75% of countries in the top 20 most visa-open countries are in West Africa or East Africa.*

In the top 20 most visa-open countries, only one is in North Africa and none are in Central Africa.*

**Africa Visa Openness Index in numbers**

- **West Africa**: 30%
  - Burkina Faso
  - Cape Verde
  - Gambia
  - Guinea-Bissau
  - Mali
  - Togo

- **Southern Africa**: 20%
  - Madagascar
  - Mauritius
  - Mozambique
  - Zambia

- **East Africa**: 45%
  - Burundi
  - Comoros
  - Djibouti
  - Kenya
  - Rwanda
  - Seychelles
  - Somalia
  - Tanzania
  - Uganda

*Groupings above are by geographical location.

- **North Africa**: 5%
  - Mauritania

- **Over 60% of African countries with low visa openness scores do not offer any visas on arrival.**

- **Africans don't need a visa to travel to 20% of other African countries.**

- **Africans can get visas on arrival in 25% of other African countries.**

- **Africans need visas to travel to 55% of other African countries.**

55 African countries

Only 13 out of 55 countries offer liberal access (○) (visa free or visa on arrival) to all Africans.

Only 9 African countries offer eVisas (●):
- Côte d’Ivoire
- Gabon
- Kenya
- Nigeria
- Rwanda
- São Tomé and Príncipe
- Sierra Leone
- Zambia
- Zimbabwe

Top 50 countries worldwide

Out of the top 50 countries worldwide, 15 African countries (●) that improved visa procedures the most (2010-2014) are in the top 20 in the Africa Visa Openness Index.

**UNWTO Visa Openness Report 2014**
Visas AND TRAVEL

You are about to set off on a trip to another African country. Suitcases are packed, accommodation is reserved, tickets have been booked, and passport is in hand. Everything has been taken care of and you can get on your way. But can you?

Do you have a visa to enter the country to which you are travelling? Have you been to the Embassy, filled out the forms, paid the fee and waited for processing?

Have you had to think twice about the trip because of the time, cost and process involved or by now have you decided to go somewhere else?

The travel experience for Africans who already have a passport starts with the visa question.
Glossary

AFDB  African Development Bank
ASEAN  Association of Southeast Asian Nations
EAC  East African Community
ECOWAS  Economic Community of West African States
eVisa  Electronic visa
GDP  Gross Domestic Product
IATA  International Air Transport Association
ICT  Information and Communications Technology
IOM  International Organization for Migration
IT  Information Technology
MUR  Mauritian Rupee
NEPAD  New Partnership for Africa's Development
REC  Regional Economic Community
RMC  Regional Member Country (of AfDB)
SADC  Southern African Development Community
UAE  United Arab Emirates
UNECA  United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNWTO  United Nations World Tourism Organization
UK  United Kingdom
US  United States
USD  US Dollar
WEF  World Economic Forum
WTTC  World Travel and Tourism Council

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African Development Bank Group
The Africa Visa Openness Report 2016
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Moono Mupotola
Director, NEPAD, Regional Integration and Trade
African Development Bank
Free Movement of People and Regional Integration

Free movement by people is the hallmark of regional economic integration, facilitating trade and economic growth across the continent. Free movement of people impacts considerable economic benefits of both temporary and long term to the economies in the region. In addition to traditional sectors such as tourism, immigrants increase economic efficiency by filling gaps in low- and high-skilled labour markets and increase economic efficiency by reducing labour shortages. Immigrants also remit considerable amount of money to support livelihoods and investments in their countries.

Despite the benefits and commitment by African Union member countries under the Abuja Treaty regarding the free movement of persons and the rights of residence and of establishment by their nationals within the Community, progress has been slow on this.

The Bank’s approach to fostering free movement of persons focuses on four aspects, namely,

(i) Economic and sector work on migration and remittances: undertaking empirical analysis to understand and shed light on the impacts of immigration on the labour market, regional trade, impact on tax and welfare systems and net fiscal consequences of immigration such as through remittances on both sending and receiving countries.

The economic and sector work will also examine migration policies and entry regimes (visas); and

(ii) Leveraging remittances for development: supporting projects to harness remittances and the African diaspora for productive investment as a source of development finance to encourage inclusive growth at both macro and micro levels.

This includes initiatives to reduce the cost of remittance services and develop policies and projects that will facilitate greater economic participation of the diaspora, for example, in infrastructure financing.

(iii) Supporting mutual recognition of skills.

(iv) Supporting REC and RMC mechanisms to facilitate movement of business people.

What if Africa could start today to fast-track connectivity, attract investment and talent into a greater number of countries, promote business opportunities across borders and expand horizons for the continent’s young people, all with a simple policy decision? To a great extent, African countries have the power to do just that by taking a look at their visa regimes.

Having an open visa policy does not require large resources or complex systems. Countries can apply positive reciprocity but also open up unilaterally. And it can be done through a number of smart solutions. As a result of opening up, countries such as Seychelles, Mauritius and Rwanda have seen a big impact on tourism, investment and financial services.

Yet Africa largely remains closed, with Africans still needing visas to travel to over half of the continent. These headlines go against the continent’s goal to truly become ‘one Africa.’ And still we know that it is the free movement of people, together with the free movement of goods, services and capital, which is the lifeblood that will sustain Africa’s integration.

Visas alone are not the whole answer when it comes to a more robust outlook. At the Bank, within the framework of our Regional Integration Policy and Strategy 2014-2023, we are working on supporting African countries to plug their skills gaps, promoting talent mobility and borderless business for African entrepreneurs to move freely to set up shop.

This first report of the Africa Visa Openness Index ranks countries on the openness of their visa regimes. The Index aims to be a tool for change, to inform and inspire leaders and policymakers to make visa reforms, simplify visa processes and apply positive reciprocity.

The vision for Africa set out in Agenda 2063 and its Call to Action urge the creation of an African passport and an end to visa requirements for all African citizens in Africa by 2018. Time is running out to meet that pledge. At the November 2015 EU-Africa Valletta Summit, African leaders committed to support migration initiatives across the continent to bring back hope.

Let us help Africans to move freely and make Africa a more open, prosperous and truly connected continent.
African Union’s Agenda 2063

Aspiration 2 -
An Integrated Continent, Politically United
Based on the Ideals of Pan Africanism
and the Vision of Africa’s Renaissance

20. We aspire that by 2063, Africa will:

Be a United Africa

Have world class, integrative infrastructure that criss-crosses the continent;

Have dynamic and mutually beneficial links with her Diaspora; and

Be a continent with seamless borders,
and management of cross border resources through dialogue.

24. Africa shall be a continent where the free movement of people, capital, goods and services will result in significant increases in trade and investments amongst African countries rising to unprecedented levels, and strengthen Africa’s place in global trade.

A Call to Action

72. We hereby adopt Agenda 2063, as a collective vision and roadmap for the next fifty years and therefore commit to speed-up actions to:

1. Introduce an African Passport, issued by Member states, capitalising on the global migration towards e-passports, and with the abolishment of visa requirements for all African citizens in all African countries by 2018.

Foreword,
African Union Commission

Agenda 2063 embodies African aspirations and a roadmap to achieve the vision of ‘an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena’. At the top of that agenda is free movement of people across the continent. We believe that free movement of people is possible, which is why Agenda 2063 calls for the abolition of all visa requirements within the period of the Ten Year Implementation Plan and the creation of an African passport.

Facilitating freer movement of people through more liberal visa policies is important for a number of reasons. First, visa openness fosters tourism (for leisure or business), facilitates trade and investments, helps fill skills gaps in the labor market, allow young people to study anywhere in the continent and creates jobs. Secondly, unlike infrastructure or industrialization policy, it requires minimal upfront capital investments.

This first edition of the Africa Visa Openness Index is meant to serve as a tool to help policymakers in Africa monitor the levels of openness/restrictiveness of Africa’s visa policy regime. It is meant to track annually the relative ease with which Africans travel within Africa.

Our initial findings show that even though progress was made, Africa is still closed-off to African travelers. On average, an African national requires visas at departure for 55% of other African countries, can get visas on arrival in only 25% and does not need a visa for only 20%. More must be done to enhance the ease with which Africans travel.

To fully reap the benefits of movement of people, liberalizing Africa’s visa regimes should move in tandem with the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision on the creation of a single African aviation market and improvement of infrastructure connectivity.

At the January 2016 summit, we took a step further as our leaders instructed the Commission to issue each Head of State the Africa Union Passport at the July Summit in Kigali. In addition, Member states agreed to the introduction of a 30-day visa on arrival for all African citizens. This is progress and a step closer to the realization of our shared grand vision: Agenda 2063.

Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma
Chairperson
AU Commission
Visa openness is about facilitating free movement of people. It is about getting more people mobile, to carry out their business easily, spontaneously, quickly, with minimum cost. That applies whether you are a businessman or woman, a student or researcher, a cross-border trader or entrepreneur, reuniting with friends and family or just travelling to visit the sights.

Aspiration 2 of the African Union’s Agenda 2063 includes a goal to be a “continent with seamless borders” where “the free movement of people, capital, goods and services will result in significant increases in trade and investments amongst African countries rising to unprecedented levels, and strengthen Africa’s place in global trade.”

Greater visa openness is a vital part of the solution in getting Africa to reach that vision. There is a strong business case for visa openness in Africa, which in turn promotes the free movement of people and is at the foundation of deeper and closer integration of the continent.

In the *Africa Visa Openness Report 2016*, visa openness means how easy it is for African travellers to visit another country on the continent.

A more visa-open country has a liberal or relaxed visa policy for travellers, so that visitors either do not need a visa when they enter or can get a visa on arrival. A more visa-restrictive country requires visitors to get a visa before they travel, in most cases from an Embassy.

Visas are used for different reasons, whether as a security measure to control the entry and duration of the stay of people coming into a country or to limit a visitor’s activities, generate revenue or show reciprocity to match the treatment other countries give to their citizens.

Yet the visa question represents so much more than getting an entry stamp in a passport.
“If we move faster on the free movement of people, goods and services, and the African passport, we are sure to see an increase in trade, as well as tourism and economic growth.”

Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, to the 25th Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government, Johannesburg, 14 June 2015

There are huge potential gains to be had for countries and regions across Africa in having more visa-open policies for other Africans. That holds true whether it is to help plug skills gaps in the labour market, promote entrepreneurship, diversify the economy, add value to services, or whether it is to attract investment and boost competitiveness.

Africa’s population is expected to rise to over 2 billion people by 2050. The continent’s economic transformation needs to promote inclusive growth. Expanding opportunities for a growing population puts skills high up the agenda. And skills and talent mobility go hand in hand. Removing time, cost and process obstacles to moving freely across the continent empower Africans to make study or job choices that impact on their incomes.

At the same time, to get the most benefits from opening up on visas, it means making access to work or residency permits easier, giving people incentives to set up a business, as well as working to harmonise education systems across Africa.

It will also come from making sure increasing remittance flows, which added USD 65 billion to Africa’s GDP in 2013 (13% of funds from Africa itself), are transferred cheaper, safer and faster through regular channels.

Africa’s public and private sector both agree that visa openness can only work with countries putting in place the right systems to manage the freer movement of people and by matching openness with investments in the continent’s infrastructure. That includes Africa’s air, road and rail projects, as well as connectivity on the airwaves, lowering costs for calls or roaming that otherwise cut people off from each other.

Visa openness is a vital step forward towards a more integrated Africa.

The Africa Visa Openness Index measures how open African countries are when it comes to visas by looking at what they ask of citizens from other countries in Africa when they travel. It aims to show at a glance which countries are facilitating travel for citizens of other countries and how: whether they allow people to travel to their country without a visa, if travellers can get a visa on arrival in the country or if visitors need to get a visa before they travel.

Data has been collected from immigration, visa agencies and travel operators across Africa. This includes data on visa regulations collected by McKinsey & Company, UNECA and AfDB.

The Africa Visa Openness Index will track changes in country scores over time to show which countries are making improvements that support freer movement of people across Africa.

In future editions of the report, more categories will be added including information on eVisas. Going forward, the report will also look at how far countries are facilitating visa openness by cutting time, reducing costs or simplifying the visa process as well as how far a visitor’s experience on the ground matches up to the agreements on paper or visa policies in place.

**METHODOLOGY**

The higher a country’s score in the Index, the more visa-open it is and the higher it ranks. Scores range from 0 – 1 (highest).

**Index categories**
- Visa required
- Visa on arrival
- No visa

Each category is weighted based on its degree of openness. For example, a ‘no visa’ result is weighted by 1 (high openness), ‘visa on arrival’ is weighted by 0.8 and a ‘visa required’ by 0.

**Index category indicators** based on 55 African countries:
- Number of countries from whose citizens a visa is required as a % of total number of countries
- Number of countries whose citizens can get a visa on arrival as a % of total number of countries
- Number of countries from whose citizens no visa is required as a % of total number of countries

A country’s score is calculated by adding the results from all three indicators:

\[(\% \text{ of visa required } \times 0) + (\% \text{ of visa on arrival } \times 0.8) + (\% \text{ of no visa } \times 1)\]

= country visa openness score.

---

5. 54 African countries recognised by the African Union, [http://www.au.int/en/countryprofiles](http://www.au.int/en/countryprofiles), plus Morocco
Visa openness in Africa: country scores and ranking

Scores range from 0-1 (highest)

Top 20 scores
Visa openness in Africa by category: no visa, visa on arrival, visa required

Scores range from 0-1 (highest)

* Visa required means a visa has to be obtained before departure and is not an eVisa
African countries are on average more closed off to each other than open, making travel within the continent difficult.

- Africans need visas to travel to 55% of other countries.
- Africans can get visas on arrival in 25% of other African countries.
- Africans don’t need a visa to travel to 20% of other African countries.

Global comparisons show that North Americans have easier travel access to the continent than Africans themselves. North Americans require a visa to travel to 45% of African countries, can get visas on arrival in 35% of African countries and don’t need a visa in 20% of African countries.6

Free movement of people is not a reality across Africa. Central Africa and North Africa are the most closed regions. Good results in West Africa are due to the Free movement of persons protocol and in East Africa are as a result of the high number of visa on arrival policies.

- In the top 20 most visa-open countries, only one is in North Africa and none are in Central Africa.
- 75% of countries in the top 20 most visa-open countries are in West Africa or East Africa.

Many of the continent’s regional and strategic hubs have restrictive visa policies. Africa’s Upper Middle Income countries as a group have low visa openness scores. Africa’s small, landlocked and island states are more open, promoting trade links with their neighbours.

- 8 out of 9 of Africa’s Upper Middle Income Countries have low visa openness scores.

The average score of the top 10 most visa-open countries is more than double the average score of all countries, which shows how far ahead leading countries are on visa openness.

- Average visa openness score for the top 10 countries is 0.861, while the average score for all countries is 0.425.

Less than a quarter of all African countries provide liberal access at entry for all African citizens. Most countries with low visa openness scores do not offer any visas on arrival for African countries. Important reforms here can include the introduction of visa on arrival policies.

- Only 13 out of 55 countries offer liberal access (visa free or visa on arrival) to all Africans.
- Over 60% of African countries with low visa openness scores do not offer any visas on arrival.

**Average Index scores of top 10 countries vs. all countries**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>0.0</th>
<th>0.425</th>
<th>0.861</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Index score of all countries</td>
<td>Average Index score of top 10 countries</td>
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</table>

Scores range from 0-1 (highest)

---

CLOSER LOOK AT THE TOP 10 COUNTRIES

TOP 10 COUNTRIES HEADLINE FINDINGS

- 9 out of the top 10 countries are in the top 50 countries worldwide that improved visa procedures the most (2010-2014) according to the UNWTO Visa Openness Report 2014.
- 8 out of the top 10 countries have an upward trajectory on travel and tourism figures on GDP, employment, visitor exports and investments according to the World Travel and Tourism Council 2015.8

1. **Cape Verde**
   - Travel and tourism contributed to:
     - 40.0% of Cape Verde’s GDP in 2014, and is forecast to rise by 5.6% in 2015.
     - 35.8% of total employment with 79,500 jobs in 2014.
   - Index: 0.859
   - Ranking: 4

2. **Mali**
   - Travel and tourism contributed to:
     - 10.1% of Mali’s GDP in 2014, and is forecast to rise by 3.6% in 2015.
     - 6.9% of total employment with 205,000 jobs in 2014.
   - Index: 0.874
   - Ranking: 2

3. **Guinea-Bissau**
   - Data unavailable.
   - Index: 0.852
   - Ranking: 6

4. **Mauritania**
   - Data unavailable.
   - Index: 0.830
   - Ranking: 7

5. **Togo**
   - Travel and tourism contributed to:
     - 6.7% of Togo’s GDP in 2014, and is forecast to rise by 5.4% in 2015.
     - 5.7% of total employment with 60,500 jobs in 2014.
   - Index: 0.856
   - Ranking: 5

6. **Seychelles**
   - Travel and tourism contributed to:
     - 56.9% of Seychelles’ GDP in 2014, and is forecast to rise by 5.6% in 2015.
     - 57.3% of total employment with 25,500 jobs in 2014.
   - Index: 0.822
   - Ranking: 9

7. **Mozambique**
   - Travel and tourism contributed to:
     - 7.0% of Mozambique’s GDP in 2014, and is forecast to rise by 4.7% in 2015.
     - 6.0% of total employment with 710,500 jobs in 2014.
   - Index: 0.830
   - Ranking: 7

8. **Mauritius**
   - Travel and tourism contributed to:
     - 25.5% of Mauritius’ GDP in 2014, and is forecast to rise by 3.6% in 2015.
     - 24.2% of total employment with 134,000 jobs.
   - Index: 0.822
   - Ranking: 9

9. **Uganda**
   - Travel and tourism contributed to:
     - 9.9% of Uganda’s GDP in 2014, and is forecast to rise by 8.0% in 2015.
     - 8.6% of total employment with 592,500 jobs in 2014.
   - Index: 0.822
   - Ranking: 9

10. **Cape Verde**
    - Travel and tourism contributed to:
      - 40.0% of Cape Verde’s GDP in 2014, and is forecast to rise by 5.6% in 2015.
      - 35.8% of total employment with 79,500 jobs in 2014.
    - Index: 0.859
    - Ranking: 4

How to read this chart:
- % No visa
- % Visa required
- % Visa on arrival

Visa required means a visa has to be obtained before departure and is not an eVisa.

9 out of the top 10 countries are in the top 50 countries worldwide that improved visa procedures the most (2010-2014) according to the UNWTO Visa Openness Report 2014.

8 out of the top 10 countries have an upward trajectory on travel and tourism figures on GDP, employment, visitor exports and investments according to the World Travel and Tourism Council 2015.
Seychelles: Top performing country on visa openness

“Seychelles is a visa-free country meaning that there are no visa requirements for any person wishing to travel to this country.”

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Transport, The Republic of Seychelles

Seychelles is the top performing country on visa openness in Africa. It is the only country on the continent that offers visa-free access for all Africans. This fits into the country’s wider visa policy, which does not require any international visitors to have a visa for entry. While the country opened up its visa regime unilaterally to African travellers, nationals of the Seychelles require a visa to visit 34 African countries, equivalent to over 60% of the continent.10

Seychelles has been considered an early reformer in relaxing visa requirements to boost its tourism sector. As a result, the country has seen 7% annual growth in international tourism arrivals between 2009-2014.11 Seychelles is one of two African countries that feature in the top 10 economies worldwide that prioritise travel and tourism the most according to the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2015 by the World Economic Forum. The Report also ranks the country as one of the most tourism-ready economies in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Seychelles’ GDP was USD 1.423 billion12 in 2014 and it has moved from being an Upper Middle Income Country to a High Income Country according to the World Bank’s 2015 classification.13


   Data relates to travel and tourism total contribution to GDP, including direct and indirect contributions and total contribution to employment, including jobs indirectly supported by the industry.
8. Ibid.
African countries can benefit from tapping into global trends on facilitating the freer movement of people by looking at visa openness solutions. This will help in reaching milestones set out in the African Union’s Agenda 2063 including removing visa requirements across the continent by 2018 and the creation of an African passport. Visa reciprocity in Africa (matching the treatment a country receives from visa-open countries) is also weak.14 African countries stand to gain from promoting more visa-free regional blocs across the continent but also from pushing for greater reciprocity among members and non-members.

VISA SOLUTIONS

- **Visas on arrival for Africans** (such as in the policies of Mauritius and Rwanda)
- **Visa-free regional blocs** (such as the ECOWAS Free movement of persons protocol)
- **Regional bloc visas** (such as the East African Tourist Visa of Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda)
- **Multi-year visas** after assessing applicant (such as with the US or UK 10-year visitors’ visas)
- **Promoting positive reciprocity** (for citizens of countries that relaxed visa requirements to benefit from similar requirements when visiting other African countries)

SOLUTIONS

- **Opening up on visas unilaterally** (such as in the case of Seychelles who offers visa-free access to all Africans)
- **Simplifying the visa process:**
  - documents required, fees, processing time, online applications
- **Improving access to information:**
  - online and in different languages

TRAVEL DOCUMENT SOLUTIONS

- **Regional travel using regional passports or national identity cards** (such as within ECOWAS and the EAC)
- **African passport for business people**
  - (issued by a competent authority to strict criteria)

Electronic visas or eVisas can be a more effective alternative to traditional paper visas given that online visas do not require the traveller to be physically present or to present a passport before travel. However, a request for an eVisa does not automatically give the visitor the visa, which can be accepted or refused and costs paid may not be reimbursed.

**Only 9 African countries offer eVisas:**
- Côte d’Ivoire, Gabon, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Sierra Leone, Zambia and Zimbabwe

15. Ibid., non-exhaustive list
Global debate on visa openness

Development economists argue that open borders could double world GDP, bringing benefits to migrants in the form of higher income and opportunities. The country hosting migrants stands to benefit in terms of skills gained and jobs created as more workers need more managers. That counters local fears of jobs being lost or a labour market being flooded. Purchasing power also rises with a growing demand for more goods and services.

Urbanisation is rapidly becoming a global challenge and one that is fundamentally linked to migration. Findings show that a city’s openness to diversity is linked to how it conducts business worldwide, alongside its economic, investment and trade connections. As such, cities that draw in international populations to add to their growth model are the very places that show what a sustainable city of the future looks like.

States with small populations, such as the UAE, and city-state Singapore, have addressed concerns around the free movement of people. They remain economically competitive and continue to attract foreign talent, while managing the flow of people into the labour market by offering sponsored work passes or permits and issuing long-term visit passes or visas.

Regional mobility in Africa

Most people in Africa migrate across regions, moving to and from regional hubs, such as Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Libya, Nigeria and South Africa, as well as between bordering countries. Supporting Africans to move regionally is facilitated by Free movement of persons protocols. The protocols mutually exempt all or certain categories of travellers from visa requirements. There has been limited change in recent years, although member countries of ECOWAS and the EAC have already ratified their protocols.

Open reciprocity means having reciprocal visa exemptions between regional and economic blocs. The world average of open reciprocity stands at 17%, according to the UNWTO Visa Openness Report 2014. Worldwide, together with the Schengen Area in Europe, ECOWAS has the highest levels of open reciprocity among its members at 100%, while ASEAN counts on 84% open reciprocity levels among its members.

The benefits of more open visa policies, as outlined in the UNWTO Report, impact not just the members of regional and economic blocs but also non-members. Trends point towards greater openness; the Schengen Area has 25% open reciprocity between its members and non-members, while ASEAN has a level of 14%.

In Africa, open reciprocity levels between members and non-members of Regional Economic Communities are markedly lower than the world average. SADC, which has 44% open reciprocity among its members, has 8% open reciprocity between members and non-members. ECOWAS has open reciprocity levels of just 2% between its members and non-members.
Tourism and visa openness

Recent findings highlight that over half of all trips taken worldwide were for tourism and that most tourists visit destinations within their region.23 Other global trends show that the tourism industry is a key driver of jobs and tends to employ more women and young people, whilst also creating new opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises.24

Africa needs to capitalise on these trends by facilitating tourism from neighbouring countries and across the continent. In that way, Africa can support growth and development based on inclusive, shared prosperity that can economically empower the continent’s growing young population and dynamic small businesses and bring opportunities to women in the workforce. Importantly, according to recent figures, already 7 out of the top 10 most tourism-ready economies in Sub-Saharan Africa,25 feature in the top 20 most visa-open countries in Africa.

At the same time, arrivals to Africa’s destinations are projected to grow by 4.4% by 2034 rising from 119 million passengers in 2014 to 280 million people flying to, from and within the continent.26 Opening up the skies across Africa needs to be matched by more visa-open policies on arrival on the ground.

Mauritius and Rwanda are in the top 10 of the most visa-open countries in Africa.

The case stories of Mauritius, an island state, and Rwanda, a landlocked country, showcase how the freer movement of people is leading to economic dividends.

In recent years, the two countries have adopted open visa policies and smart travel solutions for visitors from other African countries in an effort to promote tourism, attract investment and boost the competitiveness of their economies.

As a result, both countries have seen an increase in African business and leisure travellers, which has in turn generated an economic impact that is still growing.

25. Ibid.
ECONOMIC IMPACT OF VISA OPENNESS
Mauritius has benefitted from its open visa policy, which supports its business friendly environment and competitiveness in services, from tourism to finance and investment.

TOURISM
Mauritius is in the top 10 economies worldwide that prioritise travel and tourism the most, according to the World Economic Forum’s Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2015. As a result of greater openness, African travellers made up over a quarter of visitors to Mauritius in 2014. Gross earnings from tourism totalled USD 1.24 billion in 2014.27 The country’s infrastructure investment supports its open visa policy — its airport featured in the top 10 World’s Best Airports for under 5 million people in the World Airports Awards 2014.28

FINANCIAL SERVICES
Since the late 1990s, the government’s partnership with the private sector has supported growth in financial services by having a practical and fluid visa regime for business people to enter easily. When a financial institution sponsors a business contact, a simple letter facilitates entry. The country’s financial sector is home to many international banks, which are part of a total of 23 banks on the island with combined assets of USD 38.5 billion in 2014.32

CASE STORY: Mauritius
Africans now make up over 25% of all travellers to Mauritius.

“We have always been an open country. We relaxed visa requirements for 48 countries in Africa. That has been done principally to remove barriers to enhance mobility of people. It’s also in line with the policy of Mauritius to become a hub, a services gateway. Having this free visa-open policy helps in boosting and attracting traffic to Mauritius.”

Ken Poonoosamy,
Managing Director, Board of Investment, Mauritius

INVESTMENT
Greater visa openness forms part of Mauritius’ Africa strategy, which aims to promote the country as a gateway for investment into the continent. There are over 20,000 global business companies registered in Mauritius.29 The country is ranked number one in Africa in the World Bank’s Doing Business 2016 and in the Global Competitiveness Index 2015-2016.30 The Africa Centre of Excellence, the Board of Investment of Mauritius’ one-stop shop on investment opportunities in Africa, provides real-time information for business ventures.31 The platform now has 7000 users, nearly two-thirds from Africa and outside the continent.


ECONOMIC IMPACT OF VISA OPENNESS

Visa openness is helping Rwanda to achieve its goal to become a Middle Income Country by 2020. In recent years, trade, tourism and investment has grown and the economic outlook is strong. GDP growth increased to 7% in 2014 and tourism revenues rose by 4% to USD 305 million.33 The Rwanda Development Board’s Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions initiative has seen results as conference visitors increased by 24% in 2014.34

REGIONAL MOBILITY

To support its open visa policy at the regional level Rwanda abolished work permits for East African Community citizens. This has led to over 12,000 people getting work permits free of charge.35 Rwanda, Kenya and Uganda also allow travel between their countries with national identity cards, which has increased cross-border trade by 50%.36 The three countries launched a single tourist visa, which led to a 17% increase in arrivals to Rwanda in one year.37

As a result of Rwanda’s open visa policy, African travellers to Rwanda increased by 22%.

CASE STORY: Rwanda

SERVICE DELIVERY

Within the framework of Rwanda’s National Migration Policy, the country’s systems include a visa-on-arrival policy for all Africans and an efficient visa procedure. The visa fee was halved from USD 60 to USD 30.38 Electronic visas are available through a virtual office policy. Rwanda processes over 90,000 eVisas a year for 95% of visitors; only 5% of visitors go to an Embassy.39 Alongside the country’s relaxation of visa requirements for visitors, Rwandans can get a passport in 3 days, down from 30 days.40 The Automated Passenger Clearance System at Kigali Airport clears all Rwandans, who make up 30% of travellers, and frees up space for visitors.41 The Directorate General of Immigration and Emigration has won awards for service delivery using ICT and in promoting client satisfaction, now monitored through customer surveys.

34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
“As a result of the Government of Rwanda establishing a visa-on-arrival policy, we have witnessed that African travellers coming to Rwanda have increased by average 22% annually. We are seeing increasingly more African travellers participating not just in tourism, but in business and also seeking employment in our country. So the interest that we had in bridging the gap for trade, employment and business is being realised.”

Francis Gatare,
CEO, Rwanda Development Board

“You have got borders and airports in most of the countries now. We have biometrics, we take fingerprints, they take your photos, we have a lot of data. We will be able to manage the perceived and actual real fears created by movement of people.”

Anaclet Kalibata,
Director General of Immigration and Emigration, Rwanda

Security and visas

In a climate where global security is undergoing a series of shocks as a result of cross-border threats, such as from international terrorism, nations under pressure react by closing their borders. Temporary restrictions to the movement of people may be considered necessary in response to a crisis, which also involves greater security profiling and extending surveillance.

Visas have therefore at times been considered a necessary security measure to tackle the threat of suspected illegitimate visitors who could pose a security risk to the country. Yet, governments and border officials who are on the frontline of immigration disagree. When visa regimes have opened up, such as in the case of Rwanda, no greater security challenges have been found. The Directorate of Immigration and Emigration found that only 0.045% of travellers visiting Rwanda in 2014 could potentially be considered suspect.42

Here, visas do not seem to be an effective solution, in particular given that visitors applying for visas need to have a legitimate reason for their trip. Rather having strong systems in place, including biometric databases at border controls, and joining up IT systems with other countries and regions seems to be the answer. That allows information sharing and greater cooperation, which in turn minimises risk and provides higher levels of security overall.

African Union’s Agenda 2063 - A Call to Action

72/i. Support young people as drivers of Africa’s renaissance, through investment in their health, education and access to technology, opportunities and capital, and concerted strategies to combat youth unemployment and underemployment. Ensure faster movement on the harmonisation of continental admissions, curricula, standards, programmes and qualifications and raising the standards of higher education to enhance the mobility of African youth and talent across the continent.

Youth and visa openness

“If there should be an open border it’s going to cause improvement in the lives of students who have dreams and goals to achieve. They should allow them to achieve their dreams the way they want and where they want, I think it’s going to take everyone higher.”

Stanley Okoye, student of Finance, University of Kigali

Stanley and Lionel are two ambitious students aiming high for a bright future in finance and engineering. What they also have in common is that they are both benefitting from African countries’ open visa policies. Stanley is Nigerian and studying in Rwanda while Lionel is Kenyan and enrolled at the University of Mauritius. They are part of Africa’s generation of almost 200 million young people between the ages of 15 and 24 and this is projected to double by 2045. The continent has the youngest population in the world and its young people want to move.

Jobs and education are top priorities for Africans post-2015, as the My World Survey by the United Nations has found. Around 15 million young people are entering the labour market each year and high unemployment is a challenge, with too few jobs available or a mismatch of skills. Without mobility, young Africans remain unable to travel freely and connect. When hope is constricted and prosperity stays out of reach, social cohesion is tested. Irregular migration channels to outside the continent can then seem the only option.

Visa openness can be part of the solution by allowing young Africans to study, develop new skills and take up job opportunities in Africa. In turn, countries such as Rwanda and Mauritius, who have opened up their visa regimes stand to gain a reputation as educational hubs, attracting new talent and skills into their labour markets and becoming more competitive.

45. Ibid.
Africa WITHOUT BORDERS

“An Africa without borders is within reach. It’s something that will happen because African leaders decide to transform the more than 600 borders we have on our continent in more than 600 links. And it has only benefits without undermining the safety and the security of our respective countries.”

Valentine Rugwabiza, Minister of East African Community, Rwanda

Visa openness is not just about unlocking Africa’s growth and future development. It is part of building a common identity for Africans connecting to the idea of ‘one Africa’. In that way more open visa policies break down borders both physically and culturally. By making it easier to travel, visit and experience the continent, all Africans stand to benefit and realise their potential. Whether your goal is to study in another country, set up a business halfway across the continent or experience firsthand new cities on a work trip or to visit tourist sites.

Issues of migration, the free movement of people and visa openness for Africa continue to top the agenda of high-level discussions, from the World Economic Forum Global Agenda Council on Africa to the EU-Africa Leaders Valletta Summit on Migration in November 2015. The recently adopted Global Goals for Sustainable Development have a target under Goal 10 to “Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.”

Importantly, visa openness through its link to migration will be vital to Africa’s development. The connection between development and free movement of people lies at the heart of the Global Forum on Migration and Development, while recent research highlights the critical impact migrants have on building resilience within communities and as agents of local development.

The goal is now to shift the mindset from looking at borders as barriers blocking out risks to viewing borders as gateways that can usher in greater creativity and connectivity. Visa openness matters for Africa in order to capitalise on the continent’s demographic dividend and encourage her dynamic, growing young population to seize opportunities to shape the continent. Talent can only be nurtured by allowing people to move with greater freedom.

The big aspiration on the free movement of people across the continent is clearly set out in Agenda 2063’s Call to Action, which calls upon leaders to “Introduce an African Passport, issued by Member states, capitalising on the global migration towards e-passports, and with the abolishment of visa requirements for all African citizens in all African countries by 2018.”

Opening up a country’s visa regime is a political and policy decision, which is not dependent on large-scale investment or resources. It is a quick win on development that still remains untapped. Africa’s leaders and policymakers have a key role to play in making this a reality.

47. http://www.gfmd.org/
Annex 1. Visa openness in Africa: country scores and ranking

<table>
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<th>Country</th>
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<td><strong>25</strong></td>
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</table>

Scores range from 0-1 (highest)

* Visa required means a visa has to be obtained before departure and is not an eVisa.
Only 13 African countries offer liberal access to all African citizens

1. In some instances visa available on arrival with certain conditions e.g., if emergency travel, for tourism groups, depending on country of departure etc.
2. Visa available on arrival for all countries contingent on Somali sponsor sending invitation letter to Airport Immigration at least two days prior to visitor’s arrival
3. For visas on arrival, citizens of Namibia, Mauritius, Seychelles, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe must obtain an entrance clearance from Gambia Immigration prior to arrival

Courtesy of McKinsey & Company