

ESA Newsletter

APRIL - JUNE 2023

CHAMPIONING GENDER, INCLUSIVITY & DIVERSITY

Lesotho Hosts ESA



ROCB
East and Southern Africa
World Customs Organization

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Editorial

Salute! Dear reader, we present to you our second of 2023 edition of the global ESA Newsletter for the year 2023. Time and again, we have showcased astounding Customs stories from our beloved ESA Members, development partners, private sector and all our distinguished stakeholders. They are yet again warming our hearts with their inspiring, innovative and captivating chronicles which we are more than delighted to share with you in this issue.

In this edition, we feature the Gender, Inclusivity and Diversity (GID) flag flying high in the 'Kingdom in the sky', Maseru, Lesotho as they hosted ESA for its first ever policy dialogue, and the installation of the Virtual Reality Training Station System at the ROCB and our Regional Training Centres. We also see how ESA celebrated International Customs Day 2023. On a solemn note, we remember the August 2021 accident in Tanzania that claimed five Customs officers, we send our love and deepest sympathies to their families and TRA at large.

Meanwhile, the East African Revenue Authorities are steering drones to enhance Customs enforcement. Zimbabwe's Electronic Single Window gains momentum. As you dig in deeper, you will learn of South Africa's and Uganda's mutual recognition arrangement on Authorized Economic Operator, the future of Customs courtesy of Blockchains & biometrics as well as smooth operation of OSBPs supported by JICA. Herein too, Uganda enlightens us on how we can all become risk managers as part of our everyday lives. Last but not least, Artificial Intelligence (A.I) & Big Data makes their way into Customs enforcement.

We never tire to thank all Members, Regional Economic Communities, stakeholders and development partners for their contributions to our quarterly newsletters amid their busy and overflowing schedules. We salute you.

Enjoy the read.



**Ms. Faith Mosongo,
Programme Officer**

Acknowledgement

Kenya Revenue Authority
 Mauritius Revenue Authority
 South Africa Revenue Service
 Tanzania Revenue Authority
 Uganda Revenue Authority
 Zambia Revenue Authority
 Zimbabwe Revenue Authority
 Japan International Cooperation Agency
 Regional Private Sector Group
 South African Development Community
 World Customs Organization

Editorial

Larry Liza - Editor in Chief
 Faith Mosongo - Programme Officer and Editor
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 Eric Kaburu - ICT Officer, Design and Layout

High-Level ESA Gender, Inclusivity & Diversity Policy Dialogue 1/2



Delegates at the GID Policy Dialogue

The High-Level ESA Gender Inclusivity & Diversity Policy (GID) Dialogue, themed 'Advancing Gender Inclusivity and Diversity in the East and Southern Africa Region' was organized by the World Customs Organization, East and Southern Africa Regional Office for Capacity Building (WCO ESA ROCB) in conjunction with the African Union Commission and their cooperating partners (GIZ and Expertise France), UNECA and GTS. The Policy Dialogue was hosted by Revenue Services Lesotho in Maseru, Lesotho and took place from the 20th- 22nd March 2023.

The dialogue was aptly aligned with the WCO 2023 Theme of 'Nurturing the Next Generation: Promoting a Culture of knowledge-sharing and professional pride in Customs' and was geared towards encouraging and promoting dialogue on GID amongst thought leaders in various industries including Governments, Customs, Development Partners, Regional Economic Communities and the Private Sector.

The dialogue was graced by the presence of a high-level delegation including: Dr. Adelaide Retselisitsoe Matlanyane, the Minister of Finance, Lesotho; the WCO ESA Vice Chair, Mr. Batsirai Chadzingwa,

Zimbabwe; Acting Commissioner General, Lesotho, Mrs. Mathabo Mokoko; UNECA Principal Regional Advisor, RITD - Ms. Brendah Mundia, Head of component, Programme Support to the AfCFTA, GIZ AU - Ms. Aude Lanois; AUC Senior Policy Officer, Mr. Dhunraj Kasse; and the WCO ESA ROCB Director, Mr. Larry Liza.

The forum is envisioned as the first of a series of engagements on the topic and has a focus on the Eastern and Southern African region (ESA) and provided a great platform for Customs Authorities and the supply chain stakeholders to learn about how they can exploit the opportunities that the AfCFTA has to offer in the context of GEDI (Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion). Customs Authorities and Partner Government Agencies from the region shared experiences on matters concerning GID and Trade as they pursue reforms and modernization whilst delivering their mandate effectively and efficiently. In addition, Regional Economic Communities, Development Partners and the Private Sector also had an opportunity to demonstrate how they have leveraged on GID to remain competitive in the trade environment in order to ensure sustainability.

High-Level ESA Gender, Inclusivity & Diversity Policy Dialogue 2/2

Summary Outcomes

- i. Development of sustainable policies on GID and the Gender Action Plan.
- ii. Commitment in Leadership and Management – Top Management of all gender to take up the role of Gender Champions across all networks.
- iii. Gender Mainstreaming in Recruitment and Hiring.
- iv. Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL).
- v. Digitalization, Research & Data Management: Utilize digitalization and secure management of disaggregated data to develop policies, tools and instruments to facilitating trade, especially for vulnerable and informal cross border traders as well as eCommerce. to collect and analyse gender disaggregated data for trade policy.
- vi. Promoting communication and awareness.
- vii. Set up of visible/prominent Gender units - Generally, gender units do not exist in organizations and where they do, they are not given prominence. GID should be given prominence in the relevant divisions/departments.
- viii. Use of gender focused engagements and governance structures to address fragmentation challenges.
- ix. Use of change management programs to advance of gender, inclusion and diversity initiatives in the long term. Use of change management in organisations will ensure successful transformation.
- x. Use of capacity building activities to advance the GID agenda with both Customs and other border agencies and well as private sector.
- xi. Information accessibility – Ensuring that there is availability of information to women, youth and MSMEs through use of free multimedia and

government platforms. Information accessibility empowers marginalised groups, and MSMEs to make informed strategic decisions.

xii. Use of inclusive stakeholder engagements between governments (competition authorities, IPR authorities, Customs), private sector and development partners including trade facilitation structures such as NTFCs and Customs Business Forums.

xiii. Partnerships with learning institutions and governments.

xiv. Continental Approach for Simplified Trade Regimes- The AUC is invited to adopt a continental approach in the development and implementation of the Simplified Trade Regimes in collaboration with RECs and Partners such as UNECA, UNCTAD and GIZ, and to conclude existing discussions and fully implement STRs where they exist.

xv. Taking advantage of AfCFTA instruments - Member States (Women) need to take advantage of the trade facilitation instruments related to the AfCFTA such as the Rules of Origins Annexes and Guidelines; NTB Online Elimination Mechanism; African Trade Observatory; competition policy; dispute settlement mechanisms etc. to address gender-based barriers systemically. NTB reporting can also include a gender and diversity dimension.

xvi. AU SME Strategy - Member States need to domesticate the AU SME Strategy and Implementation plan taking into consideration the situation women and youth in the region.

xvii. Regional Meetings on GID - GID meetings to be held periodically to provide a platform for engagement of key stakeholders as well as sharing of best practices. This could be done annually or every 2 years.

Article by

Faith Mosongo,
Programme Officer

WCO Virtual Reality Training (VRT) Kiosk Arrives at the ROCB

Humans have dreams! We aim to surpass reality and enter other worlds. We become superheroes and battle villains to save the planet. When we travel to new locations, they can be breathtaking, thrilling, or even eerie. We move through time, see into the future, and go back to the past to relive our previous experiences. However, the world's we visit in our dreams are all products of our imagination that we are unable to physically feel the excitement they contain. Or can we?

The information that our perceptions send to our brain shapes how we perceive the world around us. Our view of reality can be altered if we can control the data our senses collect. We would be able to perceive things that have never existed in actuality through sight, hearing, and other senses. Virtual reality does exactly this.

The WCO Virtual Reality Training Kiosk which was recently delivered and installed at the WCO ESA ROCB office in Nairobi, Kenya is one of many new technologies being utilized in the modernization of building Customs capacities. The installation of the VR kiosk equipment was on 10th and 11th March 2023. "Train-the-trainer" sessions were conducted to enable the trainer to guide their learners in the future. Furthermore, multiple users were assisted in their first attempt to experience the "Cargo Inspection at a Maritime Port" VR training. After the two-day installation and training session, the ROCB team was able to experience learning through virtual reality and this will translate to us training ESA Members. I hope to train you soon!

We were then graced by a visit by the Director for Capacity Building, Taeil Kang, to our officers to launch the project alongside the kiosk delivered to the WTO Regional Training Centre (RTC) Kenya.

The WCO ESA ROCB would like to thank the World Customs Organization for delivering this promise, and salute the generous financial support of the Customs Cooperation Fund of Korea and RTC Korea, whose huge investment and commitment will see thirty-two WCO Regional entities will receive the same VRT kiosk.



Article by

Erick Kaburu,
ICT Officer



Dr. Taeil Kang, WCO Director of Capacity Building, Courtesy Visit to the WCO ESA ROCB & RTC Kenya 1/2



Dr. Kang at the WCO ESA ROCB offices

The WCO ESA ROCB office in Nairobi, Kenya had the honor to host the Director, WCO Capacity Building, Dr. Taeil Kang on 13th March 2023. Accompanying him were Mr. Sungsig Kim, CCF- Korea Fund Manager, ESA RDM, Mr. Oluimo DaSilva, HO Entertainment CEO and Producer, Mr. Sung Cil Baek and Dong-Ho Ryu respectively who were received by Ms. Faith Mosongo, Programme Officer WCO ESA ROCB.

Dr. Kang who himself is the initiator of the World Customs Organizations Virtual Reality Training (VRT) project was able to preside over the handing over the VRT kiosks to both WCO ESA ROCB and RTC Kenya at Kenya School of Revenue Administration (KESRA) centre.

In his speech during the handover ceremony of the virtual reality kiosks/sets he highlighted the WCO's and his vision on the utilization of new technologies and on the modernization of building Customs capacities. The VRT system will aid in enhancing the capacity of Customs officers by providing the relevant knowledge and skills in improving Customs operations and drive compliance in revenue mobilization. He also highlighted that with the generous financial support of the Customs Cooperation Fund of Korea, who made an investment of almost one million euros, thirty-two WCO Regional entities will receive the same VRT kiosk. It is noteworthy that WCO ESA ROCB & RTC Kenya is among the few WCO Regional entities that Dr. Kang has presided over in person.

RTC Kenya in partnership with the World Customs Organization launched the WCO Virtual Reality Training (VRT) System in an event presided over by the Commissioner for KESRA, Dr. Mugambi Mwirigi and Dr. Taeil Kang at KESRA centre. Furthermore, a dedicated team assisted the meeting participants to experience the virtual reality cargo inspection training.

The WCO ESA ROCB would like to thank the World Customs Organization and Dr. Kang who kept his promise in delivering the VRT Kiosk and the generous financial support of the Customs Cooperation Fund of Korea.



Dr. Kang at RTC Kenya
(Kenya School of Revenue
Administration)

Dr. Taeil Kang, WCO Director of Capacity Building, Courtesy Visit to the WCO ESA ROCB & RTC Kenya 2/2



Kenya Revenue Authority Ag. Commissioner of Customs & Border Control,
Mrs. Pamela Ahago having a go at the Virtual Reality Customs Training.



VRT Kiosk at RTC Kenya

VRT Kiosk at WCO ESA ROCB offices



Tanzania Accident Claims 5 Customs Officers



On the morning of 23rd August 2021 when I was still asleep, I woke up with a phone call from my friends which is unusual to call me early in the morning. I received the call from a Customs officer who wanted to know about the rumors spreading, "Is it true that there is an accident and Customs officers lost their lives?" he asked, but I had no clue about the tragedy, later on, I was informed about the accident happened during 0500hours at Hanseketwa village in Tunduma Songwe Region on 23rd of August 2021 which cost lives of four Customs officers and their driver.

These officers were in charge of fighting and preventing smuggling activities entering the country through the Tunduma/ Nakonde border from Southern African Countries that are dominated in the area due to porous border areas with space and many paths of more than 250 ways and other reasons.

The tragedy brought great sadness to Customs officers and other stakeholders, this accident was caused by the grounded vehicle parked on the road which led the Customs officers team to hit the vehicle while chasing a smuggler with a Toyota Hiace carrying smuggling goods.

TRA offered condolences to the families and friends of the deceased officers.

".... On behalf of Tanzania Revenue Authority officers, for grief and sorrow I am reporting the death of Bernard Balagi Mushingi (40), Azaria Asakwe Sivonike (42), Said Mrisho Buddy (34), Fahad Hassan Haji (26) assistant Customs officer and Joel Isaya Mitondwa (36) the driver. TRA family will always remember the deceased and honor their contributions to collecting government revenue. In this tragedy we fellow officers have been left with sorrow and a big gap in their dedication with the knowledge and expertise they had to protect the community" said Commissioner General TRA Mr. Alphayo Kidata. May their souls rest in peace.

Article by

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International Customs Day (ICD) 2023

2023 Theme - “Nurturing the Next Generation: Promoting a Culture of Knowledge-sharing and Professional Pride in Customs.

The word Customs comes from the Greek word “teloneum” which means Tax, and tax revenues has served to cover the financial needs since customs existence for generations.

Over the years Customs administrations have embraced reforms in technology, Customs policies and procedures, and electronic systems which have brought many improvements in Customs administration world over. And young officers are more receptive to the latest technology. The theme of (ICD) resonates well with the World Customs Organization vision and goals.

Customs administrations should adopt a homey organizational culture that mentors young officers through knowledge-sharing in order to achieve current and future objectives. However, for young officers to acquire experience specific to Customs, administrations have to invest in programs that engage, motivate, and make deliberate knowledge-sharing management policies.

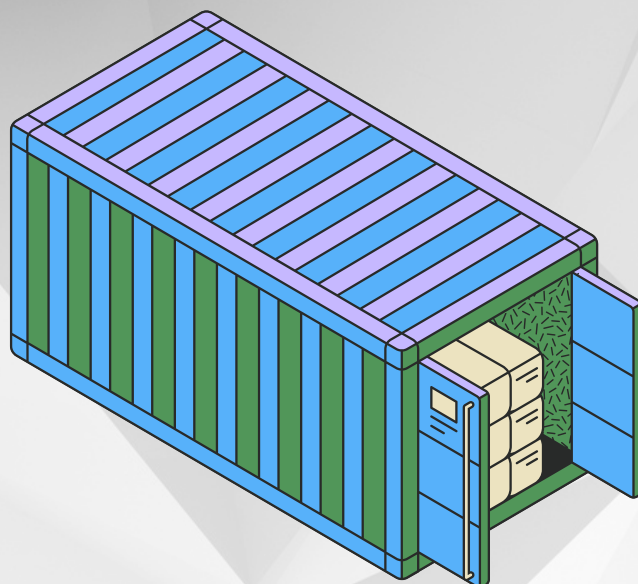
Nurturing the next generation needs comprehensive mentorship in knowledge transfer. This requires a platform where experienced and new employees can share knowledge and learn from each other. And some of the programs that can nurture young officers is by creating local and international competitions, forums and capacity building that can allow collaboration with other administrations, stakeholders and academia in research. This will ensure that Customs knowledge is acquired through the rigorous analysis of data supported by experts and collect multi-disciplinary views.

Customs administrations should be proud with the noble call entrusted in ensuring facilitating economic links between countries and protecting citizens from illicit trade, thus creating an immense sense of pride among officers belonging to the Customs family. This year’s theme can only be actuated if all Customs administrations act now in order to nurture the next Generation.



Article by

**Gershom Mwansa,
Zambia Revenue Authority**



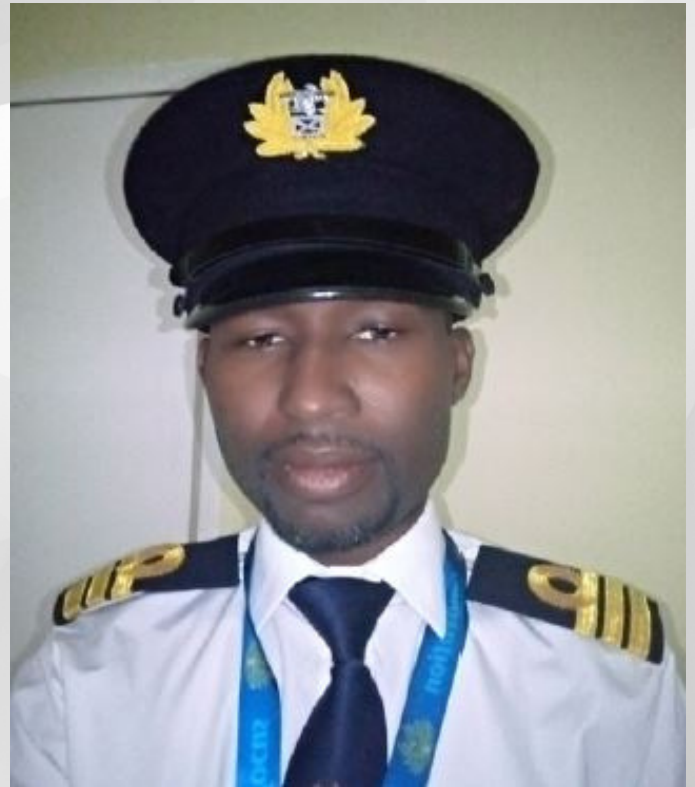
International Customs Day & Professionalism

The 2023 International Customs Day theme which is “Nurturing the Next Generation: Promoting a Culture of Knowledge-sharing and Professional Pride in Customs”, poses a self-introspective question to Customs Officers as to whether they are proud of their profession.

Professional pride could be defined as a positive emotion that includes self-reflection or evaluation and attitude toward one’s own occupational group. Having a positive feeling and mindset entails that one can do anything possible to better the profession and serve it from public ridicule.

Professionalism is not only being knowledgeable about the job which you are doing, but it is also how you do the job. One needs to have the right attitude, skill, good judgment, and polite behavior because this is expected from a person who is trained to do a job well. Professionalism involves consistently achieving high standards, both visibly and behind the scenes. From day one of a person’s career as a Customs Officer, professionalism should be a virtue to aspire for. When one aspires to be professional, then it will be easy for nurturing to take place. In view of the ZRA vision which is **“To become a model of excellence in revenue administration and trade facilitation”**, nurturing of members of staff to become productive employees cannot be overemphasized and this can be attained through knowledge sharing.

In conclusion, one of the great philosophers Aristotle once said, **“educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all!”** According to Aristotle, educating humans goes much beyond the cognitive aspect of learning. In order to ensure complete and holistic development, our education should be backed by values like empathy, compassion, rationality, etc. Values such as humanity, accountability, integrity, confidence, courage must be imparted to Customs Officers in order to develop professional pride.



Article by

Cosum Sinyinza,
Zambia Revenue Authority



Progress and Further Expansion of the Master Trainer Programme on RoO in East and Southern Africa Region



The World Customs Organization (WCO), in cooperation with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), has been carrying out the Master Trainer Programme (MTP) on Rules of Origin (RoO) for Africa. The aim of MTP is to cooperate with participating WCO Members to establish more sustainable training capacity through the development of pool of qualified trainers and tailor made training materials and training course guide, which meet regional needs. The MPT on RoO has been carrying out since September 2021 to cooperate with African WCO Members to implement the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Based on the remarkable success of the MTP and taking into account the needs from Members demonstrated in a number of WCO meetings and the importance of improving the Customs capability in the region for the implementation of AfCFTA, the WCO and the JICA agreed to expand the MTP on RoO to Cameroun, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Senegal and South Africa .

With this background, the WCO/JICA Joint Project organized a supplementary workshop from 22nd to 26th August 2022 in Brussels, Belgium, and an online supplementary RoO session on 30th and 31st August 2022 for new participants (new MTP Working Group (WG) members) from the above-mentioned 5 WCO Members. The workshop in Brussels got new WG members together and provided them with the occasion to understand and apply the fundamentals of competency-based training. In addition, experts from the WCO and Japan Customs shared their expertise on technical aspects of RoO via their

presentations and case studies. At the online sessions, the new WG members worked on the advanced case studies on RoO, which deepened their practical knowledge on the origin determination. New WG members for the ESA were then invited to Working Group 3, which was held from 3rd to 7th October 2022 in Lusaka, Zambia with other WG members already in the MTP. The WG members of all 13 WCO Member Customs administrations, namely, Botswana, Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, participated in the working group activity.

This working group activity was the third in a series of five activities of the MTP to be undertaken for the WG members to be Master Trainers (MT). The WG members started developing teaching materials they could use when conducting training sessions and were drilled on teaching skills and knowledge on RoO to become MTs on RoO. With this in mind, the WCO and Japan Customs experts conducted lectures, including case studies, to enable the WG members to understand RoO and the competency-based approach further. The material making has just commenced and the WG members are expected to continue working on it intersessionally until the materials are finalized at the fourth WG planned for next year.

All the efforts and exchanges provided by new WG members seem to be very promising for the progress of the MTP and for the acceleration of the implementation of AfCFTA in entire Africa.

Electronic Cargo Tracking System Solution to Dumping of Goods in the EAC Region



The Electronic Cargo Tracking System (ECTS) has improved security, increased safety and turn-around time from Ports to destination cities within our economic region. Before the launch of this system, goods on transit were easily dumped, anywhere between the discharging ports and their destinations. ECTS has brought a large number of benefits for TRA (Customs & Domestic Revenue Departments).

Dumped goods have very big impact on economy of any country; no fair competition in businesses (the real taxpayers fail to compete with those smugglers of goods on transit, hence, they become bankrupt). The government loss Customs duties, taxes and other charges from those goods, most of these smugglers are not regular identified businessmen therefore, they usually sell the goods at very low price in comparison to the current market price of the same goods, this leads to economic recession and depression in the long run.

For instance, here in Tanzania, since the launch of ECTS in 2020 the cases of dumping of transit goods have dropped to an astonishing rate, the revenue collection has increased, tracking of goods from the point of entry to the point of exit has been made easy, simple and at very low administrative costs, in

comparison with yesteryears, before this technology came into application.

Nonetheless, ECTS has made trade facilitation easier for TRA officers, business community and government at large. Cargo dumping has been reduced to nearly zero, safety of goods has also been improved, national security has become effectively greater, congestion of cargo (transit goods) has been reduced, logistic services has become trustworthy between transporters and consignors of the goods and the business relations between Tanzania and other neighboring countries within the East African Community (EAC) has been improved for better.

Article by

**Anthony Irafay,
Tanzania Revenue Authority.**

East African Revenue Authorities to Implement Drone Technology for Customs Enforcement

Over the years, the East African Community (EAC) partner states have witnessed a rise in smuggling trends. This can be attributed to the fact that the EAC borders are vastly wide, inaccessible and porous posing serious challenges to enforcement activities. Additionally, enforcement activities are still underfunded, and the tools for field enforcement operations are unreliable hence the need for more enforcement measures.

The application of drones in Customs enforcement initiatives has been reported to be revolutionary in Customs administration and border protection efforts across the globe. This is because drones minimize the obvious dangers and health risks to enforcement staff such as ambush by armed smugglers, harsh weather, unfriendly community and difficult terrain. Other benefits include their ability to collect detailed data to guide analysis and decision-making, they support rapid response hence doing away with blind or unyielding patrols, and their movements are flexible to suit the majority of surveillance manoeuvres. Drones also enable efficient usage of resources (human and operation) through smart working and provide more affordable alternatives for increased targeted response compared to speculative response which is costly, among others.

Noting the success reported by other Customs Administrations that have embraced the use of drone technology for Customs enforcement and border protection initiatives, East African Revenue Authorities are seeking to incorporate drone technology into their Customs procedures. The Region's Revenue Authorities will set up a Technical Working Group that shall determine a viable Regional Integrated Drone Technology Platform that aims to curb smuggling, protect territorial integrity and foster compliance. The Working Group will work in consultation with the EAC Secretariat as the regional intergovernmental organisation mandated with management and administration of Customs and for related matters among EAC Partner States.

A report by the East African Revenue Authorities Technical Committee (EARATC) on the status of the implementation of drone technology highlighted that the East African Revenue Authorities are currently working on customizing the policy to suit their specific institutions and national laws. So far, the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) is in the process of procuring four (4) surveillance drones, while the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) is in the process of preparing Terms of Reference (ToR) for scope, structure and specifications for procurement. Other Revenue Authorities in the Region are still in the preliminary stages of implementation.

The East African Revenue Authorities Commissioners General (EARACGs) report came out after the 50th biannual meeting to share experiences and address common challenges facing tax administrations in the Region. The 50th EARACGs Meeting was held from 16th to 17th February 2023 in Kampala, Uganda under the theme "Leveraging Technology and Data for Revenue Mobilization".

Article by

Loice Akello,
International Relations & Diplomacy Division,
Kenya Revenue Authority



KRA's UAVs will fly at least 3,500 metres above the area being surveilled. [Stockphoto]

Nurturing the Next Generation: Promoting a Culture of Knowledge-Sharing and Professional Pride in Customs

The International Customs Day is commemorated every year on the 26th of January and it was first initiated by the World Customs Organization in 1983. This important day is dedicated to all the Customs officers including all the agencies who dedicate their time, energy and resources to ensure that there is in place an effective management of the global trade.

Further, this important day is celebrated by the use of different themes and this year 2023, the theme is "Nurturing the Next Generation: Promoting a Culture of Knowledge-sharing and Professional Pride in Customs". This is a very good theme that has embedded in it various fundamental issues which will improve the efficient functioning of the Customs organizations world over.

Furthermore, the young officers serving in various Customs organizations are the future because these are very receptive to new technologies including those that can help in trade administration. In addition, this young talent is environmentally sensitive and the young people adopt many green practices which contribute to sustainable trade.

This year will further see the strengthening of organizational culture, norms and values in the organizations which will be adapted to the next generation. Further, there will be a strong drive towards national building, removal of trade barriers, and prevention of illicit trade, thus bringing pride to various generations of officers serving in the Customs organizations. Additionally, under the WCO, there is zero tolerance for corruption and high integrity.

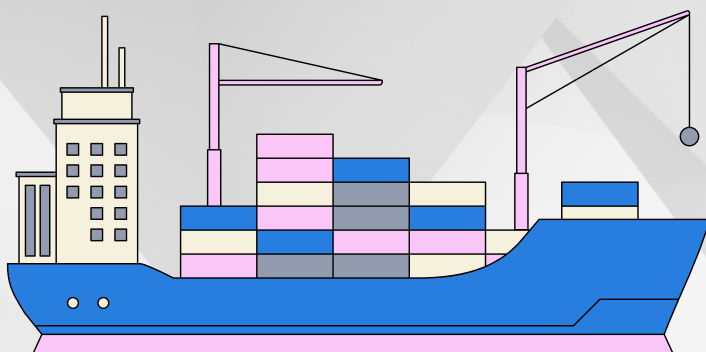
"There will be a strong drive towards national building, removal of trade barriers, and prevention of illicit trade, thus bringing pride to various generations of officers serving in the Customs organizations"

Finally, the WCO has an important task of ensuring that knowledge is shared which should lead to best practices and good norms in the Customs organizations. The WCO has today come up with the WCO Data Strategy which synthesizes statistics and data. Currently, the WCO has developed learning platforms to increase learning through conferences, training activities and by way of holding various workshops. The CLIKC learning platform provides access to a gold mine of learning opportunities for Customs officers.



Article by

Precious Muzyamba
Zambia Revenue Authority



Project for Capacity Development on Smooth Operation of OSBPs on the North-South Transport Corridor Supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA): An Update

This Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) technical cooperation project has been implemented since December 2020 to improve operations at three one-stop border posts (OSBPs) in Southern Africa: (i) at Kazungula, between Botswana and Zambia; (ii) at Chirundu, between Zambia and Zimbabwe; and (iii) at Beitbridge, between South Africa and Zimbabwe. Beitbridge was added to the project as a subject border in the last quarter of 2022. The project has supported several activities to improve border operations, including a study tour to East Africa from 6 to 10 February 2023.

East African Community (EAC) Study Tour

A total of 20 officials from both the central and border levels from the countries participating in the project (Botswana, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) took part in this activity. In cooperation with WCO, JICA had implemented a series of technical cooperation projects between 2007 and 2022 that aimed at building the capacity of Customs administrations in East Africa (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda). The operationalization of the Malaba (Kenya and Uganda), Namanga (Kenya and Tanzania), and Rusumo (Rwanda and Tanzania) OSBPs was included in these projects. Building upon the experiences of these JICA technical cooperation projects, the study tour was designed and implemented with the objective to learn from good-practice examples of the EAC Partner States in implementing OSBPs that can be utilized in project activities in Southern Africa.

The tour activities included:

- A virtual meeting with the EAC Secretariat;
- A site visit to the Malaba OSBP, between Kenya and Uganda; and
- A site visit to the Namanga OSBP, between Kenya and Tanzania.

Active group discussions were held among the participants to review, analyze, and evaluate the findings from the site visits to formulate recommendations for improvement of border operations in Southern Africa.

Achievements

The participants learned good practices in the implementation of OSBPs in East Africa. Lessons learned include the importance of (i) regional integration through harmonized and standardized legal frameworks and multilevel coordination committees between and among Partner States; (ii) adequate hard and soft infrastructure such as the use of ICT; and (iii) effective management of stakeholder relations.

The project expects that these lessons can be applied in facilitating the implementation of OSBPs along the North-South Corridor in Southern Africa. The project will continue until March 2025. JICA is strongly committed to enhancing trade facilitation in Southern Africa through strengthening of the capacity of border operations and promoting OSBPs through this project.



Namanga (Kenya and Tanzania) OSBP

A New Era of Customs Enforcement: How AI and Big Data are Transforming the Industry



Customs enforcement has traditionally relied on manual processes and human expertise to detect and prevent illicit trade and smuggling. However, with the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and big data, the industry is undergoing a transformation that is revolutionizing the way Customs agencies operate.

Here are some of the key ways in which AI and big data are transforming the Customs enforcement industry:

- **Improved risk assessment:** AI and big data are helping Customs agencies to improve their risk assessment capabilities. By analyzing large amounts of data and identifying patterns and anomalies, Customs agencies can more accurately identify high-risk shipments and individuals, and target their enforcement efforts accordingly.
- **Enhanced detection capabilities:** AI and big data are also improving Customs agencies' ability to detect illicit goods and activities. This includes using machine learning algorithms to identify and flag suspicious patterns in trade data, as well as using advanced imaging and scanning technologies to detect hidden or illegal goods.
- **Streamlined processes:** AI and big data are helping Customs agencies to streamline their processes and reduce the burden on human

- **operators.** This includes automating routine tasks such as data entry and documentation, freeing up human resources to focus on higher-level tasks such as risk analysis and enforcement.
- **Real-time monitoring and analysis:** AI and big data are also enabling Customs agencies to monitor and analyze trade data in real-time, allowing them to quickly detect and respond to emerging threats and trends.

By embracing AI and big data, Customs agencies are able to operate more efficiently and effectively, and to stay ahead of the evolving threat landscape. It is important that Customs agencies continue to invest in these technologies and to work closely with industry partners to ensure that they are making the most of these powerful tools. At the same time, it is important to ensure that these technologies are deployed in a manner that respects privacy and other human rights, and that they are subject to appropriate oversight and accountability mechanisms.

Article by

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The Future of Customs: From Blockchain to Biometrics, What's Next for the Industry?



The Customs industry is undergoing a rapid transformation, driven by technological advancements in areas such as blockchain, biometrics, and artificial intelligence.

Here are some of the key trends and innovations that are shaping the future of Customs:

1. **Blockchain technology:** Blockchain has the potential to revolutionize the Customs industry by providing a secure and transparent platform for tracking goods and transactions across borders. By using blockchain technology, Customs agencies can create a tamper-proof record of transactions, reducing the risk of fraud and improving efficiency.
2. **Biometrics:** Biometric technology, such as facial recognition and fingerprint scanning, is becoming increasingly prevalent in the Customs industry. By using biometric data to identify individuals, Customs agencies can improve security and streamline the Customs clearance process.
3. **Artificial intelligence:** AI is already being used by some Customs agencies to improve risk assessment and detection capabilities. In the future, AI is likely to become even more prevalent in the Customs industry, as agencies seek to automate routine tasks and improve decision-making processes.

4. **3D printing:** 3D printing has the potential to disrupt the traditional Customs clearance process, as it enables the production of goods on demand. This could lead to a shift away from traditional trade patterns and supply chains, and may require Customs agencies to develop new systems and procedures for managing the flow of goods.

As the Customs industry continues to evolve, it is important that Customs agencies remain adaptable and innovative, and that they are able to keep pace with the latest technological advancements.

This requires a willingness to experiment with new technologies and to work closely with industry partners to develop new solutions and approaches. At the same time, it is important to ensure that these technologies are deployed in a manner that respects privacy and other human rights, and that they are subject to appropriate oversight and accountability mechanisms. By staying ahead of the curve and embracing new technologies, Customs agencies can continue to play a critical role in facilitating global trade and ensuring the safety and security of people and goods across borders.

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Can Integrity be achieved in Customs?

Integrity is a very easy thing to achieve in Customs today than many years back especially when the system is electronically streamlined, this can help to avoid many integrity related issues.

Customs all over the world plays a very key role in facilitating international legal trade, revenue mobilization, negating smuggling of prohibited and illicit items, and above all, through deployment of Non-Intrusive inspection equipment like the scanners ensures national security.

Basically, corruption in Customs is a vice that has been talked about for a long time now. Corruption is detrimental to growth and development of any institution or even the state. It is inimical to good leadership and to efforts in the enhancement of integrity in any organization.

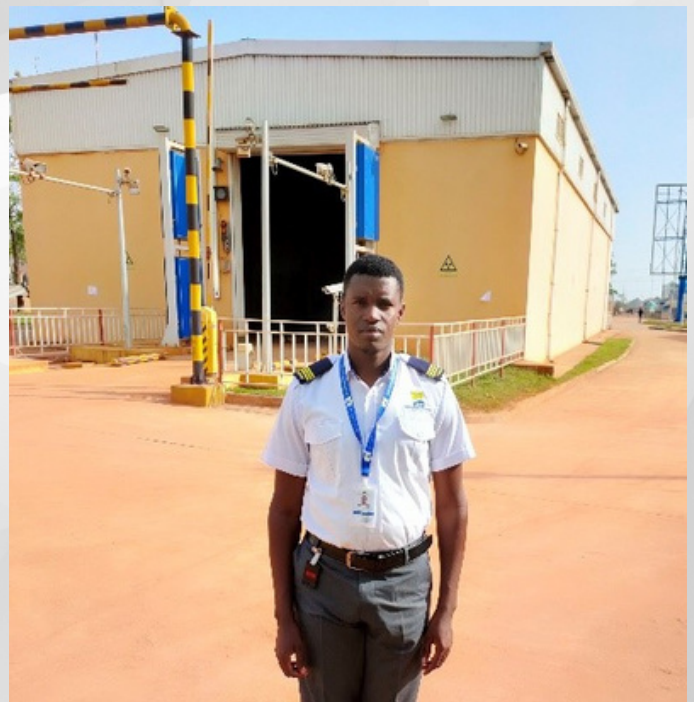
URA employees especially in the Customs department are aware that any form of corruption whether political or bureaucratic corruption jeopardizes the work of Customs and has a cataclysm into other important areas like the economy, security and most importantly for our case, has an effect on the realization of our economic independence.

As it comes to our attention, there is no doubt that integrity must be promoted at all levels continuously and holistically if we are to achieve the Customs mandate. This can be done through continuous promotion and engagements with different actors, employees directly and /or indirectly.

To fight corruption in Customs, well-articulated policies, strategies, standards and organizational instruments must be adopted to support efforts in strengthening integrity and battling corruption.

I still agree with the words of Bob Marley, where he said that "The greatness of a man is not in how much wealth he acquires, but in his integrity and ability to affect those around him positively."

Developing Uganda Together.



Article by

Katabarwa Albert
Short-term Employee with URA-Customs
Non-Intrusive Inspection



Zimbabwe Electronic Single Window Gains Momentum



The Delegates that participated in the Zimbabwe Electronic Single Window (ZeSW) workshop, among them, were the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority, Ministry of Information Communication and Technology, Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries Water and Rural Development, Ministry of Health and Child Care, Environment Management Agency, Zimbabwe National Road Authority, Vehicle Inspection Department, Plant Quarantine Services Institute Agriculture Marketing Authority and National Biotechnological Authority.

The Zimbabwe Electronic Single window (ZeSW) project implementation team gained momentum after its official launch in June 2022. The Zimbabwe Revenue Authority hosted 2 WCO regional experts on single window who facilitated a workshop in Zimbabwe. The Revenue Authority was delighted to have the Regional Experts from World Customs Organization in the country on a five-day single window capacity-building workshop. Participants were drawn from all Border regulatory agencies.

The five-day engagement unpacked the dynamic processes for the implementation of an effective and efficient e-Single Window platform. Participants were taken through the requirements for a successful implementation of a Single Window platform based on the WCO Single Window Compendiums, and the use of the WCO Data model in harmonization of data, and data exchange initiatives with the various government departments and trading countries.

Delegates were also exposed to case studies of Thailand, Nigeria and other countries that have successfully implemented the single window facility. The Experts emphasized the importance of applying Integrated Risk Management in Single Window Environment.

In conclusion, the WCO facilitators, commended Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) for the milestones carried out to date, and implored on other regulatory agencies that were present to fully participate in the development of the Single Window facility. The experts highlighted that the successful implementation of bringing services “under one roof” involved a collaborative effort on the part of all Cross Border Regulatory Agencies in redesigning interactions between traders and regulatory agencies.

Article by

Stanley Chinyadza



Creating A Culture of Knowledge-Sharing

The next generation of Customs professionals is well-equipped to tackle the challenges of the modern age. But in order to maximize their potential, organizations must create a culture of knowledge-sharing and professional excellence.

The Benefits of Fostering a Culture of Knowledge-sharing Organizations that foster a culture of knowledge-sharing can reap a number of benefits. For one, it encourages a culture of collaboration and innovation. By creating an environment in which Customs professionals can share their knowledge and expertise, organizations can ensure that the best ideas are discussed and implemented. By involving Customs professionals in the design and implementation of new procedures, organizations can ensure that they remain up-to-date and relevant.

Knowledge Management in Customs

Knowledge management is an essential component of fostering a culture of professional excellence in Customs. By leveraging the latest technology, organizations can ensure that their employees remain up-to-date on the latest industry trends and regulations.

Customs should also strive to create an environment in which their employees can easily access and share knowledge. By leveraging cloud-based systems, organizations can ensure that their employees can access the information they need when they need it. By leveraging collaboration tools, organizations can ensure that their employees can easily share their ideas and best practices with their peers.

Encouraging Professional Pride in Customs

Encouraging professional pride in Customs is an essential component of fostering a culture of professional excellence. Customs should strive to create an environment in which their employees feel valued and respected. By providing employees with recognition and reward for their accomplishments, organizations can ensure that their employees remain proud and motivated.

The next generation of Customs professionals is set to transform the industry. By doing so, they can ensure that the next generation of Customs professionals is equipped with the skills and expertise necessary to succeed.



Article by

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Nurturing Young African Women into Customs Experts through Knowledge Sharing



Zambia Revenue Authority Customs officials

For a young African woman, a new career in the Customs Division of a Revenue Authority is exciting as she has the opportunity to develop expertise in matters of international trade and taxation; national budget and tax policy analysis; among other trade and tax policy related matters.

However, this is not easy because the operating environment of Customs Services is vast and dynamic in nature. This tends to leave young Customs Officers in a state of uncertainty as they try to understand their role in making valuable contributions to their Customs Administration since they have a lot of new energy, ideas, and progressive contributions. Worse still for the young woman, these hurdles are exacerbated by cultural norms that may tend to marginalise their career progression and development of professional pride.

In an effort to develop Customs specific aptitudes and guided experience, the Zambia Revenue Authority has adopted an all-inclusive approach through the creation of a systematic Mentorship Programme, Talent Management and Succession Plan which are all incorporated in the Authority's 2022-2024 Corporate Strategic Plan.

This is to ensure young Customs officials are mentored by experienced and knowledgeable Customs experts in various facets such as enforcement, classification, valuations, origin, procedures and other Customs matters thereby retaining the institutional memory and creating a young generation of future talent.

Both tacit and explicit knowledge are systematically shared from induction to deployment stage and this is followed by a post-deployment evaluation whose aim is to assess the level of assimilation of Customs knowledge and the ability to implement and apply it. In this process, deliberate efforts to ensure young women are accorded an equal opportunity to acquire this knowledge are made thereby enlightening the new generation without leaving anyone behind.



SACU Member States Reflect on the Implementation of a Regional Advance Ruling System 1/2



From 31st January to 1st February 2023, the WCO in partnership with the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) held a regional workshop on advance rulings in Windhoek, Namibia to discuss the state of play in the implementation of advance rulings while reflecting on opportunities for a regional coordination framework. The workshop was preceded by the fourth meeting of the SACU Technical Working Group on 30 January 2023. Both meetings were organized under HS-Africa Programme, funded by the European Union.

The meeting brought together experts from all five SACU Member States; Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa. Representatives from East African Community (EAC) and Mauritius also attended the meeting to share their experiences in the implementation of the advanced ruling.

In their opening remarks, Mr. Donald NDWANDWE, SACU Secretariat acting Director, Trade Facilitation and Revenue Management, and Mr. Sam SHIVUTE, NamRA Commissioner General, expressed their sincere appreciation to the WCO for organizing a workshop on advance rulings for the SACU region and the continuous partnership. They also thanked the European Union for the support provided to the SACU region under the HS-Africa Programme and emphasized the importance of advance rulings in trade facilitation. Mr. Donald NDWANDWE highlighted that the support provided will go a long



way to build the required capacity for the SACU region as well as to assist in moving forward the agenda for Trade Facilitation in SACU, which is a key component included in the SACU strategic plan for 2022 – 2027. Mr. Sam SHIVUTE referred to the successful implementation and launch of an advance rulings program in Namibia in July 2022, notably with the support of the HS-Africa Programme. He urged all Member States to follow suit and use the opportunity of the assistance and partnership under the HS-Africa Programme to set Customs work to “World Class” standards.

During the workshop, the role of advance rulings as a key component of trade facilitation was discussed and widely recognized by all the participants. An expert from the WCO exchanged with participants on the existing International Standards the on advanced ruling, elaborating in detail on the WCO Council Recommendation of 1996, the WCO Technical Guidelines on advance rulings for classification, origin and valuation (2015), WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement provisions and AfCFTA provisions on advance rulings. Member States shared the state of play at the national level as well as the challenges and improvements to be undertaken.

SACU Member States Reflect on the Implementation of a Regional Advance Ruling System 2/2



Following the discussions on the national state of play, experts from the EAC and Mauritius took the floor to share their experiences, challenges and lessons learned in the implementation of advance rulings.

The workshop concluded by developing recommendations for improvements to the current arrangements at the national level to better reflect current international standards.

Alongside the workshop, there were meetings of the SACU secretariat and the five Member States with the EU HS-Africa Programme team to conclude future work plans for assistance under the EU HS-Africa Programme and other EU-WCO relevant initiatives.



Customs and Cross-Border E-Commerce: Opportunities and Challenges



The rise of cross-border e-commerce has presented both opportunities and challenges for Customs agencies worldwide. On one hand, e-commerce can facilitate international trade and support economic growth. On the other hand, it can create new risks and challenges for Customs agencies, including the need to manage a greater volume of smaller and low-value shipments, prevent illicit trade, and ensure the safety and security of imported goods.

Customs agencies must adapt to the changing landscape of cross-border e-commerce and develop innovative solutions to address the challenges it poses. One potential solution is to implement advanced data analytics and artificial intelligence tools to better manage and process the large volume of e-commerce transactions. These tools can help identify high-risk shipments and facilitate faster and more efficient clearance of low-risk shipments, while also reducing the administrative burden on Customs officials.

Moreover, Customs agencies should work closely with e-commerce platforms and online marketplaces to ensure that they have effective risk management and compliance systems in place. This includes establishing clear guidelines for e-commerce sellers on the import and export requirements of different countries and providing training and support to help them comply with these regulations.

At the same time, Customs agencies must also address the risks posed by illicit trade in e-commerce, including the sale of counterfeit goods, smuggling, and money laundering. This requires close collaboration with other law enforcement agencies and international organizations to develop effective strategies to detect and prevent illicit activities.

In conclusion, cross-border e-commerce presents both opportunities and challenges for Customs agencies. By leveraging innovative technologies and collaborating closely with e-commerce platforms and law enforcement agencies, Customs agencies can help facilitate trade and ensure the safety and security of imported goods. As the e-commerce landscape continues to evolve, Customs agencies must remain vigilant and adapt their strategies to address new and emerging risks.

Article by

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Signing of the Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) between the South African Revenue Service (SARS) and Uganda Revenue Authority (URA)



South African and Ugandan accredited traders will enjoy lower trade costs and simplified procedures in their import and export activities, because of a mutual recognition arrangement signed today. On 27th February 2023, South Africa and Uganda have agreed to recognise each other's Authorised Economic Operators (AEO) that enables AEOs to benefit from faster controls and reduced administration for customs clearance.

Under this agreement South Africa and Uganda will recognise each other's AEOs which means that South African AEOs will receive benefits when exporting to Uganda, and South Africa will reciprocate for Ugandan AEOs. Today's decision will further boost trade opportunities and contribute to the smooth flow of goods between both countries. The MRA will also strengthen end-to-end supply chain security for trade in goods by promoting multi-layered risk-management and providing facilitation benefits to accredited traders.

AEO programmes are vital tools for developing trust-based partnerships with economic operators who have high levels of commitment to compliance and supply chain security. Economic operators are interested in the tangible benefits offered to compliant participants, particularly, mutual recognition arrangements (MRAs) with trading partners. On the other hand, AEO programmes enable customs authorities to focus their attention on real risk areas.



The Next Generation

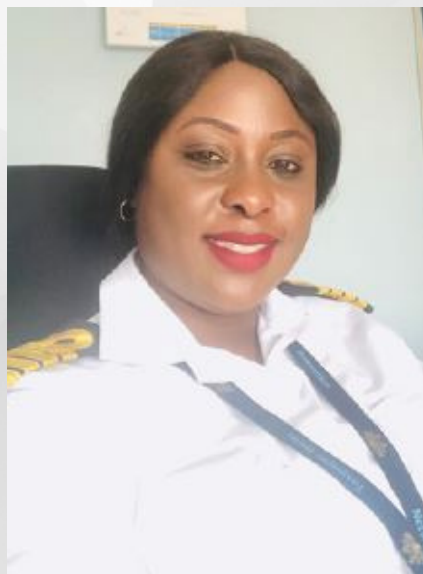
In this era of globalization, the importance of nurturing the next generation of Customs Officers cannot be over-emphasized.

Customs modernization initiatives have played an important role in improving the ease and efficiency in the processing of various Customs transactions which has helped reduce the processing time and ultimately the cost of doing business. Young Customs officers tend to be more receptive and flexible to the latest technologies as they are more exposed and always ready to try out new initiatives. In as much as the role of the technologically sound generation is appreciated, caution ought to be taken on how and when this technology is used in the workplace. In certain instances, technology may serve as a distraction as some officers tend to spend more time on social media platforms as opposed to being productive.

Additionally, the acquisition of Customs knowledge, understanding and interpretation of Customs legislation and legal texts is very critical. In this light, the need for mentorship by experienced officers in this area is cardinal and can be used to empower the next generation in terms of managing intergenerational understanding of Customs issues. This will help the new generation gain the much-required experience and develop the right attitudes as they take up leadership roles in the future. Technology has made it easier for Customs information to be quickly transmitted and is easily accessible for those that seek it. Information gathered from various sources ought to be critically analyzed and domesticated to suit the local Customs environment. The ability to domesticate customs issues is an acquired skill that gets better with experience.

‘The need for mentorship by experienced officers in this area is cardinal and can be used to empower the next generation in terms of managing intergenerational understanding of Customs issues.’

In conclusion, good knowledge and information management coupled with technology advancement are key to having the next generation of Customs officers that are Professional and knowledgeable as well as innovative and creative.



Article by

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Completion Conference



Mr. Fuyuki Sagara



Project expert team

The Project for Capacity Development of South Sudan Customs for Introduction of Harmonized System Code Phase 2 (P.I.H.S.2) has held a completion conference to mark the end of the three-year customs project in South Sudan.

The project that started in 2020-2023 mainly focused on capacity building for customs officers and clearing agents on Harmonized System (HS) code and Rules of Origin (ROO) that are very important to the economic sector of South Sudan.

Mr. Fuyuki Sagara the Chief Representative of the JICA South Sudan office stated that the purpose of the conference was to disseminate the outcomes of JICA's technical cooperation project in the customs sector.

South Sudan needs to reduce over-dependency on oil revenue, and improvement of the customs sector is one of the essential parts for improving non-oil revenue collection that contributes to economic sustainability in South Sudan. As a result, the project has influenced South Sudan's economy as seen in the increased number of customs declarations with the right HS codes.

Upon project completion, JICA expects National Revenue Authority (NRA) to sustain its activities and take further steps to meet the regional and world standards, which will strengthen the economic harmonization and mutual prosperity between South Sudan and neighboring countries. This project is in line with the concept of the revised industrial development strategy for South Sudan.



Make Everyone a Risk Manager

The trend is always as thus: The Chief Risk Officer convenes and facilitates a semi-annual executive risk workshop for business unit heads and the CEO.

At the workshop, each executive makes a presentation about his or her unit's risk profile, followed by challenges and requests for clarifications. The meetings create visibility about when a risk reported by one business unit might also be experienced by others, sometimes in unexpected ways. Requiring busy executives to spend two days discussing risks sends a powerful signal about the importance of risk management—and line executives' ownership and accountability for risks. After each executive risk workshop, the Chief Risk Officer prepares a report for the audit committee of the supervisory board, which it then shares and discusses with the entire board.

On the other hand, the employees are embedded in an environment where by the nature of their work, are risk takers. Their risk appetite is amplified by an urgency or impatience to "get the job done,". A belief that they have all the information they need and therefore don't need the assistance or interference of others.

Whereas the Chief Risk Officer and his Executives would successfully take the risk management function through an exercise in checking boxes at the board level, this approach can only yield the desired results if in addition to it, a bona fide management process that employees, managers and executives, all embrace risk management, as part of their everyday lives.

Companies ought to know and rapidly become aware of the new-age risks. Take an example. There are more threats emanating for cyber risk and geopolitical risks. How much do employees at our work places know about these?

Risks have to be written out, understood and formalized and signed off. List each risk and see whether there are mitigating controls. Risk management function should let employees use natural language, and not risk management jargon, that may require them to classify or set a priority for the problems they report or encounter. Let the Chief Risk Officer do the prioritizing, and let the frontline staff, list the risks as they are.

We need to embrace a culture within the employees of knowing and understanding that Risk assessment should be an ongoing one. Let's Erase your risk register every year and recreate fresh register. You have to see what the emerging risks are. We sometimes overestimate the pace of change but underestimate the impact of change. So, we need to do the balancing of the two and see what is coming, ahead of time.

Make everyone a Risk Manager.

Article by

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SARS - Private Sector Coffee Sessions on AEO:



SARS Customs and Business in South Africa – led by the apex organization – Business Unity South Africa (BUSA), came together to form a joint C-2-B partnership to increase the uptake of the AEO program in South Africa. The group is co-chair by Ms. Rae Viviers from Customs and Dr. Juanita Maree from the private sector.

To aid knowledge sharing between Customs and Business, informal “coffee Sessions” were created online to explain the requirements of the respective AEO criterion. These “coffee sessions” kicked off on Tuesday, 18th January 2023 and will continue until all WCO AEO criteria have been discussed.

The main aim of these sessions is to inform, clarify, discuss, debate, and share best practices on the SARS Authorized Economic Program. This collaborative approach is anticipated to improve South Africa’s AEO program, enhancing AEO enrolment and ultimately ensuring a safer and more secure supply chain.

To date, the following criteria have been discussed: (A) Demonstrated compliance with Customs matters, (B) satisfactory system for management of commercial records, (C) Financial Viability, (D) consultation, cooperation, and communication, (E) education, training, and awareness, (F) information exchange, access, and confidentiality, (G) cargo security, (H) conveyance security, (I) premises security, (J) personnel security, and (K) business partner security. Additional criterions established by SARS were also discussed in two separate sessions, which pertain to (1) sufficient customs knowledge, and (2) the relevant AEO annexures and documentation. These sessions have enjoyed great success and hopefully set the tone for further collaboration on various topics.

RPSG Work Plan for the Year



The WCO ESA Regional Private Sector Group (RPSG) met for the first time this year and formulated a work plan for 2023. The RPSG's mission is to create an official platform to inform and advise regional Customs administrations, members, stakeholders in trade, and society on customs and trade-related matters from the perspective of the private sector in the ESA region. Furthermore, the RPSG aims to achieve this mission through collaborative efforts between private sector stakeholders and customs administrations and by utilizing modern-day technology.

The work plan for this year thus contains, but is not limited, to the following:

1. Governance meetings – The RPSG will continue with the four governance meetings held throughout the year, and for the moment, these meetings will remain virtually on Microsoft Teams.

2. Election of new Chair – The current Chair and Vice-Chair of the WCO ESA RPSGs term is ending in June, which warrants the election of a new chair.

3. Projects and Objectives – The RPSG will host four webinars this year once more to address important topics that will aid trade within the region.

4. Publications and deliverables – As the pandemic is over and the focus is on economic and trade recovery, this year will slightly alter the COVID-19 situation reports. Rather, the RPSG will publish a report addressing trade facilitation and the AfCFTA instead, as the focus shift to economic recovery and sustainability is becoming paramount after the recent supply chain shocks.

5. Focus areas and portfolios – the focus of the RPSG will remain the AEO, digitalization, and coordinated border management which could be linked to Single Windows and OSBPs. Gender equality is also a serious contender to be added to a portfolio.

Additional information is available on the RPSG's website: <https://www.wcoesarpsg.org/>



C-2-B Initiatives in Zambia Make Strides to Decrease OGAs at Kasumbalesa



Zambia – particularly at Kasumbalesa – had made significant strides by addressing issues mounting through its trade facilitation desk. Some of these issues include having a plethora of Other Government Agencies (OGAs) regulating trade at the border, according to John Mumba, chairman of the Zambia Customs & Forwarding Agent Association, who is also a member of the RPSG.

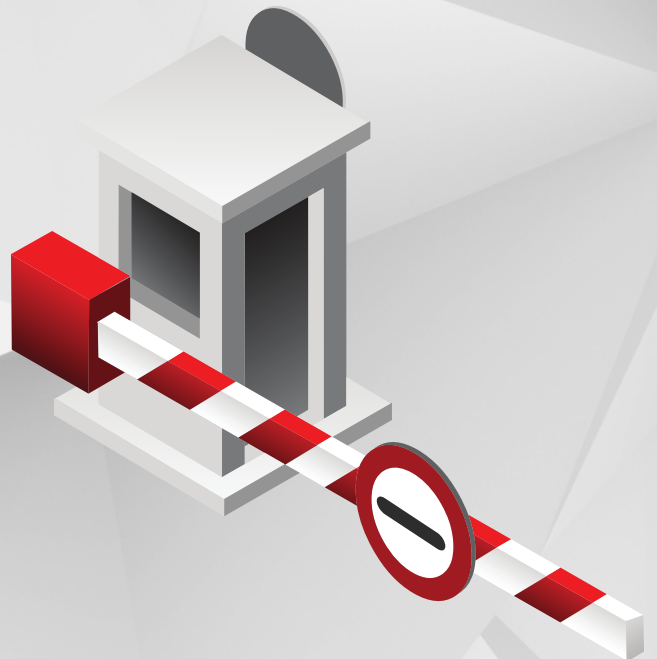
At one point last year, the Kasumbalesa border post had approximately 15 OGAs which exacerbated significant bottlenecks at the border post.

According to statistics gathered by FESARTA (and published on the RPSG website), Kasumbalesa processes approximately 800 trucks (north and southbound) per day. And in recent times, border crossings have averaged around a day and a half, which is too long for cross-border trade at one of the most important border posts in the SADC region.

Through private-sector collaboration, these OGAs have recently been downscaled to six, which enhanced trade facilitation through the border. Government is now also asking the private sector to step in with suggestions which will improve the border post as a whole. These collaborations are important to realize the dream of a united Africa – trading under the AfCFTA.



Zambia Customs & Forwarding Agents Association



Distribution of VRT System Kiosk Sets to ESA Regional Training Centres

In this digital world, technology is transforming training at an accelerated pace and experiential learning technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR) have revolutionized learning for both training providers and learners.

Virtual Reality Training (VRT) is the digital simulation of lifelike scenarios for training purposes. Trainees enter a 360°, active learning environment, experiencing sights and sounds that dissolve the barrier between virtual and actual reality. Creating real-world experiences, integrating theory and practice and generally accelerating learning are only some of the advantages of the use of experiential learning technologies.

The World Customs Organization (WCO) made a bold move to new technology-assisted capacity building by introducing the WCO VR Training Project with the financial support of the Customs Cooperation Fund of Korea (CCF-K), and Regional Training Centres of the WCO ESA region, namely RTC Mauritius, RTC Kenya, RTC South Africa and RTC Zimbabwe are amongst the beneficiaries.

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth and WCO Capacity Building Director, Dr. Taeil Kang as well as the Director-General of the MRA, Mr. Sudhamo Lal, were present during a function at MRA Customs on Monday 06 February, 2023, wherein, the WCO VR Training Kiosk was made available to RTC Mauritius.



Other dignitaries present at the said function included, amongst others, Dr. the Honourable Renganaden Padayachy, Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, the Chairperson of the MRA and representatives of the US Department of Justice and Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

The aim of the Virtual Reality Training Programme to support customs officials to learn the basic procedures of physical inspection on containerised cargo at a maritime port, through the use of VR Technology.

Critically, with Virtual Reality, workplace scenarios that were once too difficult, expensive, or dangerous to train become vastly more practical, cost-effective, and safe in an immersive simulation environment. The system will be used for advanced training of customs officials and, when combined with story narratives and learning curriculum developed by subject matter experts, the result of using VRT as a training tool is that is trainees learn in the best way possible, through personal experience, significantly improving risk analysis skills during inspections and examination of goods, learning retention, job performance, team collaboration, workplace safety, and cost.



Study Visit to WCO Headquarters by the SACU Secretariat and SACU Member States

A study visit for representatives of SACU and its Member States to the World Customs Organization Headquarters was organised from 13th to 22nd March 2023, to coincide with the 71st Harmonized System Committee (HSC). Organised under the framework of the EU-WCO HS-Africa Programme, it was a follow up to consultations and work plans established at the national and regional level as part of the ongoing support to SACU and its Member States that is provided under the HS Africa Programme, funded by the European Union.

The study visit brought together tariff experts from all five SACU Member States, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa, as well as a representative from the SACU Secretariat. During the visit, the officials had an opportunity to learn, exchange, network, and enhance their knowledge and abilities to efficiently navigate the HS by getting a hands-on experience on the workings of the 71st HSC.

To improve the Member States collaboration on tariff classification and expand their capabilities in establishing a regional advance ruling system, the SACU experts visited the EU DG TAXUD where they had a workshop to exchange on best practices and mechanisms that support an effective binding tariff information at national and Customs Union level. The experts deliberated with their peers from the EU on practices that ensure a sound HS migration framework with time bound processes of submission of proposals, adoption and implementation of HS Amendments.

The outcomes of this study visit are intended to improve and strengthen tariff classification work and advance rulings at national level for all the SACU Member States. It is also expected to create greater collaboration in the region and further encourage SACU Member States to participate more in the future meetings of the HS Committee, and as a region, continue to timely migrate their Common External Tariff (CET) to new versions of the HS.

For more information, please contact hs@wcoomd.org



Training on Undercover and Surveillance Techniques 1/2



The fight against drug trafficking in Mauritius is high on the agenda of the Mauritius Government. The Government is leaving no stone unturned in assisting enforcement agencies to make the country safer from drugs, organized crime, corruption and terrorism. The authorities are committed to achieving health, security and justice for all by tackling the threats and promoting peace and sustainable well-being for its citizens.

The training on 'Undercover and Surveillance Techniques' has come at an opportune moment, as building capacity for our enforcement officers goes hand in hand with the massive investment in tools and technology that are being made.

The U.S. Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration has responded positively to the request made to them, some back for the conduct of a training for our enforcement officers. Since all the islands states of the Indian Ocean, namely Comoros, Madagascar, Seychelles along with Mauritius are not spared and rendered vulnerable by their proximity to major heroin trafficking route and growing methamphetamine and cocaine routes, the training has been extended to the other islands.

The training on 'Undercover and Surveillance Techniques' was conducted from 06 to 10 February 2023 at the seat of the MRA. Custom House, Mer Rouge.

The aim of the training is to strengthen technical capacity of law enforcement personnel on criminal investigations, specifically on investigating Drug Trafficking Organizations and Transnational Criminal Organizations.

The training was attended by twenty-seven (27) officers from law enforcement agencies in Mauritius namely, Mauritius Police Force (MPF) [ADSU -06] and Customs [06] and from the region - from Madagascar [06], Comoros [06] and Seychelles [06].

The training was facilitated by six (06) Instructors - four (04) from Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Washington, USA and two (02) from Maputo, Mozambique.

It is to be pointed out that the DEA has been actively developing the capacity of our officers in the fight against drug trafficking. In this same breath, a course on Narcotics Investigations was held in February 2018 and one on Combating Drug Trafficking in April 2022.

The Training on 'Undercover and Surveillance Techniques' was conducted in English with simultaneous interpretation in French.

The Training was officially launched by the Hon P. K. Jugnauth, Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for

Training on Undercover and Surveillance Techniques 2/2

Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity, in the presence of other dignitaries such as His Excellency S. Sardar, Chargee d’Affaires, US Embassy and Mr. N. K. Ballah, Chairman of the MRA Board. In his keynote address, he emphasized on the fact that the Government has engaged in a relentless battle against drug trafficking with over Rs13.7 billion worth of dangerous drugs and the arrest of some 20,000 persons. He also added that a series of measures have been announced in the Budget to tackle drug trafficking in a planned and coherent manner such as installation of body scanners, high patrol vessels, advanced light helicopter, among others. He seized this opportunity to thank the Government of the United States, and in particular, the Department of Justice, the US Embassy in Mauritius and the DEA for their unflinching support in our capacity building endeavours.



On the other hand, Mr. S. Lal, Director-General of the MRA, in his address also expressed his heartfelt appreciation to the Chief Guest and the experts from the US DEA. He added that the MRA has increased the vigilance at the airport, port and courier services and is deploying state of the art technology and modern tools and equipment such as X-ray Scanners, Drug -loo, Fast Interceptor Boats, Vessel Tracking System, Drones, Sniffer Dogs, modern CCTV Control Room, Advance Passenger information and so on. The ‘Drug Free Moris’ mobile application which focuses on harm reduction caused by dangerous drugs through awareness and education campaigns had also been launched in 2021.



The five training comprised classroom sessions as well as practical and hands sessions on the field, with the simulation of drug profiling and interception. The training culminated with the handing over of certificates to the participants as well as Certificates of Appreciation to few MRA staff who have been collaborating and providing support all along.



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