



FRONTIÈRES ET INTÉGRATIONS EN AFRIQUE DE L'OUEST
WEST AFRICAN BORDERS AND INTEGRATION

CROSS-BORDER DIARIES

BULLETIN ON WEST AFRICAN LOCAL-REGIONAL REALITIES
With the support of the Sahel and West Africa Club

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K like **Kano** +
K like **Katsina** +
M like **Maradi** =

• K2M

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HOME OF HOSPITALITY

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Responsible : Marie Trémolières
SWAC-OECD
2 rue A. Pascal
75116 Paris-France
marie.tremolieres@oecd.org

Editor : Guy-Michel Bolouvi
Sud Communication (Sud-Com Niger)
BP 12952 Niamey-Niger
T: +227 96 98 20 50
F: +227 20 75 50 92
mboluvi@yahoo.fr

With contributions by
Guy-Michel Bolouvi, Marie Trémolières,
Philipp Heinrigs, Ahmed Imam, Hassane Baka,
Yamina Cherrou, Olivier Lefay, Gafar Ajao.

Translation
Leslie Diamond
Printing OECD

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Dear Readers,

Once is not always. Following the habitual wandering of our chroniclers along the African borders, this issue makes one stop in the States of Northern Nigeria and Southern Niger. Thanks to the combined efforts of populations, policies and donors, the ECOWAS Cross-border Initiatives Programme is gaining ground. This special issue financed by the European Delegation of the European Commission based in Niamey focuses on the implementation of three coordination platforms for improved movement of capital, populations and commercial trade.

This area, with its great dynamic of flows, is described through its human, economic and security dimensions.

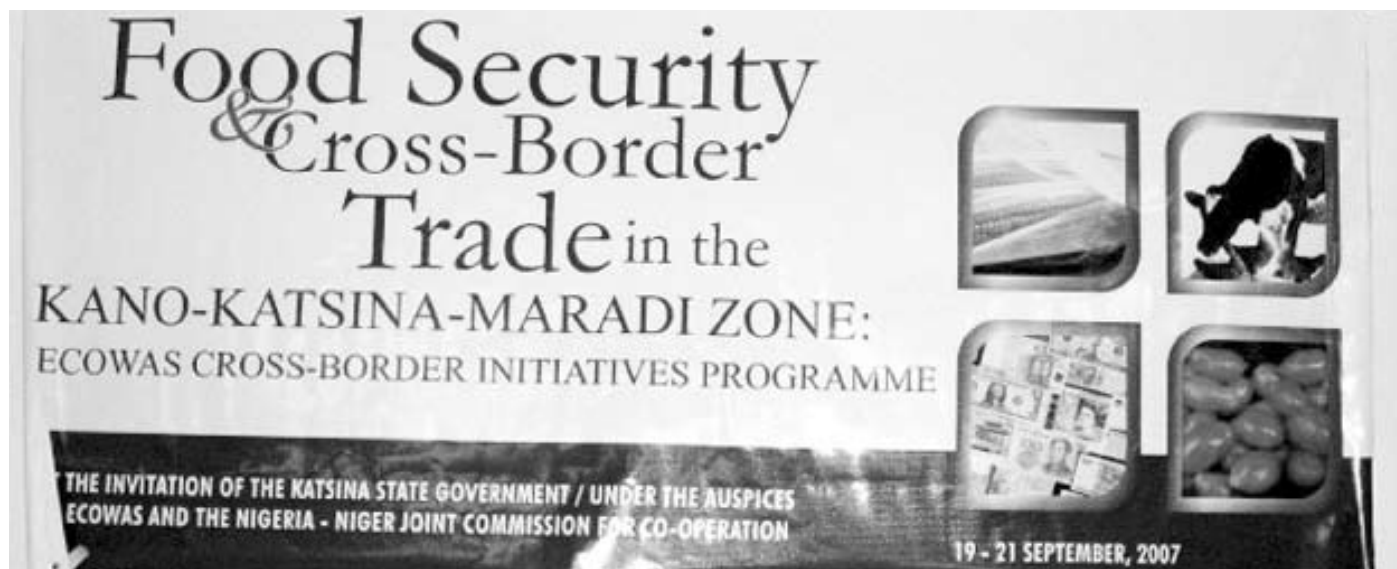
Enjoy the issue!

The editors



Kano - Katsina - Maradi
Cross-border Cooperation Initiative

The ECOWAS Cross-border Initiatives Programme (CIP) launches a new initiative



In September 2007, the CIP launched its 4th initiative this time involving Nigeria and Niger. Before Kano-Katsina-Maradi area were the pilot operations in the Sikasso-Korhogo-Bobo Dioulasso zone, Sénégalie méridionale and the Karakoro Basin.

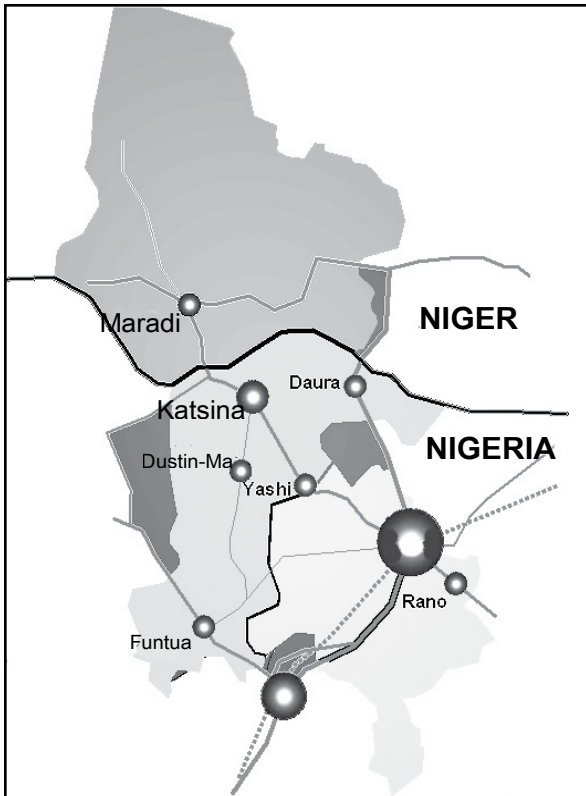
The CIP continues to evolve. Providing support, Heads of State at the ECOWAS Heads of State Conference, held in Accra on 15 June 2007, adopted the strategic objective “to transform West African into a border-less area enabling the region to transform by 2020 to an ECOWAS of the people”.

In the same vein, the ECOWAS Commission 2007-2010 Strategic Plan anticipates the outcomes: “Borders will be secure and fluid, numerous cross-border cooperation initiatives among border populations will be implemented”. The CIP is the operational tool.

The launching of a Niger/Nigeria initiative is additional proof of the possible vitality of cross-border cooperation in West Africa. It also provides an opportunity for the Border Diaries to further explore the CIP.

With regard to the major topic of food security management, one of the most intense West African trade corridors, the cross-border corridor from Kano in Northern Nigeria to Maradi in Southern Niger passing through Katsina (Northern Nigeria), has been included in the cross-border integration process implemented by the CIP.

The idea of an ECOWAS CIP was brewing since the beginning of 2000 even though it did not officially begin until the end of 2004 with the proclamation of the ECOWAS Executive Secretary.



Dioulasso (Burkina Faso) called the “SKBo zone”; the “Sénégal méridionale” zone between the Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Senegal; the “GreatLake” or “Karakoro Basin” zone between Mali and Mauritania.

Under the supervision of ECOWAS and the Niger-Nigeria Joint Commission for Cooperation (NNJCC), Katsina, Capital of the Katsina State in Northern Nigeria, adjoining the Maradi region in Southern Niger, hosted the workshop, held from 19 to 21 September 2007, launching this cross-border initiative.

This workshop, co-organised by the Sahel and West Africa Club (SWAC) and FewNet/USAID with the financial support of the European Union Delegation in Niamey and

Jointly opened by the Nigerian Minister of the Interior, H.E. Godwin O. Abbe, and the Governor of the Katsina State, H.E. Barrister Ibrahim Shema, represented by the Vice-Governor H.E. Barrister Sirajo Umar Damari, participants in the workshop were able to draw up elements of a cross-border initiative focusing on the issues of food security and cross-border trade.

These elements were presented via three platforms and a “communications” programme:

- Information on food crop markets
- Cross-border movement of goods
- Cross-border movement of capital
- Improvement of circulation of information through the setting up of a radio stations network.

The first two-year implementation phase of the initiative will fall under the auspices of the Niger-Nigeria Joint Commission for Cooperation (see Border Diaries No. 07, September 2007). The process in this zone also relies on years of field work carried out by the SWAC and ENDA-Diapol.

ECOWAS considers it a tool to facilitate the implementation of locally-driven cross-border cooperation initiatives in all of the West African cross-borders zones.

On 18 January 2005, the CIP was presented in a memorandum to the ECOWAS Council of Foreign Affairs Ministers entitled, “the cross-border areas concept or local integration”. The Council adopted the memorandum and asked the Executive Secretary to expand cross-border cooperation to all of the West African borders.

In February 2005, the Executive Secretary informed Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the launching of the CIP.

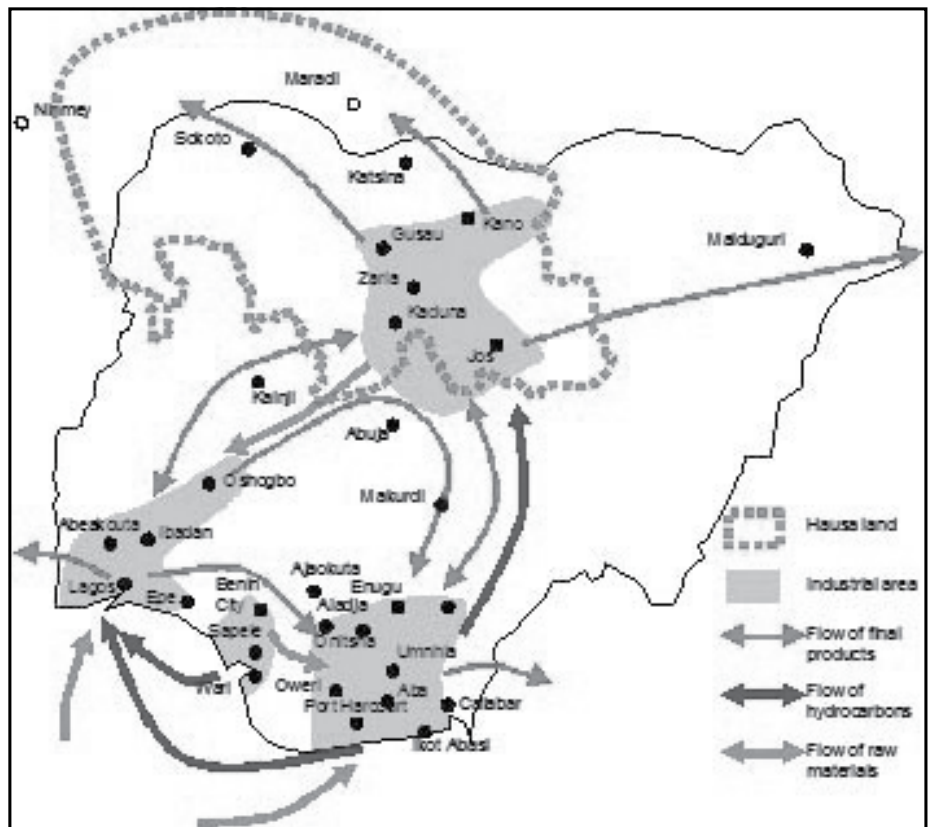
On 9 January 2006 a second memorandum followed entitled, “Assessment and Perspective of the implementation of the Cross-border Initiatives Programme”.

The 2007-2010 Strategic Plan setting out the implementation of a regional strategy in support of cross-border cooperation was approved by member States in June 2007.

Between the announcement in 2004 and the approval of the Strategic Plan in 2007, the CIP tested the waters by relying on realities on ground through three pilot operations:

in the zone shared by Sikasso (Mali), Korhogo (Côte d’Ivoire) and Bobo

the UNDP offices of Niamey and Abuja, brought together concerned representatives of public and private local actors, national entities responsible for borders and food security, governments as well as regional and international organisations.



Kano - Katsina - Maradi

Cross-border Cooperation Initiative

The K²M initiative falls within the macro-regional framework (read: The Need for Cross-border Cooperation in West Africa) as requested by ECOWAS member States, as well as fits in to the specific local framework.

The K²M area is at the heart of “Kasar Hausa” which covers over 83 000 km² with more than 50 million inhabitants between Nigeria and Niger.

The three towns of Kano, Katsina and Maradi make up one of the oldest trade corridors, open centuries to the Gulf of Guinea, North Africa and the Middle-East. Connected by age-old social and cultural links, very densely populated.

And with a compact urban network organised around the urban area of Kano, this area illustrates Nigeria’s influence on Niger’s economy along the 1 500 km common border. Commercial trade is intense: cattle from Niger, Nigerian cereals and manufactured products or indeed re-exported products to Nigeria.

Situations of severe food insecurity were observed in Niger during the 2005 lean season.

As a result, a joint field mission was carried out in May 2006 and strategic thinking was undertaken by the CILSS, FEWS NET, OCHA, SWAC, UNDP, UNICEF, WAMIS-Net and WFP and a broader study on Niger-Nigeria-Chad and Cameroon by the CILSS, FEWS NET WFP, and the University of California/Berkeley.



The K²M initiative

This May 2006 Report highlights the potential and issues related to cross-border cooperation initiatives driven and carried out by local actors.

The zone’s circumstances have geared the CIP towards initiatives likely to:

- Contribute to the regional integration process by strengthening solidarities and economic and social cross-border activities;
- Set up systems and integrated, concerted cross-border tools for the free movement of people, goods and capital;

- Establish systems and concerted, integrated cross-border tools to monitor and manage food crises. For this initiative to succeed, at the workshop it was decided to proceed in stages starting off with “Phase 1” which would include:

- Conceiving and implementing, through coordination and consultation, a harmonised food crop market information collection and dissemination system;
- Establishing a mechanism to improve, through concertation, the cross-border movement of goods and capital.

Implementation of Phase 1



Local actors meeting in Katsina in September 2007 asked the Workshop organisers to draft components of a proposal for the implementation of Phase 1.

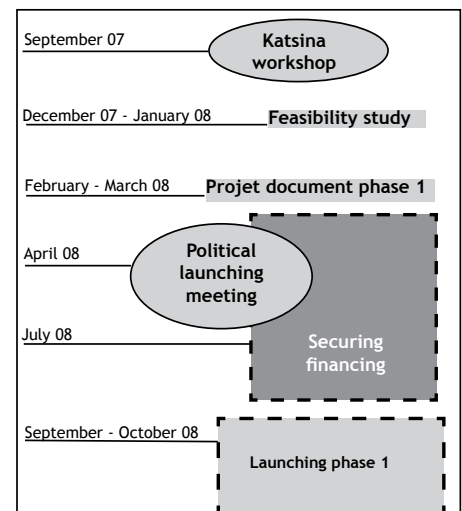
This reference document should:

- Situate the K²M initiative within the overall issue of West African cross-border cooperation;
- Recall the initiative's technical and organisational structure;
- Supplement this structure with implementation proposals and identify outstanding issues;
- Put forward components of a technical, organisational and financial feasibility study of the K²M initiative.

This feasibility study should enable in-depth strategic thinking with local involved actors on all of the initiative's components: in particular governorates, local government services (agriculture, livestock, trade, customs, police, etc.), agricultural producer associations, livestock breeders, merchants, market "managers", bankers, etc.

The draft document should then be submitted to a political meeting, under the auspices of the Niger-Nigeria Joint Commission for Cooperation and ECOWAS, bringing together the governments of Niger and Nigeria as well as representatives of local public and private actors and regional and international organisations.

The outline of the process is:



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General organisation of Phase 1

In order to be effective, cross-border cooperation is defined within the confines of three geographical levels of development and consequently implicates three types of actors.

The implementation of a cross-border cooperation initiative brings together all of these actors within a regional cooperation framework and relies on State political leadership while letting the local level drive the initiative.

These actors, for which cooperation is crucial for the implementation of the CIP in the K²M area, are:



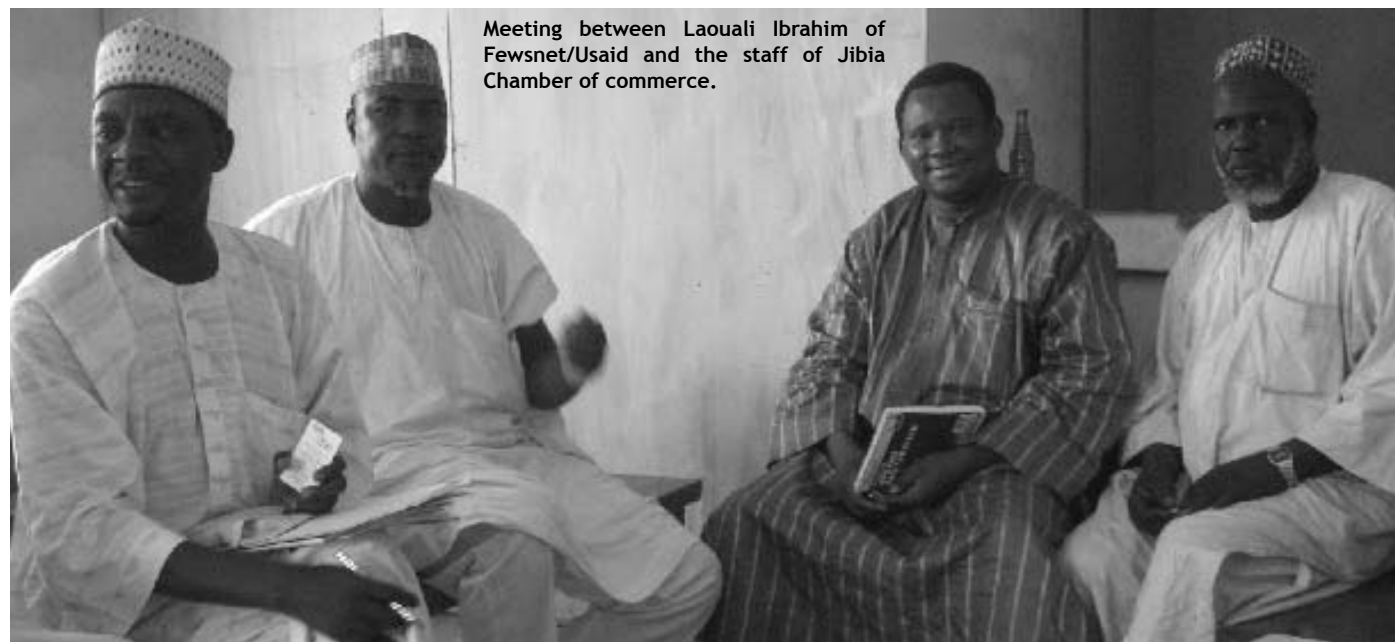
Local actors at Kano Chamber of commerce

• **Local actors:**
The drivers of local initiatives: local State representatives, locally-elected officials and civil society in the broad sense (private operators, associations, etc.).



Meeting at Maradi Chamber of commerce

They should be direct initiators of cross-border cooperation projects, providing proposals and actors for the implementation of these projects.



Meeting between Laouali Ibrahim of Fewsnnet/Usaid and the staff of Jibia Chamber of commerce.



The commission nationale des frontières of Niger

• **National actors:** They are central government representatives which involve ministries responsible for the “National Boundary Commission” of Nigeria, the “Commission nationale des frontières” of Niger as well as services in both countries responsible for food security. In addition to facilitating local initiatives, they should intervene beforehand in order to provide the essential legitimacy to cross-border cooperation. The State is thus at the centre of this mechanism of which it is also the political driver.



National boundary commission



Government of Nigeria



the Niger-Nigeria Joint Commission for Cooperation



CILSS

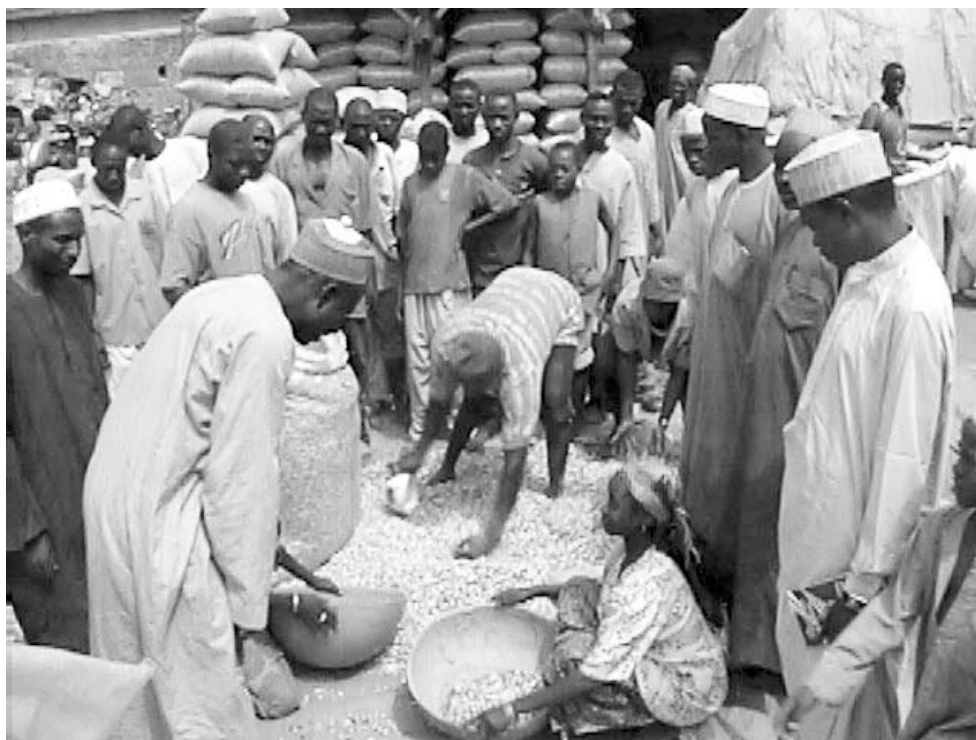


Cross-border cooperation within a local initiative strengthens State legitimacy in regional construction by bringing together populations in the regional integration process encouraged by State actors.



• **Regional, multilateral (ECOWAS as well as the CILSS) and bilateral (the Niger-Nigeria Joint Commission for Cooperation) actors.** These actors are mandated by the States to bring about cooperation and regional integration.

Institutional framework and general organisation



At the Katsina Workshop, it was decided that:

- The K²M initiative is included in the ECOWAS CIP as one of its pilot operations. The ECOWAS Commission's involvement in the "initiative's governance remains to be defined". However, it is not ECOWAS' place to interfere directly in the implementation of field operations whereas it provides political support.

- "The initiative will be implemented under the auspices of the Niger-Nigeria Joint Commission for Cooperation". The NNJCC's legal status and bi-national governance is ideal for heading the K²M initiative steering committee (COIK²M) in which the Commission nationale des frontières of Niger and the National Boundary Commission of Nigeria are represented. The NNJCC thus has a fundamental political role to play.

- Through the three platforms and the "Communications" programme, the initiative

should foster the expression of local public and private actors (producer associations, merchants, transporters, banks, radio stations, civil society associations, etc.)

The involvement of other national, regional and international actors responsible for food security issues is crucial although the modalities of their implication remain to be defined.

It was felt at the Workshop that the platforms must be a space in which to

foster locally (public and private) driven initiatives. This does not exclude the central governments whose presence is essential as a great number of decisions require in-depth dialogue with political and administrative authorities of the Niger and Nigeria Governments.

Regional and international organisations such as the CILSS, FewsNet and Mitsowa are also involved with regard to market information.

Each platform, as a regular dialogue framework, requires actors' cooperation at various levels in order to focus on the CIP's specific objectives in the K²M area.

As the NNJCC oversees the K²M initiative, it must be involved with the work of the three platforms. Communication is essential to the operations' success and the Workshop prevailed in this regard with the proposal of setting up a network of radio stations broadcasting on both sides of the border.●





The Platforms

«Information on food crop markets»

This Platform is expected to:

- Develop proposals aimed at harmonising price, quantity and flow data collection methods; monitor the implementation of a medium-term harmonisation process of such methods.
- Identify / map out designated markets as a common basis for the survey.
- Strengthen operational partnerships among market information systems of Niger and Nigeria.
- Identify the needs of economic operators (producers, merchants, market managers, entrepreneurs, transporters) concerning information on prices

and trade flows as well as public calls for tender procedures for the reconstitution of food security stocks and food crisis management.

- Negotiate an agreement with GSM operators active in Niger and Nigeria aimed at facilitating the circulation of information via portable telephones.

This platform aims to bring “information” producers closer to local operations who are also “consumers” but who are not currently taken into account.

This operational approach could be a motivator to harmonise methods, the shared choice of reference markets, etc.

Identified members of this Platform are

- Managers of the four large markets in the area (Dawanau, Katsina, Jibya, Maradi)
- Merchant/transporter associations related to these markets
- Civil society associations
- Public entities of the Katsina and Kano States and the Maradi Region that are responsible for trade, agriculture, livestock breeding and food security
- Niger and Nigeria government bodies responsible trade, agriculture, lives-

tock breeding and food security including national information systems.

- Regional and international institutions working or wanting to work on the information systems.



«Cross-border movement of goods»

This Platform's work should aim to:

- Define the modalities of establishing a network of the Dawanau, Katsina, Jibya and Maradi markets; to monitor this process which should contribute to simplifying official control mechanisms.
- Lead a permanent dialogue among operators of these four markets (producers, merchants, market managers, entrepreneurs, transporters), of border control officials (Police, customs, health services, etc.) and local political authorities.
- Train economic operators to deal with various types of controls carried out by police, customs officials, veterinary/sanitary services, etc.

This Platform involves, and essentially through consultations over the long-term, the conception and implementation of a standardisation and simplification of the control of goods.

The Katsina workshop illustrated that there were viable working hypotheses: for example, to centralise all of the controls in one market and to affix on the control vehicles a badge or sticker which would enable them to circulate without stopping.

Identified members are:

- Managers of the four large markets in the zone;
- Merchant/transporter associations related to these markets;
- Public entities of Katsina and Kano States and the Maradi Region responsible for security, customs and veterinary/health controls.

Setting up a network of markets is set out as a condition for this Platform's success. The feasibility study shall specify the modalities of training modules for economic operators.

The question here is how to guarantee the effective participation of all of the control forces and how to involve their governing ministries?●



Cross-border movement of capital



This Platform's mission is to:

- Establish an accurate assessment of all of the financial transaction and trade operation systems in the K²M area.
- Dialogue with ECOBANK and other commercial banks in order to set up a greater number of branches and diversify services offered within the K²M area.
- Intensify strategic thinking on the development of a cross-border bank card payment system based on existing models in Nigeria
- Improve existing mechanisms for the reconstitution of public stocks (broadening and facilitating calls for tender systems, improving financial channels, etc.) by involving in the debates governments of both countries, public and private trade and financial operators in the K²M area.
- Undertake strategic thinking on the development and establishment of a network of microcredit institutions to support small and medium-scale trade (notably to facilitate remittances).
- Undertake strategic thinking on the creation of a specific financing system for the cattle trade sector, based on the work undertaken by the CILSS on the "Livestock Breeders Bank".

Potential members of this Platform are:

- Managers of the four markets
- Merchant/transporter associations

Establishment of a radio stations network

- Agricultural and livestock breeder associations
- Banks
- Public entities of the Katsina and Kano States and the Maradi Region responsible for financial transactions
- Public governmental bodies of Niger and Nigeria responsible for food security stocks.

There are three issues:

- 1) Seeking, with banking operators, efficient monetary transaction systems;
- 2) Carrying out operational strategic thinking on the improvement of stock purchase mechanisms by public authorities, notably those of Niger;
- 3) Holding discussions on micro-credit and commercial credit for livestock breeders.

The scope of the Niger and Nigeria Central Bank's involvement remains to be defined.

The initiative places high priority on the setting up of a network of cross-border radio stations broadcasting in the K²M area with the aim to:

- Disseminate locally information on price, quantities and exchange rates.
- Disseminate locally the rights and responsibilities of populations with regard to ECOWAS texts and national legislation concerning the movement of persons, goods and capital.
- Disseminate all other relevant information for food security as well as trade and financial transaction facilitation in the K²M area.
- Promote the K²M initiative, and make its work known

The launching and development of this programme is not necessarily linked to the three Platform's work. The dissemination of prices, exchange rates and ECOWAS texts on free movement can begin as soon as possible. The communications and information programme can also be improved with the creation of:

- a "cross-border directory" compiling the coordinates of public services, merchant and transporter associations, markets, etc.
- concise "information flyers" in local languages.

Communications is an essential investment which is broader than the proposal to create a "radio stations" network. In the promotion of border cooperation and CIP operations in particular, a concrete example is the availability of some tools created by the SWAC with the support of ENDA-Diapol.

For example, the website <http://www.afriquefrontieres.org/>, which initiates exchanges of experiences and analyses, enables the dissemination of a large number of educational reports and information notes.

It also disseminates this magazine, the "Border Diaries", regularly produced and disseminated since 2004; it is based on field surveys conveying the cross-border vitality in West Africa.

These communications tools have greatly facilitated the dissemination of the idea of cross-border cooperation as well as the process and methods to make it a reality. They have also facilitated raising political awareness and being able to exchange of experiences.

The dissemination of information also makes it possible to capitalise on progress made and share knowledge regarding border areas.

Within the K²M context, communications is essential in order to make the initiative known, inform populations and local actors on the tools selected by the Platforms and to close the gap between institutional knowledge and that of border actors.

However, the concretization of these Platforms raises many questions. How to technically implement the project? How to institutionally organise this programme while guaranteeing concerned States' responsibility and the freedom of the local undertaking initiative?

How to involve national, regional and international institutions working on food security?

This Phase 1 feasibility study is a segue from the work carried out at the Katsina workshop to an initiative where ideas and suggestions from all actors are welcome.



Financial transaction at Dan Issa / Maradi



The ECOWAS Cross-border Initiatives Programme (CIP)

From 2004 to 2007, the ECOWAS CIP gained ground. The process is underway and has already caught on. In fact, the African Union Border Programme has been inspired by it. Here, the Border Diaries presents the key touchstones.

- At the end of 2004, the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat announced its intention to create a Cross-border Initiatives Programme aiming to foster the implementation of locally-driven cross-border cooperation projects within all West African border zones.

- On 18 January 2005, the CIP concept was submitted to the Council of ECOWAS Ministers of Foreign Affairs in a memorandum entitled “The Cross-



The ECOWAS headquarters in Abuja

- border Concept or Local Integration”. The Council adopted this memorandum and asked the Executive Secretariat to expand cross-border cooperation.

- In February 2005, the Executive Secretary wrote to all ECOWAS Ministers of Foreign affairs informing them of the CIP’s launching.

- In 2005, ECOWAS produced a draft Legal Community Convention aiming to provide West African cross-border cooperation with a common legal foundation. In 2006, the project was presented to Ministers responsible for regional integration and territorial planning. The Convention is on the agenda of the ECOWAS Heads of State Summit (June 2008).

This Convention sets out a unified application of cross-border cooperation for all internal borders enabling States and local communities to be directly involved in cross-border cooperation operations by relying on their expertise within the limits of the internal laws of each member State. However, the scope of application can be determined by member States, local communities and territorial authorities.

- On 9 January 2006, the Executive Secretariat presented a second memorandum to the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs entitled "Assessment and Perspective of the Implementation

of the Cross-border Initiatives Programme".

- The 2007 - 2010 Strategic Plan approved by ECOWAS Heads of State envisages the implementation of a regional strategy in support of cross-border cooperation (Objective No. C-TCTMoPIM O2 EO2 A2.3). A central element of this strategy is the CIP.

Proof on the ground

Three pilot operations are currently being carried out within the CIP's framework:

- Sikasso (Mali), Korhogo (Côte d'Ivoire) and Bobo Dioulasso (Burkina) - S.K.Bo: The process was launched in September 2005 at the Sikasso workshop under the auspices of Regional Planning Ministers of Burkina Faso and Mali, co-organised by the Municipal Development Partnership (MDP), the SWAC and UNOWA with the active

participation of the National Borders Directorate of Mali (DNF).

The CILSS and UEMOA were involved with the process. An Action Plan was drawn up with 19 border activity proposals. UNDP Bamako and Ouagadougou financed local technical assistance to this process (two facilitators) over a six month period as from January 2007. Due to the Ivorian political situation, the process only concerns the areas of Burkina Faso and Mali despite the demand by local actors to include the neighbouring area of Côte d'Ivoire

Four activities were launched:

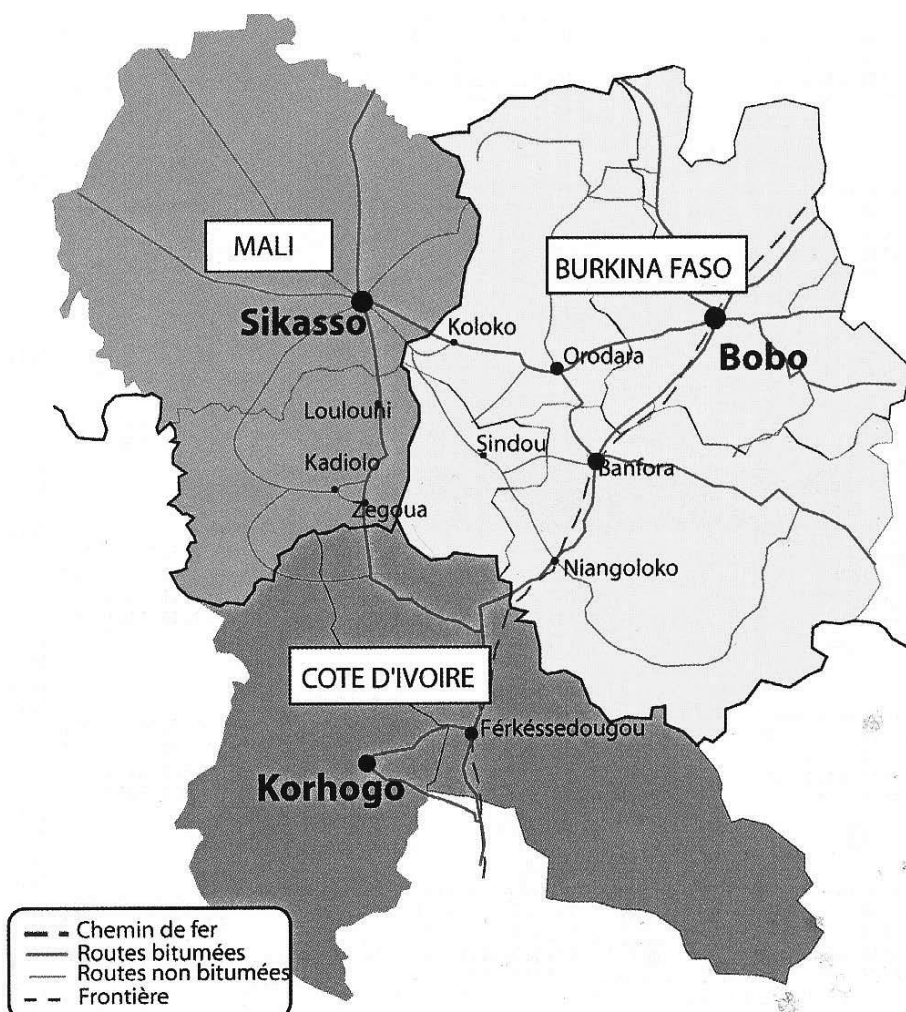
- 1) The "Kurumba" radio network in the cross-border zone launched in June 2006;
- 2) The creation of a production and marketing sector (notably fruit sellers);



- 3) A cross-border administration directory;

- 4) The creation of a network of border health structures.

- Ségambie méridionale (The Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Senegal): The pilot operation in Ségambie méridionale was launched at the workshop co-organised by ENDA-Diapol and the SWAC held in Ziguinchor from 24 to 26 October 2005 with the financial support of CIDA and the Austrian Development Cooperation.





The meeting brought together approximately one hundred participants representing local associations, local communities, technical services, States, intergovernmental organisations and development partners in order to develop an Action Plan containing 19 proposals aimed at initiating actions and exchanges.

Activities focus on cross-border security, planning of production routes as well as the economic beekeeping sector.

A community radio stations network has been set up and a Festival of cross-border populations was organised. These activities are supported by ENDA-Diapol in collaboration with the GTZ-Procas and with the SWAC's limited support.

- Concerted Management of the Karakoro Basin, the "great lake" between Mali and Mauritania: This

cross-border land planning programme of the Karakoro Basin is a result of extensive lobbying carried out by the GRDR (Groupe de Recherche et de Réalisations pour le Développement Rural) in the Senegal River Basin (Mali, Mauritania, Senegal) for over thirty years.

It is based on numerous cross-border cooperation agreements and conventions linking Mali and Mauritania since independence.

The official launching meeting in Nouakchott (Mauritania) coordinated by the GRDR in September 2006 was co-financed by the Comité Catholique contre la Faim et pour le Développement (CCFD), the SWAC, the Delegation of the European Commission to Mauritania and ENDA-Diapol.

The launching meeting was followed by a workshop of local actors and the adoption of a cross-border development

plan (infrastructure, natural resources, local economic dynamics), which is in its starting phase. The Border Diaries' next issue focuses on this area.

Prospects

The ECOWAS Commission is currently in negotiations with the UNDP and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) for the implementation of an interim regional West African cross-border cooperation support project. This one-year project aims to:

- Strengthen and capitalise on the pilot operations' achievements;
- Develop a three-year programme (including a regional fund to finance cross-border initiatives on the ground)



aiming to standardise cross-border cooperation throughout West Africa.

Involvement of the CILSS and UEMOA

The UEMOA's 2004-2008 Regional Economic Programme (REP) provides significant support to cross-border cooperation. Six zones have been identified.

For several years the CILSS has been working on cross-border food security issues. Along with FewNet/USAID and the SWAC, it is one of the main supporters of the K²M initiative.

It is developing a broad West African cross-border market monitoring programme.

The African union border programme

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

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Inspired by the West African experience, the Commission of the African Union began working on cross-border cooperation at the end of 2006.

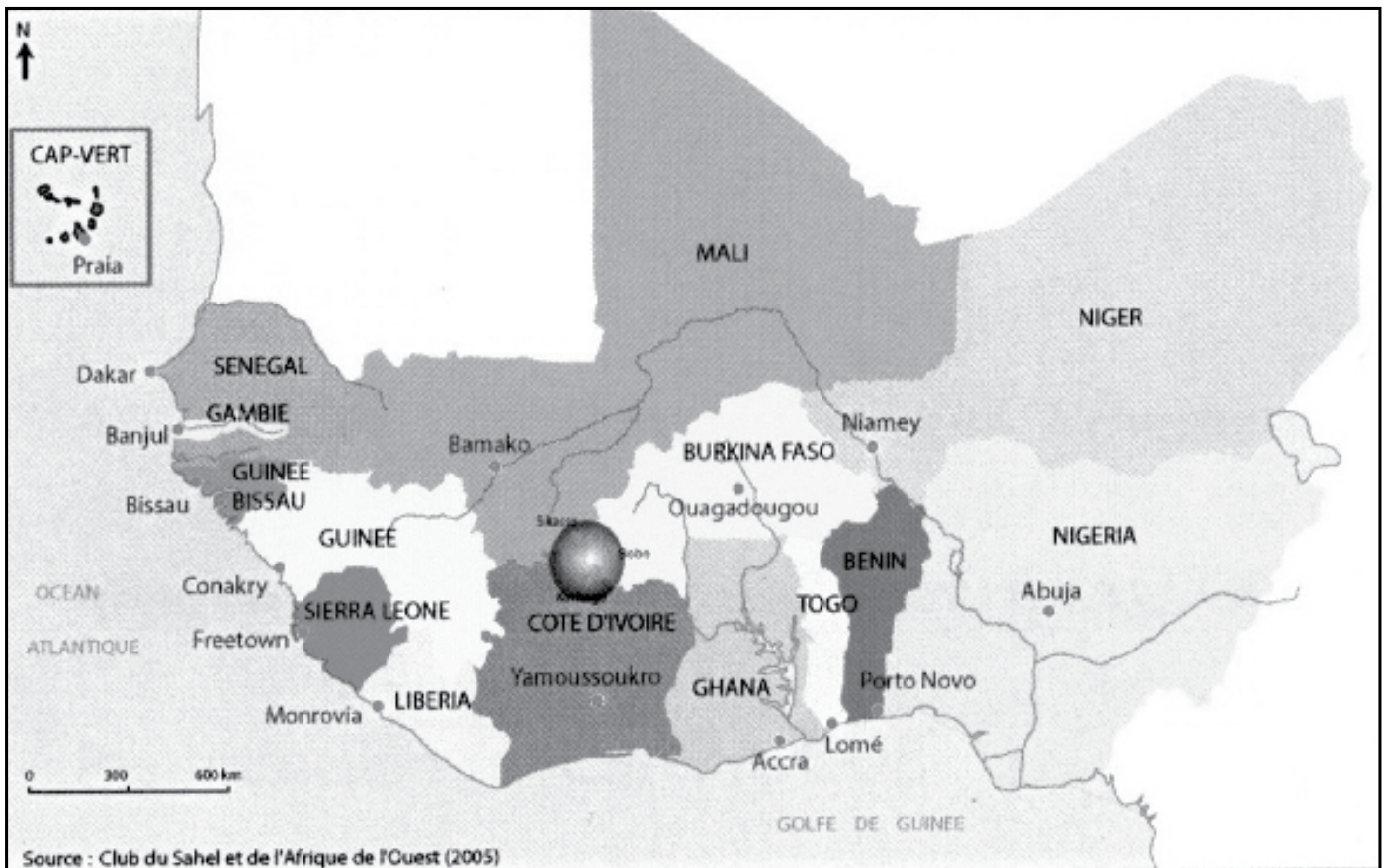
Following a consultation process with member States, a Ministerial meeting was held in June 2007 at which the programme was finalised and provided with the following objectives:

- To facilitate and support the delineation and demarcation of African borders where it has not yet been done.
- To strengthen integration dynamics implemented within the framework of the Regional Economic Communities and other large-scale regional cooperation initiatives;
- To develop local or locally-driven cross-border cooperation within the framework of Regional Economic Communities and other regional cooperation initiatives; and
- To strengthen border management capacities including the development of special education and research programmes.

A meeting to be held in Djibouti in December 2008 will finalise this Action Plan which is based on a border activities matrix.

A Region without borders

Today, the need for cross-border cooperation is no longer discussed. Everywhere, emphasis is placed on jointly reaping the benefits from exploiting opportunities offered by shared similarities, diversities and complementarities on both sides of the border. Borders are now thought of as sources of opportunities rather than as barriers. ECOWAS is one of the continent's pioneers.



For over a decade, ECOWAS has been integrating the “cross-border” concept and has placed cross-border cooperation on its agenda. The ECOWAS Heads of State Conference held in Accra on 15 June 2007 adopted the strategic objective of “transforming West Africa into a borderless zone enabling the region to evolve by 2020 towards an ECOWAS of the people”.

With support from its Cross-border Initiatives Programme (C.I.P.), the ECOWAS Commission’s 2007-2010 Strategic Plan pledges a region where

“Borders are secure and fluid; many cross-border cooperation projects among border populations are being implemented”.

In fact, the development of cross-border cooperation is one of the major focuses of the “Migration and Development Action Plan” defined within the framework of the ECOWAS Common Approach on migration adopted at the Ministerial meeting on 14 June 2007 in Abuja.

This Plan sets out that: Free circulation within the ECOWAS zone is an essential component of regio-

nal integration, which is in itself one of the conditions for the West African economy to be better integrated into globalisation. Furthermore, there is a direct (inverse) correlation between the fluidity of circular and intra-regional migration and extra-regional migratory pressure.

In effect, it has been established that this fluidity helps reduce migratory pressure on external ECOWAS borders.

The Action Plan emphasises the need to give priority attention to borders and cross-border areas and to establish

a regional Cross-border Co-operation Fund that would:

1) facilitate free movement through concrete actions such as setting up joint border posts, border markets, shared health clinics, shared schools, etc.;

2) support border populations through basic development actions for the poorest and most marginalised populations;

3) develop good neighbour relations anchored in field realities between ECOWAS member countries and between the ECOWAS zone and its neighbours.

This approach is the result of a forward-looking vision of the overall development of the region. At the time of independence, West Africa was sparsely populated and its population was essentially concentrated on the coast and around large Sahelian cities.

Between 1960 and 2006, the region's total population increased more than 3.5 times, growing from 87 to 310 million inhabitants.

This demographic dynamic was accompanied by a high rate of urbanisation. Rural agricultural areas became denser around new cities.

It shows that trading zones progressively integrate beyond national borders.

Large agricultural markets are now located in many of these once marginalised border zones.

The map showing the urban cross-border network confirms this evolution. It illustrates that between Sahelian and coastal countries, there are currently fifty or so villages with more than 50 000 inhabitants within a 150 km perimeter of borderlines.

There is intense trade in these areas. This is where almost all foreign trade passes between the world market and land-locked countries and between Sahelian countries and coastal countries. These areas, their potential as well as their specific risks must be taken into account in cooperation and regional integration strategies.

ECOWAS is an economic cooperation institution for countries sharing common borders and projects.

Correctly evaluating the current landscape and preparing the future requires ECOWAS to "promote co-operation and integration, leading to the establishment of an economic union in West Africa (...)"

Its Treaty also foresees in Art. 3.2 "(...) the establishment of a common market through:

– The liberalisation of trade by the abolition, among Member States, of customs duties levied on imports and exports, and the abolition among Member States, of non-tariff barriers in order to establish a free trade area at the Community level;

– The adoption of a common external tariff and a common trade policy vis-à-vis third countries;

– The removal, between Member States, of obstacles to the free movement of persons, goods, service and capital, and to the right of residence and establishment; (...)"

These measures intensifying cooperation and regional integration are imperative.

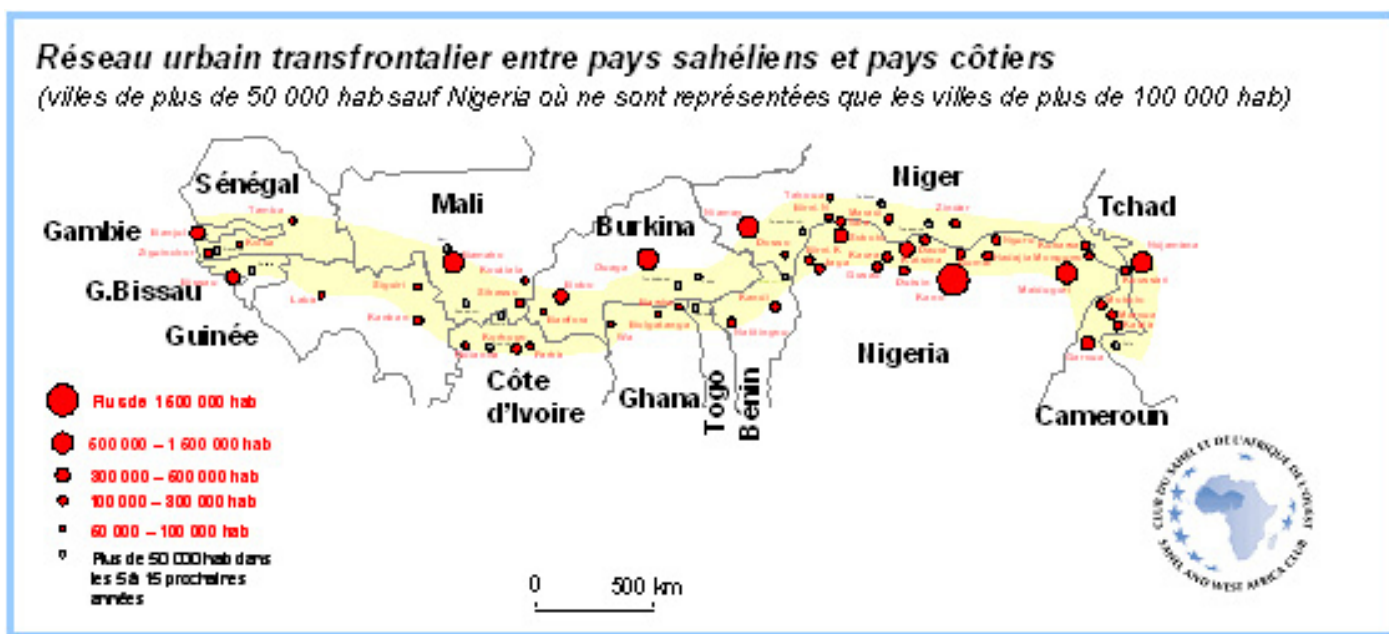
The narrowness of many national West African markets compromises regional competitiveness especially in relation to those of China, USA and Europe.

Only an integrated well-conceived economic space can take advantage of the complementarities of production systems and achieve economies of scale.

Valorising border zones

Border zones are the front lines of this regional economic goal. There are numerous day-to-day obstacles and constraints which still hinder West African cooperation and integration despite existing Community texts on free movement of goods and persons and the right to establishment.

These zones also suffer the consequences of the disparities between national economic policies and are often marginalised in the implementation of sectoral policies concerning transportation, electricity, access to education and health services.



They are subject to a purely national notion of how economic sectors should be managed. While these sectors have enormous potential, the development of this potential is hindered due to this cross-border situation.

The discrepancies of national systems manifest themselves in border areas. Achieving local integration in these zones, based on for example community homogeneity and economic complementarities, constitutes the first step of regional integration.

Border zones are particularly vulnerable in periods of instability. Conflicts are not initiated in these areas but their consequences often manifest there: refugee flows, circulation of armed groups, illicit trafficking of merchandise and resources.

As trade zones, they are also havens where fleeing populations are protected and economies of war develop.

In the specific context of unstable cross-border areas such as S n gambie M ridionale or that of C te d'Ivoire for the SKBo zone, cooperation initiatives are carried out to integrate security into the daily lives of populations: joint border patrols organised at national level or by local monitoring committees.

Undisputedly, cross-border cooperation plays a positive role. The 2005 food crisis in the Sahel and in particular Niger demonstrated the solid link between food security issues and cross-border trade of food products. It is thus impossible to forecast and manage Sahelian food crises without taking into account the regional market of which the cross-border dimension is obvious.

Currently many West African countries extol cross-border cooperation for accelerating the regional integration process.

Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal officially support pilot operations. Mauritania, a non member ECOWAS country, also participates in a pilot operation within the framework of its good neighbour policy.

The ECOWAS Commission has officially added cross-border cooperation to its organisational chart. Cross-border cooperation is included in the mandate of its Free Movement of Persons Department which is under the responsibility of the Office of the Commissioner of Trade, Customs, Industry, Mines and Free Movement of Persons. ●

Mandate of the Cross-border cooperation department

- To implement a regional cross-border cooperation strategy in support of free movement, good neighbour relations, peace and development through the Cross-border Initiatives Programme;

- To set up and implement a regional fund for cross-border cooperation in order to provide financial resources needed for rapid development of cross-border cooperation projects within all of the community border and cross-border areas;

- To monitor the ratification, implementation and follow-up of the cross-border cooperation convention.

Integrating border cooperation into one of the ECOWAS Departments is a decisive step in the Community's involvement. It sanctions a clear political approach that officially links cross-border cooperation to the Community goal of building an economically integrated regional zone based on free movement. It also establishes cross-border cooperation as a medium- and long-term response to West African migratory issues. The Free Movement of Persons Department is indeed also responsible for migration. In particular, it encourages the development of member countries' common approach to migration.

It sets out that: "in order to promote mobility within the ECOWAS zone, it is important to provide particular attention to border and cross-border areas. ECOWAS member States thus recommend making a Regional Cross-border Cooperation Fund operational that will enable:

- Facilitating free movement through concrete actions such as the setting up of joint border posts, border markets, joint health centres, shared schools, etc.;

- Supporting border populations through development activities geared towards the poorest, most marginalised populations;

- Developing good neighbourly relations rooted in realities on the ground among ECOWAS member countries and between the ECOWAS zone and its neighbours. ●



Consensus on border issues

At the Cross-border Initiatives Programme (CIP) launching workshop, held from 19 to 21 September 2007 in Katsina (Nigeria), three platforms were put forward on which to establish cross-border cooperation between Niger and Nigeria along the Kano-Katsina-Maradi (abbreviated “K²M”) corridor. These platforms are:

- 1° Information on the markets;
- 2° Cross-border movement of goods;
- 3° Cross-border movement of capital.

The Border Diaries examined these platforms with several participants representing institutions who, by participating in this workshop, demonstrated their interest in the integration process underway.



Hassane Baka representative of AREN (association pour la redynamisation de l'élevage au Niger) Maradi region

How do these platforms respond to your concerns?

Since 2001, with the urging of our livestock breeders in Dakoro (Maradi region), an economic interest group (EIG) was established to market livestock in Nigeria. Aware of the value

OXFAM-Great Britain/Niger

By Hassane Baka and Yamina Cherrou

added of their production created in Nigeria, the livestock breeders decided to organise a grouped marketing campaign aimed at Nigeria.

The potential of a grassroots movement such as the EIG has been incredible. Livestock breeders were able to bring together more than 400 heads of cattle for the first transaction.

They faced several problems very much linked to the three platforms developed at the Katsina workshop.

First, they were not as capable in negotiations as the Nigerian traders, notably due to inexperience and lack of information on prices and quality.

Secondly, the border crossing, where taxes are paid and sanitary controls carried out, was long and harassing.



Yamina Cherrou, food security and livelihood coordinator, Oxfam-Great Britain, Niger

Finally, the movement of capital and the fluctuation of the exchange rate between the CFA Franc and the Naira was a problem.

Nevertheless, with their first experience on the Jibya market in Nigeria under their belt, the livestock breeders

Interview

sought solutions to their problems: they agreed on a sales technique by seeking advice from our Nigerian partners (farmer platform) and obtaining information on prices.

Through our intermediary, they met with customs services and Maradi Governorat in order to cut border crossing time as well as reduce taxes. Finally they negotiated with Ecobank Maradi and Ecobank Jibya to facilitate the transaction from one country to the other so as to avoid travelling with cash.

Nigerian traders had 7 days to complete their transfer but within one week the exchange rate fluctuated and the Niger livestock breeders lost an estimated 40% of the value for which they had hoped. As there is no assurance mechanism the losses were assumed by the EIG and AREN.

Thus, it is obvious that the three platforms raised during the workshop are fundamental to encouraging cross-border trade. The launching of cross-border cooperation between Niger and Nigeria is the first step towards a dialogue in order to overcome the obstacles to free-trade.

As organisation representing more than 70 000 livestock breeders, AREN commends this initiative. However, our greatest concern with this initiative, which is shared by our partner Oxfam-GB, is the taking into account of the most vulnerable populations. The entire issue revolves around how the cross-border cooperation programme can benefit disfavoured livestock breeders.

How can your institution/association contribute to attaining these objectives?

Our two organisations can contribute to attaining these objectives by assuring that livestock breeders are part of the cross-border cooperation process.

According to us, this initiative cannot be fully successful if it only benefits those people already organised and above all if does not put all of the industry's actors into contact.

The three platforms raised during the workshop are fundamental to encouraging cross-border trade.

That means that livestock breeders having a small herd must be represented in the cross-border initiatives programme and that our structures must join together to support development geared towards economic performance.

A feasibility study is underway on the creation of a communications platform (one of the three platforms developed at the Katsina workshop) between the various economic actors of Nigeria and Niger.

One of the challenges will be to see how the livestock breeders with a small herd from this meeting area will

be able to make a profit if they do not join together to form a marketing-gearred economic force?

Hence in 2008, AREN and Oxfam-GB are launching a joint programme aiming to reduce livestock breeders' vulnerability to food crises by strengthening their economic power and their influence in cross-border trade.

This programme seeks to: promote entrepreneurship in the pastoral environment by developing viable economic models for growth; support changes of individual and institutional behaviour around marketing, collective action and socio-economic decisions; improve lobbying capacities to influence economic policies.●



European Union /Niger

By Olivier Lefay

How do these platforms respond to your concerns?

• Market Information

For many years (a decade) the European Commission has supported through its representation in Niger (Delegation) the development and improvement of information systems.

To this end, it supports the information system on agricultural statistics, the early warning system, the agricultural and cattle market information systems.

This support's objective is to have sufficient information in order to foresee and better manage all localised or wide-spread food crises.

The 2005 crisis emphasised insufficient market monitoring, in particular of Nigerian cereal markets (the largest in the region).



Olivier Lefay: Responsible for European Commission Delegation (ECD) Programmes in Niger

Despite efforts undertaken by AMIS (Agricultural Market information System) which, since this period, monitored some of the large border mar-

Interview

kets, this monitoring was insufficient because price increases on these types of centralising markets already have a direct impact on markets in Niger.

The information was too late for an early warning to be issued on price increases.

To have sufficient information in order to foresee and better manage all localised or wide-spread food crises.

Smaller markets, collective or whole-sale-retail, needed to be monitored in particular in Nigeria along the border. Information on price increases on markets or supply shortages enabled Niger authorities to react quicker to the potential impacts of these evolutions on availability and accessibility to cereals and in particular millet at the national level.

A better understanding of the Nigerian trader and negotiator world, which already have their networks, helped, at a lower cost, come up with an information communications system.

• Cross-border movement of goods

This platform is partly raised in the first one. We can add here: how to enforce ECOWAS rules which clarify that the free movement of goods is an asset?

In 2005, this rule was not respected by Nigeria which would not allow its cereals to be exported while meanwhile importing cereals from Niger.

We can also raise the unreliability of customs statistics at this border level, which does not facilitate the understanding of the trade phenomena nor the subsequent consequences.

• Cross-border movement of capital

The fluctuation of the Naira and the behaviour of wholesale traders which deal good on both sides of the border do not facilitate this monitoring. Understanding the compensation mechanisms used by negotiators would already be a big step.

That would enable tools to be developed (via the banking system, or other ways based on the "family" network) to secure transactions as Niger traders

do not seem to be comfortable with these transactions.

This does not encourage them to develop their trade in Nigeria (despite existing opportunities for Niger cattle).

How can your institution contribute to attaining these objectives?

Within the framework of studies conducted, the ECD can provide financing on the TCF (Technical Cooperation Facility) line of the EDF.

Under 30 000 Euros, the National Organizer can decide alone to finance studies subject to preliminary approval of the terms of reference including the schedule and budget.

Other than that, the ECD must also agree.

With regard to the cross-border issue, the 10th EDF which should be launched in 2008/2009 takes into account this topic as a result of the significant amount of financing provided to regional integration●

Dawanau market / Kano

By Gafar Ajao

How do these guidelines meet your concerns?

The guideline is very apt as it discusses issues that affect the smooth, improved and streamlined trade as well as the usual inhibitions, human constraints and the excesses of law enforcement agents toward traders across borders. The holistic approach to these issues as stipulated by the guideline would bring a change in the overall approach and activities of both the traders/producers and policy makers.

It is very obvious that the information gap is still palpable in which some traders, might perhaps not sure of the authenticity, but with the formation and intervention of KKM program, it will be very easy to drive-home the importance and advantages of information application to the regular events across borders. As expected, this gui-

deline would be a guiding template for me and my services in the MIS across borders. It would be good, if this initiative could also check the existing organised import export systems in countries with special focus on border trade.

How do your institution / association contribute to the achievement of these goals?

The overall goal of the initiative is to see that there is an established cordial relationship between traders across borders and eradicating the deluge of obstacles that slow down businesses which has contributed to the shortfall of

economic situation in the border trade affairs.

It is pertinent to mention also that these initiatives will, surely, be replicated by my institution by organising a sensitisation workshop and field visits to border markets, which would be a regular exercise for traders and the many law enforcement agencies that operate along the borders●



Gafar Ajao : ICT/MIS Coordinator, ICT Center, Dawanau (Kano)



Interview

Sahel and West Africa Club/OCDE

By Philipp Heinrigs

The Katsina workshop also dealt with issues regarding the cross-border movement of capital. What is the impact of the Naira non-or partial convertibility on the cross-border movement of capital?

There are several levels on which the Naira's partial convertibility affects the movement of capital. Generally non-convertibility of a currency implies that this currency has no value outside its home country and thereby considerably reduces trade incentives and this in turn reduces capital movements. In theory that means with restricted convertibility, as is the case in Nigeria, there are less cross-border currency movements. But this is theory and we have seen through the work carried out by the various institutions involved in this initiative that there is considerable cross-border trade in the area and there are many good reasons to facilitate this trade. Problems regarding the movement of capital which many actors have been mentioning are very constraining in this respect.

What are these problems?

The problems cited are most often security issues. It is considerably risky to go back to your country carrying cash money made by selling livestock because there is no system that allows you to easily transfer this money. Another issue is the dependence on the parallel market, first, the rate you get will surely be below the official exchange rate and second, you have few possibilities to hedge against exchange rate fluctuations. Another issue mentioned during the workshop was the problem of counterfeit money on the markets and the confidence crises that is engenders. To another

extent but equally important is the ease at which you can do your business. Some participants mentioned the facility with which they can carry out their day to day business when travelling as far as Hong Kong or Brazil but face difficulties when dealing with Niger.

Also participants from Government agencies responsible for food security cited problems with capital transactions as a main reason for not buying in Nigeria when replenishing security stocks.



Philipp Heinrigs, Local development and the process of regional integration

So the partial convertibility of the Naira is having a negative effect on trade in the K2M area?

I think overall the answer to this question is yes. However, actors have obviously adopted a series of strategies to deal with these problems, which in

my view is further underlining the great potential there is in terms of improving trade and cooperation. But one has to mention that the Nigerian Government has made considerable progress over the last three years in terms current and capital account management as well as Naira convertibility.

There are plans for full Naira convertibility and even a West African common currency. Can you tell us something about that?

Yes, concerning the full Naira convertibility I think the proposed date is the beginning 2009. As regards the ECOWAS common currency which was first discussed during 1999/2000, I believe the date has been postponed to 2009. Realistically speaking one would assume that full Naira convertibility would come before an ECOWAS common currency. But there are so many factors that impact on the usefulness and timing of such measures that it is very difficult to predict their actual entering into force.

So there is plenty of work for platform 3 in charge of capital movements?

I think it is too early to say what the specific work programme of this platform will be. As agreed

during the workshop, the consultants in charge of the Feasibility Study I are also asked to define in more detail the technical aspects of each platform, notably through meetings with a broad group of actors. But I am sure that there are many interesting and useful ideas that will be addressed in this platform!●

Dawanau international market/Kano



The food basket of West Africa

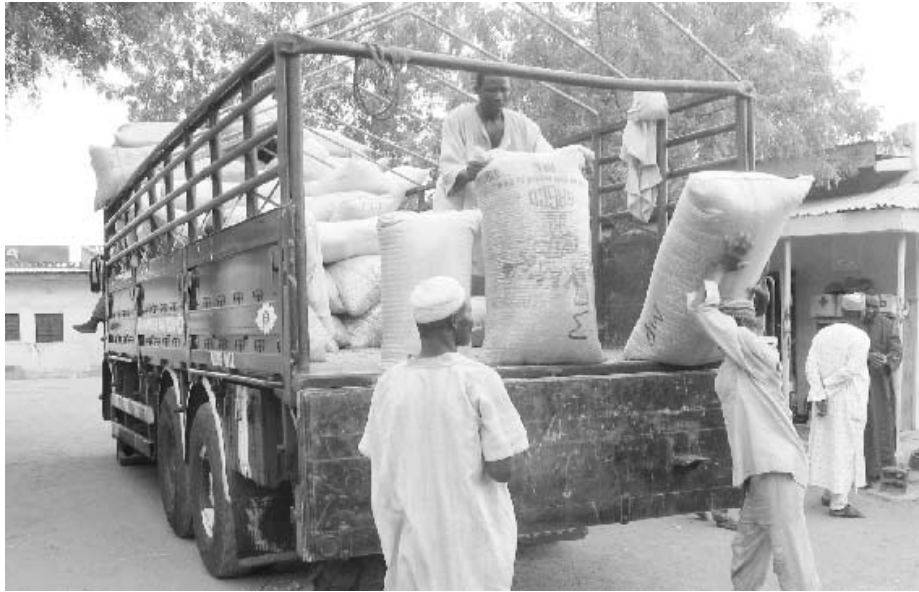
By Ahmed Imam, Executive Secretary, Dawanau Market Development Association (DMDA))



The Dawanau International Market is situated along Katsina Road, Dawakin Tofa Local Government Area of Kano State (North-West Nigeria). The name “Dawanau” was

derived from its district name as of 1985 as a result of its seceding from Yankura, Sabon Gari Market of the same Kano city. The secession was partly due to too much congestion that had led to several fires and losses.

The market now occupies a 7kmX 6km area. Dawanau Market is the largest grain market in West Africa having over fifty thousand (50,000) members with about ten thousand (10,000) stores and



Dawanau Market exports an average of 9,200 metric tones (MT) of various grains such as Cassava (Chips & Gari), Cowpea, Millet, Sorghum, etc.

The Dawanau Market also functions as a state of the art Information Communication Technology Resource Centre. The Centre tracks trade data, trade deals, market prices and analyses commodity trends.

The MISTOWA Project (Network of Regional Market Information Systems and Traders Organisations of West Africa/USAID) supported the Centre and trained over 400 TOs/POs in data collection and dissemination. MISTOWA recently established an Agribusiness Information Point (ABIP)

DMDA and MISTOWA



Before MISTOWA's involvement, the Dawanau market was neither officially managed nor organised. The Market's trade capacity was not grossly underestimated.

Dawanau Market exported 5,100 tonnes of grains per day

five hundred and thirty-six (536) large warehouses.

The Market provides food commodities for all of Nigeria and most countries in the Sahel region making it the Food Basket for West Africa and other parts of the world.

Dawanau Market is a daily market serving countries such as Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger, Senegal, etc.

There are twenty-eight (28) associations in the market, sixteen (16) commodity and twelve (12) non-commodity associations. All 28 associations are grouped under the parent association "Dawanau Market Development Association" (DMDA).



536 large warehouses.

to various West African countries. Following MISTOWA's intervention, exports rose to an average 9,890 tonnes per day and Dawanau has since become known as one of the largest grain markets in Africa.

On 20 September 2004, DMDA met with the MISTOWA team to discuss issues regarding market information systems, the strengthening of regional trade and building of POs/TOs capacities.

DMDA benefited from IFDC-MISTOWA's Equipment Grant program which led to the



Cattle market

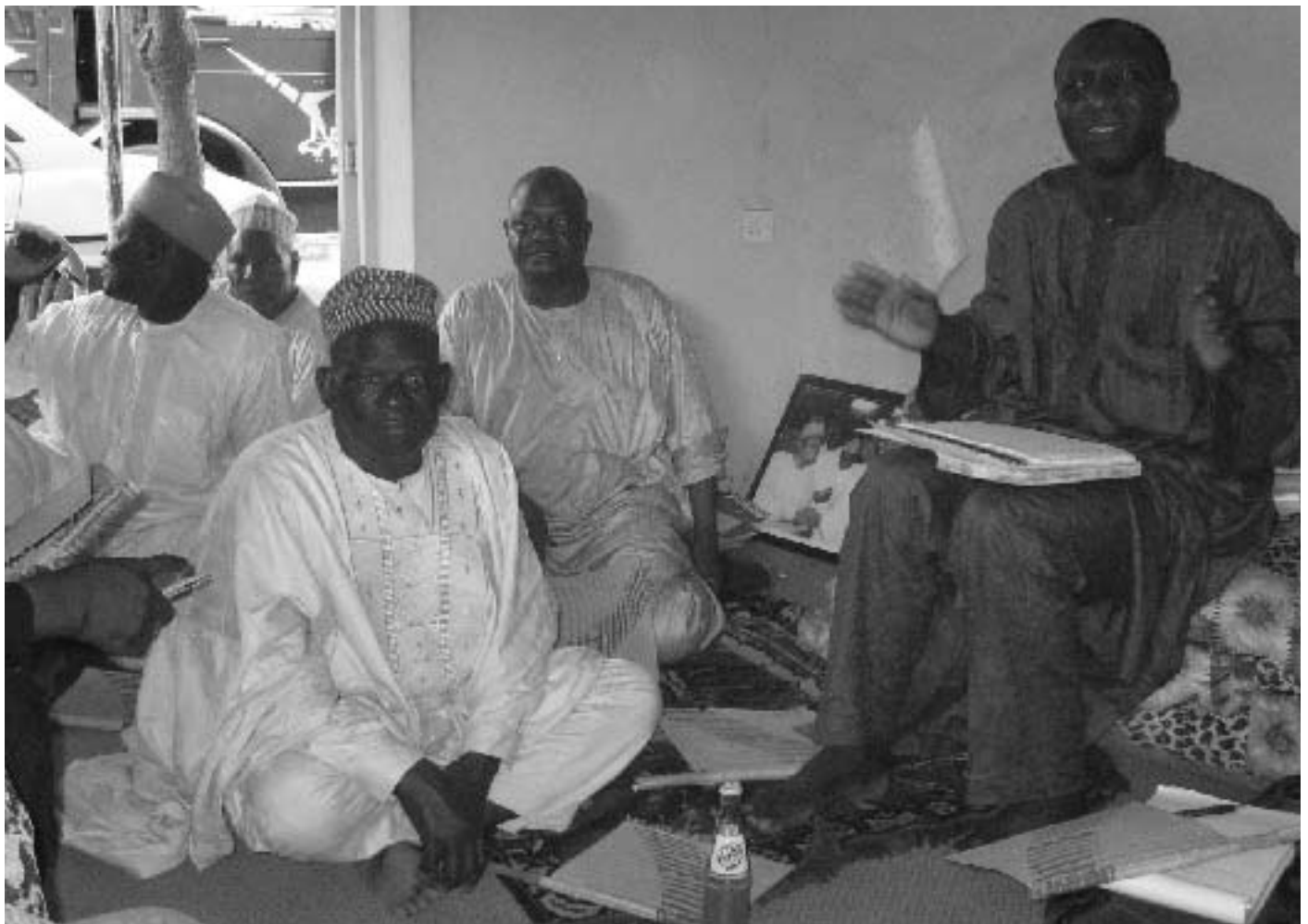


Too much congestion had led to several fires and losses.



improvement of our communications, data, and general information resources in the Market. This provided the DMDA a tremendous support in the development of trade and opening of trade opportunities for Dawanau Market. In addition, these transformations have attracted many institutional buyers and observers to the Market. DMDA and Dawanau Market are grateful to IFDC-MISTOWA for their support.

information resources in the Market



The Dawanau market staff



The Dawanau Market Development Association A winning partnership

The IFDC-MISTOWA Equipment Grant provided to the Dawanau Market Development Association enabled the DMDA to change the market, itself and the entire Dawanau community.

The socio-economic development and improved business relationships between members and the outside world are one of the many signs.

A myriad of opportunities followed the strengthening of the West Africa regional market information system and traders' organizations.

There are many other success stories with eager testimonials by all POs/TOs who have benefited directly and indirectly in the market.



The DMDA and the Dawanau Market are cases that illustrate the MISTOWA achievements in Nigeria.

The support received is boosting the market's day-to-day business activities and the development of the POs/TOs whereby many influential people in the agricultural manufacturing and international trade are setting up in the market.

Today, we have two new state of the art agricultural processing and rice milling companies.

The equipment and the various ICT training continually improve trade between Dawanau and the rest of the world.●



A rice mill in Dawanau market

MISTOWA's achievements in the Dawanau market

- Increased Regional Trade in Dawanau Market
- Increased DMDA Membership
- Increased DMDA revenue generated
- MIS/ICT concretization
- Equipment Grant Support
- Establishment of Agribusiness Information Points (ABIPs) in 8 locations
- DMDA members acquired ICT/Computer training
- 10 Members purchased Personal Computers
- DMDA became the choice of POs/TOs organisations
- Dawanau Market is exporting 10,200 tonnes of various commodities everyday to different countries around the world.
- DMDA members receive offers daily from different countries, particularly, Cameroon, Chad and Niger.
- Many organizations collaborate with the DMDA to achieve their respective goals
- The DMDA was recognized and chosen as one of the clearing houses for the disbursement of the Naira 50 billion Federal Government Loan to farmers
- The MISTOWA Equipment Grant transformed the market and it strengthened our Association with regard to management and sustainability.
- Ongoing ICT/Computer training workshop at the ICT Centre
- ABIP sensitization workshop was organised by the ICT Center for DMDA members ●

MISTOWA assisted training programs

- First major MISTOWA project, in Lomé, Togo, December 2004
- Official launching of the MISTOWA Project in Ghana, February 2005
- MISTOWA-sponsored trade fair, April 2005 at Dakar, Senegal
- Meeting of partners of the MISTOWA Project, Bamako, Mali April 2005
- Annual MISTOWA Work Planning Workshop; Bamako, September 2005
- MIS training program for producers, Benin Republic, August of 2005.
- Official launching in Abuja, March 2006
- Crop-Outlook in Bamako, Mali, March 2006
- Kano Crop-Outlook and Onion Forum
- End of year meeting with MISTOWA Chief of Party in Abuja.
- 120 members (7female and 113 males) of DMDA had benefited in the 3 consecutive ICT/Computer training programs at the CRC Centre in Kaduna between August 2005 and June 2006
- 24 members (4 male and 20 females) of DMDA attended the HIV/ICT training for women held in Kaduna in July 2006
- Partners Meeting of the MISTOWA project, Abuja July 2006.

DMDA and its members recorded trade deals worth three million dollars as a result of MISTOWA intervention in the Dawanau market.

DMDA interactions with partners and government institutions are leading to impressive relationships within the countries in Africa. The Nigerian police seconded a security officer to the executive of DMDA. The position of DMDA in the agricultural sector goes beyond buying and selling; it participates in a high-powered committee set up by the Federal Government and numerous research institutions.●

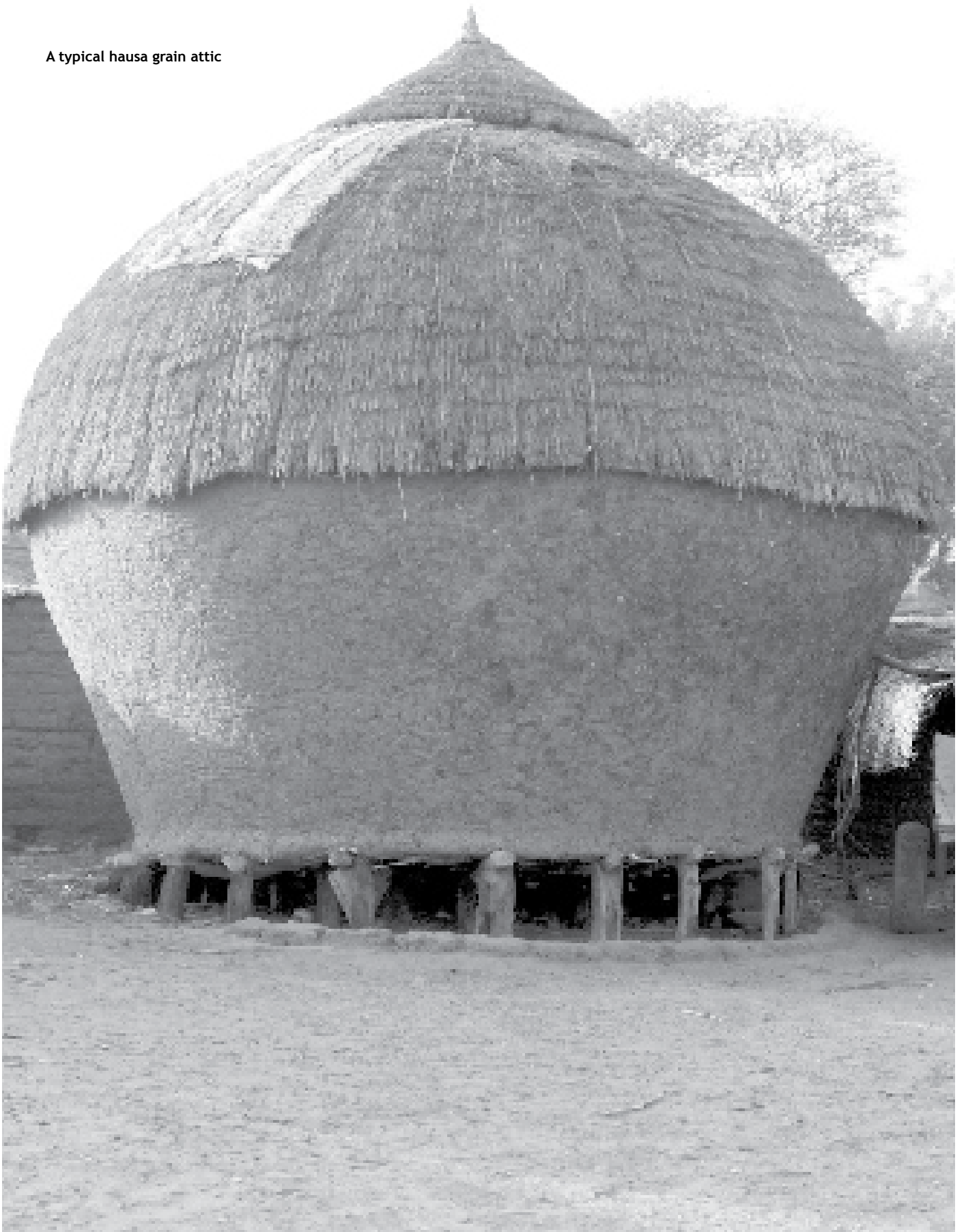
Contact:

DAWANAU MARKET DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

Motor Park, Dawanau International Market, Dawakin Tofa Local Govt, Kano State

Phone: 08037001180, 08036148344, Email: imam1060@yahoo.com, kungiyar@yahoo.com

A typical hausa grain attic



The Extremadura region

«If borders are the “scars of history”, they have to be overcome to develop surrounding areas»

What are the Portuguese regions bordering Extremadura? Since when do cross-border relations exist between the two countries? Are they based on historical relations, economic complementarities or on a shared culture?

Extremadura is an Autonomous Community of Western Spain. The territory covers 41,634 km², and its population is 1,083,879 inhabitants. It has two provinces: Cáceres and Badajoz, bordering Portugal to the west, with two regions: Alentejo and Centro Region. It is an important area for wildlife, parti-

cularly with the major reserve at the Monfragüe National Park.

The region has wide legislative and executive autonomy, with its own Parliament and Regional Government. The distribution of powers is laid out in the “Autonomy Statutes”, the regional constitution. Merida is the capital city of Extremadura.

Two thousands years ago, Merida was also the capital of the Lusitania, an ancient Roman Province, including Extremadura, current Portugal (except for the northern area today known as the North Region) and a central western part of current Spain.

The region cooperates with the two neighbouring Portuguese regions since its very beginning as Regional Government in 1983.

The Autonomy Statutes included the need to take into account cross-border cooperation, and introduced at the political agenda this relationship that, up to that moment, was only an informal one between the populations closed to the border.

This process has strongly developed during the nineties through the regional efforts and the cohesion policies made by the European Union.

But it is at the beginning of the nine-

ties when cross-border cooperation was acknowledged widely and institutionalized through concrete agreements between the two countries and the regions involved, within the framework of the previous Madrid Outline Convention on Transfrontier Cooperation between Territorial Communities and Authorities (1980) and its Additional Protocols.

The Working Community between Extremadura and Alentejo was established in 1992, and the Working Community between Extremadura and the North Region in 1994.

Of course there had been historical relations, being even Portugal part of Spain for a period during the 16th Century.

The economical structures have been similar, and the cultural interaction across the border is very much similar to other European border areas: own identities



together with shared elements, developing a complex relationship along the time.

Could you give some concrete examples of cooperation?

Several Cross-Border Initiatives Offices (Gabinete de Iniciativas Transfronterizas) in all of the three regions involved intend to help the regional administrations to develop a truly cross-border cooperation, which has some difficulties due to the considerable differences between the administrative structures in Spain and Portugal.

These Offices stimulate as well the cross-border cooperation between every sector of the civil society. In the last 15 years the cross-border cooperation among the populations from Extremadura, Alentejo and Region Centro has increased spectacularly.

Commercial exchanges, cultural activities, and conventions on different subjects take place frequently.

One of the better examples is the wide interest in studying the Portuguese language in Extremadura. Nearly 15,000 people study this language in our Region (a number higher than the students of Portuguese in the rest of Spain).

Other examples are the generation of additional synergies in the field of joint research and innovation; the sustainable cross-border management of environment and environmental protection; the development of common tourism approaches; but specially the generation of "critical mass" to lobby towards the Spanish and the Portuguese governments to develop new initiatives, as new transport and communication links, a cross-border health programming, etc.

How are the financial issue of cross-border projects managed?

Most of the cross-border cooperation projects are coordinated by the Office of Cross-Border Initiatives (Gabinete de Iniciativas Transfronterizas) and supported under the Spain /Portugal INTERREG A Programme (European Union).

Since Extremadura, Alentejo and Region Centro of Portugal are Objective 1 regions (a classification regarding wealth, being Objective 1 the European poorest regions), 75 % of funding for

these projects comes from European resources. Besides, there are some other projects financed by the own regional budget.

The regional efforts have been very important, because the impact of the border affects most working fields, but we cannot forget the benefits from the European Funds.

The access to an important amount of European Regional Development Funds and others has let the cross-border community to organize and make better projects and programmes in many fields within a region without main structures until the end of the seventies.

Extremadura is the first European border region funding a cross-border initiative in West Africa. What is the message you would like send to West African border populations?

As previously mentioned, the Autonomy Statutes of Extremadura included a paragraph mentioning the need to cooperate with the neighbouring Portuguese regions, but also with the brother countries in Latin America.

As a development of these, and being aware of the extraordinary process of solidarity between the different European regions to promote the development of the poorest regions (as it is our case) Extremadura also approved a Law on International Cooperation, showing the will of the citizens of Extremadura to help other peoples in different parts of the world to overcome their difficulties and obstacles for development.

So, there is a Annual Plan for International Cooperation for Development being established since 1995. Its focus is to cooperate in different efforts for development in various fields: human development, generation of capacities, health protection, but also, to use the experience of Extremadura in various fields to collaborate with other regions and countries, especially in Africa and Latin America.

The strengthening of cross-border cooperation has let our regions to profit from synergies operating at the border in a much disorganized manner.

Now, there is a strong input with a solid base generating a cross-border conscience amongst the citizens and the different actors operating in the border area.

The results are evident in terms of a greater feeling of being part of a single community and the growing cross-border cooperation in many fields: Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, cultural exchanges, media, languages, etc.

These same structures let us know very useful information about the real conditions of our regions.

It is not only about statistics, but also a set of qualitative aspects, more difficult to measure, but very important: production diversification, innovation capacities, employment and unemployment distribution, and any other social, cultural or even administrative elements that, all together, can support or obstacle convergence, the territorial cohesion and the European conscience of the citizens.

A better knowledge of our own reality, after looking carefully cross-border phenomena and comparing with similar facts in other European border regions, has converted cross-border actions into normal ones within a space that has never been so permeable.

The core idea is to pay a special attention to border regions, to rural areas, to the more peripheral territories, in a planned framework of the whole territory.

This is especially important for many policies that tend to concentrate in already developed areas, as it is the case of innovation and technology programmes.

This is a known risk, but we also know that there is a need: in case of bad departing conditions, we have to imagine new solutions, to offer wide and ambitious measures. Only through this we can overcome ancient delays in comparison with other regions, more developed.

This is true in Europe, in African or in America. The question is: if borders are the "scars of history", they have to be overcome to develop surrounding areas. Moreover, through a deep cross-border cooperation process the ghost of conflict disappears, leaving room to dialogue, peace and progress.●

**Martín Guillermo Ramírez,
Gronau, Federal Republic of Germany**

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