

Regional Trade Facilitation Project Supporting Small-Scale Traders Closes



Participants in the regional coordination committee meeting

The Great Lakes Trade Facilitation Project (GLTFP) launched five-years ago to deepen small-scale cross-border trade in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda with a special focus on women and young people has closed on a high note and paved the way for increased intra-trade in the region.

Financially backed by the World Bank, the GLTFP was launched in 2016 with USD\$26 million meant to help increase the capacity for commerce and reduce the costs faced by traders, especially small-scale and women traders, at targeted locations in the borderlands.

Initially set to cover 2016-2020, the project got a one year no cost extension which ended on 31 December 2021. During its lifespan, the GLTFP supported improvements to infrastructure and facilities at priority border posts in the named countries. These border posts were identified and proposed by the authorities based on traffic volumes, importance to supply chains of goods traded most across the borders, relevance to conflict dynamics in the region and the poor state of infrastructure to support cross-border trade.

The border points also had security of small-scale traders improved, particularly through separate or demarcated lanes for safe passage of pedestrian traffic, lighting and cameras, and providing warehousing for traders to safely store their goods and minimize losses in their supply chains.

In addition, support had been provided to redesign access roads in the control zones and to provide parking facilities for vehicles as well as strengthening IT infrastructure and connectivity for customs and other agencies' management and processing systems (including cross-border connectivity).

To wrap up the project, the project's Regional Coordination Committee, trade experts from COMESA Secretariat and customs authorities held a four-day meeting in December 2021 in Goma, DRC to discuss strategic issues on implementation of the project.

The delegates were informed that the GLTFP has realized several important achievements including the launch of Joint Border Committees at all the 12 project borders and trained members in various aspects of border management.

The project also supported bilateral meetings to deal with outstanding issues that impact on the Simplified Trade Regime (STR).

Speaking during the meeting in Goma, Senior Research Fellow at COMESA Secretariat Mr Benedict Musengele thanked the World Bank for its support to the project and commended the Member States for their dedication and commitment to improve small-scale cross border trade.

He also raised the issue of continuation of the project after closure.

"As you are aware, sustainability will be best addressed when the project beneficiaries themselves take lead in implementing the recommended measures. Therefore, inputs and support from project countries and relevant stakeholders will be critical for success in addressing this matter."

The meeting also discussed the STR and the new trading model adopted by small-scale cross-border traders in which they are consolidating goods rather than trading as individuals. This approach was necessitated after the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Border Profiling Survey Planned to Enhance Collection of Data

The COMESA Secretariat through the Statistics Unit is planning to conduct a Border Profiling Survey which is expected to add value to the understanding of the border trading environment as it affects small-scale cross-border traders. The survey is planned for the first quarter of 2022.

To kickstart the process, a draft questionnaire suited to borders such as Nakonde between Zambia and Tanzania and Kasumbalesa between Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been developed and discussed with the Zambia Statistics Agency.

A report from the Statistics Unit states that the Chief Statistician at COMESA Secretariat Mr. Themba Munalula recently led a team on a scoping mission for the profiling survey to selected borders in Zambia.

The objective of the mission was to better understand the border environment so that an appropriate survey design could be implemented and to collect information that would be useful in informing the sample size, budget and other logistics needed for the exercise.

The COMESA Secretariat with funding from the European Union has been implementing a Small-Scale Cross Border Trade Initiative (SSCBTI) project since May 2018 at 10 target borders in seven Member States in the tripartite region. This development recently helped the Secretariat to publish gender-disaggregated data which is vital. The systematic collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination of gender disaggregated statistical data on SSCBT is one of the key thematic areas of intervention of the project.

The gender-disaggregated SSCBT data is available on the COMSTAT data portal (<http://comstat.comesa.int>).

EU Supports Construction of Market at Tunduma Border Post



File: Tunduma Border

The European Union through the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) working with COMESA Secretariat and the Government of Tanzania will soon construct a market at the Tunduma One Stop Border Post to enhance cross-border trade.

This infrastructure development is part of the 15 million Euros Cross Border Trade Initiative Programme aimed at increasing formal small-scale cross-border trade flows in the COMESA/tripartite region, leading to higher revenue collection for governments at the borders as well as increased security and higher incomes for small-scale cross-border traders.

“There is high anticipation among the community and the construction of this market is expected to transform the livelihoods of the people of Tunduma as well as boost the country’s economy,” Mr Magesa.

The programme also covers implementation of the design and implementation of policy and instruments aimed at facilitating small scale cross border trade, reducing corruption, bribery and harassment at the borders, building the capacity of institutions representing small cross border traders and better data collection and monitoring for small scale cross border trade.

Recently, the Infrastructure Expert at COMESA Secretariat Engineer Moreblessing Loxton conducted a factfinding mission to Tunduma Border to physically inspect and assess the land identified for the market, confirm the findings and recommendations from the feasibility study and develop an implementation plan.

During the mission, the team visited the site for the construction and recommended that the design layout of the market be revised to increase the number of trading spaces from 400 to 700 to accommodate the traders. In view of the global agenda on climate change, the team also proposed that the design of the border market should include the use of sustainable energy such as solar power, recycling of waste including ablution waste, kitchen waste and digestible agriculture among others.

Authorities from the Tunduma Town Council (Mr Philimon Magesa) and Tanzania Revenue Authority (Mr John Micah) both described the market as important and a welcome development to the community in Tunduma.

“There is high anticipation among the community and the construction of this market is expected to transform the livelihoods of the people of Tunduma as well as boost the country’s economy,” Mr Magesa said.



COMESA Conducts Regional Dialogue on Enhancing Fish Trade



Participants in the regional dialogue on fish

COMESA Secretariat through the Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme (RECAMP), is working on strategies to improve and strengthen participation of COMESA's SMEs involved in fisheries and fish product value chains in the regional and international markets. This will be done through sustained supplies, improved trade efficiencies, enhanced value chains and quality of products.

To actualize this, the Secretariat conducted a regional dialogue meeting in December 2021 on enhancing the participation of fisheries producers in sustainable regional and global value chains from the private sector small and medium scale group.

Specifically, the regional dialogue was meant to strengthen the capacity of producers, producer organizations and other value chain actors to enhance competitiveness, value addition and market access, identify major challenges and agree on the way forward to support small and medium scale fish producers to improve their competitiveness and market access.

The delegates also agreed on the importance of establishing intra-regional fish supply chains

and link small and medium scale fish producers especially women, youth and the vulnerable groups of the society to regional and international markets.

Participants from the public and private sector made presentations and further discussed that women do participate in all parts of fish food systems but are most visible in post-harvest processing and trade of fish and are vital to the region's food and nutrition security. They indicated that the effects of COVID-19 pandemic and accompanying responses had resulted in substantial disruptions to demand, production, distribution and labour in fisheries, aquaculture and food systems. These disruptions have severely impacted women processors and traders.

RECAMP is funded under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) and is focusing on enhancing the competitiveness and market access for three target value chains which include horticulture, agro processing and leather and leather products.

Speaking at the meeting, Kenya's Principal Secretary in the State Department for Fisheries, Aquaculture and Blue Economy Dr Francis Owino

and the Director of Industry and Agriculture at COMESA Mrs. Providence Mavubi indicated the importance of fisheries and aquaculture in ensuring a consistent supply of animal protein in the form of fish and fish products. They called for the stepping up of efforts to promote domestic and regional trade, by enhancing competitiveness of products, facilitation/smoothing of cross border trade as well as ensuring wider participation and empowerment of women in the fish trade sector across the region.

The workshop had participation of both the public and private sector from Burundi, Comoros, Kenya, Mauritius, Madagascar, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, and Uganda who included public officers and non-state actors. Further participation was enhanced by regional and continental bodies which included AU-IBAR, EAC, ECOFISH-IOC, and IGAD.

Under the EDF COMESA RECAMP, it is expected that other dialogues on the other two focus value chains; Leather and Leather Products and Horticulture will be held in 2022 to further support the competitiveness and improved business environment and access to markets in all the Member States.



We are Back!

This is to notify all Member States, Stakeholders, Partners and the general public that the COMESA Secretariat has opened today Monday 10 January 2022 after having a three week break.

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