



Report

# Building one-stop border posts

### A toolkit

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November 2023

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How to cite: Calabrese, L., te Velde, D. W., Mendez-Parra, M., Ayele, Y., Rombo, K. (2023) Building one-stop border posts. ODI Report. London: ODI (www.odi.org/en/publications/building-one-stop-border-posts-a-toolkit).

### Acknowledgements

This toolkit was prepared by Linda Calabrese, Dirk Willem te Velde, Max Mendez-Parra and Yohannes Ayele from ODI and Kevin Rombo from TradeMark Africa (TMA).

The authors would like to thank TMA staff and especially Catherine Nanzigu for comments on an earlier draft. The authors would also like to thank Flavia Busingye (East African Community) for her comments and feedback.

The authors would also like to thank officials from the East African Community, the Uganda Revenue Authority, the Kenyan Revenue Authority, the Tanzanian Revenue Authority, the German Agency for International Cooperation and the Japan International Cooperation Agency and from other institutions that preferred not to be named.

This toolkit has been funded as part of the ODI–TMA partnership. All views provided are those of the authors and not the responsibility of ODI or TMA.

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### Acronyms

AUDA-NEPAD	African Union Development Agency-NEPAD
BLT	Build-Lease-Transfer
BOOT	Build-Own-Operate-Transfer
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
DBOM	Design-Build-Operate-Maintain
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EAC	East African Community
EPC	engineering procurement contract
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
JICA O&M	Japan International Cooperation Agency operations and management
OSBP	one-stop border post
PPP	public–private partnership
REC	regional economic community
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SCT	Single Customs Territory
TMA	TradeMark Africa
TMEA	TradeMark East Africa

### **Executive summary**

Cross-border trade plays an important role in Africa's development. In the current context of increased economic integration, at the regional and now the continental level, border crossing needs to be fast and predictable in terms of both time and procedures.

One-stop border posts (OSBPs) are among the most successful interventions implemented to improve the transit of people and goods at border crossings across countries. Several OSBPs have been set up in the East African region, thanks to the efforts and interventions of several development organisations, chiefly TradeMark Africa (TMA, formerly TradeMark East Africa, TMEA) but also the World Bank and the Japan International Cooperation Agency, to name a few.

The East African experience in setting up OSBPs can provide lessons for the rest of the continent. This toolkit aims to distil these lessons in a format that provides 'food for thought' for others who want to emulate TMA's work. The main lessons are:

- Lesson 1: Set up a legal framework within which OSBPs can operate.
- Lesson 2: Understand what model (juxtaposed, straddling, singlecountry) is most apt to the context.
- Lesson 3: Related to Lesson 2, understand how to operate border facilities between two countries.
- Lesson 4: Consider whether it is possible to integrate private sector financing.
- Lesson 5: Identify a model for raising funds for the construction and operation of OSBPs.
- Lesson 6: Identify the right stakeholders to involve in building and running OSBPs.
- Lesson 7: Build trust between parties through dialogue.
- Lesson 8: Establish structures for managing stakeholders at the borders.
- Lesson 9: Identify a model for the handover and long-term sustainability of OSBPs.
- Lesson 10: Continue offering sensitisation and capacity building at the borders.

### 1 Introduction

#### 1.1 Context and background

Africa has the highest number of landlocked countries of all regions of the world, and therefore cross-border trade plays an important role in the continent's development. However, the transit of both people and goods across borders in Africa is inefficient. Slow processes, excessive bureaucracy for small transactions and duplicated checks have made border crossing unfit for efficient trade purposes.

In the current context of increased economic integration, at the regional and now the continental level, border crossing needs to be fast and predictable in terms of time and procedures. This entails providing the hard infrastructure that is necessary for a smooth transit but also eliminating the duplications in processes and procedures that slow down the flow of people and goods.

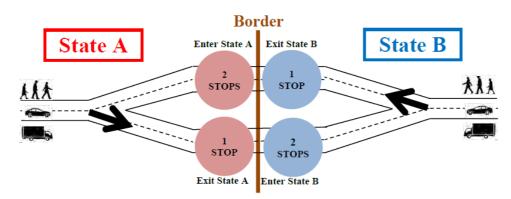
One-stop border posts (OSBPs) are among the most successful interventions implemented to improve the transit of people and goods across borders. Implemented first in Europe and later in Southeast Asia, in the past two decades OSBPs have also appeared in Africa. The first fully functional OSBP set up in Africa was the Chirundu border post between Zambia and Zimbabwe. Since then, several OSBPs have been established in the East African region. This has been the outcome of efforts and interventions by several development organisations, chiefly TradeMark Africa (TMA, former TradeMark East Africa, TMEA) but also the World Bank (whose East Africa Trade and Transport Facilitation Project has been crucial to trade in the region) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Given Africa's ambitions of continental trade integration, but also the potential for other regions to adopt OSBPs, it is important to understand how the OSBP model came about in East Africa and to draw lessons for others who wish to undertake similar steps elsewhere. Setting up an OSBP is a complex operation that entails coordinating a myriad of stakeholders (different government agencies, border communities and development partners) in two different countries.

#### 1.2 What is an OSBP?

Traditional border crossings (Figure 1) see the presence of several institutions from both the country that one is leaving (State A) and the country that one is entering (State B). At such a traditional border, a

person crossing would first clear their exit with the immigration authorities of State A and then clear their entry with the immigration authorities of State B. Similarly, goods leaving State A to enter State B will be subject to exit checks in State A and entry checks in State B. These include customs inspections but also, depending on the goods, controls by standards authorities or agriculture and food agencies, among others.



#### Figure 1 Traditional border crossing

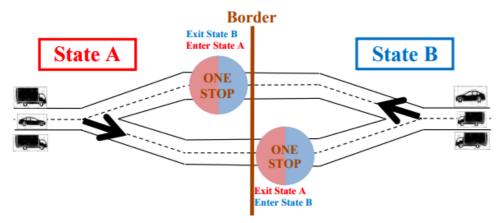
OSBPs eliminate the need for these duplicate procedures. OSBPs are border crossings where travellers, goods, and means of transport stop only once to undertake exit formalities from one country and entry formalities into the other (AUDA-NEPAD and JICA, 2022). In practice, at an OSBP, border agencies (customs, immigration, standards bodies, etc.) from both countries operate side by side. This entails the creation of physical infrastructure (the building or buildings in which these agencies operate) but also, most importantly, soft infrastructure to harmonise processes and procedures.

In terms of the **hard infrastructure**, there exist various types of OSBPs, as identified by the African Union Development Agency-NEPAD (AUDA-NEPAD) and JICA (2022).

The **juxtaposed** OSBP (Figure 2) is the most common, and occurs more often when facilities already exist, or when a natural barrier (e.g. a river) separates the two countries. In the juxtaposed OSBP, two separate facilities operate, one in each country. Customs and immigration procedures are conducted in these integrated facilities in the country of entry. This model is commonly found among OSBPs in East and Southern Africa. Examples include the Malaba border crossing between Kenya and Uganda, Chirundu between Zambia and Zimbabwe and Rusumo between Rwanda and Tanzania (AUDA-NEPAD and JICA, 2022).

Source: AUDA-NEPAD and JICA (2022)

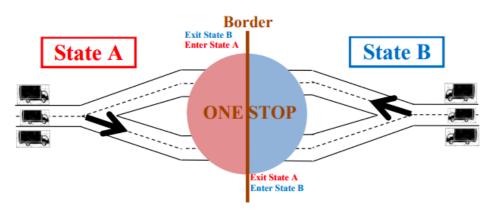




Source: AUDA-NEPAD and JICA (2022)

The **straddling** OSBP model (Figure 3) has a single facility built across the border line and is more often found in places where the landscape around the border is flat, on a road connecting the two countries. An example is the Nemba/Gasenyi border between Burundi and Rwanda (AUDA-NEPAD and JICA, 2022). In theory, the work in this model is divided equally, but there may be imbalances between the countries in terms of work to maintain the OSBP.

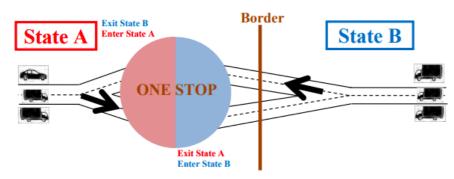




Source: AUDA-NEPAD and JICA (2022)

Finally, the **single-country** (wholly located) OSBP (Figure 4) is fully located in one of the two states. This would normally occur at a seaport or a road/railway bridge. In East Africa, this is found in Ruhwa on the border between Burundi and Rwanda (AUDA-NEPAD and JICA, 2022).

#### Figure 4 Single-country OSBP



Source: AUDA-NEPAD and JICA (2022)

In terms of the **soft infrastructure**, OSBPs require the creation of a legal and regulatory framework. The **legal framework** has several layers (AUDA-NEPAD and JICA, 2022):

- The general legal environment of the countries and the regional economic community (REC) concerned. This is important as it sets the scene on issues relevant to the OSBP, such as competition law, foreign exchange legislation, criminal law, etc., but also in terms of how national systems interact with supranational law. For instance, it matters whether East African Community (EAC) regulations are directly applicable in the Partner State or if they have to be translated through domestic legal instruments.
- The specific legal conceptualisation of OSBPs. Since OSBPs operate beyond traditional state borders, specific legal instruments may be necessary to deal with issues such as extraterritoriality, staff exchange, delegation of authority, etc.
- The regulatory framework for OSBPs. This may include the formulation of an OSBP Act and the legalisation of various schedules to operationalise OSBPs.
- Border procedures and protocols:
  - harmonised procedures for the movement of people, such as immigration, use of biometrics and asylum procedures
  - harmonised procedures for the movement of goods, such as customs and risk management procedures, regulations on hazardous goods and clearance of perishable goods;
  - health procedures and protocols, such as those to control the spread of infectious diseases.

In addition to the legal framework, things to consider **include** information technology and computerised customs management systems, systems for data collection, and bonds and warehousing systems. East African OSBPs are connected to the Single Customs Territory (SCT) established among countries of the region. The SCT eliminates or minimises internal border controls on the circulation of goods within the EAC Customs Union. As such, its implementation is linked closely to the creation of OSBPs, which contribute to the objective of minimising interruptions to trade flows among EAC Partner States.

#### 1.3 Scope of this report

This toolkit looks at the instruments, steps and policies to be followed, or adapted, when setting up OSBPs. It also looks at ways to address the issues that emerge during operations over time. By describing the experience of the EAC and TMA, it unpacks the complexities to navigate when creating and operating more efficient border crossings. In particular, it documents the main challenges facing TMA and partners, considering that this may be useful to those who want to follow TMA's steps.

In the preparation of this toolkit, interviews were conducted with stakeholders in various sites in East Africa: in Nairobi, Kampala and Arusha and at the Holili–Taveta border between Tanzania and Kenya. We interviewed officials from national governments and the EAC, experts from TMA and other development partners.

The toolkit is structured as follows. Section 2 provides some background on how OSBPs came about in East Africa, highlighting the main challenges faced and the groundwork conducted by TMA and other development partners. Section 3 considers the funding models of OSBPs in East Africa. Section 4 discusses stakeholder engagement and Section 5 focuses on how to make the OSBPs sustainable in the long term. Section 6 concludes.

### 2 TMA and OSBPs in East Africa

At the time of writing, there exist over a dozen OSBPs in East Africa. Construction of these started in the 2010s but the process was not straightforward. Originally, the goal was to improve road infrastructure, but soon many realised that a more drastic approach was required to improve traffic flows in East Africa.

The first step in setting up an OSBP involves sorting out the legal framework. As cross-border operations, OSBPs operate across countries and legislations. This raises the question of how to regulate cross-border activities, and in particular which legislation should be followed. Or, if there is any supranational law in place for OSBPs, the question is how to translate this into the national laws of the border countries. Moreover, any legislation should be aligned with the broader set of international conventions on border management, trade facilitation, movement of people and goods and so on to which the states involved are signatories – for instance, the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement.

Within the East African context, the countries involved are part of several economic communities, which affect how trade is conducted. The seven members of the EAC (Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda) are also members of other communities, such as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) (see Figure 5). Moreover, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda are also members of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD, not shown in Figure 5). To complicate matters further, at the time of writing, DRC and South Sudan, the newest members of the EAC, are not part of the EAC Customs Union or Common Market. These memberships and exceptions entail different rules and regulations, as the remainder of this toolkit explains.

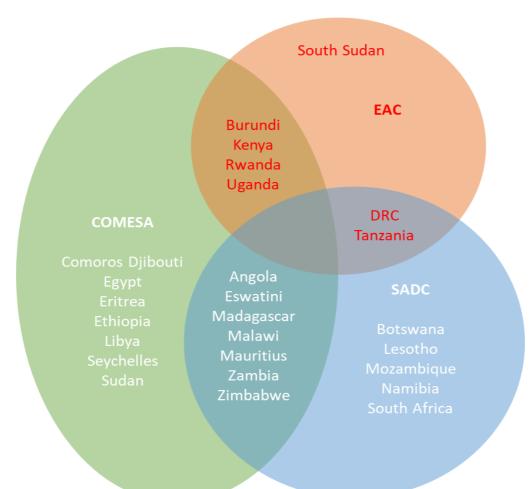


Figure 5 Overlapping memberships in COMESA–EAC–SADC

#### Source: Authors

Within the EAC, the OSBPs were created under the framework of the Common Market, which therefore provides the main legal structure. The main documents are the EAC OSBP Act 2016 and the EAC OSBP Regulations 2017. If issues arise, these documents explain to whom they pertain and how they can be escalated, if need be.

However, some of the East African OSBPs connect to countries that are not part of the EAC. One example is the Moyale OSBP between Kenya and Ethiopia. In such cases, countries need to enter formal agreements (bilateral, memorandum of understanding or other) to ensure that both parties understand which legal framework to apply. The presence of a formal agreement is needed to unlock the next steps, and in some cases is a precondition to obtaining financing. For instance, JICA required agreements to be in place before financing the implementation of the Rusumo OSBP (and bridge) between Tanzania and Rwanda (AUDA-NEPAD and JICA, 2022).

#### Lesson 1: Put in place a legal framework

Countries wishing to establish an OSBP need to set up a legal framework to address supranational issues. This is easier for countries that are part of a REC, as they already have a forum in place for discussing legal issues.

Other key decisions regarding OSBPs depend on where the border infrastructure sits. Section 1.2 discussed the differences between juxtaposed, straddling and one-country models of OSBPs. The choice will depend on the geographic or infrastructure conditions. For instance, in cases where facilities are already present in the two countries, or where a natural barrier (e.g. a river) forms a boundary, the juxtaposed model is commonly used. If the land is relatively flat, and new facilities need to be built, the straddling model can be used. In places such as seaports, the single-country model is the feasible option (AUDA-NEPAD and JICA, 2022).

The choice also depends on political preferences: in the EAC, some countries have opposed the single-country model and preferred to undergo large infrastructural works to put in place OSBP structures on both sides of the border.

Based on the EAC experience, other issues need to be taken into account when constructing OSBPs:

- Land issues: the governments involved need to acquire land, which can be a lengthy process or raise questions around compensation.
- Environmental issues and concerns may arise with regard to building the infrastructure (protected land).
- Access to infrastructure and utilities may be challenging in remote border areas, and may require substantial work.

#### Lesson 2: Carefully consider what model to follow when building an OSBP

Understanding whether a juxtaposed, straddling or single-country model is most appropriate requires consideration of the geography, the physical environment, the infrastructure availability and the political interests of the two border countries.

The model of OSBP used determines the division of labour and responsibilities among the participating countries. In East Africa, most OSBPs adopt the juxtaposed model, with two offices (one in each country). Under this model, each country is responsible for maintaining the OSBP office and operations on its side. In the single-country model, the host country takes on more of the responsibility to manage the OSBP.

The juxtaposed model is more commonly applied where countries are part of a common organisation, such as the EAC. In this model, countries retain their territorial integrity while referring to a higherlevel decision-maker. However, in other parts of Africa, such as West Africa, the single model may be the preferred option (AUDA-NEPAD and JICA, 2022).

In places where there is only one facility, countries need to engage in deep cooperation. This may be more difficult to do if they are not part of the same REC. This issue could be addressed through the creation of an institution mandated to oversee borders, for instance a joint management committee between the two parties.

### Lesson 3: Understand how to manage the border facilities

Consider which parties should be responsible for border management and how to coordinate their work. These could be institutions from the two countries, a REC or a newly created organisation.

## 3 Financing OSBPs

Financing of OSBPs can be done in different ways, using different funding models. Public (national or regional) funds can be used, as can public–private partnerships (PPPs) or support from development partners. The construction can be funded through (different combinations of) grants, loans or national budgets, or even user charges. Each modality has its advantages and drawbacks.

At the operational level, the OSBP's operations can be financed through user fees or government funds. In case this is shared among the two countries, this needs to be codified through a general act, or regulations for the specific OSBP (AUDA-NEPAD and JICA, 2022).

The choice of the level of public and private involvement depends on various factors. To start with, the appetite of the private sector may depend on the type of project, and its potential profitability and risk. For instance, cross-border projects such as OSBPs may be seen as undesirable by risk-averse operators, as dealing with two national jurisdictions may complicate operations. Moreover, participation of the private sector requires an adequate environment, including the provision of incentives, as well as permission to repatriate profits in case the investors are foreign (AUDA-NEPAD and JICA, 2022).

In the EAC, hybrid/combination models of funding involving several financiers have been employed, generally involving government and development partners. For instance, the Busia (Kenya–Uganda) and Mutukula (Tanzania–Uganda) OSBPs were financed by the UK (through TMA) and Canada, whereas the Rusumo OSBP (Rwanda–Tanzania) was partly financed by JICA (EAC, 2017, 2018; AUDA-NEPAD and JICA, 2022).

In terms of PPPs, many possible variations exist, although these are not widely implemented in East Africa. The AUDA-NEPAD and JICA OSBP sourcebook lists various models that can be used to operationalise PPPs. These range from designs fully developed and run by private companies (Design-Build-Operate-Maintain – DBOM) to others where the development is carried out by public entities through procurement but private entities cover operations and maintenance (called EPC+O&M contracts, where the government carries out the engineering procurement contract, EPC, and operations and management (O&M) is run privately). Other models include Build-Own-Operate-Transfer (BOOT), whereby a private company finances, builds and operates the OSBP for a set period, at the end of which it is transferred to public entities; Build-LeaseTransfer (BLT), whereby a private company finances, builds and leases the OSBP to public entities and then transfers it to them after a set period (AUDA-NEPAD and JICA, 2022: 7–8).

PPPs can be a valuable tool in bringing in much-needed finance but two things are important to note. First, PPPs require an adequate regulatory framework. Many African countries do not have the appropriate legal framework in place; even those that do, have struggled to conclude PPPs (Vallee, 2018). Second, PPPs can be an expensive affair. Recent World Bank research shows that 42% of transport-related PPPs require contract renegotiations – that is, the state needs to provide more resources to the private companies than what was originally agreed in the contract (Herrera Dappe et al., 2023). PPPs are also significantly affected, and weigh more on government finances, in conjunction with macroeconomic shocks (ibid.), and therefore should be approached carefully.

### Lesson 4: Consider whether to adopt a financing model involving the private sector

Involving the private sector can bring financial resources to the building of OSBPs but this needs to be considered carefully based on the country's regulatory environment and risk appetite.

In addition to public and private involvement in the development and management of OSBPs, in East Africa development partners have also provided support. It is not only the buildings hosting the OSBP that are necessary: water; energy; and information, communication and technology infrastructure all need to be in place. Borders are often in remote areas, and bringing all the relevant infrastructure may be expensive and time-consuming. Moreover, finance may be needed to acquire land and provide compensation to landowners.

These funds are usually sourced from a variety of funders, and the funding process thus requires coordination and oversight. In East Africa, the EAC has been involved in mobilising resources and coordinating financing for the OSBPs. Several development partners, such as JICA and the World Bank, have assisted in financing infrastructure construction. Donors have also been involved in building the soft infrastructure needed, supporting the development of systems and the capacity-building necessary to make the borders work. In this, the EAC has acted as a coordinator, to ensure donor funds have been properly allocated towards different needs.

### Lesson 5: Decide how to raise and coordinate financing

Financial support for OSBPs can come from different institutions. There is a need for one institution to coordinate and manage the resource mobilisation process.

### 4 Stakeholder engagement

OSBPs have many stakeholders: governments and their agencies, the private sector and civil society on both sides of the border. In cases where there is a REC governing trade between the two countries, the REC is also a stakeholder.

In the case of the OSBPs among EAC countries, the EAC has been heavily involved in developing the legal framework, coordinating funding, providing capacity-building and finally monitoring the functioning of the border posts.

National agencies are also involved. Ministries of works have usually been involved in the design of OSBPs, customs authorities in their operations and ministries of trade and internal affairs and their agencies (for standards, plant and animal health, immigration, etc.) in the deployment of their functions at the border. For instance, at the Holili–Taveta OSBP between Tanzania and Kenya, there are 17 agencies on the Tanzanian side.

In some cases, depending on the importance of the borders and their trade flows, not all agencies can be well represented at the OSBP. In those cases, agents are contracted to fulfil essential functions.

### Lesson 6: Identify the right stakeholders to involve in building and running the OSBP

Consider what stakeholders need to be involved, both remotely (to organise and coordinate) and in person (to run day-to-day operations at the border). These are likely to be similar to those already involved in operating the border (pre-OSBP) but additional stakeholders may need to be involved (e.g. RECs).

Coordinating many stakeholders is never easy. First, stakeholders from different countries may have different interests regarding the role of the border. For instance, one side may want to increase revenues collected at the border; the other may want a faster flow of traffic and cargo. One side may be more interested in imports than in exports. These differences will translate into different needs and requirements regarding the way the border operates, for example preferring speed to thoroughness or vice versa.

Coming to a common solution on these different needs may require compromise and adjustment between the two parties. For this, it is important to build dialogue and trust. This can be done not only through formal bilateral talks but also, and most importantly, through informal dialogues. In the EAC, informal dialogues and talks were key to getting both parties to understand each other and to agree on common principles for OSBPs. These dialogues and the mutual trust that came with them became the building blocks of OSBP management.

#### Lesson 7: Build trust between parties through dialogue

Beyond formal bilateral talks, it is important to allow the two parties to conduct informal dialogues in which to talk through any differences in their visions for the borders and to build mutual trust.

In addition to the big principles governing the borders, there is a need to coordinate stakeholders on the ground. Given the multiplicity of actors on the ground, in the EAC OSBPs joint border committees have been set up. These host regular meetings attended by agencies and representatives from both sides of each border, to discuss any issues that may arise and to improve operations.

In some cases, however, this may not be enough. For example, some of our interviewees suggested that there should be dialogue between sister agencies on the two sides of the border. In other words, the immigration agencies or standards agencies on the two sides of the border should work together to coordinate their actions. This is easier within the framework of the EAC, where there is already a certain degree of coordination, but it may be more difficult for countries that are not part of a REC.

### Lesson 8: Establish structures to manage stakeholders at the borders

Consider setting up structures like the EAC joint border committees to address border-related issues.

### 5 Operations and sustainability

Once the border infrastructure is built and the operations are running, it is important to keep things functioning smoothly. The experience of OSBPs in East Africa shows that OSBPs are not a one-off intervention: they require continuous work. For instance, buildings and other infrastructure at the border need to be properly maintained, and utilities and services (cleaning, etc.) need to be provided. Moreover, there is a need to train staff and to provide continuous learning, to ensure that services are always performed at the desired level, even when there is turnover. All of this has cost implications, so the sustainability of operations must be properly budgeted for.

Given that development partners, and in particular TMA, have been involved in the operations of these OSBPs, there is a need for a model to ensure the OSBPs are still financed when development partners leave and hand over operations to governments. TMA is working towards a model similar to Build-Operate-Transfer, where the final goal is to transfer operations to the government after a certain number of years. For instance, TMA is no longer involved in operations at the Holili–Taveta border; at other borders, such as the newer Tunduma OSBP between Tanzania and Zambia, this is still a work in progress.

In the EAC, TMA continues to be involved in certain aspects of the OSBPs, for instance impact management of the interventions, and in information-sharing. Over time, mechanisms should be developed to enable a complete handover to governments.

### Lesson 9: Identify a model for handover and long-term sustainability

It is important to identify pathways to transfer the OSBP's ownership and operations management to the government early on in the design. This should be a gradual process.

Another point that was critical to ensure sustainability of the OSBPs was robust sensitisation and capacity building, in particular of government officials tasked to run the OSBPs. The border posts may see a high turnover of staff, who may therefore take with them what they have learned about running the posts. Therefore, one important intervention is to continue running capacity building activities, to

ensure that the progress achieved are not lost, and that sustainability is achieved in running the posts.

### Lesson 10: Continue offering sensitisation and capacity building at the borders

In a context of potentially high turnover at the border, offering capacity building activities is essential to ensure that progress achieved is not lost, and knowledge on processes and procedures is maintained.

### 6 Conclusion

The East African integration process has achieved considerable results in terms of economic integration, and there have been considerable improvements in trade times, thanks to the introduction of OSBPs.

In setting up OSBPs, EAC Partner States and development partners have had to consider questions about the development and maintenance of hard and soft infrastructure. Moreover, this has required smart thinking about building trust and connections between stakeholders who may have different, and sometimes conflicting, interests.

This study has discussed the OSBPs developed in the EAC and drawn lessons for use in setting up similar initiatives in other areas of Africa and around the globe. It is hoped that these lessons can inform those others who will undertake similar work in the future.

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