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Young Zimbabweans show faith in the future

BY Ed Richardson

Reading tea leaves (remember those?) is probably as reliable a way of predicting the future for Zimbabwe as analysing the political and economic landscapes.

So much depends on one person – president Robert Mugabe and his Zanu-PF party. Locals believe that they will be voted out if and when there is a free and fair election.

In the meantime, those government departments controlled by the government are deepening the “indigenisation” drive, which is potentially reaching down into the smallest businesses.

The policy requires that all businesses be 51% owned by Zimbabweans. One of the many uncertainties is the understanding of who is a “Zimbabwean”.

It would seem to exclude Zimbabwean-born whites, Indians and coloureds but accommodates newly arrived Chinese – depending on which government department one talks to.

While the policy has seen the emergence of some strong



The stoic faces of Zimbabwe – a country in transition, where the people have shown amazing patience as the economy collapses.

black Zimbabwean-owned groups, it has also stalled investment plans.

Companies are also diversifying outside of the country – much as has happened in South Africa.

In the midst of this uncertainty families as well as young Zimbabweans are returning home, bringing skills acquired through a number of years working successfully abroad.

They have been attracted back by the lifestyle, the people, and what they see as post-Mugabe opportunities.

As a result there are very interesting dynamics at play in the economy.

For many (mostly whites) who have managed to stay in business through the worst of times, the latest indigenisation moves are one bridge too many. They are selling or closing their businesses, or are trading water.

Black Zimbabwean entrepreneurs are making the most of the opportunities. Some are purchasing the companies in order to grow, while others simply strip out the assets, leaving more people

jobless and less likely to vote for Zanu-PF.

Then there are the bright young (white) professionals who want their children to grow up in Zimbabwe – and are determined to make the economy work.

One suspects that they are the vanguard, and that many more of the four million or so white and black Zimbabweans now living outside the country will be back when they feel welcome.

Zimbabwe will boom – but only the tea leaves know when.

Mix of cargo points to economic growth

A growing demand for imports from Zimbabwe points to economic growth in the country, according to Mahaveer Chavda, chief executive officer of Chavda Freight.

The company, which operates dedicated 8-32 ton superlink and consolidated loads to Bulawayo and Harare, carries imports as varied as mining supplies, home appliances, geysers, solar panels, household furniture,

construction materials, office supplies and gym equipment.

Demand for mining and construction equipment, general merchandise, and fast moving consumer goods continues to increase due to growth in the Zimbabwean economy, says Chavda.

He is keen to help South African exporters make the most of opportunities in the market.

“Chavda Freight has the infrastructure and expertise

needed to assist South African exporters with all their logistical export needs in terms of warehousing, clearing, forwarding and consolidation shipments. We also offer dedicated vehicles.

“At the border, we assist clients with pre-clearance of documents by forwarding the relevant documents to clearing agents in order to have the vehicles cleared before arriving at Beitbridge, so eliminating unnecessary delays.

“In addition, we provide an efficient tracking and tracing service to all clients, so ensuring effective movement of cargo across borders,” he says.

A dedicated weekly eight-ton express service between Gauteng and Harare via Bulawayo is being introduced to cater for market needs.

On the Zimbabwean export side, Chavda sees opportunities in tobacco, cotton, grain and other niche supplies.

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FTW4623

Beitbridge – order among the chaos

Volumes down as cost-conscious shippers look to efficiency of Durban's competitors

BY Ed Richardson

Musina is everything a frontier town should be. It is a bustling, dusty and hot 24-hour gateway that never sleeps – the kind of place in which interesting people thrive.

They come from all over the world – the United Kingdom, the rest of Africa, the United States, China, Europe, Pakistan and India.

What lures them to the rapidly growing town is trade – both legal and illegal.

Fraudsters, prostitutes, hijackers and thieves thrive in an environment where the only constant is change. The constant flow of hundreds of trucks and thousands of people crossing the border is almost impossible to monitor and police effectively.

It is a place where trucks and valuable loads can simply disappear, or spend days waiting for paperwork to be finalised.

Or, it can be an orderly world where goods and vehicles are cleared well in advance, and transit is fast and incident-free.

Both realities exist in the same time and space. Cargo owners and transporters can choose in which dimension their drivers, goods and trucks find themselves.



Trucks at Beitbridge .. a place where trucks can spend days waiting or where transit is fast and incident-free.

The fact is that most goods flow relatively smoothly, shepherded through by the highly professional (and idiosyncratic) border logistics industry, which includes clearing agents, truck stops, and logistics companies.

They are headed and staffed by the type of person who continues to work when temperatures reach 42 degrees, the system is down on the Zimbabwean side, and Sars has changed the rules overnight.

Modernisation through e-filing is forcing the clearing agents in particular to reinvent themselves.

That they will continue to be needed at the border post

despite the on-line submission of documents from anywhere in South Africa is indisputable when one experiences the hustle and bustle of the border.

Things go wrong – and you need people on the ground, not e-mail messages or telephone calls to sort them out.

There is also a growing emphasis on seeing to the needs of drivers – the people who literally keep trade moving.

Another challenge is the changing patterns of trade in southern Africa. A number of agents believe volumes through Beitbridge are dropping due to the improvement in efficiencies at Durban's competitors – Beira, Dar es Salaam, and

Walvis Bay.

This was confirmed when speaking to shippers and truckers in Zimbabwe.

It is a symptom of a larger challenge facing South Africa – the country's exporters are being out-manoeuvred on their own doorstep by the Brazilians, Chinese, Turks, Europeans and Indians.

Transnet, Sars and the Roads Agency have to take some of the blame – they could be doing far more to make it easy to trade with and through South Africa.

But, ultimately, it is up to business to emulate the pioneering spirit of the people keeping freight moving through Musina.

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Work starts on Zimbabwe dry port

Growing volumes on Trans Kalahari route

BY Ed Richardson

Work has started on developing a Zimbabwean dry port in Walvis Bay as volumes on the Trans Kalahari route steadily increase.

“Increased interest has been shown from the freight and logistics sectors in Zimbabwe on the Walvis Bay option, and they are even looking at setting up representation in Walvis Bay,” says Rob Doe, business development manager South Africa for the Walvis Bay Corridor Group (WBCG).

Zimbabwe is served by Walvis Bay through the Trans-Kalahari (TKC) and the Walvis Bay-Ndola-Lubumbashi development corridors. These routes offer

savings on both time and costs for trade between the Americas and Europe compared to other gateways, according to Doe.

“We are actively marketing the Port of Walvis Bay and the TKC via Maun/Francistown into Bulawayo/Harare,” he says.

Zimbabwean industry and commerce minister Professor Welshman Ncube told the Chronicle newspaper in July that work had started on the architectural design of the dry port which, according to the WBCG, will cost around \$2 million in its first phase.

The Gauteng branch office of the WBCG serves Botswana, Gauteng and Zimbabwe, and having a permanent representative in Zimbabwe is a possibility if volumes

keep growing.

“Significant growth has been experienced on this corridor for imports to Zimbabwe, including consignments of frozen chicken, furniture, equipment, vehicles and other consumables,” he says.

Approximately 700 vehicles are being discharged at the Port of Walvis Bay on a fortnightly basis, with 90% of these vehicles destined for the Zimbabwe market, according to Doe.

Export volumes are also growing.

“Agriculture is the backbone of Zimbabwe’s economy,” and the balance of trade is showing an improvement along the TKC corridor.

Half of Zimbabwean tobacco is exported to the European Union, in addition to other

agricultural products.

Minerals being handled through Walvis Bay include nickel, ferrochrome and granite.

“The outlook for Zimbabwe is picking up, and the economy is starting to recover. That being said, the TKC, through the Port of Walvis Bay, offers Zimbabwe an alternative trade route which offers importers and exporters reduced time and cost savings, high reliability and cargo security,” he says.

According to Doe, the major focus of the Gauteng office since its opening has been to create awareness and promote the usage of the TKC through the Port of Walvis Bay as an alternative entry and exit point for Botswana, Gauteng and Zimbabwe with the rest of the world.

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FTW5561

6 Zimbabwe August 2012

Warehouse systems can help reduce costs

Upbeat SDV talks expansion

Zimbabwean importers, exporters and manufacturers can reduce costs through the introduction of modern warehouse management systems, says John Deans, country manager of SDV Zimbabwe.

Modern systems include bar-coding, management and racking – all of which SDV installs and manages on behalf of its Zimbabwean clients.

Demand comes from big multinationals which are reinvesting in Zimbabwe, as well as medium-sized companies.

Many are investing in order to be well positioned as the Zimbabwean economy starts recovering.

Deans, who recently took over

SDV Zimbabwe after being with the company's Zambian office for two years, is also positive about the future.

As a company, we can see

'Many are investing in order to be well positioned as the Zimbabwean economy starts recovering.'

growth in the economy, and are making good progress," he says.

SDV has plans to expand its own operations in the country

"This will be through the acquisition and management of warehouses, by focusing on forwarding, positioning itself for growth in airfreight, as well as mining, ultimately providing all facets of our company's services to shippers and clients in Zimbabwe," he says.

FMCG, tobacco, cotton, telecoms equipment, ferrochrome and general cargoes are among the goods handled by SDV Zimbabwe.

"We are working very closely with local indigenous clearing agents who are very professional and ethical. Our strategy is to support local Zimbabwean suppliers at all times," he says.

At present, the forwarding operations make use of road almost exclusively, even though Deans is a proponent of rail too.

"Rail services can, at times, be unreliable on most corridors into Zimbabwe but we offer total solutions to our customers to meet their logistics requirements.

Deans also expects SDV Zimbabwe to fly high.

"SDV Zimbabwe is excellently positioned for the growth in airfreight to and from Zimbabwe. With the recent arrivals of Emirates, KLM and soon, Qatar Airways, the company is now offering door-to-door solutions worldwide for our clients," he says.

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'Perfect fit' as major logistics network is created

Zimbabwe's Pioneer Corporation Africa and Unifreight companies have come together to form one of the region's biggest logistics networks under the banner of the Pioneer Unifreight Group.

Unifreight, which operates in Zimbabwe under the Swift flagship brand, is a major player in distribution in Zimbabwe, and formed a natural fit with Pioneer's cross-border trucking operations, says group chief executive officer Albert Ushe.

Pioneer operates more than 200 cross-border trucks, carrying more than 50 million tons of bulk cargo a year between Zimbabwe and regional destinations in sub-Saharan Africa.

Swift has a network of depots across Zimbabwe, and operates a newly recapitalised fleet of medium and heavy trucks on all the country's freight routes.

"Swift is the only company in

Zimbabwe with this network of depots and transport capabilities," says Ushe.

Services now include cross-border loads being hubbed into the Swift depots, where they are unpacked and then distributed within the country.

The business units in the new merged group are Pioneer Transport (Zimbabwe and RSA), Pioneer Coaches, Pioneer Clan Botswana, Swift, Skynet, Unifreight Logistics/Contracts and Engineering.

South African-registered Pioneer Transport RSA offers a range of transport-related logistics products and transport solutions to local, regional and international corporates, NGOs and multinationals operating in sub-Saharan Africa.

It operates through alliances with reputable transport operators in the region, and also offers logistics consulting services,

says Deon Wheelson, managing director of Pioneer Transport and Pioneer Coaches.

"Re-capitalisation of all business units that occurred in 2011 means the Group is back on its feet and ready to compete effectively in the market going forward," says Ushe.

"We can now move everything, from the smallest parcel to contract loads," he adds.

Ten major contracts with blue chip companies in South Africa have been signed for the movement of cargo into Zimbabwe and Zambia, he added.

Northbound cargo includes fast-moving consumer goods for the retail sector, raw materials and electrical goods for the industrial sector.

In terms of south-bound cargo, Pioneer carries mostly mining mineral ore for major mining houses into South Africa for processing, he says.



Albert Ushe ... networks of depots.

All loads and parcels are tracked through a group-wide track and trace system.

"Investment in information technology is a priority area for the group in order to offer efficient service delivery," says Ushe.

'Green' pallets help reduce carbon footprint

Transporters and shippers serving land-locked Zimbabwe and the rest of the region can reduce their carbon footprint by switching from wooden pallets to those made from recycled plastics, according to Kamal Diaite, business manager at Extruwood.

According to Diaite, southern Africa's reliance on road transport is expected to lead to the introduction of "green"

regulations.

It is estimated that the road transport industry is responsible for 18% of global CO₂ emissions.

Plastic pallets made from recycled materials, such as those produced by Extruwood, offer vehicle and fleet owners a triple bottom line of environmental compliance by supporting recycling, assisting in the preservation of SA's

dwindling wood reserves, and – perhaps most importantly – massive cost savings over the longer term due to the durability of the product, he says.

For cross-border freight, plastic pallets have the added advantage of not being subject to fumigation.

They are also easy to clean, which is important for Zimbabwe's growing volumes

of agricultural exports as well as the importation of foodstuffs into the country.

"Extruwood pallets have been designed to meet the most exacting demands of logistics and warehouse operators – being incredibly tough and durable. They do not deteriorate in any weather conditions, and are ideal for cold storage situations, especially for food items," says Diaite.

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Radio links speed up transit times

BY Ed Richardson

Having agents on both sides of the border keeping in contact via two-way radios has helped reduce transit times for shippers, including those with abnormal loads, says Denise Stevens, director of Freightlink Africa.

“You have to have guys on the ground to constantly monitor and follow up on all loads. Otherwise trucks can stand for up to six days,” says Stevens, who started Freightlink as a clearing agent serving South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique, Malawi and the Democratic Republic of Congo three years ago.

It has since moved into non-traditional clearing services in order to meet the needs of clients

at the border.

These include handling all the documentation and insurance requirements of the drivers and trucks crossing the border, as well as those of the cargo.

“Our forte is abnormal loads, which can stand up to 15 days while waiting for permits. It is not necessary for those big trucks to stand,” she says.

These include high-value loads, which are sometimes left unprotected after their escorts to the border leave. “We provide local security all the way to the gate,” she says.

Stevens started Freightlink because she saw the need for a smaller company which is able to provide superior levels of attention and service to clients, she says.

“Having worked in the industry for years, I know where all the potential inefficiencies are hidden. If you are passionate about what you are doing, and you can encourage the same level of passion in your staff, then you can overcome the challenges.

“We all focus on doing the best we can,” she says.

“Doing the best” they can includes a personal best for the team of moving 98 trucks and loads moving under customs supervision through the border in less than 10 days.

Stevens sees her role as a partner with the transporter. “Transporters suffer when clearance is delayed. They have to explain to the exporter, and they lose money if their truck is standing rather than working.



Denise Stevens ... ‘Our forte is abnormal loads.’

Drivers are a vital part of the team.

“Ultimately, the shipper and transporter are reliant on the person who is driving the truck.

“We make sure that drivers who come to the office are made to feel welcome, which extends to giving them a cup of coffee while waiting for papers,” she says.

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FTW5660

Multi-country vehicle registration helps freight move

BY Ed Richardson

Establishing partnerships with trucking companies in Zimbabwe and other southern African states has enabled Kodav Logistic Solutions to expand its operations into the whole region.

Through its partners, it operates a fleet of over 200 tri-axles, superlinks, reefers and low-beds registered in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Malawi.

“We are currently offering bulk, breakbulk and reefer services to and from Zimbabwe,” says managing director Corné Pretorius.

Services provided include clearing and documentation, the distribution of products, road freight, and “other supply chain solutions,” he says.

Established to cater for the



Corné Pretorius ... ability to move quickly.

transport needs of subsidiaries within the CJ Petrow Holdings, the company now services the needs of external customers as well.

The company has infrastructure in Durban, Johannesburg,

Beitbridge, Harare, Lusaka, Blantyre, Lilongwe and Beira.

“We are very much service orientated, and our ability to adapt to the changing market is one of our biggest strengths,” he says.

‘Beira the natural entry and exit point’

“The Beira corridor is at present very under-utilised, which is why we have decided to focus on it,” says Patrick Gwasera of Anlink Freight.

Anlink has partnered with Beira-based LA Freight Services in order to service the route.

Gwasera sees Beira as a natural entry and exit point for neighbouring countries Malawi, Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and will be setting up a presence in the states to cater for shippers.

“Our aim is to establish a consolidation service into Africa.

“We are busy setting up Mozambique first, and the others will follow,” he says.

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The Spirit of Can Do

Beira and Walvis

BY Ed Richardson

Both Beira and Walvis Bay are proving to be more cost-effective gateways for Zimbabwe than Durban for a number of shippers, says Sheila Mashiri, managing director of Allen Wack & Shepherd Global Freight (AWS).

“We have done the costing and found that it is a lot cheaper to use than Durban,” she says.

Second-hand cars and commercial vehicles are being routed through Walvis Bay in order to save costs.

“Coming through the

Plumtree border post is working well,” she says.

Costs from Beira will be further reduced if lines allow their containers to go through to Zimbabwe rather than being unpacked in the port, she says.

“We will facilitate getting the boxes back. That will help lower rates further,” she says.

According to Mashiri, cargo is available to fill the containers on the return leg.

Because of the growing volumes of outbound freight there is, she believes, no need for shipping lines to demand onerous deposits on containers

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FTW1875SD

Beira office strengthens

Harare-based Alro Shipping has strengthened the land leg of the route from the east through Beira by being among the first forwarding and transport companies in Zimbabwe to open offices in the Mozambican port.

“About 80% of our fleet now operates on the Beira corridor, where it takes just two days to get a container from the port into Harare,” says director Rob Follett-Smith.

The company represents the MOL and Ignazio Messina lines in Zimbabwe.

With MOL having introduced services into Beira following the dredging of the port, it is logical to complement the sea leg with road, says Alro operations

manager Colin Gurr.

“More and more shippers are moving into Beira, and so we felt it important that our road transport division had a presence in Beira,” he says.

The company also provides clearing services, which help it control both the movement of freight and costs, says Follett-Smith.

“We are the only company in Zimbabwe which can offer this one-stop shop between Mozambique or South Africa and Zimbabwe,” he says.

Alro handles both consolidated and full loads. Consolidation is carried out at warehouses in Johannesburg, Beira and Harare.

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Sheila Mashiri ... Second-hand cars being routed through Walvis Bay.

land leg

non-operational costs are spread across the transport, forwarding and clearing arms.

It has clearing offices in Mutare and Beit Bridge to handle both South African and Mozambican traffic.

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In order to meet growing volumes and demand for the Alro trucking services, the company is in the process of increasing the size of its fleet.

Another way of keeping costs down is through the use of imported, quality second-hand trucks, which have historically come from the United States.

With the Zimbabwean



Rob Follett-Smith ... handling consolidated and full loads.

government having introduced legislation that bans the use of right-hand-drive vehicles, Alro is among the first transport companies to convert a truck from left to right-hand drive.

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9

Keeping border delays to a minimum

BY Ed Richardson

Border knowledge is perishable. What is happening this week could well be out of season next week," says Solomon Mhlanga, founder of Beitbridge-based Rusticana Investments.

Mhlanga, a former Zimbabwean customs officer, is filling a need for agents at the border to shepherd trucks and loads through the system.

"Where clearing agents deal with the paperwork and the clearance of goods, we worry about the truck. We understand that a truck only makes money if it moves," he says.

Rusticana works with clearing agents at the Beitbridge border, helping up to four trucks a day to pass through as

quickly as possible.

"Our day ends at one or two in the morning, and starts again at five," he says.

Mhlanga has created a South African company in order to handle deposits and make payments on behalf of the drivers.

Mhlanga arrived at the border in 2006 and spent weeks sleeping on the street while he built the business and a profile with fleet and cargo owners.

"We make sure the owner of the truck knows what is happening.

"If there are any problems we notify the owner as soon as possible," he says.

With Rusticana fetching the paperwork from the clearing agent, and accompanying the driver through the border

formalities, delays are kept to a minimum.

"The driver stays seated in the truck while we handle all the paper work," he says.

The company's services are in big demand from owners of time-sensitive cargo.

"We know the systems and the people. We speak the language on both sides of the border and know the best way to do things.

"But that does not mean we cut corners," he adds, saying that it is important to protect the company's reputation in order to ensure that clients do not suffer undue delays.

Looking ahead, Mhlanga believes that modernisation – or the digitisation of clearing procedures – creates big opportunities for services like Rusticana's.



Solomon Mhlanga ... 'We understand that a truck only makes money if it moves.'

While the clearing can be done from anywhere in the world, it is only someone on the ground with "fresh" experience and knowledge of the workings of the border who can ensure that trucks and their cargo flow freely.

SDV pushes Beira corridor

Super-heavy cargoes routed through Richards Bay

Logistics major SDV is a strong proponent of Beira as one of the corridors into Zimbabwe – mainly due to its geographical locality.

But country manager John Deans finds that many shippers still need to be convinced about Beira port – although this is changing.

He encourages them to make some trial shipments to test the route for themselves.

"We have been using Beira corridor for the past 15 years, through the SDV/Bollore network.

"But we also offer solutions for Durban, Maputo, Richards Bay and Walvis Bay where SDV has its own wholly owned facilities."

Being of Durban origin himself, Deans views the Zimbabwe-Joburg/Durban corridor as vital to SDV's growth into Zimbabwe.

"With excellent facilities and high-calibre personnel within SDV-SA, SDV is now a major player here. We make each corridor work," he says.

For ro-ro cargoes, which can be self-driven rather than transported off wheel (as required by South African regulations), SDV offers this option via Maputo and Walvis Bay. It also offers services to and from both these important ports

for all types of cargoes.

Super-heavy cargoes – an SDV speciality – are routed through Richards Bay.

"Zimbabwe is very much a containerised cargo market too, and we are starting to see more and more shipping lines opening up agencies. This is highly beneficial to shippers in that it offers competition amongst the carriers, and, hopefully competitive rates," he says.



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Services follow emerging market trend

BY Ed Richardson

New shipping and logistics services introduced to serve companies operating in Zimbabwe and neighbouring countries are a good indicator of how trade flows are changing, says Arnaud Thibault, regional director – Southern African countries for CMA CGM and Delmas.

“As the market trends keep moving towards emerging countries (Asia, India, the Middle East, and South America), our line services have followed the same trends to meet the needs of our clients.

“Where the Durban corridor was until recently one of the main entry and exit points for Zimbabwe, we see increasing use of the ports of Beira and Maputo,” he says.

CMA CGM and Delmas

have responded to the changes by building up their presence in Maputo and Beira, while also developing their Durban operations. The group offers direct shipping line services to and from Zimbabwe through Durban, Maputo, Beira and Walvis Bay.

The services link Zimbabwe with direct shipping lines to and from Asia, the Middle East, the Americas and Europe.

“The Asian trade is showing the biggest market growth in Zimbabwean imports and exports. That is why we have put in place direct services connecting all the Zimbabwean corridors with Asia,” he says.

In order to speed up transit times, the CMA CGM Group has developed a dedicated Through Bill of Lading (TBL) service for Zimbabwean imports and exports covering both the

land and sea legs.

Both road and rail are used on land, “depending on the corridor,” he says.

Harare, Bulawayo and Mutare are the main centres served by the company in Zimbabwe, and there are plans to open CMA CGM offices in Bulawayo and Mutare, according to CMA CGM Zimbabwe general manager Gulshen Afridi, who opened the Harare office in August 2011.

“We are in close contact with our offices in Mozambique and South Africa to follow up operations. Many decision-makers are based in South Africa to deal with Zimbabwe shipments. We also have our regional office team to coordinate CMA CGM activities in Durban, she said.

The main freight moving in and out of Zimbabwe is construction materials, agricultural products,



The Port of Beira ... Increasing use of Beira and Maputo for Zimbabwe-bound cargo.

tobacco and cotton, minerals and retail goods.

According to Thibault, the coordination of inland transport with shipping solutions is the main challenge in Zimbabwe.

“The ability to coordinate with the ports of Maputo, Beira, Durban, and Walvis Bay where we have our own agencies enables us to provide a full and integrated solution to our clients in Zimbabwe,” he said.

Durban office closes the loop for Freight World

With the opening of offices in Durban, Harare-based Freight World is now one of the only companies with its own registered offices from Durban to the north and south banks of Limpopo and all cities and exit border posts in Zimbabwe, says managing director Felix Nyaruwanga.

Opened by Zimbabwean expatriate Rob White, the Durban operation was the final piece in the puzzle to make Freight World one of a handful of full service

regional logistics companies, he says.

It has offices at all the Zimbabwean border posts, as well as bonded and general warehousing in Harare, Gauteng and Durban.

“Our newest office is in Gweru, which is in the middle of the new Zimbabwean mining boom,” he says.

Freight World operates weekly door-to-door import and export groupage services within the region, as well as full container

loads. It handles freight through Zimbabwe and Malawi.

Offices in Durban were opened to facilitate transit cargo. The office is a registered holder of customs bonds, says White.

Operations in Durban and Gauteng fall under Freight World South Africa, which was created in partnership with Nexor International to handle the South African side of the services.

“Johannesburg is a full forwarding agent, which buys and sells freight space,”

says Nyaruwanga.

Having offices operating 24 hours a day on both sides of the border helps reduce transit times, he adds.

“We have seen a resurgence in the Zimbabwean manufacturing industry due to the dollar-based economy,” says Hassan Suleman of Nexor.

“This has led to an increase in the importation of capital equipment, spares and raw materials from South Africa and abroad,” he says.

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'IT support critical on modernisation journey'

BY Ed Richardson

Document digitisation has created the need for round-the-clock information technology (IT) support because clearing agents now need to have the latest customs information running smoothly on their systems at all times.

"Easyclear was the only service provider to have a local presence to help our clients get up and running with the new system," says area manager Lara Luis.

Easyclear offers a fully integrated modular system including the recently introduced ACM or E-Rfm. "We were integrally involved in the implementation at all of the Sars branch offices during the roll-out of modernisation phase III," says Michael Henning, general manager of Easyclear.

What modernisation has done, however, is to open up new business opportunities for smaller operators, says Luis.

"You no longer need to sit at the border. All you need is a computer and a connection, and you can even work from home. Musina is less than 20 minutes from the border," she says.

Easyclear has developed technology that allows communication with Sars through the use of cell phone technology both locally (using local service providers) and abroad (using foreign service providers) at very little added cost.

The most notable trend is a move away from paper-based declarations and audit trails to electronic submission and data storage for audit purposes. "The growth in Smartphone technology

has also sparked an interest in utilising this technology within our products particularly from a management reporting and control perspective," adds Henning.

Logistics and trucking companies are also moving into clearing in order to have greater control over the movement of cargo and to optimise revenues.

"From a service provider's perspective there appear to be opportunities aligned with Sars' trusted trader initiative, where brokers can offer value-added services when clearing goods, much like those offered by the insurance industry, where identified risks are borne by the broker and costed into the service offered by the freight agent," he adds.

Even though Easyclear provides the means to clear remotely and for the companies to become clearing



Lara Luis ... technology allows communication with Sars through the use of cell phone technology both locally and abroad.

agents, Luis says IT has not replaced the human touch.

"At the point where there is a problem, you need a representative on the ground. Customs wants to speak to a person, not a computer.

"You have to physically take the query through the chain of command," she says.

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Trucks cleared before the cargo is loaded

Able to handle repairs and returns

BY Ed Richardson

Customs modernisation coupled with the right communications and electronic data interchange (EDI) systems means that pre-clearance procedures can start at the border post before the truck is even loaded in South Africa, says Martin Ehrke, Beitbridge branch manager of Ziegler South Africa.

The systems, which are integrated into Ziegler's global cargo management system, enable the Beitbridge team to add value to the services provided at the border.

"Part of our strategic positioning is to provide a gateway into Africa, with our own offices facilitating the movement of the cargo from arrival in Durban until the trucks pass through the Beitbridge border," says Paul Lawrence, managing director of Ziegler South Africa.

"We are able to arrange the in-bond movements on our own road bond, and ensure that all customs requirements and acquittals are met by controlling the process through

our Beitbridge office," he says.

"We check and monitor each truck as it passes through the border, and ensure that there is a paper trail in place from start to finish," adds import manager Tina Baxter.

Mandatory insurance is arranged for South African vehicles travelling through Zimbabwe – a process that can lead to delays if not handled correctly.

"At all times we ensure that we are fully compliant from A to Z," she says.

Paper trails and strict monitoring are particularly important for the high-value copper and tobacco cargoes handled by Ziegler.

With high-value cargo comes large VAT bills, and Ziegler has one of the largest deferment agreements at the border with the South African Revenue Services (Sars).

Security is another priority. All high-value loads are accompanied by armed guards, and are tracked electronically.

"We track and trace everything," says Baxter.



The Ziegler team at the Beitbridge border post ... import manager Tina Baxter and Beitbridge branch manager Martin Ehrke.

Another potentially tricky cargo is the re-importation and re-export of capital goods and equipment that was either on short-term hire in Zimbabwe and other neighbouring states, or which has been sent to South Africa for repairs.

"Our office is one of a handful able to deal with repairs and returns," she says

Ziegler opened the Beitbridge branch in 2009 to assist clients using the gateway into sub-Saharan countries.

It was started because of the need to have agents at the border

to handle both exports and imports and high-value cargo.

With modernisation an office is still needed to handle queries and delays caused by system failures on both sides of the border, according to Ehrke.

"It is important that you partner with a non-complacent agent on the Zimbabwean side," adds Baxter.

When the Zimbabwean system is down, it is possible to have goods cleared manually – but only if the agent on the Zimbabwean side has good relations with customs, and is willing to persevere.

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Modernisation creates need for border agents

Modernisation of the customs systems on both the South African and Zimbabwean sides of the border has created an opportunity for Sediba Clearing to expand its services beyond clearing into that of a border agency, says managing director Lin Botha.

"There will always be a place for agents at the border. We have had to adapt to the changing needs over the years, and will continue to do so," she says.

Botha also believes that agents in Musina have a number of advantages over those doing online entries from elsewhere in the

country, particularly when it comes to the issuing of Southern African Development Community (SADC) certificates.

"Customs in Johannesburg and Durban take longer to issue SADC certificates than the authorities at Beitbridge," she says.

Traditional clearing services are required for imports, and for dealing with the Zimbabwean customs authorities when their systems are down and the clearance has to be handled manually.

Delays of exports at the border are created by "weak" or incorrect entries, and these can only be

sorted out by meeting with customs in person.

Exporters and importers can also incur unnecessary costs if the entries are not made correctly through paying higher duties than necessary.

"However, as we get further into the electronic system, there should be fewer penalties due to the simplification of the process," she says.

Equally, Botha believes that there is less opportunity for "dodgy agents" and cargo owners to cheat the system. She warns shippers to select their agents carefully.



Lin Botha ... 'We have become monitoring and tracking agents.'

If customs suspects that they are cutting corners then all freight handled by them will be suspect, and could be subject to delays and searches.

Safmarine Zimbabwe targets agricultural commodities

The agricultural sector, particularly the export of tobacco and cotton, continues to be a priority for Safmarine Zimbabwe.

According to country manager Andrew Kuster, customers prefer a Zimbabwe-packed product

because it reduces the risk of infestation and the need for double handling and fumigation.

"To meet this need we are making sure we're geared up to provide a consistent container supply and the required specialist

knowledge," he told FTW.

There's also been a change in the way cotton is shipped, says Kuster.

"Cotton, which historically moved by breakbulk to South Africa for warehouse packing, is

now being packed at source and shipped to Far East markets. Our Safari 3 service calling at Beira, only 550 km away from Harare, currently dominates the market in terms of space and frequency," he said.

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FTW5659

Consolidated buying power ensures competitive rates

BY Ed Richardson

The Bridge Shipping Group is upbeat about the future of Zimbabwe, says Cheyne Pretorius, general manager of Bridge Shipping Zimbabwe.

"With offices in the country since 1981, we remain focused on our customers there."

This confidence saw the company opening a fumigation division in 2011 to accommodate the fumigation of agricultural products prior to export, he says.

With its core business being logistics, warehousing and

freight forwarding, the group handles various agricultural exports and imports for its clients. It is also active in the minerals sector.

"The company has been doing business in Zimbabwe for 31 years and has built up a solid base of suppliers in the road and rail transportation arena, as well as with ocean carriers.

"This gives us the ability to consolidate our buying power with vendors, thereby ensuring our customers get the most competitive rates," he says.

The Bridge Shipping Group

also has offices in South Africa, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, as well as the ports of Durban, Cape Town and Beira.

Pretorius advises shippers not to buy on price alone when doing business in these countries.

"By using a solid company like the Bridge Shipping Group, their valuable cargoes will be looked after throughout the entire supply chain," he says.

Cheyne Pretorius ... 'Fumigation division opened in 2011.'



Doubling schedule to meet demand

Big opportunity for fast moving consumer goods

Gold and diamond booms in Zimbabwe are fuelling growing demand for "proudly South African" products, says Muhammad Gardee, a director of Gauteng-based Motion Liner Transport.

"Our delivery schedules have almost doubled to meet demand," he told FTW.

"As September and October approach the Zimbabwe route becomes more appealing to transport companies because the exports become readily available and the route suddenly becomes 30% more profitable because of the southbound load," he says.

Growth is particularly strong in the Bulawayo area, which is at the centre of a number of new mining operations.

"Exploration sites are mined with very basic technologies, and this has created a great opportunity for retired South African miners. It is only about 800kms from home, and you earn in dollars as opposed to rand," he says.

With growing buying power has come an emphasis on quality – which gives some South African goods an advantage over imports from the East, he adds.

"Most Zimbabweans have

now turned their focus away from the politics in the country and are concentrating on creating small economic hubs and self-supportive structures which are independent of the failed economy."

This creates great opportunity for fast moving consumer goods as industry is still battling to come off the ground in the local manufacturing market, he says.

Motion Liner runs three to five vehicles a week to Bulawayo, Harare, Mutare and Victoria Falls, with loads mainly originating in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town.

They vary from eight tons

to 34-ton superlinks, as well as abnormal cargo specific to clients' needs.

There are, however, a number of challenges which require experienced transporters to handle, he says.

"Document processing and crossing Beitbridge is always a big problem.

"Trucks sit in truck stops for days waiting for papers to be cleared on the Zimbabwe side."

These delays create opportunities for theft at the truck stops, which means that cargo must be secured in tamper-proof packaging wherever possible, he says.

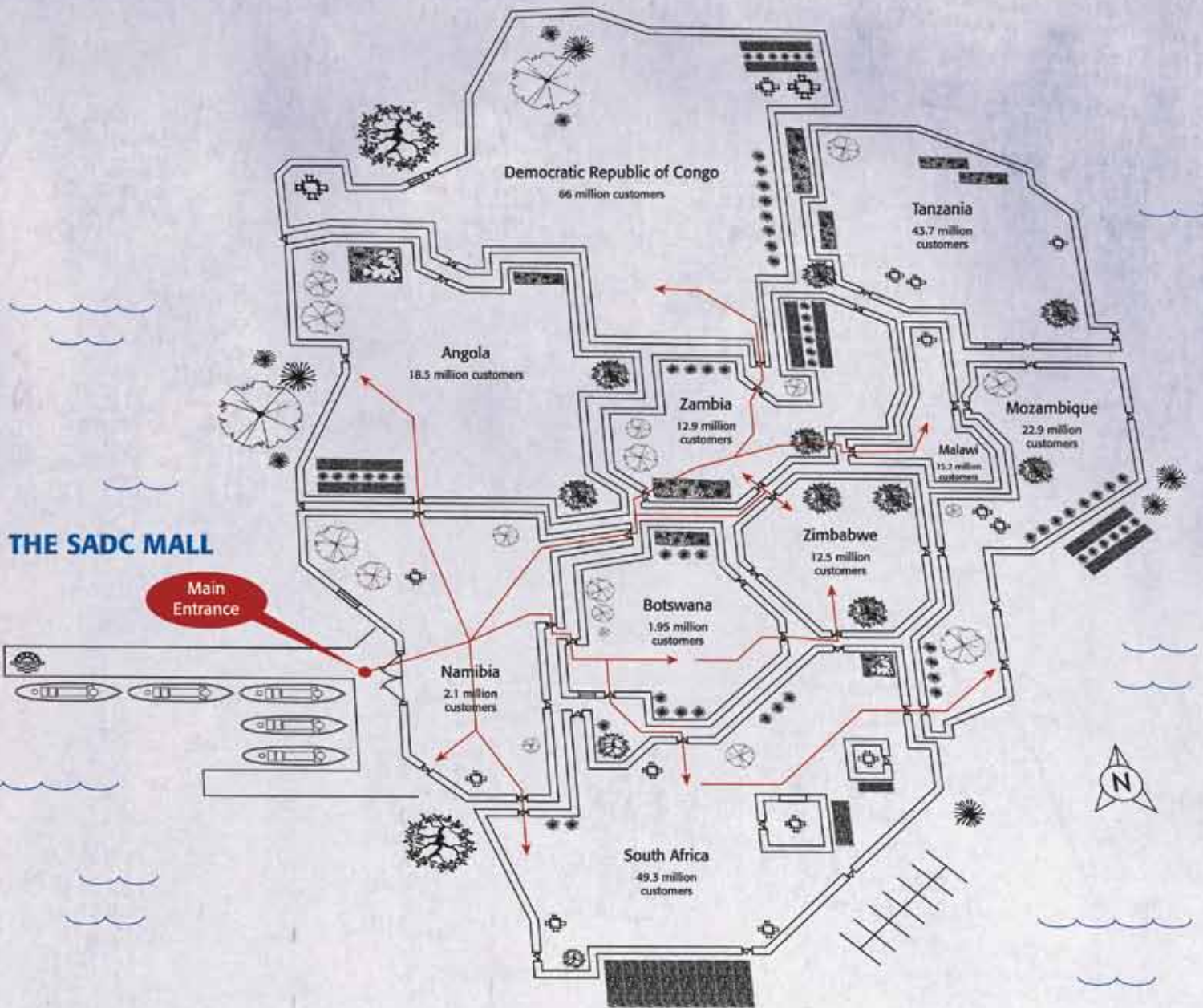


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Crabs and clams alive, alive ho

BY Ed Richardson

Handling shipments of live crabs and clams from Mozambique for airfreighting to Japan and Singapore via OR Tambo International is all in a day's work for branch manager Marlene van der Merwe and her Beitbridge team.

Melville Trading t/a Twane Forwarding & Clearing is able to

ensure that the fish are landed live at their destination by facilitating speedy border crossings.

A separate operation has been created to help transporters who are not based in Musina, she says.

Trucks are closely monitored because delays are often caused by drivers wanting to sleep over when they could be safely on the road.

"We patrol both sides of the

border, and provide clients with an update on the status of their documents and trucks every two hours. This dissuades drivers from taking chances," she says.

As for the clearing operation, "it is wonderful to work paperless. If everything is electronic, it is much easier to provide an efficient service," she says.

"Even though you can do EDI from anywhere, it is still necessary

for clearing agents to have a presence at the border – both to cater for problems, and to handle entries that still have to be done manually."

Problems can be both physical and clerical – loads may need to be rearranged or lightened to ensure that the axle loads do not exceed limits, vehicles may need repairs, and some systems still have to be digitised.

Garden setting for business deals

Ongoing investment in skills development and infrastructure has helped keep the rooms of the Bronte hotel in central Harare filled with visiting business people and non-governmental organisation (NGO) workers.

Situated in Baines Avenue, a short stroll from down-town Harare, the hotel is known for its gardens with their giant local sculptures, which help create a relaxed atmosphere.

The gardens, which are dotted with chairs and tables, are a favourite meeting place for business, says managing director Graham Dickens.

Positioned as an hotel for the more discerning market, the Bronte has been refurbished around the needs of business guests.

It has 94 double/twin bedded rooms and eight executive suites, with two-thirds of the guests being regional and international.

Occupancy is averaging around 70%.

One of the services provided is



Bronte Hotel managing director Graham Dickens ... catering for the needs of business guests.

free Wi-Fi, which FTW found to be both reliable and fast compared to some connections in South Africa and elsewhere in the region.

For meetings and presentations, there is a selection of conference venues.

Exercise is as important as good food and rest, and the Bronte has two pools, as well as a fitness centre on site.

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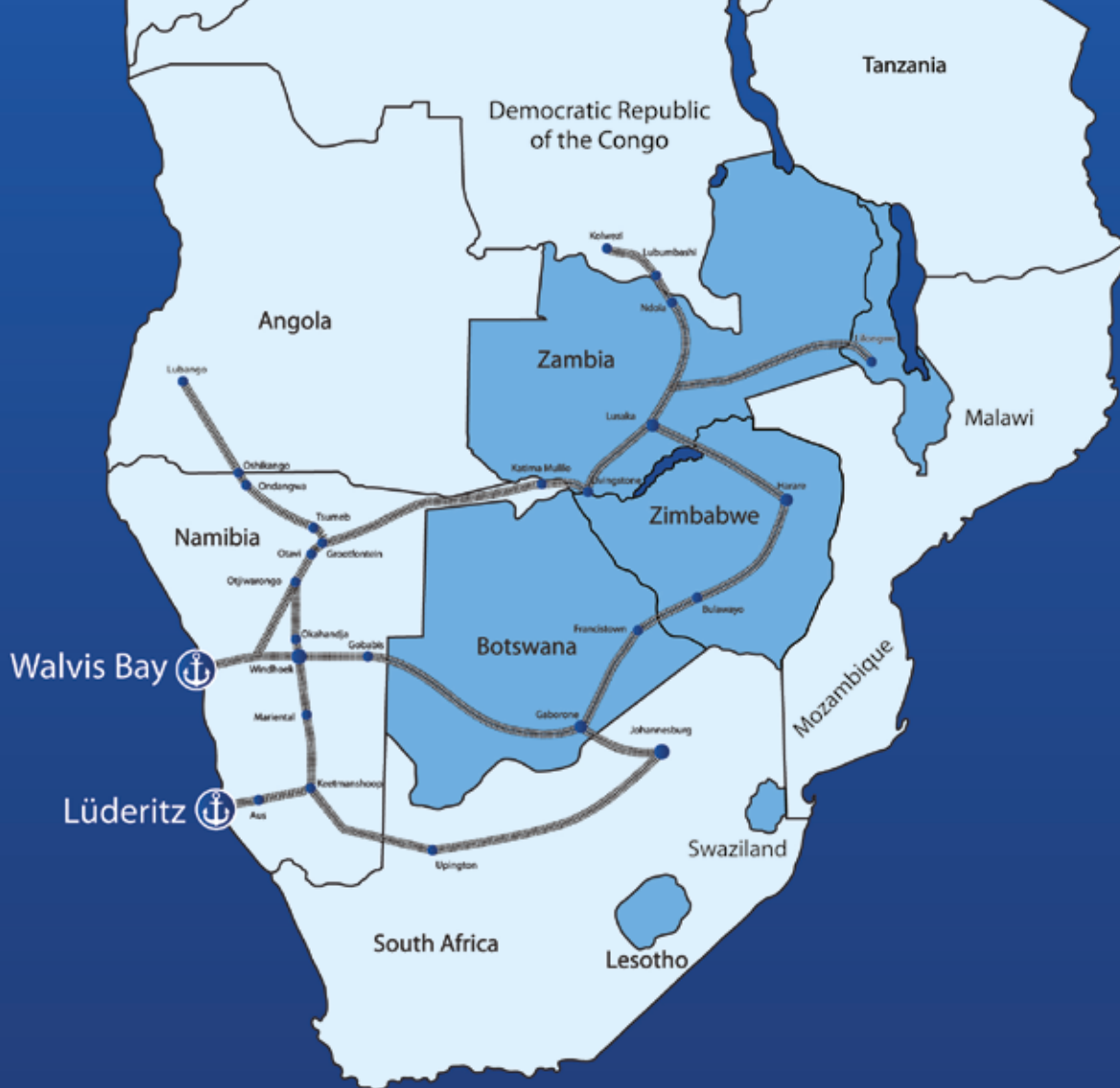
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