

Benin Customs, with the technical assistance of the World Customs Organization (WCO), are currently preparing their first [Time Release Study \(TRS\)](#), that is expected to be completed by the end of this year. From 13 to 17 January 2020, a National Workshop was held in Cotonou with the aim of raising awareness and training the staff of Beninese Customs and other stakeholders for the performance of the first national Study.

Time Release Studies (TRS) are a trade facilitation tool recommended since 1994 by the World Customs Organization (WCO), which is utilized to quantify the average time for goods to clear through Customs. TRS enable Customs administrations to measure, and break up into separate phases, the time required from the arrival of goods to their release, identifying bottlenecks, delays and constraints, where they exist, with a view to implementing corrective actions, aimed at improving the efficiency of the entire clearance process.

TRS are also recommended by [WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement \(TFA\)](#), whose article 7.6 encourages members to periodically measure and make available to all relevant stakeholders (publication) the average release time of goods.

[Malawi](#)

and

[Cape Vert](#)

are other African countries that recently completed TRSs (for Malawi, the study measures average release time of goods at the Songwe Border Station).

To this effect, the World Customs Organization developed the [WCO TRS Guidelines](#), that recommend to reconstruct and analyse separately the time needed for completing each of the phases in which the clearance process is articulated, from the arrival of cargo at the port/airport/land border, until its physical release to the importer or to a third party acting on the importer's behalf

TRS can be developed also at bilateral (between two countries, either at a single or at multiple border posts or Customs offices), or multilateral level (within regional contexts, like in the case of COMESA that in 2017, with the support of the African Development Bank, adopted a [COMESA TRS model](#)

for measuring average release time of goods simultaneously in

[10 Member countries](#)

, namely: DR Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Sudan, Uganda

and Zambia. The study was designed to cover a total of 34 border sites in the 10 Member States; comprising 15 land borders, 6 international airports, 9 seaports and 4 inland dry ports. These are Djibouti (Djibouti DCT and PK13), DR Congo (Kasumbalesa, Matadi and Kinshasa International Airport), Eritrea (Massawa and Asmara International Airport), Ethiopia (Galafi, Bole International Airport, Modjo and Kality), Kenya (Busia OSBP, Malaba OSBP, and Moyale), Madagascar (Toamasina, Antsirana, Mahajanga, Toliary Ivato, Mamory Ivato and Antanimena), Malawi (Mchinji, Dedza and Mwanza), Sudan (Port Sudan - 3 quays and Khartoum International Airport), Uganda (Busia OSBP, Malaba OSBP and Mpondwe), and Zambia (Chirundu OSBP, Kasumbalesa, and Katima Mulilo).

The WCO TRS Guidelines also recommend the use of a specific online platform developed by the WCO ([WCO TRS software](#)) for data analysis and for producing statistical reports, which is available to WCO Members free of charge. In order to use the software, the WCO members must submit a request to the WCO Secretariat, that will provide them with a User ID and a Password valid for a single survey.