



JUNE 2022 NEWSLETTER

Contents

Regional Updates

SIGMAT Functional Training for Ghana, The Gambia, and Nigeria	2
UEMOA Launches Land Border Performance Measurement Initiative with TFWA Program Support.....	3
Factsheet: TFWA Program's Key Achievements	4
TFWA Program Launches New Video on NTFCs in West Africa	5
GIZ Hosts Strategic Workshop in Senegal	6

Country-level Updates

Benin.....	7
Côte d'Ivoire.....	8
Niger	14
Togo.....	15

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



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the
Netherlands



IMPLEMENTED BY



WORLD BANK GROUP
THE WORLD BANK IFC International
Finance Corporation



SIGMAT Functional Training for Ghana, The Gambia, and Nigeria



SIGMAT is an ECOWAS Customs interconnection project that aims to improve regional integration by automating transit procedures in the union. The SIGMAT module allows electronic data exchanges between Customs systems—this facilitates and secures the movement of goods across the various trade corridors in the region by providing digital, accurate information to Customs officers about cargo in transit from one state to another.

The Trade Facilitation West Africa (TFWA) Program promotes SIGMAT through the efficient transport of goods in selected trade corridors:

- Côte d'Ivoire Customs is connected (by road and rail) with Burkina Faso's Customs system
- Burkina Faso Customs is connected with Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, and Niger
- Togo is connected with Burkina Faso and Niger
- Niger is connected with Burkina Faso and Nigeria
- All those countries share the same Customs System, ASYCUDA

In June 2021, during an ECOWAS meeting, Ghana expressed its wishes to be connected with other countries. The first country will be Côte d'Ivoire. Since Ghana's Customs systems is different from ASYCUDA systems, Ghana has needed some IT development in order to make the electronic exchanges possible. A one-week technical meeting was organized in November 2021 in Ghana. The second meeting, a specification meeting, was held in Ghana in April 2022.

A Ghanaian Customs team is expected in Abidjan in the first week of July 2022 to discuss some technical and legal text issues and decide on an implementation chronogram. The connection will be launched by end of 2022.

UEMOA Launches Land Border Performance Measurement Initiative with TFWA Program Support



On May 11, the West African Monetary and Economic Union (also known under the French acronym, UEMOA) Commission, with support from the Trade Facilitation West Africa (TFWA) Program, officially launched the land border performance measurement initiative. This development forms part of the Commission's broader trade facilitation efforts to improve the performance-monitoring capacities of agencies operating at land borders in the UEMOA zone. Once fully operational, the initiative will support border agencies to detect trade bottlenecks, especially issues faced at border-crossing points that affect the movement of goods, while boosting transparency and efficiency of their operations.

The one-day virtual session was facilitated with the support of TFWA Program experts and gathered a total of 47 stakeholders from seven UEMOA Member States (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Niger, Senegal and Togo) representing National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs), Customs, and transport associations. Several government ministries — including Trade, Transport, and Agriculture — also attended the event.

The workshop was formally opened with a welcome statement by UEMOA's Commissioner in charge of Regional Market and Cooperation, Prof. Filiga Michel Sawadogo and introductory remarks by the UEMOA Director of Trade, Mrs. Rose Kabran.

The workshop aimed to:

- Present the matrix and technical elements to the UEMOA Member State stakeholders;
- Build the capacity of participants in the area of performance measurement;
- Provisionally design a performance measurement matrix; and
- Agree on an action plan to schedule next steps.

During the technical sessions, participants discussed the initiative's objectives, results, activities, implementation schedule, and modalities. Presentations were delivered with a focus on performance measurement, particularly on the formulation of objectives, the definition of objectively verifiable indicators (such as clearance time, and level of user/client satisfaction), and the identification of sources of verification. This was followed by preliminary design of the UEMOA land border performance measurement matrix in the area of trade facilitation by the participants, who also agreed on a consensus-based action plan to guide the initiative's efforts over the coming months.

Overall, the workshop was well received and participants commended the efforts of the UEMOA Commission and the TFWA Program in terms of workshop delivery and outcomes. As next steps, participants recommended two virtual workshops to follow up on the design of the performance measurement matrix, which will be complemented by an on-site workshop before the end of the third quarter of 2022.

Factsheet: TFWA Programs Key Achievements

The Trade Facilitation West Africa (TFWA) Program recently published a factsheet (in English, French, and Portuguese) featuring key highlights since the program's inception in 2018.

In addition to examples of how the program, with support from regional bodies and other development partners, is making a difference across West Africa, the document highlights the transformative country and corridor-level impacts to trade facilitation measures and reforms.



Key program-supported milestones include:

- Launch of the ECOWAS Regional Trade Facilitation Committee to facilitate National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) coordination across West Africa.
- Creation of five NTFC trade and gender sub-committees—in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Niger, and Nigeria—to mainstream gender into national trade agendas.
- ECOWAS Member States' fulfillment of their World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) obligations. Adherence to the TFA will help reduce the overall cost and time required to trade across the region.
- Launch and operationalization of the System for the Management of Goods in Transit (SIGMAT), an IT system designed to connect customs systems across the region, enabling efficient sharing and transparent processing of cargo information between countries.
- Support for the strengthening of Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures at the country level by introducing and deploying electronic phytosanitary certificates (ePhyto), a paperless solution developed to facilitate safe and efficient trade.
- Several evaluations on small-scale cross-border traders to build evidence on trade and gender in West Africa. The results will help address the principal trade facilitation challenges affecting small-scale women traders along the corridor, such as access to markets and cumbersome customs and border procedures.

Looking forward, the TFWA Program remains committed to supporting partners to deliver inclusive, targeted, and scalable trade facilitation interventions.

[Click here to view more achievements on the factsheet](#)

TFWA Program Launches New Video on NTFCs in West Africa



Recently, the Trade Facilitation West Africa (TFWA) Program produced a short video that provides a high-level overview of National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs), explaining what they are and why they are an important part of trade facilitation.

In West Africa, trade remains a major source of growth for most countries, however trade transactions are often very complicated because of non-tariff barriers, including burdensome customs procedures, poor infrastructure, and inadequate or unclear trade rules and regulations. The video highlights the role of NTFCs as key multi-stakeholder platforms established to champion trade facilitation measures. By strengthening inter-agency collaboration and coordination, NTFCs help eliminate complexity and duplication of efforts, which significantly reduces time and costs related to trade.

The TFWA program is empowering NTFCs across West Africa to achieve more effective and innovative trade facilitation policy outcomes at the national level, while also contributing to stronger regional integration via platforms like the ECOWAS Regional Trade Facilitation Committee.

Watch the video to learn more about NTFCs and trade facilitation in West Africa

GIZ Hosts Strategic Workshop in Senegal



From April 26 to 28, GIZ hosted a team-building and strategy workshop in Saly, Senegal to discuss the strategic goals for the program while also helping the team develop shared vision and understanding. Working under the theme “The Power of Alignment – Managing Quality & Change Successfully”, the event was designed to exchange lessons learned, ranging from technical knowledge to organizational know-how. Specifically, the training set out to accomplish the following objectives:

- Identify effective ways to deliver the program successfully;
- Discuss multiple future scenarios and impacts on program implementation;
- Explore ways to strengthen potential partnerships with internal/external partners and stakeholders;
- Build a strong culture based on international, cross-functional, cross-hierarchical team spirit; and
- Plan next steps.

The workshop commenced with a welcome speech and an introductory overview by the Head of the GIZ component of the TFWA Program, Ms. Barbara Rippel. This was followed by a productive breakout session on individual and group expectations, which stimulated discussions centered on the program's strengths and weaknesses. Participants were encouraged to share their own personal achievements and even highlighted some program successes, including:

- Improved Member State coordination across ECOWAS;
- The adoption of multiple ECOWAS customs texts;
- The establishment of the ECOWAS Regional Trade Facilitation Committee (RTFC);
- The successful deployment of SIGMAT along the Dakar-Bamako corridor;
- The strengthening of the ETLS and development of the ETLS website; and
- Capacity building activities for customs, tax administrations, and the private sector.

At the end of the workshop, participants worked together to:

- Develop guiding principles and cornerstones for strategies in different future scenarios;
- Define the frame of reference for WATIP II;
- Develop a SWOT and trend analysis, putting into consideration the existing structure, staff, collaborations, and resources; and
- Develop strategies to successfully master the different scenarios, including stretch goals, indicators/measures, and targets for the future.



Benin Establishes National Trade Facilitation Committee



The government of Benin, with support from the Trade Facilitation in West Africa (TFWA) Program, signed an inter-ministerial decree formalizing the National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) as part of their obligations to the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). The NTFC will play a central role in coordinating implementation of trade facilitation measures and other related initiatives, including strengthening public-private sector partnership and assisting the government to modernize and simplify trade procedures in the country.

The newly established committee is made up of the following bodies:

- Strategic Orientation Committee
- Technical Committee
- Technical Working Groups, which take into account gender, trade facilitation, and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

The signing was preceded by a series of meetings and consultation sessions with key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Trade Facilitation Committee of the General Directorate of Customs, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Microfinance (in charge of gender), and the private sector.

Following these consultations, the TFWA Program team organized an in-country workshop, among other things, to strengthen the NTFC's institutional capacities (based on the TFWA Program Maturity Model). The session helped the government define its priorities and actions, improve awareness of international best practices, and renew commitments to integrate a gender perspective into trade facilitation reforms.

The structure of the new institutional framework guarantees institutional coherence in terms of trade facilitation, and takes into account the aspects of the TFA, the Trade in Goods Protocol of the AfCFTA, as well as the gender dimension related to cross-border trade.

With the continued support of the TFWA Program, Benin now joins the list of West African countries that operate on principles of global best practices. Through its newly established NTFC, Benin will make progress in facilitating greater inclusiveness, simplification, and harmonization of international trade procedures.



Team Côte d'Ivoire Strengthens NTFC Capacity

From March 20 to 26, the TFWA Program embarked on a mission to strengthen the role and capacity of the Ivorian National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) to effectively implement and coordinate trade facilitation policies.

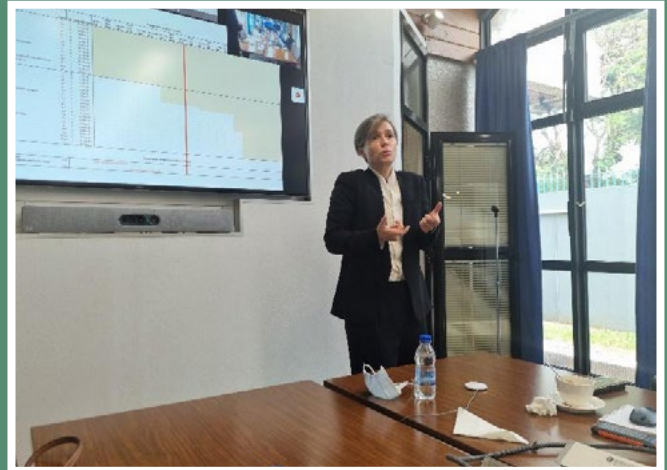
On March 21, the TFWA Program hosted a workshop in Côte d'Ivoire, bringing together members of the NTFC and representatives of the Foreign Trade Directorate, and the Ministry of Trade. The workshop aimed to review the operational priorities of the NTFC action plan—established in collaboration with the TFWA Program following the maturity self-assessment exercise—and adopt a working methodology to implement them in accordance with commitments to the WTO TFA and the AfCFTA.

In May, the TFWA Program worked with NTFC members to develop and validate the gender strategy, a key step toward integrating a gender perspective into the functioning of the NTFC and national trade facilitation reforms. During the session, teams were formed to implement activities from the main action plan. Subsequent workshops were held with four working groups to finalize the NTFC work plan along the following themes:

- Access to information and automation;
- Simplified and streamlined procedures;
- Public-private partnership and compliance programs; and
- Cooperation and inter-agency dialogue.

The topic addressed by each working group includes several AFE Category C measures that have convergences in their technical implementation.

The TFWA Program will continue to provide technical support to the Ivorian NTFC as it makes progress in ensuring trade facilitation reforms deliver measurable improvements in the country.



Advancing Implementation of ePhyto in Côte d'Ivoire



Côte d'Ivoire has made significant strides in operationalizing sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures to facilitate faster, safer, and easier trade across its borders.

In March, the TFWA Program team supported the live test launch of the ePhyto solution, which is an electronic system designed to fast track the exchange of phytosanitary certificates and ultimately reduce the time and costs required to trade. This phase started with the attribution of access codes to the ePhyto module by the GUCE-CI (Côte d'Ivoire's single window platform).

To complement the country's ongoing SPS efforts, the TFWA Program team is currently planning to conduct a study—focused on cocoa and mango exports—to measure the benefits of the ePhyto and eRisk modules for the private sector. Between March 18 and 30, several consultations were held with stakeholders from the private sector to discuss the major phytosanitary constraints in obtaining certificates for cocoa and mango exports. With results from the sessions, the team developed a baseline survey (to measure the impact of the implementation of ePhyto at the end of the program) and hired technical experts to collect data in four key locations across Abidjan: Korhogo, Port of San Pedro, Port of Abidjan, and Abidjan airport.





TFWA Program Holds SPS Validation Workshop on Pest Risk Management



Following the pre-validation exercise held in February 2022 to improve sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures in Côte d'Ivoire, the TFWA Program conducted a two-day workshop to validate seven legal and regulatory texts to improve the framework of pest risk management. The texts will contribute to the management of phytosanitary risks and reduce delays and costs related to phytosanitary inspections in the country. At the same time, they will strengthen collaboration between the NPPO and national plant health actors concerned with SPS.

The key stakeholders in attendance, including technical experts from the TFWA Program and representatives from Europe-Africa-Caribbean-Pacific Liaison Committee (COLEACP), examined the proposals of texts and signed off on its technical contents.

The seven validated legal texts are:

- New law on plant protection (replacing Law n°64-490 of December 21, 1964);
- Decree for the application of the new law;
- Decree establishing attributions, composition, organization, and functioning of the National Committee of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures in the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, abbreviated CN-SPS-CI;
- Inter-ministerial decree specifying the details of the collaboration between the NPPO and the scientific research structures (public, private) in plant health (phytosanitary inspection, ARP, surveillance, phytosanitary protection, experimentations, studies, research, agricultural advice); and
- Order of the Minister in charge of Agriculture appointing the members of the national expert teams for the realization of the PRA, and the establishment and updating of the lists of pests, including quarantine and non-quarantine pests.

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

- Share the validated and corrected texts with participants for feedback;
- Consolidate the reviewed and corrected texts;
- Share the consolidated texts with the legal department of MEMINADER for formatting;
- Share the formatted texts to the Ministries involved for review and feedback; and
- Share the final texts to the General Secretariat for adoption and signatures.

SPS Validation Workshop for Safer Trade



On April 12, the TFWA Program team conducted a one-day workshop for representatives of the Directorate of the Veterinary Services of the Ministry of Animal and Halieutic Resources (DSV) to discuss and validate three legal texts (Ministerial acts or Arrêtés) to facilitate safe trade while also ensuring human and animal health.

The three validated texts:

- Establish the list of disinfectants used in breeding as veterinary drugs;
- Define the general rules and procedures for the certification of animals, animal products, and veterinary drugs for import and export; and
- Establish a list of priority animal diseases in Côte d'Ivoire.

Once adapted, the SPS measures will provide several benefits:

- Reduce time and costs of imports (for example, the cost of importing veterinary disinfectants is expected to drop from 22.5% to 2.5%);
- Reduce inspection time of animals, veterinary drugs, animal and animal-derived foodstuffs, and the issuance of the veterinary certificate; and
- Improve quality controls to safeguard human and animal health including epidemiological surveillance of animal diseases and emergency response plans

At the end of the workshop, the stakeholders agreed to:

- Share the validated and updated texts with the participants for feedback;
- Consolidate reviewed and updated texts and forward them to the legal department for formatting; and
- Submit final texts to the Chief of Staff of the Minister, DSV for signatures.

TFWA Supports Customs Strategy Workshop

Following a technical mission in March to revise the customs strategy and discuss transactional data-exchange between border offices with systematic reconciliation, the TFWA Program continued to provide technical assistance to the customs administration in Côte d'Ivoire.

From May 12 to 20, the program held a seminar in Bassam to develop the Customs 2022 - 2025 Strategic Plan and restructure the customs reform committee. The seminar was well attended by representatives from Ivorian Customs, including the President of Reform and the General Inspector, as well as the World Customs Organization (WCO) Director of the Regional Capacity Building Office. Overall, the seminar provided guidance on methodological aspects and relevant tools and techniques used in formulating an updated strategic plan, which covers several key elements (vision, mission, strategic axis, and performance indicators).

Thanks to the productive sessions, customs representatives requested that the TFWA Program facilitate a workshop on how to use customs intelligence information from the Regional Information Exchange Networks and WCO Customs Enforcement Network. Following the workshop, the program team in Côte d'Ivoire also made presentations on voluntary compliance (a strategic step to modernizing customs operations) to the GM and other key stakeholders, including the Deputy, General Inspector, Director of DARRV, Director of Customs Investigation Department, Director of the Regulatory and Legal Department, and the President of the Reform Committee. At the meeting, the team announced a planned program-sponsored study tour on voluntary compliance in the Netherlands for the Ivorian delegation in the coming months.



TFWA Program Meets with Donors



The TFWA Program's work to improve trade facilitation is only possible thanks to contributions from program donors and with support from various regional institutions and partners. In March, the TFWA Program team in Côte d'Ivoire met with donor representatives to present the program's key achievements and discuss next stages as the program moves into its final year of implementation. Participants at the meetings included: Ms. Anne Bisso, USAID Director; Mr. Mauro Miranda, First Counsellor, Head of Section (Trade) at the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire; H.E Ms. Yvette Daoud, Ambassador of the Netherlands to Côte d'Ivoire; and Mr. Joel Amani Kouame, Senior Trade and Economic Advisor, Embassy of Netherlands in Côte d'Ivoire.

USAID: Ms. Bisso stressed the importance of strengthening coordination between the various existing trade initiatives that Côte d'Ivoire can fully benefit from, including the new Prosper Africa Program, aimed at supporting and strengthening trade between Africa and the United States, as well as the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

USAID also confirmed support for the implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and expressed strong interest in getting the World Bank to coordinate a donor meeting with the NTFC (to support coordination and needs-gathering for TFA-related projects).

EU: In the context of TFA implementation, the EU stated that it is necessary to raise awareness among economic operators. With the NTFC mandated to coordinate trade facilitation reforms, it is important to leverage existing platforms, such as WhatsApp, to disseminate trade facilitation-related information.

Embassy of Netherlands: A presentation on the voluntary compliance initiative sparked great interest and discussion, which focused on consolidating synergies with existing governance initiatives. The program's efforts to support the Ivorian NTFC and strengthen its role as an inclusive and participatory platform were commendable. Representatives called on the program to continue to systematically integrate a cross-cutting approach in its reforms, for the benefit of women traders.

Niger's NTFC launches reform planning exercise



Niger has made significant progress in the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) provisions, with support from the TFWA Program. For context, the TFA spearheads a global effort to improve trade efficiency, reduce trade costs, increase transparency, and encourage the adoption of new technologies. Developing and the least-developed countries may require help to implement the provisions of the TFA and evaluate their ability to implement by selecting one of three categories (Category A, B or C) for each of the agreement's provisions.

Recently, the Nigerien National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) organized an intensive planning exercise for the implementation of Category C of the WTO TFA—this indicates provisions that require additional time, as well as technical and financial assistance, to be implemented.



The NTFC members worked in groups following three main themes:

- Transparency and information;
- Interagency cooperation and coordination; and
- Customs and transit.

Under each theme, the working groups reviewed results to be obtained under each Category C commitment of the TFA, and developed key activities to achieve those results. During the session, the TFWA Program experts also re-examined existing synergies between the trade facilitation provisions of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) and the WTO TFA. At the end of the meeting, the NTFC members agreed to establish a detailed road map with timeframes for TFA implementation.

TFWA Program and Togo Revenue Authority Train Customs Officials on Customs Risk Management



From April 4 to 8, the TFWA Program, in collaboration with the Togo Revenue Authority (OTR), successfully organized a technical training workshop on customs risk management. The hybrid session was attended by 50 Togolese customs officers and facilitated by a TFWA Program customs expert with support from OTR experts in risk management.

Participants benefited from the training, which aimed to improve their capacity in international techniques and best practices governing customs risk management. The training complemented the current OTR initiative to minimize physical inspections of imported cargo at the Togolese border through a variety of customs risk management mechanisms, including IT applications.

As one of the key measures contained in the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), the application of risk management improves efficiency and reduces customs clearance time, while strengthening controls to detect fraud and other offences.

Overall, the participants were pleased with the outcome of the training and requested a follow-up training, with a focus on other customs risk activities, such as the action plan for implementation of risk management and a mapping of cargo transit at the Cinkasse border in August 2022. In fact, the TFWA Program team and the OTR's management have already met with the Customs/OTR Director of the Lomé Port to agree on a practical approach for this next training.

