

## ECOWAS AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT: K2M IN PERSPECTIVE

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### Abstract

The study seeks to assess the utilisation of cross-border initiatives towards effective participation by ECOWAS for enhanced regional development. This was carried out using a mixed method of incorporating primary and secondary data collection. The primary data collection involved questionnaires and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, while secondary sources such as government reports, academic publications, and media coverage were engaged to supplement and contextualise the findings. The analysis revealed that leveraging cross-border cooperation by ECOWAS for regional development is impacted by the border communities' infrastructures, informal cross-border trade, grazing rangelands, and cross-border insecurity as important, influential factors. It was also highlighted that the formation of the peace and prosperity taskforce offers an opportunity for cross-border communities to initiate conflict prevention, management, and resolution. Also, a lack of financial and technical assistance, cumbersome approval processes, competing priority needs, and few development partners were revealed. Based on the findings, the study recommends fostering cooperation between state parties through the development of joint planning and action commissions.

**Keywords:** *ECOWAS, Cooperation, Cross-border, Regional Development.*

### Introduction

The intricate dance between safeguarding national interests and fostering interconnectedness through economic, social, political, health, or educational bonds becomes the choreography of leadership within sub-regions. The global craving to protect national interest by most leaders revolves around better economic, social, political, health, and educational ties within their sub-regions. The idea of coming together resonates with the fact that being alone could defeat self-preservation from existing threats by living in isolation. Attempts at the incorporation of distinct communities have been made in earlier times to satisfy human needs. Early incorporation started in Western Europe by forming economic communities to stimulate free trade, share health services and education opportunities, and harmonise economic policies. The rest of the world was surprised that fragmented and bitter Europe could attempt the cooperation of diverse communities.

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Cross-border initiatives connote a regional cooperation effort by contiguous communities within member states of a region towards meeting their immediate community needs, leading to sustainable development. After World War II, the global economic community structure transformed from initial unitary community markets into common market spheres of cooperation through expanded cross-border cooperations. (Aynaoui et al., 2023). This process started immediately after the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century when the increase in production by several countries began an interplay in the exchange of people, education, health, technology, goods, and services within their common areas of influence and interactions. (Sima et al., 2020). Accordingly, nation-states believed that to sustain region-wide economic growth and social interaction, an integrated market for the free flow of people free flow of trade, services, and investment is necessary. The rationale for increasing interactions among state residents with little or no barriers led to the establishment of regional economic blocs to deepen this cooperation. Therefore, it is a global trend for groups of contiguous nations to pull their resources together under cross-border cooperation initiatives arrangement to promote modern industrial development and create wealth, health, technology transfer, education, and employment to enhance their regional development. (David et al., 2020) Regional development connotes the improvement within a region in economic prosperity, growth and advancement in the quality of lives of citizens that encompasses material consumption, public education, health care, and environmental protection. (Alexander & Garba, 2021). These are achieved through conscious efforts of job creation and income generation. Consequently, the concept of cross-border initiatives rests on promoting activities involving social, political, educational, health, and economic factors of two (2) or more states with communities sharing boundaries within a regional bloc that would enhance regional development.

African countries, individually and collectively as a bloc have experienced several struggles of integration at both continental and regional levels. The African Union has reiterated its commitment towards advancing regional trade and integration for enhanced regional development (Nubong, 2021). For example, The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) was established in 1992 with a mandate to address regional environmental challenges dominated by social, economic, and security crises through regional collaboration among the member states for enhanced regional development. In the West African region, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established in 1975 with an economic focus on enhancing the living standard of the citizens of the region. The major reason for establishing ECOWAS was to foster the ideals of collective self-sufficiency for member states. The main efforts in achieving this objective were the establishment of a customs union, common external tariff, free labour mobility, free movement of services and capital to promote free market among the states, in other words, create cross-border initiatives that would foster regional development within West Africa. (ECOWAS, 2005).

According to Uwak et al. (2023), ECOWAS has been able to achieve the highest levels of intra-regional exports compared to other regional economies (Oshota & Wahab, 2022). Thus, the cross-border cooperation initiative by ECOWAS fostered intraregional exports among member states. It is also geared towards promoting regional socio-economic development, free movement of people, peace and security to the main economic bloc in West Africa. To achieve this, ECOWAS established the ECOWAS Cross-Border Cooperation Support Programme (ECBCSP) aimed at fostering collaboration and integration for enhanced regional development

among the nations in the region. Based on the ECBCSP, ECOWAS is to develop the cross-border cooperation zones for populations that live on either side of the border within a band of one hundred and twenty kilometres. The initiatives would cover the establishment of trade infrastructures for agricultural products within the border communities straddling identified zones in the region. It also involves the establishment of functioning integrated public health programmes that would provide easy access to healthcare services to populations straddling these communities. Furthermore, the idea is to establish common markets for the exchange of goods and commodities within these zones. Lastly is to ensure conflict mediation and prevention by engaging the youth within the zone. The process is to be achieved through an efficient and effective integrated border management that would transform the border areas into catalysts for growth, socio-economic and political integration through the prevention of conflicts. Hence, several protocols, conventions, and programmes, such as ECBCSP trade liberalisation, which provide common markets for transnational trade, monetary union, and infrastructure development, among others, were initiated to support the ECOWAS cross-border cooperation initiative agenda for enhanced regional development. There are four pilot operational zones for the take-off of the ECBCSP involving 11 ECOWAS states that are at various stages of development. While an additional seven (7) new zones covering the fifteen (15) member states are being added. According to Tinubu (2023), the region's intracommunity growth hovers around 12 per cent in 2023. The capacity to trade with each other ranges between 2 per cent in Cabo Verde and 43 per cent in Gambia. The trade volume is in contrary to trade volume with countries outside the region, such as 68.0% with the European Union (EU), 59.0% with Asia, and 30.0% with the USA (Tinubu, 2023).

However, despite these efforts, cross-border cooperation initiatives suffer from lack of coordination, capacity building, resource constraints, poor socio-economic development, and infrastructure deficits such as lack of transnational highways to integrate transportation, communications, health, education, and community security. The inability to achieve the convergence criteria by the member states adversely affects the ECOWAS cross border initiative for enhanced regional development. It is, therefore, against this background that this study intends to examine the issues associated with the ECOWAS cross-border cooperation initiative, the challenges hindering its implementation, and the prospects for improving ECOWAS cross-border initiatives towards enhanced regional development. The study covered the period from Jan 2014 to May 2024 being, the period of increased security threats to ECOWAS member states, such as increased cross-border crime, increased smuggling of small arms and light weapons (SALW), political instability, and emerging economic realities of trade liberalisation with the corresponding implementation of ECOWAS Memoranda particularly cross border concept or local integration, cross border initiatives program in relation to regional development. The study focused on the ECOWAS region with a focus on the Nigeria-Benin corridor and Nigeria-Niger Republic corridor. The study also focuses on cross border cooperation initiatives programme initiated by ECOWAS as it affects regional development using some cross-border communities in Nigeria and Niger Republic. It did not consider other ECOWAS regional corridors in the regional integration process.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

The two key variables in this study are cross-border initiatives and regional development, which are the independent and dependent variables, respectively. These variables were conceptualised, and the relationship between them was established.

### **Cross Border Initiatives**

Cross-border initiatives are collaborative efforts or projects that involve multiple regions or countries working together to address common challenges, pursue shared goals, or take advantage of mutual opportunities. These initiatives can encompass a wide range of fields, including trade, economics, security, environmental conservation, cultural exchange, and more.

### **Development**

Development typically refers to the process of economic, social, and environmental progress that leads to improvements in the well-being and quality of life for individuals and communities. It encompasses various aspects of human life and society such as social, economic, and political, amongst others.

### **Regional Development**

Regional development refers to the economic, social, and environmental progress within a specific geographic area, such as a city, region, or district. It focuses on enhancing the well-being and quality of life of the population within that area while also promoting sustainable growth.

### **Conceptual Relationship between Cross-border Initiatives and Regional Development**

Cross-border cooperation initiatives are cooperations or acts or policies which are aimed at promoting and strengthening good neighbourly relations between border populations. The cross-border cooperation initiatives involve attributes such as good neighbourly relations, socio-economic development, and improved security. Other attributes are territorial community engagement, such as cultural activities, education, and healthcare promotion. In contrast, attributes of regional development include administrative jurisdiction, trade facilitation, revenue generation, and productive capacity. Others are technological advancements, infrastructure, and efficient services.

In essence, a process that leads the union to provide a platform for greater interdependence among countries in overcoming common economic and development challenges. Similarly, consensus among nations in a region through agreements and other mechanisms helps them to collectively pursue common policies that promote the socio-economic well-being of their citizens.

The greater the degree of interdependence between states in a region, the more it provides an impetus for cooperation in solving regional problems. The implication is that if cross-border cooperation initiative is encouraged, it will enhance regional development. Conversely, when cross border cooperation initiatives are neglected, it will hamper regional development. Therefore, there is a direct relationship between cross-border initiatives and regional development (Khmeleva et al., 2022).

### **Overview of ECOWAS**

Leaders in West Africa envisioned the cross-border cooperation of the region as a vehicle for development as early as the 1960s. Consequently, a meeting was called at Lomé in December 1973 to deliberate on a draft treaty, which was further examined in January 1975. Thereafter, fifteen (15) West African states formed ECOWAS by signing the Treaty of Lagos on 28 May 1975. The goal of the Heads of State and Government was to establish a common market and a monetary union as a means to accelerate the socio-economic development of member states. (Yabi 2010).

In 1993, ECOWAS member states revised the Lagos Treaty of 1975 to accelerate economic integration for regional development. The Revised ECOWAS Treaty vested in ECOWAS the responsibility for managing regional conflicts in its articles having considered that peace and security are indispensable to achieving successful cross-border cooperation for regional development (Obadan, 2015). In 2001, Mauritania withdrew its membership, leaving the Fourteen (14) current member states of ECOWAS.

In 2000, Malian president Alpha Oumar Konare started the idea of Cross-Border Areas by bringing together Mali, the Sahel, and the West African Club as they share a common geographical space that physical borders could not separate. Successive meetings of experts along with Ghanaian and Malian Heads of State in March and May 2002 in Sikasso and subsequently in Accra have made it possible to understand local border realities better to share various experiences of cross-border cooperation. The meeting considered how to improve trade routes for agriculture and fishery products within common border zones, integrate common public health programmes; share a common border market, and conflict mediation and prevention. The ECOWAS in 2006 launched the two border cooperation experiences located at Sikasso-Korhogo-Bobo Dioulasso (Mali and Burkina Faso), while the second experience is located at the Southern Senegambia cross-border area (The Gambia, Casamance, and Guinea-Bissau). In 2021, the ECOWAS ministers from Member states developed and adopted the instruments of operational tools and funding mechanisms for cross-border cooperation, such as the newly revised ECOWAS Cross Border Cooperation Regional Support Program (ECBCSP), the funding instrument being the ECOWAS Free Migration and Movement Fund (ECOWAS CBC-FMM) and the draft regulation of the regional fund. According to Bala & Tar (2021), cross-border cooperation in ECOWAS has been hampered because of the lack of political will by member states to implement legal protocols and mechanisms. Consequently, ECOWAS's objectives of achieving cross-border cooperation are not realised because of a lack of political will by member states with implications for regional development.

### **Cross-Border Cooperation Initiatives and Regional Development: An Appraisal**

Cross-border cooperation was the primary purpose of the formation of ECOWAS for regional development. The considerable influence that member states have in the progress of ECOWAS can be situated within the parameters of liberal intergovernmentalism. This is apparent because ECOWAS member states tend to support the Community's initiatives only when they perceive that such initiatives will maximise their utility. Thus, the application of the theory in this study would necessitate the consideration of the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as examples of cross-border cooperation and regional development for possible lessons. In the study conducted by Khmeleva et al. (2022), an empirical analysis was conducted using PLS-SEM to assess the determinants of cross-border cooperation. The findings from the study suggest that infrastructure, tourism, economy, and socioeconomic conditions are the main drivers of cross-border cooperation. However, the research did not evaluate the environmental conditions of the border communities (Khmeleva et al., 2022). This presents an important gap which is crucial to this research. The environmental condition forms an important gap for this study to interrogate.

Negm (2023) posited that small, fragmented, and often border-related communities across Africa make a compelling case for cross-border cooperation. However, political motives, geography, and the uneven distribution of benefits militate against the efficiencies that cross-border cooperation could achieve. In his observation, he asserted that sharp differences in

policy preferences among member states and uneven distribution of resources hamper cross-border cooperation in Africa. Consequently, the model of border relations that cross-border communities adopt in Africa has not worked well because member states have failed to pursue enabling domestic policies within the context of globalisation. (Negm, 2023). The study dwelt primarily on the economic principles that militate against cross-border cooperation in Africa as well as the policy preferences of states that hamper the process and not on regional development.

Ssengooba et al. (2022) employed a mixed-method approach to provide an analysis of legal and institutional frameworks that constrain or facilitate access to healthcare for residents in border areas in the East African Community. It examined the legal and institutional frameworks that either facilitate or hinder access to health facilities by citizens who live in East African border communities and found out that legal and institutional frameworks exist, but gaps were noted that did not address the right to access by citizens other than the facility hosting nation. (Ssengooba et al., 2022). This presents an existing gap important to this research. The significant gap would form an integral part of this study.

Defere et al. (2022) also examined the Ethiopian-Kenyan border cooperation using a qualitative method by conducting key informant interviews, individual interviews, and focused group discussions. The study examined the international cross-border boundary and environmental use by residents across the divide. The study found that the lack of proper policy on international cross-border activity affects the uncoordinated movement of pastoralists across the borders. The action often led to pressure on rangelands from incompatibility of livestock size and grazing land compatibility, leading to rangeland degradation and conflict for water and feeds. (Defere et al., 2022). This is an important gap in the literature and forms part of the gap this study seeks to fill.

Bala and Tar (2021) used a qualitative approach to assess the challenges of counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency development and the opportunities for ECOWAS cross-border cooperation in their qualitative work “Regional Cooperation in West Africa: Counter Terrorism and Counter Insurgency.” They assessed the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of the formation of a Multinational Joint Task Force. They also reviewed some specific cooperative programs of the body (Bala & Tar, 2021). In their qualitative study they revealed the accomplishments of ECOWAS and the frustrations in the quest for regional cooperation before bringing out its challenges and prospects. Bala and Tar’s contention focused on the inability of member states to engender regional security cooperation in West Africa. Thus, regional security cooperation is an important pillar in cross-border cooperation and forms an integral gap in this study. The literature reveals that the lack of collective will of member states in the region hampers cross-border cooperation. The various authors whose works were reviewed have made valuable contributions to cross-border cooperation by ECOWAS and regional development. However, the literature reviewed tended to treat cross-border cooperation and regional development in isolation without any interaction between the two concepts. Thus, the literature failed to establish a nexus between cross-border cooperation by ECOWAS and regional development. Thus, this study seeks to contribute to existing knowledge by establishing a linkage between the cross-border cooperation efforts of ECOWAS and regional development. Hence, the study will consider an appropriate theoretical framework that will sufficiently explain it to situate the interaction between the two concepts.

## **Examples of Cross-Border Cooperation Initiatives and Regional Development from the European Region**

Cross-border cooperation was the primary purpose of the formation of ECOWAS for regional development. The considerable influence that member states have in the progress of ECOWAS can be situated within the parameters of liberal intergovernmentalism. This is apparent because ECOWAS member states tend to support the Community's initiatives only when they perceive that such initiatives will maximise their utility. Thus, the application of the theory in this study would necessitate the consideration of the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as examples of cross-border cooperation and regional development for possible lessons.

### **European Union Cross-border Cooperation and Regional Development**

The EU is a political and economic union that comprises 28 member states. The Community was born out of the need to develop Western Europe after the Second World War (WW2) and to prevent future wars in Europe through closer economic and political ties. It functions through a system of supranational institutions and intergovernmental negotiation. The EU enacts policies to ensure the free movement of people, goods, services, and capital. The Community has also developed a single market by standardising its laws, which apply to all member states. Furthermore, it has established a monetary union composed of 19 member states with the 'Euro' as their legal tender. The EU's GDP as of 2023 was \$19.9 trillion, which is less than the GDP of the United States, which was \$27.3 trillion in 2023 (The Economist 2023). Although the Community constitutes only 7 per cent of the world's population, it accounts for 20 per cent of global exports and imports (The Economist, 2023). Furthermore, 26 out of its 28 member states have very high Human Development Index (HDI), while only Bulgaria and Romania have high HDI (UNDP Report, 2023). Thus, the cross-border cooperation of the EU has translated into the socio-economic development of the region and the well-being of its citizens.

The EU operates within the competencies arrogated to it by treaties and according to the principle of subsidiarity (Holland, 1995). The laws enacted by the Community fall into 2 categories, namely, those that do not need domestication by member states and those that need domestication by member states. This ensures that member states have common policies on a wide range of issues, including foreign policy, mutual defence, economy, and the environment. European Union member states also delegate part of their sovereignty to the Community's institutions in return for representation in those institutions. By abdicating some sovereignty, member states undertake to carry certain responsibilities in order to benefit from the privileges, benefits, and opportunities that the Community offers.

### **Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN)**

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established On 8 August 1967, in Bangkok, Thailand, as a regional intergovernmental organisation comprising ten countries in Southeast Asia. The countries are Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar (Burma) and Cambodia. ASEAN promotes intergovernmental cooperation and facilitates political, economic, security, military, educational, and socio-cultural integration among its members. It also engages other countries in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

Since 1993, the bloc has been cutting tariffs in an effort to create an ASEAN Free Trade Area, as a result, intra-ASEAN trade has risen from 19% in 1993 to 40% in 2019 (Investopedia, 2019). As of 2019, ASEAN's 10 economies represent \$2.5 trillion in combined gross domestic

product (GDP), around 3% of the global total (The Economist 2023). The group sought cross-border cooperation by creating the Asian Economic Blueprint (AEC) by the end of 2022, which established a single market. Furthermore, by 2050, ASEAN is also expected to be the fourth-largest economy in the world after the European Union, the US, and China. (Swire 2023).

Though the ASEAN Bloc has achieved most of its laid down goals, especially in the area of integration and cooperation, corruption still remains a widespread issue. As bribe money remains an important requirement to grease business transactions in public service (Mahbubani 2023).

### **ECOWAS Trade and Security**

The ECOWAS trade and security have been on the front burner, with four major factors influencing the region. The study by Bangura (2020) highlighted the aspects and its challenges. Firstly, the ECOWAS efforts to strengthen trade and regional security. The process has seen the development of frameworks that were to facilitate trade within the sub-region. Frameworks such as the ECOWAS trade liberalisation scheme and the Common External Tariffs have been developed to facilitate trade, however, smuggling and violation of trade quotas have hampered the agreement. Next is the efforts by the ECOWAS towards preventing and managing conflicts within the region. The establishment of the ECOWAS standby force, the joint military task forces, and the military cooperation alliances in the maritime sector. Lastly is the way and manner ECOWAS deals with factors that undermine trade and security in the region.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Several theories could be used to explain the study on cross-border cooperation and regional development. The theories include the Regional Economic Integration Theory, advocated by Alfred Marshall in 1890, that economic setups at a cooperation particular cross-border area (border market) fan out to drive regional cooperation markets, specialisation, and growth of the affected areas (Miron, 2010). Constructivism, on the other hand, was advocated by Valerian Popkov in 2015 and focuses on cross-border cooperation, which is based on circular processes of supply chain, autopoiesis, and network dynamics of demand and supply, which opens new avenues for such as cross-border markets for cooperation, understanding, and shaping of economic systems. The Hegemonic Stability Theory was developed by Robert Keohane in 1980. He posits that cross-border cooperation is influenced by a stable liberal world order, which requires the dominance of a single powerful hegemon, as the liberal world requires leadership in economics and international law to drive cross-border cooperation and integration.

Others are Neofunctionalism Theory, which emerged in Europe around 1958 and was championed by Ernst B Haas as one of the European cross-border cooperation theories. The theory focuses on a realistic and dynamic perspective of the theory, emphasising economic cross-border interdependence, the need for governance, and the establishment of common market rules. Intergovernmentalism Theory, as advocated by Stanley Hoffmann about the cross-border integration that was taking place in Europe in the 1990s and Liberal Intergovernmentalism Theory. Liberal Intergovernmentalism was considered apt for this study because it considers the strong influence of states in the process of cross-border cooperation and its integration.

Andrew Moravcsik postulated liberal intergovernmentalism in the 1990s, and a detailed exposition of the theory was published in his book, "The Choice for Europe" in 1998. The

theory sought to explain regionalism and cross-border cooperation in the EU by emphasising that states make calculated moves and consider their alternatives before choosing the one that maximises their utility. Such a rationale also applies in regions that lack economic interdependence as a major causal factor for cross-border cooperation (Borzel, 1985). As a result, individual states tend to support cross-border cooperation and regional development initiatives when they perceive that such support will maximise their utility.

Liberal Intergovernmentalism blends intergovernmentalism with a dose of neo-functionalism. It maintains that the process of cross-border cooperation remains in full control of states. The theory proposes that integration is a result of 3 stages, which are: National interests arise out of domestic policies, governments bargain with each other to further national interests, and an institutional choice is made once an agreement is secured (UK Essays 2015). Consequently, nation-states consider supranational institutions as a way of creating credible commitments with other states. Each of these stages is separate and could be explained by a different theory. Liberal Intergovernmentalism thus represents a baseline theory in regionalism that seeks to explain state behaviour.

An important criticism of liberal intergovernmentalism is that it underestimates the influence of supranational actors like the EU Commission and the EU Courts, as well as transnational actors such as European firms and interest groups in the EU (Nugget, 2010). A further criticism by Leon Lindberg points out that governments are under both domestic and external pressures that limit their autonomy (Coskun, 2015). Moravcsik, however, does not see a conflict between supranational institutions and liberal intergovernmentalism. He asserts that these institutions do not reduce the autonomy of member states but rather increase it.

Although the weaknesses in liberal intergovernmentalism can easily be identified, it also has considerable strengths because it explains the role of states in the EU. In West Africa, national governments are very influential in the integration process, and their preferences are a significant factor in the pace of the process. The dominance of unproductive elites in the politics of member states has often resulted in isolationist and nationalist policies that do not promote regional integration (Adetula, 2009). Thus, liberal intergovernmentalism theory could sufficiently be used to explain cross-border cooperation in the ECOWAS region and its interaction with regional development. This theoretical framework provides the foundation upon which this study will be anchored in relation to the identified problem.

### **Methodology**

Based on the pragmatic research philosophy adopted for this study, a descriptive survey research design was made, meaning the study combined both quantitative and qualitative techniques in carrying out this research. The research was exploratory in nature and heavily relied on the interpretation of relevant existing scholarly writings on the subject matter. In addition, respondents' views were elicited through the use of questionnaires and oral interviews. Secondary sources were sourced using documented research, journal publications, academic papers, newspapers, and internet sources.

### **Population and Sample Size**

The study population includes officials of the ECOWAS Commission, Nigeria Customs Service, and community stakeholders. The study estimates the population size to be about 500 from organisational charts indicating relevant stakeholders. Krejcie and Morgan's formula was used to arrive at the sample size of 217. A total of 200 questionnaires were returned duly filled

representing 92% of the entire distribution. A purposive sampling technique was then used to administer the questionnaires and conduct interviews.

**Table 1: Data Presentation**

Question	SA		Agree		Undecided		SD		Disagree		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1. Are you aware of the ECOWAS cross-border cooperation initiative?	80	40	33	16	25	13	16	8	46	23	200	100
2 the Current Infrastructure Supports K2M Cross-Border Cooperation by ECOWAS	12	6	50	25	-	-	38	19	100	50	200	100
3. Does the informal cross-border trade support cross-border cooperation and regional development?	32	15	145	73	-	-	17	9	6	3	200	100
4. Does the Cross-border management of grazing rangelands within K2M of ECOWAS enhance Regional Development?	20	10	82	41	11	5.5	31	15.5	56	28	200	100
5. The Cultural and Language affiliation within K2M of ECOWAS enhances Regional Development	59	29.5	71	35.5	8	4	34	17	28	14	200	100
6. Regulating Cross-Border Migration within K2M of ECOWAS is critical to regional development	48	24	126	63	-	-	7	3	19	10	200	100
7. Financial Commitment is a Challenge for Cross-Border Cooperation Initiatives Within K2M of ECOWAS	46	23	118	59	-	-	20	10	16	8	200	100

**Source: Field survey, 2024.**

### Analysis of Findings

From the data above, most of the respondents agree that the ECOWAS cross-border cooperation initiative enhances regional development in the K2M. To further affirm, the

interview report asserts that the provision of safe and durable infrastructures and access to the corridor will assist the over 40 million people within the corridor with their cross-border transactions and cooperation, enhancing regional development. The implication is that existing infrastructure would provide the desired social cohesion, integration, and interdependency as advocated in the theory of liberal independence. Therefore, the provision of infrastructure is a major consideration for the cross-border cooperation by ECOWAS for enhanced regional development in the K2M corridor. Similarly, most of the respondents indicate that the non-formalization of the informal cross-border trade continues to hamper regional development in the border communities. The interview report corroborated that the classification of the trade going on in the border communities as informal does not allow them to trade in a wide range of goods or quantities that are capable of enhancing regional development across the border communities.

Hence, the theory of liberal intergovernmentalism, which clearly sets out rules of trade between communities, remains a factor that would facilitate cross-border cooperation by ECOWAS for regional development. The result also shows that the majority of the respondents believe that there is a need to seek better conservation efforts on the scarcity of rangelands caused by climate change in order for ECOWAS to leverage cross-border cooperation within the K2M corridor to enhance regional development. This view has been advocated by researchers Timpong-Jones et al. (2023), who noted that the weak conservation of rangelands without community involvement is making migration of pastoralists migrate across borders in search of rangelands, which can trigger cross-border conflicts and insecurity. (Timpong-Jones et al., 2023). Therefore, rangelands management is a major consideration for cross-border cooperation by ECOWAS to enhance regional development. The findings show that the majority of the respondents agreed that lack of funding would result in poor implementation of cross-border cooperation, leading to poor regional development within the ECOWAS K2M corridor.

According to Grad-Rusu (2021), the experience of Hungarian-Romanian cross-border cooperation thrived from funding received from the Interreg program. The situation in the K2M will continue to undermine cross-border cooperation until funding is made available for the program under the ECBCSP.

The paucity of funds has been the challenge of implementing the cross-border cooperation initiatives by ECOWAS in the K2M region. Until recently, the Nigerian Government had to secure the US\$1.3 billion required to build the K2M railway line connecting the capital cities of Kano, Katsina, Daura, Jibia, Dutse in Nigeria and Maradi in Niger Republic. The 287km long rail line with a branch off to Dutse of 91km is scheduled for completion between 2025 and 2026.

### **Summary of Major Findings**

From the data generated from the field and literature reviewed, the major findings are as follows;

1. There is a relationship between cross-border cooperation initiatives by ECOWAS and regional development. This is in line with the postulation of the liberal intergovernmentalism theory adopted for the study. It proves that reducing barriers to cross-border cooperation initiatives should be on a multilateral basis to get the greatest benefits for enhanced regional development.

2. The study further deduced that leveraging the benefits of cross-border cooperation initiatives by ECOWAS and regional development would result in infrastructure development and international border markets.
3. Funding is critical in the implementation of cross-border cooperation.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study overviewed the possibility of ECOWAS leveraging cross-border cooperation initiatives and deduced that various factors could limit its benefits toward enhanced regional development. The study observed that border communities' infrastructure gap that limits their growth has been developed by the ECOWAS over the years. Despite these efforts, cross-border communities lack sufficient infrastructure for their regional development. The study also revealed that informal cross-border trading is hindering resources, fuelling the movement of SALW, thus leading to insecurity, loss of thus, cross-border cooperation, and regional development. This is certainly counterproductive for leveraging ECOWAS efforts to integrate its border communities for regional development.

The study further noted that over the years, Grazing rangelands have continued to contract, thus affecting the migration of people across the borders. The ECBCSP has been tasked with the development of joint border posts, cross-border security patrol units, border information centres, and regional migration observatories. Other tasks include cross-border trade facilitation and promotion actions such as the provision of market information, ensuring market access, supporting cross-border trade networks, and facilitating the establishment of special economic zones (SEZs) that would mitigate the effect of climate change on the grazing rangelands. The study, therefore, recommends an enhancement of a joint development plan that would address the challenge of inadequate financial and technical resources. The plan would involve decentralisation and deconcentrating of administrative functions from central or national government to the local community's administration. This will aid infrastructure development across border communities. It would further enhance technical capacity and enable the Communities to amass required resources needed for border community infrastructure development towards enhancing regional development.

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