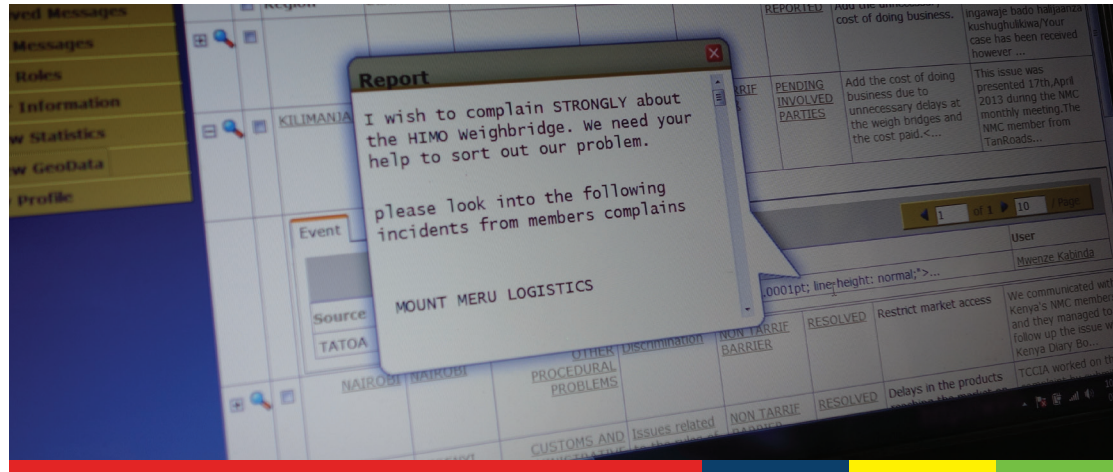


## Case Study

The SMS reporting  
system impacting  
informal traders,  
including women



Africa is at the centre of a mobile technology revolution which is already benefiting traditionally disadvantaged groups. According to interviews, SMS appears to be the most preferred means for informal traders to report NTBs. Although there exists online NTB reporting systems at the national level in Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania utilizing SMS, as well as a Tripartite online system (<http://tradebarriers.org/>), these rely on sufficient awareness raising and ensuring they can be understood in appropriate local languages. TMEA supported advocacy efforts have increased the number of both formal and informal traders being aware of the existence of NMCs and phone numbers of NMC representatives. The following examples were recounted in interviews:

### Grassroot examples

- On one occasion, a Tanzanian woman trader had been stopped by customs officials at the Rwandan border, asking her to pay a bond in order to take cultural goods to an exhibition in Rwanda. Having received a SMS text, the Tanzania NMC coordinator was able to call back the woman trader (saving her airtime) and reassure her that the money going into the bond was only a tax guarantee in case she were to sell any goods, and if she does not, the bond would be given back to her when crossing the border back to Tanzania. The following morning, the woman trader paid the bond and successfully crossed the border to attend the exhibition.
- On another occasion, a NMC member supported a Ugandan trader wishing to attend an East African trade fair in Tanzania to enter the country at the Mutukula border. The Tanzania Revenue Authority had stopped the Ugandan trader, who was carrying hair products, asking for the payment of a bond of US\$800. The trader was carrying a letter from the Uganda Revenue Authority saying that he was exempt from paying the bond. However, at the border the Tanzania Revenue Authority had not been notified of the letter. After receiving a SMS text from the trader, the NMC coordinator went in person to the Tanzania Revenue Authority and helped resolve the matter so that the Ugandan trader could successfully cross the Mutukula border and attend the trade fair.

In addition, there are also examples of NMCs using SMS text (direct, not via the system) to notify each other of issues to address. For example, a Kenya NMC member recently texted a Burundi NMC member to report a problem with a Kenyan company, Kaluworks, not being afforded preferential treatment at

the Burundian border. The Burundi NMC coordinator provided help by writing a letter to the Customs Department of the Burundi Revenue Authority, which resulted in the Kenyan company being given the appropriate preferential treatment.