



Informal Cross-Border Trade Networks Within ECOWAS Region: An Ethiopian Perspective,

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Abstract

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) aims to facilitate regional integration through cross-border trade, yet informal networks continue to play a significant role in this sector. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews with traders and community leaders, supplemented by secondary data analysis of government reports and academic literature. Approximately 30% of all cross-border trade in Ethiopia was found to be conducted through informal networks, highlighting the region's reliance on these channels despite formal regulations. Informal trade networks are resilient and continue to dominate within ECOWAS, necessitating a more nuanced approach that acknowledges their economic importance and potential for integration. Policy makers should consider incentivizing participation in formal markets while also addressing the regulatory challenges faced by informal traders.

Keywords: *Ethiopia, Sub-Saharan, Geopolitics, Mercantile, Informality, Regionalism, Transboundary*

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