

SUCCESS STORY

Streamlining Trade Across Southern Africa

USAID's Southern Africa Trade Hub launches National Enquiry Points in six countries



Ambassador Earl Miller and Botswana's Minister of Trade and Industry Vincent Seretse officially open the National Enquiry Point, housed at the Botswana Bureau of Standards in Gaborone

Malawi was the first SADC country where USAID's Southern Africa Trade Hub helped launch a National Enquiry Point, in September 2014 with the Malawi Bureau of Standards.

Lesotho was next, with the Trade Hub collaborating with the country's Department of Standards and Quality Assurance.

Launches in Zambia and Swaziland followed, in April and June 2015, in coordination with the Zambia Bureau of Standards and the Swaziland Standards Authority, respectively.

In August 2015 the Trade Hub launched a National Enquiry Point in Mozambique alongside the country's standards organization, the Instituto Nacional de Normalização e Qualidade, with USAID Mozambique Mission Director Alex Dickie presiding.

Botswana was the final country to join the list, launching its NEP in September 2015 with the Botswana Bureau of Standards.

In just twelve months, six southern African countries have launched National Enquiry Points to improve trade and the ease of doing business.

With USAID's support, southern Africa now has a network of top-quality, effective National Enquiry Points (NEPs) in Malawi, Lesotho, Zambia, Swaziland, Mozambique and Botswana. Serving as a "one-stop shop" where reference requests for information can readily be made; NEPs facilitate commerce, enhance private sector involvement, and promote economic growth.

Establishing a National Enquiry Point, also known as an NEP, is a requirement of the WTO's Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement because it plays a crucial role in reducing the time and cost of trade.

Working closely with the national standards bodies of the six Southern African Development Community (SADC) member countries, USAID's Southern Africa Trade Hub purchased computer equipment for NEPs including laptops and servers, and offered extensive training on standards, regulations and conformity assessments to NEP officials.

"The establishment of the NEP within the Zambian Bureau of Standards (ZABS) is improving business competitiveness in local and international markets. We are now able to ensure that manufacturers, importers and exporters get the latest information on standards, regulations, test methods, codes, and specifications for their target markets," emphasized ZABS/NEP Documentation and Information Officer, Brian Mweemba.

As U.S. Ambassador Earl Miller noted in his address at Botswana's NEP launch, "Removing trade barriers is an important part of the Trade Hub's work in the SADC region. When resources like the National Enquiry Point help eliminate obstacles in trade flows, they ease the movement of commodities, which keeps costs reasonable for consumers."

USAID is proud to have partnered with six governments in the southern Africa region to help each nation fulfill its obligations as a WTO member while utilizing twenty-first century tools to streamline trade, improve food security and encourage investment.

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