

DESCRIPTION

AfCFTA Implementation & Trade Readiness is an independent PHC Public Interest project established to monitor the gap between the African Continental Free Trade Area’s legal and policy framework and its practical commercial usability.

The project will maintain evidence concerning the conditions that determine whether businesses can actually make use of AfCFTA across specific countries, sectors, products and trade corridors.

Rather than treating AfCFTA as a single continent-wide condition that is either “ready” or “not ready”, the project will examine the practical factors that determine usability, including tariff schedules, Guided Trade Initiative participation, rules of origin, services offers, customs and documentation processes, national implementation structures, payment systems, domestic regulation, infrastructure and business awareness.

PHC will use Concerns, evidence, actions, proposals and periodic assessments to maintain a continuously updated picture of implementation progress, obstacles and opportunities.

OBJECTIVES

1. Establish and maintain a transparent evidence base covering practical AfCFTA implementation.
2. Identify and monitor the Concerns preventing businesses from using AfCFTA effectively.
3. Track implementation readiness by country, sector and trade corridor.
4. Convert policy and analytical findings into identifiable actions, responsibilities and measurable progress.
5. Improve visibility of practical trade opportunities for African businesses, particularly SMEs.
6. Identify businesses, infrastructure providers, financial services, logistics organisations and other participants capable of supporting functioning trade routes.
7. Provide a public platform through which evidence, experience and constructive feedback can be retained rather than lost in short-lived social-media discussion.
8. Develop practical PHC assessment services for organisations wishing to demonstrate their capability and trustworthiness within African trade.
9. In time, support specific trade-route readiness assessments based on accumulated evidence.
10. Build a sustainable subscription-supported public-interest information resource without allowing subscribers to control its conclusions.

BACKGROUND

The African Continental Free Trade Area creates the legal framework for one of the world’s largest potential integrated markets, but implementation remains uneven.

The existence of the agreement does not by itself mean that a particular product or service can move efficiently from one African country to another under preferential terms. Commercial usability depends on multiple interacting conditions, including tariff schedules, rules of origin, customs procedures, certification, national regulation, payment systems, logistics and the ability of businesses to understand and use the framework.

The immediate inspiration for this PHC Project came from Salefu Ngbede’s article Africa’s Free Trade Zone Has a Filing Cabinet Problem, which highlighted the distinction between AfCFTA’s formal existence and its practical usability, and argued for closer attention to the administrative, documentary and implementation barriers that continue to constrain trade.

The article also proposed a practical set of implementation indicators that could be tracked repeatedly rather than discussed once and forgotten. That approach strongly aligned with the PHC principle of maintaining evidence over time, identifying Concerns, recording change and converting analysis into practical follow-through.

This project is therefore independently established by PHC as a Public Interest project inspired in part by that analysis. It is not currently affiliated with, endorsed by, or operated in partnership with Salefu Ngbede, Adaln Technologies Limited, The Liquidity Desk, the African Union or the AfCFTA Secretariat. Any future contributor, advisory, commercial or partnership relationship would be separately agreed and recorded.

PHC Project Health Control provides a structure for retaining relevant evidence, converting identified problems into Concerns and Actions, and maintaining the resulting information over time.

The project begins not with the assumption that AfCFTA is failing, but with the practical question:

What must be true for AfCFTA to be commercially usable for a particular business, product, service or trade corridor — and how do we know whether those conditions are being met?

The intention is to create a continuously maintained evidence base that helps distinguish between what is legally possible, what is administratively ready, what is commercially usable today, and what still requires intervention.

IMPACT SUMMARY

The intended impact is to help move AfCFTA discussion from general ambition towards observable implementation. The project will make it easier to see where trade is already practicable, where it remains constrained, what is causing the constraint and what action could improve the situation.

Over time, the project should help connect businesses seeking cross-border opportunities with credible participants in the trade ecosystem, while providing a maintained evidence base that can support governments, investors, SMEs, logistics providers, financial institutions, advisers and other stakeholders.

Success would be demonstrated not by the volume of commentary generated, but by increasingly usable trade routes, resolved implementation Concerns, better-informed commercial decisions and growing participation by African enterprises.

DOCUMENT LINKS

Africa’s Free Trade Zone Has a Filing Cabinet Problem: Linkedin Article Source
Project Info: [1]_Project_Info.pdf
Framing Questions: [2]_Framing_Questions.pdf
Strategic Plan: [3]_Strategic_Plan.pdf
Manifesto: [4]_Manifesto.pdf
Business Case: [5]_Business_Case.pdf
Phc Proposal: [6]_PHC_Proposal.pdf
Plan 90: [7]_90_Day_Plan.pdf