



A step in the right direction for South African immigration law? The impact of immigration law amendments by African countries on cross-border transactions in the mining and construction industries.

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Introduction

Nations across Africa are increasingly realising the critical importance of dismantling barriers that have long hindered intra-continental interactions. From the removal of troublesome trade tariffs within sub-regions to the elimination of visa restrictions entirely, the continent is on a fast progressive path. The move towards visa-free entry among African states not only fosters a sense of unity but also holds significant promise for economic growth, cultural exchange, and enhanced regional cooperation. The decision by several African nations, including the recent move by Rwanda and Kenya, to open their borders to fellow African citizens reflects a pivotal shift in the continent's approach to interconnectivity. As of 2021, South African citizens had visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 108 countries. On the date of publication of this article immigration legislation stipulates that visitors entering South Africa from only 19 African countries would not be required to produce a visa upon entry. Nonetheless, Visitors from the 34 remaining states would be required to have a visa upon entry into SA. Similarly, other African states that have moved towards a visa-free entry policy are Seychelles, Gambia and Benin. This article will discuss the impact of the visa-free entry policy implemented by several African countries on cross-border transactions in the mining and construction sector and surmise whether this is a step in the right direction.

The impact of the visa-free entry policy on intra-continental trade in the construction and mining industries

A distinction to note is that a passport states a person's state or country of origin, while a visa states the duration of time a foreigner is allowed to visit the visa-issuing territory. There is a general part of public debate that critically ventures that a visa-free Africa may pose some security concerns, although little empirical evidence exists to support this, as other regions like the EU have noted, that lifting visa requirements in the EU and for its partner countries has wrought on some security issue as well as irregular migration that does need further redress.

Nonetheless, it is arguable that the pros seemingly outweigh the cons with increased tourism, job creation and thus improving the overall economic potential. Scrapping visa requirements, reducing airfares and improving connectivity could unlock the incredible potential of tourism in Africa. According to African Development visa-free travel for all Africans across the continent would give a great fillip not only for tourism but also to enable free trade across the African Continent.

In addition to driving infrastructure, dealing with security issues and upgrading public-private partnerships, could help the industry become an engine of much-needed economic growth and job creation in the continent. By engaging in the visa-free entry policy, there will be a need to improve infrastructure, and this may further bolster potential for cross-border transactions between construction companies in the country that implements the visa-free entry policy and another African country. This will function for the purposes of improving establishing person-person but also business-to-business contact is critical for developing infrastructure within visa-free policy participating territories.. The Free movement of persons in Africa is expected to deliver several key benefits including improving trans-border infrastructure and shared development.

One of the most critical economic impacts of this policy is the promotion of enhanced trade within Africa by suspending and reviewing the transit-visa requirement for foreigners en-route to the neighbouring countries. This will manage and reduce barriers to cross-border movement, and businesspeople and entrepreneurs alike can traverse the continent more easily. This will stimulate trade and investment, reducing transaction costs and creating a conducive environment for economic growth. Cross-border transactions will increase in the mining and construction sectors as a result of this policy as investors, businesspeople and entrepreneurs will freely move without any hindrance and will come to these visa-free entry countries to enter into various agreements or business deals that will benefit the construction and mining sectors of the various countries. Simplified entry processes can make African countries more appealing to foreign investors this way. The reduction in administrative barriers can make investment more attractive and potentially lead to increased foreign direct investment.

African businesses can now expand more easily into other African markets by removing either the transit or business visa requirements allowing the bearer to enter the host country and engage in business activities without joining that country's labour market. This access to new customer bases and growth opportunities can lead to the expansion of businesses, creating jobs and driving economic growth. Visa-free policies are a catalyst for regional economic integration. They encourage African countries to collaborate on trade agreements, infrastructure development, and various other initiatives. By working together, these nations can harness their collective potential more effectively. Enhanced regional cooperation can lead to the development of critical infrastructure, such as transportation and energy. Improved infrastructure further facilitates business activities and overall economic growth.

Easier travel will likely boost tourism within Africa. With a diverse range of cultures, landscapes, and attractions, the continent stands to gain significantly from increased tourism. This surge in visitors can create jobs and stimulate local economies. More so, more hotels and other infrastructure would have to be built to accommodate the African people who will be travelling to the visa-free entry country thus boosting the construction industry.

However, it is crucial to emphasize that the success of visa-free policies depends on effective implementation, infrastructure development, and security considerations. Governments must ensure that border control, security, and documentation procedures are still in place to prevent misuse and maintain safety. To date, this shift in intra-continental migration policy is driven by the African Union through its Africa Openness Index, which assesses and rates how African countries for implementing policies advancing free movement for African people to work, travel and live in different parts of the continent.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the visa-free policy for African foreigners is a momentous step towards unlocking the economic potential of Africa's rapidly growing population and emerging markets. It has the power to encourage business expansion, and cultural exchange, and create a more integrated and prosperous continent. Effective implementation and cooperation among African nations will be key to realising these benefits fully. This policy stands as a testament to Africa's commitment to unity and growth on a continental scale. The visa-free entry policy has a significant impact on cross-border transactions in the construction and mining industries because construction or mining countries in other countries would want to do business with the construction and mining companies in the visa-free entry countries as it would be easier to travel to these countries entering into various agreements. The visa-free entry policy is definitely a step in the right direction for the purposes of boosting the construction and mining industries in visa-free entry African countries. Perhaps South Africa should also consider to be a visa-free entry country for the purposes of boosting its construction and mining industries.