Fact Sheet

Open Society Initiative for Eastern Africa

In Our World, all Persons Count Equally.
The Open Society Initiative for Eastern Africa (OSIEA) was founded in 2005 as a part of the global Open Society Foundations (OSF) network. OSIEA’s vision is ‘a just, inclusive and vibrant Eastern Africa where all people live in dignity, equality and participate meaningfully in society’.

Since 2005, through support to individuals, organizations, coalitions, movements and government agencies, OSIEA has contributed towards efforts to:

- Strengthen democratic governance, rule of law and accountability;
- Protect the rights of the most marginalized including persons with disabilities, sexual and gender minorities, women and youth;
- Promote food security particularly among pastoralist communities;
- Advocate for accountable utilization of natural resources; and
- Promote inclusive, equitable and sustainable economic growth through economic justice.

*Our contributions have been through grant-making, advocacy and research.*
QUICK FACTS

Since 2010 OSIEA has contributed US$ 111.072 million in grants to over 300 partners across the region including government institutions, civil society organizations, movements, individuals, academic institutions as well as religious bodies. OSIEA’s contributions are improving the lives of millions of people in Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda.

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Kenya
Tanzania
Uganda
Rwanda
Sudan
South Sudan
A. PRIORITY AREAS OF WORK

1. Democratic Governance and Rule of Law
2. Economic Governance:
3. Health and Rights
4. Equality and Non-discrimination
1. Democratic Governance and Rule of Law:

Constitution-making and cultivating a culture of constitutionalism.

Free, fair, credible and inclusive elections where women and other marginalized groups participate fully.

Accountability in the management of public resources.

Access to justice for victims of gross violations of human rights.

Security sector governance.

Migration governance.

Countering violent extremism and the associated human rights violations.

Right to information and freedom of expression.

Protection of the rights of human rights defenders.

2. Economic Governance:

Macroeconomic policies that promote equitable growth, human development and the fair distribution of resources, with a focus on taxation, trade, and investment.

Food security rights of people in marginalized communities.

Decision-making and resource allocation that is participatory and equitable.

Transparency, accountability, prudence and integrity in management of public resources.

Responsive, sustainable, transparent and accountable management of natural resources.
3. Equality and Non-discrimination
(focus on youth, women, persons with disabilities, and sexual minorities):

- Laws, policies and practices that adopt equality and non-discrimination.
- Full and effective participation of persons from marginalized communities in decision making at all levels.
- Full recognition of the contributions and aspirations of marginalized constituencies as equal partners in development and in society.
- Just and fair distribution of and access to resources and services by marginalized groups.

4. Health and Rights
(focus on persons who use drugs, persons in need of palliative care and sexual minorities):

- Strong institutions to facilitate equitable access to health services for the marginalized populations.
- Equality, protection and enjoyment of the health rights of marginalized communities.
- Challenging socio-cultural beliefs and norms that perpetuate exclusion and marginalization of minority groups from accessing health care.
B. KEY CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE REGION

Our support to advancement of disability rights in the region have contributed to:

- Introduction of the teaching of disability rights in higher institutions of learning especially in their schools/departments/faculties of law.

- Adoption of inclusive education as a key strategy to increase access to and improve quality of education for persons with disabilities.

- Measures to protect rights of persons with albinism who are at risk of ritual attacks and murders.

- Access to justice for persons with intellectual disabilities. Recently, a Kenyan court sentenced a man to 30 years in prison for raping his niece with intellectual disability. This landmark ruling is now changing the landscape on access to justice for persons with intellectual disabilities. The justice system is now taking measures to be more inclusive, friendly and responsive to the needs of persons with intellectual disabilities when seeking justice.
We have supported initiatives to enable pastoralists attain food security which have contributed to:

- Improving their productivity and production through increased intra- and inter-boundary livestock mobility.
- Increased budgetary allocation towards livestock development.
- Development of a teaching curriculum for a short course on pastoralism and climate change, which is being administered at the Center for Climate Change at the University of Dar es Salaam.
- Offered scholarships to students to undertake climate change studies at Master’s level.
Our support to health and rights initiatives has contributed towards the advancement of rights of marginalized communities in the region.

- Efforts by our partners in Uganda to improve governance for health have contributed to recognition of emergency health care in Uganda as a human right enforceable in law.

- Support to efforts on maternal health have contributed towards increased calls for better quality maternity services to end maternal deaths, holding negligent health care workers accountable for maternal deaths, as well as access to justice for mothers whose rights have been violated during delivery. Examples include a ruling in Kenya where a mother was awarded KShs. 2.5 million for rights violation during delivery as well as a ruling in Uganda that awarded a man UGX 35 million for losing his wife during delivery due to negligence.

- The support to initiatives on palliative care have contributed to increased investment by governments in palliative care in the region in terms of increased human resources, commodities, as well as support for those needing palliative care.

- Support to efforts targeted at persons who use drugs have contributed to their inclusion in provision of health care, especially in HIV and AIDS interventions in the region. At the same time, harm reduction efforts have contributed to improved quality of life of those using drugs, enabling them to lead healthy and productive lives.

- Support to efforts targeted at sexual and gender minorities have resulted in organizations strongly asserting their rights, which have yielded great success. An example is the registration of the Transgender Education and Awareness organization that advances the rights of transgender persons and a court ruling that made it possible for transgender to formally change their names and have these changes reflected in official documents.
Our contributions have sought to address the socio-cultural and normative factors that perpetuate the discrimination and violence against women in the region with a view to creating a society in which women are respected, they have access to equal opportunity and access to resources.

- Our contributions have also sought to enable survivors of sexual and gender-based violence access justice and health care.

- Support to legal and policy frameworks that seek to protect and promote women’s rights.

We have supported efforts to strengthen the women’s movement and address barriers that prevent women from ascending to leadership and decision making positions.
Our support to efforts aimed at advancing democratic governance and rule of law has contributed to:

- Increased advocacy for the strengthening of electoral processes towards realization of free, fair, credible and inclusive elections.
- Increased calls for greater accountability in the management of public resources.
- Constitutional and institutional reforms with Kenya having promulgated one of the most progressive constitutions in the region in 2010 as well as institutional reforms to enhance efficiency and accountability.
- Efforts towards strengthening governance structures and systems, especially Kenya’s devolved governance system, to foster a governance system that is responsive to the needs of the people.
- Efforts to seek justice and accountability for grave crimes and reparations for victims and survivors.
- Some of the efforts of our partners in South Sudan contributed to the framework document that shaped the final peace accord signed in August 2015.
- Efforts of our partners are advocating for inclusive and positive South Sudanese identity based on respect for diversity and promotion of social cohesion through use of theatre, art and social media.
OSIEA’s support to efforts aimed at fostering efficiency and accountability in utilization of natural resources to ensure they benefit those who need them most has contributed to:

- Sensitization of communities to enable them participate in natural resources governance and negotiate for a share of the proceeds of natural resources.
- Growing but still very nascent body of work on transparent and accountable oil governance in the region.
OSIEA makes it possible for the smallest bird to sing from the top of the tree.