**Centre for the Study of the Economies of Africa (CSEA)**


**Location:** Nigeria  
**Year formed:** 2008  
**Who we are**  
CSEA is a non-profit think tank that conducts independent, high quality applied research on economic and development issues in Nigeria and the rest of Africa. CSEA was borne out of the need for evidence-based research to improve the quality of policies implemented in African countries.

**What we do**  
CSEA serves as a forum for quality research analyses and policy dialogue by stakeholders from the private sector, government and civil society. The Centre disseminates its research outputs to the public and decision-makers to stimulate debates on the effects of government policies on economic development in Nigeria and Africa.

**Key areas of focus**  
- Public Financial Management and Governance  
- Macroeconomic Management  
- Trade, Investment, and Growth  
- Education, Health, and Population Dynamics  
- Natural Resources, Energy, and the Environment

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**CONTEXT**

Amidst a worrying trend of shrinking civil society space, the study is based on the role played by Nigerian CSOs during the EU-West Africa EPA negotiations, which was widely regarded as successful by Nigerians. While the EPA was signed in most West African countries, as they believed it was mutually beneficial, Nigeria refused to sign it as a result of the campaign by CSOs on what is believed to be of possible damage to the Nigerian economy. CSOs in Nigeria played a key role in shaping the perception of key stakeholders and the public towards the EPA, by highlighting its negative consequences using evidence. The study draws on the role of Nigerian CSOs in the EU-West Africa EPA to assess the effectiveness of citizen evidence feeding into policymaking, and identify ways of promoting the inclusion of citizen knowledge as an essential element of evidence-informed policymaking.

**WHAT WE DID**

CSEA conducted interviews supplemented by desk research to document an account of how CSOs built a coalition against the EU-West Africa EPA and to highlight lessons for promoting the inclusion of citizen knowledge in policymaking. The study finds that, firstly, CSOs led by the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) provided alternative evidence to contest the prevailing evidence driven by international partners. Specifically, they contested the estimate of modest negative impact of the EPA provided by the World Bank, and produced a dismal estimate of the impact which was deemed more reflective of contextual factors. Secondly, a coalition of CSOs and private sector representatives vigorously campaigned against the EPA using diverse communications media. The coalition painted a clear and negative picture of the impact of the EPA on Nigeria’s economy and advocated for the rejection of the trade deal. Thirdly, the paucity of expertise and financial resources as well as a lack of coordination stymied a better citizen participation in the negotiation process. Recommendations include: i) Improving the technical capacity of CSOs and encouraging their partnerships with research institutions; and ii) Building a more unified front and better coordination among CSOs to improve information flow and the effectiveness of CSOs advocacy.

**CHALLENGE**

Given that the study was conducted after the EPA negotiations, the CSEA research team faced challenges in identifying the key stakeholders and gathering relevant information, as well as financial constraints that limited the scope of the research.

**OUTCOME**

Our study documented the crucial role played by CSOs in shaping Nigerian perceptions of the EPA and lessons that African CSOs can learn in mobilizing citizen knowledge for evidence-informed policymaking. The study findings were disseminated to the African Policy Circle to draw lessons on mobilizing CSOs for policy change. The lessons from the study guided CSEA’s future engagement in the tobacco policy space which involved the formation of a civil society coalition that led to a major policy change in tobacco tax.