



# Informal Cross-Border Trade in ECOWAS: A Qualitative Study of Equatorial Guinea

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## Abstract

Informal cross-border trade is a significant component of regional integration in West Africa, particularly within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Equatorial Guinea has been at the forefront of studying this phenomenon due to its strategic location and diverse economic activities. A qualitative research approach was employed, involving semi-structured interviews with local traders, market participants, and government officials. Data collection took place through focus group discussions and document analysis in key border regions of Equatorial Guinea. Traders reported a significant proportion (60%) of their business involves informal cross-border trade, primarily focusing on agricultural products and manufactured goods. The study identified challenges such as inadequate infrastructure and inconsistent regulatory frameworks as major impediments to regional integration. The findings highlight the importance of addressing these challenges through collaborative efforts between governments and local communities to facilitate a more seamless regional market environment. Policy recommendations include strengthening border control mechanisms, improving infrastructure connectivity, and enhancing cross-border trade regulations. Additionally, fostering greater awareness among traders about regional integration benefits could reduce transaction costs and enhance economic collaboration. Informal Cross-Border Trade, ECOWAS, Equatorial Guinea, Regional Integration, Qualitative Study

**Keywords:** *Cross-Border, Integration, Informal Economy, Small-Scale Trade, Regionalism, Qualitative Research, Sub-Saharan Africa*

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