**An analysis of the impact of debt service on human rights**

# Contents

## Abstract

Background

When government revenue is diverted to service debt, this negatively impacts the government's ability to meet human rights obligations. However, creditor and debtor countries hold divergent views on whether debt is a human rights issue, with creditor countries asserting that these are contractual agreements that are economic and technical in nature. Here, we try to answer the following question: should public and publicly guaranteed debt be considered a human rights issue, and explore the pathways by which debt service may impact human rights?

Methods

We conducted a literature review to explore the pathways through which debt service impacts human rights. We then consider three scenarios: the impact on human rights of a reduction in government external debt service to 5%, 10%, and 14% of government revenue in those countries where debt service is above these levels. As debt repayment varies by year, we used the average debt service between 2022-2024, from the Debt Justice UK dataset (collated from the World Bank and IMF sources), which includes external public and publicly guaranteed debt, and IMF repurchases and charges. To translate the impact of debt services on human rights and governance in a country, we used the Government Revenue and Development Estimations (GRADE), a model which translates the impact of a change in government revenue per capita on access to economic and social human rights. Additional revenue also improves governance indicators, and we analyse this impact.

Finding

**Scenario 1**: If debt service was reduced to 5% of government revenue in countries where it is above this threshold, an additional 33 million people would use basic sanitation (15.75% of those without access) and 17 million would drink clean water (16.84% of the people without access). Five million additional children would attend school, and there would be 380 thousand additional teachers. 59 thousand additional children and almost 8 thousand mothers would survive. There would be an improvement in governance indicators in all countries.

**Scenario 2**: If debt service was reduced to 10% of government revenue in those countries where it is above this threshold, an additional 23 million people would use basic sanitation (12.45% of those without access), and 11 million would drink clean water (17.58 % of the people without access). Three million additional children would attend school, with 251,000 additional teachers. 38 thousand additional children and 5.5 thousand mothers would survive.

**Scenario 3**: If debt service was reduced to 14% of government revenue in those countries where it is above this threshold, an additional 16 million people would use basic sanitation (13.39% of those without access), and 7 million would drink clean water (16.45 % of the people without access). Two million additional children would attend school, with 171,000 additional teachers. 28 thousand additional children and almost 4 thousand mothers would survive.

Interpretation

If the debt service of these governments was reduced, millions of additional people and children would have access to economic and social human rights. This analysis demonstrates that debt service should be considered a human rights issue and that it acts via multiple channels including revenue, representation, redistribution, and regulation.

## Introduction

### *Background and rationale*

An imminent debt crisis is predicted if there is no coordinated global response to the current levels of debt (1). This has been described as the fourth global wave of the debt crisis. The first of the three previous waves was in the 1970s, following an increase in interest rates. The second wave, from the 1990s to the 2000s, affected East Asia, the Pacific, Europe, and Central Asia, and was catalysed by low interest rates and financial market liberalisation. The third wave involved Europe and Central Asia, after the regulations were eased. The current wave is the largest and fastest growing, driven by the response to the 2008 financial crisis when northern governments pumped large quantities of public money into banks to boost their economies, resulting in low interest rates. An expanding private credit sector, seeking better returns on investments developed an appetite for bonds from low- and middle-income countries, and this helped drive the current situation, where, for example 40% of African debt is owed to private creditors (2). In the African region, although debt in absolute terms and as a percentage of GDP is not as large as in other regions, debt service is onerous because it is often owed to external lenders and in foreign currency, usually the US dollar (70%). Furthermore, African countries face harsh borrowing terms, paying much higher interest rates on their debt than in other parts of the world (3), and interest rates on new debts are rising faster than growth rates in the region (4).

Creditor countries, usually developed countries, hold divergent views from debtor countries, usually developing countries, regarding whether debt is a human rights issue. Creditor countries assert that these are contractual agreements that are economic and technical in nature, rather than an issue for human rights committees and bodies. At the Human Rights Council, creditor countries repeatedly vote against the consideration of foreign debt as a human rights issue (5).

Given these divergent views, we consider if debt services should be considered a human rights issue. We first consider the pathways through which debt services may affect human rights by applying a framework used for tax abuse (the four Rs): representation, revenue, redistribution, and regulation or repricing (6). We then translate the impact of government revenue equivalent to that diverted to service debt into access to economic and social rights, and thus a government's ability to meet its human rights obligations.

### *Literature review*

#### *Debt and human rights*

External debts erode governments' ability to meet their obligations under the International Covenant on Economic and Social Cultural Rights. Traditionally, governments are the primary duty-bearers and are obliged to ensure that all people within their jurisdiction have access to human rights (including water, sanitation, food, education, healthcare, and housing). However, scholars argue that human rights obligations transcend borders (7), and experts assert that governments should not be placed in positions where they cannot meet their obligations because of debt service (8).

The United Nations' independent experts are one of the special procedural mechanisms of the Human Rights Council. Independent experts on debt and other international financial obligations pay special attention to the impact of foregone revenue and conditionalities which come with debt relief on the ability of states to meet their economic and social rights obligations (9). Guiding principles to help governments promote human rights compliant economic reform policies were developed and accepted by the Human Rights Council (HRC) in 2019. Among these principles, the state *and its economic partners* must demonstrate that economic measures do not undermine human rights, both economic and social, but also civil and political rights (10).

### *Revenue*

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) defines fiscal space as room in a government budget that allows it to provide resources for a desired purpose without jeopardising the sustainability of its financial position or the stability of the economy (11). If governments divert a significant proportion of their revenue to service debt, there is less fiscal space for the provision of public services. Here, we briefly review the literature on 1. debt services and human rights, and 2. debt relief, and human rights.

*Debt service*

Kapindula and Kaliba studied Zambia between 1970-2014 using Auto Regressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) model and finds that public external debt servicing had a negative impact on investment in infrastructure including roads, rail and public housing (12). Fosu modelled the relationship between public debt and government expenditure for 35 African countries between 1975-1994 and find that actual debt service has little impact, but predicted debt service shifts public spending away from health and education (13–15). Lliyasu and Gambo empirically show that a one percent increase in debt service spending in Nigeria reduces recurrent spending by 0.18-0.15 percent and capital spending by 0.23-0.28 percent (16).

Asongu and Le Roux model the impact of short term external public debt service on infrastructure including electricity and telecommunication, using the generalised method of moments (GMM) and finds that debt has a negative impact on infrastructure development, but this is moderated by governance indicators (17). Sani and Said also used the GMM approach on a sample of 43 African countries between 2000 -2014 and finds that the public debt burden negatively impacted health expenditure, but this relationship was attenuated by strong institutions (18).

*Debt relief*

Debt relief has been shown to have a positive impact on human rights, and governments spend more on public services (19). Cassimon et al. found that a 10% reduction in debt service results in a 3.5% increase in government investment in the year following the reduction, with the impact being greater for initiatives which require institutional change (20). Dessy et al. studied the impact of debt relief in African countries. They studied health and education spending as a proportion of gross national income as a dependent outcome. The independent variables included cumulative 5-year debt relief in dollars, overseas development aid, and the interaction between debt relief and institutional quality. They find that the interaction between debt relief and change in institutional quality has a significant effect on the percentage of spending on education and health but that relief without change in institutional quality has no impact (21). Oryema et al. found that a reduction in under-five mortality was associated with engaging with debt relief initiatives, but not with actual debt cancelled (22). These studies align with other studies which show that additional revenue positively impacts outcomes in the health and education sectors, and that this impact is greater in well-governed countries (23,24). Hall and O'Hare quantified the impact of additional revenue on basic rights in individual countries, and showed that this impact is amplified in well-governed countries (25–28).

### *Representation or governance*

The Office of the United Nations Commission for Human Rights states that good governance and human rights are intertwined, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are grounded in human rights, include targets of governance at national and international levels.

Although credit can positively influence countries' economic development, benefits can only be maintained in the presence of good governance (29). Appiah-Kubi et al. studied 47 African countries from 2000 to 2018 (average debt-to-GDP ratio was 60% and the average tax-to-GDP ratio was 16%), using the GMM and fixed effects two-stage least squares (IV-FE) methodological approach, they found that government investment in infrastructure, such as road and railway construction, leads to public debt.

However, government consumption, for example, on salaries, increases the productivity of the public sector and reduces public debt. Although spending on the military tends to increase debt, it is not a key driver of debt in Africa as in other regions. Critically, a 1% increase in the tax-to-GDP ratio reduces the public debt stock-to-GDP ratio by 0.3%, but increased corruption is strongly and positively associated with public debt (30). Others confirm this finding, and a study of 126 countries using ordinary least squares, fixed-effects GMM, and instrumental variable estimation found that corruption drives public debt through suboptimal allocation of public funds, and that this effect is amplified by higher investment spending (31). Tarek and Ahmed consider the pathways through which poor governance may drive debt accumulation in the Middle East and North Africa, including the negative impact of corruption on economic growth, resulting in less tax revenue, reduced fiscal space, and higher debt levels (29).

If the debt service is large, foregone revenue reduces governance quality (27), and poor governance drives public debt accumulation, creating a vicious cycle. This cycle may also be fuelled by external factors, including fluctuations in interest rates, deteriorating terms of trade, and profligate lending (8). For example, lending by the World Bank has been reported to have little fiduciary oversight or impact assessment, and its primary purpose is to disburse loans rather than ensure the implementation of projects, which may have contributed to corruption (32).

When countries receive loans from the IMF, it is in exchange for mandatory policy reforms which have a significant influence on the domestic fiscal space. Disbursements are given in tranches and contingent upon the implementation of the agreed policies. Some policies, including privatisation, market deregulation, fiscal consolidation, and lowering of environmental protection, can negatively impact human rights (10). Policies may include liberalising markets which reduce tax revenue from imports and currency devaluations which raise the price of imports needed for the provision of human rights, such as medications. Other commonly prescribed policies include liberalisation of the movement of international finance and the sale of state-owned enterprises (33). In addition to monetary policies, IMF policies directly impact the government's fiscal policy, including a reduction in expenditure on the public sector and wage bill ceilings in the public sector, reducing its productivity and increasing the role of the private sector in the provision of public services (34). These conditions put citizen-state relationships under pressure and frequently led to public protests (35).

### *Redistribution*

Fiscal policy is the most powerful tool for addressing income inequality, using taxes, subsidies, transfers, and public services (36). Looking at 13 countries, Lustig et al. found that government spending on education and healthcare contributed 69% of the redistribution effect of policies designed to reduce inequality, including cash transfers and subsidies (37). Debt services reduce fiscal space for spending on public services, and therefore, the ability to reduce inequality.

Conditions associated with debt relief and restructuring increase inequality. Using panel data modelling and country-year fixed effects, Biglaiser and McGauvran find that countries which restructure their debt introduce allocation policies which favour the rich and penalise the poor by reducing social spending (education, healthcare, and social spending), reducing tax rates, and increasing inequality. They argue that austerity is appealing to the IMF, shareholders, credit rating agencies, foreign and domestic businesses, and wealthy constituents (38). Furthermore, IMF conditions have been shown to increase inequality (39)(40).

### *Regulation and repricing harmful products*

When governments divert revenue to debt services, it reduces revenue and regulatory quality (27). An example of the impact of weak regulations on human rights is the non-communicable disease epidemic driven by the sale of unhealthy products, including tobacco, processed food, and alcohol (41). Drivers are known as the commercial determinants of health (42) and play an increasing role in low- and middle-

income countries with weak regulatory quality (43) and poor implementation because of inadequate resources (44).

## Hypothesis and objectives

We hypothesise that if the average debt service between 2022-2024 of governments is reduced, the additional government revenue will significantly increase access to human rights, including the right to good governance. We aim to translate the impact of additional revenue into an impact on human rights and governance indicators.

## Methods

### *The data*

We use Debt Justice UK estimates on external, public, and publicly guaranteed debt service as a percentage of government revenue. Public and publicly guaranteed debt service is the sum of principal repayments and interest actually paid on the long-term obligations of public debtors and long-term private obligations guaranteed by a public entity. These figures include data on IMF repayments. Data are expressed as a percentage of government revenue (46). As debt services vary each year, we use a three-year average for 2022, 2023, and 2024. We consider three scenarios and analyse the potential if debt service was reduced to 5%, 10%, and 14% of the government revenue for countries in the dataset.

### *Study size*

The data were available for 116 countries.

For Scenario 1, we analysed the impact of reducing debt service to 5% of government revenue; only countries where the average debt service was greater than 5% were included.

For Scenario 2, we analysed the impact of reducing debt service to 10% of government revenue; only countries where the average debt service was greater than 10% were included.

For Scenario 3, we analysed the impact of reducing debt service to 14% of government revenue; only countries where the average debt service was greater than 14% were included.

### *Study design*

To translate the impact of debt services into human rights, we used Government Revenue and Development Estimations (GRADE)(25–28,47). The research underpinning GRADE modelled the effect of government revenue on several indicators, including basic and safe water, basic and safe sanitation, school attendance, number of teachers, and child and maternal survival. Governance indicators strongly affect the relationship between government revenues and outcomes, and the model uses a logistic function augmented with measures of governance quality, which allows each country to have a different 'S' shape as its government's quality varies (Figure 1). Additional revenue has a much more significant impact in lower-income[1] than in higher-income countries[2], and as per capita revenue increases, the possible gains decline rapidly (Figure 1).

Governance indicators also respond to increased government revenue and econometric methods have been used to quantify the effects of an increase in government revenue per capita on the quality of governance indicators. Additional revenue in any country has been shown to improve governance over the long run; this impact plateaus at approximately ten years (see Figure 2) (27). Thus, there is important feedback from government revenue to governance, and from governance to government revenue, and over time, as governance improves, government revenue will further increase. This effect was incorporated into the model and the online visualisation.

[1] Lower-income-countries includes low-income and lower-middle-income countries
[2] Higher-income-countries includes upper-middle- and high-income countries

Government revenue is taken from the UNU-WIDER Government Revenue Database, updated annually (48), and the six indicators of governance are taken from the Worldwide Governance Indicators (49). Population data, coverage of water, sanitation, and child and maternal survival are taken from the World Development Indicators, which are updated quarterly (50). Data on out-of-school and school-age populations from the UNESCO VIEW dataset and UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) were updated twice each year(51). The GRADE is updated annually.

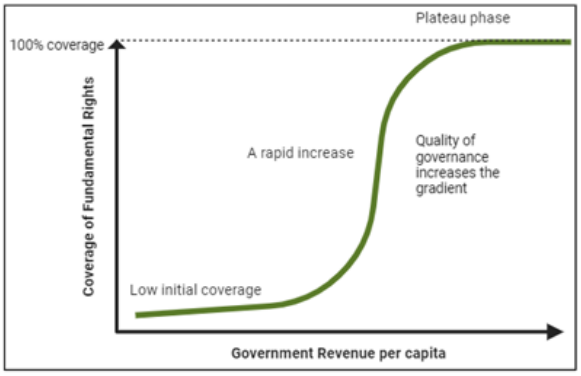


Figure 1. S shaped curve, showing the relationship between revenue and access to human rights




Figure 2. Improvement in governance with additional revenue

Ideally, we would show the impact of a reduction in debt over the long term to demonstrate its impact on governance. However, as debt service fluctuates over time, we choose the average debt service over three years (2022-2024) and show the impact on human rights in only one year (2020), accepting that we significantly underestimate the long-term impact.

However, to demonstrate the potential impact of a reduction in debt service on governance, benefits that would accrue over the longer time, we have projected the average debt service for 2022-2024 over 10 years and present the impact on governance indicators. As governance indicators vary from year to year, we present the difference between the indicators with and without debt relief in 2020 if debt service is reduced to 5% of government revenue (Scenario 1). Worldwide Governance indicators are measured on a scale of -2.5 to +2.5, with higher values corresponding to better governance. However, changes in these indicators are generally very small, and the changes may be positive or negative.

## Results

Data were available for 116 countries in the Debt Justice database. The average debt service over these three years ranged from 0.2 to 50.3% of the government revenue. When the debt service was above the selected thresholds, the impact of reducing the debt service to the threshold was analysed. The number of countries by region and income group is summarised in Table 1.

- For Scenario 1, we analysed the impact of reducing debt services to 5% of the government revenue. The debt service of 99 countries was above 5% of their government revenue, and we analysed 96 of these countries.
- For Scenario 2, we analysed the impact of reducing debt services to 10% of government revenue. The debt service of 67 countries was greater than 10%, and we analysed the impact of reducing debt service to 10% in these countries.
- For Scenario 3, we analysed the impact of reducing debt services to 14% of government revenue. The debt service of 43 countries was greater than 14%, and we analysed the impact of reducing debt service to 14% in these countries.

Summary data for each scenario were aggregated by region. GRADE translations were not available for all countries or indicators, and the number of countries with available data is presented in the summary statistics (Table 2). The year presented was generally 2020, but if data were unavailable, the most recent year was used, usually 2019.

The data for each scenario were aggregated by region, for water and sanitation, education, and survival. Data from the individual countries are available in the Appendix for Scenario 1, and upon request for Scenarios 2 and 3.

To demonstrate the scale of the potential and benefits for governance that would accrue over a longer time, we projected the average debt service for 2022-2024 over 10 years and present the impact on governance indicators for scenario 1. As governance indicators change in the absence of debt relief, we present the difference between the indicators with and without debt relief in 2020 if debt service is reduced to 5% of government revenue.

Table 1. The number of countries which would have debt relief in each of the three scenarios by region and income group

| | Scenario 1 | | | | | Scenario 2 | | | | Scenario 3 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Region | LIC | LMC | UMC | HIC | Total | LIC | LMC | UMC | Total | LIC | LMC | UMC | Total |
| East Asia & Pacific | 0 | 8 | 5 | 0 | 13 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Europe & Central Asia | 0 | 3 | 9 | 1 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Latin America & Caribbean | 0 | 4 | 16 | 0 | 20 | 0 | 3 | 11 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 7 |
| Middle East & North Africa | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 5 |
| South Asia | 0 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 19 | 18 | 3 | 0 | 40 | 14 | 16 | 2 | 32 | 8 | 13 | 2 | 23 |
| Total | 19 | 42 | 34 | 1 | **96** | 14 | 31 | 22 | **67** | 8 | 22 | 13 | **43** |

**Table 2 Summary data for each of the three scenarios**

| | Scenario 1 | | | Scenario 2 | | | Scenario 3 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variable | Number of observations | Mean | Sum | Number of observations | Mean | Sum | Number of observations | Mean | Sum |
| Additional revenue | 89 | 10.42% | | 61 | 8.88% | | 39 | 8.66% | |
| Additional people with access to basic water | 86 | 196,500 | 17,095,820 | 60 | 178,179 | 10,690,755 | 39 | 181,665 | 7,084,939 |
| As a percentage of those currently without basic water | 86 | 16.84% | | 60 | 17.58% | | 39 | 16.45% | |
| Additional people with access to basic sanitation | 85 | 396,237 | 33,680,183 | 61 | 371,508 | 22,661,990 | 39 | 410,377 | 16,004,720 |
| As a percentage of those currently without basic sanitation | 85 | 15.75% | | 61 | 12.45% | | 39 | 13.39% | |
| Additional children in school | 86 | 57,536 | 4,948,084 | 59 | 53,679 | 3,167,056 | 38 | 54,996 | 2,089,863 |
| As a percent of OOS children of primary school age | 85 | 6.17% | | 59 | 4.71% | | 38 | 4.26% | |
| As a percent of OOS children of lower secondary school age | 86 | 7.96% | | 59 | 6.69% | | 38 | 6.97% | |
| As a percent of OOS children of upper secondary school age | 86 | 3.85% | | 59 | 2.62% | | 38 | 2.42% | |
| Under five deaths averted | 89 | 665 | 59,209 | 61 | 625 | 38,106 | 39 | 707 | 27,589 |
| Deaths averted as % of all deaths | 89 | 6.42% | | 61 | 5.32% | | 39 | 4.92% | |
| Maternal deaths averted | 89 | 87 | 7,718 | 61 | 90 | 5,502 | 39 | 100 | 3,905 |
| Deaths averted as % of all deaths | 89 | 12.01% | | 61 | 10.39% | | 39 | 11.44% | |
| Additional teachers | 66 | 5,763 | 380,345 | 39 | 6,613 | 251,287 | 27 | 6,349 | 171,414 |

**Table 3. Additional people with access to water and sanitation by region and as a percentage of those without access**

| | Scenario 1 | | | | Scenario 2 | | | | Scenario 3 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Region | Additional people with access to basic water | As a percentage of those currently without basic water | Additional people with access to basic sanitation | As a percentage of those currently without basic sanitation | Additional people with access to basic water | As a percentage of those currently without basic water | Additional people with access to basic sanitation | As a percentage of those currently without basic sanitation | Additional people with access to basic water | As a percentage of those currently without basic water | Additional people with access to basic sanitation | As a percentage of those currently without basic sanitation |
| East Asia & Pacific | 4,148,068 | 7.20% | 6,298,282 | 19.90% | 1,914,201 | 5.67% | 2,961,626 | 10.03% | 556,305 | 7.10% | 934,359 | 8.97% |
| Europe & Central Asia | 271,508 | 15.49% | 305,292 | 21.30% | 23,115 | 24.90% | 44,154 | 9.62% | 2,006 | 4.28% | 1,530 | 4.42% |
| Latin America & Caribbean | 882,350 | 36.97% | 1,915,295 | 17.40% | 186,672 | 33.74% | 577,191 | 14.39% | 103,380 | 28.88% | 231,409 | 13.36% |
| Middle East & North Africa | 799,020 | 56.36% | 3,555,784 | 69.10% | 784,771 | 55.23% | 3,445,132 | 61.45% | 746,818 | 48.80% | 2,962,057 | 49.48% |
| South Asia | 4,872,140 | 57.42% | 10,739,322 | 42.68% | 3,829,758 | 51.19% | 8,673,577 | 39.96% | 3,101,064 | 55.84% | 7,130,709 | 45.98% |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 6,122,415 | 3.33% | 10,866,208 | 2.44% | 3,952,238 | 2.75% | 6,960,311 | 1.98% | 2,575,367 | 2.41% | 4,744,655 | 1.93% |
| Total | 17,095,820 | | 33,680,183 | | 10,690,755 | | 22,661,990 | | 7,084,939 | | 16,004,720 | |

**Table 4. The additional number of children who would attend school and as a percentage of those currently out of school**

| | Scenario 1 | | | | | Scenario 2 | | | | | Scenario 3 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Region | Additional children in school | As a percent of OOS children of primary school age | As a percent of OOS children of lower secondary school age | As a percent of OOS children of upper secondary school age | Additional teachers | Additional children in school | As a percent of OOS children of primary school age | As a percent of OOS children of lower secondary school age | As a percent of OOS children of upper secondary school age | Additional teachers | Additional children in school | As a percent of OOS children of primary school age | As a percent of OOS children of lower secondary school age | As a percent of OOS children of upper secondary school age | Additional teachers |
| East Asia & Pacific | 583,893 | 5.86% | 6.47% | 2.73% | 59,366 | 266,730 | 4.06% | 3.17% | 2.29% | 28,339 | 73,856 | 5.81% | 3.51% | 3.70% | 8,256 |
| Europe & Central Asia | 25,086 | 4.12% | 6.59% | 6.16% | 3,269 | 1,493 | 2.66% | 3.27% | 1.51% | 297 | 359 | 0.97% | 1.10% | 0.99% | 83 |
| Latin America & Caribbean | 129,679 | 6.35% | 7.43% | 4.38% | 19,103 | 26,442 | 2.91% | 4.74% | 2.61% | 1,707 | 9,932 | 1.71% | 2.36% | 1.16% | 594 |
| Middle East & North Africa | 300,634 | 17.37% | 25.42% | 6.96% | 64,705 | 238,226 | 13.85% | 20.22% | 5.44% | 53,590 | 186,040 | 10.90% | 15.84% | 4.17% | 35,875 |
| South Asia | 1,646,356 | 13.29% | 28.74% | 8.80% | 172,714 | 1,338,548 | 10.26% | 26.72% | 7.17% | 138,022 | 1,115,433 | 9.95% | 31.49% | 7.37% | 113,658 |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 2,262,435 | 4.73% | 4.49% | 2.30% | 61,188 | 1,295,616 | 3.57% | 3.36% | 1.71% | 29,333 | 704,243 | 2.46% | 2.48% | 1.32% | 12,948 |
| Total | 4,948,084 | | | | 380,345 | 3,167,056 | | | | 251,287 | 2,089,863 | | | | 171,414 |

**Table 5. The additional number of children and mothers who would survive by region and as a percentage of deaths**

| | Scenario 1 | | | | Scenario 2 | | | | Scenario 3 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Region | Additional children aged less than five years who survive | As a percentage of all deaths under five years | Additional mothers who survive | As a percentage of all maternal deaths | Additional children aged less than five years who survive | As a percentage of all deaths under five years | Additional mothers who survive | As a percentage of all maternal deaths | Additional children aged less than five years who survive | As a percentage of all deaths under five years | Additional mothers who survive | As a percentage of all maternal deaths |
| East Asia & Pacific | 4,824 | 4.30% | 731 | 8.56% | 2,025 | 4.82% | 524 | 10.31% | 724 | 7.20% | 91 | 15.36% |
| Europe & Central Asia | 1,023 | 9.37% | 72 | 18.20% | 88 | 8.47% | 6 | 9.94% | 7 | 5.69% | 0 | 0.00% |
| Latin America & Caribbean | 3,275 | 9.76% | 209 | 10.65% | 664 | 7.18% | 52 | 8.04% | 227 | 6.32% | 17 | 8.87% |
| Middle East & North Africa | 8,427 | 13.32% | 622 | 45.32% | 6,579 | 10.15% | 547 | 40.41% | 5,078 | 7.56% | 495 | 34.27% |
| South Asia | 13,113 | 21.19% | 2,698 | 39.11% | 10,598 | 16.75% | 2,244 | 32.12% | 8,778 | 16.45% | 1,900 | 33.04% |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 28,547 | 2.28% | 3,386 | 4.74% | 18,152 | 1.84% | 2,129 | 3.95% | 12,775 | 1.68% | 1,402 | 3.93% |
| Total | 59,209 | | 7,718 | | 38,106 | | 5,502 | | 27,589 | | 3,905 | |

### Worldwide governance indicators

If debt service in these countries were reduced to 5% of government revenue (Scenario 1), there would be an improvement across all governance indicators in all regions (Table 6).

Table 6 Change in Worldwide Governance Indicators if debt service is reduced to 5% of government revenue in these countries

| Region | Average change in control of corruption | Average change in government effectiveness | Average change in political stability | Average change in regulatory quality | Average change in rule of law |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| East Asia & Pacific | 0.008627 | 0.009324 | 0.005795 | 0.009175 | 0.005651 |
| Europe & Central Asia | 0.005806 | 0.006275 | 0.0039 | 0.006175 | 0.004464 |
| Latin America & Caribbean | 0.011055 | 0.011948 | 0.007425 | 0.011757 | 0.008364 |
| Middle East & North Africa | 0.025244 | 0.027344 | 0.016904 | 0.026512 | 0.01853 |
| South Asia | | | | | |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 0.02808 | 0.030349 | 0.01886 | 0.029862 | 0.021285 |
| Average of all | 0.01466 | 0.015845 | 0.009846 | 0.01559 | 0.011 |

## Discussion

### *Key results*

We hypothesised that additional government revenue equivalent to that diverted to service debts would significantly increase access to human rights, including the right to good governance. Three scenarios were used to demonstrate this, and the findings are summarised as follows:

**Scenario 1**: If debt service was reduced to 5% of government revenue in countries where it is above this threshold, an additional 33 million people would use basic sanitation (15.75% of those without access) and 17 million would drink clean water (16.84% of the people without access). Five million additional children would attend school, and there would be 380,000 additional teachers. 59 thousand additional children and almost eight thousand mothers would survive. All countries saw improvements in their governance indicators.

**Scenario 2**: If debt service was reduced to 10% of government revenue in those countries where it is above this threshold, an additional 23 million people would use basic sanitation (12.45% of those without access), and 11 million would drink clean water (17.58 % of the people without access). Three million additional children would attend school, and there would be 251,000 additional teachers. 38 thousand additional children and 5.5 thousand mothers would survive.

**Scenario 3**: If debt service was reduced to 14% of government revenue in those countries where it is above this threshold, an additional 16 million people would use basic sanitation (13.39% of those without access), and 7 million would drink clean water (16.45 % of the people without access). Two million additional children would attend school and there would be 171,000 additional teachers, almost 28 thousand additional children and four thousand mothers would survive.

### *Limitations*

As debt services vary considerably from year to year, it is challenging to establish the average amount of government revenue that each country diverts to service debt each year, which makes it difficult to provide accurate estimates of its impact on governance and human rights. We selected one year, but as

debt service takes place over many years, it is likely that this is a significant underestimate, especially when considering the long-term impact of foregone revenue on governance.

### *Interpretation*

The main contribution of this work is to definitively answer yes to the question – is debt service a human rights issue? and provide numbers to support this argument, indicating the scale of human rights deprivation which results from debt service. Another important contribution is to consider the channels through which debt services impact human rights.

Furthermore, this study provides the first estimates of the impact of debt service on governance indicators, confirming the OHCHR statement that good governance and human rights are entwined, providing data to support this statement, and building on the work of many others who have highlighted the importance of institutions for the effective use of debt relief (20,22).

### *Revenue*

Principle 3 of the Guiding Principles for Human Rights Impact Assessments for Economic Reform Policies states that '*the burden of proof is on the government and its economic partners to demonstrate that the proposed economic reform measures will help realise and not undermine the human rights of the state's population*'. Principle 5 and 6 state that '*States and their creditors must be guided by all applicable human rights law relating to civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights'* and 'both the government and their economic partners are obliged to demonstrate that these policies will not impact human rights' (10). Here, we demonstrate that debt services undermine human rights and demonstrate the scale of the impact in one year.

### *Representation*

This study confirms that if governments have additional revenue equivalent to the foregone revenue from debt services, governance quality and access to human rights improve. As governance quality is strongly associated with debt (30,31), reducing debt services could reverse the vicious cycle and drive a virtuous cycle.

As stated by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) -

*"Good governance and human rights are mutually reinforcing. Human rights standards and principles provide a set of values to guide the work of governments and other political and social actors. They also provide a set of performance standards against which these actors can be held accountable"*(52).

### *Redistribution*

Principle 7 of the Guiding Principles states that '*economic reform policies must not be discriminatory ….the impact of economic reforms on the most disenfranchised or marginalised individuals has to be assessed and alternative measures evaluated*' (10). Here, we show that if governments have additional revenue equivalent to debt service while incorporating the impact of governance in each country, a significant proportion of those who do not have access to their basic rights will gain access, thus demonstrating that reduced debt services increase redistribution and ensure the most marginalised gain access to their rights.

### *Regulation and Repricing*

If governments have additional revenue equivalent to debt services, Table 6 shows that there is an improvement in regulatory quality. Strengthened regulations are critical to ensuring access to basic human rights.

### *Future research*

Article 28 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states the 'Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realised' (53).

However, the cycle of debt, debt restructuring, and conditions which negatively impact human rights are driven by an international economic order which includes poorly judged lending after the 2008 global financial crisis and fluctuations in interest rates (8). The governments of countries which are major shareholders of the IMF have the most influence over their decisions and prioritise the repayment of debt to avoid losses for creditors from their countries (39). Shareholder governments also use their influence to further corporate interests, and liberalisation may be pushed by the IMF in a given country to serve the interests of a given corporation (54).

The next step for future research is to identify to whom debt service is paid and thus are duty bearers for the impact of debt service on basic human rights and assess whether they are contributing to an international order in which the rights and freedoms of all can be fully realised.

## Conclusion

Debt service resulted in millions of people not accessing their right to water, sanitation, education, or survival. Government revenue diverted to service debt negatively impacts governance and the ability of governments to provide public services, regulate harmful products, and redistribute resources within their countries, thus impeding them from meeting their human rights obligations. Thus, we conclude that debt is a human rights issue.

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## Appendix-The potential for human rights if debt service is reduced to 5% of government revenue – country level results

| Country | Revenue | Additional people with access to basic water | As a percentage of those currently without basic water | Additional people with access to basic sanitation | As a percentage of those currently without basic sanitation | Additional children in school | Additional teachers | As a percent of OOS children of primary school age | As a percent of OOS children of lower secondary school age | As a percent of OOS children of upper secondary school age | Additional children aged less than five years who survive | As a percentage of all deaths under five years | Additional mothers who survive | As a percentage of all maternal deaths |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **East Asia & Pacific** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cambodia | 3.5 | 49,274 | 1.04% | 100,867 | 1.97% | 7,386 | 775 | 0.93% | 1.26% | 0.65% | 74 | 0.88% | 9 | 1.26% |
| Fiji | 5.3 | 4,160 | 7.93% | 7,732 | 100.00% | 641 | NaN | 14.32% | 20.74% | 2.93% | 14 | 2.72% | 1 | 12.45% |
| Indonesia | 10.3 | 3,294,224 | 15.99% | 4,811,524 | 13.07% | 459,836 | 49,361 | 9.54% | 10.43% | 4.10% | 2,848 | 2.75% | 479 | 6.23% |
| Lao PDR | 18.0 | 114,236 | 10.63% | 246,494 | 16.51% | 14,385 | 2,505 | 4.61% | 3.26% | 3.59% | 281 | 3.74% | 34 | 13.92% |
| Marshall Islands | 2.6 | 170 | 3.42% | NaN | NaN | NaN | 7 | NaN | NaN | NaN | 1 | 4.53% | 0 | 0.00% |
| Mongolia | 26.1 | 92,062 | 19.27% | 257,000 | 24.18% | 7,029 | 774 | 19.83% | 10.70% | 12.68% | 328 | 28.83% | 16 | 54.93% |
| Myanmar | 5.8 | 142,346 | 1.46% | 269,912 | 1.90% | 42,085 | | 4.52% | 2.43% | 1.56% | 570 | 1.36% | 85 | 4.34% |
| Papua New Guinea | 4.5 | 37,648 | 0.71% | 45,181 | 0.57% | 8,092 | NaN | 1.82% | 1.52% | 0.86% | 124 | 1.11% | 17 | 3.60% |
| Philippines | 1.6 | 198,997 | 3.01% | 358,178 | 1.80% | 31,759 | 3,885 | 2.52% | 1.79% | 0.86% | 329 | 0.50% | 65 | 3.27% |
| Samoa | 5.9 | 815 | 4.65% | 4,512 | 64.99% | 183 | 18 | 7.94% | 18.51% | 4.13% | 5 | 5.25% | 0 | 7.26% |
| Tonga | 2.3 | 226 | 16.94% | 866 | 11.57% | 28 | 3 | 4.07% | 1.57% | 0.63% | 1 | 3.01% | 0 | 1.71% |
| Vanuatu | 0.6 | 405 | 1.48% | 506 | 0.34% | 29 | 3 | 0.23% | 0.17% | 0.10% | 1 | 0.43% | 0 | 1.02% |
| Viet Nam | 1.6 | 213,506 | 7.08% | 195,510 | 1.88% | 12,440 | 2,034 | 0.00% | 5.29% | 0.65% | 248 | 0.80% | 23 | 1.31% |
| **Regional total/averages** | | **4,148,068** | **7.20%** | **6,298,282** | **19.90%** | **583,893** | **59,366** | **5.86%** | **6.47%** | **2.73%** | **4,824** | **4.30%** | **731** | **8.56%** |
| **Europe & Central Asia** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Albania | 5.5 | 14,585 | 10.42% | 19,865 | 100.00% | 1,290 | 264 | 3.61% | 30.84% | 3.51% | 24 | 8.75% | 1 | 39.41% |
| Armenia | 5.7 | 842 | 100.00% | 36,402 | 21.41% | 1,803 | 344 | 2.88% | 3.55% | 4.99% | 33 | 8.46% | 2 | 18.86% |
| Azerbaijan | 3.6 | 5,662 | 1.23% | 478 | 0.12% | 2,704 | 770 | 1.09% | 7.48% | 10.86% | 102 | 3.39% | 2 | 5.46% |
| Bulgaria | 0.6 | 126 | 0.18% | 173 | 0.02% | 202 | 76 | 0.10% | 0.19% | 0.24% | 6 | 1.55% | 0 | 0.83% |
| Georgia | 3.2 | 3,445 | 3.49% | 3,001 | 0.57% | 482 | 187 | 0.00% | 0.00% | 37.36% | 18 | 3.94% | 1 | 6.42% |
| Kazakhstan | 0.6 | 1,783 | 0.21% | 543 | 0.14% | 0 | 113 | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 48 | 1.09% | 1 | 2.23% |
| Kyrgyz Republic | 3.4 | 19,817 | 3.63% | 44,745 | 32.23% | 2,822 | 142 | 6.72% | 5.06% | 1.48% | 42 | 1.48% | 5 | 6.63% |
| Moldova | 1.3 | 4,558 | 1.83% | 9,963 | 1.78% | 287 | 56 | 4.65% | 1.99% | 0.73% | 9 | 1.59% | 1 | 14.27% |
| Montenegro | 8.5 | 108 | 1.53% | 249 | 1.80% | 372 | 46 | 17.06% | 15.70% | 5.53% | 10 | 55.86% | 0 | 10.22% |
| North Macedonia | 11.2 | 8,628 | 18.42% | 6,406 | 18.51% | 1,722 | 407 | 4.65% | 5.24% | 4.77% | 34 | 28.11% | 0 | 0.00% |
| Tajikistan | 4.0 | 24,232 | 1.40% | 64,207 | 20.83% | 4,028 | 223 | 1.08% | 4.21% | 3.47% | 78 | 0.92% | 10 | 18.88% |
| Turkmenistan | 6.9 | 55,602 | 41.21% | 119,260 | 79.55% | NaN | NaN | NaN | NaN | NaN | 211 | 3.31% | 15 | 100.00% |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Uzbekistan | 2.8 | 132,120 | 17.79% | 0 | 0.00% | 9,375 | 641 | 7.56% | 4.80% | 0.94% | 407 | 3.33% | 33 | 13.41% |
| **Regional total/averages** | | **271,508** | **15.49%** | **305,292** | **21.30%** | **25,086** | **3,269** | **4.12%** | **6.59%** | **6.16%** | **1,023** | **9.37%** | **72** | **18.20%** |
| **Latin America & Caribbean** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Belize | 12.5 | 6,187 | 97.92% | 8,378 | 17.99% | 546 | 151 | 10.55% | 8.21% | 3.04% | 21 | 25.20% | 1 | 11.20% |
| Bolivia | 6.6 | 102,499 | 12.99% | 163,740 | 4.01% | 10,421 | 762 | 5.06% | 3.91% | 2.21% | 326 | 4.83% | 48 | 11.35% |
| Colombia | 4.6 | 89,590 | 7.01% | 204,191 | 6.34% | 22,305 | 4,893 | 3.95% | 4.85% | 2.95% | 525 | 5.39% | 22 | 4.24% |
| Costa Rica | 8.7 | 43 | 0.42% | 8,240 | 7.20% | 2,722 | 734 | 26.65% | 11.29% | 6.66% | 78 | 14.55% | 0 | 0.00% |
| Dominican Republic | 11.9 | 148,153 | 39.31% | 302,988 | 20.05% | 13,212 | 1,311 | 4.41% | 8.77% | 4.20% | 408 | 5.46% | 22 | 10.16% |
| Ecuador | 4.5 | 80,586 | 7.17% | 238,942 | 0.01% | 7,251 | 1,886 | 10.66% | 7.91% | 1.38% | 288 | 6.16% | 18 | 8.61% |
| El Salvador | 15.6 | 122,751 | 95.16% | 274,736 | 24.88% | 12,648 | NaN | 3.55% | 4.85% | 3.60% | 202 | 15.49% | 21 | 51.32% |
| Grenada | 8.3 | 590 | 2.64% | 3,150 | 30.61% | 20 | 18 | 0.00% | 0.00% | 21.02% | 4 | 10.66% | 0 | 0.00% |
| Guatemala | 4.5 | 78,599 | 7.78% | 191,254 | 3.54% | 13,179 | 856 | 1.75% | 0.88% | 0.74% | 190 | 2.11% | 22 | 5.68% |
| Honduras | 5.9 | 75,321 | 17.27% | 172,389 | 10.50% | 6,987 | NaN | 1.24% | 0.88% | 0.96% | 175 | 4.74% | 18 | 11.64% |
| Mexico | 2.4 | 139,277 | 34.54% | 108,474 | 1.14% | 31,510 | 8,102 | 6.42% | 2.44% | 0.87% | 805 | 3.00% | 21 | 1.82% |
| Paraguay | 9.0 | 27,137 | 100.00% | 192,682 | 39.99% | 7,636 | NaN | 1.46% | 2.21% | 2.71% | 196 | 7.55% | 14 | 14.19% |
| St. Lucia | 3.2 | 30 | 0.47% | 995 | 3.35% | 41 | 14 | 8.92% | 2.14% | 1.41% | 1 | 2.41% | 0 | 0.00% |
| St. Vincent and the Grenadines | 9.5 | NaN | NaN | NaN | NaN | 53 | 12 | NaN | 49.56% | 10.95% | 2 | 11.75% | 0 | 5.46% |
| Suriname | 21.6 | 11,586 | 94.95% | 45,137 | 73.98% | 1,148 | 365 | 4.29% | 3.52% | 3.04% | 53 | 27.15% | 3 | 24.08% |
| **Regional total/averages** | | **882,350** | **36.97%** | **1,915,295** | **17.40%** | **129,679** | **19,103** | **6.35%** | **7.43%** | **4.38%** | **3,275** | **9.76%** | **209** | **10.65%** |
| **Middle East & North Africa** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Djibouti | 23.1 | 26,213 | 10.04% | 54,076 | 14.91% | 2,592 | 422 | 2.01% | 2.98% | 3.37% | 71 | 5.21% | 8 | 14.51% |
| Egypt | 22.8 | 601,805 | 100.00% | 2,869,319 | 100.00% | 259,645 | 53,744 | 65.19% | 57.99% | 13.28% | 7,170 | 14.77% | 495 | 100.00 % |
| Jordan | 15.7 | 115,844 | 100.00% | 196,204 | 61.48% | 21,958 | 4,657 | 2.26% | 3.48% | 4.13% | 445 | 12.20% | 36 | 36.63% |
| Tunisia | 21.6 | 55,158 | 15.41% | 436,185 | 100.00% | 16,439 | 5,882 | 0% | 37.25% | 7.04% | 740 | 21.10% | 83 | 30.14% |
| **Regional total/averages** | | **799,020** | **56.36%** | **3,555,784** | **69.10%** | **300,634** | **64,705** | **17.37%** | **25.42%** | **6.95%** | **8,426** | **13.32%** | **622** | **45.32%** |
| **South Asia** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bangladesh | 7.7 | 671,394 | 17.44% | 1,080,490 | 1.41% | 190,536 | 21,140 | 7.25% | 4.99% | 2.07% | 1,181 | 1.36% | 140 | 3.86% |
| Bhutan | 24.1 | 20,780 | 100.00% | 4,351 | 2.40% | 3,620 | 417 | 39.22% | 27.29% | 9.57% | 27 | 10.15% | 4 | 72.34% |
| Maldives | 20.6 | 2,366 | 100.00% | 4,321 | 100.00% | 430 | 836 | 10.07% | 5.99% | 3.88% | 29 | 59.48% | 1 | 16.34% |
| Pakistan | 34.0 | 3,239,418 | 14.57% | 8,258,303 | 9.59% | 1,399,728 | 138,782 | 9.89% | 5.45% | 5.00% | 11,169 | 2.33% | 2,477 | 20.70% |
| Sri Lanka | 30.1 | 938,182 | 55.09% | 1,391,856 | 100.00% | 52,042 | 11,539 | 0.00% | 100.00% | 23.47% | 707 | 32.62% | 76 | 82.28% |
| **Regional total/averages** | | **4,872,140** | **57.42%** | **10,739,322** | **42.68%** | **1,646,356** | **172,714** | **13.29%** | **28.74%** | **8.80%** | **13,113** | **21.19%** | **2,698** | **39.11%** |
| **Sub-Saharan Africa** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Angola | 45.3 | 1,337,784 | 9.34% | 3,024,825 | 18.72% | 206,131 | | 5.85% | 4.52% | 5.56% | 10,185 | 10.76% | 857 | 29.67% |
| Benin | 18.4 | 135,728 | 3.10% | 113,724 | 1.08% | 72,737 | 2,137 | 13.93% | 5.46% | 2.83% | 363 | 0.90% | 171 | 7.00% |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Burkina Faso | 2.3 | 20,945 | 0.18% | 22,007 | 0.13% | 18,035 | 1,242 | 1.07% | 0.61% | 0.37% | 76 | 0.11% | 19 | 0.92% |
| Cabo Verde | 16.4 | 10,898 | 16.02% | 19,588 | 15.07% | 1,491 | 248 | 16.84% | 12.03% | 5.27% | 24 | 15.57% | 2 | 42.84% |
| Cameroon | 18.0 | 202,364 | 2.23% | 555,678 | 3.79% | 86,188 | NaN | 5.35% | 3.24% | 3.00% | 1,077 | 1.58% | 163 | 3.94% |
| Central African Republic | 5.5 | NaN | NaN | 2,758 | 0.06% | 4,472 | NaN | 0.52% | 0.31% | 0.56% | 32 | 0.14% | 5 | 0.28% |
| Chad | 8.6 | 6,682 | 0.08% | 38,991 | 0.28% | 17,207 | 2,794 | 0.58% | 0.41% | 1.01% | 216 | 0.26% | 21 | 0.28% |
| Comoros | 7.1 | 280 | 0.18% | 1,186 | 0.23% | 910 | NaN | 1.57% | 1.67% | 1.09% | 13 | 1.05% | 1 | 2.12% |
| Congo | 16.5 | 33,321 | 2.23% | 112,351 | 2.48% | 9,916 | NaN | 2.63% | 1.68% | 2.66% | 481 | 6.08% | 41 | 8.21% |
| Côte d'Ivoire | 17.6 | 444,177 | 5.69% | 885,364 | 5.05% | 99,820 | 5,611 | 7.09% | 3.78% | 3.06% | 1,361 | 1.92% | 204 | 4.63% |
| Dem. Rep. Congo | 1.7 | NaN | NaN | 19,909 | 0.03% | 21,986 | 1,308 | 0.33% | 0.32% | 0.51% | 198 | 0.06% | 26 | 0.12% |
| Eswatini | 2.5 | 4,515 | 1.31% | 8,972 | 2.13% | 386 | | 0.83% | 1.85% | 2.35% | 16 | 0.99% | 1 | 1.91% |
| Ethiopia | 14.5 | 567,407 | 0.96% | 705,901 | 0.68% | 339,965 | NaN | 4.74% | 3.24% | 1.82% | 1,660 | 0.86% | 264 | 2.41% |
| Gabon | 17.5 | 62,119 | 18.48% | 136,921 | 11.90% | NaN | NaN | NaN | NaN | NaN | 261 | 10.04% | 22 | 14.84% |
| Ghana | 13.2 | 551,277 | 12.06% | 503,481 | 2.05% | 98,348 | 9,294 | 5.04% | 10.76% | 4.56% | 753 | 1.83% | 106 | 4.52% |
| Guinea | 10.7 | 32,333 | 0.68% | 62,567 | 0.67% | 29,508 | 1,311 | 2.27% | 1.55% | 1.45% | 207 | 0.44% | 38 | 1.49% |
| Guinea-Bissau | 16.9 | 1,701 | 0.21% | 5,773 | 0.35% | 5,756 | NaN | 2.65% | 2.98% | 3.18% | 44 | 0.90% | 5 | 1.12% |
| Kenya | 15.1 | 682,348 | 3.42% | 1,409,845 | 4.03% | 168,239 | NaN | 7.95% | 20.61% | 7.95% | 1,450 | 2.58% | 198 | 2.57% |
| Lesotho | 10.2 | 26,076 | 4.16% | 20,951 | 0.03% | 3,851 | 251 | 15.94% | 7.42% | 2.93% | 85 | 1.84% | 10 | 2.61% |
| Liberia | 4.2 | 2,544 | 0.20% | 3,070 | 0.07% | 4,664 | 413 | 1.12% | 0.98% | 1.03% | 36 | 0.28% | 4 | 0.36% |
| Madagascar | 9.6 | 32,098 | 0.24% | 42,068 | 0.17% | 60,414 | 4,224 | 6.89% | 2.80% | 1.36% | 165 | 0.28% | 21 | 0.60% |
| Malawi | 21.7 | 125,187 | 2.16% | 78,131 | 0.55% | 113,004 | NaN | 18.76% | 10.73% | 3.30% | 395 | 1.41% | 48 | 1.95% |
| Mali | 4.0 | 26,439 | 0.71% | 58,593 | 0.51% | 18,915 | 1,992 | 0.72% | 0.52% | 0.60% | 235 | 0.26% | 36 | 0.93% |
| Mauritania | 14.4 | 58,518 | 4.59% | 100,325 | 4.45% | 11,025 | 1,566 | 2.71% | 2.36% | 1.95% | 213 | 3.39% | 23 | 3.38% |
| Mauritius | 13.0 | 125 | 7.60% | NaN | NaN | 983 | 140 | 0.00% | 26.52% | 5.49% | 24 | 10.89% | 0 | 2.06% |
| Mozambique | 8.6 | 93,392 | 0.82% | 157,422 | 0.80% | 65,187 | 5,766 | 8.24% | 2.22% | 1.31% | 459 | 0.56% | 113 | 7.55% |
| Niger | 7.5 | 36,095 | 0.28% | 47,119 | 0.23% | 56,163 | 1,723 | 1.57% | 1.16% | 0.81% | 156 | 0.12% | 31 | 0.63% |
| Nigeria | 6.5 | 495,465 | 1.06% | 933,750 | 0.78% | 272,195 | NaN | 1.37% | 1.37% | 1.53% | 3,465 | 0.39% | 412 | 0.50% |
| Rwanda | 3.5 | 46,779 | 0.90% | 39,709 | 0.97% | 11,166 | 511 | 3.62% | 5.57% | 0.94% | 45 | 0.28% | 8 | 0.75% |
| São Tomé and Principe | 2.5 | 517 | 1.09% | NaN | NaN | 155 | NaN | 3.08% | 3.42% | 0.94% | 2 | 1.68% | 0 | 4.46% |
| Senegal | 17.6 | 306,840 | 12.37% | 293,529 | 4.13% | 88,777 | 7,342 | 4.32% | 4.73% | 3.21% | 529 | 2.43% | 128 | 9.09% |
| Sierra Leone | 12.0 | 23,634 | 0.79% | 13,734 | 0.20% | 26,446 | 1,394 | 5.99% | 4.86% | 2.18% | 130 | 0.45% | 21 | 1.80% |
| South Africa | 5.0 | 34,372 | 0.96% | 390,919 | 3.09% | 31,546 | 4,618 | 2.20% | 3.35% | 1.87% | 1,006 | 2.50% | 17 | 1.09% |
| Sudan | 12.7 | 59,667 | 0.34% | 176,675 | 0.63% | 58,652 | NaN | 1.05% | 0.86% | 1.60% | 954 | 1.11% | 83 | 2.01% |
| Tanzania | 8.3 | 257,572 | 1.06% | 276,341 | 0.66% | 111,929 | 6,105 | 2.75% | 1.39% | 0.91% | 914 | 0.82% | 134 | 2.47% |
| The Gambia | 13.4 | 12,804 | 2.61% | 8,575 | 0.63% | 7,066 | 453 | 4.74% | 5.56% | 2.63% | 39 | 0.91% | 5 | 1.21% |
| Togo | 8.9 | 28,592 | 1.10% | 40,897 | 0.61% | 15,235 | 746 | 7.97% | 3.10% | 1.57% | 113 | 0.63% | 13 | 1.16% |
| Uganda | 7.1 | 145,819 | 0.74% | 268,725 | 0.75% | 72,465 | NaN | 2.83% | 1.68% | 0.99% | 371 | 0.51% | 45 | 0.97% |
| Zambia | 15.3 | 216,321 | 3.30% | 285,836 | 2.22% | 51,503 | NaN | 4.80% | 5.17% | 2.94% | 794 | 2.01% | 90 | 10.50% |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Regional total/averages** | **6,122,415** | **3.33%** | **10,866,208** | **2.44%** | **2,262,435** | **61,188** | **4.73%** | **4.49%** | **2.30%** | **28,547** | **2.28%** | **3,386** | **4.74%** |
| Global total/averages | 17,095,820 | 16.84% | 33,680,183 | 15.75% | 4,948,084 | 380,345 | 6.17% | 7.96% | 3.85% | 59,209 | 6.43% | 7,718 | 12.02% |