



MARCH 2022 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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Regional Trade Facilitation Committee Launches

On February 21, the ECOWAS Commission launched the Regional Trade Facilitation Committee (RTFC). This new forum—the first of its kind in West Africa—marks a major milestone for trade facilitation in the region. In June 2021, the agreement (Decision C/DEC.1/6/21) to establish and operationalize the RTFC was made at the eighty-sixth regular session of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers in an effort to enhance trade facilitation within ECOWAS Member States. The Trade Facilitation West Africa (TFWA) Program supports these efforts and commends ECOWAS on launching this landmark regional forum.

The historic launch was marked with a ceremony in Lomé, Togo. The event was moderated by Mr. Kolawole Sofola, ECOWAS Acting Director of Trade and brought together several key stakeholders, including: H.E Mr. Kodjo Sévon-Tépé Adédzé, Togolese Minister of Trade, Industry, and Local Consumption; Mr. Téli Konzi, ECOWAS Commissioner for Trade, Customs, and Free Movement of Persons; Mr. Philippe Kokou Tchodie, Commissioner General of the Togolese Revenue Office (OTR); and Ms. Barbara Rippel, Head of the GIZ - TFWA Program.

In his remarks, H.E Mr. Kodjo Sévon-Tépé Adédzé explained that the new committee is designed to strengthen synergies between the bodies responsible for facilitation at the country level. He also urged members of the new RTFC to work toward simplifying exports, imports, and transit procedures within and outside the region. Speaking on behalf of Ms. Rippel, Mr. Kenneth Okoro, reiterated the TFWA Program's commitment to assist ECOWAS in facilitating the movement of goods in the region. Later, TFWA Program representative Bénédicte Meille delivered a presentation on the role of the NTFCs in implementing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), bringing one of the program's key focus areas to the RTFC forum.

Following the official launch, the committee commenced its inaugural meeting, which took place from February 21 to 23. Several recommendations were made during this first meeting, including: mainstreaming peer learning and experience-sharing in the committee's operations; developing sensitization programs for several ongoing trade facilitation initiatives to ensure relevant stakeholders are informed and positioned to fully enjoy the benefits of these initiatives; and strengthening private sector engagement in the design, implementation, and monitoring of trade-related policies, initiatives, and instruments. Moving forward, the RTFC will serve as a platform to ensure cooperation and coordination between ECOWAS Member States for the harmonized implementation of national, regional, continental, and international trade facilitation reforms.



TFWA Program Hosts Side Event at UN Women CSW66

On March 14, the TFWA Program hosted a side event at the 66th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66). The panel discussion explored issues at the forefront of the trade and gender agenda while showcasing innovative and transformative solutions to build private sector resiliency to market disruptions, with a focus on West African traders.

The event was moderated by Ewokolo Jeme, a gender expert and training coordinator for the GIZ - TFWA Program, who introduced the key panelists: Dr. Barbara Ky, Director of the Gender Centre at UEMOA; Jailson da Luz Costa, Customs IT and Interconnectivity Specialist at GIZ - ECOWAS; Christel Annequin, Transport Facilitation and Logistics Consultant at TFWA Program (World Bank); and Carine Yemitia, Regional Senior Procurement Officer at IFAD / Chairperson of Women in Logistics and Transport (WiLAT) in Côte D'Ivoire. The event was held virtually via ZOOM, and gathered more than 80 participants and stakeholders from across the globe.

During the session, panelists unpacked the pandemic-related challenges facing small-scale cross border traders (SSCBTs) across the region. The vast majority, up to 70 - 80 percent, of Africa's small-scale traders are female. Women represent a huge portion of the private sector, and were thus particularly impacted by COVID-19, which is disproportionately affecting women and deepening existing inequalities in the region.

Over the course of the event, panelists emphasized the importance of digitalization at the national and regional levels. Digital trade has the potential to improve the efficiency, cost, and transparency of cross-border trade. At the same time, digitalization can help address the limitations faced by women traders. As an example, Mr. Jailson da Luz Costa highlighted ECOWAS's mission to simplify and automate procedures across the region: "To support traders and reduce delays at the borders, ECOWAS has introduced and adopted the Transit Supplementary Act, an e-tool aimed at facilitating the movement of goods."

Dr. Ky added that more investment is required for digitalization to benefit women traders. She highlighted the need for capacity and training that equips women traders to take full advantage of digital tools and platforms. On the customs side, Ms. Carine Yemitia said that customs administrations should continue to embrace digital transformation in order to shape the smart supply chains of the future. Automation of customs procedures is key to simplifying trade, allowing less in-person physical contact, reducing customs clearance time and costs, and enabling safer cross-border trade.

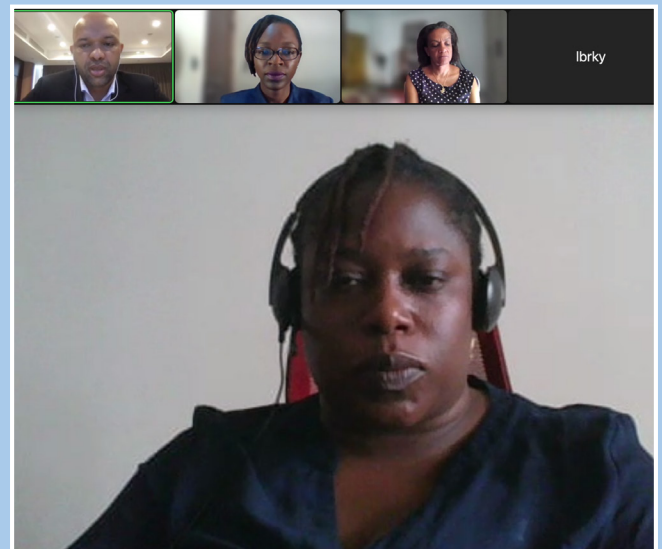
As the conversation continued, the speakers outlined concrete actions that can protect women traders and build their resilience to future business disruptions. For example, Ms. Christel Annequin highlighted efforts by the TFWA Program to simplify small-scale trade through the groupage system, an economical way for traders to bulk their merchandise and send it across borders as groups.

"To support traders and reduce delays at the borders, ECOWAS has introduced and adopted the Transit Supplementary Act, an e-tool aimed at facilitating the movement of goods."

- Jailson da Luz Costa (GIZ - ECOWAS)

This mechanism not only facilitates safe trade, but it saves traders money and decreases the total number of vehicles on the road each day, helping the environment.

Before the session closed, the panelists highlighted some overarching strategies—such as improving women's access to trade-related information at the borders—that can elevate women traders and women working in customs administrations. As uncovered during the discussion, this is another important step to addressing the hurdles faced by women in the region.



ECOWAS Hosts Workshop on Mirror Data for Risk Analysis



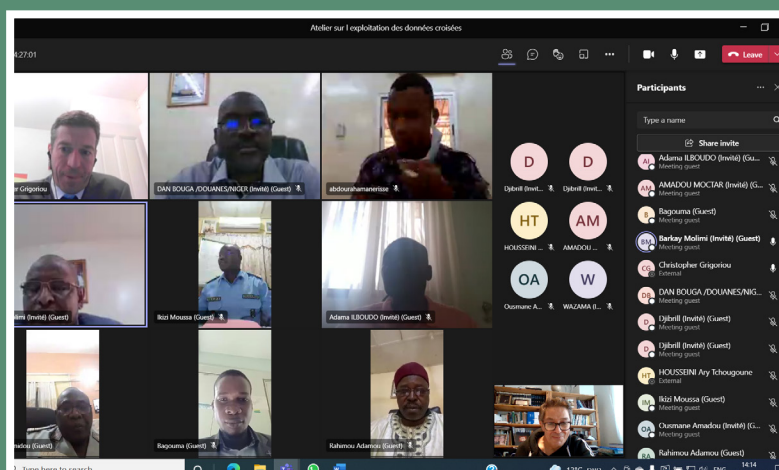
The TFWA Program recently conducted virtual capacity building workshops on the use of mirror data for the Customs Administrations in four pilot Member States of the Operationalization Project of the Supplementary Act on Regional Customs Cooperation of ECOWAS. These workshops were part of the Operationalization Project of the Additional Act A/SA.6/12/18 of December 22, 2018, relating to Mutual Assistance and Customs Cooperation and in accordance with the Action Plan validated by each pilot Member State.

During the workshops, participants learned key areas of mirror data exchange and risk management, including:

- Method and contribution of the mirror analysis in macroeconomic data on foreign trade;
- Customs risk management and selectivity, with a focus on post-clearance control (an effective means of optimizing customs controls and expediting the clearance of goods); and
- Development and implementation of a mechanism for the exchange and reconciliation of mirror transactional statistical data between border offices of the pilot Member States of the project.

The workshops provided an opportunity to present cases specific to each Member State. These presentations were based on available data collected from international trade statistical databases and the methodology for interpreting and processing statistical discrepancies detected through the analysis of mirror data. Also, the workshops provided an opportunity to discuss arrangements for the exchange of mirror statistical data on foreign trade and transactional information on cross-border trade at the local level (between offices and customs' posts at the borders) and at the national level, in a systematic way within the framework of the customs cooperation strategy.

As a next step, the project is working to implement the exchange of mirror statistical data at the national level and between border offices of the pilot Member States.



TFWA Program Aims to Create Community of Trust between Traders and Border Officials



The TFWA Program has begun recruitment for a facilitator to develop an innovative behavioral training and dialogue platform that will build small-scale cross-border traders' (SSBCTs) awareness of trade rules and regulations. At the same time, this platform will facilitate dialogue to build trust and strengthen SSBCT communications with border authorities.

These efforts build on the TFWA Program's Trader Association Mapping conducted in 2020 and Capacity Building Needs Assessment completed in 2021. The Capacity Building Needs Assessment identified very low trader awareness of rules and regulations as a key need in the region. To meet this need, the TFWA Program will provide SSBCT training focused on both technical (for example, national and regional trade rules and regulations, as well as trader rights and obligations) and behavioral (for example, communications, confidence, persistence and resilience) content.

Additionally, the TFWA Program will foster stronger dialogue with border authorities to catalyze a wider cultural shift—encouraging a move from adversarial to more collaborative relationships. This will include advocating for customs to adopt, as part of their mandate, proactive communications on the evolution of trade rules and regulations, as well as action to support traders' voluntary compliance.

In February, the TFWA Program began recruiting experienced training facilitators across its nine focal countries.

These facilitators will serve as a critical part of the training design and delivery team. Candidates do not need to be cross-border trade experts, but should bring proven experience using participatory methods (such as role playing / community theater / case studies or experience delivering behavioral training to rural participants, especially women, with limited education and/or literacy).

The recruited facilitators will help design the training curriculum and a rollout plan that uses a phased approach, in which the curriculum will be piloted in 2022, then refined and replicated in additional countries.

Selection of the pilot countries is currently underway, and will be based on:

1. Existing TFWA Program relationships with in-country Border Authorities;
2. Border Authorities' demonstrated receptiveness to the culture shift envisioned by the TFWA Program;
3. The availability of qualified training facilitator candidates in country; and
4. Compatibility with the TFWA Program's existing corridor work plans.

Recruitment for training facilitators is ongoing in all nine countries, and interested candidates should send applications to **tcubbins@worldbank.org**.

ECOWAS Interdepartmental Trade Facilitation Committee Meets



On 18 February, the ECOWAS Commission's Interdepartmental Trade Facilitation Committee met virtually to discuss the following ongoing initiatives:

- Regional Trade and Transport Facilitation Strategy.
- ECOWAS Regional Non-Tariff Barriers Policy and Strategy.
- ECOWAS Regional COVID-19 Response Development (Trade Component).
- Preparation for the Launch and First Meeting of the ECOWAS Regional Trade Facilitation Committee.

The directorates represented included: Trade, Free Movement, Transport, Legal, Communication, Industry, and Private Sector. The Committee highlighted the need for capacity-building programs around trade facilitation initiatives to ensure stakeholders are adequately equipped and positioned to efficiently and effectively undertake implementation.



TFWA Program Supports NTFC Roadmap Validation Workshop



The Burkinabe National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) roadmap was recently validated at an NTFC meeting in Ouagadougou. In total, more than 30 NTFC members attended the meeting, which was chaired by Mr. Seydou Ilboudo, Director General of Trade, who represented the NTFC President.

During the session, NTFC members reviewed, and ultimately approved, the draft roadmap. The roadmap was developed based on a NTFC self-assessment and is composed of 34 activities grouped into four strategic objectives. The strategy, which will be implemented over a three year period, includes trade and gender sub-committee activities among other things.

Participants recommended the mapping of key trade facilitation entities as well as the creation of thematic working groups or sub-committees. Additionally, participants validated and adopted the mandate of the NTFC's Technical Secretariat. The document details the attributions and functions of the Technical Secretariat as the operational structure of the NTFC, taking into account the weaknesses identified under the NTFC self-assessment exercise.

The Trade Facilitation Roadmap represents a key step toward improving Burkina Faso's trade landscape, which is one of the TFWA Program's long-term goals for the country.



TFWA Program Supports First ePhyto Training

Following the successful launch of phytosanitary certificates (ePhyto) in Côte d'Ivoire—an endeavor heavily supported by the TFWA Program—the program recently hosted the first training session on ePhyto for the GUCE (Côte d'Ivoire's single window for external/foreign trade).

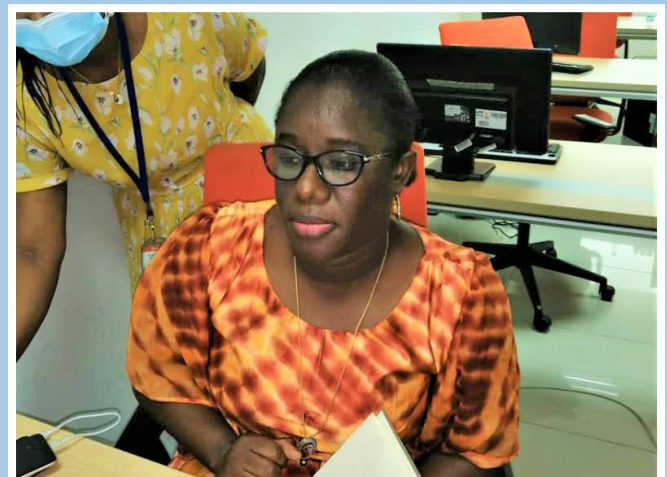
ePhyto is an important way to reduce trade costs and facilitate safer trade. Other benefits include efficient documentation creation and exchange, reduction of time spent on customs clearance processes, and greater collaboration among stakeholders. The training session attracted representatives of the Directorate of Plant Protection, Control and Quality (DPVCQ) and the Ministry of Agriculture interested in learning how to implement the ePhyto solution. During the session, participants highlighted some key actions that have already been completed:

- Finalizing the connection between IPCC and the GUCE and;
- Conducting a workshop in partnership with COLEAP to outline and update the lists of regulated pests in ACP countries.

Over the course of the session, key next steps were recommended:

- Performing ePhyto tests (for products such as mangoes) with European countries recommended by the COLEACP.
- Conducting a field mission to implement a live test of the module at the port of Abidjan.
- Developing a baseline survey to measure the impact of the implementation of the e-phyto at the end of the project.
- Commencing configuration of the system to generate the control form.

Since last year, the TFWA Program has provided funding and technical expertise to countries across West Africa to achieve broader adoption of the ePhyto solution.



Pre-validation Workshop Improves SPS Measures



On February 23 and 24, the TFWA Program hosted a workshop at the Directorate of Plant Protection, Control and Quality (DPVCQ) of the Ministry of State, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER) to improve the content of expert proposals before they are submitted to national stakeholders for validation. In total, 20 stakeholders participated in the physical workshop in Abidjan, with some more joining online via Webex.

The four internally pre-validated texts are:

- Preliminary draft of the (new) law on plant protection;
- Preliminary draft decree for the application of the (new) law on plant protection;
- Preliminary draft decree on the procedures of phytosanitary inspection, PRA, and plant quarantine;
- Draft inter-ministerial order setting out the details of collaboration between the NPPO and the structures of plant health research and agricultural advice.

This initiative forms part of the TFWA Program's support to improve sanitary and phytosanitary measures across the region. Through the TFWA Program's technical and financial assistance, countries across West Africa will reap the benefits of trade with fewer import and export risks, greater access to international markets, and stronger guarantees around the safety of food and other products.



Sanitary and Phytosanitary Workshop Takes Place in Abidjan



On January 27, the TFWA Program, with support from the private sector, conducted a workshop on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) procedures for representatives of importing companies. Hosted at the World Bank Office in Abidjan, the workshop allowed participants to exchange lessons and share experiences. Specifically, the workshop focused on procedures related to obtaining the various documents issued by the Veterinary Services (DSV, SICOSAV, etc.) of the Ministry of Animal Resources and Fisheries when importing goods.

Participants focused on several issues, bringing light to key topics:

- The different types of operator activities;
- The types of documents issued;
- Procedures for obtaining the documents issued;
- Time required to obtain the documents issued;
- Costs related to obtaining these documents; and
- Challenges encountered during import operations and solutions.

Advisory Agreement Signed between Côte d'Ivoire and IFC



On January 13, the Ivorian government signed an assistance agreement with the International Finance Corporation (IFC). The agreement was signed by Souleymane Diarrassouba, the Ivorian Minister of Trade and Industry and IFC's Resident Representative in Côte d'Ivoire, and is part of the TFWA Program's efforts to reduce trade transaction costs along the Abidjan-Ouagadougou corridor while at the same time strengthening private sector commitment.

Speaking at the meeting, Souleymane Diarrassouba highlighted collaboration as a key step in improving trade competitiveness along the corridor, one of the six major trade corridors in the West African region. He stated that collaboration will, in time, improve trade flows and efficiency. He mentioned that the agreement is in line with Côte d'Ivoire's solidarity vision, which considers the private sector a critical lever for growth, with an expected contribution of 75% under the 2021-2025 National Development Plan. Olivier Buyoya reaffirmed IFC's commitment to assisting the Ivorian government to strengthen performance along the corridor and boost economic development.



With support from the TFWA Program, Côte d'Ivoire has already successfully established an information portal (Portail Web d'Information Commerciale, or PWIC) and single window for trade (Guichet Unique du Commerce Extérieur, or GUCE-CI). These innovations streamline customs inspection procedures and, as a result, reduce time and costs related to export and import customs clearance, especially for private operators.



Customs Risk Analysis and Management Technical Assistance Officially Launched

Proper risk management in border management is one of the most important preconditions for trade facilitation. With this in mind, the TFWA Program recently provided technical assistance for Mali's Customs Administration to strengthen, update, and modernize its risk analysis and management (RAM) system. TFWA Program experts met with members of Malian Customs—including Mr. Amadou Konaté, Director General of Customs Mali, and other senior managers and agents from the country's domestic services—to discuss the proposed action plan. The action plan was developed based on results of a risk management diagnostic questionnaire and was designed to address the seven priority areas for interventions identified by the customs administration for the modernization of its RAM system.

Generally, the program-provided technical assistance will support the updating of the AGR strategy (in line with international standards and best practices in risk analysis and management). Specifically, this involves:

- Developing the strategy to cover anti-fraud, secure revenue, voluntary compliance, trade facilitation, and the policy of selectivity of controls in advance, during, and after customs clearance and customs intelligence.
- Developing the strategy to integrate modern concepts of controls, anti-fraud, and governance based on systemic quality assurance, voluntary compliance, and regional/international cooperation.
- Developing a multi-year strategic plan to operationalize the IGA with performance indicators in terms of risk analysis, control, facilitation of international trade and voluntary compliance of companies with customs regulations in Mali.

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

- Schedule follow-up meetings between the customs technical services and the TFWA Program;
- Present the updated customs' RAM strategy and diagnostic report in Mali;
- Conduct workshops to validate the reports and raise awareness of RAM performance; and
- Monitor, evaluate, and report on RAM implementation.

Risk management is an efficient way for customs administrations to drive interventions at the border, ensure effective compliance, and significantly improve performance in trade facilitation. The TFWA Program will support the Malian Customs Administration to implement the recommended next steps over the coming months.





Program Trains Company Managers and Drivers on the Dakar-Bamako Corridor

The TFWA Program hosted a series of training workshops in Bamako and Kayes, Mali to strengthen the managerial capacities of transport company managers. The workshops aimed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of carriers, drivers, and shippers related to loading techniques, road safety, and best practices. In total, 75 participants—including representatives of freight transport companies, the Malian Council of Road Carriers (CMTR), technical service of transport, and road transport unions—attended the sessions.

The TFWA Program developed and implemented the training modules on transport company management. The modules focused on seven key areas:

1. Prevention and Road Risk: road risk on West African corridors: VECO formula (Vehicle, Environment, Driver, and Organization); transport safety precautions
2. Cargo Handling and Securing Techniques: highway code and securing, general rules and responsibilities, law and securing, types and cases of control; unloading; general securing principles; specific securing requirements by type of cargo
3. Resource Management in Transport
4. Transport Company Environment
5. Application of Management-Marketing Principles to Transport
6. Application of the market research technique to transportation
7. Practical Exercises (Case Studies): practical situations involving calculations and the choice of different securing methods; good practices in some transport companies

In addition to the above, the training provided an opportunity to share materials for compiling texts relating to cross-border trade with technical services and professional organizations in the private sector and drivers' unions.

This activity is part of the implementation of the National Action Plan to Improve the Competitiveness of the Dakar-Bamako corridor. In the coming weeks, the TFWA Program, with support from the National Monitoring Committee for Improving the Competitiveness of the Dakar-Bamako corridor, will plan awareness-raising and communication activities to complement the training.



TFWA Program Holds NTFC Maturity Model Self-Assessment Workshop

On February 25, the TFWA Program's Nigeria team organized a workshop to conduct the annual progress review of the Nigerian National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC). The review used the TFWA Maturity Model and presented the online maturity self-assessment questionnaire to NTFC members.

The maturity framework is a tool designed for NTFCs across the West African region to self-evaluate their performance in relation to good practices, integrate results based on their NTFC, and participate in effective progress monitoring in response to trade facilitation-related international and continental engagements. The one-day session was facilitated by Bénédicte Meille, Trade Facilitation Specialist for the TFWA Program, who explained trade facilitation reforms and the role NTFCs plan in trade policy-making (facilitating national consultations and operational dialogues). Specifically, she highlighted the role of the Nigerian NTFC in advancing the facilitation process through the implementation of the following activities (as stipulated in its Action Plan):

- Review trade facilitation legal framework and avoid overlapping regulatory functions
- Make strong budget commitment to operationalize the plan
- Periodically update the trade facilitation roadmap/strategic planning
- Mainstream trade facilitation into the Nigeria National Development Planning Policy

During the session, the maturity model was analyzed, and participants were asked to assess their performance (based on the three pillars). They were also asked to see where they are placed on the maturity level scale while identifying ways to be able to fulfill their mandate. Ms. Meille gave a live demo of the online questionnaire, including log-in steps and a brief review of the questions.

The online tool is designed to be completed annually by NTFCs in an effort to obtain an objective overview of the Committee's performance in facilitating domestic coordination and overseeing implementation of the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement (as per its Article 23.2)

At the end of the workshop, participants were asked to test the platform, create accounts, and fill the questionnaire. Once submitted, the TFWA Program will provide recommendations to strengthen weak performance areas. In the coming weeks, ECOWAS plans to do a second session/exercise to consolidate and review responses.



“The NTFC is in a good position to influence and ensure that the recommendations you are designing within the NTFC are integrated into the bigger picture [part of the development planning policy]. This means being efficient. A well-performing NTFC ensures that public institutions responsible for trade policies adopt a coordinated, inclusive and participative approach benefitting all - male and female traders, private companies, SSCBTs.”

- Bénédicte Meille (World Bank - TFWA Program)

Nigerien NTFC Trained in Inclusive Project Management



In West Africa, National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs) play a pivotal role in advancing trade facilitation and logistics policy reforms. To effectively fulfill their mandate and enhance operational sustainability, the TFWA Program provides technical and capacity building support to equip NTFCs across the region with tools to advocate relevant technical recommendations and effectively influence the government reform agenda related to cross-border trade.

Recently, the TFWA Program organized a capacity building workshop on Inclusive Project Management in Niamey. The two-day, virtual session was designed to provide members of the Nigerien NTFC with the requisite project management tools for the planning and implementation of trade facilitation reforms. During the interactive session, participants learned the following curriculum / modules: fundamental concepts and principles of project management, reasons for success and failure of projects, and tools for effective and inclusive stakeholder engagement. Training participants found the workshop very helpful—they said it strongly contributed to their understanding of the value of gender and inclusive application in project development, implementation, and evaluation.



Upon completion of the training, Nigerien NTFC members plan to apply the preparatory steps and tools to communicate their definitive dates for the implementation of the TFA Category C commitments to the World Trade Organization while also developing project proposals in the area of trade facilitation.

Socialization Workshop Focuses on Gender Assessment and SSCBT Survey

In Senegal, the TFWA Program hosted a workshop to share results of a survey conducted on small-scale cross-border traders (SSCBTs). At the same time, the workshops sensitized the results of the TFWA Program Gender Assessment Report, which shows that a large proportion of small-scale operators at border crossings in West Africa tend to be women, partly because they are often active in the distribution of food and smaller consumer goods, which can dominate SSCBT.

The workshop explored constraints facing SSCBTs across the TFWA Program's priority trade corridors. These include higher trade costs, more pervasive corruption, cumbersome clearance procedures, abuse and harassment, and limited access to finance. To mitigate these barriers and facilitate cross-border trade, the report outlined key actions to increase border transparency, streamline, and/or decentralize existing procedures and requirements, improve financial inclusion, and take steps to create a safe, transparent, and equitable environment at border crossings.

The report also looked at how border officials and service providers operate, while simultaneously exploring their views on how to improve trade. Finally, workshop participants discussed key findings from the TFWA Program Gender Assessment Report to get a better understanding of the challenges faced by women, to identify the institutional needs and priorities of key program stakeholders, and to review current initiatives in the region on the trade and gender front.

To address the gender insensitivity of existing trade policies and procedures, the TFWA Program provides an awareness campaign and training to mainstream gender issues into trade facilitation discussions. The program also supports the development of policy and procedures to support small-scale traders—including women—doing businesses across borders.



Progress Review Assesses TFWA Program Activities in Senegal



On January 12, members of the Sub-committee for Strategic Management of the Main Corridors of Senegal met with other stakeholders from the public and private sectors in Dakar. Participants aimed to review, among other things, the progress of key activities included in the action plan adopted in October 2019. Despite setbacks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, participants commended the smooth and successful execution of key TFWA Program activities and components:

Capacity Building of Actors

- Development of the collection of texts and travel documents on the Dakar-Bamako Corridor with a restitution workshop on June 16, 2021.
- Capacity building activity for transport actors on loading techniques (intended for loading platforms of more than 200,000 tonnes and transport players).

SIGMAT Implementation

- Deployment of SIGMAT across the national territory.
- Training of trainers at the Customs School for Senegalese Customs Officers, auxiliaries, handlers, licensed customs brokers, defense and security forces, and the private sector.

The popularization of the tool, which is another very important element of SIGMAT's implementation, has been challenging, despite the recruitment of a communications agency and the validation of communications materials. Other key components, such as operationalization, remain dependent on the improvement of the political situation between Mali and Senegal, which would enable the signing of regulatory acts and the materialization of the interconnection through the exchange of information between the two customs.

At the end of the meeting, participants agreed to form a working group with relevant stakeholders to prepare and initiate the implementation process of awareness activities along the corridor, review the initial dates, and update the terms of reference.

Togo Embarks to Achieve Full ISO Certification of the OTR, Togo's Revenue Authority



In February, with support from the TFWA Program, the Office of Togolese Revenue / Office Togolais des Recettes (OTR) officially launched a five-week activity to assist the systematic integration of Quality Assurance with the OTR. The TFWA Program has provided technical assistance—including practical tools and recommendations—to support this key public institution as it strengthens its commitment toward enhanced governance and public accountability. Risk mapping processes, reviewing internal audit and internal control architecture, and other competencies support the OTR's high level of engagement to actively manage and mitigate risks in relation to its management objectives and organizational performance. The OTR is engaged to achieve full ISO certification for all of its processes before the end of 2024.

Optimizing the OTR's organisational system and shifting the office toward a culture of quality service for all its citizens can change the cross-border trading ecosystem.

The TFWA Program congratulates the government of Togo and the OTR on this exciting development.

