



Informal Cross-Border Trade Networks within ECOWAS: An Ethnographic Study of Comoros

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Abstract

Informal cross-border trade networks are integral to regional integration in ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States), yet their dynamics within specific member states remain underexplored, particularly in Comoros. The research employs participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis in urban markets of Moroni, the capital city of Comoros. Data collection spans over six months to capture daily transactions and socio-economic interactions among traders. Socio-economic data reveals that informal trade networks are predominantly engaged in trading fish and agricultural products between Comoros and mainland ECOWAS countries, with a significant proportion (60%) of local traders reporting increased income due to regional integration efforts. The study underscores the importance of integrating traditional trade practices into broader policy frameworks for effective regional economic development. The emergence of these networks indicates potential avenues for enhancing Comoros' participation in ECOWAS's wider economic structures. Policy makers should consider formalising informal trade networks to boost local economies and improve governance, while also investing in infrastructure that supports cross-border commerce.

Keywords: *African geography, cross-border studies, ethnography, regional integration, traditional commerce, West Africa, qualitative methods*

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