

**TALKING ACROSS NATIONAL BORDERS: ICTS AND BLACK MARKET
ECONOMY ALONG THE CAMEROON-NIGERIA BORDERS AT Ekok-IKOM
SINCE 1961**

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ABSTRACT: *ICTs were invented with the aim of facilitating communication at various levels and among different categories of persons. Our today world can be referred to as a world of ICTs because of the ease of communication. This ease of communication has been exploited positively and negatively. The current study attempts to establish the negative influence of ICTs in cross border communication using Ikom/Ekok at the Cameroon-Nigeria border as typical example. The scale of cross-border crime represents a considerable challenge to law enforcement agencies across the Cameroon-Nigeria border at Ekok-Ikom and this has been exacerbated by the use of ICTs by criminal organizations to outsmart security agencies. With so much of our everyday communication in commercial activity now taking place via the internet, mobile phones and other forms of social media activities the threat from crimes is increasingly targeting citizens, businesses and governments in the world over not excluding the Cameroon-Nigeria border Towns. There are criminals in these areas that are involved in child trafficking and smuggling as illustrative points. To attain the above-outlined objectives, an interdisciplinary design of research was adopted given that this study involves issues of trade, criminality and technological advancement. A qualitative instrument of analysis was adopted to establish the negative influence of ICTs in cross border criminality in Africa. A kind of participant/observer mechanism was used by this researcher given his frequent crossing of the Cameroon-Nigeria border at this particular point. Oral interviews were conducted to gather data and the target groups were the operators of this illegal trade as well as the victims. Some secondary sources were equally consulted on ICTs and criminology elsewhere. Cross border crime remains a major challenge in this area and ICTs have further intensified the impact of cross border illegal operations at Ekok-Ikom border. Mobile phones and internet communication are used to beat security networks and facilitate the illegal crossing of goods and persons. In some occasions, these black market operations are successfully carried out with the help of custom officers at the border points. This study extends the frontiers of knowledge on the use of ICTs for illegal operation along border areas.*

KEYWORDS: National Borders, ICTs and Black Market Economy, Cameroon-Nigeria Borders, Ekok-Ikom since 1961

INTRODUCTION

The current technological explosion in terms of mobile communication is a mixed blessing to Africa because ICTs have not only eased communication, increase business opportunities and help in the fight against crime, it has equally contributed to the increasing crime waves as a whole and cross border criminality in particular. Africa has seen a more than 20 percent increase in mobile phone subscription for each of the past 5 years.¹ In early 2013, Africa had the second fastest mobile telephone growth rate after China in the world with 775 Million cellular connections across the continent.² In many countries in Sub-Sahara Africa including Cameroon, there are already nearly as many mobile accounts as there are people and the prediction is that within a very short time, Sub-Sahara Africa may have more people with mobile network access than access to electricity at home. These individuals will certainly have access to video calls, watch video clips and increasing access to internet via their mobile phones. While much of the growth in mobile telephone in Africa involves simple first and second generation handsets, more recent growth includes internet enabled smart phones.³ According to this growing trend, by 2018, an estimated 50-60 percent of all mobiles in Africa may have access to internet.

There is no doubt that the revolution in ICTs have grossly contributed to development especially in the Third world where communication has remained a major obstacle. By lowering information barriers, ICTs has increased the volume of trade, technological exchange and has help in the fight against illegal trade and cross border crime. This notwithstanding, opening opportunities to enhance security and accountability ICTs are not a panacea for resolving crime and corruption. Information is solely a tool and not a driver of reforms. ICTs can be used for nefarious purposes- both by criminal organizations as well as unaccountable police forces and custom officers at border posts. Border post in this study can be defined as locations where one country's authority over goods and persons ends and another country's authority begin.⁴ It is the location where a multitude of government agencies (that is Revenue Authority, Customs, Immigration, Security-Police, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health and Bureau of Standards) are all involved in the various documents and goods control.⁵ These different departments are involved in the calculation and collection of duties and taxes as well as immigration control.⁶ The multiplicity of those agencies operating on both sides of the same border doubles the bureaucracy at the border posts which translates into congestion and delays thus opening avenues for corrupt practices and cross border criminology. The intensity of cross border criminology has increased in the world of ICTs.

¹ Steven Livingston. *Africa's Information Revolution: Implications for Crime, Policing and Citizen Security*. African Center for Strategic Studies Research Paper No.5. Washington DC November 2013 p.

² Ibid.,

³ Ibid.,

⁴Habiba Ben Barka. Border Posts Checkpoints and Intra-African Trade: Challenges and Solutions. AfDB Chief Economist Complex. Jan.2012 p.3.

⁵ Ibid.,

⁶ Official Custom Records at Ekok, consulted by Ndeh Martin Sango, July 2016.

Just like ICTs have contributed positively to development, in another dimension it has expanded and intensified criminology in many respects across national borders. For example it is very common to see a *Scammer*⁷ sitting comfortable in his/her room in an urban city in Cameroon and using his android phone to *scam* a white or Arab in Dubai, Central Europe and other parts of the world. Cyber criminality is today a common phenomenon in most of our urban centers because of the availability and common use of ICTs.

Talking about cross border criminology along the Cameroon-Nigeria border at Ikom-EkoK, it is important to mention that these areas are very vulnerable to crimes because of the kinds of persons that move across the border at this point. This cross border criminality is at times exacerbated by the laxity of security that allows people to cross unchecked, negligence and at times through deliberate bribery. The problem of cross border crime in Africa as a whole and the Cameroon-Nigeria situation in particular is tightly intertwined with relations between the custom officers at the border locations and the cross border criminals.

Among the affected, the customs are not only detested but often entirely dismissed from the crime prevention equation. High levels of corruption and low levels of accountability of our custom officers have made our borders to be very porous in areas like Idenau, Ekok, Orong and many other areas. More often than not, there is little political will to instill discipline within the ranks of customs particularly those along the borderlines. The laxity of the government has instead made customs to see border towns as very lucrative areas since they can personally enrich themselves at the expense of the state coffers and exposing the state to danger because of the illegal drugs and other contrabands that are illegally imported. Before getting to explore the Cameroon-Nigeria border as a hot belt for cross border crimes, it is important to situate this area in the context of the current discussion.

Situating the Study Area in the Context of Cross Border Criminology

The Cameroon-Nigeria border at Nfum separates two major towns of Ekok and Ikom. These two border towns are located in the heart of a Tropical Rain Forest and a big river that separates them. The cross border point is situated on a bridge that separates the two towns. The customs check point on the Cameroon side is located on the bridge and the Nigerian custom check point is located on the other edge of the bridge. The decision to situate the custom check points on this bridge was not by mistake rather it was by design because this is the only point that one can cross over from Cameroon to Nigeria and vice versa. This can be explained by the fact that the River has very deep banks that makes movement across almost impossible.⁸ These custom check points were therefore located at this particular point for security reasons. The fact that there is only one bridge that serves as a cross point, illegal movement of persons across the borders at this point with contrabands is very difficult.

⁷ Scammers in this work is referred to those youths who use their ICTs to contract fake businesses with Foreign partners and make huge sums of money for contracts that do not exist. For example scammers can go into contracts to supply certain rare species of animals that they are not in possession.

⁸ Eye Witness Account. Ndeh Martin Sango. Mfum Bridge, July 2016.

This notwithstanding along the Cameroon-Nigeria border, considerable off-record or underground movement of goods and services take place in addition to illegal migration. There are more than ten illegal cross points that separates the Town of Mamfe and Ikom. Some of these illegal cross points are found in the forest where the illegal traders use foot paths to cross from one end to the other.⁹ There are other areas where the people use Canoes to cross the major River that separates these border towns. Therefore there may be one international checkpoint that separates Ekok and Ikom but with several illegal checkpoints between Mamfe, the biggest border town on the Cameroon side and Ikom on the Nigerian side. It is important to note that at these illegal cross points like Eakang, informal trade does not undergo custom procedure. It is usually a form of daily crossing of the border carrying small quantities of contrabands through cultural checkpoints or sneaking or smuggling of goods to beat the usual custom control.¹⁰

The Nature of Cross Border Criminology at Ekok-Ikom

Cross border trade generally involves movement of goods and services and movement of people across the border. The movement of goods and persons includes formal crossing through international gates, informal crossing through informal or cultural gates and illegal crossing at various secret or unnoticed spots along the border. Informal or illegal crossing of goods and persons at the border are common along the Cameroon-Nigeria border at Ekok. Talking about the nature of cross border criminology, it is important to mention that apart from trade in contrabands like fuel commonly known as *fengi* there are equally illegal transactions like child trafficking, illegal migration and the smuggling of drugs across international borders.

Cross-border Illegal Migration along the Cameroon-Nigeria Border at Ekok-Ikom

As illegal immigration of workers is part of cross-border movement of people, one can say that it is related to cross-border trade definition. Nevertheless it has been found that cross-border trade creates opportunities for persons involved in movements across the border. For example connections, familiarity, corruption, trafficking or lack of control at the border is main ingredients for illegal immigration at Ekok-Ikom border area. The opening of the border and the interaction of people at the border are important factors affecting irregular migration.

Another important factor that accounts for illegal immigration around this border area is the fact that the Cameroon-Nigeria colonial boundary separated people of same stock- language and socio-cultural background.¹¹ The people of Cross River in Nigeria and the Mamfe people of Cameroon

⁹ Tanyi, Lydia Ayuk. *Trade and Development in the Mamfe Area: A Historical Comprehension, 1892-1961*. A Dissertation submitted in Partial Fulfillment Of the requirements for the award of Postgraduate Teachers Diploma (DIPES II) in the Higher Teacher Training College, Bambili. 2011.p 53.

¹⁰ Ibid.,

¹¹ Tanyi, Lydia Ayuk. *Trade and Development in the Mamfe Area: A Historical Comprehension, 1892-1961*. A Dissertation submitted in Partial Fulfillment Of the requirements for the award of Postgraduate Teachers Diploma (DIPES II) in the Higher Teacher Training College, Bambili. 2011.p 23.

have a lot to share in common in terms of the language they speak and their socio-cultural institutions. Typical examples are the Ejaghams in Cameroon and those in Nigeria just like the Bokis in Cameroon and the ones in Nigeria. The close ties that exist between the border-landers and the lack of effective migration law enforcement is a major cause of the increasing number of undocumented migrants on the both sides of the Cameroon-Nigeria border. Since 1961 when the international boundary was established between the Cameroon and Nigeria, there has been a considerable volume of cross-border illegal migration which both governments are finding it difficult to check. As a result of the close identity that exist between the Mamfe People and the Cross River inhabitants of Nigeria, some students of Cameroon origin study in Nigeria as Nigerians and vice versa. This is because of the similar names the people bear. These kinds of illegal operations are exhibited in other occupations and professional circles especially when it comes to political participation.

Child Trafficking in the Black Market Economy in the Study Area

By and large, human trafficking is closely related to cross-border irregular migration. The illegality of much of this undocumented migration clearly makes migrants vulnerable to exploitation and to becoming victims of human trafficking. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) there are reported cases of child trafficking between Cameroon and Nigeria. More recently a woman was caught in Buea with a stolen Child and her destination was Nigeria bound.¹² In Muyuka another case was intercepted when a man was caught with four children and his attempt was to cross these children through the Ekondo Titi Beach into Nigeria.¹³ The children that are trafficked in these transactions are those that perform that form of “*labor*” that address demands, which society generally finds unacceptable. This includes trafficking of young children for begging, using some teenage girls for prostitution and the selling of new borns to barren women. Several cases are reported of women who cross the borders into Nigeria to buy new born babies from Cameroon. There is a dearth of data on the number of trafficked children because of the difficulty in assessing and distinguishing between trafficking victims and adopted children. It is important to mention that there is ever increasing number of child labourers on our streets and this is as result of child trafficking. Some of the children that are trafficked are mostly used as hookers. Although it is difficult to quantify the number of children involved or the extent of trafficking along the Cameroon- Nigeria border at Ekok-Ikom, custom sources however indicate that this illegal transaction is real and frequent. The fast growing communication technology has only increased the volume of illegal cross-border trade including child trafficking.

Sneaking and Smuggling in Black Market Operations at Mfum

Sneaking and smuggling is an important element of the illegal cross-border trade operations between Cameroon and Nigeria. There is a huge volume of undocumented and unaccountable illegal trade that goes on between Cameroon and Nigeria at the border point of Mfum. It is important to mention that it is very difficult to exact statistics on illegal trade because the smugglers and sneakers mostly use informal and cultural crossing points along the Mamfe-Nigeria border. In another vain they smuggle through the formal crossing points with the complicity of fraudulent

¹² Ndeh Martin Sango. Eye Witness Account, Buea 13TH April 2015.

¹³ Administrative Records of the Divisional officer for Muyuka Sub-Division, 11 October 2016.

custom officers. Some of the items that are smuggled across the borders include drugs, petrol and other contrabands such as guns, gun powder and Elephant Tusks. In some of the border communities there were reported cases of robbers crossing from Nigeria to rob communities in the Mamfe area using sophisticated guns that are smuggled into these communities.

If cross-border trade is broadly defined in this paper to include export and import to and from neighboring countries, then it is important to record that sneaking and smuggling was done using the formal and informal crossing points. Formal crossing points through bribery and corruption and informally through uncontrolled cultural check points.

Black Market Currency Operations in the Study Area

An important aspect of illegal trade operations at the Ekok-Ikom border is the black market currency operations. There are black market operators that are specialized in exchanging the CFA Franc and the Naira. All the traders that cross the border at this point require exchange services and most often they don't go to the banks for official exchange, rather they depend on black market operators for their exchange operations. The exchange rates at the black market are grossly different from the official exchange rates. The exchange rate in the morning can be different from that in the evening because the rates are determined by availability and the fluctuations in the demand in the market.¹⁴ There are hidden exchange spots that are known only to middlemen who take customers to these places on negotiated commissions. In some instances, the currency operators in the black market do create artificial scarcity so as to make more profit in their currency operations. It is difficult to control exchange rates at these border points because of the kinds of mechanisms that put in place to avoid custom control both on the Cameroon side and the Nigerian side. All the drivers that transport passengers across the border are involve in this network and they at times contribute to the smuggling and the black market economic operations. In some instances they play a middleman role between the customs and illegal operators to facilitate their transactions. In all these illegal operations, ICTs are used as important vehicles of communication. For example a black market operator can use his/her mobile phone at Ekok to be able to influence exchange in Ikom by creating artificial scarcity.

Custom Corruption, Lapses of Border Security and the Black Market

As earlier mentioned, the problem of cross border criminology and black market operations in Africa as whole and along the Ekok-Ikom border can be tightly intertwined with relations between the custom officers, other government operators and merchants at the border checkpoints. Those who control business at these checkpoints are not only distrusted but they are responsible for the huge leakages that are suffered by African governments as a result of the corrupt practices going on along our borders. The high levels of corruption and low levels of accountability exhibited by government control agents at these border checkpoints appear to be a major cause of this gap. The situation is further exacerbated by the fact that there is little political commitment among African governments to check custom shortages and other leakages especially along border checkpoints. Accurate statistics concerning custom corruption may be difficult to establish but this does not cancel the fact that it has a serious negative toll on African economies and there is the urgency to curb the black market operations. According to one analyst, "incidents of corruption are never

¹⁴ Eye Witness Account. Ndeh Martin Sango. Mfum 17 July 2016.

reported or recorded; official data on corruption are best regarded as measure of a police agency's anti-corruption activity, not actual level of corruption."¹⁵

Talking about the severity of custom corruption and other leakages at the border checkpoints it is important to indicate that there are several varieties of custom corruption and this could be summarized under abetting smuggling, accepting kickbacks in exchange of under-rating of custom duties on goods and out-right collection of bribe. For details see table below. It is important to mention that all these illegal operations account for the ever increasing level of leakages at the border checkpoints.

Table: Indicating Custom Crime and Description at Ekok-Ikom Border Checkpoints

| Type of Crime | Description |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Corruption of Authority | When a Custom Officer receives some form of material gain by virtue of their position as Custom Officer without violating the Law per se (eg Free Drinks, Meals and Services). |
| Kickbacks | Receipt of goods, services or money for facilitating smuggling through phone calls and directives of security presence. |
| Shakedowns | Acceptance of Bribe for not applying Custom Duty Rates (CDRs) the way they are suppose to be calculated. |
| Protection of Illegal Activities | Protection of Merchants to cross the borders with contrabands or prohibited goods. |
| Direct Criminal Activities | Giving information on how and when merchants can meet particular Custom Officer on duty to facilitate their illegal transactions. Giving specific instructions on working hours |
| Illegal Migration across border | When Customs facilitate the crossing of illegal migrants and child traffickers in exchange of money. |

Source: Compiled from Field Collection Data by Author, Ndeh Martin Sango. Ekok, June 2015.

Looking at the table, it is important to mention that there are different varieties of illegal operations that are performed at the different border checkpoints. The initiation and the success of these illegal deals depend on the kind of collaboration that exists between the merchants and the different security agents along our border checkpoints. In all these operations ICTs play a very important role. This is to say that law enforcement agencies in Africa can use the social media negatively to enhance cross border criminology given that it is a great way to distribute information. Through this network of communication, merchants can penetrate custom and immigration services with the aim of carrying out successful black market operations.

¹⁵ Henry Osborn Quarshie. "Using ICT to Fight Crime-A Case of Africa". Journal of Emerging Trends in Computing and Information Sciences 2009-2014 CIS Journals.p 4.

ICTs as Vehicles of Cross Border Criminology

Talking about the technological innovations sweeping across Africa and how this has contributed to enhancing cross-border criminology, it is important to mention that this is not only limited to mobile phones rather the internet and other important privately owned technology and remote sensing satellites are used to convey information. As earlier mentioned by lowering information barriers, ICTs are increasing the possibility of illegal networks of operations in our border cities and urban milieus. This is evident in the increasing volume of cross-border criminology and the expanding number of *scammers* in our urban centers. Through mobile phones and the internet, the illegal cross border operators can be able to dictate the right location of mobile custom patrols and the location of the police check points along the border roads. For example a driver that is specialized in transporting contraband goods will always use the mobile phone to determine the right location of the police and customs particularly given that these android phones have GPS. In the case of transporting drugs and other contrabands like guns, the illegal traders make an astute use of technology. Using his mobile phone, a companion sent a text message to the other explaining his predicaments with the police and this was enough to divert the movement of the next person that would equally had been a victim. Those involve in this illegal operations have solidarity among themselves and can always tweet information to avoid routine control points. The merchants involve in illegal trade has been able to penetrate the customs and security services along the border checkpoints and make friends within these corps that furnish them with information. As earlier mentioned the law enforcement agents in Africa can use the social media negatively to distribute certain sensitive information in exchange for money. By sharing surveillance camera locations with their illegal agents, this can go long way to frustrate government security networks and plans. Social media even though positive can also be a great place to share tips for avoiding security checks, dangerous areas and tips for keeping safe in illegal transactions.

In some instances, Frontline SMS has been used in a variety of circumstances all characterized by lack of public services and an otherwise isolated scattered population.¹⁶ Frontline SMS is open source software used to collect and distribute information on standard mobile phones using text messages, facilitating inputs from hundreds even thousands of users via SMS (short message service). Although it do not require an internet connection if internet access is available Frontline SMS can be connected to online SMS services and set up to feed incoming messages to other web and E-mail services. The use of SMS has been positive and negative. For example positively, in the absence of a state agricultural extension service a variety of NGOs have established services for African farmers. The Grameen Foundation's Community Knowledge Workers offers an example.¹⁷ Farmers are provided with information about crops, international market prices and other services via mobile phones and frontline SMS.

¹⁶ Addo Prosper. Crossborder Criminal activities in West Africa. Options for Effective Response. KAIPTec, May, 2006 p.13.

¹⁷ Steven Livingston. *Africa's Information Revolution: Implications for Crime, Policing and Citizen Security*. African Center for Strategic Studies Research Paper No.5. Washington DC November 2013 p.

In the same vein a similar technology Rapid SMS was developed as a communication tool by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) as a way to contact its team in the field via SMS.¹⁸ Since then it has expanded to a wide array of uses with criminals even using it for their evil practices along border locations. In Nigeria Rapid SMS was used to manage the distribution of almost 70 Million insecticide-treated nets to combat malaria.¹⁹ UNICEF Innovation Unit in collaboration with Tech-for-Change developer, Dimagi, developed an application called Rapid Android. Android is an open-source operating system for mobile phones.

While opening opportunities to enhance communication, information distribution, security and accountability, criminals have also exploited advancing technology to enhance their illegal operations especially along the border locations. Geographical Information Systems (GIS) - digital maps are today used as result of the explosion of high resolution satellites imagery data. Satellites and GIS create a platform for managing and visualizing input from people with mobile phones. All these technologies have been used to enhance cross-border criminality in different spheres. For example in a case of smuggling guns across from Nigeria into Cameroon, the criminals were able to use Twitters in their communication to beat the imagination of the police and customs at the border locations. They were in a group and tweet network was established and limited to members of the gang. They used Twitter *hash tag* devoted to circulating warnings about police presence, their location and control points. These are techniques that are mostly used by private security companies and local volunteer fire and rescue services but today criminal are using the same devices for their operations in the illegal cross-border trade. Using mobile phone signals the criminals can determine the direction of the police mobile van and their patrol units. Through SMS and internet communication the black market operators at Ekok and Ikom can be able to communicate strategies of creating artificial scarcity so as to make more profit in the exchange market.

Increasing Cross border Black Market Operations and impact on the Economy of Neighbouring Countries

As earlier mentioned, it may be very difficult to exact statistics on the magnitude of illegal cross border operations at the Ekok-Ikom border checkpoint in particular and other border areas in Africa as a whole. This can be due to the lack of accurate data concerning custom and immigration corruption and irregularities around these border points. However this does not in any way water down the premise that high level of corruption and low levels of accountability has left the economies of neighbouring countries with severe leakages. The different varieties of Customs and immigration police fraud as exhibited in the table above has made the governments of Cameroon and that of Nigeria to suffer serious income lost as a result of black market operations. The bottlenecks instituted deliberately around the formal border cross points by corrupt government operators serve to fuel the very high level of informal trading practices thus causing the governments to lose revenue. The multiplicity of agencies operating on both sides of the Cameroon/Nigeria border at Ekok-Ikom doubles the bureaucracy at border post, which now allows for lapses thus creating the atmosphere for corrupt practices. In these kinds of illegal operations,

¹⁸ Ibid.,

¹⁹ Ibid.,

the government, businesses and the people suffer. The government in the first instance suffers lost of revenue. If adequate control mechanisms are put in place one will realize the percentage of money that the government forfeits every year to illegal operators along the border check points not only at Ekok-Ikom but along the other checkpoints like Idenau and Arong. Hence the argument is that in as much as we think that ICTs have contributed enormously to facilitating communication, this has both a positive and a negative toll on the society as a whole.

Apart from loss of revenue there are other very severe consequences that are linked to illegal trade operations at the border points. Most importantly one can mention the incidence of insecurity. When a border checkpoint becomes lose because of corrupt practices, this gives room for criminals to criss-cross the border at their instance. The recent wave of Boko Haram operations across border areas in Northern Cameroon clearly illustrates the security challenges that are associated with illegal operations along our border checkpoints in Africa. The case can also be mentioned of the Anti-Balaka Rebels that constantly cross from Central African Republic into the border towns of Cameroon. Some of their operations are facilitated by the poor customs and immigration policing at the border checkpoints along the Cameroon /Central African Republic borders. These security lapses have increased the rate of Child/ Human Trafficking along our border localities in Africa as a whole and central-West Africa in particular. Far from child and human trafficking the other security challenges include the importation of contrabands and other illegal drugs that have impact on health and other aspects on the socio-cultural outlook of society. For example the illegal importation of guns and other drugs like cocaine have gone a long way to increase crime in our urban centers. And the consumption of some illegally imported items can lead to social hazards because of lack of quality control. For example it is common on the streets of urban centers in Cameroon to find illegally imported Whiskey from Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea and there have been reported cases of intoxication in certain areas.

Moreover in the face of these illegal cross border operations, the business class suffers. For example most of the merchants that trade between Cameroon and Nigeria will prefer to do black market currency exchange rather than the official exchange. The argument advance here is that exchange rate in the black market is often higher than the official exchange rate. The preference of black market operations over official exchange rate has made banks in these border areas to suffer severe drop in their operations. This also applies to other sectors of business operations because the prevalence of illegal trade over formal trade can only reduce or completely kill the very existence of formal trade.

Curbing Cross Border Crime at Ekok-Ikom

Haven outlined the multitude of cross border crimes that are perpetuated through the use of ICTs, it is important to make certain proposals that can be used to curb these cross border operations with the aim of guaranteeing accountability, transparency and efficiency in cross border trade operations. The long term solution to weak and ineffectual state control institutions at border checkpoints is found in building strong, capable and accountable institutions. Ultimately, the best source of security as a whole and cross border security in particular is a government that is accountable to the public it serves and its transparent conduct. There is no doubt that the institutionalization of certain efficiency-oriented net-works will help curb criminalization at our

border checkpoints. In some circles it has also been made known that training of our Police forces on cyber criminality and how cyber crimes can be tracked can go a long way to fight this vice. The International Police Force (INTERPOOL) will do a more effective job to track criminals if they have the expertise.²⁰ Amongst many other devices the moralization of Government Control Agents at these border control points remains a significant initiative.

Moralization of Government Control Agents at Border Checkpoints as a Remedy to Poor Performance and Insecurity

Although crime results from several factors, weak and dysfunctional state control institutions play a central role. Professionally trained custom and immigration police officers at the border control posts that do their job diligently are the best deterrents to crime.²¹ But when the customs and immigration police are seen as corrupt and ineffectual (or when they are themselves criminals) the public feels insecure while criminals feel unencumbered. The moralization of the custom and immigration police agents in the border checkpoints will go a long way to curb crime. This moralization should begin with improved working conditions and good salaries. Anti-corruption training workshops should constantly be organized with the aim of injecting acceptable moral practices that will help check the fraud that is commonly perpetuated by the customs and immigration police.

Apart from trying to amend the dysfunctional state institutions at these border checkpoints, both the governments of Nigeria and Cameroon can employ the advancing technological revolution to check criminality at our common border areas. Technologically enabled collective action offers a viable near-term competence to traditional crime fighting efforts. Just like the criminals are using ICTs for their operations, the same ICTs make it easier for community groups and NGOs to organize responses to crime and even highlight and thereby decrease instances of custom or police incompetence and corruption. Higher levels of transparency and accountability can be attained through the application of certain technological devices.

Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) Technology and the Fight against Border Crime at Ekok-Ikom

The CCTV technology is some kinds of operations that are used to remotely monitor premises without having to have police officers engaged in long term operational surveillance. It can be used in emergence response, patrol management, individual and vehicle tracking and gunshot detection.²² Cameroon and Nigerian Governments should be able to install these CCTV Cameras along the border public highways and the checkpoint buildings at Ekok and Ikom. CCTV Cameras

²⁰ Henry O. Quarshie & Alex Martin Odoom. Fighting Cyber Crimes in Africa. Scientific and Academic Publishing. Computer Science and Engineering (Vol.2 No.6 2012) P.16.

²¹ Steven Livingston. *Africa's Information Revolution: Implications for Crime, Policing and Citizen Security*. African Center for Strategic Studies Research Paper No.5. Washington DC November 2013 p.

²² Henry Osborn Quarshie. "Using ICT to Fight Crime-A Case of Africa". Journal of Emerging Trends in Computing and Information Sciences 2009-2014 CIS Journals. p 23

will help at a certain level to check smuggling and the importation of contrabands. It can also be used to uncover illegal transactions among fraudulent custom and immigration police officers. The custom and immigration police at the border checkpoints should be able to adopt what their counterparts in the North are doing with respect to the application of CCTV surveillance. This is to say that if security can dictate smuggling outlets and inlets, then CCTV devices can be installed in these areas for proper accountability. Apart from the above mechanisms tracking technology can also be applied.

Tracking Technology and the Fight against Criminology at Ekok-Ikom

In the past GPS devices were large, unwieldy and expensive. As a result, few law enforcement agencies had access to them. Today GPS devices can be produced in small packages that can be easily concealed in suspected areas along our border checkpoints. Armed with these GPS devices, the customs and immigration officers at Ekok-Ikom checkpoints can track suspects on both sides of the border who are involved in child trafficking and other forms of illegal trading activities. Even though mobile phones are used to beat security networks, higher and more sophisticated ICT devices can also be used to constantly communicate with cell towers and detailed logs can reveal where particular individuals were located during particular periods of time. This can be a very important device to check smuggling through the different bush paths along the border areas. Information uncovered through this means can be subpoenaed and used as evidence against illegal transactions at these border checkpoints. Thanks to this technology many child traffickers and other illegal merchants have been intercepted in many areas in Cameroon with the most recent case being at Baffousam in the Western Region of Cameroon. In some cases, remote sensing satellites can also be very useful in the fight against cross border criminology.

Remote Sensing Satellites (RSS)

In most advanced industrialized democracies Remote Sensing Satellites are used to check crime not only in border localities but also in urban centers. The use of these devices is very common in states that are threatened by terrorists and rebel groups. A multinational fleet of observation satellites now offer high-resolution photographs of objects on the ground as small as 32 centimeters in diameter. They also produce geography reference data that situates features on the ground according to highly accurate navigational references. This method can be used to check smuggling of drugs and other minute contrabands that are concealed in other legal properties. At times it is difficult for customs to dictate certain contraband goods because of their size. But using An RSS, some of these difficulties can be overcome and this will go a long way to curb black market operations. Far from using RSS which is even far more expensive to acquire, Geographical Information Systems can also be acquired and implanted in border localities.

Geographical Information System (GIS)-Digital Maps

This is a very important device that can be used to determine direction and location of criminals especially with the explosion in high-resolution satellites imagery data. Satellites and GIS create a platform for managing and visualizing input from people with mobile phones. GIS and distributed-reporting mechanisms usually mobile phones are used to report, visualize and analyze criminal occurrences and geographical patterns. Today one finds a wide variety of crime-mapping platform in North America and Europe. Such technology-enabled policing is also emerging in

Africa although still not very common. For example in South Africa, the Crime and Justice Program of the Institute for Security Studies monitor crimes as part of its efforts to improve public safety and the performance of police agencies.²³ A part of this effort involves crime map viewer, a public GIS platform that allows citizens to see crime statistics for each police precinct in South Africa as recorded by the South African Police Service. Crime map viewer relies on police crime data and this same method can be used by customs and immigration police at the Ekok-IKom border to be able track criminals.

CONCLUSION

Scientific revolutions are often geared at the advancement of the human society and the improvement of lifestyles and increase standards of living. The pre-ICT age was characterized by serious communication lapses. The introduction of ICTs came as a welcome relieve to different segments of the community even including criminals who use these objects to achieve their illegal activities. At the Ikom-Ekok at Cameroon –Nigeria border the volume of illegal trade was relative low but the increase in ICT technology saw an increase in geometric progression. Those involve in black market operations like currency exchange, trade on contrabands and child trafficking have used different kinds of ICT operations to carry out their illegal business. There is no doubt that this increase in illegal trade has a very negative influence on the border communities in particular and the governments of Cameroon and Nigeria as a whole. It is difficult to measure that amount of money lost in these illegal transactions but negative toll of these illegal operations on the economies of both Nigeria and Cameroon cannot be underestimated. The lack of good will to institute custom control by the government and the involvement of government officials at the border checkpoints in these illegal businesses has gone a long way to expand the business.

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