

GIZ Gender Competition 2024

Project: Alliances for Trade Facilitation (A4TF)

Project Activity: Sensitization for Women in Cross Border Trade Ghana

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) entered force in May 2019, since then 54 out of 55 countries have signed the agreement with the goal of a combined market comprising close to 1.3 billion people. The establishment of the AfCFTA offers immense potential for informal cross-border women traders across the continent to expand their business beyond their localities and to formalise their operations. It is reported that 70% of informal cross-border traders in Africa are women¹. Informal cross-border trade (ICBT) is any form of trade conducted across neighbouring border points by unregistered traders². These traders usually bypass border regulatory frameworks and taxes at the borders. Though the volumes of trade carried out by these traders may seem insignificant, it forms the primary source of thousands of livelihoods and support to their families. Many have very little to no formal education, thus, making them susceptible to challenges. These include limited access to information and finance, inadequate infrastructure, unfair treatment, sexual harassment, and restrictive trade policies that limit their potential for success. Recognising this, a protocol on Women and Youth is considered under Phase 3 negotiations of the AfCFTA Agreement.

In line with the World Trade Organization's Joint Declaration on Women's Economic Empowerment, the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MoTI) in Ghana with the support of the World Bank Group and Trade Facilitation West Africa established a Trade and Gender Subcommittee under Ghana's National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) in 2021. The Trade and Gender Subcommittee was established to promote inclusive and gender-sensitive trade policies through addressing gender disparities in the formulation and execution of trade policies, particularly those pertaining to trade facilitation measures. The Subcommittee is mandated to ensure the demands and challenges of women which includes their protection at the borders are considered in policy making. Women traders should be able to trade without fear or intimidation and herewith exploit new market opportunities.

MoTI through the Trade and Gender Subcommittee and development partners including GIZ through the programme "Alliances for Trade Facilitation" (A4TF) set out on the project activity "*Sensitisation for Women in Cross-border Trade*".

From the terms of reference establishing the NTFC Trade and Gender Subcommittee, the focus for the partnership for the project activity was:

a. Consult women traders and groups representing women across the trading ecosystem and relay concerns or recommendations to larger NTFC members to identify Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) and propose solutions to facilitate cross-border trade for women.

¹ [Empowering Women in Trade | UN Women – Africa](#)

² [Informal cross-border trade for empowerment of women, economic development and regional integration in Eastern and Southern Africa | UNCTAD](#)

- b. Sensitize women cross border traders on issues affecting their sector of operation.
- c. Identify men in the trade ecosystem who can act as gender champions (He for She).

The A4TF project recognises the importance of women in the overall trading environment and developed different strategies to identify and address challenges that women-traders face. Among others the global project has developed Gender Guidelines to ensure that all trade facilitation projects under A4TF are gender sensitive and follow the do not harm principle. Concrete activities to support female cross-border traders were for example conducted in Ghana in close collaboration with its NTFC Trade and Gender Subcommittee, structured into 3 phases.

Phase 1: Sensitisation of Women Cross-border Traders

The project activity started with a sensitisation of cross-border women traders on their rights, processes at the border posts and trade opportunities under the AfCFTA. Women traders through the Ghana Union Traders Association (GUTA) were mobilised in 3 regional capitals. The sensitisation offered a platform for dialogue where over 300 women from different locations were engaged and the views of women at the borders were sought to support Ghana's position during the negotiations on the AfCFTA Protocol on Women and Youth. Among these were traders in household products, cosmetics, and foodstuff. The participant [experience](#) highlighted the success of this.



Figure 1: Participant contributing to dialogue



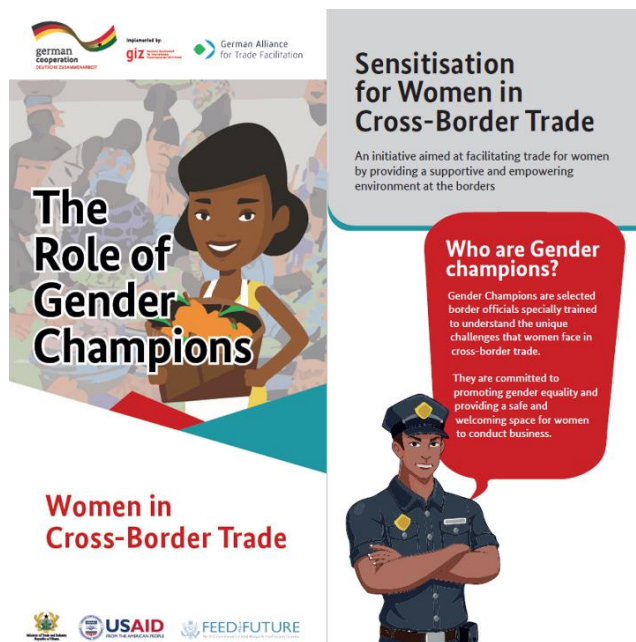
Figure 2: A section of participants from one of the sessions

Phase 2: Sensitisation of Border Officials and Identification of Gender Champions

On conclusion of Phase 1 and the identification of the concerns of the women traders, it became necessary to engage border officials in selected border posts to ensure they are made aware of women's unique needs and vulnerabilities at borders and in trade. This is because these women traders daily encounter border officials who are present to enforce the security and integrity of cross-border trade and travel at the borders. However, apart from their enforcement responsibilities, their role in promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment is often overlooked.

In view of this, 6 busy border points were earmarked for the sensitisation. Attention was given to borders with increased foot traffic compared to other less busy border points. A total of about 70 border officials were sensitised on gender and the importance of Women's Economic Empowerment. During the sessions, the officers were also given the

opportunity to nominate themselves to be Gender Champions who will be advocates for women at the border posts. A total of 20 officers (10 men and 10 women) opted for the role.



A brochure was designed and circulated among the border communities during the engagements. This provided succinct information on why and how to help the women in ICBT, and some information on Gender Champions and their role at the borders.

Overall, the sensitisation was successful and further revealed other systemic issues which the team was unaware of. For instance, how some women traders purposefully take advantage of their gender to cut corners and to intimidate the officers when caught. Again, how some traders use their influences with local traditional rulers to circumvent the law.

Later, 13 out of the 20 nominated Gender Champions received further training on handling issues at the border posts. These officers were equipped to understand gender, how to address and to be sensitive to issues of women at the border posts and to understand the effect of their roles as law enforcement on women traders at the borders.



Figure 3: A section of border officials at Tumu, Upper West Region.



Figure 4: Gender Champions training in Wa.

Phase 3: Cross-border traders and Border Officials dialogue

This is currently planned and under this phase, the project aims at finding solutions to extended misunderstandings through dialogue by bringing both groups of stakeholders (trader association representatives and border officials) together to:

- i. Address challenges that have been identified from prior engagements with both groups.
- ii. Identify a roadmap to ensure women are protected.

- iii. Showcase the gender champions at the various borders and highlight the ways they can support the women at the borders.
- iv. Solicit the support of the border agencies in the protection of women and in the operation of Gender Champions at the border posts.

Impact

The short-term benefit has been to ensure selected women cross-border traders have the capacities to handle their own border declarations while reducing the engagement of middlemen. Hiring middlemen results in increased transactional costs for the women traders and further delays at the borders. Also, that these traders understood the importance of compliance at the borders by paying the required duties and avoid smuggling of goods at the borders.

By equipping the Gender champions with the required training to carry out their duties, we expect the officers in the medium term to create a more gender sensitive border environment in these 6 locations. They will further disseminate the knowledge and skills acquired and to also build awareness among their colleagues. Also, the agencies from which the Gender Champions have been identified will identify the need to have advocates at other border posts to protect women in ICBT.

In the long-term, the project aims to increase visibility of the border champions through graphics/visuals, locally translated posters at the borders and to collate data from the officers for planning of further relevant interventions at their border posts for women

Cooperation and Outreach

Through MoTI and the Gender Subcommittee, the GIZ Global Programme “Alliances for Trade Facilitation” in Ghana collaborated on this project with the World Bank, USAID supported the Feed the Future Ghana Trade and Investment Activity, the Ghana Shippers Authority, the Ghana Revenue Authority Customs Division, other border regulatory authorities and GUTA. The key takeaways from Ghana were shared in the “Central Asian Networking and Leadership Conference for Women in Trade” organized by the Trade Facilitation Project in Central Asia. Besides, jointly with the Central Asian project a virtual roundtable was organized to raise awareness on the challenges faced by women in cross-border trade in Central Asia and Ghana throughout the GIZ. The aim was to highlight the importance of gender mainstreaming in trade facilitation agreements and policy-level work and discuss practical solutions for addressing main challenges in international development cooperation work.

Related Links

- Video about the trader Ms. Adobah and her experience from the event “Women in Cross-Border Trade” : [Click here](#)
- News about the event series “Women in Cross-Border Trade”: [Click here](#)
- News about the joint Gender Roundtable: [Click here](#)
- Topic Page on Gender: [Click here](#)