

# PAGICBT – METHODS NOTE

## Methods Note

### Public Authority and the Governance of Informal Cross-Border Trade in Eastern DRC (PAGICBT)

#### 1. Research Overview and Objectives

This dataset forms part of a qualitative socio-legal research project examining the governance of informal cross-border trade (ICBT) in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), with particular attention to gender, legal pluralism, and the interaction between informal economic practices and regional trade regimes.

The study explores how small-scale cross-border traders (SSCBTs), the majority of whom are women, organise trade, manage risk, access finance, and resolve disputes in contexts where formal legal recognition and private law protections are limited or absent. It also examines the role of cross-border traders' associations (CBTAs), development interventions, and regional trade policies, including the COMESA Simplified Trade Regime.

#### 2. Research Design and Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in socio-legal and law-and-development approaches. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted in border regions characterised by high levels of informal cross-border trade.

Fieldwork focused on two key sites:

- **Goma** (North Kivu province)
- **Bukavu** (South Kivu province)

These sites were selected for their strategic positions along the DRC–Rwanda trade corridors and their significance to regional informal trade networks.

#### 3. Data Collection

##### 3.1 Interview Methods

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted between July and August 2023. Interviews explored:

- Trading practices and border-crossing routines
- Legal status and registration
- Role of CBTAs
- Collective trading practices (including groupage)
- Access to finance and savings mechanisms
- Experiences with border authorities
- Awareness and use of the COMESA Simplified Trade Regime

Interview formats were flexible, allowing participants to narrate their experiences in their own terms while ensuring thematic consistency across interviews.

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## **3.2 Participants**

The dataset includes interviews with approximately 52 participants, including:

- Women and men small-scale cross-border traders
- Representatives of cross-border traders' associations
- Border and customs officials
- Local administrative authorities
- Representatives of development programmes and NGOs

Women traders constitute the majority of interviewees, reflecting the gendered composition of informal cross-border trade in the region.

## **4. Languages and Translation**

Interviews were conducted in French and Swahili, depending on participants' preferences. Where necessary, interviews conducted in Swahili were translated into French for transcription and analysis. The transcripts retained key vernacular expressions when analytically relevant, with clarifications provided in brackets where appropriate.

## **5. Data Structure and File Organisation**

Interview data are organised into two consolidated transcript documents:

- One document containing all anonymised interviews conducted in Goma
- One document containing all anonymised interviews conducted in Bukavu

Within each document, interviews are clearly separated and labelled using unique interview codes indicating:

- Location
- Participant category (e.g. trader, CBTA representative, official)
- Sequential interview number

This structure was chosen to facilitate thematic analysis while maintaining a manageable and coherent dataset.

## **6. Anonymisation and Confidentiality**

All interview transcripts have been anonymised prior to deposit. Anonymisation measures include:

- Removal of direct identifiers (names, contact details)
- Replacement of personal names with pseudonyms or role-based identifiers
- Aggregation or generalisation of potentially identifying details
- Retention of location identifiers at the city level only (Goma/Bukavu)

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No real names or directly identifying information appear in the deposited transcripts. Anonymisation was conducted in line with UK Data Service guidance and in accordance with participants' consent.

### **7. Ethics and Consent**

Ethical approval for the study was obtained through the researcher's institutional ethics procedures. All participants received an information sheet explaining:

- The purpose of the research
- Voluntary participation
- Right to withdraw
- Use of anonymised quotations
- Long-term storage and reuse of anonymised data

Both verbal and written consent were obtained from all participants. Blank copies of the information sheets and consent forms (in English and French) are included with the deposited documentation.

### **8. Data Access and Reuse Considerations**

Given the sensitive nature of the research context, including border governance, informality, and political instability, the dataset is recommended for safeguarded access. While fully anonymised, the data relate to potentially sensitive economic and governance practices and should be accessed in accordance with UK Data Service safeguards.

The dataset is suitable for secondary analysis by researchers interested in:

- Informal economies
- Legal pluralism
- Gender and trade
- Law and development
- African regional integration
- Border governance

### **9. Related Outputs**

The dataset underpins several academic outputs, including peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and conference papers on informal cross-border trade, private law, and regional economic governance in Africa.