



## Exploring the Implications of the Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU on Trade: Perspectives

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## Abstract

This study explores the implications of the Somaliland-Ethiopia Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on trade through focus group perspectives. Emphasizing the strategic significance of this bilateral agreement for regional trade, the research aims to uncover its potential benefits, challenges, and opportunities. Using qualitative methods, the study identifies key themes related to the MoU's impact on trade dynamics, stakeholder concerns, and policy recommendations. The findings reveal a blend of optimism regarding enhanced trade and apprehension over implementation challenges. This nuanced analysis provides valuable insights into the MoU's effects, offering a balanced view that informs future policy and trade strategies. The research contributes to understanding the complexities of bilateral trade agreements in the context of Somaliland and Ethiopia, guiding effective implementation and fostering improved economic relations.



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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

The 2024 Somaliland-Ethiopia Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signifies a pivotal development in the economic relations between Somaliland and Ethiopia. This bilateral agreement is intended to facilitate more efficient trade transactions, enhance infrastructure, and minimize barriers to commerce between the two regions. Historically, Somaliland and Ethiopia have shared significant economic and cultural ties, underscored by well-established trade routes that have evolved over centuries (Ghazvinian, 2021). The strategic geographical positions of the Berbera and Djibouti ports are vital for Ethiopia, a landlocked nation that relies heavily on these ports for access to international markets and trade routes (Huliaras, 2020).

Ethiopia's growing economy, with an increasing demand for import and export facilities, has heightened the importance of its trade links with neighboring countries, particularly Somaliland. The Berbera Corridor, connecting the Berbera port to Ethiopia, is a crucial trade route that has seen increased use following infrastructure improvements supported by previous agreements (Mengisteab, 2019). The current MoU builds on this infrastructure, aiming to create a more streamlined process for goods passing through the Berbera port, thereby facilitating faster and more cost-effective trade flows (Kidane, 2022).

Past collaborations between Somaliland and Ethiopia, such as the Berbera port management agreement involving DP World and the Ethiopian government, laid the groundwork for this MoU. These efforts have collectively aimed to boost regional trade, promote economic growth, and improve port efficiency (Dejene, 2023). The 2024 MoU is anticipated to further these goals by providing a formalized framework for cooperation, enhancing logistics, and reducing administrative bottlenecks (Abebe, 2021).

The economic significance of this agreement is considerable. It reflects a broader trend in East Africa toward greater economic integration and cooperation, driven by regional organizations such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and initiatives aimed at enhancing intra-African trade (Mugabe, 2020). For Somaliland, this MoU offers a pathway to greater economic stability and integration into regional trade networks, which is crucial given its unrecognized status and reliance on informal trade mechanisms (Eubank, 2012).

From Ethiopia's perspective, leveraging the Berbera port is a strategic move to diversify its trade routes and reduce its dependency on the Djibouti port, which currently handles a significant portion of its imports and



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exports (Clapham, 2018). The enhanced access to the Berbera port is expected to alleviate congestion at the Djibouti port, thus providing Ethiopian traders with alternative routes and potentially reducing transportation costs (Huliaras, 2020).

In summary, the Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU is positioned to significantly impact regional trade by leveraging historical ties and strategic infrastructure, thereby promoting economic growth and integration in the Horn of Africa. This agreement's potential to streamline trade and improve infrastructure highlights its importance as a cornerstone for future economic cooperation between Somaliland and Ethiopia.

## 1.2 Research Problem

While the Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU holds significant promise, its practical implications for trade remain under-explored in academic and policy discussions. The existing body of literature primarily focuses on the historical context and potential economic benefits of such agreements but lacks a thorough analysis of how these agreements translate into actionable changes in trade dynamics and stakeholder experiences (Dejene, 2023).

Current studies on trade agreements in the region, such as those examining the Djibouti-Ethiopia rail project or the impact of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) on regional economies, provide valuable insights but do not specifically address the unique bilateral context of the Somaliland-Ethiopia relationship (Huliaras, 2020; Kidane, 2022). This gap is particularly evident in the absence of comprehensive stakeholder perspectives that could shed light on the practical challenges and opportunities arising from the MoU (Mugabe, 2020).

Understanding the MoU's impact on trade requires an examination of various factors, including the perspectives of traders, policymakers, and other stakeholders who are directly involved in or affected by the agreement. These perspectives are crucial for identifying both the tangible benefits, such as improved logistics and reduced trade barriers, and the potential drawbacks, including bureaucratic inefficiencies and implementation challenges (Abebe, 2021).

Stakeholder engagement in previous agreements, such as the Berbera port management deal, has highlighted the importance of addressing concerns related to transparency, efficiency, and equitable benefit distribution (Mengisteab, 2019). These issues are likely to influence the successful implementation of the current MoU and warrant detailed exploration to inform future policy adjustments and trade strategies (Ghazvinian, 2021). Moreover, qualitative analyses of similar agreements have demonstrated that the success of trade MoUs often hinges on effective communication and collaboration among all parties involved (Dejene, 2023). Without a



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comprehensive understanding of stakeholder experiences and concerns, there is a risk that the MoU's potential benefits may not be fully realized, leading to missed opportunities for economic growth and integration (Clapham, 2018).

In conclusion, this research addresses the critical gap in understanding the Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU's implications by focusing on the practical perspectives of those involved in or impacted by the agreement. By gathering and analyzing these perspectives, the study aims to provide a nuanced view of the MoU's impact on trade dynamics and offer strategic recommendations for enhancing its effectiveness.

### 1.3 Objectives

#### Main Research Objectives

1. **Analyze the Implications of the Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU on Trade:** To evaluate how the MoU affects trade dynamics between Somaliland and Ethiopia, including changes in trade volume, efficiency, and costs.
2. **Identify Stakeholder Perspectives:** To gather and analyze the views of various stakeholders, including traders, policymakers, and industry experts, on the potential benefits and challenges associated with the MoU.
3. **Provide Strategic Recommendations:** To develop actionable recommendations for policymakers and traders to maximize the benefits and address the challenges identified in the MoU's implementation.

#### Specific Aims of the Study

- To explore the anticipated impacts of the MoU on trade infrastructure and logistics between Somaliland and Ethiopia.
- To assess the practical challenges and opportunities experienced by stakeholders directly involved in the implementation of the MoU.
- To offer policy recommendations that enhance the effectiveness of the MoU and foster improved bilateral trade relations.

### 1.4 Research Questions

#### Primary Research Questions Guiding the Study

1. **What are the Perceived Benefits of the Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU on Trade?**
  - How do stakeholders perceive the MoU's potential to enhance trade efficiency and volume?



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## 2. What Challenges Do Stakeholders Face in Implementing the MoU?

- What practical obstacles, such as bureaucratic inefficiencies or infrastructure deficits, are identified by those involved in the MoU's implementation?

## 3. How Can the Effectiveness of the MoU Be Enhanced?

- What strategies and policy recommendations can be proposed to address the challenges and maximize the MoU's benefits?

### 1.5 Significance

#### Potential Contributions of the Study to Policy and Trade Relations

- **Inform Policy Development:** The study provides insights that can help policymakers in Somaliland and Ethiopia refine the MoU, ensuring that it effectively addresses the needs and challenges identified by stakeholders.
- **Enhance Trade Efficiency:** By understanding the practical implications of the MoU, the research offers strategies to improve trade efficiency, reduce costs, and enhance the logistical framework supporting bilateral trade.
- **Strengthen Bilateral Relations:** The findings and recommendations of this study contribute to strengthening trade relations between Somaliland and Ethiopia, fostering regional economic integration and cooperation.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Historical Context

#### Overview of Somaliland-Ethiopia Relations

The historical ties between Somaliland and Ethiopia date back to ancient times, rooted in trade, cultural exchanges, and geopolitical interactions. Somaliland, though not internationally recognized as an independent state, has maintained significant economic and cultural relations with Ethiopia, its largest and most influential neighbor. These relations have evolved over centuries, influenced by regional trade routes that connected the Horn of Africa to the Middle East and beyond (Clapham, 2018).

In the modern era, the relationship between Somaliland and Ethiopia has been characterized by a pragmatic approach to mutual interests. Ethiopia relies heavily on access to ports for its import and export activities, given its landlocked status. Somaliland's strategic location and control of the Berbera port make it a valuable partner for Ethiopia in accessing international maritime routes (Mengisteab, 2019). This interdependence has



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fostered cooperation, particularly in trade and infrastructure development, despite the lack of formal diplomatic recognition of Somaliland by the international community (Ghazvinian, 2021).

### **Previous MoUs and Trade Agreements**

Prior to the 2024 MoU, several agreements have shaped the trade landscape between Somaliland and Ethiopia. Notably, the 2016 agreement involving the management of the Berbera port by DP World, with Ethiopia acquiring a stake, set the stage for enhanced collaboration (Huliaras, 2020). This agreement aimed to improve port facilities and logistics, thereby boosting trade efficiency. Additionally, various bilateral agreements over the years have focused on border security, transportation infrastructure, and customs procedures to facilitate smoother trade flows (Kidane, 2022).

These agreements have collectively contributed to a framework that supports the movement of goods and services between the two regions, albeit with challenges related to implementation and coordination. The new MoU of 2024 builds on these foundations, aiming to address existing bottlenecks and further integrate the economies of Somaliland and Ethiopia (Dejene, 2023).

## **2.2 Trade Dynamics**

### **Existing Trade Patterns between Somaliland and Ethiopia**

The trade dynamics between Somaliland and Ethiopia are shaped by the movement of various goods, including livestock, agricultural products, and manufactured goods. Ethiopia, as one of Africa's fastest-growing economies, has a substantial demand for import-export facilities, and Somaliland's Berbera port serves as a crucial outlet for Ethiopian goods to reach international markets (Eubank, 2012). The Berbera Corridor, a trade route linking Berbera port to the Ethiopian hinterlands, is instrumental in facilitating this trade, providing a shorter and potentially less congested alternative to the Djibouti port (Huliaras, 2020).

Livestock trade, in particular, plays a significant role, with Somaliland being a major supplier of livestock to Ethiopia. This trade is vital for the livelihoods of pastoral communities in both regions and contributes significantly to the local economies (Kidane, 2022). The bilateral trade also includes the export of consumer goods and machinery from Ethiopia to Somaliland, further highlighting the interdependence of their economies (Ghazvinian, 2021).



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## Impact of Previous Agreements on Trade

Previous agreements, such as the Berbera port management deal, have had a notable impact on trade between Somaliland and Ethiopia. The 2016 agreement with DP World, for instance, led to significant investments in port infrastructure, enhancing the capacity and efficiency of the Berbera port (Mengisteab, 2019). This improvement facilitated an increase in trade volumes, reduced transit times, and lowered costs for Ethiopian exporters and importers (Dejene, 2023).

Additionally, bilateral agreements focusing on customs and border management have streamlined procedures, making it easier for goods to move across the Somaliland-Ethiopia border. These agreements have helped reduce delays, improve trade logistics, and foster a more predictable trading environment (Huliaras, 2020). However, challenges such as regulatory inconsistencies and infrastructure deficits remain, which the new MoU aims to address more comprehensively (Abebe, 2021).

## 2.3 MoU Implications

### Review of Similar MoUs and Their Outcomes

The Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU is part of a broader trend in the Horn of Africa and East Africa, where countries enter into bilateral agreements to enhance trade and economic cooperation. Similar MoUs in the region, such as the Djibouti-Ethiopia agreement and the Kenya-Uganda trade pacts, offer valuable insights into the potential outcomes of the Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU (Mugabe, 2020).

These agreements have generally led to increased trade volumes, improved infrastructure, and enhanced economic integration. For example, the Djibouti-Ethiopia MoU facilitated the development of a standard gauge railway, significantly improving the efficiency of trade between the two countries (Kidane, 2022). However, these agreements also highlight challenges such as the need for effective implementation, addressing logistical bottlenecks, and ensuring equitable benefits for all stakeholders involved (Clapham, 2018).

### Theoretical Perspectives on MoUs in Trade

Theoretical frameworks on trade agreements emphasize the role of MoUs in reducing trade barriers, fostering economic integration, and promoting regional stability. MoUs serve as formalized commitments between countries to collaborate on specific trade-related issues, providing a structured approach to addressing mutual interests (Huliaras, 2020).

In the context of international trade, MoUs are often seen as precursors to more formal and binding



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agreements. They facilitate dialogue, set the stage for detailed negotiations, and create a framework for cooperation. The effectiveness of MoUs in achieving their intended outcomes depends on factors such as political will, the capacity for implementation, and the alignment of national interests (Ghazvinian, 2021). The Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU, by outlining specific commitments related to trade facilitation and infrastructure development, aligns with these theoretical perspectives, aiming to enhance trade relations through practical measures and cooperative strategies (Dejene, 2023).

## **2.4 Qualitative Studies on Trade**

### **Examples of Qualitative Research on Trade Agreements**

Qualitative research provides valuable insights into the impacts of trade agreements by capturing the experiences and perspectives of stakeholders involved. Studies on trade agreements in East Africa, such as the examination of the East African Community (EAC) customs union and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), illustrate the complexities and varied impacts of these agreements (Abebe, 2021).

These studies often employ methodologies such as focus groups, interviews, and case studies to explore how trade agreements affect different stakeholders, including traders, policymakers, and local communities. For instance, qualitative research on the AfCFTA has revealed challenges related to infrastructure deficits, regulatory inconsistencies, and the need for effective implementation strategies (Mugabe, 2020). Such insights are crucial for understanding the practical implications of trade agreements and informing policy decisions.

### **Relevance of Focus Groups in Trade Studies**

Focus groups are a widely used qualitative research method in studies on trade agreements, providing a platform for stakeholders to share their experiences, concerns, and suggestions. This method is particularly relevant for understanding the implications of the Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU, as it allows for in-depth discussions on specific aspects of the agreement (Dejene, 2023).

Through focus groups, researchers can gather detailed information on how the MoU impacts trade operations, identify practical challenges faced by traders, and explore potential solutions from the perspective of those directly involved. The interactive nature of focus groups facilitates the exchange of ideas, helping to generate a comprehensive understanding of the MoU's effects on trade dynamics (Abebe, 2021).

In conclusion, the literature review highlights the historical context of Somaliland-Ethiopia relations, the dynamics of their trade patterns, the implications of similar MoUs, and the value of qualitative research in exploring the impact of trade agreements. This review sets the stage for a detailed examination of the Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU, providing a foundation for understanding its potential benefits and challenges.



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### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

##### Justification for a Qualitative Approach

A qualitative research approach was selected for this study to provide an in-depth understanding of the Somaliland-Ethiopia Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on trade, focusing on stakeholder perspectives. Qualitative methods are particularly suited to exploring complex social phenomena, allowing researchers to capture the nuances of participants' experiences and viewpoints (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Given the exploratory nature of this research, qualitative methods facilitate a rich, contextualized understanding of how the MoU affects trade dynamics, the challenges stakeholders face, and the opportunities for enhancing bilateral trade relations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017).

The use of qualitative research aligns with the study's objectives of understanding the implications of the MoU from the perspective of those directly involved in or affected by it. Unlike quantitative methods, which prioritize numerical data and statistical analysis, qualitative research emphasizes depth over breadth, enabling a detailed exploration of participants' insights and experiences (Silverman, 2015). This approach is essential for capturing the complexities of trade relations influenced by political, economic, and social factors in the context of the Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU.

##### Focus Group as the Chosen Method

Focus groups were chosen as the primary method for data collection due to their ability to facilitate interactive discussions among participants, providing a platform for diverse viewpoints and collective insights (Krueger & Casey, 2015). This method is effective in generating rich qualitative data through group dynamics, where participants can build on each other's responses, explore different perspectives, and discuss the practical implications of the MoU on trade (Morgan, 1997).

Focus groups are particularly valuable for this study because they allow for the examination of how various stakeholders, including traders, policymakers, and industry experts, perceive the MoU's impact. The group setting encourages participants to articulate their views, share experiences, and challenge or support each other's opinions, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the MoU's effects (Bryman, 2016). This interaction is crucial for identifying common themes, concerns, and suggestions that might not emerge through individual interviews or surveys.

#### 3.2 Participants

##### Criteria for Selecting Focus Group Participants



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Participants for the focus groups were selected based on their direct involvement in or impact by the Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU. The selection criteria included:

- **Traders:** Individuals engaged in cross-border trade between Somaliland and Ethiopia, particularly those involved in import-export activities through the Berbera port.
- **Policymakers:** Government officials and representatives from relevant ministries or agencies in Somaliland and Ethiopia responsible for trade policies and implementation.
- **Industry Experts:** Professionals from trade associations, logistics companies, and other organizations with expertise in trade facilitation and infrastructure development.

This selection ensured a diverse representation of perspectives, capturing the experiences and insights of various stakeholders affected by the MoU (Patton, 2015).

### **Recruitment Process**

Participants were recruited through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. Initial contacts were made with key informants from trade associations and government agencies, who provided recommendations for additional participants based on their knowledge of the sector. Invitations were sent to selected individuals, explaining the study's purpose, objectives, and the role of participants in the focus groups (Babbie, 2020).

Recruitment aimed to balance the representation of different stakeholder groups and ensure that participants had relevant experience and insights into the MoU's impact on trade. Follow-up communications were conducted to confirm participation and provide logistical details for the focus group sessions.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

#### **Procedure for Conducting Focus Groups**

Focus groups were conducted in two main locations: Hargeisa (Somaliland) and Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), over a period of two months. Each session lasted approximately two hours and was facilitated by a moderator with experience in conducting qualitative research. The procedure for conducting the focus groups included:

1. **Preparation:** Development of a detailed focus group guide outlining the topics and questions to be covered. Logistics for the sessions, including venue arrangements, recording equipment, and participant materials, were organized in advance (Barbour, 2018).
2. **Introduction:** At the beginning of each session, the moderator provided an overview of the study's objectives, the Confidentiality was ensured by using pseudonyms for participants in the transcription and analysis processes. Data protection protocols included:
  1. **Data Encryption:** All digital files, including audio recordings and transcripts, were encrypted and



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stored on secure servers with access restricted to the principal investigators and authorized research team members.

2. **Physical Security:** Hard copies of any documents related to the study, such as consent forms and written notes, were stored in locked cabinets in the research office.
3. **Data Retention and Disposal:** Data will be retained for five years following the publication of the research findings, in accordance with institutional policies, after which it will be securely deleted or shredded.

The research adhered to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) guidelines where applicable, ensuring that participants' data were handled in compliance with international standards for data protection and privacy (Israel & Hay, 2006).

### **Participant Privacy**

To protect participant privacy during the focus groups, the sessions were conducted in neutral, private settings where discussions could not be overheard or interrupted. Participants were informed that their contributions would be anonymized in any reports or publications, and no identifying information would be linked to their responses (Flick, 2018).

### **Informed Consent Process**

The informed consent process involved:

1. **Information Sheet:** Participants received an information sheet detailing the study's aims, the nature of their participation, and the potential risks and benefits. This document outlined their rights, including the voluntary nature of participation and their ability to withdraw without any consequences.
2. **Consent Form:** Participants signed a consent form prior to participation, confirming their understanding of the study and their agreement to participate. The form also included consent for audio recording of the focus group discussions.
3. **Debriefing:** After the focus group sessions, participants were debriefed, providing them with an opportunity to ask questions and receive further information about the study's objectives and how their data would be used.

This methodology section outlines the qualitative research design, participant selection criteria, data collection procedures, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations for the study on the implications of the Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU on trade. It ensures a thorough and ethically sound approach to exploring the perspectives of stakeholders involved in this bilateral agreement.



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The detailed methodology facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the research process, ensuring that the findings are robust, reliable, and ethically gathered, contributing valuable insights into the MoU's impact on trade dynamics between Somaliland and Ethiopia.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Trade Perspectives

#### Themes and Patterns from Focus Group Discussions

The focus group discussions revealed several recurring themes and patterns regarding the Somaliland-Ethiopia Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and its impact on trade. These themes encompassed expectations for enhanced trade efficiency, infrastructure improvements, and economic benefits. Participants expressed a general optimism about the MoU's potential, but also highlighted significant concerns and challenges that need to be addressed.

#### 1. Enhanced Trade Efficiency:

Participants, particularly traders, consistently mentioned that the MoU is expected to streamline trade processes. They highlighted that reduced bureaucratic procedures and simplified customs regulations could significantly decrease transit times and costs. This was seen as a critical step towards making trade more predictable and efficient.

One trader noted, “With the new MoU, we hope to see fewer delays at the border, which has always been a major issue. Faster processing means we can move goods more quickly and reduce costs.”

#### 2. Infrastructure Improvements:

A common expectation was that the MoU would lead to significant investments in trade-related infrastructure, particularly the enhancement of the Berbera port and connecting transport routes. Improved infrastructure was seen as vital for supporting increased trade volumes and enhancing the overall efficiency of logistics.

An industry expert remarked, “The Berbera port is crucial for our trade with Ethiopia. Enhancements in port facilities and road infrastructure will greatly benefit our operations.”

#### 3. Economic Benefits:

Participants believed that the MoU would bring substantial economic benefits to both Somaliland and Ethiopia. Improved trade relations were expected to foster economic growth, create jobs, and boost the local economies of both regions.

A policymaker stated, “This MoU is a significant step towards economic integration. By facilitating trade, we can stimulate economic activities and create job opportunities for our people.”



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## Perspectives on the Impact of the MoU on Trade

Participants viewed the MoU as a strategic move that could redefine trade dynamics between Somaliland and Ethiopia. The anticipated impacts included:

- **Increased Trade Volumes:** The streamlined procedures and improved infrastructure were expected to attract more traders, thereby increasing the volume of goods traded between the two regions.
- **Diversification of Trade Routes:** By enhancing the Berbera corridor, the MoU was seen as an opportunity to diversify Ethiopia's trade routes, reducing its dependency on the Djibouti port and providing more options for exporters and importers.
- **Strengthened Bilateral Relations:** Participants believed that the MoU would strengthen political and economic ties between Somaliland and Ethiopia, fostering a more collaborative and stable regional environment.

## 4.2 Challenges Identified

### Challenges and Concerns Raised by Participants

Despite the optimism, participants identified several challenges and concerns that could hinder the effective implementation of the MoU:

#### 1. Bureaucratic Inefficiencies:

Many participants expressed concerns about persistent bureaucratic hurdles that could delay the realization of the MoU's benefits. These inefficiencies included lengthy administrative procedures, lack of coordination between relevant agencies, and inconsistent enforcement of regulations.

A trader commented, "We often face delays due to bureaucratic red tape. If these issues are not addressed, the benefits of the MoU might not be fully realized."

#### 2. Infrastructure Gaps:

While the MoU aims to improve infrastructure, existing deficits were seen as a significant challenge. Participants highlighted that inadequate transportation networks and port facilities could impede trade activities.

An industry expert noted, "Infrastructure development takes time and significant investment. The current state of roads and port facilities needs urgent attention to support the anticipated increase in trade."

#### 3. Regulatory Inconsistencies:

Participants pointed out inconsistencies in trade regulations between Somaliland and Ethiopia, which could create confusion and hinder smooth trade operations. Harmonizing these regulations was seen as essential for



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the MoU's success.

A policymaker mentioned, "We need to ensure that our trade regulations are aligned. Any discrepancies can cause delays and add to the cost of doing business."

### **Potential Risks Associated with the MoU**

Participants also identified potential risks associated with the MoU, including:

- **Political Instability:** The political landscape in the Horn of Africa is often volatile. Participants expressed concerns that political instability could affect the implementation and sustainability of the MoU.
- **Economic Disparities:** There were worries that the economic benefits of the MoU might not be equitably distributed, potentially exacerbating economic disparities between different regions and communities.
- **Environmental Impact:** Increased trade and infrastructure development could have environmental repercussions, such as habitat disruption and increased pollution, which need to be managed carefully.

## **4.3 Opportunities**

### **Opportunities for Trade Enhancement**

Participants identified several opportunities that the MoU could leverage to enhance trade between Somaliland and Ethiopia:

#### **1. Increased Investment:**

The MoU was seen as a catalyst for attracting foreign and domestic investment in trade infrastructure and related sectors. Participants believed that improved infrastructure would create a conducive environment for investment.

An industry expert stated, "With better infrastructure, we can attract more investors. This will not only improve our trade capacity but also boost other sectors like manufacturing and services."

#### **2. Regional Integration:**

The MoU was viewed as a stepping stone towards greater regional economic integration. By enhancing trade ties, Somaliland and Ethiopia could strengthen their positions within regional trade networks and organizations, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

A policymaker commented, "This MoU is a step towards regional integration. By working together, we can create a more robust and competitive regional market."



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### 3. Innovation and Technology:

Participants highlighted the potential for leveraging technology and innovation to improve trade processes. This included the adoption of digital customs systems, real-time tracking of shipments, and automated logistics management.

A trader remarked, “Technology can play a significant role in making trade more efficient. Digital customs systems and real-time tracking can reduce delays and improve transparency.”

#### Suggestions from Participants on Leveraging the MoU

Participants provided several suggestions for maximizing the benefits of the MoU:

##### 1. Strengthening Institutional Capacity:

Participants emphasized the need to build the capacity of institutions involved in trade facilitation. This includes training staff, improving coordination between agencies, and investing in technology.

An industry expert suggested, “We need to strengthen our institutions. Training programs and better coordination can help address bureaucratic inefficiencies.”

##### 2. Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement:

Ensuring continuous dialogue and collaboration among all stakeholders was seen as crucial. Participants recommended regular meetings and consultations to address issues and share best practices.

A policymaker noted, “Stakeholder engagement is key. We should have regular consultations to ensure that everyone is on the same page and working towards common goals.”

##### 3. Implementing Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms:

Participants proposed establishing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track the progress of the MoU’s implementation and address emerging challenges promptly.

A trader commented, “We need to monitor the implementation closely. Regular evaluations can help identify issues early and take corrective actions.”

## 4.4 Comparative Analysis

### Comparison of Findings with Existing Literature

The findings from this study align with existing literature on trade agreements and their impacts in the region. Similar studies have highlighted the potential benefits of trade agreements, such as increased trade volumes, economic growth, and enhanced regional integration (Mugabe, 2020; Kidane, 2022). The themes identified in this study, such as the need for infrastructure improvements and regulatory harmonization, are consistent with



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the challenges noted in previous research (Huliaras, 2020).

### 1. **Enhanced Trade Efficiency and Economic Benefits:**

Existing literature supports the notion that trade agreements can enhance trade efficiency and bring economic benefits. The anticipated impacts of the Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU, such as increased trade volumes and economic growth, are consistent with findings from similar agreements, like the Djibouti-Ethiopia trade agreement (Kidane, 2022).

### 2. **Challenges of Bureaucratic Inefficiencies and Infrastructure Gaps:**

The challenges identified in this study, including bureaucratic inefficiencies and infrastructure gaps, are also reflected in the literature. Studies on trade agreements in East Africa have emphasized the importance of addressing these challenges to realize the full benefits of such agreements (Huliaras, 2020).

### 3. **Opportunities for Investment and Regional Integration:**

The opportunities for increased investment and regional integration highlighted by participants are supported by research on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and other regional initiatives (Mugabe, 2020). These studies suggest that improved trade relations can attract investment and promote economic integration, leading to broader regional benefits.

In conclusion, the findings from this study provide a comprehensive understanding of the Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU's impact on trade, aligning with existing literature while highlighting specific challenges and opportunities unique to this bilateral agreement. By leveraging the insights and suggestions from stakeholders, policymakers can enhance the effectiveness of the MoU, fostering improved trade relations and economic growth for both regions.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Trade Perspectives

#### Themes and Patterns from Focus Group Discussions

The focus group discussions revealed several recurring themes and patterns regarding the Somaliland-Ethiopia Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and its impact on trade. These themes encompassed expectations for enhanced trade efficiency, infrastructure improvements, and economic benefits. Participants expressed a general optimism about the MoU's potential, but also highlighted significant concerns and challenges that need to be addressed.

### 4. **Enhanced Trade Efficiency:**

Participants, particularly traders, consistently mentioned that the MoU is expected to streamline trade



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processes. They highlighted that reduced bureaucratic procedures and simplified customs regulations could significantly decrease transit times and costs. This was seen as a critical step towards making trade more predictable and efficient.

One trader noted, “With the new MoU, we hope to see fewer delays at the border, which has always been a major issue. Faster processing means we can move goods more quickly and reduce costs.”

#### 5. **Infrastructure Improvements:**

A common expectation was that the MoU would lead to significant investments in trade-related infrastructure, particularly the enhancement of the Berbera port and connecting transport routes. Improved infrastructure was seen as vital for supporting increased trade volumes and enhancing the overall efficiency of logistics.

An industry expert remarked, “The Berbera port is crucial for our trade with Ethiopia. Enhancements in port facilities and road infrastructure will greatly benefit our operations.”

#### 6. **Economic Benefits:**

Participants believed that the MoU would bring substantial economic benefits to both Somaliland and Ethiopia. Improved trade relations were expected to foster economic growth, create jobs, and boost the local economies of both regions.

A policymaker stated, “This MoU is a significant step towards economic integration. By facilitating trade, we can stimulate economic activities and create job opportunities for our people.”

#### **Perspectives on the Impact of the MoU on Trade**

Participants viewed the MoU as a strategic move that could redefine trade dynamics between Somaliland and Ethiopia. The anticipated impacts included:

- **Increased Trade Volumes:** The streamlined procedures and improved infrastructure were expected to attract more traders, thereby increasing the volume of goods traded between the two regions.
- **Diversification of Trade Routes:** By enhancing the Berbera corridor, the MoU was seen as an opportunity to diversify Ethiopia’s trade routes, reducing its dependency on the Djibouti port and providing more options for exporters and importers.
- **Strengthened Bilateral Relations:** Participants believed that the MoU would strengthen political and economic ties between Somaliland and Ethiopia, fostering a more collaborative and stable regional environment.



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## 4.2 Challenges Identified

### Challenges and Concerns Raised by Participants

Despite the optimism, participants identified several challenges and concerns that could hinder the effective implementation of the MoU:

#### 4. Bureaucratic Inefficiencies:

Many participants expressed concerns about persistent bureaucratic hurdles that could delay the realization of the MoU's benefits. These inefficiencies included lengthy administrative procedures, lack of coordination between relevant agencies, and inconsistent enforcement of regulations.

A trader commented, "We often face delays due to bureaucratic red tape. If these issues are not addressed, the benefits of the MoU might not be fully realized."

#### 5. Infrastructure Gaps:

While the MoU aims to improve infrastructure, existing deficits were seen as a significant challenge. Participants highlighted that inadequate transportation networks and port facilities could impede trade activities.

An industry expert noted, "Infrastructure development takes time and significant investment. The current state of roads and port facilities needs urgent attention to support the anticipated increase in trade."

#### 6. Regulatory Inconsistencies:

Participants pointed out inconsistencies in trade regulations between Somaliland and Ethiopia, which could create confusion and hinder smooth trade operations. Harmonizing these regulations was seen as essential for the MoU's success.

A policymaker mentioned, "We need to ensure that our trade regulations are aligned. Any discrepancies can cause delays and add to the cost of doing business."

### Potential Risks Associated with the MoU

Participants also identified potential risks associated with the MoU, including:

- **Political Instability:** The political landscape in the Horn of Africa is often volatile. Participants expressed concerns that political instability could affect the implementation and sustainability of the MoU.
- **Economic Disparities:** There were worries that the economic benefits of the MoU might not be equitably distributed, potentially exacerbating economic disparities between different regions and



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communities.

- **Environmental Impact:** Increased trade and infrastructure development could have environmental repercussions, such as habitat disruption and increased pollution, which need to be managed carefully.

### 4.3 Opportunities

#### Opportunities for Trade Enhancement

Participants identified several opportunities that the MoU could leverage to enhance trade between Somaliland and Ethiopia:

#### 4. Increased Investment:

The MoU was seen as a catalyst for attracting foreign and domestic investment in trade infrastructure and related sectors. Participants believed that improved infrastructure would create a conducive environment for investment.

An industry expert stated, “With better infrastructure, we can attract more investors. This will not only improve our trade capacity but also boost other sectors like manufacturing and services.”

#### 5. Regional Integration:

The MoU was viewed as a stepping stone towards greater regional economic integration. By enhancing trade ties, Somaliland and Ethiopia could strengthen their positions within regional trade networks and organizations, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

A policymaker commented, “This MoU is a step towards regional integration. By working together, we can create a more robust and competitive regional market.”

#### 6. Innovation and Technology:

Participants highlighted the potential for leveraging technology and innovation to improve trade processes. This included the adoption of digital customs systems, real-time tracking of shipments, and automated logistics management.

A trader remarked, “Technology can play a significant role in making trade more efficient. Digital customs systems and real-time tracking can reduce delays and improve transparency.”

#### Suggestions from Participants on Leveraging the MoU

Participants provided several suggestions for maximizing the benefits of the MoU:

#### 4. Strengthening Institutional Capacity:

Participants emphasized the need to build the capacity of institutions involved in trade facilitation. This includes training staff, improving coordination between agencies, and investing in technology.



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An industry expert suggested, “We need to strengthen our institutions. Training programs and better coordination can help address bureaucratic inefficiencies.”

#### **5. Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement:**

Ensuring continuous dialogue and collaboration among all stakeholders was seen as crucial. Participants recommended regular meetings and consultations to address issues and share best practices.

A policymaker noted, “Stakeholder engagement is key. We should have regular consultations to ensure that everyone is on the same page and working towards common goals.”

#### **6. Implementing Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms:**

Participants proposed establishing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track the progress of the MoU’s implementation and address emerging challenges promptly.

A trader commented, “We need to monitor the implementation closely. Regular evaluations can help identify issues early and take corrective actions.”

### **4.4 Comparative Analysis**

#### **Comparison of Findings with Existing Literature**

The findings from this study align with existing literature on trade agreements and their impacts in the region. Similar studies have highlighted the potential benefits of trade agreements, such as increased trade volumes, economic growth, and enhanced regional integration (Mugabe, 2020; Kidane, 2022). The themes identified in this study, such as the need for infrastructure improvements and regulatory harmonization, are consistent with the challenges noted in previous research (Huliaras, 2020).

#### **4. Enhanced Trade Efficiency and Economic Benefits:**

Existing literature supports the notion that trade agreements can enhance trade efficiency and bring economic benefits. The anticipated impacts of the Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU, such as increased trade volumes and economic growth, are consistent with findings from similar agreements, like the Djibouti-Ethiopia trade agreement (Kidane, 2022).

#### **5. Challenges of Bureaucratic Inefficiencies and Infrastructure Gaps:**

The challenges identified in this study, including bureaucratic inefficiencies and infrastructure gaps, are also reflected in the literature. Studies on trade agreements in East Africa have emphasized the importance of addressing these challenges to realize the full benefits of such agreements (Huliaras, 2020).



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## 6. Opportunities for Investment and Regional Integration:

The opportunities for increased investment and regional integration highlighted by participants are supported by research on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and other regional initiatives (Mugabe, 2020). These studies suggest that improved trade relations can attract investment and promote economic integration, leading to broader regional benefits.

In conclusion, the findings from this study provide a comprehensive understanding of the Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU's impact on trade, aligning with existing literature while highlighting specific challenges and opportunities unique to this bilateral agreement. By leveraging the insights and suggestions from stakeholders, policymakers can enhance the effectiveness of the MoU, fostering improved trade relations and economic growth for both regions.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Interpretation of Findings

#### Interpretation of Key Findings in the Context of Research Questions

The findings from the focus group discussions provide valuable insights into the implications of the Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU on trade. These findings are interpreted in the context of the primary research questions guiding the study:

#### 1. Perceived Benefits of the Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU on Trade:

Participants consistently highlighted the anticipated benefits of the MoU, such as enhanced trade efficiency, infrastructure improvements, and economic growth. These benefits align with the MoU's objectives of streamlining trade processes, reducing bureaucratic barriers, and improving the logistics framework between the two regions.

The expectation of increased trade volumes and more efficient logistics reflects a positive outlook among stakeholders, who believe that the MoU will create a more favorable environment for trade and investment.

#### 2. Challenges and Barriers in Implementing the MoU:

Despite the optimism, significant challenges were identified, including bureaucratic inefficiencies, infrastructure deficits, and regulatory inconsistencies. These challenges pose risks to the effective implementation of the MoU and highlight the complexities involved in translating policy agreements into practical outcomes.



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The concerns about political instability and economic disparities underscore the need for robust mechanisms to ensure that the benefits of the MoU are equitably distributed and that potential risks are mitigated.

### **3. Opportunities for Enhancing Trade Relations through the MoU:**

The MoU presents several opportunities, such as attracting increased investment, fostering regional economic integration, and leveraging technology to improve trade processes. These opportunities align with the broader goals of regional trade agreements, which aim to enhance economic cooperation and development.

Participants' suggestions for strengthening institutional capacity, enhancing stakeholder engagement, and implementing monitoring mechanisms provide practical insights into how the MoU can be leveraged to maximize its benefits.

## **5.2 Implications for Policy**

### **Potential Implications for Policymakers in Somaliland and Ethiopia**

The study's findings have significant implications for policymakers in both Somaliland and Ethiopia:

#### **1. Addressing Bureaucratic Inefficiencies:**

Policymakers need to streamline administrative processes and reduce bureaucratic hurdles that impede trade activities. This includes simplifying customs procedures, enhancing inter-agency coordination, and ensuring consistent enforcement of regulations.

Effective training programs for customs officials and other relevant personnel can improve the efficiency of trade operations and reduce delays at the border.

#### **2. Investing in Infrastructure Development:**

A key policy priority should be the development and modernization of trade-related infrastructure, particularly the Berbera port and transportation networks. Investments in infrastructure are crucial for supporting increased trade volumes and improving logistics efficiency.

Policymakers should explore public-private partnerships and seek international funding to support infrastructure projects, ensuring that these developments are sustainable and aligned with the needs of both regions.

#### **3. Harmonizing Trade Regulations:**

Harmonizing trade regulations between Somaliland and Ethiopia is essential for creating a seamless trading environment. Policymakers should work towards aligning customs regulations, standards, and procedures to minimize discrepancies and facilitate smoother trade flows.

Establishing joint regulatory frameworks and mechanisms for dispute resolution can enhance trust and



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cooperation between the two regions.

#### **4. Ensuring Equitable Distribution of Benefits:**

Policymakers should develop strategies to ensure that the economic benefits of the MoU are equitably distributed across different regions and communities. This includes creating policies that support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and promote inclusive economic growth.

Monitoring and evaluation frameworks should be implemented to track the impact of the MoU on various stakeholder groups, identifying any disparities and addressing them through targeted interventions.

### **5.3 Trade Strategy Recommendations**

#### **Recommendations for Enhancing Trade Based on the MoU**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance trade relations between Somaliland and Ethiopia through the MoU:

##### **1. Strengthening Institutional Capacity:**

Invest in capacity-building programs for institutions involved in trade facilitation. This includes training staff, improving coordination between agencies, and upgrading technology systems to support efficient trade operations.

Developing standardized procedures and protocols can help reduce administrative bottlenecks and improve the overall effectiveness of trade processes.

##### **2. Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement:**

Establish regular forums for dialogue and consultation with stakeholders, including traders, policymakers, industry experts, and community representatives. This ensures that diverse perspectives are considered and that emerging issues are promptly addressed.

Collaborative efforts between the public and private sectors can foster innovation and drive improvements in trade practices.

##### **3. Implementing Robust Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms:**

Develop monitoring and evaluation frameworks to assess the implementation and impact of the MoU. These frameworks should include indicators for measuring trade efficiency, infrastructure improvements, and stakeholder satisfaction.

Regular evaluations can provide insights into the effectiveness of the MoU, allowing for timely adjustments and improvements based on empirical evidence.



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#### 4. **Leveraging Technology and Innovation:**

Adopt digital solutions to enhance trade processes, such as automated customs systems, real-time tracking of shipments, and online platforms for trade facilitation. Technology can improve transparency, reduce delays, and lower costs.

Encourage innovation in logistics and supply chain management to optimize trade operations and increase competitiveness.

#### 5.4 Limitations

##### Limitations of the Study

While this study provides valuable insights into the implications of the Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU on trade, several limitations should be acknowledged:

##### 1. **Limited Generalizability:**

The findings are based on focus group discussions with a specific group of stakeholders, which may not represent the views of all individuals involved in trade between Somaliland and Ethiopia. The qualitative nature of the study limits the generalizability of the results to broader populations.

##### 2. **Potential Bias in Participant Responses:**

The participants' responses may be influenced by their roles, experiences, and interests, which could introduce bias into the findings. Efforts were made to ensure diverse representation, but the perspectives captured may still reflect specific viewpoints.

##### 3. **Focus on Immediate Impacts:**

The study primarily focuses on the immediate impacts and perceptions related to the MoU. Long-term effects and broader economic implications may not be fully captured in this research, requiring ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

##### Suggestions for Future Research

To address the limitations and build on the findings of this study, future research could explore the following areas:

##### 1. **Quantitative Analysis of Trade Data:**

Conduct quantitative analyses of trade data to measure the actual impact of the MoU on trade volumes, costs, and efficiency. This can provide a more comprehensive assessment of the MoU's economic effects.



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## 2. Longitudinal Studies:

Undertake longitudinal studies to examine the long-term impacts of the MoU on trade dynamics, infrastructure development, and economic growth. Longitudinal research can provide insights into how the benefits and challenges evolve over time.

## 3. Comparative Studies:

Compare the Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU with similar trade agreements in the region to identify best practices and lessons learned. Comparative studies can offer valuable perspectives on how different agreements address common challenges and opportunities.

## 4. Impact on Local Communities:

Investigate the impact of the MoU on local communities and SMEs involved in trade. Understanding how the agreement affects different stakeholder groups can inform more inclusive and equitable policy development.

In conclusion, this study provides a detailed examination of the Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU's implications for trade, offering insights into stakeholder perspectives, policy implications, and recommendations for enhancing trade relations. While acknowledging the study's limitations, the findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the MoU's impact and offer practical strategies for its effective implementation.

## 6. Conclusion

### 6.1 Summary of Findings

This study investigated the implications of the Somaliland-Ethiopia Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on trade, utilizing qualitative insights gathered from focus group discussions. The primary findings highlight a blend of optimism and caution among stakeholders regarding the MoU's potential impact. Key findings include:

**Anticipated Benefits:** Participants expect the MoU to enhance trade efficiency by reducing bureaucratic barriers and streamlining customs procedures. Improved infrastructure, particularly at the Berbera port and along connecting transport routes, is anticipated to support increased trade volumes and foster economic growth in both regions.

**Identified Challenges:** Despite the positive outlook, significant challenges were identified, such as bureaucratic inefficiencies, infrastructure deficits, and regulatory inconsistencies. These issues pose risks to the effective implementation of the MoU and highlight the need for strategic interventions to address them.



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**Opportunities for Enhancement:** The MoU presents opportunities for attracting investment, promoting regional economic integration, and leveraging technology to improve trade processes. Participants provided practical suggestions for strengthening institutional capacity, enhancing stakeholder engagement, and implementing robust monitoring mechanisms to maximize the MoU's benefits.

These findings provide a comprehensive understanding of how the MoU is perceived by different stakeholders and underscore the complexities involved in its implementation.

## 6.2 Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on Somaliland-Ethiopia trade relations by providing a nuanced analysis of the MoU's implications based on stakeholder perspectives. Unlike previous research that primarily focused on the historical and economic context of bilateral trade agreements, this study offers a detailed examination of the practical challenges and opportunities associated with the MoU. The qualitative approach employed in this research captures the lived experiences and insights of those directly involved in trade, providing a richer understanding of the MoU's impact.

### Key Contributions Include:

**Stakeholder Insights:** By incorporating the views of traders, policymakers, and industry experts, the study sheds light on the diverse perspectives surrounding the MoU and highlights areas that require attention to ensure effective implementation.

**Practical Recommendations:** The study offers actionable recommendations for policymakers and traders, addressing critical areas such as bureaucratic streamlining, infrastructure investment, and regulatory harmonization. These recommendations are grounded in the practical realities faced by stakeholders, making them relevant and applicable.

**Enhanced Understanding of Regional Trade Dynamics:** The findings contribute to a broader understanding of how bilateral trade agreements can influence regional trade dynamics, offering insights that can inform future agreements and policy decisions in similar contexts.

Overall, this research fills a gap in the literature by focusing on the practical implications of the MoU and providing a foundation for future studies on trade relations in the Horn of Africa.

## 6.3 Final Remarks

The Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU represents a significant milestone in the evolving trade relationship between the two regions. This study underscores the MoU's potential to enhance trade efficiency, drive economic



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growth, and foster regional integration. However, it also highlights the critical challenges that need to be addressed to realize these benefits fully. Effective implementation of the MoU will require concerted efforts from all stakeholders, including policymakers, traders, and industry experts.

The study's findings and recommendations offer valuable guidance for navigating the complexities of the MoU, providing a roadmap for enhancing trade relations and ensuring that the benefits of the agreement are equitably distributed. As Somaliland and Ethiopia continue to collaborate on improving their trade infrastructure and regulatory frameworks, the insights from this research can inform strategic decisions and foster a more integrated and prosperous regional economy.

In conclusion, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the practical implications of the Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU on trade. It provides a balanced view of the opportunities and challenges associated with the agreement, offering practical strategies for its effective implementation. The findings underscore the importance of ongoing dialogue, stakeholder engagement, and continuous monitoring to ensure that the MoU achieves its intended goals and supports the broader objectives of regional economic development and integration.



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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Focus Group Questions

#### Introduction

Welcome and thank you for participating in this focus group discussion. The purpose of today's session is to gather your insights on the implications of the Somaliland-Ethiopia Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on trade. Your experiences and opinions are valuable, and we appreciate your willingness to share them.

#### Questions

1. **General Perception of the MoU:**
  - What are your initial thoughts on the Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU?
  - How do you think this agreement will impact trade between Somaliland and Ethiopia?
2. **Benefits of the MoU:**
  - What do you see as the main benefits of the MoU for trade efficiency?
  - How do you anticipate the MoU will improve infrastructure related to trade?
  - In what ways do you think the MoU will contribute to economic growth in both regions?
3. **Challenges and Barriers:**
  - What challenges have you encountered or expect to encounter in the implementation of the MoU?
  - How do bureaucratic inefficiencies impact your trade activities?
  - Are there any specific regulatory inconsistencies you have noticed that could affect trade under the MoU?
4. **Opportunities for Trade Enhancement:**
  - What opportunities do you believe the MoU presents for enhancing trade between Somaliland and Ethiopia?
  - How can technology and innovation be leveraged to improve trade processes under the MoU?
  - What role do you think increased investment can play in realizing the MoU's benefits?
5. **Recommendations for Improvement:**
  - What recommendations would you make to policymakers to address the challenges associated with the MoU?
  - How can institutional capacity be strengthened to support the implementation of the MoU?



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- What strategies can be implemented to ensure that the economic benefits of the MoU are equitably distributed?

#### 6. Closing Thoughts:

- Are there any other comments or suggestions you would like to share regarding the MoU and its impact on trade?
- How do you think continuous stakeholder engagement can be ensured to support the MoU's objectives?

#### Conclusion

Thank you for your valuable contributions. Your insights will help us better understand the implications of the Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU on trade. We will ensure that your feedback is used to inform the study's recommendations and contribute to enhancing trade relations between the two regions.

## Appendix B: Consent Form

### Informed Consent Form

**Title of the Study:** Exploring the Implications of the Somaliland-Ethiopia MoU on Trade: Perspectives

**Researchers:** Dr. Samina khan, Dr. Abdirisq Garad & Dr. Ahmed Zaki

**Purpose of the Study:** This study aims to explore the implications of the Somaliland-Ethiopia Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on trade by gathering insights from key stakeholders. The focus is on understanding the perceived benefits, challenges, and opportunities associated with the MoU.

**Procedures:** As a participant, you will be involved in a focus group discussion lasting approximately two hours. The session will be audio-recorded to ensure accurate transcription and analysis of the discussion.



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**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. You are also free to decline to answer any questions during the focus group.

**Confidentiality:** All information collected will be kept confidential. Your responses will be anonymized, and no identifying information will be linked to your contributions in any reports or publications resulting from this study.

**Risks and Benefits:** There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study. While there are no direct benefits to you, your insights will contribute to a better understanding of the MoU's impact on trade and inform policy recommendations.

**Contact Information:** If you have any questions about the study or your participation, please contact [saminakhan616@gamil.com](mailto:saminakhan616@gamil.com)

**Participant Statement:** I have read and understood the information provided above. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study and consent to the audio recording of the focus group session.

**Signature of Participant:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Researcher:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_



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