



## Informal Cross-Border Trade and Regional Integration in ECOWAS from an African Perspective

Muhoozi Kizza<sup>1</sup>, Abduke Muteesa<sup>2,3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, Busitema University

<sup>2</sup> Kyambogo University, Kampala

<sup>3</sup> Department of Advanced Studies, Busitema University

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**Correspondence:** [mkizza@yahoo.com](mailto:mkizza@yahoo.com)

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### Author notes

*Muhoozi Kizza is affiliated with Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, Busitema University and focuses on African Studies research in Africa.*

*Abduke Muteesa is affiliated with Kyambogo University, Kampala and focuses on African Studies research in Africa.*

### Abstract

Informal cross-border trade plays a significant role in regional integration efforts within ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States), particularly in regions with limited formal economic opportunities. The analysis employs qualitative research methods to explore perceptions and practices of traders across borders, supplemented with secondary data from government reports and academic literature. Ugandan traders engaged in informal cross-border trade reported facilitating over 40% of total regional commerce, highlighting the substantial role such activities play despite regulatory barriers. The analysis underscores the potential for formalizing these informal practices to enhance regional integration while addressing existing regulatory hurdles. Policy recommendations include developing targeted regulations that facilitate rather than hinder cross-border trade and promoting capacity-building programmes among traders.

**Keywords:** *Africanization, Cross-border Trade, Economic Geography, Mercantilism, Regional Integration, Subsidiarity, Zonalization*

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