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ACTIVITY FACT SHEET

West Africa Trade Hub and African Partners Network

Funding Level

\$48.6 million

Duration

2014-2019

Geographic Scope

21 countries in West Africa

Key Partners

- Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
- West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA)
- Comité Permanent Inter-états de Lutte contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel (CILSS)
- Regional associations and alliances

Implementing Partner

Abt Associates in association with:

- Banyan Global
- J.E. Austin Associates Inc.
- Kanava International
- SSG Advisors

Offices

Accra, Ghana (Main office)
Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
Dakar, Senegal

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OVERVIEW

USAID/West Africa's mission-wide goal is the West African-led advancement of social and economic well-being. The West Africa Trade Hub and African Partners Network (Trade Hub) contributes to this goal by building and working through a network of West African partners to expand trade and investment in targeted regionally and globally traded value chains. This work builds on a decade of USAID's trade-related assistance in West Africa and complements the work of USAID trade and investment hubs in east and southern Africa.



FOCUS AREAS

The Trade Hub works with national and regional associations and regional economic communities, helping them serve as leaders in adopting improved practices, attracting buyers and investors, and promoting implementation of regional trade agreements. The Trade Hub also works to improve the enabling environment by addressing transport constraints and trade barriers.

Improving Regional and Global Value Chains

The Trade Hub works with associations and lead firms to increase their capacity to expand trade in targeted value chains:

- Regional value chains (maize, millet, sorghum, rice, cattle, small ruminants)
- Global value chains (such as shea, cashew, mango, and apparel)

The Trade Hub also partners with Trade/African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Resource Centers across the region to provide information about trading requirements, including requirements for firms exporting to the United States under AGOA.

Increasing Access to Finance and Investment

By working through financial advisors and business service providers, the Trade Hub helps businesses develop applications for loans to expand their trade in targeted value chains and develop projects suitable for equity investors.

FOCUS AREAS (CONT.)

Facilitating an Enabling Environment for Trade and Transport

The Trade Hub improves implementation of regional transport and trade policies in collaboration with private sector advocacy groups, regional institutions such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), and national government entities such as customs agencies. The aim is to reduce bribes, delays, duplicative documentation, and other non-tariff barriers along targeted corridors.

GOING “BORDERLESS” IN WEST AFRICA

USAID, under the West Africa Trade Hub II (WATH II), a predecessor to the current Trade Hub, identified key measures to improve regional integration in West Africa following a comprehensive gap analysis on the ECOWAS Free Trade Area. The analysis identified the need for improved public–private dialogue and coordinated private sector advocacy regarding implementation of the ECOWAS Tariff Liberalization Scheme (ETLS).

As a result, WATH II assisted leading firms with trading and transport operations in the region to form a private sector association, known as the Borderless Alliance (BA). Established in 2011, the Alliance is a business association that leverages its members’ influence to identify and advocate for evidence-based transport and trade policy reforms. The Borderless Alliance’s membership base has since grown dramatically. The Borderless Alliance established an independent secretariat and founded National Committees in Côte d’Ivoire, Nigeria, Benin, and Senegal. It is thus well positioned for long-term sustainability and self-governance.

One of BA’s most successful endeavors has been the creation of Border Information Centers (BICs) at border posts along the highly-trafficked trade corridors in the region. As mentioned previously, the earlier analysis had highlighted the need to increase awareness of ETLS rules and procedures among the private companies trading and transporting goods within the region, as well as the public agencies responsible for regulating trade. Regional traders find that ports and land borders are major bottlenecks due to the multiplicity of rules and procedures required to move vehicles and goods through border processes—and the lack of consistency in implementation.

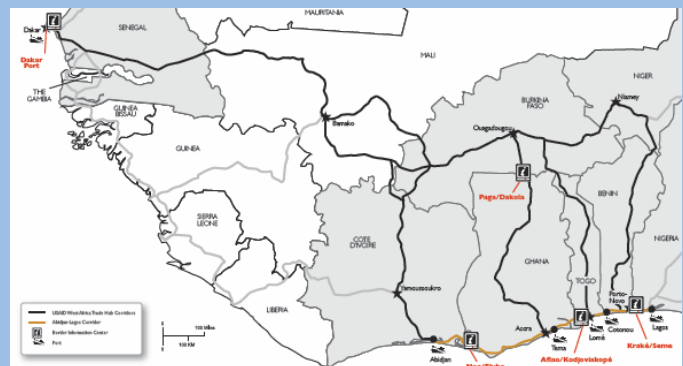
GOALS

The Trade Hub is working to achieve results in two broad areas:

- Increased private sector capacity to trade
- Improved transport and trade enabling environment

Key performance targets include:

- Increased trade in targeted sectors
- Increased investment in targeted sectors
- Decreased cost and time to trade along targeted corridors



Each BIC operates with two offices—one on either side of a land border. Each office is staffed with a knowledgeable trade advisor from the host country who advises shippers, truck drivers, producers, and traders on specifics of the regional agreements (and border clearance requirements of the entering or exiting country). With USAID support, from November 2011 to early 2014, the BIC network expanded to nine such information centers (see map).

Most BICs are established in partnership with the national shippers’ council of the host country, which usually provides the physical location of the center and which may provide in-kind support. Other financial support to the BICs comes from Customs agencies, national shippers’ councils, and other border stakeholders. USAID has supported the salaries of Trade Advisors (generally former Customs Officers of their respective countries) stationed at each border, and has funded training, coordination meetings, publications, and outreach activities.

USAID published a Border Information Center toolkit, intended to guide and inform future implementers on best practices in setting up and monitoring impact. BICs have yielded reductions in clearance times at the borders where they were launched.