



MARCH 2023 NEWSLETTER

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About the TFWA Program

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

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

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

The TFWA Program is managed by the World Bank Group and the German Development Cooperation Agency (GIZ) – the program's implementing partners – with strategic oversight and guidance provided by a Steering Committee, chaired by the ECOWAS Commission and supported by the UEMOA Commission as deputy chair.

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TFWA Hosts Trade and Gender Training for NTFCs



On September 15 and 16, the TFWA Program organized a training session on “Mainstreaming Gender to Improve Trade Facilitation Outcomes” for NTFCs in Burkina Faso and Niger. Both training sessions were held in hybrid format and delivered by TFWA Program experts, Jean-Louis Uwitonze and Jessica Antista. This event forms part of a regional, comprehensive capacity-building initiative to increase awareness of gender in trade facilitation among NTFC members, including gender sub-committee members, and to help these committees place gender issues on their agendas.

The training focused on basic gender concepts, the nexus of trade and gender, and how to incorporate gender into their work. Topics included:

- Understanding key gender concepts that underpin gender mainstreaming as it relates to the work of the NTFC;
- Understanding, appreciating, and applying best practices to mainstream gender into NTFC operations and policymaking;
- Applying stakeholder mapping and analysis to identify and define engagement strategies for any additional stakeholders invited to the NTFC Trade and Gender Working Group;
- Understanding key concepts of gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in order to promote gender-sensitive monitoring in respective countries; and
- Understanding and applying techniques of gender-responsive budgeting to effectively advocate for gender equality.

In Burkina Faso, the training gathered 36 participants, including NTFC members and trade and gender sub-committee members as well as representatives from the Ministry of Gender, the Permanent Secretariat of the National Council for Gender Promotion (SP-CONAP genre), the Informal Traders' Association (Le conseil National de l'Economie Informelle), and the Small-Scale Traders Associations. During the sessions, participants were divided into working groups to discuss and engage in practical exercises.

The closing ceremony was officiated by Mr. Seydou Ilboudo, Director General of Commerce (representative of the NTFC Chairman). He thanked the TFWA Program for the capacity building that is being rolled out for the Burkinabe NTFC and commended the quality of the session. He also congratulated NTFC members for their contributions and encouraged them to remain committed and apply lessons learned in their trade facilitation activities. At the end of the sessions, participants were asked to evaluate the training. Many expressed their appreciation, commended the quality of the training, and noted its importance to their work.

In Niger, the session was attended by a total of 41 members of the NTFC and the Trade and Gender Working Group (65% women, 35% men), including a few small-scale traders. At the closing ceremony, Mr. Boukari Souleymane, a representative of the General Secretary of the Ministry and Chairman of the NTFC, congratulated the participants on their active participation in discussions and practical exercises. He also thanked the TFWA Program for its continued support to NTFCs and commitment to advancing the trade and gender agenda across the region.



ECOWAS and TFWA Roll Out NTFC Empowerment Program



The TFWA Program and UNCTAD are working together to provide multi-faceted support for the roll-out of the regional ECOWAS Online Empowerment Program for National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs). The program has already been launched in several countries across the region, including Burkina Faso, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal, and has been well-received by participants, who have demonstrated a remarkable level of commitment to the self-paced learning and interactive sessions.

Recently, the online learning program was successfully launched in Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Cabo Verde, Togo, Liberia and Gambia. NTFC Secretariats play a key role in the process, monitoring progress, ensuring meaningful participation, and supporting participants in their e-learning journey.

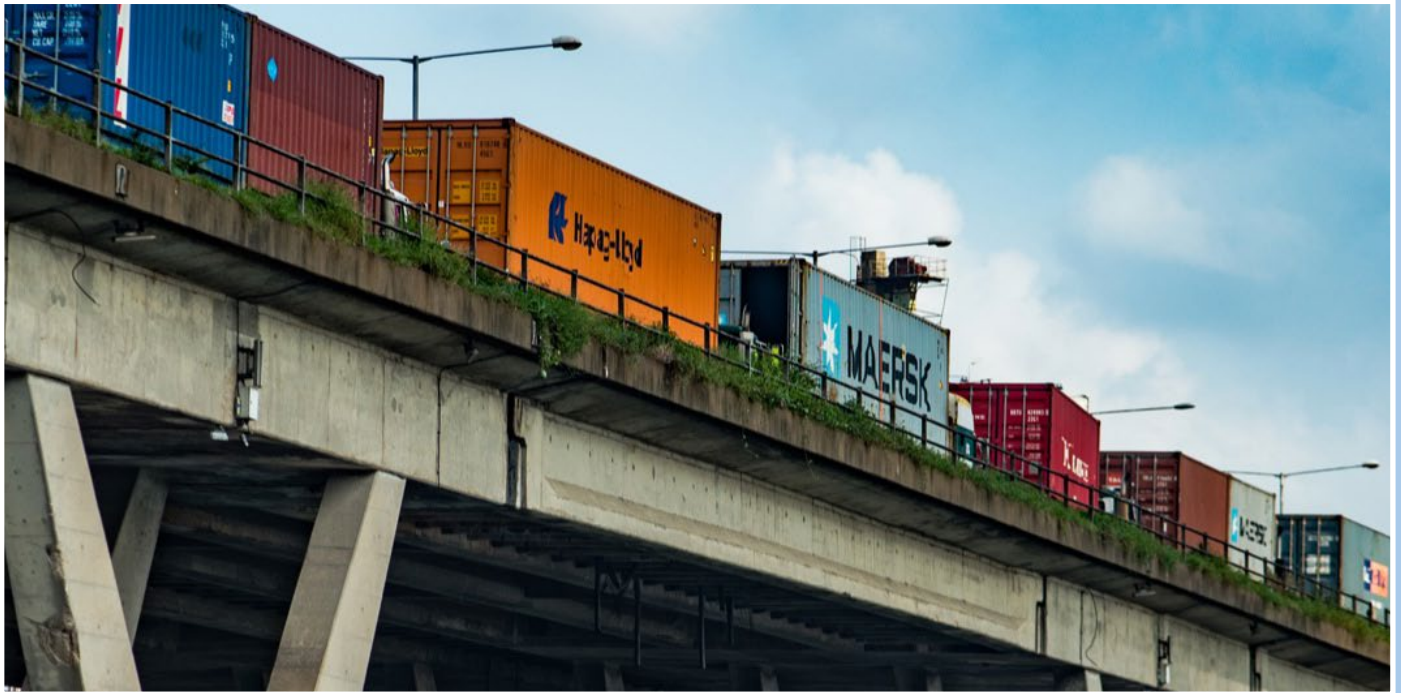
The ECOWAS Online Empowerment Program encourages NTFCs to successfully undertake their mandate to implement trade facilitation reforms in a coordinated manner. It enables NTFC members to connect with international experts through a series of webinars. At the same time, the learning program is building new bridges between West African NTFCs. For example, the chair of Ghana's NTFC trade and gender sub-committee plans to share insights with the NTFC in Nigeria.

Later this month, the ECOWAS Online Empowerment Program will be launched in Ghana.

Burkina Faso



Customs Appoints OCOD Members



Burkina Faso, like other countries in the region, has taken steps to improve its customs clearance operations. With support from the TFWA Program, the country has made significant progress in establishing the Observatory for the Customs Clearance Operations Celerity (OCOD). On February 23, the Director General of Customs signed the Decision appointing members to the Observatory, marking a major milestone in the OCOD's creation.

Once established, the OCOD's mandate is to monitor the efficiency of customs procedures and operations at borders and ports, including ensuring compliance with the commitments made by customs and the private sector. The Burkinabe OCOD will also be in charge of handling complaints.

The TFWA Program team in Burkina Faso took several steps to help establish the OCOD, including undertaking a study tour in Côte d'Ivoire and creating a steering committee in charge of planning the OCOD's development. More recently, the program supported the signing of the draft Protocol on Extra Legal Work between the private sector and customs.

The TFWA Program commends Burkina Faso on this development and will provide technical support to see the OCOD through to its official launch.



National Trade Facilitation Committee Holds Inaugural Meeting

On March 1, the National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) in Burkina Faso held its inaugural meeting under the chairmanship of the Director General of Trade. The meeting, which brought together 46 participants, focused on strengthening the NTFC legal framework, TFA implementation, TFWA Program implementation status in Burkina Faso, and the development of a 2023 action plan for the NTFC. Mr. Honoré Yonli, Director General of Trade, delivered an opening speech to commence the meeting.

The gathering started with a presentation of Decree No. 2017-0099/PRES/PM/MCIA/MINEFID of 13 March 2017 on the creation, attribution, organization and functioning of the NTFC. Following the presentation, recommendations (based on results of an NTFC self-assessment administered by the TFWA Program) highlighted the weakness of the current decree. After a productive discussion, participants agreed to share a preliminary draft decree (to revise the decree in effect) with the heads of the NTFC member structures.

Following discussions on strengthening the legal framework, the NTFC Secretariat presented the implementation status of the TFA in Burkina Faso, highlighting notifications, the development of strategic documents, capacity building, and initiated reforms. The TFWA Program delivered a presentation on the implementation of the program, which enabled NTFC members to learn the current status of TFWA-funded activities in Burkina Faso.

Specifically, the presentation focused on:

- Technical assistance to the NTFC;
- Technical assistance for SPS risk management;
- Support to SOGESY for upgrading the SYLVIE platform;
- Establishment of the Observatory for the Speed of Customs Operations (OCOD-BF);
- Strengthening of customs cooperation and risk management;
- Implementation status of the SIGMAT system on Burkinabe corridors;
- Implementation of the electronic phytosanitary certificate (ePhyto); and
- Implementation of the ECOWAS Online Empowerment Program for NTFCs.

During the session, NTFC members reviewed the three-year roadmap of activities and identified priority activities for 2023. The NTFC meeting drew to a close with the representative of the Director General of Trade reiterating the Ministry of Trade's support and expressing appreciation to the TFWA Program.



TFWA Program Strengthens NTFC Capacity in Niger

The Trade Facilitation West Africa (TFWA) Program continues to strengthen the capacities of NTFCs to improve trade facilitation reform implementation across the region.

In Niger, the TFWA Program supported the NTFC on the 2023 iteration of its annual self-assessment. Based on the TFWA Maturity Model, the self-assessment has made it possible to define priority, results-based activities. It has also enhanced the need to strengthen the NTFC's strategic planning capacity through the adoption and maintenance of a transparent inter-sectoral coordination and monitoring tool.

At the same time, the TFWA Program has supported the Nigerien NTFC through an integrated technical assistance sequence:

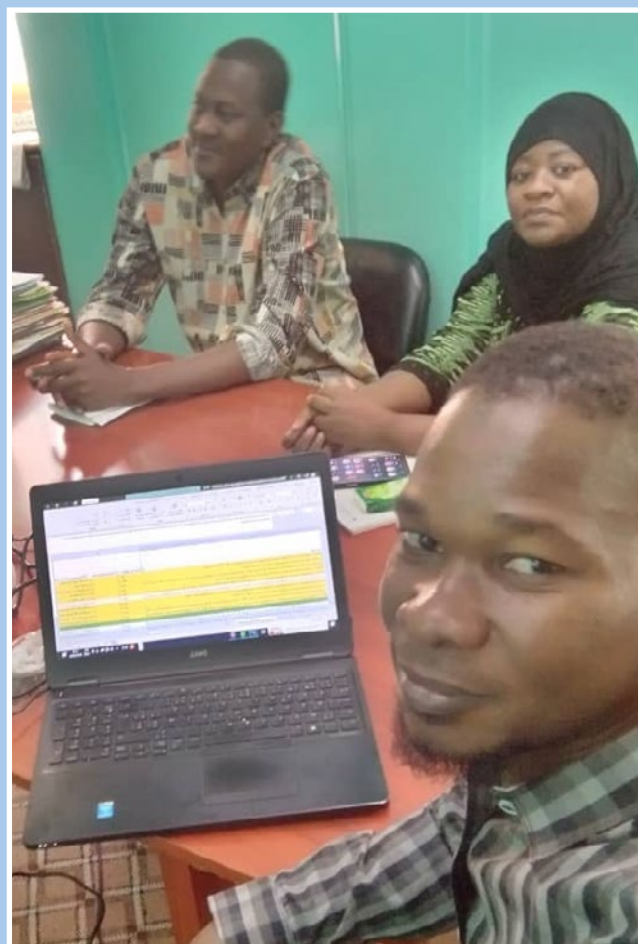
1. Assessing its needs to meet WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement requirements (in 2020 and 2021);
2. Elaborating with NTFC working group Category C action plans and notifying their definitive implementation dates (in 2022); and
3. Identifying the ministerial indicators impacting trade facilitation results (in 2022).

The NTFC Niger has identified the need to develop a strategic planning tool that will allow it to monitor the implementation of the agreement.

Recently, the TWFA Program helped the committee develop a consolidated monitoring and evaluation dashboard to keep track of the sequential and inter-sectoral progress necessary to comply with WTO notification commitments.

This consolidated dashboard gathers all the activities, tasks, assigned responsibilities, expected results, and indicators for each of the Category C technical measures. The dashboard aims to facilitate the NTFC's work, particularly the coordination of technical working groups, the precise monitoring of sectoral responsibilities, progress in the implementation of priority tasks, and the preparation of quarterly NTFC monitoring reports to be presented to the supervisory authorities (to determine progress, difficulties, and the priorities for the next quarter).

In February, the dashboard was presented at the NTFC's first meeting of the year. It was well received by NTFC members, who appreciated the tool's versatility and user-friendly format. After the meeting, two working sessions were organized by the TFWA Program in collaboration with the NTFC secretariat. In the coming months, the TFWA Program will support the Secretariat and NTFC leadership to complete the tool and to systematically adopt reforms planning and coordination processes in accordance with the national mandate and commitments toward the WTO and the AfCFTA.



New Togolese National Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards

Last year, following a request from the Ministry of Agriculture, the TFWA Program team conducted a one-week sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) mission to assess Togo's national SPS legal, regulatory, and institutional framework in accordance with applicable international standards, including the WTO SPS Agreement and the AfCFTA.

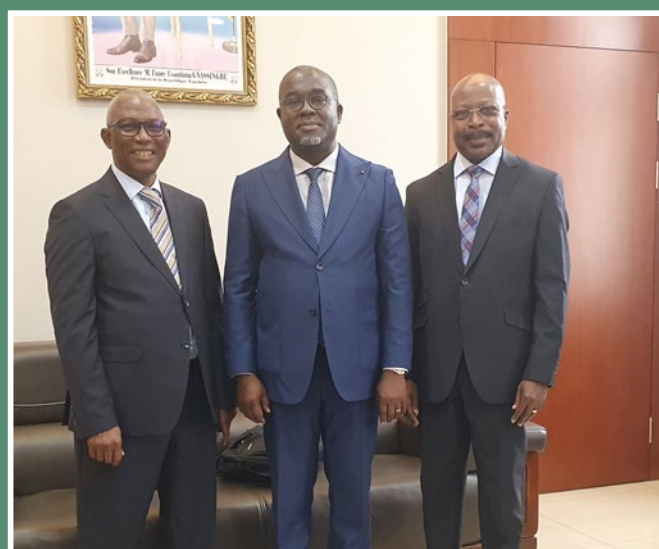
This assessment exposed several gaps, challenges, and inconsistencies between the Togolese SPS practices and international standards, especially related to administrative institutions and organizational capacity. Based on the mission's findings, an SPS Action Plan was drafted to optimize Togo's current SPS strategy and its ability to carry out SPS legal, regulatory, and institutional reforms. At the same time, the plan aims to improve Togo's sanitary, phytosanitary, and zoo-sanitary control and inspection procedures. To meet this need, the team worked with Togolese SPS government officials to draft several legal instruments, including a new SPS law, decrees, an administrative order, and an administrative decision.

From December 12 to 16, the TFWA Program team organized a working group session in Kpalimé, Togo. At the five-day workshop, participants reviewed the revised draft Togolese national SPS standards (including draft laws, decrees, orders, and decisions) to ensure their compliance with the applicable international standards. This reform process is essential to facilitate the exportation of Togolese agriculture products in West Africa and internationally.

Several legal deliverables were finalized:

- The draft decree to create the new Togolese National SPS Committee;
- The draft law on SPS plant and vegetation standards;
- The draft decree governing pesticide management;
- The draft administrative order on phytosanitary inspection and plant quarantine; and
- The draft decision to classify plants, plant products, and other imported merchandise according to phytosanitary risk.

The TFWA Program will continue its work to improve sanitary and phytosanitary measures across the region.



TFWA Launches Video on SSCBT Training in Northern Togo

Recently, the Trade Facilitation West Africa (TFWA) Program produced a short video showcasing its efforts to build the technical and behavioral capacity of small-scale cross border traders (SSCBTs), especially women. The initiative was piloted in Kara, a city in Northern Togo that is situated along the Ouagadougou-Lomé trade corridor.

Women traders face a disproportionate number of risks and challenges, including lengthy customs procedures, limited knowledge of border-crossing rules and procedures, and abuse. These challenges can be costly and time consuming, impeding trade.

The TFWA Program's capacity building initiative is designed to raise trader awareness of rules and regulations. An interactive and participatory approach teaches women traders (in local languages) the key behavioral competencies they need to thrive in trade. The video captures dialogue sessions between traders and border authorities that were designed to build trust and improve communication, ultimately making trade safer, faster and cheaper for SSCBTs.

In total, 209 traders—90% women—were empowered through the initiative. The TFWA Program remains committed to improving conditions for women traders and plans to launch the initiative in other West African countries.



**Watch the video to learn more
about our work with SSCBTs**