

NEWSLETTER

First Quarter - 2025



TAX FOCUS WEST AFRICA

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Welcome to the Q1 2025 edition of Tax Focus West Africa, WATAF's quarterly newsletter.

This issue captures WATAF's dynamic start to the year, featuring highlights from our participation in key international tax events, including the 3rd NTO Conference in Panama and CIAF 2025 in Accra. It also covers WATAF's continued leadership on global tax discussions, recent high-level engagements with partner organisations, and notable appointments within member tax administrations. As always, we bring you the latest from across our region, showcasing developments that shape the future of tax cooperation in West Africa.

ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT DURING THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2025:

(i) Guinea-Bissau Prepares for VAT Implementation: WATAF-Led Training Builds Institutional Readiness



Above: DG, DGCI with the Trainers and WATAF Staff

In a landmark step toward reforming its tax system, Guinea-Bissau officially rolled out Value Added Tax (VAT) on 1 January 2025. To support this major policy shift, the West African Tax Administration Forum (WATAF) facilitated a comprehensive five-day training workshop in Bissau from 13–17 January 2025. This workshop was, at WATAF's instance, generously sponsored by the Open Society Foundation.

Hosted at the Bissau Royal Hotel, the training gathered 80 participants from across the General Directorate of Taxes and Contributions (DGCI), the Treasury, and the Ministry of Finance. It aimed to enhance technical capacity, streamline understanding of VAT principles, and build operational readiness for implementation.

International Expertise, Regional Impact

The sessions were led by high-level experts with proven VAT systems from Portuguese and French-speaking jurisdictions:

- **Cláudia Maria Marramaque Afecto Dias**, Director of VAT Service, Portuguese Tax Authority (Portugal)
- **Antónia Pinto Dias**, Director of Taxation and Collection Service, National Revenue Directorate (Cabo Verde)
- **Philippe Accalogoun**, Deputy Director of Legislation and Litigation, Directorate-General for Taxation (Benin)

Topics covered included VAT registration, invoicing, deductions, exemptions, and compliance obligations. Participants also reviewed practical aspects of tax audits, control measures, and cross-border considerations.



Above: Cross-section of DGCI staff during one of the training sessions.

Engaging the Public: Awareness on the Move

The workshop concluded with a dynamic street walk, where participants took VAT sensitisation directly to the public. Armed with banners, flyers, and megaphones, the team fanned out through the streets of Bissau, engaging citizens on VAT's purpose, debunking misconceptions, and promoting voluntary compliance.

This hands-on campaign strengthened the connection between tax officials and the communities they serve—an important step in building trust in the evolving tax landscape.





Above: Public sensitisation in action during the final day of the training.

Strengthening Communications Capacity

The training also provided an opportunity to improve the visibility and reach of Guinea-Bissau's tax messages. Five staff members from DGCI's Tax Education and Communication Department participated in the sessions, enhancing their technical understanding of VAT to better inform the public.

Despite notable efforts, including the airing of radio jingles and production of public awareness materials, the department cited constraints in digital engagement and media resources. Several discussions during the workshop emphasised the need for continued capacity building and investment in communications to sustain taxpayer education.

Positive Outcomes and Conclusion

Participant evaluations were overwhelmingly positive. Most respondents reported an improved understanding of VAT principles and felt more confident in applying them in practice.

The training was a significant milestone in supporting Guinea-Bissau's transition to VAT. By strengthening both institutional and communication capacities, it laid the groundwork for improved tax compliance and sustainable revenue mobilisation.

(ii) Laying the Groundwork for Property Tax Reform in Guinea-Bissau



Guinea Bissau's Country Correspondent, the Trainers, and WATAF Staff

From 20-24 January 2025, Guinea-Bissau took a significant step toward improving domestic revenue mobilisation through a capacity-building workshop on Urban Property Tax, held at the Royal Bissau Hotel. The event was organised by the Directorate-General of Contributions and Taxes (DGCI) in collaboration with the West African Tax Administration Forum (WATAF) and was generously supported by the Open Society Foundation.

The workshop brought together property tax administrators and technical staff from DGCI for four days of intensive training designed to strengthen their skills in valuation, taxpayer segmentation, and data analytics—critical areas for effective property tax reform.

Expert Facilitation and Strategic Learning

The training was delivered by international experts with a strong background in property tax systems and data science:

- **Mr. Anthony Mwandha** – Property taxation specialist
- **Mr. Jupar Dunbar** – Data analytics and geospatial mapping expert

Sessions included:

- Principles and global best practices in property valuation
- Taxpayer segmentation models to better understand compliance behaviours
- Hands-on training in Python and Anaconda software for data-driven tax administration
- Revenue trend analysis and strategic taxpayer engagement methods

Participants responded with high enthusiasm and actively engaged in exercises and discussions. Some further extended their learning into the evenings during "Train-the-Trainer" sessions aimed at fostering long-term sustainability through internal knowledge sharing.



Photos from the training sessions

Forward Momentum for Tax Reform

The DGCI Director-General underscored the broader context of tax reform by announcing the upcoming implementation of VAT in February 2025 and a geospatial mapping project scheduled for March. These initiatives are expected to enhance the country's revenue base while improving the transparency and fairness of the tax system.

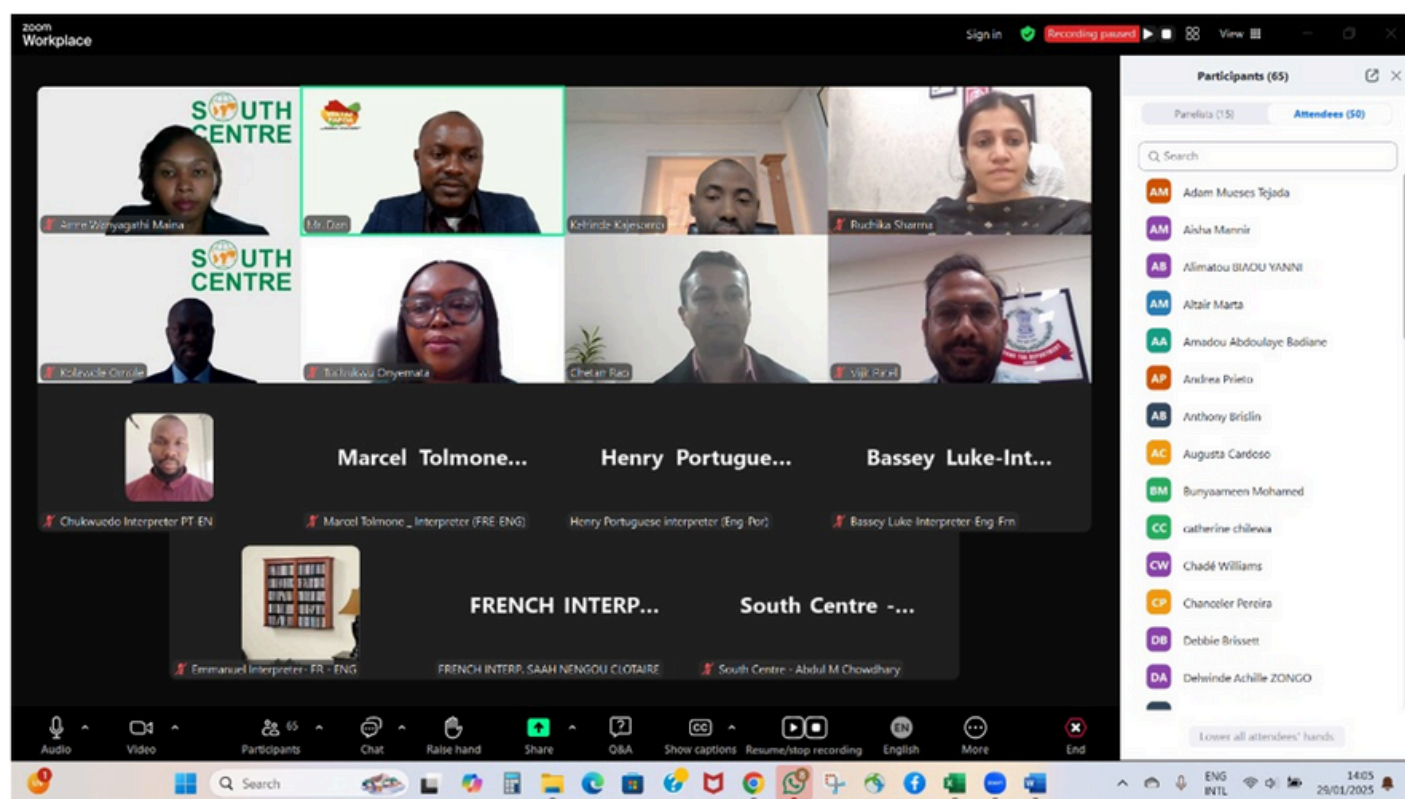
A structured feedback session led by WATAF facilitators allowed participants to share insights and recommendations, culminating in a clear consensus: the workshop delivered both practical tools and renewed confidence in driving reforms forward.

This workshop marks another step forward in Guinea-Bissau's journey toward a transparent, efficient, and equitable tax system. WATAF remains committed to supporting member states in building technical capacity and fostering regional cooperation in tax administration.



Photo from the closing ceremony, DG, DGCI, Trainers, and WATAF Staff

(iii) WATAF-South Centre Webinar Unpacks Global Tax Reforms and Their Impact on Developing Countries



As part of ongoing efforts to enhance regional tax cooperation and build technical capacity in international taxation, the West African Tax Administration Forum (WATAF), in collaboration with the South Centre, hosted a high-level webinar from 28–29 January 2025. The event, themed “Strengthening Tax Administration through International Taxation,” focused on two critical developments: the UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation (UNFCITC) and the OECD’s Amount B of the Two-Pillar Solution.

Held virtually via Zoom, the event drew 215 participants from 58 countries, including 15 WATAF member states. Attendees comprised senior tax officials, economists, policy experts, civil society representatives, and academics from across the Global South.

Insightful Engagements and High-Level Participation

The opening remarks set the tone, with contributions from Dr. Carlos Correa, the South Centre Executive Director; Dr. Iyabo Masha, G-24; and Mr. Jules Tapsoba, the WATAF Executive Secretary. Mr. Tapsoba underscored the importance of equitable tax governance in achieving sustainable development.

Technical sessions featured leading voices from Latin America, Africa, and Asia—including experts from Nigeria, Senegal, Brazil, India, Chile, and Cabo Verde. Key facilitators such as Mr. Kehinde Kajesomo, Mr. Alpha Ngom, and Ms. Liselott Kanashared diverse regional perspectives, while moderators from WATAF and South Centre guided the discussions.

Key Themes Explored

Participants examined the following:

- The governance structure and potential benefits of the UNFCITC, especially its promise of inclusivity for developing countries.
- Critical updates on Amount B, with concerns raised over its data sources, pricing mechanisms, and implications for countries with limited negotiating capacity.
- Case studies, including India's independent assessment of Amount B, provided grounded insights for WATAF members..

Strengthening Regional Tax Systems

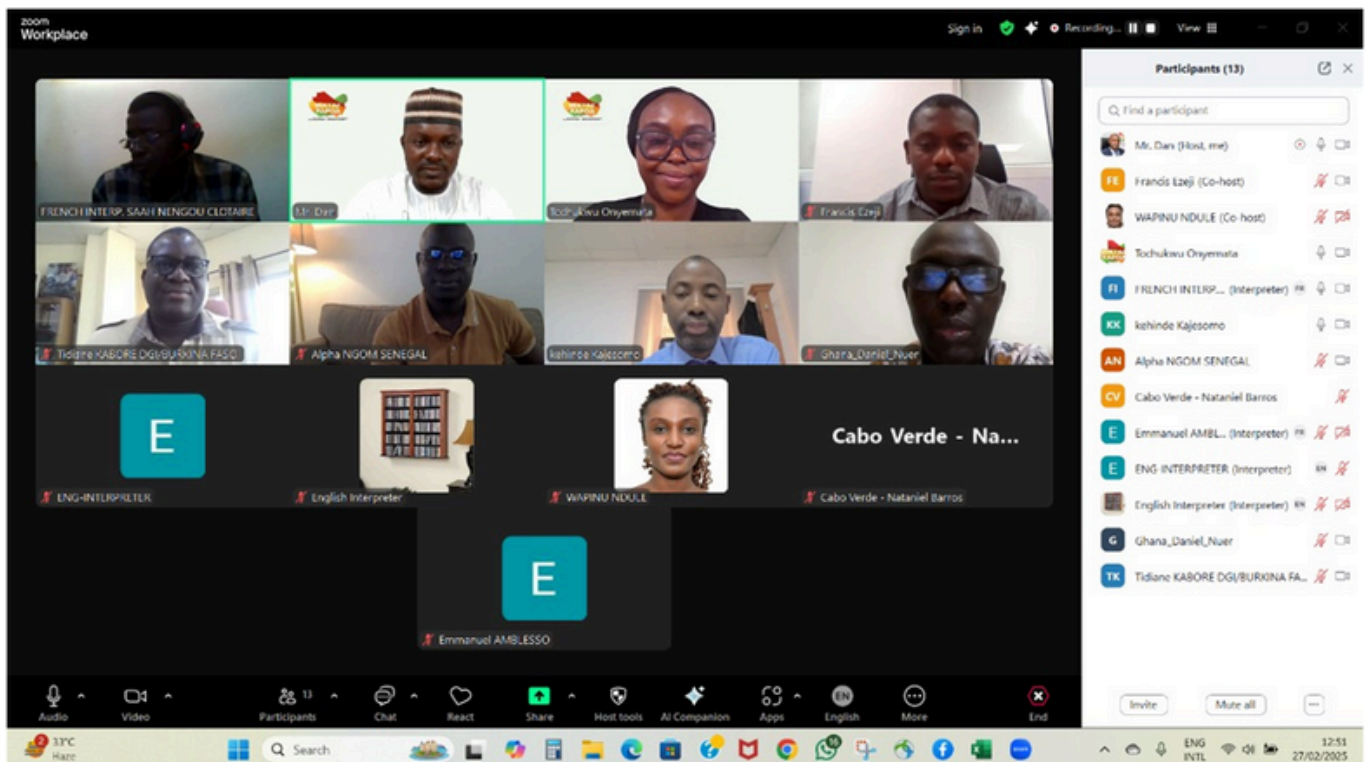
Discussions highlighted the strategic value of regional collaboration, particularly in areas such as joint audits, tax transparency, and administrative cooperation. The forum also provided tools for assessing the impact of global tax measures on local contexts for evidence-based policymaking.

Conclusion

The webinar marked another successful knowledge-sharing initiative by WATAF and the South Centre, reinforcing the commitment to building strong, fair, and adaptive tax systems in West Africa and beyond. Participants called for continued capacity building and policy dialogue to help shape global tax rules that reflect the priorities of developing economies.

A full recording of the sessions and key materials will be made available to WATAF member administrations upon request.

(iv) WATAF International Tax Committee Elects New Leadership



On 27 February 2025, WATAF convened a virtual meeting of its International Tax Committee to strengthen its engagement in global tax discussions, particularly at the United Nations and the OECD. The meeting brought together technical experts from member tax administrations to review recent international tax developments and outline strategies for greater regional participation in shaping global tax policy.

A key outcome of the meeting was the election of new committee leadership. **Mr. Kehinde Kajesomo** of the **Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), Nigeria**, was appointed as **Chairman**, and **Mr. Alpha Ngom** of the **Direction Générale des Impôts et Domaines (DGID), Senegal**, was elected as **Vice Chairman**.

Under this new leadership, the Committee aims to reinforce WATAF's voice in international forums and build a stronger, coordinated regional stance on key tax matters, including digitalisation, global minimum tax rules, and the evolving role of the UN in international tax cooperation.

WATAF congratulates Mr. Kajesomo and Mr. Ngom on their appointments and looks forward to their leadership in advancing the region's interests in the global tax landscape.

(v) Highlights from the 18th WATAF Council Meeting



The 18th Council Meeting of the West African Tax Administration Forum (WATAF) took place on 18-19 March 2025, marking a significant milestone in the organisation's efforts to strengthen collaboration and governance across tax administrations in the region. The meeting was convened to review progress, share strategic updates, and take key decisions to shape the Forum's future.

Key highlights included the presentation of the Executive Secretary's report detailing activities undertaken since the last Council meeting. The report also highlighted WATAF's participation in various regional and international tax initiatives. The Council commended the Secretariat's efforts in deepening stakeholder engagement and reinforcing WATAF's visibility.

The meeting also addressed administrative and structural matters to enhance operational efficiency. Members acknowledged the Secretariat's progress in implementing Council directives and expressed strong support for the ongoing initiatives under WATAF's strategic priorities.

The 18th Council Meeting underscored WATAF's role as a key platform for collaboration among West African tax administrations and its dedication to fostering a robust and inclusive tax environment in the region.

(vi) WATAF Country Correspondents and Heads of Communications Departments: Advancing Tax Communication Across West Africa



Group photo from the opening ceremony

The 2025 WATAF Country Correspondents Conference was held from 18–19 March, in Abuja, Nigeria, bringing together 33 communication professionals and technical experts from across nine West African tax administrations and the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS). The two-day event underscored the critical role of strategic communication in strengthening tax systems, boosting public trust, and supporting institutional development.

The conference opened with a high-level series of remarks from dignitaries across national and international institutions, including Mr. Gregory Wilfred Asuquo, Director of Security at FIRS– who delivered the security briefing; Mr. Jules Tapsoba, WATAF Executive Secretary; Mr. Isaac Gonzalo Arias Esteban of CIAT; Ms. Talato Eliane Djiguemde-Ouedraogo, WATAF Chairman; and Dr. Zacch Adedeji, Executive Chairman.

Day One: Sharing Experiences and Setting the Tone

The day began with a presentation by CIAT's Isaac Gonzalo Arias Esteban on global best practices in tax communication. A panel discussion on "The Role of Focal Persons in Institutional Development" followed, featuring representatives from Liberia: Ankrah Daniel; Burkina Faso: Etienne Soma; The Gambia: Marri Sarr; and WATAF: Wapinu Ndule.

Key highlights included:

- Liberia's "Know Your Tax" campaign, which improved voluntary compliance
- Burkina Faso's community outreach model
- The Gambia's strengthened media partnerships

Another session led by WATAF Communications & Liaison Manager, Tochukwu Sandra Onyemata, and country correspondents evaluated WATAF's communication impact and highlighted areas of improvement.









Panel discussions and speaker sessions from Day One

The day ended on a celebratory note with a Farewell Party and Award Night in honour of the former Executive Secretary of WATAF, Mr. Babatunde Oladapo, recognising his invaluable service to the organisation.





Award Night photos

Day Two: Focused Training for Communication Leaders

The second day featured a **high-level workshop** for Heads of Corporate Communications, facilitated by **Dr. Abdullahi Ismaila Ahmad**, Director of Communications, FIRS. His session on **“Crisis Communication and Reputation Management”** explored how digital platforms, timely messaging, and internal coordination are essential to protecting institutional credibility in today’s information age.

An interactive **breakout session** followed, where participants developed practical strategies aligned with the **WATAF 2025 Work plan**.

Conclusion

The conference reinforced WATAF’s commitment to empowering tax communicators across the region. It established concrete action points for strengthening country correspondent roles, boosting digital engagement, and enhancing visibility through strategic content. As WATAF advances its communication agenda, the insights and connections formed in Abuja will serve as a strong foundation for institutional growth and taxpayer engagement across West Africa.

WATAF'S PARTICIPATION AT PARTNERS' EVENTS

i. WATAF Reappointed to NTO Council and Strengthens Global Collaboration in Tax Administration



The West African Tax Administration Forum (WATAF) is pleased to announce its reappointment as a member of the Council of the Network of Tax Organizations (NTO) during the 7th NTO General Assembly held on 17 February 2025, in Panama. This assembly, which preceded the 3rd NTO Technical Conference, marked another significant milestone in WATAF's ongoing efforts to contribute to global tax cooperation.

The assembly, chaired by Mr. Logan Wort, led to the election of Dr. Esther A.P. Koisin, Executive Director of the Commonwealth Association of Tax Administrators (CATA), as the new Chair of the NTO Council. The reconstituted Council now comprises CATA (Chair), CIAT, WATAF, ATAF, and IOTA.

Through the leadership of its Executive Secretary, Mr. Jules Tapsoba, WATAF reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening tax administrations and promoting international cooperation in tax matters.

As part of its broader engagement, WATAF also actively participated in the 3rd NTO Technical Conference held from 18-20 February 2025, in Panama City. WATAF hosted a panel session on the topic "Pillar 1 vs. Digital Service Tax (DST): Status of Implementation, Potential Revenue, and Challenges." The session featured expert insights and shared key findings from a joint study by WATAF, ATAF, and the South Centre, enriching discussions on the evolving international tax landscape.

During the mission, WATAF also visited the headquarters of CIAT, where productive discussions were held on enhancing collaboration between the two organisations. Plans are currently underway to formalise this cooperation through a Memorandum of Cooperation.

WATAF looks forward to continuing its role on the NTO Council and working closely with international partners to advance efficient and equitable tax systems across jurisdictions.

ii. WATAF Participates in CIAF 2025 in Accra



WATAF Executive Secretary, Mr. Jules Tapsoba, proudly joined Technical Session 4 of the 11th Annual International Tax Conference, organised by the West African Union of Tax Institutes (WAUTI), one of WATAF's valued partners. The event, held in Accra, Ghana, focused on leveraging data analytics for revenue mobilisation, with expert discussions covering digital economy taxation, illicit financial flows, and more.

The conference also provided an excellent opportunity for the Executive Secretary to connect with key stakeholders, including the newly appointed Commissioner General of the Ghana Revenue Authority, Mr. Anthony Kwasi Sarpong, and the Commissioner General of the Gambia Revenue Authority, Mr. Yankuba Darboe.

WATAF's participation reinforces the strong ties between both organisations, formalised through a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC), and reflects its ongoing commitment to regional collaboration and capacity building.

Special thanks to WAUTI for the kind invitation and to all participants for the enriching dialogue!



iii. WATAF Moderates High-Level Webinar on Women Grassroots Organisations and Accountability



WATAF participated in the webinar “Women Grassroots Organisations as Accountability Partners” held on 31 March 2025. The session, jointly organised by the Addis Tax Initiative (ATI) and the International Budget Partnership (IBP), was moderated by Tochukwu Sandra Onyemata, WATAF’s Communications and Liaison Manager and DRM Coordinator.

The discussion focused on the critical role that women’s grassroots organisations play in advancing transparency, accountability, and inclusive governance.

WATAF commends the organisers and speakers for spotlighting such an essential topic and fostering meaningful dialogue across the global tax and development community.

Tax Updates in West Africa

i. Leadership Transitions in West African Tax Administrations



The first quarter of 2025 marked significant leadership changes within two key tax administrations in West Africa with the appointment of dynamic professionals committed to driving fiscal transformation in the region.

On **8 March 2025**, **Madame Fatoumata Foula DIALLO** was appointed as the new **Director General of the Direction Générale des Impôts (DGI), Guinea**. Her appointment comes at a pivotal time as Guinea seeks to strengthen its domestic revenue mobilisation framework and deepen reforms in tax policy and administration. Her leadership is expected to bring renewed energy to the institution, particularly in the areas of digital transformation, taxpayer services, and institutional accountability.

Earlier in the year, on **21 January 2025**, **Mr. Anthony Kwasi Sarpong** assumed office as the **Commissioner General of the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA)**. With a background in strategic leadership and financial management, Mr. Sarpong's appointment signals a bold vision for fiscal transformation in Ghana. His mandate includes driving innovation in tax compliance, improving revenue outcomes, and reinforcing GRA's position as a model tax authority in the region.

WATAF congratulates both leaders on their appointments and looks forward to continued collaboration in advancing effective, transparent, and inclusive tax systems across West Africa.





- ii. Visit [WATAF Blog](#) to read article on “Mali’s Mining Shake-Up: Tax audits reveal massive revenue loss and lead to stringent policy changes”.

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