
Foreword and acknowledgements

This publication reflects the priorities of the regional organisations that are members of the Sahel and West Africa Club (SWAC), namely the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) and the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), and thus also contributes to the objectives set out in the OECD Programme of Work and Budget.

The SWAC/OECD Secretariat has long played an active role in local development and cross-border co-operation, particularly in applying innovative, rigorous methodological techniques to the region's challenges. The analytical and methodological approaches followed in this report were carried out during SWAC's 2015–16 thematic cycle, building upon the outcomes of the Secretariat's ECOLOC Programme (Reviving Local Economies in West Africa) and the WALTPS study (Preparing for the Future – A Vision of West Africa in the Year 2020). Multi-scale spatial analysis from the local to regional levels lies at the heart of this study, as does the concept of the “cross-border area”, defined as “a geographic area that straddles two or more countries, where people are linked by socio economic and cultural ties” by former President of Mali, Alpha Oumar Konaré. In 2002, the SWAC Secretariat supported this vision by promoting a shift from strictly bilateral approaches to the recognition of regional areas in which different levels of

formal and informal governance operate. This led to the creation of the West African Borders and Integration (WABI) Initiative, which drew on the complementary nature of its founding members – the SWAC Secretariat, Enda Diapol and Mali's National Borders Directorate. The network is an informal structure, based on the pooling of knowledge and information sharing, and has since been joined by partners such as the Municipal Development Partnership (PDM) and the Group for Rural Development Research and Projects (GRDR). Its strengths also lie in the political lobbying carried out by national governments and regional organisations such as ECOWAS, UEMOA, CILSS and the African Union; the facilitation of dialogue between local actors and political institutions, the sharing of experiences between countries from the “global south” and “global north”, and its engagement with local populations.

The SWAC Secretariat has progressively adopted a more systematic approach to its analytical work. This has been evident in its work on food systems and the use of social network analysis (SNA) to examine cross-border co-operation in this report. In applying innovative analytical methodologies such as SNA and data visualisation to the region's development and transformation challenges, the SWAC/OECD can act as a bridge between leading research institutions globally and policy makers to improve comprehension of issues and

offer well informed policy advice that anticipate major trends, such as climate change and urbanisation. These forms of analysis are pertinent in helping to develop an understanding of global network structures that can range from public policy makers to local agents and business traders to groups involved in illegal activities, and therefore also improve co-ordination between various partners, including donors, regional organisations, private actors, state actors and local municipalities. SNA also has the advantage of providing an intricate and nuanced depiction of interactions and hierarchies within networks, portraying the varying degrees of sophistication of systems, along with their interactions and transformations, comparable over space and time. This recent and ground-breaking methodology in the field of development, which has rarely been applied to West Africa, can pave the way for new and complementary studies that can improve the effectiveness of regional policies.

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The Centre for Border Region Studies (CBRS) is an international research centre dedicated to borders and borderlands around the world. Founded in 1976, the Centre is today part of the Department of Political Science and Public Management at the University of Southern Denmark in Sønderborg. The Centre brings together academics from the fields of history, political science, anthropology and geography. It promotes a relational approach to border regions, in which borderlands and states are intimately interconnected through a variety of cultural, economic and governance networks. The Centre focusses on four main areas of research: the changing role and function of borders, conflicts and co-operation in border regions, border regions and the European Union, and minorities in border regions. In recent years, the Centre has participated in projects funded by the European Union, the European Science Foundation, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and the SWAC/OECD.

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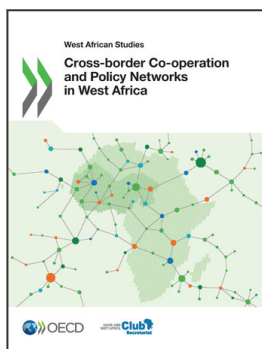
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