

# Ghana National Single Window Brochure

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## Highlights:

What is a Single Window?  
Why does Ghana need a Single Window?  
What are the expected Economic Benefits?



## Partners



**Ministry of Finance**  
Republic of Ghana



**Ministry of Trade and Industry**  
Republic of Ghana



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# Introduction

This brochure presents an overview of the Ghana National Single Window (GNSW) Programme, provides a background on its evolution, and details the approach, deliverables and timelines for its implementation. The brochure is intended for the general audience and more technical information is available directly from West Blue.





# Background

The Ghana National Single Window project was initiated on the 1st of September 2015 by the Government of Ghana to enhance the country's trade and economic development and secure and increase government revenue. It was officially launched on 1st December 2015.

From the outset, the project was seen as a partnership between business and government to strengthen Ghana's trade competitiveness and enhance the participation of the business community in the global market, thereby creating new trade and employment opportunities. This is a clear win-win scenario with direct benefits to business, government and the general public.

The Government of Ghana contracted West Blue Consulting to undertake the GNSW programme. Specifically, West Blue was tasked to:

- Assist Ghana Customs to take over responsibility for Import Classification and Valuation from the Destination Inspection Companies

- Undertake a full feasibility study and the implementation of the GNSW
- Develop a Risk Management System for Ghana Customs and related Agencies
- Undertake specific interventions to support the above areas, including the development of an Inspection Policy for trade in Ghana

The GNSW project builds on previous work undertaken over several years that focused on the automation of international trade processes in Customs. It significantly extends and expands upon this work by providing a fully automated and integrated all-of-government approach to Single Window based on international best practice.



# What is a Single Window?

The Single Window concept was developed by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in 2005 as an effort to simplify, harmonise and standardise international trade procedures and associated information flows between trade and government and within government itself.

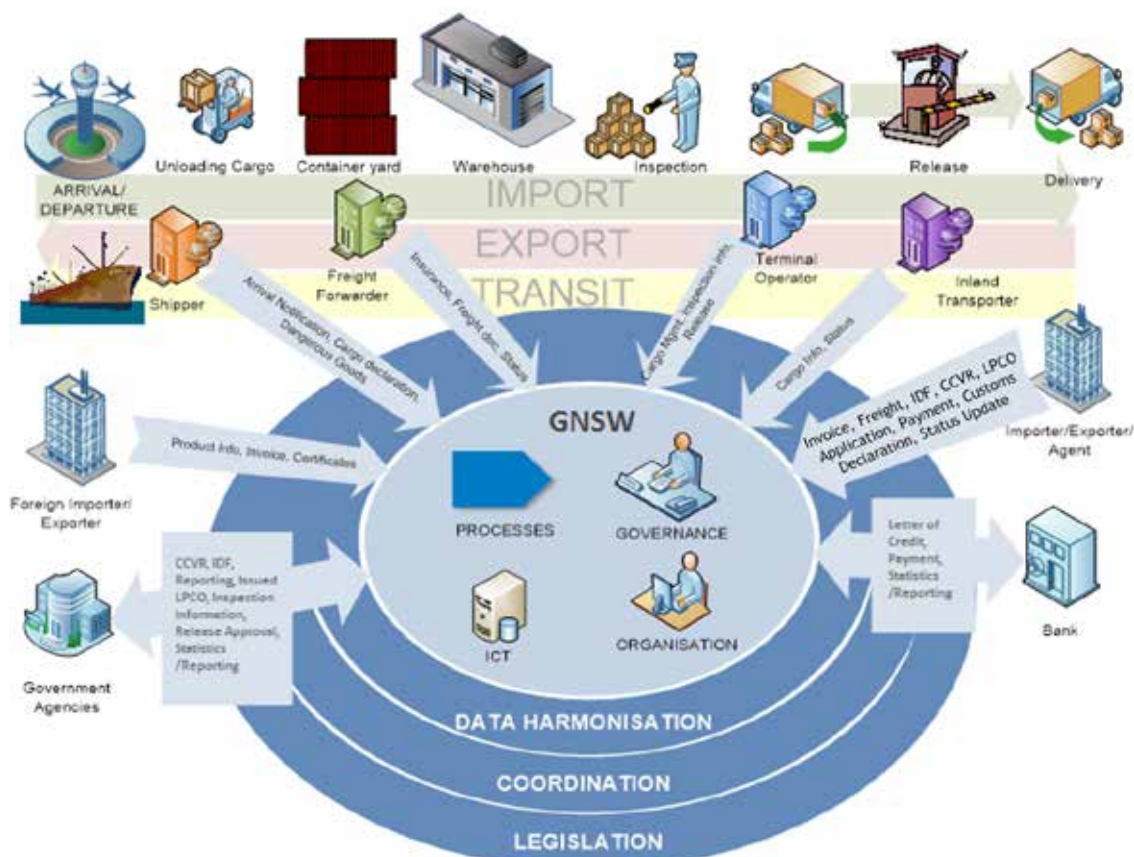
UNECE, through its UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT), defined Single Window as “a facility that allows parties involved in trade and transport to lodge standardized information and documents with a **single entry point** to fulfil all import, export, and transit-related regulatory requirements. If information is electronic, **then individual data elements should only be submitted once**”. This work, as contained in UNECE Recommendation 33 – “Recommendation and Guidelines on Establishing a Single Window to enhance the efficient exchange of information between trade and government” - has become the global standard for Single Window implementation worldwide.

Several important points are worth noting in this definition. Firstly, a Single Window is a facility. It is not an Information Technology (IT) system, as such, although IT plays a major role in its implementation. Rather, a Single Window is an organic concept focusing on the way we do business, both within

government and between government and business, ensuring the maximum integration, harmonisation and standardisation of the process, procedures and related information-flows within the international trade environment. It is essentially driven by the principle of a partnership between trade and government for economic development and prosperity.

A second key concept in the definition is the single entry point. Within this, the basic idea is that information **should only be submitted once** and then reused to populate the various government and in some instances private service operator's requirements. In a fully functional Single Window facility, the trader submits all the information required through the single entry point and the facility manages the distribution of this information to the relevant entities for assessment and response to the client. This is the very essence of **Single Submission of Data** and has a major impact on reducing the cost and time of doing business.

Since its inception in 2005, Single Window has been implemented in over 70 countries. It is now seen by the World Bank and many other development agencies as a key tool to enhance the trade and economic competitiveness of a country.





# MINISTRY OF FINANCE



REPUBLIC OF GHANA

## PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY (PFMA) BILL

### INTRODUCTION

The Government of Ghana has initiated the process of introducing a new Public Financial Management Bill. This initiative forms part of the structural reforms being undertaken to strengthen the Public Financial Management System in the country. The draft Bill when passed will become the overarching legislation which will help address persistent weaknesses in the budget outcomes and promote fiscal discipline, transparency and accountability governing the management of public funds with accompanying regulations. The key principles underpinning this legislation include accountability, fairness, responsibility, stability and transparency.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE PFMA BILL

- More robust macroeconomic and fiscal framework to guide and anchor fiscal policies,
- Stronger regulatory framework for financial management and control of money, assets, other resources and liabilities of public funds,
- Roles and responsibilities of persons entrusted with public financial management, accounting and audit of the public accounts and
- Stronger sanctions regime.

### THE SCOPE OF THE PFMA BILL

- The Roles and Responsibilities for the Minister of Finance, Chief Director, Controller and Accountant-General, Director of Budget, Principal Spending Officers and oversight agencies which are aimed at improving Budget Discipline and ensuring Accountability.
- The Macro Fiscal Policy formulation by strengthening the processes for engaging with Cabinet and Parliament and codifying some of the fiscal rules in the legislation to improve the transparency and credibility of the policy
- The entire process of Budgeting which has been strengthened and made more robust with a budget Calendar and the role of Cabinet clearly specified.
- The Coverage of National Accounts expanded to cover all public funds and not just the consolidated funds and a Treasury Single Account will be established as well as stronger Commitment Control to regulate outer year commitments and improve reporting of commitment of entire government entities.
- The Debt Management functions within the Ministry of finance strengthened with a stronger oversight of all borrowing across government to ensure more sustainable debt level consistent with our medium term macro fiscal framework
- The Cash Management responsibilities strengthened to support a more reliable and predictable budget releases
- Introduce a stronger Sanctions regime to ensure efficient management of public resources by Public Officials as well as Oversight roles and responsibilities over MDAs, State Owned Enterprises, Special funds and other agencies and bodies.



# Does Ghana not already have a Single Window?

Initial work on establishing a Single Window in Ghana commenced in 2002. This focused primarily on automating Customs' processes and procedures. The current project takes this work much further through an all-of-government approach to establishing an automated and integrated National Single Window based on international standards and best practice (see below for details).

## **What is the Ghana National Single Window?**

The Ghana National Single Window (GNSW) project, often referred to by government as Single Window Phase II, greatly expands upon the initial work undertaken in this area by extending the National Single Window automation and integration approach to all other government agencies and private sector operators involved in international trade. Working towards the realisation of the Single Submission of data in the trade supply chain, the project adopts a Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) Approach. Within this, and in line with the UN/CEFACT BUY SHIP PAY Model, the services provided by the Commercial, Financial, Transport and Logistics and Regulatory sectors will be reviewed for automation and/or integration.

The GNSW will simplify, standardise and harmonise the underlying trade processes within all key government agencies, including Customs, and will integrate these within the National Single Window framework. It will also provide traders with the critical "single entry point" referred to above – to facilitate the single submission of their trade information for processing and to receive the relevant response from government and private sector operators in a seamless and easy to use service.

The GNSW will, to the maximum extent possible, also reduce the human interface in trade transactions, allowing most processes to be undertaken automatically. This will greatly increase transparency and reduce the possibilities for irregular interventions and payments.

In addition, the GNSW will introduce a fully integrated Risk Management system that will allow Customs and Partner Government Agencies to focus inspections and examinations on higher risk consignments, thus facilitating the free flow of legitimate transactions. This approach also provides for the single coordinated inspection of goods, should such an intervention be deemed necessary. Again, this will greatly speed up the flow of goods along the value chain, reduce costs and increase predictability - all key factors in trade competitiveness.

The GNSW services will be delivered via [www.ghanatradinghub.gov.gh](http://www.ghanatradinghub.gov.gh) complimented by other service delivery programmes such as the Customs Technical

Services Bureau (CTSB) and an Import; Export and Transit Process Manual.

## **The GNSW is governed by the following:**

### **Steering Committee Members:**

- Chief of Staff (Chairman)
- Minister of Finance
- Minister of Food and Agriculture
- Minister of Trade and Industry
- Minister of Transport
- Attorney General

### **Technical Committee Members:**

Technical Officer representatives from the organisations:

- Office of the President
- Ministry of Food and Agriculture
- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Trade and Industry
- Ministry of Transport
- Attorney General
- Association of Ghana Industries
- Bank of Ghana
- Customs Brokers Association of Ghana
- Federation of Associations of Ghanaian Exporters
- Food and Drugs Authority
- Ghana Association of Bankers
- Ghana Chamber of Commerce
- Ghana Community Network Service Limited (GCNET)
- Ghana Institute of Freight Forwarders
- Ghana Ports and Harbour Authority
- Ghana Revenue Authority
- Ghana Shippers Authority
- Ghana Standards Authority
- Ghana Union of Traders Association (GUTA)
- Narcotics Control Board (NACOB)
- National Information and Technology Agency
- National Security Council
- Nick Scan Ltd.
- West Blue Consulting

### **Working Group Members:**

Process Owner Representatives from the Technical Committee Members as above. The Working Groups consist of 4 sub-groups of:

- Business Process and Data Harmonisation
- Change Management and Stakeholder Engagement
- ICT and Infrastructure
- Legal





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Cross section of guests at the 2016  
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Cross Section of dignitaries at the 2015 Ghana National Single Window Conference



Cross Section of Participants at the 2015  
Ghana National Single Window Conference



Cross Sections of Guests at the 2016  
Ghana National Single Window Conference



Cross Section of Participants (Group Photograph) at the 2015 Ghana National Single Window Conference



## What has been achieved so far?

The first, and indeed pressing, task of the GNSW Project was to provide the necessary technical, architectural and administrative support to Ghana Customs to take over the pre-arrival classification and valuation process for imports from the 1st of September 2015. This work was previously handled by five Destination Inspection Companies and was discontinued in order to bring Ghana in line with global best practice as recommended by the World Custom Organization and World Trade Organisation.

West Blue developed the fully automated Pre-Arrival Assessment Reporting System (PAARS) and the complimenting suite of operational and capacity building activities to provide this function. It went live on 1 September 2015 and already within its first months of operation has reduced the time for import classification and valuation of compliant transactions from 2 weeks to the established 48 hours Service Level Agreement - and in some cases just 2 hours. The system is fully functional and has been well received by the business community – “An extremely important effort at re-engineering a major tool for trade facilitation; a wonderful experience so far!” Kwabena Ofosu Appiah - President of Ghana Institute of Freight Forwarders (GIFF). It is also important to note that this major change in procedures was associated with an actual increase in Customs revenues in 2015, which demonstrates that it is possible to have enhanced trade facilitation while simultaneously securing (and indeed increasing) government revenues.

The second major task assigned to West Blue was to undertake a full feasibility study for the GNSW. As Single Window is a collaborative and partnership concept by nature, this involved close cooperation and engagement with all key stakeholders - including all relevant government agencies and business associations. Over 40 stakeholder assessment meetings with individual agencies and associations have been held so far, assessing the current business processes and procedures for

international trade; the related documents and information flows; the information and communications (ICT) infrastructure currently in place; and the stakeholder and change management requirements to support the implementation of the GNSW. A Legal Framework Analysis will be conducted following the establishment of the Blue Print of the end state GNSW. This work is progressing satisfactorily and a draft GNSW Strategy and Road Map will be presented to the government in May this year.

### *Other key deliverables in the project so far include:*

- Establishment of the fully automated HS Classification tool - to assist traders to determine the appropriate Harmonised System (HS) Code for their imports and exports
- Creation of a national Risk Management Committee and Team and the development of a single integrated Risk Management System. This will significantly reduce the number of goods physically inspected and ensure better detection of fraudulent activities through the pooling of risk intelligence from all agencies. Experience from Customs Administrations worldwide has shown that this approach has a very positive impact on fraud detection while at the same time facilitating the flow of legitimate trade.
- Submission of Import Declaration Form (IDF) directly on PAARS.
- Establishment and integration of an electronic Letter of Credit (e-LC) and other modes of trade payments.
- Development of a comprehensive Inspection Policy for government.

Some of the above initiatives are already operational and the remainder are currently under development.

## Why does Ghana need a National Single Window?

Many countries around the world are currently focusing on implementing major trade facilitation reforms to enhance their competitiveness and increase their participation in the global economy.

Indeed, trade facilitation has become a major element of trade and economic development policy worldwide, as evidenced by the signing of the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement.

Ghana is no exception in this regard and the government has adopted Trade Facilitation as a key pillar in its trade and economic development programme. However, the challenges facing Ghana in this area are formidable. Ghana ranks 171 out of 189 countries in the World Bank "Trading Across Borders" Report for 2016. Within Sub-Saharan Africa, Ghana is 36 out of 47 countries in the region.

Clearly there is a lot of room for improvement and this is one of the main reasons the Government initiated the GNSW project.



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## What are the expected Economic Benefits?

World Bank's "Trading Across Borders Rankings", reports on the cost and time of administering procedures and processes for importing and exporting. Reducing these factors (time and cost) is exactly what the Ghana National Single Window Project is designed to address. The improvements introduced by the PAARS system are already having a dramatic impact on the time required to do business and the other elements of the programme such as the Integrated Risk Assessment, IDF Direct, and e-Letter of Credit, will have similarly strong effects.

Based on the experience of Single Window implementations in other countries, West Blue estimates that the GNSW project will reduce the cost and time of international trade (Import, export and transit) in Ghana by 50% and 25% respectively over the next five years. This will have a huge impact on the

international competitiveness of Ghanaian business and should, other things being equal, result in a strong growth in Ghana's international trade performance. It will also greatly increase the global ranking of Ghana in the above mentioned "Trading Across Borders Report", from a rank of 171 in 2016 to 121 by 2021. Similarly, the ranking within the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) regions could increase from 36 to 16, other things being equal.

Another potential benefit of the GNSW is the likely positive impact on Ghana's foreign direct investment prospects. Trade efficiency is a key determinant of investment decisions by international business and the positioning of Ghana as a trade efficient and trade friendly country will greatly enhance its attractiveness to such investors.

## How will the GNSW be financed – and will there be charges to use the system?

The Ghana National Single Window will be financed out of the existing 1% fee on imports and exports. There will be no additional fees or costs to use the system.



Cross Section of Officers at the Customs Technical Services Bureau





A cross-section of participants at the 2015 Ghana National Single Window Conference



Facilitators networking at the 2015 Ghana National Single Window Conference



Business Process Analyst experts at the 2016 Ghana National Single Window Workshop



Group photograph of participants at the 2016 Ghana National Single Window Media Workshop



Group Photograph of participants at the 2016 Ghana National Single Window Working Group



## How does the **GNSW** project relate to existing service providers such as **GCNet**?

The GNSW project utilises existing systems and infrastructure whenever and wherever this is efficient and effective for achieving the primary goal of the project - enhancing the trade efficiency and competitiveness of the Ghanaian economy. For example, the GNSW PAARS System already uses the eMDA and GCMS facilities of GCNet for government permits and Customs Declarations respectively. However, it should be clear that the GNSW objective of a fully integrated and automated facility,

as described throughout this document, is much broader and more comprehensive than any services currently available. The interoperability of existing and new systems of the GNSW eco system is key, with the adoption of a National Trade Data Set aligned to WCO's latest version of the Data Model, being fundamental and critical.

## How will the **GNSW** project interface with other trade related reform projects in the country?

Similar to the above, the GNSW project will work in collaboration with all related projects and initiatives as long as they support the achievement of the GNSW overall goals and objectives.



Cross Section of Facilitators at the 2015 Ghana National Single Window Workshop

## What is the timeline for **implementation**?

The first deliverables of the GNSW project, the PAARS, went "live" on 1 September 2015. Additional elements, such as the Tariff Calculator, are also currently operational. Other key aspects, such as the IDF Direct, the e-Letter of Credit, are under development.

In parallel with the above developments, the GNSW Feasibility Study is underway and the resulting GNSW Strategy and

Roadmap will be presented to government in May 2016. The Study will present a range of recommendations to government on the phased rollout of the GNSW over the next 5 years. Priority will be given to key products in terms of export or import value. Rollout of the specific facilities under the Roadmap will commence immediately upon acceptance of the report by government. This will cover an initial 5-year period and developments will continue for a further 5 years thereafter.



Ghana National Single Window Facilitators meeting with the Vice-President



L-R Secretary-General, World Customs Organization; Mr Kunio Mikuriya with the Vice-President of Ghana; Mr Kwesi Amissah-Arthur



Group Photograph of the Ghana National Single Window Facilitators with the Vice-President



## What are the major risks and assumptions behind the **GNSW** project?

As with any project of this size and importance, strong political will and support is crucial. It is anticipated that this will continue throughout the life of the project - for the benefit of the Nation.

It is also essential to have full buy-in and engagement of key stakeholders, both in government agencies and the private sector. This has been very positive to date and it is expected that this will continue, based on the delivery of powerful and effective services from the project.

## How do business and government contribute to the **GNSW** project?

As stated several times throughout this publication, the GNSW Project is a partnership between government and business for the benefit of all. Government has been very strong in supporting the project, with all key Ministries actively engaged in the process. This is key for the success of the project. The Ghana Revenue Authority and the Ghana Customs have been particularly supportive. West Blue would like to sincerely thank all of the above agencies, partner government agencies for their hard work and dedicated support over the past year.

Similarly, the business community has been a key partner in the design, development and delivery of the GNSW. Support from this group has been very forthcoming from the inception of the project and is growing even stronger with the effective delivery of services like PAARS. West Blue welcomes and appreciates

the continuation of this support and looks forward to the active promotion of the project by the business associations to their members, their full participation in the development processes, and direct and frank feedback throughout the process regarding service delivery.

West Blue is fully committed to supporting the stakeholders throughout the implementation of the project and has undertaken a full stakeholder and change management assessment of all key government agencies and business organizations. Based on these assessments, West Blue has developed a comprehensive training and communications programme that will be rolled out in the implementation phases.

## Concluding Comments

The GNSW is a ground breaking project that can have a dramatic and positive impact on the performance of the Ghanaian economy. It involves a fundamental change in mind-set, where government and business are working together as partners for the benefit of the country.

This is a win-win scenario for all. West Blue is privileged to undertake this project and will work diligently to ensure its successful implementation.

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