

The Impact of the Chirundu One Stop Border Post in Addressing Border Protectionist Challenges

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Abstract

Chirundu One Stop Border Post (OSBP) programme was initiated by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) bloc. It was launched in 2009 with the aim of meeting international border management standards. The agreement to run the border post was signed by the Governments of Zimbabwe and Zambia in 2009. The major objective of the study was: To assess the impact of the Chirundu OSBP in addressing barriers that constrained the flow of people and goods. The study provides some recommendations that are useful in promoting effective operation of the Chirundu OSBP. The author noted that there are few studies that link border management with trade protectionism, yet border management is fundamental for the development of Zimbabwe's political economy. The paper was being discussed in the framework of the trade facilitation concept. The study employed three major research methods namely: interviews, observations and documentary search.

Keywords: border management, Chirundu OSBP, border challenges, Zimbabwe

1. Introduction

The major aim of this paper was to discuss the impact of the Chirundu One Stop Border Post (OSBP) in addressing border protectionism. The OSBP programme was initiated by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Regional Economic Community and the Zimbabwean and Zambian governments embarked on the preparations to launch an OSBP at Chirundu in 2004 (COMESA 2013). Chirundu One Stop Border Post (OSBP) is a border post in Chirundu town which is located in Mashonaland West Province of Zimbabwe. The border post is located on the banks of Zambezi River bordering Zimbabwe and Zambia. It is about 352 kilometres from Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe and it is also 117 kilometres from Lusaka, the capital city of Zambia (Distance Calculator 2015). There are small towns called Chirundu on both sides of the borders (Kwaramba 2010). It is the biggest border post that connects Zimbabwe and Zambia. It also links Zimbabwe to its COMESA trading partners such as DRC, Malawi and Kenya. Chirundu border post is the second busiest border post for Zimbabwe following the Beitbridge border post. About 220 heavy goods vehicles transit Chirundu border in one day and the number of commercial vehicles was even higher than that before the decline of the Zimbabwean economy (Curtis 2009:01). On average, the number of trucks making entry and exited on daily basis was 470 (320 entry and 150 exit) during the second quarter of 2011 compared to 260 in 2010 and 100 in December 2004 (Nkwemu 2011). Before the implementation of the OSBP at Chirundu, heavy commercial trucks used to spend three days at the border post and after the implementation of the OSBP, trucks were now spending only three hours at the border (TMSA 2013). Chirundu border post is the main port of entry that links South Africa and Zambia. In addition, it is part of the North-South Corridor Aid for Trade Programme which was launched by the Tripartite Regional Economic Communities (RECs) which is a combination of SADC, the East African Community (EAC) and COMESA (Odiki et al 2009). The main agenda of the North-South Corridor Aid for Trade Programme is to improve trade facilitation in the Southern and Eastern Africa through the development of transport infrastructure.

2. Methodology

This section discusses the methodology applied to address the study objectives and research questions. The major issues outlined in this methodology include: research design, sampling and population, data gathering and data analysis.

Data gathering methods used in this methodology included: interviews, observations and documentary search. These methodologies ensure the covering of both primary and secondary sources. Rahman and Yeasmin (2012:155) note that combining primary and secondary data collection methods to overcome the intrinsic biases, weaknesses and problems that come from a single method. Thus, primary and secondary collection methods complement each other in order to improve reliability and validity of data obtained from the data collection process.

The researcher conducted 25 face to face interviews with respondents from various organisations such as Zimtrade, COMESA Secretariat, Shipping and Forwarding Association of Zimbabwe (SIFAZ), Shalom Clearance Agency, Ministry of Regional Integration and International Cooperation, cross border traders, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Industry and Commerce and Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA). The researcher applied documentary search to solicit data. In the discipline of social sciences, documentary search is a method that involves the use of wide range of documents such as books, journals, government publications, news papers, magazines, letters, diaries, personal notes, biographies, essays, government pronouncements and proceedings, internet and policy documents (Punch 2008:190). The documents collected from various institutions were helpful in providing statistics as well as a historical background of the development of Zimbabwe's border management and trade policies. The study also applied observation method to collect primary data. The researcher started conducting observations at Chirundu OSBP in 2012. The researcher has been observing a variety of issues such as finding out how border officials interact with transiting people, the rate of border clearance, corruption and infrastructural developments. This helped a lot in identifying the challenges and benefits associated with the Chirundu OSBP. The researcher applied content analysis to analyse data. Thus, the subthemes designed for this study were related to various issues such as the challenges, benefits, and strategies to improve the Chirundu OSBP.

3. Conceptual Framework

The major concept applied for this study is the trade facilitation concept. Trade facilitation is a concept that entails the harmonisation and simplification of international trade procedures and it involves the formalities and active practices involved in presenting, collecting, communication and processing data required for the movement of goods and services in global trade (United Nations 2011). According to the World Bank (2014:01) the key tenets of trade facilitation include the simplification, standardisation and harmonisation of trade procedures. It is widely believed that trade facilitation measures increase the flow of the goods and services across the borders (Silva 2013). This study discovered that COMESA has introduced the OSBP programme in order to increase the flow of goods across the region.

The application of modern border management and trade facilitation measures has been an event/activity formulated by developed countries. Polner (2014) and Doyle et al (2011) put much attention of presenting the border management reforms implemented by the European countries. This study desisted from discussing border management from the developed countries perspective and it therefore focused on border management reforms and programmes implemented by the Zimbabwean government in order to improve trade facilitation. This study discovered that the implementation of trade facilitation at the Zimbabwe entry ports has helped a lot in addressing border protectionist challenges such as border delays, long queues, corruption and unnecessary inspections and searches at the Zimbabwean borders.

The implementation of trade facilitation measures usually helps to increase a country's ability to use the benefits of market access (United Nations 2011a). COMESA has improved market access to its member states through the implementation of the Chirundu OSBP which has led to the improved flow of goods and people transiting the border. However, the main reasons for the unwillingness of developing countries to adopt trade facilitation is the understandable fear of going through the costs associated such as infrastructural requirements, operational procedures and human resources (Buyonge and Kireeva 2008:43). Thus, the implementation of trade facilitation measures poses multiple demands on limited resources of developing countries. In addition, another challenge associated with trade facilitation is that governments will have to fund the projects, programmes or reforms before seeing the benefits in relation to increased trade and revenue (OECD 2014:05). The major costs associated with implementing trade facilitation reforms include institutional costs, regulatory costs, training and education costs, equipment and infrastructure costs (World Bank 2014a). This is in line with the study findings which showed that there was only one OSBP in Zimbabwe because the country was failing to establish other OSBPs due to the huge costs associated even though the government had already approved the establishment of many OSBPs at the Zimbabwean borders.

4. Chirundu One Stop Border Post Programme

During the period of the study, there was only one OSBP established at the Zimbabwean borders and this was Chirundu OSBP. The OSBP system was established in 2009 (Kwaramba 2010). This initiative was as a result of the COMESA regional integration. The rationale behind the OSBP was to resolve border delays. The system of the OSBP adopts the 'Single Window' concept which entails that standardised documents and information is logged at a single point to fulfil all export, import, and transit requirements (Mubaiwa 2013:16). Clearance of people, goods and services occurs at one side of the border. According to Kieck (2010:06) OSBP is defined by the following components:

- (1) Offices of both states are located in close proximity, necessitating only 'one stop' for border;
- (2) a common control zone (or zones) is demarcated within which officers from both states conduct border controls in terms of their respective laws;
- (3) the control zone comprises of offices, inspection areas and related facilities and it is usually located within the national territory of only one state;
- (4) immigration and import and export formalities are handled as a seamless transaction between the two countries;
- and (5) inspections and searches of cargoes or vehicles are generally conducted in the presence of officers from both states.

Border agencies from both countries that participate at an OSBP embark on the advance electronic transmission of data as a matter of preventing duplication of effort. The agencies therefore undertake joint inspection through mutual arrangements (Kieck 2009:06). Agencies such as customs, security and immigration therefore perform joint border controls as well as sharing infrastructure and assets that are relevant for clearing consignments and people. Basically, clearance occurs on the entrance side before the trader proceeds to the exit side of the border. OSBP system helps traders and travellers to avoid going the border clearance process twice. Thus, commercial and non-commercial clearances are conducted once and scanning of consignment is carried at one side of the border.

The origins of the OSBP can be traced back to the 1960s mainly within the Western European countries as well as in the Common Market for Southern Cone (MERCOSUR) regional trading bloc. OSBPs had also been established in the USA and Canada and more recently at Malaba border which is found between Uganda and Kenya. The Malaba OSBP was established under the EAC Regional Economic Community (REC) (Mubaiwa 2013:17). Zimbabwe's preparations for the establishment of Chirundu OSBP started in 2004 when the government implemented series of border management reforms aimed at reducing border barriers and the costs of doing business. In 2005 the COMESA Council of Ministers held a meeting in Kigali, Rwanda. The meeting was centred on the establishment of OSBPs across the COMESA region so as to foster trade facilitation and trade expansion with the aim of resolving border congestion as well as addressing border delays. Zimbabwe and Zambia were involved in negotiations between 2007 and 2009 and these negotiations led to the establishment of a bilateral agreement between the government of the Republic of Zimbabwe and the government of the Republic of Zambia concerning the establishment and implementation of One Stop Border Post at Chirundu in 2009. There were various sub-committees established during the setting of the Chirundu OSBP namely, ICT Sub-Committee, Procedures Sub-Committee, Facilities Sub-Committee and Legal Sub-Committee. The major mandate of these sub-committees was to ensure the implementation of the OSBP according to the requirements of the agreement made by Zimbabwe and Zambia. The study noted that there were no conflicts and tensions between Zambia and Zimbabwe pertaining to the operations of the Chirundu OSBP and this shows that both countries were adhering to the requirements of the agreement.

One of the major reasons for establishing an OSBP at Chirundu was to promote trade facilitation between Zimbabwe and Zambia as well as other COMESA countries. Trade facilitation in international political economy is defined as the harmonisation and simplification of procedures such as export and import procedures (European Commission 2013). Thus trade facilitation focuses on the efficient implementation of rules and regulations of trade. It therefore covers all the measures that inhibit the flow of goods and services such as administrative measures, customs control measures, policy measures, technical control measures and health control measures. The main areas of focus under trade facilitation include transport security, transit and multi mode transport, logistics and transport services, post efficiency, streamlining of documentary requirements and information flows, customs modernisation and infrastructure investments (Zhang 2008). Zimbabwe and Zambia have established the OSBP system in order to improve trade facilitation between the two countries through the reduction border impediments at the same time increasing the flow of imports and exports.

There are several factors that are considered when setting up an OSBP between two neighbouring countries. Before the introduction of the OSBP, there is need for improving relations between the adjoining countries. Improved cooperation usually helps in the establishment of OSBP procedures such as harmonisation of laws between the two adjoining countries and this is essential for the formulation of an agreement which govern the operations of the OSBP. The agreement is the one that is used facilitate the functioning of the OSBP. Thus, Zimbabwe and the Zambian government embarked on a bilateral agreement before the implementation of the Chirundu OSBP. The negotiations

between Zimbabwe and Zambia were conducted between 2007 and 2009. These negotiations have resulted in the establishment of three key legal documents that govern the operations and management of Chirundu OSBP and these include: (1) Zimbabwe One Stop Border Control Act (No. 21) of 2007; (2) Zambia One Stop Border Act (No. 8) of 2009; and (3) Bilateral agreement between the government of the Republic of Zimbabwe and the Republic of Zambia pertaining to the Establishment and Implementation of One Stop Border Post at Chirundu. This agreement is significant in enhancing the effectiveness of the COMESA regional integration as it is helping in improving the move towards a completely integrated region. The study observed that the major pushing factors that led the implementation of the COSBP include: (1) border delays: the rate of turnover was very slow leading to congestion and long queues at the border and this pushed the two governments to engage into a bilateral agreement focusing on border management; (2) the desire to enhance trade facilitation; (3) the impetus of globalisation: the inevitability of globalisation trends have actually pushed the two governments to move according to time trends; (4) the huge border administration costs; (5) Zimbabwe as a landlocked country suffers much from border barriers imposed by the surrounding countries. The establishment of the OSBP is meant to build positive relations with the neighbouring countries as well as improving access to the markets and the sea; (6) the need to reduce the spread of diseases by reducing time spent at the border by travellers and traders; and (7) the need to reduce business costs because spending much time at the border is associated with going through an array of costs such as food, accommodation and other related business costs.

The implementation of an OSBP at Chirundu has resulted in a process of sharing of important border equipments and facilities between Zimbabwe and Zambia. The One Stop Border Act (No. 8) of 2009 indicates that Zimbabwe and Zambia have to "Share each other's border control infrastructure and facilities thereby enabling border control officers of each party to perform their statutory border controls functions outside their territory" (Nkwemu 2011:03). The equipments and facilities that are shared by Zimbabwean and Zambian border officers include buildings, furniture, printers, weighbridge, photocopying machines, scanners, tables, and offices among others. It was noted that sharing border equipments and facilities helps to build ties and relations between the border officers. It also promotes strengthening of relations between the republic of Zimbabwe and the Republic of Zambia.

Both the Zimbabwean and Zambian governments are giving much political, social, economic and technological support to the Chirundu OSBP. The Tripartite regional initiative (COMESA-SADC-EAC) is gearing up its unlimited support towards the success of the OSBP. Interviews conducted with the government officials from various Ministries show that international organisations such as the COMESA, World Bank, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Department for International development (DFID), Trade Mark South Africa (TMSA) were actively involved in supporting the Chirundu OSBP through various ways that include financial, technological and material support. In addition, the international organisations were also helping in form of research. The COMESA regional organisation played a pivotal role in the establishment of Chirundu OSBP and it is also monitoring progress so as to promote efficiency and effectiveness. The study noted that the major roles played by COMESA on the establishment of Chirundu OSBP include: (1) the COMESA Secretariat was responsible for overseeing administrative issues; (2) identifying and negotiating with the funding organisations, for instance, JICA and DFID. These donors were very crucial for setting up the infrastructure at Chirundu OSBP; (3) providing funds for soft activities such as meetings, stationery, seminars and workshops among others; (4) assessing and monitoring to ensure that Zimbabwe and Zambia are respecting and sticking to the requirements of the agreement and COMESA resolutions; (5) providing guidance; (5) COMESA helped so much in the establishment of ASYCUDA especially, the Zambian side which was using an outdated version of ASYCUDA called ASYCUDA 2.7; and (6) funding and supporting for research activities. Generally, Chirundu OSBP is very crucial to COMESA and Africa as a whole because it links many African countries. Countries that were utilising Chirundu OSBP are as follows, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Mozambique, Botswana, Angola, Tanzania, DRC, Kenya, Zambia, Rwanda, Namibia and Uganda. One can therefore suggest that the Chirundu OSBP is very crucial in spearheading the regionalism agenda of promoting trade through linking countries.

There are several successes and achievements which were recorded as a result of implementing an OSBP at Chirundu. These major successes and achievements observed during the period of the study are: (1) the result oriented programmes were successfully put in place, (2) the agreement made between Zimbabwe and Zambia is comprehensively adhered to, (3) the border clearing process has tremendously increased, (4) the management staff as well as the agencies is copying well with the new system. The successes of the Chirundu OSBP are highlighted in the Zimbabwean National trade Policy. The Government of Zimbabwe (2012:16) highlights that "Following the successfulness of The Chirundu One Stop Border Post, the government will extend the concept to other ports ..." Thus, Chirundu OSBP has shown much flexibility and easiness to cross that border post thereby pushing Zimbabwe's government to convert other border posts into OSBPs.

The study observed that the establishment of an OSBP at Chirundu border post has helped to reduce the

challenges associated with smuggling. Interviews conducted at the Chirundu OSBP indicate that border smuggling was reduced as a result of the following reasons: (1) the border authorities conduct joint inspections in order to combat issues of substitution of documentation (fake documents/fogging of documents). When the officials from two countries are working together, it is easier to get to the bottom of issues that are controversial. The researcher noted that the border revenue authority agencies from Zimbabwe and Zambia were conducting joint investigations. Thus for instance, the officials from both countries were helping each other in tracing the consignment from its original producer, middleman involved as well as investigating the final receiver of the consignment. In this case, it is easier to figure out issues and of rules of origin; that is by finding out whether the goods truly originate from Zimbabwe or Zambia; (2) conducting joint border patrols (3) controlled delivering. The OSBP concept makes it easier to trace the real price offered for a commodity in its country of origin. Thus for example, if a Zimbabwean trader is exporting cement to Zambia and fakes the price in order to have reduced duty, the Zambian authority can talk to ZIMRA and ZIMRA can call its investigating team to trace the real price of that cement. This information would be used for valuation exercises; (4) the adoption of an OSBP can also act as a psychological deterrence to bogus traders. Traders may develop a psychological fear of being caught and they may start doing things in the right procedures.

5. Benefits Associated with the Chirundu OSBP

The study divided the benefits and advantages associated with Chirundu OSBP into five major categories which include: (1) reduction of administration costs; (2) reduction of smuggling activities; (3) reduction of health related challenges; (4) boosting Zimbabwe's political economy; and (5) helps in improving regionalism.

5.1 Reduction of Smuggling Activities

The implementation of Chirundu OSBP has helped to combat smuggling activities at the border post. Interviews and observations carried at Chirundu OSBP shows that smuggling at Chirundu OSBP was occurring in four major categories that include: transiting goods via the border post without paying import duties; the use of fake documents; false declarations and transiting goods using boats to cross the Zambezi River. One of the major reasons contributing to smuggling was the challenge of border delays. The implementation of the OSBP at Chirundu has helped to reduce border delays and this has led to the reduction of smuggling activities. Furthermore, the implementation of an OSBP has also improved border security. Security officers from both countries were conducting joint operations such as joint inspections, joint monitoring, joint patrols and joint scanning. This has led to the reduction of border jumping activities as well as false declarations. Furthermore, OSBP concept has installed psychological deterrence in the minds of the bogus cross border traders. Bogus dealers were staying away from committing border crimes due to the fear of being apprehended by security officers. Thus, the OSBP system psychologically deters bogus traders to carry out their scrupulous activities at the borders. This is as a result of the improved and meticulous verification of documents; rigorous scanning and inspection of consignment that was done jointly by borders agencies of both Zimbabwe and Zambia. However, the idea of bringing border agencies from two countries to work under one roof has increased friendships and relations between Zimbabwe and Zambia border agencies thereby leading to inclusive corruption. The border agencies get to understand and it is very easy for them to establish some corruption channels.

5.2 Reduction of Administration Costs

During the period of the study, the researcher noted that the Chirundu OSBP had helped to address the challenges of high border administration costs. Thus, the implementation of an OSBP has brought border officials from two sides to be housed under one roof thereby sharing essential border equipments such as intrusive scanning machines, buildings, desks, printers and related office equipments. This implies that two adjoining nations, Zimbabwe and Zambia in this context, are no longer buying multiple border equipments since they have started sharing essential border operational equipments. This actually helped in reducing the problem of duplication of effort. Sharing border equipment also helped to improve effective distribution of resources. Furthermore, conducting border process such as inspections and scanning at one side of the border usually help to address the challenges of detaining transports and travellers at the border post thereby helping them to stay shorter. In addition, the Chirundu OSBP has also addressed other administrative costs such as transportation costs. Stopping at both sides of the borders usually increases transportation costs such as those arising from border traffic congestion. One of the major motives of establishing Chirundu OSBP was to reduce border delays through the introduction of a Single Window clearing system. Thus, the establishment of an OSBP has helped to improve

the rate of clearing goods and people. On a daily basis, Chirundu processed 380 declarations in 2009 and 128 declarations per day in 2003. After the establishment of the OSBP, export declarations increased by 670 percent per day (Nkwemu 2011:01). The establishment of an OSBP at Chirundu has also helped to reduce congestion at the border, for instance, on average 12 buses were cleared daily in 2011 compared to 5 busses in 2008 (Nkwemu 2011);(6)The implementation of the OSBP has helped to expedite the clearing processes of vehicles crossing the border. Before the implementation of the OSBP at Chirundu, the Zimbabwean government was experiencing some revenue losses due to unnecessary border delays. The total cost of commercial truck standing in queues at both Chirundu was about \$60 million per year (Curtis 2009:16). One can therefore note that Chirundu OSBP has strengthened the attainment of Zimbabwe's overall trade objective of increasing the rate of traffic flow across the border thereby improving border liberalisation.

5.3 *Political economy*

The establishment of an OSBP at Chirundu has brought about several benefits to the Zimbabwean political economy such as the creation of jobs. During the establishment of the OSBP, many jobs were created such as the construction of structures for example construction of roads, roundabouts, air conditioners, traffic lights, construction of offices, bridge construction and signage among others. In addition, the Chirundu OSBP was the first OSBP to be established in the southern African region. This brings about prestige, honour and glory to both Zimbabwe and Zambia's political economy.

5.4 *Regionalism*

The Chirundu OSBP strengthens the importance of regional programmes such as the COMESA Simplified Trade Regime (STR) programme that was agreed upon by both Zimbabwe and Zambia. The establishment of an OSBP has facilitated the flow of goods and services between Zimbabwe and Zambia. Thus, the OSBP has therefore helped to improve the operations of small scale cross border traders which was the basic focus of the STR agreement. In addition, the implementation of the Chirundu OSBP has also helped to improve regional relations. The relations between Zimbabwe and Zambia have improved a lot since the two countries were brought together in the creation of an agreement governing the operations of Chirundu OSBP. Zimbabwe and Zambia were constantly involved in continuous meeting in particular to the discussion pertaining to the developments and challenges experienced at Chirundu. Another advantage related to regionalism was that of the improvement of the North South Corridor. The programmes of Corridors were implemented by COMESA in order to link member states through the establishment of infrastructural structures such as roads, railways, and bridges. The Chirundu OSBP has increased the rate of traffic flow in the North-South Corridor thereby improving the worthiness and importance of the COMESA Corridor programme.

5.5 *Curbing the Spread of Diseases*

The study noted that before the establishment of an OSBP at Chirundu, there was an influx of diseases such as cholera, diarrhoea, malaria as well as sexually transmitted diseases like HIV and AIDS, cervical cancer, gonorrhoea, syphilis, genital herpes and genital warts among others. The establishment of an OSBP had marked a positive move towards addressing these social problems. Kureya and Madzinga (2011:22) argue that there are about 100 permanent sex workers at the Chirundu Border post and another 200 transient sex workers who provide their services to stranded people at the border waiting for clearance. The establishment of an OSBP at Chirundu has helped to reduce the time spent at the borders by traders, tourists and other people crossing the borders thereby helping to reduce illicit activities like prostitution. To some extent, reduction of time spent at the borders by cross border traders could be a disadvantage to commercial sex workers. However, on the positive note, reduction of prostitution activities helps to reduce the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies.

5.6 *Challenges experienced at Chirundu OSBP*

During the period of the study it was noted that there were diversified challenges affecting the operations at Chirundu OSBP. The study therefore split the challenges into some categories and these categories include: legal issues; infrastructural challenges; health related; language and cultural; corruption; operational challenges and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) challenges. These challenges are discussed in greater depth below:

5.7 Legal issues

The study noted that the operations of Chirundu OSBP were constrained by differences between the national laws of Zambia and Zimbabwe. The main differences were found within the following aspects: (1) duty rates: the import duty rates outlined in Zimbabwe's Tariff Handbook are quite different from Zambia's. This is raising confusion and challenges to cross border traders; (2) penalties and fines; (3) punishable offences: some issues that are considered as serious offences in Zambia may not be considered as serious offences in Zimbabwe, for instance, during the period of the study it was prohibited to import cattle medicines from Zambia yet Zambians were freely importing such medicines from Zimbabwe; (4) the currencies used are different. The Zimbabwean and Zambian governments should therefore embark in further negotiations that allow the introduction of some amendments to the One Stop Border Act of 2009 in order to align the laws so as to reduce confusion to the cross border traders.

5.8 Language and cultural barriers

Communication between the Zambian and Zimbabwean border officials was one of the major challenges observed at the Chirundu OSBP. Generally, the border officials from both countries have different mother languages, cultures and values. Zimbabwean border officials were quite comfortable in using Shona and Ndebele whereas the Zambian officials were using their mother languages that include Bemba, Tonga, Nyanja, Lozi, Chewa, Kaonde, Luvale and Lunda. In order to address language barriers, the officials were communicating in English. However, there were several border officials who were not educated such as the general hand cleaners, construction workers and security officers. It was really difficult for non-English speaking officials to adjust thereby making it difficult for border officials from both countries to communicate. In addition, it was also noted that the travellers and traders crossing Chirundu OSBP were facing communication challenges due to language barriers. Chirundu OSBP accommodates traders and travellers from many countries such as Tanzania, Kenya, Angola, Malawi, South Africa, Mozambique and DRC. The highlighted countries have different mother languages and some of the countries are French speaking. COMESA should therefore introduce a common language so as to address the language barriers. This may help to improve the rate of communication between member states. The study also observed that the border officials were having different religious background and this was raising some severe challenges such as religious discrimination. The major dominant regions found within the border agencies at Chirundu was Christianity and the African Tradition Religion (ATR). These two religions are parallel and those involved in such religions do not get in good terms. Furthermore, ATR is found in different formatives and it differs from culture to culture. ATR in Zimbabwe is different from ATR in Zambia. In Zimbabwe as well as Zambia, ATR also differs from place to place and from province to province. The study therefore suggests that COMESA should conduct some educational programmes and public campaigns to teach people to learn to practice religious tolerance.

5.9 Health related challenges

During the period of the study, there were no proper hospitals at Chirundu especially on the Zimbabwean side. The Zimbabwean border agencies were therefore failing to access adequate and standardised health facilities, hence, they were getting services from the Zambian hospitals. The Zimbabwean government should therefore upgrade the health infrastructure at Chirundu so as to improve the health standards of border agencies and people crossing the border. This will also help to motivate border agencies to stay at Chirundu because many border officials were constantly submitting transfer letters seeking to work at other border post where there were good health facilities.

5.10 Poor town planning and Infrastructural challenges

The researcher observed that Chirundu town was developing at a faster pace before the implementation of the OSBP. The implementation of the OSBP has slowed the developmental pace of Chirundu town. The major reason for the reduced pace of development was that the OSBP led to the reduction of time spent by the cross borders at the border. Before the implementation of the OSBP, travellers and traders used to spend a lot of time at the border thereby promoting businesses such as hotels, lodges, restaurants, takeaways and shops. This has adversely impacted on local businesses around Chirundu town. For instance, the researcher observed that Beitbridge town was being converted into a big town with the reason that travellers, traders, and drivers of commercial trucks were spending a lot of time at the border thereby promoting local businesses. The implementation of Chirundu OSBP has actually reduced the pace of development of the surrounding areas. The study also noted that the Chirundu residential area is closely located to the border. There is no

separation between the border post and the residential area. Thus, the town was poorly planned. In addition, Chirundu town is a tourist attraction area. There were some wild animals moving around the area and these animals were scaring people using the border. Some of the animals are extremely dangerous. The study noted that the incidences of animal attacks were so common especially to those illegal border jumpers.

Another infrastructural challenge affecting the operations at Chirundu OSBP was frequent power cuts as a result of inconsistencies of the Zimbabwe Electrical Supply Authority (ZESA). These power cuts were causing direct challenges to the border post such as derailing operations at the border. In some incidences, the unnecessary power cuts were forcing the border agencies to halt some operations. For instance, ZIMRA uses electronic devices that directly depend on electricity such as computers, printers, scanners and cameras among others. Power cuts generally cause breakages to electronic gadgets resulting in the loss of served data. Furthermore, cell phone network transmission and internet servers directly depend on electricity and the unusual power cuts resulted into loss of communication. Generally, unnecessary power cuts were derailing border operations and this was adversely impacting on the flow of people and goods crossing the border. The study therefore noted that power cuts at the border had become one of the major barriers to both national and regional trade since the rate of flow of goods at the border is reduced.

5.11 *Operational challenges*

The study noted that there were some challenges affecting the operational procedures at Chirundu OSBP and these included: (1) bureaucracy and rigidity on the part of the government. Disbursement of funds to the OSBP is heavily marred by bureaucratic pathology. These delays were affecting the rate of flow of people and goods across the border. During the period of the study, there were so many pending construction works at Chirundu OSBP and the government was not releasing funds in time, for example, there was need to construct a roundabout, signage, air condition and some more offices. The government should reform its structures in order to increase its effectiveness and efficiency on the implementation of national projects; (2) the government was relying on international donors which actually enhance the dependency syndrome. For instance, the construction of roads and bridges was directly funded by international donors such as JICA and TMSA. Depending on international donors actually undermines national sovereignty in the sense that the country will bow to the conditions offered by the funders; (3) Another operational challenge that was affecting Chirundu OSBP was lack of trained staff. Having untrained staff at the border usually contribute to unnecessary delays, unnecessary errors, poor quality work, long queues and production of poor reports. The government should therefore send its workforce to schools, refresher courses, seminars and international workshops. Thus, some of the workers should be sent to international schools such as European and American countries for training. This will enable workers to meet international border management standards; (4) another operational challenge that was being experienced at Chirundu was corruption. The study observed that bringing together border officials of Zimbabwe and Zambia to work under one roof has led to the establishment of friendships and relationships. Thus, border officials working under one roof have come to know each other better and this has contributed to inclusive corruption at the border; (5) the study also noted that the transit of people and goods at Chirundu was constrained by border opening hours. Chirundu was not opening for 24 hours a day. It was opening during the day and closing at night. Traders; commercial trucks and travellers were forced to sleep at the border waiting for the border to be opened at 06:00 hours. This was a major challenge to trade in the sense that people and goods were delayed at the border. The government should therefore allow the border to be opened for 24 hours a day in order to increase the flow of goods and people.

5.12 *Information Communication and Technology (ICT) challenges*

The study noted that during the implementation of an OSBP at Chirundu, there were severe challenges related to Information, Communication and Technology (ICT). During the initial phases, there was a severe challenge of poor internet connectivity. During the period of the study it was observed that there was no optic fibre internet at Chirundu and they were using outdated internet system which was slow thereby leading to slow clearance of goods and people. There were cell phone network challenges at Chirundu thereby affecting communication setup. Furthermore, during the initial stages of the OSBP, both countries were facing severe challenges in particular to different clearing systems. Zambia was using an outdated version of ASYCUDA which is referred as ASYCUDA 2.7 whilst Zimbabwe was already utilising the latest version which is referred as ASYCUDA World. However, Zambia upgraded from ASYCUDA 2.7 to ASYCUDA World in December 2013. From December 2013, both Zambia and Zimbabwe began to use similar versions of ASYCUDA and this has led to the reduction of challenges related to the use of different customs clearance systems. Another challenge which was affecting the operations at Chirundu OSBP was that the ASYCUDA system was not linked. Both

Zimbabwe and Zambian clearance border agencies were resorting to individualism, thus, the system was not connected together. This was leading to a rise in criminal cases such as false declarations and substitution of documents (presentation of fake documents) by bogus traders. For instance, bogus traders making false declarations, for example, when crossing maize meal products from Zimbabwe to Zambia, they declare it as maize meal at the Zimbabwe side and when they get to the Zambian side they say they are carrying maize simply because maize calls for a duty free within the COMESA region. Another issue which was resulting from false declarations was the issue of imported Japanese cars. The bogus traders were using different documents at different borders and this was difficult to pick out because the ASYCUDA clearance systems were not connected together. The study therefore suggests that Zimbabwe and Zambia link their ASYCUDA systems so as to combat unscrupulous activities at the Chirundu OSBP. Ideally, the main agenda of having an OSBP was to promote information sharing between the two adjoining countries, for instance, the Bill of Entry launched in Zimbabwe for goods that will be exported to Zambia should reflect in the systems of two countries. This would actually help to avoid false declarations. However, linking the clearance systems is associated with some challenges such as the national security threat. If the ASYCUDA system is connected together, the neighbouring countries could therefore see the amount of transactions conducted by its partner which is not good to national security. The government should therefore weigh the advantages and disadvantages of linking its ASYCUDA system with the Zambian authorities before embarking on an action.

5.13 Strategies to Improve Chirundu OSBP

There are various strategies that can be implemented in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness of Chirundu OSBP. The major strategies noted during the period of the study include: (1) there is need to open the border for 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Chirundu OSBP opens during the day and the border is closed during the night. Opening the border for 24 hours a day would increase the flow of goods and services thereby helping to improve trade liberalisation. It also reduce the number of days taken by traders at the border especially during holidays like Christmas where people take ages to cross borders; (2) there is need to improve the social living conditions of border officials. The government should therefore build better houses, schools and hospitals around Chirundu town; (3) there is need to upgrade the computer system at the border. This challenge is being experienced by many COMESA countries such as DRC, Kenya, Malawi and Zambia; (4) the Zimbabwean government should increase the rate of consultations with the academic institutions, private sector and international organisations such as the EU, UN, COMESA, DFID and JICA among others; (5) there is need to carryout continuous research projects in order to ensure that the OSBP keep in touch with the ever-changing global standards.

6. Conclusion

The study concluded that some of the challenges experienced at the Chirundu OSBP were resulting from poorly trained staff. Both the junior and senior management staff requires thorough training programmes in order to match with the OSBP requirements. Training programmes increase efficiency and effectiveness of workforce thereby improving the quality of work. In addition, there is need for conducting refresher courses so as to make the border clearance agencies to keep in touch with international standards. Thus, both Zimbabwe and Zambia should send their border clearance agencies to Europe and America for training and this can improve the management of Chirundu OSBP. This can also help the workers to adapt to changes that are occurring at international levels thereby leading to improved regional integration and effective trade facilitation

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