

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

UNCTAD



**Cross-border Trade
in the Pre- and
Post-Pandemic
Environment**
Evidence from
Malawi, the United
Republic of Tanzania
and Zambia



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UNITED NATIONS
Geneva, 2022

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This publication has been edited externally.

United Nations publication issued by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

UNCTAD/DITC/2021/3

eISBN: 978-92-1-001336-9

ABBREVIATIONS

CBTA	Cross-border trade association
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
EAC	Eastern and Southern African Community
MSMEs	Micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises
PACRA	Patent and Company Registration Agency (Zambia)
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
STR	Simplified Trade Regime
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report was prepared by UNCTAD's Trade, Gender and Development Programme. It provides an overview of the results of an impact assessment of capacity-building activities conducted by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Malawi, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia aimed at small-scale and informal cross-border traders, mainly women. Interventions were carried out as part of two projects: the Development Account project "Informal Cross-border Trade for the Empowerment of Women, Economic Development, and Regional Integration in Southern and Eastern Africa", implemented during 2016-2019, and the Development Account project "Global Initiative towards post-Covid-19 Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises sector", implemented during 2020-2021.

The assessment refers specifically to the capacity-building activities carried out in November-December 2019 and February 2021 at selected border posts. It

is based on the findings of interviews conducted with former training participants, and an online survey of government officials and representatives of cross-border trade associations (CBTAs) who were involved in the planning and delivery of UNCTAD training programme. To complement the analysis and findings of the impact assessment, the report also relies on previous analytical work carried out by UNCTAD since the inception of the activities in 2016. By analysing the information collected from different categories of stakeholders, the report presents an original picture of informal and small-scale cross-border trade in the pre-and post-pandemic environment.

The next section provides an overview of UNCTAD's capacity-building activities on cross-border trade carried out during 2016-2021. Section 3 then presents the results of the impact assessment. Section 4 presents four case studies illustrating the impact of training activities on women cross-border traders.

2. OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND: UNCTAD TRAINING ACTIVITIES

During 2016–2019, the UNCTAD Trade, Gender and Development Programme, Division on International Trade and Commodities implemented the project entitled “Informal Cross-border Trade for the Empowerment of Women, Economic Development, and Regional Integration in Southern and Eastern Africa.” The project was comprised of a range of activities, including training workshops, research, policy dialogues, surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions with stakeholders.¹ Since this assessment relates only to capacity-building, the report will focus on those activities.

Between 11 November and 2 December 2019, five training workshops for small-scale and informal cross-border traders, especially women, were conducted at three border posts: Mwami/Mchinji (Zambia-Malawi), Nakonde/Tunduma (the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia) and Songwe/Kasumulu (Malawi and United Republic of Tanzania). A total of 151 trainees participated in the activities.

Each training workshop lasted six days and was divided into two components. The first dealt with trade rules, customs procedures and traders’ rights and obligations; the second focused on developing/strengthening entrepreneurship skills based on the EMPRETEC methodology developed by UNCTAD.²

The main objectives of the UNCTAD training programme were to:

- Familiarize traders with trade rules and customs procedures applied at the borders, and with their rights and obligations when crossing the borders

- Build or strengthen traders’ entrepreneurship skills in areas such as detecting business opportunities, setting goals for their businesses, improving the efficiency and quality of their activities, etc.
- Introduce traders to the process and benefits of formalizing their businesses.

UNCTAD developed three country-specific guides tailored to Malawi, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia to provide detailed and practical information to traders about the requirements to cross the border.³ The guides were the basis for the first component of training activities. The EMPRETEC manual for low-literacy entrepreneurs was used for the second component.

In response to the pandemic and its devastating impact on micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), a broad United Nations inter-agency project was launched in 2020 under the title “Global Initiative towards post-Covid-19 Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises sector.” The project’s objectives were to strengthen the resilience of MSMEs, mitigate the economic and social impact of the global COVID-19 crisis, and strengthen the contribution of MSMEs to implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The UNCTAD Trade, Gender and Development Programme was responsible for the trade and gender component of the project. Its interventions replicated the training activities for informal and small-scale cross-border traders carried out in 2019. More specifically, four training workshops were held from 1 to 15 February 2021 at the Mwami/Mchinji, Nakonde/Tunduma

¹ Under the analytical component, a study was published in February 2019 examining the characteristics of cross-border trade

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