

# Mauritius

*What motivated the establishment of your Single Window (SW)?*

## Background

As a small island economy (60 km long by 40 km wide), Mauritius is extremely open and highly dependent on the outside world for its supplies of current consumption and equipment goods (total imports and exports exceed the GDP in value), and its economic growth relies to a considerable extent on possibilities of access to foreign markets for its export goods.

Both the import and local distributive trades are highly decentralized, with over one thousand regular importers and over seven thousand retail outlets. On the other hand, close to five hundred firms export goods (mainly sugar and apparel) to the European Union, to the United States and to Africa. Finally, one has to note that purchasing power within that small system is limited.

Because of the above factors, import, export and distributive trade procedures and processes have to be as simple and efficient as possible. The TradeNet single window system contributes significantly to this objective in Mauritius through the speedy processing of data and the maintaining of high levels of cost-effectiveness.

*What year was it established?*

Launch date	TradeNet Phases
28 July 1994	<u>Phase 1</u> - Transmission of Approved Non-verification declarations from Customs to Freight Stations for Delivery of Goods. This phase is now obsolete with Phase 3 fully operational.
5 January 1995	<u>Phase 2</u> - Submission of Manifests from Shipping, Clearing & Forwarding Agents to Customs.
28 July 1997	<u>Customs Management System &amp; Phase 3</u> - Submission of declarations from traders to Customs and receiving response from Customs for Goods Delivery.
11 July 2000	<u>Phase 4</u> - Submission of Form 28 for the transfer of containers.
11 December 2000	<u>Phase 5</u> - Submission of Import and Export Permits.

In addition to the phases defined, the Mauritius Customs adopted the "Single Goods Declaration" form to be in line with the World Customs Organisation recommendation. In 2001, the system has integrated a programme for the electronic submission of declarations by operators of the bonded warehouses within the port area (for goods in transit), and it is in the process of providing for the electronic payment of Customs duties and taxes.

Since then, Mauritius Customs has implemented two more “Single Windows”/one stop shop.

- A “one-stop shop” for exporters: This new window includes dedicated processing of export declarations and issuance of Certificates of Origin over extended hours of service.
- A “Single Window” Cargo inspection office at New Container Terminal: This new window was implemented in parallel with the recent launching of an X-ray scanner at Port Louis. The window allows importers/brokers to schedule cargo inspections on line over a twelve-hour/two shift period. Brought together in the cargo examination shed are Customs Cargo Inspectors along with Inspectors from Health and Agriculture.

*What is the current status of the facility (study, pilot phase, running)?* Running

*How did the SW interface with already established systems (if any existed)?*

#### **Establishment**

It did not evolve from another system, as it had been designed from scratch with the help of “Singapore Network Services Ltd.” and a local team at “Mauritius Network Services Ltd.”

*Did any other SW model serve as inspiration or model?*

The system in Mauritius is known as the TradeNet system. It is the first EDI network on the island; it was modeled on the Singapore TradeNet system, with local requirements and conditions having been taken into count.

*What services does the SW provide? What documents/information/process are covered?*

#### **Services**

Distribution of data through TradeNet concerns the sending of electronic copies of manifests to the Mauritius Ports Authority, the Cargo Handling Corporation, and the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Selective electronic copies of Customs declarations are sent to the Ministry of Cooperatives and Commerce and to the Mauritius Freeport Authority.

Selective electronic copies of import permits are sent to banks for funds transfers to the Registrar General and to the National Transport Authority (in relation to the importing of second-hand cars).

The system also links with banks to allow for electronic payments.

*How many clients does the SW have at the present time?*

Around 400 companies

*How does it work? What is the operational model for the*

#### **Operational model**

It is a value-added network system based on mailboxes. There are no systems of various participants that are integrated. The network

*SW (describe the business process model)?*

*Which public and private agencies are involved in the facility?*

operator allows transmission of electronic documents between various parties.

Refer to the answer to “What services does the SW provide? What documents/information/process are covered?” (Services)

*What is the business model? How is it financed (government, private sector, Private-Public partnership)?*

### **Business model**

Public - private sector partnership

*What were the costs of establishment of the facility?*

Costs were related to the establishment of a company to act as the value-added network operator, and this included equipment, software, and staff. There were also expenses for Customs, namely for the purchasing of equipment.

*What are the ongoing operational costs (annual)?*

Running costs originate mainly from communications, maintenance of equipment and staff retribution.

*What are the user fees (if any) and annual revenue? Model of payment (fixed price per year, price per transaction, combination, other model)?*

There are one-time costs such as registration fees and the price of software. Then there is a pricing per transaction element applied on a current basis.

*How will the SW be sustained over the coming years?*

The programme has been designed to be self-sustainable and the objectives in that respect have been fully met, to the extent that the value-added network operator is already self-sustainable, and has been able to use its own resources to finance its investment and participation in new related projects.

*Do the revenues generated cover operational costs or do they make a profit?*

Fully self sustainable (see previous question)

*Are the revenues (if any) reinvested in the SW?*

The programme has been able to use its own resources to finance its investment and participation in new related projects.

*How are data submitted (electronically – what type of format/language, paper – what forms, combination – what kind of combination)?*

### **Technology**

Customs-related documents, such as declarations, manifests, and import and export permits are submitted electronically, in EDI format. However, paper copies of declarations are required as supporting documents and have to be printed out and kept on record.

*Where are data sent and lodged (government or private entity)?*

The data is lodged through front-end software supplied by the value-added network operator. It is then routed to the government agency concerned via the value-added network operator.

*Who can submit data (importer, exporter, agent, customs broker)?*

Individual importing and exporting firms, clearing and forwarding agents, customs brokers and commission agents are allowed to submit data through the system.

<i>Do you provide any helpdesk or customer service?</i>	<b>Promotion and communication</b>	Mauritius Network Services Ltd. was set up as a value-added network operator for the TradeNet system. It takes care of operational issues, installation and training, and it provides helpdesk services and support to the operators. If there is a problem on the system, contingency measures exist and provide for continuity of service so that no party is penalized.
<i>Is use of the facility obligatory or voluntary?</i>	<b>Judicial aspects</b>	The programme is obligatory.
<i>Do participants need to sign a contract with provider/agency in order to participate?</i>		Yes, a network service agreement is signed with the value-added network operator. Operators are granted permission by the Mauritius Customs and the Ministry of Cooperatives and Commerce, or by the Mauritius Freeport Authority to use TradeNet for the operation of bonded warehouses.
<i>Was specific legislation (or change of old legislation) necessary?</i>		Changes to Customs legislation and additional legislation governing submission of declarations and data by electronic means were required.
<i>What are the benefits to clients and to participating agencies?</i>	<b>Benefits</b>	Surveys have shown that availability of the system on a 24 hour/7 day basis allows the operators to do better planning, and the average clearance time of goods has been reduced from 4 hours on average to around 15 minutes for non-litigious declarations.
<i>How did it benefit trading community and the Government?</i>		The trading community benefits in the sense that goods are cleared faster and in a more transparent manner, hence enhancing their competitiveness.
<i>What was the impact on Customs revenues?</i>		The system is a tool for the authorities to foster trade facilitation – namely through the use of risk management – while ensuring that customs revenues are not affected. There results a high level of efficiency for all business concerns which deal with Customs.
<i>What problems did it solve?</i>		The aim was to streamline the paper-based trade procedures in order to result in faster turnaround time for trade declarations, a reduction in paperwork, faster clearance of goods, and an overall improvement of services to the public.
<i>What were the crucial success factors?</i>	<b>Lessons learned</b>	Success factors were commitment from all stakeholders, with the participation of both the government and the private sector in the

operating company. Implementation in phases allowed the project to be more manageable and acceptable.

*What were the greatest obstacles?*

The main obstacle was the replacement of UNCTAD's ASYCUDA system at the Mauritius Customs. Owing to the impossibility of getting a new version of the ASYCUDA system that could link to the TradeNet, a decision was taken to develop our own local Customs Management System with the help of international consultants. This set back the launch of Phase 3 of the project by almost two years.

#### **Source for further information**

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<http://mns.intnet.mu/>

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