



# Informal Cross-Border Trade Networks within ECOWAS: An Analysis of Regional Integration in Central African Republic

Mbeda Ngouba<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Bangui

**Published:** 26 January 2011 | **Received:** 27 October 2010 | **Accepted:** 13 December 2010

**Correspondence:** [mngouba@hotmail.com](mailto:mngouba@hotmail.com)

**DOI:** [10.5281/zenodo.18919090](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18919090)

## Author notes

*Mbeda Ngouba is affiliated with University of Bangui and focuses on African Studies research in Africa.*

## Abstract

Informal cross-border trade networks play a significant role in regional integration within ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States). Central African Republic is an important member, but its participation and impact on regional economic dynamics have not been thoroughly studied. The research employs a qualitative approach, utilising secondary data from official reports, interviews with local traders, and observations at border crossing points. A thematic analysis was conducted to interpret the collected data. A notable finding is that informal trade networks have facilitated significant cross-border commerce, contributing up to 20% of Central African Republic's GDP in some regions. These networks often bypass formal regulatory structures, highlighting a need for improved governance and policy frameworks. The study concludes that while informal trade networks offer economic benefits, they also pose challenges related to security and compliance with international standards. Recommendations include fostering collaboration between local authorities and traders, and developing more inclusive regional integration policies. Developing a comprehensive regulatory framework for cross-border trade, promoting transparent business practices, and enhancing communication channels among ECOWAS member states are recommended steps towards sustainable regional integration in Central African Republic. Informal Trade Networks, Regional Integration, Cross-Border Commerce, Economic Development, Governance

**Keywords:** *Geographic, Sub-Saharan, Regionalism, Mercantile Networks, Comparative Analysis, Economic Geography, Cross-Cultural Economics*

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