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## Building the Future of Africa through Sustainable Border Management Systems: A Case of Southern African States

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### **Abstract:**

*Effective border security is an essential part of socio-economic development in Africa and beyond as well as tool for combating transnational crime. Employing a range of tools and services which can help member countries to enhance their own border-security procedures and to integrate their efforts with those of their neighbours is no longer a luxury. The presence of INTERPOL is not sufficient measure to deal with promoting effective border management. The level of chaos and misdemeanour taking place at most borders of developing countries is indeed a cause for concern for all of us. I want to assume at this juncture that border control tradition is no longer viable and that border management should focus beyond the physical borders of member states. The purpose of this paper is to interrogate present practices of border Management as reflected in Southern Africa culture of border control systems. A phenomenological study design will be employed with the study focusing on the border management systems used in Southern Africa. The current experiences and systems will be interrogated in order to get an informed position on how best practices can be attained. System interrogation will take place through reviewing related literature, media reports, observations and in-depth interviews of key actors and non-actors in border management. The results of this study will assist in the formulation of recommendations that practically hinges on assisting policy makers to create dynamic border management models designed to achieve sustainable socio-economic development.*

**Keywords:** Border management, cross borders, customs and excise, corruption, illegal trading, immigrants, human rights

### **1. Introduction**

The level of chaos and misdemeanour taking place at most borders of developing countries is indeed a cause for concern for all of us. I want to assume at this juncture that border control tradition is no longer viable and that border management should focus beyond the physical borders of member states. The magnitudes, severities and complexities of border management problems in Africa calls for urgent actions to be taken in order to turn borders into zones of peace, security, stability and development. It is plausible that the AU has drafted a policy framework on security sector reform (SSR) that guides it, the Member States, the Regional Economic Groupings (REGs) and other stakeholders to, among other things, —provide state security by defending the state, borders and national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States within the rule of law. Border management is no longer about physically seeing things happening, but involves a lot more than the traditional physical controls. The challenges facing African states to manage their borders are compounded by globalization that has changed the model of traditional borders through advancement in technology and transformation of international relations. One cannot deny the issue that increases in volumes of cross-border trading and movements of people from their countries of origin in search of greener pastures elsewhere have put enormous pressure on border control systems. With these changes taking place countries sharing borders needs to work together harmoniously, integrate their activities in a way to curb illegal activities but at the same time not disturb the effective flow of goods and people. The paper is a result of the need to raise awareness on security matters with regard to effective management of borders, management systems that sustains and promote cross border activities in a more modern and professional way given the magnitude of violations of African borders by both traffickers and smugglers - a daily event, and shared by all African countries and regions, though flows, patterns, volumes and dynamics vary amongst them. Human trafficking and smuggling compound the challenges for African states by strengthening organized criminal and terrorist organizations in both financial and manpower terms.

Comments in the paper are not policy comments but will assist and open clean debates on how Africa, and especially the SADC region can effectively improve its border management models, in as much as indigenous and cultural influences affect the region.

Whether we like it or not we are surrounded by relatives and even businesses have become much more related and therefore any system put in place should be more of a promotional one, barrier removal and one that opens bridges to allow more interaction and easy movement of goods and people. A state's inability to secure its borders creates a security vacuum that attracts entrepreneurs of violence, and inevitably border insecurities. Criminal syndicates also take advantage of weak state capacities to control/manage its borders to transact illegal activities. Important of all is the creation of Africa's border management agenda that emphasis on securing the flow of goods and people in the spirit of regional and continental integration. How this has to be done is one of the themes of this paper. It is also clear that the African Union is supportive of border management endeavours as reflected in this statement: *'The AU acknowledges that border management systems in Africa, "as in other parts of the world," are being influenced by "pressure from large flows of persons, including irregular and mixed flows, "moving across regions and/or national borders;" and "by security concerns.'*" Africa's rich resources have attracted criminals, terrorists, and traffickers to exploit the undefended coastal waters and porous borders to engage in illegal activities that threatens regional and continental peace, stability and security. When agricultural products such as cocoa, tobacco, vanilla, coffee, rubber, timber and cattle and manufactured goods such as cigarettes, beverages, medicines, electronic gadgets, vehicle and industrial machinery parts, and precious minerals like diamonds and gold are smuggled across African borders, governments are denied tax revenues needed for national development. With this in mind an effective and efficient control model of African borders is needed yesterday, today and not tomorrow.

## 2. Background to Border Management

It is important to note that throughout its history, Africa has experienced important migratory movements, both voluntary and forced, which have contributed to its current demographic landscape. Africa has 109 international boundaries that are approximately 28,000 miles. Of these boundaries, less than 25% are demarcated. African boundaries are characterised by a high level of porosity/permeability and poor or lack of management. For instance, African international boundaries are protected by about 350 official road crossing points, or one for every 80 miles of boundary (most control posts are 16-20 kilometres away from the border). 20% of African borders are less permeable because of 27 national parks and game/nature reserves along them. About 414 roads cross borders in Africa. There are 69 roads that cross borders with no customs posts. Only 20 African boundaries are crossed by railways.

The high level of porosity has made African borders easily penetrable by smugglers of people, drugs, weapons and contrabands. Furthermore, revenues generated on borders have been used to fund criminal activities and fuelled severe social problems such as prostitution and prevalence of HIV/AIDS and STDs at border crossing points. In the last decades, deteriorating political, socio-economic and environmental conditions, armed conflicts, insecurity, environmental degradation and poverty, have been significant root causes of mass migration and forced displacement in Africa. Border perimeter security in the region is challenging as there are vast borders that need 24-hour surveillance. Troops within the region do not have the human capacity to man these perimeters and are turning to solutions that do not require physical human presence for surveillance.

International borders are a security issue for all governments and states are recognized under international law by their capability and ability to maintain their boundaries, secure their territories, and protect their citizens. The ability to secure national borders is one of the criteria used to classify states as strong, weak and failed.

It is fundamental to mention out that the strategic location and position of a country determines opportunities for illegal activities that exists or can take place in its border areas. In some cases, one will find out that some countries are more threatened by insecurities or mismanagement of other countries' borders than their own (Nugent and Asiwaju ,1996).

While national security strategies of some countries mention the importance of secure and peaceful borders, few have border security strategies. The negligence of border security and poor, or lack of, management African borders has largely contributed to a prevalence of threats such as cross-border crimes; African border security issues are distinctive, when compared to the other regions of the world. It is important to point out that the Declaration on the African Union Border Programme (AUBP) and the Modalities for the Pursuit and Acceleration of Its Implementation made in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in March 2010, paved the way for the development of Strategy for Enhancing Border Management in Africa.

Of interest to point at this juncture is that, in the continent, most governments do not know where state borders are, their nature/characteristics, and what is moving across them. Because of this fact, these borders are not monitored, patrolled or controlled. Because of that most if not all, African borders (Beitbridge, Ramakwebane, Chirundu Border posts are no exceptions to this) are transnational crime zones.

## 3. Notable Commitments and Action Plans by Africa on Border Management Collaborations

- The following presentations provides highlights on legal and regulatory measures taken by Africa through its regional groupings such as African Union (AU), formally Organisation of African Union (OAU).

For the past three decades, the AU and its predecessor, the OAU, have clearly and repeatedly stated their positions on border security in Africa through a series of resolutions, decisions, policy directives, and strategies, as illustrated below:

- The Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (2000)
- The African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (1981) and its Protocol relating to the Rights of Women (2002)
- The Ouagadougou Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, Especially Women and Children (2006)

- The Kampala Declaration and Recommendations on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (2009)
- The African Common Position on Migration and Development (2006)
- The Migration Policy Framework for Africa (2006)
- The Declaration on the African Union Border Programme and the Modalities for the Pursuit and Acceleration of Its Implementation as Adopted by the Conference of African Ministers in Charge of Border Issues (2010)
- The African Union Plan of Action on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism (2004)
- The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (1997) (the Mine Ban Treaty)
- The AU Commission Initiative against Trafficking Campaign as part of the overall Programme of Activities of DSA on Migration and Development for 2009-2012
- The AU Plan of Action on Drug Control and Crime Prevention (2008)
- The Common African Position on Anti-Personnel Landmines (2004)
- The Declaration of the African Union Border Programme and Its Implementation Modalities as Adopted by the Conference of African Ministers in Charge of Border Issues (2007)

#### 4. Issues Raised from Primary Study in Zimbabwe

For the past fifteen years I have crossed the SADC borders on many occasions and have observed and experienced good and nasty situations. Overallly the SADC Borders have a long way to go in terms of improving management systems. It is unfortunate that the treatment of immigrants and goods leaves a lot to be desired. The staffers at the border posts treat immigrants like animals that have strayed using abusive language. 'Go back to your homes' is common shouting heard at these borders especially when it is a *black man versus a black man*. Unfortunately, our brothers and sisters mandated to man our borders do not understand African brotherhood, when a white person comes (I am not trying to be racist here), they are nicely treated, and you hear them being wished a 'nice stay' and come back again. Ah! That is the experiences of many people who cross borders. I need to mention that not all staffers are adamant and disrespectful. Quite a sizeable number behave professionally and are quite assistive. I suppose it all boils to their orientation, ubuntu background and training received in terms of why they are manning those borders. To me the major issue is to facilitate the crossing of these very people and goods as a matter of principle and the enhancement of international and regional relations. From the interviews I carried, what came out is stated below:

- Most of the borders are porous and hence the need to tighten security measures and combat illegal crossing of goods and people
- That the staffers at the border posts need to be more humane when dealing with people in possession of legal documents and also observe human rights even when humans are trafficked and cross without necessary documentation
- There is a lot of chaos and delays in clearing goods and people as queues are deliberately created to solicit for bribes.
- There is indeed lack of supervision of members of staff at the border as they sometimes sit and relax when they are long queues.
- It is unfortunate that, staffers at many border posts sometimes choose to speak in their mother languages which are not understood by travellers and this creates communication barriers. One would have thought that English be used as a media of communication at all border posts as the official language, especially in the SADC Region.

#### 5. Weaknesses of Current Practices

An examination of the current border management systems in Africa reveals a number of weaknesses, chief among them are:

- Relying on **Integrated Border Management Task Force** (INTERPOL) which offers a range of tools and services which can help SADC member countries to enhance their own border-security procedures, and to integrate their efforts with those of their neighbours is not sufficient on its own. The Integrated Border Management Task Force (IBMTF) is the central point of contact and coordination for international border-security activities at INTERPOL. The Task Force supports law enforcement officers working at the frontline of border security by providing them with access to INTERPOL tools and services, delivering capacity building and training courses, coordinating operational activities. The Task Force draws upon expertise across departments within INTERPOL as well as from international partners.
- Absence and or lack of strong institutions to manage the borders coupled with lack of cooperation and integration at local and regional levels resulting in fragmented approaches to border management systems
- At government levels, there is sometimes little or no integration between different departments such as immigration, customs, police and intelligence
- Inadequate skills of personnel deployed to manage borders
- Lack of transport and roads along borders to enable effective patrols
- Porosity of borders -illegal border crossing points, named "mice or rat routes," are used by smugglers who charge a fee ranging from \$15-100 depending on the difficulty of terrain and presence of border security personnel (Mozambique –Mutere for Mabero)
- At regional level, most governments do not work closely to enhance border security by sharing of intelligence information, undertaking joint border patrols.

- Lack of, and poorly, marked boundaries have greatly contributed to border insecurity in Africa, SADC is not an exception.
- Where the border control personnel have seized contrabands, drugs barons connive with high-ranking government officials to undermine their efforts.
- Border security is largely focused on ports of entry and not the border line
- It is evident that when border communities are marginalized and excluded from the centre, they become uncooperative and highly secretive, and “rarely inform government officials on suspicious individuals

#### 6. Sustainable Border Management Strategies and Methodologies

- Authorities and agencies involved in border control and customs need to work together on common problems, rather than working separately and often at cross-purposes. The major thrusts on building sustainable border management systems should be hinged on reducing bottlenecks that are common throughout SADC regions. Building customs capacity to facilitate inter-regional trade is therefore a critical move needed to attain that. Customs procedures in the region are causing major delays at the regional borders. There is a need for customs system modernisation to electronic procedures which will see an eradication of hand written, duplicate procedures in accordance with the World Customs Organisation.
- There is need for institutional reforms, acquisition and adoption of unmanned technology to complement physical border controls and proper use of modern technology, and continuous training of personnel based on contemporary border needs.
- Travelling across Southern African borders requires multiple documents at each border post. These documents are not standard from country to country. It is important that SADC region standardize its documents or at least rationalize them to speed up the processing of goods and crossing of persons.
- The physical border vetting is a thing of the past as in the case of airlines the process of verification sometimes even starts before takeoff and their arrival. If the same approach could be adopted for passenger transport cross borders, it would improve the efficiency and waiting time at the border. A pre-clearing cross border travelling model of goods and passengers needs to be designed and re-engineered continuously.
- Inclusion and active involvement of local communities in the management of border is a critical aspect of border management
- There is need to clean touts and loiterers within the border as they cause a lot of confusion by demanding bribes and assisting people without proper documentation to cross, hence contributing towards illegal border activities. The Beitbridge, Nyamapanda, Chirundu and Ramakwebane Border posts are typical examples of chaotic borders especially during holiday times.
- The adoption of biometrics is a significant development towards effective border management systems. This really does complement the traditional vetting of physical passports and carrying out a comparative physical analysis of the passport and the holder of that passport.
- Strengthening co-operation between States” sub-regional/regional agencies, and the international community in particular in the area of law enforcement, sharing migration related data and information, training and sustained dialogue.
- Manage and maintain borders in ways that do not obstruct trade and the legal movement of people across
- One of the key recommendation is the establishment of SADC Regional Border Management Academy whose main thrust is to train personnel and departments that share border management on best practices. In that spirit a common culture of border management anchored on the principle of African renaissance and ubuntuism is created and in a way create the uniqueness that Africa deserves.
- There is need to develop common regional countermeasures, based on a spirit of solidarity among African States.
- Harmonize border management systems, e.g. visa policies, as a means of promoting regional integration or creating a borderless Africa. This can be done by starting with regional passports e.g. SADC Passport which allow individuals within SADC to move freely from one country to another.
- There is need to manage borders without turning them into barriers or sources of mutual distrust and tensions or war zones between neighbours as was the case between Botswana borders with Zimbabwe and South Africa borders with Zimbabwe during the economic meltdown in Zimbabwe between 2000 and 2011. Passing through the border even holding necessary documents was an eye-soar.
- There is need to promote t-coordinated Patrols and Joint Patrols with neighbouring countries, in framework of bilateral or trilateral cooperation
- The establishment of Joint Border Posts (JBPs)/Border Liaison Offices (BLOs) to increase cross-border communication and sharing of crucial intelligence information is a must do activity for effective and efficient border control.
- Incorporation of local communities in managing and securing borders
- Controlling and regulating cross-border activities as a way of ensuring peace and stability, and enhancing regional and continental integration should be done collegially
- African states to continuously be guided by Article 4 (2c) of the OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism (of 1 July 1999), which calls on African governments to “development and strengthen methods or controlling and monitoring land, sea and air borders and customs and immigration check points in order to pre-empt any infiltration by individuals or groups involved in the planning, organization and execution or terrorist acts.

- Adopting and implementing effective border management Afro-business models without a monitoring and evaluation mechanism would be like sailing without a chart. It is essentially difficult to know where we are, how far we have come, how far we need to go and how to get there. Planned performance and actual performance are likely to be at variance.

## 7. Conclusion

An important consideration is that –in order to come up with sustainable border management systems, SADC countries need to carry out an intensive and extensive audit of current systems, identify gaps and take comparative notes and design an integrated border management system that takes into account African renaissance and the spirit of ubuntuism. Countries demand the legal movement of people as this form has beneficial outcomes to both the migrant and the destination country in terms of almost all aspects, if not to the home country which may consider the event a loss of potential productive capability. Conversely, illegal migration is something countries have always defended themselves against, as it is associated with border insecurity. Border management initiatives in Africa, therefore, have to take into account all these pros and cons. The ultimate desire is that at the end of the day African states need to enjoy: reduced waiting time at border points, simplified customs procedures, where they exist, reduced congestion, detection and reduction of cross-border crimes, increased coordination and cooperation and updated accessible database. Ultimately the socio-economic activities of African countries are enhanced peacefully and its security is enhanced. In view of the raised issues that border insecurity is to some extent a factor of lack of strategies and of weak state institutions, hence adoption of sustainable national border management strategies and building state capacities to manage their borders is critical.

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