ALX Professional Foundations: Week #3 Milestone Worksheet

Instructions: Provide responses to all items in the orange boxes. The worksheet consists of Sections A-E. Work on this worksheet one section at a time throughout your week, and return to Savanna after each section for the next set of content and further instructions.

SECTION A: Problem Statement

Step 1: Your GCGO

Which Grand Challenge or Great Opportunity (GCGO) do you want to play a part in addressing? (Pick one.)

As a reminder, the GCGOs are:
- Urbanization
- Education
- Infrastructure
- Healthcare
- Climate change
- Governance
- Job creation
- Agriculture
- Natural resources
- Arts, culture, and design
- Tourism
- Empowerment of women
- Regional integration
- Wildlife conservation

GCGO:
Regional integration

Step 2: Describe <u>Your</u> Problem

You are going to take a first pass at briefly describing <u>your</u> chosen problem. This can be any problem that speaks to you, as long as it is a real-life occurrence that is clearly linked to your chosen GCGO, that occurs in a certain place and for certain people (and/or animals), and that it can be clearly defined.

For example, if you chose wildlife conservation as your GCGO, you might first state your chosen problem as:
There are very few white rhinos left in Kenya and they are in danger of going extinct.

Another example, if you choose infrastructure as your GCGO:
Residents of major cities in South Africa endure prolonged periods without electricity, significantly hampering their ability to generate income.

Note that this is just your first attempt stating the problem, and you don't need to quantify the problem yet. In order to get to your official problem statement (which does need to be quantifiable) first answer the following questions. The more specific your answers, the better. You may also ask Google, Wikipedia, , ChatGPT, and/or other reliable online sources to help you. Please be sure to cite (give credit to) any sources that you use.

Describe your problem using What/Who/When/Where/Why/How....

1. **What** is the problem? What is reality like because of this problem? What will reality be like if the problem continues?
The problem is the slow pace of regional integration among African countries, which hinders trade, economic growth, and social cohesion. As a result, African nations struggle to leverage the benefits of economic cooperation, free trade, and political stability. If this problem continues, Africa may lag behind other regions in terms of development and global influence.

2. **Who** does this problem impact, directly and indirectly? Who contributes to the problem?
Directly, this problem impacts businesses, governments, and citizens across African nations. Businesses face trade barriers and higher costs when exporting goods across borders. Governments lose out on potential revenue from integrated markets. Indirectly, the broader global economy is affected, as the lack of regional integration limits Africa's potential as a significant trade partner.

3. **When** did this problem begin? When does it occur?

The issue has historical roots, with its beginnings in the colonial-era fragmentation of Africa. However, the problem has persisted even after the formation of regional bodies like the African Union and various regional economic communities, which have not fully realized their objectives of regional integration.

4. **Where** is this problem occurring? What is the context in which it occurs?

This problem is widespread across African countries, particularly within regional economic blocs like the East African Community (EAC), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and others. The lack of infrastructure, political instability, and bureaucratic trade barriers worsen the situation in many regions.

5. **Why** is this a problem? What are the pain points or gaps? Why do you personally care about this problem?

Regional disunity leads to missed opportunities for economic growth, weakens Africa's position in global markets, and leaves African countries vulnerable to external economic shocks. I care about this issue because I believe that Africa's economic future lies in its ability to integrate, collaborate, and build resilient economies.

6. **How would reality be different if this problem were solved? (This can be your opinion.)**

If regional integration were fully realized, African nations would experience enhanced trade, more robust economic growth, and political stability. Countries would have stronger bargaining power on the international stage, and citizens would benefit from improved infrastructure, higher employment, and lower costs for goods and services.

Step 3: Understand and Quantify Your Problem

Next, you will conduct some basic web research to better understand, define, and quantify your problem. You will do this through a combination of Google search, Wikipedia, credible web sources, ChatGPT or other AI research tool, and your own synthesis of information from these sources. Be sure to give credit to your sources, and paraphrase (use your own words) rather than quoting directly.

7. **What is the historical context for this problem? What happened in the past that contributes to the problem now?**

The problem stems from the colonial-era divisions that carved up Africa into regions with artificial borders, disrupting traditional trade routes. After independence, many African nations focused on national sovereignty, slowing regional cooperation, and also countries were left with infrastructures and policies that prioritized ties with former colonial powers rather than intra-African trade. Efforts to integrate, such as the creation of regional economic communities, have seen limited success due to infrastructural challenges and political differences.

8. **What are the possible economic (money-related) reasons why this problem exists and continues?**

Many countries are hesitant to fully embrace free trade due to fears of losing national revenue from tariffs. Weak infrastructure, such as poor road networks and inefficient ports, further inhibits cross-border trade. Additionally, some nations are protective of their industries and are reluctant to open up markets due to fears of competition. Many African countries rely heavily on exports of raw materials to the West, which diminishes the potential for intra-continental trade.

9. **What are the possible political reasons why this problem exists and continues?**

Political instability and distrust among neighboring countries often prevent the full implementation of regional agreements. Many governments prioritize short-term political gains over long-term economic cooperation, while corruption and inefficient governance structures delay integration efforts.

10. What cultural beliefs and/or social norms possibly contribute to this problem?

Cultural diversity across African regions, including language barriers and historical rivalries, complicates regional cooperation. Differences in legal systems, regulatory frameworks, and informal norms also slow the process of harmonizing policies for regional integration.

11. Who are the people potentially responsible (directly or indirectly) for creating and/or maintaining this problem?

Political leaders, governments, and regional economic bodies are directly responsible for the slow pace of integration. In some cases, external actors, such as multinational corporations or international organizations, may indirectly maintain the status quo by influencing trade policies that protect their interests.

Now that you have the preliminary information you need, you'll continue your web research to find some numbers, or quantifiable information, to help describe your problem:

What numerical data can you find that is relevant to your problem? Be sure to use your own words and also cite (give credit to) your sources.

Example 1:
According to Chat GPT, there are about 880 white rhinos currently living in Kenya. This population is very small, and they are critically endangered.

Example 2:
Johannesburg has approximately 5.8 million residents (per ChatGPT) and had approximately 4.7 million international overnight visitors in 2019 (according to the South African Tourism Annual Report for 2019/2020).

12. Approximately how many people (and/or animals) are directly impacted by this problem? Explain.

Directly, regional integration issues primarily impact human populations involved in trade, transport, and industries reliant on cross-border commerce. For instance, around **1.3 billion people** across Africa are directly affected by the slow pace of integration,

including those in industries like agriculture and tourism, which depend on smooth cross-border relations. Similarly, migratory animals, such as the **1.2 million wildebeests** that cross between Tanzania and Kenya during the Great Migration, face direct challenges from disrupted ecosystems and limited regional cooperation in managing protected areas (Source: WWF).

13. **Approximately how many people (and/or animals) are indirectly impacted by this problem? Explain.**
    Indirectly, the problem of regional integration affects an estimated **2.5 billion** people worldwide, which includes investors, international companies, and trade partners from outside Africa. These stakeholders are hindered by the continent's limited market integration, which restricts their ability to tap into business opportunities and reduces their market reach and growth potential. Habitat fragmentation and inconsistent wildlife protection laws further endanger these animals. For example, approximately **415,000 elephants** are estimated to remain in Africa, but their long-term survival depends on regional cooperation to manage protected areas and migration corridors (Source: World Wildlife Fund).

14. What other numerical data can you share that is relevant to your problem? What can you find out about its size and scope? What can be measured? (For example, the amount of trash produced in Nairobi each day, the number of people without access to clean water, etc.)
    Intra-African Trade: Only **17%** of Africa's trade occurs within the continent, which is significantly lower compared to **69% in Europe** and **59% in Asia**. This highlights the substantial untapped potential in regional trade (Source: UN Economic Commission for Africa).
    Economic Loss: Due to slow regional integration, African economies are losing out on **1-3% in annual GDP growth**, further widening the economic gap between Africa and other continents (Source: African Development Bank).

Step 4: Describe Your Solved State

Without having to come up with *how* to solve the problem, describe what the desired, solved state looks like. Please use numbers wherever possible, and make your solved state specific and measurable.

15. **If the problem were addressed/solved, what would reality be like?**
A fully integrated Africa would have seamless trade across borders, with businesses benefiting from a unified market. The implementation of common infrastructure projects, such as high-speed rail and digital networks, would foster greater economic cooperation. Trade within Africa would increase significantly, and African countries would have more influence in global trade discussions.

16. **Are there other benefits that would come from your problem being solved? Name at least one.**

Political stability: Countries that trade together are less likely to engage in conflict.

Employment: Increased trade would lead to job creation, particularly in manufacturing and services.

Technological advancement: Regional integration would encourage technological collaboration across borders, leading to innovation in industries like agriculture, healthcare, and education.

Step 5: Clarify Your Problem Scope

You are more effective at solving a problem when you know where its limits are. That is, when you know what is "in scope" and "out of scope." For this reason, it is important to list what is out of scope, or NOT included as part of your problem definition.

Example 1:
The scope of the problem does not cover any other animal species besides white rhinos. It does not include white rhinos outside of Kenya.

 Example 2:
The scope of the problem does not include any businesses or people outside of the legally-defined Johannesburg city limits. It does not apply to tourists or visitors staying for less than 1 year in Johannesburg.

17. **What is NOT in the scope for your problem?**

This problem scope does not include regional integration outside of Africa.
It does not cover areas outside of economic integration, such as military or cultural integration.
The problem does not consider the challenges faced by non-African countries.

Step 6: Areas for Learning

What do you not know or understand that you would like to know more about? This can be anything related directly or indirectly to your problem. Let your curiosity run wild!

Example 1:
I'd like to know where most of the demand for rhino horn is coming from. I'd like to know who are the primary buyers and who is behind the trafficking of rhino horn. I'd like to know how long the average rhino's lifespan is. I'd like to know how many babies a typical female rhino has, and how many babies typically survive into adulthood. I'd like to know more about what diseases impact rhinos. I'd like to know more about the kinds of habitats that rhinos thrive in. I'd like to understand what international organizations do the best job supporting wildlife conservation and what their practices are. I'd like to know what models of community involvement have been most successful

in keeping wildlife safe and thriving. I'd like to understand how much land is available in Kenya for rhinos to roam.

Example 2:
I'd like to better understand the utility company Eskom and its history. I'd like to understand why Eksom has failed to plan properly to update its infrastructure. I'd like to understand the relationship between Eksom and the South African government. I'd like to know if there are private utility companies providing competition to Eksom. I'd like to know what the latest breakthroughs are in solar power. I'd like to know what other possible energy sources might be made available in Johannesburg. I'd like to know how much energy tourists and temporary visitors use. I'd like to better understand the process of how limited energy supply gets allocated to people and businesses. I'd like to better understand the economic impact to people and businesses of not having power.

18. **What else would you like to know or understand better? (It can be anything related to your problem.) List 5-10 things.**
    - How can infrastructure projects be better coordinated across African regions to support integration?
    - What are the most successful models of regional integration from other parts of the world, such as the EU?
    - How can political leaders overcome distrust between neighboring countries?
    - What role does digital infrastructure play in accelerating regional integration?
    - How can Africa harmonize its legal and regulatory frameworks to facilitate trade?
    - What are the biggest challenges facing the AfCFTA, and how can they be addressed?
    - How can African governments ensure that integration benefits all citizens and not just elites?
    - What role do international organizations like the African Union and the UN play in promoting regional integration?
    - How can local businesses be better supported to take advantage of regional integration?
    - What policies have been successful in other continents to encourage economic integration?

Step 7: Problem Statement

This step is the culmination of all you have done in Part A. You will synthesize the work you have done above to create a problem statement of 150 - 250 words. This should be in narrative form, 2-4 paragraphs, and should NOT use bullet points.

Your problem statement should:
- Provide a succinct description of the problem **in the first sentence**.
- Indicate specific population affected
- Explain the impact (cost, time, environmental, personal) and why the problem matters.
- Explain what reality would look like if the problem were solved. The gap that exists between present reality and the desired outcome should be clear.

Please cite (give credit to) where your information came from directly in your statement. Avoid word-for-word quoting and instead paraphrase (use your own words), as modeled in the example. Also list your sources and their urls (web addresses) at the end.

Example :
Kenya's white rhinos are in critical danger of extinction. There are currently about 880 white rhinos in the country of Kenya, per Wikipedia. According to Chat GPT, Rhinos are considered a keystone species, meaning they have a disproportionately large impact on their ecosystem compared to their population size. Rhinos help shape their environment by influencing vegetation growth and acting as seed dispersers, which creates habitat for other species (per ChatGPT).

The extinction of white rhinos would have cascading effects on other plant and animal species in their habitat. According to the Kenya Wildlife Service, rhinos' presence in reserves and parks bring millions of tourists each year, contributing to local economies and supporting conservation efforts. Once a species goes extinct, it is gone forever. The extinction of rhinos would represent the loss of millions of years of evolutionary history, and unique genetic diversity that science has yet to fully understand and benefit from (per ChatGPT).

My problem would be considered solved when the population of wild, white rhinos in Kenya reaches 10,000, and when all imminent threats to their population including poaching and habitat destruction are not present. If this were the reality, it would create ecosystem balance, create large revenues from ecotourism, preserve important cultural symbols, and allow for genetic diversity that could benefit humanity in ways we may not yet fully understand.

Sources:
Kenya Wildlife Services Annual Report 2017, https://www.kws.go.ke/content/annual-reports
ChatGPT, https://chat.openai.com/
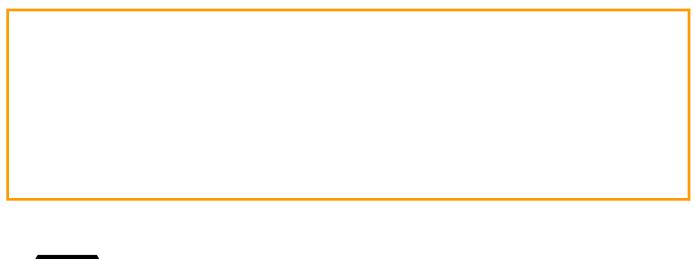*"White Rhinoceros", Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_rhinoceros*

19. My problem is statement is:

Africa's slow pace of regional integration hampers the continent's ability to achieve its full economic potential. Only 17% of Africa's trade occurs within the continent, a far cry from the intra-regional trade seen in Europe and Asia. Despite efforts like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), trade barriers, weak infrastructure, and political instability continue to obstruct progress.

This problem primarily affects the **1.3 billion** people living in Africa, particularly those in the transport and trade sectors. Businesses are hindered by tariffs and delays at borders, while governments lose out on potential revenue from a more integrated market. Indirectly, the global economy also suffers, as Africa's limited market integration restricts its role in global trade. Historically, colonial-era fragmentation and post-independence policies that prioritized national sovereignty over regional cooperation have worsened the issue.

If regional integration were fully realized, Africa's GDP could increase by **$450 billion** by 2035. The economic cooperation would create jobs, foster innovation, and enable African nations to stand together as a formidable force in global trade. The removal of trade barriers and improvements in infrastructure would significantly raise the standard of living for millions across the continent, while also enhancing political stability.

20. **Please list all sources that you used to form your problem statement:**

African Union: Insights into the goals and challenges of regional integration as part of the AU's Agenda 2063, which aims to foster a united and prosperous Africa through initiatives like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

African Development Bank (AfDB): Resources on infrastructure deficits, economic cooperation, and investment gaps between African countries, highlighting the need for better connectivity and regional projects to enhance trade and integration.

World Economic Forum (WEF): Data on economic barriers, cross-border trade challenges, and the potential benefits of regional integration for African nations.

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA): Reports on the status of regional integration, economic partnerships, and how various political and social factors impact cooperation across African countries.

Research on the European Union (EU): Comparative studies on how regional integration has worked successfully in Europe, especially regarding overcoming cultural and political divisions.

Reports on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA): Specific details on how AfCFTA is expected to facilitate trade, reduce tariffs, and create economic cooperation, as well as the challenges it still faces in implementation.

International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank: Economic studies and forecasts on the benefits of regional integration in developing countries, and what African countries can learn from successful integration models elsewhere.

Digital Infrastructure Reports: Studies on how digital technologies and fintech could accelerate regional integration by facilitating cross-border trade, financial transactions, and market access.

Feedback from Peers: Contributions from peers on the potential role of digital infrastructure and comparative insights from other regions like Asia.

Please go back to Savanna and continue with your learning content. You will be filling out Step 8 after you've completed the Peer Activity.

Step 8: Peer Activity Report

This step is related to your peer activity and should help you to improve your problem statement. Answer the following questions as part of the activity and then update your Problem Statement in Step 7 above, based on your feedback.

21. **Who reviewed your problem statement? (Give the first and last names of your 2 peers).**

Christine Monyangi
Elizabeth Wachira

22. **In brief, what feedback did they give to you?**

Elizabeth Wawiru: Elizabeth noted that the problem statement effectively highlighted the importance of regional integration in Africa but suggested that it could benefit from a clearer explanation of how specific trade barriers affect different industries. She recommended adding more concrete examples of how small businesses, particularly in sectors like agriculture and manufacturing, are directly impacted by the lack of integration.

Christine Monyangi: Christine appreciated the clarity of the problem statement, especially the data points related to trade and GDP. She recommended incorporating how the lack of integration affects individual livelihoods, such as job creation and access to resources. Christine also pointed out that adding a section on the potential role of regional institutions in facilitating integration could strengthen the argument.

23. **Was their feedback useful to you? Did it feel kind? Why or why not?**

    Christine Monyangi: Christine's feedback was very useful as she emphasized the need to highlight the human and social dimensions of regional integration, which I had underrepresented. Her input helped me recognize the importance of addressing how individuals and communities are impacted by the slow pace of integration. The feedback felt kind because she was constructive and specific, offering suggestions without being overly critical. She recognized the strengths of my statement and provided thoughtful ways to improve it.

    Elizabeth Wachira: Elizabeth's feedback was insightful and practical. She pointed out the importance of providing more data and facts to support my argument, which helped me realize that quantifiable information could make my problem statement stronger. Her feedback was kind, as she balanced constructive criticism with encouragement. She acknowledged the strengths of my original statement and framed her suggestions as ways to enhance it rather than pointing out flaws. This made the feedback both helpful and motivating.

24. Who did you give feedback to? (Give the first and last names of 2 peers- they may be the same or different peers from above.)

Christine Monyangi

Elizabeth Wachira

25. Do you feel that you gave useful and kind feedback to your peers? Why or why not?

Yes, I believe I provided useful and kind feedback to both Christine Monyangi and Elizabeth Wachira. My feedback was constructive as I recognized the importance of their problem statements, both of which address critical issues. I made sure to offer suggestions on how they could refine their statements by focusing on specific areas or providing more clarity around their goals. This was intended to help them strengthen their work and guide their research more effectively.

Additionally, I ensured that my feedback was respectful and supportive. I acknowledged the effort they put into their problem statements and encouraged them to think about potential solutions or next steps that could make their ideas even more impactful. By keeping the tone positive and offering actionable advice, I aimed to help them improve their work while fostering a collaborative atmosphere.

SECTION B: Research Questions & Hypothesis

IMPORTANT: Complete this section AFTER completing the Savanna Modules *Asking Effective Questions* and *Web Research.*

Step 9: Research Questions

Based on what you have learned so far and on 'Step 6: Areas for Learning' from this worksheet, come up with 3 research questions. **Research questions should be complex enough that they can't be answered by a single Google search.** If appropriate, form a hypothesis that your research may confirm or reject. (As a reminder, a hypothesis is a prediction of how you think your research will answer your research question. It is your best guess. If you truly have absolutely no idea, state "not applicable.")

Example Research Question #1:
What are some ways can we increase rhino populations?
Hypothesis:
Rhino populations will be increased by creating more open spaces for them to roam, increasing their protection, increasing international interest in them, and other reasons I have yet to uncover.

Example Research Question #2:
Which organizations have been effective at wildlife conservation and what practices do they use?
Hypothesis:
Not applicable; I don't know.

Example Research Question #3:
How many babies can a typical female white rhino have in her lifetime, and what are the reasons a female may not have high fertility?

26.Research question #1:

What are the most significant policy and regulatory misalignments between African countries that hinder effective regional integration, and how can these be addressed?

Hypothesis (if applicable): Policy alignment is critical for smooth trade, mobility, and cooperation between African nations. Investigating the policy gaps and exploring potential harmonization strategies can shed light on what is preventing full integration.

27.Research question #2:

What innovative technological solutions can be implemented to reduce trade barriers and promote cross-border cooperation among African countries?

Hypothesis (if applicable): Technology offers immense potential to streamline trade processes, reduce costs, and bridge gaps in communication and finance. Investigating the most effective technological interventions could inspire new ways to achieve integration faster and more efficiently.

28.Research question #3:

How can infrastructure development be accelerated to support regional integration in Africa, and what role can public-private partnerships play in this process?

Hypothesis (if applicable): One of the significant barriers to regional integration is the lack of infrastructure, particularly transportation and digital infrastructure. Understanding how to accelerate development and engage both governments and private sector actors will be key to fostering integration.

STOP

Please go back to Savanna and continue with your learning content. You will be prompted on when to return to complete Section C.

SECTION C: Web Research

Part 1: Research Plan

You can plan out your research, for each of your research questions, using the template below.

29. Step # 1: Define your objectives, 3 research questions & associated hypotheses.

Key Questions: What are you trying to accomplish with this research? What do you wish to find out that will accelerate your work in the right direction?

Your Response:

Objective: My goal is to explore the factors influencing regional integration in Africa, with a focus on technological, infrastructural, and policy barriers. I aim to identify actionable solutions that will promote smoother cross-border trade and development in the continent.

Research Questions:

1. What are the key technological barriers to regional integration in Africa, and how can they be overcome?
   ○ **Hypothesis**: Technological limitations like inconsistent digital infrastructure and lack of standardization impede regional integration.
2. How does policy misalignment between African countries affect cross-border trade, and what are the most feasible policy solutions?
   ○ **Hypothesis**: Divergent trade regulations and policies are major barriers, and efforts toward policy harmonization will improve regional trade.
3. What role can infrastructure development play in promoting regional integration in Africa?

- ○ **Hypothesis**: Addressing physical infrastructure gaps (roads, railways, and ports) will significantly enhance trade and integration.

30. Step # 2: Determine your end outputs.

Key Questions: What type of data/information is ideal for you to find, based on what you are trying to accomplish? Do you need to present it in any particular format?

Your Response:

- **Data Required**:
    - ○ Reports on Africa's digital infrastructure and technological gaps.
    - ○ Studies and policy papers analyzing trade regulations and their impact on regional integration.
    - ○ Infrastructure development data from sources like the World Bank, African Development Bank, and AfCFTA.
- **Output Format**:
    - ○ A research report summarizing key findings and recommendations.
    - ○ Visual data representation (graphs, charts) highlighting gaps in technology and infrastructure across African countries.
    - ○ Policy briefs with action points for trade harmonization

31. Step # 3: Scope your main sources of information.

Key Questions: Do you already know where you might want to go to find the information you're seeking? Are there particular entities or organizations that you know are seen as "experts" on the topic?

Your Response:
Main Sources:

- **International organizations**: The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), African Union, AfCFTA, World Bank.
- **Regional development institutions**: African Development Bank (AfDB), NEPAD, African Trade Policy Centre.
- **Industry experts**: Thought leaders in technology, trade, and policy from universities, think tanks, and consulting firms like McKinsey or Deloitte.

STOP

After you updated earlier parts of the worksheet based on your research plan, please go back to Savanna and continue with your learning content. Return to Part 2 and Part 3 prior to submitting your milestone.

Part 2: Conducting Research

You can answer the following questions as you complete conducting your research into your research questions.

32. Step 1: Begin gathering your required information.
Key Questions: What search terms should you use? How many reports/articles do you want to read before deciding you have seen enough?
Your Response: ● **Search Terms**: "regional integration in Africa", "AfCFTA trade barriers", "African infrastructure gaps", "digital trade in Africa", "policy harmonization Africa". ● **Research Goal**: Review at least 10 sources from a mix of academic papers, policy reports, and reputable websites to gather comprehensive insights.
33. Step 2: Evaluate the Validity/Credibility of Your Sources and Information
Key Questions: Are the sources credible and reliable? Consider the authority, accuracy, objectivity, and currency of the information to ensure its validity for your research.

Your Response:

Priority will be given to reports published by recognized authorities such as AfDB, UNECA, and AfCFTA.
Peer-reviewed journals and reports from leading consulting firms like PwC, McKinsey will be considered for insights on trade and infrastructure.
Currency of data is important; only use reports published in the last 5 years to ensure relevance.

34. Step 3: Synthesize and Communicate Your Key Findings.

Key Questions: Summarize the key information and findings that you have gathered during your research. Organize these findings in a clear and coherent manner, ensuring that they directly address your research objectives and questions.

Your Response:

- **Findings**:
    - Africa's regional integration is hampered by a lack of digital infrastructure and harmonized regulations, according to UNECA reports.
    - Policy misalignment, particularly in customs procedures and tariffs, remains a significant barrier to intra-African trade.
    - Infrastructure projects like the African Union's PIDA (Program for Infrastructure Development in Africa) are promising but require enhanced coordination between regional bodies and governments.

35. Return to Your Original Objectives and Key Questions.

Key Questions: Revisit your initial objectives and key questions to ensure that your research findings adequately address them. Reflect on whether your findings have effectively contributed to solving the identified problem.

Your Response:
My research findings support the hypothesis that infrastructure and policy misalignments are critical barriers to regional integration. The lack of technological

standardization is a challenge, but successful case studies from other regions can offer replicable solutions. Addressing these gaps would significantly accelerate Africa's progress toward seamless regional integration.

Part 3: Research Summary

In 200-300 words, provide an executive summary of your research in the text box below. You should be synthesizing information from multiple sources. Provide answers and explanations for the 3 questions you investigated and your key research findings. This should be in a narrative format (no bullet points), and be at least 3 paragraphs long.

Please use at least 3 different online sources such as ChatGPT, organizational websites, Wikipedia, etc. Please cite (give credit to) where your information came from directly in your statement. Avoid word-for-word quoting, paraphrase instead (use your own words), as modeled in the example. Also, list your sources and their URLs (web addresses) at the end.

36. Research Summary

In this research, I explored the barriers to regional integration in Africa, focusing on three key areas: technology, policy, and infrastructure. One major obstacle to regional integration is the uneven development of digital infrastructure across the continent. Some regions have well-established networks, while others struggle with poor internet access, limiting the ability of countries to leverage technology for cross-border trade. According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), bridging this digital divide is essential to enhancing Africa's digital economy and accelerating regional integration.

Another significant finding is the policy misalignment between African countries, particularly regarding trade regulations. Differences in customs procedures, tariffs, and trade policies create challenges for businesses operating across borders. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is working toward harmonizing these policies, but progress has been slow and varies by country. Research from McKinsey & Company emphasizes the need for more cohesive efforts by African governments to remove these regulatory barriers and facilitate smoother cross-border trade.

Lastly, infrastructure development remains a critical component of regional integration. While many African nations are investing in large-scale projects, more coordinated efforts are needed to optimize these investments. The African Development Bank points out that closing

the infrastructure gap, particularly in transportation and logistics, will significantly boost trade and economic collaboration across the continent. Technological advancement, policy harmonization, and infrastructure development are therefore essential to realizing Africa's full potential for regional integration.

Sources:

- United Nations Economic Commission for Africa:https://www.uneca.org
- McKinsey & Company - Africa Insights
  https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/middle-east-and-africa
- African Development Bank - Regional Integration
  https://www.afdb.org/en/topics-and-sectors/initiatives-partnerships/regional-integration

Once you have completed this worksheet, export/convert to .pdf, rename it per the instructions, and upload to Savanna as your Milestone # 3 Submission. Celebrate a job well done!