

Irish investments in Uganda

The opening up of the Irish economy in the last 50 years has transformed Ireland as a country beyond recognition. Over 1,300 foreign-owned companies have put down roots in Ireland, including nine of the top 10 global software companies. Irish food and drink is exported to over 175 markets around the world and Ireland welcomed nine million visitors last year.

Many factors contribute to Ireland's success. Among these factors is the role embassies, including its embassy in Uganda, play in supporting Irish investors and businesses in accessing new markets.

"The embassy has an important role to play in supporting trade and investment between Ireland and Uganda," the Irish ambassador to Uganda, Dónal Cronin, says.

"In fact, our new Country Strategy Paper for Uganda 2016-2020 which we are now implementing, includes trade and investment promotion as a priority area of work," he adds.

In order to boost business links between the two

countries, an Irish business network was established in 2012. In 2017, the network is being re-launched as part of the Irish embassy's renewed efforts to promote Irish business and companies seeking to expand into the Ugandan market under a new strategy launched by the Irish government earlier this month. The programme is called 'Ireland Connect: Trading and Investing in a dynamic world'.

Business Ireland Uganda (BIU) is one of only three business networks which the Irish government has set up in Africa to strengthen trade and investment ties between Ireland and Africa's high growth markets. The other two networks are Business Ireland Kenya and Business Ireland South Africa.

Frances Collins, the second secretary and trade advisor at the Irish Embassy, explains that: "Business Ireland Uganda currently has 32 members; membership includes Irish citizens doing business in Uganda and Ugandan citizens with business ties to Ireland or Irish companies. The overall aim of Business Ireland Uganda is to share knowledge and experience on doing business in Uganda and engage on efforts to promote and

facilitate Irish business in Uganda."

"One of the most important functions of the network is to provide opportunities for business people with common interests to interact and network. Through the network, members are able to identify opportunities to further their own businesses" Cronin, who also serves as chairperson of the network, adds.

Irish businesses in Uganda

Simba Travelcare was opened in 2005 by Irishman Declan Peppard and specialises in providing travel management services to a wide selection of corporate and individual customers in Uganda and overseas.

Commenting on the similarities between doing business in Uganda and Ireland, Peppard says: "As in Ireland, in Uganda people to people interaction is very important. The success of Simba Travelcare is very much built on the Irish way of doing business, including providing a personal level of service, a professional team and management involvement on a day-to-day basis.

Speaking about the BIU, Peppard says: "It is a great network to be involved



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in — there are a lot of Irish companies that are bringing their skills to Uganda through partnerships."

Fellow Irishman Bernard Wight who founded the Irish Ugandan company Geo Gecko, is also a member of the network. Wright is an example of the kind of innovative entrepreneurship which makes Ireland seventh of 128 countries in the 2016 Global Innovation index. Geo Gecko specialises in geo-intelligence services for sectors such as agriculture, urban planning, economics and finance.

"Our clients want access to information such as how many fields are being cultivated in the eastern region, what property taxes may be

generated in each part of the city and the like. Essentially, we provide the data that enables the public or private sector to make informed decisions" he explains.

"One of the great things about BIU is that it is not just for Irish companies doing business here. It is also open to Irish investors who are looking to invest in Uganda and companies doing or wishing to do business in Ireland. This is essential if we are to grow trade between our countries."

James Mulhall, the country manager of Smart Security agrees. Smart Security is a company which provides tailor-made electronic security solutions to East African

businesses and specialises in electronic security, building management systems and ICT.

"Our mission is to become East Africa's leading electronic security company by committing to world-class technology and human resources to understanding and satisfying customers' business requirements.

Being a member of BIU enables us to network with other business associations in Uganda and Business Ireland Networks in the region and meet with potential customers," he says.

If you are interested in joining BIU, contact embassykampala@dfa.ie.

As told to Samuel Sanya