

# HORN OF AFRICA BULLETIN

Horn of Africa Bulletin is a publication  
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# HORN OF AFRICA

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## The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

The AfCFTA and Regional Integration: Implications for Peace and Security in the Horn of Africa

Informal Cross Border Trade – the Pivot for the Success of the African Continental Free Trade Area

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This publication is produced by the Life & Peace Institute (LPI) with support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The donor is not involved in the production and are not responsible for the contents of the publication.

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ISSN 2002-1666

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Since its formation, LPI has carried out programmes for conflict transformation in a variety of countries, conducted research, and produced numerous publications on nonviolent conflict transformation and the role of religion in conflict and peacebuilding. The main focus of our work has been on Africa, with the Horn of Africa Programme being established and well-known in the 1990s. We have strengthened the capacity of our civil society partners to address the conflicts in their own context, in some of the most difficult and war-torn countries.

Currently, we run conflict transformation programmes in the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes regions in partnership with local civil society organisations and universities in Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya and the DRC. There is also a common programme including publications, policy work and methodology design based in Sweden.

Dr Eyob Balcha  
Gebremariam

## Introduction

The establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is one of the most significant steps taken by African leaders toward achieving regional integration. The official starting of trading within the AfCFTA framework on 1 January 2021 has become a milestone in institutionalising the pan-African vision. The year 2021 has become a landmark in Africa's political and economic history along with 1963 – the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU); 1980 – the adoption of the Lagos Plan of Action; 1991 – the adoption of the Abuja Treaty; 2002 – the transformation of the OAU into the African Union (AU); and 2018 – the signing of the agreement to establish the AfCFTA. These historical milestones are a testament to the generational effort of realising and institutionalising the ideals of Pan-Africanism.

The AfCFTA is one of the largest free trade areas, constituting around 1.2 billion people in 55 national economies with an approximate 2.5 trillion USD combined GDP. If we zoom into the Horn of Africa region and Member States of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) region, we have eight countries with a population of 290 million and a combined GDP of 292 billion USD. The IGAD region has almost a quarter of Africa's population (around 24%). However, the region's economic contribution to the continental economy is meagre (around 11%). The low level of economic productivity in the IGAD region has implications for the implementation of the AfCFTA, the achievement of its objectives and the eventual contribution of the continental initiative in affecting people's lives positively.

The pursuit of regional integration and creating a single continental market through the AfCFTA is commendable. However, it is imperative to note that the current global political economy that<sup>1</sup> derives its modus operandi from the colonial period has continued to keep African economies only as sources of primary commodities, hence heavily dependent on the demands of non-African economies for their produce (mainly EU, USA and China). Such adverse

incorporation of African economies into the global economy makes them extremely vulnerable to external shocks. In practice, weaker and fragmented African economies compete with each other to access European, American or Asian markets. Hence, the determination to boost intra-Africa trade can be one way of achieving “self-reliant and self-sustaining development” across the continent as the Lagos Plan of Action aspired. However, the aspirations of realising continental self-reliance will undoubtedly remain an unfulfilled dream unless the heavy reliance on foreign markets is fundamentally rectified. AfCFTA aims to achieve this by transforming intra-Africa trade from around 16% in 2018 to 50 per cent by 2030.<sup>2</sup>

One of the guaranteed ways of strengthening the resilience and dynamism of African economies is enhancing their productive capacities where the bulk of their exports are manufactured and high-value products. Replacing the dependence of African economies on unprocessed agricultural and natural resources has a dual purpose. It will make African economies more resilient to the fluctuating commodities market at the global level. At the same time, African countries can also trade with each other more meaningfully and in a complementary manner. Hence, AfCFTA's objective can be met.

However, there is also a genuine risk of narrowly implementing the AfCFTA only from a trade liberalisation standpoint. African economies have not entirely recovered from the “great African depression”,<sup>3</sup> which collapsed productive capacities and transformative potentials due to structural adjustment programmes. The capacity of African states and public investments in agriculture, education, health, infrastructure and social security has not improved adequately over the past four decades. Weak economic performances, unsatisfactory rates of industrialisation, low human capital development, vulnerability to external price shocks and limited capacity to deal with health crises such as Ebola and Covid-19, show that African economies are quite fragile. Such a reality requires

a comprehensive developmental approach that recognises the particular challenges of each Member State of the AU and the commonly shared bottlenecks at the continental level. In such a broad continental and developmental approach, AfCFTA can be just one aspect of the solution within a grand scheme of addressing the fundamental developmental challenges of the continent.<sup>4</sup>

If the implementation of AfCFTA remains dominated by a narrow focus on transactions of goods and services at the border, it will become another inspiring initiative that fails to live up to the expectations of millions of Africans. Implementing AfCFTA equally requires adequate attention to fundamental issues such as enhancing the productive capacities of African economies, addressing the infrastructural deficit and fighting poverty, inequality and injustice. Enhanced productive capacities within African economies will lead to the availability of African manufactured products and services as major outputs. The production of high-value export commodities can be then used as a major step toward increasing intra-Africa trade. For example, the four largest economies in the IGAD region (Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda) had tea, coffee, cut flowers, oilseed, gold and crude petroleum as their top exports in 2019. These commodities are predominantly exported to Europe, the USA, the Middle East and China. In return, the top imports into these big four economies of the IGAD region were primarily medicine, cars, aircraft, refined petroleum and wheat.<sup>5</sup> Except for wheat, most IGAD countries have minimal capacity to produce the top imports of their neighbouring countries. However, this does not mean that IGAD Member States are inherently incapable of producing high-value products for the regional market. Member States can reasonably coordinate with each other to effectively utilise resources at their disposal and target the IGAD market with high-value export products. Such kind of developmental approach requires broadening the ongoing conversation about AfCFTA beyond a narrower focus on the removal of tariffs.

This edition of the Horn of Africa Bulletin (HAB) is dedicated to examining the AfCFTA by identifying the opportunities and challenges for sustainable development, peace and security in the Horn of Africa region. AfCFTA's role in the IGAD region is particularly examined from the justice perspective, the implications for informal cross-border traders, civil society's role, and the vital peace and security issue.

Peace and security are one of the top agendas in the IGAD region. Most Member States have gone through civil wars, inter-state wars, and insurgencies. Hence, it is imperative to discuss the interplay between AfCFTA's implementation and the peace and security outlook in the region. The contribution by Darlington Tshuma analyses two potential scenarios in this regard. A scenario where a greater integration through AfCFTA can have a dividend on the peace and security situation or a context where already embedded layers of grievances can be exacerbated in implementing AfCFTA. This HAB issue also includes two essays that directly engage with the issue of Informal Cross-Border Trading (ICBT) both at the policy and practical levels. At the continental level, 85% of economic activity occurs in the informal sector, and women constitute almost 90% of the labour force in this sector.<sup>6</sup> ICBT is a sub-set of this massive economic sector, with particular features occurring in the borders of African economies. The policy level issues are addressed in the essay co-authored by Zachary Kagunda, Ruth Getachew & Steve Kirimi, emphasising the vital role of ICBT in facilitating regional integration. The essay argues that IGAD's recognition of the vitality of ICBT through policy frameworks such as Cross-Border Security Governance (CBSG) is a good starting point to improve the quality and efficiency of ICBT in the region. In addition to facilitating intra-regional cross-border trading, such initiatives can also enhance relations among neighbouring regional economic communities (for example, between IGAD and the East African Community – EAC). The reflective essay by Oduma Philip Dennis is an invaluable contribution to

understanding the indispensable role of ICBT in border communities. It is based on the lived experiences and day-to-day encounters of informal cross-border traders on the Kenya-Uganda border. The essay also provides an evidence-based, compelling argument on the amendments that relevant policy initiatives such as the One-Stop Border Post require to better serve the needs of informal cross-border traders.

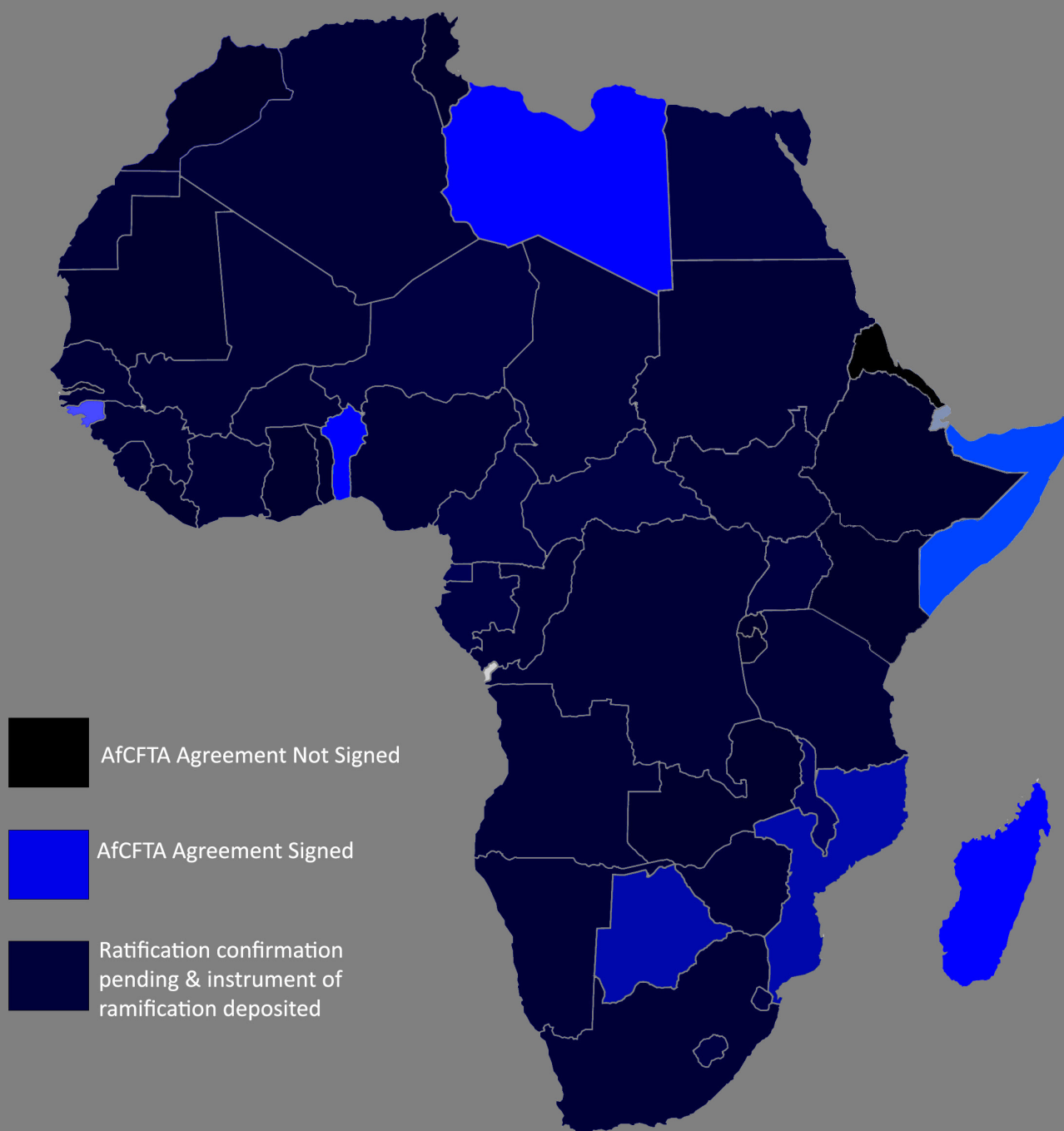
Caleb Maikuma Wafula's contribution focuses on the potential and challenges of ensuring just transition in implementing AfCFTA in the Horn region. The essay asks how just trade transition can be fostered with specific attention to women and youth-led small and medium enterprises (SMEs). AfCFTA's role in enhancing the socio-economic wellbeing of women and youth is examined mainly by focusing on social equity, gender equality and decent work opportunities. AfCFTA has specifically dedicated articles focusing on gender equality (Article 3 (e)) and youth and women in micro, medium and small-scale enterprises (Article 27 (2d)). At the continental level, 80% of businesses

are also categorised as SMEs, with a significant presence of women and young people. Caleb's contribution allows us to closely examine the potential for realising a just transition in implementing AfCFTA by focusing on women, youth and SMEs. Civil society organisations (CSOs) have a vital role in realising the AfCFTA agreement. Their role can vary from information dissemination and awareness-raising to ensuring the active participation of citizens in decision-making processes. Lucie Sewe's contribution to this edition discusses the role of CSOs in the IGAD region in implementing the AfCFTA agreement. Overall, the essays included in this issue give food for thought for policy and decision-makers on the multifaceted issues associated with AfCFTA in the IGAD region. Given the region has the distinctive features of low economic productivity and fragile peace and security status, it can serve as a testing ground to evaluate whether implementing the AfCFTA in its current form can effectively improve the livelihood of African citizens, especially marginalised women and young people.

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## Which countries have ratified the AfCFTA?



# **The AfCFTA and Regional Integration: Implications for Peace and Security in the Horn of Africa**

**Darlington Tshuma**



## Introduction

Regionalism and regional integration are not new practices in Africa. More recently, the signing and ratification of the African continental free trade area (AfCFTA) by most African states has reignited academic and policy interest in integration and regionalism. This essay unpacks the continental free trade area and analyses its implications for peace and security in the Horn. On the one hand, it argues that the implementation of AfCFTA could exacerbate grievances emanating from regional economic disparities and uneven distribution of integration benefits and costs. This is particularly true in contexts where relations between states are complex and characterised by intense rivalry and negative competition. Weak and fragmented regionalism, slow growth, political instability, and the absence of harmonised security policies to tackle illegal trade and smuggling add to the challenge of integration. On the other hand, this essay avers that current measures to deepen regional economic integration through, for example, the creation of one-stop-border posts under the Horn of Africa Initiative and the African Union (AU) plan to Boost Intra-African Trade (BIAT), can go a long way in deepening integration and creating economies of scale with built-in flexibilities to withstand external shocks. Doing so could promote economic development, particularly in fragile contexts, while simultaneously positioning Regional Economic Communities (RECs) as sites for developmental regionalism. The essay concludes by advancing recommendations that will hopefully result in re-evaluating current thinking about regional economic integration in Africa.

## Prospects for regional integration in the Horn of Africa

Free trade constitutes a major step toward the African integration agenda. The AfCFTA has the potential to transform the economic trajectory of African economies whose combined Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2019 was USD 2.6 trillion.<sup>7</sup> Simulations based on economic modelling by various institutions including the World Bank, show that Africa's GDP could reach USD 6.7 trillion if free trade is fully implemented by 2030.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) forecasts that free trade can boost intra-African trade by over 52% if import duties are eliminated and non-tariff barriers reduced.<sup>9</sup> However, poor regional connectivity, slow growth and aging infrastructure contribute to fragmented regionalism characterised by low intra-regional

trade. For example, intra-regional trade in the Horn averaged 15% in 2018.<sup>10</sup> These persistent problems, which are not restricted to the Horn, continue to militate against developmental regionalism as benefits often take long to materialise, and when they do materialise, are unevenly distributed creating winners and losers.

However, new multi-million infrastructure projects like the Addis-Djibouti railway line, the El Wak – Rhamu trunk road and Standard Railway Gauge in Kenya are expected to improve and deepen regional integration. Such kinds of infrastructure projects play an immense role in making the movement of people and goods within and outside the region accessible and cheaper. In addition to easing mobility, new infrastructure projects can also lay strong foundations for greater forms of integration. Fragmented regionalism and bureaucratised tax regimes have derailed the incorporation of Africa's small-scale traders into formal economies.

Liberal scholars argue that trade liberalisation and economic interdependence reduce fragility in three main ways. First, economic integration makes conflict costly, which compels states to work together to pre-empt aggression while reducing the temptation to use force and military might to resolve disputes. Second, regional trade boosts economic growth within regional blocs, which in turn reduces the possibility of intra-conflict within participating states.<sup>11</sup> Lastly, the 'democratic peace' argument holds that in addition to democracies not fighting each other, 'liberalising coalitions' characteristic of Western Europe, advocate liberalisation which favours regionalism.

While the economic dividends of free trade have been succinctly articulated by institutions like UNECA, who demonstrate the net gains of economic integration, this essay concerns itself primarily with the peace and security implications of the free trade area. An optimistic scenario is that, if fully implemented, the free trade area will lead to greater peace, stability, and sustainable development. Seen this way, the free trade area is more than a Pan-African economic project, but a peace and security response initiative intended to facilitate the economic and political integration of Africa. In fact, AfCFTA optimists argue that the free trade agreement signals a new type of African agency designed to confront the hard political-economic reality of African economies playing a subordinate role in global affairs.<sup>12</sup>



Since integration involves participating states voluntarily accessing each other's markets, there is a need to develop innovative ways to minimise conflict and optimise the benefits of mutual interdependence. Free trade areas offer incentives for participating states to cooperate and collaborate on security matters through, for example, harmonising regional border security policies, anti-smuggling, and money laundering laws. In 2002, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) set up its Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN) to detect potentially violent conflicts and encourage information sharing and analysis. CEWARN operations are credited with a significant reduction in violent conflicts along the Kenya-Uganda and Ethiopia-Kenya-Somalia borders.<sup>13</sup> To further the goal of regional integration, IGAD and its Member States created the Horn of Africa Initiative which, to date, has raised in excess of USD 4 billion from development partners to deepen regional integration through regional infrastructure projects like the Isiolo/Mandera corridor.<sup>14</sup> Priority areas for the initiative include security, transport, energy, trade and regional value chains and investments.<sup>15</sup> However, the Initiative has failed to shake-off criticism that it is externally driven and lacks home-grown institutional support. Additionally, dependence on external support and donors to fund strategic regional initiatives like regional integration gives donors undue power and influence to underwrite regional initiatives often informed by dominant international agendas of the time.

In the Horn, Ethiopia-Djibouti cooperation demonstrates potential benefits likely to be derived from an integrated market. The two countries have invested more than USD15 billion in road and railway connectivity to boost trade between themselves.<sup>16</sup> Ethiopia also uses Djiboutian ports for over 90% of its foreign trade and continues to invest heavily in developing and upgrading infrastructure. Djibouti's trade with Ethiopia accounts for more than 80% of its GDP and includes water and electricity imports. Millions of dollars have been spent in securing key trade routes and infrastructure and streamlining custom procedures culminating in the region's first single border post. Analysts note that trade liberalisation between Kenya and Ethiopia has the potential to create strong regional value chains and investments. The El Wak - Rhamu trunk road linking Kenya with Somalia and Ethiopia, is an example of a large-scale infrastructure project needed to deepen integration in the Horn. At present, total bilateral trade between Ethiopia and Kenya is extremely low, averaging USD 70 million in 2019. This translates to 0.05% of Ethiopia's total exports and 0.09% of Kenya's total exports.<sup>17</sup>

## Regional integration and implications for peace and security in the Horn

Uneven distribution of benefits and costs within regional economic schemes, including the threat of job losses and migration of high-cost industries to low labour cost zones, can trigger new conflict dynamics. Similarly, where regionalism reaches dazzling heights in the absence of mechanisms to address the uneven distribution of benefits that include infrastructure development and job opportunities, new conflict dynamics may emerge with major implications for security and regional politics. In a region like the Horn characterised by complex and complicated relations between states, perceptions of 'unfair advantage' and negative competition may spark distrust creating new conflict patterns alongside security configurations. Additional stressors like regional instability, socio-economic hardships and environmental concerns can prevent greater forms of integration. Overlapping regional membership encourages unhealthy competition and may lead to institutional jealousy. Consequences of overlap include regional bodies pursuing conflicting and divergent mandates that weaken the capacity to champion inclusive growth and effect structural transformation underpinning regional integration and trade.

Additional threats to integration in the Horn stem from the complex regional geopolitics of border securitisation, political instability, illicit financial flows and smuggling which limits free trade between countries. Illegal trade and smuggling are facilitated by porous borders and the absence of harmonized security policies to regulate the movement of goods and people. Infrastructure projects like the El Wak - Rhamu road connecting Kenya with Ethiopia and Somalia, is not only critical to consolidating regional integration and facilitating trade but may also benefit informal traders and transporters through improved access to larger markets and a more secure regional corridor. Enhancing intra-regional trading and augmenting cross-border trading communities within the region's broader vision of integration is one way to address the challenge of low intra-regional trade.

Security configurations between multiple countries create complexity, ambiguity and ambivalent relationships motivated by a variety of factors. For instance, instability in Somalia has affected her neighbours, not least because of the direct threat of violent extremism but

also the direct intervention and presence of Ethiopian and Kenyan peacekeepers in the country. Additionally, protracted civil wars and conflict in countries like South Sudan and Somalia has destroyed important trade infrastructures like roads, telecommunications, and railways that are essential to trade and economic integration. Protracted conflicts pose significant challenges to the operationalisation of the free trade area with the likelihood that implementation may exacerbate localised grievances emanating from unequal development and distribution of political and administrative power. In countries with multi-layered conflicts, disagreements over resource management and the exercise and distribution of political power often assume ethnic and clan dimensions making them even more complicated to manage. For instance, informal cross-border trade negatively impacted by good infrastructure and cheaper goods by-passing informal markets may give rise to new forms of localised grievances that create pockets of insecurity along key corridors.

To deepen regional integration and transform RECs into sites of developmental regionalism, IGAD Member States must continue to invest

in regional infrastructure development projects that have the potential to transform regional economies away from low-productivity agriculture toward higher productivity manufacturing and services. For instance, investments in good infrastructure including good road and rail networks, electricity and internet in Kenya and Ethiopia was accompanied by a significant shift from low-productivity agriculture to manufacturing and services that enhanced economic development in both countries. Research conducted by the World Bank shows that infrastructure investment can promote economic development in fragile countries. A report by the World Bank estimates Somalia's annual real income to grow significantly if accompanied by investments in transport, electricity and the reform of current customs and tax regimes. While regional integration and free trade may not eliminate illegality and criminality, putting in place efficient systems significantly reduce arbitrage arising from corruption and shadow regionalisation associated with transnational organised criminal syndicates who engage in illegal trade of high-value commodities like gold, diamonds, and charcoal.

## Conclusion

This essay presented two scenarios: an optimistic scenario describing a situation where implementation and operationalisation of free trade leads to a better-integrated region with greater prospects for peace and stability and a cautious scenario where implementation exacerbates grievances emanating from unequal development and uneven distribution of integration benefits. Both these scenarios are intended to alert decision-makers of potential developments with significant strategic impact while they can still prepare for or even avoid them. While the signing of the AfCFTA signalled African leaders' commitment to match rhetoric with action, operationalizing the free trade area to achieve optimal integration must be informed by the realities of African economies, particularly Africa's expansive informal markets mediated by informal cross-border networks. Shadow regionalism curated by informal modes of regional interactions can easily morph into criminality and vigilantism thereby undermining free trade and regional integration. On balance, the success of free trade will depend on Member States' ability to develop harmonised security policies on cross-border conflicts, smuggling, human trafficking, and violent extremism, among others. More importantly, integration requires dedicated and visionary leaders with a strong political commitment to act when required to do so. Current negative trends including internecine conflicts in Somalia and South Sudan, competing actors, and multi-layered conflicts mitigate against success of AfCFTA in the short and immediate term.

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# Informal Cross Border Trade – the Pivot for the Success of the African Continental Free Trade Area

Zachary Kagunda, Ruth Getachew, Stephen Kirimi

## Introduction

Informal Cross Border Trade (ICBT) plays a crucial role in the Horn of Africa (HoA) by enhancing the livelihood and food security of the borderlands' communities. The HoA region is endowed with an abundance of natural resources that, if well utilized, have a high potential to yield inclusive growth and reduce poverty in the region, amidst climate change and increased population growth. Likewise, it is also an area prone to communal conflicts and civil wars. This article aims to look at ICBT in the HoA region, addressing the following questions: What are the factors that influence community participation in ICBT? Why is ICBT very crucial in the HoA region? What role does the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) play with regard to ICBT? How does the ICBT contribute to the goals of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

ICBT is not a new phenomenon. Indeed, the activities carried out in the ICBT sector have existed even before colonialism. During the pre-colonial period, Africans used to exchange goods and services (barter trade) as well as trading in hides and ivory among other precious commodities, in what was popularly known as Long Distance Trade or Trans Saharan Trade. Following the artificial demarcation of Africa and after the independence of most of the countries in the Horn region, the term informal versus formal was coined as countries around the region sought to formalize and /or modernize their economies. The focus then (and indeed to some degree today) was rapid industrialization. The informal sector along with the formal sector is an important pillar of economic growth for much of the region. ICBT is a critical component of intra-African trade and a source of income for approximately 43 percent of Africa's population.<sup>18</sup> Thus, how the Member States of the IGAD treat the informal sector has a profound impact on employment, growth, equity, and sustainability.

ICBT is the daily reality of HoA borders. Stand at most HoA border posts and watch who crosses the border to or from neighboring states. Women with their heads and arms laden, bicycles, trucks, buses, and cars overloaded with goods. These vehicles carry informal cross-border traders across the borders, generally described as small traders in import and export, or the trading business. In the HoA region, the persistence of ICBT is mainly attributed to limited economic opportunities in the formal sector and the absence of other means of livelihood.

The informal economy in the HoA borders is

vast and fast expanding. It supports some of the poorest and most vulnerable families by providing livelihoods and food security. The informality mainly relates to the natural resource base on which local people rely for their living, i.e., agricultural production, fishing, and livestock trade, to mention but a few. Although at times equated with illegality and thus facing intense pressure from the Member States' governments to formalize, informal sector activities have generated significant employment opportunities. In addition, the returns yielded from ICBT are often employed to sustain families, providing for their healthcare and education.

The HoA border areas constitute one of the most dynamic challenges that IGAD Member States' governments encounter while carrying out their responsibilities. Achieving a balance between competing and conflicting priorities along these borders, especially when mobility and security interests intersect, is very tricky. On the one hand, the flow of people and goods offers high potential to promote economic growth and social development/integration, while on the other hand, states have a legitimate mandate to safeguard national security and combat transnational crimes such as human trafficking, smuggling of small arms and light weapons and terrorism. By and large, the African Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have been very critical in advancing peacebuilding initiatives that have created an enabling environment for inter and intra-trade relations. Nevertheless, the IGAD region remains fragile and much more investment and harmonized policies are needed to strengthen political stability, civil liberties, and openness.

The primary objective of the AfCFTA is the creation of one continental market for goods and services, with free movement of people and goods, as well as the expansion of intra-African trade through better harmonization and coordination across the RECs and the continent in general. Without mobility of people and goods, achieving the AfCFTA goal will remain an elusive dream. In the vicinity of the Horn region, good progress has been made where East Africa Community (EAC) Member States allow national identity cards as an alternative travel document. The IGAD Member States in their part formalized ICBT which can boost intra-regional trade. Recognizing the centrality of the informal sector contributes to advancing the goals of AfCFTA. ICBT, which is usually not registered in official statistics, can boost the intra-Africa trade that AfCFTA aims to realize. The expanding ICBT in



the Horn region has massive potential with regards to creating job opportunities for women and youth, reducing poverty, and integrating the region as espoused by the dream of the African Union's (AU) Agenda 2063.

### The Gravity of ICBT

ICBT is a critical component of regional integration and livelihood sustenance within the HoA borders. However, ICBT remains largely invisible, and in government circles, it is more often associated with smuggling, tax evasion, and illegality than with innovation, enterprise, and job creation. In the circles of borderland communities, it is considered a "survivalist economy" involving small entrepreneurs who mainly trade with legal small subsistence goods. Most traders hardly access preferential trade agreements; they may buy, or more often sell, in informal markets; and they may not always pass through the formal crossing point with all or part of their goods. Informal cross-border traders are perpetually progressing what others have come to regard as the 'real' but 'invisible' integration of Africa's economies when formal integration efforts are still fraught with many constraints. A significant portion of informal cross-border traders are women for whom ICBT is often their sole source of income and economic empowerment. Since ICBT occurs outside the purview of the state, policymakers struggle to closely gauge the needs and challenges as well as the magnitude of the trade.

Despite being a source of immediate livelihood for millions of people living in the borderlands, ICBT has remained marginalized because it is regarded as illegal commercialization of cross-border activities, especially by the Member State organs.<sup>19</sup> ICBT encourages entrepreneurship and regional trade integration between neighboring countries and creates a substantial income for many borderland citizens. Furthermore, ICBT provides employment opportunities, expands market access, and enables product availability and diversity. ICBT expands outlets for goods produced and manufactured within and outside the African continent and, provides access to goods unavailable domestically to meet domestic demand.

Although the AfCFTA agreement does not explicitly expound on ICBT and gender, the preface of the policy document vividly notes the importance of gender equality. It specifies that the AfCFTA aims to promote and attain sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development, gender equality and structural transformation". Likewise, Article 27(d) of the AfCFTA Protocol on Trade in Services makes

explicit reference to improving the export capacity of formal and informal traders, with particular attention to micro, small and medium-sized operators.<sup>20</sup> The inclusion of an ICBT chapter in AfCFTA would have helped address some of the key concerns in the ICBT sector. Key among them are provisions that would support informal cross-border traders, especially women, who are the majority in ICBT,<sup>21</sup> by promoting their participation in entrepreneurship; improvement of their business environment and free movement across the border; minimization if not total removal of cumbersome rules and procedures popularly known as Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs), reduction of tariffs; and finally, supporting the formalization of their business enterprises.<sup>22</sup>

### Advancing Regional Integration

Regional integration is a crucial mechanism for development and intra-regional trade in Africa. Regional integration is expected to contribute towards overcoming the setbacks that Africa faces as a result of many small national economies, fragmented local markets, and landlocked countries. Since the ratification of the Abuja Treaty in 1991, the agreement established a roadmap towards an African Economic Community (AEC), which would pursue the integration agenda in Africa.<sup>23</sup> African governments have been creating and fostering RECs to facilitate trade and eliminate bottlenecks, and optimistically, a number of RECs have made significant progress, while others are far from achieving their visions and goals, as enshrined in their founding treaties.<sup>24</sup> All the eight RECs which are intended to serve as the building blocks of the AU are at different levels of integration. For example, EAC has advanced into a common market, IGAD has adopted the cross-border security governance (CBSG), while Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) have free trade areas in operation. Additionally, all the eight RECs have also adopted the free movement of person protocol and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) stands as best practice in this arena since all its member countries have adopted the agreement on the free movement of persons, rights of residence and adoption of a common passport.<sup>25</sup> The EAC and IGAD-led initiatives have created an enabling environment for free movement of goods and people, thus progressing in integrating the region.

Notably, Ethiopia, one of the regional powerhouses, is not a member of EAC but a

member of IGAD and COMESA. This is a common constraint that continues to hamper the level of compatibility and alignment between individual countries and REC strategies and policies and the stated objective of regional integration through common markets. It is believed that the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) agreement,<sup>26</sup> will go some way towards addressing overlapping membership issues by bringing together three of Africa's major regional economic communities, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the EAC, and the COMESA.

### **Catalytic Drivers of AfCFTA**

The coming into force of the AfCFTA in January 2021, presented enormous opportunities for traders, both in large and small companies and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), to trade across Africa through a liberalized market for goods and services. We should be aware that one of the general objectives of AfCFTA is to create a single market for goods and services aided by the free movement of persons as stated under Article 3(a) of the Agreement.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, this aspect places the free movement of persons at the heart of free trade. The HoA region has recognized the importance of ICBT, and Member States have adopted policies

such as Informal Cross Border Trade-Cross Border Security Governance (ICBT-CBSG)<sup>28</sup> and decisions that promote the informal sector within their jurisdictions.

The ICBT-CBSG Policy Framework seeks to leverage policy shifts on ICBT to improve CBSG by recognizing the contributions of subsistence-oriented ICBT, to the livelihoods and resilience of borderland communities, and by extension the human security needs. It also emphasizes the convergence and harmonization of trade policies at regional and continental levels among other benefits. For instance, since January 2014, EAC began to accept national identity cards as an alternative travel document to international passports.<sup>29</sup> This action has led to a significant uptick in cross-border traders traveling across these countries. Women cross-border traders now travel more confidently, as their national identity cards allow them to cross borders legally and avoid the harassment that often surrounds previously considered illegal border crossing. Additionally, EAC and COMESA have simplified the trading rules for ICBT.<sup>30</sup> All such initiatives that advance mobility and ICBT are catalytic elements that will promote the achievement of AfCFTA goals.



## Conclusion

The African integration process has recorded undeniable achievements, as witnessed through the work of some of the RECs and in compliance with the Abuja Treaty.<sup>31</sup> The free movement of people is now a reality in some of the RECs. More importantly, the landmark signing of the AfCFTA, by the AU Heads of State and Government, is a good move in the right direction. Precisely, according to the Trade Law Centre NPC (tralac), an independent capacity-building think tank organization based in South Africa, as at May 2022, 43 of the 54 signatories (80%) have deposited their instruments of AfCFTA ratification.<sup>32</sup>

However, the deficit of political goodwill from Member State governments reduces the level of implementation of numerous decisions taken at the national, regional, and continental levels and slows the signing, ratification, popularisation and domestication of policy instruments. Furthermore, unless there is harmonization of norms and procedures under the multiple memberships in different RECs, the full dividends of more profound regional integration may not be realized. Amidst this, as described in the above sections, sustainable livelihood, food security, and economic benefits of ICBT are of critical importance to borderland communities. ICBT has been an existential necessity and an adaptive and creative response to ecological and socio-economic challenges for millions of people in the African borderlands. Furthermore, the adoption of the IGAD policy framework on ICBT-CBSG in the HoA region, which is now under the implementation phase, is very encouraging. It is a lesson for RECs, especially on convergence and harmonization of policies on cross-border trade and cross-border human security needs.

More specifically, the policies and decisions that address the needs of informal cross-border traders can also contribute to the primary objective of the AfCFTA in the horn region. Given the unique African social, economic, and political position, the regional integration agenda will further be advanced through the harmonization of existing policies. As such, building off the exemplary adoption of the ICBT-CBSG Policy Framework, the formalization of Informal Cross Border Trade (ICBT) through removing constraining/restricting tariff and non-tariff barriers and implementing trade facilitation, which will include the investment in regional policy harmonization, as well as by establishing the needful awareness vis a vis the provisions of such policies among communities, would lay the strong foundation for the realization of an integrated and prosperous Africa which is the core essence of the AfCFTA.

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# Informal Cross-Border Traders in a Disadvantaged Position to Benefit from Continental Trade Agreement

Oduma Philip Dennis

I write this reflective piece based on my experience as a team leader at the Busia District Farmers' Association and a border resident in Buyengo Parish, Busia District, in the Bukedi Sub-Region of Eastern Uganda. In this piece, I emphasise the challenges that informal cross-border traders face in my district and the actual implications that the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) can have in addressing these challenges. I will identify the challenges that informal cross-border traders face on a daily basis and propose recommendations. I firmly believe that such kind of actual experiences will serve as a vital input to policy and decision-makers at every level in the implementation of the AfCFTA.

The AfCFTA has been in existence since 1 January 2021 and has been hailed by many economic analysts as the largest trade agreement in the world in terms of the number of participating countries. The agreement aims to create a single market for goods and services and also facilitate the movement of persons and resources within the continent. The agreement represents a major opportunity for countries to boost growth, reduce poverty, broaden economic inclusion, and lift 30 million people out of extreme poverty by 2035 when fully operational (World Bank, 2020). However, to achieve its full potential, emphasis has to be placed on putting in place policy reforms and trade facilitation measures, not only for the large multinational companies, but more importantly for the rural, smallscale informal cross-border traders who are majorly the women, youth and persons with disabilities.

According to the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), informal cross-border trade is trade between neighbouring countries conducted by vulnerable, small, unregistered traders. Typically, it is proximity trade, involving the movement of produce between markets close to the border. The informality refers to the status of the trader (unregistered), not necessarily to the trade itself (captured or unrecorded by the official customs system).

Due to the nature of this trade, it is hard to get actual data on informal cross-border trade, however such trading activities contribute to the income of about 43% of Africans. It is estimated that this type of trade contributes between 30 to 40% of total intra-regional trade in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region and 40% in the Common Markets for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) region (African Development Bank, 2012). Informal cross-border trade is also gender sensitive as women constitute between 60

to 70% of those engaged in these trading activities (AFREXIM Bank, 2020).

In a continent with very high unemployment rates and protracted conflicts, informal trade contributes to job and income creation for the vulnerable and marginalised members of the population. It should be noted that in the history of African trade, informal cross-border trade has been in existence from as far back as when bartering was the main form of trade between the border communities. However, despite the rich history and the importance it continues to play in borderland communities, informal cross-border trading has failed to catch the attention of key policy and decision-makers in the majority of African countries. The failure by policy actors to integrate both the sector and the actors actively involved in informal cross-border trading into the intra-African trade framework, has contributed to the regulatory blindness to its importance by the majority of African countries.

Even though some Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have initiated policies aimed at facilitating informal cross-border trade, the AfCFTA faces an even bigger task to not only expand those initiatives but also to put attention on other critical challenges affecting the informal cross-border traders. Some of the initiatives like the use of national identity cards as travel documents in the East African Community (EAC), the simplified trade regimes (STR) in the COMESA, and the non-tariff barriers (NTBs) reporting mechanism, are positive steps. However, the impact of these initiatives is debatable considering the low level of literacy among informal cross-border traders and the awareness levels of such measures to the intended beneficiaries. Some of the daily challenges faced by informal cross-border traders are too complex to be solved only by the establishment of STR and national identity cards. Informal cross-border traders seldom feature in the decision-making realms of policymakers. Hence, these key economic actors will undoubtedly remain the last segments of society to benefit from any positive consequences from the implementation of the AfCFTA.

The following key areas are identified as major challenges that informal cross-border traders are facing:

**Poor information dissemination channels:** Information on different policies intended for the benefit of border communities does not always trickle down to the intended beneficiaries, despite the fact that there is a lot of trade and cross-border

information available. As a result, most traders do not benefit from this information that may help them.

For example, according to the coordinator for Busia Women Cross border Traders Association, there is a lot of trade-related information but they do not have ways of spreading it to the beneficiaries. Therefore, the majority of border communities do not have knowledge of the various cross-border conventions, the taxes applicable to them, the custom procedures, and the various product standards required for the different products. Lack of clarity and sufficient knowledge on these key trading issues compromises the success of informal cross-border traders. The lack of reliable market information systems makes dissemination of the needed information difficult, hence making it more challenging for informal cross-border traders to tap into the regional markets. The poor access to information means the traders will not be able to realise the opportune markets created by the AfCFTA.

#### **Limited access to and complicated procedures at customs:**

The Government of Uganda's decision that all traders must use the Busia One-Stop Border Post (OSBP), is very costly for the informal traders because it is not easily accessible. The OSBP is approximately 24kms from Majanji in the south and 15kms from Tororo in the north. Along that whole stretch though, informal cross-border traders use a number of ungazetted routes across the border, which makes them unauthorised crossing points. Legally they are supposed to obtain temporary travel documents every time they intend to cross the border to Kenya. According to the fishing community on Lake Victoria Majanji Sub-County, it is very costly for them to get clearance from the immigration offices due to the high costs of transport to reach the customs office. Thus, the fishing community enters Kenya illegally.

Illegal border crossing means risking being arrested, which in turn increases the total cost of informal cross-border trading. Traders usually end up paying unnecessary 'fees' in the form of bribes to security personnel which affects their businesses negatively. It has been observed that even those in Busia municipality are uncomfortable using the OSBP and prefer using routes at Sofia and Marachi, due to the restrictions at the OSBP, even though they are impassable during the rainy season. One female trader who buys second-hand clothes from Kenya, said that she prefers to use the Sofia route despite the poor road network, because she rides through it. If she were to use the OSBP, there is a policy against actually riding a motorcycle or bicycle. She says that pushing the motorcycle with luggage is very difficult

and so feels that they are discriminated against compared to some of their counterparts with larger vehicles which have no such restrictions. As a result of such custom procedures, some small-scale traders still do not use the official routes suggesting that the positive impact of the STRs and temporary travel documents remains negligible and is not reaching its potential in benefitting these traders.

#### **Volume of goods and services traded by the informal traders:**

Informal cross-border trade is characterised by the small scale of both production and sale of goods. Most traders carry small volumes of goods on their heads, bicycles, and motorcycles to the market for sale. Hence, their market access and coverage is within a limited radius from the border. While the AfCFTA aims at widening the market for goods, it is hard to see how this is applicable to the context of informal cross-border traders who lack the capacity to supply the needed volume of goods to the bigger markets further from the border. At the moment, market access does not seem to be the biggest challenge for informal cross-border traders compared to the issue of their being limited by only being able to supply small quantities of goods. So, they may not be able to take advantage of any increase in market demand. Interventions to improve the quantity and quality of goods and supply are key if the informal cross-border traders are to benefit from the wide market potentially being outlined by the AfCFTA. According to one of the informal cross-border traders who buys produce from Uganda and sells it in Kenya, it is hard for her to meet any extra demand of the produce because she has little capital. Hence, an increase in demand will not necessarily lead to an expansion of her business.

#### **Restrictions on the means of transport used by border communities:**

The most common means of transporting goods by informal cross-border traders are carrying on the head, bicycles and motorbikes. However, there are many restrictions on motorcycles with foreign number plates. In February 2021, Uganda Revenue Authority started a crackdown on all motorbikes with Kenyan number plates. In essence, a Ugandan trader would need to use a Ugandan motorbike up to the border, then thereafter they would have to hire a Kenyan motorbike for the journey in Kenya and vice versa, making movement of goods and services difficult and expensive. Due to the small-scale nature of their businesses, any such disturbance in the means of transport increases on the cost of doing business.

**Limited access to finance:** Most informal cross-border traders find it extremely hard to acquire financial support from financial institutions because they are not registered and so are not easily traceable. As a result, it is hard for them to expand their businesses even when there is demand. The absence of financial institutions in such rural areas makes it even harder for the rural communities.

## Recommendations

If the AfCFTA and similar continental and regional policy initiatives aim to benefit informal cross-border traders, the following key issues might be useful starting points:

**Boosting production capacity of borderland communities:** The AfCFTA gives us the opportunity to widen the market, but if the production capabilities of the informal cross-border traders are still limited then they will be unable to supply their commodities to the wider market. Regional markets require consistency in quantity and quality hence the need to build the capacity of the borderland communities to meet the market demands of the commodities they trade-in.

**Establishment of needed trade infrastructure:** Most border areas are marginalised and do not have the infrastructure to support their businesses. The road network connecting border communities is not maintained by governments and is usually left in the hands of local communities for routine maintenance. Small-scale cross-border traders also tend to sell their produce in open spaces and hence are affected by either direct sun or rain. The women who trade in perishable commodities like vegetables and fruits lose much of their commodities due to the lack of facilities to increase their shelf life thus governments must invest in infrastructure which will directly benefit the small-scale cross-border traders.

**Clustering the informal traders into various commodity cooperatives:** Acquiring the capacity to supply the large regional markets hopefully emerging from the AfCFTA, may require informal cross-border traders to get organised into cooperatives for bulk and collective marketing as opposed to working at the individual level which is unlikely to be able to meet the demands of the regional markets. Through the various cooperatives, it will be much easier to pass the needed production and market information to the traders, ensure value addition to their commodities, and link

them to financial institutions which can then boost their businesses and also enable traceability of the commodities when required. Borderland civil society organisations like farmer organisations, and cross-border traders' associations can play a key role in the process of bringing the informal traders together.

Interventions to ease the activities of informal cross-border traders entail the following:

**Gazetting more entry/exit points for small-scale traders:** The current restrictions to only using the OSBP for crossing is expensive for informal traders because of the distances involved. So, any efforts to force them to use the one-stop border posts hardly bear fruit. Informal traders already have unofficial routes, so, governments should work on mechanisms to ensure they can be used safely without harassment from law enforcement officers. More entry/exit points will ensure that travel documents and STRs are brought nearer to the beneficiaries ensuring they are more relevant and useful. At this stage, even if the continent adopted the Continental Simplified Trade Regime without decentralising it to lower levels, it might not have much impact.

**Gazetting a range within which foreign motorcycles can move:** Motorbikes are the most common means of transport used by informal cross-border traders. To avoid the inconveniences and costs resulting from these restrictions of use in foreign countries, policymakers should gazette particular distances from the border point within which these motorbikes can move freely without hindrance.

## Conclusion

Informal cross-border trade plays a key role in supporting vulnerable border communities. The AfCFTA presents them with hope and an opportunity to access bigger and better markets which are distant from them and in so doing could lead to more economic empowerment, creation of jobs and wealth, and promote cross-border collaboration for the border communities. However, currently, informal cross-border traders are not well organised and able to tap into the opportunities presented by the trade agreement. Informal cross-border trading has multiple and intertwined challenges. These include: the limited business networks, limited market information, poor trade infrastructure, and difficulties to access finance coupled with government policies which restrict their movement across the borders. These challenges limit the ability of border communities to seize any potential opportunities created by the AfCFTA. Hence policy and decision-makers need to take action. Any delay to effect changes in such policies continues to put the lives and safety of informal cross-border traders at risk through the actions of the law enforcement personnel and the high levels of corruption and harassment.

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# AfCFTA's Implications for Small and Medium- Sized Enterprises (SMEs): Towards a Just Trade Transition Analysis

Caleb Maikuma Wafula

## Introduction

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) marks a distinct turning point in Africa's economic development trajectory, in line with the enduring pan-African vision of a united Africa.<sup>33</sup> However, the conjoining of just trade transition and the AfCFTA pact invokes an eclectic mix of analytic and philosophic questions: Is the AfCFTA deal being delivered in a just manner? Precisely: How is just trade transition being fostered, with attention to women and youth-led Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs)? What should be done to build a momentum and deliver just trade transitional pathways for AfCFTA?

Until now, these and other important research and policy questions have been more or less glossed over in the relevant AfCFTA scholarship. History suggests that trade agreements and economic integration do not necessarily lead to fair and sustainable outcomes. Arguably, this has been due to the “abstract” nature of how the call for justice could practically be applied, given the scope of AfCFTA. Resultantly, this has raised more questions than provided answers about the implications of AfCFTA among women and youth-led SMEs, as exemplified by fears that AfCFTA gains might accrue disproportionately across Africa.

Based on secondary sources, this paper seeks to unpack the AfCFTA deal, with the main aim of unravelling how well (or not) the concept of just trade transition has been, or is being considered and implemented, with attention to women and youth-led SMEs especially in the Horn of Africa (HoA) region.

### Conceptual Clarity: Just Trade Transition

Just trade transition is best understood within the broader just transition discourse, that can be traced to the political struggle of North American trade unions for programs to support workers who lost their jobs due to environmental protection policies in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>34</sup> Over time, the trade union movements consistently sustained the push, and the term was brought to the global arena as one of the 2012 Rio plus 20 Summit resolutions.<sup>35</sup> The resolutions framed a just transition to sustainable development, within the parameters of dignity, freedom, social equality, human rights and good governance as guiding principles. It also called for equity and justice between and within countries, across genders and between generations. It stressed that the global commons should remain under

public ownership and protection. Between 2013 and 2015, the International Labour Organization (ILO) in cooperation with trade unions and the business sector, developed guidelines for a Just Transition Towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All.<sup>36</sup> The guidelines are based on four pillars: social dialogue, employment, social protection and rights at work. While acknowledging that there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ for all the principles, plus a large degree of overlap, this paper adopts: Social Equity; Gender Equality; and a Decent Work and Vulnerability Focus, to serve as a reference framework for a just trade transition that could apply in the case of the Horn of Africa (HoA). The choice of these principles is further motivated by other contextual issues in the HoA, including the region being home to some of the world's most unequal societies, particularly for vulnerable women and youth.

Thus far, the just transition concept has received increased resonance in international policy and debate, with significant overlaps with the literature on energy, environmental and climate justice.<sup>37</sup> For some, narratives and perceptions of what is just or not, is purely dependent on the claimants or right's holders. Importantly though, none of these claims can be wished away, as they contain significant legitimate concerns and interests.<sup>38</sup>

As mentioned above, this paper views the just trade transition through the lens of Social Equity; Gender Equality; Decent Work, and Vulnerability Focus. These considerations form the backbone of the discussions in the next section which will seek to interrogate the AfCFTA deal against the selected principles, to better understand how the agreement measures on the justice scorecard.

### AfCFTA Implications for SMEs

#### Social Equity

Beyond trade liberalization, AfCFTA is widely seen as an enabler of inclusive growth. As the African Union's (AU) flagship projects of Agenda 2063, it potentially embodies a “win-win” approach such that all African countries, societies and communities receive benefits from the pact.<sup>39</sup> The World Bank estimates that 30 million Africans could be lifted out of extreme poverty, while incomes could rise by \$450 billion by 2035.<sup>40</sup> Exports could increase by \$560 billion, while wages may increase by 10.3 percent and 9.8 percent for unskilled and skilled

workers, respectively.<sup>41</sup> Such kinds of projections might be considered as encouraging promises to Africa's development challenges, even though gains may manifest unevenly across a number of variables, such as geography, gender, skill level, and overall policy implementation.

Women and youth-led SMEs constitute the majority of traders and account for approximately 80% of the continent's businesses.<sup>42</sup> These SMEs are already positioning themselves to exploit economies of scale, tap into continental export destinations and use the continental market as a stepping stone for expanding into overseas market including through continental supply chains as well as global value chains.<sup>43</sup> At the heart of the AfCFTA deal is the adoption of the Simplified Trade Regime (STR) to facilitate small-scale trade and ensure the pact benefits extend to small-scale traders, through: reduced clearance costs; simplified customs documents; simplified certificates of origin and fewer delays in the clearing of goods etc.<sup>44</sup> Examples where this takes place include: Moyale One-Stop Border Post, which is meant to boost trade between Kenya and Ethiopia; the Galafi One-Stop Border Post, between Djibouti and Ethiopia, which lies on the Djibouti Corridor; or the planned Horn of Africa Gateway Development Project (HoAGDP) to connect Kenya to Somalia and to Ethiopia.

The level of awareness of the AfCFTA deal among SMEs remains a challenge though. For example, a recent survey showed that only 26.2 percent of firms in Ghana, the operational seat of the AfCFTA Secretariat, have even heard of the AfCFTA, much less are well prepared to benefit from its low-to-zero tariffs, price advantages, and other competitive gains afforded when they conduct transactions around the continent under the AfCFTA.<sup>45</sup> The situation might not be that different in the HoA. Faced with uncertainty about taxes and tariffs applicable to consignments, many traders still use panya (smuggling) routes, where personal safety and security is likely to be compromised.<sup>46</sup>

Importantly, there are increasing concerns that African markets (dominated by SMEs), are ill prepared for such heightened levels of competition, and the pact brings concerns of further entrenchment of existing inequalities.<sup>47</sup> Bello and Gass (2018) note that past and present trade liberalization and free trade agreements create winners and losers. Based on economies of scale, there is evident indication that AfCFTA stands to benefit Multi-National Corporations (MNCs) instead of developing SMEs.<sup>48,49</sup> There are fears that the pact risks choking local SMEs, as consumers always prefer cheaper

products.<sup>50</sup> This may lead to local producers losing sales to industrial elites with higher ownership of the means of production, who can lower the cost of their products by leveraging the reduced tariffs.<sup>51</sup> For instance, East African Breweries from East Africa's economic giant Kenya, could more affordably expand production and export their goods across the HoA region and beyond compared to smaller economies, such as Somalia.

The paper acknowledges that AfCFTA constitutes the continent's most ambitious long-term response framework to the structural socio-economic drivers of insecurity. The explanation for this lies in its potential to reduce unemployment, which in turn has the potential to reduce conflict. This paper is of the view that the imbalances between MNCs and SMEs as earlier highlighted, are also linked with an expanding wealth gap between the rich and poor. Inequalities that stem from the dominance of MNCs tend to contribute to the economic and political marginalization of vulnerable groups of societies such as women and youth. In most cases, violent groups tend to target marginalized young people, in particular, to advance their agenda as witnessed in the case of Al-Shabaab in Somalia.

## Gender Equality

Although AfCFTA does not incorporate a specific chapter on trade and gender, expectations are high as it relates to the expanded business prospects for women-led SMEs, which will unlock the potential for African women, to grow their businesses.<sup>52</sup> Proponents view AfCFTA as a first agreement where achievement of gender equality is explicitly stated as an objective of international trade and a big stride in Africa's commitments towards achievement of gender equality as stipulated in the sustainable development goals (SDG 5).<sup>53</sup>

Article 3(e) specifies that AfCFTA aims to "promote and attain sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development, gender equality and structural transformation".<sup>54</sup> Additionally, its preamble contains an explicit reference to the importance of gender equality for the development of international trade and economic cooperation.<sup>55</sup> Although the preamble is not legally binding under international law, it certainly sets the tone for the pact.<sup>56</sup>

Pursuant to Article 27(d), there is an explicit reference to improving the export capacity of formal and informal service suppliers, with particular attention to micro, small and medium-

sized operators in which women and youth actively participate. This provision targets women entrepreneurs and aims to ensure that they are not left behind in the process of trade liberalization by breaking the barriers these businesses constantly encounter as they try to position themselves to tap into more advanced regional and overseas markets.

Article 4 of the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons makes it more affordable for informal traders to operate through formal channels, which offer more protection by addressing the vulnerabilities of women in cross-border trade who ordinarily encounter gender-specific risks ranging from harassment to abuse.<sup>57</sup> A good example is the proposed Busia Cross Border market and the Safe Trade Zone Emergency facility between Kenya and Uganda that seeks to provide storage facilities and a day care centre for women traders.

Trade experts and gender equality advocates are expressing concern that gender-related provisions of the AfCFTA's legal framework lack precision and that AfCFTA runs the risk of exacerbating existing gender disparities and discrimination and worsening the conditions of women engaged in trade.<sup>58,59</sup> As further explained, this is because our economic structures are not gender equal: those with fewer assets, less income and less capacity to borrow are usually less able to benefit from changes and most often are women.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, this paper underlines that AfCFTA is fairly general and lacks firm commitment as it doesn't have concrete tools or measures identified, nor are there specific sectors targeted to achieve gender equality or enhance women empowerment.<sup>61</sup> Consequently, the level of commitment is relatively low, since the means of implementation of these provisions is left to the total discretion of the Member States.<sup>62</sup>

### **Decent Work and Vulnerability Focus**

The nexus between AfCFTA and infrastructure development appears to be strong, viewed through the prism of the continental Private Sector Investment Financing Framework. This is a private-sector-led initiative, meant to boost industry capacity and take advantage of the liberalized pan-African market.<sup>63</sup> On the one hand, AfCFTA provides new opportunities for infrastructure investment that will catalyze integration and facilitate intracontinental trade. For example, the Addis to Djibouti road, rail and port connection; and the Lamu Port, South Sudan, Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor are connecting landlocked countries to ports on coastlines, and completing currently missing links

for transcontinental highways, to facilitate the free flow of goods.

On the other hand, significant investment in quality infrastructure will be critical to greater market opportunities, triggering more trade and investment. It will also allow greater value addition and productivity growth leading to better jobs with social inclusion, and thus further enlarged markets.<sup>64 65 66</sup> Infrastructure development is necessary, in order to realize the full socio-economic development impact of AfCFTA thanks to the Program for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) initiative.<sup>67</sup> PIDA aims at strengthening rural-urban links and developing trade corridors, such as upgrading the poor border conditions for informal cross-border traders. Such kinds of improvements in border areas provide informal cross-border traders with facilities such as hygienic water, sanitation and catering facilities, particularly for women traders.<sup>68</sup>

However, there are also legitimate concerns about effectively redressing the negative implications of infrastructure projects on communities. Member States and project developers have on different occasions been accused of leaving out the public, including local communities along the corridor routes, during discussions on critical issues related to the implementation of various AfCFTA infrastructure projects. For example, the LAPSSET project has been faced with concerns over the environmental impacts and inadequate compensation for owners of the land that the roads and railway pass through, precipitating public litigation processes.<sup>69</sup> Closely related is the Addis Ababa–Djibouti Railway modernization project, where it is feared that the lack of serious public participation of local communities and pastoral communities has led to rent-seeking practices, such as compensation for owners of cattle and camels killed by trains.<sup>70</sup> The level of compensation is at the discretion of the train operator, more so, it has no explicit statutory basis.<sup>71</sup>

Jobs are central to the just trade transition. By promoting labor-intensive infrastructure development and industrialization, AfCFTA can generate significant income gains in the form of direct and indirect employment opportunities along the entire trade value chain, for the bulging youth and women population.<sup>72</sup> For the eastern African countries alone, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) estimates that AfCFTA could result in welfare gains amounting to USD 1.8 billion and create two million jobs.<sup>73</sup>

By contrast, critics maintain that the AU's Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons,<sup>74</sup> a crucial complementary policy enabler for the success of the AfCFTA, has received considerably less political attention and traction than the AfCFTA itself, thus far only bilateral agreements e.g., between Kenya and Ethiopia; Kenya and Uganda; Ethiopia and Djibouti are in place. There is also a legitimate concern that laborers from poorer countries may be forced to work long hours and live in informal settlements without basic amenities such as drinking water and electricity, in order to send money to their families. Some workers might even be forced to accept lower wages and be prevented from joining labor unions, under threat of losing their jobs.<sup>75</sup>

Furthermore, the challenges for realising decent work for all as protected by ILO conventions, are daunting, in the sense that trade unions, civil society organisations and communities that will be directly affected have been poorly consulted in the formulation and implementation of the AfCFTA.<sup>76</sup> According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) commissioned ex-ante human rights assessment, AfCFTA negotiators must ensure broad consultation and participation in the AfCFTA negotiations and implementation. The report further urges policymakers and negotiators to reach out to all stakeholders and ensure that the voices of vulnerable and marginalised groups are heard and taken into account.

## Conclusion and Recommendation

The conclusion is a rather mixed picture of the continent's positioning for a just trade transition, in light of the AfCFTA. Overall, there can be no doubt that the nascent and wide-reaching free trade area is backed by a set of aspirations for achievement of just trade transition. Nonetheless, the challenges are in the implementation. While the free-trade agreement will continue to evolve over time, there seems to be a serious level of disparity between what is on paper, and what is being implemented, including contradiction between policy rhetoric and actions. The negative implications of these gaps significantly affect the most vulnerable members of society such as informal traders, women and youth-led SMEs etc. Any effort to realise just trade transition in the HoA, can thus seek to align its ambitions against important principles, as well as ensuring that such a transition is socially inclusive and just, leaving no one behind by:

- Sensitizing and creating awareness among policy makers, development partners, women and youth led SME traders, as well as the public, on a common understanding of the concept of just trade, its relevance and how to ensure its implementation across the AfCFTA spectrum.
- Enhancing consistency between policy, strategies, and trade facilitation actions while ensuring issues concerning women and youth-led SMEs remain adequately prioritised.
- Building an efficient and participatory institutional architecture for enhanced sharing experiences, best practices, and lessons learned, in order to ensure that various stakeholders including development partners are not only cognizant and supportive of the free trade agreement but also safeguard issues of justice across the trade value chains, jobs and opportunities related to the AfCFTA at local, national, regional and continental levels
- Mobilising Member States, continental organs, institutions and "development partners" to enhance the retraining, building the necessary new skills and formalization of work for vulnerable workers, both in highly skilled as well as semi-skilled areas so as to help meet the emerging job-skill requirements of the AfCFTA.

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# Potential Contributions of Civil Society Organisations to the Effective Implementation of the AfCFTA

*Focus on the Eastern Africa Region*

Lucie Sewe



## Introduction

In January 2021, African countries opened their markets for trading under the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). This presented a new dawn and an opportunity to boost growth, reduce poverty, and broaden economic inclusion. Studies indicate that the AfCFTA could increase intra-African trade by 52% by 2022, thereby stimulating Africa's economic development and global positioning.<sup>77</sup> Civil society has emerged as a potentially significant factor in the implementation of the AfCFTA. Civil society refers to the communities and groups which function outside of the government to provide support and advocacy for issues in society, including promoting good governance.<sup>78</sup> The United Nations Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognise civil society participation as crucial for trade agreements to attain global economic, social, and environmental standards.<sup>79</sup> Notably, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are among the actors which played a key role in leading to the adoption of the AfCFTA agreement.<sup>80</sup> While the economic benefits of implementing the AfCFTA remain a key discussion focus, analysts have observed that the concept of inclusivity and participation of democratic elements such as civil society, in shaping Member States' engagement in AfCFTA activities, is yet to be addressed. This paper seeks to highlight areas where CSOs could potentially contribute, drawing upon experiences in the Eastern Africa region. The discourse identifies key challenges and concludes with recommendations for going forward.

### Rationale for Regional Integration in Africa

The need for regional integration in Africa emanates from the changing global economic and political environments, and the subsequent realisation that enhanced cooperation and integration constitute a potential response.<sup>81</sup> African attempts at integration have operated within the overarching framework of accelerating the capacity for shared sovereignties and problem-solving in the economic and political realms. At the early stages of integration, Pan-Africanists such as Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, propagated the promotion of political unity with reduced colonial fragmentation (continentalism), while countries such as Tanzania and Nigeria, proposed basing Africa's integration schemes on sub-regional organisations. This contest between continentalism and sub-regionalism was resolved by the establishment of the Organization for African Unity (OAU), when African countries opted for both continental institutions for security and political

integration in respect for sovereignty and territorial co-existence, alongside sub-regional economic institutions.<sup>82</sup> The period 1960-1980 witnessed the emergence of major regional integration efforts that pushed forward the continent's economic integration agenda and articulated broad-based, all-inclusive Pan-African integration. These efforts resulted in the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the East African Community (EAC), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). Integration has recently gained acceptance as essential in facilitating economic and political development, adopting different dimensions which include streamlining mandates and developing closer political union.<sup>83</sup>

The AfCFTA presents opportunities that could result in better harmonisation of trade liberalisation and facilitation across the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), thus benefiting all Member States. Economic integration has been a key aspiration of African countries.<sup>84</sup> It is an opportunity to allow free movement of goods, services, people and capital between national markets while overcoming divisions that impede the flow of goods and improving living standards. As African countries continue to promote regional integration, exclusion of key stakeholders features as one of the factors accounting for ineffectiveness. This calls for the participation of additional actors such as CSOs. Analysts also highlight challenges related to inadequate political will, the high incidence of conflict, the poor design of regional integration arrangements, and the multiplicity of the different institutions coupled with inadequate funding.<sup>85</sup>

### Potential Support Lines for Civil Society Engagement in the Implementation of AfCFTA

CSOs are groups that function outside of government to provide support and advocacy for issues affecting society.<sup>86</sup> These groups include academia, women groups, faith-based organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations (CBOs) and youth organisations.<sup>87</sup> In a statement released in 1999, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, the late Kofi Annan, recognised the positive participation of civil society groups in various sectors and called for their stronger union with governments. He described this as "a powerful partnership for the future". In 2007, CSOs established the East African Civil Society

Organizations' Forum (EACSOF), primarily to build a critical mass and to foster confidence and capacity in articulating interests in the East African Integration Process.<sup>88</sup> EACSOF, which currently has a membership of over 400 CSOs, has made significant achievements in mobilising the masses toward political transition and opening up civil spaces for public participation. This includes initiating advocacy for the free movement of Africans in Africa and training member organisations on good governance, policy engagement and participation in trade negotiations.<sup>89</sup>

The demand for civil society participation in the negotiation and implementation of trade agreements has recently intensified following the growing and progressive mainstreaming of sustainable development issues in free trade agreements. Article 29 of the AfCFTA Agreement, calls upon State Parties *“to recognize the importance of technical assistance, capacity building and cooperation in order to complement the liberalization of services, to support State Parties' efforts to strengthen their capacity in the supply of services and to facilitate implementation of this Protocol.”*<sup>90</sup> In recognition of the significance of this Article, CSOs are among the actors which played an active role leading to the adoption of the AfCFTA agreement by participating in dialogues and providing feedback on diverse issues. As part of the process, The Department of Trade and Industry of the African Union Commission (AUC), organised the first annual AfCFTA Stakeholders Forum in Dakar in 2018, which committed to engage Member States in taking action for ratification and implementation of the AfCFTA. The forum attracted over 70 participants from African CSOs.<sup>91</sup>

As AfCFTA moves forward, it is envisaged that civil society can make significant contributions towards successful implementation by bringing citizens' concerns to public authorities, monitoring policy and programme implementation.

First, CSOs can provide diplomatic, technical and advisory support to follow up on the ratification of AfCFTA by countries that are undergoing their legislative processes. By October 2021, 38 out of the 54 signatories had submitted their instruments of ratification with the Chair of the AUC, while 41 countries had complied with their requirements at the national level.<sup>92</sup> While ratification confirms Member States' commitment to the Agreement, any strain on diplomatic relationships can undermine its success. Political stability and good relationships among Member States are key ingredients for fostering trade. For example, the maritime conflict between Kenya and Somalia could develop into

further political tensions and conflict, affect trade relations between the two countries and reduce their commitment to AfCFTA. Regional integration not only addresses trade relationships but brings along an element of social cohesion. The maritime dispute presents an opportunity for civil society to mitigate such issues by working in partnership with the respective governments and regional organisations to support systems that avert further tension. Through the diplomatic frameworks, regional organisations have taken responsibility to mediate issues that cause tension among neighbouring countries in the region with participation from civil society, through advocacy, education and capacity-building.

Second, AfCFTA contains a significant component of awareness-raising, where CSOs could be useful as catalysts for raising visibility. Evidence suggests that several potential traders are unaware of the existence of AfCFTA. A study by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 2018 in Malawi and Zambia, found several small-scale cross-border traders possessing limited knowledge of customs rules and trade regimes, yet they are heavily dependent on cross-border trade for their livelihoods.<sup>93</sup> The study revealed that several active informal women traders were unfamiliar with a scheme known as Simplified Trade Regime (STR), which is operated by the 19-country Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), of which both Malawi and Zambia are members. This was considered a knowledge gap that undermines the traders' capacity to conduct business effectively. The outcome of this study triggered the development of knowledge-building programmes by UNCTAD to support informal and small-scale cross-border trade and to strengthen their entrepreneurship skills. CSOs could contribute by supporting the development and dissemination of information tools to facilitate understanding of the AfCFTA and other trade initiatives through the media, websites, and newsletters and other channels.

Further, unexpected situations such as the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected cross-border movement, call for flexible and innovative training arrangements.<sup>94</sup> COVID-19 had an impact on Africa's integration and challenged the level of preparedness of almost all countries in the world. As the pandemic gained momentum, several countries in Africa responded to the crisis by invoking national emergency powers.<sup>95</sup> This trade disruption and the hardship caused by uncoordinated responses

to the pandemic could have been checked, and the effects of unilateral action ameliorated, by joint action between the government and the civil society, or at least by consultation. CSO engagement can help to supplement government efforts by educating communities and carrying out advocacy activities at the community level. NGOs whose mandate includes capacity-building, are instrumental in providing the necessary interventions to support the preparedness of communities, in various ways including training. CSOs can be instrumental in educating citizens about AfCFTA policies and their implications for day-to-day trade activities. They can also draw the attention of relevant policymakers by providing information on traders' experiences and issues.<sup>96</sup>

Third, CSOs can demand accountability from governments in fostering intra-African trade, as well as monitor and support government efforts to ensure relevant national laws and policies follow the provisions and aspirations of the AfCFTA. They can also support governments to build the infrastructure and institutional capacity to facilitate an enabling trade environment within Africa. This includes identifying and assessing weaknesses in institutions that are responsible for implementing AfCFTA, while applying strategies to ensure there are appropriate checks and balances in place.<sup>97</sup> For several years, civil society groups in Africa have contributed immensely to the efforts to support global visibility. In 2016, civil society called for the EAC countries to rethink the signature and ratification of the European Union-East Africa Community (EU-EAC) Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), raising concerns on regional integration and intra-trade in Africa and weak trade relationships, among other issues. This was to articulate areas that disadvantaged some partner countries after critically analysing the content of the Agreement and drawing the attention of the concerned countries to the issues.<sup>98</sup> In the final analysis, CSOs recommended the development of a mechanism to facilitate implementation and the tracking and monitoring of the Agreement by key stakeholders.

## Conclusion

This article has discussed the role of civil society as an actor and valuable partner in the implementation of the AfCFTA. It has demonstrated the potential for various groups to support AfCFTA. As observed by Teunissen and Akkerman, successful integration requires strong commitment in implementing agreed arrangements, fair mechanisms to arbitrate disputes and equitable distribution of the costs and gains of integration.<sup>102</sup> Civil society engagement in the delivery of AfCFTA guarantees inclusion and participation and could also promote transparency, accountability and adoption of policies through advocacy.

## Key Recommendations for Successful Civil Society Engagement

The AU recognises that the initial implementation-level conditions for the success of the AfCFTA are heavily dependent on the willingness of individual Member States and their leaders to take action to implement the agreement and their capacity to coordinate and harmonise trade policies at the national and regional levels.<sup>99</sup>

Implementation of the AfCFTA requires close collaboration between governments and CSOs to enhance good governance and accountability. The AfCFTA will need to define mechanisms for stakeholders to participate in all relevant forums that permit close follow-up, including reporting on the development of policies and practices. Structured and regular dialogues between governments, CSOs and regional organisations, should be held to make the process more efficient and effective by facilitating the presentation of information updates on the implementation of AfCFTA. Lessons from other trade agreements confirm the importance of consultative mechanisms to the success of trade agreements.<sup>100</sup>

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic provides a learning experience for the AfCFTA and should stimulate governments to develop regional emergency plans and response mechanisms that can be applied to similar situations in the future. In addition to delaying implementation timelines, COVID-19 led to a redirection of human and financial resources to respond to the growing crisis.<sup>101</sup> AfCFTA, with support from the Member States, the AU and other regional institutions, can develop a tool for researchers and academics to collect and analyse data to facilitate relevant decisions. This includes strengthening data collection and analytical capacities at key border points where cross-border trade takes place. Another step to address such emergencies is for AfCFTA to set up an emergency fund that can be utilized for specific emergencies. The fund may draw on past experience to make accurate projections on costs. Civil society's responsibility would be to follow up and ensure the establishment of this fund, as well as support the development of measures to ensure accountability.

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# Conclusion

The AfCFTA is one way of institutionalizing the ideals of Pan-Africanism in today's socio-historical and political- economic context. The realization of the continental free trade area is a major milestone. However, its implementation requires a substantive reorientation of legal and policy frameworks in several areas so that ordinary citizens of Africa can benefit from this continental initiative.

The essays presented in the previous section addressed several issues that decision and policy makers, particularly in the IGAD region, need to consider. They raise important questions on justice and the implementation of a just transition within the AfCFTA framework, the implications of AfCFTA on the informal cross-border trading and communities benefiting from ICBT, the daily encounters of informal cross- border traders, the role of civil society and the challenges that insecurity and fragile peace pose to the success of the AfCFTA. The essays are focused on the IGAD region. However, most of the identified challenges can also be found in other regions of the continent.

More specifically, the cases mentioned in the essays require the IGAD member states to design and implement legal and policy frameworks that facilitate reaping the benefits of AfCFTA. As Caleb argued, just transition becomes a possibility if the gender and youth issues are integrated into the AfCFTA implementation practices along with the creation of decent job opportunities.

The case of informal cross-border traders is given the proper attention it requires in this HAB issue. The actual implementation of the AfCFTA directly affects the lives of people involved in informal cross-border trading. The contribution of Zachary Kagunda, Ruth Getachew & Steve Kirimi and Oduma Philip Dennis shows us that the policies and decisions that directly affect the lives of informal cross-border traders need to be protective of their specific and often disadvantageous position to big business. Hence, if AfCFTA is pursued within the broader motto of promoting people-centered continental

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integration, the implementation needs to adequately consider the multiple challenges that informal cross-border traders face.

Lucie Sewe's contribution on the role of civil society organisations in enhancing people's understanding of the AfCFTA is a useful reminder that organised citizens of the region have a major role to play in its implementation. Darlington Tshuma's piece also reminds us that peace and security issues remain at the centre of realising AfCFTA's vision and the practical challenges of forging regional integration among countries with diverse internal political processes. Both contributions are vital reminders that the roads ahead are not predictable and require concerted efforts from both governmental and non-governmental actors to pursue AfCFTA's vision in an inclusive and orderly manner. The expected level of awareness that needs to be created to implement AfCFTA, as well as the vital role of peaceful political processes and transitions in the IGAD region, will inevitably create debate and contestations on the best way forward. This makes the implementation of the AfCFTA, both in the IGAD region and at the continental level inherently political.

To sum up, Africa, the AU and its regional economic communities have started an ambitious political and economic project attempting to bring about continental integration through the integration of African markets and economies. This is a massive task that requires multifaceted changes and transformations in policy, legal and institutional frameworks at the sub-national, national, sub-regional and regional levels. The processes and the tasks ahead are above and beyond the rhetoric of trade liberalisation and the removal of trade barriers at the border. The full realisation of AfCFTA requires transforming the productive capacities of African economies, boosting intra-Africa trade by producing high-value products and responding to the needs and demands of informal cross- border traders. The essays in this issue of HAB contribute to some of the important questions we need to ask in the next phases of implementing the AfCFTA.



## BORDER GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA: CREATING SYNERGIES BETWEEN EXISTING POLICIES

### By The African Union Border Programme

The adoption in February 2020 by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union Strategy for Better Integrated Border Governance is a significant paradigm shift in a number of areas:

#### 1. Anchoring continental and regional policies in border areas

Previously confined to the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, decisions and actions relating to border management have gradually been extended to the issue of socio-economic development and the promotion of regional and continental integration. This is a significant development decided by African Ministers in Charge of Border Issues who, on numerous occasions, have emphasized “the need to put in place a new form of pragmatic border management aimed at promoting peace, security and stability, but also at facilitating the integration process and sustainable development in Africa”.

This evolution is really well reflected in the provisions of the Strategy, which makes borders the place where continental and regional policies can find an anchor and an appropriate site for operationalization.

#### 2. Aligning the continental border governance strategy with regional instruments

The adoption of the Strategy provides an opportunity to align it with regional policies as well as strategic and operational frameworks already finalized or under development. For example, the Strategy is easily aligned with the continental and regional strategic instruments for border management<sup>103</sup>. It will further define areas of harmonization with the organization of technical meetings between the AUC and the RECs for greater coherence of border governance strategies, which will thus allow the realization of the principles of subsidiarity and complementarity.

#### 3. Translating strategic directions and guidelines into national border policies

The African Union Commission has consistently

sensitized Member States aim to strengthen state presence in border areas that are based on the guidelines and recommendations of the Strategy. In West Africa, several countries have already developed such policy and strategic frameworks for border governance. Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger have each developed a national border policy and an action plan for its implementation. Côte d’Ivoire and Guinea are in the process of launching the development of theirs.

In addition to guiding the implementation of various important policies (e.g. the establishment of peace, security and stability) or promoting cross-border cooperation, said policies enable the state to better strengthen its presence in border areas, particularly by establishing its sovereignty. Establishing National border policies allow the state to better secure its territory and protect border communities.

It is in this respect that the mission of the strategy is to develop a shared and inclusive governance of borders that contributes to the mission of the Strategy of the African Union’s Agenda 2063.

#### 4. Turning barriers into bridges by facilitating mobility, migration and trade in Africa

To boost African trade, the African Union decided on the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) which will lead to the creation of a single continental market for goods and services, with free movement of businesses, persons and investments. It will also pave the way to the establishment of the Continental Customs Union.

The AU Strategy encourages the implementation of joint investment programmes, the CFTA, promoting joint border facilities, such as One-Stop Border Posts (OSBPs), and adopting relevant international standards.

Further, the Strategy aims to regularise small-scale informal cross-border trade by reducing transaction costs for small traders through the establishment and full implementation of simplified trade regimes and supporting the establishment/strengthening of Cross-Border



Traders Associations (CBTA).

In addition, this instrument has provisions to facilitate legal migration and cross-border mobility through the promotion and implementation of the AU Migration Policy Framework and Protocol on Free Movement.

Finally, the Strategy will help establish secure borders in order to ease restrictions on mobility and interaction between border communities, e.g. by providing adequate services and accessible information on requirements, challenges and opportunities of migration for population in general, and for the potential workforce (migrants in particular).

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