



## MAY 2020 NEWSLETTER

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### About the TFWA Program

**The Trade Facilitation West Africa (TFWA) Program** is an initiative driven by multiple development partners that aims to improve existing trade facilitation measures in West Africa. The program strives to reduce the time and cost of trade borne by the private sector, especially by improving the movement of goods along selected corridors, and supporting small-scale traders – including women and other key stakeholders – with trade facilitation reforms and programs.

The TFWA Program brings together key development partners, including European Union, USAID, Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and Government of the Federal Republic of

Germany to support countries in the region and regional bodies (the ECOWAS and UEMOA Commissions) in the implementation of a combination of targeted interventions and measures.

The TFWA 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 ECOWAS Commission and supported by the UEMOA Commission as deputy chair.

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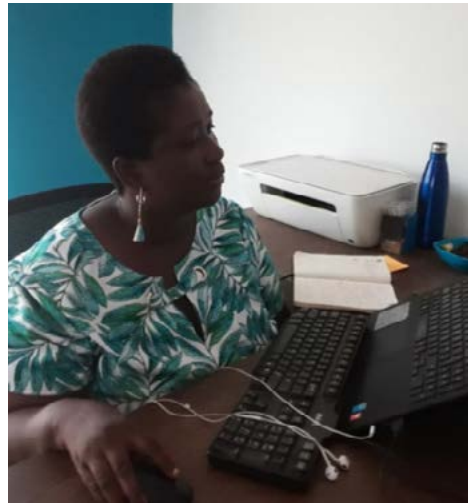


# TFWA Program COVID-19 update



**Despite challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, many TFWA Program activities continue to move forward, demonstrating the program's resiliency. Adapting to the situation, team members are working from home to support governments and promote trade facilitation in the region.**

**Snapshots of how the team has adapted to work and life during the pandemic follow below:**



Through several months of extensive engagements, the TFWA Program has developed very strong relationships with key stakeholders in Burkina Faso. Today, faced with the uncertainties presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the TFWA Program is reaping the fruits of its investments in these relationships. With UEMOA staff working virtually and Burkina Faso's borders closed, Evelyn Rekia Ayivor—the program's focal point for UEMOA and Burkina Faso—is building on these established connections to engage UEMOA and Burkinabe stakeholders from her home office. Despite restrictions imposed by the disease, by replacing her normal face-to-face meetings with emails, calls, WhatsApp chats, and video conferencing, Evelyn is working hard to ensure key discussions with UEMOA and implementation of the program's activities in Burkina Faso continue moving forward with few disruptions.



In Niger, closed borders and limitations on personal contact have forced country focal point Anvar Rahmetov to engage stakeholders and clients from his home office. Because the program had established relationships, infrastructure, and support networks before the pandemic, Anvar is able to provide ongoing, stable communication with TFWA Program stakeholders, despite the restrictions. Though there were some inevitable delays, Nigerien activities have adapted to the situation and continue with few interruptions. Many planned activities, including hiring experts to support Niger's National Trade Facilitation Committee and its budget planning, continue as normal.



In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, TFWA Program focal points based in Ouagadougou, like Rose Kabran, have been in containment since March 23, forced to work from home. To this end, the UEMOA Commission has set up a platform called Microsoft Teams, which allows staff to individually or collectively monitor professional activities, including activities underway for the TFWA Program. Follow-up for the TFWA Program is done through regular exchanges between the program focal points at the UEMOA Commission and the World Bank—using email, telephone, and WhatsApp. Irregular Internet connection, and the Internet's relatively high cost, are the major constraints encountered by program staff. The other challenge is managing children, who are home following school closures across the Burkina Faso.



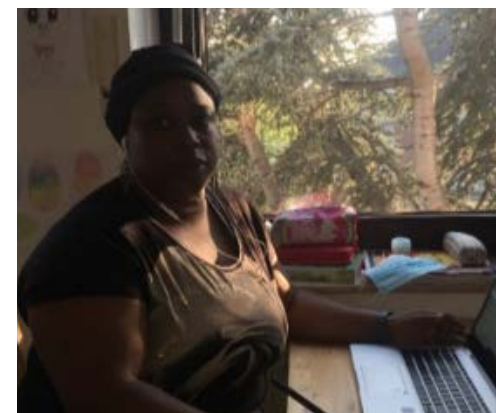
In Nigeria, TFWA Program team member Kabir Adamu Hassan promotes the TFWA Program from his home office, where his two-and-a-half-year-old daughter checks in on him throughout the day. With Nigerian stakeholders adhering to social distancing, Kabir's regular face-to-face meetings have moved to Webex. Through emails, telephone calls, video conferences, and WhatsApp, Kabir continues to advance program activities, despite the circumstances.



In Abuja, Amamata Sulemain—Information Officer at the ECOWAS Commission and TFWA Program focal point for communications—is locked down and working from home. Despite having to adapt to the current situation, Amamata continues meeting deadlines with the help of Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and WhatsApp video calls. While staying safe, she remains in close touch with her GIZ, UEMOA Commission, and World Bank communications counterparts—advancing the program despite the restrictions posed by the pandemic.



At GIZ in Mali, TFWA Program focal points continue planning program activities while also making sure the team stays safe. By using digital communications tools—including emails, calls, Skype, WhatsApp, and Microsoft Teams—team member Abdoulaye has maintained communication with different program stakeholders, including the permanent secretariat of the Corridor Monitoring Committee and the national GIZ office. Among other challenges, the Malian team faces unreliable internet connections and regular load shedding (blackouts) while working from home. Despite these challenges, Abdoulaye and the other program focal points have shown great will, dedication, and motivation.



Despite a short-notice move from Abuja, Nigeria to Bonn, Germany—sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic—Ewokolo continues pushing the TFWA Program's work forward. Juggling work and home-schooling takes time, but Ewokolo has successfully leveraged pre-established relationships to maintain the program's momentum. Partnerships and relationships built over the past few years, as well as partners' proactive and rapid responses and quick adaptation have made the transition a lot easier. Though coordinating through emails, web-based meetings, and phone calls takes away face-to-face engagement, it also offers flexibility and an opportunity to think outside of the box. Luckily, there isn't a significant time difference between Abuja and Bonn, which makes Ewokolo able to continue her work with minimal interruption.



# SPOTLIGHT: Adapting stakeholder engagement during COVID-19



In line with activities outlined in the program workplan, the TFWA Program team is focused on building the capacity of the National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) in Burkina Faso. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the meetings held between the program and the NTFC—originally scheduled for the week of March 23—was cancelled. Given recent developments impacting trade facilitation, including border closures, the TFWA Program and the NTFC strongly felt the need to continue their discussions virtually. With this in mind, a digital meeting with all key NTFC members was planned for April 15. The meeting aimed to discuss the current situation while also pushing forward regular program objectives, including the NTFC’s strategic plan, gender mainstreaming in NTFC activities, the NTFC maturity model, and a communications strategy.

Given the meeting’s many participants, managing the agenda was one of the main challenges associated with moving the meeting online. The TFWA Program team also wanted to ensure that everyone wanting to comment would have an opportunity to speak in the new online forum. Importantly, most of the NTFC members would be connecting to the three-and-a-half hour meeting from home with unreliable internet connections.

Anticipating these challenges, the TFWA Program assisted the NTFC as it prepared for the virtual gathering, helping provide members with data before the meeting. Once the list of participants for the meeting was confirmed, the TFWA Program team called each participant to take them through the basics of using Webex for conference calls. Each participant familiarized with the platform and learned how to indicate when they wanted to make a contribution. Ultimately, this personal touch ensured active engagement and participation during the meeting.

By adapting to the situation and moving the workshop online, the TFWA Program team was able to maintain momentum and continue advancing the program’s objectives in Burkina Faso. Changing the workshop from an in-person gathering to a digital event relied heavily on pre-established stakeholder relationships. The TFWA Program built strong working relationships with its NTFC stakeholders in Burkina Faso and thanks to the great collaboration with the NTFC’s members and executives, the program was able to pivot and continue its activities, despite the pandemic.



An in-person meeting with the Burkinabe NTFC in 2019. The most recent meeting—on 15 April, 2020— was held online to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Trucks queue at the Malanville border station, connecting Benin and Niger

## TRADE FACILITATION CONTINUITY

In addition to adapting to new working conditions, the TFWA Program team has been sharing sectoral-level guidance in response to the current realities presented by COVID-19. Many ports and borders in the region have closed, and those that continue to operate are facing a number of new challenges.

Considering the quickly changing realities along trade routes, the World Bank, a TFWA Program co-implementing partner, developed a guidance note for trade facilitation business continuity. Below is an excerpt for country responses to COVID-19, which the program is sharing with relevant stakeholders to promote responsible and safe business continuity during the pandemic.

## TRADE FACILITATION CHECKLIST FOR COUNTRY RESPONSES TO COVID-19

### 1. MEASURES TO SUPPORT BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND FRONT-LINE STAFF



#### Protection of front-line workers

- Are offices being sanitized and precautionary measures issued by health authorities followed?
- Are customs officials using hand sanitizers, frequently handwashing, and wearing personal protection equipment, including protective gloves and gowns where necessary?
- Are quarantine measures or segregation spaces in place for potentially ill passengers?
- Are staff trained to assess passengers for illness and to take measures to avoid contracting the disease?



#### Support to business continuity

- Are ICT systems ready to support remote work?
- Have flexible working conditions been considered?
- Have schedules been staggered to limit the number of workers on shift at the same time and to increase the physical distance between workers?
- Have border agency working hours been extended to accommodate social distancing among border officials?
- Have remote work features of existing automated solutions been considered?
- Are online and telephone appointment management systems and scheduling being used to limit the physical presence and interaction of logistics workers at buildings, facilities and border crossing points?
- Has presence at enquiry points been ramped up to address as many issues as possible through distance communications, including telephones, SMS, web-chat, online forms, electronic payment, and email?
- Has available trade-related information on websites been increased (such as Trade Information Portals - TIP, direct mailings, routine video conferences, etc.) regarding changes to procedures related to facilitating trade and reducing the risk of transmission?
- Has a contingency plan been developed to address staffing shortfalls?

### 2. MEASURES TO FACILITATE SAFE BORDER TRADE



#### Handling of emergency/relief consignments

- Have the recommendations contained in WCO Communiqué (March 9, 2020) been considered?



#### Enhanced use of risk management

- Have risk management measures been implemented to prioritize border activities for imports and exports and to allow low risk critical supplies to bypass clearance controls?
- Have the measures been combined with reasonable random audit procedures to confirm compliance with requirements?
- Has the enhanced use of pre-arrival processing and post-clearance audit methods been established for critical commodities to achieve higher level of release for low risk consignments?
- Have accredited importers or exporters been established based upon compliance records to allow critical need articles to be expedited (establish audit procedures that validate ongoing compliance)?
- Have policy priorities and the levels of inspection been reviewed in view of lower workplace attendance?



#### Increased internal and external border agency collaboration

- Can information technology tools be used to stimulate workplace collaboration?
- Are Customs and Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) agencies working together to identify critical need products and facilitating the entry and clearance of critical supplies (e.g. medicines, perishable foods, foods required for a potentially extended period of quarantines, testing kits, clothing, etc.)?
- Are SPS agencies working with regional and international trading counterparts to identify those items certified under equivalent regimes or produced under similar production systems that could bypass entry controls?
- Have border agencies identified critical imports that receive pre-exit testing equivalent to or are mutually agreeable with import requirements so that they may bypass clearance procedures or may be required to undergo fewer clearance activities at entry?
- Are border agencies and the private sector working together to undertake pre-assessment of imports through advance screening of documentation to identify and prioritize import activities prior to commodity arrival?
- Are government authorities working closely with the private sector to identify service standards and precise inspection procedures for critically needed items, so that the private sector can better anticipate and sequence logistics?



# Small-scale cross-border trade survey explores gender barriers in West Africa

To expand the base of evidence needed to design well-informed program activities, the TFWA Program commissioned a field survey on small-scale, cross-border traders (SSCBTs), including women traders, along the program's six priority corridors.

The survey—which called on interviews with traders, officials, and border intermediaries—generated a large base of sex-disaggregated quantitative evidence on SSCBT patterns, dynamics, and related gender ramifications. Key informant interviews and focus group discussions with traders' associations, local authorities, and financial institutions provided valuable qualitative information on the topic. The survey also provided an assessment of existing border and market infrastructure, and data on how its users perceive it.

In West Africa, the role of small-scale women traders is often underestimated—trade policies and interventions rarely encompass measures addressing the challenges women face.

Poor, gender-neutral data on SSCBTs prevented proper diagnosis of the best ways to promote inclusive regional trade facilitation. The TFWA Program tries to fill this gap, starting by generating reliable evidence.

The survey shed light on the space, complementing and corroborating previous assumptions and hypotheses on SSCBTs and gender in West Africa. The TFWA Program synthesized the survey results into a one-pager, which provides a detailed overview of the SSCBT survey findings.



[Click here to view the survey results](#)



## Bilateral meeting brings together key stakeholders from Mali and Senegal

From February 17 to 20, the TFWA Program hosted a successful bilateral meeting between IT experts from Senegalese and Malian customs to advance activities required for the Interconnection of their IT systems (SIGMAT-GAINDÉ). Held in Dakar, representatives from the Senegal and Mali Management Committee of the Dakar-Bamako Corridor participated in the four-day session, as did Senegal's Customs Director General. Representatives from the Chambers of Commerce from both Mali and Senegal were also invited to attend, though only one representative from Mali came to the meetings.

Both customs IT teams have been proactively supporting implementation, using a chronogram of activities to guide their work. During the meeting, attendees discussed these activities in an effort to advance the interconnection agenda.

The meeting also provided an opportunity to show that GIZ and the World Bank are working jointly to implement this project.

Looking forward, GIZ and the World Bank will continue to work together to ensure proper support under the TFWA Program umbrella. As next steps, based on their chronograms, customs in both countries need to provide formation, communication, and sensitization efforts to field staff. Per the current situation, the customs agencies are trying to deliver these efforts virtually. Additionally, GIZ is responsible for delivering the equipment required in support of this effort.





## Dakar-Bamako corridor project action plan moves forward with TFWA Program support

On February 7, the first meeting of the National Monitoring Committee for the 'Improving the Competitiveness of the Dakar-Bamako Corridor Project'—a project that falls within the framework of the TFWA Program—took place. The meeting focused on reviewing and validating the joint committee's plan of action while also discussing priority activities arising from the plan.

A number of influential stakeholders attended the meeting, including representatives from the Ministry of Investment Promotion Private, Small and Medium Enterprises, and National Entrepreneurship. The meeting provided an opportunity for attendees to outline deadlines for each activity to be implemented.

As a result of this meeting, some of the activities listed in the work plan were reformulated, paving a clear path for implementation. Additionally, meeting participants agreed to insert a new activity—relating to the ECOWAS brown map—into the work plan. Meeting attendees agreed that the TFWA Program team would serve as the plan's next reviewer, with a view to inserting activities from its Dakar-Bamako corridor action plan.



## Rail customs interconnection meeting advances TFWA Program objectives

From January 13 to 17, the TFWA Program hosted a rail customs interconnection meeting in Abidjan. Following a previous rail customs interconnection meeting in October 2019, the workshop focused on the monitoring, evaluation, and extension of the SIGMAT solution to railway transportation between Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso.

In total, 35 participants attended the meeting, including representatives from Burkinabe and Ivorian customs offices, the SITARAIL railway system, the World Customs Organization, UNCTAD, the African Development Bank, the World Bank, and Communauté Portuaire d'Abidjan. The meeting aimed to establish SIGMAT rail implementation planning procedures while creating road interconnection appraisals—to solve issues faced by both administrations related to the current interconnection process. The group also prioritized

reaching agreement on rail technical specifications. Further, attendees strived to finalize the joint circular, which provides framework instructions for the application of SIGMAT to international rail transit between Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire.

During the meeting, the group finalized the joint circular, which introduces the rail concept on interconnection. Importantly, the meeting allowed technical specifications for rail processes to be discussed and agreed. Because the SIGMAT solution for rail implementation planning has been agreed, as a next step, a pilot launch will be scheduled.



## Benin



## SIGMAT implementation meeting advances data exchange in Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire

From January 6 to 10, the TFWA Program hosted a customs interconnection technical meeting with stakeholders focused on the Abidjan-Ouagadougou corridor, one of the program's six priority trade routes. Following last October's rail customs interconnection meeting in Ouagadougou, the Bolloré Group's railway company, SITARAIL, funded and organized this technical meeting. Held at SITARAIL's training office in Abidjan, this gathering aimed to define a data exchange architecture between the SITARAIL railway system and the SIGMAT system used by the customs administrations of Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire.

Twenty stakeholders participated in the meeting, including the SITARAIL IT department, freight forwarders, a team of two Burkina Faso customs IT officers, and the Ivorian IT team.

Following this meeting, stakeholders improved their understanding of the rail procedures. Additionally, participants learned the technical specifications that will allow them to develop interfaces with SITARAIL, SIGMAT, and the two customs authorities.

Regional customs administrations play an important role in trade facilitation, creating the foundational structures needed to advance the TFWA Program. This meeting laid the groundwork for the program to continue to advance its mission and objectives in the region.



## TFWA Program advances trade and gender dialogue in Benin

On March 6, the TFWA Program facilitated the first bilateral meeting between the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Microfinance in Benin. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Microfinance is in charge of gender promotion and integration, and by bringing these ministries together and creating a platform for dialogue, the TFWA Program helped advance its goals around trade and gender in Benin.

As a result of the meeting, which was attended by more than 15 key officials, the ministries decided to form a trade and gender working group—agreeing to come together to outline terms and a work plan for the group. Participants also agreed to integrate gender into the workings of national trade facilitation,

and look into how the decree under review may make the Ministry of Social Affairs and Microfinance a permanent member of the National Trade Facilitation Committee in Benin.

The bilateral meeting was preceded by two separate individual meetings with the Minister of Industry and Trade and the Minister of Social Affairs and Microfinance, respectively. The two ministers agreed to jointly champion the launch of two reports: a regional gender assessment and a survey on small-scale cross-border trade and gender. These reports highlight the need for gender to be mainstreamed in trade-related activities, encouraging both ministries to make it a priority moving forward.





## TFWA Program connects ministries to mainstream gender in Burkina Faso

On November 28, the TFWA Program convened the first-ever meeting between the Gender Ministry and Trade Ministry in Burkina Faso. The meeting focused on mainstreaming gender within National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) activities, which are led by the Trade Ministry. The Gender Ministry is not part of the NTFC and there have not been any efforts to prioritize gender in NTFC activities in Burkina Faso.

Thanks to the TFWA Program meeting, it was realized that the Ministry of Trade was independently developing a gender strategy, without input from the Gender Ministry. At the same time, the Gender Ministry had completed an evaluation of the National Gender Policy and was developing its own gender strategy. By connecting these dots and promoting cross-ministry discussion, the TFWA Program built bridges between these key national stakeholders.

Following the meeting, both ministries committed to creating a small-scale cross-border trade and gender sub-committee within the NTFC. This committee will develop a roadmap for mainstreaming gender in NTFC activities. The Ministry of Trade also committed to revising the NTFC decree to include the Gender Ministry and other gender stakeholders. Both ministries also

promised to involve each other in the development of their respective strategies moving forward.

In January 2020, the gender ministry officially nominated three representatives to the NTFC for TFWA Program-related discussions. The process of revising the NTFC decree to include the Gender Ministry is still being actively pursued by both ministries and—following the initial meeting facilitated by the TFWA Program—the small-scale cross-border trade and gender subcommittee has already met twice.



## TFWA Program helps operationalize the NTFC in Cabo Verde

From February 26 to 28, the TFWA Program hosted a capacity building workshop in Cabo Verde, bringing together representatives from relevant government institutions, the World Bank, GIZ, and the ECOWAS Commission. The goal of the meeting was to foster National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) operationalization while accelerating the development of Cabo Verde's trade facilitation agenda, building on momentum created with the ratification of the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) on February 6th, 2020.

The workshop used interactive working sessions to enhance NTFC capacities for the effective implementation and ownership of TFA and trade facilitation reforms. Importantly, these sessions established how TFA needs should be addressed, developing a platform for dialogue between the government of Cabo Verde and the TFWA Program. Designed to strengthen donor coordination mechanisms, this platform—which was kicked off at the workshop—will form an important part of the relationship between government and the TFWA Program moving forward. Overall, the group work and discussion improved stakeholders' understanding of TFA implementation and the challenges linked to TFA technical measures and notifications.

Following the workshop, recommendations were adopted to provide a structured approach toward NTFC compliance with TFA-related obligations and priorities. Additionally, recommendations were identified to prepare the sequencing and consolidation of activities required to draft a national strategy for trade facilitation in Cabo Verde. A specific focus on process mapping and wide adoption of risk management were both defined as key enablers to TFA alignment.

As a next step, with a view toward building the NTFC's capacity to rapidly assume its role and responsibilities, the TFWA Program will fund and support the customized roll-out of the UNCTAD NTFC Empowerment Program for Cabo Verde.







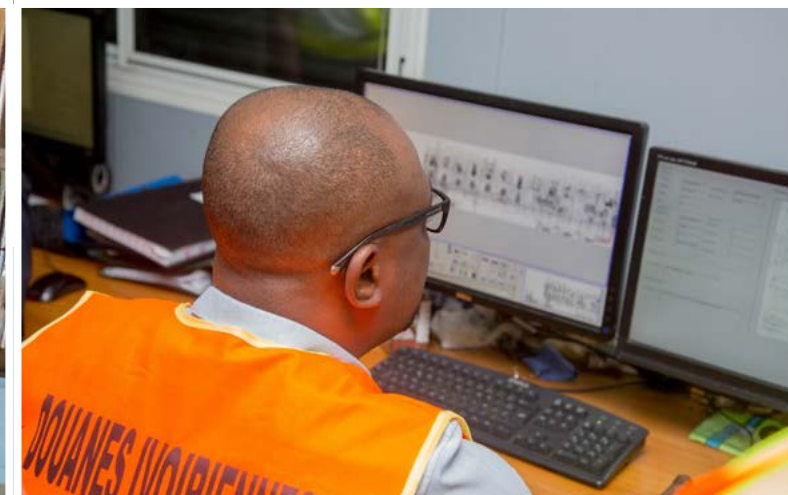
## TFWA Program workshop targets key Ivorian stakeholders

On March 12 and 13, the TFWA Program hosted a workshop in Yamoussoukro, bringing together members of the National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC), the Ivorian government, professional associations, and the private sector. The two-day workshop aimed to: i) develop project sheets for selected category C measures; and ii) identify and formulate projects that could benefit from technical assistance and capacity-building support related to the implementation of the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA).

The workshop included presentations from World Bank and NTFC Secretariat experts, who discussed the TFWA Program, the status of national TFA implementation, Côte d'Ivoire's Category C measures, and the Commercial Information Web Portal (PWIC), a one-stop shop for trade-related information. During the sessions, the NTFC Secretariat indicated that several achievements had been made since the establishment of the NTFC in 2015. With that said, Côte d'Ivoire still requires enhanced assistance to implement category C measures.

This workshop represents an important step in facilitating trade between Côte d'Ivoire and other countries, while also maximizing the benefits resulting from the TFA. At the end of the two-day gathering, the workshop enabled NTFC members to find appropriate methodologies to elaborate technical assistance project sheets. The workshop also helped identify the type of technical assistance needed in relation to category C measures. Further, the TFWA Program team helped draw up project sheets concerning Articles 1, 6, and 8.

In addition to these outcomes, several recommendations emerged from the workshop. The program team outlined a number of next steps, including the elaboration of a strategic plan to be submitted to the TFWA Program. Providing ongoing support to stakeholders in Côte d'Ivoire, the TFWA Program will help strengthen awareness, assess the NTFC, and establish the technical secretariat to facilitate coordination.



## Ivorian missions focus on customs risk management and sanitary and phytosanitary systems

From February 17 to 27, the TFWA Program team conducted two missions in Côte d'Ivoire. The first mission aimed to evaluate the Ivorian customs risk management system. The second mission—which happened simultaneously—strived to evaluate the sanitary and phytosanitary system at Côte d'Ivoire's borders, including at airport and land borders.

With a focus on customs risk management, the team met with several customs directors, visiting the airport's customs office, the port's customs office, and the border post of Noe (between Noe, Côte d'Ivoire and Elubo, Ghana). These meetings were conducted to evaluate current customs risk management practices, including the use of the authorized economic operator (AEO) classification system. By identifying, analyzing, evaluating, and treating risks, customs can significantly improve its performance.

As a result of the mission, the team realized that the current risk management system is operational, but needs to be strengthened. Moreover, it became apparent that customs did not fully understand the concept of the AEO, indicating the need for more training. The customs reforms committee agreed with the TFWA Program team's findings and, as a next

step, the team will develop an action plan to help strengthen and improve the customs risk management system.

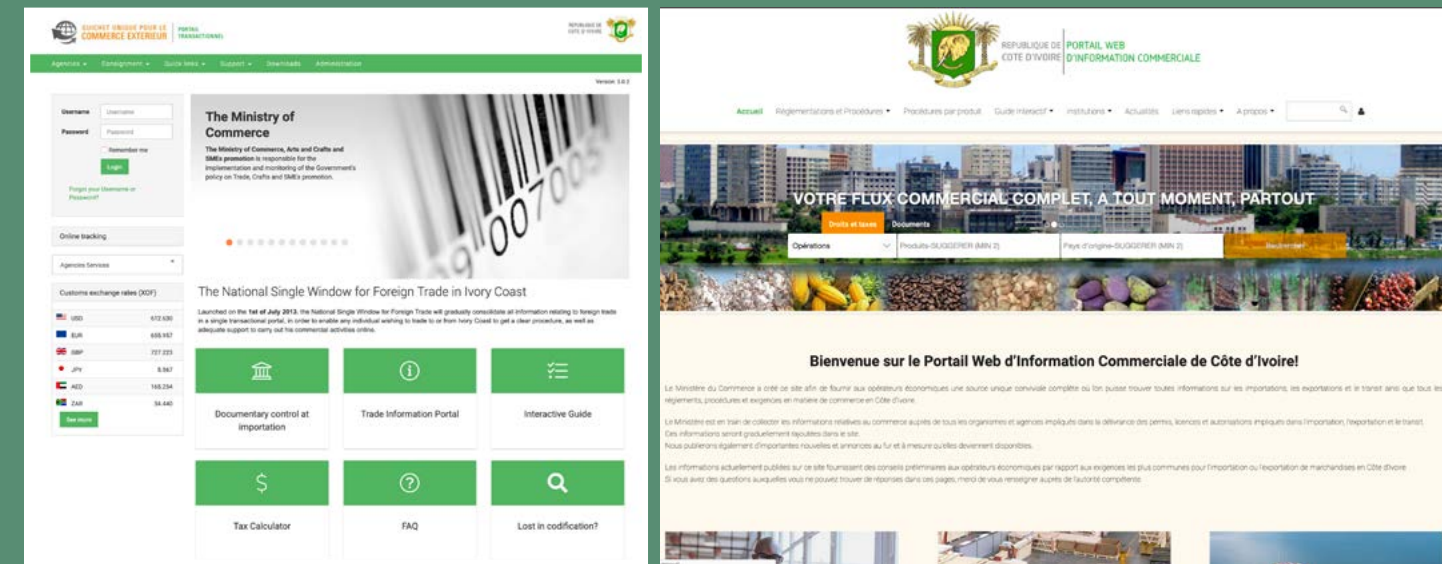
To advance sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures, the TFWA Program also met with key Ivorian ministries, laboratories, and controlling sanitary and phytosanitary entities. Following this mission, stakeholders agreed to receive support from the TFWA Program, principally around the categorization of sanitary and phytosanitary risk and norms. To this end, an action plan will be put in place with experts and involved stakeholders, including customs.

Following both missions, the TFWA Program team is planning to host a workshop presenting key stakeholders with the results of the research, encouraging further dialogue. Based on stakeholder feedback, the team will support the preparation of efficient action plans. Importantly, both action plans will be synchronized—improving trade facilitation within the country. The TFWA Program also highlighted the importance of including Burkina Faso in the action plan, to create impact along the entire corridor.





# TFWA Program supports PWIC and GUCE efficiency in Côte d'Ivoire



From January 13 to 23, the TFWA Program hosted a mission to evaluate the state of the Commercial Information Web Portal (PWIC) and the Single Window for Foreign Trade (GUCE) in Côte d'Ivoire. Requested by the National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC), through the Ministry of Commerce and Industries, the mission aimed to find out how the TFWA Program could help both tools become more efficient.

The PWIC was first created by the Ministry of Commerce, with support from the International Finance Corporation. By strengthening this website, the TFWA Program hopes to facilitate the dissemination of user-friendly materials, providing a comprehensive source of information on imports, exports, and transit. Importantly, the website will also provide information on all regulations, procedures, and requirements to trade in Côte d'Ivoire—another critical part of facilitating trade in the country. The PWIC has the ability to serve as a key tool saving the private sector time and money, underlining its importance to Ivorian trade and the TFWA Program.

Launched in July 2013, the GUCE was designed to provide any individual wishing to trade to or from Côte d'Ivoire with clear procedures and adequate support to carry out their activities online. Specifically, the GUCE aims to facilitate the importation and exportation of goods with a simple, fast, and efficient single point of entry for the exchange of electronic information between regulatory agencies and trading participants. The TFWA Program hopes that, with support, the GUCE will gradually consolidate all information relating to foreign trade onto a single transactional portal.

For economic operators, such as traders, these innovations provide faster clearance times, a more transparent and predictable process, and less bureaucracy. For the national economy as a whole, the PWIC and GUCE encourage improved transparency, better governance, and reduced corruption, due to fewer opportunities for physical interaction. With this in mind, the TFWA Program shared a draft report with the NTFC and other stakeholders and, as a next step, the program will host a workshop to encourage stakeholder dialogue toward an action plan—encouraging further improvements to both platforms.



# Customs authority training helps advance TFWA Program objectives in Niger

On February 26 and 27, the TFWA Program and Niger's customs authority and conducted a two-day training for Nigerien customs officers. The training focused on the new ECOWAS customs code, aiming to improve understanding and adoption within the authority.

Twenty-five customs officers from the Nigerian customs authority attended the training, which was spearheaded by the ECOWAS Commission and opened by a representative of the director general of customs. During the two-day session, the officers were informed that as the region moves toward achieving a customs union, ECOWAS Member States have adopted the Community Customs Code—a document adopted under the guidance of the ECOWAS Commission, in line with the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and the revised Kyoto Convention. The customs code includes major regulatory changes that consider the evolution of customs procedures in response to new requirements around international trade. The ECOWAS Customs code is also meant to: i) enable the community to harmonize the coordinated management of its borders; ii) ensure the uniform and coherent enforcement of regional rules across the community customs territory; and iii) provide customs administrations of ECOWAS Member States the opportunity to improve their procedures and promote regional cooperation.

The training covered a number of relevant and timely topics, including: control of goods, inspection of travelers and their luggage, rights and obligations of persons under the customs legislation, decisions on the application of customs laws, customs officer powers, pre-clearance formalities and clearance operations, verification of declaration and customs controls, payment and repayment of duties and taxes, release and removal of goods, customs debt and customs debt guarantees, state warehouses, priority operations, free circulation procedures and re-importation in the same state, customs procedures with economic impact, trade and industrial activities, and the free zone.







## TFWA Program improves understanding of trade key agreements in Niger

On February 24, the ECOWAS Commission, Borderless Alliance, the Nigerien Ministry of Trade and Private Sector Promotion, and Niger's Chamber of Commerce organized a one-day sensitization workshop under the TFWA Program umbrella.

The workshop focused on the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (ACFTA), aiming to inform the private sector of the implications of both agreements. In total, 66 people attended the event, comprised of representatives from the private sector, public sector, media, and donor organizations.

The event was declared open by a representative from the Ministry of Trade and Private Sector Promotion, while key addresses were delivered by the ECOWAS Commission, the European Union, GIZ, and the president of Nigerien Chamber of Commerce. In an effort to notify the private sector, these presentations

highlighted that Niger ratified the TFA and submitted its categorized trade facilitation commitments to the WTO. Further, it was noted that Niger is one of the ECOWAS Member States that has already signed and ratified the ACFTA agreement.

Following the presentations, private sector participants believed that the agreements would make trade easier and more transparent. With that said, it was recommended that the government consider palliative measures to support the private sector, to mitigate any potential negative effects. Participants also advocated for more consultation and private sector involvement in trade negotiations, since the private sector ultimately feels the effect of any trade policy. Looking forward, the group agreed that further consultations with the private sector were needed, as one day was not sufficient to understand the full implications and meaning of both agreements.



## TFWA Program mission to Malanville-Gaya joint border post looks into border management

From February 24 to 28, the TFWA Program team visited Niamey and the Benin-Niger border (Malanville-Gaya Joint Border Post). The mission aimed to identify and evaluate border management issues in Niger, both at the headquarters level and on the ground. While on mission, the team field-tested a new comprehensive questionnaire developed by the program to evaluate border management and trade facilitation in Niger.

The TFWA Program team spent three days at the border, interviewing customs and other agencies with a presence at the border post (including frontier police, sanitary and phytosanitary services, water and forests protection, and health and fire protection). The team also interviewed Koumate and Kotcha park managers, private border management contractors, and the senior management of the Malanville Joint Border Post. In Niamey, the team interviewed senior officials at the Directorate-General of Customs and Directorate-General of Waters and Forests, as well as freight forwarders. The team was supported by the Malanville Joint Border Post administrator and other cooperating counterparts, which helped the TFWA Program advance its goals in the region.

At the end of the mission, the team concluded that existing joint border management could be significantly improved.

Specifically, the team identified the need for enhanced communication and coordination, simultaneous presence and inspections, and the presence of respective National Trade Facilitation Committees. The team also documented very poor Internet connectivity, unstable electricity provisions, low computerization of border agencies, and the poor condition of trucks and parts of the highway. Also, the team concluded that border procedures for small-scale and cross-border traders could be further simplified and streamlined in Niger.

Based on the issues identified, the mission issued specific recommendations to UEMOA, which manages the Malanville Joint Border Post and to the governments of Niger and Benin. As a next step, the border management questionnaire tested during the mission will be adapted and improved for other border missions.







## TFWA Program supports NTFC institutional anchoring and compliance in Niger

Following activities held in November 2019, the TFWA Program hosted a three-day workshop in Niamey from January 27 to 31, 2020. The workshop aimed to support Niger's National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) in strengthening its institutional anchoring and operational capacities, with a focus on assisting the NTFC to meet its World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) obligations. The mission assisted the NTFC in preparing timely notifications to the WTO, which were due by February 22, 2020.

To achieve this, the TFWA Program team hosted bilateral discussions with the chair and vice-chair of the NTFC, the NTFC Secretariat, and the minister special adviser to the president, who oversees national strategy related to cross-border trade and continental trade integration. During these meetings, the program team discussed institutional strengthening of the NTFC and the upcoming notification deadlines due to the WTO. Existing synergies between the WTO TFA, the African Continental Free Trade Area, and World Bank Doing Business reform packages were highlighted, and, consequently, need to adopt sustainable mechanisms to translate political commitments and action points into operational reforms. In the meeting, the TFWA Program team recommended that the Nigerien authorities consolidate the rationalization of resources and coherence of decision-making processes between these three packages.

Following the TFWA Program workshop, Niger's NTFC established a coordinated work schedule to build NTFC capacities around TFA-related activities planning and also successfully finalized the Category B notifications due at end of February.

For context, notifications were required for the definitive implementation dates of Category B measures—TFA provisions that can be met autonomously, without the assistance of development partners.

Looking forward, the TFWA Program will provide continuous support to the NTFC to develop results-based technical assistance requirements, working in cooperation with the International Trade Centre, which is growing capacity on the ground with an onboarded TFWA Program country focal point and an NTFC support expert joining the team soon.



## Increasing the NTFC's footprint in the Nigerian trade facilitation agenda

**On December 9, the TFWA Program team in Nigeria hosted a half-day workshop with Nigeria's National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC).**

The Nigerian NTFC has been identified as the mandatory public-private dialogue mechanism established under the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). Specifically, the NTFC is central to providing leadership for the TFA's implementation. It was deemed to be a key champion for ensuring higher-level support for the trade facilitation activities being delivered by the TFWA Program and trade facilitation in Nigeria. With this in mind, the TFWA Program team has been closely engaging the NTFC with the goal of strengthening its capacity. At the same time, the TFWA Program team is working closely with the committee to mainstream gender into the NTFC's agenda. Overall, the team aims to ensure trade facilitation measures are improved and more efficiently implemented, as mandated under result one of the TFWA Program.





## Identifying champions for trade facilitation in Nigeria

The TFWA Program's Nigerian team, together with Nigeria's National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC), held a series of discussions to identify and mobilize trade facilitation champions in the region. With this goal in mind, the team met with the Honorable Minister of State for Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Investment (FMITI) and, in a separate meeting, the Minister of State for Transportation to identify priority areas for trade facilitation reform. Both Ministers welcomed assistance from the TFWA Program and supported an approach that would mainstream gender in all the trade activities.

On December 9, 2019, the TFWA Program team visited Nigeria's Ministry of State for Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Investment in Abuja. More than 20 stakeholders attended the meeting, which focused on the Nigerian National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) and its role in advancing the trade facilitation agenda for the country. In this meeting, the Minister of State for FMITI and the NTFC highlighted several areas of interest, including: i) outreach to producers and traders in border communities to promote formalization and compliance; ii) increased visibility of the NTFC and better internal coordination among its members; iii) support for participation in the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (ACFTA); and iv) accelerating progress in the implementation of the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement. They also requested TFWA Program support to enable them to review the national trade facilitation roadmap and action plan.

Additionally, the ministry and NTFC requested program support in presenting their plan of short and medium-term objectives for formal presentation to CEOs of key agencies.

In a separate meeting held on December 13, the Minister of State, Federal Ministry of Transport identified several key areas of interest for the ministry, including a national single window, gender mainstreaming, joint border posts, and implementation of a risk management system at the ports. Specific requests for TFWA Program support included: i) a national single window, which would be a sui generis solution for Nigeria; ii) a diagnostic study on transportation to support small scale traders in border communities; iii) financial and technical support for joint border posts; and iv) diagnostics to support the implementation of risk management systems at the port.

By identifying and building relationships within both ministries, the TFWA Program team has laid the groundwork to achieve the program's goals in Nigeria. The team will continue to work with both ministries to address these requests and advance trade facilitation in Nigeria.



## Bringing gender into Nigeria's trade facilitation agenda

On December 10, the TFWA Program team met with the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in Nigeria—the lead government agency for gender affairs in the nation. In line with the TFWA Program's mandate to ensure gender is mainstreamed into West Africa's trade facilitation agenda, this meeting aimed to introduce them to the program and its work while providing an introduction to the National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) to build bridges between both organizations.

The team also met with the Economic Services Department's team and director to discuss key priority areas and ongoing activities in the gender ministry. Specifically, the team highlighted the importance of the gender ministry being actively present in all NTFC meetings and to lead on the gender dialogue in trade facilitation for Nigeria.

Looking forward, the TFWA Program will continue working with the NTFC and the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, facilitating a relationship between both organizations with the goal of mainstreaming gender in the Nigerian trade facilitation agenda.







## Fostering NTFC efficiency in Nigeria

On December 9, The TFWA Program facilitated a half-day workshop with members of the Nigerian National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC). Hosted at the World Bank offices in Abuja and attracting more than 20 participants, the workshop aimed to disseminate the findings and recommendations of the Nigeria Gap Assessment and Reform Action Plan report, which assessed the country's alignment with the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). At the same time, the gathering presented areas for cooperation with the World Bank and TFWA Program on trade facilitation and gender. Additionally, the TFWA Program aimed to identify potential activities to support TFA implementation in Nigeria.

The Nigeria Gap Assessment and Reform Action Plan Report was well received by the NTFC and had largely informed Nigeria's TFA notifications. Many of the areas prioritized for implementation in the assessment remain high priorities for technical assistance. These include risk management, border agency coordination, and the single window. Looking forward, Nigeria needs to complete the domestication of the TFA following its ratification, while also revising its current TFA notifications to modify how it has categorized penalty disciplines (TFA article 6.3) and the 2020 implementation timelines for 16 measures.