

YEAR 2020 SPOTLIGHT EDITION

BIZnet
CBC - Your Market Hub

The COMESA Business Council's year in review - January 2021.





CEO'S MESSAGE

Dear Members, Partners and Stakeholders,

With 2020 behind us, we look forward to 2021 with great expectation and hope for a healthier and more equitable future for the regional business community.

In this issue, we're pleased to share with you our strategic highlights of 2020. As we reflect on the lessons that the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us on being agile and adaptable, we recognise that it has made us stronger, more resilient, and more than ever, resolved to push forward the private sector agenda, to create an enabling environment in which businesses not only recover from the regional and global economic downturn, but also thrive. Indeed, we're all in this together.

Sandra Uwera, CEO, CBC

*From all of us at the
COMESA Business Council,
we wish you a healthy and
prosperous*

2021

STRATEGIC HIGHLIGHTS

I. BUSINESS POLICY & ADVOCACY

Five industry positions developed to inform advocacy and policy agendas

a) In April, CBC developed the COMESA Business Declaration- *Facilitating the Movement of Essential Goods and Services Across Borders During the Period of the COVID-19 pandemic*, which provided input to the COMESA Regional Guidelines.



c) A seed industry position report focusing on *Unlocking Food Security Through Improved Seed Trade in COMESA* was developed and validated through industry meetings. The recommendations were presented to and adopted by the 7th COMESA Technical and Ministerial Committee meeting on Agriculture.

d) In August, CBC convened the Industry Technical Committee Meeting which considered key agendas on the, *Business Trader Observer: An Annual Survey of Business Impediments along Trade and Transport Corridors in the COMESA Region*; *Digital Financial Inclusion Project- Business Case for a Digital Common Payment Policy for MSMEs*; and *Industry Response to Address COVID-19/ Post COVID-19 Impact on Private Sector Competitiveness*.

The position report on the above, was presented at the Industry and IC meetings.

b) In June 2020, the Agro-Industry workgroup developed and validated a position report focusing on *Harmonisation of Food standards in COMESA*. Key recommendations centered on net weight regulations; promotion of mutual recognition arrangements; and improving laboratory capacities and addressing the cost of certification. The positions were presented at the 10th SPS Committee meeting.



e) In June, CBC and the SADC Business Council developed a position report and carried out joint advocacy on addressing trade restrictive measures during the COVID-19 pandemic era. The position focused on adopting tripartite approaches to facilitating trade, and also removal of the tobacco sales ban.

Field missions under the Digital Financial Inclusion Program

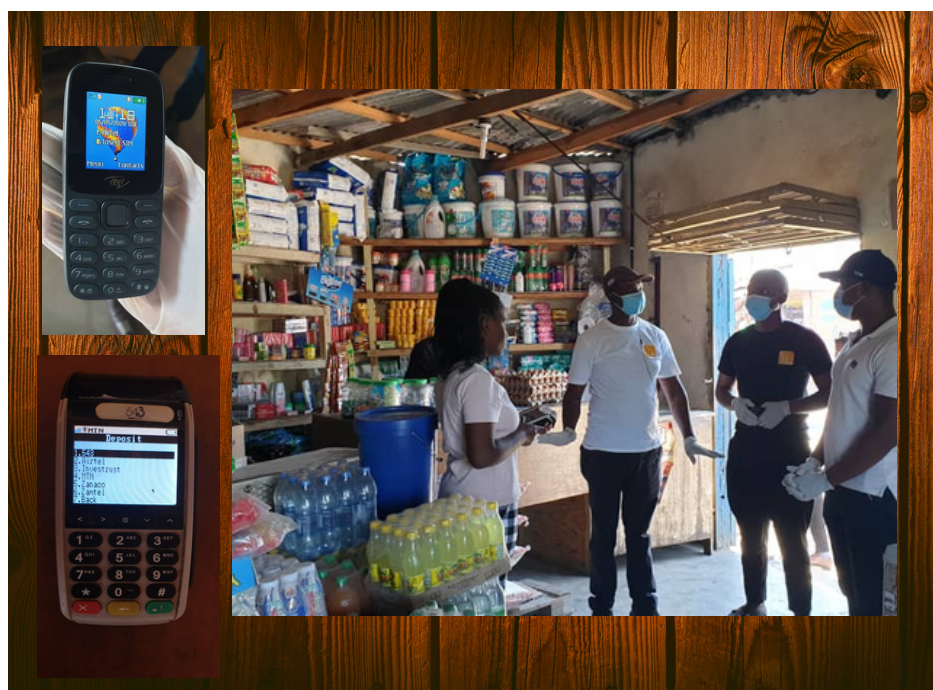
Field missions to Egypt and Mauritius were carried out to complete the data collection process aimed at, amongst other objectives, understanding finance and ICT policies, as well as regulatory frameworks that exist, and those that are needed, to support the harmonization of digital payment systems across COMESA. the missions also entailed training of SMEs on digital marketing tools and basic digital financial literacy.



Other objectives included gathering information on existing digital Payment Infrastructure and Pricing structure for digital payments; understanding the gaps in relation to cost of transaction, political will, consumer protection, financial inclusion of women and youth, domestic regulatory frameworks, and more.

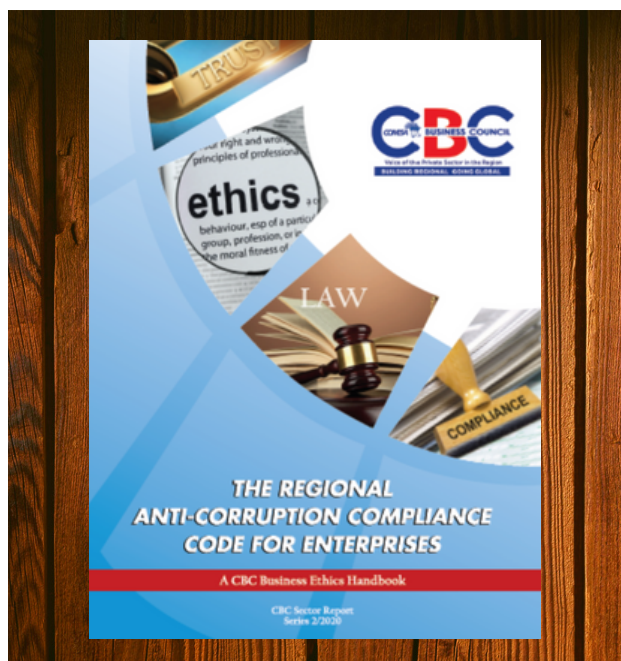
In Lusaka, Zambia, field visits to local SMEs were carried out to explore the extent of digital payments adoption by SMEs at the bottom of the financial pyramid, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

In consultations with local retail electronic payments platform, collaborative relationships between FinTechs and the broader financial services community emerged as fundamental in the drive for financial inclusion of women and youth-run SMEs, whose marginalization has been exacerbated by the pandemic's impact on market conditions.



Studies and Reports

CBC completed the following studies and reports to inform business policy:



a) Business Integrity Project on Anti-corruption Compliance for Enterprises

CBC is implementing the Business Integrity Project focusing on building the capacity of the private sector to stem corruption and enhance their participation in transparency and reform initiatives towards achieving an enabling business environment. *The Regional Code on Anti-Corruption Compliance for Enterprises*, developed at the end of 2019, was adopted by the CBC Annual General Meeting in August 2020. The Report has been published in three languages: English, French and Arabic.

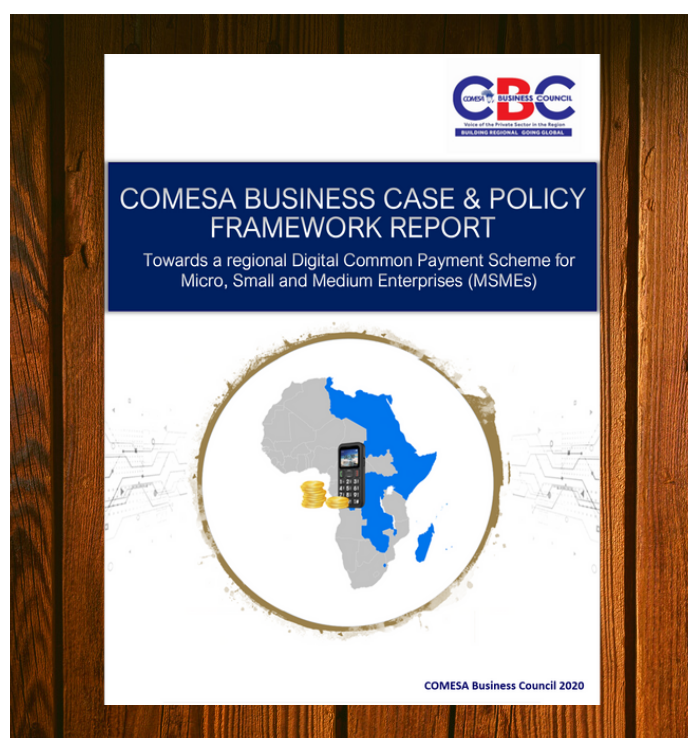
In August 2020, CBC carried out a training for 25 Associations on practical elements of the Regional Code on anti-corruption compliance to enable implementation within their institutions. CBC is also carrying out a mentorship programme to support Associations with the implementation of anti-corruption policies within their governance structures.

b) Digital Financial Inclusion for MSMEs

The SME Digital Financial Inclusion Program's goal is to support the development of a regional common payment scheme that serves Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) thereby enhancing cross border trade.

The Business Case Report was developed on the value proposition, and a policy framework for the regional common payment scheme for MSMEs was informed by multi-sectoral engagements in 9 pilot countries.

9-country and 5 sectoral stakeholder meetings (comprising of MSMEs, Mobile Network Operators, ICT regulators, finance regulators, fintechs, microfinance institutions and industry associations) validated the Business Case Report and agreed on key policy areas for harmonization in the development of the policy framework to support the scheme.



2. BUSINESS FACILITATION

Provision of Market Information

To address market information gaps; 23 Market Briefs and Market Pointers were developed and disseminated to the public and private stakeholders in the region to inform partnerships and trade.

Thirteen Market Briefs on the following countries: Kenya, Egypt, Djibouti, COMESA-South Africa, Burundi, COMESA-EU, Seychelles, COMESA-China, COMESA-USA, Tunisia, Zimbabwe, Mauritius and Seychelles.

The ten product Market Pointers were on Grapes, Pineapples, Cashew Nuts, Fresh Strawberries, Ginger, Garlic, Fresh Lemons, Chilli, Peppers, Mangoes, Blueberries and Beans.



Webinars - Industry Related Consultation on Impediments to Business

Five platforms of engagement were convened to increase stakeholder coordination in addressing regional industry business impediments. The webinar topics were:

- The Future of Industry Post Covid-19: Reset? Revolutionize? Maintain?
- Taking Stock: Implementation of The COMESA Regional Guidelines for The Movement of Essential Goods and Supplies Across the Region During the Covid-19 Pandemic.
- Unlocking Food Security Through Improved Seed Trade in COMESA.
- Concerted Approaches to Tackling Illicit Trade for Industry Competitiveness in COMESA
- Reshaping the Future of Industry and SMEs Through Digital Financial Inclusion.

Local Sourcing for Partnerships Training and Business Linkages Meetings in Zambia

As part of the Local Sourcing for Partnerships Project, a buyer-seller meeting was convened in Zambia, with support from the Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme (RECAMP). 54 SMEs were trained on the HACCP food safety management system.

Furthermore, CBC is upgrading BIZNET, an online portal with regional business data to inform sourcing and linkages. Mapping exercises are being conducted to collect data from six countries: Seychelles, Malawi, Mauritius, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Kenya.





Collaboration and Partnership

CBC carried out several engagements to facilitate linkages and partnerships at regional and global levels towards enhanced impact, greater sustainability and increased value. The following outputs were achieved:

- An MOU was signed with the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) signifying commitment to cooperate in the areas of facilitating business partnerships and increasing inter-regional trade; advocacy and strengthening African business participation in multilateral policy; development of business facilitation measures to advance Sustainable Development Goals; enhancing digital trade facilitation, SMEs' sustainability, and facilitation of the movement of goods and services particularly within the COVID-19 pandemic period.
- An MOU was signed with Africa E-Trade Group to cooperate on advancing the interests of intra-Africa trade in the areas of digital business facilitation, technical skills development, trade partnerships and private sector development, with a specific focus on empowering SMEs.

3. MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNICATION OUTREACH

To increase communication and engagement with members, CBC publishes bi-weekly reports, business insiders, research papers, newsletters and policy briefs that are widely disseminated.

- 15 BIZNET newsletter were published to enhance engagement with members and the regional business community.
- Insider Bulletins were developed, offering insights on regional market performance and best practices for business resilience during the pandemic period.
- 5 new members joined CBC in 2020.
- 4 infomercials were developed for campaigns to complement CBC's membership drive; to enhance awareness of the *Digital Financial Inclusion for SMEs* program; the Regional Anti-corruption Compliance Code for Enterprises; CBC's Corporate Communications Manual; and on CBC's membership benefits.





Meeting with the Egyptian Tourism Federation

Meeting with the Federation of Egyptian Industries (FEI)

Earlier in 2020, CBC's CEO had an opportunity to engage with the Federation of Egyptian Industries (FEI), an active member of CBC, on the challenges faced by industry in the country, and explore the opportunities there are to overcome these challenges through strengthened regional collaborations in the interest of furthering the private sector agenda.

CBC's CEO also met with the Egyptian Tourism Federation to explore potential areas of collaboration, towards enhancing the visibility of the region's rich culture and heritage, as seen in music, arts and crafts, languages, cuisine, architecture and more.

4. INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Corporate Governance

Two statutory Board meetings convened, and One AGM held in August 2020, to report on administrative, program and governance performance of CBC.

Corporate Communications Manual

A Corporate Communications Manual was developed to facilitate the best results and value from CBC's communications activities, whilst also ensuring that all partners' communications are consistent and complementary.

Corporate Social Investment

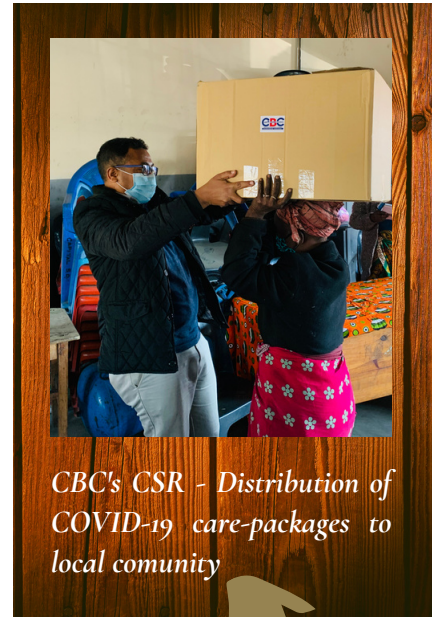
CBC, as part of its COVID-19 CSR initiatives, partnered with Barefeet Theatre and Lusaka Food Bank to donate COVID-19 care-packages and face-shields to vulnerable local communities that the institution has worked with in its Local Sourcing for Partnerships program.



5. STAFF HIGHLIGHTS



CBC staff striking an 'Each For Equal' pose in support of the #EachforEqual 2020 campaign, to help forge women's equality.



CBC's CSR - Distribution of COVID-19 care-packages to local community



A lively house warming get-together to welcome a staff member's family to Lusaka, Zambia



Fun at a staff luncheon



Merry-making at the office Christmas party.



Bidding a fond-farewell to our colleague and friend as she embarks on a new and exciting journey.

ABOUT COMESA BUSINESS COUNCIL

The COMESA Business Council (CBC) is a business member organization bringing together a diverse group of businesses and associations in the region from 34 sectors in 21 countries of COMESA. CBC is the recognized regional apex body of the private sector in the region. CBC as the key advocacy driver for business, provides a link between the private sector and organs of the common market. We seek to improve the competitiveness and deepen the participation of the private sector in regional and global trade, through advocacy, business facilitation and enterprise development. This includes prioritizing and taking specific advocacy strategies to address key business impediments and measures that affect our industries and have a direct bearing on the participation of our businesses in trading in the COMESA region.

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COMESA Business Council

Ben Bella Road, P.O. Box 30051, Lusaka,
Zambia

Email: info@comesabusinesscouncil.org

Tel: +260 211 229725/32