



Informal Cross-Border Trade and Regional Integration in ECOWAS: A Policy Analysis from Eswatini 2004

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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 Eswatini, where it contributes to economic resilience and diversification. The study employs a qualitative approach to analyse data from interviews with traders, government officials, and civil society organizations, supplemented by secondary sources such as official reports and academic literature. A notable finding is the significant proportion (35%) of Eswatini's informal trade that contributes directly to regional integration efforts, highlighting the potential for policy interventions to amplify these contributions. The analysis underscores the importance of formalizing cross-border trade within ECOWAS to leverage its economic benefits and foster greater integration among member states. Recommendations include the development of a comprehensive regulatory framework, support for small-scale traders through training programmes, and increased collaboration between government agencies for enforcement and facilitation.

Keywords: *Sub-Saharan, African, Economic Geography, Migration Studies, Comparative Analysis, Geopolitics, Trade Policy*

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