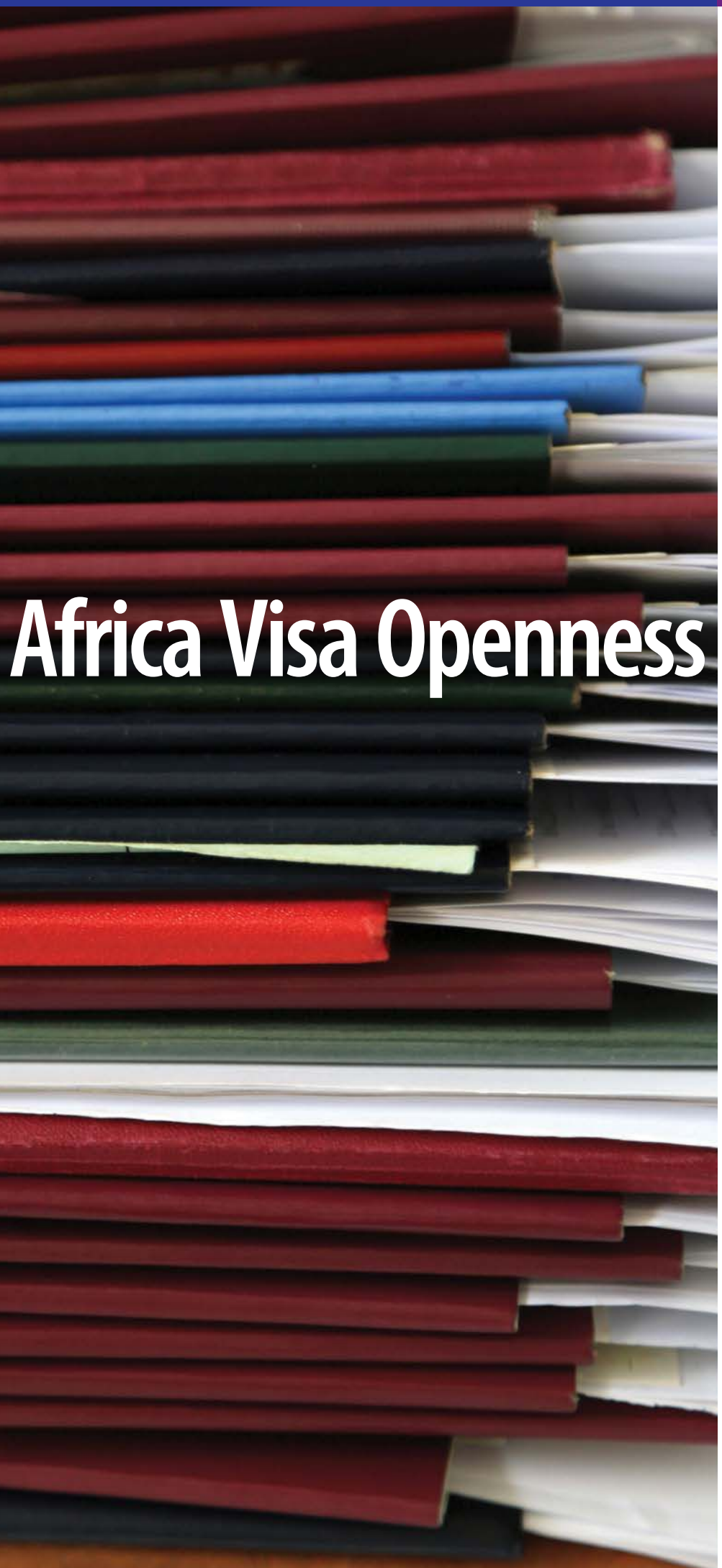
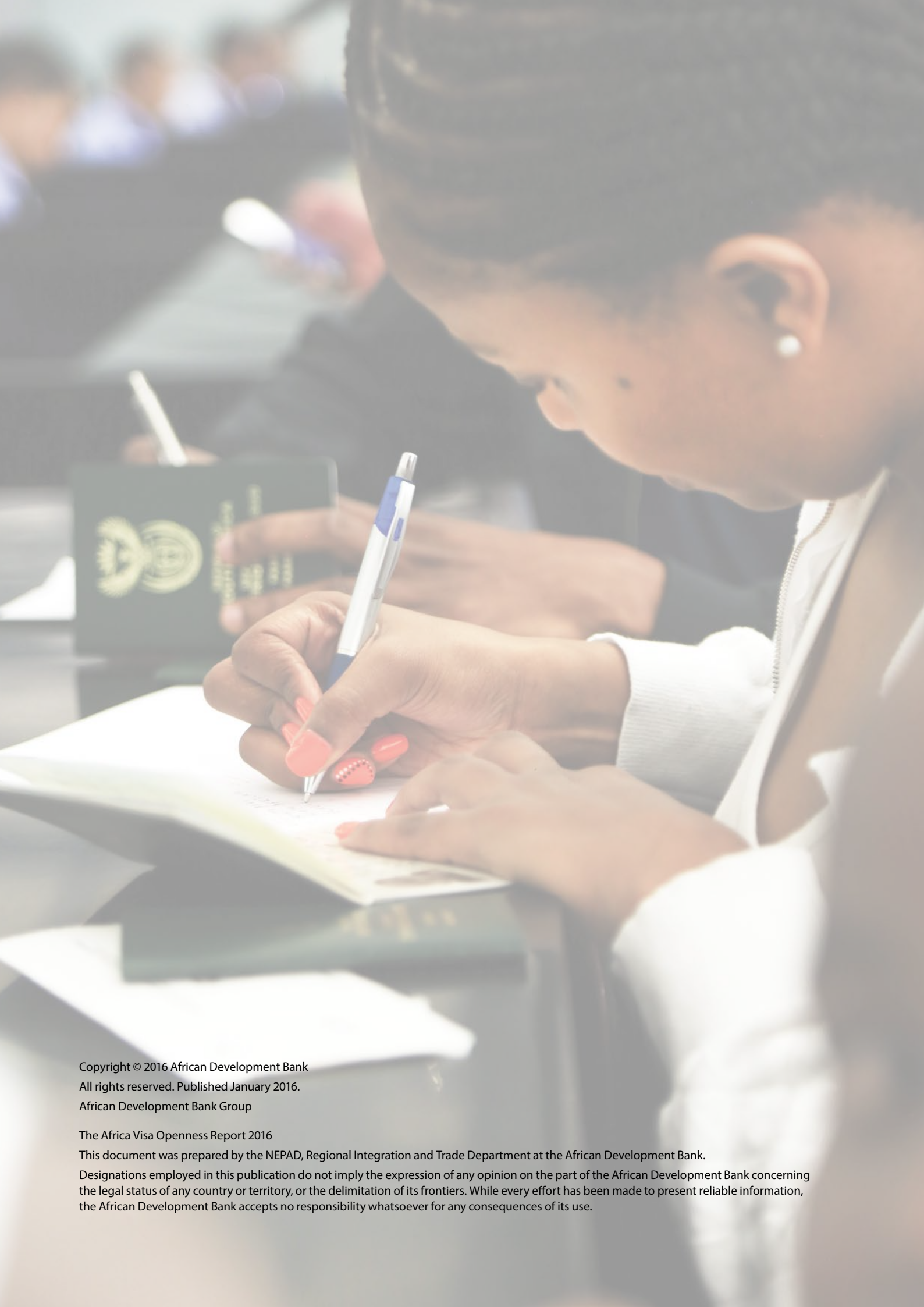


VISA OPENNESS INDEX

Africa Visa Openness Report 2016

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP



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African Development Bank Group

The Africa Visa Openness Report 2016

This document was prepared by the NEPAD, Regional Integration and Trade Department at the African Development Bank.

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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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Acknowledgements

This report is the product of a strong collaboration on the part of AfDB with McKinsey & Company in developing the Africa Visa Openness Index, together with the World Economic Forum Global Agenda Council on Africa.

The report also benefitted from important contributions from international organisations, regional bodies and development institutes across Africa during AfDB events on migration. Special thanks goes to AfDB senior management for their continued support of the project.

Acknowledgement also goes to the high-level public and private sector officials in Mauritius and Rwanda who provided valuable insights and information for the case stories. Thanks also to the AfDB Representatives and Field Offices in these countries for their support.

In Mauritius, sincere appreciation for their interviews goes to Ken Poonoosamy, Managing Director, Board of Investment; Kevin Ramkaloan, Director, Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, and to Lakshman Bheenick, Chief Executive, Standard Bank Mauritius.

In Rwanda, sincere appreciation for their interviews goes to Valentine Rugwabiza, Minister of East African Community; Francis Gatare, CEO, Rwanda Development Board; Anaclet Kalibata, Director General of Immigration and Emigration; Dr Kaaya Siraje, Vice Chancellor, University of Kigali, and to Stanley Okoye, student of Finance, University of Kigali.

Jean-Guy Afrika led and managed the production of the report with invaluable support from Adrien Akanni Honvo in calculating the Index, alongside Harcel Nana Tomen and Olumide Abimbola and colleagues from the NEPAD, Regional Integration and Trade Department.

Special recognition goes to Elena von Essen for writing the report and to Peggy Ford-Fyffe King for the design and graphics as well as to José Carlos Alexandre for the images.

Moono Mupotola
Director, NEPAD, Regional Integration and Trade
African Development Bank

African Development Bank Group
Regional Integration Policy and Strategy (RIPoS)
2014-2023

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.

*Annex 5b. Available at: http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Policy-Documents/Regional_Integration_Stategy_RIPoS_-2014-2023_-Approved_-_Rev_1_-_11_2014.pdf

Foreword

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.

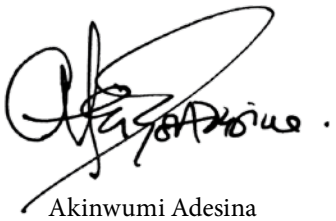
Yet Africa largely remains closed, with Africans still needing visas to travel to over half of the continent. These headlines go against the continent's goal to truly become 'one Africa.' And still we know that it is the free movement of people, together with the free movement of goods, services and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



Akinwumi Adesina
President
African Development Bank Group

"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

Visa openness

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.

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.

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

African Union's Agenda 2063[1]

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:

l. 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.

1. Selected extracts: http://au.int/en/sites/default/files/Agenda2063_Popular_Version_English_0.pdf

Visa openness IN AFRICA

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.

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.[2] 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[3] (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[4], 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.

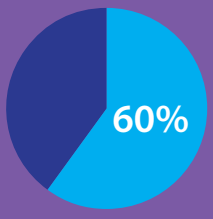
2. *African Economic Outlook 2015.* http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/fileadmin/uploads/aeo/2015/PDF_Chapters/Overview_AEO2015_EN-web.pdf
3. AfDB, http://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/article/remittances-up-by-5-reach-us-65-billion-afdb-annual-report-13144/
4. "Implementing the Yamoussoukro Decision will Transform Intra-African Air Connectivity," http://www.iata.org/policy/liberalization/Pages/intra-africa-liberalization-report.aspx

Average visa openness

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.

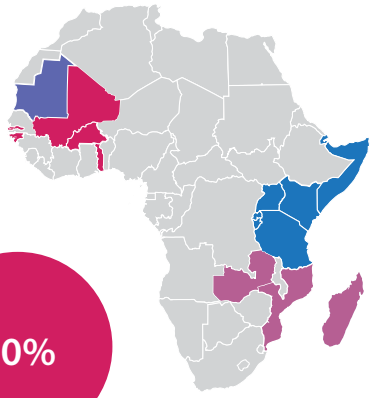


Over 60% of African countries with low visa openness scores do not offer any visas on arrival.

Africa Visa Openness Index in numbers

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.*



5%

North Africa
Mauritania

30%

West Africa
Burkina Faso
Cape Verde
Gambia
Guinea-Bissau
Mali
Togo

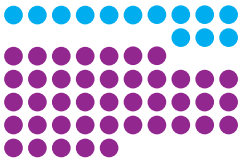
20%

Southern Africa
Madagascar
Mauritius
Mozambique
Zambia

45%

East Africa
Burundi
Comoros
Djibouti
Kenya
Rwanda
Seychelles
Somalia
Tanzania
Uganda

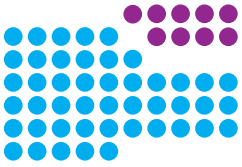
**Groupings above are by geographical location.*



55 African countries

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

8 out of 9 of Africa's Upper Middle Income Countries have low visa openness scores (●).



55 African countries

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

Top 50 countries worldwide

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

**UNWTO *Visa Openness Report 2014*

Africa Visa Openness Index

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.

Definitions

A **VISA** is an endorsement (through a certificate or stamp in a travel document) showing a visitor is allowed to enter the country for a specific length of time and for specific activities.

VISA REQUIRED means a visa has to be obtained before departure and is not an eVisa.

VISA ON ARRIVAL means a visa has to be obtained on arrival in the country. This includes filling out any visa forms, paying the visa fee if applicable and receiving a visa in a travel document.

NO VISA means that there is no visa needed either before departure or on arrival, with no entry authorisation required to enter freely into the country. Entry procedures still need to be complied with – these can include filling out entry forms and receiving an entry stamp.

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:[5]

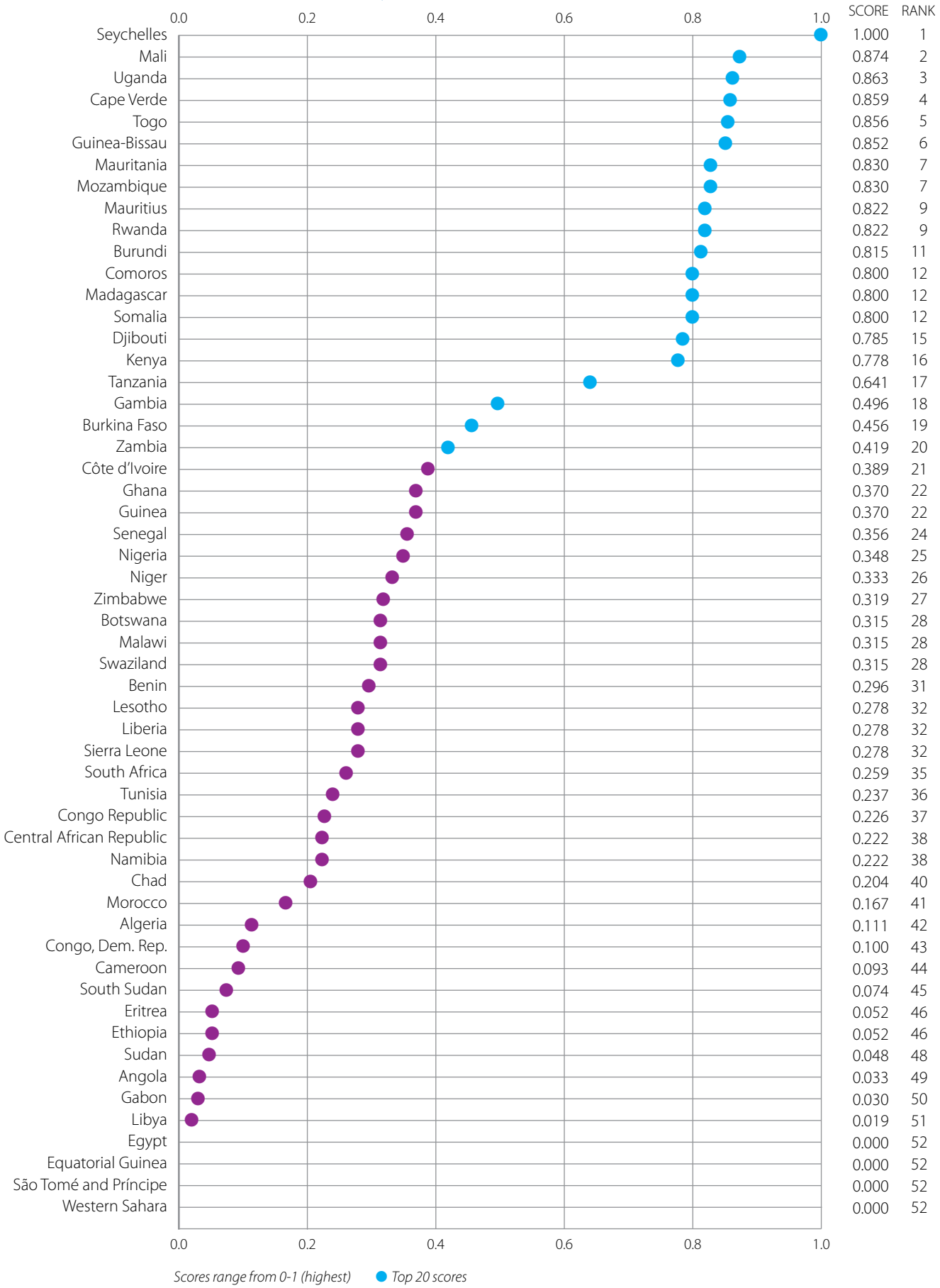
- Number of countries from whose citizens a visa is required as a % of total number of countries
- Number of countries whose citizens can get a visa on arrival as a % of total number of countries
- Number of countries from whose citizens no visa is required as a % of total number of countries

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

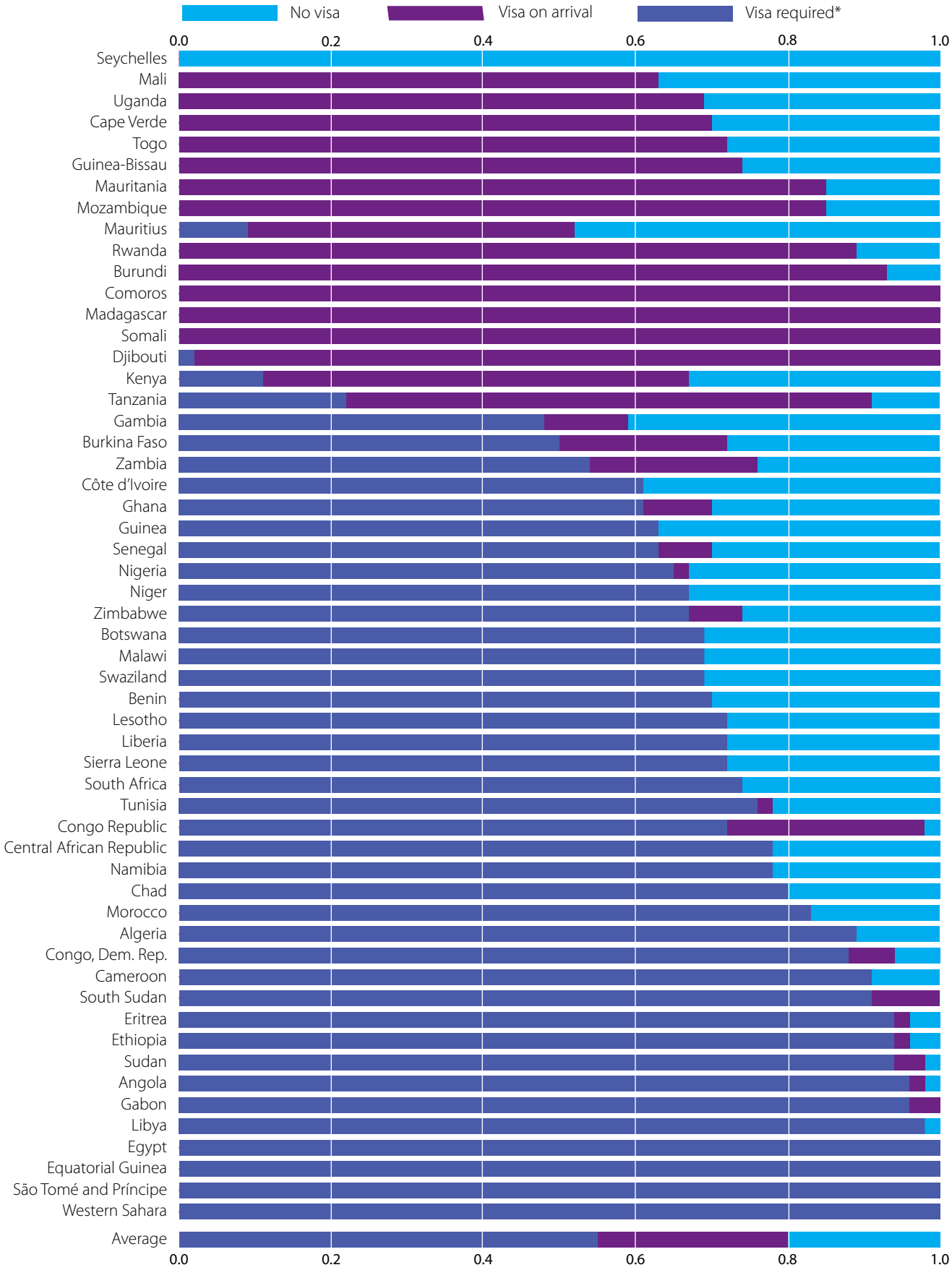
(% of visa required x 0) + (% of visa on arrival x 0.8) + (% of no visa x 1) = country visa openness score.

5. 54 African countries recognised by the African Union, http://www.au.int/en/countryprofiles, plus Morocco

Visa openness in Africa: country scores and ranking



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*

FINDINGS

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.**

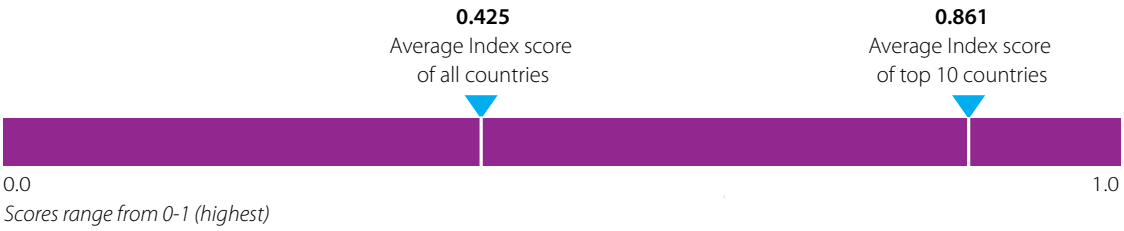
The average score of the top 10 most visa-open countries is more than double the average score of all countries, which shows how far ahead leading countries are on visa openness.

- **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



Scores range from 0-1 (highest)

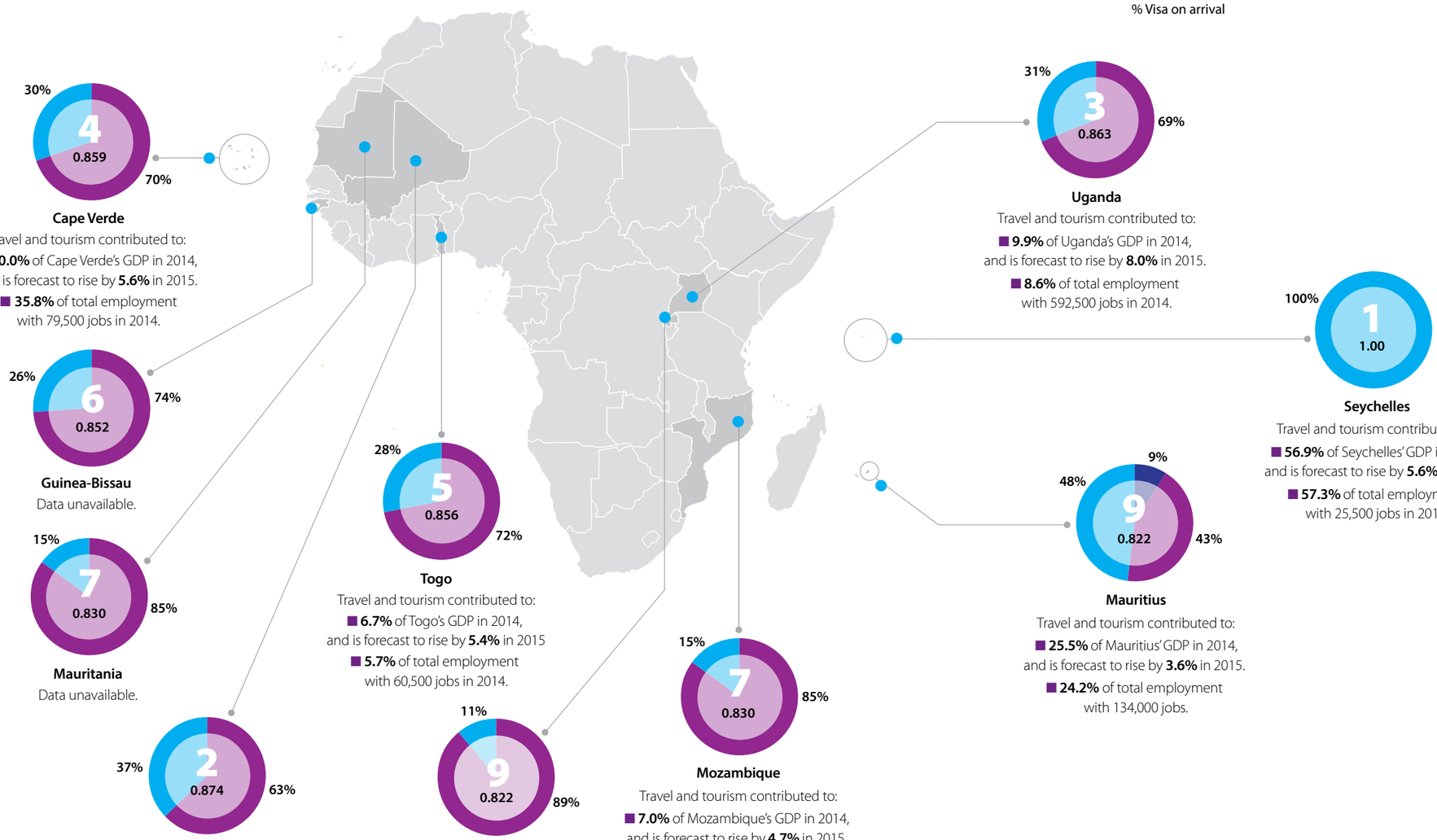
6. McKinsey & Company 2015, "Unlocking Africa: Simplifying visas to allow the free flow of talent"

Closer Look at the Top 10 Countries on Visa Openness[7]

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]

How to read this chart:



7. WTTC, Economic Impact 2015 Country Reports. http://www.wttc.org/research/economic-research/economic-impact-analysis/country-reports
   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.

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[9]

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 billion[12] 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]

9. Seychelles Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Transport, http://www.mfa.gov.sc/static.php?content_id=1
10. Seychelles Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Transport, http://www.mfa.gov.sc/static.php?content_id=9
11. *African Economic Outlook 2014*, http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/fileadmin/uploads/aeo/2014/PDF/E-Book_African_Economic_Outlook_2014.pdf
12. http://data.worldbank.org/country/seychelles
13. http://data.worldbank.org/news/new-country-classifications-2015

Visa Openness SOLUTIONS

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[15]

- **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)
- **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

14. McKinsey & Company 2015, "Unlocking Africa: Simplifying visas to allow the free flow of talent"
15. Ibid., non-exhaustive list

Global debate on visa openness

Development economists argue that open borders could double world GDP[16], 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.[17]

Urbanisation is rapidly becoming a global challenge and one that is fundamentally linked to migration.[18] 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.[19]

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.

Worldwide, ECOWAS (100%), the Schengen Area (100%) and ASEAN (84%) have the highest levels of open reciprocity among Member Countries.

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.[20]

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%.[21]

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.[22]

16. http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/04/if-people-could-immigrate-anywhere-would-poverty-be-eliminated/275332/
17. Ibid.
18. IOM, *World Migration Report 2015*, http://publications.iom.int/system/files/wmr2015_en.pdf
19. Ibid.
20. UNWTO, *Visa Openness Report 2014*, http://dtxtq4w60xqpw.cloudfront.net/sites/all/files/pdf/2014visaopennessreport2ndprintingonline.pdf
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.

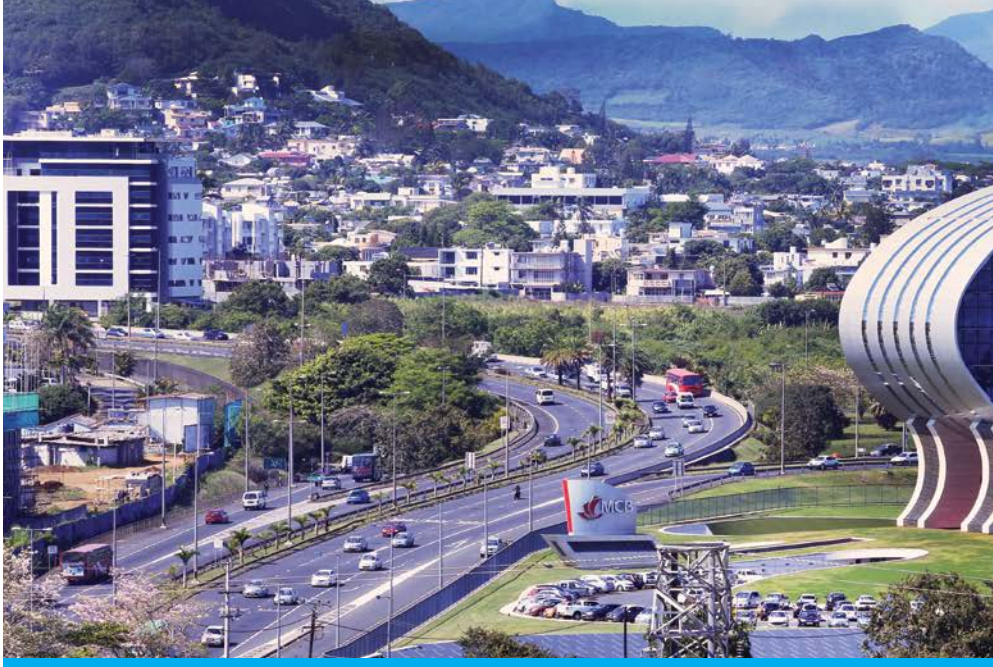
Case Stories

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.



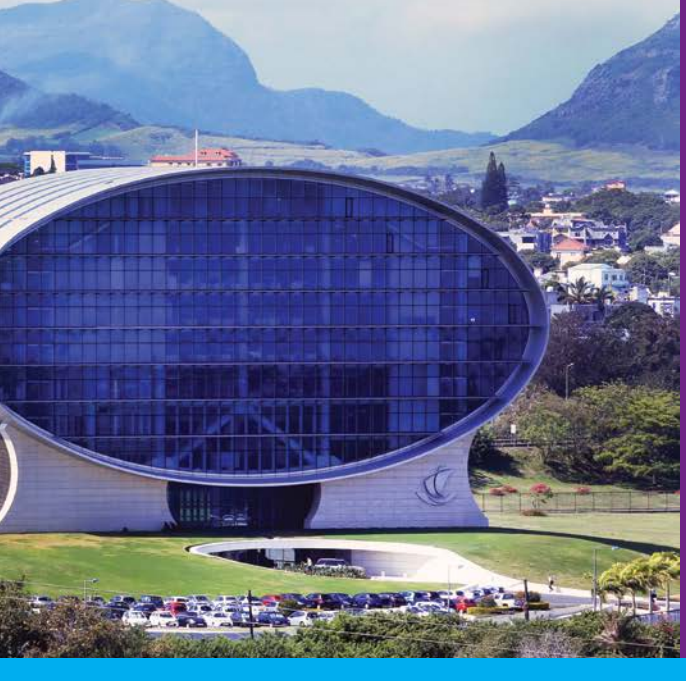
Tourism and visa openness

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.

23. UNWTO, *Tourism Highlights 2015*, http://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284416899
24. WEF, *The Tourism & Travel Competitiveness Report 2015*, http://www3.weforum.org/docs/TT15/WEF_Global_Travel&Tourism_Report_2015.pdf
25. Ibid.
26. IATA, http://www.iata.org/policy/liberalization/Pages/intra-africa-liberalization-report.aspx



"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

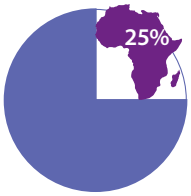
CASE STORY: Mauritius

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*.



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

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]

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.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

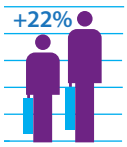
Since the late 1990s, the government's partnership with the private sector has supported growth in financial services by having a practical and fluid visa regime for business people to enter easily. When a financial institution sponsors a business contact, a simple letter facilitates entry. The country's 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]

27. Board of Investment Mauritius, http://www.investmauritius.com/investment-opportunities/property-development.aspx. MUR 44.5 billion. Exchange rate as of December 2015.
28. http://www.worldairportawards.com/awards/airport_award_winners_2014.html
29. Board of Investment Mauritius, http://www.investmauritius.com/investment-opportunities/financial-services.aspx
30. Board of Investment Mauritius, http://www.investmauritius.com/why-mauritius/benchmarks.aspx
31. http://www.boiafrica.com/Default.aspx
32. Board of Investment Mauritius, http://www.investmauritius.com/investment-opportunities/financial-services.aspx

CASE STORY: Rwanda

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]



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

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]

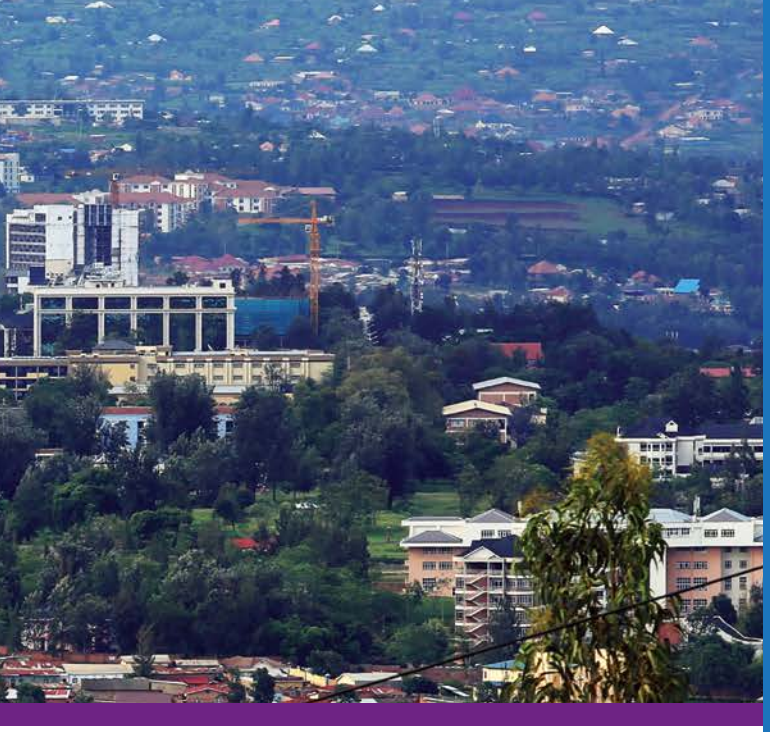
SERVICE DELIVERY

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]

95% of visitors use eVisas.

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.

33. Interview with Rwanda Development Board, http://www.rdb.rw/
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Interview with Rwanda Directorate General of Immigration and Emigration, https://www.migration.gov.rw/index.php?id=2
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.

42. Interview with Rwanda Directorate General of Immigration and Emigration, https://www.migration.gov.rw/index.php?id=2

African Union's Agenda 2063 - A Call to Action[43]

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.[44] 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[45] 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.

43. Selected extract: http://au.int/en/sites/default/files/Agenda2063_Popular_Version_English_0.pdf
44. AfDB, http://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/article/youth-employment-in-africa-under-the-spotlight-14584/
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." [46]

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[47], while recent research highlights the critical impact migrants have on building resilience within communities and as agents of local development.[48]

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.

46. http://www.globalgoals.org/global-goals/reduced-inequalities/
47. http://www.gfmd.org/
48. IOM, *World Migration Report 2015*, http://publications.iom.int/system/files/wmr2015_en.pdf

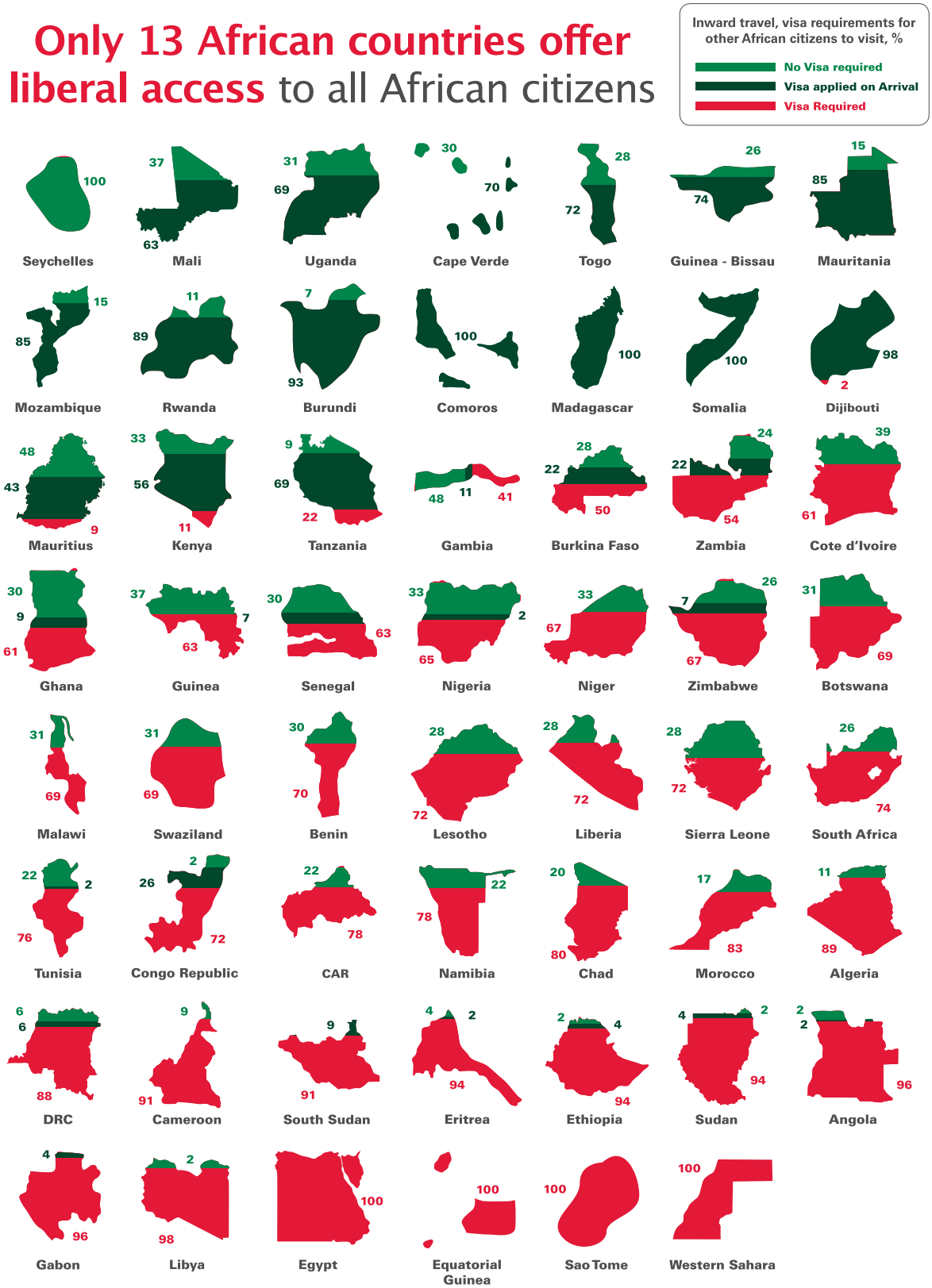
Annex 1. Visa openness in Africa: country scores and ranking

Country	Visa openness categories			Openness	Rank
	No visa (%)	Visa on arrival (%)	Visa required* (%)		
Seychelles	**100**	**0**	**0**	**1.000**	**1**
Mali	**37**	**63**	**0**	**0.874**	**2**
Uganda	**31**	**69**	**0**	**0.863**	**3**
Cape Verde	**30**	**70**	**0**	**0.859**	**4**
Togo	**28**	**72**	**0**	**0.856**	**5**
Guinea-Bissau	**26**	**74**	**0**	**0.852**	**6**
Mauritania	**15**	**85**	**0**	**0.830**	**7**
Mozambique	**15**	**85**	**0**	**0.830**	**7**
Mauritius	**48**	**43**	**9**	**0.822**	**9**
Rwanda	**11**	**89**	**0**	**0.822**	**9**
Burundi	**7**	**93**	**0**	**0.815**	**11**
Comoros	**0**	**100**	**0**	**0.800**	**12**
Madagascar	**0**	**100**	**0**	**0.800**	**12**
Somalia	**0**	**100**	**0**	**0.800**	**12**
Djibouti	**0**	**98**	**2**	**0.785**	**15**
Kenya	**33**	**56**	**11**	**0.778**	**16**
Tanzania	**9**	**69**	**22**	**0.641**	**17**
Gambia	**41**	**11**	**48**	**0.496**	**18**
Burkina Faso	**28**	**22**	**50**	**0.456**	**19**
Zambia	**24**	**22**	**54**	**0.419**	**20**
Côte d'Ivoire	39	0	61	0.389	21
Ghana	30	9	61	0.370	22
Guinea	37	0	63	0.370	22
Senegal	30	7	63	0.356	24
Nigeria	33	2	65	0.348	25
Niger	33	0	67	0.333	26
Zimbabwe	26	7	67	0.319	27
Botswana	31	0	69	0.315	28
Malawi	31	0	69	0.315	28
Swaziland	31	0	69	0.315	28
Benin	30	0	70	0.296	31
Lesotho	28	0	72	0.278	32
Liberia	28	0	72	0.278	32
Sierra Leone	28	0	72	0.278	32
South Africa	26	0	74	0.259	35
Tunisia	22	2	76	0.237	36
Congo Republic	2	26	72	0.226	37
Central African Republic	22	0	78	0.222	38
Namibia	22	0	78	0.222	38
Chad	20	0	80	0.204	40
Morocco	17	0	83	0.167	41
Algeria	11	0	89	0.111	42
Democratic Republic of Congo	6	6	88	0.100	43
Cameroon	9	0	91	0.093	44
South Sudan	0	9	91	0.074	45
Eritrea	4	2	94	0.052	46
Ethiopia	4	2	94	0.052	46
Sudan	2	4	94	0.048	48
Angola	2	2	96	0.033	49
Gabon	0	4	96	0.030	50
Libya	2	0	98	0.019	51
Egypt	0	0	100	0.000	52
Equatorial Guinea	0	0	100	0.000	52
São Tomé and Príncipe	0	0	100	0.000	52
Western Sahara	0	0	100	0.000	52
Average	**20**	**25**	**55**		

Scores range from 0-1 (highest)

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

Annex 2. Visa requirements to travel to other African countries



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

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World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on Africa

Courtesy of McKinsey & Company

VISA OPENNESS INDEX

African Development Bank

Immeuble CCIA

Rue Jean-Paul II, Plateau

01 B.P. 1387

Abidjan 01, Côte d'Ivoire

Telephone: (225) 20 26 26 54

www.afdb.org

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