



## SUCCESS STORY

# Customs Study to Reduce Bottlenecks

### Identifying bottlenecks and delays in the customs process

Customs procedures often tie up goods and merchandise at borders for weeks, even months. Customs offices in Malawi are no exception. But now, thanks to help from USAID's Southern Africa trade hub, that's changing.



Photo: USAID/Lisa Yarmoshuk

USAID helped complete an analysis of Malawi's customs procedures that will help identify weak links and areas that need improvement. The analysis, known as a time release study, assesses the time elapsed at each stop in the cargo release process. An analysis of this data helps point out inefficiencies in the customs clearance process and determine where infrastructure, policy, and process improvements are necessary. This study, carried out in 2005, was the first of its kind to be completed in all of Southern Africa.

Customs officials review documents at the Ressano Garcia and Komatiport border post between South Africa and Mozambique.

To ensure that all relevant Malawian actors and agencies were involved in the study, USAID helped them put together a representative working group to lead the process. The working group included representatives from Malawi's customs authority, freight forwarders, government departments such as the Ministry of Agriculture, pre-shipment inspection companies, and transporters.

***USAID helped Malawi to carry out a diagnostic study to identify inefficiencies in the customs clearance process. The study will help the government reduce the costs of doing business in Southern Africa.***

With help from USAID and its partner, the World Customs Organization, the working group designed a questionnaire, administered the questionnaire at selected border posts, compiled and analyzed the results and produced a final report containing recommendations for improvements to the customs process.

In 2006, USAID offered to assist Malawi in designing action plans for implementing the recommendations identified in the final report.

Thanks to the project's success, USAID is now replicating the project in Mozambique and discussing further replication elsewhere in Africa with interested countries.