



## DECEMBER 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.

#### FUNDED BY



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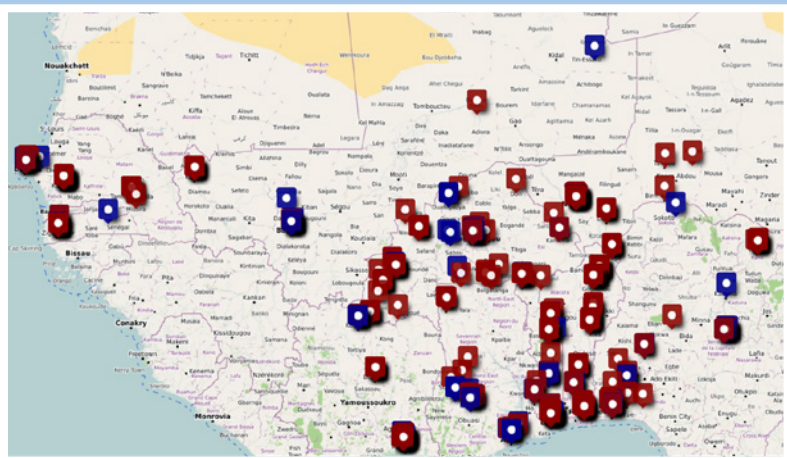


# TFWA Program launches two new videos

As more and more activities take place across the sub-region, two videos were produced to expand awareness and increase TFWA Program visibility with key stakeholders and the wider public. The first video offers a high-level overview of the program and its component. The second video highlights results from key data gathered in the TFWA Program's 2019 survey of small-scale cross-border traders (SSCBTs) along project corridors. Click below to watch the videos and learn more about our work.



## Evaluating CSOs/NGOs to influence integration policies in West Africa



Despite the COVID 19 crisis, which sparked border closures and numerous restrictions across the region, many activities planned under TFWA Program Component 3.3—which focuses on strengthening civil society's ability to advocate for and influence trade facilitation—were completed. A study of NGOs / CSOs and associations active in West African trade was carried out along the six corridors covered by the project. The mapping aimed to identify NGOs / CSOs working in the trade and trade-related space, characterizing their institutional profiles, their fields of activity, their geographical locations, their modes of organization and governance, and their strengths and weaknesses.

ENDA-CACID's presence in each of the nine countries surveyed—using focal points and partner organizations to minimize the pandemic's impact—yielded very satisfactory results. In total, the mapping reached 576 organizations, including 402 associations and individual NGOs and 176 umbrella organizations. In addition to showing the sector's diversity, the study highlighted the strong presence of women in CSO decision-making structures in the region. In fact, 35 percent of decision-making body members (members of executive boards or boards of directors) are women. Additionally, 40 percent of the mapped organizations were headed by women. Even though a significant portion of the organizations do not directly perform regional and international activity, 60 percent were connected to networks or federations working at the regional and/or international level. This gives the organizations an opportunity to bring concerns back to the regional, national, or international level while also receiving information from the wider community. This connectivity also provides the potential to participate in advocacy campaigns and influence national and regional policies.

Civil society brings significant added value to the TFWA Program. West African NGOs / CSOs have experience monitoring regional ECOWAS policies related to trade and the free movement of

people and goods. These organizations also have experience implementing agricultural policy and, more recently, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). For a long time, regional policies were exclusively devised, developed, and conducted by official national and regional structures, without the participation of outside actors. Today, this approach is changing. Many stakeholders recognize that NGO / CSO participation is a condition for sustainability, ownership, and success. To maximize this relationship, the TFWA Program will continue working with civil society. As a next step, the mapping will be extended to include an assessment of NGO / CSO training needs as well as workshops focused on trade facilitation advocacy.





# Safeguarding SPS for food security and greater competitiveness



## Background

Climate change and food insecurity are two major global threats. Though challenging, these threats have actually birthed opportunities for landlocked countries like Burkina Faso. In the 1980s, after observing coastal neighbors like Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire producing bananas without irrigation, Burkina Faso adopted a series of new irrigation techniques to gain competitiveness and grow their local market. In this banana plantation rush, some cooperatives operated negligently, disregarding sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS) such as the quarantine stage required for importing vegetables and vegetable products between Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso. Ignoring SPS led to the importation of a banana disease called "Black Sigatoka", which ultimately created a 50 percent shortfall in production and lasting problems for the banana industry.

## TFWA Program support for Burkina Faso's SPS requirements

The World Trade Organization regulates SPS assessments and controls at both the national and international levels. Respecting SPS requirements before introducing agricultural or animal produce remains a critical element to guaranteeing the safe importation and exportation of goods to or from any country. In an effort to improve its SPS assessment, Burkina Faso's Ministry of Agriculture requested TFWA Program collaboration toward improving SPS adherence across different trade corridors. This would enable the country to limit the propagation of pests and diseases while also guaranteeing the safety of foods, agricultural, and animal products.

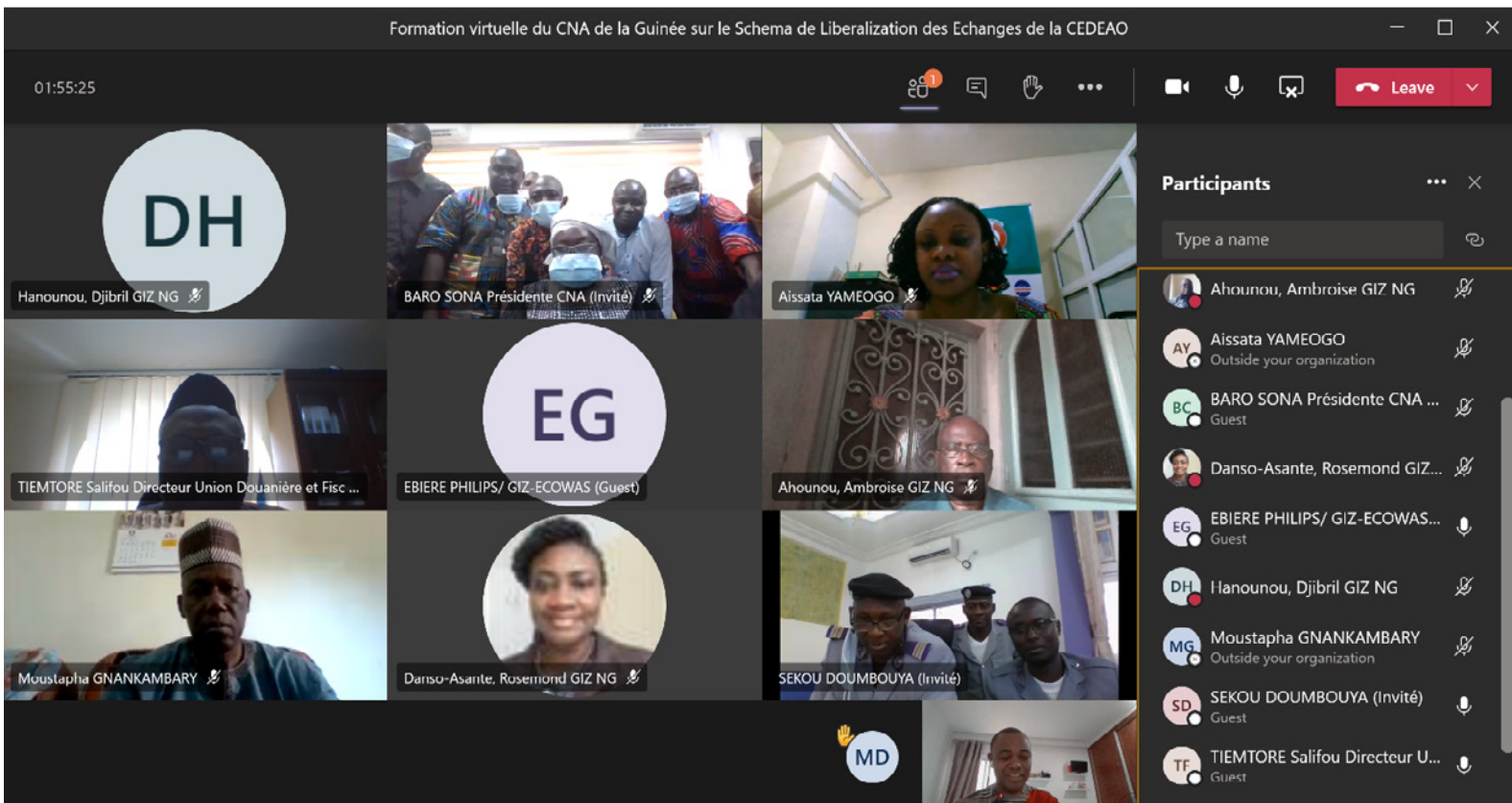
Following the Ministry of Agriculture's request, the TFWA Program conducted a gap analysis and built a work plan with core activities focused on raising awareness of SPS's critical role and utility. Among other activities, the program will closely liaise with a variety of stakeholders at the border in order to increase their understanding of SPS and its benefits. The TFWA Program will also strengthen plant protection operators' capacity by organizing national consultations on accepted SPS risk assessment procedures.

## Digitizing to increase SPS efficiency

In most TFWA Program countries, the elaboration, issuance, and transmission of phytosanitary certificates for export is still a manual process, in paper form. This hampers the flow of agricultural and animal produce. Electronic phytosanitary certificates (E-Phyto) on exports can be used more quickly, as soon as they are accepted by the National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO) of the importing country. This shift to electronic certificates with the International Plant Protection Convention's (IPPC) E-Phyto solution would significantly reduce customs clearance times, associated costs, and the risk of forgery. It would also provide more accessible phytosanitary data for risk management and control agencies, even prior to the arrival of goods, including airfreight transportation.

Pushing digitization and improving awareness around the purpose of SPS measures—demonstrating how SPS controls provide more benefits than constraints—ultimately has the potential to improve trade facilitation and food security, which is needed in corridor-dependent countries.

# Virtual workshops focus on private sector ETLS training

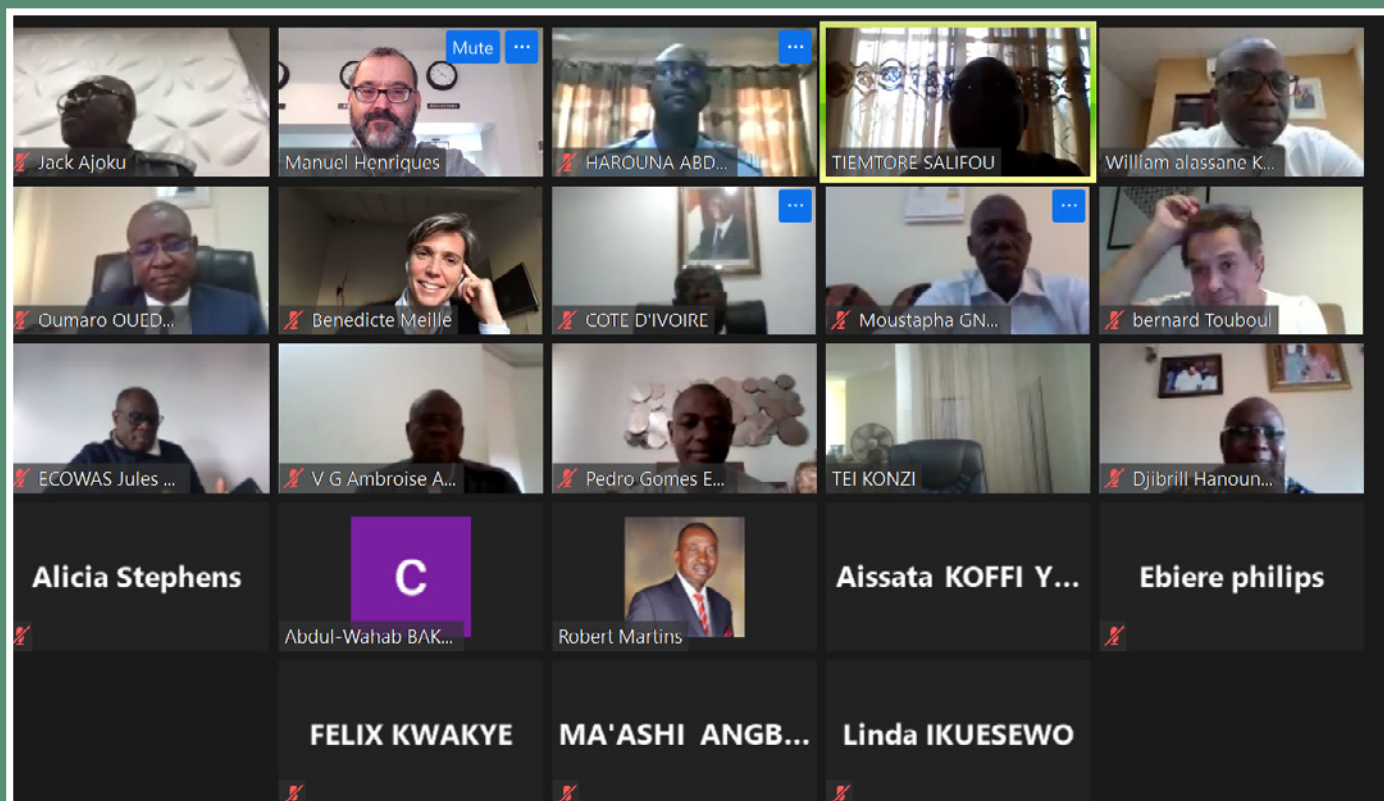


The TFWA Program supported the Directorate of Customs Union and Taxation (DCUT) of the ECOWAS Commission to host a virtual workshop for the private sector of French and English-speaking ECOWAS Member States focused on the use of the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) website. The workshops took place in October and November, gathering a combined total of 247 participants, including representatives from the private sector and the media. These workshops aimed to inform and familiarize key ECOWAS Member State stakeholders with the ETLS website, a regional tool aimed at promoting the free movement of goods across West Africa.

As a result of the workshops, it is expected that ETLS will have greater awareness within the business community and media, which the program hopes will ultimately increase business opportunities emerging from ETLS-approved products. TFWA will continue organizing trainings and information sessions in partnership with Directorates of the ECOWAS Commission to increase the capacity of its members and optimize regional trade facilitation.



# Working together to implement a key regional tool for mutual assistance and customs cooperation – the launch of the ECOWAS Supplementary Act on Mutual Assistance and Cooperation between Customs (MACC) pilot



The ECOWAS Commission called on the TFWA Program team to support its efforts to build a consensus driven Supplementary Act (adopted in December 2018) to guide and enable the fluid flow of information and related cooperation activities between customs administrations and the ECOWAS Commission through a Mutual Assistance and Customs Cooperation Agreement (MACC). When ECOWAS needed to see a more active implementation of the MACC, it requested that the co-implementers of the TFWA Program develop a plan for piloting the operationalization of this customs cooperation and enforcement instrument. In a very short period, a modality for bringing the regional instrument—from signing ceremony to operational reality by ECOWAS Member States—was established. The ECOWAS MACC Working Group worked diligently over the summer to design a comprehensive strategy and workplan for piloting the ECOWAS MACC.

On October 22, 2020, customs directors general or alternates in the four selected pilot countries—Niger, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso—gave unanimous support for the ECOWAS initiative and expressed their appreciation to the TFWA Program.

An aide memoire from the meeting was circulated and focal points will be identified from each country's administration to work with the MACC technical committee to deliver the agreed action plan. This is a great start and will be an excellent forum to expand the subject matter to broader risk management and compliance matters in the future. For now, the excellent collaboration between the TFWA Program co-implementers and ECOWAS will need to expand to the four pilot countries to ensure the initiative's success.

Improving cross-border information sharing, including technological tools, is not only part of the ECOWAS vision for a more closely integrated region, but is also consistent with recommendations from the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement and the African Continental Free Trade Agreement. Once the Supplementary Act is piloted along these distinct corridors, it will facilitate operational practicalities for other ECOWAS Member States.

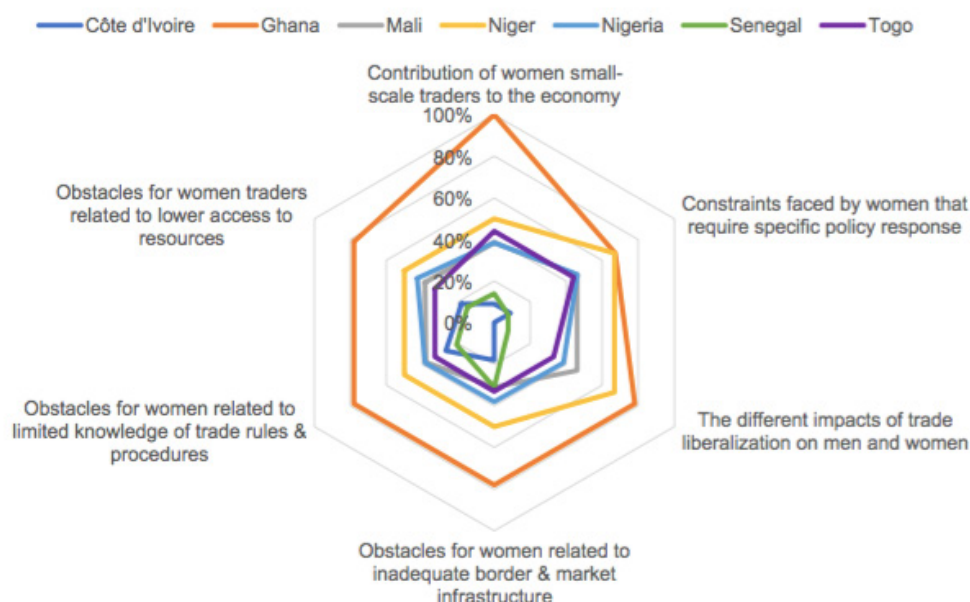
# NTFCs undergo gender capacity needs assessment

As part of the TFWA Program's efforts to mainstream gender across all project components, a gender capacity needs assessment was conducted for National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs) in nine ECOWAS countries. In fact, despite the critical role of women in trade, NTFCs in the region are largely gender-blind in their operations. With this in mind, the World Bank contracted A2F Consulting to assess the gender capacity of NTFCs while striving to integrate gender into trade-related processes and policies, ensuring trade facilitation contributes to inclusive growth.

A multi-tier capacity assessment was carried out to understand gender capacity needs, both at the individual and organizational levels. Key informant interviews were conducted with six to 10 key stakeholders in each country, including with NTFC leadership and relevant members. Additionally, a rapid assessment of NTFC members' level of gender awareness in each country was conducted through a digital survey of between three and 14 NTFC members per market (representing between 26 percent to 65 percent of total membership).

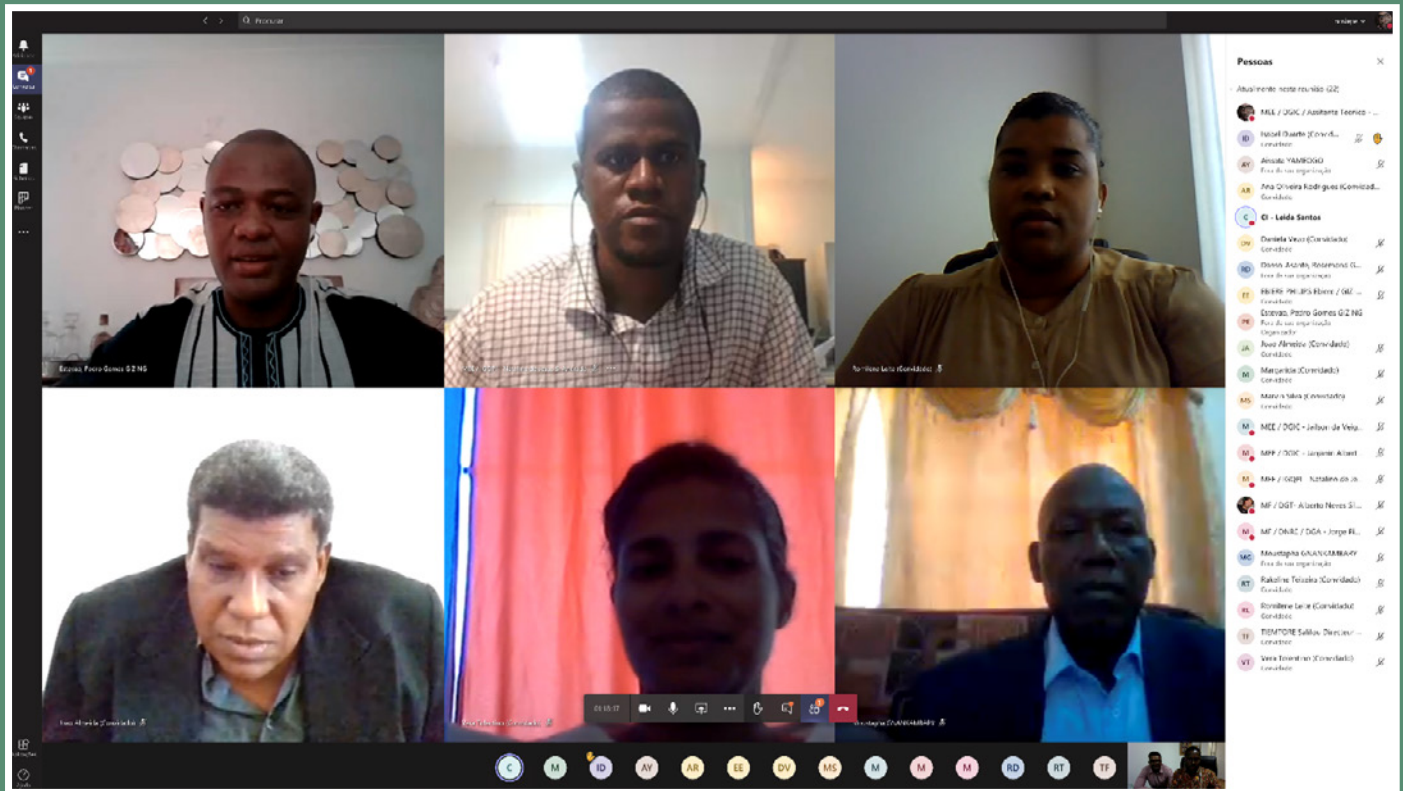
Results revealed that surveyed NTFC members have low levels of awareness of the gender and trade nexus and lack operational know-how to integrate gender. Across the studied countries, respondents lacked an understanding of gender issues, particularly as they relate to trade. NTFCs have expressed interest in integrating gender into their day-to-day operations and policymaking activities; however, they do not know where to start. Additionally, the NTFCs are at a nascent stage of development and typically do not have the level of institutionalization, operational platforms, or resources to support true gender mainstreaming. Thus, capacity building needs to be framed within the operational guidance necessary to build organizational effectiveness, which can be achieved through the development of a gender-sensitive NTFC operational toolkit.

**Figure 3: NTFC Members' Self-Assessment of Level of Awareness of the Trade-Gender Nexus**



*Note: Axis represents proportion of members that reported having good awareness on each dimension*

# National Approval Committee members in Cabo Verde, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Benin, Niger, and Togo strengthen their skills on ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme approval procedures



The TFWA Program supported the ECOWAS Commission Directorate of Customs Union and Taxation (DCUT) to organize a virtual training on ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) approval procedures. The workshops targeted National Approval Committee (NAC) members in Cabo Verde (5th to 9th October) Guinea (12th to 14th October), Burkina Faso (15th, 16th and 19th October), Benin, Niger, and Togo (9th to 13th November). In total, 102 people completed the workshops, including participants from the Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Regional Integration, Ministry of Finance, Customs Directorate, the Chamber of Commerce and National Export Promotion Body.

One objective of these nine workshops was to strengthen the functioning of the NACs by training their members on the ETLS mechanism. At the same time, the workshops aimed to provide ECOWAS Member States with a good number of trained ETLS resource people to facilitate activities, raise awareness, and train the national business community on ETLS, with a particular emphasis on highlighting the advantages of the scheme and the criteria for approval of companies and products.

The workshops allowed NAC members to master the ETLS mechanism, ensuring that a good number of ETLS resource persons are available in each trained ECOWAS Member State. Through these workshops, the approval process will be facilitated at the national level and the timeline for approval will be drastically reduced. Trainees will lead national awareness, information, and capacity building activities on the ETLS mechanism in order to strengthen regional integration in the ECOWAS region. As a result, the TFWA Program hopes to see a significant increase in the number of submissions of applications for approval to the scheme from these countries. Following the workshops, trainee-led national activities will also strengthen regional ETLS integration in the ECOWAS region.

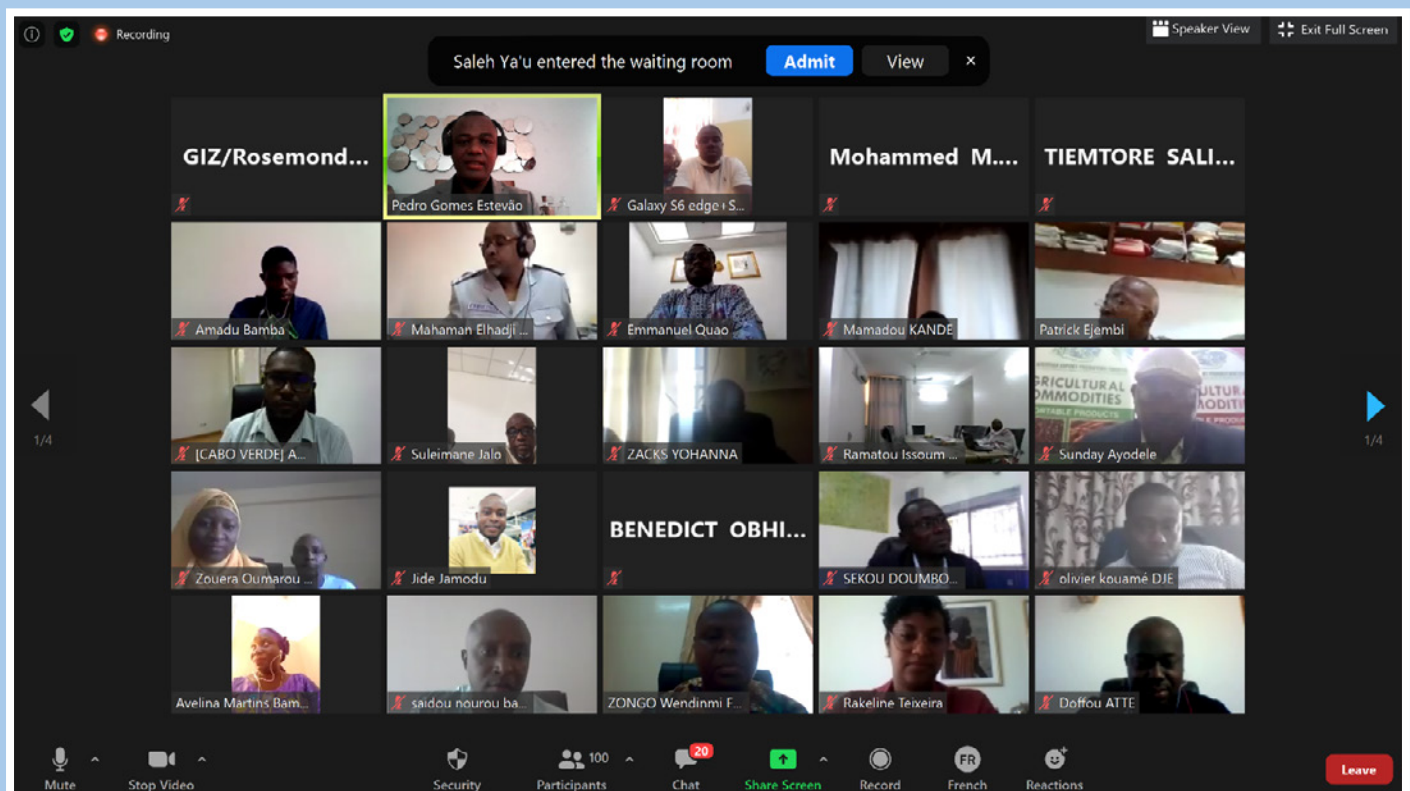


# Workshop trains National Approvals Committees on the ETLS website and portal

The TFWA Program supported the Directorate of Customs Union and Taxation (DCUT) of the ECOWAS Commission to organize a virtual training workshop for members of National Approvals Committees (NACs) of ECOWAS Member States. The workshop, hosted in October, focused on the use of the website and portal of the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS). In total, 162 NAC members—ranging from representatives of Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Regional Integration, Ministry of Finance, Customs Directorate, Chamber of Commerce, and National Export Promotion Body—attended the workshop.

The training, which was requested by the ECOWAS Commission and was well received by the members, aimed to sensitize and re-introduce NAC members to the operational mechanism of the ETLS Scheme while also tactically addressing frequently identified challenges and difficulties encountered by the NAC in the approval of

enterprises and products. The training is expected to enable NAC focal points to operationalize the ETLS and significantly reduce delays for approval. As a result of the workshop, the TFWA Program also hopes to increase the number of applications for approval to the scheme from all ECOWAS Member States. With this workshop, TFWA reaffirmed its aim of improving the capacity of NAC members for the effective implementation of the ETLS Scheme and enhancing business opportunities emerging from the ETLS website and portal.



# Analyzing COVID-19's impact on small-scale cross-border traders



In September, the TFWA Program undertook a field survey to assess the impact of COVID-19 on small scale cross-border traders (SSCBTs). The survey focused on SSCBT commercial activity along the TFWA Program's six priority corridors and aimed to:

1. Understand COVID-19's impact on SSCBT business operations and profitability
2. Identify SSCBT awareness of and access to COVID-19 assistance
3. Understand key decision factors that would impact SSCBT adoption of potential TFWA COVID-19 assistance measures

Quantitative data from field surveys with 1,391 traders has been analyzed to provide initial insights on the impact to business, revealing about 50 percent of traders were no longer able to pay their suppliers—41.5 percent of which is due to lack of funds and 8.5 percent of which is due to disruptions in normal payment channels. It also showed that despite SSCBTs generally being eligible for COVID-19-related cash transfers, these transfers did not successfully reach them. Further, some SSCBT were not aware that this assistance was available.

Another finding revealed that the largest transportation challenge affecting traders since COVID-19 has been the increased cost of transport, with women hit harder across all transport challenges cited, leaving many to turn to pooling as a key coping mechanism.

Qualitative data from 72 focus group discussions with traders and transporters will be analyzed in the coming months. Based on the comprehensive analysis, the TFWA Program will design and pilot intervention(s) to address specific challenges faced by small-scale cross border traders in selected countries.



## Burkina Faso



## TFWA National Program launches in Burkina Faso

In October, a national program launch of the TFWA was held in Ouagadougou in collaboration with the National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) and the Burkinabe Chamber of Commerce. The launch, which was attended by the Minister of Trade for Burkina Faso, Honorable Harouna Kaboré, the Director of Trade for UEMOA, Rose Tiemoko Kabran, Acting Country Representative of USAID in Burkina Faso, Kathy Younger, Chargé d'Affaires at the embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Burkina Faso, Maarten Rusch, and joined virtually by Maiko Miyake from the World Bank.

Honourable Kaboré expressed the government's strong commitment to support the implementation of the Trade Facilitation West Africa Program. In her speech, Madam Kabran mentioned that the program—which aims to reduce the time and cost of trade borne by the private sector, especially by improving the movement of goods along selected corridors, and by supporting small-scale traders—is in line with UEMOA's vision and hence has the organization's full support. The representatives of USAID and the Netherlands both expressed their strong support for TFWA Program activities and hoped that the program would spur economic growth in the region, helping improve the well-being of West Africans through effective facilitation of trade. They also reiterated their support for TFWA activities, which include a number of initiatives targeting the three priority trade corridors in Burkina Faso. Maiko Miyake, representing the World Bank Group and International Finance Corporation, affirmed the institutions' resolve to collaborate with the NTFC on

all program activities. While acknowledging the NTFC for including the gender ministry in all TFWA-related meetings, she also called on the committee to work on revising the NTFC decree to formally include the gender ministry and other key gender related institutions in the NTFC.



**Learn more about the TFWA Program's efforts in Burkina Faso**







## Gender mainstreaming efforts take center stage in the Burkinabe NTFC

In early November, the trade and gender sub-committee of Burkina Faso's NTFC held a workshop to advance its goals toward gender mainstreaming. Among other the deliverables, the sub-committee worked on a draft decree, which is expected to be signed by both the Gender Minister and the Trade Minister over the coming weeks. Once signed, this decree would formalize the sub-committee, a major success for greater inclusiveness in Burkina Faso's trade space.

Based on terms of references and best practices shared by the TFWA Program team, the group also worked on a draft roadmap that outlines how the sub-committee will work. Importantly, the sub-committee will include two representatives of women's associations. There are also plans to revise the NTFC decree to include the key gender actors, however, as the revision process is lengthy, this is only expected to be completed next year, after a new government is sworn in.

The biggest takeaway from the meeting is that the NTFC now sees how the maturity model can help them improve efficiency. As a result, the NTFC plans to immediately put together a team to work with the TFWA Program on conducting a self-assessment.





## Burkina Faso continues harmonizing national customs code to international and regional conventions

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In November, with support from the TFWA Program, the Customs Commission in Burkina Faso organized a workshop in Bobo Dioulasso aimed at revising the national customs code. Once completed, the revised Customs Code will incorporate the fundamental principles of the ECOWAS Customs Code, the Kyoto Convention, and the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement, while adopting supplementary national customs provisions as required by the ECOWAS Customs Code. All these efforts are aligned with the ECOWAS Customs' Union program focused on facilitating the harmonization of domestic and indirect taxes across the economic zone.

Thanks to continued and productive engagements with the Customs Commission in Burkina Faso, this workshop is the sixth out of eight workshops planned and is the second of four workshops to be supported by the TFWA Program, falling under the program's first component. The TFWA Program will also support two validation workshops once the revisions are completed, with a follow-up workshop scheduled to take place soon.

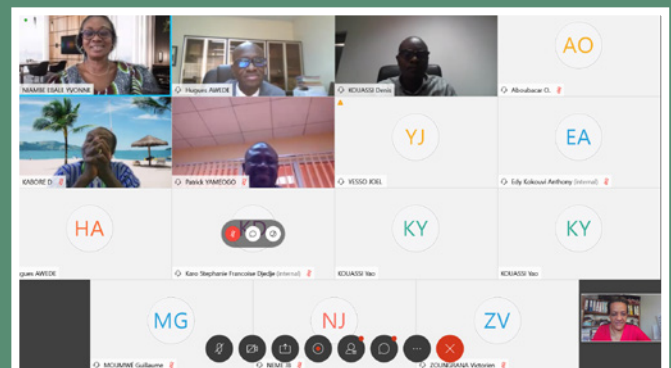


## Customs and SITARAIL collaboration supports rail customs computerization

On September 15th, a technical meeting was held with Ivorian and Burkinabe Customs, SITARAIL, ECOWAS, the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the World Bank. The meeting aimed to present UNCTAD, Burkina Faso, and Côte d'Ivoire with Customs and SITARAIL's collaboration for the computerization of the rail customs process. Additionally, the meeting focused on the exchange of IT data. SITARAIL has carried out the computer developments necessary to integrate the management of data exchange with the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) into its system. SITARAIL was also able to present ASYCUDA's different windows for the processing of rail-specific data.

UNCTAD asked Customs from two countries to provide a test environment to integrate the IT data exchange solution and to verify the correct functionality of this new development and of the data exchanges with SITARAIL. The integration of this new module can then be completed in each country, testing and validating the system before the pilot phase is launched (scheduled before yearend).

Another meeting was held on September 24th with Customs of Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, the WCO, and the World Bank to finalize and validate two legal texts: "Joint Circular" and the "Framework Instruction on the Extension of the Interconnected System for the Management of Goods in Transit (SIGMAT) to International Rail Transit Between the Customs Administrations of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso," which will legally allow the two countries to exchange customs data. These texts will be signed by Customs Directors General at the pilot project's launch ceremony, which should be organized by the end of the year.







## TFWA supports faster and more efficient customs reforms in Côte d'Ivoire

After a successful risk management diagnostic mission in March, the TFWA Program has further committed to supporting Ivorian Customs' multileveled reforms. In fact, the program will help the country implement an anticipated risk analysis on sea and air manifest while also enhancing the customs valuation process.

### **About the anticipated risk analysis on sea and air manifest:**

In Côte d'Ivoire, risk analysis currently only applies at the time of customs clearance of goods, based on the elements of customs accounting. Good international practice shows the value of applying risk analysis based on elements of manifests and sea or air bills of lading—improving the detection of fraud, trafficking, and criminal offences. Today, Ivorian Customs is willing to extend its approach to controls based on risk analysis to manifests. The TFWA Program will support information and training on this practice while encouraging the establishment of the methodology, processes and procedures needed for operational-level implementation.

### **About the customs valuation process:**

Following the diagnosis of the World Customs Organization in 2018, the TFWA Program will update the assessment of the value determination process and procedures. TFWA support will allow for the reallocation of human resources to more thoroughly handle the most complex cases. The program will also strengthen DARRV capacities in the area of customs valuation, in particular through the improvement of material and logistical training capacities. Implementation will also enable the transition from a culture of cumbersome controls of customs administration to a culture of service, which is now characteristic of modern, agile, and efficient customs. This is an essential step in managing change for a customs body that strategically aims to promote trade facilitation as a key factor in economic development in a globalized world.



## Côte d'Ivoire commits to gender mainstreaming by setting up Trade and Gender Working Group

The TFWA Program worked with Côte d'Ivoire's National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) Secretariat to create a Trade and Gender Working Group, which was convened for the first time in September. The working group comprises 12 members, including representatives from the Ministry of Commerce, Customs, the Chamber of Commerce, Borderless Alliance, two industry advisory bodies, and three industry associations. Twenty-five percent of these representatives are women. Formalities of this approach were minimal, as the creation of the working group required only the spoken approval of the President of the NTFC, which was obtained retroactively at the general NTFC meeting that followed. While the gender ministry has been invited to join the working group, a representative has not yet been appointed.

The working group's inaugural meeting focused on sensitizing members to the trade and gender nexus, the results of the TFWA gender and small-scale cross-border trade studies, and planning for the formal presentation of these studies to the broader NTFC. The subsequent meeting will focus on defining objectives for 2021 and gathering relevant trade data to build the case for gender inclusion. In 2021, the working group will explore the possibility of integrating the newly re-initiated "cellules genre" in the trade and transport ministries, identifying gender champions, and supporting the TFWA Program's NTFC gender capacity-building agenda, including through workshops (as the pandemic allows).



## Niger appoints NTFC permanent secretary following TFWA program advice

In May, the Minister of Commerce and the Private Sector of Niger appointed Mme Khamed Salamatou Mahamadou as the Permanent Secretary of the National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC). Prior to the appointment, Mme Mahamadou served as the Head of the External Commerce Division at the Ministry of Commerce. A career commerce ministry staff member and a longtime expert on the trade facilitation portfolio, she also has a graduate degree in project management, making her an ideal candidate for the job – ensuring dynamic institutional development of Niger's NTFC.

The appointment of a dedicated secretary to the National Trade Facilitation Committee, which is co-chaired by the Ministry of Commerce and the Directorate General of Customs, is one of the institutional development steps that the TFWA Program team advised the government of Niger to take. The NTFC chairs also agreed with the TFWA team's proposal to assign a budget line for NTFC activities. Further, they agreed to upgrade the founding decree, ensuring comprehensive representation of all relevant state agencies, as well as the private sector and civil society organizations.

We wish Mme Salamatou and the Nigerien NTFC the best of luck in their endeavors and look forward to hearing further good news from Niger regarding the institutional development of its NTFC.







## Dakar-Bamako logistics strategy presented

Following the inaugural meeting of the National Monitoring Committee (NAC) in February, The TFWA Program convened a workshop with Senegalese and Malian project partners to present the Dakar-Bamako Logistics Strategy. The strategy used a data-driven approach to reveal the underlying flow and pattern of goods along this important trade corridor. Additionally, the strategy outlined how infrastructure could be developed to support and improve trade flow. In fact, previous TFWA Program diagnostics, such as the Corridor Assessment Report and the Small-Scale Cross-Border Trader Survey, had highlighted how longer transit times along corridors greatly affect trade facilitation and economic opportunities.

Aware of the key regional and national issues at stake with improved infrastructure, both Mali and Senegal were receptive to the TFWA Program's presentation and findings. As a result, these markets could explore reopening discussions on the location of the dry port. This strategy, if jointly applied, could enable more targeted and cohesive infrastructural planning and reforms—progress in line with the TFWA Program's second component, which strives to promote the efficient and improved movement of goods along selected corridors.



## Leveraging the power of goods grouping to revive cross-border trade

Aside from being an economic lifeline to many, cross-border trade also guarantees food security by channeling food surplus from one region to another. Many cross-border traders source their produce from Togo, then travel to neighboring countries like Benin, Burkina Faso, or Ghana via passenger buses or taxis. Often, several packages are informally, individually transported across the border. To decrease the price of transportation, traders can group their goods into one truck, working together to save money.

Some goods grouping is already practiced by the Bonké bus station in Lomé, a station that conveys packages between Benin, Ghana, and Togo. If adopted more widely, goods grouping could help traders convey goods more frequently, at lower prices, and in safer ways. With the recent movement of people and goods drastically slowed down, and with the aim of alleviating the economic burdens facing many small-scale traders, Togo's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCIT) and the National Cooperative of Road Hauliers of Togo (CNATROT) launched the TALDEO-TRANS initiative: a project to pilot goods grouping from Lomé to smaller areas within Togo.

Togolese stakeholders called on the TFWA Program to collaboratively develop a feasibility study assessing the potential market for goods grouping between Lomé and its hinterlands. The study will also look at grouping for cross-border transport between the Togolese capital and Ghana and Benin. The aim is to design the appropriate technical logistics to expand this model.

With TFWA Program support, goods grouping could become an important part of post-pandemic recovery for traders, sparking a wider trend in regional trading that is eventually replicated in other countries. The end goal is for the continued flow of goods and increased food security in this fragile sub-region.