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HESPI Managing Director's Statement

Effective Policy Advocacy by CSOs is Critical for Good Financial Governance

December, 2023

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in most countries engage in policy advocacy to address socio-economic and political matters including human rights and democratic values; fostering sound policies implementation; and advocating for the rights of marginalized communities and the well-being of citizens. The issues promoted by the CSOs in the Horn of Africa (HoA) include good governance, peace building and conflict resolution, gender equity and empowerment, poverty alleviation, and protection of human rights.

The CSOs advocacy in the HoA region has achieved notable impacts in supporting social welfare of marginalized communities, and poverty alleviation and protection of individual rights. However, their impact in governance matters, in particular Public Financial Management (PFM) and Financial Transparency and Accountability (FTA) has remained inadequate largely owing to the narrow space for CSOs advocacy and their limited internal capacities.

The areas and extent of engagement of CSOs in this region has been largely determined by the policy and regulatory environment as well as the advocacy landscape of where they operate. The CSOs engagements expanded or narrowed based on whether governments severely restricted their areas of engagement and/or their sources of financial support. Other key constraints included lack of access to government relevant institutions and policymakers, scarce resource availability to enable advocacy activities, and limited capacity to engage in evidence-based research.

In terms of the impact and effectiveness of CSOs policy advocacy, the principle areas of concern in the sub region are lack of proper advocacy strategies and implementation plans, limited monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and lack of utilization of useful social media. Also, there is clear evidence of the need for strengthening their vital internal capacity for policy development and research analysis, internal accountability and evaluation systems, adequate coalition building and networking, and policy communication and dialogue.

In this context, the required capacity interventions to strengthen the CSOs' policy advocacy should give emphasis on development of clear adaptable plans, conduct effective lobbying of governments and other key actors to support for policy advocacy, mobilize adequate resources and build effective coalitions and networks to leverage their collective influence. Effective policy advocacy is essential for strengthening financial governance, and the official policy makers and CSOs should jointly address the major internal deficiencies of inadequate Human skills and institutional capacities; establish collaborative relationship between CSOs and government policy makers; and enable access to timely and credible data for evidence-based research and analysis. Effective capacity building and facilitation of a mobilization of financial resources are critical for impactful policy advocacy specially in good financial governance.

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Briefs on Current Economic
Developments in the Region



Joint assessment of government investments and expenditure in the prevention and elimination of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) - by HESPI and IPF

May - November, 2023



The Horn Economic and Social Policy Institute (HESPI) and the Institute of Public Finance (IPF) established a partnership in conducting a joint study on the prevention and elimination of the Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) and which is a very important public health problem in Ethiopia, a country with high burden of the NTDs in sub sahara, and in Africa at large.

NTDs are treatable and preventable diseases, but are affecting many people in the tropical and subtropical countries with a devastating impact on impoverished communities by disproportionately affecting children, women & People With Disabilities (PWDs). Factors exacerbating the impacts of the NTDs include the abject poverty, water and sanitation problems, stigma and discrimination (lepers), lack of funding and its inefficient utilization. Because the NTDs affect many of the poorest & most vulnerable communities, their voices are not heard and these diseases are not tackled with the resources that they deserve.

The impacts of NTDs is observed on individuals, families, communities and in economic livelihood. Some agencies contribute to the NTDs prevention and elimination programs, but valuation and tracking of the effective utilization of the resources is not often done, to address the financing challenges and to better chart out future funding opportunities and resources management.

In May, 2023, HESPI and IPF initiated a project in health financing tracking on prevention and elimination of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) across all sectors and from all sources in the regional states of Amhara and Oromia in Ethiopia. The team undertook an assessment to quantify and document all government contributions for NTDs as well as track NTDs expenditure from all sources to the service providers.

On November 10, 2023, HESPI and IPF organized a half day workshop to validate the data collected and the preliminary findings of the study. These activities served as a prerequisite for effectively and rationally allocating both domestic and international funding to prevent and eliminate NTDs; raise awareness of the importance of government investment in NTDs control and eradication; engage with policymakers and stakeholders to advocate for increased domestic investment in NTDs; and support organizations working to document and track government contributions to NTDs. Representatives from the Ethiopian Ministries of Health and Finance, Oromia and Amhara Bureaus of Health, NGOs, and sector experts participated at this workshop. The Institutes organized a validation workshop at the end of november 2023 to refine the assessment report on government investments and expenditure in the prevention and elimination of NTDs.

Enhancing the role of civil society organizations in policy advocacy for PFM, FTA in Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan

July 11-13, 2023



The Horn Economic and Social Policy Institute (HESPI) conducted three studies on the role of CSOs in public policy advocacy, in Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan to identify their advocacy capacity gaps and to inform on their priority future capacity building needs. The capacity gaps assessments and analysis relied on qualitative information from key informant interviews and self assessment data generated by utilizing a capacity assessment review matrix. The findings from country case studies identified a broad range of technical and knowledge limitations that constrain the CSOs policy advocacy.

The studies highlighted the primary objective of addressing the CSOs high priority capacity constraints; including building effective strategies and plans for policy advocacy, acquiring technical knowledge and the tools of establishing

convincing public policy advocacy. Other constraints were seen as the need for monitoring and evaluation capacity, effective communication with relevant stakeholders, and to build networks and associations to leverage their influence.

The participating CSOs in the three case studies underscored financial resources shortage, inadequate governance legal framework, and limited access and collaborative relationship with relevant government officials. Also constraining their policy advocacy activities was lack of access to reliable information and current data to build evidence-based policy advocacy, and very narrow space regarding their privileges and legal protection. The findings of the CSOs assessments demonstrate their capacity weaknesses and the need to address their primary constraints and challenges on effective policies advocacy.

Leveraging enhanced SDR allocation to finance resilient economic recovery in Ethiopia

August 29 - September 1, 2023

HESPI staff conducted a study to explore the possibilities for SDRs to ease short to medium term liquidity shortages as well as leverage long term economic development as part of the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) initiated country case studies in four African countries including Ethiopia. In doing so, the country case studies were aimed to amplify the advocacy for enhanced SDRs allocation to Low Income Countries (LICs) through evidence-based research.



The overall objective of this study is to generate evidence to make a case for enhanced SDRs allocation for Ethiopia and indicate the possible instruments towards enhanced SDRs, given the specific needs and policy priorities of the country. Specifically, the study focused on the following:

- Showing trends in governments' fiscal position and the state of balance of payments
- Showing trends in debt profile of Ethiopia and presenting the state of debt restructuring efforts with creditors
- Supporting evidence-based policy advocacy on the role of SDRs in easing debt distress
- Supporting economic recovery in Ethiopia and similar countries in Africa
- Indicating the merits and demerits of various instruments for rechanneling SDRs to countries in Ethiopia

The conclusions of the study were thus focused on addressing the multiple internal and external shocks Ethiopia is going through, including: i) to what extent can SDRs be utilized to ease the short to medium term liquidity shortage? ii) to what extent can SDR be used to support the long term development financing needs of the country (eg. Investment in building resilience to climate shocks)?; iii) what kind of SDRs channeling mechanisms would suit Ethiopia best?

HESPI Meetings & Workshops

HESPI Board of Directors meeting

November 8, 2023

HESPI conducted its Board of Directors meeting on November 28, 2023. The meeting was a hybrid virtual and face-to-face meeting. The meeting addressed important organizational issues like review of programmatic and financial performance of the Institute in 2023, and work and financial plan for 2024. Also, Directors evaluated the resources mobilization challenges and opportunities facing the Institute. The meeting participants identified current issues to monitor on socio-economic stability and security in the sub region and passed decisions on areas of topical and concern and for the near future including development of HESPI strategic plan and quickly on boarding a Resources Mobilization expert under the SALCA program.



Workshop on Gender, Inclusion and Diversity (GID)

November 20 - 24, 2023



A workshop on assessing the Gender, Inclusion and Diversity within the SALCA program stakeholders was organized by the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) under the SALCA: "Strengthening African Leadership Capacity for Climate Adaptation: An Imperative for Adapting to Climate Impact program and was aimed at providing a platform for learning and sharing of knowledge among the beneficiary institutions. On that regard, Dr. Nancy (Gender Expert) and Ms. Seyram (SALCA coordinator from ACBF) visited HESPI on October 23-24, 2023. The workshop was planned to help the SALCA program implementers to better

design (program) and implement their adaptation projects through the GDI leans, better understand the various ways in which gender is embedded in our societies and the concepts best used to explain that, to help the challenges assumptions about women and their capabilities. The workshop addressed theoretical understanding and operational challenges and opportunities to materialize GDI in the programs. The workshop was culminated with a draft GDI work plan for short term for each SALCA partner.

It is understood that GID is essential dimensions in our societal fabric. In the SALCA portfolio, gender refers to the roles, expectations, and opportunities ascribed to individuals based on their perceived sex. Inclusion embodies the principle of ensuring equitable access and participation for all, regardless of their background or characteristics. Diversity encompasses the richness of human experiences and backgrounds, acknowledging that our differences make our communities stronger. In this context, we explore the intersection of these concepts in the work of the community-based organization.

HESPI Meetings & Workshops

SDRs Allocation Research Capacity Building Seminar

December 6-7, 2023

AERC and AFRODAD organized a capacity building workshop for training of trainers in Nairobi on 6 - 7 December 2023, as part of their SDR research project that covered four African Countries, namely Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, and Senegal. The training was primarily on policy advocacy to enable the participants that conducted the initial research to undertake effective technical assistance and outreach activities with policy makers, such as Ministers of Finance, Central Banks, the Media and Civil Society Organizations. The key objectives were to provide a platform for the research policy recommendations and to create awareness of the available data and research evidence and to allow the media and CSOs to support proposed improvements in policy uptake and possible actions.

The Workshop content was centered on presentations by the organizers, including Mr. Jason Rosario Braganza, Executive Director of AFRODAD and AERC, as well as a keynote address by Prof. Abebe Shimeles, former Director of research at AERC and AfDB. Prof. Abebe emphasized, among other things, on the shortcoming of the current IMF/WB Debt Sustainability Assessment, which often is based on underestimated projections of African economies than they turn out to be. As a result, countries in Africa are assigned higher than actual risk of debt, which erodes their prospect of accessing external finance. In addition, Dr. Daouda Sembane, Executive Director, AfricCatalyst made an informative presentation on SDRs and Debt: Situating SDRs in the development finance landscape in which he raised the key issues of advocating for more equitable SDR allocations that are based on the receiving countries' liquidity needs rather than their quota in the IMF capital, or share in the global economy. The rest of the workshop was interactive and based on role playing among the participants, and provided limited effective training or innovative knowledge dissemination.

HESPI team however took advantage of the event and had useful side meeting with the AFRODAD Director, and discussed their intended forthcoming activities in Ethiopia and on their willingness to collaborate with HESPI. In particular, he noted a planned assessment of the legal landscape surrounding debt management in Ethiopia that could be conducted with HESPI researchers in early 2024, as well as possible joint engagements in debt management enhancement and sustainability analysis periodically. He also mentioned HESPI's possible participation in two of AFRODAD's annual flagship activities, namely "media training on debt, and debt-development academy". It was agreed to sign an AFRODAD and HESPI activity agreement to anchor the discussions, and arrange a virtual meeting to firm up these proposals with the AFRODAD personnel working on the above mentioned topics.

HESPI hosted Emirates based Trends Research & Advisory Institute Delegates

November 20 - 24, 2023

HESPI hosted a delegation led by Dr. Mohammed Abdullah Al-Ali, CEO of Trends Research and Advisory from Abu Dhabi, UAE, to discuss areas of cooperation and networking. TRENDS Research and Advisory is an independent research institution in Abu Dhabi, UAE that aims to contribute to the shaping of the future through analyzing the geopolitical, economic and social aspects of regional and global developments in order to better understand the various dimensions of prevailing trends and the opportunities and challenges they present.

HESPI is also engaged in generating and disseminating knowledge for policy ideas through research, creating platforms for debating research findings, and recommendations and policy propositions for future development and growth trajectory, primarily in the IGAD region. In the discussion, it was indicated that the two organizations can collaborate in conducting research, and organizing of policy forums in the areas of Security, Economic Cooperation between the Gulf and the Horn, Trade and Regional Integration for mutual benefits.



Conferences & Networking

Conference on China and the World: Towards Building a Community with a Shared Future

July 4 - 6, 2023



The managing Director of HESPI, Dr. Ali Issa, was invited by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) to participate at an International Conference on “China and the World: Towards Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind,” which was held in Beijing on 5th July 2023. The Conference participants represented many parts of the world and made presentations at plenary sessions and parallel session on “different topics including “revitalizing Global Development”. Dr. Ali made a presentation at the conference to share valuable insights with delegates from the various countries.

His brief presentation addressed several interlinked issues to revitalize global development. (i) Foremost, he highlighted the challenges of global food insecurity and its manifestations in the developing countries, many in Africa; and the impact of climate change impact that is aggravating prevalent insecurity, internal displacement and outward migration. He also underscored the urgent need for effective responses focused on agricultural transformation for inclusive and sustainable development through technological change and enhanced policies. Dr. Ali noted that International Solidarity demands comprehensive knowledge and dissemination of the experience of China and other successful nations in the areas of technological innovations and agricultural transformation for effective poverty reduction and sustained development.

China - Africa Cooperation for Development

August 29 - 30, 2023

Dr Ali Issa, Managing Director of the Horn Economic and Social Policy Institute participated in the China-Africa cooperation for development conference on August 29-30, 2023 in Beijing, China. Dr. Ali delivered a statement on enhancing Knowledge for Food Security and Agricultural Technology for Development. He mentioned one of the biggest challenges currently facing many



developing countries is acute food insecurity, manifested in rising food prices, prevalent hunger and malnutrition. In these circumstances, most of the affected African nations are confronted with anemic growth, increasing numbers of people in absolute poverty, and in some instance instability driven by food riots and broad insecurity. He underlined the adverse impact of climate change and unfavorable environmental conditions that have aggravated the food insecurity crisis in some regions, including the Sahel and in parts of Eastern and the Horn of Africa. He said that this has led the authorities of these nations to place the highest priority on enhancing food security and adequate nutrition among the most vulnerable communities. The two-day event participants were over 100 delegates from think tanks, international organizations, diplomatic missions, and high level government officials.

Conference Networking

The 2023 Africa Think Tanks' Summit "Linking Evidence, Policies, and Practice to Support the Implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement"

November 8 - 10, 2023



The 2023 Africa Think Tanks' Summit was held from 8 to 10 November 2023 in Lusaka, Zambia under the theme of "Linking Evidence, Policies, and Practice to Support the Implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement". The event brought together think tanks, policymakers, development

practitioners, public institutions, civil society organizations, the private sector, and academia to share ideas and experiences, and devise implementable recommendations on what works and what needs to change in Africa's approach to addressing AfCFTA implementation and related challenges. Delegates discussed particularly the capacities required to accelerate the implementation of the AfCFTA and its translation into sound policies and actions at continental, regional, and national levels that can guarantee inclusive and sustainable development in Africa.

Dr. Ali Issa, the Managing Director of the Horn Economic and Social Policy Institute (HESPI) participated in the event's activities and panels, and moderated session on "Leveraging Data, Good Practices, and Learning for effective AfCFTA implementation" that included representatives of Think Tanks, AFRISTAT, UNIDO and the Pan African Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Also, the Managing Director had side meetings during the event with the Executive Secretary and senior officials of ACBF, heads of several Think tanks, and other prominent participants.

HESPI - the International Budget Partnership (IBP)

December 8, 2023

HESPI and IBP met virtually to explore possibilities on joint initiatives to overarching issues that contribute to improved Public Finance Management (PFM) and economic governance in the region and beyond. The key discussion points were: (i) the potential for CSOs budget training and advocacy in Ethiopia; (ii) IBP's "Collaborating for Open and Accountable Budgets" (COAB) Project; (iii) IBP's curriculum and materials - and experience in other regions; (iv) Dialogued about our organization's roles; and (v) Possibilities of working with the legislature for budget advocacy



1) The CSOs training: Both online or face-to-face training arrangements for CSOs were under consideration, the latter being the preferred mode of training. An online training is planned to start from February 2024. The training will take 10 weeks, which is a combination of someone from IBP lecturing through zoom calling, and people read the training materials on their own suitable time. The training materials (curriculum, workbooks, handouts on budget cycles) will be prepared and uploaded by the IBP. Zoom group of participants who can access internet will be created which will serve as a forum for the training and help the participants know each other better. This will concurrently create fertile ground for collaboration and the coalition building which is being pursued by the HESPI and the Ethiopian Civil Societies Organizations Council (ECSOC).

2) Continued support and capacity building to the CSOs on identified PFM advocacy gaps: The IBP has the interest on this, at least for Ethiopia. However, they also indicated that the funding situation is tight. They would rather propose looking for other funding sources where they promise to do the liaising and contribute technically when needed. Some of the potential funding sources they propose include the EU delegation (CSOs coordination and the PFM units), German Cooperation, UNICEF Ethiopia.

3) Dissemination of the OBS findings: Same as number 2 above, the IBP proposes looking for funding from elsewhere to disseminate any findings or recommendations from the OBS for 2022. In other countries like in Bolivia, the OBS proxies are used before considering funding to the national governments. Similar tactics can be used while working with the big donors (EU, USAID, FCDO, UNICEF, WHO, etc.) and the Ethiopian government. The IBP will also technically support in the dissemination of the OBS findings/recommendations from its experience in other countries/regions.

HESPI Regional Office Started Operations

The Horn Economic and Social Policy Institute (HESPI) opened a regional office in Nairobi, Kenya in May 2023, to promote and facilitate the operations of the regional Think Tank in the Southern member states of IGAD, and the Greater East Africa Community. Following the commencement of regional office in Nairobi, the required essential support staff, senior professional associates and a Managing Country Directors were recruited and deployed to address the demands of Kenya and Somalia and South Sudan economic and social policy research, policy advice and capacity building.

The HESPI Nairobi regional office has started well and accomplished successful partnerships collaboration activities by signing of MOUs with several key potential partners. In addition, the staff has participated in requests for proposals as part of various consortiums, and prepared concept notes and technical proposals to augment the Institute's sustainable and flexible funding sources. Although in its initial face of operationalization, the new regional office will enhance the socioeconomic research and consultancy services of the Institute, and strengthen its foundations in the diplomatic hub of Eastern Africa, at Nairobi.

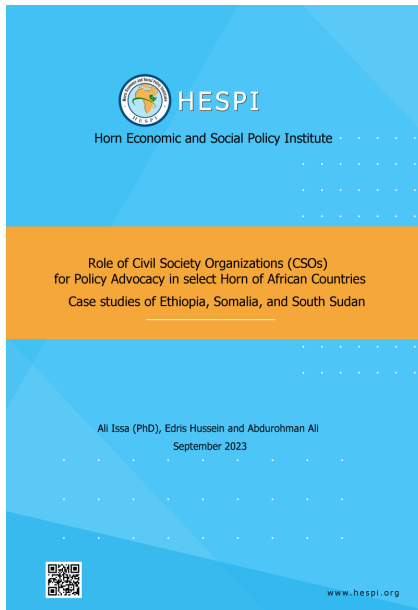
The new regional office in Kenya, is located at a conducive working and living environment for the knowledge generation and dissemination community, and has assisted Nairobi to become a centre to host many international, continental and bilateral diplomatic missions, as well regional organizations. These entities include the United Nations Environmental (UNEP) and Habitat entities; AfDB, IMF and World Bank regional offices. and representative agencies of the African Union-AU, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Eastern Africa Community (EAC).

Dr. Abdirizak Hassan:- Regional Director, Nairobi, Kenya



Dr. Abdirizak has a Ph.D. in Financial Economics with a solid grasp of the full ranges of development issues and challenges and the broad range of economic policy issues. For six years, he was the Chief Economic Advisor to the Central Bank of Somalia and led many reform efforts at the Bank, including Currency Reform and National Payment Systems Initiatives. Dr. Abdirizak was a Professor in the Departments of Economics and Finance at the Franklin University from 2006 to 2013 and has extensive practical experience in the challenges facing post-conflict Somalia gained through working with various international, public and private sector entities. He was the Chief Executive Officer of Gargaara Company Limited; an MSME financing facility established to support the productive sector-

Agriculture, Fishery, Livestock & energy in Somali. Dr. Abdirizak is currently the regional office Director of HESPI, and leads the research, institutional capacity building activities, and a team of senior associates and consultants.



Role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) for Policy Advocacy in Select Horn of African Countries:- Case studies of Ethiopia, Somalia, and South Sudan

by: **Ali Issa (PhD), Edris Hussein & Abdurohman - HESPI Staff**

The study of the role of CSOs in public policy advocacy, in the three select countries of the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan) aims to identify critical advocacy capacity gaps that have been facing them and to inform their priority future capacity building interventions. The capacity gaps assessments and analysis relied on qualitative information from Key Informant Interviews and self-assessment data generated by utilizing a Capacity Assessment Review Matrix. In this context, the findings from the country case studies identified a broad range of internal technical and knowledge limitations that constrain the CSOs effective public policy advocacy

Growth & Economic Transformation Strategy:- A long term vision for Somalia

by: **Ali Issa (PhD) - HESPI Managing Director**

This report is on the policy briefs on the findings, conclusions and key recommendations of 10 studies conducted on the Growth and Economic Transformation Strategy (GETS) long term vision of Somalia. It comprises a small part of the research conducted by the National Economic Council (NEC) advisors and sector experts, which were presented at the National Policy Forum in June, 2022.

The studies cover four pillars:

- Pillar 1: relates to policies for growth and economic transformation
- Pillar 2: is on agriculture productivity, food security, and climate adaption
- Pillar 3: covers key topics of social services delivery (health & education)
- Pillar 4: assesses the blue economy of Somalia (marine resources, oil & gas)

Growth & Economic Transformation Strategy

A LONG-TERM VISION FOR SOMALIA

edited by Ali Issa Abdi

September 2023



Youth Employment and Dynamics in Rural Non-Farm Enterprises (RNFE) in Ethiopia

by: **Fredu Nega (PhD) & Edris Hussein - HESPI Staff**

Using panel data from the Ethiopian Socioeconomic Survey, this paper analyzes factors that determine entry and stay in non-farm enterprises as well as movement between different activities within the non-farm sector. It has three major contributions. First, we analysed the drivers to entry into and continued participation in RNFE as well as movement between different activities within the non-farm sector. This allows us to understand why people enter or exit RNFE and how people move from one form of non-farm enterprise into another. Secondly, the analysis takes age differences of RNFE owners into account to determine if the youth perform differently in the movement within RNFE. Third, methodologically we use a panel double hurdle model, which controls for unobserved effects and allows for an unbiased estimation of the relationship between non-farm enterprise diversification and the independent variables.

Youth Employment and Dynamics in Rural Non-Farm Enterprises (RNFE) in Ethiopia

By
Fredu Nega Tegebu (PhD) & Edris Hussein Seid (MSc)

July, 2023



www.hespi.org

enterprise diversification and the independent variables.

Kenya economic performance

December 31, 2023

Kenya is operating a liberal economy with flexible prices and exchange rate policies that promotes economic growth through trade, public investment and encourages smallholder businesses. As result Kenya experienced promising economic developments, achieving a real annual GDP growth of 5.1 percent in 2022 and projected 5.3 percent in 2023 (IMF, 2023), notwithstanding the difficult global instability and insecurity during these recent years.

Economically, Kenya has successfully established a diverse and dynamic economy, which contributed more than 40% of region's GDP among the members of EAC (Kenya- Country Profile- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023). Over the last decade, the average real GDP growth was about 4.5 percent. Thus, this is the dominant economy in the Eastern Africa Community, and attained a nominal GDP of USD 114.3 billion (2022) and GDP per capita of USD 2,257 and Kenya has recently joined the lower-middle income categories of the World. With a GDP of \$95 billion, Kenya recently reached lower-middle income status, and has successfully established a diverse and dynamic economy (Economic Growth and Trade, Kenya-USAID, 2020)

The country's political and economic arena has made significant reforms that contributed much to sustain its economic growth, social development, and political stability over the past decade. Nevertheless, fundamental development issues still continue to challenge the government and the people of Kenya face multiple challenges to address poverty, inequality, youth unemployment, transparency and accountability, climate change, continued weak private sector investment, and the vulnerability of the economy to internal and external shocks. This requires joint effort of Government and non-government support and collaborated efforts of development partners, and Civil Society Organization.

Source: by Dr. Tsegaye Kaleab of the HESPI regional office, Nairobi, Kenya

Travel around Africa is easier as countries continue to ease visa restrictions

December 12, 2023

The Africa Visa Openness Index in 2023 reveals much progress since the year before. In 2023, data from the report shows that 50 countries improved or maintained their 2022 score, with only 4 countries scoring lower. All key overall matrices have shown improvements in 2023. In 28% of all intra-Africa travel scenarios, African citizens do not require a visa. "It makes it easier for Africans to visit their families, pursue education and business interests abroad, and discover Africa as tourists. It also contributes towards the fulfillment of aspirations for a prosperous, integrated continent where people can develop their potential unhampered by overly restrictive visa regimes."

Rwanda emerges as a new champion in 2023, following a progressively more liberal visa regime pursued over the past 8 years. In 2016, the country allowed the citizens of nearly 90% of African countries to obtain a visa on arrival. ". In another positive development, reports state that Kenya plans to remove visa requirements for African travelers by end 2023.

Despite the many improvements, there are still hurdles to overcome. In nearly half of country-to-country travel scenarios (46%), Africans are required to obtain visas ahead of departure to travel to other African countries. Visa restrictions are notably pronounced in northern and central Africa. Sustaining the momentum on visa liberalization is crucial for realizing the vision of the 'Africa We Want.' Embracing liberal visa policies will not only facilitate seamless travel but also contribute significantly to enhanced trade in goods and services, cross border investment and shared prosperity.

One key area for which further progress on visa openness is crucial, is the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). "Freeing the movement of people across Africa's borders is not only an important objective in its own right, but is also essential to continental integration".

Source: African Development Bank,. Communication and External Relations Department



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