

NEWSLETTER

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FSDE Launches Gender Mainstreaming Initiative with Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Support

FSDE Ethiopia has initiated the "Sustaining Action for Gender Equality" (SAGE) project, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. SAGE aims to promote gender equality in financial services by onboarding gender experts, integrating gender perspectives into FSDE programs, and providing technical support to enhance women's financial inclusion. In addition, FSDE will organize the G7 Partnership convening for Women's Digital Financial Inclusion in Ethiopia, fostering operational cooperation and highlighting progress.



Ethiopian Insurtech Accelerator Holds Session with Increased Regulator Engagement

The BimaLab Ethiopia Insurtech Accelerator program successfully concluded its second and third immersion sessions at Creative Hub Ethiopia, following the initial session in December 2023. This program, launched in collaboration with FSD Ethiopia, FSD Africa, and Tellistic, provides vital support to insurtech startups in Ethiopia. The sessions covered various topics, including product management, consumer discovery, regulatory compliance, and sales and growth. The program aims to stimulate the development of innovative insurance solutions in the country.

TOP NEWS

- Regional Financial Inclusion Frameworks Finalized Across Ethiopia
- Ethiopian Insurtech Accelerator Holds Session with Increased Regulator Engagement
- ESX Hosts Inaugural Treasurers Forum

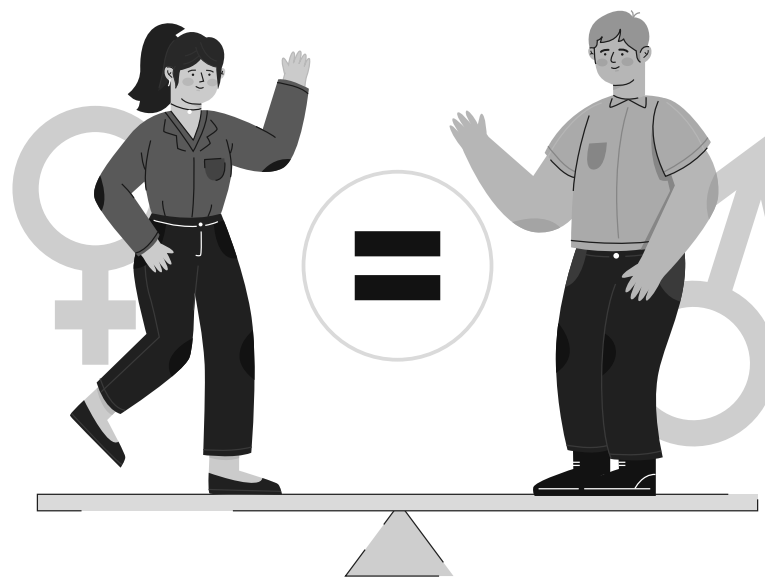


Project Spotlight

FSDE Launches Gender Mainstreaming Initiative with Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

FSDE Ethiopia has launched the “Sustaining Action for Gender Equality” (SAGE) project. The initiative focuses on promoting gender equality in financial services. The project is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s Financial Services for the Poor program. Through SAGE, FSDE aims to strengthen its efforts towards gender mainstreaming and achieve its mission of promoting inclusive financial sector development.

Under this grant FSDE will onboard gender experts who will be responsible for leading the mainstreaming efforts across its core programs. The primary goal of the gender team is to strategically integrate gender into the planning, implementing, and monitoring of all current and future FSDE programs. The team will provide technical support and develop tools and guidelines to support partners and financial service providers to encourage gender intentionality to improve women’s financial inclusion and economic empowerment.



As part of this initiative, FSDE will be responsible for organizing the G7 Partnership convening for Women’s Digital Financial Inclusion in Ethiopia. The primary goals of this partnership is to improve operational cooperation in the country, document efforts to support digital financial inclusion in Ethiopia, and showcase the strengths of the G7P. This will enable partners to share progress, align their respective work, and complement each other’s efforts. ■

FSDE will onboard gender experts who will be responsible for leading the mainstreaming efforts.



Regional Financial Inclusion Frameworks Finalized Across Ethiopia

After months of collaborative work, customized regional frameworks seeking to expand access to vital financial services have been established across Ethiopia's 11 regions and two city administrations.

FSD Ethiopia has partnered with the National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE) to facilitate the development of a regional implementation framework for 11 regions. The aim of this framework is to align with the National Financial Inclusion Strategy at the country level, while also customizing it to the unique context, challenges, opportunities, and targets of each individual region.

The development of targeted initiatives requires careful consideration of regional differences and community factors to tailor initiatives to specific community needs. To further enhance the framework, global best practices from countries with diverse financial inclusion models were also taken into account.

Global best practices from countries with diverse financial inclusion models were also taken into account.

In November 2023, the Secretariat team traveled to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on a week-long study tour organized by FSD Ethiopia. They met with Islamic finance providers, universities, and the Malaysian Financial Planning Council to explore diverse models expanding access.

From September to November 2023, FSD Ethiopia facilitated an online certificate course on Digital Money technologies through the Digital Frontiers Institute. 15 participants garnered insights on digital payments ecosystems and their role in realizing the NFIS vision. ■



The inclusion of the NBE provided valuable guidance on regulatory compliance for the development of locally tailored insurance products and models.

Ethiopian Insurtech Accelerator Holds Session with Increased Regulator Engagement

The BimaLab Ethiopia Insurtech Accelerator program concluded its second and third rounds of immersion sessions at Creative Hub Ethiopia, building on insights from its first session in December 2023.

The BimaLab program, launched by FSD Ethiopia in collaboration with FSD Africa and Tellistic, aims to support the development of insurtech startups in Ethiopia. Its inaugural immersion was held from December 5-7 and brought together 15 selected startup and insurance company cohorts.

During the initial session, participants received an introduction to the accelerator and Ethiopia's insurance landscape. They familiarized themselves with the BimaLab platform and evaluated their current progress. The program was officially launched on December 6th at an event in Sheraton Addis Hotel, where the 10 cohorts pitched their solutions.

For its second immersion, held between January 09 and January 11, 2024, the program enhanced its focus on product management and consumer discovery through presentations, group work, and field visits. Notably, staff from the National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE) participated in a dedicated regulatory discussion.

The inclusion of the NBE provided beneficial guidance on regulatory compliance for developing locally tailored insurance products and models.

The third round immersion session was held for three days from January 30, 2023, during which cohorts learned about sales and growth. ■

Partner Spotlight

Ethiopia Commences Central Securities Depository Project in Partnership with Montran

Ethiopia took a significant step towards modernizing its capital market infrastructure with the commencement of the Central Securities Depository (CSD) project. The National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE) announced on January 16, 2023, that it has initiated the design and implementation of the CSD Project in collaboration with Montran, a technology solution provider based in the United States.

The CSD plays a vital role in enabling modern monetary operations and securities trading for the upcoming Ethiopia Securities Exchange, according to the NBE. The project launch follows a kick-off meeting held on December 13, 2023, which brought together key stakeholders from Ethiopia, Kenya, the United States, Georgia, and China, displaying the global interest and collaboration surrounding this ambitious initiative.

The meeting provided a comprehensive overview of various aspects, including stakeholder engagement, project overview, risk mitigation strategies, project governance, and the phased approach for implementation.

The discussions during the meeting outlined the next steps, such as an on-site visit by the project team, design and development phases, approval and revision processes, and the closure of the inception phase. The ultimate objective of the project is to support the establishment of the ESX Stock Exchange by mid-2024 and provide a modern automated post-trade infrastructure encompassing government and corporate securities.



**The CSD plays a
vital role in enabling
modern monetary
operations.**

The kick-off meeting served multiple purposes, fostering collaboration, and aligning efforts among all project stakeholders from the start. It emphasized the significance of teamwork and collective efforts for the project's success. Moreover, it aimed to establish a shared understanding of the project's goals, objectives, scope, timelines, and deliverables, ensuring that all stakeholders work together towards a common goal. ■



ESX Hosts Inaugural Treasurers Forum

The Ethiopian Securities Exchange (ESX) organized its inaugural Treasurers Forum on January 11, 2024, in Addis Ababa, with support from FSD Africa, held at the Sheraton Hotel in Addis Ababa. The event brought together key stakeholders from the financial sector to discuss the evolving role and opportunities for treasury functions in Ethiopia's emerging capital markets.

The forum began with opening remarks by Michael Habte, the Chief Operating Officer of the ESX. Michael emphasized the importance of treasury functions in driving financial growth and innovation, setting the stage for insightful discussions throughout the event.

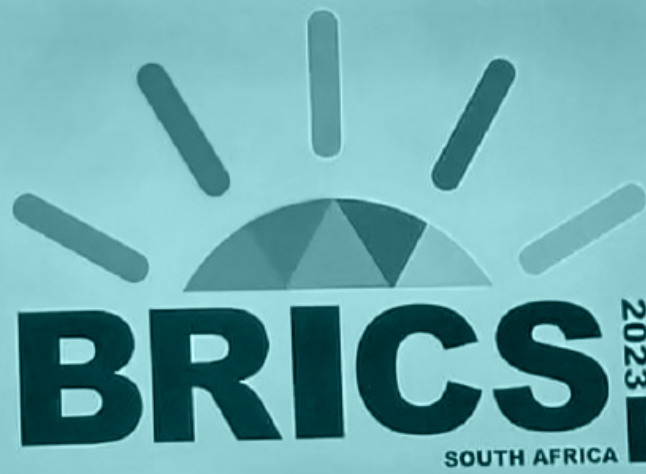
The Treasurers Forum provided a platform for treasury professionals, industry experts, and regulators to engage in discussions during the Q&A session. Led by Yodit Kassa, Chief Market Development and Communications Officer at the ESX, the session addressed pressing questions and fostered knowledge-sharing among the participants.

ESX officials expressed their appreciation to all participants, speakers, and sponsors for their contributions to the success of the inaugural Treasurers Forum. They reiterated their commitment to organizing future events that continue to drive progress, foster collaboration, and support the growth and stability of Ethiopia's financial sector.

The Treasurers Forum provided a platform for treasury professionals, industry experts, and regulators to engage in discussions during the Q&A session.

Attendees had the opportunity to gain experience from experts, gaining a deeper understanding of critical financial concepts and strategies.

FSD Ethiopia has also participated in the insightful event as a stakeholder who actively work with both ESX and FSD Africa in bringing market-based solution for Ethiopia's nascent capital market. ■



Country Update

Ethiopia officially joins BRICS bloc

Ethiopia officially became a member of the BRICS group of emerging economies on January 1, 2023. This came after the country was granted admission by member states to join the bloc during the 15th BRICS Summit held in Johannesburg, South Africa, last August.

In a statement released on its official account on X (formerly Twitter), the Ethiopian Foreign Ministry said "Today marks a historic day as Ethiopia has officially joined the important BRICS partnership platform."

It added that Ethiopia's membership "recognizes its rich multilateral contributions to promoting international peace, security and prosperity, as well as its continued leadership and commitment to South-South cooperation."

Several other nations, including Argentina, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UAE and Iran, had also received offers to join BRICS during the August summit. In total, around 40 countries had expressed interest in becoming members.

Ethiopia was granted admission by member states to join the bloc during the 15th BRICS Summit held in Johannesburg, South Africa.

As the rotating presidency of BRICS in 2023, South Africa's government said it had received "formal expressions of interest" from 23 nations seeking to join, such as Belarus, Cuba and Palestine.

Currently, BRICS covers over 42 percent of the world's population and 30 percent of the global GDP. ■