



Final report: Political Economy of Regionalism in West Africa

Scoping study and prioritisation

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30 March 2012

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge the contributions of Kofi Marrah and Francis Laleye during the fieldwork component of the project. We are also grateful for the contributions of the key informants interviewed for this scoping study. Without their willingness to share their insights the report would not have been possible. Useful feedback on previous drafts was received from David Booth, Jakob Engel and Leni Wild and the DFID project team.

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Abbreviations

AFD	Agence Française de Développement
ALCO	Abidjan-Lagos Corridor Organisation
ALTTFP	Abidjan-Lagos Transport and Transit Facilitation Program
ATP/E-ATP	Agribusiness and Trade Promotion and Enhanced Agribusiness and Trade Promotion
CDD	Centre for Democratic Development
CET	Common External Tariff
CILSS	Comité permanent Inter-Etats de Lutte contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel
DFID	Department for International Development
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ETLS	ECOWAS trade liberalisation scheme
EU	European Union
FTA	Free Trade Area
GCnet	Ghana Community Network Services Limited
LASDEL	Laboratoire d'Etudes et de Recherche sur les Dynamiques Sociales et le Développement Local
NTB	Non-tariff barrier
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PCU	Project coordination unit
REC	Regional Economic Community
RRTTFP	Regional Road Transport and Transit Facilitation Program
SWARIP	Support to West African Regional Integration Programme
TMEA	Trademark East Africa
UEMOA	Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest-Africain
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WAGP	West African Gas Pipeline
WAMZ	West Africa Monetary Zone
WAPP	West African Power Pool
WATH	West Africa Trade Hub

Executive summary

Developing a better understanding of the features, processes and dynamics of West African regionalism is important for both domestic and external stakeholders in West African development, whether the main focus is on the integration process itself or on progress in particular countries. In particular, attention needs to be paid to the interests, incentives and choices which shape the behaviour of major political and economic actors in regard to regional processes and issues – in short, the political economy of West African regionalism.

This, however, is a large subject, including topics of greater and lesser importance or relevance. This scoping exercise was commissioned to help identify priorities among various dimensions of West African regionalism that might be the focus of useful political-economy work that can add value to what practitioners already know and are doing. This could in turn contribute to more effective and realistic strategies to support regional integration. This report provides the final recommendations of the scoping exercise.

Criteria for selecting priorities

An initial long list of topics was compiled to include issues of perceived importance to stakeholders within the region. This was developed through a selective review of the literature on regionalism and regional integration in West Africa and refined after the team carried out key informant interviews in four West African countries in the autumn of 2011. Prioritization among these issues was based on four main criteria reflecting the degree to which additional political economy research could add value, including:

- i Originality – Prioritisation should avoid duplication of existing knowledge or research already commissioned;
- ii Suitability – Prioritisation should identify issues where challenges arise from political economy factors rather than technical problems;
- iii Feasibility – Prioritisation should identify issues where externally commissioned researchers might effectively carry out a study; and,
- iv Interest – Prioritisation should include an assessment of regional stakeholders' interest, as well as what is potentially of greatest interest to DFID programming in the region.

Priorities for additional political economy analysis

On the basis of the criteria given above, five issues were prioritised for additional political economy analysis. Not all five issues need to be dealt with simultaneously, nor does the order of their presentation suggest a ranking among them. Rather, further discussion among DFID programme staff could lead to decisions as to what to prioritise among these five given the ongoing redesign of the SWARIP.

- 2 **Informal trade along the Nigeria-Benin border:** An increase in intra-regional trade volumes is a key driver and evidence of more effective regional economic integration. However, despite the establishment of free-trade areas (FTA) and common external tariff (CET) regimes within both UEMOA and ECOWAS, implementation of, and commitment to these agreements has been slow and

uneven across countries and as a result the anticipated increase in formal intra-regional trade volume has not transpired. Informal market activity across national borders within the ECOWAS region, although not captured in official data, continues to drive trading dynamics. Tackling these kinds of informal trade across borders would require different policy approaches, both at the national level but also as part of donors support to regional integration and a political economy study could help to inform the development of such an approach.

The border between Benin and Nigeria appears to provide a particularly rich example of the challenges in this area that may be amenable to political economy analysis. In particular it would help to consider illegal flows in both directions and across sectors in order to identify where room for manoeuvre for policy or programmatic interventions might exist. Such an approach would also complement ongoing work on the political economy of Nigerian trade policy.

- 3 **Reducing transaction costs in regional trade:** Efforts to increase the volume of intra-regional trade are severely hampered by the high transaction costs (including both time delays and financial costs) associated with movement of goods throughout West Africa. While an improvement in the quality and quantity of physical infrastructure (e.g. roads and highways) is a critical need in the region, it is unlikely to be sufficient to effectively reduce costs to desired levels. In no small part, this is due to the continued prevalence of the delays and costs incurred at official and unofficial roadblocks along main transport corridors. We therefore suggest two potential entry points for political economy analysis: i) combating delays and corruption at borders posts; and ii) reducing delays and costs (including harassment, bribery and extortion) at checkpoints along transport corridors.

In an effort to improve governance along the region's primary road corridors, a number of projects have been initiated which monitor and report regularly on obstacles faced by key users of the road network. The information provided by these various initiatives is useful in observing and tracking changes in road governance. However, there appears to be significant scope for focused political economy analysis to add value to this existing work, complementing quantitative information with more qualitative analysis that can help to answer the 'why' questions emerging from road governance tracking initiative in the region.

- 4 **The politics of sub-regional organisations:** One of the key priorities for improving the outcomes generated through regionalism across the African continent is the rationalisation of the various sub-regional groupings to avoid duplication of efforts and to prevent policy incoherence. Differential progress has been made by the two main formal regional bodies that provide institutional frameworks for cooperation and integration in West Africa: ECOWAS and UEMOA. While the official objective is that ECOWAS will one day subsume UEMOA and become the sole regional body, both organisations continue to exist and they are perceived to have different strengths. There are few signs that total consolidation under ECOWAS will happen in the short term.

Security issues are clearly relevant here. For example, although until recently regional security policy was the exclusive domain of ECOWAS, UEMOA is currently expanding its capacity in the area of security and peacekeeping and moving towards the creation of a security commission. There are several factors

driving this but one of the key issues is the serious security situation facing the Mali-Niger-Burkina Faso bloc in the Sahel (e.g. international terrorism, the fall-out of the Libyan crisis, the Tuareg rebellion, drug smuggling). A better understanding of UEMOA, relationships between and with its member states, and of Francophone West Africa more generally would be a useful complement for donors, like DFID, with limited footprint in Francophone countries.

- 5 **Ghana:** The implementation of regional policies remains the responsibility of national governments. While the team concluded that carrying out an ECOWAS-wide assessment of national-level commitment would not be feasible, we suggest a limited number of individual country case studies. Ghana could be a feasible and useful place to begin such an exercise. Widely viewed as a dynamic and progressive presence in the sub-region, an up-to-date assessment of the sets of interests that exist within Ghana and the Ghanaian state with respect to regional issues would be of significant interest. Such a study would be of particular interest after a number of years of sustained growth on the economic front and in the run-up to major elections later this year. From a practical standpoint, there are a number of Ghanaian scholars and experts who may be good candidates to carry out the analysis; such a study could build on a large body of existing work; and would help to balance DFID's regional approach which is currently focused on supporting regional organisations (ECOWAS in particular).
- 6 **West African port efficiency:** As conduits for imported and exported goods, national ports in West Africa are key centres of economic activity which are critical for increased productivity of private investment and thus growth and development in the region. However, inefficient port operations deprive states of revenue and contribute to the high cost of imports and low intra-regional trade volumes. In practice, West African port efficiency is variable and it remains significantly dependent on informal practices. Potential reforms pose a complex set of political economy challenges that involve a network of diverse and competing stakeholders. Despite this, port efficiency has been one of the areas in which modest level of success has been achieved in some West African countries. The scoping mission suggests there may be at least two cases from which valuable lessons might be learned regarding why and how reforms have been successful, what obstacles were overcome and what strategies were adopted: a package of reforms implemented in 2011 to improve customs revenue collection, tackle customs fraud and facilitate trade at the Port of Cotonou; and the implementation of the Ghana Community Network Services Limited (GCNet) system at Tema Port. A political economy study focusing on port efficiency would offer a chance to learn about the actual drivers of reform processes, not only in terms of policy formulation, but also in relation to implementation.

Together, these five issues, while specific enough to limit the scope of inquiry to a feasible level, nevertheless speak to a range of themes in the literature on regionalism and regional integration identified in the draft literature review and inception report previously submitted to DFID. A number of the prioritised issues reflect elements of the formal regional integration agenda (though even here, we suggest an approach that puts localised West African realities at the heart, rather than formal protocols); others address sets of issues related to the (under)provision of regional public goods.

It is also worth noting that the breadth of the issues identified and the range of potential entry points reflect the approach taken for this work. We have adopted a broad view of regionalism that attempts to capture those issues and processes that include a regional dimension, but may not be explicitly framed as 'regional' issues or best addressed through the formal regional organisations. We feel that SWARIP would benefit from a similarly broad conceptualization of support to regionalism in West Africa.

Résumé

Une meilleure compréhension des caractéristiques, des processus et de la dynamique du régionalisme en Afrique de l'Ouest est importante pour les partenaires internes comme pour les partenaires externes du développement dans cette région, que le centre d'intérêt soit le processus d'intégration en lui-même ou les progrès dans certains pays. En particulier, il convient de prêter attention aux intérêts, aux incitations et au choix qui façonnent le comportement des principaux acteurs politiques et économiques en ce qui concerne les questions et les processus régionaux : en bref, l'économie politique du régionalisme ouest-africain.

Il s'agit là d'un vaste sujet qui inclue des questions d'importance ou de pertinence plus ou moins grandes. Cet exercice exploratoire a été commandé pour aider à identifier les priorités entre les différentes dimensions du régionalisme en Afrique de l'Ouest qui pourraient faire l'objet de travaux d'économie politique pouvant enrichir les connaissances et les pratiques actuelles dans ce domaine. Cela pourrait ensuite contribuer à des stratégies de soutien de l'intégration régionale plus efficaces et réalistes. Ce rapport présente les recommandations finales de cet exercice exploratoire.

Critères de sélection des priorités

Une première longue liste de sujets a été établie pour regrouper les questions jugées importantes par les parties prenantes dans la région. Cette liste a été développée à partir d'une revue sélective de la littérature sur le régionalisme et l'intégration régionale en Afrique de l'Ouest, et affinée après que l'équipe ait réalisé des entretiens avec des intervenants clés dans quatre pays ouest africain à l'automne 2011. L'établissement des priorités entre ces questions était fondé sur quatre principaux critères reflétant la mesure dans laquelle chaque nouvelle recherche d'économie politique pouvait apporter une valeur ajoutée, comprenant :

- i L'originalité : les responsables de l'établissement des priorités doivent éviter la duplication de connaissances déjà acquises ou de recherches déjà commanditées ;
- ii La pertinence : les responsables de l'établissement des priorités doivent identifier des questions pour lesquelles les défis sont liés à des facteurs d'économie politique plutôt qu'à des problèmes techniques ;
- iii La faisabilité : les responsables de l'établissement des priorités doivent identifier des domaines dans lesquels des chercheurs contractuels peuvent effectivement réaliser une étude : et,
- iv L'intérêt : les responsables de l'établissement des priorités doivent inclure une évaluation des intérêts des parties prenantes régionales, ainsi que de ce qui est du plus haut intérêt pour les programmes du DFID dans la région.

Priorités pour de nouvelles analyses d'économie politique

Sur la base des critères mentionnés ci-dessus, cinq questions ont été considérées comme prioritaires pour faire l'objet de nouvelles analyses d'économie politique. Les cinq questions ne doivent pas être traitées simultanément, et leur ordre de présentation ne reflète pas un ordre de priorités entre elles. De nouvelles discussions

entre les intervenants des programmes du DFID pourraient permettre d'établir les priorités entre ces cinq questions en tenant compte de la redéfinition en cours du SWARIP.

1 Commerce informel le long de la frontière entre le Nigeria et le Bénin :

Une augmentation du volume des échanges intra régionaux est un moteur essentiel et la preuve d'une intégration économique régionale plus efficace. Cependant, malgré l'établissement de zones de libre-échange (*FTA en anglais*) et de régimes de tarif extérieur commun (TEC) au sein de l'UEMOA et de la CEDEAO, la mise en œuvre et l'engagement vis à vis d ces accords ont été lents et inégaux entre les pays. En conséquence, l'augmentation attendue du volume des échanges intra régionaux formels n'a pas eu lieu. Les activités commerciales informelles par-delà les frontières nationales dans la région de la CEDEAO, bien que n'apparaissant pas dans les données officielles, continuent à être le moteur des dynamiques commerciales. Lutter contre des activités commerciales informelles de ce type nécessiterait différentes approches politiques, tant au niveau national qu'à celui du soutien apporté par les bailleurs de fonds à l'intégration régionale, et une étude d'économie politique pourrait guider le développement d'une telle approche.

La frontière entre le Bénin et le Nigeria semble fournir un exemple particulièrement intéressant des défis dans cette région et pourrait se prêter à une analyse d'économie politique. Cela permettrait en particulier de considérer les flux illégaux dans les deux directions et dans les différents secteurs de façon à identifier où une marge de manœuvre pour des interventions en matière de programme ou de politique existe peut-être. Une telle approche compléterait également les travaux en cours sur la politique commerciale nigérienne.

2 Réduire les coûts des transactions commerciales régionales : Les efforts pour l'augmentation du volume des échanges intra régionaux sont sérieusement compromis par les coûts élevés des transactions (comprenant les coûts temporels et les coûts financiers) associées à la circulation des marchandises en Afrique de l'Ouest. Si une amélioration qualitative et quantitative de l'infrastructure physique (par ex. routes et autoroutes) est un des besoins essentiels de la région, il est peu probable qu'elle soit suffisante pour réduire efficacement les coûts et leur permettre d'atteindre les niveaux désirés. Cela est dû en grande partie à la prévalence persistante des délais et des coûts encourus aux barrages routiers officiels et non officiels le long des principaux corridors de transport. Nous suggérons donc deux points d'entrée potentiel pour une analyse d'économie politique : i) lutter contre les délais et la corruption aux postes frontières ; ii) réduire les délais et les coûts (ainsi que le harcèlement, la corruption et l'extorsion) aux postes de contrôle le long des corridors de transport.

Dans une tentative d'amélioration de la gouvernance le long des grands corridors routiers, un nombre de projets ont été initiés pour surveiller et rendre compte des obstacles auxquels les principaux usagers du réseau routier font face. Les informations fournies par ces diverses initiatives sont utiles pour observer et suivre les changements en matière de gouvernance du transport routier. Cependant, il semble qu'il y ait un champ d'action significatif pour une analyse d'économie politique qui apporterait une valeur ajoutée aux travaux existants. Elle compléterait les informations quantitatives avec des analyses plus qualitatives qui tenteraient d'apporter des réponses aux questions sur le

pourquoi qui émergent de l'initiative de suivi de la gouvernance du transport routier dans la région.

- 3 La politique des organisations sous régionales :** Une des priorités essentielles pour l'amélioration des résultats obtenus par le régionalisme dans l'ensemble du continent africain, est la rationalisation des travaux des différents groupements sous régionaux pour éviter la duplication des efforts et prévenir l'incohérence des politiques. Des progrès différents ont été accomplis par les deux principaux organes régionaux formels qui fournissent un cadre institutionnel pour la coopération et l'intégration en Afrique de l'Ouest : la CEDEAO et l'UEMOA. Si l'objectif officiel est que la CEDEAO englobera un jour l'UEMOA pour devenir le seul organe régional, les deux organisations continuent d'exister et sont perçues comme ayant des atouts différents. Il y a peu d'indications qu'une consolidation totale sous la bannière de la CEDEAO aura lieu à court terme.

Les questions de sécurité sont ici clairement pertinentes. Par exemple, bien que jusqu'à récemment la politique de sécurité régional ait été le domaine exclusif de la CEDEAO, l'UEMOA est en train de développer ses capacités dans les domaines de la sécurité et du maintien de la paix et s'apprête à créer une Commission de sécurité. Plusieurs facteurs sont en jeu mais un des problèmes essentiels est la situation sécuritaire grave et préoccupante à laquelle le bloc Mali-Niger-Burkina Faso fait face au Sahel (par ex. le terrorisme international, les effets de la crise libyenne, la rébellion touarègue, les trafics de drogue). Une meilleure compréhension de l'UEMOA, des relations entre ses États membres, et de l'Afrique de l'Ouest francophone à un niveau plus général, serait utile aux bailleurs de fonds, comme le DFID, qui n'ont qu'une influence limitée dans les pays francophones.

- 4 Ghana :** La mise en œuvre des politiques demeure la responsabilité des gouvernements nationaux. Si l'équipe a conclu qu'une évaluation de l'engagement au niveau national auprès de l'ensemble des membres de la CEDEAO ne serait pas faisable, nous suggérons un nombre limité d'études de cas portant sur certains pays. Il semble à la fois possible et utile de commencer un tel exercice par le Ghana. Le Ghana est largement considéré comme une présence dynamique et progressive dans la sous-région ; une évaluation actualisée des intérêts dans le pays et au sein de l'État ghanéen par rapport aux questions régionales serait très intéressante. Une telle étude serait particulièrement intéressante après plusieurs années de croissance économique soutenue et à la veille des élections majeures qui auront lieu plus tard dans l'année. D'un point de vue pratique, nombre d'universitaires et d'experts ghanéens sont autant de bons candidats pour mener à bien l'analyse ; une telle étude pourrait s'appuyer sur les nombreux travaux existants, et aiderait à équilibrer l'approche régionale du DFID qui se concentre actuellement sur le soutien aux organisations régionales (la CEDEAO en particulier).
- 5 L'efficacité portuaire en Afrique de l'Ouest :** En tant que canaux de transit pour les marchandises importées et exportées, les ports nationaux en Afrique de l'Ouest sont des centres d'activité économique essentiels qui jouent un rôle critique pour la productivité croissante des investissements privés, et donc pour la croissance et le développement dans la région. Toutefois, des opérations portuaires inefficaces privent les États de revenus et participent aux coûts élevés des importations ainsi qu'aux faibles volumes d'échanges intra régionaux. En

pratique, l'efficacité portuaire en Afrique de l'Ouest est variable et reste très dépendante de pratiques informelles. Les réformes potentielles forment un ensemble complexe de défis en matière d'économie politique qui implique un réseau de parties prenantes diverses et concurrentes. Malgré cela, certains pays ouest africains sont parvenus à obtenir des succès modestes en matière d'efficacité portuaire. La mission exploratoire suggère que de précieuses leçons sur comment et pourquoi les réformes ont eu de bons résultats pourraient être tirées d'au moins deux cas. Il serait également possible de découvrir quels obstacles ont été surmontés et quelles stratégies ont été adoptées. Les deux cas en question sont i) un ensemble de réformes mises en œuvre en 2011 pour améliorer la collecte des recettes douanières, venir à bout de la fraude douanière et faciliter le commerce au port de Cotonou ; et ii) la mise en œuvre du système GCNet (Ghana Community Network Services Limited) au port de Tema. Une étude d'économie politique se concentrant sur l'efficacité portuaire représenterait une opportunité d'en apprendre plus sur les facteurs réellement déterminants pour les processus de réformes, pas seulement en termes d'élaboration des politiques, mais aussi en ce qui concerne leur mise en œuvre.

Ensemble, ces cinq questions, bien qu'assez spécifiques pour limiter la portée des études à un niveau pratique, adressent néanmoins un large éventail de thèmes dans la littérature sur le régionalisme et l'intégration régionale qui avaient été identifiés dans la version provisoire de la revue de la littérature et dans le rapport initial soumis précédemment au DFID. Un certain nombre des questions considérées comme prioritaires correspondent à des éléments du programme formel d'intégration régionale (bien que même dans ce cas, nous suggérons une approche qui met les réalités locales ouest africaine au cœur des recherches, plutôt que des protocoles formels), d'autres traitent d'ensembles de problèmes liés à la fourniture (insuffisante) de biens publics régionaux.

Il convient également de noter l'étendue des questions identifiées et l'éventail de points d'entrée potentiels qui reflètent l'approche choisie pour ce travail. Nous avons adopté une définition large du régionalisme qui essaie de capturer les questions et les processus qui ont une dimension régionale, mais qui ne sont peut-être pas qualifiés explicitement de questions « régionales » ou qui ne sont peut-être pas abordés au mieux par l'intermédiaire des organisations régionales formelles. Nous pensons que le SWARIP bénéficierait d'une conceptualisation aussi large du soutien au régionalisme en Afrique de l'Ouest.

1 Background

This report is the final output from an initial scoping study on the political economy of regionalism in West Africa, commissioned by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and carried out by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and its partners.

Although the research team was concerned with understanding the dynamics arising with respect to key regional institutions such as Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest-Africain (UEMOA), we have adopted a broad view of regionalism that attempts to capture those issues and processes (formal and informal) that include a regional dimension, even where such topics are not explicitly framed as 'regional' issues. We feel that Support to West African Regional Integration Project (SWARIP) would benefit from a similarly broad conceptualization of support to regionalism in West Africa.

The scoping study was carried out in line with shifts in thinking regarding the application of political economy analysis in international development. After a number of years of experience contracting and conducting country level political economy analysis (the Drivers of Change studies, in the case of DFID), in recent years there has been a move towards adopting a problem-driven approach in which the analysis is increasingly focused around a specific challenge arising in the context of operations. While it is critical that such studies do not lose the valuable insights of macro-level studies (indeed problem-driven studies need to independently consider macro-level features of the political economy context, building on the findings of such studies where they exist), experience is increasingly suggesting that a problem focus can help to maximise operational relevance of applied political economy analysis for donor operations (Fritz et al., 2009).

It is clear that developing a better understanding of the political economy of West African regionalism is important for both domestic and external stakeholders in West African development, whether the main focus is on the integration process itself or on progress in particular countries. However, priorities need to be established. There is therefore a need for a scoping study to help prioritise among the various topics which might be the focus of useful political-economy work.

2 Approach

This report is based on two phases of work as described in the Terms of Reference for this work. The first phase comprised a desk-based survey and assessment of existing source materials. Given the breadth of the inquiry at this phase of DFID work on regional integration in West Africa, this review was inevitably selective, but an effort was made to draw from the most relevant academic studies, grey literature (e.g. Regional Economic Community [REC] documentation, government and development partner publications, etc.) and mass media. This stage also included consultation with DFID and World Bank staff in the region with the aim of optimising coverage of available material, avoiding duplication of efforts and reaching full agreement on the scope, timing and staffing of the country-based stage of work.

In the second phase of the work, the ODI-based staff drew on links with leading West African think tanks, including the Centre for Democratic Development (CDD) in Ghana and the *Laboratoire d'Etudes et de Recherche sur les Dynamiques Sociales et le Développement Local* (LASDEL) in Niger, in preparation for, and execution of expert and stakeholder interviews conducted in-person in up to three West African countries. The Anglophone country selected was Ghana and the two Francophone states were Niger and Benin. Additional planned in-person Anglophone interviews in Nigeria were replaced with a series of telephone and video-conference interviews due to security concerns in Abuja during the period of scheduled fieldwork and in the subsequent months. These interviews tended to take the form of exploratory conversations, generally conducted individually and sometimes off-the-record. The researchers adopted a snowball method, leveraging the personal networks of interviewees where beneficial.

As described in the terms of reference for this work, the complete scoping task, including both phases of the project, required the researchers to undertake a number of steps, including:

- The creation of a long-list of key issues in West Africa that have a regional dimension.
- The identification, where possible, of specific operational issues as entry points to the broad issue types already identified. This attempt to focus more narrowly is in line with the general trend in political economy analysis away from broad-thematic studies and towards more specific development challenges or 'problems' for analysis in an attempt to increase the chances of identifying operationally relevant recommendations.
- To prioritize among these issues according to the perceived importance of the issue to stakeholders within the region and the degree to which the nature of the issue identified suggests potential for additional commissioned political economy research to add value. Assessments of this latter criterion included at least four factors:
 - First, the team will attempt to prioritise issues that do not appear to duplicate existing knowledge or research already commissioned or underway within DFID or elsewhere in the donor community;
 - Second, the team will attempt to prioritise those issues where challenges arise from political economy factors rather than simply a lack of technical knowledge;

- Third, the team will attempt to prioritise those issues where it appears most feasible for commissioned researchers to carry out such a study. Experience suggests there can be good reasons to commission external research assistance in certain cases. For example, where findings may be particularly sensitive, DFID may want to maintain some distance from the findings, or where there is insufficient in-house expertise. However, in other cases, the incorporation of political economy perspectives by on-the-job practitioners may be preferable. In such cases, the integration of research findings into operations tends to be facilitated as practitioners retain stronger ownership over the research findings, and are able to make explicit their own existing (and, where practitioners have extensive experience in-country, very significant) tacit knowledge; and,
- Fourth, the team will attempt to prioritise issues that are potentially of interest to DFID programming in the region.

3 Non-prioritised options

3.1 National-level commitment to regional integration

The issue: Whilst regional bodies such as ECOWAS are primarily concerned with policymaking, the implementation of regional policies remains the responsibility of national governments. A real commitment on the part of national governments to the regional integration process is essential if greater regional integration is to be achieved. Yet very little is known about the incentives faced by national governments to support or oppose regionalism in its various forms.

What we know: The level of real commitment to 'regional integration' generally across the region seems unclear. National governments face key constraints to the smooth implementation of decisions made at the regional level, including a lack of continuity across election cycles. Newly elected leaders, eager to establish their own identity and differentiate themselves and their governments from their predecessors, often abandon positions previously established. Continuity is also hampered by commonly occurring cabinet reshuffles occurring throughout the region. Furthermore the absence of national strategies which assess the costs and benefits to the country of regional integration processes remains an obstacle.

The verdict: This is a highly relevant problem and a greater understanding of the national level incentives to regional integration processes would be arguably useful for all countries within the region. However carrying out an ECOWAS-wide assessment would be unreasonable in terms of the required resources. Depth of understanding here would have to be balanced with the breadth of country contexts in the sub-region. Therefore this issue was not prioritised for general, ECOWAS-wide treatment (but see section 4.4 on Ghana below).

3.2 The dominant role of Nigeria

The issue: In several important respects, the pace of the West African regional integration process is being dictated by attitudes, decisions and non-decisions in Nigeria. Even where the country has played a constructive role, as in peace and security issues in the region, Nigerian dominance has important implications (Orbus, 2010). For example, ECOWAS' military dependency on Nigeria means that it will be unlikely to be able to address the insurgencies and unrest in Nigeria itself which represent a significant share of the region's conflicts (Moller, 2009). Further weight for this issue arises from the fact that, with ECOWAS institutions based in Abuja, Nigeria is seen as a natural hub for work on regional integration. The temptation for donors has been to work on regional issues through such institutions.

What we know: Despite the fact that Nigeria was a key driver behind the creation of ECOWAS and the country has been a party to many of the landmark formal regional integration agreements, the perception still is that Nigerian commitment to integration is qualified and uneven. The country's economic power (relative to its neighbours) provides it with an informal but widely acknowledged 'veto' vote. While every member state has its particular issues with the implementation of ECOWAS agreements, the

gains from understanding better Nigerian views on integration would be particularly large.

The verdict: However, despite this, we suggest that there are good reasons not to prioritise a Nigeria study at present. First, DFID's foothold in Nigeria is already significantly better established than elsewhere in the region, with more significant in-house knowledge and, in the best cases, DFID staff in Abuja are already adopting politically savvy ways of working. Second, where DFID's internal knowledge has proven insufficient, the office has commissioned a number of political economy studies to inform work on issues with strong regional dimensions. The most recent of these, being carried out by Gareth Williams of the Policy Practice, is still underway and it seems advisable to evaluate the outcome of existing work before commissioning additional studies. Third, given recent unrest in Nigeria, Nigerian leadership on regional issues is very much in question. The view that domestic concerns were likely to distract Nigerian leadership was expressed by a large number of interviewees during fieldwork, even before the situation with Boko Haram has further deteriorated in recent months.

3.3 Monetary integration

The issue: While it is one of the most clearly visible forms of regional integration, the establishment of a West African monetary union, intended to reduce transaction costs in cross-border trade and promote greater ease in cross border investments, remains an area of frustration for supporters of regional integration.

What we know: The move towards a common currency has been the headline focus in the RECs. Convergence criteria, including a wide variety of macroeconomic indicators, have long been set. Yet, despite the technical knowledge of the issue demonstrated by staff members in UEMOA and the West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ), progress against these criteria has remained limited where it has occurred at all, with deadlines for union pushed back repeatedly. For many, discussions of a monetary union are little more than a distraction from greater progress on a more limited agenda including, for example, development of effective regional systems for non-cash payment (World Bank, 2007).

The verdict: Despite the interest in this issue among regional institutions (e.g. the West Africa Monetary Institute), this issue is not recommended for prioritisation. This decision reflects the views of the scoping team that the lack of political traction at the national level, reflected in the failure to make progress towards agreed upon convergence criteria, remains a firm barrier to further integration on this front. The scoping study did not identify any recent changes that would suggest an externally commissioned piece of political economy analysis would identify feasible ways forward. If anything, given the extent to which the European Union (EU) remains the pre-eminent model for regional integration in the minds of many West Africans (Draper, 2010), enthusiasm for monetary integration appears to have recently been further dampened by the EU crisis still unfolding.

3.4 Non-application of protocols: ECOWAS-wide

The issue: Both ECOWAS and UEMOA have ratified formal protocols and directives which if complied with would propel the process of regional integration forward. However, non-implementation of regional protocols is a widespread phenomenon (Brock et al., 2010a-e; 2011a-c). In reality the implementation and application of formal regional agreements has been inconsistent, non-existent and slow. This issue is one of the most commonly referred to obstacles to the regional integration process, in particular in relation to free movement of goods and people, although other examples exist.

What we know: On-going work has identified regional protocols which have not yet been implemented, providing a preliminary overview of the key challenges preventing implementation (Annequin and Eshun, 2011; Dupaigne et al., 2007). Regional protocols are often unsupported by national level legislation, regulation and procedures, and there is a general lack of enforcement and consistency. There are clearly a number of wider factors which contribute to this situation: the lack of regional institutional capacity, particularly in the case of ECOWAS; the weak connection between institutions at the regional and national level; the absence of real political commitment to the regional integration process; and the lack of policy prioritisation mechanisms.

The verdict: A deeper understanding of the challenges faced by countries in implementing specific protocols, while useful, is not feasible across the range of regional protocols and countries. To be realistic and relevant such an analysis needs to focus on specific instances of non-implementation. Therefore this issue has not been prioritised as a general issue across all ECOWAS/UEMOA countries (see section 4.1).

3.5 Non-creation of a court of audit in Benin

The issue: The improvement of public sector financial management is key to monetary integration process and the ECOWAS protocol which requires member states to create independent Courts of Audits is a crucial step in ensuring that government is held accountable for its use of public resources. However while Courts of Audits have been in existence for several years in some ECOWAS states (Burkina Faso's Court of Audit has published public accounts since 2005) in other countries like Benin and Nigeria they have not yet been created.

What we know: In Benin implementation has been delayed not because there is resistance in theory to the courts creation but rather because the court's creation is not possible without a change to the country's constitution. This is a delicate issue; the constitution has not been amended since 1990 and has particular historical significance to the Benin people. A constitutional review to address the issue could have significant and unintended consequences because it would open up space in which (unrelated) potentially politically sensitive issues could be debated.

The verdict: Although interesting, this particular issue does not have enough broader regional implications for it to be of great interest to DFID. Furthermore given that DFID has no presence in-country a commissioned analysis is also unlikely to have much impact. However this does not mean that DFID should not be interested in UEMOA countries more generally (see section on the politics of regional groupings: UEMOA and ECOWAS below).

3.6 Implementation of Axle Load Policy

The issue: Recent issues arising regarding axle load restrictions provides a useful concrete case study of the political economy challenges arising from harmonisation of standards across the sub-region. Implementation of a harmonised axle load policy is intended to prevent the significant problems associated with the overloading of trucks by drivers and transport firms. This practice is currently viewed as widespread in West Africa, and is particularly problematic in the case of trans-border shipments due to the presence of significant variation in the engineered road tolerances by country. This, in turn, leads to significant damage to roads, highways, and often the trucks themselves, thus resulting in serious safety concerns, reducing the speed of transport and increasing the long term costs of transporting goods throughout the region. A harmonised standard has been agreed at the regional level in an effort to ensure the preservation of investment in road infrastructure projects; however, among those that signed up to the agreement, deadlines for implementation have repeatedly been missed and currently implementation is uneven.

What we know: In practice, implementation of this regulation presents a serious collective action problem in which truckers appear to individually face incentives to overload trucks in order to gain business and maximise profits in the short term. Two features of this emerged during consultations as particularly important. First, the costs of compliance (e.g. road construction, replacement of trucking fleets, etc.) with the new regulation impact asymmetrically across actors and across countries based on historical legacies, with Francophone countries and Anglophone countries working towards this from different baselines of prior regulation, hampering efforts at coordination. Second, uncoordinated implementation means those countries that do move first to implement policies and regulations can face detrimental impacts, discouraging first movers. In the case of Ghana, these impacts reportedly include a reduction in business for Ghanaian truckers previously working out of Tema port and who have moved en masse to other ports where there is business, leading to calls for harmonised implementation by the Minister of Roads and Highways for Ghana.

The verdict: Despite the clear political economy dimensions to this issue, we suggest it is not prioritised at present in large part because analytical work on this issue is already underway, commissioned by the World Bank office in Ghana and carried out by Vision Consult Ltd. (Vision Consult Ltd., 2011). The draft report provides some useful indication of the distribution of current practices in Ghana and of the costs and benefits associated with overloading practices. Once the World Bank study has been finalised, it may be useful to revisit this issue to determine whether additional work by a commissioned political economy specialist could add value by linking these findings to the design of donor programmes.

3.7 Peace and security: ECOWAS-wide

The issue: Dimensions of regionalism also includes the 'renunciation of aggression, maintaining regional peace and stability, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts among member states' (World Bank, 2007). Among RECs worldwide, ECOWAS is generally regarded as the leading example of a regional organisation that is effective

in performing its crisis management role (Orbus, 2010). However, despite ECOWAS' relative success, its military dependency on Nigeria means that it will unlikely be able to address the insurgencies and unrest in Nigeria itself which represent a significant share of the region's conflicts (Moller, 2009). Commentators also note that while there have recently been a number of instances of greater activity by ECOWAS on issues of democratic practices and governance (e.g. the suspension of Niger in 2009, the imposition of limited sanctions on Guinea, and the issuance of critical statements in relation to events in Guinea and Guinea Bissau), this seems to be subject to significant inconsistencies (e.g. muted criticism in the ECOWAS election observation in the 2007 Nigerian elections) (Orbus, 2010).

What we know: Our interviews and fieldwork suggest that the current unrest and internal security issues facing Nigeria do not necessarily have a regional dimension. Although the problems do have an external influence, this is not coming from ECOWAS member states but rather from countries outside of the region. However more recent reports suggest that large numbers of Nigerian refugees are fleeing the northern part of the country for Niger. If this continues it indicates that the on-going un-rest may have important regional implication. Other significant security concerns in the region are those facing the Mali-Niger-Burkina Faso bloc in the Sahel (e.g. the fall out of the Libyan crisis, the Tuareg rebellion and organised crimes such as drug smuggling). The Ivory Coast crisis has also been important, underlying as it did UEMOA's political weakness in protecting its economic (and monetary) interests; during the political stalemate in the Ivory Coast the West African Central Bank in Abidjan was closed along with other UEMOA institutions. Our interviews indicate that these issues are the key drivers behind UEMOA's recent expansion into security and peacekeeping areas, traditionally ECOWAS policy territory.

The verdict: Although these issues are of potential interest, our interviews and fieldwork did not identify any feasible entry points for further analysis, particularly as Nigeria's security threats do not have inherently regional roots. The security threats in the Sahel region are of interest but we feel that they could be better addressed by a study with a broader focus on UEMOA (see section 4.3 below).

3.8 Transport infrastructure (Railways and dry ports)

The issue: Transport in the West Africa region is costly and transporters are unable to meet current demands. Improvements in the region's transport infrastructure network are thus a key priority for regional integration (Teravaninthorn and Raballand, 2008; UNECA, 2010). Functioning railway networks would do much to rectify the under-provision of transport infrastructure and improve the ground transport network. Furthermore the existence of rail connections from seaports would enable the use of dry ports which could operate as centres for transshipment of cargo to inland destinations and could be used to reduce irregular customs activity. However, despite initiatives within the region over the last few years to introduce dry ports and rehabilitate and construct railway networks these have been progressing slowly.

What we know: An initiative to rehabilitate and extend the Cotonou (Benin) – Parakou (Niger) railway line to Dosso (Niger) and to construct dry ports in both Niger and Benin has been in the pipeline for several years. However, despite the offer of a public-partnership in 2010, which proposed to partly finance the infrastructural work

(along with UEMOA) in exchange for concession and exploitation of the railway and dry ports, no progress has been made to date. The proposed project illustrates well the difficulties of overcoming collective action problems at the sub-regional level. There are indications that a number of key interests are preventing the project's implementation, including tensions/disagreements between Benin and Niger and conflicts between different interests groups on both sides.

The verdict: The rehabilitation and construction of the railway line and dry ports poses complex political economy challenges which involve a diverse number of powerful actors at both the local, national, sub-regional and regional level. To engage effectively with this issue would require access to these actors and a wide range and depth of relationships with key players at all levels. We believe it would be difficult for a single study by an external consultant to obtain the necessary levels of access across the breadth of actors. At the same time, focusing the analysis at national level or in relation to specific types of transport infrastructure risks underplaying the key dynamics at regional level, where the real political economy challenges really lie. In addition, finding a suitable local consultant with the required networks and skills would be difficult. For all these reasons the scope for a short-term commissioned political economy study to generate definite operational implications would be limited. It is for this reason that the issue has not been prioritised at this moment.

3.9 Regional energy infrastructure

The issue: Serious deficits in the supply and distribution of energy in the sub-region are a major problem; inadequate, expensive and unreliable power supply stunts the growth of the manufacturing and private sector and deprives the region of much needed investment. In response, significant investments have been made to scale-up energy access through regional energy initiatives; however, these have experienced repeated delays with deadlines being continually pushed back.

What we know: The presence of coordination and cooperation issues associated with cross-border infrastructure required for effective power pools and the potential changes to established practices of the creation and management of natural resource rents suggest the development of new energy infrastructure or the possible extension of existing projects (such as the proposed extension of the West African Gas Pipeline [WAGP] to Cote D'Ivoire) are likely to involve serious political economy challenges. Two ongoing projects were considered as possible entry points for analysis:

- The case of the WAGP is a good example of the serious political economy challenges faced in creating and managing cross-border energy infrastructure including the cooperation and policy coordination necessary between the four national governments and other key stakeholders. Construction began in 2005, and although Ghana received its first gas supplies in 2008, the WAGP has only been officially completed since 2011 and is still not fully functional, five years after the planned deadline. Although technical issues have created setbacks it seems clear that there are other powerful interests at play. Reports suggest that illegal mining activities along the pipeline in Nigeria which have delayed construction and allegations of improper payments to officials for pipeline exploitation rites are just two of the many scandals which have dogged the pipeline's construction.

- The West Africa Power Pool (WAPP) project is another key example of challenges associated with improvements in regional energy infrastructure. Interviews suggest that micro-level political issues may be as important as national level coordination challenges in explaining the slower than expected progress on implementation of the WAPP. For example, in the framework of the West Africa Power Pool project a gas turbine plant was planned to be built in Marie Gleta, Benin. The introduction of the gas turbine should reduce power outages, which are currently frequent throughout the day, and the cost of energy. Although it was supposed to be completed in 2009, it is still not functioning. There have been several contract amendments since the initial account was won by the Group Chevron. Unconfirmed reports suggest that while some delays and contract amendments may have arisen from genuine (albeit severe) underestimation of original costs and a lack of capacity among constructing agents, they likely indicate illicit agreements between those responsible for authorizing some of the work under the WAPP and those contracted.

The verdict: Despite the interesting features of these projects, regional energy infrastructure is not recommended for prioritisation. This suggestion arises in large part from the sense that developing a better understanding of the illicit activities that have been associated with implementation failures of these regional projects would demand better levels of access that might be feasible for externally commissioned consultants. Such issues might be better addressed 'on-the-job' by informed staff capable of the type of long-term relationship building necessary to achieve adequate levels of access. For DFID or other international donors this may demand an unpublished study, or support to a relevant third party organisation, for example, in the model of Trademark East Africa (TMEA).

3.10 Agriculture and food security

The issue: Food security is recognised as being one of the major development challenges facing the West Africa region (Verdière, 2009; Bromley et al., 2011). Highly volatile international food prices, heightened environmental pressures, and increasing population growth and urbanisation all affect migration, settlement patterns and demand for food products in the region. Increased regional agricultural productivity and diversity, enhanced intra-regional trade in agricultural products and improved regional mechanisms for preventing and managing short-term cyclical food shortages are key regional objectives which are necessary for improved food security. But poor systems for providing information about prices, availability and location of food products, coupled with inadequate regional stocking facilities, high transportation costs and continued abnormal border practises means that although West Africa produces sufficient food for the region's needs, cyclical food shortages are frequent and often become critical.

What we know: At the regional level there is only limited agricultural planning, and initiatives to reform policies to improve food security such as the establishment of a regional food stock to overcome short-term seasonal food shortages have struggled to get off the ground. Whilst agricultural policy is a key pre-occupation for both national and regional policy makers, coordination problems pose a number of challenges. Different working habits and rhythms of reform implementation have led to a lack of harmonisation between agricultural policies and practises at the sub-regional level

(between UEMOA and ECOWAS) and at the national level, inconsistencies between trade and agricultural policies have resulted in the imposition of national tariff and non-tariff barriers (Rolland, 2011).

Poor systems for providing information about prices, availability and location of food products, coupled with inadequate regional stocking facilities for food products, high transportation costs and continued abnormal border practises means that although West Africa produces sufficient food for the region's needs, cyclical food shortages are frequent and often become critical. However recent efforts by UEMOA to address short-term seasonal food shortages, and thus food security, by setting up a regional exchange market for sensitive food products have not advanced very rapidly. Despite the fact that such a market could make real progress towards improving food security in the region and that the UEMOA members of the Comité Permanent Inter-Etats de Lutte contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel (CILSS¹), a sub-regional grouping which acts informally as the technical arm of UEMOA, have been in agreement for several years that such an initiative is essential, the initiative has never been implemented.

The creation of a regional exchange market requires the resolution of significant collective action problems. Food insecurity does not impact equally upon the countries in the region and those that are the most affected are amongst the poorest economies. Regional countries continue to act primarily in their national interests and the policies of some of the less affected coastal countries can exacerbate food crises in times of shortage. For example in 2003, Nigeria's reaction to food shortages was to illegally buy food products at elevated prices from Niger, which further contributed to the lack of food in that country and precipitated the ensuing crisis.

The verdict: Many of the constraints to improvements in food security are the result of more general problems such as the non-implementation of regional trade policies in this report (see section 4.1) and the incoherence between national, sub-regional and regional policies and practises. Whilst the Sahelian countries, which are most affected by transitional food shortages, have a greater incentive to cooperate to overcome these barriers, cooperation has more often than not taken the form of arrangements along the lines of informal sub-regional blocs. For the coastal and economically more powerful countries such as Nigeria, less frequent national food shortages, can, and are often, resolved through illicit informal trade which can further undermine food security in the most vulnerable countries. These nationalistic responses to food shortages are a wider illustration of the limited commitment that national countries in the region have to regional integration processes. As constraints to improvements in food security are of a more general nature which are addressed more specifically elsewhere, this particular issue, despite its importance, has not been selected as a priority for future analysis.

¹ CILSS (the permanent regional committee in the struggle against drought in the Sahel) has been present in the region for 35 years. It's members covering Ivory Coast, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Cape Verde, Senegal, Niger, Mali, Mauritania and Chad

4 Prioritised options

4.1 Informal trade along the Nigeria-Benin border

The issue: An increase in intra-regional trade volumes is a key driver of and evidence of more effective regional economic integration. However despite the establishment of free-trade areas (FTA) and common external tariff (CET) regimes within both UEMOA and ECOWAS, implementation of, and commitment to these agreements has been slow and uneven across countries and the anticipated increase in intra-regional trade volume has not transpired (Dupaigne et al., 2007). Yet in many cases, this presents a false picture of the movement of goods across national borders. At the regional level, low levels of official cross-border flows are closely linked to the continued (and in many cases increasing) prevalence of un-official cross border flows. This phenomenon has been highlighted as one of the key obstacles to the formal integration process in West Africa (UNECA, 2010; Dupaigne et al., 2007; World Bank, 2007).

Informal market activity across national borders within the ECOWAS region, although not captured in official data, continues to drive trading dynamics and accounts for an important proportion of intra-regional trade (Page 2001). It is an issue which affects, to a greater or lesser extent, all cross-country borders within the region. Regularised non-implementation of regional agreements, inconsistent application of standards, systematic violations of cross-trading provisions and the widespread imposition of non-tariff barriers (NTBs) all act as strong incentives for the persistence of informal trade flows.

What we know and entry points for analysis: A key barrier to the increase in intra-regional trade in the West Africa region is the unorthodox trade policy in Nigeria; despite adopting the ECOWAS CET the Nigeria trade regime remains unstable and protectionist (Dupaigne et al., 2007) imposing high levies and bans on imports which can change frequently, providing a strong incentive for corruption and smuggling. Related to this, high levels of informal trade emerged as a highly relevant constraint to regional integration.²

The border between Benin and Nigeria appears to provide a particularly rich example of the challenges in this area that may be amenable to political economy analysis. Three specific types of informal trade across the Benin-Nigeria border were identified: the illicit trade in petrol from Nigeria to Benin; the illegal importation of Nigerian manufactured goods into Benin; and the (re-)exportation of prohibited products to Nigeria from Benin. Tackling these kinds of informal trade across borders would require different policy approaches, both at the national level but also as part of donors' support to regional integration, and a political economy study could help to inform the development of such an approach. However, we suggest that there may also be some challenges in developing a feasible operational response addressing some components of informal trading due to political incentives in both countries. This is discussed below, first with respect to the specific issue of illicit trade in petrol and

² The prevalence of informal trade is likely to be shaped by a number of factors, including, but not limited to the relations between neighbouring countries at the local level where cross-border trade takes place. Both understanding purported drivers (e.g. local level dynamics) and identifying other potential factors and assessing their relative weight would be a key priority for the political economy analysis.

then more generally with respect to the broader issues of cross-border flows between Nigeria and Benin.

i) Illicit trade in petrol

The issue: With illegal imports of Nigerian petrol accounting for between 70-85% of Benin's national petrol consumption this issue is of clear importance when addressing the problem of informal-market activity in West Africa. Curtailing petrol smuggling across the Nigerian border would enable Benin to address the serious quality and safety issues posed by the illicit market and would provide a significant financial boost to the state's public finances, which are heavily dependent on fiscal receipts.

What we know: In 2003, faced with severe petrol supply shortages and escalating prices, the Benin state made the decision to remove petrol subsidies which it had introduced in 2000 to protect consumer spending power. In so doing, the state effectively let the black market regulate prices (which fell to half the official market price). Since the removal of state subsidies, the informal market has not only kept petrol prices affordable, but it has also created significant informal employment opportunities for the local population, offering potentially high profits and rent extraction to the Nigerian and Benin business networks and politicians who have a vested interest in the trade. Previous attempts by both Benin and Nigeria to reform the informal market appear to have failed. Interestingly, the biggest threat to the informal petrol market was the recent (short-lived) removal of state petrol subsidies in Nigeria.

The verdict: The informal petrol market presents highly relevant political economy issues. However the failure of previous reform attempts seems to confirm that the involvement of high-placed political figures and powerful businessmen are driving the informal trade. As long as there are no clear political incentives to tackle this issue from the top-down, the capacity of a commissioned analysis to identify room for manoeuvre which could generate feasible operational implications seems limited. We therefore suggest an approach that looks across sectors to identify where more room for manoeuvre might exist (see section 4.1.2).

ii) The illegal importation of manufactured goods to and from Benin

The issue: When customs duties and protection rates are high, transporters are more vulnerable to corrupt law enforcement practises and there is an increased incentive for informal market activity. The illegal importation of Nigerian manufactured goods to Benin, which would otherwise attract high internal tariffs, is an important informal-market activity along the Benin-Nigeria border and one which deprives the state of substantial fiscal revenues. Curtailing this informal trade would permit the state to increase its fiscal receipts substantially. Furthermore, there is illegal re-exportation from Benin to Nigeria of prohibited products or those with a high taxation rate. Although some progress has been made towards phasing out bans and reducing import duties, the impact of these measures on trade flows and facilitation has been limited because the main items subject to unofficial trade remain prohibited (second-hand cars) and subject to continued high taxes (rice, pharmaceutical products).

What we know: The illicit fiscal market for these goods is undertaken in effective coordination with border, customs and security officers as well as a well-organised network of drivers, buyers and negotiators. In particular an organised group of transporters, known locally as the 'acquis', who import these goods into Benin are central to this trade. Knowledgeable in the products they transport, experts in border crossings, and specialised in grouping products, these transporters have specially modified trucks with increased volume capacity and work in coordination with networks of various border and other officials. Currently knowledge about the internal dynamics of this cross-border trade is limited, including the informal rules which regulate the black market trade, the incentives faced by various actors and the other external forces at play. The 'acquis'³, a well-organised group of cross-border transporters, could provide an entry point for an analysis of the informal aspects of trade dynamics and provide important insights into incentives at play, though a failure to gain their cooperation is a real risk for the analysis.

The verdict: Adopting a broader focus on informal trade across the Nigeria-Benin border may therefore be more advisable than a narrow focus on the illicit petrol trade. The study would then assess the potential room for manoeuvre that might exist in relation to key products, given what is known about trade policy in the two countries and current political priorities. Specifically, building a better understanding of the extent of potential variation that may exist across different sectors would provide useful information to DFID regarding their approach to informality. Such a study would also provide an excellent opportunity to build on the ongoing work by Gareth Williams on the political economy of Nigerian trade policy (as mentioned in section 3).

4.2 Reducing transaction costs in regional trade

The issue: Efforts to increase the volume of intra-regional trade are severely hampered by the high transaction costs (including both time delays and financial costs) associated with movement of goods throughout West Africa (Teravaninthorn and Raballand, 2008). While an improvement in the quality and quantity of physical infrastructure (e.g. roads and highways) is a critical need in the region, it is unlikely to be sufficient to effectively reduce costs to desired levels. In no small part, this is due to the continued prevalence of the delays and costs incurred at roadblocks along main transport corridors. One recent study reports an account of '37 official and unofficial roadblocks "at the last count" on transporting goods by road from Ghana through Togo and Benin to Nigeria. A journey that should take two days takes as many weeks' (World Bank, 2007:68).

What do we know about it and possible entry points for analysis: Such costs are incurred at both official (e.g. authorised tolling by customs agents) and unofficial (e.g. tolling by unauthorised individuals, unauthorised tolling by authorised individuals, etc.) control posts, though the dynamics underlying practices at these two types of location are likely to vary in important ways. We therefore suggest two potential entry points for political economy analysis.

³ This is the local term commonly used to describe this group. The French term suggests that this is something established, taken for granted, and well rooted in local reality.

i) Combating delays and corruption at borders posts

The issue: The non-application of ECOWAS trade liberalisation scheme (ETLS) protocols, bureaucratic burdens associated with paperwork processing, complex and duplicate border procedures, and poor cooperation between enforcement agencies, as well as informal border-customs practises such as harassment at border posts are all costly and time-consuming and represent a significant impediment to the free movement of persons and goods across borders. This was recognised by ECOWAS and UEMOA in 2003 when they adopted the Regional Road Transport and Transit Facilitation Program (RRTTFP) which aims to promote intra-regional trade and facilitate trans-border movements.

What we know: Recent and on-going border post reform initiatives, such as the implementation of single window customs points and joint-border posts could be considered potential entry points for analysis that would allow donor programming to adapt to actual examples of strategies to address a recognised problem/impediment for regional integration. Joint border posts aim to speed up cross-border and security procedures by bringing customs and other border officials from two neighbouring countries together. The objective of such reforms is to reduce the transaction costs of cross-border traffic by reducing duplicative controls and delays. In West Africa the first joint border post was financed and built by UEMOA along the Burkina-Faso border in 2011. Eleven others are planned. Two are currently under construction on the Benin-Nigeria (Krake-Seme) and Ghana-Togo (at Noepe) borders under the responsibility of ECOWAS and a third along the Benin-Niger (at Malanville) border under the responsibility of UEMOA.

The verdict: The reform of border posts poses significant political economy challenges. A good understanding of the interests and incentives at play could clarify the key bottlenecks and identify where there is scope for constructive intervention to overcome such constraints. A political economy analysis of the implementation of the single window customs points at both the ports of Lomé and Cotonou could help to develop detailed knowledge of the key impediments to the reform process as well as potential avenues for change in border posts. This would not only be useful in the on-going reform processes in these two ports but would also be useful in providing subsequent support to the other planned single window customs ports along the Abidjan-Lagos corridor. Similarly, analysis of the change process at the Joint Border Posts could provide support to the others planned.

At the moment there is no on-going political economy analysis in either of these areas; however, there is an organisation charged with monitoring progress towards the Abidjan-Lagos Transport and Transit Facilitation Program (ALTTFP) along the Abidjan-Lagos transport corridor with whom work could be linked up. Although this kind of monitoring is not political economy analysis as such, the data it produces could be useful raw material for further analysis. The Abidjan-Lagos Corridor Organisation (ALCO) acts as a regional umbrella for the project and is responsible for liaising between the national project coordination units (PCUs), the national facilitation committees and the regional facilitation committee within ECOWAS. ALCO is also responsible for collecting data on performance indicators which included port dwell times in Cotonou and Lomé ports and the border crossing times on the Benin-Nigeria, Togo-Benin, Ghana-Togo and Ivory Coast-Ghana borders. Although ALCO don't have any political economy analysis experience in-house they do have experienced staff members with extensive experience of customs reforms who could work with an

external political economy specialist to undertake a fruitful analysis. This approach would entail a more integrated form of political economy analysis which could, in time, become an in built element of reform practice/processes.

ii) Checkpoints and transport corridors

The issue: In addition to the challenges experienced at border posts, the transport of persons and goods remains significantly constrained by the presence of checkpoints along major transport corridors (Adzibgey et al., 2007). High levels of insecurity on the roads (hold-ups and ransoms) mean that checkpoints are essential, but checkpoints, both official and unofficial, are associated with significant delays and official charges as well as harassment, bribery and extortion. The sheer number of checkpoints can be overwhelming for truckers, with separate roadblocks established by agents from the customs, police and forest services; even villages, towns and districts erect roadblocks. Bribes are often organised and everyone from the agent on the road to their highest level superiors receives their share of the gains.

What we know: In an effort to improve governance along the region's primary road corridors, a number of projects have been initiated which monitor and report regularly on obstacles faced by key users of the road network. The Improved Road Transport Governance (IRTG) project monitors and reports on the number of checkpoints, the length of delays and the value of bribes drivers pay when hauling goods along six main transport corridors⁴. The USAID Agribusiness and Trade Promotion and Enhanced Agribusiness and Trade Promotion (ATP/E-ATP) projects collect the same data for five other transport corridors⁵. Meanwhile, ALCO collects similar data on border crossing times and roadblock frequencies along the Abidjan-Lagos coastal corridor.⁶

The verdict: The series of 16 West Africa Road Governance Reports commissioned by USAID/UEMOA as a part of the USAID West Africa Trade Hub (WATH) work (USAID/UEMOA, 2011) contain a wealth of information, tracking the number of checkpoints, delay times and bribery across 11 main transport corridors. However, although the information provided by these various initiatives is useful in observing and tracking changes in road governance, consultations with WATH staff and other donors in the region suggest there is significant scope for focused political economy analysis to add value to this existing work, complementing quantitative information with more qualitative analysis that can help to answer the 'why' questions emerging from the tracking initiative. This would also help to identify possible incentives for change, beyond an analysis of the status quo. In other words, complementary PE analysis has the potential to help agencies develop an improved understanding of the underlying incentives driving the presence and persistence of such checkpoints which appears to be currently lacking. In a best case scenario, the PEA would also help to

⁴ IRTG covers the following six main corridors: Tema-Ouagadougou, Ouagadougou-Bamako, Lomé-Ouagadougou, Bamako-Dakar, Abidjan-Ouagadougou and Abidjan-Bamako.

⁵ USAID ATP and E-ATP projects cover the following corridors: Kantchari-Accra, Fada N'Gourma-Parakou, Techiman-Kantchari, Bobo-Dioulasso-Koutiala and Koutiala-Dakar

⁶ Sources in Burkina Faso mentioned the transport unions operated an observatory of abnormal practises which records costs and delays incurred on major routes. The scoping mission was unable to confirm this or to confirm whether such an initiative is linked to one of the Corridor Alliance projects (WATH). Such a linkage is a possibility, but in either case, it would be well worth exploring these issues further with the transport unions.

explain changes (increases and/or decreases) observed in the data, providing valuable operationally relevant insights into the development of more effective programming.

From a practical perspective, there are strong reasons to pursue a study in this area. Not least among these is the opportunity to build on the relationships developed by WATH in their monitoring efforts.

4.3 The politics of sub-regional groupings: UEMOA and ECOWAS

The issue: One of the key priorities for improving the outcomes generated through regionalism across the African continent is the rationalisation of the various sub-regional groupings (Khaidiagala, 2011; UNECA, 2006). On the one hand, to avoid potential duplication of efforts, and on the other, to prevent the sort of policy incoherence that can result from overlapping mandates and memberships (BIS and DFID, 2011:19).

What we know and entry points for analysis: In the West Africa region there are two main formal regional bodies which provide institutional frameworks for cooperation and integration in the region, ECOWAS and UEMOA, both of which have objectives to increase trade integration and policy coordination between their member states. Differential progress has been made by the two organisations and they are perceived to have different strengths reflecting both capacity gaps and a number of political economy factors. UEMOA has made greater progress towards economic integration than ECOWAS and has already achieved monetary integration, while the latter has demonstrated greater strength in regional policy coordination (e.g. in areas such as security and infrastructure). The official objective is that ECOWAS will one day subsume UEMOA and become the sole regional body.

As all UEMOA member states are also ECOWAS member states there has been a tendency to concentrate on ECOWAS when considering the issue of regional integration in West Africa. However UEMOA is still a significant regional actor and one which has been, arguably more successful than ECOWAS at overcoming the coordination problems critical to integration processes. Furthermore there are few signs that consolidation under ECOWAS will happen in the short term. On the contrary, recent moves by UEMOA to develop its regional policy coordination competences indicate it is moving away from, rather than towards, greater integration with ECOWAS. In reality, few stakeholders believe that the two bodies won't continue to exist for the foreseeable future.

Although it is important to consider UEMOA in relation to sub-regional rationalisation processes, the current ECOWAS-centric approach means that the power structures, informal politics, and interests and incentives which drive UEMOA's own agenda within the regional integration processes are ignored. This lack of knowledge is problematic and poses potential constraints to improved regional integration. The implicit assumption that the Ivory Coast and Senegal are the most powerful within the grouping because they are the strongest economies within UEMOA, is an example of this. However, reports indicate that it is in fact the three land-locked countries (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger), whose solidarity is strengthened by common cultural and historical bonds, who between them form the most important and powerful (informal) sub-regional bloc and are exercising increasing political and economic power within UEMOA. An understanding of this type of sub-regional dynamic is in turn

essential to understanding the drivers of current policy. For example, although until recently regional security policy was the exclusive domain of ECOWAS, UEMOA is currently expanding its capacity in the area of security and peacekeeping and moving towards the creation of a security commission. There are several factors driving this but one of the key issues is the serious security situation facing the Mali-Niger-Burkina Faso bloc in the Sahel (e.g. international terrorism, the fall-out of the Libyan crisis, the Tuareg rebellion, drug smuggling).

DFID's current knowledge of Francophone West African countries is not strong. DFID is not present in the majority of UEMOA member states and its understanding of UEMOA and how it functions is very limited. As an organisation, DFID may also be constrained by its commitment to working with ECOWAS as the formal body leading regional integration in West Africa. Given the importance of UEMOA in the region and its continued role as a significant player in the integration process, a detailed analysis of UEMOA and the relation between it and its member states, by externally commissioned researchers, would be useful going forward as well as being more practical than in-house work.

Developing a better understanding of UEMOA and of Francophone West Africa more generally would be good for DFID practice. Most basically, this understanding offers a means of ensuring DFID 'Does No Harm' in the region. Second, such an exercise may help to identify a new range of partners in countries where its footprint is currently limited. Further, this understanding could provide the basis for improved donor coordination in the region, helping to break down linguistic silos.

Obtaining knowledgeable Francophone insights on these issues will depend on a number of factors. Fundamentally, the commissioned researchers, in addition to the usual requirements regarding strong relationships with key informants (that is, good networks) and analytical capacity would also require French language fluency. Local research institutions (like LASDEL) as well as organisations with experience in conducting PEA in Francophone Africa (like ODI) would provide a good first point of call, though collaboration with donors present in country (e.g. AFD) could also help with the identification of potential consultants.

4.4 Ghana

The issue: Developing a better understanding of the interests, relationships and processes within the various states of ECOWAS relating to regional integration is an important priority for DFID and other actors seeking to contribute to regional integration processes. However, as noted above, an ECOWAS wide study appears to be too broad to allow for the type of in-depth study required to produce useful conclusions capable of informing donor engagement. We suggest a limited number of individual country case studies could provide a better way forward and that Ghana could be a feasible place to begin such an exercise.

What we know and entry points for analysis: While there is some limited recognition of regional dimensions (e.g. among staff in the Private Sector Development team) in the DFID-Ghana country office, at present the country office appears to largely view DFID-Nigeria as responsible for 'regional affairs'. While Nigeria is widely viewed as the dominant power in West Africa, there is a risk that an

approach to regionalism and processes of regional integration that focuses too narrowly on Nigeria and on the formal regional bodies based in Abuja overlooks other important country perspectives. In the view of the scoping team, developing a better understanding of other potentially influential countries in the sub-region is arguably increasing in importance given the widely held view that, at least in the near term, Nigerian politics are likely to be substantially dominated by domestic considerations rather than regional ones.

As a clear second-tier power in the sub-region Ghana's potential influence exceeds that of most other countries in the region. Priorities would include the identification of key constituencies and interest groups at the macro level with strong stakes (either positive or negative) in regional issues. There is a body of existing work on which such a study might build, for example Kwame Ninsin's edited volume on *'Nation-States and The Challenges of Regional Integration in West Africa: The Case of Ghana'* (Ninsin, 2009) and a variety of less regionally focused political economy work including country level Drivers of Change analysis (Booth et al., 2005a-c; Crook, 2005a-b). It is not necessary to repeat this existing analysis (although, given the fact that seven years have now elapsed between the Drivers of Change analysis and the present, it would be important to question assumptions that are deemed to be key to regional issues). What is needed now is an up-to-date assessment of the sets of interests that exist within Ghana and the Ghanaian state with respect to regional issues.

Such a study would be of particular interest given the dynamism in the country's prevailing political economy after a number of years of sustained growth on the economic front and in the run-up to major elections later this year. While it seems unlikely that issues of regional integration will be the dominant factor determining outcomes in the upcoming round of elections, DFID and other donors active in the region may benefit from a better understanding of the likelihood of sustained support or opposition on regional issues. The significant extent to which policy positions can change as a result of electoral cycles (in some cases merely to signal a departure from the previous government), or even the frequent rotation of ministers and key civil servants, was cited by interviewees as a key constraint to effective engagement on regional issues. This may have important implications not only with respect to the development of key regional policies, but also with respect to predictability and trust that underpin the collective action required for effective implementation.

Like the other studies recommended for prioritisation in this report, the success of the report depends substantially on the access the research team would have to key players at the national level. Researchers would need good networks of key informants, which could then be leveraged and combined with the necessary analytical skills. From a practical standpoint, there are a number of Ghanaian scholars who may be good candidates to carry forth such an analysis.

While carried out largely by independent analysts, the work should be carried out in close liaison with DFID staff at the country office in Accra. This would have the advantage of allowing staff to draw on the process of enquiry, as well as the findings of any final report, in their work. Similar exercises in the past have included periodic oral debriefings, and the development and submission of interim and final reports in such a way that country office staff are brought into the research process and gain some degree of ownership over the findings (either through a commenting process, or through co-authorship).

4.5 West African port efficiency (Tema and Cotonou)

The issue: As conduits for imported and exported goods, national ports in West Africa are key centres of economic activity which are critical for increased productivity of private investment and thus growth and development in the region. However, poor efficiency of port operations, characterised by long delays and high official and unofficial financial costs, deprives the member states of key sources of revenue and contributes to the high cost of imports and low intra-regional trade volumes (Pálsson et al., 2007).

What we know and entry points for analysis: Expansion of the region's ports is necessary to respond to anticipated increases in port traffic and ship size. National governments and international donors have made significant investments in port infrastructure, such as the recently approved €60-million AfDB loan for the construction of a new container terminal at the Lome Port in Togo. Yet, while the expansion of the capacity of the region's ports is necessary, the main obstacle to increasing imports and intra-regional trade volumes is the improvement of port efficiency.

In situations like that of Freetown's port, efficiency is variable, suggesting practices in West African ports remain significantly dependent on informal practices⁷ (see also Annequin and Eshun, 2011 on practices at the Tema port). Pálsson et al. (2007) suggest a range of reforms including: labour and institutional reform; fostering private sector participation; facilitating procedures and controls in ports; improving port access; facilitating transport on the main trade corridors from the port to landlocked countries; increasing competition among shipping lines where informal barriers to market entry or collusion still prevails. Reforms of this sort pose a complex set of political economy challenges which involve a complex network of diverse and competing stakeholders.

In response to this challenge several regional projects to improve port efficiency have been initiated over the past five years and all of the West African coastal countries have commenced port reforms processes. These attempts have focused primarily on the automation and streamlining of customs procedures and the reduction of corruption. For example, in the framework of the World Bank-funded ALTTFP, single window customs points for external trade are being created in five ports along the Abidjan-Lagos transport corridor⁸. The Abidjan-Lagos coastal corridor was identified by ECOWAS as being a priority for social and economic development as it links up five of West Africa's most important economic cities (Abidjan, Tema, Lomé, Cotonou and Lagos) which also act as transport gateways to the regions' three landlocked countries (Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger). In the first phase of the programme single window customs points are being piloted in Lomé and Cotonou before being rolled out in the second phase to Tema, Abidjan and Lagos.

⁷ Customs officials at Freetown's seaport are notorious for their slowness in processing imports and exports. Allegedly, containers and shipments belonging to NGOs tend to pass through customs at a faster rate than others. This has led some merchants and others to either secure NGO markings on their goods or exploit connections to have their goods included in NGO containers' (Author's interview in Grant, 2008:113).

⁸ The single window customs points are being created within the framework of the Abidjan-Lagos Transport and Transit Facilitation Program (ALTTFP), financed by the World Bank and executed by ECOWAS. The Abidjan-Lagos Corridor Organisation (ALCO) was set up to operate as a regional monitoring unit to implement the program.

Although the implementation of reform processes is ongoing, it has been one of the areas which has achieved a certain level of success in some West African countries.

There are good reasons to recommend a political economy study focusing on port efficiency and reform. First, it would be of great interest to DFID and other external actors to learn about the actual drivers of the reform process, not only in terms of policy formulation and coherence, but also in relation to their apparent implementation success. Second, it is likely that technical knowledge exists on these issues, mostly held by sector specialists. However, there might be added value in conducting more in depth qualitative research directly involving sector specialists (through in depth interviews for example) to ensure that the broader lessons learnt on successful reform experiences are recorded and shared. Finally, this study would offer the opportunity to conduct comparative research in more than one site where similar reforms have been implemented (see below for two examples on the ports of Tema and Cotonou). This could be of particular value for DFID and other actors operating at the regional level where support to multi sites/country policies and interventions are envisaged.

The scoping mission suggests there may be at least two cases from which valuable lessons might be learned regarding why and how reforms have been successful, what obstacles were overcome and what strategies were adopted:

i) The Port of Cotonou: negotiating reform

In 2011, as part of a wider national reform to improve customs revenue collection, tackle customs fraud and facilitate trade by reducing transactions costs, the port of Cotonou undertook a series of reforms which were implemented by the end of the same year. These included the establishment of pre-shipment verification procedures for imported goods, the installation of an automated x-ray scanner for the control of imported goods and the introduction of GPS tracking devices on imported cargo. The recent implementation of these reforms could provide a useful case study of the challenges arising from the reform of port operations and highlight how a deeper understanding of the official and unofficial costs and benefits of reform to various stakeholders can open up space within which change can be negotiated.

Despite its relative success, the reform process at the port of Cotonou was not easy and Benin faced strong protests by powerful interest groups (e.g. customs, port, and docker unions and importers) which included lengthy strikes, protests and disruptive port/border blockages throughout 2011. Previous attempts some years earlier to reform port operations had met with similar protests and had been subsequently abandoned. However, re-elected to his 2nd and final term as President in March 2011, Yayi Boni was determined to make port reform his priority policy and was committed to pushing through the reforms. The implementation of the reforms required protracted negotiations between key official and unofficial stakeholders with deep-rooted interests.

ii) The Port of Tema reforms

Reforms enacted at the Port of Tema in Ghana may also provide an interesting case for analysis. The implementation of the Ghana Community Network Services Limited

(GCNet) system represented a fairly fundamental overhaul of the customs clearance procedures at Tema Port, including the introduction of an electronic system for processing trade and customs documents and the facilitation of the passage of transit goods through the use of common customs bonding. The implementation of this system likely required the negotiation of entrenched interests and reportedly encountered resistance from, among others, customs authorities. However, a recent documentary film produced by a Ghanaian investigative journalist revealed some of the adaptations made by those participating in illicit activities, suggesting all is not yet solved.

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