

Sub-Saharan Africa Business Environment Report (SABER)

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In the past decade, I have been interested in understanding and analyzing the African business environment, starting with the 1995 African Entrepreneurship Conference and the subsequent book *African Entrepreneurship: Theory and Reality* (with Barbara McDade) and followed by a 2009 special issue of the *Journal of African Business*, as well as other publications. I have continued to do research on related topics including a ten-country study that considered African business people, both women and men, at various levels of economic and business activities. I interviewed business owners, managers, and workers of small to medium to large-scale formal-sector companies, and described and modeled the factors that helped and hindered business success, sustainability, and upward mobility. I also researched informal-sector, small-scale economic activities (e.g., agriculture, local manufacturing, retail sales and vending) that are engaged in by large numbers of people in every African county. As a result, I delineated the entrepreneurship landscape from bottom to top based on interviews, case materials, and surveys.

The Sub-Saharan Africa Business Environment Report (SABER) project grows out of this interest, and commences in fall 2010 for a four-year period. As project director, along with Dr. Robert Rolfe, Professor of Marketing at the University of South Carolina, this research project is different from my previous work, and focuses on producing an annual report that is comprehensive and



straightforward. It will analyze business indicators and conditions in Sub-Saharan Africa by region and specific countries. It aims to produce a concise package about African business conditions to assist several client groups ranging from business people and business consultants, to policy and decision makers, to the academic community of faculty and students who are located in the United States, Africa, and elsewhere. It focuses on major economic, social and political events and indicators of the sub-continent, initially considering the twenty largest economies in Sub-Saharan Africa. As an annual report, it will consider factors in the past year that have shaped

the economic and political environment of the region and particular countries.

SABER will include data on and evaluation of indicators and their implications for economic growth; foreign direct investment and trade; political stability; business regulation; labor and employment; gender issues in business; ease of doing business; trade organizations and policies; Millennium Development Goals; telecommunications and infrastructure; and health initiatives and epidemics as they impact economic indicators.

An added feature will be the linkages to African universities and business schools. An advisory group of African scholars from business colleges in Africa will comprise a Council of African Scholars to review the reports. And each year, one of the scholars will be in short-term residence at UF to provide guidance and give seminars and lectures.

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