



Understanding Political Will for Tobacco Control in the Nigerian Context

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INTRODUCTION

Sustained political will among government and non-state actors in the policy space has been responsible for the recorded success at the federal level in the implementation of tobacco control policies. In addition, a few states have demonstrated substantial political will by enacting laws on the prohibition of smoking in public places. Given that majority of states are not politically motivated to adopt tobacco control measures, we seek to provide an understanding of what constitutes political will in Nigeria. In view of the concerns around the implementation of tobacco control policies, we also examine the factors that influence political will in order to leverage on positive forces and curb negative forces within the policy environment.

Based on the findings, we provide some policy recommendations.

METHODOLOGY

The data was obtained from surveys conducted in four states: Lagos, Rivers, Ekiti, and Abuja. These states have been identified as states that have made some considerable progress in demonstrating political will for tobacco control, and have enacted laws against smoking in public places. For each state, structured questionnaires were administered to officials at the federal and state levels, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Multilateral Development Institutions.

Organization	Ministry of Health	Ministry of Finance	Customs Service	Civil Society Organizations	Multilateral Organizations	Total
Frequency	4	3	2	4	1	14

We adopt the conceptual framework of Political Will for Anti-Corruption Reforms developed by Brinkerhoff et al (1999) to guide the data collection and analysis. The Brinkerhoff et al (1999) model was chosen because it models political will using a system-wide approach which allows for an examination of the bidirectional relationship between environmental factors and political will. Also, given that the evidence of political will is most often known after the policy reform, the framework provides the opportunity to perform an ex-ante evaluation of political will.

RESULTS

States that have demonstrated political will still show weak support for tobacco control policies

Based on the theoretical framework adapted for this study, five key indicators have been identified and assessed:

Table 1: Findings on Political Will Indicators for Tobacco Control in Nigeria

Indicator	Key Findings
Locus of Initiative	Externally driven by CSOs; insufficient government commitment
Extent of Analysis	Generally weak but slight improvement from non-state actors
Mobilization of Support	Inadequate collaboration within the government and between the government and CSOs
Application of Credible Sanctions	Weak application of sanctions
Continuity of Efforts	Absence of long-term focus

1. Locus of Initiative

The primary state actors expected to generate the political will for changes in the tobacco control policy space are the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Finance for taxation policies in particular. However, the study finds that senior officials in both Ministries accord high priority to tobacco control policies but characterized with lack of commitment. In addition, evidence from the study show that Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are the catalysts for tobacco control policy changes. CSOs within the tobacco control arena frequently hold policy dialogues and press briefings geared towards the implementation of tobacco control policies of international standards.

2. Extent of Analysis

The surveys revealed the government has taken minimal steps towards conducting a proper analysis of tobacco control measures. The absence of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) desk officers in the state Ministries of Health demonstrates the deficiency in providing information and assistance on tobacco use. In the same vein, non-state actors are marginally active in the area of conducting tobacco-related research. However, the trend has been changing considerably, as indigenous research groups have begun to build the capacity to provide more evidence to inform policies and reinforce advocacy efforts.

3. Mobilization of Support

There appears to be inadequate collaboration between stakeholders within the government towards tobacco control activities. The national and most State Ministries of Health identified the 'lack of intergovernmental cooperation and coordination on tobacco control policies' as a key obstacle to the full implementation of the National Tobacco Control Act, 2015. This is against the submission that relevant government agencies are willing to collaborate with multinational organisations, donors and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

4. Application of Credible Sanctions

The support and use of sanctions, whether positive or negative, to provide incentives that promote compliance to tobacco control policies appears to be weak within government ministries and agencies. The Environmental, Health and Sanitation Department in Ekiti State outrightly stated that the arrest of tobacco policy offenders is not encouraged by the Department. Sanctions contained in tobacco laws are largely symbolic in nature as tools of compliance are not implemented.

5. Continuity of Efforts

Consistent support from policy makers towards tobacco reform is expected to be significantly hindered due to the apparent lack of resources in government ministries and agencies. ‘Lack of human and financial resources’ was ranked as the most significant obstacle to the implementation of tobacco control laws by national and State Ministries of Health. The State Health Ministries stated that there are no budget provisions for tobacco control allocated directly to the Ministry. Furthermore, some government agencies disclosed the lack of technology to efficiently run their operations.

Contextual Factors

Political will does not occur in isolation but is influenced, either positively or negatively, by a set of factors which also influence the outcome and implementation of tobacco control policy reforms. Based on the literature and stakeholder interviews the following contextual factors are examined:

Table 2: Findings on the Influence of the Contextual Factors in Tobacco Control within Nigeria

Indicator	Key Findings
Tax Enforcement	Demonstrated capability of effecting tax policy changes
Combat Smuggling	Ineffectual due to inadequate resources
Tobacco Industry	Dominant negative influence
Civil Society Organizations	Dominant positive influence
Multilateral Development Institutions	Passive positive influence

1. Effective Tax Enforcement

The stakeholder consultations revealed that the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) is willing and able to efficiently tax tobacco companies in accordance with the mandate given to the agency. Furthermore, the interviews with the Nigeria Customs Service revealed that the agency is capable of implementing the tobacco excise tax which, according to an official, has been effective in curbing the inflow of tobacco products into Nigeria.

2. Capacity to Combat Smuggling

The Nigeria Customs Service wholly supports tobacco control policies and expressed its full preparedness in combating the envisaged rise in smuggling. The agency has deployed both conventional and innovative strategies in curbing smuggling activities in border towns. However, officials disclosed that their anti-smuggling efforts are being rendered ineffective due to inadequate resources.

3. Smokers and the Tobacco Industry

The tobacco industry maintains a strong position within Nigeria as they influence the support and by extension, outcome of tobacco policy reforms. State and social actors including the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Finance, Nigeria Customs Service and several Civil Society Organisations identified tobacco companies as a dominant negative force affecting the political will of government officials towards enacting tobacco tax increments.

4. Civil Society Organisations

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the tobacco reform space appear to be the most influential agents shaping the political will of state actors, design and implementation of tobacco control laws and outcomes of tobacco reforms. CSOs accord high priority to tobacco control policies and declared their support for an increase in taxes on tobacco products.

5. Multilateral Development Institutions

Multilateral Development Institutions (MDIs) with a presence in Nigeria have also expressed their support for tobacco control policies and acknowledged that excessive tobacco consumption has severe economic and health implications.

Recommendations

To build political will among government officials, the following steps are recommended:

- ⇒ The government should collaborate with international donor partners to build the capacity needed for tobacco control policy implementation.
- ⇒ CSOs would need to strengthen the research-based evidence-component of their advocacy efforts by increasing their engagement with research-based institutions.
- ⇒ Stakeholders should identify individuals, possibly within CSOs, who can champion the reforms and support their activities.

The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (CTFK) funded the Centre for the Study of the Economies of Africa to conduct a scoping study on the tobacco market. This policy brief presents one out of the three components of the study. The full report will be made available on CSEA website: www.cseafrica.org.

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