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## Preface

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Cross-border co-operation in various forms has been actively pursued in West African border areas for many years. Often transcending regional legislations and administrative constraints, it is driven by a variety of actors ranging from nongovernmental organisations to government institutions, to regional and international organisations, including the SWAC Secretariat, one of the pioneers of implementing cross-border co-operation policy in West Africa. The impetus generated by cross-border clusters has helped deliver institutional developments such as the creation of joint committees, the inclusion of cross-border co-operation in the integration strategies of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) in 2004 followed by the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) in the Sahel, the creation of the Cross-border Initiatives Programme (CIP) – now the Cross-border Co-operation Programme (CBCP) – by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 2005, and the launch of the African Union's Border Programme (AUBP) in 2007. Indeed, this latter initiative was the outcome of one of the resolutions of the 8<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union to focus efforts on the structural prevention of conflicts.

One of the key aims of the AUBP is to speed up the process of border delimitation and demarcation where such work has not yet been

completed in accordance with the sovereign rights of states. This has led to the demarcation of over 2 500 km of borders between 12 countries from 2008 to 2015. In West Africa, 1 300 km of Mali's land border with Algeria have been demarcated, along with 1 303 km of its border with Burkina Faso. A delimitation and demarcation treaty has also been signed with Senegal, and delimiting operations are currently under way on Mali's borders with Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritania and Niger.

Greater cross-border co-operation can be facilitated in countries where regional integration is actively pursued and where the positive implications for development are keenly understood. For example, Mali's Constitution of 25 February 1992, places particular emphasis on cross-border co-operation to support integration and even allows for the possible changes in national sovereignty to aid this goal. In 2000, the country pursued a particularly active national border policy which then took on an added security dimension after the 2012 crisis, in addition to the provision of incentives to promote the economy and free movement of goods and persons. Projects promoting regional integration also extend into the areas of healthcare, infrastructures, radio broadcasting, and the economy, and are being developed on the back of this legislative and administrative progress.

The AUBP is also involved in facilitating cross-border co-operation, as recently illustrated by the adoption of the Convention on

Cross-border Co-operation in Africa (Niamey Convention) at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea in 2014. This Convention provides the first continental legal framework for cross-border co-operation since the resolution on the principle of the intangibility of borders, adopted in July 1964 in Cairo by the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). This new legal instrument reflects the determination of African leaders to accelerate the continental integration process and the peaceful resolution of cross-border disputes.

These institutional initiatives aimed at recognising and opening up borders come against the backdrop of a renewed surge in transnational terrorism. The cases of the Lake Chad basin, Mali and Nigeria, for example, have prompted the international community and African countries to place increasing importance on the security of borders. More than ever, the extent of border openness is vital to the stability of states and the prosperity of the West African region. As the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) recently noted in a report on border management in Mali, a new balance is needed “between control and free movement...” in order to strengthen “... the role of borders as a factor for integration and peace”.

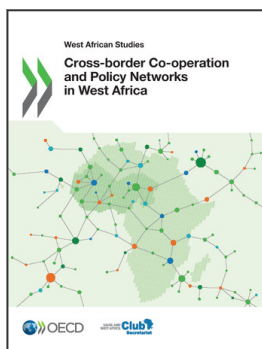
For this to succeed, however, greater insight is needed into the co-operation potential of border regions, and the functioning of policy

networks which enable collaboration between cross-border actors. Numerous studies have examined border legislation and the feasibility of financing cross-border activities, but few have attempted to systematically map the regions where support for cross-border co-operation is strongest beyond research into the organisational structure of co-operation networks.

The analysis of cross-border policy networks in this publication is an encouraging development for all actors involved in cross-border co-operation in West Africa as it reveals for the first time, how cross-border governance networks are organised, how information circulates between partners of a very different nature, and which actors are considered to be the most central, thereby facilitating the understanding of dynamics that are for the most part informal. This relationship-based approach, which is still rarely applied to development in general and to West Africa in particular, is complementary to traditional analyses aimed at understanding the economic and political processes at play in regional integration. The new data visualisation technique used in the report provides a means of anticipating changes and providing support for policies that are particularly suited to cross-border co-operation, which is by nature a relationship-based activity.

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