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**PAGE 3: B. ABOUT YOU**


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**Q1: Respondent details**

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**Q2: Country or Customs territory**

UNITED STATES

**Q3: Organization**

Public sector

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**PAGE 4: C. ABOUT YOUR CASE STORY**


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**Q4: Title of case story**

Women in Informal Cross Border Trade in Southern Africa

**Q5: Case story focus**

Trade Facilitation.

**Q6: Case story abstract**

As a part of the Southern Africa Trade Hub project, USAID conducted a gender assessment on informal cross-border traders (ICBTs) in southern Africa. The assessment included a literature and policy review, as well as field research carried out in two border areas: the Mwanza border in Malawi and the Kazungula border in Botswana. The final report from the assessment entitled, "Women Informal Cross-Border Traders in Southern Africa: Contributions, Constraints, and Opportunities," examines the constraints, challenges and opportunities experienced by women ICBTs in doing business and interacting with officials at border crossings. The report highlights that women comprise 70-80 percent of informal cross border traders in the southern Africa region and that ICBT contributes to women's livelihoods – both at the individual and household level — as well as food security and national and regional economic growth and trade.

**Q7: Who provided funding?**

Other (please specify) USAID

**Q8: Project/Programme type**

Regional

**Q9: Your text case story**

The regional USAID-funded Southern Africa Trade and Investment Hub worked to improve international competitiveness, intra-regional trade, and food security throughout Southern Africa. Recent experiences in trade liberalization and their impacts on gender equality made a strong case for the need to incorporate gender perspectives into overall trade facilitation policy, design and implementation. The inclusion of gender perspectives was an essential element of the project with the potential to address social, cultural, and economic aspects that have influence on gender inequality and marginalization of women.

As a part of the Trade Hub's gender integration strategy and its efforts to improve trade facilitation, USAID conducted an assessment on women ICBTs in Southern Africa, a group whose valuable contribution to trade in sub-Saharan Africa remains largely unrecognized and often ignored. The main research objective was to learn about existing constraints and challenges experienced by women in informal cross border trade, especially at border posts.

and make recommendations and identify possible opportunities to reduce and/or address identified constraints. This would include examining women traders' knowledge of current regulations on trade, immigration and customs policies and regulations that are relevant for their businesses. The assessment was designed to provide a better understanding of the profiles of women ICBTs, including education levels, age, fertility rates and marital status. The report would also illustrate the various economic benefits of cross border trade for women, and the contributions ICBT makes in lives of women traders to national economies, to regional food security, and peace and security.

The assessment includes a literature and policy review, as well as field research carried out in Malawi and Botswana using a rapid-appraisal methodology. For field research, the team visited six borders for field research: two between Malawi and Mozambique and four between Botswana and its neighbors, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Namibia. The rapid appraisal included interviews with 36 ICBTs. Of these, 26 (72 percent) were women (including 24 in focus groups and two in special case studies), and 10 (28 percent) were men. In addition, 15 key informant interviews were carried out with members of trade associations and border agents and officers.

The final report examined women's role in informal cross border trade across Southern Africa and the gender constraints experienced by women ICBTs. The report found that these constraints include higher transaction costs; lack of access to information on procedures, rights, and processes; and limited access to transportation. The report also illustrates how the lack of physical security at border crossings increases the vulnerability of women ICBTs to harassment and different forms of gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual coercion, exploitation, and harassment often by border agents, while staying overnight at borders, or in transit to/from borders.

Key findings include:

**Trade facilitation:** ICBT is incredibly fluid and efficient when compared with formal trade in Africa. In the region average custom delays can be up to 12.1 days – the longest in the world. In contrast, when the research team observed a line of ICBTs in Malawi and Botswana, customs officials stated that all would make it through in several hours on average.

**The Profile of Women ICBTs:** From the literature review, the research team found that sources estimate women comprise 70-80 percent of ICBTs. The assessment found that contrary to stereotypes, women ICBTs are not undereducated. For example, 82 percent of Malawi women ICBTs have at least secondary or higher education. Many of the women included in the field research were heads of their households (HoH), either because they were not married, they were widowed, divorced, or separated, or their husbands had jobs in other locations – de-facto HoH. For many, being ICBT was not their only job – many had other formal or informal jobs, including working as retailers. These ICBTs would sell the goods they bring back directly – in shops, in formal and informal markets, from their homes, or through their other jobs.

**Contributions:** The research team found that women traders, regardless of marital status, control their own businesses and are generally able to exercise decision-making control over incomes derived from ICBT. The assessment found that ICBTs work contributes to increased decision-making and that most women used funds from ICBT to pay for school fees. In addition, women's incomes make significant contributions to family health, nutrition, food security, and housing. Moreover, ICBT contributes substantially to economies in Southern Africa. The assessment highlights that ICBT can contribute between 30 to 40 percent of intra Southern Africa Development Community trade and ICBT in Southern Africa is valued at \$20 billion a year. Women ICBT's role in food security is crucial as traders typically trade from areas of surplus to shortage, and fluidity and exchange across borders and among populations and groups can also promote peacebuilding and conflict mitigation.

**Constraints:** The assessment found several key constraints for women ICBTs. While free trade area has helped ease border taxes in Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa region, there are still a range of taxes and charges, many which are quite costly for traders. Additionally, inadequate access to finance and financial resources is a chronic problem for women ICBTs; 80 percent of ICBTs obtain capital from informal sources and rotating savings clubs are highly popular. A key finding from field research is the enormous information gap between ICBTs and border agents. Many Malawi revenue authorities (MRA) insisted that customs rules are clear, but ICBTs disagree and expressed concerns about being harassed, cheated and overcharged by MRA. Many ICBT's also complained of high rates of GBV to, from, and at borders.

**Communication materials and other tools:**

This activity produced several communication tools, including a short video highlighting the research findings. A professional videographer was hired to travel with the research team in Botswana and a final video produced and featured on the Trade Hub's YouTube account: Informal Cross-Border Trade (ICBT) Kazungula - Botswana-Zambia. Other tools produced as a result of the assessment include: a detailed policy review that examines gender implications of key trade policies in the region; a fact sheet for ICBTs; and a summary brief of key research findings.

In addition to these communication materials, key findings from the report have been disseminated to a wide range of USAID staff across bureaus and regions at an April 2016 lecture event and a November 2016 presentation at

USAID's Advanced Trade Facilitation Course. Findings were also disseminated in a May 2016 seminar to the United States Department of Agriculture Foreign Agriculture Services. In March 2017, assessment findings will be disseminated to a wider development audience through a webinar with Microlinks.

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**Q10: Lessons learnt**

The report successfully examined constraints, challenges and opportunities experienced by women involved in ICBT, especially at border posts. The report found that women ICBTs face a number of obstacles, including sexual harassment or coercion in some countries or borders (including Malawi's Mwanza border with Mozambique), and sometimes unique risks, such as using wild animal corridors to avoid certain borders (e.g., in Northern Botswana). In addition to these constraints, the study also found that many women ICBTs have developed cooperative mechanisms that help them professionally — and which also help the flow of Southern Africa trade. For example, they will look out for each other's safety on the road, and typically they belong to one or more "savings clubs" they have created to provide access to short-term working capital.

The principal constraint was limited time in the field. This research was carried out at in the final months of the Trade Hub project, and this limited the scope of the research, in addition to both the number of countries included and the amount of time allotted for fieldwork and analysis. It is hoped that a number of proposed recommendations can be taken up by the follow-on USAID-funded Southern Africa Trade and Investment Project and other key regional, international, and national stakeholders working on trade issues in Southern Africa.

Another constraint for the research team was not being able to interview "front-line" border officials from Customs, Immigration, and Police. In both Malawi and Botswana, the chief customs officer facilitated access to high-ranking officials of these services, but did not offer to set up interviews with the lower-ranking "front-line" officials who interact with border crossers — perhaps because the subject matter is sensitive. This limitation of the present research should be remedied in subsequent research on ICBTs in general and women ICBTs in particular.

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