



Africa
Borderlands
Centre



AFRICA BORDERLANDS CENTRE MID-TERM PROJECT REPORT

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United Nations Development Programme
Regional Programme for Africa
Africa Borderlands Centre (2021-2025)

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Outcome:

Key stakeholders across Africa (i.e., AU, RECs, UNDP Country Offices, and development partners) supported to more effectively engage in borderlands development to ensure that “no-one is left behind” in the achievement of Agenda 2063 and the SDGs.

Outputs:

Output 1: Centre established as a “thought leader”, delivering cutting edge data, analysis, and knowledge on critical borderland policy and programming issues.

Output 2: ABC established as a hub of high quality technical and policy advice, able to apply evidence-based knowledge to design and deliver innovative programming on borderlands in support of transformative, systemic change.

Project Goal:

Better outcomes for people living in Africa’s borderlands.



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ACRONYMS

ABC	Africa Borderlands Centre
ABDA	Africa Borderlands Data Alliance
ABORNE	Africa Borderlands Research Network
ACCLAB	Accelerator Laboratories (UNDP)
ACMI	Africa Climate Mobility Initiative
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Agreement
AU	African Union
AUBP	African Union Border Programme
AUC	African Union Commission
AU-ECOSOC	African Union- Economic and Social Council
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CBTA	Cross Border Traders Association
CCU	Community Credit Union
CGD	Citizens Generated Data
CO	Country Offices
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
COST	Country Oversight and Support Team (UNDP)
COVID-19	Novel Coronavirus
CPD	Country Programme Document
CBO	Community Based Organizations
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DFI	Digital Financial Inclusion
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ETCG	European Grouping of Terrotirial Cooperation Platform
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HOA	Horn of Africa
IFI	International Finance Institutions
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Authority on Development
ICBT	Informal Cross Border Trade
LGA	Liptako Gourma Authority
LPI	Life and Peace Institute
MRU	Mano River Union
NSO	National Statistical Organization
OSI	Open Society Institute
PAPS	Political Affairs, Peace and Security
PSC	Peace and Security Council
PSD	Peace, Security and Development
RBA	Regional Bureau for Africa (UNDP)
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
RPA	Regional Programme for Africa (UNDP)
RSCA	Regional Service Centre for Africa (UNDP)

SECCI	South West Kenya, Marsabit, Dawa Somalia and Ethiopia Project
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNOWAS	United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Association
WACA	West and Central Africa Hub (UNDP)
WANEP	West African Network for Peacebuilding



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Africa Borderlands Centre (ABC) commenced implementation in January 2021 and is mid-point as of June 2023. Its five-year project was borne out of ensuring that borderland communities achieve the Global 2030 Development Agenda, as outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Africa Union (AU's) Agenda 2063. The project was mainly funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Regional Programme for Africa (RPA) with additional funding and technical support from Donors such as the Governments of Sweden and Japan. The ABC Project consists of six activity streams, namely: 1) Action-Oriented Analysis and Knowledge Produced for UNDP Country Offices (COs) and Partners on Key Borderlands Issues; 2) Transformative Approaches to Borderlands Policy and Programming Designed, Tested and Scaled Up; 3) Good Practices and Lessons Learned Collected and Shared Regarding Borderlands Programming and Implementation; 4) On-Demand Technical and Programming Advice Provided on Borderland Issues to UNDP COs and other Stakeholders; 5) Evidence-based Policy Advocacy/ Advice/ Support to Regional Stakeholders to Support Mainstreaming Borderland Issues and Approaches; and 6) More Effective Partnerships Developed and Strengthened in Support of more Innovative Borderlands Policies, Programming and Financing.

The design and implementation of the project have been informed by the challenges and opportunities that abound within the borderland communities. Historically, the borderlands have borne the disproportionate burden of poverty, insecurity, displacement, climate change impact, limited state presence, and inadequate infrastructure, including water and food. Structural and institutional inhibitions against seamless cross-border mobility, cross-border social cohesion, inclusive management of natural resources and gender-based discrimination have hampered the borderlands communities from maximizing their development potential. In addition, livelihoods have been undermined by supply chain disruptions, especially in drier climates such as the Horn, the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin. These challenges were further worsened by the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, including border closures, on the livelihoods of borderland dwellers, who rely mainly on ICBT as a source of income. Another accentuating factor was the Russia-Ukraine war, which increased the cost of living in Africa, including in borderlands, and adversely affected much-needed funding to implement development assistance.

Despite the challenges, the borderlands are centres of opportunities. They have also demonstrated enormous ingenuity and resilience. They have the potential to make significant contributions to Africa's food security and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) through investment in agriculture and pastoralism value chain and Informal Cross Border Trade (ICBT). The implementation of the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) provides additional opportunities to strengthen their inclusiveness in cross-border trade and improve the livelihoods of borderland stakeholders. This also represents an entry point for private sector investors to contribute to developing the borderland areas. The AU's Border Governance Strategy is being implemented by the AU Border Programme (AUBP). The normative frameworks of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) represent robust governance mechanisms to support overall continent-wide development in the borderlands.

Over the last two and a half years, ABC has institutionalized its thought leadership, leading to improved awareness of key stakeholders on the opportunities to invest in and partner with borderland communities to achieve the Agendas 2030 and 2063. The Centre has also established itself as a Centre of Excellence in innovative programme design, facilitation and implementation directly across the borders of 25 African countries and indirectly influencing policies in several others. These interventions have started the process expected to cascade into transformative, systematic change and a model of borderland programming in the medium to long term.



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The strategy of ABC embraced a “Thinking Better: Doing Better” Approach. In the first instance, it implemented intensive data mining, processing and analysis work to provide an intimate understanding of about 106 border pairs in Africa and thematic research initiatives that showcases the resilience of border communities as articulated by stakeholders and the communities, based on their perspectives. These thought pieces were then utilized to generate top-notch evidence on the significant development opportunities and how they could transform the border regions. “Doing Better” focused on co-creating innovative programme ideas on ICBT, cross-border social cohesion and peacebuilding, livelihoods, climate-resilient infrastructure, and entrepreneurship development that have benefitted hundreds of households across the continent’s border regions.

The main results over the first half of the project were:

Thought Leadership of UNDP on Borderlands Programming Institutionalized: The Centre established a first-of-its-kind data dashboard, which aggregates and integrates statistics and information from different sources to showcase the key development indicators, major demographic and socio-economic features, pathways to growth, and potential investment opportunities in borderlands across all AU Member States. It also co-created and utilized for programming, results from ground-level research on themes such as ICBT, mobility, peacebuilding, social protection, innovation and resilience. Its flagship research on the sources of the resilience of borderland communities enjoyed a high level of visibility among AU Member States, RECs, and civil society organizations. These thought pieces intensely explore the prominent development accelerators and the roles of youths and women as drivers of development in the borderlands. The ABC has had a catalytic role in advancing a borderland focus as an emerging priority area inside UNDP, particularly in Africa, engaging with over 25 Country Offices on new research, innovation or programming related to borderlands development. The role of the Africa Borderlands Centre as a UN system thought leader was acknowledged in the 2022 report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (A/76/668-S/2022/66).

Transformative Approaches to Borderlands Policy and Programming Designed, Tested and Scaled: Through the Centre's innovation programme, social laboratories were established and embedded within four borderlands clusters in close coordination with 10 UNDP Accelerator Laboratories. The Zambia-Zimbabwe Cluster (Victoria Falls and Livingstone), developed digital payment platforms and virtual logistical management systems for ICBT practitioners, leading to improved and efficient business models. The South Sudan-Sudan Cluster (Warwar) transformed the local *Sanduk* savings and loans systems into an online payment, loan management and business empowerment platform, which enhanced the transparency, security, efficiency access to finance, and profitability of businesses. The Ghana-Benin- Togo Cluster (Aflao) diversified and expanded market opportunities for *Kente* textile producers, which improved technical know-how, market opportunities, livelihoods and profit for borderland practitioners. The Mali-Burkina Faso-Niger Cluster worked with displaced borderland communities in Bamako to reduce wastage, improve nutritional health and enhance women's



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participation in the value chain of the dairy sector. The ABC innovation laboratory also co-created an inclusive model of digital financial inclusion, which aims to connect Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) to increased funding, partnerships and collaboration with the formal financial service sector players.

Good Practices and Lessons on Programming Collected and Shared: With the ABC support, borderland communities in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso were supported to improve their socio-economic situations and peacebuilding, focusing on utilizing ICBT the an entry point to forge cross-border social cohesion in the Liptako Gourma region. In addition, the Centre implemented socio-economic and livelihoods recovery programmes, including mitigation of climate-induced shocks in border communities in Kenya, Sierra Leone, Niger and Namibia. Pilot initiatives were implemented in close coordination with the AU, to strengthen gender and youth-sensitive, bottom-up coordination of development initiatives in East Africa, and provide life-saving livelihoods support for communities in the Karamoja Cluster (Kenya-Uganda) and Lipako Gourma (Mali). The Centre also commenced the process of curating, analyzing and showcasing best practices in implementing innovative programmes in borderlands across Africa. The publication emanating from such would be an additional resource tool that provides a pathway for partners interested in development assistance and impact investment in Africa's borderlands.

On-Demand Technical and Programming Advice Provided to UNDP COs: The ABC commenced with a polling of the programmatic priorities and needs of UNDP Country Offices. The outcome of the survey broadly defined the project's interventions. A programming guide was developed, based on intimate conversations, observations, reflections and collective aggregation around inputs provided by borderland stakeholders. It is the first iteration of such, which contains lessons learned from consultations and pilot implementation of ABC's activities. Lessons learned from the "Support for Effective Cooperation and Coordination of Cross-Border Initiatives in South-West Ethiopia- South West Kenya- Marsabit and Dawa, and Kenya-Somalia- Ethiopia (SECCI) was utilized to inform the design of the ABC programmatic priorities and key stakeholders. A Trade for Peace approach to programming was co-created with Country Offices. Its novel approach integrating socio-economic development, trade and peacebuilding components in the Liptako Gourma borderland is now replicated across West Africa's post-conflict settings.

Further to this, an overarching 4-Pillar Portfolio Approach, which is area-based and cross-border in design, has also been incrementally piloted to apply to various types and context of borderland communities. Based on these models, ABC conducted selective scoping and diagnostic studies in borderlands of Chad, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, and Burundi to better appreciate the implementation needs of the borderlands. Lessons learned have led to ABC's support to UNDP Country Offices in Chad, Cameroon, The Gambia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Togo, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Kenya and Uganda to develop project proposals, and in some cases, project documents, that are aligned to our model. To strengthen UNDP's SDG Integrator role, the ABC technical supported a conflict analysis containing clear development-oriented recommendations in the Mander Triangle of the Kenya-Somalia- Ethiopia border, whilst it also supported crafting an implementation plan for the Kenya-Uganda border regions. UNDP's COs continue to demand ABC's technical support to develop projects and programmes on the borderland.

Policy Advocacy Implemented to Enhance the Visibility of Africa's Borderlands: The ABC's inclusive approach to project formulation provided an opportunity to co-create the project objectives in close partnership with the AU, RECs, border communities and UN Agencies. The project was launched globally in Lodwar, Kenya in February 2021, thus increasing awareness about the development opportunities in the borderlands. Subsequently, the centre facilitated the mainstreaming of the voices

of borderland youths from 9 Africa countries in the 2021 YouthKonnnect event, leading to improved awareness of opportunities for development assistance to the regions. ABC also utilized platforms such as the Development Dialogue Series, Africa Climate Mobility Initiatives, and the AU High-Level Tangier Conference on Peace, Security and Development Nexus to ventilate issues of borderland development. For the first time, the borderland challenges were mentioned in the UNSG's Report on Peace and Security, and the ABC was featured at the 2022 Africa Borderlands Network (ABORNE) Annual Conference. The Centre participated in the Working Group on Borderlands established by the UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), briefed the European Group on Territorial Collaboration (EGTC) during its 2022 Conference in the Czech Republic, positioned the borderlands water potential at the 2023 Steering Committee Meeting of the Sahelian States and the 2023 UN Water Conference, and briefed the UN Special Envoys for the Sahel, Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes.

Effective Partnerships Developed and Strengthened, Leading to Improved Borderland Policies, Programming and Financing: The project prioritized partnership with borderland communities, national and local authorities – through our UNDP Country Offices, AU Member States, the AUC and RECs, and international development partners, including international financial institutions and relevant UN agencies. It facilitated the co-chairing of the project board by the AUC Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), and undertook advocacy initiatives that led to the identification of joint priorities with IGAD, ECOWAS and COMESA. UNDP signed an MOU with IGAD, and an MoU with COMESA is being developed, with borderlands as a central focus. ABC also conducted a Mandera Triangle Conflict Analysis and explored discussions with private sector entities such as IKEA Foundation and Equity Bank. In the first half of its implementation, it conducted strategic engagements with the Governments of Japan, Germany, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Switzerland, the Governments of France, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and the European Union. Moreover, the center has started substantive discussions with The World Bank Group, the Africa Development Bank Group (AfDB), the Islamic Development Bank, KfW, and other regional and International Financial Institutions (IFIs). ABC has worked closely with CSO partners and, through its partnership with the Life and Peace Institute (LPI) has established a borderlands CSO East Africa dialogue platform.

Through the interventions and corresponding achievements outlined above, the project has significantly contributed to improving policy and programming for accelerated SDG *achievement in Africa's borderlands*.

The main contributing factors to the project's progress were:

- ❑ The leadership provided by the RBA Director in championing ABC and giving the Centre the necessary strategic support;
- ❑ The project design was inclusive and co-created with the borderland communities, the AU, RECs and other development partners, in close coordination with UNDP COs, thus making it demand-driven;
- ❑ Project activities were derived from diagnostic studies and community immersion exercises that leverage on an intimate experience and trust-building with borderland communities; integrated and inclusive programming, including the use of UNDP knowledge transfer platforms to co-implement with UNDP COs, RBA, the RSCA Units, Accelerator Labs, YouthKonnnect Projects, etc.;
- ❑ The focus of the Centre on social innovation allows for an intimate experience with borderland communities and the generation of evidence which could be replicated in other borderland contexts; the utilization of field-based assets that have an intimate understanding and social capital in the borderland communities, such as CSOs, private sector start-ups, and UNDP COs;

- ❑ Interconnectedness of project components/ output areas; adaptability and flexibility in repurposing resources and in implementing programmes, which increase d policy advocacy;
- ❑ a strong focus on elevating the voices of borderland stakeholders;
- ❑ Effective facilitation of partnership and participation of development partners in the project implementation, which is the decision-making organ of the project;
- ❑ strengthening borderlands networks and platforms driven by borderland community stakeholders, such as the CBTAs; nimble and uncomplicated project management arrangements.

Despite the progress, invaluable lessons were learned, providing opportunities to “do better”. They include:

- ❑ There is a need to increase investments in the most catalytic areas capable of enhancing local capacities that accelerate borderlands development. Sustainable use, management, governance and inclusive development of groundwater resources in the semi-arid and arid regions of the Horn, Lake Chad and the Sahel borderlands is such an area.
- ❑ The project needs to redouble its efforts at strengthening learning and knowledge transfer outside of UNDP and UN-based Platforms, based on the lessons learned in its initial implementation phase. This should be done in close coordination with existing knowledge platforms and networks. ABC’s knowledge ecosystem should also be more connected to UNDP mainstream programme colleagues for better horizontal and vertical learning.
- ❑ Maximizing the impact of data requires enhanced partnerships with primary stakeholders involved in borderlands development, including the people, local authorities, National Statistical Organizations (NSOs), AU, UN Agencies, RECs, and knowledge institutions from the private sector. Rather than focus mainly on data mining, ABC should explore a more partnership-centric approach through a data alliance that seeks to coordinate, harmonize, and maximize the use of existing data and analysis gathered across different organizations. It should also explore its leaning on its comparative advantage in either analysis, joint horizon scanning or dissemination of the data to inform policies and map solutions to complex peace, security and development challenges in borderland regions.
- ❑ Strengthening resource mobilization entails developing and implementing a purposive strategy, with clear incentives for non-traditional donors like the private sector, impact investors, International Finance Institutions (IFIs) and Governments. For the second half of the implementation phase, the Centre needs to proactively engage development partners more, showcasing the results of the Centre’s work and co-creating joint initiatives with partners for funding.
- ❑ Innovation work in borderland communities should proceed with comprehensively mapping scalable solutions. Based on lessons from its 2 and half years of experience, the approach to commence with a call for proposal on scalable solutions only yielded submissions on ideas, thus necessitating the project’s focus on piloting. A deliberate strategy has to be developed on scaling in the second half of the project.
- ❑ Having generated sufficient evidence for borderland programming, the project’s research focus in the second half should be tilted on targeted and measurable advocacy towards influencing policies, laws and practices capable of accelerating the SDGs in the borderlands.
- ❑ Achieving sustainable results and transformation in programming entails stronger partnerships between the ABC, UNDP COs and local stakeholders (CSOs, CBOs, private sector and others), clearly based on successful models and patterns of implementation.

- Improved technical-level consultations with project implementers across the continent is important to strengthen the ownership of the initiatives by community stakeholders, clients and partners.
- The linkages between borderlands and UNDP CO Programming should be strengthened through deliberate joint efforts with the Country Support and Oversight Team (COST). Such collaboration should enhance COST's participation in the project board, and incentivize borderlands programming by COs, both at the planning stage (CPDs) and at the implementation stage (AWP).
- On partnerships, engagement with the AU should be strengthened to enable Member States to develop policies, laws and initiatives to accelerate borderlands development.

How this report is structured:

Section I starts with a context analysis, and a description of the project's objectives and outputs.

Section II provides a detailed Project Results Summary. It provides a comprehensive analysis of the outputs and activities, including their interconnectedness. It also describes the current implementation status and on-going activities in each output area.

Sections III to V comprise a *Performance Review*. The *Progress Review* in Section III assesses the overall progress of the project towards different development outcomes and the overall capacity development process. This includes a discussion of overall progress towards the UNDP Strategic Plan, RPA Strategy, gender and human rights mainstreaming, integration into the other programmes and projects in RBA/RSCA, and communication and publicity activities. The *Implementation Strategy Review* in

Section IV assesses the quality of the project's implementation strategy, looking at the quality of the consultative process, the quality of partnerships and the extent to which the project has endeavored to ensure regional and local ownership and sustainability.

A *Management Effectiveness Review* in Section V reviews the effectiveness of the project management structure in terms of cost-effectiveness, timeliness, and quality of monitoring.

Section VI presents a concise analysis of some of the main implementation issues that are generic to the project and not related to a specific output or activity and adjustments performed to address these issues.

Lessons learned are captured in Section VII. Section VIII provides a financial overview report, covering all funding provided to the project, and a financial utilization report, presenting expenditure by project components.



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I. CONTEXT

Continental Africa comprises 54 AU Member States with 109 terrestrial international boundaries and a length of more than 170,000 kilometres. Together, the border municipalities in Africa is home to about 270 million persons, roughly 1/5 of Africa's population. Most often than not, these state borders are not identical to peoples' borders, thus throwing up complex development challenges- notably socio-economic, governance-related, insecurity and sub-optimal social cohesion. These challenges have recently been worsened by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the fallout of the Russia-Ukraine war.

Despite the challenges, the borderland regions have demonstrated immense resilience and creativity in addressing their multi-dimensional development challenges. On their own terms, they have emerged from the ashes of marginalization to become unicorns of Informal Cross Border Trade (ICBT). Through their investment in agriculture, pastoralism, and other semi-formal economic activities, they have sustained the livelihoods of millions of persons and have built resilience against myriads of problems such as violent conflict and extremism, poor management of natural resources, climate change impact, displacement, weak service delivery, weak governance, limited state presence, poor infrastructure, unregulated economic activities, and cross-border conflict, etc. The progress recorded in the social, economic and governance spheres is due largely to the peculiar mode of governance, socio-cultural and economic systems that the border communities have developed. Gaining an in-depth understanding of the peculiar development systems in the borderlands, curating, analyzing, and expanding them into a development offer based on the terms of these communities, and implementing them across the continent's border regions, is, therefore, the key objective of the ABC.

The ABC builds on the combination of an Africa-centric and global development agenda. Africa Union (AU's) Agenda 2063 aspires to facilitate "an integrated continent, politically united based on the ideals of Pan Africanism and the vision of Africa's renaissance" which is achieved through "world-class integrative infrastructure that crisscrosses the continent, to achieve a continent of seamless borders, and management of cross-border resources through dialogue". The AU gives further expression to this through the AU Border Governance Strategy as a normative framework for its Member States, with the following five pillars: Development of Capabilities for Border Governance; Conflict Prevention and Resolution, Border Security and Transnational Threats; Mobility, Migration and Trade Facilitation; Cooperative Border Management; and Borderland Development and Community Engagement. The normative frameworks of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) provide complementary means to achieve the vision of a borderless and integrated Africa.

The Global Agenda 2030 envisions a secure world, free of poverty and hunger, with equitable access to socio-economic, infrastructural, security, political and environmental goods, in a gender-sensitive manner worldwide. The Africa borderlands people, typically marginalized in governance, include some of the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across its 17 goals, which are likewise aligned to other milestones contained in the Africa Promise, Sustaining Peace Agenda, UNDP Country Programme Documents, and other UN-wide programmatic guidance documents.

The Centre drew inspiration from previous UNDP knowledge products and combined this with local intelligence, a review of international, regional and national policies, laws and normative frameworks to provide a development offer to accelerate the achievement of the development goals of the borderlands. This is done by focusing on the following core outputs:

- I. Action-oriented analysis and knowledge produced for UNDP COs and partners on key borderlands issues;
- II. Transformative approaches to borderlands policy and programming designed, tested and/or scaled up;
- III. Good Practices and lessons learned collected and shared regarding borderlands programming and implementation;
- IV. On-demand technical and programming advice provided on borderland issues to UNDP COs and other stakeholders;
- V. Evidence-based policy/advocacy advice/support to regional and sub-regional stakeholders to support mainstreaming borderlands issues and approaches; and
- VI. More effective partnerships developed and strengthened in support of more innovative borderlands priorities, programming and financing.

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II. PROJECT RESULTS SUMMARY

This section reports progress against the project's stated outputs, and aims to establish whether and how well the outputs were achieved. Listed under each output are the activities undertaken and results achieved towards attaining that output.

Output 1: Action-Oriented Analysis and Knowledge Produced for UNDP COs and Partners on Key Borderlands Issues

This output institutionalized the thought leadership of UNDP on borderlands development through codifying and harmonising socio-economic data from Africa's borderlands and conducting several research on borderlands development. The details of the support provided are outlined below.

I. The Borderlands Portal: Development deficits in the borderlands have often been compounded by the lack of borderlands data to inform evidence-based policy and development programming. Data is not readily available, which easily disaggregates information regarding poverty levels across Africa's borderlands, nor is there data which measures exclusion and inequality. Macro, comparative analysis generally fails to capture the fine-grained, context-specific detail needed to operate effectively in these complex environments. Meanwhile, ethnographic research, where it is conducted, tends to be confined to academic analysis, and the information has not often been synthesized into knowledge that policymakers can easily and effectively utilize to ensure more effective engagement with borderland issues.

The Africa Borderlands Dashboard was established to aggregate secondary data from 106 terrestrial border pairs/trios in Africa on borderlands demography, economy, security, basic infrastructure, conflict situation and mobility. The Encyclopaedia concept was refined through consultations with borderland stakeholders, UN and UNDP Data Experts, and development practitioners. This was followed by data mining using online Volunteers, refinement and clean-up exercises, development of factsheets, data visualization maps and the design of the Encyclopaedia portal to enhance centralized, systematic, and interactive utilization of the mined data generated. The portal development process applied an innovative approach utilizing online United Nations Volunteers (UNVs), University students and mining of existing secondary data.

The Borderlands [Encyclopaedia Data Portal](#) provides additional resource materials to those interested in investing in, providing development assistance to, or collaborating for development partnerships with borderland communities. It is also a repository of several policy briefs, analyzing granular data on gender, mobility, inclusive growth, peacebuilding, etc., in the borderlands. The uptake of the portal's data remains low, and efforts must be strengthened to increase the number of data users in the second half of the programme implementation phase.

II. The Borderlands at a Glance Resource (Coffee Book): The knowledge product provides an authentic ethnographical characterization of the borderlands of East and West Africa. It captures the borderlands' history, geographical characteristics, culture, and historical trajectories. It provides the resources, challenges, and opportunities inherent in the border regions in prose, pictures, maps and voices. It provides policy and programmatic recommendations to strengthen development assistance and partnerships in these spaces. The data visualization maps seek to simplify the complex Encyclopaedia data to expose the realities of African borderlands communities to a broader audience in a visually graphical manner.

The materials have served as tools for students of border history, the general public, policymakers, development practitioners, diplomats and other key actors to improve their understanding of the borderlands' basic history resources and challenges. It has also provided an avenue to capture the voices of the stakeholders. These voices have often ventilated the sources of livelihoods and resilience of border communities, their engagement in cross-border management of natural resources, how complex conflict dynamics shape development, issues relating to climate change impact, how female-headed households have built resilience against multiple vulnerabilities, how ICBT and agropastoralism shape economic development, pathways to inclusive growth, and major socio-economic gaps in borderlands development.

III. Africa Borderlands Data Forum: The Africa Borderlands Centre (ABC) convened the first-ever edition of the Borderlands Data Forum in Nairobi from 8 – 9 March 2023 to discuss the challenges and opportunities surrounding the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data for policymaking in Africa's borderlands. The participants ranged from Africa borderland communities to private sector data scientists, Community-Based Organisations (CBOs), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), UN system, and National Statistics Office (NSO). The forum contributed to refining the borderlands [Encyclopaedia Data Portal](#).

The Data Forum highlighted the need to harness innovative data sources and methodologies tailored to the unique context of border regions, which are often remote, conflict-prone, and difficult to access. The discussions emphasized the need for stakeholder partnerships and collaboration to build a sustainable and inclusive data ecosystem. Participants discussed the importance of ensuring that borderland communities are involved in the data collection and analysis process, and that the results from such processes are communicated to them meaningfully as this will ensure ownership and sustainability of data platforms. Moreso, innovative data solutions to improve the use of borderlands data across various thematic sectors and productive value chains such as agriculture and livestock production, climate-resilient infrastructure, trade, entrepreneurship, financial inclusion, social cohesion, and peacebuilding were explored.

Novel approaches such as web-scraping, Citizen-Generated Data (CGD), satellite imagery, and social media analytics were proposed, along with partnership and financial models to sustain the Borderlands Encyclopaedia. The capacity building and training of Data Analysts and experts to enhance their understanding of innovative data sources and statistical methods to bridge data gaps relating to demand, supply and use in borderland regions is critical.

To achieve a harmonized data ecosystem, participants proposed using existing data projects, such as the ABC portal, as entry points for collaboration and possible partnership modalities. There was an emphasis strengthen strengthening partnerships to improve the timeliness, availability, accountability, disaggregation, and inclusiveness of data management processes across the public and private sectors. Strengthening engagements with National Statistical Offices (NSOs), regional entities, and partnerships with the private sector to explore data commercialization opportunities was emphasized. The Forum proposed the establishment of an African Borderlands Data Alliance (ABDA) for better coordination, sustained dialogue and improved borderlands data usage for planning and policy influencing and development in border regions.

IV. Flagship Research on Borderlands Agropastoralists: The ABC produced a research report titled: [Promise, Peril and Resilience: Voices of Agropastoralists in Africa's Borderland Regions | United Nations Development Programme](#). The research provides evidence-based recommendations for developing policy and programmatic interventions in Africa that leverage the sources of borderland agropastoralists' resilience. The study's uniqueness stems from direct, in-person, in-depth conversations in local languages with over 1,042 agropastoralists, in hard-to-reach borderland

communities in East and West Africa. The study challenges oversimplified notions of borderlands as lawless, backward, and developmentally peripheral places to live. It validates the point that agropastoralists have a strong attachment to their homelands; they demonstrate remarkable adaptability to living in rugged terrains and enduring vulnerabilities and take responsibility for their development journey. Its key messages include:

- ❑ **Mobility** is the most critical pathway for accelerating resilience and sustainable development in the borderlands. The major cross-border mobility patterns include cross-border family reunion, shared infrastructure and educational facilities, religious and touristic visits, cross-border labour migration, seasonal migration for pastures and water to mitigate climate change impact, and informal cross-border trade-induced migration. The study finds that most borderland agropastoralists can achieve their developmental goals when legal and policy frameworks, security and socio-economic dynamics actively facilitate regular cross-border mobility. In essence, mobility is an essential socio-economic component of borderland life, and as such, key stakeholders need to facilitate rather than impede cross-border mobility.
- ❑ **Agropastoralists perceive climate change as the biggest long-term threat to their survival and development.** More than insecurity, agropastoralists perceive climate change as the major source of future displacements, poverty, conflicts and all the associated losses. Women and children already bear the disproportionate impact of environmental challenges. Borderland communities have taken responsibility for incrementally addressing the effects of climate change-induced damage and losses. However, sustainable adaptation mechanisms, which guarantee prosperity, stability and development, are lacking. Creating tailored climate solutions through technology, policy and investment models is essential to the survival of the borderland agropastoralists.
- ❑ **Conflict and security threats significantly impact borderland communities, despite a positive perception of safety by most of the interviewees for the research.** Essential factors for the perception of safety include social cohesion and dialogue facilitation by non-state actors, ongoing security operations and the research team's inability to access the conflict's epicentres. Community conflict management and security mechanisms compensate for limited government-led conflict mitigation mechanisms. These measures are, however, not sustainable, given their limited effectiveness. Borderland communities would like to see increased investment in cross-border governance mechanisms that address structural and proximate causes of conflict at local, regional and bi-national levels.
- ❑ **Fluidity and flexibility in income generation activities are central climate adaptation mechanisms.** They are used by the most vulnerable borderland agropastoralists to cope and build forward better after climate-induced disasters, conflict, drought, famine and other man-made disasters in the borderlands. Technical and vocational skills acquisition tied to agro pastoralist value and supply chains is central to sustainable livelihoods, peace and security across borders. In the same vein, policy and legal frameworks that promote labour mobility across borders can unlock their potential as hubs for attaining regional integration and objectives, such as the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).
- ❑ **As a unit of social mobilization, the family serves as the nerve centre of mobility and labour diversification.** It also helps cross-border agropastoralist communities to anticipate and mitigate conflict and socio-economic risks. It provides social protection for the most vulnerable agropastoralists and serves as the critical link for cross-border socio-cultural links. The cross-border links not only provide social and economic benefits but also serve as facilitators of cross-border integration. Communal structures leverage the social capital of the families, thus providing trustworthy platforms for cross-border social dialogues and co-creating sustainable solutions.

Agropastoralists would want the family to play more formal roles in conflict risk mitigation, social protection, mobility facilitation, and cross-border socio-economic development.

- ❑ **Women and youth inclusion are critical to agropastoralism's economic viability and sustainability in Africa's borderland.** Even though men earn twice as much as women, the latter significantly contribute to household income. Climate-related vulnerability has further exacerbated water scarcity, disproportionately impacting women, who spend several hours daily finding and collecting water. Addressing sexual and gender-based violence, which is still prevalent in the borderland, is essential to the inclusion of women in the borderland economy. The youths are the future of agropastoralism. Without sustainable income, they are drawn into violent conflict. Literacy among young borderland agropastoralists doubles those of the adult populations, which provides an opportunity for providing incentives for future generations of modern climate-resilient agriculture and livestock practices.

Though the report analyzes the basic services deficits in Africa's borderlands, it argues that enhancing innovative, cross-border joined-up approaches to governance of water, energy, and food production, strengthening peacebuilding and social cohesion, and informal cross-border trade management, would (more than merely increasing infrastructure), transform the borderlands into production hubs across Africa.

V. Borderlands Literature Review and Spotlight Research Series: As a means of deepening its understanding of the borderland's context, the Centre facilitated the conduct of a literature review of key challenges and entry points for programming during the COVID-19 pandemic, to draw the attention of policy-makers to the peculiar challenges the pandemic posed to ICBT and livelihoods, and how it exacerbated climate change impact. It also facilitated research spotlight briefs, leading to the production of 3 Spotlight Briefs, which address some of the major entry points for development in the marginal spaces: peace, mobility and ICBT. The research draws on the experiences of border communities in epicentres cross-border contexts, across three regions of Africa. The study on *"Mobility and Migration in the Karamoja Cluster"* provided clearer perspectives, evidence and inspiration, which enabled the eventual programme implementation in the Kenyan-Uganda Border. The study on *"Boko Haram and the Conflict Dynamics in the Chad Basin"* explored entry points for multi-country programming in post-conflict borderlands, and set the basis for programme implementation in the Liptako-Gourma region of West Africa. The study on *"Informal Cross-Border Trade along the DRC-Uganda Border"* provided evidence for a planned public-private sector trade facilitation programming on the Kenya-DRC Corridor, in close coordination with Equity Bank (East Africa).

The Africa Borderlands Centre conducted a 2022 Mendera Triangle Context & Programming Entry Points Analysis with the UN Office of the Special Envoy and Life and Peace Institute to guide future UN programming in the region. The Borderlands Centre also conducted a 2022 Karamoja conflict and gender analysis to guide its programming work in the sub-region. The Borderlands Centre also analyzed Guinea-Bissau and its illicit cross-border economies with Guinea-Conakry and Senegal. The report was not published but informed a new UNDP Guinea Bissau programme on community resilience towards Serious Organised Crime (SOC) in borderland regions of Guinea-Bissau.

VI. Applying SDGs Investors Mapping in the Africa Borderlands: The SDGs investors mapping work stems from a lack of viable pipeline and market intelligence as a main barrier to investments. The mapping provides evidence, data and concrete recommendations on viable business models enhancing development financing, among other functions. The current focus of the SDG Investors Mapping is national territories, thus, the borderlands and cross-border contexts are excluded from taking advantage of the exercise to achieve their SDGs related investments goals. In close coordination

with UNDP Finance Hub in Pretoria, the ABC implemented joint research and thinking to adapt the SDGs investors mapping methodology to the borderland context, based on the different typologies, peculiar types of economic actors, and peculiar legal and legal and policy frameworks and nature of economic transactions. The result of the engagement is a Guidance Document that shows how to adapt the standard methodology to the borderlands context. This Guideline is expected to be utilized, as a resource to facilitate private-sector investment in the borderlands.

VII. Informal Social Protection Systems in the Borderlands Series: Beyond formal research, the ABC explored using indigenous knowledge to improve resilience and innovation in the borderlands. One less explored area is the role of primordial groups in strengthening informal social protection and livelihoods. Case Studies of Kenya-Tanzania and Liberia-Sierra Leone borders were explored. Trade and commerce-based livelihood activities were the main focus of the indigenous social protection systems, which were most beneficial to female-headed households. The studies' major findings show the interrelationships between family, kinship and communal groups, across national boundaries, in providing social protection. While these actors' roles were often not sufficiently proactive and were often disaster focused, they have been proven reliable, and efficient and have operated over several decades. They have also not been sufficiently connected to policies, legal and normative frameworks guiding social protection at the national level. Major recommendations include creating programmatic support to enhance the transparency, proactive engagement, and registration of the indigenous social protection systems for enhanced government and private sector support. The recommendations are being factored into ABC's programme responses.

VIII. Predictive Analysis on Resilience and Innovation of ICBT in East Africa: The Centre commissioned a knowledge product on "*Trends and Patterns in Resilience and Innovation by Informal Cross Border Traders in East Africa: Case Study of Youths and Female-Owned Businesses Pre and Post COVID-19*". The study found that the future success of ICBT, as an accelerator of development would be primarily determined by reforms in governance, underpinned by improved digitization, access to finance, and safety and security in the borderland regions.

IX. Integrated regional analysis and overview of strategic options for UN/UNDP engagement with the AU and SADC in response to the complex situation in Cabo Delgado: The Africa Borderlands Centre, working with the Mozambique Country Offices, commissioned the development of integrated regional analysis and overview of strategic options for UN/UNDP engagement with the AU and SADC in response to the complex situation in Cabo Delgado, Northern Mozambique, and in border communities in neighbouring countries (Comoros, Madagascar, Malawi and Tanzania). The report examines the legal framework for SADC's engagement in response to the crises in Cabo Delgado. It includes a brief analysis of key stakeholders' interventions and responses to the crises, identifying gaps and challenges. The report outlines potential scenarios for SADC/SAMIM sustained engagement and presents recommendations on strategic entry points or options for UN/UNDP engagement with the AU and SADC. The report also includes a section on practical lessons from current initiatives led by the AU, RECs and RMs in response to acute crises such as violent extremism in Africa, for instance, in Somalia, the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin.

X. Research & Data Partnerships and Collaboration: Beyond the mainstream implementation of thought-leadership activities, the ABC prioritized partnerships on research, including the following:

- ❑ **The Private Sector:** The project engaged private sector entities, such as Conquest Capital Limited, the ICT Partner, to develop the ABC Encyclopedia Dashboard.
- ❑ **UNDP Country Offices, RSCA and Regional Hubs:** The ABC variously co-created its research and data work with colleagues in the UNDP Thematic Hubs in HQ (GPN, BPPS where relevant),

specific focal points in the Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA), the Resilience Hub in Nairobi, the Private Sector Hub in Pretoria and the WACA Hub in Dakar. In addition, it co-created and jointly implemented research activities with the UNDP AfCFTA project, the Inclusive Growth Unit, and the Innovation Unit of the RSCA. The Regional Programme for Africa (RPA) consistently provided strategic guidance to all the Centre's knowledge works. UNDP Resident Representatives and UNDP Technical-level colleagues in all the case study countries also contributed to successfully implementing the Centre's research agenda.

- ▣ **Youths:** Guided by UNDP's principle on youth and women empowerment and participation, and in cognizance of the 'youth bulge' phenomenon in Africa and the need to harness the demographic dividend for sustainable development in Africa, the Centre engaged young persons as co-creator of solutions to development challenges in the borderlands. In the first instance, UN Volunteers (UNVs) provided data entry and data analysis support for developing the Borderlands Portal. Also, the ABC engaged, through a Bootcamp, the services of youthful men and women from the University of Nairobi - some of whom come from borderlands areas- to develop data visualization maps using the mined data. 75% of young students engaged in this process were females. According to one of the youths, *"The output in the form of Illustrative Borderland Maps is a sure way to condense and visualize expansive data that would otherwise take volumes of books in prose. We are elated to help magnify the voices of our Africa Borderland Communities"*. ABC's commitment to the principle of leaving no one behind calls for deliberate efforts to ensure that available data speaks to the lives of those living in Africa borderlands.
- ▣ **Universities/ Think Tanks:** Resource persons were drawn from various Universities in Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Ethiopia, DRC, Uganda, Liberia and Sierra Leone, to provide direct technical support and in other cases, provide expert advisory and peer review to strengthen the knowledge work of the ABC.

Output 2: Transformative Approaches to Borderlands Policy and Programming Designed, Tested and/or Scaled-Up

This output attempted to identify, curate, test and scale innovative solutions to development challenges in the borderlands. This it did through a pan-African call for proposals, targeted at UNDP Accelerator Labs, on innovative solutions to the challenge of access to capital for ICBT. The process of problem identification, selection of the "best in class" solutions, and refinement of the proposals submitted were inclusive. The output also features collective intelligence sessions on digital financial inclusion for ICBT practitioners and the eventual development of a borderlands approach to DFI. Finally, it maps over 100 solutions to development challenges in Africa Borderlands, which serves as reference materials for practitioners and potential investors in the borderland regions. The specific results achieved are outlined below.

I. Ghana-Benin-Togo Innovation Challenge (Aflao): The results of the experiment include: diversification of Kente products into 4 different typologies (interior decoration, furniture, casual textiles, accessories) with improved quality and standards; transfer of knowledge on modern techniques, quality assurances, standards and measurement, colour quality, threading and weaving, finishing, and marketing of the products; improved entrepreneurship skills of the Kente weavers in identifying new market opportunities across the border communities in the Benin, Togo and Ghana corridor. Improved creativity and innovation are expected to lead to improved market penetration in the medium to long term.

The experiment trained 44 Kente weavers on quality systems, and processes related to standard Kente weaving. As a result of the experiment, eight new designs of Kente with improved quality and

standards were produced, and four new diverse Kente products were created. The 44 Kente weavers improved their skills and knowledge related to quality Kente weaving, entrepreneurship, and product development. The production of eight new designs of Kente with improved quality and standards indicates that the weavers could apply the knowledge and skills they gained from the training to produce better products. The creation of four new diverse Kente products indicates that the weavers were able to develop their creativity and innovation, which could lead to increased demand for their products. Overall, the experiment positively impacted the Kente weaving industry, as it helped improve the skills and knowledge of the weavers, which could lead to increased competitiveness and profitability in the market.

"I was giving up on Kente due to the high cost of yarns, dwindling profits and collapse of Kente market in the border area. However, through the innovation experiment, I received training session on marketing and access to yarns. My interest on this craft is now revived" Emmanuel Kumedzina, a youth and Kente weaver from Aflao border.

"The quality of native Kente weaves had declined due to a lack of expertise, and competition from cheaper imports had also impacted the market in the Aflao border area. This had an adverse effect on our livelihoods as Kente weavers." "The project skills enabled me to not only weave higher-quality items, but also to expand my business outside the Aflao border area." Cecilia Hudola, a youth and Kente weaver from Aflao border- Voices of Project Beneficiaries.

II. Burkina Faso-Mali-Niger Mali Innovation Challenge (Bamako): The milk value chain results include: knowledge product established that 10% of the milk produced in the border areas of Dori, Kaya and Menaka in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger were processed, and only 3% were transformed into cheese, butter, and ghee, indicating a substantial opportunity for increased value addition. In response, ABC Innovation Lab diagnosed the key challenges of processing, storage and bulking, transportation, and milk marketing beyond the production areas. New market opportunities were identified with a focus on Mali¹. The milk potential of the tri-border area is estimated to be 267,638,834 litres. The lack of bulking equipment minimizes the ability to stock and transport long distances, leading to losses. There is a significant opportunity for accelerated value addition since only 3% of the milk is value-added into cheese, butter, and ghee.

Of the three border areas covered by the initial study, Dori has the most robust milk value chain. However, the average milk production of 610 litres per annum falls short of the world's best practice of 8,000 litres. The milk potential of the tri-border area is estimated at 267,638,834 litres. The lack of bulking equipment poses a challenge for stocking and transporting milk over long distances, leading to losses. Only less than 10% of the milk produced is processed, with a mere 3% being value-added into cheese, butter, and ghee, indicating a significant opportunity for accelerated value addition.

ABC and Mali UNDP Country Office collaborated with a milk small-holder cooperative organization, La Translait, for small-holder processors and resellers, with whom it piloted the establishment of a digital platform for the marketing of milk within Bamako.. Based on the study, training was conducted for 150 smallholder milk farmers in the borderlands of Menaka on modern milk bulking, hygiene, standardization and transportation of milk products from the border to the milk collecting Centres in the cities.

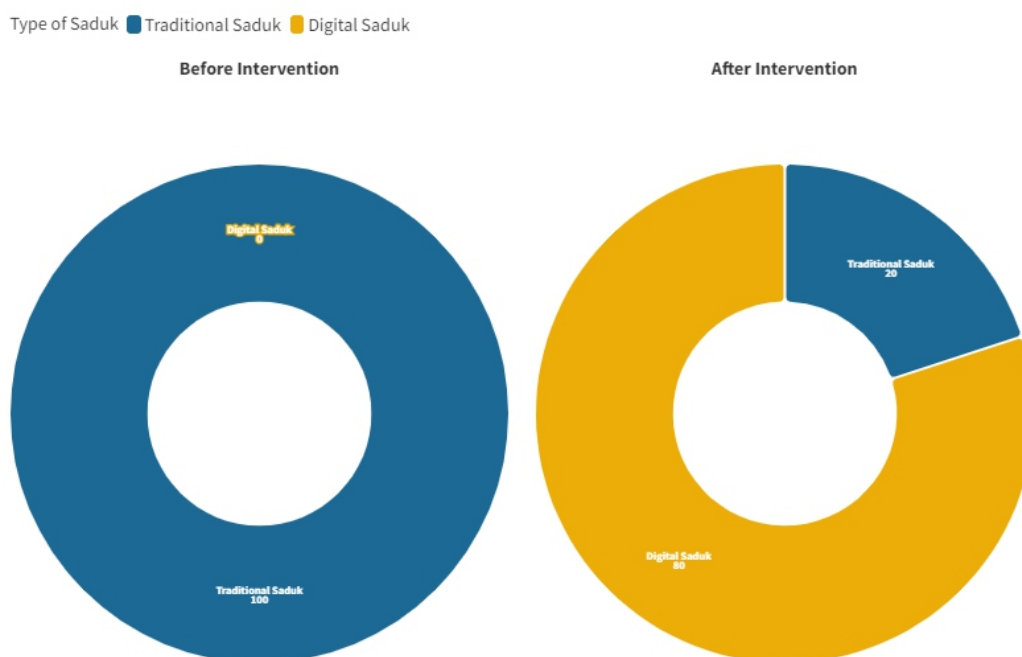
From the simulation, the platform facilitated the sale of 5 products (fresh milk, Fene, Wagashi, Ghee/ Sirime, and plain Yoghurt). Over a period of 3 weeks, 24 traders interacted with the App, making 57 orders, out of which 47 were successfully transacted, with 10 unsuccessful transactions largely due to

technical glitches. The successful transactions were facilitated by “Orange Money” mobile payment platform linked to the “La Translait App”. Regarding market potential, in the immediate vicinity of the simulation (Commune n6- Bamako), transactions among 24 patrons generated a turnover of 179,500FCFA. With an estimated 3,000,000 inhabitants that need dairy products daily, the market potential of the digital platform is enormous.

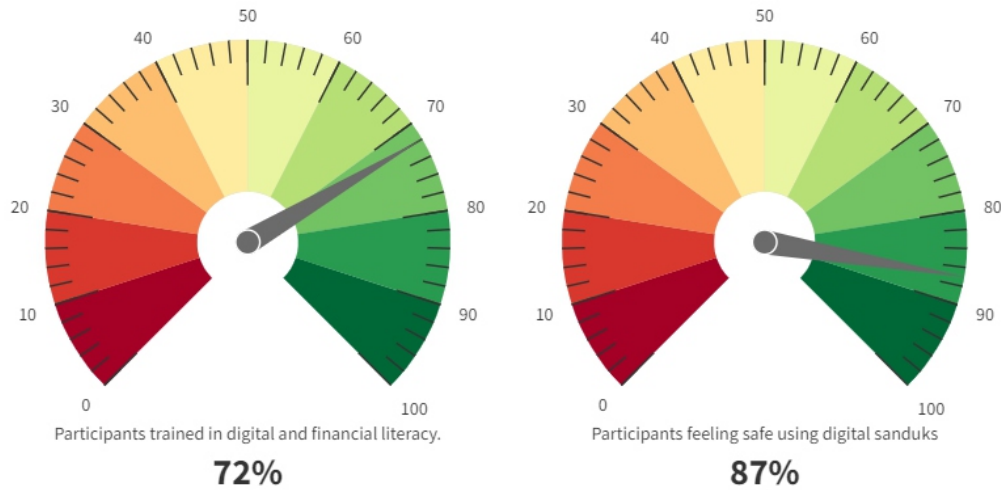
III. South Sudan-Sudan Innovation Challenge (Warawar): The specific results are: increased digital and financial literacy skills among the 131 cross-border traders; improved capacity in basic business management and digital transaction through the M-Gurush Platform; increased gender and cultural sensitivity among the trained cross-border traders and Sanduk saving groups; enhanced business record-keeping and cash management practices, using the M-Gurush Platform (private sector involvement as a Vendor in Warawar, which is a marginalized zone) and improved intra -SANDUK profitability, which enabled them to make investments, which further increased the share capital. This led to increased access to capital for the members.

At the beginning of the experiment, the number of participants keeping their money in digital *sanduk* was zero percent, at the endline, (35%) of the experimental group participants kept their money in the digital *sanduk*. At the beginning of the experiment, majority of the *sanduk* participants had a share of between 4,000 and 4,400 SSP; at the end of the experiment majority contribution registered an increase to 17,500 SSP. The frequency of savings has improved as well, at the beginning of the experiment, participants could save every month, at the endline, majority of the participants savings was done every week. Below are some of the key results of the innovation challenge.

a. Transformation Impact: At the beginning of the experiment, 100 participants used traditional sanduks; with 0 per cent using digital money platforms for savings; at the end of the experiment, 80 per cent used digital sanduks. The participants who did not switch to digital sanduks continued using traditional sanduks for their financial transactions.

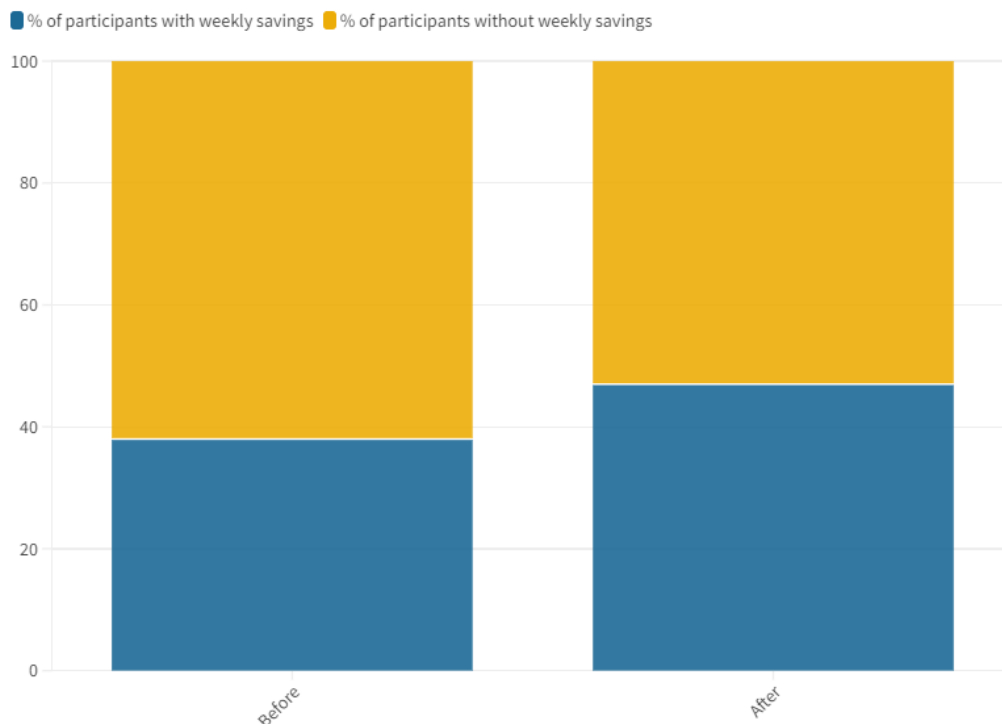


b. Confidence in Sanduk Digital Platform: The majority of participants, 87%, felt secure when utilizing digital sanduks for financial transactions. Furthermore, 72% of participants were proficient in digital and financial literacy, suggesting they were well-equipped to use the digital platform. This implies that the participants trusted and were eager to employ digital sanduks for their financial needs.

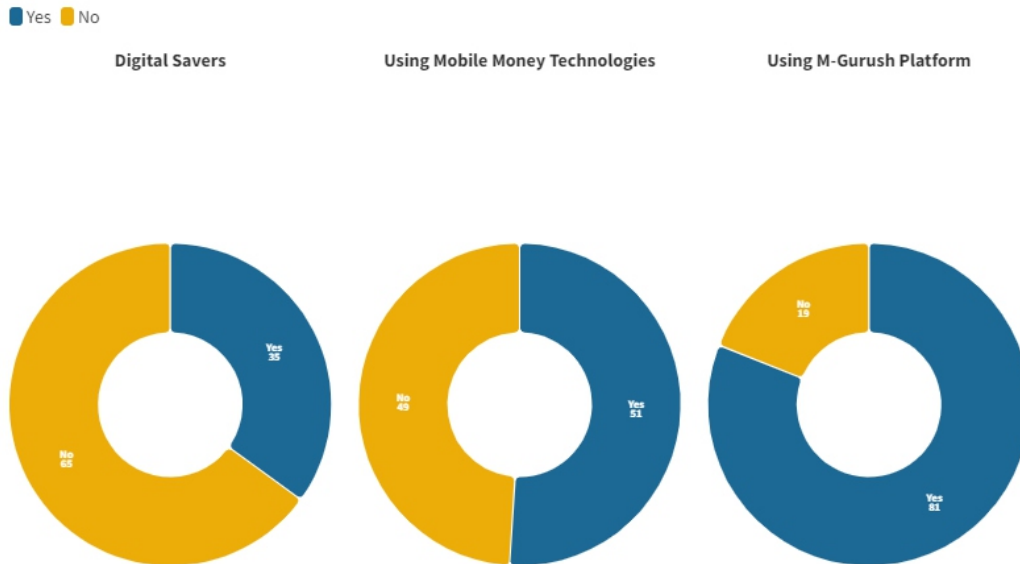


c. Diversification in Business: At the start, 22% of participants sold tea, while 37% diversified into bakery and restaurant businesses by the experiment's end. This demonstrates that digital sanduks enhanced the participants' platform confidence and inspired them to broaden their business horizons.

d. Increased Rate of Saving: The experiment recorded an increase in the rate of saving among the participants. Initially, 38% of the participants saved weekly, but this increased to 47% by the end of the experiment. The increase in the rate of saving shows that digital sanduks encourage participants to save more.

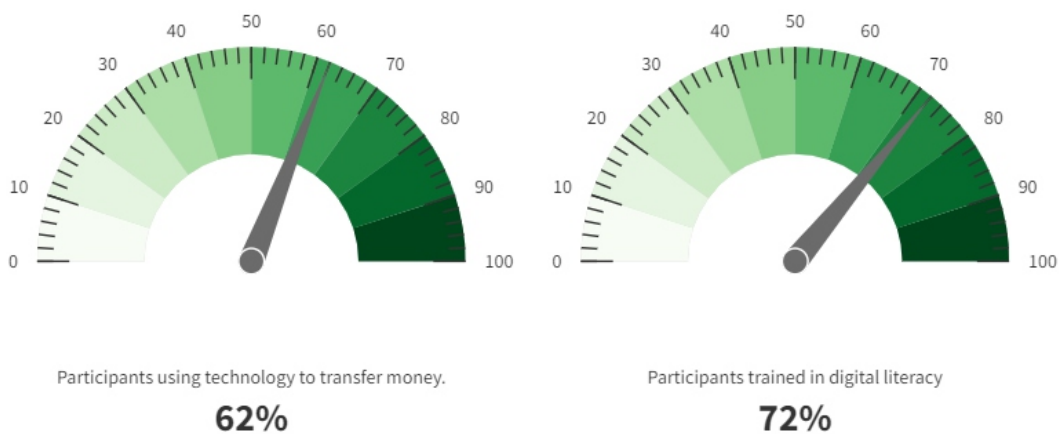


e. Digital Money in Sanduk: By the end of the experiment, 35% of the participants saved digitally, with 51% using mobile phone technologies and 81% of those using M-Gurush platform. The experiment showed that digital sanduks are an effective way to save money and that mobile phone technologies are a convenient way to access the platform.

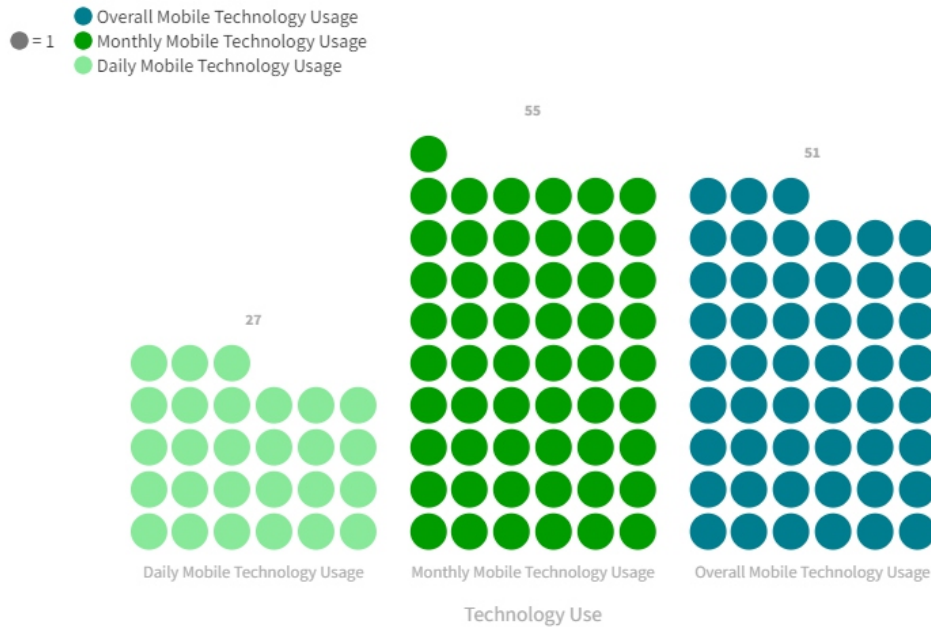


f. Increase in Weekly Contributions: The experiment recorded increased weekly contributions. Initially, weekly contributions were between 4000-400 SSP, but by the end of the experiment, they had increased to 17500 SSP. The increase in weekly contributions shows that digital sanduks encourage participants to contribute more regularly and in larger amounts.

g. Technology Usage: 72% of the participants were trained in digital literacy, with 62% using technology to transfer money. This shows that digital sanduks encourage the use of technology for financial transactions and increase digital literacy among the participants.

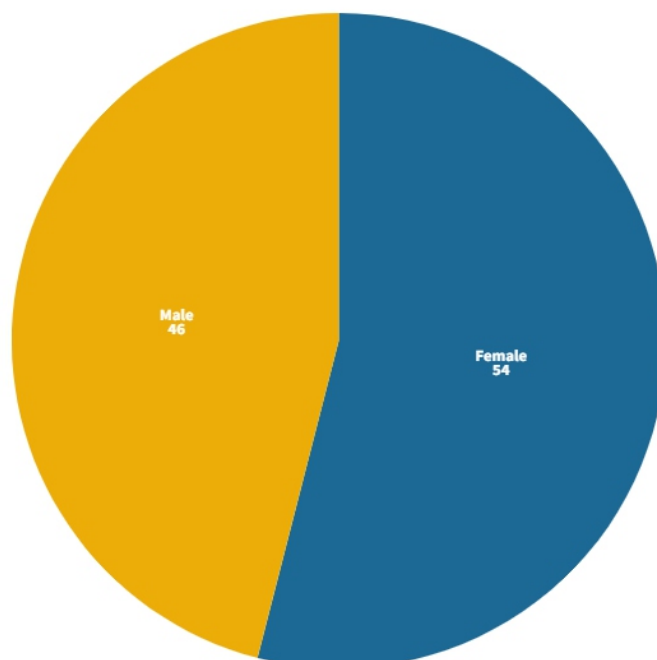


h. Emerging Findings: 51% of the respondents use mobile phone technologies for financial services, with 55% using services monthly and 26% daily. 87% of the participants feel safe using Mobile Service Providers. These findings indicate that mobile phone technologies are an effective way to access financial services, and participants have confidence in the safety and security of mobile service providers.



i. Gender Participation: 54% of the transactions was done by women and 46% by men, with 75% of the participants having full KYC documents. These findings indicate that digital sanduks encourage gender participation in financial transactions and that the participants were adequately identified and documented.

Transactions by Gender



The experiment revealed that digital sanduks yielded favourable results on participants' financial habits and businesses, including increased confidence in the digital platform, diversification of businesses, regular savings, and higher weekly contributions. Furthermore, digital sanduks encouraged technology adoption for financial transactions, boosted digital literacy, promoted gender participation, and ensured proper identification and documentation.

IV. Zambia-Zimbabwe Innovation Challenge (Vic-Fall/Livingstone): 5 groups VSLA were migrated to the Village Savers App. The results are: a positive correlation between digitization and increased savings. 100% of participants recorded positive results in increased profits (%?), creditworthiness, and ability to offer a more diversified range of products (number or statistics). The enhancement of transparency and improved financial literacy training led to an increase in savings for the Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA). For instance, one of the 5 groups had USD300 at baseline; after 6 months, they had USD1,700 (300% increase). At the beginning of the innovation, only 10% of 70 participants had a business bank account, which increased to 70% within 6 months. This is due to training on book-keeping rules and financial management and exposure to the benefits derivable from tech-enabled banking. As a result of the hands-on training offered by the Village Savers, Cross Border Traders' (CBTs) on digital literacy, female traders could navigate through their features phones, something they had not been able to do before participating in the skills training. To navigate the App opened an opportunity for the CBTs to participate in other service offers.

The women comprised most of the CBTs selected for the Experimentation Group (EG). For the first two months of the experiment (December-January), 83% of the women traders had access to finance through the Group savings generated from their respective savings. The second two months (January-February), brought about a 3.3% (83%-86%) increase in female traders accessing finance through generated group savings. The last two months of the experiment (April-May) also resulted in a 2.5% (86.60%-89.10%) increase in female traders' access to finance through generated group savings.

Prior to the formation of the Savings Groups in November 2021, the traders had no group savings due to the drop in their businesses because of the COVID-19 lockdown. The Groups were motivated to start their savings in December 2021 and savings increased throughout the experiment from USD845 in December 2021 to USD3,996 in May 2022, resulting in a 372.8% savings growth rate throughout the experiment.

The traders themselves provided the savings capital. After forming the savings groups and drafting the group constitutions in November 2021, the five Savings Groups in the EG set their base rate (Minimum savings). They could save and borrow from the same savings with a stipulated repayment period and interest for the amounts loaned out, which exponentially increased the amount available to the group. Record-keeping was improved due to the intelligent way the Village Savers App managed the records, which increased trust and confidence in their Groups and saw the members committing more resources to the Groups.

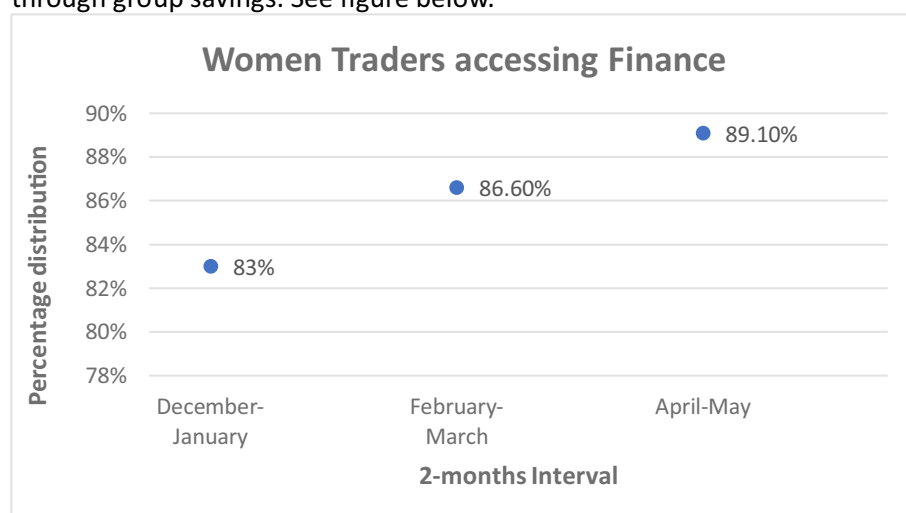
The increased confidence in the Saving Group stemmed from the opportunity the pilot gave the CBTs in savings and financial management training. It increased the traders' capacity to navigate around the App to track their Savings and helped them keep records of their finances, showing them how their business was growing.

A complementary part of the innovation was focused on digitising logistics to enhance cross-border trade efficiency in the Zambia-Zimbabwe border region. Thumeza, a start-up logistics company, implemented this. However, the experiment did not achieve significant results due to a number of factors. One, the platform design was not user-friendly, cross-border regulatory laws, policies and

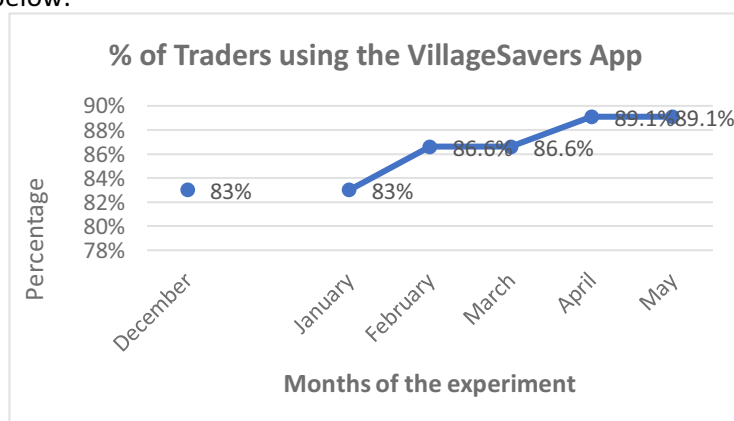
other administrative requirements were cumbersome. This made transactions not cost-effective for ICBT practitioners, compared to the rudimentary way of transporting goods. This situation further weakened the incentives for insuring goods, and given traders' limited purchasing powers, they could not patronize the digital platform. Some of the key results are outlined below.

a. Confidence in the Innovation experiment: The participation of Cross Border Traders (CBTs) in digital literacy training resulted in significant success, particularly among female traders, who reported high confidence levels in navigating their feature phones. The hands-on training provided by Village Savers to use the App also opened up opportunities for CBTs to access other service offers.

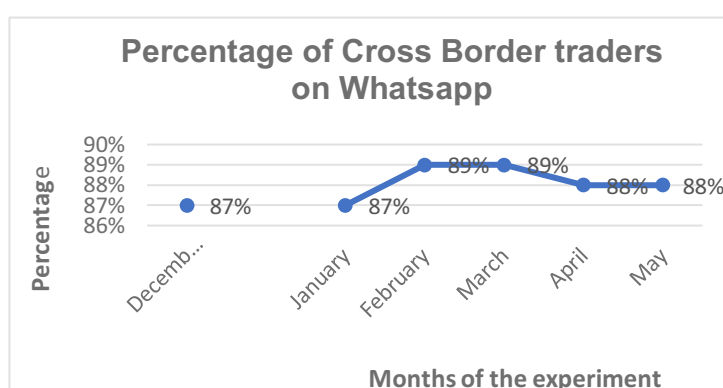
b. How the experiment lead to increased access to finance for female traders (by %), over a period of this experiment? : Most Cross-Border Traders (CBTs) in the Experimentation Group (EG) were women. During the experiment's first two months (December-January), 83% of female traders had financial access via their respective group savings. In the following two months (January-February), there was a 3.3% increase in female traders accessing finance through group savings. The last two months of the experiment (April-May) also saw a 2.5% increase in female traders' access to finance through group savings. See figure below.



c. The percentage of uptake throughout the experiment?: Throughout the experiment, the active CBTs using the App increased from 83% to 89.1%, indicative of increased uptake in the use of digital technology among the traders. Initially, some CBTs with no email addresses had not been registered on the App but were added by Group administrators. For the ones that dropped out, replacements were made. Thus, the observed percentage increase between some monthly intervals is shown in the figure below:



d. What was the result of training/ capacity building on technology?: The participation in the EG encouraged the CBTs to use technology which saw increased usage of WhatsApp and email services as these were required for the traders to engage within their Saving Groups and interact on the App. The WhatsApp groups were formed after the training in November 2021, in which 75 traders were selected to be part of the experiment while the 25 were put in the control group. Six WhatsApp groups were created, with one group comprising the control group. The usage of WhatsApp increased from 87% to 89% throughout the experiment. The observed decline between March and April 2021 was due to some Savings groups in the experiments removing non-saving and committed group members as guided by their group constitutions.



e. The % of the users throughout the experiment: Before the formation of the Savings Groups in November 2021, the traders had no group savings due to the drop in their businesses because of COVID-19 lockdown. The Groups were motivated to start their savings in December 2021, and savings increased throughout the experiment from USD845 in December 2021 to USD3,996 in May 2022, resulting in a 372.8% savings growth rate throughout the experiment, as shown in the figure below.



f. Who provided the capital that they used for the borrowing. What is the impact of this on the % growth of the capital that they have borrowed from?: In November 2021, traders in the EG formed five Savings Groups and set their minimum savings rates. They could save and borrow from the same pool with a repayment period and interest, resulting in an exponential increase in group funds. The Village Savers App improved record-keeping, increasing group trust and confidence and encouraging

members to commit more resources. The pilot program also provided savings and financial management training, boosting traders' confidence and capacity to navigate the app and track their savings. The experiment resulted in a remarkable 372.8% growth rate in group savings.

New proposals are being developed to scale-up this intervention in other borderland regions.

V. Collective Intelligence Session to develop a Borderlands Model on Digital Financial Inclusion (DFI):

Access to finance has been identified as a major impediment to ICBT, based on literature reviews and direct engagements with ICBT practitioners across Africa borderlands. However, good practices identified indicate that the Community Cooperative Unions, working closely with VSLAs are the most critical stakeholders with the capacity to improve access to finance. Furthermore, integrating fintech into decades-long local and informal VSLA structures could increase the competitiveness and credibility of these local structures and improve access to financial resources for their clients. Innovation is key to reaching the last mile, and workable solutions can be contextualised to the border settings.

The session led to the design of a DFI model of engagement in cross-border contexts, targeted primarily at ICBT stakeholders, agropastoralist-related businesses and micro-industries. It combines the capacity of fintech actors with VSLAs in providing inclusive financial services to the last miles in the borderland and stands on the following pillars: Mapping and Evidence Generation; Documentation and Business Development Service Delivery; Entrepreneurship Development Training; Beneficiary Selection and Loans Management; Analytics and Lessons Learned. The integrated services to be provided through the model include credit facilitation; improved digitized saving culture; cashless payment solutions; and ease of cross-border transactions.

Participants proposed that ABC support access to finance by pairing fintech and VSLA players to provide a portfolio of services, including:

Leveraging on Web Application: CCUs and existing technology providers agreed will partner to adapt an existing technology-enabled financing tool (web application) that is accessible and reliable, to meet the financial needs of the most vulnerable in the borderlands. Risks and vulnerability assessment will shape the tool's design, customer experience tracking and thorough understanding of the Applications Programming Interface (API) ecosystem.

The ABC will provide technical support to the collaborating entities on (a) minimum standard and criteria set for credit facilitation; (b) customer acquisition; (c) technology integration and product iteration; and tailored entrepreneurship development capacity. The web application created will provide an integrated solution to credit and savings challenges and optimize cashless payment. Based on the foregoing, a catalytic grant-to-credit scheme shall be provided for competitively selected consortiums to deploy in specific value-chain to provide revolving loans for vulnerable persons.

Institutional Capacity Support: CCUs and technology providers, who shall be the custodian of the loans, will be provided with technical and human resource capacity to implement a pro-poor revolving credit scheme for the most vulnerable. Each phase will last for one year, consisting of 3 loan and payment cycles. Beneficiaries of the credit facility will be selected based on social credit scoring, which represents an alternative collateralization approach. The credit facility will focus on economic activities that promote green growth and climate resilience. The collaborating organizations will be supported to enhance their capacity on beneficiaries' record management, data analytics and reporting, and customer management. These initiatives will reinforce the long-term ownership and sustainability of the product developed.

Training: Tailored capacity development approach will be linked to specific product pipelines supported in each borderland, delivered through online and peer-to-peer learning. Training modules will be integrated into the web application. Evidence of capacity development will form a part of credit scoring and beneficiaries' eligibility as a way of providing alternative collaterals for accessing credit. The primary focus areas for the training are: digital literacy, financial education, entrepreneurship and marketing, and business development. Training shall be delivered to product managers and beneficiaries on sustainable management of project infrastructure, beyond the period of ABC's support. Analytics and learning activities shall be provided to policy influencers, on the impact generated to improve further scaling.

Infrastructure for Cross Border Transaction: Each borderland DFI product shall be linked to major African digital payment gateway service providers. The linkage's essence is to overcome currency fluctuation challenges, ease cross-border trade, facilitate cashless payment, and improve security, particularly for female traders. Each supported product will be connected to seamless payment with hundreds of other payment solutions providers, banks and financial institutions, telecoms-based payment solutions and agent bankers spread over 35 African countries.

To strengthen coordinated and inclusive implementation, the co-creation Workshop prescribed:

Local Steering Committees: For each product developed, ABC will facilitate a local steering committee led by Regional/ Local authorities and comprising major occupational, social and religious associations, as well as Chambers of Commerce, Peace Committees and the private sector. They will provide advocacy support for the replication and long-term sustainability of the model.

DFI Learning Platform: The ABC will facilitate a learning platform to cultivate the private sector to continue scaling and institutionalizing this model. This platform will link up to existing Pan African Peer Exchange Platforms, Digital Financial Inclusion Networks, and Central Banks' Associations, among others. The discussions will be co-facilitated with the AfCFTA Secretariat, AfCFTA Project of UNDP, African Union, Regional Economic Communities and regional business councils.

VI. Innovation Partnerships and Collaborations: The innovation work of the ABC has been based on deep immersion with borderland communities, co-creation of ideas with UNDP Country Offices and other stakeholders, continuous consultations with Experts and professionals engaged in innovations and Information and Communications Technology (ICT), and the use of users of innovative ideas as sounding boards for improving development impact. The specific partners include:

UNDP Accelerator Laboratories (Acclabs) and Country Office Leadership: The Acclabs served as co-visioners and co-implementers of innovation ideas in close coordination with borderland communities. Leveraging their local knowledge, existing networking capacities amongst the Acclabs across the borders and expert knowledge on the border regions, the ABC and Acclabs engaged in collective intelligence, conceptualization, experimentation, and curations of results and lessons learned in the implementation process. ABC's engagement with the Acclabs represents one of the largest among UNDP regional programmes, and provides valuable lessons that could guide future engagements.

Tech Start-Ups: Through the Acclabs, the ABC identified private sector entities already engaged in innovation, and with a good understanding of the development challenges and opportunities in the borderlands. These companies co-implemented social experiments with the ABC on thematic issues such as digital logistics for cross-border trade, transformation of local VSLAs business processes into virtual platforms, enabled by ICT, development of ICT infrastructure in rural borderlands regions, and provision of digitization to support milk value

chain development. These entities include Village Savers Limited, Thumeza Limited, Translait, TuScale, M-Gurush mobile money company, etc.

The Private Sector: The ABC engaged banking and financial services institutions such as ECOBANK and Equity Bank (East Africa) in co-creating DFI ideas. Others consulted include Digital Frontiers Institute, M-Vend Rwanda, Cooperatives Union (Gambia), Institute for Cooperatives Development (Kenya), National Fintech Association (Ethiopia), Better than Cash Alliance (Rwanda), Zep Re (Burundi), and so on.

UN RSCA, Other UN Agencies and the AU: The ABC collaborated with the AfCFTA project to co-create the DFI ideas and the innovation challenge. The AfCFTA project was also represented in the project's decision-making structures and in providing expert advice. The UNCTAD Chief of Trade, Gender and Development provided technical support to the implementation. Similarly, the AU Gender Department strengthened the connection between the Centre's innovation and the continental normative framework. In the same vein, the UNDP Resilience Hub for Africa in Nairobi, and the Finance Hub in Pretoria provided invaluable inputs into all the innovation outreaches of the ABC.

Local Governments: The ABC brought together governments across borders to partner on implementing innovation programming. For instance, the engagement brought together security, customs, immigration, and local administration with local entities in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Togo and Benin Republic. Though the results of such has been limited due to institutional, legal and policy constraints, it has been useful to explore the possibility of local-government-to-local-government engagement overall.

Cross-Border Traders Association (CBTAs): The ABC engaged with established structures for ICBT practitioners engaged in consensus-building and promotion of the welfare of members. The interactions enabled a deeper understanding of the opportunities for digital financial inclusion in the borderlands. In addition to speaking with the leadership of the CBTAs, learning sessions were conducted with female and young members to gain a nuanced understanding of the opportunities for innovation.

National Government Institutions: For policy influencing, ABC also partnered with national institutions as co-implementers and also, to help influence policies on inclusive development in the borderlands. Specific examples include the Ministry of Trade and Industry of the Republic of Ghana, the Ghana Enterprise Agency, and the Government of South Sudan. Others include the National Pension Authority of Zimbabwe, and the Zambia Industrial Development Bank.

Civil Society Organizations: The ABC interacted with various CSOs to co-create a borderlands DFI approach. CSOs and CBOs also participated in collective intelligence and co-creation workshops across different borderlands on the continent. Examples of organizations that provided expertise include the Open Society Institute (OSI), and the GIZ.

In sum, the project strengthened the recognition of innovation capabilities in the borderlands, identified the most promising pathways to improve livelihoods through innovation and generated evidence that could be scaled to improve the socio-economic situation of borderland stakeholders, particularly in the ICBT sector. Scaling challenges linger. However, it should be prioritized in the second half of project implementation.

Output 3: Good Practices and Lessons Learned Collected and Shared Regarding Borderlands Programming and Implementation

This output curated, analysed and disseminated good practices and lessons from SECCI, ABC's implementation, and other implementers' experiences, and shared these with clients to enable more result-oriented programming in the borderlands. The details of ABC's implementation are outlined below.

I. Trade for Peace in the Liptako Gourma Region: The initiative, launched in 2021 with support from the Government of Japan, was to provide inclusive economic opportunities, promote cross-border trade and investments, enhance the resilience of communities, and prevent violent conflict in the borderland communities of Liptako-Gourma. The geographic focus was the border triangle between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. The project successfully enhanced the innate resilience of borderland communities through support to livelihood and income-generating activities, capacity building and skilling, and inter-communal dialogues. The project's focus on addressing food insecurity as a root cause of conflict and supporting women and youth has successfully impacted over 7,000 direct beneficiaries, including 3,000 traders, farmers, and herders, and prevented violent conflict in the region. Co-implemented with UNDP Country Offices and other organizations, the project seeks funding for Phase 2, which aims to expand the initiative to other vulnerable borderlands communities in West Africa affected by war and climate change. Trade for Peace (T4P) is novel in that it integrated socio-economic development and trade directly with peacebuilding and social cohesion approaches – at borderlands and cross-border level. The concept of Trade for Peace has resonated strongly with UNDP Country Offices and ABC is currently supporting over 10 COs exploring T4P-inspired borderlands and cross-border interventions.

II. Promoting Socio-Economic Development and Peace in Africa's Borderlands: The project was implemented in close partnership with the Government of Sweden, with funding support from the Government of Sweden. It was focused on capacity development, livelihood support and innovation, in collaboration with UNDP Country Offices in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Kenya and Uganda. Co-implementers included the AU Border Programme (AUBP) and the Life and Peace Institute (LPI). The work has generated lessons for pro-active engagement with local and national authorities and has provided a platform for AU, IGAD and CSO engagement to exchange on borderlands programming.

The first focus area supported the AU to strengthen the engagement of CSOs in borderlands development. The LPI implemented the component and focused on strengthening the implementation of the AU Border Governance Strategy. A CSO Network was facilitated to strengthen inclusive engagements pioneered by the LPI, by creating a joint mechanism to connect with civil society organisations in the borderlands of East Africa and the Horn of Africa in line with its Strategy for Engagement with Borderlands CSOs.

The second focus area was on improving livelihoods in the Liptako Gourma region. The initiative built on the initial results achieved by the Trade for Peace project. It provided training and facilitated dialogues for cross-border traders engaged in the pastoralism value chain with training on storage, processing, bulking, transportation and marketing of milk products. The engagement prioritized capacity development and establishing an online milk marketing platform for women and youths, in close coordination with Translait and Tuscale innovation companies.

The third focus area was on promoting sustainable peace in the Karamoja region. The region in Uganda and Turkana and West Pokot counties in Kenya are interconnected regions with immense opportunities for peace, social cohesion, and wealth creation. The region shares a common language and culture, and there is potential for cross-border trade and regional economic integration, particularly in the livestock trade. To better embrace these opportunities, Kenya and Uganda signed a Memorandum of Understanding supporting the Kenya-Uganda (Karamoja) Cross Border Programme for Sustainable Peace and Development. UNDP Kenya, UNDP Uganda, and the UNDP Africa Borderlands Centre are supporting the implementation of the MOU through quick impact initiatives, an independent gender and conflict analysis, and the development of a fully costed implementation

plan. The initiatives have led to the provision of livelihood assets, construction of cross-border schools, development of water infrastructure, promotion of cross-border peacebuilding dialogues, and provision of a comprehensive understanding of the complex cross-border conflict and gender dynamics. The implementation plan developed is expected to guide local, national, and regional initiatives in the two countries borderlands.

III. Mapping Innovative Solutions to Development Challenges in the Borderlands: As part of the offer to strengthen the dissemination of good practices, the social laboratory of the ABC commenced the mapping of innovative solutions, useful for borderlands development in early 2023. The main objective of the solutions mapping work is to provide a resource tool for sharing and disseminating innovative development solutions across the African continent. The exercise aims to generate a compendium of innovative homegrown innovative development and map out solution pathways to address development challenges in the four areas encapsulated in the 4-Pillar Area-Based Programming of the ABC. The ongoing work will feature the selection of new, scalable, and fully advanced innovations. The compendium produced will serve as a resource tool to improve development assistance and investments in the borderlands and enable borderlands innovation to influence overall sustainable development in Africa. The Compendium also elevates the voices of borderland innovators. It will enhance replicability, sustainability and, where possible, scalability of innovations.

IV. The Area-Based Portfolio Approach as ABC's Programming Guide: Based on the rich experiences gathered in implementing its work across all output areas, it developed the approach as an integrated model in specific geographical areas within 30km or more of the national border frontier, which allows for simultaneous and coordinated implementation of co-created development interventions to redirect the recipient communities on a sustainable development pathway. The Guideline presupposes that the connection between and among the borderlands provides a natural impetus for the ABC to utilize "geographical areas" as entry points instead of only an issue- or sector-based programming. This territorial focus aims to address complex development challenges in the borderlands through an integrated offer (across four pillars) that takes cognizance of the participation of beneficiaries through bottom-up engagement strategies. It employs flexibility and agility in designing interventions for each border cluster based on differences in contexts. Whilst some of the pillars have been implemented in different border contexts, attempts to implement all four pillars in the same borderlands simultaneously have been impossible due to funding constraints. The area-based portfolio approach directly draws on ABC's varying experience in implementing quick impact projects in 2021, the Innovation Challenge, the Karamoja project implementation and the Trade for Peace programme in the Liptako Gourma.

V. Workshops with RECs: In close coordination with the AUC, RSCA and RPA, the project has taken proactive measures to socialize its work with the RECs and engage in strategic dialogues toward developing joint programme proposals based on the best practices and lessons learned in their engagements. With IGAD, a joint workshop was organized in 2021, in close collaboration with UNDP Resilience Hub for Africa. The Workshop identified key development challenges and opportunities for achieving the SDGs in borderlands within the Horn of Africa. It also established a Technical Working Group to fashion out a joint UNDP-IGAD Programme on Borderlands Development. With ECOWAS, a joint Workshop was held in 2022, leading to the formulation of priority areas for collaboration. On the borderlands, ICBT promotion, market information system, resilience building, peace and security were the key priority areas. A joint Working Group was proposed for UNDP and ECOWAS Partnerships, with the leadership of the process located in the WACA Hub. The engagement process is expected to lead to the formulation of many joint proposals/ project documents for implementation. In 2023, ABC and the RPA co-facilitated engagements with COMESA, leading to a joint Workshop to identify priorities

and improve development coordination. Key areas of interest include ICBT, cross-border peace and security.

Together with IGAD, UNDP organized a lesson-learned workshop convening COs from East Africa and key partners to share best practices for implementing cross-border projects in the region as part of a programme closure process for the EU-funded Horn of Africa cross-border project SECCCI. The workshop was informed by a lessons-learned analysis conducted for SECCCI.

VI. Partnerships and Collaborations on Good Practices and Lessons Learned: The following key partners contributed to shaping our good practices and lessons learned dissemination:

Borderland Communities: In all initiatives designed and implemented, the collective intelligence of border communities were utilized. They provided invaluable inputs into identifying the challenges, the programmatic solutions, implementation support, monitoring and appraisal of the project performance.

African Union and RECs: In line with the co-creation principles undergirding the establishment of the ABC, ABC organized several technical meetings with AUC (online) and AUBP colleagues to identify gaps in programming, opportunities for collaboration, improved synergy in implementation and, ultimately, the prioritization of the objectives of the AU Border Governance Strategy in its implementation. It also improved information-sharing on project progress with the AU. Whilst no direct implementation occurred with the RECs, they provided viable sounding boards for the ABC to further improve its implementation mechanisms. They also provided connections to CBOs, their normative frameworks as additional tools/ enablers and desk-to-desk information sharing.

Sub-Regional Organizations (MRU and LGA): Sub-regional organizations have a more granular knowledge, networks and credibility working in the specific borderlands in the Mano River and Liptako Gourma regions. ABC's implementation leveraged these resources. In addition, it utilized the norms, lessons, and institutional mechanisms established before our implementation. It also ensured coherence between the ABC's work and ongoing implementation by the sub-regional bodies.

WACA Hub: UNDP's West and Central Africa (WACA) Hub provided a critical entry point for ABC's implementation in West Africa. Its intimate knowledge of the borderland's actors, its other programme streams on small arms and light weapon, and on Lake Chad Stabilization provided the opportunity for peer learning and inclusive programme design. It provided leadership in providing visibility for ABC's work in the region with UN Special Representative for the SAHEL, UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and UN Resident Coordinators. The leadership of the WACA Hub has also contributed to the engagements with the LGA and ECOWAS Commission.

Government Departments and Local Authorities: Several Local Government Administrations provided support with the identification of priority programmes. They also provided security facilitation, connection to local resource persons and other key resources.

UNDP Country Offices in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Namibia, Kenya, Sierra Leone: The UNDP Resident Representatives in the aforementioned countries led ABC's efforts in articulating the key challenges, prioritizing borderland programming and ensuring the mainstreaming of such into the CO's work plans. Through their Heads of Programme, they ensured the identification and provision of support to focal points, which provided field-based coordination and leadership for implementing ABC's work. CO's operations also provided top-notch support on mission planning, logistics, security and other related areas, not only for ABC Staff, but also to local partners, which contributed significantly to achieving programmatic objectives.

CSOs, CBOs and NGOs: Through the synergy formed with the lead regional and national level partners, some CSOs and CBOs served as co-implementers of AU programmes; these include the Life and Peace Institute (LPI), etc.

Output 4: On-Demand Technical and Programming Advice Provided on Borderland Issues to UNDP COs and Other Stakeholders

Proposals adapted the Area Based Portfolio Approach, developed under Output 3 of the ABC's work. This output provided technical expertise to clients, which led to scoping missions to guide further the development of new project proposals and project documents. Key beneficiaries of such technical expertise included UNDP Country Offices, other UN Agencies and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The resource mobilization process for the completed project proposals are underway. Highlights of the results are below:

I. Addressing Multi-Dimensional Challenges Faced by Agro-Pastoralists in East Africa's Border Communities: Agro-pastoralists in East Africa's Karamoja and Borena regions are grappling with many challenges, ranging from recurring droughts and the socio-economic impact of Covid-19 to livestock raiding, food insecurity, and limited economic opportunities. Unfortunately, the potential of borderland communities across South Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda borderlands remain vastly untapped, with inadequate support for the region. To address these issues, UNDP partnered with IGAD to develop a new three-year regional project to improve production capacities and livelihoods, support small-scale businesses and trade actors, and foster social cohesion to mitigate food insecurity. The project will also enhance IGAD's capacity to conduct analysis, research, and programming to support agro-pastoralist communities in East Africa. The IGAD-UNDP technical working group established in 2021 jointly developed the program document, and a Memorandum of Understanding was signed in Djibouti in August 2022, formalizing UNDP's close collaboration with IGAD. The programme document draft was used to inform a concept note submitted to the European Union for funding in May 23, together with LPI and PAX.

II. Rapid Socio-Economic Development in the Context of COVID-19 Pandemic: The ABC project was formulated in 2020, during the global COVID-19 pandemic, characterized by border closure, a spike in COVID-related deaths, and collapse of MSMEs, many of which were located in the borderlands. At the start of implementation in 2021, the ABC immediately supported select borderland communities with high socio-economic challenges occasioned by the pandemic. In Kenya-Uganda border, hundreds of households with businesses were supported with small grants and training for business recovery. Water facilities were also built to enhance community cohesion, while cross-border peace committees were resourced to improve their early warning mechanisms. In the Sierra Leone-Guinea and Sierra Leone-Liberia Borders, the cross-border MRU peacebuilding radio station was supported to provide early warning, which led to information dissemination of COVID-19 safety measures and safe facilitation of cross-border trade after the pandemic. In addition, small grants were provided to ICBT practitioners, which directly benefited hundreds of households. The main beneficiaries were women. In the Niger-Mali border, insurgents rebuilt a cross-border market, destroyed earlier by insurgents, and security actors supported to revive cross-border trade. In the Namibia-Angola border, climate refugees were supported with livelihood packages to improve their livelihoods. The initiatives were co-implemented with UNDP Country Offices in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.

III. Addressing Multi-dimensional Challenges in the Borderlands of Chad and Cameroon: The borderland communities of Chad and Cameroon face numerous challenges, including protracted conflict, violent extremism, food insecurity, and climate-related disasters. National development agendas have not adequately served these communities, particularly in times of crisis, and limited access to basic services further compounds their struggles. The ongoing war in Ukraine has increased

global prices of staple foods, fertilizer, and oil, exacerbating the already difficult situation. Additionally, Chad and Cameroon are home to large populations of internally displaced persons and refugees. The security situation in the region has deteriorated in recent years due to the spillover effects of violent extremism and terrorism in neighboring countries. To tackle these security, development, and humanitarian risks, the Centre conducted a mission to the region and hired a consultant to collaborate with UNDP Chad and UNDP Cameroon in designing a multi-year regional borderlands project. The initiative aims to enhance production capacities and livelihoods, support small-scale businesses and trade actors, promote governance and service delivery, and foster social cohesion in the borderlands of Chad and Cameroon. Fundraising for the project is underway, and a proposal has been submitted to KOICA for funding.

IV. Harnessing Innovation and Resilience for Socio-Economic Development in the Borderlands of Burundi: Burundi's borderland regions possess immense potential for socio-economic development and innovation. To tap into this potential and address their challenges, UNDP's Strategic Plan for 2022 - 2025 seeks to utilise a portfolio approach, which understands problems from a systems perspective and leverages relationships between interventions to achieve broader goals. Building on this approach, the UNDP Burundi Country Office undertook a "Deep Demonstrations" process to explore development options for border communities, leading to the design of a dedicated borderlands development programme. The programme focuses on the Commune of Nyanza-lac, which borders Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The UNDP Africa Borderlands Centre provided technical support and hired a consultant to develop an area-based portfolio programme for borderlands development. The programme document was developed in partnership with local communities and authorities, and a multi-stakeholder workshop was held to share and inform the area-based portfolio approach. The programme aims to invest in the resilience of Burundi's borderlands to promote socio-economic development and peace in the country.

V. Promoting Socio-economic Development and Preventing Violent Extremism through Trade for Peace in the Borderlands of Benin, Togo and Burkina Faso: The borderland communities of Benin, Togo, and Burkina Faso face common challenges such as deficient local governance, widespread unemployment, and the lure of violent extremism. These challenges are compounded by climate change, slow recovery from COVID-19, challenging political conditions, and increasing food prices due to the ongoing war in Ukraine. To keep the crisis from worsening, the borderlands communities need to strengthen local governance, build resilience, help with socioeconomic recovery, and improve human security. ABC and other UNDP offices have proposed an initiative focusing on enhancing production capacities and livelihoods, promoting local governance, and service delivery to foster social cohesion in the borderlands. The concept note is currently under discussion with the European Union Delegation in Ouagadougou.

VI. Promoting Peace and Economic Development through Cross-Border Trade in Sierra Leone and Liberia: Sierra Leone and Liberia remain fragile and impoverished, with high poverty rates. The two countries face ongoing challenges, including violent conflicts, Ebola and COVID-19, and global economic factors such as the Russia-Ukraine war and increases in the price of staple foods. The Mano River Union was established to promote regional integration through trade, but this potential remains largely untapped. Cross-border trade, particularly informal and small-scale trade, provides a significant livelihood for many, especially women. A draft programme concept, "Promoting peace through inclusive cross-border trade between Liberia and Sierra Leone," has been developed by UNDP Liberia and UNDP Sierra with the support of the Africa Borderlands Centre, drawing on lessons learned from a similar project in the Sahel region. Fundraising is currently underway for the programme.

VII. Promoting Trade for Peace in the Borderlands of DRC and Rwanda: The Great Lakes region is full of opportunities but also faces unique challenges. The region possesses abundant natural resources,

including minerals, wildlife, land, and water, and is home to a growing workforce. However, it faces unique challenges such as poverty, inequality, underemployment, climate change, weak governance, and chronic violence. The Africa Borderlands Centre and UNDP Country Offices in DRC and Rwanda have developed an options paper for a potential multi-year regional project to enhance livelihoods, support small-scale businesses, promote governance, and foster social cohesion in the borderlands of DRC and Rwanda. The project aims to deepen economic integration through cross-border trade, dialogue between border communities, and strengthening food security, livelihood, and income opportunities, particularly for Women and Youth. The options paper is currently under discussion with the European Union.

VIII. Promoting socio-economic development and peace in the border regions of Senegal, Guinea and Mali: The border regions of Senegal, Guinea, and Mali are confronted with several challenges, such as poverty, limited access to social services, and public investment directed towards urban centres. To address these challenges, UNDP Mali, Guinea, and Senegal, in partnership with ABC and UNDP's Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa (based in Dakar), have developed a concept for a multi-year regional project aimed at promoting socio-economic development, strengthening productive capacities and livelihoods, and fostering social cohesion in these regions. Due to the high poverty rates and limited access to basic social services in these landlocked regions, it is essential to provide a tailored response that meets their needs. This proposed project aims to promote sustainable development by addressing these challenges and prioritizing the needs of the borderland regions, which are often overlooked in public investment decisions. Ongoing discussions with partners, including the European Union, aim to bring this project to fruition.

IX. Horn of Africa Drought Resilience Programme: The Horn of Africa is facing a severe drought due to the worst-performing rains in 73 years and five successive failed rainy seasons, impacting over 36 million people, with more than 20 million facing food insecurity. The frequency and severity of drought are increasing, making it harder for people to recover between shocks. More than 36 million people are affected, with more than 20 million in the highest categories of food insecurity, with women and girls disproportionately affected by the direct and indirect impacts of the drought. The Centre and other partners have developed a Horn of Africa drought resilience program to be launched in Q2 2023. The program aims to build resilience and reduce the severity of impact on the people of the Horn, through increased coherence of policy frameworks and financing mechanisms for climate risk, implementation of IGAD-UN Drought Resilience Action Plans in selected target areas, and the inclusion of a development lens in resilience-building approaches. The program will include area-based interventions focused on the borderlands of Somalia, Kenya, and Ethiopia.

X. Partnerships and Collaborations on Technical and Programme Advisory: The following key partners contributed to shaping our technical and programme advisory:

Sub-Regional and Regional Institutions: The ABC supported RECs and sub-regional bodies to sharpen their development approaches to borderland issues through technical-level meetings and major co-creation workshops. With ABC, RECs also shared their knowledge on relevant issues related to AfCFTA, peace and security, and ICBT, leading to improved capacity for programme formulation. ABC has also co-created a programme with IGAD for the Horn of Africa, and the Liptako Gourma Authority (ALG) was a key partner for the implementation of Trade for Peace. UNDP is beginning to co-create a programme with COMESA on Trade for Peace in East/Southern Africa.

CSOs and CBOs: These stakeholders supported the organizing of consultations with key stakeholders in each targeted borderland. They also contributed their knowledge to enrich the contents of ABC-formulated projects. As sounding boards, they confirmed the relevance of the Area-Based Portfolio Approach to implementation, with adaptation to specific

development challenges in each borderland. UNDP is working closely with LPI in East Africa and the Horn.

UNDP COs and other UN Agencies served as requestors, facilitators, beneficiaries and implementing entities to co-created programmatic ideas. They also put at ABC's disposal their social capital with National Governments, RECs and other relevant cross-border actors.

Output 5: Evidence-Based Policy Advocacy/ Advice/Support to Regional and Sub-National Stakeholders to Support Mainstreaming Borderland Issues and Approaches

The Centre's main preoccupation has been to "elevate voices" from the Africa borderlands. Its entire work has been centred around providing the platform for the ventilation of challenges, opportunities, innovation and creativities, programmatic options and futuristic perspectives from the people of the borderlands themselves. The stories of the borderlands have been re-told through the work of research, data, innovation, and programming. The key results on this workstream include the following:

I. Global Launch of the ABC in Lodwar, Kenya: The ABC's initial activity was a global launch in the borderlands of Lodwar, Turkana County, Kenya. The event, which took place in February 2021, was attended by over 500 in-person and online participants. It was also attended by hundreds of borderlands stakeholders, who showcased the best of their culture and projected their resilience. The project's launch provided an opportunity for agenda setting by the UNDP Administrator, the Assistant Secretary-General, and Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa. The essence of the Centre's work was to develop a development model that works for the people of the borderlands, based on their peculiar experience, resilience and creativity. The AU, IGAD, ECOWAS, and the authorities in the Republic of Kenya endorsed the Centre's objective.

II. Consultations with UN Special Envoys for the Sahel, Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes, and UN-OAU: To strengthen coordination along the human rights-humanitarian-peace-development nexus in the borderlands context, the project organized briefing sessions with the political representatives of the UN Secretary-General in various parts of Africa. The briefing sessions provided opportunities for joint horizon scanning, identification of the priorities of the political missions within the borderlands setting, exchange of ideas on practical challenges to be addressed and opportunities to be harnessed, updates on ongoing initiatives with implications for project implementation by the ABC, opportunities for strengthening coordination with RECs and the AU, and co-creation of specific analysis and programmatic interventions. The engagements provided sharper perspectives, which enabled the Centre to develop cross-border implementation plans for existing normative frameworks, develop regional and cross-border conflict analysis where such did not exist, and formulate cross-border project proposals/ documents.

III. Bilateral Meetings with Ambassadors & Heads of Missions: Following the launch of the Centre, proactive measures were consulted with Ambassadors/ Heads of Mission of Diplomatic Embassies accredited to Kenya and the African Union to socialize the works of the Centre. The ABC utilized the Ambassadors in its decision-making functions (as members of the Project Board). It also benefited from them as sounding boards, to elicit better guidance to improve its programming quality.

IV. Global Development Dialogue Series: The UNDP hosted a global webinar on "Unpacking promising practices on resilience-building in Africa's Lake Chad borderlands". The Session is part of a Series, implemented in 2021, providing a global platform to elevate voices of borderland stakeholders to development practitioners and policymakers in over 100 countries. Through the platform, the ABC facilitated south-south and north-south dialogues between representatives of borderland women, youths, security services and local governments. The event interrogated the dynamics that have slowed the progress towards achieving sustainable development in borderland communities in the Lake Chad Basin and how development partners responded to them. Local leaders,

women and youth shared experiences that illustrated how borderland communities had addressed complex challenges in this region, notably insecurity, violent extremism, poverty, social fragmentation, and the impact of climate change. The session also examined opportunities for innovative programmes to strengthen resilience around cross-border trade, transitional justice, livelihoods and natural resource management issues. Many ideas generated in the session were utilized to develop new project proposals.

V. YouthConneckt 2021 (Dakar and Accra): The UNDP WACA, in close coordination with the YouthConneckt programme, provided collaboration opportunities to elevate the voices of young people proffering solutions to development challenges in the Sahel. The event themed “Cross-Border Cooperation: Understanding Issues and Opportunities for Youth in Border Regions in the Sahel” enabled the exhibition of products made by young entrepreneurs in the borderlands, knowledge exchange between the young persons and Government Officials, private sector engagement on scaling such innovative solutions and media visibility for borderlands creatives. The event mainly showcased innovative solutions led by young people and supported by ABC.

ABC also elevated the voices of five borderlands youth from South Sudan, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Kenya to participate in the Youthconnect Africa Summit 2021 in Accra, Ghana, themed “Africa Beyond Aid: Positioning the Youth for Post Covid Economy and AfCFTA opportunities”. The borderlands youth had an interactive bi-literal session with the Regional Director and a dedicated session themed “Elevating youth voices to strengthen resilience in borderlands communities” showcased some of their solutions to development challenges in the border regions.

VI. ABORNE Annual Conference 2022: The ABC utilized the Africa Borderlands Research Network (ABORNE) platform to implement advocacy around borderland programming with academia across hundreds of Africa Universities and research institutions, and among academia outside Africa, with research and practice interest in border development on the continent. ABORNE is an interdisciplinary network of researchers interested in all aspects of international borders and transboundary phenomena in Africa. The Centre participated in the 2022 edition of the ABORNE Annual Conference, organized with the OECD Sahel West Africa Club and the University of Florida Sahel Research Group (SRG). The ABC made informed contributions, sharing its practice experience, on trade and security in Africa borderlands, with specific presentations of experiences with digital financial inclusion for ICBT. Through direct interaction with several other practitioners and academia, including from the AU and RECs, the ABC improved its understanding of its essence, achievements and experiences in the borderlands. On the other hand, it gained a bird-eye view of emergent issues on food security, Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE), shared infrastructure, migration and refugee flow, etc. related to ICBT, from academics and practitioners.

VII. Africa Climate Mobility Initiative: In close coordination with UNDP Resilience Hub for Africa, the ABC co-organized series of policy advocacy activities for the Africa Climate Mobility Initiative (ACMI) to draw attention to migration and displacement challenges in the borderlands and beyond. The engagement themed “**Shaping the Future of Mobility in Africa: Addressing Climate-Forced Displacement & Migration in the Continent**” featured the preparation of a comprehensive report and Agenda for Action on hotspots impacted by forced mobility and climate change.

VIII. AU High Level Conference on Peace, Security and Development Nexus: The ABC, as a means of projecting the findings of its research on the resilience of borderlands agropastoralists, hosted a Session on “Promise and Resilience: Agropastoralists and the Peace, Security and Development Nexus in Africa Borderlands” during the AU-PSD Nexus High-Level Conference in Tangiers, Morocco, themed “Promoting the Peace, Security and Development Nexus: The Promise of Regional Integration”. The ABC utilized the platform provided to undertake policy advocacy for the accelerated improvement in legal and institutional mechanisms to liberalize cross-border mobility, improved investments in livelihoods diversification for agropastoralists, and effective cross-border social cohesion through the agency of family. Ambassadors accredited to the AU and members of the Peace and Security Council

(PSC) utilized the opportunity to lend their voices to policy measures targeted at improving a borderless Africa, based on the vision of the AU Border Governance Strategy.

IX. Partnership Engagements with the EU in Brussels: Following EU's identification of the borderlands development as a critical priority for Africa in its 2021-2027 programme, the ABC Team, under the leadership of the RPA Coordinator and with the facilitation of the UNDP Brussels Office, engaged in series of discussions to socialize the work of the Centre. This cascaded in a mission to Brussels in 2022, to present the achievements of the Centre in greater detail. It (then) newly completed research on agropastoralism and explored entry points to strengthening implementation. In addition, the UNDP's EU Representation Office was briefed on progress made. As a follow-up to the Mission, the ABC has discussed and developed 3 new project proposals, mainly focused on the Sahel and Central Africa cross-border dynamics.

X. Deep Dive on Water Accelerator for Development in the Sahel: The Centre availed itself of learning from experts in the Sahel regions and contributed to discussions around the subject of water as a catalyst for achieving the SDGs in the Sahelian states, particularly their borderlands. This was a part of the recommendations of the Steering Committee meeting of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS), which identified water as a driver of resilience to climate change. The interactive session enabled ABC to sharpen its understanding of gaps and opportunities, national and regional frameworks, irrigation investment capabilities, the nexus between water energy and climate, water sanitation, water and industrialization, and water and peacebuilding in the Sahel. The learning session further strengthened the development of the concept note on groundwater access facilities for Africa's borderlands by the ABC.

XI. 2023 UN Water Conference & ABC's Advocacy for Sustainable Solutions to Groundwater Challenges in the Horn of Africa (HOA): In furtherance of its policy advocacy objectives, the Centre participated in the United Nations 2023 Water Conference on the theme "Climate-Resilient Groundwater as a Catalyst for Sustainable Development in Africa's Borderlands- A Shared SDG Agenda". A special side event was organized on Groundwater as a catalyst for borderlands development, looking particularly at [new solutions to droughts in the Horn of Africa](#). The event featured keynote speeches from the Government of Ethiopia, the World Bank, UNICEF and the RBA Director, a panel discussion facilitated by ABC Team Leader, and technical interventions by UNDP's new Principal Water Resources Advisor for Africa. The side event details were captured in [the webcast of the event](#) and additionally, a [blog](#) article highlights some of the key issues in groundwater access. The key partners called for creating a Groundwater Access Facility (GaFa) to sustainably use millions of cubic kilometres of untapped groundwater reservoirs in the HOA. Further to the call to action, the Centre is implementing a pre-feasibility study on groundwater access in the HOA and has also commenced concept proofing for the GaFa in the Kenya-Somalia borderlands.

XII. 2022 European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation Platform (ETCG): The ABC was invited to participate in the ETCG Forum in Liberec, Czech Republic Forum, as a way of strengthening North-South exchange and facilitating cross-regional experience sharing and lessons. The EGTC, a standing European collaboration platform connecting European regions to discuss and promote cross-border collaboration initiatives, enabled the ABC to project its policy-influencing role, and discuss potential Europe-Africa dialogues, knowledge transfer and functional collaborations on cross-border collaboration. The ABC is engaged in high-level discussions to develop follow-up programmatic collaborations, including a dialogue forum with select European and African (borderland) regions from 2023 and beyond.

XIII. Elevating the Voices of Borderlands Agropastoralists: The Centre developed a communications strategy to elevate the voices of borderlands agropastoralists as part of its flagship research. This workstream led to the production of audio-visuals, which tells the stories of the resilience and creativity of the borderland agropastoralists. In addition, blog articles, photo albums and social media

messages were produced and disseminated on various media platforms to improve awareness of their challenges. Following the launch of the flagship report, series of newspaper editorials, feature stories in newspapers, radio and television interviews were conducted to advocate for enhanced investment in cross-border mobility, livelihoods diversification and kinship-based social protection systems.

XIV. Engagements with the Great Lakes and HoA UNDP RRs: The ABC participated in the Great Lakes RR Forum at the margins of the RBA cluster retreat in Nairobi. The objective of the meeting was to identify opportunities for collaboration between UNDP's Country Offices, the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes and UNDP's regional presence, including the Africa Borderlands Centre. The meeting identified some priority areas for collaboration and positioned UNDP in support of the UN Great Lakes Regional Strategy. UNDP presented its work on borderlands development and cross-border collaboration. The Centre also participated in the virtual RR Forum on the Horn of Africa, briefing UNDP Country Offices on the work the Centre is supporting in promoting borderlands development and cross-border cooperation in the region. The RR meeting engagement reflects the corporate and country-level buy-in to the mandate and work of the ABC.

XV. Borderlands in the Social, Print & Electronic Media: The Centre's social media platforms (Twitter and Youtube) has contributed significantly to creating awareness, improving interaction with development practitioners outside UNDP and contributing to the co-creation of solutions to development challenges in the borderlands. Since its launch in 2021, the social media pages have recorded over 70% improvement in "followership", many of whom are influencers within the policy space. On the print and electronic media, the Centre has leveraged its presence in Kenya to appear in major newspapers, television and radio stations. It has also conducted policy advocacy events through the CTGN, BBC Africa, and BBC Swahili service.

XVI. Borderlands on the Web & Telling the Stories "From the Horses' Mouth": The Centre has consistently invested in improving its policy advocacy work through continuous review and improvement of its engagement channels. This has, for instance, led to the revamping of its website <https://www.undp.org/africa/africa-borderlands-centre>, and the launch of an Exposure site <https://africaborderlandscentre.exposure.co/resilience-in-the-borderlands-zala-and-her-friends-story-of-survival-and-adaptation?source=share-africaborderlandscentre>, which feature videos, audios, album and prose that tell the stories of resilience in Africa's borderland.

Project activities and results were communicated through the following instruments:

Project website: Stories, documents and resources derived from the project's activities are available on UNDP Africa Borderland website.

Press releases: over 15 press releases were made for key events in major national and regional newspapers across the continent.

Articles and News stories: The ABC team took responsibility for writing the stories of the Africa Borderlands people. Such articles appear predominantly on UNDP Website and local Kenyan newspapers. The project also published and disseminated to over 500 subscribers, bi-annual newsletters, which provided up-to-date details of its works.

Project fact sheet: 4 editions were developed to policy-level clients based on strategic/ targeted communication needs.

Youtube and Twitter: A YouTube channel and a Twitter handle were developed for the project. Beyond serving as repositories of stories from the Centre, they also provided opportunities for interaction with members of the public and for eliciting feedback on the quality of the Centre's work.

Briefings/ Interviews: In the margin of major events, staff of the ABC had been featured in interviews with media organizations across 25 countries to socialize the Centre's work with the members of the public.

Output 6: More Effective Partnerships Developed and Strengthened in Support of More Innovative Borderlands Policies, Programing and Financing

Transforming policies and legal frameworks to accelerate development in the borderlands is a medium-term goal. However, the ABC set a solid foundation for this by cultivating partners with influence in the community and policy spaces, such as the AU, RECs, Development Partners and the private sector. This has led to joint visioning exercises and aggregation of institutional interests. In the second half of project implementation, it intends to become more strategic in engaging on policy-level issues. Below are details of achievements on partnerships. In 2022, in particular, ABC started to work for establishing a continental Community of Practice on African borderlands. However, the work was halted and may be picked up during the second half of the ABC programme implementation phase.

I. The AUC: The project formulation phase was co-created with the AUC and RECs. In addition, the PAPS Department of the AUC co-chairs the project board. It has consistently been invited to all activities on the design of ABC's research, data, innovation and programming. The AUC has undertaken policy advocacy for the Centre to improve AU member-states understanding of the mandate of the Centre. In 2023, the held discussions with Departments of Trade and Gender of the AUC, to further explore opportunities for collaboration. In the same vein, it held discussions with the AU-ECOSOC, towards utilising its influence to reach out to hundreds of NGOs working in the borderlands. Overall, in its project implementation, the ABC has been a vehicle for the implementation of the objectives of the AU Border Governance Strategy. UNDP developed a joint list of priorities with AUBP and offered to provide capacity secondments to the AUBP. ABC is also closely engaged with the GIZ AU Border Programme team to coordinate the support provided.

II. IGAD: The IGAD has been a champion of the borderlands, with the Executive Secretary featuring in important ABC events, including the initial team retreat, a joint Workshop to map out programmatic priority and several one-on-one meetings with the ABC Team Leader. IGAD and UNDP signed an MOU with a strong focus on borderlands development. In addition, the IGAD and ABC Team have co-created a USD21 million borderlands development project in the Horn of Africa, which is focused on improving livelihoods, access to finance, climate resilient infrastructure, peacebuilding and social cohesi on in the HOA. The programme was developed in follow-up to a joint workshop and through a technical working group initiated to coordinate UNDP-IGAD programming, which ABC initiated. IGAD and UNDP will also submit, later in 2023, a joint proposal to several donors on implementing its joint programme in the Horn of Africa.

III. ECOWAS Commission: The ABC has leveraged the leadership of the ECOWAS Commission's leadership in creating a borderless West Africa, to engage in strategic discussion on how the borderland regions would not be left behind in this process. In 2022, a joint Workshop chaired by the Commission's Vice President, led to the development of Terms of Reference for Working Groups to develop joint project proposals, one of which is on borderlands development. Under the coordination of the UNDP WACA hub, the engagement with ECOWAS is expected to build on existing partnerships with other UNDP thematic hubs and ultimately lead to concrete deliverables for the ABC.

IV. COMESA: The REC has been at the forefront of improving harmonious cross-border relationships in its member states through the trade for peace programme. In 2022, the ABC commenced discussions with it, towards exploring opportunities for joint programming on borderlands development. This led to the conduct of a joint technical workshop to map out areas of opportunity.

Under the leadership of UNDP RPA, the workshop led to several recommendations to develop joint programming across COMESA member states.

V: Development Partners: Through the purposeful leadership provided by the RPA and the ABC's ability to localize its programme ideas in specific geographical hubs in Africa, financing was provided by the Government of Japan for the "Trade for Peace in the Liptako Gourma" whilst the Swedish Government also funded the Borderlands Development Programme in Kenya, Uganda, and Mali. In addition, partners such as the EU launched a "first of its kind" borderlands development call, to strengthen cross-border development in the Horn of Africa. The World Bank has continued to engage the ABC towards improving the cross-border elements of its sovereign instruments to member states. Discussions with the Gulf States (UAE and Qatar), as well as with the Africa Development Bank Group, the Islamic Development Bank and other IFIs are at the initial stage. They will be intensified in the second half of project implementation.

VI. The Private Sector: The Centre engaged private sector partners (mostly start-up businesses) as co-creator of ideas, implementing entities, vendors and advocacy partners, as mentioned in the different project output areas. However, it has not secured private sector funding for project implementation. Initial discussions with Equity Bank East Africa Group has slowed down due to "due diligence" processes, whilst engagements with the IKEA Foundations and Bayer Group have not resulted in concrete results. The project has to rethink its engagement with the private sector as strategic partner in policy influencing and financing in the second half of its implementation.

VII. Engagements with other Sub-Regional Organizations: In the Sahel, the Centre worked closely with the LGA as a partner in designing and implementing the Trade for Peace project in Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso. The Borderlands Centre conducted an in-depth analysis of options to strengthen UNDP's partnership with SADC and engaged EAC during workshops on regional trade facilitation. The Centre also engaged the LCBC as part of the development of a new Chad – Cameroon cross-border project. The team also met with the MRU during discussions for a Sierra Leone – Liberia programme.

VIII: Borderland communities and CSOs: UNDP emphasized community-level engagement throughout its programming and identified a list of borderland speakers to ensure their active presence in national and regional events, organized by ABC or where ABC was engaged. In partnership with LPI, ABC is supporting the development of a borderland cso network for East and Southern Africa which will help engagement with CSOs throughout the workstreams of ABC. ABC actively participates in the Borderlands Working Group for the Horn, coordinating research and policy with regional, national and borderland CSOs. Key CSOs partners so far include, Life and Peace Institute (LPI), the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), the African Borderlands Research Network (ABORNE), BORESHA, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Infotrak.

IX. Collaboration with the UN system: The Africa Borderlands Centre coordinates its data, research, programming, and policy work closely with its UN system partners. For example, the Africa Borderlands Centre worked closely with the Office of the UN Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa to conduct a conflict and programming entry point analysis for the Mandera triangle. The Centre also worked closely with the UN Peacebuilding Fund, which now has a dedicated focus on borderlands initiatives. The Centre engaged with UNISS, OCHA, IOM, UNHCR and WFP, has briefed the Special Envoys for the Sahel and Great Lakes and is working in close partnership with UN Country Teams and Resident Coordinator Offices in the 30 countries where ABC initiatives are operating. The Centre is also working closely with the World Bank through regular exchange on research and policy and by jointly co-chairing the ACMI workstream on borderlands. ABC is building on this partnership to expand to water in borderlands in 2023. UNDP has proactively contacted the World Bank, particularly the Horn of Africa Initiative team to identify opportunities for technical and financial collaboration.



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III. PERFORMANCE REVIEW

This section assesses the overall progress of the project towards different development outcomes and the overall capacity development process.

(i) Overall Progress Towards the Project Outcome

In its formulation, the project outcome was conceptualized as “Key stakeholders across Africa (i.e., AU, RECs, UNDP Country Offices, development partners) supported to more effectively engage in borderlands development to ensure that “no-one is left behind” in the achievement of Agenda 2063 and the SDG”.

The ABC has invested substantial time and focus on attaining inclusive growth, for populations at risk of being left behind in the SDGs, particularly in off-corridor border communities.

Key project achievements that contributed to the attainment of the overall objectives include:

- Developed an inclusive approach to developing new programmatic tools, evidence, connections, and convening platforms for a more intimate understanding of the borderlands. These include research and data work findings, innovation experiment findings, trade for peace, and the area-based portfolio approach.
- Elevated the voices of borderlands stakeholders, transforming their perception from developmentally peripheral, lawless and backward areas, to centres of resilience and creativity, with opportunities for development partnership.
- Generated strong evidence with proof that creativity and innovation that accelerates cross-border mobility, digitizes VSLAs, diversifies products from raw materials, and provides safety and security for ICBT practitioners are most critical to achieving AfCFTA objectives for the poorest and most left behind traders.
- Demonstrated nimbleness by responding to the devastating socio-economic impact of COVID-19 in Africa borderlands.
- Capacitated CSOs and CBOs in the borderlands to improve their interest articulation, programming, networking and advocacy roles, to enhance the sustainability of the borderlands approach to development partnership.
- Strengthened the quality of cross-border programming in UNDP Country Offices through inclusive, mutual learning and knowledge transfer processes.
- Mobilized influential actors at the sub-national, national, regional and international levels to improve the quality of their policy and programming interventions in the borderlands.
- Ventured to discuss, co-create and implement ideas on private sector support to the borderlands, with defined pathways for strengthening their roles in evidence-generation, risk management, funding, and sustainability.

- Developed an initial iteration of the model of borderlands programming based on lessons learned from active listening, community immersions, and dialogues with borderlands stakeholders. The model is encapsulated in the 4-pillar area-based portfolio.
- Strengthened the entry points for implementing the programming model by linking water resilience to value chain development, access to finance, climate-smart infrastructure, peacebuilding and social cohesion. This is particularly relevant for the off-corridor borderlands contexts.

(ii) Contributions to UNDP Strategic Plan, The Africa Promise and RPA Strategy

The work of the ABC is underpinned by the UNDP Strategic Plan (2022-2025), which seeks to achieve systemic change in areas of “structural transformation, leaving no one behind, and building resilience”. These transformations, read together, promote green, inclusive and digital transitions. They also prioritize a rights-based approach hinged on empowerment and inclusion while strengthening institutions to prevent, mitigate, and respond to crises. ABC’s core focus has been elevating voices of borderland communities as part of UNDP’s commitment to leaving no one behind, drawing attention to borderland communities, directing investments and influencing new policies and programmes to incorporate the needs of borderland communities better. ABC’s approach to borderlands development reinforces existing sources of community resilience and promotes sustainable approaches to structural transformation.

The UNDP Renewed Strategic Offer for Africa (Africa Promise), which derived its inspiration from the corporate UNDP Strategy, is geared toward strengthening UNDP’s position as Africa’s premier ENABLER and INTEGRATOR for the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the AU’s Agenda 2063. It has six signature solutions, organized around six strategic impact areas, viz: (1) Natural Resource Governance; (2) Youth Employment and Empowerment; (3) Structural Economic Transformation; (4) Sustainable Energy; (5) Climate Change; (6) Peace and Security.

The RPA Strategy (2022-225), inspired by the corporate strategic plan and the Africa Promise, is anchored on four key priorities: people, prosperity, planet and peace. It is premised on a people-centered process of integration, inclusive economic transformation, resilience building across the sub-regions on the continent, and promotion of the role of women and youth in achieving sustainable peace.

The six output areas of the ABC’s work were aligned to the objectives and signature solutions identified in the above-named normative documents. In its implementation, the Centre has prioritized digitization to increase access to finance and livelihoods of ICBT practitioners in the borderlands. It has implemented specific measures across its output areas to support mitigation and adaptation against climate vulnerabilities, particularly for climate-displaced populations in the borderland. Its crisis prevention work has focused mainly on building on the progress made by UNDP’s stabilization projects in the Sahel and Lake Chad to make the cross-border socio-economic and social cohesion milieu sustainable for the border communities.

The ABC’s investments in the realization of the signature solutions in the “Africa Promise” has been focused on supporting youth impacted by COVID-19 pandemic in the borderlands to rebuild their ICBT-related businesses, strengthening evidence capable of improving capital injection to micro-businesses in the borderlands, developing value chain that supports the conversion of commodities to finished goods, building climate-smart infrastructure for storage, processing and marketing of goods, and strengthening cross-border peacebuilding platforms.

The project provided substantial impetus for implementing RPA Strategy by ensuring that its activities are aligned to the broad objectives of the AU Border Governance Strategy to create a borderless continent. Its evidence-generation activities and advocacy for mobility facilitation has been a significant entry point across its six output areas, and the promotion of the roles of women and youth

in achieving inclusive growth and sustainable peace has been reinforced through its innovation and programming engagements.

(iii) Gender Mainstreaming

ABC's engagement in gender mainstreaming was implemented in line with the SDGs and to achieve the objectives of the AU Women and Youth Financial and Economic Inclusion Initiative (WYFEI), which provides the capabilities for them to contribute equally to societal development. The ABC Gender marker 2, outlined in the project document, obligates gender analysis to feed into the implementation design, activities, result framework and budgeting. In line with this, the project ensured that in capturing the voices of communities in its research and knowledge work, at least 50-50 gender parity was achieved. The thought leadership of women and youths were emphasized, with specific recommendations dedicated to them. In the innovation challenge, ideation stage activities targeted females involved in ICBT, young persons impacted by COVID-19, female leaders of CBTA's, female-managed VSLAs and females in the financial service sector. In addition, in at least 2 of the 4 experiments, women constitute between 60% and 75% of direct beneficiaries. In programming, female-headed households were prioritized for support whilst women groups involved in peacebuilding were supported to utilize their agencies in fostering cross-border social cohesion. Partnerships with UNDP COs also steered programme design and implementation in the direction of gender equity, whilst women-and-youth representatives formed about 80% of borderland advocates through which the resilience and creativity of the borderlands were ventilated. ABC has consistently ensured broad participation of women throughout its events, research and policy engagement and developed a list of female speakers to better gender balance panel discussions.

(iv) Human Rights Mainstreaming

The Human Rights Based Approach was utilized in implementing the project. The project utilized a participatory approach from planning to implementation. It regularly included marginalized, under-represented and excluded groups (such as illiterates, informal traders, and other disadvantaged groups) in the borderlands to review and validate knowledge, innovation and programming ideas. In programming, structural and proximate violence prevention against females engaged in ICBT was prioritized, in addition to providing technical and financial support to cross-border peace infrastructure on preventing sexual and gender-based violence. In addition to directly engaging these groups, other key partners working in the borderlands were also sensitized, through ABC's policy advocacy roles, on the need to include marginalized groups in their programming. Examples of this include during the AU Summit side events, community immersion meetings with borderlands municipal authorities, and making technical-level inputs into initiatives such as the ACMI.

(v) Synergy with UNDP Regional Service Centre for Africa (RSCA)

The RSCA's strategic visioning led to the establishment of the ABC. Its hands-on guidance at the critical stage of designing the Centre's outputs, implementation approaches, project governance mechanisms and management approach strengthened ABC's efficiency. The RPA has also provided leadership by crafting and co-implementing resource mobilization initiatives. The RPA provided the required leadership in the Centre's high-level engagements with the AU, ECOWAS, IGAD and COMESA. It also provided catalytic funding to ensure the achievement of the Centre's results, and followed through with resource mobilization conceptualization, missions and meetings on behalf of the Centre. Finally, it led efforts for integrated programming by connecting the ABC with other units within the RSCA.

Based on the leadership of RSCA, and in line with the thematic focus of the Centre, it always consulted all the teams in RSCA for inputs, participation, technical advice and collaboration in programme design and implementation. ABC regularly inputs into corporate briefing notes and presentations and has contributed to various RSC-wide initiatives as a member of the RSC partnership and data working groups. These include Governance and Peacebuilding, Inclusive Growth, Environment and Nature, Communications, Innovation, Gender, AfCFTA, and the Hubs in Nairobi, Dakar and Pretoria.

IV. Implementation Strategy Review

This section assesses the quality of the implementation strategy and how this has impacted on the project results. Key indicators analyzed include sustainability, participation, quality of partnerships and regional ownership.

(i) Sustainability

Co-creation of project ideas with local communities, based on their experiences, capabilities and preferences, has contributed to making ABC's interventions sustainable. In addition, partnership with the existing private sector, CSOs and NGOs partners in project design and implementation, which builds on their existing work and experience, enables business continuity after funding from the ABC must have been spent. The project team always endeavoured to connect with County/State/ Local Administrations. It was able to elicit their buy-in, to not only provide oversight on project activities but also to advocate for the long-term maintenance of infrastructure supported by the project. In addition to providing legitimacy and physical security, the local authorities also provide additional funding for the maintenance of the infrastructure in some cases. Finally, where possible, the ABC has ensured that our initiatives complement previous and/or ongoing initiatives by other development partners, feeding into long-term development partnerships with the targeted community. The financial sustainability of ABC-initiated projects and the Center itself remains difficult, and more work needs to be done to secure funding to scale and sustain the work of ABC.

(ii) Participatory/Consultative Processes

The formulation of the project was based on the shared vision of the clients, namely the AU and RECs, the borderland communities, UNDP Country Offices, Development Partners, CSOs and CBOs, research and knowledge networks, and other critical stakeholders. The ABC ensured participatory approaches across all the areas of its work, from design to validation, ideation to implementation, and monitoring to reporting. In addition, in-depth consultations were always held with peer institutions to enhance the complementarity of initiatives and prevent duplication. The first half of ABC's work has been about proof of concept, finding ideas that work and building a network also outside of the UN system, including with AU/RECs and CSOs. For the second part of the programme implementation phase, there will be a renewed emphasis on UN engagement, both through UN coordination mechanisms and at the bilateral level.

(iii) Quality of Partnerships

ABC's strategy was informed by the complex and cross-cutting thematic nature of borderlands programming. This requires UNDP, other UN Agencies, Development Partners, AU, RECs, sub-regional organizations, INGOs, CSOs, CBOs, and local stakeholders to work collaboratively. The project's primary clients have been the borderland communities, and the major intermediary to reach them has been the UNDP Country Offices. This strategy has produced mixed results, with remarkable success in some countries with COs with good cross-border experience and networking but with some challenges where the CO does not. Some communities often perceive the ABC as a donor and, as such, develop expectations that are non-realizable for the project. This also, at times, led some local stakeholders to focus on immediate livelihoods support, rather than co-creation of catalytic, medium-term pipelines of support, capable of leveraging the strengths of such community (however limited these strengths were).

Nevertheless, the project forged close relationships with the AU and RECs, leading to the acceptance of senior officials from both the AUC and IGAD, accepting to serve on the project board, and with the former serving as a Co-Chair. Specific requests from these organizations were also rapidly responded

to, in line with the project outputs. Within the initial 14 months of implementation, the project built partnerships across 21 African countries and gained healthy name recognition. At the end of the second year, it began narrowing down direct engagement to the most strategic partners such as the UNDP Country Offices, the AU, RECs, private sector, innovators, development partners and borderland community stakeholders.

In the second half of the project, increased partnership with other UN Agencies, security forces in the borderlands, and Member States of the AU is critical to the overall improvement of the quality of partnerships.

(iv). Regional Ownership

The project design and implementation are hinged on building on the development practices by borderland communities to influence a new way of implementing partnerships with the communities. In this regard, the AU's vision of a borderless Africa is central to the work of the ABC. Specific activities and outreaches were implemented with the AUC to enhance regional ownership. However, this is still a work in progress. Nevertheless, the ABC has commenced a process to give meaning to the term "regional ownership" by cultivating CSOs, under the auspices of the AU-ECOSOC, to mobilize borderlands CSOs on the continent for improved engagement in borderlands development.

V. Management Effectiveness Review

This section assesses the effectiveness of the project management structure in terms of monitoring, timeliness of action, resource allocation and cost-effective delivery.

(i) Monitoring and Evaluation

The project was monitored based on the milestones outlined in the project document, its Results and Resources Framework (RRF) and Annual Work Plans. Systematic and detailed monitoring was conducted under a common framework generated by the RPA, and quality was assured on ATLAS (now Quantum) and offline. The ABC Staff supported by the RPA, were primarily responsible for monitoring the progress of the activities under their respective outputs. Based on the implementation, Staff collated information on their respective workstreams, which became centralized into periodic monitoring reports on ATLAS. Periodic discussions were held with the RPA Coordinator and the staff, to discuss progress with project implementation. In addition, challenges relating to project implementation are collectively documented and addressed.

In the absence of meetings of the Technical Committee, several technical-level consultations were held with project implementers, beneficiaries and partners, to keep them updated with progress. In addition, the Project Board conducted its annual meetings, during which it was updated on project monitoring situations of the ABC. The project risk logs are shared as updated, during each meeting, and advice was provided to sharpen the implementation of the project.

(ii) Timely Delivery of Outputs

The work programme has been implemented within the stipulated time-frames, with minimal delays (average of 3-6 months) due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and security challenges which at times, made access to the borderland regions challenging. The outputs on research, data and innovation spilled from 2021 to 2022 but led to the exceptional delivery of results and improved quality of work. The extra time used also reinforced stakeholders' ownership and allowed enough time to generate the desired change. The workstream on programming also witnessed minimal delays, leading to no-cost extensions on the Trade for Peace and the Borderlands Socio-Economic

Development Workstreams. In most situations, activities implemented by NGOs and CBOs provided performed better in terms of timeliness of delivery.

(iii) Resource Allocation

In its initial 2 years, the project had utilised the sum of USD 5,203,747 on combined project implementation and staffing. The following table show resource utilization across project outputs.

Table 1: Expenditure Analysis per Output (2021-2022)

Project Outputs	2021	2022
Project management	1,318,143.00	1,449,000.00
1.1 Analysis and Knowledge Production	621,460.00	460,000.00
1.2 Good Practice and Lessons Learned	1,050.00	56,308.00
1.3 Policy and Programming	130,737.00	150,000.00
2.1 Technical and Programming Support	106,568.00	400,000.00
2.2 Policy Advocacy	-	1,000.00
2.3 Partnerships	181,038.00	328,000.00
Total Expenditures	2,259,439.00	2,884,308.00

On value for money, the project has been implemented following UNDP Procurement Policy, ensuring maximum benefits from procured goods and services. Procurement has been implemented in close coordination with UNDP Kenya. Project management has also exhibited transparency and accountability in the utilization of resources. Competitive procurement of goods and services has also leveraged the resources and tools of UNDP, especially upholding the best value for money, fairness, integrity, and transparency. To save cost and time, open calls for proposals have also been supplemented by utilising the UNDP Global Policy Network (GPN) Roster to recruit and deploy consultants.



Photo Credit: Temidayo Ibitoye

VI. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

This section provides an overview of risks and mitigation during the project implementation.

#	Description	Date Identified	Type	Impact	Mitigation Measures / Management response	Status
1	Limited understanding of borderlands programming and engagement with the ABC	2021	Programmatic	Project outputs perceived as classic multi-country programming	Community immersion, sensitization sessions, co-creation, consultations and joint ideation, formulation and implementation by ABC and its clients. Development of knowledge tools to guide implementation of the ABC's work	Resolved
2	Travel restrictions and operational challenges occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic	2021	Operational	Project implementation was delayed and at times, it was impossible to engage directly with borderland communities.	Project used online medium to reach key stakeholders and facilitated staff travels to rural borderland areas within the context of UNDP policies.	Resolved
3	Security restrictions in the Liptako Gourma Borderlands	2021-2022	Strategic/ Security	Delay in implementation due to worsening security in the targeted borderlands.	Risk transfer to third-party partners with boots on the grounds in the borderland areas. Effective coordination with security forces. Deployment of on-line monitoring by project staff to keep track of progress of project initiatives.	Resolved
4	Inadequate Project Visibility of the project results in the initial implementation period	2021	Programmatic	The project results were not as visible to funding partners.	A new communications approach was developed, leading to the production of new tools, the production of the 2021 Annual Report, and the	Resolved

					improvement of social media outreaches.	
5	Limited leverage of some clients to implement borderlands programming	2021-2023	Programmatic	Limited local partnerships, leading to inability to maximise the opportunities for development impact	The project explored direct contact with local NGOs with capacity, risk management mechanisms and proven development results, and paired them, where possible with our primary clients.	On-Going
6	Reluctance of borderlands stakeholders to implement innovation, due to COVID-19 related socio-economic impact and other challenges	2021-2023	Programmatic	Many partners preferred direct interventions to address poverty and insecurity	The Project had a proactive engagement to deliver a portfolio of solutions, using immediate relief support as entry points to improve innovations, data mining, elevation of voices, etc.	On-Going
7	Limited Project impact due to wide funding gaps and limited success of resource mobilization by the project	2021-2023	Operational	Resource gaps have severally limited the scale and depth of implementation	Several outreaches, pitches, presentations and sensitizations have been made to donors. Also, project results have been well communicated. The RPA has also provided support to improve resource mobilization. New initiative has been established on water access.	On-Going
8	Limited support from the AU in the implementation of the project initiatives with RECs	2021-2023	Strategic	Limited success in setting solid foundation for ABC's policy-influencing role	Several outreaches have been implemented with the AUC and RECs to improve understanding of programmatic opportunities and commitment	On-Going

9	Complicated RFPs and procurement processes limited project team creativity in taking maximum advantage of borderlands innovation	2022	Programmatic/ Operational	Limited impact of innovative digital financial inclusion through the VSLAs and Tech-Start Ups for the most left-behind communities.	The project has considered options to work with NGOs/CSOs to provide grants, with potential of achieving only limited success.	On-Going
10	Non-Conduct of the second Technical Committee Meeting	2022	Strategic	All stakeholders, across several micro-projects did not meet to discuss issues.	Based on observation in 2021, the project size and decentralized micro-projects structure ensured that implementing stakeholders met regularly and were consulted on critical issues, thus making it necessary to save time by not convening additional technical meetings. Moreover, the Technical Committee was not mandated by the Project Document, and many of the TC members are also represented on the Board.	On-Going
11	Limited incentives to institutionalize the ABC's work with UNDP Country Offices, most of which have limited experience in borderland programming	2021-2023	Strategic	Engagement has been mainly <i>ad hoc</i> , there is limited uptake on the thought leadership role of the Centre. COs have often not integrated the borderlands approach to their CPDs. Funding Windows have not taken cognizance of the borderland opportunities. Funding commitment to borderlands programming by COs has been unimpressive	The Project consistently engaged with the RRs, providing opportunities for co-creating, deriving mutual benefits, and improving CO's cross-border work.	On-Going



Photo Credit: Temidayo Ibitoye

VII. GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED

GOOD PRACTICES

1. Strategic Support by the RBA Leadership

The RBA leadership provided the vision, detailed guidance, periodic reporting and accountability mechanisms, including regular reports to the regional director of the RBA on the progress recorded and challenges experienced in project implementation.

2. Inclusive Approach to Project Design and Implementation

The co-creation of the borderlands main project and other micro-projects with ordinary borderlands people, the AU, RECs, and Experts ensured that its objectives reflected the clients' development vision, needs and preferences. At the implementation phase, each activity is, in return, co-created through existing sounding boards, specially convened review sessions and collective intelligence workshops. ABC took on board the experiences of experts and professionals in different technical fields, building-in risk mitigation measures, based on the practical experience of stakeholders, into project design and implementation. This enabled the realistic and practical design of project initiatives and strengthened project stakeholders' ownership of implemented activities.

3. Diagnostics Through Community Immersion Exercises

ABC prioritized active listening, observation, and engagement with marginal actors as standard practice in developing project ideas. It visited over 25 borderlands to gain a first-hand understanding of the way of life, developmental aspirations, local nuances, and immediate, medium and long-term objectives. It also improved its understanding of the actors and factors that could accelerate multidimensional growth. It gained a frog-eye view of needs and opportunities. Through these engagements, it was able to learn and strengthen learning for its other key partners involved in project implementation. The learning also led to top-notch diagnosis of development challenges, opportunities and the most promising entry points to implement programmes. These factors enabled the development of innovative programme ideas, owned and driven by borderland communities.

4. Integrated Programming Across all Outputs

The implementation of the ABC workstreams ensured that each output is synergized and mutually reinforcing. Overall, the research and data work provided evidence that strengthened innovation and programming. Advocacy and partnerships are mainstreamed across all the outputs, while communications leverage the contacts and perspectives derivable from all the outputs. The ABC strived to strengthen coordination and joint implementation with the RBA and RSCA Units, leading to the co-implementation of some of the most impactful activities. The synergy with UNDP COs cuts across different thematic areas. In addition, lessons learned in the initial implementation year led to the iteration of an integrated programming guide, which provides a portfolio approach –cross-cutting programming that embraces the multidimensional challenges and opportunities in the borderlands – as the most critical pathway to borderland programming.

5. Utilization of Community-Based Resources to Support Project Implementation

As a sustainability strategy, ABC endeavoured as much as possible not to create new platforms, networks and stakeholders for project implementation but rather utilized existing networks and platforms. In addition to their acceptance within the communities and their excellent understanding of the issues, the local stakeholders also have intimate understanding of risks and opportunities for synergizing with local authorities. Based on the foregoing, the ABC empowered key stakeholders to implement projects with reasonable autonomy, financial empowerment, and operational oversight. This ensured that project implementation was not burdened by bureaucratic constraints and did not obstruct the creativity of the local partners.

6. Flexibility and Adaptability on Policy Influencing

The actual implementation of the project has been nimble, flexible and adaptable enough to continuously scan for opportunities, connect with influentials within and outside the UN System, seize momentum and platforms that were ab initio unrelated to borderland works, but capable of elevating voices from the borderlands. Some of the examples of such initiatives, which have helped project the Centre's thought leadership include the AU PSD Conference, YouthConnectk, AU Summit 2023, and IGAD High-Level Meetings. The ABC has also utilized UNDP GPN knowledge platforms to socialize its work with a wide array of stakeholders, which contributed to elevating the voices of borderlands stakeholders and providing visibility for the solutions being implemented by the Centre.

7. Facilitation of Development Partners Engagement in Project Implementation

Partnerships are central to the ABCA's work. Bilateral and multilateral partners (many of whom were not contributing partners) have continued to be engaged to influence their perceptions, engagements and interest in borderland programming. Several bilateral validation and knowledge-sharing sessions were organized. The partners were also provided with the membership of the project board and provided periodic updates on the project progress. Immediate observations included increased interest in borderland programming and increased dedicated funding for initiatives, similar to the ABC portfolio approach to borderlands programming.

8. Strengthening of Borderlands Networking

A key success factor for the project is using existing networks to provide additional entry points for borderlands and cross-border programming in Africa. With their deep understanding of the issues, actors, nuances and development opportunities, organized networks have proven invaluable in guiding the ABC on quality programming. Associational life in the borderlands is often built around religious and traditional organizations, socio-cultural groups, family and kinship. These structures were embraced and cultivated to garner deep context understanding. In addition, organized cross-border traders associations, farmers, agropastoralists, and peacebuilding groups, with a solid connection to the local and non-formal institutions, provided indigenous knowledge, which was factored into the design of ABC's interventions, and in part, accounted for the achievement of the set results at mid-term.

9. Staff Commitment, Dexterous and Uncomplicated Project Management Arrangements

The ABC was implemented by a team of dedicated professionals, with a high degree of commitment. Project implementation commenced during the COVID-19 pandemic with restrictions on movement heightened risks of COVID-19 transmission and difficult family situations. Despite these factors, the team achieved all the set milestones and creatively provided solutions to obstacles. This helped build a high level of trust and confidence, allowing for creative approaches to solving problems. Tools and additional support were implemented to ensure effective delivery and work-life balance during the pandemic.

In addition, smart approaches were utilized to facilitate operational support for the implementation of the project, leveraging resources from UNDP Kenya CO, the RSCA and the GPN. The need for effective time management, coupled with COVID-19 difficulties, led to limiting technical-level meetings for the project, which enabled more intense focus on technical-level consultations to achieve project outputs.

LESSONS LEARNED

There are some pertinent lessons to be learned from the mid-point implementation of the project. The project has, however, taken proactive measures to act on them. They are as follows:

1. Entry Point(s) for Area-Based Programming through Groundwater Access Facility

The Africa Borderlands Centre flagship research identified that water is 70% of the challenge in the borderlands communities of Africa. Also whilst the Area-Based Portfolio Approach to borderland programming represents an overarching programming model for the borderlands, the realities of each border region varies. This makes it challenging to implement the programme rigidly. In response to this, ABC has taken measures for a more flexible application of the design, considering the need to adapt local realities. Secondly, for the Arid and Semi-Arid (ASAL) regions in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, UNDP has developed a water access portfolio integrated with the Area-Based Portfolio Approach.

Given that 80% of the water supply and water for development in these areas is abstracted from groundwater, the UNDP ABC established a partnership with the World Bank Group. The partnership involves technical assistance to phase 1 of the World Bank Group Horn of Africa Groundwater for Resilience programme. UNDP used its data expertise to map and analyse factors of specific sustainability.

The work was presented in 2023 and is moving into the next collaboration stage in phase 2. UNDPs technical assistance is leveraging the investments towards borderland communities and reveals that only 20% of the borderlands in the Horn of Africa have investments in groundwater. Therefore, UNDP ABC are mobilizing new partnerships with other IFIs and Climate Funds.

To ensure the top-notch implementation of this, a Water Advisor has been deployed to implement this within the borderlands and provide integrated support to UNDP in the RBA region. To support this water offer from the UNDP ABC, there is a need for a review of the capacity and financing needs for the water hub component of the ABC.

2. Thought Leadership and Policy Influencing.

The project has produced several knowledge products, and team members have shared their knowledge and experiences, which has significantly helped project the Centre's thought leadership. However, there are no sufficient pathways through which ABC's learning and knowledge-influencing roles could become institutionalized. Based on this, the project needs to redouble its efforts at strengthening learning and knowledge transfer outside of UNDP and UN-based Platforms, based on the lessons learned in its initial implementation phase. This should be done in close coordination with existing knowledge platforms and networks. ABC's knowledge ecosystem should also be more connected to UNDP mainstream programme colleagues for better horizontal and vertical learning.

3. Data Partnerships as Sustainability Pathway.

Maximizing the impact of data requires enhanced partnerships with primary stakeholders involved in borderlands development, including the people, local authorities, National Statistical Organizations (NSOs), AU, UN Agencies, RECs, and knowledge institutions from the private sector. Rather than focus mainly on data mining, ABC should explore a more partnership-centric approach that seeks to coordinate, harmonize, and maximize the use of existing data and analysis gathered across different organizations. It should also explore its leaning on its comparative advantage in either analysis, joint horizon scanning or dissemination of the data. The Centre has been able to produce top-notch data for the use of borderlands stakeholders. However, within the current institutional design of ABC, ensuring the sustainability of the knowledge tool and making it useful for the broad range of stakeholders could not be achieved. Therefore, the Centre has commenced the process of identifying data partners for the sustainability of its foundational work. Following its first borderlands data forum in early 2023, it resolved to facilitate the Africa Borderlands Data Alliance (ABDA) in close concert with other partners. The ABDA is expected to provide a platform for partners involved in data management in the borderland to coordinate their functions, thus ensuring that data users are able to maximize access and usage.

4. Generating Impact At Scale Requires Adequate Resource Mobilization.

The Centre fell short of its resource mobilization targets in its first half, though it achieved tremendous progress in overall partnerships management, visibility, and high-profile engagements with development partners. The resource mobilization challenges are partly attributable to geographic reprioritization by most development partners. Nevertheless, the project implemented several innovative measures to improve resource mobilization, including specific bilateral and multilateral outreaches, supporting COs to develop more proposals, co-creating new projects with IGAD, etc. To build on these initiatives in the second half of project implementation, it plans to develop and implement very clear resource mobilization strategy, with key indicators, milestones and deliverables, targeted at non-traditional donors like the private sector, IFIs, impact investors and Governments in Africa.

5. Deliberate Strategy/ Partnerships for Scaling Innovation in the Borderlands.

The innovation work of the Centre has been largely focused on generating proof of concept to improve access to finance in the borderlands. It has also co-created a pathway for DFI in the borderlands. However, an appreciation of the borderlands innovation ecosystem is lacking. Therefore, it is critical to invest in solution mapping in the borderlands. In addition, piloted initiatives should be implemented at scale to demonstrate to key partners, their "ready-for-market" value addition. These are priority areas for the ABC as project implementation continues.

6. Institutionalizing the Engagement with UNDP Country Offices.

The project has made progress in implementing specific borderland activities in close coordination with over 20 COs across Africa. However, the borderland lens of UNDP CO Programming still needs improvement. Also, incentives for integrating borderlands in their programming are weak. In this regard, the linkages between borderlands and UNDP CO Programming should be strengthened through deliberate joint efforts with the COST team in RBA HQ in New York, to improve development effectiveness and leverage UNDP internal funding opportunities.

7. Strengthening the Co-Leadership Role of the AUC.

The AUC had co-chaired the 2 project board meetings since the inception of the ABC. It provided its PSD High-Level Conference platform for the ABC to undertake policy advocacy for its work. It has also hosted a number of technical meetings aimed themed on the borderlands and has made inputs into the major outputs of the Centre. However, there is a need for improvement in providing the leadership for the ABC's engagement with RECs and joint resource mobilization. In addition, the ABC should serve as a major resource centre for the achievement of the AU Border Governance Strategy and the objectives of the AUBP.

VIII. FINANCIAL STATUS AND UTILIZATION

Financial Summary


The fund utilization for the ABC up until May 2023 is as summarized below;

Approved Budget:	USD 30,000,000
Fund Received:	USD 9, 182, 266
Expenditures to date:	USD 8,272, 827
Fund Balance:	USD 909,439



www.undp.org/africa/africa-borderlands-centre
www.stories-undpborderlands.org



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