

Article

# Interagency Collaboration and Effective Land Border Management in South West, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** This research concentrates on cooperation between different government institutions, and the efficient management of land borders in South-Western Nigeria. The objectives of the study sought to assess the association of restricted imports with the operational land border control in South-Western Nigeria and the association of multi-stakeholder collaboration with land border control in the region. The study's objectives gave rise to two research questions and hypotheses, which were tested. The Stakeholders' theory was the theoretical framework for the research. The research method used in this case was survey design. The respondents' replies constituted the primary data, whilst documents from various research worked constituted the secondary data. The respondents were survey participants who filled out a standardized questionnaire. The results were analysed using Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient and were presented in tables. The study's findings revealed that multi-stakeholder collaboration has a significant relationship with physical land border management in South West, Nigeria, and that import prohibitions have a significant relationship with operational land border management in South West, Nigeria. flowing from the findings, the study recommended that interagency collaboration with the National Agency for Food, Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC) and the Standards Organization of Nigeria (SON) should be encouraged so that goods that escape the nation's borders are intercepted in the market. Also, the appropriate tariff and fines due for such goods should be imposed in order to forestall and possibly recover the economic losses that the nation might have incurred as a result of the economic sabotage called smuggling.

**Keywords:** Interagency Collaboration, Anti-smuggling, Land Border, Management, Nigeria

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## 1. Introduction

The management of a country's border is central to every country's trade and economic policies. The interdependence of countries has made it impossible for any country to exist in isolation. Even countries like North Korea, with heavy international sanctions, still interact strategically with allied nations. Interaction among countries lead to the movement of persons, goods and services. Therefore, every country maintains land, air and sea borders to control the inflow and outflow of persons, goods and services from their domains. For a country like Nigeria, the land border is the most critical. According to a World Bank report cited by Mohammed, goods worth more than 5 billion dollars are smuggled into Nigeria through Benin Republic alone every year. This is so because of the vast landmass in the country, coupled with the fact that most of its boundaries with its neighbours – Cameroon, Benin Republic, Niger, etc., are land borders [1][2].

Therefore, in addition to several measures taken to effectively combat smuggling and better manage the nation's land borders, the Muhammadu Buhari led Federal government in 2019, implemented a comprehensive land border closure as part of a wider programme to limit the smuggling of goods, particularly rice and fuel, which were undermining local industries and reducing customs revenue [3]. However, the impact of these anti-smuggling policies on border management has been mixed. While government officials claim that policies like border closure, the different tariff regimes and the publication of a list of prohibited goods have reduced smuggling and boosted customs revenue, others point to significant challenges that remain. Border communities, in particular, have been negatively affected by the closures and heightened restrictions, which have cut off their economic lifelines, leading to increased poverty and unemployment in these areas [4]. Additionally, there have been reports of smuggling activities shifting to more remote and less policed areas, rendering some of the policies less effective [5]. The unintended consequences of these policies have also strained Nigeria's diplomatic relations with its neighbours, especially Benin Republic, which relies heavily on trade with Nigeria [6].

Additionally, the reliance on border closures as a primary tool of anti-smuggling policy has raised concerns about the sustainability of such measures. Scholars like Abdullahi, and Abdulrazak; Abiodun and Akaayar have argued that while border closures may offer short-term relief, they fail to address the root causes of smuggling, such as weak governance and poor interagency collaboration among the Customs Service and other security agencies at the various land borders. In view of the multifaceted nature of land border management, this study therefore seeks to critically examine the relationship between interagency collaboration and effective land border management in South West, Nigeria [7].

### **Statement of the problem**

Nigeria land borders are wide and porous [8]. With an approximately 923,769 square kilometers of land mass, the nation shares borders with neighbouring countries like Chad, Niger Republic, Cameroon, and Benin Republic [9]. Also, the country's proximity to countries like Togo, Ghana, Mali, among others makes her a strategic player in the West African subregion in particular, and the African continent at large. Cross-border crimes, including drug trafficking and the smuggling of illegal items such as shoes, frozen chicken products, imported automobiles with unpaid customs fees, foreign parboiled rice, and gasoline, were made possible and maintained by these porous borders [10].

The Nigerian Customs Service collaborates with other security agencies in the management of the nation's land borders, but are chiefly responsible for the certification of the movement of goods in and out of the country through any of its borders – land, air or sea. However, the various components of land border management appear to contribute to defeating the anti-smuggling objectives of the nation as chiefly implemented by the Nigerian Customs Service. On the physical components, many of the nation's land borders lack appropriate physical demarcations, border posts, fence barriers and effective surveillance system – like the Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) and aerial drone systems. The Idiroko border in Ogun state, South West Nigeria for instance, has alternative bush paths for every barricaded border area and checkpoints, and these areas remain flashpoints for smugglers. Aided by the challenges of large expanse of land and the active connivance of the people living in border communities, the illicit economy of smuggling continues to thrive [11].

Another component of land border management revolves around its operational dynamics. Issues such as border patrol, intelligence gathering, inspection of goods, and collection of tariffs are also affected by human factors. Smugglers are often in the habit of using their clearing agents to coopt some officials from sister security agents into their scheme. This is because, the institutional component of land border management is expected to see the Nigerian Customs Service work in collaboration with the Nigeria Immigration Service and other security agencies. However, issues of interagency collaboration remain a challenge that see agencies working in competition instead of

cooperating with one another, thereby working at cross purposes and undermining the anti-smuggling objectives of the government. Sadly, the Nigerian Customs Service has, at different times, had course to battle with corrupt officials of other security agencies who aid and abet smuggling. In view of the foregoing, this study examines the relationship between interagency collaboration and effective land border management in South West, Nigeria [12].

### **Objectives of the study**

The broad objective of this study is to examine the relationship between interagency collaboration and effective land border management in South West, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to;

1. Determine the relationship between multi-stakeholders' collaboration and physical land border management in South West, Nigeria.
2. Ascertain the relationship between import prohibitions and operational land border management in South West, Nigeria.

### **Research questions**

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What relationship exist between multi-stakeholders' collaboration and physical land border management in South West, Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between import prohibitions and operational land border management in South West, Nigeria?

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study:

1. **Ho:** Multi-stakeholders' collaboration has no significant relationship with physical land border management in South West, Nigeria.
2. **Ho:** Import prohibitions have no significant relationship with operational land border management in South West, Nigeria.

### **Review of related literature**

**Customs services in Nigeria and around the world:** The Nigeria Customs Service is a Federal Government agency that is responsible for the regulation and control of the movement of goods in and out of the country, among other related functions. The Customs Service in Nigeria is backed by statutes like the Customs and Excise Management Act (CEMA) 1959, amended in 1966, 1979, and 2004, now replaced with the Nigerian Customs Service Act of 2023. The Customs Service in Nigeria does not operate in isolation, there are Customs bodies in every country of the world. Globally, we have the World Customs Organization (WCO).

The Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) and the World Customs Organization (WCO) are key institutions in the administration and regulation of international trade. While the NCS operates as Nigeria's border control and revenue-generating agency, the WCO serves as a global platform for harmonizing and modernizing customs procedures. Their symbiotic relationship reflects a shared commitment to facilitating legal trade, combating smuggling, and aligning national customs procedures with international standards [13].

The World Customs Organisation, founded in 1952 as the Customs Co-operation Council (CCC), is an autonomous intergovernmental entity dedicated to improving the efficacy and efficiency of Customs administrations. The WCO was established with 17 member nations, but in 1994, it was rebranded to signify its growing international significance. Headquartered in Brussels, the WCO now boasts of over 180 member countries, covering 98 percent of world trade [14]. The WCO, as the worldwide hub of Customs knowledge, is the only international organisation with authority in Customs affairs and may justifiably claim to represent the entire Customs community. The WCO, as the preeminent international customs organisation, is committed to:

- a) Developing and promoting international customs standards.
- b) Providing technical assistance and capacity building to member countries.
- c) Ensuring security and efficiency in the global supply chain.
- d) Encouraging harmonization of customs procedures across nations.

Nigeria has been a member of the WCO since its early years and actively participates in policy formulation and technical workshops. This partnership facilitates knowledge exchange and enables the NCS to implement best practices in customs management [15].

**Border and borderland:** A border refers to a line that divides one territory from another. A border refers to a line that divides and sets apart a geo-spatial region. Borders in political terms, set apart the borders of a country, a nation, a state, province, county, municipality, and even a city or town. A boundary defines the area under the control of a particular governing body. A regional level government is only permitted to design and operationalise a piece of legislation within the territory ascribed to it. Caflisch refers to a border in the broadest sense as a particularly state area of jurisdiction, whereas Lamptey describes the border as a static model of territorial boundaries which primitive may be marked by artificial borders stones, walls, and even fences, and in a more sophisticated fashion, by river systems, mountain ranges, and trees that possess border-marking attributes. Borders serve the major purpose of geo-boundaries, which is to identify and locate. Borders serve to geo-separate the social, political, economic, or cultural functions of one area from the other. Moreover, Martinez describes the social groups living along the borders in two main categories: national border landers and transnational border landers.

National border landers are people who, as a result of foreign economic and cultural influences, have almost no contact with the border side of the border. This is caused by a lack of empathy towards the adjacent people, as well as unwillingness or inability to connect with a different society in a meaningful manner. Transnational border landers are people who maintain strong ties with the neighbouring state and who try to overcome obstacles to such relations, taking every opportunity to travel, shop, work, study, or live temporarily across the border. As a result, a great deal of their life is heavily influenced by foreign factors. For a great many inhabitants of transnational borders, such factors may be considered marginal. On the other hand, as for people who are heavily intra-cross border engaged, foreign influences are of paramount importance in defining important aspects of their life [16].

In relation to other issues, particularly the increased borderless exchange of goods, information, and people, the removal of exchange control on the movement of capital, the rapid growth of foreign direct investment, the cultural globalisation of major consumer products, and the globalisation of communication and information networks, Globalisation of Neoliberalism has emphasized the discipline of borders. Particularly, borders have become a central focus of concern. States delineate borders to protect areas considered important for their population or natural resources, or for political and symbolic relations with the state. The borders delineate the parameters of the state's eminent domain as well as probable cordial ties with some of the neighbouring states, or hostility with the others.

**Land border management in Nigeria:** Africa's borderlands are often poorly defined, and border control is further complicated by infrastructure deficiencies, corruption, and weak governance [17]. Many West African nations, including Nigeria, are party to regional trade and migration agreements, resulting or, one might say, leading to memberships in organisations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This regional economic integration, however, has exacerbated border mismanagement particularly the phenomena of cross-border smuggling along with a wider range of land border security [18].

With respect to volume of border traffic, Nigeria's southern and southwestern frontiers rank among the busiest and most difficult to police in all of West Africa. The common frontiers with the Republic of Benin and the Republic of Togo are notorious for their ease of penetration by all manner of illicit parties smugglers, traffickers, and undocumented migrants of all stripes. According to the research of Adewuyi and Bankole, these land borders remain not only poorly controlled and deficiently structured, leading, in turn, to the uncontrolled spread of fuel vandalism and the illegal fuel smuggling of

derivative fuels and strategically controlled items such as rice and vehicles. The case of Nigeria, and particularly southwestern Nigeria, illustrates the poorly studied land border control. The relative porosity of the border is of primary concern alongside the uncontrolled migration of crossers along the vertical and horizontal plane of border control.

The matter of unchecked customs equipment and lack of modern monitoring technology adds to the problem of border surveillance [19]. In addition, the economy of bordering communities has resulted in an almost reliance on smuggling which results in less than effective border control. This also means that border communities need the integration of other forms of economic assistance.

Managing land borders, specifically in the South-West of Nigeria, remains particularly difficult due to border porosity, economic factors, and ineffective governance. While supplying the border community with supportive economics has been proven to buffer perturbation, the governance of Nigeria has tried to resolve smuggling with border security through anti-smuggling policies. This has resulted in greater socio-economic turmoil and proved the policies to be ineffective. The governance surrounding misinformation and border control with development has proven to be effective.

### **Theoretical framework**

The foundation for this research lies within the Stakeholder Theory paradigm. Organisational theorist Ian Mitroff first articulated stakeholder theory in his 1983 book "Stakeholders of the Organisational Mind." In 1983, R. Edward Freeman, a philosopher and professor of business administration, wrote an essay on stakeholder theory that was published in the California Management Review. Freeman does not cite Mitroff; instead, he attributes the genesis of stakeholder theory to conversations at the Stanford Research Institute. Shortly thereafter, he published his book "Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach."

Every stakeholder has an interest in a particular project, firm, or organisation. In the context of project management, a stakeholder is a person or a group that has been impacted by the outcome of a particular project. Stakeholders may belong to an organisation or lie outside of it. In all instances, however, they have a high level of interest in the project and its outcomes. In brief, stakeholders are important. They are the sponsors of a project or an organisation, and they are determined to see it through. This, however, does not mean they stand by and do nothing. Stakeholders are active, and their activities have an impact which, depending on their actions, can either be positive or negative.

People and all the socio-technical aspects of a project or an organisation, including top management, project managers, team, customers, and users, are within the reach of stakeholders. Managers need to allocate their time and resources to the most important stakeholders: those who have the most power, are the most proximate, and have the most time sensitivity. This has the most urgent and important impact on a project. This is the beginning of stakeholder theory. Stakeholder theory deals with the ethics, morals, and values concerned with the management of the people who have a project or an organisation associated with it. Stakeholder theory is concerned with improving the stakeholder's relations, and therefore improving the overall project or organisation effectiveness.

The works of researchers who have written about stakeholder theory are relevant to the particular study. The Nigerian public sector is akin to an organisation, with a multiplicity of stakeholders. In Nigeria, the principle of externalities, which states that any person who is affected by the activities of a given organisation is a stakeholder, applies: all Nigerians are stakeholders in the Nigerian public sector. Public servants in Nigeria, as per the agency principle of the stakeholder theory, act as the agents of the Nigerian people and as such hold certain responsibilities towards the stakeholders [20].

## **2. Materials and Methods**

**Research Design:** Survey research design.

**Area of the Study:** Seme and Idiroko land borders in Lagos and Ogun states, South West, Nigeria.

**Source of Data:** Primary and Secondary.

**Population of Study:** 728 Officers of the Nigeria Customs Service serving at the borders in the area of the study

**Sample Size Determination:** We obtained a sample size of 258 using the Taro Yamane formula.

**Method of Data Analysis:** Descriptive statistics, such as frequency counts and percentages, were used to look at the data that had been collected in order to answer the research questions. Consequently, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to assess the assumptions. We sent out 258 questionnaires, and 245 of them were filled up and submitted back. This is the same as 95% of the people that took part (Table 1).

### 3. Results and Discussion

**Table 1.** Responses to the variable; Multi-stakeholders' Collaboration N = 245

S/ N	QUESTIONS	$\Sigma fx$	X	Decision
1	While the Customs Service checkmates the movement of goods in and out of the borders, the Immigration Service checkmates the movement of persons across the borders.	790	3.2	Agreed
2	For effective anti-smuggling operations, the Customs Service and the Immigration Service must work in collaboration and not in competition.	1015	4.1	Agreed
3	As the lead anti-smuggling agency, the Nigeria Customs should lead other security agencies in this regard.	1017	4.1	Agreed
4	The multiplicity of checkpoints around the border vicinities that are not manned by men of the Customs Service creates an ambience of competition and not collaboration.	869	3.5	Agreed
5	For anti-smuggling operations to succeed, there must be a multi-stakeholder' collaboration that will also involve leadership of border communities.	1059	4.3	Agreed

#### Source: Field Survey, 2025

While the Nigerian Customs Service is the only agency in charge of enforcing anti-smuggling policies for the Nigerian government, they are not the only government agency that operates at the nation's borders. For instance, the immigration service also operates at the borders to checkmate the movement of persons in and out of the country through the nation's borders. To this end, table 1, containing statements one to five addresses the issue of multi-stakeholders' collaborations at the country's borders. In the table, the respondents also accepted all the statements put forward for reactions.

Emphasizing the multi-stakeholders' nature of land border management, the respondents in the first statement accepted the view that while the Customs Service checkmates the movement of goods in and out of the nation's borders, the Immigration Service checkmates the movement of persons across the borders. Following from the first statement, the respondents agreed to the second statement that for effective anti-smuggling operations, the Customs Service and the Immigration Service must work in collaboration and not in competition.

Irrespective of the multi-stakeholders' nature of land border management, the respondents in the third statement accepted the notion that as the lead anti-smuggling agency, the Nigeria Customs should lead other security agencies in this regard. They also agreed to the penultimate statement that the multiplicity of checkpoints around the border vicinities that are not manned by men of the Customs Service creates an ambience of competition and not collaboration [21].

The views in the penultimate statement also informed the agreement of the respondents to the fifth statement that for anti-smuggling operations to succeed, there must be a multi-stakeholder' collaboration that will also involve leadership of border communities. The implication of the responses of the respondents to the issues raised with respect to inter-agency collaboration is that the multi-stakeholders' nature of land border management requires cooperative efforts and not inter-agency competition or working at cross purposes (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Responses to the variable; Import Prohibition N = 245

S/N	QUESTIONS	$\Sigma fx$	X	Decision
6	Publication of prohibited list of items is a way of encouraging indigenous production and consumption of local substitute goods.	940	3.8	Agreed
7	The publication of prohibited list of items only ends up increasing the potentials for smuggling of such items and increasing its prices locally.	937	3.8	Agreed
8	Most items listed as contraband becomes most sought after when the list is made public.	889	3.6	Agreed
9	The publication of prohibited list of items helps the Nigerian Customs Service to increase surveillance, vigilance and enforcement of the ban.	1037	4.2	Agreed
10	The publication of prohibited list of items helps to discourage importers from attempting to smuggle items listed as contraband.	618	2.5	Disagreed

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

The publication of prohibited list of items from importation is the focus of table 2. In this table, the respondents agreed to all but one of the statements. In the first statement, the respondents accepted the idea that the publication of prohibited list of items is a way of encouraging indigenous production and consumption of local substitute goods. this is true because most of the items that make the list are those that can be easily produced locally. However, while the first statement shows intent, the second statement portrays the reality on the ground. The respondents agreed to the view that the publication of prohibited list of items only ends up increasing the potentials for smuggling of such items and increasing its prices locally. This is because in the third statement, the respondents agreed to the views that most items listed as contraband becomes most sought after when the list is made public.

Nevertheless, the respondents agreed to the penultimate statement that the publication of prohibited list of items helps the Nigerian Customs Service to increase surveillance, vigilance and enforcement of the ban. In the fifth statement however, the respondents disagreed to the assertion that the publication of prohibited list of items helps to discourage importers from attempting to smuggle items listed as contraband. Interaction from the respondents revealed that the importers and their agents are only driven by their selfish economic interest and not any altruistic or nationalistic interest [22].

### Test of hypotheses

#### Test of Hypothesis One

**Ho:** Multi-stakeholders' collaboration has no significant relationship with physical land border management in South West, Nigeria.

**Hi:** Multi-stakeholders' collaboration has a significant relationship with physical land border management in South West, Nigeria.

**Table 3.** Relationship between multi-stakeholders' collaboration and physical land border management

Variables		Multi-stakeholders' Collaboration	Physical Land Border Management
Multi-stakeholders' Collaboration	Pearson Correlation	1	.981**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.030
	N	245	245
Physical Land Border Management	Pearson Correlation	.981**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.030	
	N	245	245

The information in the table below shows how multi-stakeholder participation affects how physical land boundaries are managed in the studied areas. The correlation coefficient (r) value of .981 shows that there is a strong positive relationship between getting many stakeholders involved and managing land borders well in South West Nigeria [23].

The table showed a p-value of .030, which is lower than the alpha criterion of 0.05. This means that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between working together with many stakeholders and managing physical land borders in South West, Nigeria. As a result, the previously suggested alternate hypothesis that multi-stakeholder cooperation has a major impact on physical land border management in South West, Nigeria, was accepted.

#### Test of Hypothesis Two

**Ho:** Import prohibitions have no significant relationship with operational land border management in South West, Nigeria.

**Hi:** Import prohibitions have a significant relationship with operational land border management in South West, Nigeria.

The table above shows how import prohibitions and the management of operational land boundaries in the study areas are related. The correlation coefficient (r) value of .761 indicates a significant positive relationship between import prohibitions and the management of operational land borders in South West Nigeria.

**Table 4.** Relationship between import prohibitions and operational land border management

Variables		Import Prohibitions	Operational Land Border Management
Import Prohibitions	Pearson Correlation	1	.761**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.044
	N	245	245
Operational Land Border Management	Pearson Correlation	.761**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.044	
	N	245	245



The table indicated a p-value of 0.044, which is below the alpha threshold of 0.05, signifying a statistically significant positive correlation between import prohibitions and operational land border management in South West, Nigeria. Consequently, the aforementioned alternative hypothesis asserting that import prohibitions significantly relate to operational land border management in South West, Nigeria, was affirmed.

#### **Summary of findings**

That multi-stakeholder' collaboration has a significant relationship with physical land border management in South West, Nigeria.

That import prohibitions have a significant relationship with operational land border management in South West, Nigeria.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The conclusion from the findings of this study is that effective management of a country's land borders require effective collaboration between the various agencies of the government at the border. The customs service, police, the military, the immigration service, among other personnel at the border must work in synergy and not at crossroads. Equally important is the fact that there is the need for international collaboration between the agents of one country, and their counterparts across the border. All of this is necessary to ensure that the movement of persons and goods are better monitored and documented in line with relevant national laws and international best practices. To achieve this, we recommend as follows.

#### **Recommendations**

In light of the study's results, the following suggestions were proposed;

1. Multi-stakeholder' collaboration with the National Agency for Food, Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC) and the Standards Organization of Nigeria (SON) should be encouraged so that goods that escape the nation's borders are intercepted in the markets. Also, the appropriate tariff and fines due for such goods should be imposed in order to forestall and possibly recover the economic losses that the nation might have incurred as a result of the economic sabotage called smuggling.

2. Sster security agents at the borders, especially the Nigerian Police, Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) and the Military should forge a better working partnership with the Nigerian Customs Services in the areas of physical border security, border patrols, checkpoints, among other security measures.

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