

Research Article

The Historical Appraisal of Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas): It's Achievements and Challenges So Far

Adewoye Sunday Bade¹, Ogunrinda Remi Kunle², Adetutu Segun Adewale³

^{1,2,3} Department Of History, Ladoke Akintola University Of Technology, (LauTech) Ogbomoso

Abstract: This study provides an historical appraisal of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), examining its evolution, challenges and achievements since its establishment in 1975, the study explores ECOWAS transformation from a regional economic organization to a comprehensive institution promoting economic integration, peace and security in West Africa. This paper analyzes the challenges militating against the organization and the significant milestone achieved. The study obtained its data from both primary and secondary sources such as textbooks, journals and archival materials. The article recommends that ECOWAS strengthen its institutions, enhance its decision-making processes and foster greater co-operation among member states to address the regions complex challenges.

Keywords: Regional Integration, West Africa, ECOWAS challenges, achievements

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1. Introduction

Since independence in the early 1960s, regional integration had been seen as a major way of overcoming the challenges of under-development by Africa and improving the living standard of its people even though as pointed out by Kwame Nkrumah, the first post-independence President of Ghana, has its fair share of human and material resources necessary for her development, she lags behind the rest of humanity. Africa's plight in Nkrumah view is largely due to its division. Hence its clarion call for Africa to seek ye first the political kingdom and all else shall be added unto thee¹.

Close economic relations between separate nation states as a pre requisite to the economic development of the areas concerned are not a new phenomenon in the history of the growth of nations and of the world economy. The third world's interest in the Post World War II scheme of economic integration is to a large extent the result of severing political and economic ties with European power which until the 1960's had chosen to remain custodian of the third world's political social and economic welfare. West Africa as a sub-region was not legitimately drawn into the vortex of world trade until the cessation of the slave trade. Thereafter, and until the period of West African independence in the 1960's and the geographical division of the region by Britain, France, Germany and Portugal eroded whatever scheme of economic co-operation existed among West African states before the colonial era. Its replacement with economic links in colonies ruled by European powers has been aptly described as a unity of Europe in African².

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established on May 28, 1975 by fifteen West African nations met in Lagos and signed the treaty. The treaty formally came into effect on June 23, 1975; when the required minimum seven member states had ratified it. The other nations ratified the treaty thereafter. ECOWAS was related



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with the foremost objectives of promoting greater economic cooperation among West African State with the penultimate goal of establishing a monetary union in the region. Political and economic difference among member states have however started the efforts of advancing the monetary cooperation⁴ (Ackah 2012).

Regional integration has been an evolving process over many decades now and different regions of the word have embraced it. Its evolution was very much in the form of integrating actors concerned with economic and security issues to the inclusion of other measures such as social, cultural, environmental and other development needs. It could rightly be said that the ideal of economic integration in West Africa developed from the awareness of global economic interdependence⁵. This explains why Adedeji (2002) points out that Africa came into existence during the age of regional integration. After the World War II, the promotion of regional integration became a global phenomenon culminating in the establishment of European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, the Latin America Free Trade Association in 1960, the Central America Common Market in 1961, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967 and the Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA) in 1968⁶. The inactivation to integrate was as a result of the devastated economics of Europe, and the desire to carry out a super powerful capitalist society in Western Europe in the overall global struggle against socialism

2. Economic Characteristics Of The West African Economy

The conventional theory on close economic relations such as the customs union emphasis the importance of the potential complementarity of the structure of the economics of the areas concerned. The benefit to the union depends to a large extent on whether the intra-union trade is in general result of trade-creation or of trade diversion. Examination of the economic characteristic of West Africa in the high of this criterion will determine the extent to which the customs union type of desired economic co-operation is justified. Primary production is the mainstay of the West African sub-region. The average share of agriculture which includes fishing, livestock and forestry in total GDP varies between 50 and 60 percent. Its geographical regulation belt roughly divides the sub-region into two agricultural production belts. The southern half specializes in the production of primary product such as oil seeds rubber, cocoa, coffee, banana and timber, while the northern savannah specializes in livestock production and grain crops⁷.

Trade emanating from the competitive character of primary production within West Africa is export-oriented; consequently, the volume of inter- country trade in the sub-region according to the reports of research carried out between 1972-1980 shows West Africa inter-country import to be exceptionally low level of imports of a large proportion of the countries of the sub-region from other west African countries. Another outstanding characteristic of great relevance to economic co-operation in West Africa is the size of the countries in term of population, domestic market and per capital income. The relatively low population in the sub-region is accompanied by extremely low level of per capital income. Consequently, the market for manufactured goods in each country except Nigeria is small. This confirms the economic commission for Africa's observation that the present each market of most African countries individually is not larger than that of a moderately sized. European town.

References has been made to economic characteristics of the West African sub-region primary export production is competitive, very little trade flows between countries of the sub-region; they are very dependent on foreign trade, the population, the market and the per capital income are small and they are at a very low level of industrial development. Associated with this weak base for economic co-operation is the instruction of numerous national currencies, for example, the Cedi in Ghana, the Dollar in Liberia, the CFA Franc

in the francophone countries, the Leone in Sierra Leone and the Naira in Nigeria linked with the currencies of Britain, France and United states.

3. Motivation Towards Economic Relation Among Independent West African States

The history of some form of economic co-operation in both the Anglophone and Francophone countries of the sub-region dates back to the early colonial days. The quest for the introduction of a uniform monetary system in all the Anglophone west African territories as early as the turn of the century, necessitated the establishment of the West African currency Board with London controlled Centre at Lagos, Accra, Freetown and Bathurst. The importance of this monetary linked as the convertibility of British West African coins and notes on demand into sterling Bank in London. It was essentially a convenient starting exchange standard currency. This system was convenient for both commercial and administrative links with Britain. An analogous monetary system – the French West African currency union was also established in the francophone territories with basically the same objective⁸.

After the World War II, a few functional economic links centered in West Africa territories were established in the areas of research and Air links. These were the West African Institute of Social Research and the West African Airways. With the attainment of independence by these territories from 1957, and the associated spirit of nationalism accompanied by the desire to safeguard national sovereignty by the various countries. The few pre-independence links were dissolved. The decades of 1960s therefore witnessed a variety of new experiments in economics co-operation both within Francophone and Anglophone West African countries.

Post-independence efforts at either reclaiming old links or experimenting with the new ones differ between the two defined groups of West African countries. For instance, the Francophone countries have posteriorly striven towards maintaining pre-independence link. This is particularly so in the monetary field where the Anglophone countries abandoned the idea of the West African currency Boards in preference for individual currencies, while the French West Africa currency union was replaced in 1962, by the West African Monetary Union. The currency of this later- the CFA Franc has been convertible into French Franc. It is no wonder, therefore that the earliest post-independence attempt at economic integration was made within the French speaking West African countries⁹.

Followings are the objectives of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

- (a) To promote co-operation and development in all fields of economic activity particular in the field of industry, transport, telecommunication, energy to mention just a few.
- (b) To raise the living standard of the people and to increase and maintain economic stability among member states
- (c) To foster closer relations among member states, for instance by encouraging free movement of citizens, goods and services among nations.
- (d) To contribute to the progress and development of the African continent.¹³

4. Conceptual Clarification Of Integration

Integration is a means in which various states within a sub-region, in a peaceful and non-coercive manner, collectively seek to resolve conflicts in either a pre-emptive or reactive response. Moreover, it is a vehicle through which member states maximize or attempt to

maximize, their national interest on a long-range basis through the creation of supranational institutions and the evolution of sub-regional policies.

Deutsch (1957:7-9) Define integration as a condition in which people have attained within a territory that is manifested by a sense of community and the growth of institutions and practices strong and widespread enough among the people involved to assure for a long-time dependable expectation of peaceful change¹⁴. Deutsch's position is that integration is measure by flow of international transactions, the movement of people, trade, and so on among the integrating nations. For Ernst Haas (1958:62) integration refers to a process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities to a new center, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over pre-existing national states¹⁵. The end result of a process of political integration is a new political community super-imposed over the pre-existing ones in his neo-functional approach to explaining integration in Europe, for example, Haas postulated the concept of spill-over (Functional and political) to delve into the critical question of how cooperation in certain sectors of the economy could precipitate greater economic integration and eventually lead to much more widespread political integration in Europe.

Lindberg (1963:3) penned that integration is a process whereby nations forgo the desire and ability to conduct foreign and key domestic polities independent of each other. Instead, they seek to make joint decision or delegate the decision-making process to new central organization¹⁶. He stated further that integration is the process whereby political actors in several distinct setting are persuaded to shift their expectation and political activities to a new center.

According to Maiyaki (2017:24), the age-long practice of the individual survival of nations have long give way to the emergent concept of integration and cooperation among states as an option to meeting the collective development needs of the cooperative nations. He stated further that, practice has shown overtime that when states take comparative advantage of each other's strength and weaknesses, it opens the space of and engenders the potentials for specialization, development of the economies of scale and indeed reduces the cost of production¹⁷. In a nutshell, integration is the process of coming into a community by different nations for the purpose of forming a common front for development in all spheres of life.

In the view of David Mitrany, the leading exponent of functionalism shortly after 1945, integration could be effected through the creation of a transnational, health and welfare necessities, cultural activities, trade and production. This process would not involve the surrender of national superiority but would promote global peace and security¹⁸. In organizing these thoughts and model, Mitrany assumed first that politics and economics cannot be separated in the functions of the state but that both could be internationalized without any visible loss of sovereignty by the state¹⁹. However, it is difficult to internationalize political and socio-economic issues, in the affairs among states. This is particularly so in the cases of newly independent countries which are generally sensitive to the full control over economic policies as a means of guaranteeing sovereignty, economic development and therefore of legitimizing movements. It was in this vein that I. L. Claude (Jr.) argued that states are not likely to be induced to participate in functional endeavors where they have unsettled political and security issues which divide them²⁰. Also, Mitrany assumes that the internationalization of politics and economics would ultimately shift loyalty and sovereignty from states to international organizations. This he said, would occur as a result of specifying the technical and non-controversial aspect of governmental conduct and weaving an ever-spreading web of international relationships

with initial concentration on commonly experienced or non-controversial needs and the expansion of these at the expense of the political needs.

Neo-functionalism, a modified version of functionalism, was proposed by Ernest Haas in the early 1950s. The central idea of Haas in this model was that there exists a continuum between economic integration and political union. Both were said to be linked together by the "spill-over" effect through which the tasks and powers of the central institutions are increased and integration gradually encroaches on the politically sensitive area. Subsequently, political community would emerge and grow. This determination was prompted by his observation of the European experience. He observed that the determinism implicit in the picture of the European social and economic structures was absolute. Given all these conditions, the progression from a politically inspired common market to an economic union and finally to a political union among states was automatic. Seeing this as an automatic process leaves little room for conscious effort on the part of the actors involved hence degeneration of the subjectivities aspect in the process of integration but the anti-functional politics of the late President De Gaulle of France within the community led Haas to re-examine his deterministic posture on integration. He recognized that incremental economic integration may not automatically result in political unity but that integration and desegregation coexist simultaneously and that crucial political choices by the member states of the community could influence the pace and direction of integration. Thus, in Haas modified model, even though more weight was given to the political function this could only have significance given a charismatic political leader. Short of this, integration could be frustratingly gradual²¹.

Apart from this however, the spill-over doctrine has considerable problems especially for integrating developing countries. In particular, for these category of countries, it is not relevant to welfare of "low" politics union. Trade diversion, on the other hand, occurs when one of the member countries previously produced the commodity inefficiently owing to its protection behind a tariff wall, whereas after customs union this country now captures the whole customs union market. J. Viner contends that the formation of a custom union will raise "welfare" or real income where trade creation is greater than trade diversion.

Subsequently, the analysis from J. Viner was extended by J. E Meade, R. Q Lipsey postulated that the real income is likely to be raised if the following condition exist:

- (a) That the potential partners in a union conduct a significant proportion of their trade with one another
- (b) That the economics be at least potentially complementary

However, these²² conditions are not characteristic of most developing countries, including but to "high" politics. It would imply a modification of national policies, in industry, trade, agriculture and monetary policies. These are essentially highly political issues in the less-developed countries by virtue of being crucial to economic development. In Africa, issues which are closely non-controversial and solvable by technocrats in the European Context, are generally problematic and require the attention of political leaders for solution.

Within the context of economic explanation, regional integration has generally been interpreted through the traditional theory of economic integration. This model of course has a number of limitations for the developed and the developing countries.

Professor J. Viner, the exponent of the traditional theory of economic integration maintains that the essential rudiments of economic integration²³ are trade creation and trade diversion. Trade creation occurs in a customs union when prior to its formation potential member countries produced behind tariff walls, whereas afterwards one of the customs union partners becomes the complete supplier of all members of the customs in West Africa. The countries in the sub-region do not for example, conduct substantial trade with each other. The foreign trade of West African countries constitute a high percentage of the gross national product. The economies of West Africa countries are more competitive than complementary. Nearly all countries in the sub-region produce similar primary products for the markets of industrialized countries²⁴.

In view of this R.F Mikesell, he opined that the static analysis of the welfare implication of stiffingexisting trade patterns may not be essential in the evaluation of economic integration among less-developed countries²⁵. The rationale for economic integration among them should be sought for in the economic development theory. With the dynamic effect, not the static, which explain the appeal of economic integration. The less-developed countries generally seek a fundamental change in the structure of production and trade and have sought to fashion a regional trade mechanism to help their economic towards regional specialization. Consequently, attention has been paid to the dynamic effect of customs union; the economics of scale and import substitution industrialization, which refer to the ways in which custom union can affect the rate of growth of the gross national product.

P. Robinson maintains that the formation of customers union among the less-developed countries would lead to the benefits of economies of scales because modern technology is such that the cost of production per unit are reduced by the expanded capacity of an existing plant or the construction of a larger one.

“Pure economies of scale” he added “derive from the “invisible nature of much capital equipment “only large output capacity can be used to produce at a sufficiently low cost in many areas of the manufacturing industry²⁶. The areas considered here include cement, oil refining, soap, types and tubes, canned goods and shoes, industries in which both operating cost and capital changes would decrease. Indeed, the optimum scale of operation of plant on requires a doubling or trebling of the very small market.

Thus, J. S. Bain has argued that it may not be possible to make a universal case for decreasing of steeply falling cost throughout industry, as postulated by P. Robson. In his Barriers to New Competition, Bain²⁷ emphasizes that for most industries in the less developed countries many cost relationships are flat. For instance, in oil refining, tractors, cigarettes, liquor and meat packing, total costs are proportionately with the production costs. While other industries such as soap, tyresand tubes, canned goods, shoes and farm machinery showonly moderate gradients, beyond the critical size of these operations, relatively modestly scaled economies can be achieved.

Thus, the theories²⁸ of political and economic integration which inform integration process in the ECOWAS are fraught with some difficulties and may not necessarily provide the answer to the sub-regions questions of political unity and economic development. The relevance of economic policies to superiority in the less-developed countries, undermines the functionalist notion that full integration of states could be realized through the internationalization of politics and economics. Polities cannot be divorced from economics in the affairs of the less developed countries since the control of economic policies represents a vital vehicle for the maintenance of sovereignty. The Shift of loyalty to international organization as envisaged in the functionalist theory could be

difficult to affair since organizations at all levels in the less-developed counties are characterized by poor administration.

The neo-functionalism doctrine of spillover is not applicable to the less-developed countries, since it occurs in the sphere of high politics. Political leaders in the less-developed countries are sensitive to issues concerning industry, trade, agriculture and monetary policies, where spill-over occurs, because they represent issues vital to the process of economic development. The legitimization of the various political regimes in the less-developed countries is largely a function of the promotion of economic development through the effective management of these issues.

The possibilities for extensive economies of scale with a customs union of less-developed countries are not without limitations. The descending cost curves which it emphasizes are not characteristic of most industries in the less-developed countries²⁹. Although some manufacturing industries producing consumer goods are within the markets of some less developed countries, nevertheless, given the underdeveloped nature of their economies, the more important problem seems to be one of attracting investment or allocating resources for development. E.g. most countries in West Africa generally lack the capital and adequate schemes for industrial allocation to ensure rapid industrial development import substitution industrialization within the context of customs union of the less developed countries is not per se the deus ex machina for increasing their foreign exchange earnings. The lack of the necessary input into import substitution industrialization in developing countries inevitably results in increased import of capital raw materials and consumer goods, so that foreign exchange earnings cannot be appreciably increased. Thus, the integrators' in the West African sub-region cannot ignore these limitations if integration is to succeed and facilitate economic development in the area. Genuine efforts would have to be made to remove the political, economic and structural impediments to integration in order to ensure its effectiveness in the area³⁰.

5. The Challenges Militating Against ECOWAS

Despite steady economic growth in several ECOWAS countries in recent years, ECOWAS is still facing a myriad of security and socio-economic issues that threaten to shake the region's relative stability and economic progress. The challenges range from terrorism and violent extremists, to piracy, political instability, election-related violence, drug trafficking or deadly viruses, these as well as other security and violence related issues are hardly limited to one country alone but tend to lead to the spillover of instability across the region. As security in the sub-region remains tenuous and peace fragile and COVID-19 pandemics is seriously affecting nations' economics with the economic growth in the forecasted to contract for about 3% in 2020 bringing per capita income back to 2013 levels.

Immigration Problem: This is a greater challenge to migration in the latest African sub-region militating against the enforcement of the ECOWAS protocol on entry, residence and settlement. Thus the treaty signed in Lagos on 28th May 1975 creating ECOWAS, covered wide areas of activities. Article 27 of the treaty affirms a long term objective to establish a community citizenship that could be acquired automatically by all nations of member states. In 1992, the revised treaty of ECOWAS among others, affirmed the rights of the citizens of the community to entry, residence and settlement and enjoined member states to recognize these rights in their respective territories.

The Strong External Influence: Many of the member states of ECOWAS were former colonies of some colonial powers, such as Britain, France and Portugal identified as Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone countries. There are differing ideological and cultural perspectives of the English, the French and the Portuguese who influence

administration of their colonies respectively. These different administrative perspectives have been the primary basis for trade and cultural exchange among the countries of West Africa. These member states are still controlled to a large extent, by their colonial master.

Border Problems: The increasing issue of extortion at the border by the officials of the agencies conceded, is a great impediment to achieving the desired ends of abolishing the trade obstacles from within the international trading relationship within the ECOWAS community.

Multiplicity of the Organization. The multiplicity of organizations of ECOWAS member states with the same objectives has affected the general objective of ECOWAS of integrating the sub-region. Several ECOWAS members are currently part of the West African Monetary Union (also known by its) French language acronym "Union Monetaire Quest-Afraine" (UEMOA) a regional economic and monetary union which shares a common currency – the CFA Franc and common custom. The francophone countries; Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo with Guinea Bissau (Lusophone) comprise UEMOA. The currency (CFA franc) they all use is pegged Euro. The west African states could not generate effective political institutions to regulate social relationship based on economic and political order, and therefore were not able to replace their traditional social force with "occupational class and skilled grouping" in the process of modernization. Public institutions structures remained highly fragile and utterly disorganized in the face of enormous pressure from varied and fast expanding social force. The inability of West African states, national political development to accommodate great qualities of "consensus" legitimacy, effective, and stability 'created grave deficiencies in enthroning effective and stable government throughout the sub-region. This in turn created condition for wide spread "mistrust among their citizens, in national and public loyalties in organization skill and capacity building³¹ (Huntington 1968).

Financial Problem: Financially the objections of the ECOWAS can only be achieved when the financial base of the community is solid. However, some member states are notable to honor their financial obligations to the community. This is one problem that has bedeviled the community over the years, especially when it comes to the cunning of the affairs of the community. According to Salamatu Hussain Suleiman, Commissioner for political affairs, peace and security for ECOWAS said ECOWAS is facing sever "financial difficulty" and can no longer fight terrorism and other threats in the sub-region. According to the ECOWAS commissioner, member states have continually failed to honor the payment of their mandatory community levies. This is hugely affecting the operation of the commission in the wake of increasing reports of insecurity, terrorism and piracy challenges among others. This has forced the commission to reprioritize their scheduled activities in maintaining peace and security in west Africa ordinarily, each country is supposed to pay 0.05 percent of the imports as levy to ECOWAS commission. Unfortunately the community levy is not being respected as much as it should, and that funding gap has affected in no small measure the operation of the commission³² (Salamatu, 2016)

Religious problem: Religion has been a constant source of discontent among the indigenes who feel that foreign doctrines and norms in their community should be resisted. The followers of the two dominant religious of West Africa, Christianity and Islam, have often clashed in their communities over doctrines and life styles. The coastal regions of some West African countries is Christianity and the people have richer arable land, schools and industries. This southern region historically has attracted intolerant families. Usually, dating labors and cattle herders from the north, who are

chiefly Muslims, looking for work, often have clash occurring in several countries in West Africa which hardly get abated.

Political problems: on the political challenge, West Africa countries have been having the most unstable political arrangements in Africa. From 1960 and even till date, those governments had not been interested in keeping the system which had allowed for multiple political parties to co-exist and compete for their share of the electorate system. The healthy competition that multiple parties bring into polities as they try to persuade the electorate to vote them into power opens up, otherwise closed political system to scrutiny, as in banditry, kidnapping to mention just a few. These unrest has led to the creating of temporary abode for the internally displaced persons camps (IDPC) across the West African states. A region or a group's disagreement government has often resulted in a feeling of being cheated in terms of budget allocations and distribution of amenities unequally among regions. Political instability and coups: several ECOWAS states have experienced military coups and unconstitutional change of government in recent years examples of Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso and Niger. These political crises threaten the democratic principles ECOWAS promotes and often strain relations between member states forces the parties to lay out clearer manifestoes. In the contrary, abuses like imprisonments. Disappearances, house detention, forced exile and death had become rampant in the sub-region. Again, the member governments are not under control as joint decisions taken are deliberately floated by some member states without sanctions. Very often, when given the choice between political survival and long term interest in collective regional development, the former tends to prevail for leaders in the region. New governments in the ECOWAS region frequently do not feel bound by regional commitment made by their predecessors. The political instability that is persistent in the sub-region is a result of bad government, high illiteracy, and high level of poverty, mismanagement of resources, elections rigging, corruption and lack of effective rule of law. All these have devastating effect on the entire sub-region.

Security problems: The major security problems that continues to threaten west African counties has been outbreak of internal squabbles among ethnic groups or between regions or ethnic groups and the central government on grounds of the latter's policies. The issue of terrorism, with the network in West African states, such as Boko Haram Islamic states of West Africa (ISWAP). Security threats and terrorism is another problem the region faces now, the rising tourism and insurgency, especially in the Sahel region of Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger; groups linked to Al-Qaeda and is operate actively, making peace keeping and regional security a serious challenge. Organized crime, piracy and cross-border trafficking also destabilized the region.

Economic inequality and poverty: Despite its economic cooperation efforts, West Africa. Still struggle with high poverty rates, youth unemployment and widening gaps between the rich and the poor countries. Dependence on export of raw materials like oil and cocoa makes economics unenviable to global price fluctuations³³.

6. The Achievement Of Economic Community Of West African States (Ecwas) So Far
The economic community of West African states (ECOWAS) has made unprecedented achievements since creation in 1975. The followings are some of the important achievements so far.

Promotion of regional integration: ECOWAS has worked tirelessly to promote trade among member states by removing trade barriers and developing a common external tariff. The ECOWAS trade liberalization scheme (ETLS) help goods and services move freely across borders.

Peace keeping and conflict resolution: ECOWAS has played a significant role in resolving conflicts in the region for example wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Mali etc. the creation of the ECOWAS monitoring coup (ECOMOL) a military peace-keeping force that intervened in combating several crises in the region.

Free movement of people: citizens of the member states can travel, live and work in other ECOWAS countries without Visa up to 90 days: This promotes cultural exchange and economic activities across borders.

Infrastructure development: ECOWAS has supported the development of regional infrastructure such as roads, energy project and telecommunications network to improve connectivity and trade in the region. It has promoted joint economic projects and programs to improve agriculture industry and transport. Also it has supported efforts to create a single currency (the ECO) for the region, though its implementation suffered challenges and delays.

Health and social initiatives: ECOWAS developed several programs to combat diseases like Ebola virus and Corona virus (COVID-19) showing regional solidarity in health emergencies.

Democracy and good governance: ECOWAS has consistently promoted democratic governance through the election observer mission to monitor general elections and supporting peaceful transition of power in the region³⁴.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the economic community of West African states (ECOWAS) has made significant progress in promoting regional integration and cooperation in West Africa since its establishment in 1975. Despite the challenges it has faced, including political instability, economic disparities and security threats, ECOWAS has achieved notable milestones in promoting regional trade, facilitating the free movement of people and goods intervening in regional conflicts.

However, for ECOWAS to effectively address the complex challenges facing the region, it must strengthen its institution, enhance its decision-making processes, and foster greater cooperation among member states. This requires a renewed commitment to regional integration and co-operation, as well as a willingness to address the underlying structural and institutional weaknesses that have hindered ECOWAS's effectiveness.

Ultimately, the success of ECOWAS will depend on its ability to balance the interests of its member states while promoting the greater good of the region, it is essential that it remains committed to its founding principles of promoting economic integration, peace and security in West Africa.

In accordance with the analysis presented in this study these recommendations are necessary to bring the regional integration in West Africa to greater height.

- Strengthen ECOWAS institutions: ECOWAS should prioritize strengthening its institutions, including the commission, the community court of justice, and the pertinent.
- Enhance decision-making processes: ECOWAS should enhance its decision-making processes to ensure greater transparency, accountability and inclusivity
- Foster greater co-operation among member states: ECOWAS should foster greater cooperation among member states to address the region's complex challenges.

- Address underlying structural and institutional weaknesses that have hindered its effectiveness

By taking into consideration and implementing the above-mentioned recommendations, ECOWAS can build on its achievements and overcome its challenges to promote greater regional integration and cooperation in West Africa.

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