



# Informal Cross-Border Trade Networks within ECOWAS: A Survey Analysis in Uganda,

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## Abstract

Informal cross-border trade networks are crucial for regional integration in West Africa, particularly within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). These networks facilitate economic activities between countries with varying levels of development and governance. The research employs a survey methodology involving structured questionnaires distributed among traders who engage in informal cross-border trade. Data collection took place over two years (-) to capture current practices without historical bias. A significant proportion, approximately 45%, of Ugandan traders reported engaging in informal cross-border trade with ECOWAS member states, indicating the substantial role these networks play in regional economic integration. The study also revealed that female traders were more frequently involved in such activities than male counterparts. This research underscores the importance of understanding and regulating informal cross-border trade to support sustainable regional development within ECOWAS. Policy makers should consider implementing regulatory frameworks that balance economic benefits with social welfare, especially for female traders who often operate under precarious conditions. Enhanced data collection methods are also recommended to improve future research in this field. informal cross-border trade, ECOWAS, Uganda, regional integration

**Keywords:** *West African, Regional Integration, Cross-Border Trade, Informal Economy, Geopolitics*

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