



WOW // Work and
Opportunities
for Women

Violence against Women Traders at Border Crossings

WOW Helpdesk Query 31

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Query Question: Violence against Women Traders at Border Crossings

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1. What does the existing evidence tell us about the nature, scale and perpetrators of violence to women traders at border crossings and the drivers of their violence, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa (and Ethiopia, Somalia, or Horn of Africa more specifically)?*
2. What evidence, if any, is there of links between violence and the taxes and duties systems at borders, or that border and customs officials are involved in perpetrating violence against women traders?
3. What are the key learnings from existing interventions by governments or development partners which seek to address violence experienced by women traders at border crossings, (or from other interventions which address violence against women in similar contexts, e.g. refugee camps), that can inform future programming?

*All types of violence (sexual, physical, economic and others, including a combination of different types of violence) will be considered.

Preference should be given to evidence from sub-Saharan Africa and particularly the Horn of Africa. There is a particular interest in understanding whether violence is linked with payment of taxes and duties and whether there is abuse of power by border and customs officials. Key learnings as reported by other authors should be synthesised and mapped according to the intervention. This will involve identifying evaluations, where these exist, and assessing their robustness and thus strength of evidence overall. The authors are not expected to do their own in-depth analysis of what is effective or has resulted in impact. The location of violence should pertain to the journeys of women traders travelling across borders (through legal and illegal channels)—links with intimate partner violence can be included but what is realistic in the customs space needs to be recognised. The focus should be on women traders from all socio-economic groups.

Table of contents

- Acronyms 4**
- 1. Executive Summary 5**
- 2. Methodology 7**
- 3. Nature, scale, perpetrators and drivers of violence 8**
 - 3.1 Women cross-border traders in sub-Saharan Africa..... 8
 - 3.2 Nature of violence against women cross-border traders 9
 - 3.3 Scale of violence 11
 - 3.4 Perpetrators 13
 - 3.5 What drives this violence? 14
- 4. Links between violence and tax/duties systems at borders 16**
 - 4.1 Link 1: Complex border tax systems enable GBV by border officials..... 16
 - 4.2 Link 2: Strict border controls can push women ICBTs toward unpatrolled crossings and GBV risks from other actors 18
 - 4.3 Link 3: The trade policy and programming context for addressing GBV among women ICBTs 19
- 5. Programme Mapping 20**
- References..... 30**
- Annex A: Boolean Search Terms 35**

Acronyms

COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
DFID	Department for International Development
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDI	Gender Development Index
EAC	East African Community
ICBT	Informal cross-border trader
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
OECD-DAC	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SIGI	Social Institutions and Gender Index
SCOO	Simplified Certificate of Origin
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
STR	Simplified trade regimes
VAWG	Violence against women and girls
WOW	Work and Opportunities for Women

1. Executive Summary

This WOW Helpdesk report discusses the existing evidence on gender-based violence (GBV) against women traders at border crossings. The first section discusses the evidence on the nature, scale, perpetrators and drivers of this violence; the second section discusses the evidence of links between violence and the taxes and duties systems at borders, including the role of border and customs officials as perpetrators; and the third section discusses key learnings from existing interventions that seek to address violence experienced by women traders at border crossings. The report is based on desk-based research using Google and Google Scholar searches of key terms, and searches of key intervention databases, as well as engagement with a small number of experts.

Overall, the evidence base is limited, for several reasons: the ‘informality’ of small-scale border trading means that the scale of the phenomenon is uncertain though probably in some cases exceeding formal trade flows; violence against women traders is typically underreported; and there are difficulties in conducting research on corruption and exploitation by border and customs officials. Moreover, evidence on learning from project interventions is also limited due to several challenges involved in mapping and assessing interventions and paucity of results reporting and evaluations: interventions addressing GBV are mostly a small part of much larger, multicomponent trade facilitation programmes, little detail is given on types of approaches have been effective and which have been effective and why; and programme documents in the public domain are unusually varied in quality and explanatory content.

The existing evidence shows that women cross-border traders experience high rates of GBV, and that this is often experienced as ‘polyvictimisation’, i.e. experiencing multiple forms of violence, at the same time or over a period of time, in different locations, and by different actors. There is limited rigorous evidence on the *scale* of violence against women cross-border traders, but what evidence does exist points to high rates of economic, sexual and physical violence; evidence on the scale of violence is even more limited for *different groups* of women traders – e.g. by age, disability, refugee/IDP status, or sexual orientation, which hides some groups’ particular vulnerabilities.

Key findings on the nature, scale, perpetrators and drivers of violence include:

- **Women cross-border traders experience economic violence and coercion,** including discrimination when obtaining trade-related paperwork, delays at the border, unwarranted impounding of goods, and bribery and corruption, including coercion into paying informal fees and/or higher bribes than male traders. The available evidence suggests that over half of women cross-border traders experience economic violence and coercion by border officials and police.
- **Women cross-border traders experience sexual violence, harassment and exploitation,** ranging from verbal sexual harassment to rape, and often citing pressure from border officials, a mostly male workforce, to provide sexual favours in exchange for better treatment at the border, e.g. to avoid being detained, or goods being impounded. Transactional sexual relationships between women cross-border traders and border officials are one coping mechanism to manage and mitigate the risks of sexual violence and harassment. Available evidence from several SSA countries suggests high rates of sexual harassment and violence against women cross-border traders – for example, 37% of women cross-border traders in Liberia, and 11%-54% of women cross-border traders in the DRC.
- **Beyond economic and sexual violence, there are also reports of women cross-border traders experiencing other forms of violence, including physical violence and verbal harassment,** such as physical assaults, robbery, insults, threats, being stripped and spat on. Existing data suggest

high levels of verbal abuse against women cross-border traders – e.g. 38% of women cross-border traders in DRC report verbal abuse by border officials.

- **Women cross-border traders experience violence not only at the border crossings, but also in their broader ‘world of work’, including on transport** and in destination countries. These risks include theft of goods and cash, sexual harassment, and verbal abuse, and are exacerbated by unsafe travel conditions, such as having to travel through the night.
- **Whilst there is very limited evidence on the impact of cross-border trading activities on women traders’ experience of intimate partner violence (IPV)**, the very limited evidence that does exist suggests that this type of economic activity can increase women’s risk of IPV, and that cross-border trade interventions should consider how they can work with traders’ partners to mitigate these risks.
- **This violence is perpetrated by a range of actors, including border and customs officials**, gangs working on behalf of the state or independently, smugglers, transport workers, and male traders.
- **Several factors drive violence against women traders at border crossings:** the broader context of gender inequality, including stigma against cross-border traders in many contexts in SSA; a broader context of high rates of GBV; violent and unstable borders in some contexts (including in the Horn of Africa); and unequal access to information between border officials and cross-border traders, including around what taxes and fees are due, as well as knowledge of the ‘rules of the game’, linked to traders’ levels of literacy, familiarity with the border, whether they have crossed before, and whether they have social or professional networks or associations they can leverage.

The report discusses evidence of links between this violence against women cross-border traders, and the taxes and duties systems at borders, making two key points.

- **Complex border tax systems, where there are information asymmetries between border officials and women traders, enables GBV by border officials**, who wield great power and are often able to act with impunity. With regard to tax, this can play out in officials imposing arbitrary taxes or threatening to impound goods unless the trader offers a bribe or sexual favour. However, the limited evidence base does not explore interactions among these factors, e.g. whether the severity or incidence of violence varies in association with particular fees or penalties.
- **Traders’ awareness of complex tax systems and corrupt tax officials may push women into informal cross border trade**, in order to avoid the challenges at border posts, including of disproportionately high formal and informal taxes and fees, delays, and violence. Women cross-border traders may be especially likely to avoid formal border crossings, and choose informal routes instead; but informal border crossings pose risks as well – of coercion and sexual violence by smugglers and intermediaries, as well as by border officials if the traders are caught.

Finally, the report includes an intervention mapping of policy and programme interventions that seek to address violence experienced by women traders at border crossings; many of these projects are still active or were very small scale and outcomes have not been reported. Simplification of customs procedures, taxes and charges for small traders makes the content less conducive to harassment. Promising approaches directly addressing violence include: gender-sensitive training of border officials; awareness-raising and information sharing with women cross-border traders; building the capacity of women cross-border traders’ labour organisations and supporting their collective voice; and improving the design and maintenance of infrastructure services at the border.

2. Methodology

This WOW Helpdesk query was delivered through desk-based research including Google and Google Scholar Boolean searches of key terms (see Annex A). We also solicited grey literature from a small number of experts¹. The intervention mapping (section 5) was done through searches of: The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) and World Bank databases; DFID programme documents provided by DFID and DevTracker; WTO/Enhanced Integrated Framework; and UNCTAD (See Annex A).

Evidence on the nature, scale and perpetrators of violence to women traders at border crossings, and the links with taxes and duties systems, is limited for several reasons:

- **The 'informality' of small-scale border trading** means that there is limited rigorous evidence on the nature and scale of the phenomenon. The characteristics of trade flows and traders (individuals or small businesses) are not captured in the standard trade databases².
- **Violence against women traders is typically underreported** partly due to women's concerns and fears about reporting violence to authorities more generally, as well as the particular links that border and customs officials may have with security and justice officials.
- **Difficulties conducting research on corruption and exploitation** by border and customs officials, which tends to be mostly hidden and can be dangerous for researchers. Furthermore, the research agenda on trade, corruption and organised crime has also been shaped by the overrepresentation of male researchers, which has tended to ignore the experiences of women (UNODC, 2019).

Evidence on key learnings from existing interventions was also limited due to the following challenges involved in mapping and assessing interventions:

- **Interventions addressing VAWG are mostly a small part of much larger, multicomponent trade facilitation programmes.** Typically, these programmes have several entities involved (funders, primary management, and secondary and even tertiary implementing organisations) each of which may – or may not - issue its own studies, features and reports on a VAWG component. Comments on VAWG learnings are rare and evaluations almost non-existent.
- **Limited programme details available in public domain:** Some apparent interventions are mentioned in the academic and research literature, on which this mapping draws quite heavily, without sufficient information to verify details with funding or implementing bodies.
- **Quality and content of project reporting varies at each stage** (i.e. organisations involved in funding, management, implementation and field engagement) so cross-verification across these categories is not always possible.

¹ Dr. Katja Jobes (SDDirect); Dr. Maxim Bolt (University of Birmingham); Julia Hakspiel ([Sauti Africa](#), a mobile trade and market information platform); Dr. Amanda Shaw (Independent Consultant).

² UNComtrade data (and annual publication is International Trade Statistics Yearbook). OECD and WTO jointly present data on Aid for Trade (annual publication is Aid for Trade at a Glance). The World Customs Organization states that "informal trade is an activity that is not included in official trade data" (WCO, 2013).

3. Nature, scale, perpetrators and drivers of violence

3.1 Women cross-border traders in sub-Saharan Africa

Informal cross-border trade is an extremely important economic activity throughout sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Although estimates are necessarily crude, for certain products and countries, the value of informal trade may meet or even exceed the value of formal trade ([Bouet et al 2018](#)). Informal trade is particularly important in supporting the livelihoods of marginalised groups, including women, who compose the majority of small-scale cross-border traders ([Brenton and Soprano, 2018](#)). ‘Formal’ and ‘informal’ trade, are not fully distinct categories, and informal traders often have engagement of some kind with official procedures, through having visas and paying some or all trade-related duties ([Higgins 2012](#))³. A substantial proportion of informal cross-border trade concerns staple food commodities (e.g., maize, rice and cattle) and low-quality consumer goods (e.g., clothes, shoes and electronic appliances) ([Lesser and Moisse Leeman 2009](#)). Informal cross-border trade is often conducted among people of the same clan or ethnicity group⁴.

Informal cross-border trade is also of great importance in the Horn of Africa. For some foods and livestock, informal trade far exceeds formal trade ([Little, 2005](#)). On the Ethiopian-Somali border, the main products traded informally (in c. 2000) were kerosene, wheat flour and pasta and sugar from Somaliland to eastern Ethiopia, and, in the other direction, goats and sheep, maize and sorghum, cattle and camels, charcoal and kerosene ([Little, 2005](#)). Informally traded goods also penetrate far into the interior of the other countries. The biggest market site for all the goods traded across the borders of the five countries in the Horn is in Nairobi ([Little, 2005](#)).

The vast majority of informal cross-border traders (ICBTs) in SSA are women⁵. Women represent about 70% of ICBTs⁶ in Southern Africa ([Piovani, 2018](#)) and about 60% in West Africa ([Yusuff 2014](#)). The majority of female ICBTs are relatively poor, with a low level of education, and trade in high volume⁷ of low-value goods, including food products, cosmetics, cloth and handicrafts ([Andall, 2018](#)), with male cross-border traders more likely to import higher value commodities, and dominating trade in services such as transport and money exchange (Shaw 2010). In some settings, women CBTs are not specialised but deal in a range of goods as opportunity presents and engage in two-way trade, i.e. both export and import, on their trips (Pro-Femme and Wakala Consulting, 2013).

Despite the typically low-value nature of goods, informal cross-border trade composes a significant proportion of all trade in SSA: for example, it is estimated to amount for 30-40% of all trade within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) ([Andall, 2018](#); Shaw, 2010). **Informal cross-border trade is also an important source of income for women and their families.** In SSA, informal

³ In Section 4 we discuss how efforts to formalise trading activities relate to the policy debate around formalisation of enterprises.

⁴ E.g. Ethiopia-Kenya trans-border trade or trade between Uganda and D.R. of Congo, Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda

⁵ [Ityavyar, 2013](#) estimate 90% of small-scale (formal and informal) cross-border traders in SSA are women.

⁶ 70% of traders between Mozambique and South Africa; 65% of traders between Zimbabwe and South Africa.

⁷ Higgins and Turner (2010a) state that in Burkina Faso, Uganda and Zambia women transport up to five times as much in volume as men.

cross-border trade is the most important source of employment among self-employed women, making up 60% of non-agricultural employment (Shaw, 2010; Higgins and Turner, 2010a).

3.2 Nature of violence against women cross-border traders

This report focuses on violence against women cross-border traders, considering all types of violence⁸ – sexual, physical, economic, and others – against traders in their ‘world of work’⁹, focused on the border and in transport. These different forms of violence often overlap in a ‘polyvictimisation’ of cross-border traders who experience different forms of violence (physical/economic/sexual etc) happening at the same time, over a period of time, in different locations, by different actors. This section presents evidence from across SSA, as there is very limited information publicly available from the Horn of Africa. It should also be noted that men as well as women traders experience general violence, in some cases to a greater extent overall than women (Pro-Femme/Twese Hamwe et al, 2013); this report focuses on gender-based violence experienced by women cross-border traders.

Women cross-border traders experience several types of economic violence and coercion¹⁰, including discrimination when obtaining trade-related paperwork (CIGI, 2018); delays at the border (CIGI, 2018); cumbersome border processes (Blumberg et al. 2016); unwarranted impounding of traders’ goods (Blumberg et al. 2016); and bribery and corruption at border posts (Blumberg et al. 2016). For example, Ruiter et al. (2017)¹¹ observe that border agents are able to cheat and bribe female traders by exploiting ‘information asymmetries’ around fluctuating exchange rates, coercing traders to pay informal fees; and in some cases forcing female traders to pay larger bribes than male traders (Higgins and Turner 2010a and 2010b).

Women cross-border traders also experience sexual violence and harassment, ranging from verbal sexual harassment to rape, and often citing pressure from border officials, a mostly male workforce¹², to provide sexual favours in exchange for better treatment at the border. Studies from Liberia (USAID 2014; Higgins 2012¹³) DRC (Brenton et al. 2011; Hossein et al. 2010¹⁴), and Southern Africa (Blumberg et al. 2016) point to high rates of sexual violence against cross-border traders (see section 3.3 below on the scale of violence). **This sexual violence can take different forms.** For example, in Liberia women report border officials demanding sexual favours in exchange for avoiding arrest or confiscation of goods (USAID 2014); in East Africa, women report having to pay larger bribes than male traders, or having to provide sexual favours to border guards to prevent detention or confiscation of their goods (Higgins and Turner 2010); in the DRC, women report common sexual touching, groping, stripping, attempted rape and rape (USAID 2014; Brenton et al. 2011), as well as physical assault and sexual

⁸ Referring to the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) definition: ‘Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life’.

⁹ See [ILO \(2019\) Convention and Recommendation](#)

¹⁰ Whilst the VAWG/GBV literature tends to use the term ‘economic violence’, the trade community refers to corruption, bribes, and coercion.

¹¹ Based on survey and FGDs with 100 Kenyan and 100 Ugandan women cross-border traders.

¹² E.g. 82% of the total in the Great Lakes area (Brenton et al. (2011)).

¹³ Both reports cite an original UNIFEM baseline report (Randriamaro and Budlender, 2008), but it was not possible to find this online.

¹⁴ NB we have found one study from DRC (Titeca and Kimanuka, 2012) that reports no gendered dimensions to violence experienced by cross-border traders, but this appears to be an anomaly compared to other studies from the region.

harassment ([Hossein et al. 2010](#))¹⁵; in Southern Africa, Malawian women (particularly on border with Mozambique) report border agents demanding sexual favours as bribes or in exchange for not confiscating wares ([Blumberg et al. \(2016\)](#)).

One study from Southern Africa ([Blumberg et al. \(2016\)](#)) discusses **transactional sexual relationships**¹⁶ as a ‘**coping mechanism**’ or **strategy** that women cross-border traders employ to manage the risk of sexual violence. Women traders may develop ‘girlfriend-boyfriend’ relationships with border officials, to protect themselves from sexual violence by other men at the border. The study describes the experience of one Malawian woman working as a cross-border trader: “*the woman explained that sexual coercion, exploitation, and harassment was pervasive at border crossings and indicated that if she “has” to provide some sort of sexual act to get her goods across, it is better to do it on her own terms. She has a Customs “boyfriend” and perpetually has to walk a tightrope in negotiating terms of the relationship and associated sexual encounters*” ([Blumberg et al. 2016](#), p. 38). Given the unequal power dynamics at play in these relationships [Blumberg et al. \(2016\)](#) emphasise that these relationships are also inherently violent, and pose additional health risks where women may not be able to negotiate the terms of the sexual relationship, e.g. condom use.

Beyond economic and sexual violence, there are also reports of women cross-border traders experiencing other forms of violence, including physical violence and verbal harassment. Women cross-border traders in Liberia report robbery and physical assaults in bus and train stations and on buses and trains ([USAID 2014](#)); in DRC, women report insults and spitting by police officials on both sides of the DRC-Rwanda border ([USAID 2014](#)) as well as threats, beatings, verbal insults, and stripping on both sides of the border in DRC, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda ([Brenton et al., 2011](#)).

Women cross-border traders experience violence not only at the border crossings, but also in their broader ‘world of work’¹⁷, including on transport and in destination countries¹⁸. [Blumberg et al. \(2016\)](#) describe in detail the range of violence that women traders experience on transport (buses, ‘lifts’, trains, and kombis/mini-vans) in southern Africa, including: theft of goods and cash; general and sexual harassment; verbal abuse from touts and drivers; police harassment on trains; and official roadblocks where traders needed to offload and reload goods, and police and customs officials could extract goods or money from traders who had already crossed the border; and harassment and theft by transport operators. In West Africa, women traders report high incidents of theft and physical assaults on buses and trains, and at bus and train stations on their journey to markets across borders, such as port markets in Lagos and Lomé; these risks were exacerbated by unsafe travel conditions, such as having to travel through the night, or on tops of vehicles ([Higgins, 2012](#)). This is consistent with broader literature¹⁹ on GBV in the world of work, where unsafe transport and infrastructure can contribute to GBV.

¹⁵ Study with 181 Congolese, Ugandan, Rwandan and Burundian agricultural cross-border traders, ‘*les mamans*’ across four borders with DRC.

¹⁶ NB there is also a broader context of transactional sexual relationships in border areas (catering to truck drivers etc.), and the relationship between sex work and HIV/AIDS, which is beyond the scope of this query.

¹⁷ See [ILO \(2011, p. 10\)](#) for broader definition, which prioritizes including unpaid care and domestic work as well.

¹⁸ For example [Raimundo and Chikanda \(2016\)](#) and [Mafukata \(2015\)](#) discuss the risk of xenophobic violence against foreigners in South Africa, and the fear and anxiety this poses to cross-border traders planning to travel to South Africa, a major destination for regional traders. [Raimundo and Chikanda \(2016\)](#) found in their study of Mozambican traders in South Africa that nearly 20% reported xenophobic violence affected their business operations ‘a great deal’ or ‘to some extent’.

¹⁹ See ActionAid work on safe cities (e.g. [ActionAid 2017](#)); [Jobes et al. \(2017\)](#)

Finally, there is very limited evidence on the impact of cross-border trading activities on women traders' experience of intimate partner violence (IPV). The very limited evidence that does exist suggests that this type of economic activity can expose women to IPV: for example, traders on the Nigeria-Cameroon border reported verbal and physical abuse from partners, who perceived their economic activities as infringing on their domestic responsibilities ([USAID, 2014](#)). This risk can lead to women giving up their economic activities (or working with colleagues to sell their wares on their behalf) ([USAID, 2014](#)). This is in line with broader evidence on the complex linkages between women's economic empowerment and IPV, which vary by context. In contexts of high poverty and gender inequities, some studies show that women are at increased risk of IPV in the short-term, particularly in areas with a high level of acceptance of wife-beating (Krishnan et al, 2010; Cools and Kotsadam, 2017). In the longer-term, the evidence suggests that women's economic empowerment can be a protective force against violence ([Heise, 2012](#)). Cross-border trade interventions should consider how they can work with traders' partners to mitigate risks of IPV; for example, a needs assessment study for the World Bank *The Great Lakes Trade Facilitation Project* calls for interventions to not only work with traders' partners to manage this risk of IPV, but also for the recognition of traders' reproductive roles and care responsibilities, for example through the provision of childcare facilities ([World Bank 2018](#)).

3.3 Scale of violence

There is limited rigorous evidence on the *scale* of violence against women cross-border traders, but what evidence does exist (and which comes mainly from small sample studies) points to high rates of economic, sexual and physical violence.²⁰

The available evidence suggests that **over half of women cross-border traders experience economic violence and coercion by border officials and police on the border** (and in roadblocks). On the Kenya/Uganda border, more than 50% of women cross-border traders report corruption or harassment in the past week, and 81% report corruption during the last month, citing corruption by police (59%), revenue authority officials (18%), middlemen (12%) and clearing agents (10%) ([Ruiter et al., 2017](#)). In Tanzania, 72% of cross-border traders (and women in particular) reported having had to pay bribes for confiscated or impounded goods ([Funteh, 2019](#)). In the DRC, 85% of traders had paid bribes, 60% fines, and 38% had had their goods confiscated ([Brenton et al, 2011](#), see Figure 1 below)²¹. Yet despite high rates of economic violence and coercion, [Ruiter et al. \(2017\)](#) found that in Kenya/Uganda there were **very few formal complaints by women traders** (only 13.5% of women made formal complaints), due to risks of continued vulnerability to further exploitation and harassment, perceptions that they would need to provide evidence of the crime, and a desire to avoid further delays to crossing the border. Similarly, in Liberia women cross-border traders do not report

²⁰ NB The World Bank are currently piloting a survey with cross-border traders, which includes questions on GBV; the survey is being piloted in the Pacific and then will be rolled out to some African countries. Results should be available next year (communication with expert at the World Bank).

²¹ It is not clear whether this frequency relates to all (male plus female traders), or women traders alone.

due to a lack of awareness of reporting processes, especially if the perpetrators are in security forces or positions of power ([USAID, 2014](#)).

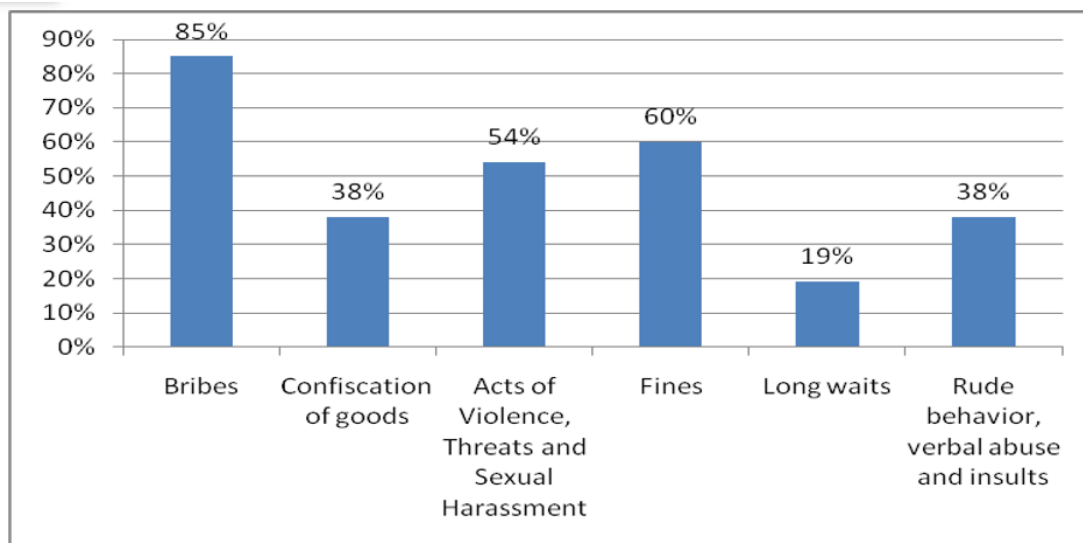


Figure 1 Brenton et al. (2011) - Reported frequency of risks by cross border traders in DRC

Available evidence also suggests high rates of sexual harassment and violence. In Liberia, 37% of female cross-border traders had experienced sexual violence at border crossings, and 15% had been raped or forced to have sex in exchange for favours ([USAID, 2014](#)). In DRC, 54% of female cross-border traders report “acts of violence, threats and sexual harassment” ([Brenton et al, 2011](#), see Figure 1). Also, from DRC, Pro-Femme-Twese Hamwe et al (2013) found that 32% of women ICBTs had personal experience of GBV on the DRC-Rwanda border posts and there was a higher level of awareness of GBV among women than men traders. Another study ([Mora and Roshan, 2013](#)), also in the DRC, found 11% of respondents reported GBV during border crossings, of which sexual touching, groping, attempted rape, and rape were the most common types of violence reported over the past 30 days. In southern Africa, 34% of female cross-border traders reported sexual harassment by border officials ([Blumberg et al., 2016](#)); in a qualitative study in Malawi, members of all focus group discussions reported incidents of sexual exploitation and harassment by border agents, in particular at the Mwanza border with Mozambique ([Blumberg et al., 2016](#)); moreover, 20% of female cross-border traders who slept in the open and 18% of those who slept in dormitories experienced various forms of GBV, including sexual violence ([Blumberg et al., 2016](#)). As above, with low reporting of economic violence and coercion, there is also low reporting of sexual violence; in their study of the Kenyan/Ugandan border, [Ruiter et al. \(2017\)](#) found reluctance to report sexual harassment because of risks to their livelihood.

Beyond economic and sexual violence, there are also limited data on rates of verbal abuse against female cross-border traders. In DRC, 38% of women cross-border traders report verbal abuse ([Brenton et al. 2011](#), see figure 1 above). Another study from DRC found that female cross-border traders experience high rates of verbal abuse by Congolese and Rwandan police officials on both sides of the border (35% in DRC, and 12% in Rwanda) ([USAID 2014²²](#)).

²² Citing Brenton et al. (2013)

Evidence on the scale of violence is even more limited for *different groups of women traders* – e.g. by age²³, disability, refugee/IDP status, or sexual orientation. It is worth noting that the broader evidence base on GBV suggests that some groups of women and girls are particularly at risk: for example, in their recent review of violence against women and girls across SSA, Fraser and Muller (2017) argue that women with disabilities, adolescent girls, older women, refugee/IDP women, and LGBTQI women are all at particular risk²⁴. Bearing this in mind, any intervention addressing GBV (including in border settings) needs to take an intersectional approach in order to address the multiple and varying forms of discrimination that women cross-border traders can face.

3.4 Perpetrators

There is evidence that a range of different groups perpetrate violence against women cross-border traders at the border and in transport – including border agents and officials, gangs working on behalf of the state or independently, smugglers, transport workers, and male traders.

State officials of many kinds are reported as perpetrators. The evidence shows that border and customs officers are a key perpetrator group of violence against female cross-border traders, as well as male cross-border traders (see e.g. [Blumberg et al., 2016](#)), and other groups crossing the border, including refugees (see Ward and UN Women, 2013). Studies from southern Africa ([Blumberg et al., 2016](#)), DRC ([Brenton et al. \(2011\)](#); [Hossein, 2010](#)), Liberia ([USAID, 2014](#)), and elsewhere point to border and customs officials as perpetrators of economic violence and coercion, sexual violence and harassment, as well as physical and verbal abuse – with these types of violence often overlapping, for example through demanding sexual favours in exchange for not having one's goods confiscated or impounded, unnecessary delays or arbitrary detention at border points in order to detain female traders overnight and then 'make sexual advances', or through unnecessarily invasive body searches ([The Centre, 2006](#); [USAID 2014](#)). [USAID \(2014\)](#) call for any intervention working with border officials to also include their supervisors, who often manage reports of incidents of violence.

Not only do border officials harass traders, but in DRC [Brenton et al. \(2011\)](#) found that **border officials also hire young men as *les viseurs* (watchers)** to act on their behalf, to use violent force to take traders' goods or money; the most vulnerable traders are women traveling by foot, carrying their goods.

Other state officials, such as police and municipal *askaris*²⁵, also commit GBV at the border, and in transit (where [Blumberg et al., 2016](#) also report harassment by transport workers and operators), including at roadblocks ([The Centre, 2006](#); [Blumberg et al. 2016](#)). In the DRC, women cross-border traders report **police** harassment including insults and spitting on both sides of the DRC-Rwanda border ([USAID 2014](#)).

The other key perpetrator group is **smugglers, brokers and intermediaries who help informal cross-border traders cross the border illegally**, a choice they may make in order to avoid tax, delays or violence at official border posts. In East Africa, women informal cross-border traders often rely on intermediaries such as *panya* (smugglers) to cross the border – this exposes them to risks of coercion,

²³ [Brenton et al. \(2011\)](#) does specifically note both younger and older traders are at risk.

²⁴ Fraser and Muller (2017) draw on What Works and other evidence, outlining particular forms of GBV against older women (e.g. related to 'witchcraft') and LGBTQI women (e.g. corrective rape); that both older women and adolescent girls are at high risk of sexual violence; and that persons with disability are at increased risk of GBV.

²⁵ A soldier or police officer in East Africa

theft, or sexual violence by the smugglers themselves, as well as risks such as fines or imprisonment if they are caught by border officials (Shaw, 2011; [Ruiter et al., 2017](#)).

Finally, at the border itself, there are reports of **wider groups of perpetrators, including male traders and the general population**. [Blumberg et al. 2016](#) argue this is due in part to the design and maintenance of border infrastructure and physical spaces: overcrowded spaces with inadequate, unhygienic, and poorly lit accommodation and sanitation facilities.

3.5 What drives this violence?

This violence and coercion are driven by several key factors: the broader context of gender inequality, gender-based violence, and violent and unstable borders; and unequal access to information between border officials and cross-border traders.

Violence against border traders happens within a broader context of gender inequality²⁶ and high rates of GBV: globally one in three women and girls experience GBV in their lifetime ([WHO et al., 2013](#)); in Africa, this is higher, at 36.6% (see figure 2 below) (Fraser and Müller, 2017). There are important gaps in the evidence around prevalence of GBV in countries in the Horn of Africa – with a recent VAWG Helpdesk study (Fraser and Müller, 2017) finding a lack of national DHS data in Ethiopia, Djibouti, Eritrea, and Somalia. This is in line with findings that there is generally less evidence from fragile conflict-affected and humanitarian settings, though emerging evidence shows that already high levels of GBV are exacerbated in conflict settings – including IPV, and sexual violence by armed actors and perpetrators known to the victim (Fraser and Müller, 2017).



Figure 2: Global and Regional GBV (Fraser and Müller, 2017, citing WHO)

One way that gender inequality plays out is through stigma and discrimination against women cross-border traders²⁷, including assumptions around her engagement in transactional sex ([Blumberg et al., 2016](#)). [Ityavyar \(2013\)](#) calls for a shift in attitudes toward women cross-border traders both from the top-down and bottom-up, through recognition of their contribution to households and economies, addressing stereotypes of “*petit hustlers*”; government recognition of this as legitimate work could address stereotypes held by border officials.

In some regions, including the Horn, this border violence is happening in the context of broader violence and securitisation, which can exacerbate existing risks to women cross-border traders

²⁶ See section 3.1 above on low GDI and SIGI rankings in Ethiopia (only country ranked in the Horn region), and SIGI analysis on gender inequality in the region.

²⁷ See [Braun \(2019\)](#) footnote above re stigma against Congolese traders engaged in international trade with China.

([Taylor et al., 2014](#)). It is also important to note that women may themselves be the ‘product’ being traded, with human trafficking taking place (e.g. for sex or forced marriage) at some borders ([Ruiter et al., 2017](#); [USAID 2014](#)); [Ruiter et al. \(2017\)](#) argue that this trafficking constitutes another barrier to women cross-border traders - contributing to a ‘general sense of insecurity and instability’ in border areas, where cross-border traders witness this activity and border officials failing to intervene, which can ‘erode trust in border officials and can make traders more hesitant about proceeding with their business’ (p.7).

Another key driver of violence is the information asymmetry between border officials and women cross-border traders, around what taxes and fees are due, as well as broader knowledge of the ‘rules of the game’, linked to traders’ levels of literacy, familiarity with the border, whether they have crossed before, and whether they have social networks they can leverage (Higgins and Turner, 2010; [Higgins, 2012](#); [Ruiter et al. 2017](#)). [Ruiter et al. \(2017\)](#)²⁸ argue that lack of information around trade information – including the various charges levied at borders including tariffs, duties and administration fees and currency exchange rate fluctuations — creates an enabling environment for corruption and violence (see also Pro-Femme/Twese Hamwe et al., 2013, [Gasioriek et al., 2016](#)) and Seror et al., 2017). Border officials often take advantage of ‘information asymmetry’ on these matters. Where states are party to overlapping regional and bilateral trade arrangements with neighbouring countries, the potential for border officials to use information asymmetry to economically exploit women cross-border traders can be exacerbated. For example, customs officials may have discretion – or claim to have discretion – over which tariff regimes to apply (Kheir-El-Din and Ghoneim, 2004). [Higgins \(2012\)](#) argues that this is preventing women ICBTs from shifting into more formal trade: “these information asymmetries and concerns around border delays and corruption, result in some women informal cross-border traders being reluctant to shift to ‘formal’ trade, even if trade liberalization and regional integration reforms are to their advantage...women perceive the regulatory burden of formal business as greater than men do, are more ‘time poor’ and as a result are less inclined to formalize their business. Women fear that even if protocols and policies are in place to speed up and simplify border processing, in practice this will not happen” (p. 11).

This lack of information is linked in part to the issue of a lack of women cross-border traders’ labour organisation and collective voice²⁹. For example, [Ityavyar \(2013\)](#) argue that cross-border traders’ associations can help traders access information, legitimise small-scale traders, and develop their small businesses, as well as enable them to be represented in formal bodies, which can provide institutional backing for traders. Section 5 discusses an initiative in the COMESA region to formalise trader groups into registered associations to gain government recognition and participation in policy dialogue.

In addition to the structural drivers discussed above, there are also additional risk factors that increase the risk of violence in border settings, including **inadequate infrastructure services at the border**. Especially for women cross-border traders who are delayed and must stay overnight at the border, inadequate and unsafe infrastructure such as poor lighting, unsafe accommodation, unsafe and unhygienic sanitation services (e.g. women-only toilets with lockable doors), and lack of storage

²⁸ Based on survey and FGDs with 100 Kenyan and 100 Ugandan women cross-border traders.

²⁹ NB evidence from broader GBV literature shows the importance of collective voice: a global study found a strong, autonomous feminist movement is substantively and statistically significant as a predictor of government action to address GBV (Htun And Weldon 2012)

facilities can drive violence by various actors in this setting ([Blumberg et al., 2016](#)). In some destination countries, unsafe and overcrowded accommodation and marketing facilities continue to expose female traders to GBV, including from male traders, thieves and police ([Blumberg et al. 2016](#)).

4. Links between violence and tax/duties systems at borders

This section discusses evidence of links between violence and the taxes and duties systems at borders, and the evidence that border and customs officials are involved in perpetrating violence against women traders. It also discusses briefly the nature of policies and interventions addressing these matters, as a bridge to the final section of the report on programme experiences. What is beyond the scope of this report, but relevant for context, is a discussion of the link between taxes more generally, and the state's ability to prevent and respond to GBV³⁰.

4.1 Link 1: Complex border tax systems enable GBV by border officials

The previous sections discuss the evidence that women cross-border traders experience high rates of GBV, linked to unequal power dynamics in the border crossing process (between traders and officials, and traders and other actors), a lack of access to information and technology around the rules of the game, and inadequate and inappropriate facilities.

Border and customs officials are powerful actors in this setting. A recent study from borders in DRC and South Sudan ([Hollstegge and Doevenspeck, 2017](#)) argues that on these officials act as 'sovereignty entrepreneurs', managing and controlling these fragile borders through 'constant face-to-face negotiations', setting the terms and conditions of border crossing, including through their ability to 'tax, threaten and discipline with impunity' (p. 815).

Under these conditions, border and customs officials have enormous relative power to take advantage of their position in negotiating with traders in general and women as small traders in particular. Women traders often lack full information and can fear losing their livelihood. Officials may act arbitrarily in the imposition of taxes or duties (Higgins and Turner, 2010a), or threaten to impound goods unless the trader offers a bribe or sexual favour.

It is important to note that the term 'border officials' cover a wide range of agencies. Customs officials generally perform three tasks:

1. inspecting consignments for weight and content and checking that the relevant product health, safety and rules of origin certificates are in place (or referring the trader to the relevant agency for certification). The movement of persons (traders) also needs to conform to immigration rules. Each requirement is, in principle, the remit of a different regulatory authority;

³⁰ See e.g. [Oxfam \(2019\)](#) on *Tax and Gender Equality*, and [ActionAid UK \(undated\)](#) on *Making Tax Work for Women's Rights* on the importance of tax systems taking women's needs into account, including around budgeting for public services on which women tend to rely more than men (e.g. GBV response services).

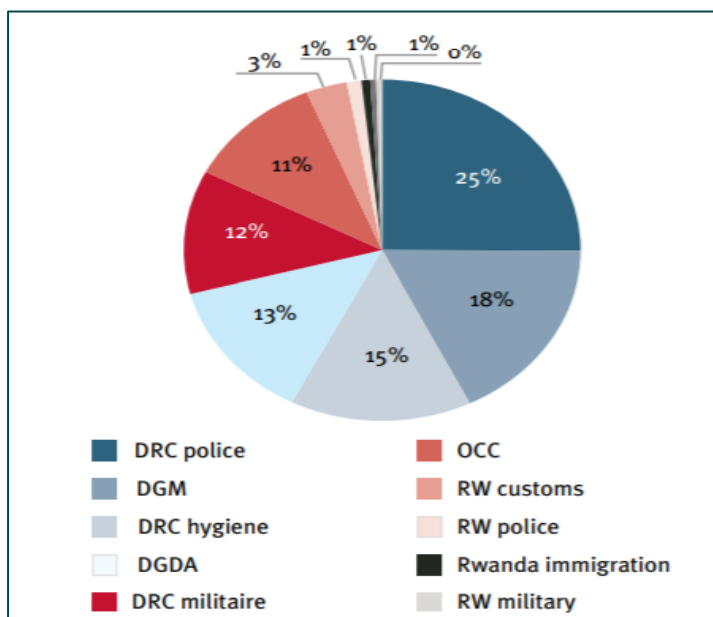


Figure 3 Reported Cases of Corruption by Officials in DRC and Rwanda, By Type of Authority (Mora and Roshan, 2013, drawing on World Bank Africa Region Gender Innovation Lab 2011-12 Survey)

2. applying appropriate tariffs (i.e. tax for specific products according to the trade arrangements between the two countries); and

3. charging administrative or other fees for processing the transaction/passage from one to the other country.

Figure 3 underscored this point – in presenting data from a 2012-13 survey on the DRC border, it shows the large range of Congolese and Rwandan officials accused of corruption. The main culprit after the military, are the Congolese customs and product standards agencies ([Mora and Roshan, 2013](#)).

The complexity of agents and systems at border posts gives rise to conditions in which corruption and GBV can flourish. The more complex is the whole set, the more scope there is for officials to abuse their position, including violence against women traders. The greater the complexity also the more pronounced are women traders’ gender-related disadvantages. Women tend to have lower literacy rates and be confined to smaller scale business activity. Trading charges are an example of how flat taxes/fees – even if progressive – are proportionately more difficult for smaller enterprises to bear, given other constraints on their businesses. Studies of the constraints faced by ICBTs, cited earlier in this report, present data on bribes, fines, and confiscation of goods as well as violence and threats of violence. None of these sources, however, explore interactions among these factors, e.g. whether the severity or incidence of violence varies in association with particular fees or penalties. The size of the samples of ICBTs in surveys at borders are too small to permit such analysis³¹.

Acknowledgement of the fact that the costs of compliance with the whole range of customs requirements are disproportionately high for small traders has led at least 93 member countries of the World Customs Organisation to introduce ‘de minimus’ schemes. These exempt small consignments (below a certain threshold value, usually USD 1000 or 2000) from many if not all taxes and certification requirements (OECD/WTO (2019)³²). No studies of their incidence and impact of these schemes, or evaluations of them, have been found. The two main regional trade arrangements in East Africa, EAC and COMESA, have also introduced simplified tariff regimes designed explicitly to help small traders. However, even when these do exist, corruption can still thrive; for example, [Ruiter et al. \(2017\)](#) describe how this plays out in East Africa around the Simplified Certificate of Origin (SCOO) (box 1 below):

³¹ World Bank Group (2010) has the largest sample size with 628 respondents (male and (90%) female).

³² Both Ethiopia and Somalia are member states of the WCO.

Box 1: Coercion in East Africa: “Border officials regularly exploit the lack of transparency surrounding trade procedures to generate uncertainty and coerce traders to pay informal fees at the risk of having their goods seized. Issues surrounding how EAC officials treat the Simplified Certificate of Origin (SCOO) are an indicative example of this kind of corruption. The SCOO is intended to encourage and simplify trading procedures across the Kenya-Uganda border; however, in many cases illustrated by participants in our research, it has become another opportunity for corruption to propagate. For example, many described situations where money paid to gain entry into Kenya must be paid again to Ugandan custom agents because the Ugandan officials demand the fees associated with re-entry. In other instances, officials refuse to accept the trader’s SCOO, and traders must pay again to obtain one. When interviewed, a number of traders complained that ... border officials often still demand the certification fee as if the trader was moving a larger amount of goods across the border” (Ruiter et al. 2017 p. 4)

In the face of this corruption and violence, interventions often focus on training and ‘gender sensitisation’ initiatives with border and customs officials (see section 5 below). For example, the *Improving the Conditions of Cross-Border Traders in the Great Lakes Region of Africa* intervention on the border between DRC and Rwanda has addressed a number of the risks around GBV and taxes discussed here, working with both border officials and women traders (see Box 2). ICT solutions are also proving successful in reducing corruption and violence linked to cross-border taxes: in Ghana, computerised border services have led to a decrease (% unavailable) in reported abuse and sexual harassment, and 35% reduction in corruption (USAID 2014).

Box 2: Improving the Conditions of Cross-Border Traders in the Great Lakes Region of Africa: “The World Bank project, “*Improving the Conditions of Cross-Border Traders in the Great Lakes Region of Africa*,” has taken several actions to address GBV faced by female cross-border traders. Specifically, the project addressed the physical insecurity that many women face at the Petite Barrière border crossing by upgrading of lighting and surveillance cameras. Official fees and tax information was posted on bulletin boards at border crossings. Handouts (with illustrations and written in Swahili) provided to traders showing which agencies are entitled to be at the border and the fees or taxes they can collect, seeks to reduce bribes women face as a result of being unclear on the fees and tax rates that they are subject to. The project also built capacity of border officials on regulations, taxes and fees, human rights, and GBV in order to improve the conduct of border officials. Additional activities include encouraging border officials to wear uniforms and ID badges; the production of a video on violence and cross-border trade; and workshops between officials and traders to reduce the stigmatized view that many officials have of small-scale traders’ (Higgins, 2012: p.29)

4.2 Link 2: Strict border controls can push women ICBTs toward unpatrolled crossings and GBV risks from other actors

Fear of the cost and complexity of customs procedures and of corruption³³ among customs officials can push women into informal cross border trade (UNCTAD 2018b). Women cross-border traders may be more likely than men cross-border traders to avoid formal border crossings, and choose informal routes instead, partly due to the challenges mentioned in previous sections (GBV, gender-specific corruption, and discrimination). But informal border crossings pose some of the same risks, including of GBV (UNCTAD, 2018b and Higgins, 2010a). As discussed in the perpetrators section above,

³³ Source: <http://www.business-anti-corruption.com/country-profiles/sub-saharan-africa/ethiopia/business-corruption-in-ethiopia.aspx>

these risks of GBV include coercion and sexual violence by smugglers and intermediaries, as well as by border officials if the traders are caught (Turner and Higgins, 2010a). For example, in East Africa, women informal cross-border traders reported that if they were caught crossing the border informally, they could be detained, their goods could be confiscated, they could be made to pay large bribes or perform sexual favours to be released or avoid having their goods confiscated ([Higgins, 2012](#)).

4.3 Link 3: The trade policy and programming context for addressing GBV among women ICBTs

Programmes addressing GBV against women cross-border traders are part of policies addressing informality in international trade more generally through ‘trade facilitation’. To some extent, donor policy and programmes towards ICBT in this field reflect the divergence in policy approaches against informal economic activity overall. Some initiatives follow an ‘incentivising’ approach (sometimes coupled with the idea that informality is equivalent to illegality, and that punitive sanctions against non-compliers are appropriate). Others argue that the formality/informality distinction is unhelpful in this connection (WCO 2013) and that it is better to prioritise direct support for informal traders in order to improve their economic circumstances.

Addressing GBV has a place in both approaches, as does support for women traders’ associations. In the first case, programmes seek to incentivise traders to formalise their activities³⁴ by reducing the absolute and relative costs (monetary, bureaucratic and informational costs) of formal procedures calculated, in quantitative studies (e.g. [Bouet et al. 2018](#)). If it is recognised at all, GBV is seen in this connection as one of the (many) inefficiencies and ‘costs’ for traders at border crossings – even if the hazards cannot be precisely calculated – and support for traders’ associations is seen as an effective way of reducing information costs. Programmes can also be motivated by concern to use conformity to trading regulations as a way of improving product health and safety standards and incentivising trading enterprises to expand the scope and productivity of their activities.

In the second case, proponents note the great significance of ICBT to the incomes of poorer and marginal communities and its contribution to food security and prioritise support for ICBT and traders to improve their current circumstances. This seems to be gaining ground over the first approach (see for example recent discussion papers published by the African Development Bank ([Afrika and Ajumbo 2012](#)) and the OECD ([Lesser and Moisse-Leeman, 2009](#)). In relation to the Horn of Africa, [Little \(2005\)](#) also argued for this approach, extending it to complementary (domestic behind-the-border, rather than ‘aid for trade’) interventions, such as support for national veterinary services to pre-empt the need for border controls. Similarly, interventions against GBV and support for traders’ associations are promoted within this approach, motivated by human rights as much as by economic empowerment concerns.

³⁴ Without formalising their ‘enterprises’ as is the case in SME and enterprise development programming.

5. Programme Mapping

The table below outlines existing interventions by governments or development partners which seek to address violence experienced by women traders at border crossings across two areas: 1) trade arrangements projects with explicit gender equality objectives; and 2) interventions targeting violence against women cross border traders. The evidence on what approaches are the most effective is still at an early stage, with few evaluations available. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this query, we suggest that interventions to address GBV against women cross-border traders can also learn from successful GBV prevention and response initiatives more broadly; see for example the DFID What Works programme set of evidence on what works to prevent VAWG; whilst this does not focus on border settings in particular, one of their evidence reviews includes discussion of police training on GBV response ([Jewkes et al, 2015](#)).

Approaches which have the potential to address violence against women traders, but for which rigorous evidence does not exist, include:

- **Gender-sensitive training of border officials:** interventions to this effect are underway under the auspices of the World Customs Organisation, see item 2.3; the project is still active so results not yet known. See also projects 2.5 and 2.2.
- **Awareness-raising and information sharing between customs authorities and women cross-border traders, mainly through associations:** It is widely assumed that in this, as in any other context, information is key to the proper functioning of markets. See project item 1.4.i below.
- **Trade Simplification Regimes:** as adopted in EAC and COMESA. are a cost saving measure for small traders, intended also to minimise conditions in which conflict, coercion and harassment of women traders can arise.
- **Training in conflict resolution:** for women traders to help them manage disputes with officials at border crossings (Item 2.2).
- **Building the capacity of women cross-border traders associations and their collective voice:** promoted to help traders access information and provide them institutional backing (e.g. for complaints of harassment) (see projects 1.3 and 1.4.c amongst others). Research studies and anecdotal evidence from women traders themselves is persuasive.
- **Improving the design and maintenance of infrastructure services at the border** for cross-border traders who are delayed and must stay overnight at the border. In response to surveys, women traders commonly mention the need for safer accommodation for overnight stays, storage facilities, toilets with lockable doors, child-friendly waiting areas, better-lit public spaces, etc.
- **The World Customs Organisation advises its members to promote gender balance within border workforces** partly on the ground that harassment of traders is likely to be reduced when female officers are present although evidence on the point is weak (see project 2.3).

Intervention	Location	Short programme summary	Learning around GBV that can inform future programming
<p>1. Trade arrangements projects with explicit gender equality objectives – whilst these programmes do not have specific learning on GBV outcomes, the broader literature discussed in previous sections suggests that improved access to information (e.g. on border charges) can help to decrease opportunities for corruption and economic exploitation, and thus these interventions are included.</p>			
<p>1.1 COMESA Simplification Project, supported by TradeMark East Africa</p>	<p>COMESA³⁵ and EAC³⁶ Ethiopia is a member of COMESA, but it is not clear if it applies the simplified trade regime</p>	<p>In 2007, COMESA and the EAC launched simplified trade regimes (STR) for certain commodities. Small-scale traders, especially women traders, benefit from a simplified customs document and a simplified certificate of origin (SCOO), under which goods originating from member countries valued at less than US\$1,000 (COMESA) or US\$2,000 (EAC) per consignment qualify for duty-free entry. Traders located in remote areas will especially benefit from the regime³⁷.</p> <p>Product lists are displayed at border posts and available at the offices of the cross-border traders' associations and customs both at the border and in the main towns nearby. The SCOO can be obtained at the border post and is signed by the customs office. STRs <i>do not</i> however rule out the need for import and export permits for certain agricultural foods and animal products, meaning that traders are required to apply for such permits where necessary (FAO, 2017; Fundira, 2018)</p>	<p>There has been inconsistent application of provisions, and multiple charges also persist ((UNCTAD 2017, and see COMESA and World Bank for more details on current state of the STR). Without complete and consistent application of STRs, corruption and coercion – conditions conducive to GBV - may still occur. No information on the impact of STRs on women traders or GBV to date.</p>

³⁵COMESA countries: Burundi Comoros D.R. Congo Djibouti Egypt Eritrea Ethiopia Kenya Libya Madagascar Malawi Mauritius Rwanda Seychelles Sudan Swaziland Uganda Zambia Zimbabwe

³⁶ EAC countries: Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda

³⁷ A summary of the scheme set out in Lesser and Moise-Leeman (2009) is slightly different in some details.

1.2 EAC Trade Simplification Project	Regional EAC (Ethiopia and Somalia are not EAC members)	<p>The EAC STR waives customs duties. It does not provide exemptions for other domestic taxes or other border requirements). It reduces one of the costs of trade, encouraging informal traders to switch to more formal trade i.e. to use official border posts, make declarations, pay taxes on consignments etc. No gender dimension specified but if GBV is less at border posts than at non-official crossing points used by ICBTs, then women may benefit.</p> <p>The project also included Infrastructural improvements including the introduction of common documentation, and single windows at intra-EAC customs posts and along the Northern Corridor (Gasiorek et al., 2016; UNCTAD, 2018)</p>	Limited uptake of STRs by small-scale traders because only one cost (tariff duties) is reduced although Infrastructural improvements have relaxed other transaction costs of trade to some extent. Lack of awareness and knowledge about STRs is another inhibiting factor. No learnings available about the impact of the project on women ICBTs or GBV in particular.
1.3 Charter for Cross-Border Traders	Malawi and Zambia	<p>The Charter for Cross-Border Traders in Malawi and Zambia is a joint initiative between the World Bank and a network of stakeholders including the respective Governments of Malawi and Zambia, border agencies, Traders' Associations, and CSOs. The Charter addresses challenges for ICBTs at borders including harassment (Koroma et al 2017). The initiative was informed by the Diagnostics Trade Integration Studies (DTIS) carried out in the two countries for the EIF (Enhanced Integrated Framework) with World Bank support.</p>	<p>The importance for improving conditions for women ICBTs of consultation for information sharing between official bodies and CSOs is stressed by Lesser and Moise-Leeman (2009) and Shaw (2010). This project is an example of a comprehensive partnership-based consultative approach.</p> <p>No impact studies or GBV learnings available of project implementation.</p>

1.4 Zambia cross-border traders association	Zambia	With funding from IFAD, the association provides market intelligence for traders on border charges and product prices in destination markets. It is an example of a 'complementary' measure designed to facilitate trade through border posts and encourage traders to pay the various taxes levied on consignments rather than face the risks of crossing at non-authorised points along the borders. (Nchito and Hansen 2010).	The project description implies that women ICBTs face greater risks at non-authorised crossing points, but GBV is not specified and no evidence is given.
2) Interventions targeting violence against women cross border traders			
2.1 Building Resilience - Enhancing the Health, Safety, and Livelihoods of Female Informal Cross-Border Traders in Southern Zimbabwe (2008-10)	Zimbabwe	This IOM and CARE project aimed to empower women ICBTs in Masvingo and Chiredzi Districts in Zimbabwe to reduce economic risks and risks of sexual violence associated with ICBT, through: establishing two ICBT associations; increasing traders' knowledge on safe migration, strengthening the financial capacity and economic security of 960 WICBTs (Migration Health Research Portal) reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS, and access to these services.	No end of project reports or evaluations found from IOM or CARE resources/databases, so no learnings available.

<p>2.2 TradeMark East Africa (TMEA) with Search for Common Ground (SFCG) (2015)</p>	<p>Burundi</p>	<p>A guide was produced on how to avoid confrontational body language when women traders deal with customs and tax officials. Laid out in cartoon-style diagrams, the guide is one of many innovative ways SFCG is helping ordinary people adapt to the realities of trade. <i>“Our aim is to help women traders improve their position in the new realities of EAC membership, and that means helping them understand today’s realities of paying taxes and duties and dealing with officials without getting into rows,”</i> (Floride Ahitungiye, Programme Director of SFCG). SFCG canvassed women traders at borders to establish the main causes of confrontation and helped organize meetings with the Office Burundaise des Recettes (OBR – the Burundian Tax Office) and Tanzanian customs officials. The project also includes radio programmes in [local languages] explaining how customs and tax rates now work and establishing a dialogue between the OBR and its clients to avoid misunderstandings. Note that the project dealt with ‘conflict’ and does not speak of GBV per se. See https://www.trademarka.com/stories/body-language-lessons-help-burundi-women-solve-border-disputes/</p>	<p>Overcoming mistrust between the OBR and traders is important in reducing conflict. Improving professional communication is simple and can be very effective.</p> <p><i>“All of us felt there were a few key issues,”</i> says clothes trader Violette Nshimirmani, <i>“and we attended meetings to get them sorted out. There was learning on both sides. This is a new reality for traders and officials alike.”</i></p> <p><i>“It starts with just simple things, like learning that finger pointing immediately sets your interlocutor on the defensive. It’s amazing how much progress you can make when you start off with the right attitude of working together to solve problems.”...</i></p>
<p>2.3 World Customs Organisation</p>		<p>In 2018, the WCO developed a blended training package “Advancing Gender Equality in Customs”, funded by the Government of Finland through the East and Southern Africa Capacity Building Programme II. This training package is composed of two tracks: A one-week workshop targeting middle and senior Customs managers focusing on how to implement gender equality in Customs and its links to customs reform and modernization.</p> <p>An e-learning module accessible in English and French in the CliKC! Platform aiming at raising general awareness on gender equality, targeting all Customs officers.</p> <p>http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/capacity-building/activities-and-programmes/gender-equality.aspx</p>	<p>The project is ongoing, no GBV or other learnings yet.</p>

		<p>The training is consistent with WCO's <i>Gender Equality Organisational Assessment Tool</i>, which is focussed on internal workplace practices but also refers to behaviour towards clients (ICBTs). It notes that "small informal traders, many of them women in border communities, are affected by ...[many problems including]..higher probability of being exposed to additional difficulties at the border including corruption and sexual harassment which also makes them more sensible for the issue of safety at the border" (WCO ?2014).</p>	
<p>2.4 World Bank Great Lakes Trade Facilitation Project' (GLTFP). (project p151083)</p>	<p>Regional</p>	<p>Large, multi-component project including e.g. COMESA STR (see above). The objective of the project is to facilitate cross-border trade by increasing the capacity for commerce and reducing the costs faced by traders, especially small-scale and women traders, at targeted locations. Infrastructural improvements, policy and procedural reforms, capacity building, and awareness-raising, along with other measures to improve behaviour at border locations and to prevent and mitigate GBV risks. GBV components include establishment of national toll-free phone line systems to allow traders, and especially women, to anonymously report abuses suffered at the border, via SMS and voice calls, using basic GSM handsets with no access to the internet. Reports would then be automatically stored in and processed by a cloud-based, open-source platform, and subsequently visualized on a website available in two versions: one open to the public, providing details and updates on the status of each issue, that can be used for monitoring and advocacy purposes; and a second, private and only accessible through log-in credentials, which offers selected stakeholders, e.g., border agencies, traders' associations and civil society the opportunity to review and take action on the various issues reported by traders. All reports are submitted and reviewed in total anonymity (World Bank; World Bank, 2018, p. 51)</p>	<p>Still active (to 12/20), no evaluation or other documents or results, World Bank internal ratings (x 2) are 'moderately unsatisfactory' to date.</p>

<p>2.5 World Bank and International Alert <i>Improving the conditions of cross-border traders in the Great Lakes region of Africa Project</i> (2012-2013)</p>	DRC	<p>As noted in Box 2, this project has taken several actions to address GBV faced by female cross-border traders, including: addressing physical insecurity risk factors at border crossings, including lighting and surveillance cameras; posting information on bulletins about official fees and tax information; provided illustrated handouts to traders showing which agencies are entitled to be at border and the fees/taxes they can collect; building capacity of border officials on regulations, taxes, fees, human rights, and GBV; encouraging border officials to wear uniforms and ID badges; and workshops between officials and traders to reduce stigma (Higgins 2012).</p> <p>This was a pilot RCT intervention that may have informed gender components of the GLTFP. It included training of border officials and traders, institutional reforms, and a strengthened voice for traders. Component 2 of the project, "Empowerment of small-scale traders (via increased knowledge and understanding of regulations and rights and establishment and strengthening of associations/cooperatives)", was subject to an evaluation in 2013 (Cross-Border Trade Impact Evaluation (2013).</p>	<p>Component 2, the training and traders' association support measures, may have resulted in potential reduction in sexual and gender-based violence (fewer traders insulted or spit upon), with no increase in "unofficial" fees to border officials. There was a possible reduction in corruption (fee-asking by border officials) emerging from the participation of border officials in the [traders associations] training. No more precise GBV learnings are available about this or any other component.</p> <p>These tentative findings (as set out in World Bank 2016) were drawn from unpublished results of the impact evaluation described in Col3. The evidence therefore suggests (at a low level of reliability) that training, information provision on traders' rights as well as trade costs and support for associations can have positive effects on the level of GBV experienced by women traders.</p>
<p>2.6 International Alert Tushiriki wote (<i>Let's all participate</i>) Project</p>	DRC, Rwanda	<p>This project promotes women's economic and political empowerment in the Great Lakes region, including through working with 1,125 women small-scale cross-border traders and 115 border officials (International Alert).</p>	<p>No evaluation available or information on GBV impacts. The project called for a regional trade agreement to foster simpler trade processes for women cross-border traders, and this may have been one influence (among others) on the its adoption in 2016 (International Alert, 2016).</p>

2.7.SADC ICBTs Associations	Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe	Women representatives of Informal Cross Border Trader’s Associations (ICBTs) met at the Women Cross Border Traders Forum on Mainstreaming Gender in the SADC Regional Trade Policy and the Tripartite Free Trade Area Policy Framework conference (TFTA) from 10th – 11th July 2013. They identified challenges facing women ICBTs and urged action to, inter alia, support the formation and registration of traders associations throughout SSA, and for action to be taken to simplify procedures, make information widely available, promote STRs (like COMESA’s), liaise with gender units in the respective Regional Trade organisations, and enhance safety and security measures for women at border posts.	While this is a proposed rather than actual intervention, it shows that the policy recommendation commonly found in trade facilitation programming to encourage consultation between official and civil society bodies is being proposed by CSOs themselves, in relation to GBV amid other concerns.
2.8 Ghana	Ghana	In Ghana, computerised border services have led to a decrease (% unavailable) in reported abuse and sexual harassment, and 35% reduction in corruption (USAID 2014).	Unfortunately, the original source cited by USAID (2014) is not included in the bibliography and we have not found programme documentation with further learning. Nevertheless, this suggests that ICT may contribute to more efficient border systems with less opportunity for GBV.
2.9 TradeMark East Africa (TMEA) ³⁸	Eastern Africa, Regional	Since 2015, TMEA has included a comprehensive gender strategy under which several discrete activities for women ICBTs relevant to safety and security (potentially covering for GBV) – have been carried out ³⁹ , mostly as part of projects to improve operation of border crossings e.g.: a) Support for EASSI (HQ in Uganda, but regional activities)	a) No learnings on EASSI activities on TMEA or EASSI websites, no information available for Shaw (2018) but stories available here .

³⁸ As much information as possible is given here on relevant activities because 1) the programme is very large, being the vehicle for all DFID’s trade-related portfolio for East Africa and 2) the findings of this Query report are to be used by DFID to inform future activities in Ethiopia within the TMEA programme. See also item 2.2 for the only TMEA activity identified that specifically addresses GBV.

³⁹ Unless otherwise noted, information on this project comes from Shaw (2018), an otherwise comprehensive and detailed assessment of gender activities in TMEA. It does not report any TMEA work impacting on GBV, and mentions it specifically only as a possibility for future interventions (p27).

	Uganda	b) Gender training for Uganda Revenue Authority (Uganda)	b) No outcomes or learning available
	Rwanda	c) Organisation and training of women ICBTs, support for Women Traders Association and One Stop Shop border crossings (Rwanda)	c) No learnings available
	Rwanda	d) In partnership with Pro-Femmes/Twese Hamwe (Rwanda umbrella NGO), baseline survey of women ICBTs (2013), formation of 63 cooperatives for women ICBTs (Rwanda). Associated also with World Bank (Great Lakes Trade Facilitation project (see below)	d) 63 cooperatives established with 2,500 women traders as members, no information on GBV impacts.
	Kenya	e) Establishment of regional grievance complaints mechanism for women 'in conflict'(Kenya)	e) No learnings available
	Burundi	f) Removal of policy road blocks (Burundi) at Gatumba DRC border	f) No learnings available
	Regional	g) Inclusion of gender and human security dimension in EAC Peace and Security Protocol	g) No learnings available
	Regional	h) Inclusion of women traders associations in Joint Border Committees (source TMEA 2018) (location n.s.)	h) By end 2017, increased representation and inclusion of women in decision- making on cross-border trade through representation in the Joint Border Committees at 4 border crossings, no learnings on GBV impacts
	Location not specified	i) Increased market and trading information for traders through the establishment of six resource centres facilitating an average of 400 traders (male and female) per month.	i) Over 100% increase in access to market and trading information by 400 traders per month (sex disaggregation not available). No learnings on GBV impacts
	Location not specified	j) Support for lobbying and advocacy for improved clearance processes and trader sensitisation.	

			j) Crossing times halved (to 30 minutes one way on average) at selected border posts. No learnings on VAG impacts
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⁴⁰ Based on abstract alone, as we were not able to access the full article.

Annex A: Boolean Search Terms

Boolean searches	Google Scholar	Google
(women OR girls OR gender) AND border AND trader AND ("gender-based violence" OR gender-based violence" OR "violence against women" OR "violence against women and girls" OR GBV OR VAWG)	Yes – but the results were poor.	Yes – first 5 pages
("Border guard*" OR "border official*" OR "border agent*") AND ("gender-based violence" OR gender-based violence" OR "violence against women" OR "violence against women and girls" OR GBV OR VAWG OR coercion)	No – the Google results were poor, so adjusted the search terms before using Google Scholar.	Yes – first 5 pages, results were poor.
("Cross-border trader" OR "informal cross-border trader") AND (woman OR women OR gender) AND violence AND border AND ("horn region" OR "horn of Africa" OR "east Africa" OR Ethiopia OR Somalia OR Kenya OR Eritrea OR Djibouti)	Yes – first 5 pages	Yes – first 5 pages.
("Cross-border trader" OR "informal cross-border trader") AND (woman OR women OR gender) AND violence AND border AND ("border official" OR "border agent") AND (tax OR custom OR duty)	Yes – only one page available.	Yes – first 5 pages.

The searches of intervention databases used the key terms above, as well as terms including: informal, informality, regulations, trade, Horn of Africa, Ethiopia, Somalia.

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