



SUCCESS STORIES



Zambia | Story 5 – 2020

One region 16 nations Towards a common future

From the beginning of time, the principles of Ubuntu have guided African societies. Best described as an African philosophy rooted in a deep awareness of: “I am because of who we all are”; the spirit of Ubuntu resonates in every fibre of SADCs existence – past and present. The 40th anniversary of SADC in 2020 commemorates a journey of progress on the complex road to achieving peace and security, development and economic growth.

This “SADC Success Stories 2020” series shines a spotlight on the positive impacts achieved through regional integration in communities and in the lives of the people of the SADC region.

This story ‘Bridging trade and development’ is based on the SADC Protocol on Trade, adopted in 1996.

Bridging trade and development

“The paper-work is done quickly but it still takes many days for us to cross. This is my ninth day in the queue, and the wait becomes even worse when one of the two ferries breaks down. Because of the long wait, I only do two trips in a month,” says Given Mwamba, an A&B Replacement Parts Limited truck driver, waiting to cross the river at the Kazungula border post between Zambia and Botswana.

Long queues are a permanent feature where travellers cross the Zambezi River at the Kazungula border post between Zambia and Botswana, at the confluence of four countries – Zambia, Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe. Trucks carrying goods on the North-South Corridor from South Africa, through Botswana, to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and vice versa, or to-and-from Walvis Bay, wait for days here as the crossing is serviced by only two ferries – which each carry only two trucks at a time.

It can take up to 12 days for a truck to move from Kasane in Botswana to Kazungula on the Zambian side, and with delays like this being the norm, trade in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) is being negatively impacted. This is notwithstanding milestones such as the introduction of the SADC Free Trade Area in 2008 and the subsequent adoption of the SADC Protocol on Trade.

Mwamba says that while the administrative functions at the border are efficient, the delay is caused by the ferries: there are only two; they both regularly break down; their carrying capacity is limited; and their operation is hampered if the weather isn’t conducive. However, he believes that the answer lies in the 923-metre Kazungula Bridge, which is scheduled for completion which is



scheduled for completion by mid 2020. “When construction of the bridge is completed, we will be spending less time.”

The volume of intra-SADC trade is expected to blossom when the Kazungula Bridge project – a one-stop border facility, which started in 2014 – is complete. The estimated project cost is US\$259.3 million, with US\$134.56 million coming from the Zambian government and US\$124.73 million being contributed by the Botswana counterparts, with support from the African Development Bank and Japan International Co-operative Agency.

Currently, on average, 271 vehicles cross the Zambezi river here every month. This figure is expected to rise significantly when the bridge is operational. Supervisory Consultants Project Manager Pius Seone says that the bridge will have two lanes and has a provision for a railway in between. “So, the movement of people and goods around SADC member states will significantly increase because we will be able to transport goods and travel by road and railway.”

“The Kazungula Bridge will speed the flow of high volumes of traffic and boost economic growth, both in the SADC region and further north into Africa.”

And it’s not only large-volume cross-continental trade that will benefit. Small-scale trade between citizens of Botswana and Zambia is also expected to boom once the bridge project is complete. George Chimbwe, a businessman from Mazabuka, Zambia, says that he cannot wait for the bridge to open as it will ease movement for cross-border traders: “It will be easier for traders to cross the river because we currently use pontoons, which stop operating at around 17:30. It will also be safer for us. While we are stuck at the border, we are sometimes robbed.”

Community members, particularly women, are equally pleased about the bridge project nearing finalisation because truck drivers will no longer have days to wait before crossing the river. “The longer truck drivers stay in queues, the more they indulge in illicit activities. This fuels HIV and AIDS.

Marriages are breaking up because of the long time that truck drivers spend here,” said 58-year-old Mainess Sianaju of Kazala village.

Chieftainess Sekute of the Toka-Leya people of Kazungula District says that the bridge project will lead to increased development in her chiefdom, as there will be improved infrastructure development, more job creation and higher levels of trade between Zambia and Botswana, and beyond.

“The coming of this bridge has transformed Kazungula from a bush to a modern town. I am now receiving a lot of people from different parts of the country, and beyond, asking for land to develop. My people are now getting employed. The bridge project has also helped us in terms of schools, clinics and other social and economic amenities,” says the Chieftainess.

The construction of Kazungula Bridge is in tandem with the SADC Regional Infrastructure Development Master Plan, which facilitates the development of cost-effective trans-boundary structures. The plan is part of the regional grouping’s Infrastructure Vision 2027, under which transport is one of six pillars. (The other pillars are energy; information and communications technology; meteorology; trans-boundary water resources; and tourism.)

The initiative to build the bridge is also in line with the SADC Trade Protocol, which is fundamental to regional integration. This protocol was signed in 1996 with the aim of liberalising regional trade, reducing barriers between member states, and stimulating production and economic development.

With the one-stop border facilities that are being incorporated into both sides of the Kazungula Bridge, truckers from the south, through Botswana, will no longer have to do exit and entry formalities at both border posts. This will improve border management operations, eliminate duplication of processes, save time, and increase the number of cargo trucks crossing the border.

