

# State of Border and Movements...

*...within Southern Africa*

This policy brief seeks to provide an overview of border management in southern Africa. Firstly, it attempts to provide nuanced reflections on the complexities associated with the notion of borders and how the understanding of these notions inform conceptualisation of frameworks and systems for effective border management in southern Africa. It then explores the issues, systems, challenges associated with border management in the region. COVID-19 affected nearly all facets of peoples life, national and international systems and this brief provides some practical examples on how border management was affected from a regional perspective. The COVID-19 pandemic also provided opportunities such as catalysing and accelerating adoption of digitalisation, this is again explored in detail, identifying the features that are likely to facilitate digitalisation. It also answers the question: Is Southern Africa ready for digitalisation? and answers this question through analysis of recent evidence on these dimensions. It concludes by providing recommendations that SADC Member States may consider as they implement regional integration programmes.

## Overview of the State of Border Management in Southern Africa

### Introduction and Background

At the core of border management systems of nation states is the desire to balance two seemingly contrasting goals: preventing and reducing cross-border security threats on one hand and the facilitation of movement of goods and people for improved trade on the other (African Union, 2020; International Organisation for Migration, 2017). Border management thus encompasses the intersection of mobility and security interests (International Organisation for Migration, 2017). In recent years, security issues in southern Africa have included terrorism and extremism (as currently happening in northern parts

of Mozambique); transnational crimes such as human trafficking, drug peddling, cattle rustling, among others. Thus, achieving a good balance between the security and mobility goals depends on effective border management policies and practices within the key areas of identity management, border management information systems, integrated border management and humanitarian border management, and thus significantly contributing to achievement of several targets within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) such as goal 10, target 10.7 (migration and mobility), and several targets in goals 9 (resilient infrastructure, inclusive industrialisation and innovation), 16 (peaceful and inclusive societies) and 17 (revitalising global partnerships) just to mention a few (International Organisation for Migration, 2017).

- **Setting the context- understanding the notion of national borders**

National borders are real or artificial lines that separate nation states, thus defining the boundaries that limits a country's exercising of internal authority and sovereignty in line with the principle of territorial integrity as articulated in the United Nations Charter under Article 2, Paragraph 4 (Vaughan, 2009). However, in the post late 1990s, a growing literature from a number of political geographers, scholars in border studies and others began to engage on the concept of 'spatial mobility of borders', one of the expansive conceptualisation of borders. The concept challenges the notion that 'borders exist only on the physical margins of the state' and instead advances the argument that 'borders are everywhere' (Balibar, 2004); the physical state boundaries that we ordinarily know are fluid and abstract and migrate or get displaced to the "centers" or inlands of nation states in different ways (Cons & Romola, 2013; Coleman, 2007) such as the case in the US-Mexico border where there is increased "immigration policing operations away from the borders in the interior", effectively rendering the border everywhere (Balibar, 2004; Coleman, 2007; Moyo, Migration and Spatial mobility of Borders in the Southern African Region, 2020; Moyo, Laine, & Nshimbi, Intra Africa Migrations: An introduction, 2021). This understanding thus nuances the definition of a border as the 'sum of social, cultural, and political processes, rather than simply as fixed lines', as in some instances a significant amount of the 'bordering' processes such as raids by immigration officials take place away from physical border (Johnson, et al., 2011). In southern Africa, like elsewhere in the world, this migration of borders into inland mostly affects vulnerable populations such as undocumented migrants, and informal cross border traders. This notion therefore suggests that border management does not only take place as the physical boundaries, given that the borders are actually "everywhere". In this brief, we present our analysis from a lens of the former conceptualisation of borders, future briefs may need to engage with the later phenomenon in more detail<sup>1</sup>.

- **Border management**

Having provided the context of our understanding of borders above, we thus define border management as the government functions of immigration, customs and excise, and policing, with the aim of controlling and regulating the flow of people and goods across a country's physical border or boundary<sup>2</sup> (our own emphasis) in the national interests of economic development, security and peace. It is a collaborative process between a country and its neighbours; it cannot be done unilaterally, and it is most effective and

efficient when done regionally" (Okumu, 2011). Border management safeguards state interests of protection of national security, enforcement of immigration requirements, enforcement of import and export restrictions and prohibitions, collection of revenue, recording cross-border statistics, and enforcement of sanitary and phytosanitary measures and technical standards (Southern African Development Community, 2011). The SADC treaty provides for developing "policies aimed at the progressive elimination of obstacles to the free movement of capital and labour, goods and services, and of the people of the Region" generally, among Member States (SADC, 1992). This is further enhanced in the SADC protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons (2005) (SADC, 2005).

The benefits that accrue from making border management systems efficient are wide ranging, from reducing the costs of trading, particularly for landlocked developing countries. Borders provide gateways for accessing sea ports which are key in catalysing economic development and access to international/global markets

**KATHURIA, 2018; WORLD BANK, 2020B**

- **Border management within the broader African Union and SADC vision for borders**

The African Union (AU) vision for borders, at the continental level, is to be "a continent of peaceful, prosperous and integrated borders that enables effective peace, security, stability and economic and



social development' (African Union Commission, 2020). It notes the importance of strengthening shared and inclusive border governance in accelerating achievement of Agenda 2063, the AU development agenda and the need to conceive and frame border management within a broader goal of promoting peace and security, facilitating regional integration and ultimately sustainable development. At the regional level, SADC considers effective and coordinated border management as an important objective within the regional integration agenda (SADC, 2011) guided by the understanding that "a Common Market requires a common approach to security, movement of people, goods and means of transport, and to sanitary and phytosanitary measures" (SADC, 2011). This drive is also evident within the other Regional Economic Communities (RECs) on the continent (Tevera, 2020).

- **Border management linked to social economic development and human rights**

The benefits that accrue from making border management systems efficient are wide ranging, from reducing the costs of trading, particularly for landlocked developing countries. Borders provide gateways for accessing sea ports which are key in catalysing economic development and access to international/global markets (Kathuria, 2018; World Bank, 2020b). In southern Africa, the transport corridors of North South, Maputo Development and Trans Kalahari are notable. Inefficiencies in border management systems present non-tariff barriers to trade which manifest through higher waiting times at borders, increased transactional costs and overall reduced competitiveness (World Bank,

2020b), and infringe on the mobility rights of citizens. These inefficiencies also contribute towards slowing down or impeding regional and continental social and economic integration agendas such as envisaged within the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), heightening social and economic costs for citizens, economic and social actors within countries.

## Border Management Systems in Place in Southern Africa

Terrestrial border posts in southern Africa are many<sup>3</sup> and diverse with regards to their sizes, designs, capacities and their management, among other dimensions. Member states are guided by guidance from the AU, SADC and other RECs they belong, such as the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA) in formulating and implementing their border management systems. Some borders are more securitised than others. Border management systems in the region are mixed: in other areas, they reflect the work and success achieved through SADC and other bodies' support towards regional integration such as through adoption of the One Stop Border Post (OSBP) such as at Chirundu between Zimbabwe and Zambia. In these instances, the border management systems demonstrate some resemblance of inter-agency, international integration and collaboration improving the efficiency of such border posts as envisaged under the Coordinated Border Management (CBM) concept. Although the OSBP concept has been adopted as a strategy by SADC, some borders are still operating independently, despite concrete plans to make them OSBP as contained in the SADC infrastructure plans and strategies. Table 1 below shows examples of SADC prioritised infrastructure projects that relate somewhat directly to border management and their status. Such borders still rely on national policies and institutions, albeit with guidance and recommendations from SADC and other RECs. In some of these borders, the concept and notion of CBM appear to be facing a number of challenges owing to a number of issues, including weak intra agency, inter-agency and international cooperation and coordination, Information Communication Technology (ICT) related challenges, gaps in infrastructure, human skills and capacities, among others. This section summarises the information on these and other border management issues in the region.

**Table 1: Selected SADC infrastructure projects with a bearing on border management**

PROJECT NAME	TYPE	COUNTRIES	STAGE	YEAR
<b>One stop Border Post</b>				
Martin's Drift OSBP	Upgrade	Botswana, South Africa	S1: Project Definition	2013
Colomue/Dedza OSBP	Upgrade	Malawi, Mozambique	S4A: Tendering	2019
Zobue/Mwanza OSBP	Upgrade	Malawi, Mozambique	S1: Project Definition	2013
Forbes/Machipanda OSBP	Upgrade	Mozambique, Zimbabwe	S1: Project Definition	2013
Nyamapanda/ Cuchimano OSBP	Upgrade	Mozambique, Zimbabwe	S1: Project Definition	2013
Beitbridge OSBP	Upgrade	South Africa, Zimbabwe	S4B: Construction	2019
<b>Data centres and Fibre Optic Cable</b>				
SADC Regional Carrier-Neutral Data Center	New	(i)	S0: Enabling Environment and Needs Assessment	2020
Luanda - Kinshasa Fibre-optic Link (Angola section)	Upgrade	Angola	S1: Project Definition	2013
Luanda - Lusaka Fibre-optic Link (Angola section)	Upgrade	Angola	S1: Project Definition	2013
Kinshasa - Kigali/Bujumbura Fibre-optic Link (DRC section)	Upgrade	Democratic Republic of Congo	S2B: Feasibility	2019
Luanda - Kinshasa Fibre-optic Link (DRC section)	Upgrade	Democratic Republic of Congo	S2B: Feasibility	2019
Lusaka - Kinshasa Fibre-optic Link (DRC section)	Upgrade	Democratic Republic of Congo	S4C: Operation	2019
Brazzaville - Kinshasa Fibre-optic Link (DRC section)	Upgrade	Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo	S4C: Operation	2019
Lusaka-Lilongwe Fibre-optic Link (Malawi section)	Upgrade	Malawi	S4C: Operation	2019
Maputo-Dar es Salaam Fibre-optic Link (Mozambique section)	Upgrade	Mozambique	TBC: Data Not Available	2013
Brazzaville - Kinshasa Fibre-optic Link (Congo section)	Upgrade	Republic of Congo	S4B: Construction	2013
Extension of National ICT Broadband Backbone (NICTBB) to Mozambique by construction of optical fibre cable and point of presences (PoPs) for providing connectivity with Mozambique	New	Tanzania	S2A: Pre-Feasibility	2020
Luanda - Lusaka Fibre-optic Link (Zambia section)	Upgrade	Zambia	S4C: Operation	2019

Lusaka - Kinshasa Fibre-optic Link (Zambia section)	Upgrade	Zambia	S4C: Operation	2019
Lusaka - Lilongwe Fibre-optic Link (Zambia section)	Upgrade	Zambia	S4C: Operation	2019
<b>Internet Exchange Point</b>				
Eswatini IXP	Upgrade	Eswatini	S4C: Operation	2020
Madagascar IXP	Upgrade	Madagascar	S4C: Operation	2019
Mauritius IXP	Upgrade	Mauritius	S4C: Operation	2019
Namibia IXP	Upgrade	Namibia	S4C: Operation	2019
South Africa Regional Internet Exchange Point (RIXP )	Upgrade	South Africa	S4C: Operation	2019
Zimbabwe Regional Internet Exchange Point (RIXP)	Upgrade	Zimbabwe	S4C: Operation	2019

(i) Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Source: SADC Infrastructure dashboard, 2021- accessed at <https://www.sadc.int/information-services/sadc-infrastructure-dashboard/>

The Cross Border Transport Agency provides periodic annual reports profiling the state of border management systems in southern Africa. It provides the information using a framework of the major transport corridors as shown in Figure 1. However, data from the latest reports (2017 and 2021) primarily covers the three corridors:- North South, Trans Kalahari and Maputo Development

corridors. Table 2 below summarises some of the border management systems, issues and gaps within these three corridors, albeit with a bias towards road transport management processes which however account for the majority of surface transport activity in the SADC region (Cross Border Road Transport Agency, 2021).

**Table 2: Border management issues in southern Africa's three major corridors**

North South (South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Zambia) (i)	Maputo Development Corridor South Africa, Mozambique: Lebombo / Ressa Garcia border post	Trans Kalahari Corridor, South Africa, Namibia and Botswana (ii)
<b>Border Posts challenges</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cumbersome and repetitive border management processes leading to heavy congestion; Use of different non-automated clearing systems by stakeholders; Delays cause operators and people to spend several days waiting; Absence of overnight facilities force drivers to sleep inside their vehicles; Existence of too many regulatory agencies that conduct regulatory and enforcement operations coupled with inefficient border management contributes to border inefficiency; ICT systems and equipment is either non-existent or obsolete, hampering effective exchange of data and information; Limited systems of integration between stakeholders on either side of the border; Some borders not operational 24 hours a day- leads to congestion and bottlenecks. Customs operations do not operate around the clock even for some borders which operate 24hrs a day; Limited and / or unskilled border post officials - slower processing times and increased time delays</li> <li>• Lack of Coordinated Border Management ; Due to border post congestion and delays illegal activities such as human trafficking and the importation of counterfeit goods (which are not declared to customs) occur at some BP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Border not a OSBP</li> <li>• Modernisation programme implemented by SARS, implementation of a Single Electronic Window by the Mozambican customs authority, fundamental to speeding up customs clearing processes,</li> <li>• border post congestion and delays due to the lack of 24-hour operations. Maputo port operates 24/7, backlog of traffic backed up between midnight and 06h00 at the border post undermines the efficiency</li> <li>• Border post facilities need upgrading: border handling 12 000 people per day vs intended capacity of 6000/day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Border posts not operational 24 hours per day</li> <li>• Most clearance procedures still take place at the border posts itself causing bottlenecks when heavy traffic flows are experienced;</li> <li>• Border support services personnel not adequately trained, lack essential skills, resulting in slower processing times and lengthy border delays</li> </ul>
<b>Border Post infrastructure</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Border post infrastructure is generally insufficient at the Beitbridge, Kazungula and Kasumbalesa border posts insofar these inland borders do not allow the seamless flow of traffic across borders. ; Border post facilities are generally in a poor condition and regarded as inadequate by corridor users; Approach roads inadequate at all major border posts leading congestion at border entry points; Inadequate border post design resulting in congestion and restrained border post operations; ; Insufficient ICT infrastructure at BP- limits the implementation of new or advanced processes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of bonded warehouses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A</li> </ul>

**Management of the corridor**

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No centralised corridor management entity assigned with the responsibility to manage and develop the corridor creating challenges with coordination of corridor stakeholders and programmes; Information dissemination with respect to corridor conditions and developments that influence cross-border road transport movements is either slow, or non-existent</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maputo Corridor Logistics Initiative (MCLI) provides strong management capacity but challenges remain as stakeholder demands change</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TKCMC is responsible for the management of the corridor, and has introduced various improvements</li> </ul> |
|--|---|--|

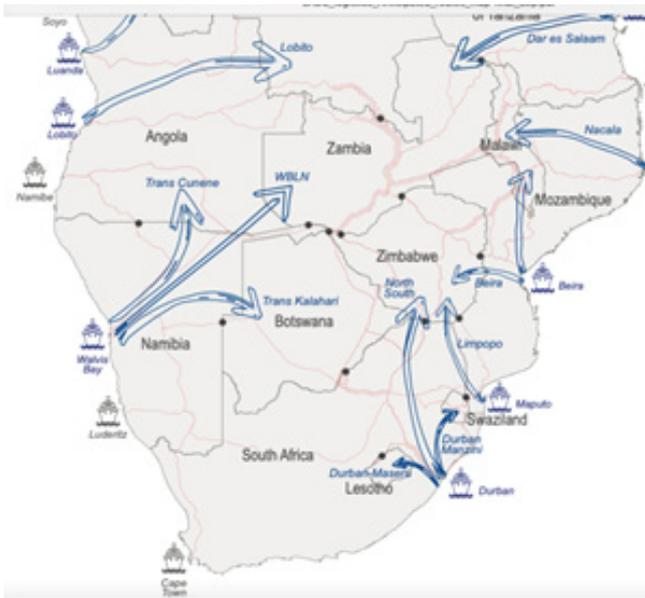
**Communication, security and human resources, other issues**

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Out-dated ICT systems (where and when they are available) and absence of the right ICT systems impedes the exchange of information by and between regulatory and law enforcement authorities; Insufficient information (data) is available relating to corridor usage, delays, new procedures and requirements and trade</li> <li>In the absence of a dedicated corridor management institution, there is no centralised communication platform from which important corridor information can be disseminated to relevant stakeholders</li> <li>Corruption and bribery is rife</li> <li>General lack of skilled personnel serving at BP, lack of management and governance skills</li> <li>Most weighbridge stations accept cash only for payment of overloaded vehicles, cash points are sometimes several kilometres away; Lack of secure parking for vehicles.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Corrupt activities</li> <li>Human resources</li> <li>Lack of trained logistics personnel to assist with exporting and importing operations between South Africa and Mozambique,</li> <li>Insufficient skilled resources at the Lebombo / Ressano Garcia border post; human resources inefficiencies, cause delays and high transport costs</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of corridor ICT systems and the development of ICT infrastructure for the whole corridor is limited to the Namibia / Botswana border post only;</li> <li>No information platform that enables the sharing of information vital to effective corridor and border management.</li> <li>Regulatory Costs -introduction of specific processes, eg compulsory purchase of third party insurance tokens at Pioneers gate (Botswana) and transit permits, leads to an increase in trade costs and increases delay time at this border post</li> </ul> |
|---|--|---|

(i) Key borders: Beitbridge (between South Africa and Zimbabwe), Chirundu (between Zimbabwe and Zambia), and Martins Drift / Groblersbrug (between Botswana and South Africa). Beitbridge is the regions busiest border post (ii) Buitepos / Mamuno & Pioneer Gate / Skilpadshek border posts

Source: Cross Border Transport Agency, 2017; 2021

**Figure 1: Major transport corridors in southern Africa**



Pertinent themes regarding the factors that affect border management emerge from the information summarised in Table 2; these are shown in Box 1 above.

### Box 1: Thematic Analysis of Factors Affecting Border Management in Southern Africa

- a. Regulatory framework:** Regional level (SADC) guidance, protocols and MoUs that facilitate and enable effective border management and facilitate better movement of people and goods, for example, Guidelines (draft) on the Coordinated Border Management (2011); Protocol on Facilitation of Movement of Persons (2005) including timely guidance eg the SADC Guidelines on Harmonisation and Facilitation of Cross Border Transport Operations Across the Region during the Covid-19 Pandemic (2020), Regional Standard Operating Procedures for Management and Monitoring of Cross Border Road Transport at Designated Points of Entry and Covid-19 checkpoints (2020) exist. However, in some areas such as road transport, regulation still depends on bilateral and multi-lateral agreements such as the Bilateral Road freight and road passenger transport agreements between Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe resulting in fragmentation, complexities, delays and additional operating costs. However, there is some progress towards moving towards better regulations across RECs in some areas such as through the Multilateral Cross-Border Road Transport Agreement (MCBRTA) that will cover SADC, COMESA and EAC regions.
- b. Infrastructure gaps:** Gaps in infrastructure such as parking bays for freight trucks, poor signage, non-availability of fast lanes that can be used by pre-

cleared vehicles, functioning of weighbridges, are contributing to inefficiencies in border management

- c. Overall inefficiencies** at border posts characterised by long vehicular and human queues on either side of the borders such between the border of Zimbabwe and South-Africa where vehicles/trucks can queue for more than three days. The inefficiencies arise from ICT systems that are not integrated and harmonised, unharmonized border operating hours,
- d. Corruption** is stifling effective border management. This is being perpetrated by officials working for the different border agencies such as customs and immigration. Corruption and congestion at borders is inter-linked, with one factor influencing the other. It also contribute to security issues owing from conveyance of undocumented immigrants and movement of illicit drugs and undeclared goods across the borders.
- e. Coordination:** weak coordination by law enforcers at border posts, resulting in inefficiencies in law enforcement and limited information sharing, existence of many windows that affect smooth flow of traffic and people. However, one of SADC's strategies to improve coordination and efficiencies is through the OSBPs as prioritised in the 2012 Regional Infrastructure Development Plan (RIDMP) with a target to transform 18 of the borders to OSBPs. There are also some continental and Tripartite moves towards addressing some of the infrastructure related deficiencies such as the Programme for Infrastructure Development Africa

(PIDA); the Presidential Infrastructure Champion Initiative (PICl); the Move Africa Initiative; and Linking Africa Plan (LAP) and continental level and the Tripartite Transport and Transit Facilitation Programme (TTTFP); and Multilateral Cross-Border Road Transport Initiative (MCBRTA) as promising Tripartite arrangements.

*Source: Summary drawn from (Cross Border Road Transport Agency, 2021; Cross Border Transport Agency, 2017)*

Illustrating costs from inefficiencies. More recent data on costs of border delays in southern Africa is elusive, however a in 2012, the estimated financial costs caused by customs delays was found to be US\$ 48 million per annum (Barka, 2012). These costs, as already highlighted, arise primarily from a lack of coordination<sup>4</sup> among the multiple government agencies on both sides of borders, weak or incompatible ICT systems resulting in duplication of procedures at each border side, heightening operational risks such as fraud (Barka, 2012). Inefficiencies also costs informal traders due to long waiting times (Tevera, 2020).

## The Impact of the Covid 19 Pandemic on Border Management Systems

Covid-19<sup>5</sup> disrupted the economic and social architecture of many countries in the world; it led to halting or slowing down of economic and social activity 'precipitating an unprecedented global health and economic crisis' with countries suffering twin vulnerabilities of being landlocked and least developed being disproportionately affected (World Bank, 2020b)<sup>5</sup>. From another perspective, the pandemic magnified and brought to the fore structural deficiencies inherent within economic and social systems, border management included (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2020). In southern Africa, border management systems were 'stress tested', and stretched to limits they had never experienced before in many decades. On one hand, Member States were enforcing stringent public health measures in line with International Health Regulations and domestic infectious disease control protocols in an attempt to keep and control infections originating from outside their borders, yet these measures inadvertently also affected movement of goods and services required to keep the wheels of economies turning. Reduced economic activity and reliable movement of supplies into these countries also stifled their financial capacity to respond to the pandemic. The covid containment measures were indeed a double edged sword; and countries struggled to balance the critical goals of public health security and movement of goods to support the economies (Vearey, Gruchy, & Maple, 2021).

## Border Related Covid Containment Measures

Countries in southern Africa, like other countries in the world, introduced many COVID-19 border related containment measures such as:

- Completely closing borders to human and cargo movements, except for essential services
- Mandatory testing of drivers and people at the borders with those found to be positive being quarantined or being denied entry. In some instances, travellers and drivers were required to produce certificates issued within stipulated time frames showing that they were covid free. In other instances countries employed strict quarantine measures, including for truck drivers, such as was the case in Zambia.
- Strict requirements for disinfection of trucks carrying cargo, restrictions on drivers' movements, in some cases measures for drivers and their trucks to be escorted, with escort fees paid to the escorting police services in other countries.
- Through moral suasion or mandatory/legal provisions, requiring some processes to be done online so as to limit physical contact

Other nationwide measures such as reductions in public service personnel (including border agency personnel) so as to comply with physical distancing measures had a bearing on border management systems as well. In some instances, COVID-19 protocols required premises with any person found with COVID to be closed and disinfected. These premises/workspaces included border agency offices.

SADC provided some form of coordination through the operationalisation of the SADC COVID-19 trade and transport facilitation cell, SADC Council of Ministers and guidance such as that shown in earlier sections to facilitate regional responses and movement of essential goods, among other objectives. In some instances, evidence of collaboration was evident such as at the Beitbridge border post between South Africa and Zimbabwe and those shown in Box 2 below.

### Box 2: Good Practices in Cross-Border Trade in the SADC Region

Botswana and Zambia: Cooperated to clear traffic that had built up at Kazungula during the first week that member States implemented national COVID-19 measures, by joint clearance and collaboration between border agencies and the use of the temporary construction bridge.

Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia: Collaborated in clearing traffic that had built up at Kasumbalesa, including by simulating operational modalities for a one-stop border post, which allow officials to operate jointly from one another's territory, and opening an additional road connection between two borders.

Zimbabwe: Designated and published a map of truck stops and garages that could be used by trucks during COVID-19.

Namibia: A public-private partnership constructed a temporary quarantine facility for trucks in Walvis Bay. The facility is fully equipped with COVID-19 hygiene requirements, resting and ablution facilities, and is secured by the police who protect drivers, cargo and vehicles.

Angola: Simplified and waived requirements for submission of stamped original hard copies of documentation and switched to accepting electronic submissions.

*Source: (UNECA, 2020)*

However, SADC countries were effecting certain measures, for example, border closures, testing and quarantine policies, in a non-coordinated and non-harmonised

manner, contributing to inefficiencies in border management systems as illustrated in Box 3 below

### Box 3: Covid 19 Induced Border Controls: An Example of Non-synchronisation

SA reopens Beitbridge – but Zimbabwe's latest lockdown extension keeps travel ban in place

- On Monday, South Africa opened its 20 land border posts, including Beitbridge, which links the country to Zimbabwe.
- But on the same day, Zimbabwe extended its hard lockdown, upholding a ban on international travel through land borders.
- This basically nullifies SA's reopening.
- South Africa says it has not yet received official notification from Zimbabwe, which is usually delivered as a "diplomatic courtesy".

South Africa may have reopened its biggest land borders on Monday 15 February, but Zimbabwe's decision to extend its lockdown for another two weeks prohibits travel between the neighbouring countries through the Beitbridge border post. Beitbridge, which connects South Africa and Zimbabwe, usually

processes thousands of commuters every single day. It's normally the busiest land port in Southern Africa, but for more than a month, it's only serviced cargo and nationals with government-endorsed travel exemptions. Amid a burgeoning second wave of Covid-19 infections, Zimbabwe returned to hard lockdown at the start of 2021. This included the closure of all non-essential businesses, a strict curfew and the closure of all land borders with exemptions for returning residents and commercial freight. And South Africa, suffering from its own second wave and amid chaos due to congestion at major ports of entry, closed off all land borders on 11 January. Only returning residents, departing foreign nationals, and commercial cargo could pass through Beitbridge during this period. On Monday, South Africa reopened 20 border points of entry for travel, after implementing new regulations to curb congestion. This reopening coincided with Zimbabwe's own review of lockdown restrictions. President Emmerson Mnangagwa announced that Level 4 lockdown restrictions would be extended for a further two weeks, with some changes to business operating hours and curfew

times. But the ban on intercity, interprovincial, and international travel across land borders was upheld, effectively nullifying South Africa's long-awaited reopening of Beitbridge border. "Zimbabwe just announced the extension [and] there is no obligation on Zimbabwe's part to necessarily inform South Africa that they are extending their lockdown," says Clayson Monyela, spokesperson for the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO). "When South Africa takes decisions on closing borders and other measures that impact international partners and neighbouring countries... we use diplomatic channels to inform [those] countries that this is what we're doing [and] it may impact your nationals who are planning to travel to our country. That would be done as a diplomatic courtesy." Zimbabwe has yet to official detail the border closure's impact on South Africa, but communication was expected later on Tuesday, according to Monyela. Free movement between two neighbouring countries needs to be bilateral. Although South Africa has allowed for travel to and from Zimbabwe, allowances do not override the regulations instituted by a sovereign state and, ultimately, a law which prevents the free, international movement of citizens in response to the Covid-19

pandemic is not subject to the leeway granted by a neighbouring country.

Zimbabwe's borders will remain closed until March, barring entry and exit through Beitbridge border, with exceptions extended to commercial goods. (Zimbabwe's airports remain open, however.)

While Zimbabwe's ongoing border closure has limited the volume of daily commuters at Beitbridge border, hundreds of truck drivers remain trapped in queues stretching up to several kilometres long in both directions. Trucking associations blame the dire backlog on roadworks on the Zimbabwean side of the border, with some drivers spending more than 48 hours in line to cross. The transportation of commercial goods remains one of the only exemptions to Zimbabwe's travel ban.

Daniel L writing in the Business Insider, South Africa on 16 February 2021

<https://www.businessinsider.co.za/sa-reopens-beitbridge-border-but-zimbabwes-latest-lockdown-extension-keeps-travel-ban-in-place-2021-2>

## Impact of the Measures on Border Management

The summary below highlights some of the impacts and challenges COVID-19 brought in border management.

1. Delays in movement of goods: With more than 80% of imported and exported goods in the SADC region being transported by road networks, lockdowns and closures of boarders resulted in resulted significant delays in the movement of freight including essential and food supplies. Mandatory quarantine measures for truck drivers such as in Zambia in 2020 caused major disruptions at Chirundu BP (Mataba & Ismail, 2021); the Zimbabwe side traffic queue stretched for 9km in April 2020 (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2020) With a number of land locked countries dependent on the region, restrictive measures in South Africa had a cascading effect in the entire region (Muranganwa, 2020).
2. Reduced work time and personnel for border control agencies: Partial lockdown measures and curfews resulted in reductions in working hours by border agencies, while enforcement of social distancing measures saw reductions in personnel, to as low levels as 25% of maximum capacity such as was seen in Zimbabwe (GoZ, 2021). This had a profound effect on border management as only few people at the BPs were available to provide services such as inspection of cargo (Muranganwa, 2020).
3. Re-engineering of border management processes. This perhaps could be regarded as one of the positive impacts of the pandemic on border management. Given the reduced levels of workers at border agencies, countries and managers of border agencies were forced to consider re-organising their work processes, streamlining them as well as adopting use of technologies to reduce physical human contact. Thus, COVID-19 could be seen as having catalysed adoption of IT solutions that can be built upon and improved over time.
4. Evidence is emerging that these impacts may have been felt more by vulnerable populations such as the informal traders who exhibit vulnerabilities owing from slower embracement of technologies, and more reliance on public transport systems, among other factors, and this could have led to increased smuggling of goods especially along less securitised regional borders (Muranganwa, 2020).

## Digitalisation: Moving to Digital Platforms -Are Citizens Ready?

It is undeniable that some of the border control challenges such as those related to information sharing and coordination and streamlining of business processes to make them client centred could be addressed by digitalisation<sup>6</sup>. In fact, the digitalisation could address some of the infrastructure related challenges indirectly as it has potential to remove the need for mega-structures at border posts, allowing many transactions to be done online. Covid-19 is catalysing this process with the 'new normal' suggesting the need for more attention to be given to this area (Simpson & Mohwaduba, 2021).

### How Can Digitalisation Help in Improving Border Management?

According to PWC (2015), digitalisation could help in the following four domains of border management processes:

**Data analytics:** Border agencies can collect data from a variety of points such as travel and freight companies instead of relying on traditional sources such as visa applications. National security screening to support the security goals of border management systems could thus be enhanced by data analytics that utilises such approaches.

**Verifying identity:** Digitalisation could allow for scaling up of other modern verification and identification methods that use biometrics rather than rely on traditional paper based methods that are prone to fraud, contributing to enhancing security goals as already argued above.

**Monitoring and surveillance:** Border surveillance has been documented as a major gap in southern Africa, with no clear roles and responsibilities for the agencies operating at the border points. Immigration, police services and customs sometimes have overlapping roles for this but in most countries there is no clear agency with the ultimate responsibility, giving credence to the recommendations on establishment of independent land border management agencies in SADC countries as is being implemented in South Africa. Digitalisation could close this gap through use of thermal imaging technologies, unmanned aerial devices (drones) supported by better electronic data interchange systems.

**Non-invasive inspection:** Through use of X-ray or gamma-ray imaging, cargo inspections could be improved at borders as cargo can be inspected without being opened, thus address under-declaring of cargo and also saving time and money especially given the expected rising of trade as AfCFTA and other measures being put in place to strengthen intra-Africa trade kick in. These technologies could also enhance achieve of security goals through detection of arms smuggling (PWC, 2015).

Other indirect ways digitalisation could benefit border management includes use of crypto-currencies in facilitating online payments including for duties, fees (SADC has developed its regional payments system- a Real Time Gross Settlement System (RTGS) based in rands and this could support this), use of digital passports, especially given the possibility of the addition of covid vaccination passports for international travel induced by Covid-19.

### Is Southern Africa Ready for Digitalisation?

There are signs that southern Africa is fast embracing digitalisation. For example, many countries are using Covid-19 dashboards as part of risk communication, a number of applications are being developed for use on smartphones and on the web, such as the Covid-19 risk assessment checker, a number of e-learning platforms to support learners to learn from home during lockdowns, and online passport applications platforms to mention but just a few. The digitalisation drive has potential to provide youths, who are expected to grow exponentially in coming years, with employment as developers. Even at present, African youths are said to be maintaining a 'solid presence in digital innovation'. UNECA has been supporting the region through implementation of its science and innovation strategy. The Global Innovation Index uses a methodology of ranking countries on a scale of Innovation "achievers". Innovation achievers are countries that have higher than expected Global Innovation Index scores based on their level of economic development. In its 2017 report, it showed that South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique were rated as "at level or above" whilst Namibia, Botswana, and Zambia were ranked as 'below'. No data was provided for Eswatini and Lesotho- see Figure 2 (Cornell University, INSEAD, and WIPO, 2017).



**Table 3a. Overview of digital development in southern Africa: Infrastructure and access**

Category	Angola	Botswana	Eswatini	Lesotho	Mozambique	Namibia	South Africa	Zambia	Zimbabwe
<b>INFRASTRUCTURE AND ACCESS</b>									
<b>Network coverage</b>									
Population covered by a mobile cellular network	90%	97%	54% 7	99%	85%	100%	100%	87%	93%
Population covered by at least a 3G mobile network	72%	96%	54% 7	98%	82%	69%	100%	72%	84%
Population covered by at least a 4G mobile network	18%	68%	54% 7	67%	40%	39%	94%	49%	35%
<b>Mobile Phone ownership</b>									
Individuals owning a mobile phone	79% 4	na	na	79% 6	31% 7	na	60% 7	45% 8	na
Female phone ownership as a % of total female population	80% 4	na	na	na	26% 7	na	61% 7	45% 8	na
Male phone ownership as a percentage of total male population	78% 4	na	na	na	37% 7	na	58% 7	44% 8	na
<b>ICT access at home</b>									
Households with internet access at home	15% 5	63%	na	37% 8	na	9% 3	62% 7	18% 8	30% 8
Households with internet access at home, rural areas	1% 8	na	na	1% 6	1% 7	na	43% 7	na	18% 4
Households with a computer at home	10% 4	28%	na	13% 8	7% 8	21% 3	22% 7	8% 8	15% 8
Households with internet access at home, urban	11% 8	na	na	7% 6	6% 7	na	70% 7	na	61% 4
<b>Mobile and fixed telephone subscriptions</b>									
Mobile cellular subscriptions per 100 inhabitants	47	163	94 7	74	49	113	166	96	90
Fixed telephone subscriptions per 100 inhabitants	0	6	4 7	1	0	6	3	1	2

Mobile and Fixed broadband subscriptions									
Active mobile broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants	21	88	16.7	64	18	66	102	51	52
Fixed broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants	0%	2	1.7	0	0	3	2	0	1
International bandwidth per internet user (kbits/s)	12% <sup>7</sup>	23.7	7.7	6.7	8.7	13.7	10.7	15.8	12.7
Fixed broadband (% of total) 256kbits/s- <2Mbits/s	23%	28%	na	na	10%	6%	5%	28%	64%
Fixed broadband (% of total) 2 to 10 Mbits/s	60%	61%	na	na	54%	87%	47%	71%	28%
Fixed broadband (% of total) >10Mbits/s	15%	8%	na	na	34%	3%	47%	0%	6%
Fixed Broadband (% of total) unspecified speed tier	na	1%	na	na	na	3%	na	na	na
Total fixed broadband subscriptions	119047	49295	8000	6329	69975	63314	1250356	88891	204424

**Table 3b. Overview of digital development in southern Africa: internet use, enablers and barriers**

Category	Angola	Botswana	Eswatini	Lesotho	Mozambique	Namibia	South Africa	Zambia	Zimbabwe
<b>INTERNET USE</b>									
<b>Percentage of population using the internet</b>									
Individuals using the internet, total	14% <sup>7</sup>	41% <sup>7</sup>	30% <sup>7</sup>	30% <sup>7</sup>	21% <sup>7</sup>	37% <sup>7</sup>	56% <sup>7</sup>	14% <sup>8</sup>	27% <sup>7</sup>
Female internet use as a % of total female population	20% <sup>4</sup>	34% <sup>4</sup>	na	na	6% <sup>7</sup>	na	na	13% <sup>8</sup>	15% <sup>4</sup>
Male internet use as a percentage of total male population	22% <sup>4</sup>	41% <sup>4</sup>	na	na	10% <sup>7</sup>	na	na	16% <sup>8</sup>	18% <sup>4</sup>
<b>Broadband traffic</b>									
Average monthly fixed broadband internet traffic per fixed broadband subscription (MB)	2310	1171	na	11998 <sup>8</sup>	12837 <sup>8</sup>	na	95879	84373	67206

Average monthly mobile broadband internet traffic per mobile broadband subscription (MB)	420	4182.8	na	86.8	0	na	1301	na	393
<b>ENABLERS AND BARRIERS</b>									
<b>ICT Prices</b>									
Mobile data and voice basket (high consumption) as a percentage of GNI p.c	9.6% <sup>0</sup>	4.4% <sup>0</sup>	15.2% <sup>0</sup>	14.9% <sup>0</sup>	36.0% <sup>0</sup>	8.6% <sup>0</sup>	5.6% <sup>0</sup>	18.3% <sup>0</sup>	47.9% <sup>8</sup>
Fixed broadband basket as a % of GNI p.c	8.6% <sup>0</sup>	3.2% <sup>0</sup>	8.9% <sup>0</sup>	10.6% <sup>0</sup>	20.0% <sup>0</sup>	2.5% <sup>0</sup>	4.7% <sup>0</sup>	7.6% <sup>0</sup>	27.5% <sup>8</sup>
Mobile and data voice basket (low consumption) as a % of GNI p.c	5.3% <sup>0</sup>	1.9% <sup>0</sup>	5.3% <sup>0</sup>	6.7% <sup>0</sup>	19.9% <sup>0</sup>	2.5% <sup>0</sup>	2.5% <sup>0</sup>	5.4% <sup>0</sup>	19.8% <sup>8</sup>
Mobile broadband basket as a % of GNI p.c	3.2% <sup>0</sup>	1.1% <sup>0</sup>	3.6% <sup>0</sup>	6.3% <sup>0</sup>	16.0% <sup>0</sup>	2.5% <sup>0</sup>	2.5% <sup>0</sup>	5.1% <sup>0</sup>	11.8% <sup>8</sup>
Mobile cellular basket as a % of GNI p.c	3.1% <sup>0</sup>	1.1% <sup>0</sup>	1.7% <sup>0</sup>	6.2% <sup>0</sup>	8.0% <sup>0</sup>	2.0% <sup>0</sup>	1.4% <sup>0</sup>	3.7% <sup>0</sup>	9.6% <sup>8</sup>
<b>ICT Skills</b>									
Individuals with basic skills	na	31% <sup>4</sup>	na	na	na	na	na	52% <sup>8</sup>	4% <sup>4</sup>
Individuals with standard skills	na	19% <sup>4</sup>	na	na	na	na	na	30% <sup>8</sup>	2% <sup>4</sup>
Individuals with advanced skills	na	5% <sup>4</sup>	na	na	na	na	na	7% <sup>8</sup>	1% <sup>4</sup>

In summary, while at national and regional levels, there are entry points to support the digitalisation agenda, data from the ITU seems to suggest that citizens in southern Africa lag behind in terms of inputs and skills that are required for its effective embracing. This requires southern African governments to take deliberate steps to address the deficiencies and social gradients to ensure that no one is left behind. Adopting widespread digitalisation against a background of such inequalities in access to infrastructure can only widen existing gradients and affect vulnerable groups such as informal traders more. Nevertheless, digitalisation offers many opportunities to improve border management as argued above.

## Policy Recommendations

The sections above highlighted the complexities of achieving effective border management systems in the southern Africa region. While there are positive features

such as the coordination and guidance from SADC, strong policy positions to support actions to address such of the gaps such as through SADC infrastructure development plans and others, the literature reviewed points to areas of continued weaker implementation and coordination. We provide some recommendations on these and other areas below.

- **Strengthen implementation OSBP, single windows as key infrastructure that promotes Coordinated Border Management.**

While SADC has adopted scaling up transformation of two way border posts to OSBP, the actual implementation is lagging behind as shown in Table 1 earlier.. Chirundu BP has demonstrated to the region the transformational potential of OSBP in improving efficiency in Border management. SADC and southern African member states thus need to prioritise financing the transformation of two way borders to OSBPs.

Where this requires significant resources, as in the case with major border projects, member states are recommended to adopt and or enhance low cost measures such as the single window concept, a key option in improving intra and inter agency coordination at BPs.

- **Take broad steps to move towards better land border management coordinating institutions at regional and country levels**

Member states need to consider and adopt the creation of independent terrestrial border management agencies with clear legal roles that strengthen their ability to provide the coordination function effectively. South Africa appears to be ahead of the curve, it provides other member states with opportunities to learn from its experiences. There is evidence that independent agencies improve the coordination of borders better and allows them to effectively take up the land border surveillance roles. At regional level, SADC has relied on the coordination role of Joint Technical Committees but this has been reported to be inadequate with proposals for the establishment of a SADC border management body (Mandrup, Kleynhans, & Blaine, 2019). Coordination at the regional level thus needs to be holistic and wider in scope, suggesting the need for SADC to move towards establishing a regional agency to provide these roles. The regional agency or body should be given the mandate to spearhead the development, review and implementation of the regional border management vision and strategies, collaborating with other SADC level institutions on peace, security and regional integration. At the present moment, the border management functions appear to be under the peace and security coordination mechanism. Mandrup et al., (2019) have further argued that such a regional coordinating body will be better placed to lead discussions on redefining 'borders' within a SADC and context, what a 'regional border' for SADC mean as well as questions on adopting 'soft or hard' borders.

- **Reorganisation of border processes to facilitate decongestion such as through adoption of digitalisation platforms, moving other functions such as cargo clearance inland**

Border congestions and delays have been associated with a number of drivers, including insufficient infrastructure to handle cargo traffic at border posts aggravated by human resource shortages and or skills gaps. We propose adoption of holistic policies aimed at

decongesting border posts through reengineering of processes such as movement of cargo clearing services inland as is the trend in Europe. Thus, cargo control functions within southern Africa could be housed inland, albeit with a heightened risk of diversion of cargo, thus the need to implement this recommendation concurrently with digital based surveillance options such as Realtime electronic cargo tracking as already happening in the EAC. SADC is reported to be developing such a system (UNECA, 2020), and this needs to be prioritised. This approach will lessen the pressure at border posts allowing for agencies operating with the borders to focus on security and human mobility related objectives of border management. Digitalisation not only improve surveillance but provide additional benefits of helping with health related measures for dealing with infectious diseases such as the case with COVID-19.

- **Tackling corruption and shortfalls in oversight and accountability at border posts through regional mechanisms**

The reported corruption problems in most of borders in southern Africa reflect challenges with or low levels of accountability and oversight which more often than not is shaped and influenced by other factors such as working environments for border agency personnel, inadequate resources and in some instances capacity challenges. While the SADC draft Guidelines for CBM provides options for addressing this, we recommend better methods of monitoring implementation of these and other regional recommendations as a region for example through peer review mechanisms.

- **Better harmonisation of measures that deal with regional and global health emergencies to facilitate seamless movement of people and goods across borders**

Despite some regional level coordination in dealing the COVID-19, the evidence pointed to shortfalls in critical areas such as lack of harmonisation in testing, quarantine and other measures across member states resulting in deterioration of border management services that manifested through longer waiting periods at borders. SADC member states should adopt for example SADC covid test certificates as implemented in EAC thus facilitating a common approach to certifying results. Even during health emergencies, southern Africa border agencies of the neighbouring countries should harmonise border opening hours, as the minimum mechanism for having coordinated border operations.

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