



PRO-FEMMES / TWESE HAMWE



RWANDA

STRENGTHENING THE ECONOMIC POWER OF WOMEN IN THE INFORMAL CROSS BORDER TRADE SECTOR WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION.

Position Paper, December 2017



**TRADE
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11.11.11

UN COMBAT DE PLEINS DROITS

About Pro-Femmes/Twese Hamwe

Pro-Femmes / Twese Hamwe (PFTH) is a Rwandan civil society umbrella organization for 53 member organizations in existence for more than 25 years now aimed at women's empowerment, peace building, gender equality promotion and development.

Pro-Femmes /Twese Hamwe envisions a peaceful and stable Rwandan society free from all forms of gender discrimination characterized by gender equality and equity in the development process.

The umbrella aims at contributing to the improvement of the socio-economic status of women, promoting the culture of peace for sustainable development through coordination and capacity building of member organizations.

SUMMARY

This advocacy paper presents evidence based recommendations by civil society organisations, private sector and cross border traders in East African community and Great Lakes region on improving the working environment of small scale cross borders traders, taking into consideration gender aspects and regional integration opportunities.

The paper aims at advocating for more dedicated efforts by governments of the region to facilitate small scale informal cross border traders especially women who import/export goods of commercial nature originating from East Africa states, and address a number of challenges including limited access to finance, inactive joint border committees, limited information on taxes and tax exemption, Inconsistent and non-harmonised national laws and policies with regional instruments including simplified trade regimes, mistreatment



and harassment of women cross border traders, Limited access to information and clarity on policies and updated guidelines and lack of proper coordination of existing efforts among different stakeholders among others.

The proposed recommendations presented by this position paper addressed to specific institutions offer guide in addressing persisting challenges to ensure promotion of economic power of women in the informal cross border trade sector within the framework of regional integration thus enhancing a regional integration that permits equally women and men of border communities to fight against poverty and contribute to sustainable economic development.

BACKGROUND

Since 2012, Pro-Femmes/Twese Hamwe, a Rwanda based national civil society umbrella organization for civil society organizations working to advance Gender equality and equity throughout the development process, is implementing a project funded by Trademark East Africa that aims at “Strengthening the Economic Power of Women in the Informal Cross Border Trade Sector within the Framework of regional integration”. In addition, since 2017, Pro-Femmes is also implementing a project funded by 11.11.11 CNCD on building capacity of women engaged in informal cross-border trade in the Great Lakes region with aim of promoting women’s civic, political and economic power.

Both projects have objective to contribute to gender responsive working environment for small scale cross border traders especially women and girls involved in this trade. Numerous studies highlight that border economies, especially in Africa, benefit much from cross border trade in the sense that it

contributes to food security, provides employment and allows millions of people to have access to goods and services unavailable in their own countries at cheaper prices. In a 2011 World Bank report, it is noted that Small Cross Border Trade (SCBT) has a more direct impact to poor households than large scale trade.

Despite significant progress towards effective regional integration and other relevant trade facilitation mechanisms, cross border trade remains highly under developed. In Rwanda but also generally in the region, the majority (74%) of cross border traders are women and it is estimated that 90% of these women traders rely on CBT as their only source of income.

Member states of East African Community and COMESA regions have made a strong political commitment to gender equity and equality even in trade agreements. Effective and sustainable integration is achievable with meaningful and steadfast participation of all stakeholders.

It is against this background that a regional advocacy meeting was held on 27th November 2017 in Kigali, Rwanda. The meeting gathered more than 60 people from key government Ministries and institutions of Rwanda and its neighbouring countries (Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi and DRC) whose mandate relate to cross border trade, civil society organizations in the 5 countries and representatives of cross border traders.



The objective of the meeting was to share and discuss key issues affecting cross border trade, Share progress on implementation of key regional commitments to regional trade and adopt key recommendations for improvement of cross border trade.

The recommendations to issues identified and validated during this meeting seek to address both the persisting challenges affecting cross border trade and highlighted gaps in national and regional policies and laws.

ISSUES IDENTIFIED, RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSIBLE STAKEHOLDERS

Small cross border trade especially that done by women is aligned with Rwanda's commitment to the achievement of gender equality as well as the empowerment of women as defined in vision 2020 and EDPRS. Gender equality is a cross cutting issue in the National cross border trade strategy which needs to be integrated in all sectoral policies and strategies because men and women experience the processes of development and the impact of policies in different ways.

The table below summarizes the key issues identified and validated, recommendations for addressing them and proposed responsible stakeholders to lead the implementation of the recommendations:

No	Issue	Recommendation	Stakeholders Responsible
1	Limited access to Finance, and capital, high bank interest rates, high valued collateral	<p>Create one permanent and sustained collateral support Fund with special emphasis on supporting women in cross border trade.</p> <p>Revise burdensome conditions required to access finance by financial institutions including high interest rates and high valued collateral.</p> <p>Develop and implement financial literacy education programs for women cross border traders</p>	Ministry of trade and industry, National Bank, other financial institutions including SACCOs/BDF
2	Inactive joint border committees (JBCs)	Invest in operationalization of joint border committees at all borders of Rwanda and neighboring countries	MINICOM, Border managers in charge of all Joint Border Committees, Emigration & Immigration, and security bodies (Army & Police).

2	Inactive joint border committees (JBCs)	<p>Ensure effective participation of women cross border traders on Joint border committees by having representatives on the committee</p> <p>Develop monitoring, evaluation and reporting system for Joint border committee meetings</p> <p>Establish a swift response mechanism for issues reported from JBCs</p>	MINICOM, Border managers in charge of all Joint Border Committees, Emigration & Immigration, and security bodies (Army & Police).
3	Limited awareness on taxes and duties, tax exemption and Challenge of informal fines	<p>Introduce progressive taxation system to ensure low taxes for small traders</p> <p>Ensure sustained capacity building and sensation programme for Cross border traders on taxation policies and types of taxes and duties</p> <p>Set up special/separate counter for small cross border traders (Guichet unique) for tax clearance at all borders</p> <p>Post updated list of custom duties exempt goods at all borders</p>	MINICOM and RRA (customs Departments), Emigration& Immigration Office
4	Inconsistent and non-harmonised national laws and policies with regional instruments including simplified trade regimes	<p>Develop and disseminate harmonized guidelines for member states on implementation of STRs</p> <p>Member states harmonize national trade laws and policies and align them to EAC&COMESA agreements</p> <p>Establish regional and national levels monitoring and evaluation of implementation and reporting of STRs,</p> <p>Ensure all small cross border traders are beneficiaries not only cooperatives/Associations.</p>	MINICOM, EAC&COMESA Rwandan Parliament Ministry of trade industry, RRA, Migration, Joint Boarder Committees and other stakeholders
5	Corruption, mistreatment, border environment, and harassment to women cross border traders	<p>Enforce anti-corruption laws and ensure punishment of corrupt border officials</p> <p>Increase number of border staff and ensure body search for women traders is done respectfully, in appropriate facilities and by female staff</p> <p>Ensure border infrastructures are Gender responsive including having separate female bathrooms/ Toilets, enough lighting, and nursing rooms</p>	MINICOM, Migration, RRA, Security agencies, MIGEPROF and all stakeholders

5	Corruption, mistreatment, border environment, and harassment to women cross border traders	<p>Harmonize and increase border working hours for 5 all EAC&COMESA countries.</p> <p>Enhance harmonization of the issuance of Jetton (Time of issuance and distance).</p> <p>Increase border community coverage using border passes from 15km to 50 km</p> <p>Establish and reinforce reporting of Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) using simple mobile technology.</p>	MINICOM, Migration, RRA, Security agencies, MIGEPROF and all stakeholders
6	Limited capacity and Access to information	<p>Develop and implement a harmonized capacity building program for both small cross border traders and border officials</p> <p>Post on borders and use media to share updated information on cross border guidelines, restrictions, policies and any other information in local languages</p> <p>Equip and strengthen Trade Information Desks and officers (TIDOs) at all borders</p>	MINICOM, RRA, Migration and other stakeholders operating at the borders
7	Poor coordination of existing Cross Border Trade promotion efforts	<p>Expand mandate and strengthen capacity and work done by cross border trade unit in MINICOM</p> <p>Ensure regular coordination meetings among all stakeholders including CSOs implementing activities on cross border trade and cross border trade representatives</p> <p>Ensure inclusion of CSOs and cross border trade representatives on NTB committees</p>	MINICOM and stakeholders



CONCLUSION

Improved cross border trade is indeed capable of having more direct impact to poor households than large scale trade if efforts to support and develop the trade are increased and targeted. Improved cross border trade and gender sensitive border environment are capable of reducing extreme feminized poverty that women of border communities of most countries in the region continue to face.

Pro-Femmes/Twese Hamwe is highly committed to continuously partner with Government of Rwanda, key stakeholders and other regional bodies to continue working for enhancement of regional integration that permits women and men of border communities to fight against poverty and contribute to sustainable economic development.

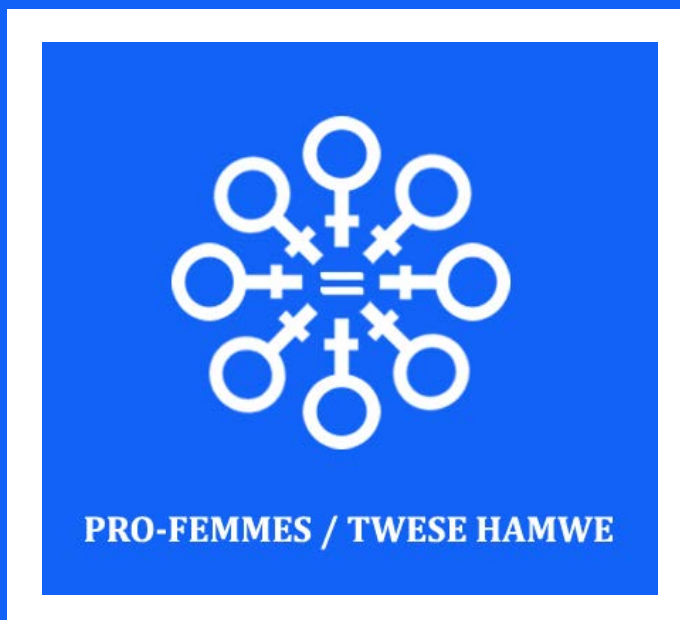
CONTRIBUTE TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF PRO-FEMMES/TWESE HAMWE'S CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FOR WOMEN LEADERSHIP

Since 2010, Pro-Femmes /Twese Hamwe has embarked on a bigger dream of building a multi-purpose Center of Excellence for Women Leadership that will not only serve Rwandans but also the region and beyond to preserve her dignity and self-reliance.

The construction of the Center of Excellence for Women Leadership that commenced in 2015 in Kicukiro District, Kigali City, aims at ensuring sustainability for programs, generate resources and serve as a learning center for the country, the region and beyond.



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