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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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SIGMAT-RAIL Launches Interconnection Between Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso



As part of its wider mission to improve connectivity across the region, the TFWA Program recently implemented the rail element of the System for the Management of Goods in Transit, called SIGMAT, in Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire—the latest two nations to benefit from this technological improvement.

SIGMAT is designed to connect customs systems, enabling efficient sharing and processing of cargo information between countries. SIGMAT rail was officially launched on June 22, 2021, when general managers of Customs for Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Niger came together for a signing ceremony, chaired by the Ivorian Minister of Budget. During the ceremony, representatives from Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire signed an official agreement connecting customs systems in their countries.

The TFWA Program carried out several activities to facilitate and encourage this reform:

- Recruited UNCTAD (technical partner) for development of the platform and;
- Provided concrete assistance to organize technical meetings between WCO, UNCTAD, SITARAIL, and customs agencies of both countries; these meetings led to the creation of a work plan, legal regulatory framework, user's guide, and testing sessions.

SIGMAT's rollout marks a major milestone for both countries, and for the region at large. This reform will greatly impact trade, reducing the time required for merchandise to travel through the Abidjan-Ouagadougou corridor while also supporting an enabling business environment.

SSCBT Survey and Gender Assessment Report Socialization Workshops Hosted in Ghana and Nigeria



As a continuation of the regional SSCBT Survey and Gender Assessment Report Socialization workshop series, the TFWA Program recently conducted workshops in Ghana and Nigeria. The workshops presented findings of the SSCBT survey and gender assessment report — two important research pieces for the West African trade space. The workshops also provided an opportunity to discuss the TFWA Maturity Model, a tool designed to assess the maturity level of NTFCs and inform fit-for-purpose and results-based NTFC action plans, and to encourage effective progress monitoring in response to trade facilitation-related international and continental engagements in each country.

The two-day session took place from July 15 to 16 and was held virtually. Various stakeholders representing Customs, the Standards Organization, Nigerian National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), and other border agencies attended the workshops. Several government ministries—including Trade, Agriculture, Women's Affairs, and Finance—state trade facilitation committees, and associations representing SMEs, shippers, and women also attended.



Following the review of findings and report recommendations, the Nigerian NTFC called on the TFWA Program to support the implementation of recommended actions in their work. Specifically, the NTFC called for including gender mainstreaming in trade policy, improving access to finance for traders, implementing interventions to reduce harassment at the border, and awareness-building of SSCBT rights and benefits. Additionally, the NTFC requested capacity building support for the newly established Nigerian state trade facilitation committees (with reporting lines to the NTFC and state governors) as well as capacity-strengthening sessions in risk management and other areas. The event was also well received by participants in Ghana.

e-Phyto Implementation Underway in Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire



After a successful risk management diagnostic mission in March 2020, a diagnostic report on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures and a detailed action plan were developed by the TFWA Program and approved by the government of Côte d'Ivoire. The action plan was prepared with a focus on risk management for SPS and e-Phyto solutions to streamline trade.

Following an official request for support from the government of Côte d'Ivoire, the TFWA team began providing technical assistance. The official kickoff meeting took place on February 24 between the Ministry of Agriculture, the TFWA Program, and GUCE (Côte d'Ivoire's single window platform). Following the kickoff, several meetings were organized with stakeholders (GUCE-CI, Ministry of Agriculture, and Customs) to verify the procedures and confirm each stakeholder's level of involvement. Additionally, it was important to check whether each current procedure could be dematerialized. Stakeholders were asked to fill in the description of the procedures, difficulties, turnaround times, and costs (if any).

What is the e-Phyto solution?

Phytosanitary certificates are one of many required trade documents for the movement of agricultural commodities. In 2016, the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) Secretariat worked with other international development agencies—including the World Bank Group—to develop an international solution for advancing a transition from paper to electronic certificates. The system is referred to as the e-Phyto Solution and consists of three components:

1. A standardized message protocol to define and harmonize phytosanitary certificates in an electronic format. The electronic phytosanitary certificate is referred to as the "e-Phyto";
2. A "hub" or centralized exchange server that allows countries to connect online to exchange e-Phytos; and
3. A Generic e-Phyto National System (GeNS) or cloud-based system that allows countries without the technical infrastructure to create, send, and receive e-Phytos.

A webinar was organized on August 25 to help the Ministry of Agriculture in Côte d'Ivoire learn the experiences of other countries that have successfully implemented e-Phytos. The webinar brought together experts from the IPPC Secretariat, representatives of regulatory agencies in Kenya and Uganda—who spoke about their experiences implementing e-Phyto—and representatives of the grain, seed, and agricultural sectors to provide perspective.

The implementation of e-Phytos by both developing and developed countries significantly improves the security, efficiency, transparency, and predictability of agricultural trade across borders. Effective and sustainable e-Phyto implementation requires in-country equipment, legislation to use electronic certificates, strategies for the governance of technical and operating resources, the establishment of operating structures, the development of cost-recovery mechanisms, and a long-term commitment to the ongoing maintenance of infrastructure.

National Monitoring Committee for the Improvement of the Competitiveness of the Dakar-Bamako Corridor Meets



The third meeting of the National Monitoring Committee for the Improvement of the Competitiveness of the Dakar-Bamako Corridor took place on August 27, 2021. The meeting, chaired by the Head of the Technical Unit for Business Climate Reforms (CTRCA), Mr. Soumaguel Maiga, aimed to:

- Validate the terms of reference relating to the training of stakeholders on management, safety, and good practices in the area of transportation; and
- Delineate the implementation status of the National Action Plan.

As discussed in the meeting, two of the six planned activities from the National Action Plan have been implemented, while three others are in progress. Of these, the planned activity relating to the registration and processing of complaints on the Dakar-Bamako corridor is currently being prepared.

After this brief presentation, attendee comments and suggestions focused on the following points:

- Setting up a monitoring system to improve the implementation of tasks by the entities responsible for the activities;
- Continuing communication activities related to the dissemination of the recently developed compendium and driver's guide approved by the committee;
- Increasing the pace of activity implementation; and
- Carrying out the monitoring and processing of complaints from users of the Dakar-Bamako corridor.



Despite some institutional challenges and the pandemic, the president reiterated the willingness of his organization and that of the committee to achieve the objectives and significantly improve the competitiveness of the Dakar-Bamako corridor. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the road drivers' union and the Conseil Malien des Transporteurs Routiers (CMTR), who discussed the incident between Senegalese and Malian transporters that led to the interruption of inter-state road traffic between Dakar and Bamako on 15 August 2021 in Kaolack. They ensured that the traffic will resume soon with the involvement of the highest authorities of both countries.

Côte d'Ivoire



TFWA Holds Inclusive Project Management Workshop for Ivorian NTFC



The TFWA Program piloted a workshop on Inclusive Project Management for NTFCs on June 23 and June 24 in collaboration with the NTFC of Côte d'Ivoire. The hybrid sessions gathered 29 participants and enabled productive exchanges with a focus on practical exercises around the adoption of a results-based approach to trade facilitation.

The TFWA Inclusive Project Management curriculum focuses on the essential need for NTFCs to conduct a robust and truly inclusive stakeholder mapping exercise to foster an environment conducive to cross-border trade reforms. It also forms part of the TFWA Capacity Building Framework for NTFCs and is one of the components of the foundational training pathway the TFWA Program has designed to equip all NTFCs in West Africa with the minimum level of capacity to effectively fulfill their mandate. NTFCs are linchpins for the successful implementation of trade facilitation reforms, and this pathway aims at enhancing their sustainability and maturity levels. The Inclusive Project Management for NTFCs two-day workshop is built around the following key competencies: Adapting the fundamental concepts of project management to the mandate and specific work of the NTFC, and mainstreaming the inclusive and gender sensitive approach.



The NTFC of Côte d'Ivoire identified this activity as a priority task through its Maturity Self-Assessment completed in June 2021, and the subsequent validation of its NTFC Action Plan.

At the end of this workshop, participants can follow and apply the preparatory steps and tools to engage an inclusive consultative process to ensure success and relevance of the trade facilitation project cycle. With lessons learned from this pilot and valuable feedback from participants, similar workshops are now planned for the NTFCs that identified it as a priority in their NTFC Action Plans.

TFWA Recommendations Help Establish Quarantine Pest List for Côte d'Ivoire

Based on recommendations made by the TFWA Program, on September 9, the State Ministry of Agriculture in Côte d'Ivoire signed a text (or "decision") to establish a quarantine pest list for 14 plants and vegetal products. This is a major step toward implementing sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) reforms for the benefit of trade in the country. Once adapted, the SPS measures will provide several benefits to the private sector, including:

- Reduced risks of marketable yield and product quality for agricultural producers as a direct result of the measure;
- Reduced risks of product / service quantity and quality issues for industry actors beyond agricultural producers;
- Improved predictability and increased reliability of freight transport along the Côte d'Ivoire - Burkina Faso corridor;
- Improved importation and exportation procedures;
- Less time and costs spent on the importation of products; and
- A stronger SPS risk analysis system, meaning better quality control at the border.

Additionally, the reform covers measures to protect keystone and endangered plant species and improve local economies, food security, and the livelihood of farmers.

The application of SPS measures decreases import and export risks, giving traders and countries access to international markets while guaranteeing the safety of food and other products. The TFWA Program supports SPS measures in countries across West Africa through targeted capacity-building workshops and the provision of financial and technical support for SPS Committees.





TFWA Program Helps Côte d'Ivoire Implement a New eManifest Module

At the request of the government of Côte d'Ivoire, the Trade Facilitation West Africa (TFWA) Program completed an assessment of the country's information portal (Portail Web d'Information Commerciale, or PWIC) and single window for trade (Guichet Unique du Commerce Extérieur, or GUCE-CI). The assessment aimed to evaluate PWIC and GUCE-CI operations, evaluate impacts on end users, and make recommendations for their improvement.

As a direct result of the TFWA Program's assessment, the government agreed to improve its engagement with the private and public sectors. The TFWA Program subsequently organized several meetings with the GUCE team to identify bottlenecks and begin improving the eManifest module's efficiency. As a result, an action plan to strengthen the single window was prepared and approved by Ivorian stakeholders. The TFWA Program also submitted a detailed action plan to improve PWIC efficiency. The action plans consider the private sector's main concern—that the eManifest module is not working—and marked a major step toward improving these important trade systems.

As a result of this work, an updated and more efficient version of the eManifest module was launched on November 18, 2020. This came in direct response to the recommendations made in the TFWA-funded diagnostics report. The new module is designed to be more efficient, thus reducing barriers to trade for the private sector. Based on data provided by the Ivorian single window for trade, the time to upload a manifest was successfully reduced from 96 hours to just 30 minutes. This is a huge achievement for Côte d'Ivoire, the TFWA Program, and those interested in trading in the region.

GBM-GIZ Meets with Mali's Customs Brokers

A tripartite meeting was held between freight forwarders, the World Bank, and GIZ on August 8, 2021 as part of the TFWA Program's implementation of SIGMAT on Mali's service corridors. Under the chairmanship of Baba Traoré, the head of the Federation of Customs Agents, the agenda focused on two main points:

1. Identifying issues noticed by freight forwarders related to the operationalization of SIGMAT; and
2. Proposing support measures to reduce impacts on customs agent activities at the border.

To start the meeting, the president reiterated the benefits that will result from the implementation of SIGMAT. These include simplified procedures for Customs' clearance of goods, which improve costs and transit times. The SIGMAT system also creates more transparency and confidence between the public and private sectors while increasing gains on both sides.



Obvious challenges have been identified and relate to technical and practical issues in the transit of goods. Measures are underway at the Customs level to strengthen the capacity of freight forwarders by better equipping them to participate in the SIGMAT process. A communique is being drafted to Customs authorities to summarize the issues regarding the imminent operationalization of SIGMAT in Mali.

The meeting also addressed the following topics:

- A FETRAM mission will visit Burkina-Faso to learn from the experiences gained during the operationalization of SIGMAT on the Abidjan-Ouagadougou corridor;
- The need to increase awareness and information on SIGMAT within the federation; and
- The need to propose a technical note that clearly outlines the requirements and accompanying measures requested.

Feedback Workshop on the 44th Report of the Observatoire des Pratiques Anormales (OPA)



On July 15, 2021, the 44th report on the Observation of Abnormal Practices (OPA) was presented in the conference room of the Conseil National du Patronat du Mali (CNPM). The workshop was chaired by Mr. Mama Djenepo, Secretary General of the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure. The workshop was attended by representatives of the Ministries of Commerce and Internal Security, as well as by:

- Customized departments and agencies of the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure;
- Representatives of professional associations;
- A representative of the National Transition Council;
- Representatives of technical and financial partners (GIZ and World Bank), and local authorities; and
- Journalists; and
- Representatives of the Ministry of Security.

Following the discussion, some priorities and key recommendations were identified, namely:

- Introducing facilitation missions on service corridors;
- Creating large truck parking lots at the border crossings;
- Associating the National Road Administration with OPA's operations;
- Developing a national business case for decision-making;
- Numbering the checkpoints and security posts;
- Raising drivers' awareness of community texts; and
- Addressing road safety issues.

Team Niger Participates in AfCFTA Strategy Validation



From July 1 to 2, the Niger Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Youth Entrepreneurship—in collaboration with TFWA Program and with support from the European Union and the UN Economic Commission for Africa—organized a two-day workshop to present and validate the national the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) strategy. The strategy identifies priority actions to be undertaken by the Nigerian government to effectively realize the AfCFTA's potential benefits.

The sessions were held virtually and attended by the TFWA Program team, trade policy experts, and representatives from development partners, including USAID and EU. During the sessions, the TFWA Program supported the country's AfCFTA National Committee to ensure the implementation of ongoing project activities aligns with the overarching goal of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and the AfCFTA.



AfCFTA, the largest free-trade agreement for participating countries, works to reshape Africa's economy by creating job opportunities, facilitating investment, and boosting trade across the continent. The AfCFTA also reduces non-tariff barriers (or 'red tape') and other trade barriers that restrict access to market, especially for women, who constitute the majority of informal cross-border traders in Africa and are vulnerable to harassment, abuse, and violence through their work. To fully utilize the opportunities of the AfCFTA, governments must direct efforts to identify key trade opportunities, current constraints, and the steps required to take full advantage of intra-African trade.



TFWA Supports Niger Customs in Validating the MACC Action Plan

Within the framework of the Mutual Assistance and Customs Cooperation Agreement (MACC) Project, the Customs Directorate of Niger, with support from the TFWA Program, validated the action plan for the operationalization of the Supplementary Act—a key regional tool for customs cooperation and an enforcement instrument to guide and enable the flow of information and related cooperation activities between customs administrations, the ECOWAS Commission, and Nigeria. The plan highlights two trade facilitating reforms: improving customs cooperation and risk management and the program's role in supporting the country's fulfillment of its WTO TFA obligations on risk management, expedited shipments, pre-arrival processing, and customs cooperation.

Plans are underway to begin implementation. TFWA's program lead in Niger is working with Directors of Nigerian Customs to complete a baseline assessment and proposal to provide technical assistance for improving the Nigerian risk analysis and management system, which is currently under review by Nigerian Customs.

The three other pilot countries—Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso—have also validated their action plans and will commence implementation.