

BORDERLESS

Removing trade barriers in West Africa



Making the Change:

Reducing barriers to trade across West Africa

March 2010

Introduction

What if completely legal trucks going from Ouagadougou to Tema made the trip in 3 days instead of 6? What if a legal truck driver going from Abidjan to Lagos paid only to fill the vehicle's tank and chop along the way — and not an additional US\$150 in bribes? And what if onions from Niger arrived in Burkina Faso and Ghana without spoiling because they sat on a legal truck at a checkpoint in the hot sun?

Removing the dozens of unnecessary checkpoints along West Africa's primary corridors would allow goods to move more quickly and help reduce the cost of trucking, which is among the highest in the world. Legal trucks — with drivers who have proper permits and licenses, cargoes that are properly documented and vehicles that are in roadworthy shape and not overloaded — should be able to roll without being held up or subject to bribes. This report summarizes the work of three organizations that are monitoring road harassment in West Africa. The hope is that government, civil society and the private sector will be moved to act to reduce the checkpoints.

BORDERLESS presents a new vision of West Africa. Borderless is transport and trade as it should be, efficient and cost-effective. Borderless is legal trucks carrying legal cargoes without being harassed or delayed.

The Abidjan - Lagos Corridor Organization (ALCO), funded by the World Bank, the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, is a joint program of the governments of **Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin** and **Nigeria**. Its objectives are prevention, treatment and care of sexually transmitted Infections (STIs), HIV and AIDS and the facilitation of the free movement of people and goods under the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme. Truck drivers are more at risk for STIs, HIV and AIDS; added transport barriers add to this risk. ALCO monitors and reports on the level of checkpoints, bribes and delays on the Abidjan - Lagos corridor to facilitate trade and better understand their influence on the spread of STIs, HIV and AIDS.

How many legal checkpoints along the ALCO corridor?

According to Annex 2 of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed on September 12th, 2007 in Accra, Ghana, between the Governments of Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria and the ECOWAS Commission, the parties shall endeavor to:

- Maintain at the most three official on route controls within 100km; and
- Reduce to three the number of agencies (customs, immigration and police) responsible for official controls along the corridor.



USAID's West Africa Trade Hub and the **West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU)** publish quarterly reports on road harassment along key transport corridors in the region, which provide a detailed picture of the level of bribery and delays caused by numerous checkpoints along key transport corridors. The data is provided by volunteer truck drivers and collected by transport agents (usually Shippers' Councils or Chambers of Commerce) in 5 countries: **Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Senegal** and **Togo**. The data are compiled and sent to WAEMU, which prepares the reports. The Trade Hub provides training, financial, technical and administrative support, and regularly verifies the accuracy of the data collected by truck drivers.

USAID's Agribusiness and Trade Promotion (ATP) project works to increase the value and volume of intraregional agricultural trade in West Africa through collaboration with West African regional integration partners such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Permanent Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (*Comité Permanent Inter-États de Lutte contre la Sécheresse au Sahel*), and the West African Economic and Monetary Union. Focusing on selected staple food products that are integral to intraregional commerce — grains (particularly maize), ruminant livestock (cattle, sheep, goats), and onions/shallots — ATP aims to empower West African farmers and agro-entrepreneurs to increase the supply of higher-quality staple foods by stimulating agro-enterprise development in rural areas and secondary cities.

Controls & Checkpoints

Checkpoints are physical road barriers along a transport corridor, while controls are inspections. At some checkpoints, in Mali for example, there can be up to 7 control points at a checkpoint, each representing a separate agency inspecting trucks. Each control, however, is an opportunity for extortion.

The Trade Hub and ATP reporting systems differentiate between controls and checkpoints. While the maps indicate where each checkpoint is located the analyses report the average number of control points per 100 km





How to report harassment

Complaining to authorities about road harassment is the first step to making things change. Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Mali have set up hotlines to take complaints and have pledged to act to root out corrupt agents.

If you have been harassed or forced to pay a bribe to a uniformed officer unjustly, **report the offense** to one of the following departments:

- Bénin** **+(229)81 000 001** or **81 000 002** to report offenses by customs officials
- Côte d'Ivoire** **115** to report offences by any uniformed officer
- Ghana** **+(233)77 64 35** to report offenses by police officers
+(233)289 533 990 to report offenses by customs officers
+(233)289 556 000 or **299 933 505** to report offenses by immigration officers
- Mali** **+(223)66 711 712** to report offenses by gendarmes
- Togo** **162** to report offenses by gendarmes
161 to report offenses by police officers

Follow up on your complaint. Find out what, if anything, was done. You can also send a copy to any of the three organizations that publish this report — contact information for ALCO, ATP and the Trade Hub appear on the back page.

Roadblocks take more than just your money and time

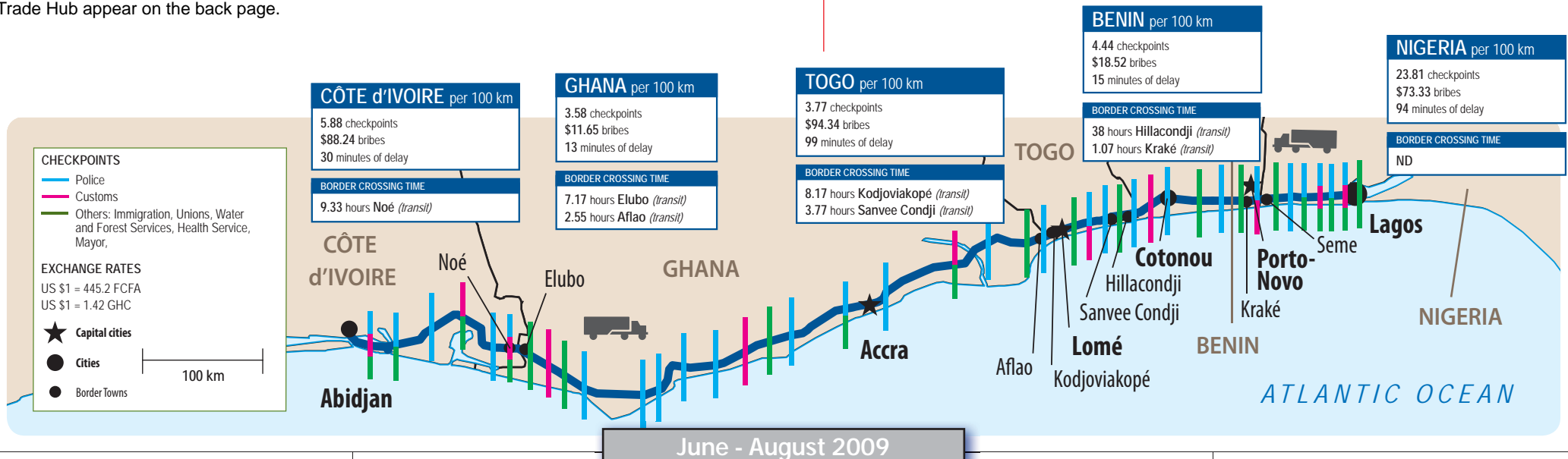
The effects of road harassment are far more extensive than just time and money lost. ALCO has found that border towns have a higher prevalence of AIDS compared to other cities, putting drivers at risk when delayed. Often, drivers are unable to process their papers in time and forced to stay the night in a border town until the border opens the following day. These barriers add to the higher rates of HIV, AIDS and STIs among truck drivers.

Delays at checkpoints also keep truck drivers away from home for a longer time, adding days to trips and permitting more opportunity for promiscuous activity.

The extensive delays at border crossings along the Abidjan-Lagos corridor mean that drivers have plenty of idle time. This encourages the demand for illicit sex and increases the opportunity for drivers to engage in risky behaviour and the spread of HIV, AIDS and other STIs.

Methodology

ALCO collects data from up to 600 people per border utilizing GPS coordinates, observation forms, maintenance reports and survey questionnaires. These tools are used to gather transport data along the Abidjan to Lagos corridor through direct observation by investigating agents as well as surveys from travelers, truck drivers and uniformed personnel. The data collected are analyzed to produce statistics per country, which are published and disseminated (see map below).



Borderless is no arbitrary police barriers.



Borderless is customs officials concerned primarily with keeping things moving.



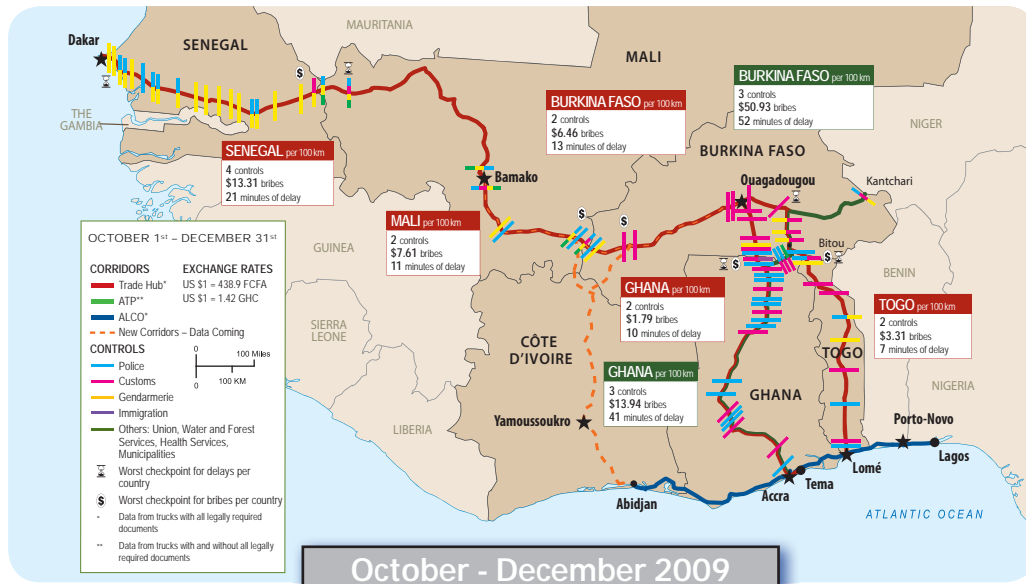
Perishable goods attract higher bribes

ATP's road harassment reports on the "onion" corridor from Kantchari, Burkina Faso to Accra, Ghana, reveals bribes over seven times higher than what the Trade Hub finds to be the case for legal trucks and drivers from Ouagadougou to Bamako, Tema and Lomé.

Methodology

ATP reports transportation and logistics barriers from onion production sites in and around Madaoua, Niger to the transit park of Bitou, Burkina Faso. Working with transport associations, ATP distributes data collection forms to volunteer truck drivers carrying onions, whether they have all legally required documentation or not. Drivers complete the data collection forms on their trips, noting each place they were stopped, how much they paid and the delay. The data are collected after the trips and analyzed on a quarterly basis by ATP staff. ATP assistants travel regularly with truckers to verify and confirm trucker findings.

Onions from Niger and Burkina Faso are transported to Bitou before moving to markets throughout the region. The higher level of bribes on the "onion" corridor suggests that uniformed officials are using the perishable nature of the cargo to extort more money from transporters and traders; corrupt agents realize that every minute a driver is delayed, the quality of his onions deteriorates. Rather than losing time at barriers, drivers pay bribes to pass through checkpoints faster.



Borderless is trade unconstrained.



Authorities boldly and bravely fighting corruption

Across West Africa, forward-looking authorities are taking action to stop corruption. The corrupt actions of disgraced officials are topics of national and regional meetings and media reports, and the officials are castigated for the negative economic impacts they cause.

The World Customs Organization held its first regional working group on ethics and good governance in Accra, Ghana, in November 2009 with representatives from Benin, Cameroon, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, and Togo. Participants agreed that corruption is a significant barrier to trade. Similar meetings of uniformed services in Togo and Burkina Faso in July included open discussions about corruption and road harassment. The national police of Burkina Faso vowed to create an internal affairs unit to take disciplinary action against officers implicated in corrupt practices as well as requiring all officers to wear badges to help drivers who are being harassed note their identities. In July 2009, a high-ranking official of the Malian Gendarmerie publicized his cell phone number as a hotline to receive complaints until the Gendarmerie sets up a hotline, which is expected in early 2010.

Ghana Customs Excise and Preventive Services (CEPS) formally launched an Internal Affairs Unit in September 2009 to investigate corrupt practices of customs officials. Currently, 15 cases are being investigated.

These new developments reflect a shift away from uniformed officials' outright denial that corruption occurs to acknowledgment of the problem, and more importantly, taking specific action to fight it. The once common responses that measures are in place against corruption and complaints are rare have gradually been replaced by calls to action. The authorities taking bold and brave action deserve commendation and support.

Methodology

The Trade Hub methodology includes gathering data on the number of checkpoints and controls, and the level of bribes and delays on priority trade corridors. Trained transport agents (representatives from Chambers of Commerce or Shippers' Councils) distribute data-collection sheets to truck drivers at ports and inland terminals.

Only drivers with trucks in roadworthy condition (according to legal standards) and with all legally required paperwork in order are recruited. The drivers' participation is strictly voluntary. They travel along corridors noting each checkpoint they encounter, which uniformed service controls are there, the amount of bribes that they paid and the number of minutes they were delayed.

Transport agents at the other end of the corridor collect the completed data-collection sheets from drivers. If the focal point agents judge the data reliable, it is sent to WAEMU for analysis and publication.

Borderless is efficient trade leading to lower prices for all.



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