WORKSHOP ON THE COMPILATION OF INTERNATIONAL MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS
Addis Ababa, 8-11 November 2004

Country Presentation

Customs - Gambia

Presentation by the Customs and Excise Department of The Gambia

BACKGROUND

The customs and excise department (ced) of the gambia has the responsibility of executing some of the country's external trade obligations, in terms of tariff classification and valuation and making decisions for the release of goods imported into the country. It carries out these functions mainly at the airport and seaport in banjul, and at a number of small road offices boundering senegal.the gambia acceded to the world trade organisation (wto) in october 1996, thus committing to a tariff reform programme introduced on a gradual basis over the period, which brought the tariff band down to a maximum of 18% in 1999. The data processing function of the department was automated with the introduction of _asycuda_. It began with a local area network (lan) at the headquarter in banjul, where officers were selected and trained to use the software to process data and produce reports for both internal and external use. Five officers were trained locally by _unctad,_ three of whom were further trained in gibraltar and one trained in lome. These skeletal staff lay the foundation of asycuda in the gambia. The software used during those days was _prologue,_ and there were two servers and seven terminals for data processing, on two local area networks (lans), one for the headquater and one for the airport. However, in year 2000, the operating software was changed to _unix_ (sco openserver tm release 5) for servers, and windows 98 for the workstations, using _tcp/ip_ for file transfer and _sco vision_ for emulation. This change brought with it the need for new hardware, compartible with the new operating system, together with the perequisite training to build capacity to operate and maintain this new software, which is _unix._ Five people were trained to manage the system.

Two of them did 9 months diploma in windows networking and _linux_ in uk, and three did three and a half months of asycuda adminstration courses at the ecowas community computer center in lome, togo. These, and some locally trained data entry staff, are running the system presently.

Automation

The customs offices automated are: banjul adquarters (for banjul seaport), and banjul international airport.both these offices have independent lans, and data extracted from the airport network is integated at the headquarters with that of the seaport for onward transmission to central statistics department. There are 13 customs offices in the gambia of which 5 are in the urban area, and only 3 out of these 5 are automated. Due to

lack of resources the network could not be extended to the seaport and other customs offices in the rural areas, as a result some of the modules are inactive. E.g. the examination module for seaport. This has caused delay in the compilation of
Data and has adversely affected the accuracy and timeliness of our reports.the rural offices account for about 3% of the total revenue collection of the gambia.

The customs and excise dept. Of the gambia does not have, at the moment, the _eurotrace_ software to be able to provide accurate statistics of number of declarations processed monthly or yearly. We rely on the central statistics department to provide such figures. Estimates are 3000 declarations per month. At the headquarters it should take an average of 6hrs for a clearing agent/broker to process a declaration
Electronically.

This length of time is because of the distance between the seaport in banjul and the customs headquarters where the network is confined. However,this is not the case with the airport where all processes take place in the same vicinity. There it would take about 2hrs to process a declaration. There are about 53 customs procedure codes in use in the gambia presently, and with the full establishment and functioning of the free zones agency, we foresee the use of more proceedures.

Controls

As declarations are processed, they are examined by vetting officers to ensure, among other things, correct tariff classifications. Where data-input staff failed to spot them, and where misclassifications escape vetting, the examination officers sometimes discover them, but mostly they are discovered by valuation officers if they go past vetting. Among the fields scrutinised is the country of origin/import. This is a determinant of the freight charges, and to a large extent, the currency used for valuation, which helps establishing the authenticity of an invoice. Therefore, in determining the country of import or export you need the manifest, bills of laden, invoices, receipts, labels, marks and numbers upon examination of packages, correspondence, and documentation found at business premises, etc.

Valuation

As at now the valuation unit of the gambia customs and excise department is undertaking a procedural transition from the age old brussels definition of values (b.d.v.) to the (w.t.o.) valuation agreement. To build capacity in this regard, the government of thegambia, through the department of state for finance and economics affairs (dosfea), deemed it necessary to seek short-term technical assistance to ensure complance with international obligations and to improve customs adminstration. As mentioned earlier the tariff band has been lowered to a maximum of 18%. With regards to asycuda most of the imported commodities are covered by the valuation module to prevent gross under valuations.