

This chapter focuses on how a cross section of Zimbabwean women managed to carve a lucrative informal cross-border market niche for themselves despite various limitations and the negative construction of the women traders by the Zimbabwean and South African states and the media.' In particular, the patriarchal states' reactions to women's trading activities has been unsupportive. The chapter begins with a discussion of the concept of globalisation and how it impacts on cross-border trade. Attention is then paid to cross-border trade and women's identity, with a special emphasis on women's empowerment and disempowerment. Cross-border women traders rely on the use of social networks, which function as a resource that contributes to their success in trading activities. The last part of the chapter presents a discussion that seeks to highlight informal cross-border trade interconnections and linkages and how they relate to globalisation, regional integration and differentiation. Thus the place of cross-border trade within the overall global but mostly regional domains is discussed. I also attempt a cursory view of how globalisation affects the position of cross-border traders. In a way globalisation can empower women, but fails to do so when women's innovative and creative abilities are curbed by patriarchal states and capital in general. Globalisation in certain respects can be seen as disempowering women, especially when one considers the overall impact Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAPs) have had on women. Yet despite the constraints on women traders, they have become an icon of success. The data presented in this chapter is part of a larger research project, which focused on livelihoods of female-headed households. At least 26% of my research sample depended on cross-border trade as the main source of income; in addition to this figure 46% of the women did commissioned knitting and crocheting for other women cross-border traders. The research involved the use of multiple research techniques that included participant observation. Several intensive interviews were conducted, and direct observation and various existing sources of data research techniques were used for the study. Willing participants were obtained through the women's social networks instead of through random sampling techniques. I used the snowball sampling technique to locate participants.