REGIONAL OVERVIEW

Uneven economic and political freedom across sub-Saharan Africa speaks to the region’s diversity. Many countries are experiencing an economic upswing, but slow democratic development threatens greater and sustained growth and improved quality of life for Africa’s citizens. In other countries, existing democratic institutions are threatened by economic uncertainty.

CIPE has worked with the private sector (especially micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises) in Africa over the last 30 years through business associations, think tanks, women’s organizations, and youth-centered programs. These partners work with CIPE to strengthen democracy by engaging governments on transparency, the business-enabling environment, accountability, the rule of law, and initiatives to combat corruption.

Through dialogue, collective action, and collaboration with government and civil society, the private sector is helping to build the institutions that will allow democracy to flourish.
CIPE's work with local partners throughout Africa is having a strong impact:

- In Ethiopia, CIPE’s support of local business coalitions led to the first collective, coordinated approach to dialogue with government on service delivery to address obstacles to business and economic growth.

- In Zimbabwe, nearly 23,000 women in business are now represented through a national coalition called the Women Alliance of Business Associations of Zimbabwe (WABAZ). WABAZ meets with government bodies and elected leaders to advocate a better business environment for women.
In Nigeria, CIPE support of business coalitions has led to a better business-enabling environment. In Plateau State, the coalition successfully advocated greater security. Businesses are now able to stay open two hours later. In Nasarawa, partners convinced the government to allocate land in 31 development areas to grow a more marketable crop. The Benue State coalition’s roundtable on credit access led to the state government re-activating the Small Scale Industries Credit Scheme, which provides access to loans for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). The Enugu coalition successfully advocated the elimination of illegitimate fees for business permits.

In Nigeria, CIPE works with seven state-level coalitions of 150 business and professional associations in Enugu, Nasarawa, Plateau, Benue, Kogi, Kwara, and Niger states. CIPE supports their efforts to advocate specific reforms that will improve the business environment and make public officials more accountable. Through training, technical assistance, and grants, CIPE has helped these coalitions to strengthen the voice of the private sector on key issues using election debates, public campaigns, and public-private collaborations. Most recently, CIPE supported the development of an eighth coalition representing women in business from across the country. This support has built the capacity of the private sector to collectively advocate policy and regulatory reform and has strengthened the democratic process by boosting private sector participation in governance.

CIPE takes a long-term approach to building sustainable private sector coalitions in Nigeria. First, CIPE identifies a network of relevant state-level business and professional organizations and builds their capacity through workshops and technical assistance. Next, CIPE supports key coalition activities and informs relevant members of the public sector and the media on the role of business in a democratic society. Finally, CIPE provides advanced training and support to coalitions focusing on sustainability and internal governance, and provides financial and technical support to take on larger and more complex advocacy initiatives. The ultimate goal is to help the eight coalitions become the institutionalized collective voice for the private sector in their respective jurisdictions.

In Senegal, CIPE partner the Union Nationale des Commerçants et Industriels du Senegal (UNACOIS) successfully advocated the passage of a revised tax code that included a series of provisions to better integrate small businesses into the formal economy.

In Côte d’Ivoire, CIPE worked with seven business associations to create a coalition to represent the needs of small and medium businesses and advocate policy and regulatory reforms to the government.

In Kenya, CIPE’s work with the private sector has led to the passage of the first law promoting a supportive business enabling environment for SMEs. CIPE-supported business coalitions successfully advocated for local policy and regulatory reforms on security, infrastructure spending, and taxation. CIPE also helped start Kenya’s first budget network to share best practices on increasing public participation in the budget process.
The Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) strengthens democracy around the globe through private enterprise and market-oriented reform. CIPE is one of the four core institutes of the National Endowment for Democracy and an affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Since 1983, CIPE has worked with business leaders, policymakers, and civil society to build the institutions vital to a democratic society. CIPE's key program areas include enterprise ecosystems, business advocacy, democratic governance, and anti-corruption & ethics.

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