

Community Engagement: A Collaborative Approach to Promoting Foreign Integrity in the Transfer of Cross-Border Goods and Services to Enhance Government Revenue.

1st CLEMENCE Jacob jclemence@rp.ac.rw +250792045480: Expert Trainer in Logistics and Transport. HND Purchasing & Supply, Advanced CILT, B.Com Hon Mgt, MSc Supply Chain, C.M.I.L.T Department of Logistics and Transport, RP Kigali College & CILT Rwanda Value Training Center

2nd JOSEPH Gasana gasajoe2020@gmail.com +250788678777: Expert Trainer in Logistics and Transport. Department of Logistics and Transport, RP Kigali College

3rd SAMUEL Makuza samakuza01@gmail.com +250 788565231: Expert Trainer in Airline and Airport Management. Department of Logistics and Transport, RP Kigali College

Abstract:

This study explores how community engagement can serve as a collaborative approach to promote foreign integrity in the cross-border transfer of goods and services, ultimately enhancing government revenue in Rwanda. Using a qualitative methodology, the research draws on semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders involved in cross-border trade and customs management. Thematic analysis revealed three key areas: existing collaborative practices, challenges in engaging border communities, and strategic opportunities to improve transparency and revenue collection. Findings suggest that while informal coordination exists, a lack of structured engagement limits its effectiveness. Participants proposed formalizing community involvement through border integrity committees, digital reporting tools, and cross-agency training. The study concludes that embedding community collaboration within formal customs frameworks can play a pivotal role in improving foreign integrity and optimizing government revenue collection processes in Rwanda and similar contexts.

Key Words: *Community Engagement, Foreign Integrity, Cross-Border Trade, Collaborative Strategies, Government Revenue, Customs Management, Stakeholder Participation*

1. Introduction

Cross-border trade plays a critical role in the economic development of land-linked countries like Rwanda, where goods and services must pass through neighboring countries to access international markets. Ensuring the integrity of these

transactions is vital for protecting national interests and maximizing government revenue. However, challenges such as smuggling, informal trade practices, and weak inter-agency collaboration continue to undermine the effectiveness of customs operations and border controls.

In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the role that community engagement can play in supporting integrity, compliance, and transparency in border management. Engaging local communities, who are often the first to witness irregular trade activities, can enhance early detection of violations and foster trust between authorities and traders. Moreover, collaborative strategies that include local voices can help shift perceptions of enforcement from punitive to participatory, creating an environment where foreign integrity is supported from both the top-down and bottom-up.

This study investigates the potential of community involvement as a collaborative framework to promote foreign integrity in Rwanda's cross-border trade processes. Specifically, it explores current practices among revenue authorities, identifies effective engagement strategies, and proposes practical approaches that can be institutionalized to support government efforts to improve revenue collection. The research is grounded in the need to balance security, trade facilitation, and transparency, while placing local stakeholders at the center of the conversation.

2. Key research objectives:

To explore collaborative strategies that revenue authorities can utilise in clearing goods and services to improve government and promote foreign integrity

2.1 Sub research objectives

- To explore a situational analysis to understand the current experiences and collaborative practices among revenue authorities.

- To identify collaborative strategies that revenue authorities can utilise to promote foreign integrity in clearing goods and service to improve government revenue.
- To propose collaborative strategies that revenue authorities can utilise to promote foreign integrity in clearing goods and service to improve government revenue.

3. Key Research question

What are the collaborative strategies that revenue authorities can utilize in clearing goods and services to improve government revenue and promote foreign integrity?

3.1 Sub Research questions

- How can a situational analysis be conducted to understand the current experiences and collaborative practices among revenue authorities in promoting foreign integrity in clearing goods and services to improve government revenue?
- What are the collaborative strategies currently utilized by revenue authorities to promote foreign integrity in clearing goods and services, and how effective are these strategies in improving government revenue?
- What collaborative strategies can revenue authorities adopt to enhance foreign integrity in clearing goods and services, specifically focusing on improving government revenue?

4. Literature Review

4.1 Cross-Border Partnerships and Economic Development

Cross-border collaboration has long been recognized as a catalyst for economic development and global integration. According to Ali and Badi, cross-border partnerships help nations leverage shared resources, gain access to new markets, and promote sustainability through innovation and mutual cooperation (Ali & Badi, n.d.). These strategic partnerships foster the flow of goods and services, ultimately enhancing national revenues through economic growth.

Wong Villanueva et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of governance in cross-border cooperation. They suggest that systems-based governance frameworks, which promote integration and collaboration, are essential for building effective border management models. Their research highlights the need for strengthened coordination among border stakeholders to enhance economic and security outcomes — a principle that closely aligns with the collaborative community engagement proposed in this study.

4.2 Community Involvement and Local Governance

Kurowska-Pysz et al. (2018) argue that sustainable cross-border cooperation (CBC) requires inclusive planning and the involvement of various local stakeholders, including public authorities, NGOs, and the private sector. Their findings from European border cities point to five critical success factors for CBC, including clearly defined goals and inclusive

4.3 Innovative Governance and Knowledge Sharing

As seen in tourism cooperation studies at the Finnish-Russian border, Makkonen et al. (2018) highlight the role of knowledge transfer and innovation in enhancing cross-border activities. Despite challenges such as legal differences and language barriers, innovation-driven collaboration has facilitated stronger relationships and integrity in operations — a concept applicable to customs and revenue authorities in East Africa.

Similarly, Doyle (2010) proposes Collaborative Border Management (CBM) as a modern approach in which stakeholders, including customs and immigration authorities, work in synergy across the supply chain. CBM introduces the idea of a "virtual border," allowing pre-clearance and transparency, which enhances both operational efficiency and foreign integrity in cross-border goods and services transfer.

4.4 Technology and Cross-Border Trade Facilitation

Chang et al. (2020) discuss how **blockchain technology** is revolutionizing global supply chains by increasing transparency and traceability. This supports integrity and accountability across borders, and is especially relevant to government revenue

collection, where informal practices and corruption may otherwise hinder trade efficiency.

In the same vein, Walumweya and Kawimbe (2024) identify **infrastructure gaps, legal inconsistencies, and regulatory barriers** as key bottlenecks in African cross-border trade. Their work advocates for structured trade optimization under AfCFTA, further reinforcing the need for well-governed, collaborative frameworks to improve transparency and efficiency at borders.

4.5 Case Context Rwanda

Muyombano (2020) provides an in-depth analysis of Rwanda's foreign development strategies, emphasizing the importance of **technical partnerships** and community-level engagement for sustainable economic development. His findings suggest that collaborative diplomacy, when rooted in administrative transparency and community participation, contributes positively to national revenue and governance.

Finally, Fiagbe (2023) examines five key factors influencing cross-border cooperation in North America: institutional capacity, security, education, social capital, and political structure. These factors, while applied to North America, reflect core dynamics that shape cross-border trade in Rwanda as well. By integrating similar frameworks, Rwanda's revenue authorities can establish more reliable and transparent systems through strategic partnerships and community involvement.

Official institutional reports offer valuable insights into the governance and operational strategies surrounding cross-border trade and revenue

collection in Rwanda. According to the Rwanda Revenue Authority (2022), the adoption of risk-based customs control systems and collaborative stakeholder engagement have contributed to improved revenue performance and reduced smuggling along Rwanda's borders. The RRA emphasizes the importance of working closely with border communities, especially through awareness campaigns and taxpayer education, to promote compliance and reduce informal trade practices.

Similarly, the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM, 2021) highlights the government's commitment to strengthening trade corridors and simplifying customs procedures under the framework of the East African Community (EAC). The report notes that collaborative programs with local governments and border traders' associations have improved transparency and efficiency in customs operations, leading to increased formalization of trade and revenue growth.

At the regional level, the EAC Secretariat (2020) outlines efforts to harmonize customs regulations and implement Coordinated Border Management (CBM), which fosters closer collaboration between member states' revenue authorities. The EAC recommends community-inclusive approaches to enforcement, recognizing the role of local actors in detecting fraud, monitoring cargo movement, and supporting integrity.

Development partners such as the World Bank (2021) and UNCTAD (2020) have also stressed the importance of good governance and digital innovation in cross-border trade facilitation. These institutions advocate for increased transparency,

5.2 Data Collection Method

Semi-structured interviews were the primary method of data collection. This method allowed flexibility in exploring participants' views while maintaining a focused approach aligned with the research objectives. An interview guide was developed around key themes such as collaboration, transparency, community engagement, and institutional coordination in cross-border trade facilitation.

5.3 Data Analysis and Presentation

The collected qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis. The interview responses were transcribed, coded, and categorized into key themes reflecting participants' experiences and perspectives on collaborative strategies to enhance foreign integrity in goods and services transfer.

Key thematic areas were presented in a narrative format, supported by direct quotations from participants to give authenticity and context to the findings. Where appropriate, tables were used to summarize recurring themes across participant groups. The following three analytical goals guided the presentation:

- To identify current collaborative practices among stakeholders;
- To highlight gaps and challenges in community and institutional engagement;
- To propose effective, context-based strategies to improve cross-border governance and government revenue.

The analysis process emphasized credibility and trustworthiness, incorporating techniques such as

capacity building of customs staff, and the use of technologies such as integrated customs management systems to enhance foreign integrity and revenue mobilization. Moreover, they recommend continuous engagement with the private sector and civil society to sustain accountability and reduce the risks of corruption.

5. Methodology

5.1 Population of the Study

The secondary data for this study was collected from official reports and documents produced by institutions involved in cross-border trade and revenue collection in Rwanda. The population for this data source includes:

- Annual reports and policy briefs from the Rwanda Revenue Authority (RRA)
- Publications and trade statistics from the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM)
- Reports from East African Community (EAC) and African Union (AU) on regional integration and customs performance
- Case studies and policy papers by non-governmental organizations and trade facilitation agencies operating at Rwanda's borders
- Relevant publications from international partners such as the World Bank, UNCTAD, and OECD

These documents were purposively selected to provide background, statistical and institutional perspectives that complement the primary qualitative data.

triangulation of data sources, peer debriefing, and member checking to validate findings

6. Results and Discussion

The findings of this study, based on thematic analysis of qualitative interviews, revealed three major themes: existing collaborative practices, challenges in promoting foreign integrity, and strategic opportunities for enhancing government revenue through community engagement.

6.1 Existing Collaborative Practices

Participants consistently highlighted the presence of informal coordination mechanisms between revenue officers and local community leaders at border points. This included joint awareness campaigns, community-based reporting of smuggling incidents, and periodic engagement forums. These practices were acknowledged as important in building mutual trust and in encouraging voluntary compliance with customs regulations. However, the study found that such collaboration was often ad hoc and dependent on individual initiatives rather than institutional frameworks.

6.2 Challenges in Promoting Foreign Integrity

A recurring challenge cited by interviewees was the lack of structured and sustained engagement with border communities. In some areas, mistrust between customs officials and local traders was prevalent, driven by inconsistent enforcement and perceived corruption. The absence of real-time feedback mechanisms and weak integration of local voices in decision-making processes also undermined community ownership of integrity-building initiatives. Additionally, there were gaps in

6.3 Strategic Opportunities

Respondents emphasized that institutionalizing community engagement could significantly enhance transparency and reduce revenue leakages. Proposed strategies included the creation of border integrity committees, involving community representatives in customs audits, and deploying localized ICT tools to report fraud anonymously. Furthermore, formal training of community liaisons and revenue staff in cross-cultural communication and ethical enforcement was recommended to build mutual respect and shared responsibility.

These findings are consistent with previous research which stresses the importance of inclusive border governance, capacity building, and stakeholder participation in trade integrity systems (Kurowska-Pysz et al., 2018; Wong Villanueva et al., 2022). In line with the study's objectives, it is evident that when community engagement is embedded within formal customs strategy, it not only strengthens foreign integrity but also improves the efficiency and reliability of government revenue collection.

References

- Ali, A., & Badi, S. (n.d.). Harnessing cross-border partnerships for enhanced economic development.
- Chang, Y., Iakovou, E., & Shi, W. (2020). Blockchain in global supply chains and cross-border trade: A critical synthesis of the state-of-the-art, challenges and opportunities. *International Journal of Production Research*, 58(7), 2082–2099.
- Doyle, T. (2010). Collaborative border management. *World Customs Journal*, 4(1), 15–22.
- Fiagbe, M. (2023). Factors influencing cross-border cooperation in North America.
- Kurowska-Pysz, J., Castanho, R. A., & Loures, L. (2018). Sustainable planning of cross-border cooperation: A strategy for alliances in border cities. *Sustainability*, 10(5), 1416.
- Makkonen, T., Williams, A. M., Weidenfeld, A., & Kaisto, V. (2018). Cross-border knowledge transfer and innovation in the European neighbourhood: Tourism cooperation at the Finnish-Russian border. *Tourism Management*, 68, 140–151.
- Muyombano, I. A. (2020). Analysis of the contribution of foreign development strategies on economic development of Rwanda (Doctoral dissertation, JKUAT-COHRED).
- Walumweya, M., & Kawimbe, S. (2024). Enhancing economic integration through cross-border trade optimization in Eastern and Southern Africa: Insights for policy and practice. *Global Scientific Journal*, 12(8).
- Wong Villanueva, J. L., Kidokoro, T., & Seta, F. (2022). Cross-border integration, cooperation and governance: A systems approach for evaluating “good” governance in cross-border regions. *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 37(5), 1047–1070
- East African Community (EAC). (2020). *Annual trade and customs report 2019/2020*. Arusha, Tanzania: EAC Secretariat.
<https://www.eac.int>
- MINICOM. (2021). *National trade policy review report*. Ministry of Trade and Industry, Kigali, Rwanda.
<https://www.minicom.gov.rw>
- Rwanda Revenue Authority. (2022). *Annual performance report 2021/2022*. Kigali, Rwanda: RRA Publications.
<https://www.rra.gov.rw>
- UNCTAD. (2020). *Trade facilitation and development: Driving border cooperation and digital transformation*. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.
<https://unctad.org>
- World Bank. (2021). *Improving border management and logistics in East Africa: A regional trade facilitation strategy*. Washington, DC: The World Bank Group.
<https://www.worldbank.org>