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Contents

Regional Updates

ECOWAS, GIZ Hosts Capacity-building Workshop for Media	2
ECOWAS Commission Holds Retreat for Interdepartmental Trade Facilitation Committee	3

Country-level Updates

Côte d'Ivoire.....	4
Senegal.....	5
Togo.....	7

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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ECOWAS, GIZ Hosts Capacity-building Workshop for Media



The media plays a critical role in creating awareness, informing, and educating the public on cross-border trade initiatives.

From 4 - 8 July, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission, in collaboration with GIZ, within the framework of the Trade Facilitation West Africa (TFWA) Program, held a capacity-building workshop in Lagos for selected journalists from The Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. Other attendees included: Mr. Kolawole Sofola, Acting Trade Director of ECOWAS; Mr. Bernard Tayoh, Head of Component, GIZ - TFWA Program; and Dr Ken Ukaoha, Director-General, West African Institute for Trade and Agriculture Development (WAITAD).

The five-day training was designed to improve media reporting on trade issues, ensuring that journalists and media professionals are more aware of existing regional trade protocols and ECOWAS initiatives. The goal is to help the media effectively monitor implementation of these trade-related agreements, hold governments to account, and ensure accuracy in reporting. Over the course of the session, participants were introduced to key concepts from international and regional trade agreements and instruments, including the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS), and the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET). The workshop also focused on the gender dimension of trade facilitation and challenges related to implementing the regional trade facilitation agenda.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Sofola highlighted the key role of journalists as custodians of information and advocates for trade reforms in West Africa. He stated that there have been numerous trade developments spearheaded by governments and the ECOWAS Commission, such as the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS), to boost trade opportunities. However, many citizens have limited knowledge of these trade protocols and their benefits. He noted that accurate information sharing via effective journalism could improve private sector participation, maximizing the benefits available from such agreements.

Mr. Tayoh mentioned that the training will enhance media understanding of current trade protocols, processes, and opportunities, enabling journalists to effectively monitor the ELTS within the ECOWAS Region. He added: "With new protocols coming up both in the region and on the continent, including under the AfCFTA, we deem it necessary to build the capacity of CSOs and journalists to understand the implication of these measures."

At the end of the workshop, participants agreed to collaborate and intensify efforts to raise public awareness of ECOWAS trade facilitation policies.

ECOWAS Commission Holds Retreat for Interdepartmental Trade Facilitation Committee



From 1 - 3 August, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission organized a retreat for the ECOWAS Interdepartmental Trade Facilitation Committee (IDTFC) in Lagos. Participants included representatives of the ECOWAS Directorates and Agencies, including: Trade, Customs Union & Taxation, Transport, Private Sector, Industry, Free Movement of Persons, Research & Statistics, External Relations, Legal Affairs, Communication, and the ECOWAS Gender Development Center. Representatives from GIZ and Afreximbank also attended the retreat.

At the three-day session, participants reviewed guiding draft documents on regional trade, including the Regional Trade & Transport Facilitation Strategy (RTTFS), the Framework for Elimination of Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs), the Common Trade Policy (CTP), and the Trade and Investment Development Strategy.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Kolawole Sofola, the Acting Trade Director of ECOWAS, welcomed the group and highlighted the Commission's recent efforts to boost implementation of trade initiatives across the region. He noted the adoption of the Supplementary Act on ECOWAS Community Transit and the launch of the Regional Trade Facilitation Committee (RTFC), which was created to strengthen synergies between the bodies responsible for facilitation at the country level while simplifying exports, imports, and transit procedures.

Speaking on behalf of GIZ, Mr. Kelechi Okoro, Advisor of Trade Facilitation West Africa (TFWA) Program, reiterated GIZ's commitment to supporting the Committee and, once adopted, welcomes the Commission's oversight in the effective implementation of the strategies.

The IDTFC was established in 2017 to spearhead a coordinated approach to the implementation of trade facilitation agreements and programs implemented by various Directorates and Agencies of the ECOWAS Commission.



NTFC Integrates Gender into Trade Facilitation Reforms



Since 2019, the TFWA Program has made significant progress advancing gender equality in trade facilitation. In Côte d'Ivoire, the TFWA Program provides technical support to the country's National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC), strengthening its capacity to address the challenges faced by small-scale cross-border traders (SSCBTs), especially women.

Following the creation and mobilization of the NTFC Working Group on Trade & Gender – which was one of the first working groups in the sub-region and resulted from policy dialogue facilitated by the TFWA Program – the NTFC validated its gender strategy during a workshop titled “Gender Mainstreaming to Improve Trade Facilitation Outcomes”. The workshop was held as part of the TFWA Program’s Maturity Model for building the capacity of NTFCs within the sub-region.

By systematically integrating a gender perspective into all aspects of the NTFC’s work, the strategy aims to:

- Strengthen the NTFC’s institutional gender capacity and effectiveness, enhancing trade and gender and improving women’s economic empowerment. Recommended actions include: NTFC gender capacity building; mainstreaming of gender structures, policies, frameworks, and communications efforts; and establishing a formal policy for promoting women’s membership and participation in the NTFC.
- Strengthen gender-sensitive trade results through increased participation of women in trade-related activities as members, participants, or beneficiaries at and beyond the border. Recommended actions include: sex disaggregation of trade data; systematic targeting of women for participation in the NTFC’s external events; and targeted interventions and partnerships to improve women traders’ access to information and finance.

As a next step, the TFWA Program will assist the Trade & Gender Working Group to develop a roadmap to operationalize key activities during and beyond the life of the TFWA Program.



TFWA Program Supports Senegalese NTFC to Implement WTO Commitments

Based on a request from the Direction du Commerce Extérieur, the TFWA Program supported the assessment of Senegal's implementation of "Category C" commitments of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA).

Over the course of the evaluation process, the TFWA Program worked closely with the NTFC Secretariat. Interviews were conducted with relevant authorities and a diagnostic report was created to summarize findings, progress, challenges, and next steps (divided by phases and defining potential requirements), per Category C notification. On June 20, the NTFC Secretariat presented the findings of the diagnosis to all NTFC members for discussion and validation. At the same time, the final dates for Category C full implementation were defined (within the stipulated WTO Notification's deadline). The TFWA Program also conducted a workshop to strengthen the NTFC members' project management capacities, including the Committee's role to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the TFA, ensuring that Senegal complies with notification obligations. The workshop also included a gender training that highlighted gender indicators relevant to the implementation of Category C notifications. Also, NTFC members agreed to establish a Trade and Gender Working Group, a key step toward identifying and addressing specific gendered barriers to trade.

The TFWA Program partners with several key agencies and authorities in Senegal to advance the WTO TFA agenda:

- At the request of The Foreign Trade Directorate, the TFWA Program joined the technical committee created to enhance Senegal's Trade Information Portal (Art. 1.2 and 1.3);
- The TFWA Program continues to work closely with Customs to support the adoption of a risk management approach after clearance (Art. 7.5) and to transition from a Preferred Partner Program (Programme de Partenariat Privilégié) to a complete Authorized Economic Operator program (Art. 7.7).



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Thank you very much for the valuable contribution to the implementation of trade facilitation measures at the national level.

- Ansou Souba Badji, Director of Foreign Trade of the Ministry of Trade and SMEs

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TFWA Program Supports Customs Risk Management in Senegal

Senegal, like other developing economies, has taken steps to modernize and digitalize its Customs administration. With technical assistance (TA) from the TFWA Program, Senegalese Customs continues to modernize its processes and procedures by integrating risk management (RM) and data analysis into its operations to strengthen Customs controls. In the context of this approach, the Customs Investigation Department (DED) has successfully implemented several key activities:

- **Established a targeting and business intelligence unit (cellule de ciblage et de veille commerciale, or CCVC) to support post control audits and investigations.** The CCVC's responsibilities include: exploiting data and providing information on the behavior of commercial operations; identifying and monitoring importer profiles and high-risk operations; listing the main importers and products that contribute to revenue; and identifying cases of abnormal Customs values and erratic or inconsistent variations.
- **Effectively utilize the results from the post-clearance control plan 2021/22.** The control plan was founded on a risk map that relied on statistical analysis based on reconciliations and data cross-referencing, including but not limited to: export data from partner countries, known as mirror data; DED's own control objectives; and the structure of importers, such as formal and informal operators or members of the Programme de Partenariat Privilégie (PPP).
- Hosted a capacity building workshop for the CCVC on the methodology developed to define RM after the clearance control plan 2021/22 and foster coordination and sharing of information to enable the constant definition of risk criteria.
- Held discussions between the DED and the Direction des Systèmes d'Information des Douanes (DSID) on building an IT application that supports automatization for post-clearance risk analysis.



“**On behalf of the Customs authorities at the highest level (DG and Coordinator), the Director of Investigations, and all the DRED collaborators, [we would like] to express to the World Bank our recognition and our gratitude for the quality of the partnership with the Customs administration, whose mission, which has just ended, is a perfect illustration of this.**

- Lt. Col. Amadou BA DIATTA, DED's Deputy Director and FP to TFWA on DED's activities

The results of DED's commitments and reforms (in terms of risk management and data analysis for the selectivity of files to be controlled) were extremely positive: the duties and taxes, excluding suspended VAT, based on contentious cases carried out on official reports and the penalties liquidated in 2021 based on official statements of offense **increased substantially by percentage and by amount in 2021 compared to 2020.**

In the coming months, the TFWA Program will support Customs on several key planned activities:

- Consolidate the use of a risk-based targeting methodology by developing and implementing the 2022-23 control plan;
- Support the automatization of the post-clearance audit selectivity process by developing and deploying an IT application; and
- Conduct required technical workshops.



TFWA Program Launches SSCBT Training in Northern Togo

The TFWA Program launched an innovative behavioral training and dialogue platform that will enhance small-scale cross-border traders' (SSCBTs) awareness of trade rules and regulations. At the same time, the training will improve trust and communication 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—results showed low trader awareness of trade rules and regulations as a key capacity building need.

To meet this need, the TFWA Program launched an SSCBT training pilot in Kara, a city in Northern Togo that is situated along the Ouagadougou-Lomé trade corridor. The launch, which took place from 5-9 September, began by sensitizing traders on the free circulation of people and goods in the ECOWAS and UEMOA zones, as well as trader rights and obligations. The proceedings were attended by members of both the ECOWAS and UEMOA Commission gender teams, as well as a representative of the UEMOA Trade Directorate. Other activities included a market visit to learn more about the participating traders' business environment and to gather initial feedback on the first two training modules.

The training covered both technical and behavioral content:

- Technical: National and regional trade rules and regulations, as well as trader rights and obligations.
- Behavioral: Key competencies needed for traders to stand up for those rights and meet those obligations by respecting said rules and regulations. These behaviors include personal initiative, communication, confidence, persistence, and resilience. In parallel, dialogue with border authorities will focus on building trusting relationships with traders.

The training will be delivered to 200 traders—more than 90% of whom are women—and take place over six weeks. The training will culminate in a town hall forum with border authorities to share experiences and build trust. This initiative is notable both for delivering capacity building to small-scale operators in a relatively remote, rural location, as well as for being designed and implemented directly by the TFWA Program team.





TFWA Supports OTR Customs with Risk Management

From 8-12 August, the TFWA Program organized the second technical workshop for 40 Togolese Customs Officers of the Togo Revenue Authority (OTR). The five-day training was an excellent opportunity for the OTR to strengthen its existing processes and adopt modern, holistic Customs-risk management approaches for future operations. The workshop greatly contributed to a broader understanding of various topics, including techniques to streamline the Customs-clearance process (such as the process used at both the Autonomous Port of Lomé and the Lomé International Airport), while also reducing the time and cost of imported cargo at the Togolese border.

Workshop participants were pleased by the outcome of the training, and the OTR expressed its appreciation of the TFWA Program's efforts. As next steps, the OTR, with support from the TFWA Program, plans to carry out a Customs risk management mission to Lomé and submit an action plan to guide Togolese Customs Officers in future clearance operations at the Lomé seaport and airport.

