

COMESA launched a training programme to build the capacity of [Trade Information Desk Officers](#) (TIDOs) stationed at selected border posts in the Region to facilitate trade and promote conversion of part of informal trade into formal trade.

On 23 February 2021, TIDOs from the border posts of Chirundu (Zambia/Zimbabwe), Kasumbalesa (DR Congo/Zambia), Mwami/Mchinji (Malawi/Zambia) and Nakonde (Zambia/Tanzania) received training through a virtual workshop on the COMESA Simplified Trade Regime (STR), a tool that allows small-scale traders to exchange their goods duty-free with a reduced set of documentary requirements to cross the border (more information on the COMESA STR is available [here](#)). This training is part of a European Union-funded programme called “Small Scale Cross Border Trade Initiative” (SSCBTI) which is implemented by COMESA together with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the International Trade Centre (ITC) and whose aim is to increase formal small scale cross border trade flows in the COMESA/Tripartite region leading to higher revenue collection by governments as well as increased security and higher incomes for small scale cross border traders.

During the training, the TIDOs were taken through trade procedures for clearing goods under the STR threshold (currently, 2000 USD) and the Regulations on the Minimum Standards for the Treatment of Small-Scale Cross Border Traders. The training also focused on cross-border data collection activities.

A similar initiative has been developed in West Africa where, to cope with the problem of insufficient information on the formalities, documentation and fees related to the use of border posts and of the corridors connected to these facilities (including how to complete clearance documents at the border) a series of help desks have been developed with the support of USAID and West Africa Trade Hub called [Border Information Centers](#) (BICs). Basically, the purpose of BICs is to disseminate information to cross-border traders so that they can effectively carry out seamless trade. Information is mainly focused on customs procedures, documentation needed for goods, vehicles and drivers, traffic laws and transport regulations, protocols on transport and transit and other aspects related to the movement of goods and vehicles across borders and along road corridors.

