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

To contribute towards the vision of a just and inclusive Eastern Africa, OSIEA has partnered with government institutions across Eastern Africa in the fight against corruption, undertake reforms, to promote inclusion for the marginalized, and seek justice for sexual gender based violence victims. The partnership with government institutions complements our engagement with civil society partners across the region.
Quick Facts About Our Work with Governments in Eastern Africa

1. OSIEA HAS SINCE 2010 PROVIDED OVER USD 2 MILLION to government institutions across the region as well as technical and institutional support to advance human rights.

2. WE HAVE WORKED WITH GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS IN THE REGION IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION. In Rwanda we are supporting the Office of the Ombudsman to work with the East African Community (EAC) and its organs towards adoption of a charter to guide asset declaration in Eastern Africa as a tool of fighting corruption. In Uganda, we are supporting the African Parliamentarians Network on Corruption (APNAC), a network that comprises members of Uganda’s parliament that constitute the anticorruption committee, to standardize the governance and anticorruption standards within East Africa and push for domestication of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Good Governance in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania as well as support the adoption of African Regional Protocol on Democracy, Elections and Good Governance.

3. WE HAVE SUPPORTED THE PROMOTION OF NATIONAL COHESION AND INTEGRATION DURING ELECTIONS. In 2016, we supported Kenya’s National Integration and Cohesion Commission (NCIC) to conduct a study on the impact of organized gangs on social cohesion in Kenya that was undertaken between 2016 and 2017. These gangs were found to create fear thus dividing communities along political and ethnic lines. The report formed a key resource for designing interventions to eradicate criminal gangs in Kenya to achieve social cohesion, especially during electioneering periods. The report was especially used by county security teams during the 2017 elections period.
WE HAVE SUPPORTED HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS IN ADDRESSING SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE DURING ELECTIONS. In 2017 we supported the Kenya National Commission (KNCHR) to undertake advocacy, documentation and archiving of cases of sexual violence during the elections period with a view to pursue justice and health care for survivors. The Commission mobilized doctors and nurses to support victims of rape and to issue reports and set up a rapid response mechanism to ensure that victims of rape received help timely.

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SINCE 2016, WE HAVE FOCUSED OUR SUPPORT AT EFFORTS BY GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS TO INCORPORATE HUMAN RIGHTS PRINCIPLES INTO DRUG LAWS AND POLICIES. In Kenya, we have been supporting efforts by the National Authority for the Campaign against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA) to revise policy and law to incorporate harm reduction and human rights discourses. The support has been aimed to initiate a process of revising the Narcotic law which has problematic provisions which mainly target the low level drug users with punitive measures, hindering their access to healthcare. These efforts have resulted in Kenya’s Parliamentary Committee on Health beginning to advocate for revision of the Narcotic Act of 1994. Following the support that we have been providing to members of the criminal justice system, more drug users are being committed to harm reduction programs from the courts instead of being sentenced to prison. Results have shown that most of those users committed to harm reduction have been rehabilitated and often able to lead more productive lives, keep off crime while those committed to the criminal justice system often return to drug use and crime after they complete their sentences. This practice has now created a legal jurisprudence.
WE HAVE SUPPORTED EFFORTS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE LEARNING FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

In Uganda, we have supported Makerere University to provide learning environments that are accessible to persons with disabilities, enabling especially those using wheelchairs to access lecture halls because of the modified buildings and the awareness created among staff at the university to ensure reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities. The university has also established a disability rights support center to provide support to persons with disabilities in terms of counselling, awareness creation among others. These efforts are now making it possible for persons with disabilities to pursue law degrees at Makerere University and excel in courses that they were previously not admitted to undertake.

SINCE 2017, WE HAVE SUPPORTED EFFORTS BY GOVERNMENTS TO SAFEGUARD THE RIGHTS OF INTERSEX PERSONS.

In Kenya, we have supported the Intersex Persons Taskforce that was constituted by the Kenyan Government to compile comprehensive data regarding the number, distribution and challenges faced by intersex persons and recommend comprehensive reforms to safeguard their rights. The work of this Taskforce has resulted in momentous wins for intersex persons in Kenya, with Kenya being the first country in Africa to ever include intersex as the third sex marker in the census (included in the 2019 census). This aimed at ensuring that intersex persons count in policy, national planning and development. Additionally, because of the recommendation of the Task Force, intersex inmates are now held in cells separate from others to prevent violations and preserve their dignity while in custody. At the same time, intersex persons are beginning to have their sex identity included in the identification documents like passports, identity cards among others. But the key progress we have seen in advancing the rights of intersex people is that there is now more awareness, and governments, politicians and other actors are beginning to acknowledge the need to address the challenges facing intersex persons to enable them live dignified lives and thrive.

WE ARE SUPPORTING ETHIOPIA’S REFORM EFFORTS TOWARDS DEMOCRATIZATION, HUMAN RIGHTS AND RULE OF LAW.

We are providing technical and financial support to the National Elections Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) to work towards credible elections through support to civic education, elections monitoring and conflict resolution. We are also providing technical and financial support to the Legal and Justice Affairs Advisory Council for review of a number of laws including the media law, access to information law, computer crime legislation and criminal procedure law. In addition, we are supporting the Human Rights Commission to undertake reforms and address human rights issues in Ethiopia.