



## JUNE 2021 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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# SSCBT Survey and Gender Assessment Report

## Socialization Workshops Underway Across the Region



In April and May 2021, the TFWA Program hosted a series of workshops to share results from the program's small-scale cross-border trade (SSCBT) survey with key stakeholders in the region. The TFWA team also used the opportunity to introduce the program's Gender Assessment Report, a recent publication unpacking gender's critical role in trade. The SSCBT Survey and Gender Assessment Report represent two important and significant research pieces for the West African trade space.

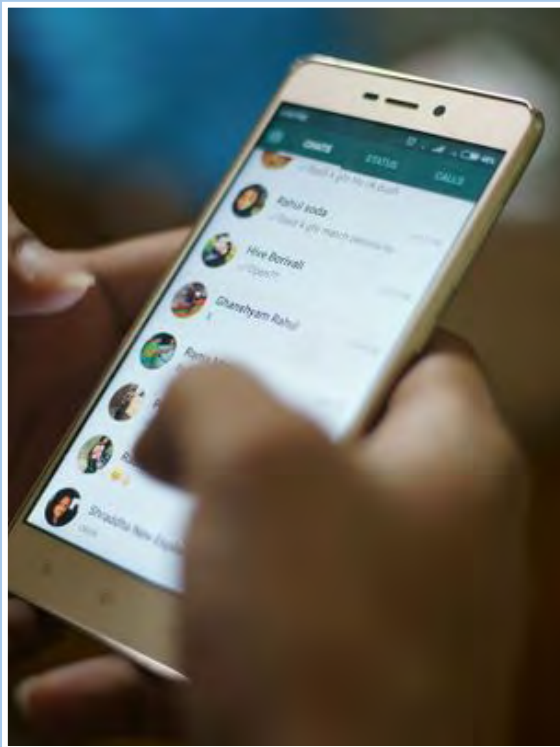
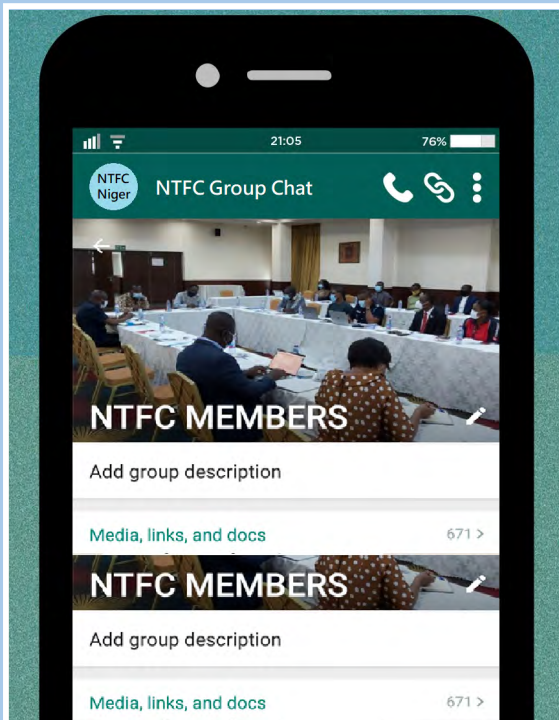
Workshops took place in six key West African markets (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Mali and Togo), with more sessions planned over the coming months. Two-day physical workshops were held in several countries alongside virtual, remote-friendly video conferencing to encourage wider participation. A variety of stakeholders—from ministers of trade, to ministers of gender, to delegates from the EU, the ECOWAS Commission, the UEMOA Commission, and several traders associations—attended the sessions, provided insightful contributions, and endorsed the TFWA Program's activities.

During the sessions, the TFWA Program presented in-depth country-specific data and extensive diagnostics on SSCBT and gender. In addition to presenting results from the SSCBT survey and gender assessment, the workshops provided an opportunity for the NTFCs to share results of their self-assessments and to discuss their priority activities to improve committee efficiency. Importantly, the workshops not only provided an engagement space for TFWA stakeholders, but also renewed partnerships and re-invigorated stakeholder commitments to improve inclusive trade facilitation in West Africa.

- 1 Burkina Faso socialization workshop in April 2021, with delegates from UEMOA, ECOWAS, the Gender Ministry, and the Trade Ministry
- 2 Stakeholders gather for the Mali socialization workshop in May 2021
- 3 Women traders from the Cotonou-Niamey corridor sharing their concerns during the SSCBT Survey presentation in May 2021
- 4 Attendees listen to the TFWA Presentation at the well-attended Burkina Faso socialization workshop
- 5 A strong delegation of women traders attended Niger's socialization workshop in May 2021
- 6 Stakeholders during the Benin socialization workshop, which had both Ministers of Trade and Gender in attendance
- 7 Key stakeholders at the Togo socialization workshop in April 2021
- 8 High-level organizational representatives at the Burkina Faso socialization workshop



# WhatsApp Pilot Builds NTFC Trade Facilitation Awareness in Niger



Trade is an extremely dynamic space. With fast-evolving regulations and quick-to-close borders, timely information is critical for drafting, monitoring, and implementing trade policies. With this in mind, in 2019, the TFWA Program assisted the Niger NTFC to set up a WhatsApp group focused on information sharing. At first, the channel was mainly used to share invitations to upcoming NTFC meetings. When the TFWA team started preparing daily messages for the group—picking one TFA article and providing contextualized information and a concise, easy-to-understand explanation of its scope—the channel evolved into a richer platform. The group eventually developed into a dynamic platform where NTFC members shared WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) data and sought contextualized explanations of trade facilitation (TF) measures.

After six months, the TFWA team distributed a questionnaire to collect NTFC member feedback regarding the channel. The below lessons were learned during the TFWA's WhatsApp pilot interaction in Niger:

- Confirmation of a high degree of interest for the information received.
- Confirmation of the channel and formats used.
- Confirmation that in addition to receiving legal texts, NTFC members need country-specific commentary. For example, in addition to receiving information on TFA 1.1 in the WhatsApp group, NTFC members would benefit from a contextualized note explaining the implementation status in Niger.
- Confirmation of a high degree of interest for receiving links on TF-related reports from WTO, WCO, and other organizations.
- In addition to the links, a suggestion to provide executive summaries of these key reports. In Niger's NTFC Whatsapp group, several members shared big reports from WTO, AU, ADB. However, most members would benefit from small, WhatsApp-friendly annotations capturing the main message.

Based on the Niger pilot, the TFWA Program plans to roll-out an NTFC WhatsApp information-sharing initiative in each of its focus markets. The program aims to leverage WhatsApp to increase engagement with and understanding of TF-related information.

# Validation of the Rules of Origin and the ECOWAS Customs Code

From May 24 to June 4, 2021, two expert group meetings of ECOWAS Member States were held in Abidjan. The meetings aimed to review and validate the draft implementing texts of the Additional Acts A/SA.7/12/18 of December 22, 2018, setting out the original rules and applicable procedures for goods originating in ECOWAS and A/SA.2/12/17 of December 16th, 2017, enacting the ECOWAS Customs Code.

The first endorsement deals with the recognition and certification procedures of the community of origin of ECOWAS products. The aim is to define the procedure for recognizing the community origin of products, which continues to involve National Approval Committees (NACs), however, under a new name: "National Commission for the Recognition of Community Origin". On the other hand, the endorsement strives to define the different modes of establishing proof of the community of origin of products. Another area of discussion was the regulation on the calculation of the value of non-originating materials and the definition of the components of the ex-factory product price.

The second approved text defines the modalities and conditions of the application of Article 271 of the ECOWAS Customs Code, which provides for the import or export of goods free of duties and taxes in some specific situations. The aim of this draft regulation, particularly within the framework of the ECOWAS customs union, is to remove discrepancies relating to their purpose, scope, and conditions of application, and thus enable all those concerned to receive the same benefits throughout the Community.

Lastly, a text is being put forward in the application of Article 137§2 and 3 of the ECOWAS Customs Code in order to determine and harmonize the conditions of access to and organization of the position of customs agents in ECOWAS Member States. This draft text is based on the best practices identified in a study conducted by the World Customs Organization (WCO) in 2016. It takes into account relevant amendments made and concerns expressed in Abuja in March 2019 by the Directorate of Customs and Taxation with the support of the TFWA Program.

The forthcoming endorsement of these texts by the competent authorities of the community will promote the effective implementation and improvement of the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme, create the conditions for the proper application of the Common External Tariff (CET), and contribute to the enforcement of high professional and ethical standards.

# ECOWAS Meetings Strengthen Regional Trade Cooperation

In April and May, the Directorate of Customs and Taxation of the ECOWAS Commission, with the support of the TFWA Program, organized various meetings of the Working Group on the ECOWAS Certificate of Origin Dematerialization Pilot Project. The meetings hosted experts from ECOWAS Member States as well as the World Customs Organization to review the state of progress on the functional and technical specifications of the electronic certificate of origin (CO) architecture based on data collected from Member States. The Member States then drafted a 12-month action plan and formulated recommendations.

In the meeting on the Interconnected System for the Management of Goods in Transit (SIGMAT), Member States reviewed the status of SIGMAT implementation at the national, bilateral, and multilateral levels. The report shows that Benin, Burkina, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Mali, Senegal, and Togo have more or less implemented SIGMAT either at the national or bilateral levels. Some member states, particularly Ghana and Guinea, have committed to implement it by December 2021. However, other states, including Gambia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone, have not given any target date. The experts also continued their review of the draft Supplementary Act on SIGMAT.

In the third regional meeting, the Commission presented the innovations introduced in the ECOWAS community transit guarantee mechanism, including community

coverage of the guarantee (valid from the office of departure to the office of destination), the financial solvency of the guarantor and his joint liability, the introduction of the comprehensive guarantee carried out using electronic digital means, and an automated guarantee management system.

The Working Group on the Transit Procedures Manual met to conduct preparatory work that would define the functionalities of SIGMAT and all the procedures characteristic of community transit. For this purpose, the experts worked in sub-groups on topics such as formalities at departure, transit, en route, and destination.

These meetings showed that the pilot experience of CO automation is very advanced, but the legal framework still needs to be implemented to secure and formalize it by settling issues related to the electronic or digital signature and the validity of the electronic certificate. Moreover, significant progress has been made in the implementation of the legal framework regulating community transit, notably SIGMAT, with the endorsement of draft texts by experts from the Member States. However, there are still technical and technological issues to be addressed, especially assistance to States to upgrade their IT infrastructures.





# TFWA Program Assesses Capacity Development Needs of National and Regional CSOs



Recognizing that civil society organizations represent a critical constituency and development partner for advancing trade facilitation in the region, the TFWA Program (comp 3.3) initiated a capacity development initiative for select civil society organizations (CSOs) in the region. As a first step, the TFWA Program is assessing existing advocacy capacity and needs. Field work was conducted in nine countries by ENDA CACID and their implementing partners, targeting 241 national CSOs, as well as 24 regional CSOs.

Advocacy, which focuses on the adoption of gender-sensitive and pro-population policies (especially those targeting vulnerable people and women), is an important activity for national CSOs. In fact, 73% of surveyed CSOs had conducted advocacy activities to influence public policy or decisions. However, the study confirmed that national CSOs have limited impact on policy and practice, and ultimately limited impact on the lives of vulnerable people. According to the study, only 21% of national-level CSO staff qualified in advocacy and 13% in trade and trade-related issues. This confirms the need for capacity building.

Of the 24 regional CSOs surveyed, 84% had advocated to influence ECOWAS policies and protocols, and 74% had done so to influence trade and trade-related issues (including trade facilitation). For issues related to agriculture and food security, and financing, respectively 58% and 32% of regional CSOs had advocated in these areas. Despite these results, regional CSOs face many constraints that prevent them from fully achieving their objectives. These challenges are similar, to some extent, to those experienced by national CSOs.

The evaluation reveals the significant capacity building needs expressed by regional CSOs. Surveyed participants expressed a need for training in ECOWAS policies and



protocols on free movement of goods and people (91%); trade and trade related issues, including trade facilitation (86%); fundraising (82%); advocacy techniques and methods (73%); and gender mainstreaming (64%). In addition, 45% of organizations expressed a need for training in management. These areas also correspond to the priorities identified by CSOs around conducting advocacy to influence policy.

The TFWA Program will create a capacity development plan for CSOs in trade facilitation to outline realistic and time-bound strategies to address the capacity deficits identified in the assessment.

# TFWA Supports Borderless Alliance to Sensitize Private Sector and Logistics Stakeholders on TFA/AfCFTA

The TFWA Program supported Borderless Alliance to organize a sensitization workshop for private sector trade and transport stakeholders focused on trade agreements and protocols. The event took place in Lomé, Togo on the 24th of February 2020. The workshop builds on previous TFWA Program support to Borderless Alliance and strived to create awareness of ECOWAS regional trade and transport-related policies and contribute to their effective and efficient implementation. At the same time, they aimed to create access to information on regional and continental trade policies, specifically the link between the Trade facilitation Agreement (TFA) and the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA).

In total, 49 stakeholders from transport associations and the private sector participated in the sensitization event, which provided an overview of the World Trade Organization TFA/ AfCFTA agreement, its implementation status in Togo, and the benefits and opportunities it presents to stakeholders. The event also covered the identification and resolution mechanisms for Non-Tariff Barriers (NTB). About 30% of the participants were women, which aligns with the TFWA Program's key focus on gender. Presenters included Secretary General of the Ministry of Trade Mr. Abe Talime, President of the Special Consular Delegation of the Togo Chamber of Commerce Madame Nathalie Bitho, Chief Negotiator for the AfCFTA in Togo Mr. Katchali Batchassi, Ministry of Trade Chief of Service Mr. Kossi Abiguime, and Head of Research at the Ministry of Trade Mr. Kokuo Ognandou, among others.



Several key recommendations emerged from the session, including: tax exemption for agricultural equipment to support agri-food production and processing; training of economic operators on the use of the AfCFTA NTB e-platform; and the need to encourage the ECOWAS Commission to set up a regional e-NTB mechanism. It was also suggested that the quality and inspection services (standards, quality assessment, product certification, and metrology) should be included in the national trade facilitation committee.



# ECOWAS Commission Partners with Other Development Partners to Build Capacity with Women and SMEs



The TFWA Program, through the Directorate of Trade of the ECOWAS Commission, collaborated with United Nations Development Program (UNDP), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), International Trade Centre (ITC), Afrexim Bank, United Nations Commission for Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and the African Union Commission to conduct a series of capacity building trainings. The trainings aimed to enhance the capacity of women and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to trade within the Trade facilitation Agreement (TFA) and the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA).

The series of trainings—which started by employing a train-the-trainer model—took place in Sierra Leone on April 7-9 for women enterprises from all ECOWAS Member States (MSs), on 12-14 April in Ghana for SMEs in Anglophone MSs, and on 20-22 April in Côte d'Ivoire for SMEs from Francophone and Lusophone MSs.

In total, 42 MS representatives attended the event in Sierra Leone. The delegates included: HE Finda Koroma, the Vice President of the ECOWAS Commission; Dr. Edward Hinga Sandy, Minister of Trade and industry; Dr. Pa Lamin Beyai, the UNDP Resident Representative, who represented Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa, the Assistant Secretary General and Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa; and

Mr. Christopher Forster, President of the Sierra Leone Chamber of Commerce (SLCC). In Ghana, apart from the 20 participating dignitaries in attendance, other notable delegates included: the UNDP Resident Representative for Ghana, Ms Silke Hollander; the Chief of Staff at the AfCFTA Secretariat, Mr. Silver Ojakol; and Mr. Kolawole Sofola, Ag. Director of Trade of the ECOWAS Commission. In Côte d'Ivoire, 20 dignitaries participated in the meeting. Overall, the capacity building program was intended to highlight the links between the TFA articles and opportunities for ECOWAS traders within the AfCFTA. The program also contributed to an understanding of strategies/approaches to source inputs and export goods and services within the AfCFTA. Additionally, the program encouraged use of the AfCFTA's operational tools, including the African Trade Observatory and the Non-Tariff Barriers Reporting System.



## Côte d'Ivoire



## Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso Hold Final Meeting Before SIGMAT Rail Launch

On June 15, key implementers from the Abidjan-Ouagadougou corridor held a final preparatory meeting before the official rollout of SIGMAT Rail, which is expected at the end of June 22, 2021. Participants reviewed areas of concern and ironed out final details before the launch. This included reviewing the user guide and legal texts (protocoles d'accord and accord cadre) that allow the exchange of electronic data between the two customs administrations.

SIGMAT is a customs interconnection project that aims to use information technology to facilitate trade, transport, and the free movement of goods within the region. SIGMAT offers benefits to governments, financial institutions, and the private sector, as it paves the way for shared data in real time, which will ultimately reduce waiting times and increase revenues through reduced transit and transportation costs. The TFWA Program is supporting the SIGMAT rollout and will continue enhancing collaborations between stakeholders in the Ivoirian and Burkinabe trade facilitation ecosystem. Following this launch, the program aims to launch SIGMAT for improved customs interconnectivity across West African corridors.



## NTFC Revises Decree to Incorporate Gender Sensitivity



In June 2021, the Togolese NTFC adopted a new draft presidential decree. As a next step, the newly drafted decree will be submitted to the Ministry of Trade/Commerce, where it is expected to be approved. Once the minister has approved the decree, it will be submitted to the president of the republic for adoption.

The Presidential NTFC Decree includes several key new features:

- Aligning the NTFC's mandate with the trade facilitation objectives of the AfCFTA;
- Expanding the NTFC's permanent membership to include the Ministry for the Promotion of Women; and
- Creating a gender sub-committee within the NTFC to provide targeted support to small-scale women traders in Togo.

The decree materialized after continued dialogue between the Togolese NTFC and the TFWA Program, which encouraged the NTFC to welcome diverse representatives and stakeholders from the Gender Ministry. The TFWA Program looks forward to continued engagements and to further anchoring gender equality and gender mainstreaming into the NTFC's operations.



## SIGMAT Training Held for Customs and Freight Forwarders in Mali



**Customs office of Kayes**



**Customs office of Kayes**



**Customs office of Sikasso**



**Customs office of Bamako/ Faladié**

Training on the Interconnected System for the Management of Goods in Transit (SIGMAT) was held for 145 customs officers and about 50 freight forwarders in Mali. The training began on March 29 and ended on April 10, lasting two weeks and taking place on two TFWA Program corridors—Dakar-Bamako (Kati-Kayes-Diboli) and Abidjan-Bamako (Bamako/Faladié- Sikasso-Zégoua).

In line with the TFWA Program's objective to improve the efficient flow of trade on these corridors, this training allowed customs agents and freight forwarders from the main offices to become skilled and informed on the application of SIGMAT. Following this training effort, SIGMAT's operationalization on these two service corridors is imminent.



## Women-run Small Businesses Receive Skills Management Training on the Dakar-Bamako Corridor

From March 16 to March 18, GIZ hosted training sessions at the Regional Chamber of Commerce and in the multipurpose room of the Kayes City Hall in Mali. The objective of these trainings was to strengthen the managerial capacities of 100 women entrepreneurs (small traders) from the Dakar-Bamako corridor through the implementation of a training module in business management adapted to their needs and focused on accessing markets and financing.

Within the framework of the implementation of the ECOWAS Regional Program for Trade Facilitation, a partnership contract has been established between the Technical Unit for Business Climate Reforms (CTRCA), GIZ/TFWA Program, and APIX in Senegal to improve the business climate along the Dakar-Bamako corridor. A joint committee bringing together the Malian and Senegalese parties has been established to ensure the actions selected are properly implemented and to confirm that both parties' commitments are fulfilled.

Among other things, the CTRCA is responsible for ensuring the effective and coherent implementation of the program's action plan on the national level, and also for ensuring the support of all stakeholders from the government authorities, the private sector, and civil society. To this end, the CTRCA has agreed to carry out joint activities with the Project for the Formalization of Retail Trade Actors (PROFAC) to strengthen the managerial capacity of women entrepreneurs operating on the Dakar-Bamako corridor.





## Burkinabe NTFC Holds First Workshop of the Trade Facilitation and Gender Sub-committee

In March 2021, the first workshop of Burkina Faso's Trade and Gender Sub-committee was held at the Maison de l'Entreprise in Ouagadougou. The sub-committee's establishment was supported by the TFWA Program and is based on the National Trade Facilitation Committee's founding decree. In total, 29 people from various institutions—including representatives from associations of women traders—attended the workshop. The meeting aimed to explain the expectations of the sub-committee, plan the sub-committee's priority activities for 2021, inform participants about the support provided by the TFWA Program toward the implementation of the Burkinabe trade facilitation roadmap, and identify potential partners for the implementation of gender activities.

During the meeting, the TFWA Program highlighted and discussed the sub-committee's core objectives:

- Ensuring the NTFC integrates the gender dimension into its programs and decisions;
- Collecting and disseminating disaggregated gender data;
- Communicating about trade and gender issues;
- Seeking funding for sub-committee activities;
- Compiling and reporting bad practices and non-tariff barriers sensitive to cross-border women traders; and
- Increasing sub-committee member capacities.

Over the course of the workshop, participants recommended several key next steps:

- Mainstreaming gender into all trade facilitation activities;
- Supporting and ensuring sustainability of information offices;
- Supporting the TFWA Program to develop an operational action plan aligned with its roadmap;
- Holding capacity-building activities (including for monitoring and evaluation);
- Strengthening sub-committee member capacities in gender and monitoring/evaluation; and
- Supporting resource mobilization for the implementation of the roadmap.

Representatives from the Ministry of Women and from the women trader associations were very happy with the establishment and effective start of the sub-committee. The TFWA Program will continue to support the sub-committee and encourage the realization of the goals outlined in this first meeting.



## New Decree Makes Nigerien NTFC More Inclusive and Ambitious

In December 2020, the Nigerien ministers of finance and commerce updated the joint decree on the founding of Niger's National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC). The updated decree follows international best practices and introduces several institutional changes to the NTFC. The decree was developed in close cooperation with the TFWA Program, which is very glad to see the improvements realized.

The updated decree widens the trade consultation body's membership to include more representatives from civil society and the private sector (for example, airport and dry port operators). The decree also expands membership to the gender ministry and to female trader representatives. Structurally, the decree reshapes the NTFC into strategic and technical committees and several working groups, including a sub-committee on trade and gender.

Based on the upgraded degree, the Nigerien NTFC and the TFWA Program team have already held initial meetings on the composition of the trade and gender working group. The two partners also hosted a small-scale cross-border trade (SSCBT) socialization workshop to help the NTFC formulate its SSCBT support agenda. The NTFC also organized a TFWA Maturity Model workshop, where the NTFC's institutional self-evaluation was validated and further steps for development were agreed upon.

The TFWA Program will continue working closely with the Nigerien NTFC. The program wishes Niger success and hopes the upgraded decree will cement its international reputation as a trade champion.





Official handover of NTFC roadmap

## NTFC Presents Nigeria's Trade Facilitation Roadmap to the Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment

In June 2021, the TFWA team in Nigeria joined the Nigerian National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) to officially present the updated Trade Facilitation Roadmap to Hon. Minister Adebayo from the Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment (FMITI). The Trade Facilitation Roadmap represents a key step toward improving Nigeria's trade landscape, which is one of the TFWA Program's long-term goals for the country.

The meeting took place in Abuja, where the Minister commended the NTFC for the effort put into developing the document. In their presentation, the NTFC indicated that several factors helped ensure the roadmap's success. These factors included: high-level political buy-in (for example, by securing the FEC's approval); improved infrastructure at the ports; the procurement and deployment of scanners to reduce physical interventions; the establishment of the single window for trade; increased advocacy, especially as it relates to the legislative agenda; and improved border agency coordination.

As a next step, the ministry agreed to facilitate a meeting of the NTFC with other key agencies. The aim is to encourage accountability and to improve the roadmap's visibility with stakeholders across the country. The FMITI, the Nigerian NTFC, and the TFWA Program look forward to continuing to promote this important trade facilitation resource.