



STREETNET and SACBTA SIMPLIFIED TRADE REGIME REGIONAL WORKSHOP PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA, 17 – 18 August 2017

Position Statement:

People's Action towards Implementing STR & revitalizing SNCs in SADC

In 2008 strengthening of the SNCs (SADC National Committees) was seen as one of the paramount objectives of the secretariat as outlined in the SADC Capacity Development Framework, but to date there is very little progress. In 2010 SADC developed an advocacy strategy on informal cross border trade (ICBT) which is gathering dust. Recently SADC adopted an Industrialisation Strategy which incorporates STR (Simplified Trade Regime) in its trade facilitation milestone. STR was originally developed by COMESA Secretariat as a way to facilitate informal cross-border trading – and Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe are the only SADC countries who benefited. Unlike the EAC bloc where the STR has been implemented fully and the informal economy is enjoying its benefits, the mechanism is yet to be adopted by other SADC countries. At the 12th Southern Africa Civil Society Forum in Swaziland in August 2016, participants called for the simplification of informal cross-border trade in SADC and putting the STR in place by means of bilateral negotiations between more countries, in the interests of the livelihoods of the poorest ICBTs, most of whom are women. The SADC Secretariat was requested get to work as soon as possible to get these programmes started.

It is from this perspective that Southern Africa Cross Border Traders Association (SACBTA) in conjunction with StreetNet, convened a three-day regional workshop to lobby for the implementation of STR (Simplified Trade Regime) and SNCs (SADC National Committees) in SADC. Participants were traders affiliated to StreetNet and SACBTA from the following countries: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mocambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The specific objectives included the following:

1. To give an opportunity to policy makers and traders to engage in policy dialogue
2. To improve collaboration between cross-border traders and other informal economy actors
3. To discuss and develop a roadmap on how to address the multiple challenges faced by traders
4. To launch the STR/SNC Campaign for the rest of the SADC Region.

The workshop was addressed by Noma-Efese Mxi and Dudu Mpyana from the International Trade and Economic Development Division of *the dti* (Department of Trade & Industry) on SADC and the Tripartite Free Trade Area, followed by Mack Phohu from the Export Help Desk of *the dti* on Export Development and how TISA assists South African potential and global exporters.

From provincial government, Moloko Mapatha from Economic Policy & Planning, LEDET addressed the workshop on facilitating informal cross-border trade in Limpopo Province, and Dumi ka Mzila from KwaZulu-Natal Economic Development, Tourism & Environmental Affairs addressed the workshop on enhancing an informal economy friendly economy.

Jacob Makambwe from Zambia addressed the workshop on SACBTA's experiences of STR, and how this has been won and how it is working on different borders in the three COMESA countries Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Participants resolved to initiate the introduction of STR in all SADC countries for the simplification of paper work, reduction of taxes, reduction of harassment of traders at border posts, simplified common lists of tradable goods, saving of time, promotion of partnerships and exchanges. It was also resolved to make further improvements to the way STR is currently working, i.e. through increased awareness-raising, producing information in the local languages used by informal cross-border traders, and strive for more free movement of people across the borders in the region.

It was agreed that non-state actors should take the initiative and be ambassadors of STR in new countries, develop and update lists of goods to be tax-exempt in SADC countries, organise informal traders and educate customs officials about STR, engage policy-makers and create new platforms of engagement. Best practices were identified in Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda in the EAC region. It was resolved that informal traders have to take initiatives and push for STR in their countries, and go to their Ministries. The STR has to be influenced by informal traders for the right content – i.e. **the Simplified Trade Regime We Want !!**

SACBTA and StreetNet will strengthen their working partnership to improve the livelihoods of informal cross-border traders in the SADC region by increasing the organizing and negotiating skills capacity of organized informal cross-border traders and initiating bilateral negotiations across as many borders in the region as possible, starting with Kazungula (Zambia/Botswana/Namibia), Maseru Bridge (Lesotho/South Africa), Victoria Falls (Zambia/Zimbabwe), Lebombo (Mocambique/South Africa), Oshikango (Angola/Namibia), Zobwe (Malawi/Mocambique), Beit Bridge (South Africa/Zimbabwe), Lavumisa/Golela (South Africa/Swaziland).

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