



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

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Abstract

Informal cross-border trade plays a significant role in regional integration within ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States), particularly in countries such as Kenya, which serves as a critical hub for this activity. The analysis is based on qualitative research methods including interviews with traders, focus group discussions, and secondary data review. While informal cross-border trade has significant economic benefits for both individuals and countries within ECOWAS, there are challenges in terms of regulatory compliance and market access that need to be addressed through more inclusive integration policies. To enhance regional integration, policymakers should develop targeted strategies to support the formalisation of informal trade sectors while ensuring fair competition and equitable market conditions for all stakeholders.

Keywords: *African geography, regional integration, cross-border trade, informal economy, West Africa*

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