

TFWA

Trade Facilitation
West Africa



REGIONAL GENDER ASSESSMENT



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FUNDED BY



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the
Netherlands



IMPLEMENTED BY



WORLD BANK GROUP
THE WORLD BANK IFC International
Finance Corporation

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Trade Facilitation West Africa (TFWA) Program is an initiative driven by multiple development partners¹ to improve trade facilitation in West Africa. Its objective is to improve the free and efficient movement of goods in the region and internationally, by reducing the time and cost of trade borne by the private sector in West Africa, and by strengthening regional trading networks' ability to take advantage of these improvements.

Started in September 2018, the five-year program is managed by the World Bank Group and the German Development Cooperation Agency (GIZ), the program's implementing partners, with strategic oversight and guidance provided by a steering committee chaired by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission and supported by the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) Commission as deputy chair. Key areas for support under the program include: (i) ensuring that trade facilitation measures are improved and more efficiently implemented; (ii) improving the movement of goods along selected corridors; and (iii) reducing the barriers for small-scale traders, with an emphasis on improving conditions for women traders.

**5-year trade
facilitation
initiative**
(September 2018–June 2023)



The TFWA Program places great emphasis on the gender ramifications of trade facilitation and regional integration. All members of the program's Steering Committee identified gender as an institutional priority, and committed to using the TFWA Program as a vehicle to address the specific challenges affecting women traders and entrepreneurs along West African trade corridors. In turn, this revealed the need for gaining a better understanding of those challenges and of the underlying policy and institutional frameworks in which they come into place.



**Gender identified
as institutional
priority**

¹ At the time this brochure was produced, the European Union, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and Germany have provided financial contributions.

As part of the preliminary analytics, the TFWA Program supported a **Regional Gender Assessment to inform the design of program activities**. The exercise, unprecedented in West Africa for both scope and ambition, aimed at gathering qualitative data and anecdotal evidence on existing constraints affecting women traders and entrepreneurs in the region, at identifying the institutional needs and priorities of key program stakeholders, and at reviewing current initiatives in the region on the trade and gender front.

The assessment methodology encompassed an extensive literature review, followed by key informant interviews and stakeholder dialogue sessions in-country. Interviews and dialogue sessions involved several program stakeholders at the local, national, and regional levels, ranging from government agencies (Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Agriculture, and Ministry of Gender, as well as trade facilitation agencies) to private sector and civil society stakeholders (chambers of commerce, business associations, and relevant NGOs), to development partners. Finally, the Gender Assessment also leveraged the sex-disaggregated empirical findings of a separate TFWA Program diagnostic—a regional field survey on Small-Scale Cross-Border Trade (SSCBT). This covered 24 border and market sites along six priority TFWA Program corridors, and involved the collection of just under 3,000 quantitative observations plus about 100 focus group discussions with TFWA Program public and private stakeholders, again with great emphasis placed on gender.

TFWA SSCBT Survey

24  **Border & market sites**

 **3000** **Observations**

 **+** **100** **Focus Group Discussions**





The TFWA Program’s Regional Gender Assessment literature review suggested that a solid understanding of the role of women in West African trade has been historically compromised by limited and somewhat outdated information. Women have been known to be important players of intraregional trade in West Africa, and to be traditionally active in certain categories of traded goods including raw agricultural products, processed food items, as well as small consumer goods and textiles. They were understood to play a variety of roles along trade value chains, ranging from local vendors to market managers, food processors and logistical services providers, yet appeared to also engage in small-scale trade including by traveling relatively long distances along regional trade corridors.

Women are important players of intraregional trade 

SSCBT survey findings confirmed that the proportion of female traders in West Africa is indeed significant, albeit not as high as it might be expected – women typically exhibit lower education levels than men, cluster in certain product categories, and travel shorter distances. In most surveyed corridors, around 40 percent of respondents were women, with the notable exception of Lagos-Kano-Niamey, which instead featured a very low share of female interviewees (14 percent). Women appeared to be older than their male counterparts, with the proportion of the population younger than 34 being lower for women in all corridors. Women also exhibited lower levels of education, except for Tema-Ouagadougou—50 percent or more of women traders along each corridor have no formal (or informal) education, a figure that reaches 62 percent in Lomé-Ouagadougou and Cotonou-Niamey. Men tend to have achieved higher levels of education overall and are more likely to have completed primary and/or secondary school.

TFWA SSCBT Survey

40% Women respondents under 34

50-62% Women traders without formal/informal education

Agricultural commodities are widely traded across the region, and women tend to trade more food items. Still, the rise of trade in consumer goods is noticeable compared with the previous literature. The only traded sector where the difference was clear was livestock, which is dominated by men. Clothing and fresh produce are principally the products that are the most traded by women, but processed foods and beverages and consumer durables represent the main specialization for a large subset of women traders. The analysis of trade patterns also showed that both women and men travel extensively along regional corridors, although average distances covered are shorter for females (293 km) compared to males (470 km).



Women tend to trade **more food items**



Livestock
trade is dominated by men



Women travel shorter distances on average
293 km vs 470 km

Women are present in all sectors of the value chain



The TFWA SSCBT survey revealed that women are present in all segments of the value chain, yet earn less, stay informal more frequently, and are thus more likely to be necessity traders than men. The analysis of West Africa’s trading networks conducted as part of the survey suggests that direct trade from producer to consumer is not very common, and that most exchanges instead take place at the trader-to-consumer or trader-to-trader level. Women tend to be more active in trader-to-consumer transactions, but are less prominent at the producer-to-buyer level (whether buyers are consumers or traders), though gender-based differences are not extremely large.

The results also show that many women earn less than \$100/month. In the Lomé-Ouagadougou and Tema-Ouagadougou corridors, for instance, the largest single share of women traders reported a monthly trade income of less \$50. Women are also more likely to run unregistered businesses, with an average registration rate of 21.6% (compared to men’s 42.4%) meaning that between 63 and 88 percent of females are operating informally across the surveyed corridors. The findings ultimately suggest that women are often “necessity traders”, switching from the agriculture sector to trading activities in search of income-earning opportunities to meet essential needs.



Many women earn less than \$100/month

Major trade facilitation constraints cited by women interviewed for the TFWA Program survey included poor border and market infrastructure, limited knowledge of border-crossing rules and procedures, and abuse – however, many challenges appeared to be widespread regardless of gender. In four out of six corridors, more than 80 percent of women responded that they have no knowledge of border crossing procedures, although the level of understanding appeared to be extremely low for men as well. Overall, 90+ percent of traders (male and female) declared to have limited or no knowledge of applicable provisions, including those adopted at the regional level, such as the ECOWAS Tariff Liberalization Scheme (ETLS). Harassment at the borders also appeared to be widespread regardless of gender: 40 percent of traders indicated that they had been exposed to bribery along most of the surveyed corridors, while the rate of issuance of formal receipts was apparently quite low and estimated at 26 percent to 47 percent, on average. Women appeared to be slightly less exposed to these abuses though, presumably due to their lower trade volumes and thus smaller amounts of managed cash.

Very low awareness of trade rules and provisions
90%+ traders have limited / no knowledge



Women view infrastructure
–lighting, fencing, and toilets–
more negatively

Sexual harassment of women came across as low in the quantitative survey, though the phenomenon does occur. There is likely a significant level of underreporting of sexual harassment, with women not feeling comfortable confiding information about verbal or physical abuse to individual surveyors, but more open to discuss such issues in group settings as part of FGDs. Finally, women covered by the survey surprisingly reported feeling generally safer than men. With that said, women were more critical of infrastructure with security and safety implications, such lighting and fencing, in addition to toilets.

Gender mainstreaming into trade policy-making and programming is still in its infancy in West Africa, both at the regional and national level – ECOWAS and UEMOA have taken important steps toward integrating gender issues into their structures, strategies, and activities, but much remains to be done. Interviews and dialogue sessions held with TFWA Program stakeholders as part of the Regional Gender Assessment process suggest that, overall, the policy and institutional arena under which the TFWA Program operates is currently not sufficiently responsive to gender. In the ECOWAS Commission, gender work is consolidated under the Gender and Development Center (ECGD) based in Dakar; the center is mandated to lead on all trade and gender activities conducted by ECOWAS, among others, and is thus also responsible for the design and implementation of the ECOWAS Gender and Trade Plan of Action 2015-2020, whose implementation appears to have suffered from financial constraints. Among various initiatives currently ongoing, the Informal Trade Regulation Support Program (ITRSP) in the ECOWAS Region appears to be particularly relevant as it places major emphasis on the facilitation of regional small-scale cross-border trade, in which women play an important role.

In the UEMOA Commission, gender work is led by a Gender Directorate, in charge of mainstreaming gender issues into the institution's strategies, policies, and programming. The directorate coordinated the elaboration of the 2018-2027 UEMOA Gender Strategy, which was produced as a result of a collaborative effort involving all relevant departments of the commission and subsequently approved by UEMOA gender ministers in 2018. Implementation of the strategy is currently ongoing, yet it might be hindered by financial and capacity constraints.



ECOWAS and UEMOA
have taken important
steps to integrate gender issues



Major emphasis placed
on the facilitation of regional
small-scale cross-border trade

At the national level, the integration of trade and gender issues into current policy frameworks and existing trade facilitation platforms (including National Trade Facilitation Committees, or NTFCs) generally appears scarce. Countries covered by the TFWA Program Regional Gender Assessment typically have national gender policies in place (although they are not regularly updated). However, they generally briefly reference trade issues, if at all. Many governments have also adopted trade policies that appear to be systematically gender-neutral. Policy and programming on gender issues is, in principle, led by gender ministries at the country level. Unfortunately though, these ministries seem to face chronic constraints in terms of limited technical capacity, lack of financial resources, and modest political leverage (albeit with some exceptions).

Many countries in the TFWA Program 
have national gender policies in place

 **Many governments have trade policies**
that are gender-neutral

 **Dialogue between trade and gender ministries is poor at best**

Institutional dialogue between trade and gender ministries is poor at best, with no mechanisms generally in place to facilitate it on a regular basis – in some cases, gender focal points (also known as *cellules genre* in certain countries) have been formally designated within key line ministries, yet again, their current level of activity varies, and generally suffers from human and/or financial capacity constraints. Also, gender focal points are typically not found within key trade facilitation agencies such as customs, border police, and phytosanitary authorities. With that said, in some cases, ad-hoc internal associations may have been created to bring together the voices of female employees.



Certain countries present a vibrant landscape

of CSOs working on trade and gender



Finally, participation of gender stakeholders in NTFCs is generally limited to none, with the rare exception of some countries where the ministry in charge of gender is in fact a member of the committee. Overall, the levels of gender institutional capacity among NTFC members tend to be extremely low, and gender issues are typically *not* covered in NTFC discussions at present. In some cases, NTFC membership lists may also include civil society representatives, though their focus tends to be generally broader than trade and gender. On a more positive note, certain countries do present a vibrant landscape of CSOs and other associations working on trade and gender, albeit such entities are generally *not* members of the NTFC.

If institutional and policy arrangements between national trade and gender actors are generally limited, discussions on transport and gender issues seem to be at an even earlier stage.

Findings from the TFWA Program's Regional Gender Assessment suggest that, across the nine countries targeted by the program, transport ministries have appointed a gender focal point in very few cases, and have even more rarely mainstreamed gender issues into their policies and projects. When relevant activities do exist, they may revolve around HIV/AIDS prevention and mitigation along selected trade corridors, or consist of timid initiatives to increase women's representation in the transportation industry.



Discussions on transport and gender issues are in early stages

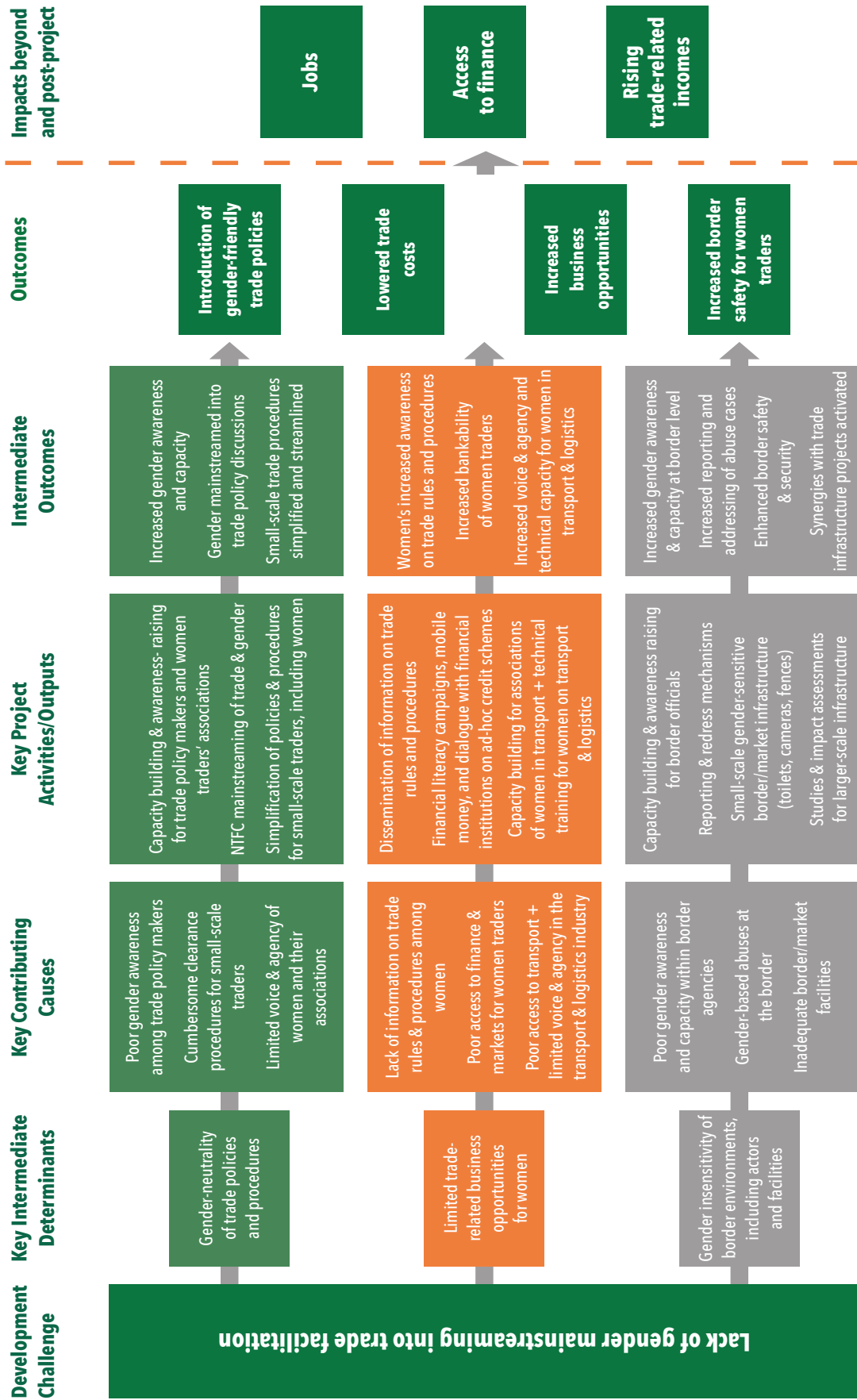


Findings show that gender should be integrated into all dimensions of the program

Findings from the Regional Gender Assessment, combined with those from the SSCBT Survey, informed the design of the TFWA Gender Theory of Change (below), mandating that gender be integrated into all dimensions of the program and contribute to the achievement of all its objectives. From a gender standpoint, the outcomes of the TFWA Program are to increase trade-related business opportunities and reduce the time and cost of trade for women in the region, while also supporting enhanced safety and security at TFWA Program borders for all traders (but especially women) while promoting gender mainstreaming into existing trade policy frameworks. These outcomes are expected to result from three main streams of TFWA Program trade and gender activities,

linked to the three key constraints (or key intermediate determinants) affecting West Africa's women traders. These constraints were identified by the gender assessment and the SSCBT survey, underlining the importance of this pre-implementation research. Those buckets could be summarized as follows: (a) the gender neutrality of existing trade policies and procedures across the region; (b) the limited trade-related business opportunities for women, in turn resulting from poor access to relevant information, finance, and transport; and (c) the existing limited gender sensitivity of border environments, for trade facilitation actors and border/market facilities.

TFWA Gender Theory of Change



Assumptions: Sustained strong economic growth; social and political stability



**Knowledge from surveys
will be used to fill gaps**
while building a stronger base of evidence

The program used evidence to inform gender theory of change. This evidence-backed approach also fed into the design of the program's planned activities, which are described below. The activities designed under each of the three proposed trade and gender buckets will need to be supported by extensive knowledge development and management, regular policy dialogue, and continuous capacity building at the local, national, and regional levels. New knowledge—generated through surveys, field studies, and similar exercises—will be used to fill existing gaps while also building a stronger base of evidence. This evidence is needed to support the advancement of gender issues in regional and national trade agendas. Existing knowledge will require ad-hoc packaging and dissemination to reach the target audience of women traders and entrepreneurs. In parallel with this, policy dialogue will be supported on a regular basis, including through the establishment of dedicated platforms and forums, to ensure that gender issues in trade facilitation and regional integration are progressively mainstreamed into policies, plans, and interventions put in place by relevant stakeholders from the government, private sector, and civil society. Finally, continuous efforts will be made to strengthen the gender capacity of relevant public and private actors at the regional, national, and local levels, to enhance their ability to, respectively, conduct gender-responsive programming and budgeting, deliver public services that respond to the specific needs of female traders and entrepreneurs, and actively participate in relevant policy-making processes and forums. Special attention will be placed on demand-side capacity building, based on the explicit requests put forward by relevant actors as well as the findings of the gender capacity assessments, which will be conducted among stakeholders in the various TFWA Program countries.



**Evidence will help
mainstream gender
issues into regional and
national trade**

To address the gender insensitivity of existing trade policies and procedures, the TFWA Program has developed a two-pronged approach. The program will aim to provide an awareness campaign and training to mainstream gender issues into trade facilitation discussions. At the same time, it will support the development of policy and procedures to support small-scale traders—including women—in doing businesses across borders. On the former, the main conduit will be the NTFC in each country. The TFWA Program will work to strengthen the gender capacity of NTFC members and mainstream gender into NTFC policy dialogue. The program will also work closely with the capacity-building programs of the joint border management, to ensure that the gender dimension is incorporated into the training. For the latter, TFWA will explore supporting the development of a simplified trade regime for small-scale traders. It will require further fact-finding of what already exists in the region and what is and is not working, with a view to develop a pilot intervention. The pilot intervention will be accompanied by a rigorous results measurement framework. If the pilot is deemed successful, it will look to scaling up in other locations.



**The TFWA Program
will support gender-sensitive
training and relevant policy and
procedural reforms**



TFWA awareness-raising campaigns aim to address information gaps among women traders

Besides supporting the engendering of trade policies and procedures, the TFWA Program also plans to support an extensive awareness-raising campaign on trade and gender targeting women traders at border- and market-level. The lack of information was one of the critical bottlenecks mentioned by the surveyed traders—among them, women tend to suffer more from the information deficit. To this end, the program will put in place several information dissemination outlets and mechanisms. The information package will be designed based on consultation with stakeholders and a needs assessment, but is likely to cover information on national and regional trade rules and regulations, available capacity-building opportunities, available market data, and available information on access to finance. The dissemination of this information will be conducted following the framework of the communications strategy, which has already been approved by the Steering Committee. The program will work closely with non-governmental organizations and community service organizations to ensure maximum outreach.



The program will explore options for increasing access to finance for women traders

The TFWA Program also intends to explore options for increasing access to finance for women traders, including by leveraging existing interventions across West Africa. An extensive set of initiatives to support access to finance in West Africa is already in place. The TFWA Program will ensure that information for these initiatives is readily available and that beneficiaries are pointed in the right direction. The program may roll out a financial literacy campaign if a gap in such an offering for the targeted beneficiaries is confirmed.

Access to finance challenges are mirrored by the desirability of the borrowers, which relates to several factors. Informality may be one. The program may organize dialogues with financial institutions to help bridge the gap between borrowers and lenders. Given the vast needs around the access to finance agenda, the program will be flexible to provide support for impactful interventions within the scope authorized by the Steering Committee. Finally, options will be explored to leverage existing mobile money transactions in the context of cross-border trade, to increase (female) traders' access to finance and reduce incentives for corruption and abuse, to which women can be more vulnerable.

Besides access to finance, the safety and security of all trade facilitation actors including women traders remain a top priority for the program – various measures will thus be explored to counter the prevalence of abuse against traders at the border and market levels. The TFWA Program will roll out an extensive communication campaign to clarify which behavior that should be tolerated, articulating the mutual rights and obligations of traders and officials. This may be documented in the form of a charter for the border community. Once the expectations are articulated, the program may host a series of consultations to define a possible redress mechanism that could work in each context. In devising the mechanism, various digital solutions will be explored and evaluated against the operational reality on the ground. Engagements with the non-governmental organization/community service organization community will also be explored for advocacy purposes. In addition, existing support centers for traders, established with the aim of reducing asymmetry of information, will be assessed to gather information on their successes and challenges, lessons learnt and best practices with the aim of designing a more efficient and sustainable model.

The program will explore ways to improve access to quality transport



The TFWA Program will also explore ways in which women can be supported in the discussion of transport and logistics. On the one hand, transport and logistics are a critical part of trade. The program will further define the needs of women traders to improve their access to quality transport and logistics services. On the other hand, the program will contemplate supporting women who work in the transport and logistics sector (or intend to), as well as support dialogue with public and private transport stakeholders, with the aim of progressively mainstreaming gender issues into their policies, programming, and operations.



Finally, the TFWA Program will contribute to the advocacy for better border infrastructure, to crowd in other nontechnical assistance-driven funding from financial and technical partners.

To facilitate this discussion, the program may support some feasibility studies and environmental and social impact assessments of the infrastructure required at border and market sites across the region to respond to the specific challenges of cross-border traders, especially women. Non-infrastructure investment, such as equipment that could bring transparency to border crossing, is eligible under the TFWA Program and will be explored on a case-by-case basis. The program will continue to explore its role in the prevention and response to infectious diseases (HIV/AIDS, Ebola, and others) along the target corridors. In this sense, the program will start supporting the gathering of existing data (for example, from Abidjan-Lagos Corridor Organization – ALCO, ministries of health, and the World Health Organization) and analyzing the impacts of infectious diseases on corridor activities.

Gender is expected to be systematically mainstreamed into TFWA Program monitoring and evaluation activities. The program-wide results framework is currently being finalized, but several indicators will be disaggregated by sex or crafted ad-hoc to measure progress against specific areas of the program that are known to be particularly relevant for target female beneficiaries (for example, reducing the incidence of harassment against women traders at the border).



The program will work to reduce the harassment of women traders at the border



In addition to the engendering of the program’s evaluation process, gender issues were heavily considered while assessing options for TFWA sustainability. The proposed Gender Theory of Change acknowledges that building solid gender capacity within program partners, stakeholders, and beneficiary entities is key to ensuring that gender-responsive TFWA Program interventions can continue after the program’s closure. Thus, major emphasis will be placed on extensive, regular capacity building as part of those activities. In parallel, synergies will be regularly explored with ongoing and upcoming relevant interventions funded by financial and technical partners in the region and especially along the program’s six target corridors. Finally, there is an expectation that, once they are successfully put in place, certain gender activities supported by the program could become self-sustainable (for example, support centers for women traders could be built at TFWA Program target borders and eventually consider charging a fee for their services) or be taken over by local associations and/or private sector actors, of which the program will aim to build capacity. Such options will be constantly monitored throughout the TFWA lifecycle.

As a result, the TFWA Program aspires to become a role model for gender-responsive trade facilitation and regional integration interventions, while observing the principle of ambitious realism.

The proposed approach to gender aims to balance the ambitiousness of a large-scale regional program, which intends to have a strong emphasis on increasing trade opportunities and reducing the time and cost of trade for women, with the intrinsic difficulties of mainstreaming gender into measures and themes that could be sometimes labeled as gender neutral. In this sense, the integration of gender considerations into the program design process has been present since the very early stages of the program’s conceptualization, and will continue to guide the design, implementation, and monitoring of all interventions throughout the entire TFWA Program lifecycle. Ultimately, the program hopes to be able to contribute to easier, safer, and cheaper regional trade for women across West Africa.





