

Episode 23: Florence Otieno – Cross Border Trader, Kenya



Florence chairs the **Busia Cross Border Women Traders Savings and Credit Cooperative Society Ltd., Kenya (BCBWT SACCO)**. Florence has been a cross border trader for almost 20 years. She trades in cereals, fruits, soap and environmentally friendly bags.

Florence trades across several borders. She imports apples to Kenya and Uganda from as far as South Africa, and buys and sells fruits and bags from Rwanda and Uganda for sale in Kenya. She also has a business interest in a factory in Western Uganda.

Florence emphasizes the importance of disseminating information on the dangers of smuggling versus legal trade. Like many cross border traders, until she attended sensitization sessions on the benefits of legal trading, Florence was a committed smuggler. Today, she is a strong advocate for trading through the proper legal channels.

Challenges Overcome: Over the years, Florence has observed a reduction in the level of harassment of women cross border traders. Florence has single-handedly spearheaded the revival of an association for women cross border traders in Busia, Kenya. By organizing themselves, women cross border traders now have a visible presence and audible voice at the border. This has resulted in their participation in the Joint Border Committee, where they ably articulate all the challenges they face at the border and call for solutions.

Benefits From the GIZ-Funded Cooperatives Accelerator: Florence names collective transactions as the most important benefit from the Cooperatives Accelerator. Cooperatives members are now trading together, cost and profit sharing as well as supplying to, and buying from each other across the Kenya / Uganda border.

Useful Resources

GIZ: <https://bit.ly/2R6if75>

IIDEA: <https://www.eaciidea.net/>



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