Making AfCFTA work for Women in Informal Cross Border Trade in Southern Africa

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Outline

• Introduction

• Landscape of women in ICBT in Southern Africa

• Challenges faced by women in ICBT in Southern Africa

• Recommendations
Introduction

• Informal Cross Border Trade (ICBT) refers to trade between neighbouring countries conducted by vulnerable, small, unregistered traders

• Over 80% of ICBT in Southern Africa are women

• ICBT source of livelihood for hundreds in Southern Africa, trade in agricultural products and groceries

• Trade in consignments below USD1,000
Informal Cross Border Trade (ICBT) landscape

- ICBT estimated between 7 and 16% of formal intra-Africa trade flows and between 30 and 72% of formal trade between neighbouring countries
- In 2018, the value of ICBT in Southern Africa reached USD17.6 billion
- Impact of women-owned business on poverty reduction and economic growth is well-documented
- Initiatives including COMESA STR and NTB reporting mechanisms exist to facilitate trade for women
- Adoption of the AfCFTA protocol on Women and Youth in trade provides a key policy guidance
Challenges

• Lack of information on AfCFTA and regional trade agreements by women in ICBT
• Scale of business, stringent collateral requirements, complex documentation processes and informality remain major barriers to women in ICBT to access finance
• Sexual harassment and gender-based violence at border and police posts (documented by Amnesty)
• Lack of digital skills
• Limited number of national and regional associations of women in ICBT
Recommendations

• Advocate for implementation of STR at SADC and AfCFTA levels for benefit of women in ICBT
• Dissemination of simplified and user-friendly information on AfCFTA to women in ICBT
• Awareness on mechanisms for reporting NTBs (including GBV) both at COMESA and AfCFTA levels
• Gender-sensitive mechanisms for women in ICBT to access capital, finance and export funds
• Digital financial inclusion for women in ICBT to engage in international trade
• Strengthening of national and regional associations of women in ICBT
THANK YOU!