About TrustAfrica

TrustAfrica is an independent foundation that strives to secure the conditions for democracy and equitable development throughout the continent.

Led by Africans, we convene dialogues, catalyze ideas, and provide grants and technical assistance to organizations working to advance these goals.

Our programs focus on:
- Governance
- Equitable Development
- African Philanthropy

Promoting African Enterprise and Inclusive Growth

The Investment Climate and Business Environment (ICBE) Research Fund is a high-impact policy research program that TrustAfrica and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) have collaborated on since 2006. It supports research that analyzes how existing policies constrain the business and investment climate in Africa. We share the findings with key stakeholders in order to influence policy, with a focus on micro, small and medium-scale enterprises (MSMEs).

Economic growth in Africa has remained high for the past several years, and some of the world’s fastest growing economies are in sub-Saharan Africa. The continent’s resilience in the face of the global economic and financial crisis has been remarkable. As a result, generalized pessimism about Africa has given way to a somewhat unguarded optimism. Sub-Saharan Africa however, continues to have the lowest aggregate level of human development in the world, with about half of the population still living below the poverty line. Women are disproportionately represented among the poor because of their precarious forms of employment and lack of social protection, and the level of youth unemployment is unprecedented.

Economic growth that is inclusive—that promotes the sustainable development of the private sector and creates socio-economic opportunities for many—is essential if Africa is to diversify its economy and take the majority of its people out of poverty. The private sector can be a powerful engine of inclusive growth. Fortunately, there is growing evidence for this approach—and growing recognition that a conducive business and investment environment is critical. An unfavorable climate impedes productivity, competitiveness, inclusiveness and the creation of jobs. There is thus an urgent need to create the appropriate conditions for both nationals and foreigners to invest in and grow their businesses, especially micro and small businesses.
Strategy and Activities

In order to create an enabling environment for the private sector, ICBE works with a range of partners—researchers, think tanks, business schools, investment promotion agencies, MSME authorities, parliamentarians, journalists, business membership associations—to support activities including:

• Policy-relevant research and dissemination of findings to key stakeholders;
• Strengthening the research and policy-influence skills of partners, and encouraging policy research communities to engage policy makers, the private sector, civil society organizations, and the media to provide incentives for and facilitate the activities of private enterprises on the continent; and
• Convenings to promote networking and experience sharing among these various entities.

Our Impact

Grant making: Since 2006, when TrustAfrica and IDRC initiated the ICBE Research Fund, we have awarded more than 110 grants in 30 countries in all the sub-regions of Africa. The grants have supported research into a wide range of themes, including:

• Strategies for developing and nurturing the MSME sector
• Labor market regulation
• Access to bank credit, access to public contracts
• Role of ICT in MSME development
• Investigations of opportunities in the oil/gas value chain
• Regulations and reform in procurement
• Institutions, corporate governance
• Social capital
• Horticulture and agro-industry
• Infrastructure
• Entrepreneurship (especially among youths and women)
• Resilience and risk in the informal sector
• Formalization options and strategies
• Coping strategies for family businesses

Knowledge Creation: ICBE has generated a large body of knowledge, most of it downloadable on TrustAfrica’s website: three edited books, four case studies, 60 policy briefs and over 90 ICBE Research Reports. Several researchers have shared their findings at international conferences, and others have published their findings in accredited journals and as book chapters.

Contributing to Policy: Research supported by ICBE has influenced policy discussions and policy making in several countries, including Botswana, Cameroon, Mauritania, Mauritius, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan and Uganda. For example, The Government of Uganda drew up a five-year plan worth almost 40 billion Ugandan shillings to implement a policy for an aquaculture park based on research funded by ICBE through a grant to the Uganda Investment Authority. The European Union acknowledged the role of the ICBE-funded research in its subsequent feasibility technical study for two pilot aquaculture park projects.

Local and Global Recognition: ICBE was featured during the annual meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative in New York in September 2010, and was shortlisted by Africa Investor for the “Investment Climate Initiative of the Year” at the Annual Investment Climate Summits in Washington in 2011 and in Tokyo in 2012. ICBE has been invited to several international events and has also established solid partnerships with like-minded organizations in Africa and elsewhere.