

Ghana National Single Window Newsletter

Strengthening Ghana's trade and economic competitiveness



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Welcome To The GNSW Newsletter

Welcome to the first edition of the bi-monthly Ghana National Single Window (GNSW) Newsletter, designed to keep you informed of ongoing developments in the project. The GNSW is a ground breaking project that will have a dramatic and positive impact on the performance of the Ghanaian economy. It involves a strong partnership between government and business for the benefit of the country - a win-win scenario for the entire community.

Government has been very strong in supporting the project, with the Ghana Revenue Authority, Ghana Customs and all key Ministries actively engaged from the outset. West Blue would like to sincerely thank the Government of Ghana and all partner Government agencies for their hard work and dedicated support over the past year.

Similarly, support from the business community has been very forthcoming since the inception of the project and this is growing even stronger with the effective delivery of services like the Pre-Arrival Assessment Reporting System (PAARS). West Blue welcomes and appreciates this support and looks forward to its continuation throughout the development processes.

West Blue is privileged to undertake this project and will work diligently to ensure its success. We are keenly aware of the changes that a project of this magnitude involves and are fully committed to supporting all stakeholders throughout the process. To this end, we have undertaken a full stakeholder and change management assessment of all key government agencies and business organizations and have developed a comprehensive training and communications support programme that will be rolled out in the implementation phases.

I hope you find this Newsletter to be useful and informative and we at West Blue would welcome your comments, suggestions and contributions for future editions.

Valentina Mintah, CEO West Blue Consulting, Ghana





THE GHANA NATIONAL SINGLE WINDOW PROJECT

The GNSW 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. The Government contracted West Blue Consulting to undertake the project and tasked it to:

- Assist Ghana Customs to take over responsibility for Import Classification and Valuation
- 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 a Container Scanning Strategy for Ghana Customs

The GNSW project, often referred to by government as Single Window Phase II, greatly expands upon the initial Customs focussed 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. Specifically, the GNSW will simplify, standardise and harmonise the underlying trade processes within these agencies and will integrate them within the Ghana National Single Window framework. These processes will cover the Financial; Commercial; Regulatory and the Ports and Logistics procedures of the international trade supply chain.

A key feature of the GNSW will be the provision of a "single entry point" facility that will provide for the single submission - by businesses - of all information required for processing export, import or transit transactions by government agencies and private sector operators. 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 to focus inspection and examinations on higher risk consignments, thus facilitating the free flow of legitimate transactions. This approach also provides for the single coordinated inspection of containers, 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 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 facilities of GCNet for government permits and Customs Declarations respectively. In a similar vein, the GNSW project is working closely with the Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority (GPHA) Port Reform Programme to ensure the full integration of this programme with the GNSW project - in order to provide a seamless service to the business community.

The Ghana National Single Window services will be delivered via 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. It will be financed out of the 1% levy on imports and exports. There will be no additional fees or costs to use the system.

ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

The first 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 into 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 has been well received by the business community – “This is 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 involves 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 Roadmap will be presented to the government in May this year.

Other key deliverables will be made available throughout the project lifespan.



The Economic and Strategic imperative for a Single Window

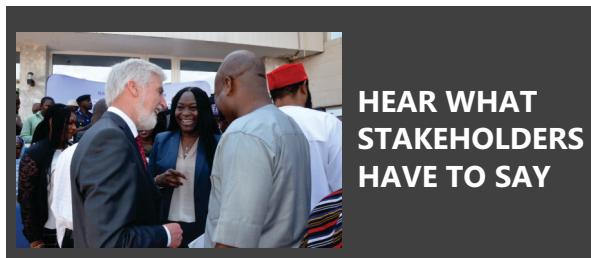
Many countries around the world are currently focusing on implementing major trade facilitation reforms to enhance their competitiveness and increase their participation in the global economy. Indeed, trade facilitation has become a major element of trade and economic development policy worldwide, as 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.

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 could 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.

THE JOURNEY SO FAR...



HEAR WHAT STAKEHOLDERS HAVE TO SAY

“The National Single Window is working and we need to keep the focus into Phase II”
Honourable Seth Terkper – Minister of Finance

“An extremely important effort at re-engineering a major tool for trade facilitation; a wonderful experience so far!”
Kwabena Ofori Appiah - GIFF President

“We at Customs are very proud of the successful takeover of our core functions of valuation, classification and risk management after 15 years. We are fully committed to the successful implementation of the National Single Window”
Mr. Fred Gavor Customs Division of GRA

“The PAARS has so far brought some efficiency in the documentation process for cargo clearance from the ports. CCVR turn around time has seen a considerable improvement over the period when the old system was in place.”
- Edmund Aryee /Mechanical Lloyd

“It is worth noting that the system was specifically designed to take account of the people (users and operators-all stakeholders and strategic partners), the processes (process enhancement to minimise processing time, reduce cost and improve compliance), the platform (a user-friendly open system that can be accessed anytime, anywhere using any device and clearly defined policy guidelines), governance, legal environment and import guidelines, among others.”
Kuadammnu John Vianney, Acting Commissioner-Customs Division, GRA

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.

It is important to note in this definition that 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.

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.

