



**StreetNet International**  
**Informal Cross-Border Trade (ICBT) Webinar Series Report**  
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Introduction

Webinar Series

1. Webinar one: *Simplified Trade Regime( STR)*, a system of border crossings for informal cross-border traders, and progress in COMESA, EAC & SADC.
2. Webinar two: *Advocacy Issues*, key findings and main recommendations.
3. Webinar three: *Conceptualizing negotiations with customs officials*.
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Key findings, main recommendations

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## Introduction

StreetNet International organized a series of webinars on Informal Cross-Border Trade (ICBT) with its West and Central African regional affiliates. The opening webinar on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March was the first among five series of webinars that were carried out between March 12 to June 30 2021.

Welcoming participants, *Oksana Abboud, StreetNet International Coordinator*, highlighted the importance of the webinar series, stressing that StreetNet International had initiated workshops on Informal Cross-Border trade in 2019 which sadly were obstructed by the Covid-19 pandemic crisis. **In recognition of ICBT concerns to informal traders even during the Covid-19 era, StreetNet went ahead with the webinar series as planned.**

The opening webinar was a plenary that focused on *updating participants on StreetNet's engagement on Informal Cross-Border Trade (ICBT) to date as well as introduce them to Simplified Trade Regime (STR) system* of border crossings for informal cross-border traders; whilst considering alternative ways of trading developed by ICBTs as result of COVID-19 border closures.

For the first webinar, SACBTA, an experienced partner in the ICBT issues, participated to assist SNI with expert and technical guidelines. Thus, they shared their experiences on Simplified Trade Regime (STR) developed model, as well as other tools and insights with participants. The series of these webinars was characterized by practical engagement of affiliates on the ground with outcomes that would inform further interventions.

The expectation of the introductory webinar was to share the knowledge that relates to the *Simplified Trade Regime (STR) system* which has worked quite well around many borders in Southern and Eastern Africa, to identify useful ideas and schemes that could help West and Central Africa affiliates in their activity. The process could be very long as it involves bi-lateral negotiations between the borders on either side, to agree on STR. This makes it a complex procedure which technical details SACBTA is familiar with, and aligned with [ILO Recommendation 204](#), which also guides SACBTA's work.

The second webinar had a wider scope beyond the theory of the *Simplified Trade Regime (STR) system*. On this webinar, we heard presentations from four StreetNet International affiliates in the region. They addressed **key findings and also identified important recommendations and advocacy opportunities**. We also learned from similar presentations by some of the SNI partners organizations in the region: Southern African Cross Borders Trade Association (SACBTA), Organization of Trade Unions of West Africa (OTUWA) and the African Trade Union Migration Network (ATUMNET, ITUC Africa).

The third webinar focused on *conceptualizing negotiations with customs officials*. It opened by reviewing the consolidated responses of StreetNet affiliates and the application of negotiation strategies. The main objective was to work on **identifying demands and inputs from all of the SNI affiliates**, as well as SNI partners, to negotiate with governments from both sides of the borders. At that point, some active negotiations in some of the borders in the region were already underway.

The fourth webinar focused on *planning for bilateral negotiations with customs officials*. Pat Horn, StreetNet Senior Advisor who was a main facilitator of the webinar series, presented the work done by StreetNet affiliates and partners in identifying the border countries in the West and Central African Region. Not all borders were identified but we managed to establish the extent of

the work that needs to be done. The follow-up work will continue, so that we can identify which of those borders we will focus on. On this webinar a sample of some of these interactions was presented.

On June 30, 2021, the series closed with the fifth and final webinar. The topic was *Initiating Regional Action Plan, A Way Forward*. From the information received from StreetNet affiliates about borders in their countries, each StreetNet affiliate in the West & Central African region was invited/challenged to initiate a cross-border project in partnership with the StreetNet affiliate/s or partner organization on the other side of the border. Pat Horn asked them to identify and prioritize this work.

**Webinar one: *Simplified Trade Regime (STR) system of border crossings for informal cross-border traders, and progress in COMESA, EAC & SADC – Presented by A.H. Tawanda, SACBTA. 12 March 2021***

Participants were drawn from all eighteen affiliates of StreetNet including CNTG of Guinea, FAINATRASIT of Togo, UNIWA of Ghana, FIWON of Nigeria; CSA of Benin, SYNAMAVAB of Benin, USYNVEPID of Benin, UGSEIN of Niger, FETTEI-CI of Cote d'Ivoire, SYTRIECI of Rwanda, ASSOVACO of DRC, LDFC of DRC, SNVC of DRC, CNTS of Senegal, SLeTU of Sierra Leone, FEPTIWUL of Liberia, SYNAVFL of Burkina Faso and SYVEBU of Burundi.

StreetNet International also invited on board its partners – ITUC-Africa represented by Comrade Joel Odigie, Deputy Secretary-General of the ITUC-Africa; OTUWA (*Organization of Trade Unions in West Africa*) represented by Comrade John Odah, Executive Secretary; and SACBTA (*Southern African Cross-Border Traders' Association*) represented by Sister Patricia Chisi and Comrade Jacob Makambwe from Zambia – Members of SACBTA Executive Committee and led by Comrade A. H. Tawanda, SACBTA Executive Secretary. Also in attendance were ATUMNET representatives: Comrades Fambaye Ndoeye of Senegal and Michael Kandukutu of Zimbabwe.

**Background: StreetNet's engagement to date with ICBT**

Pat Horn, SNI Senior Advisor, offered some background information regarding the collaboration of StreetNet International (SNI) and SACBTA in this area. StreetNet and SACBTA have collaborated on this topic since 2004. In 2004, Pat and Comrade Tawanda held some discussion on the ICBT issue during the World Social Forum in Nigeria. In 2011, they held another discussion in Maputo at a Southern African meeting concerning the recognition SACBTA had received from the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

They managed to establish STR (Simplified Trade Regime) for members within and outside COMESA for simplified border crossing. For this reason SNI was approached to help and strengthen members' capacity in promotion of STR, initially between Zambia - Zimbabwe and Zimbabwe – Malawi borders; as well as the capacity of those which belonged to the Southern Africa Customs Union (SACU): South Africa, Namibia, Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland. The intervention of StreetNet International brought great relief to those who were not members of COMESA.

***Simplified Trade Regime (STR) system of border crossings for informal cross-border traders, and progress in COMESA, EAC & SADC – Presented by A.H. Tawanda, SACBTA***

Comrade Tawanda acknowledged the collaboration SACBTA has had with SNI, stressing that **there is a close relationship between cross-border trade and the informal economy. There is also a strong bond between small scale farmers, informal economy workers and cross-border traders**, hence SACBTA and SNI's collaboration. Of all the regional bodies that included COMESA (Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa), SATUC (South Africa Trade Union Council), and EAC (East African Community), COMESA was the one who responded to the call by Cross-border Traders. With a strong cross-border movement in Zambia, they launched a campaign for ICBT. In 2009, The European Union (EU) came on board to fund in support of their interventions aimed at introducing STR in the COMESA region. This enabled them to assess the situation of Cross-border traders and proceed with a basic framework for needed responses.

In 2010, when STR worked between Zambia and Malawi and regulations were agreed upon, bilateral negotiations were held between countries on their borders. A list of goods cross-border traders could trade without customs authorities' interference came up – traders were to trade within the range of goods approved on the list.

Supporting desks known as TIDOFs were set up to facilitate the border crossing movement of informal traders.

Another achievement relates to the provision of Simplified Custom Certificate of origin – a unique paper declaration stating which products are duty-free, and at the back, what quantity was declared by traders. The traders are given a limit that starts with goods worth \$500, then \$1000, and later \$2000 per transaction per day.

COMESA introduced committees at the border and national levels with traders' representatives. The national working group was inter-ministerial, chaired by the ministry responsible for small-scale trade. All other government agencies having something to do with movement of goods at the borders were represented. The 3<sup>rd</sup> committee is by COMESA, which looks at the issues from a higher regional perspective. These are the structures that are running the COMESA STR.

This mechanism provides a very good service of which 90% of beneficiaries are women. It is also providing data on goods and their movement which the trade information officers collect and release to various ministries which need such information on CBTAs (Cross-Border Trade Agreements) within the COMESA regional body.

At the moment COMESA STR is working better in some borders than in others, as a result of funding of support structures – such as custom documents and the trade information desk infrastructure. Another EU program is about to be launched to address such challenges to re-invigorate the programme.

### **Benefits from COMESA**

SADC region traders needed to work. In EAC (East African Community), STR is being systematically followed like the one outlined above. It is in the SADC region where there are more challenges. In collaboration of SACBTA with SNI, they have managed to push organisers there for redress. Unfortunately, Covid-19 concerns have affected the process.

On the part of COMESA, in the face of restrictions in movement, newer measures are being taken. Cross-Border Traders are being given smaller quantities of goods to clear, like the former times where they had to hire a clearing agent like the bigger businesses. There is also the issue of loss of markets and loss of incomes that have emerged as a result of Covid-19 pandemic. Already, COMESA has started a discourse around the current challenges.

### **Alternative ways of trading developed by ICBTs as result of COVID-19 border closures – by Comrade Jacob Makambwe, SACBTA**

Brother Jacob addressed some of the STR challenges, the new methodologies being used and offered some advocacy suggestions:

#### **Challenges:**

- When COMESA established its structures through the EU funding, there was no exit strategy regarding how to continue its activities after the funding halted. Concerns with sustainability highlighted the issue of small traders not paying any service fees. They have now begun to pay some service fees, in order to pay the desk officers and foster sustainability of the structures. The STR was handed over to cross border associations in

different countries to find means to sustain the system. This would make traders own the system yet it calls for capacity building to attract resources to help manage the STR.

- As the borders slowly opened up, a lot of barriers started to come up due to the Covid-19 measures in place. These measures made STR a bit irrelevant, as traders are now subjected to so many payments in order to move. An example of these additional costs is the acquisition of Covid certificate with Covid test, which costs a lot of money for small traders; it is also difficult to get a permit which would last for 48 hours only.

#### **New methodologies:**

- There are new methodologies for traders from Zimbabwe/Malawi/Zambia which rely on the use of digital platforms to follow processes of Cross-Border payment systems in place. These methodologies have also come with additional cost. SNI and SACBTA jointly embarked on awareness raising at the borders of Zambia and Botswana
- Sometimes, the customs officials do not allow traders to enter the country according to the list and regulations of STR. These lists need to be reviewed – which call for two countries sitting for bilateral negotiations.
- The implementation of STR in the SADC region has reached a point where SACBTA is bringing in non-state actors to the conversation on regional integration.
- At the meeting in Botswana, the traders needed first to understand the threshold that should apply at the implementation of the STR.

#### **Advocacy opportunities:**

- Organisations that are advocating for ICBT need to strategize in the sub-region. They will have to take advantage of the August 2021 Forum of SADC Heads of States meeting, for the implementation of STR.
- Upon the ratification of the African continental Free Trade agreement, stakeholders should create advocacy models
- The region (Central/West Africa) ought to learn from the successes and shortfalls that have occurred in COMESA or SADC's attempt to implement the STR regime.

#### **Comments from participants:**

##### **Challenges:**

- Government custom agents should make the list of goods more visible and ensure desk officers work efficiently.
- Because Covid-19 has kept traders from moving freely, the STR should be made to provide safety nets for traders.
- Governments ought to intervene as the cost of transactions is too high. There are a lot of checkpoints just to cross the border.
- One key hindrance to trade around the borders of DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo) is its instability.
- There is a need for the government to intervene to protect women, as many of them get harassed and lose their products. They are not protected by current regulations.
- There is a need to identify the entry points with the assistance of organizations that represent street vendors/ Cross-Border Traders, and also to identify challenges and benefits

### Advocacy opportunities:

- Following the interventions of COMESA, the many issues confronting several African countries ought to be addressed to facilitate trading at the borders.
- Organisations should draft strategies of advocacy/lobbying to provide an opportunity to get state actors to come into terms with the situation of traders, taking into consideration existing evidence.
- Regional integration will help address issues for improved co-existence.
- It is important to engage national governments who have direct linkage to the organs in ECOWAS
- There should be a collective strategy/mechanism, for providing evidence of issues of Cross Border Trade for Regional Economic Blocs, to start responding to the needs of ICBTs within the region of Africa.
- As Continental Free Trade Agreement discourse progresses, smart advocacy is needed with a voice for regional interventions to uphold the practice of continental STR. It should be advocated to be adopted at the African Union level by organisations that represent the interests of ICBT.

### Final comments and recommendations

**H. Tawanda's remarks:** Many times, ill treatment of Informal Traders comes up. This is an advocacy issue and it is a great idea that SNI has raised this at the continental level.

It is caused by rejection and lack of recognition. To be able to deal with this, partners have to build a strong advocacy. To achieve this, there is need for support of regional level institutions – it will be a lot easier to win at the regional level; igniting discussions into the regional debate. This form of interventions should be continued until entry points are found. There is a need to have one voice at country, sub-region and regional levels. If ECOWAS trade taxes are harmonized, it will facilitate acquisition of certificates of origin.

**John Odah's remark:** As far as West Africa is concerned, it is the first region on the continent to have the protocol of free movement of goods and persons which came into effect in 1979. It has gone through the needed three phases completely. This means that any citizen from the fifteen (15) ECOWAS countries should be able to move freely and do business without any harassment. One of the issues Informal Cross border Traders face is institutionalized corruption. There are a series of checkpoints where no matter how genuine one's documents are, the officials subject traders with tactics of harassment and delays to extort money from them; after which the custom officers and other security officers at post share those sums – the money does not go to the government.

[OTUWA](#) conducted research on that and the report will be shared among participants. It plans to contact institutions for redress of the matter. The system in the [ECOWAS](#) could have been more advanced if not for the corrupt practices.

**Joel Odigie's remark:** ICBT initiative is an important thing to pursue. At the level of the African Union, there is an Officer in charge of Cross-Border Trade whose name he will find and liaise with her with the project. Women go through a lot of corrupt hazards and harassment. ITUC-Africa will commit further to the project of ICBT as it will help address issues of women and youth. As a Pan-African organization, it will continue to collaborate with Informal Economy actors with ATUMNET integrated interventions.

**Pat:** Appreciated the contextualization of the issues raised as it could inform interventions on the way forward.

## Webinar two: Advocacy issues – Key findings & Recommendations

Pat Horn, SNI Senior Adviser, who continued to facilitate this ICBT webinar series welcomed all the participants and asked if they had received and reviewed the reading materials shared after the first webinar about **Simplified Trade Regime (STR)**. She added that the STR has started being practiced in countries that are members of COMESA and that the SADC region had decided to also adopt the STR in the different parts of the region. Pat mentioned that there has been a delay in establishing the STR in different countries in the SADC region, because after they decided to implement it, there were many border closures due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Pat also highlighted that this second webinar would have a **wider scope beyond the theory of STR**. We heard about the main challenges the Informal Cross-Border Traders are facing in the region, as well as key findings, main recommendations and some suggested **advocacy areas** from four StreetNet International affiliates as well as three SNI partner organizations.

### StreetNet International affiliates that presented during this webinar were:

1. FIWON (*Federation of Informal Workers' Organisations of Nigeria*). Presented by Gbenga Komolafe.
2. SLeTU (*Sierra Leone Traders Union*). Presented by Aaron Boima.
3. SYTRIECI (*Syndicat des Travailleurs Independents de l'Economie Informelle*) from Rwanda. Presented by Jeannette Nyiramasengesho. She also represents StreetNet in ATUMNET structure.
4. CNTS (*Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs du Sénégal*). Presented by Annie Diouf.

### Partners organizations that presented during this webinar were:

1. Southern African Cross Borders Trade Association (SACBTA). Presented by Eric Chikukwa and Jacob Makambwe.
2. Organization of Trade Unions of West Africa (OTUWA). Presented by John Odah.
3. African Trade Union Migration Network (ATUMNET, ITUC – Africa). Presented by Joel Odigie.

### Key findings:

The findings presented by the affiliates and partners shared similarities. This allows us to conclude that many issues faced by ICB Trades are endemic. Here are the key findings captured in categories.

#### Gender-based violence issues:

- **Women are over 70 % of the workers that cross borders for trading.**
- ICBT women faced constant gender-based violence, even at family level. ICBT women face domestic violence and family conflict all resulting from the long hours women have to travel from one country to another.
- For many of the women, ICBT is the only available economic opportunity outside agriculture. The aftermath of Covid-19 has had a very negative effect on ICBT women, e.g, due to the economic burden of the pandemic, a large part of their business capital has gone into taking care of their households, as a lot of the ICBT women are the breadwinners of their families.

- Women traders are subjected to various types of gender-based violence as well as harassment, intimidation, robbery and sexual exploitation. This violence is perpetrated by custom officials and police. This abuse is rampant.

Violence, harassment, corruptions practices by officials:

- ICBT faced rampant corruption and requisites for payment of unregistered fees. As reported by some members, when going to neighbouring countries, if ICBTs do not have 30,000 CFA in their pocket, they cannot travel, so they can not trade to make a living.
- Informal traders, whether they cross legally or illegally, face challenges. For example, in the town of Ibadan in Nigeria, a special custom task force raided the market where food is sold. They carted away six trailer loads of foreign rice. This means that even after they evade all other obstacles at the border posts - in the Nigerian context and in other areas - they still stand the risk as traders to have all their goods confiscated by a government task force aiming to track illegal smuggling of items. This will need understanding at national and international level.
- Smuggling is rampant within this region, the roots of this have to be underscored. The examples of this can be found with some of the comments of Sierra Leone regarding Certificate of Origin of products.
- ICBT experienced high levels of violence and harassment by government agencies/officials at the borders, affecting primarily women and young men.
- Some of the traders have been arrested and jailed because they are labeled as spies, e.g the Rwandan traders who move to neighboring countries
- Loss of goods, in particular when the ICBTs are not able to pay taxes. Their goods are confiscated.

Policies issues:

- The border clearance processes are lengthy with a lot of unnecessary document requests, ICBTs face long hours of travel and a lot of time away from family.
- Currently there is no coordination between the rural apparatus and the traders that are using the roads.
- Not having a Certificate of Origin is a challenge faced by ICBTs. There is a lack of knowledge on how to access these Certificates of Origin - this issue is particularly important for SLeTU (from Sierra Leone), which highlighted small scale traders, because they are not producing the products they are selling. Revenue authorities are reluctant to give a certificate of origin to a trader who just buys from a factory which is not registered by the revenue authority in that particular country.
- The policies for partial reopening of borders in Rwanda and the DRC side have only helped the formal businesses, not the ICBTs.
- Lack of clarity on custom procedures regulations, on goods prices and updates on currency
- The technology used at borders and how to use the system is complicated for informal cross border traders.
- The requirement of taking a Covid-19 test every two weeks is a difficult policy for ICBTs
- Due to the current pandemic policies, conversations with government officials about ICBT is a complicated issue.
- There are too many duties and they are very high. For example, in Liberia most goods are from across the border.
- There is no prominent citizens' participatory process on police development related to border crossing.
- One that was surprising the most, was the way the Health and Safety Agency behaved around these issues, the way they patrol the border.

- The issue of border closures due to Covid-19 measures has been an issue, same as the protocols they put in place when they opened them again

#### Trade agreements implementation issues:

- The regional trade agreements, like the ECOWAS, do not seem to be proactive at all in tackling the issues that are affecting the informal cross border traders.
- Issues of regional integration based on accords and treaties on financial and monitoring aspects. Example, Senegal has not implemented many of these agreements.
- The ETRS should be seen as a working document.
- In Southern Africa, countries have been called upon to ratify and implement treaties agreed at the regional level, but we've seen slow implementation efforts at national level.
- There is little to no coordination of small scale traders crossing the borders - They have been able to create one front, to have a bigger voice to advocate for the implementation of agreements that have been signed bilaterally or at the regional level in West Africa.
- There is a lot of fear in ratifying these proposals. People fear that foreigners will come and get their jobs.
- To document what people moving from one country to another encountered regarding the issues of the ECOWAS protocols and its implementation issues, OTUWA conducted a scoping exercise, in which 2 people traveled through 5 countries in this subregion and documented their experiences. This was done in Dec. 2019, just before the Covid-19 pandemic hit: They went from Abuja to Lagos, traveling by road across 5 land borders (Benin, Togo, Accra, Abidjan...). They discovered several security agencies operating differently in Nigeria alone, for example, **it was discovered that there were 10 security agencies that were operating differently from each other** (migration services, custom services, drug agency, secret police, Nigerian Police, Military task force, federal and safety agency, Nigerian Security force, Quarantine Services etc). You have to "settle" with each agency. With the key agencies you have to pay and settle whether you like it or not. Also there was a well established extortion rick (transporters, trade officers and border officers). Those with ECOWAS passports, National and some other regional passports pay different rates of money to all these 10 agencies which is then used to bribe all these officers.
- All along the route they took, they discovered signs of a lot of smuggling, such as petroleum products, textile materials, foreign rice, etc. At the last border to Abidjan they were obligated to pay 10,000 Nairas, without a receipt, otherwise they would not be allowed to enter.
- Also, there was an obligation to pay for meningitis vaccinations (2,500 Nairas), even if you have had it already.
- The African country members are not willing to move to implement trade protocols, because the members are more comfortable with the colonial ways.
- The question about ITLS rule is not working, talking about the ECOWAS, people are not respecting how this works.

#### Knowledge barriers:

- Illiteracy among ICBTs is prevalent. There is a lack of knowledge of the trade procedures including those aimed at facilitating trade, as well as lack of understanding laws and the subject of trade.
- In some border areas ICBTs faced language barriers (French and/or English barriers).
- There is a lack of knowledge and information on trade protocols that facilitate trade.

#### Organization and Representation issues:

- A main problem for ICBTs is that they do not belong to any organization.

- Few organizations are vocal about these issues, others suppress their views because there is no platform for discussing them.

Border crossings infrastructure issues:

- Transportation expenses are very high, roads and infrastructure are extremely poor which account for the long hours of trips, often through long winding bush roads in order to avoid the custom posts.
- There are poor cross border service facilities and limited working hours at the borders.

Lack of access to resources:

- ICBTs have very little access to productive resources like land and financial resources such as loans, which they could use to formalize their businesses and expand their operations.
- There is an absence of financially reliable women agencies to assist the local women. ICBTs lack access to credits.

### **Recommendations:**

The set of recommendations made by the affiliates showed that informal economy workers organizations are identifying similar ways to address the issues. It was very reassuring to see that partner organizations were on the same page on how to move forward. There was a strong call for collaboration with partners and like-minded organizations. Below is the list of main recommendations captured in categories.

Trade agreements:

- To identify the extent **to which the regional and sub-regional trade protocols such as the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA) agreements could assist ICBT.**
- To install an information desk at the borders in order to help with the implementation of the Simplified Trade Regime and inform traders about the goods eligible to be transported between borders.
- To promote the full implementation and respect for the trade treaties signed by the governments of ICBTs
- To request that ECOWAS subsidise work permits for ICBTs, to be able to work daily.
- To establish license renewal places at the borders.
- To have a common understanding of a Simplified Trade Regime (STR). The procedures and processes for this task are important.
- For ITUC-Africa and OTUWA to engage with the ECOWAS secretariat to facilitate work of ICBTs' organizations. To learn how ICBT can improve the Free Movement of People and Goods and services, to follow the example of the ITUC-Africa and its relationship with ECOWAS.
- To collaborate with the ECOWAS commission to develop strategies of aligning national borders management agencies into an Integrated ECOWAS Border Management Body.
- To collaborate with the ECOWAS commission and other partners to build a campaign that prioritizes capacity building of relevant agencies involved in border management services, such as customs, police and migration.
- To engage in lobbying to establish ECOWAS moto-parks in major cities, where there are cross border checkpoints for traders moving along the border.
- To advocate for the governments at all levels in this subregion to prune the numbers of checkpoints for international border crossing in international highways and to put mechanisms in place to identify and to stop these rings of corruption.

- To advocate for the simplification of trading agreement rules while crossing the border especially for the small-scale traders.
- To lobby for a new passport implementation process. Nowadays, that the African passport has been adopted, the process is not moving well, and the Covid-19 pandemic did not help.
- To request that visas on arrivals (at the border) be eliminated.
- To put ICBT Service Assistance Locations at border crossings to help traders when they need it. An initiative like this, together with lobbying and advocacy work could help bring visibility to the ICBT challenges and contributions, by government/agency officials and other intended target audiences.
- To demand uniform rules for cross border traders, including informal traders.

#### Communication activities, advocacy & awareness campaigns:

- To create advocacy and awareness campaigns, targeting the general public and main stakeholders at the border communities.
- To work on media engagement strategy, to invite local and national media channels, radio stations and television networks to meetings with border authorities.
- To advocate for ICBTs' access to credits/small loans with reasonable interest.
- To develop public awareness campaigns towards the members of African Union countries to promote the ICBT issues at the international, African, regional levels.
- To document best practices to help in learning from each other.
- To put together PR campaigns to address the perception of ICBT in the region.
- To provide ID cards for ICBTs, to challenge the identity issue (being called spies).
- To organize a forum on strategies/advocacy that includes raising awareness and joint advocacy, even among cross border traders.
- To advocate for one stop border posts crossing like the case of Malawi and Zambia.
- To communicate a message that by improving the working conditions of the ICBT would discourage people from immigrating to other countries of Africa, Europe or any other place in the world.
- To stress that ICBTs are organized nationally, regionally and globally

#### Collective bargaining/negotiation process work:

- To initiate meetings on both sides of the borders with local/national authorities, government border authorities, and engage in collective bargaining negotiation process with the customs officials and other relevant government agencies concerned with informal cross border trade.
- To hold cross border meetings, including ICBTs organizations on both sides of the border, government agencies involved in cross borders trade, and to include trade unions in these conversations, where possible.
- To request the implementation of simplified customs documents.
- To put together ICBTs organizations' negotiations committees and their demands.
- To request that StreetNet International and partners organizations help to facilitate ICBT stakeholders' engagement with border agencies and government officials to discuss issues and challenges.

#### Capacity building:

- To strengthen organizing practices and leadership skills of the ICBTs organizations and to establish horizontal and vertical linkages of traders with governments agencies and other stakeholders in ICBT target areas.
- To work on increasing the knowledge and skills of ICBT on regional trade agreements, labor and migrant rights, negotiation skills, social protection knowledge, social dialogue, collective bargaining and entrepreneurial skills

- To develop skills of ICBTs in entrepreneurship, business management etc – to help them document and finance their small-scale businesses.
- To work on knowledge exchange exercises among ICBTs affiliates and regional cooperation with SNI affiliates.
- To provide capacity building to ICBTs to learn how to navigate the Certificate of Origin requirements.

Joint collaborations:

- To continue with joint collaboration strategies with relevant stakeholders e.g. StreetNet International, OTUWA, ITUC-Africa and Trade Unions in the Sub-region of West Africa,
- To engage the organization responsible for Certificates of Origin to educate their membership and also guide them on how to get it in order to help their members.
- To build relationships with communities along the borders, so they can have a saying on influencing border crossing policy development.

Research, mapping, scoping exercises:

- To do a mapping to identify the layers of players and their roles including customs, police and the army, the local organisation/s, the women groups themselves, the role of supporting NGOs if there are any, community based organisations and traditional institutions.
- To work on scoping exercises to identify the women's understanding of legal requirements of their trade and how they relate to these requirements.
- To conduct more studies to continue unpacking the main issues the ICBTs are confronting, and to think with them and other stakeholders how these issues can be resolved.

**StreetNet and regional partners opportunities for joint collaboration:**

As per the work being done by some of the partners, StreetNet International identifies at least 3 different areas of possible collaboration:

- **Joint studies:** as mentioned by OTUWA, some of such studies are being done in the region which makes the work easier. A possible way forward is for the 3 organizations – StreetNet International, OTUWA, and ATUMNET (ITUC-Africa) – to work together to define some areas for joint collaboration in a near future on the issue of ICBT.

The research that has been done by some of the stakeholders themselves could be one of those areas of collaboration. OTUWA's last recommendation about doing some studies (to further the research they mentioned) is an opportunity for SNI to work on some of these activities together. This could help some of our regional affiliates to be part of these studies.

- **Advocacy work:** Our partners are based in Central and West Africa and are far ahead of SNI in forging relationships with ECOWAS. StreetNet needs to rely on its partner/s to assist on the lobby/advocacy efforts of the ECOWAS structures.
- **Negotiation teams:** The third area is – to task StreetNet members of finding negotiation teams among themselves on their common borders. To build some bilateral negotiations with the different agencies, such as custom officials and the different stakeholders in the border. Some affiliates already have ideas about the borders they want to tackle.

**Closing comments:**

**Pat Horn** noted that it was very clear that a lot of these problems are endemic, they need to be tackled by joint action. This requires to be well organized and work on joint campaigns.

**Oksana Abboud, SNI International Coordinator** thanked everyone for all their input and a hard work. It was good to see some clear ideas and recommendations on how to move forward. She also stressed the importance of having a clear vision on how we are going to collaborate with different partners on the issue of ICBTs, while also considering the Covid-19 pandemic context; how we are going to participate in the discussions on opening borders and what the formalities and protocols for this work would be like. Oksana also highlighted the importance of the ICBT issue in general as there is a potential to replicate this project into other regions and other continents of SNI.

**Evelyn Benjamin-Sampson, SNI West and Central African Regional Organizer** thanked everyone for their active participation and committed herself for a follow up work and any assistance the affiliates might need especially in the further stages of this project implementation process.

### **Webinar three: Conceptualizing negotiations with customs officials.**

The webinar opened by reviewing the consolidated responses of StreetNet affiliates and the application of negotiations' strategy.

#### **Conceptualizing negotiations with customs officials**

**Discussion of consolidated responses of StreetNet affiliates and application of negotiations strategy:** The webinar opened by reviewing the consolidated responses of StreetNet affiliates and the application of negotiations strategy. Pat Horn, explaining the activity sheet title "Preparing for negotiation, mandates and practice".

She mentioned 10 tips that would help members in the negotiations' planning stage. Also what must be done before the negotiations start, then explain the Do's and Don'ts during negotiation process.

Pat also explained what you should do when you get stuck while negotiating, and what needs to be done at the end and after the negotiations.

#### **The "Three Golden Rules" in any negotiation:**

- 1. Never Negotiate alone;**
- 2. Never make a deal without agreement of members**
- 3. Maintain unity while negotiating.**

Pat went on to discuss the 10-point checklist for negotiators.

It was noted that 85% of SNI affiliates in the region submitted responses to the activity sheet "Preparing for negotiation, mandates and practice". To see the full list of demands received from the various affiliates, see Annex documents: List of Demands from StreetNet affiliates in the region, page...)

#### **Focus on creation of consultation framework between neighbouring countries: Presented by Angelique Kipulu, Secretary-General of LDFC (DRC)**

**The problem:** The weak cooperation between neighboring countries. The borders are sources of conflict with too many trade and movement barriers. Angelique stated that the DRC has borders with 9 other countries. There have been significant interactions between small traders, tourism workers, importers and others, in order to evaluate the progress of trade agreements and to standardize the prices of items.

**The proposed solution:** The **creation of a consultation framework** should be based on well defined values and principles agreed by everyone involved in the negotiations. It should strengthen the free movement of people and trade of goods and services as supported by the African Union in the neighboring countries of the DRC, as well as throughout Africa. The objective of this space is to make the interventions of the inhabitants of neighboring countries effective and coherent, as well as reinforce peace between neighboring countries. The executive should be rotated by member countries of the region or sub-region. We propose a duration of one year. A joint approach could help strengthen the region. It can help create economic opportunities between neighboring countries and regional countries. It can also promote peace and cultural exchanges.

#### **Focus on demand for a one-stop processing point. Presented by Deborah Freeman, Secretary General, UNIWA – Ghana.**

**The problem:** ICBTs have to go through too many checkpoints when crossing the border. They are calling on all the Ghana border agencies to work together to solve the problem. Often the ICBTs complain that at each checkpoint they are forced to pay bribes by the government officials. The demand is that there should be **just one checkpoint and all processes should be done once, to stop the bribes.**

**The proposed solution:** ICBTs are planning to write a proposal to the government to describe their challenges and are prepared to do all that is needed to follow through this demand process. To avoid double taxation at the borders, ICBTs are also planning to negotiate with the Ghana Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Trade, and Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA). They proposed that these two offices work together with other relevant authorities in charge of collecting revenues, so that a guideline is put in place to avoid double taxation. ICBTs from UNIWA are calling for a joint collaboration to find a solution in the shortest possible time.

**Focus on compliance with agreements between ECOWAS countries. Presented by Marcelline Adopo, Secretary General of FETEI-CI (Côte d'Ivoire).**

15 members of the Economic Community of West African States (**ECOWAS**), speak the following languages:

- French (8): Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo
- English (5): Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone
- Portuguese (2): Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde.

**The problem:** Customs and other law enforcement agencies do not respect and/or follow the ECOWAS agreement. For example, in the case of products that leave Nigeria towards Côte d'Ivoire, all the countries through which the merchandise passes, which are Benin, Togo and Ghana, will charge duty. Also the conversion of currencies (CFA to CEDI or CFA to Naira) is often a problem. There is a lack of reciprocity in administrative treatment and lack of standardization of relevant texts in national legislations regarding free movement.

**The proposed solution:** To standardize the practices and relevant texts in the national legislations. It is often said that it is necessary to move from the "Community of States" to the "Community of people". The common cultural practices will be a positive factor for a successful integration.

**Technical feedback by partners organization on SNI affiliates presentations:**

**Jacob Makambwe from SACBTA.**

He stated that the key is – to put together a very strong negotiation team that will help guide the process and the recommendations and that will work to ensure its implementation.

Much work has been done and many have talked about the state of negotiations, particularly with authorities. He believed that we must reflect about the framework of negotiations. As an example, a new bridge for cross-border trade has been built between Zambia and Botswana and the tolls that have been put in place are so high, its cost is prohibited for most small traders. In this particular case we are talking about how to take this to the parliament. We also need a collective agreement in this region to facilitate the movement of people, goods and services. Countries in West Africa have standard policies to facilitate the work of cross-border traders within the region, we have to work towards a multi-country agenda to expand these policies' reach.

Strong leadership within the group is important to build confidence in the negotiations. Some of you talked about the impediments for negotiations. Within peace-building programs, there are

border officers who can help manage issues, such as in the border between Zambia and the DRC and allow trade to take place, even in conflict areas.

**John Odah from OTUWA.**

He started by addressing a point from FETTEI-CI, about the ECOWAS. He clarified that Morocco tried to join ECOWAS which was a bit strange, because geographically, it is not in West Africa. That effort was unsuccessful. Mauritania is in West Africa, but opted to join another economic region, so it is not part of ECOWAS.

There are difficulties around currencies. France has been trying to sabotage the efforts of West African economic integration. Because France has maintained since independence a control over the economies of these Francophone countries and saw the ECOWAS efforts as a threat. Each time we are moving from one country to another, you have to change your currency, which means a lot of money is lost during these currency conversions. There is a lack of political will to solve this issue. The countries of the ECOWAS need to make the necessary moves to integrate their currencies and economies, so the free movement of people, goods and trade, can be implemented as it was envisioned in 1979.

Regarding the issue of the **one-stop processing point**, this is a very important point that in all respective countries we need the federal agencies to integrate into a stop. **We need to speak with one single voice and a single agenda to address this issue.**

Regarding the issues of bribes and extortion, the work of our team in 5 countries across the region made it clear that the security agencies in each country demanded money to pass the border. If you are entering Côte D'Ivoire for the first time, you have to pay a lot of money. The solution is that we need to document the current practices to put together a baseline for each country. With this information in hand, we can then approach our respective countries to put a demand as a first step towards making a case for West Africa-wide uniform application. We can draw the attention of relevant authorities to the bad practices and the challenges our people are facing when entering the ECOWAS's region countries.

The plan was that by 2020, ECOWAS was going to move from an idea between member states to a full regional integration of all the 15 countries. We are now in 2021, and the reality is that we are far from that level of integration. The desire to integrate our various components in the subregion is something that the political elite has not been able to actualize.

**Final comments from participants:**

**Jacob Makambwe from SACBTA:** The question he posed was how SACBTA can help to provide some type of technical assistance to those affiliates that would be open to try these negotiations. He mentioned that regarding the DRC, as we know, it is a huge country, and there are affiliates of SACBTA in some other parts of the DRC, those are the cross border traders associations in the part closer to Zambia. So, the question is whether it is possible for these affiliates that are already organized to cooperate in this process with the SNI affiliates? The SACBTA affiliates could be quite instrumental to provide some kind of capacity or may help guide our colleagues that are dealing with borders in other regions, to learn from them to provide a way to talk with the government or help draft documents to negotiate with the government. It is just a matter how we can help to promote these contacts.

**Joel Odigie from ATUMNET/ITUC-Africa:** He pointed that it is good to have the summaries with the notes that have been shared about what are the issues we are currently negotiating. More

importantly are the strategies about how to handle these issues. Border closures are an important issue for our affiliates as many members depend on borders to trade on a daily basis and their incomes have been impacted greatly during this pandemic. We need to speak of the urgency of opening borders. The issue of health and safety of ICBTs became much more important due to Covid-19 pandemic. Our list of demands should include access to water at the border crossing spots. We should demand to be included in the set up and implementation of those water stations as we don't want those plans to then become an obstacle for us to cross the border. It is important to identify what are the issues for trading in the African continent. For example, the gender based violence faced by ICBTs - these are the kind of issues we need to focus on for negotiations. We need to negotiate with our government the ratification and implementation of the ILO C190 on elimination of violence and harassment. We must also speak about Health and Safety as a fundamental workers' right which is part of the ILO recommendation. We need to have a joint strategy in which individual interest should not trump collective interest. We need to identify possible champions. We need stronger leadership. Advocacy won't work if it is not in the public domain. We need to take time to invite media friendly people.

Some of the countries have made some commitment with some supra national agreements, this is going to be the case with the ECOWAS countries, we need to keep that point in our considerations, and think about other supra national agreements as we approach our negotiations.

ATUMNET/ITUC-Africa, will let SNI to guide us on the prioritization process. They will work on trying to put these issues at the negotiation table at the different border places. When this effort is successful, ITUC-Africa will bring to the table the trade union across the continent to advance the cause.

**Jacob Makambwe from SACBTA:** There is not one single approach that can solve it all, so probably we need to find processes on how we are better able to engage with the governments. We have a common problem, the borders are closed. We found ways to negotiate with presidents from DRC, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Zambia, so this shows that regional integration is key to integrating the regions. As SNI and as SACBTA, we need to create a framework about our engagement strategy. Maybe we need to think about a strategy that can be replicated. A document that can guide us on how we can engage with different agencies and different levels of government for economic growth. Covid-19 has restricted the movement of people across borders, so we must also have a strategy for when the government allows us to move to make sure that movement is not more restricted than before Covid-19. We need to talk about vaccine roll ups. If the numbers of vaccines are low, are we ready to put ourselves on the list of priority due to the nature of our business? We need to develop communication tools to explain our strategy plan to the informal traders and other stakeholders. We need to develop capacities, such as communication strategies, documentation of what we want to communicate to our counterpart.

#### **Pat Horn closing comments:**

Pat started by addressing the StreetNet International affiliates presentations: **One stop border crossing is one of the most important demands we can work on jointly, because of the time that people waste at the various different checkpoints and also because of the various different requirements. This contributes to not only time but income loss for the informal cross border traders.**

To partner organizations: When Jacob Makambwe from SACBTA, mentioned the border between Zambia and DRC, we learned that there are officers in the border between DRC and Zambia that can help mediate during conflict resolutions. The suggestion is for the SNI organizers to help

facilitate the relevant people and organizations in this area to connect with each other to start conversations.

With the input from John Odah of OTUWA, we learned about the politics of ECOWAS and what led some countries not to be part of ECOWAS. These are the regional politics we need to be aware of for ICBT work in the region.

We will be focusing on how to get negotiations started. The next step for SNI organizations is to identify affiliates in the other side of borders so they can work together with - e.g. Liberia has a border with Guinea where there is CNTG affiliate and in Sierra Leone – SLeTU, so the organization in Liberia can work in partnership with SLeTU on setting up negotiations about the shared border, and then other with CNTG. There are language issues, but SNI organizers such as Evelyn, who speak English and French can assist in communication. We would like to suggest starting those partnerships where StreetNet affiliates can start negotiating with affiliates from bordering countries and authorities.

The plan of this webinar was also to identify demands we want to negotiate. We already talked about consultative forums, one-stop points for dealing with requirements, the demands to get members of ECOWAS to comply with the protocols - because there is much non-compliance of member countries. Those are just some of the demands. What we want to do now is for SNI affiliates to start identifying among themselves and setting up those partnerships. They should all start talking to each other about how to work together to get a joint negotiation going with authorities on the shared border. Before the next webinar, we will get the affiliates to start identifying those borders.

It is also important to look at the StreetNet Resolution about ICBT from the 6th countries in 2019, sponsored by 3 affiliates from West Africa (SLeTU, FEPTIWUL, FIWON) but was extended to the whole region. The Resolution will be re-sent to all, so we can actively start implementing the resolution, which is starting to have those negotiations across identified borders. We have hundreds of borders in the West African region. We know when we did this exercise in another region, there were hundreds as well. So we start with borders with affiliates on both sides where we are strongly organized. Whatever demand you have identified, it is now incumbent on you as affiliates to interact with each other horizontally and identify common demands from both sides of the border and jointly approach border authorities. We will be talking about this a lot more in the work you will do between the two webinars. You have identified very good demands which must start being negotiated with the counterparts you identified before as well.

We are moving toward getting some active negotiation in at least some of the borders in the region. We need to identify inputs from all of our affiliates as well as our partners. ASSOVACO is our affiliate in the East side of the DRC, bordering Rwanda, Burundi and the East African Countries. As we heard they also have problems with border closures. They have been talking to other Central African countries where SNI has affiliates in the Central African countries, same as countries in the East region, such as Uganda and Tanzania.

Pat suggested for Jacob Makambwe and Evelyn from SNI to talk, to coordinate with the affiliates that are part of SNI. John could then introduce the affiliates of SACBTA. This type of cooperation (SNI-SACBTA) has been done before in other countries such as Malawi, Zimbabwe. She suggested bringing those affiliates from SACBTA to this (ICBT webinar) process, to invite them to the next webinars.

She thanked Joel Odigie from ATUMNET/ITUC-Africa for his strategic approach. He raised the issue of extending our thinking beyond ECOWAS to the African Free Trade agreement, we need

to take in consideration the big picture, in this case, the ECOWAS and the African Free Trade Agreement. Some of your communications demands have also been included as we move forward, but maybe we need to articulate them, same as the issue of advocacy. For the issue of health and safety, perhaps it would be good to bring the ILO, same with the issue of gender-based violence which is critical for ICBTs.

Regarding the comment by Jeannette Nyiramasengeso from SYTRIECI, about Rwanda and DRC – even though the borders are closed, there are some negotiations by the government and DRC about the border. Jeannette pointed out that for example, they have built some stairs for informal economy workers to use. Pat said that it was good to see that some progress has been made between Rwanda and the DRC government about ICBT issues, this could be used as an example for other governments in the region and in all Africa.

Pat thanked Jacob for bringing up the issue of vaccine roll ups. She mentioned that in South Africa they have been negotiating with the government and they have agreed to recognize some of the informal economy workers as front line and essential workers, which is in line with what ITUC has raised.

She addressed a comment by Aaron A. Boima from SLeTU, currently in discussions with their Guinea border counterparts. Pat suggested that CNTG, Evelyn and the SNI colleague from the International Council communicate to work the mechanics about the strategy about Guinea and Sierra Leone. Ideally, they will be able to report in the next meeting how far have they were able to work in the plan they will put in motion.

Pat also highlighted that Joel Odigie from ATUMNET/ITUC comment about bringing the trade unions at the right moment which is a very important point. We are trying to create some constructive, creative, innovative presence here and this is why we work with the trade unions and such people like Joel, because at the end we will strengthen the trade union movement. She thanked him for this approach.

**Webinar #4: Planning for bilateral negotiations with customs officials, June 16 2021.**

**Planning for bilateral negotiations with customs officials.**

Oksana and Evelyn welcomed everyone. Pat presented the work done by StreetNet Affiliates and partners in identifying the border countries in the West and Central African Region where they work. (See - [video link](#)). Evelyn had worked on connecting the SNI affiliates with one another according to the borders they share. Not all borders were identified but at least we identify the extent of the work that needs to be done. As we do the follow up, we can identify which of those borders we will work on. On this webinar a sample of some of these interactions was presented.

## **Presentation of consolidated responses of StreetNet affiliates and already identified follow-ups**

1. DRC affiliate and SACBTA
  - a. SNI & SACBTA follow up work – Pat Horn started this part of the webinar, by mentioning that once we identify the borders with affiliates on both sides, we will start the bilateral work. Pat’s methodology is that participant organizations need to identify who the partner organization is on the other side of the border. The prioritize borders will be the ones where there is an identified partner on the other side.
  - b. Follow up involves contacting partners on the other side of the border, partners who have already been in contact with each other will be prioritized.
  - c. Pat mentioned that as per Jacob from SACBTA, the process has just started between SNI affiliates from DRC and the SACBTA partner in the other side of the border
2. SLeTU & CNTG (Guinea):
  - a. This is another process that just started. Evelyn reported about challenges, opportunities and other concerns raised by SLeTU & CNTG interactions (See Evelyn’s presentation in the [video link](#)). The main points raised during this presentation were:
    - i. The two organizations faced a language challenge, with Sierra Leone speaking English and Guinea speaking French. Evelyn worked with them to help navigate this challenge.
    - ii. On Feb 18 2021, their common border was opened to allow free movement of goods and services which was used as an opportunity for a work collaboration on the ICBT area for the two affiliates.
    - iii. They identified relevant ICBT stakeholders on both sides of the border and set meetings with each one of them,
    - iv. The CNTG affiliate (Guinea), promoted to work on food security issues and job creation,
    - v. The process of interaction, included a facilitator, involved written letters/emails and a WhatsApp group.
    - vi. The main outcomes: Relationships building, identification of communalities and differences, knowledge and experience exchange.

### **Getting started – SNI Affiliates:** They looked to answer these questions:

- I. Have they been in touch with the SNI affiliate or partner organization on the other side of the border in question?
- II. If not, what can StreetNet do to assist in connecting?
- III. What support do you need from OTUWA? ITUC-Africa? ATUMNET?
- IV. How much time do you need for this coordination?

1. CNTG/CNTS (Guinea & Senegal border)

- a. Presentation by Kadiatou. She began by showing maps of shared borders; she talked about the context: Harassment of traders in the borders by the border officials is the main issue. She mentioned the importance of lobbying state authorities at all government levels and proposed to work with civil organizations to advocate for human and workers rights and to collaborate on capacity building efforts with the informal economy workers, so they are informed of their rights. She also referred to engagement with trade union movements and the need for capacity building of informal economy workers about the international trade agreements currently in place. Finally, she raised the issue of engaging in communication and advocacy campaigns to raise awareness with the general public.
  - b. StreetNet can assist their work by facilitating knowledge, supporting materials, activities and workshops.
  - c. What support do you need from OTUWA? ITUC Africa? Atumnet?: They can help by facilitating interactions with government officials when discussing ICBT issues and border closures, as well offer help with capacity building on trade agreements in the region.
  - d. How much time do you need for this coordination? CNTG & CNTS have already spoken with each other.
2. FAINATRASIT/CSA (Togo and Benin): Mimi Kozon presented:
- a. Have they been in touch with the SNI affiliate or partner organization on the other side of the border in question? Yes, FAINATRASIT contacted Lily from CSA Benin and they had a preliminary set of conversations. Mimi offered some context information from each country.
  - b. What can StreetNet do to assist the work being done? Mimi suggested technical assistance to help during the knowledge exchange to understand the advantages of this work collaboration between the two countries. Also they would like to request some leadership and violence against women capacity building training.
  - c. They prepared a document of appeal to the country's state regarding the current situation and requested support. They are hoping to be able to establish a network on the basis of a platform in order to inform their counterparts about logistics, services, commerce & trade.
  - d. How much time do you need for this coordination? They said they needed around 9 months to work on this initiative. A major problem for this work is that the borders are still closed. They had discussions with some stakeholders, concerned with the cross border trade. The finding is that people can go across the border if there is money to pay the bribes and if they have many days available to be on the road. They asked for a press - conference to present the issues and see if this can be used to put pressure on national leaders, via media and social media.
3. SYNAVFL/FETTEI-CI (Burkina Fasso & Côte D'Ivoire). Mone from SYNAVFL presented:
- a. They also have been in touch via Whatsapp and emails with other affiliate on another side of the border. They highlighted that it was good to get to know each other.
  - b. They need technical and financial assistance & knowledge exchange support as well as assistance with recommendation letters for border officials.
  - c. What support do you need from OTUWA? ITUC-Africa? ATUMNET? They requested assistance with the international level engagements, help with meetings with the official counterparties to discuss the issues related to cross border trade.

Capacity building about ECOWAS that could facilitate the bilateral work and help with the recommendation letters.

- d. They may need around 5 months to organize their common agenda and set up a meeting with the vendors from the ICBT sector.

It was a good development to hear that these Affiliates have been in touch with one another and it was their first time. One thing this exercise is good for is building solidarity in practice. Encouraging affiliates to take initiative without SNI having to organize.

4. UGSEIN/FIWON (Níger & Nigéria – 4 borders identified). Foumakoye Zada from UGSEIN presented.
  - UGSEIN contacted the comrades from FIWON, despite the language challenges, they arrived at common points. Despite the distance between our countries, each organization is trying to sustain and maintain the ICBT related work.
  - SNI facilitated the exchange, and they were very grateful for it. They are considering an easier approach to communicate via correspondence or direct contact. They asked for training on negotiation skills in order to see this through.
  - What support do you need from OTUWA? ITUC Africa? ATUMNET? They asked for support on capacity building and knowledge exchange as some don't know enough about the current international trade agreements in the region and its impact on the ICBT. Assistance during negotiations with government officials, to help them contact the right people on the other side of the official borders. Between these two countries the distances are very long and some borders are very unsafe, that's why the question on security should be asked. They thanked Evelyn for the assistance during this process.

#### Partners Organization Responses:

1. OTUWA. John Odah.
  - a. He expressed delight in the process going so far. He mentioned that this is a very innovative process through virtual interactions.
  - b. Main points raised: As mentioned in a previous Webinar OTUWA commissioned a document that involved having two people going from Nigeria to Cote d'Ivoire, and cross five countries, there and back, to capture what commuters and traders witnessed when they cross from one ECOWAS country to the other. The objective is that they hope to add additional experiences with our colleagues, through the exchange about the difficulties they have. They hope this documentation can help organizations by sharing it with the ECOWAS secretariat and other offices involved. With these practical experiences, they hope to have enough information to make a case to bring ECOWAS as an institution to take up concrete action, to ease up the problems commuters and traders face in their work in the East African region, and to integrate commerce in this region. With this wider evidence, a tripartite dialogue forum (protocol created in 2010-2011), OTUWA can raise this as a substantive issue that needs to be discussed at the tripartite level. Last time this forum met in July 2019 in Abuja, we elected a bureau made up of 2 employers, 2 government, 2 workers with OTUWA & Employers organization sitting in on the Bureau. Issues affecting the subregion could be brought to this social dialogue forum. **When this bureau is able to meet the type of exercise and information captured via this webinar series, will help contribute to a body of evidence**

**to make a comprehensive report on what needs to be done. This can be taken to the tripartite level as part of the process.**

- c. Pat mentioned that this is helpful to know about the Bureau of tripartite forum meeting to assist this process with ECOWAS, as this structure is what is needed to make the demands to. As for letters of recommendations to border officials, Pat is not sure if OTUWA has those kinds of powers. Who do we approach for letters of recommendation for border officials? Is a letter of recommendation needed or is this something we need to initiate on their own? Can our affiliates do this on their own?
- d. John said that for now we should work with the affiliates and national centers in each country to get these letters done. He said this because at the borders, the feeling one gets is that the supranational organizations ECOWAS, OTUWA, Employers organizations seem too far removed from the officers in the respective national borders. So, if our comrades affiliates are able to get letters from trade union centers in Burkina, they would get more mileage from immigration and customs officers. But one of the strategies we need to consider going forward is, at the end of this process, do a massive campaign to target these borders so that at the level of these specific crossings we are discussing here, the officers know that there's a spotlight on their activities so they remember to do the right thing. Finally, after the last webinar, there was a hearing in the Nigerian senate about custom officers crossing to markets to cease what they consider to be contraband goods. FIWON's contribution highlighted this point in the second webinar – the advice at the legal level was that any illegal actions (such as confiscation of goods, harassment etc.) executed by the customs officials are something that should not be allowed to continue. He is raising this point so that our sister countries can raise these concerns also and remind them that this is unlawful.
- e. Pat noted that it is important to bear in mind that once we complete this series, we should think of a campaign to be done in the region. Prepare to raise this to ECOWAS. The question about approaching customs officials, as John mentioned, sometimes you can do this through the trade unions in your country, if they are willing to work with your organizations. Some of your organizations are members of the trade unions organizations. SNI has good relationships within many of the trade union national centers. This means that when you can start to initiate these from your side in collaboration with those on the other side of the border. No need to wait for ECOWAS interventions. This is something you can initiate from your side in collaboration with your partner organization on the other side of the border.

#### **Open discussion:**

1. Gbenga Komolafe (FIWON-Nigeria): Was glad the borders were identified. Widespread banditry is a spillover of the situation of general insecurity. Because of distance, we really don't have a lot of information on the conflict situation experienced by cross border traders. Traditional challenges like language barriers are still there but we all agree to raise these in this webinar and we could find solutions. All the four borders identified, mostly French speaking, and some conflict affected (Gbenga shared information on conflict-affected and partially closed borders)
2. Pat mentioned that the Issue of security being raised by Niger and Nigeria isa major issue so when we talk to ECOWAS etc, we should remember to raise it.. In SA, we have these issues inside the country and they impact the work of informal traders.
3. SACBTA Zambia - Jacob:"It's good to see the partnerships that have started to build especially in West Africa". His reaction to the methodology being used is that despite having this virtual platform, we need more ways to interact with one another. Highlighting

the importance of raising the issue of security within certain borders as it is quite a challenge. Between Zambia & DRC, there's a lot of insecurity and informal traders, especially women are harassed. He also mentioned the importance of enhancing networking. We need tools on evaluating activities around how we track cross border trade especially of women. Find alternative types of ICB trading, we don't imagine borders to be open, so we need to find alternatives to this trade, especially given Covid19 challenge. This is a good starting point but we need to start thinking strategically about doing business other than travelling while borders are closed. We need to encourage alternative ways to trade without traveling.

4. Pat: Yes, we've discussed some alternatives before, especially re: cross border payment systems, electronic payment systems – we need to involve partners from the finance sector too.
5. Therese of ASSOVACO: Thanked SNI for this space, for this webinar series organized in this difficult time of Covid19. I would highlight that we are not in contact with our colleagues from Burundi & Uganda to understand what is happening in our respective borders, but would like to work on this.
6. Pat, answered to Teressa from ASSOVACO comments, pointing that because she is in the extreme Eastern province of the DRC. "You are far from the capital, so you are isolated, far from Kinshasa. You're in a place where there has recently been a volcano eruption". To start this process, the 8 countries we contacted were for an exercise/sample of how this work could be done, so all the other affiliates can see and learn from each other on how this work can be done. We are aware of ASSOVACO's situation but this is where SNI will assist you with affiliates from the other side of the border, as an example you could look at working with the affiliates in Rwanda & Burundi. Evelyn, the SNI regional Organizer could assist you on this work.

The presentations you heard today gave us an idea of what we need to do to start this work. When you want to do any work, you need to initiate it in partnership with another organization on the other side of the border. You need to work on building a partnership with the organization on the other side of the border. Today's webinar was to give you a sample idea of the kind of work that is involved in doing this.

In the next webinar, **we will be talking about the way forward**. After these webinars, we should be able to understand what are the problems you are facing in the border areas. This is what we have discussed so far: In the first webinar, we heard a bit about the Simplified Trade Regime. In the second webinar we look into ICBT advocacy issues. On the 3rd webinar we looked into some of the specific challenges faced by ICB traders, one was the issue of trying to negotiate for a one-stop system for the borders where you do everything at one counter, you make all the payments in one counter. We also had a presentation by FTE about ECOWAS as a regional structure we need to engage with and for this ITUC-Africa & OTUWA can assist us. Next time, we could think about preparing a concept note & initial documentation for OTUWA & and the tripartite bureau to take note of.

7. Annie Diouf asked SNI to share this information on cross border traders and pointed to the importance of organizing a communication/advocacy campaign. We need the information discussed in these webinars to help us with lobbying activities.

**Webinar #5: Informal Cross-Border Trade – Initiating Regional Action Plan –Way Forward.  
June 30, 2021**

The final webinar started with an assessment of the webinar series by all affiliates & partners. For this, Pat Horn, asked the SNI affiliates to offer a reflection of the ICBT webinar series with these three points in mind:

A good thing: One thing you liked best about the webinar series

Something to improve: One thing which was not so good

A suggestion: One suggestion to StreetNet for next time

A record of this assessment is found under the Appendix session on page 36.

### **Informal Cross-Border Trade - Initiating Regional Action Plan –Way Forward:**

Pat Horn shared with the SNI affiliates and partner organizations some reference documents to be used as guidance during the way forward process.

- Way Forward summary doc,
- STR sensitization report, Vic Falls 2017
- StreetNet resolution 34 on Informal Cross-Border Trade

From the information received from StreetNet affiliates about borders in their countries, each StreetNet affiliate in the West & Central African region was invited/challenged to initiate a cross-border project in partnership with the StreetNet affiliate or partner organization affiliate on the other side of the border. Pat asked them to identify and prioritize to start the work.

What is needed from each StreetNet affiliate partnership:

1. Names of the two or three affiliates in one border (most cases is only two) and their countries
2. Name of the particular border they have identified to work together
3. Proposed programme of preparatory activities with their members (on both sides of the border). See the STR sensitization report, Vic Falls 2017 document, as an example of this type of project work that was done between ICBT organisations in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi.
4. Programme of activities they will initiate with customs officials on both sides of the border
5. Budget totaling no more than \$5000 with detailed breakdown of expenditures. It will be on a first come first basis. Based on the total budget we could have around 12 different projects. More funds may be requested once we have submitted final reports to the funder.
6. Proposed joint financial management arrangements agreed between the affiliates. This project funds have to be managed in agreement by both organizations and in coordination with SNI Office..

StreetNet affiliates were invited to read the report of the STR sensitization workshops held at Victoria Falls border between Zambia and Zimbabwe in November 2017, as an example of a similar process and what needs to be done along the project.

Affiliates were also encouraged to re-familiarize themselves with the Sixth StreetNet International Congress Resolution on Informal Cross-Border Trade, for guidance on what we are trying to achieve.

- I. Assistance/support which can be requested from StreetNet/WIEGO:
  1. Communications and media support
  2. Assistance with interpretation where needed.

3. Regional Focal Point support in starting ICBT campaigns. Pat suggested sending this request to FAINATRASIT who is coordinating the Focal Point of West & Central African region in StreetNet.
- II. Assistance/support that can be requested from StreetNet's partners:
1. SACBTA – technical support & advice about Simplified Trade Regime (STR), and advocacy issues.
  2. OTUWA – raising issue of ICBT with ECOWAS bureau of tripartite Social Dialogue Forum, advocating regional action on particular concerns, such as:
    - a. Security for ICBTs in conflict zones, this for example is an issue we have seen come out on the border between Niger and Nigeria.
    - b. Cross-border payment systems to facilitate trade across closed or partially closed borders.
  3. ITUC-Africa/OTUWA –securing cooperation of national trade union centres in the region for the bilateral border initiatives of StreetNet affiliates, assisting them where needed with their approaches to national government departments and customs officials. The case, for example of Burkina, is a good case in which approaching the trade union can support those engagements. Some affiliates are part of trade unions, for the SNI affiliates that are not part of any trade union, here is where ITUC-Africa/OTUWA can assist with.

### Discussion on Way Forward:

Points of clarification or comments about what has been presented and suggested for the Way Forward.

**Jacob from SACBTA:** The issues that came out are challenges that need to be addressed e.g. DRC. There is a need to take advantage of ministries of trade. The challenges faced by the ICBTs are similar across the region. Suggested the need to start addressing challenges that in particular the ICBTs women are facing in the region.

- Example, a petitioning document to inform COMESA or a minister in the country. OTUWA can share templates on how this type of documents are written.
- OTUWA offered to help with implementation work on Online Simplified Trade Regimes for traders.

**Charles Konnah (Liberia):** said that his organization is already working with SLeTU (Sierra Leone). Suggested that an ICBT Committee be set up in the sub-region (Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia Sierra Leone).

**Joel (ITUC-Africa):** Offered partnering with others to link up SNI affiliates with the ITUC-Africa National centers across Africa. Where a request has been made will encourage their members to work with SNI affiliates. They will continue to offer help to informal economy workers to effectively engage with government officials and relevant counterparts at the cross border government agencies. Suggested for SNI affiliates to use ITUC platform to address affiliates issues directly with the government across the borders. Currently ITUC is reviewing the global agreements, he encouraged SNI to participate in the process. Happy that practical engagements have been discussed across borders. He asked that ICBT respect the Occupation Health and Safety regulations on Covid-19 that are in place on both sides of the borders. It is important to think how we can link the whole ICBT process to the continental agenda, (the 2063 Agenda). Cross border traders faced the challenge of Right of Establishment and there is need to work together to

overcome this. ITUC-Africa is about to start a research which is looking at how to finance Social Protection for Informal Economy Workers.

Encourage everyone to continue looking for spaces to address Informal Economy Workers issues. We are happy to see that SNI is working toward putting together pragmatic solutions to the Informal Economy Workers' issues.

**John Odah (OTUWA):** Thanked SNI for pulling together this 5 webinar series. This has been a very engaging process. John suggested that SNI pull out the five webinar activities together as one whole for affiliates to have one document. OTUWA to do whatever they can to work with the West African sub-region in a concerted effort with our partner organizations in the region.

Offered to support the work of Joel and others as they work with SNI, and partners like ITUC-Africa. John mentioned that they have worked with the SNI affiliates in Nigeria, Sierra Leone and in Liberia on the Sensibility of Health Care for the informal sector. The report (In English) and French is ready and will be ready to share with SNI.

**Pat Horn:**

Pointed that relationships between ITUC-Africa and SNI have been going on for some time. This has been a good relation as they understand the importance of informal workers. We have been trying to identify areas of joint collaboration. SNI has collaborated with OTUWA in different places, Nigeria was a country they have worked in the past. Happy that OTUWA was able to contact some of the SNI affiliates during the webinars.

**Conclusion:**

Pat summarised that she would be in constant touch with the StreetNet International organizers. She was happy with the SNI affiliates participation, e.g. good presentations, sharing with partners on challenges at the borders. SNI will put all the information together from this webinar series into a publication, which will be shared with all the participants.

Next step is to do a follow up and also replicate the same in other regions of SNI that have not looked at the issue of cross border trade as yet. The webinar has offered some good guidance on how to do the work in other regions. Going forward affiliates will be dealing with SNI. Pat will be requesting progress reports from the SNI regional Organizers.

**Oksana Abboud** expressed gratitude for the SNI affiliates commitment and congratulated the affiliates for such a great engagement and the relationships they have already built. She encouraged everyone to continue looking for the commonalities with partners e.g. with ITUC-Africa, OTUWA or through ATUMNET structure. Oksana pointed out that unfortunately the issues of communication challenges are unavoidable – small support was provided to participants during the webinars.

Oksana also noted that there will be more work ahead – hopefully all of the participants will be equipped better now, with some proper set of knowledge, relations and skills, acquired via these exchanges, in particular with our partners organizations. Oksana closed the webinar by saying that SNI is here to assist its affiliates in their efforts and permanent struggle.

## Appendix

### List of demands from StreetNet affiliates in the region (as per exercise of webinar #3)

It was noted that 85% of SNI affiliates in the region submitted responses to this exercise, below are the demands received from the various affiliates (see Annex documents: List of Demands from StreetNet affiliates in the region, page)

CNTG, Guinea.

1. Reduction of harassment; Respect for human rights; Free movement of people and their goods; Establishment of a bipartite consultation framework Government Trade Union.
2. Ban on extortion.
3. Establishment of a consultation framework; Opening of borders.

FETTEI-CI, La Cote d'Ivoire.

1. Compliance with agreements between ECOWAS countries.
2. Creation of a platform of decision-making forums.

SLeTU, Sierra Leone.

1. Easy Access and control of ECOWAS ID Cards.
2. Access to certificate of origin to cross border Traders.
3. Simplified custom tariffs at all entering post of our borders; one stop shop at border.
4. Custom Tariffs harmonization at Border Post to allow for free movement of People and Goods.
5. Introduction and enforcement of ECOWAS ID Cards, popularizing Certificate of Origin regardless of Goods as accessibility remain a challenge to many.

SYTRIECI, Rwanda

1. Identifying & organizing all ICBT across our country which are not recognized or organized.
2. Negotiation of ICBT facilities and decency in treatment at border posts concerning tariffs and violence.
3. Social Protection, workers' rights and active/participatory social dialogue.
4. Getting increased share of the Economic Recovery Fund.
5. Special tellers for informal traders with fast tracked declarations/transactions without extortion at borders.
6. Informal cross border traders having loans with reasonable interest rates to restart up their business; Psychosocial support for ICBT especially those who lost their jobs within COVID-19 period. Direct investment to generate more wealth in place/ reduced poverty.

LDFC, DRC.

1. Put in place a recognized document that simplifies existing procedures for traders after buying their goods to prevent hassle.
2. Harmonize the different fees to be paid.
3. Create a framework for consultations between related stakeholders who work at the borders of neighboring countries.
4. A border access document is available; significant reduction of taxes within borders.
5. Enhanced collaboration. Harmonized documents. Harmonized and standardized price. Enhanced security between border guards.

UGSEIN, Niger.

1. Taxes reduced to reasonable rates.
2. Easing of regulations.

SYVEBU, Burundi.

1. Documentation ratification to facilitate trade.
2. Facility for women in the cross-border trade.

3. Easy access to currency to facilitate trade.

FIWON, Nigeria.

1. Mass Literacy on French Language.
2. Proper Documentation allowing easy crossing of the border through legal routes.

CSA, Benin

1. End of extortionate payments.
2. Formalization of informal activity and recognition of informal economy actors.
3. An end put to the various harassments of which traders are victims.

SYNAVFL, Burkina Faso.

1. Free movement of goods.
2. Exchange of different currencies.

USYNVEPID, Benin.

1. Establishment of a customs facilitation regime for informal traders regularly registered for trade within ECOWAS.
2. Establishment of a border listening and guidance office for traders.
3. Clean up the customs and police corridors of certain countries (e.g., Nigeria) and make them respect the rules established in the ECOWAS or FTAA area
4. Reduction of customs duties on quantities and specific products.

UNIWA, Ghana.

1. Everything concerning goods i.e., paying of duty, checking goods and other relevant documents are carried out at **one particular point**.

SNVC, DRC

1. Security for traders and their goods (often victims of the lawless).
2. Reduced taxes; harmonized regulations; closely monitored regulations.

## Participants organizations

### StreeNet affiliates organizations

1. *Federation of Informal Workers' Organisations of Nigeria*, (FIWON).
2. *Sierra Leone Traders Union*, (SLeTU).
3. *Syndicat des Travailleurs Independents de l'Economie Informelle* (SYTRIECI), from Rwanda.
4. *Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs du Sénégal* (CNTS)
5. CNTG of Guinea
6. FAINATRASIT of Togo
7. UNIWA of Ghana
8. CSA of Benin,
9. SYNAMAVAB of Benin,
10. USYNVEPID of Benin,
11. UGSEIN of Niger,
12. FETTEI-CI of Côte d'Ivoire,
13. SYTRIECI of Rwanda,
14. ASSOVACO of DRC,
15. LDFC of DRC,
16. SNVC of DRC,
17. FEPTIWUL of Liberia,
18. SYNAVFL of Burkina Faso
19. SYVEBU of Burundi

### Partner organizations

1. Southern Africa Cross-Border Traders Association (SACBTA).
2. ITUC-Africa
3. OTUWA (Organization of Trade Unions in West Africa)
4. ATUMNET (African Trade Unions Migration Network)

### Individual participants

#### Partner organizations

1. Joel Odigie, Deputy Secretary-General, ITUC-Africa
2. John Odah, Executive Secretary, OTUWA (Organization of Trade Unions in West Africa)
3. A. H. Tawanda, Executive Secretary. SACBTA (Southern African Cross-Border Traders' Association)
4. Patricia Chisi, Executive Board Member of SACBTA,
5. Jacob Makambwe, Executive Board Member of SACBTA,
6. Fambaye Ndoye, ATUMNET representative of Senegal and
7. Michael Kandukutu, ATUMNET representative of Zimbabwe

#### SNI affiliates:

8. Gbenga Komolafe, FIWON
9. Aime Manirakiza: SYVEBU
10. Alice Nkuzimana: SYVEBU
11. Angelique Kipulu: ASSOVACO
12. Angelique et Anne LDFC,
13. Congo Zara: SYNAVFL
14. Derate Marguerite CSA,
15. Deborah Freeman: UNIWA
16. Flolida Sia: SYNAVFL
17. Foumakoye Zada: UGSEIN
18. Habimana Jean Pierre: SYVEBU

19. Jeannette Nyiramasengeso, SYTRIECI,
20. Kadiatou Barry: CNTG
21. Komi Mensanh Kessouagni: FAINATRASIT
22. Kone Boris: FETTEI-CI
23. Kozon Badawi Mimi: FAINATRASIT
24. Martha Mason: FEPTIWUL
25. Mone Sayouba: SYNAVFL
26. Nadine Gakunzi: SYVEBU
27. Ouedraogo B Evelyne: SYNAVFL
28. Willy Choupa: CSA,
29. Marie Jose Malungo: SNVC
30. Tata Sekou Diara: UGSEIN

StreetNet team:

1. Oksana Abboud
2. Pat Horn
3. Evelyn Benjamin-Sampson
4. Maira Vannuchi
5. Pilar Balbuena
6. Nash Tysmans
7. Margarida Teixeira
8. Annelene Muhammad Shafi
9. Jane Masta
10. Kateryna Yarmolyuk-Krock
11. Sybailly Maximilien

## Evaluation of webinar series by all affiliates & partners:

Pat Horn, asked the SNI affiliates to offer a reflection of the ICBT webinar series with this three points in mind:

1. A good thing: One thing you liked best about the webinar series
  2. Something to improve: One thing which was not so good
  3. A suggestion: One suggestion to StreetNet for next time
- 
1. What participants liked best about the webinar series
    - We covered a lot during this webinar series.
    - The webinars were very organized, the affiliates had homework to do, they did presentations--it was good interaction.
    - The webinars helped us to understand ICBT in relation to what and how their challenges are as well as a way forward. It was very good.
    - It was a good way to reach our goals by doing something and giving tasks to our affiliates.
    - The task work asked from the affiliates before each webinar was a very good idea , make it interactive for everyone. The preparation was detailed, a lot of work went into it.
    - The webinar and generated learning about ICBT and the issue around it. I got many skills related to this area. The experiences shared were helpful and thank you SNI for doing this and connecting us with different actors
    - .Participants' numbers were very good. It gave me the opportunity to get a lot of information.
    - Participants were given the opportunity to participate and have ownership of whatever was being discussed. They could tell us their concerns which shows that "there is nothing for us without us"
    - It was enlightening to hear participants who spoke about their issues. We appreciated the fact that StreetNet International took into consideration the communication & facilitation aspect for participants, it was very helpful
    - Thank you StreetNet for organizing this webinar in French too. This is a very important issue because we see our informal workers dealing with these issues. I appreciate that it is in French because we learned a lot about the work to be done on the ground.
    - The modules prepared for us were very good. We were strengthened once more because we were in touch with organizations to learn about these transborder issues. This is a big advantage--to be in contact with the regions dealing with these issues.
    - This is a real opportunity that you've provided for us
    - We got vast information from different parts of Africa, We learned a lot of things from our colleagues in Rwanda, DRC--all this information has been good. They are eye-opening.
    - The ICBT-related project was different from previous events where I participated - putting together different SNI affiliates and sharing information was very positive. This allowed us to initiate different other meetings. Thank you SNI for this opportunity.
    - We are encouraged to organize other meetings apart from the mainstream webinars so we organized them. SNI should continue these types of trainings because we learn a lot.
    - I appreciate this opportunity. The well organized series of webinars have been very informative and insightful, encouraging us to take the ICBT issues more seriously. We didn't know the issues were so serious.
    - We are happy to work with the organizations that experience these things. The webinar brought us closer to our comrades to understand their challenges through experience-sharing on ICBT insider information.
    - We related to other affiliates in ways which we did not do before. We are to collaborate to negotiate and campaign for better respect for cross border traders, stop harassment and extortion. This builds solidarity and power across the African region. SNI has done a lot

- We are very happy with the webinar organized by SNI. We were happy to participate because it reinforced our capacities especially in virtual participation technical issues (because of Covid).
- I'm very happy to participate in all webinars and I thank SNI for organizing this series because it led us to develop different skills for the future; we were familiarized with a very difficult issue and we could exchange with our partners and other affiliates. This is good for us.
- We do not normally do research but you inspired me to do more research to plan the work we do. Doing this research was not usual for us but I appreciated this.
- I liked the mode of work: you asked us to describe the situation. We are timid usually but this time not--thank you very much SNI.
- This opportunity helped us understand the issue well and SNI also put us in touch with affiliates in other countries.
- We were invited to work individually and share with our partners and we have learned that we have a lot in common.
- Putting us together to think about strategy is a good work strategy for us in cote D'ivoire. For some affiliates it was not easy to participate.

## **2. Something to improve upon**

- Time management from the affiliates side - we needed respect schedules and arrive on time.
- We are requesting Street Net leaders and others responsible to visit us on ground for reinforcing our capacities, experiencing the problems we faced and doing follow-ups in addition to the virtual work on ICBT.
- The work on ICBT has been great but the platform itself is not good for me. As much as online webinars have advantages, physical meetings are still better. There were background noise from a lot of our comrades, making hearing hard sometimes. Covid pushes us to use this virtual platform.
- StreetNet during the Covid period, we felt the support of SNI through the exchanges and many events that helped overcome many of our problems, including those on ICBT.
- Some of the SACBTA affiliates did not attend the meeting, it would be good for them to have participated also. We needed more of their organizations.
- The meeting should be more organized to achieve the results as they refer to informal workers organizations
- The internet connection failed often

## **3. Suggestions to StreetNet for next time**

- We should be thinking of a hybrid or an in-person follow-up.
- I would suggest SNI think of how to help affiliates in attending/giving these types of events with improved technical support on virtual meetings.
- Continue this webinars in this field of ICBT. I liked it very much.
- Participants should be able to follow all the regulations, respect the meeting. StreetNet really needs to keep it up, make some kind of follow up for the ICBT work. There are things we cannot do alone so we need guidance and follow up from SNI.

- All things prepared for the webinar should be shared with others and with us because we will use them as reference for our activities. We will continue working on the activities in finding partners across the border.
- I suggest new/more trainings. We did not have IT means and we didn't know how to use them and during these webinars, we learned how to use these digital means--because previously we did not know how to use this.
- Informal workers are very often harassed and not respected. They are working long hours, transporting their goods. I would like to propose to SNI to organize more training to raise awareness with others on such issues.
- These kinds of discussions should continue as we are still under the pandemic. Maybe after we can meet in person but now we work together through this impressive platform.
- It would be good to know about the kind of difficulties these other organizations experience. We can learn and solve problems together.
- Implementation is good but monitoring and evaluation needs to be done so we can have good results from this project--where our transborder traders will not be harassed and there will be less extortion.
- We recommend continuing so it can reinforce our capacities. We will wait on this from you. The needs are numerous and we are thinking now that Corona will continue so we must continue this way to organize events until the moment when we can meet again.
- This pandemic period put us in a very difficult situation and we know what is being experienced by others through the virtual webinar - we suggest continuity of these webinars on other topics. This is a good opportunity for us to exchange with each other. We would welcome the organizing of these meetings.
- In thinking of these webinars, think about the different participants and consider these issues related to connection, other issues in different regions and consider more of such participative approach to resolving issues. Select different themes or topics for the different regions and different contexts.
- We learned a lot of things related to cross border trade and its actors. I would ask SNI to think more in detail about what kind of program should be proposed to different affiliates.

### **Video recordings**

1. [Video recording of webinar one](#)
2. [Video recording of webinar two](#)
3. [Video recording of webinar three.](#)
4. [Video recording of webinar four](#)
5. [Video recording of webinar five:](#)

**Glossary**

ICBT: Informal Cross-Border Trade

SNI: StreetNet International

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)

STR: Simplified Trade Regime

SACU: Southern Africa Customs Union

SACBTA: Southern Africa Cross-Border Traders Association.

**Resource documents**

- Consolidated responses of StreetNet affiliates
- ICBT negotiations activity
- Way Forward summary doc,
- STR sensitization report, Vic Falls 2017
- StreetNet resolution 34 on Informal Cross-Border Trade