

From Millennium Development Goals to Sustainable Development Goals Through Informal Cross-Border Trading: An Escape for the Poor in a Suffocating National Economy in Gweru, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Informal cross-border trading can help to achieve the sustainable development goals through positive macroeconomic and social ramifications, such as income creation and food security, especially for poor households. This research examines how the informal cross-border trading is achieving sustainable development goals in a challenging economic situation in Zimbabwe. Qualitative design was used as a method, as it allowed the collection of detailed information from the participants through semi-structured interviews, which was the major data collection tool. Twenty-five informal cross-border traders were selected through snowball sampling. Secondary data was used for comparative analysis in order to reveal the achievements of the millennium development goals and the sustainable development goals by the informal cross-border trading before and during the cash crisis, since this research was undertaken during Zimbabwe's cash crisis economy period. Data analysis was done from an interpretive approach using thematic analysis. The results revealed that the informal cross-border trade plays a vital role in achieving, particularly the millennium development goals 1, 2 and 3 and the sustainable development goals 1, 2, 4 and 5. The informal cross-border trading improves the lives of those who are engaged in it through poverty alleviation, income creation, employment creation and by improving food security. The income created from the informal cross-border trade assists

traders in accessing different goods and services needed for survival. The research recommends a strong support from the Zimbabwean government to this sector as it is a potential medium for achieving the sustainable development goals.

AQ1

AQ2

Keywords

Informal cross-border trade
Sustainable development goals
Millennium development goals
Challenging economic situation
Poor households

1. Introduction

Informal cross-border trade is pervasive in Africa. Although estimates differ, they all indicate that it constitutes a significant part of total intra-African trade. Informal cross-border trade refers to commercial exchanges that are conducted across borders by individuals who operate as unregistered sole traders (Kahiya and Kadirov 2020). The sustainable development goals were born at the United Nations conference on sustainable development in Rio de Janeiro, in 2012 (Lu et al. 2015; Sachs 2012). Their main objective is to meet urgent environmental, political and economic challenges facing our world. Comprising 17 goals and 169 targets, the sustainable development goals aim at tackling complex and multiple challenges that are faced by humankind (Costanza et al. 2016; Nilsson et al. 2016). The sustainable development goals are successors of the millennium development goals which ran from 2000 to 2015 when the sustainable development goals took over. The millennium development goals and the sustainable development goals are interdependent, so by achieving one of them it would lead to the achievement of the other (Nilsson et al. 2016). The informal cross-border trade is an economic activity that can help to achieve sustainable development goals, particularly in dealing with poverty alleviation, which it tried to achieve during the implementation of the millennium development goals.

The informal cross-border trade in Africa holds fundamental economic and social development implications. It has tremendous potential from a sustainable development perspective in that it can help to tackle poverty reduction by generating substantial revenue for border communities, and its potential development benefits go much further (Brenton and Soprano 2018; Koroma et al. 2017; Sommer and Nshimbi 2018). Various experts have underlined that it