**INVESTIGATING THE FACTORS INFLUENCING DELAY IN CUSTOMS PROCEDURE AT KRIBI PORT: CASE OF CONTAINERISED GOODS**

**ABSTRACT**

The research focuses on the customs clearance activities of containerized cargo at port of Kribi in Cameroon using an explanatory research design within a quantitative methodological framework. The research seeks to understand what the major delay factors are in the customs clearance operation, the socio-economic and operational impacts of these delays nationally as well as to the port users, and how to provide actionable and structural policy-oriented recommendations aimed at improving procedural efficiency. Data were gathered from 413 structured questionnaires distributed to a stratified sample of major stakeholders such as licensed customs brokers, shipping lines, customs officers, shippers, consignees, SGS Cameroon, and Port Authority of Kribi (PAK), yielding 359 completed questionnaires which translates into a response rate of 87%. With regard to the research questions, the results pointed out the existence of considerable systemic inefficiencies caused by inter- agency inertia, poor project coordination among agency administrators, excessive documentation, and arbitrary enforcement of agency policies among customs consignees, despite the existence of automated customs systems. All these issues have an impact on the time it takes to clear customs, as well as leading to increased demurrage fees, elevated operational expenses, decreased business satisfaction, and reduced user satisfaction. This undermines the competitiveness of the Port of Kribi. The study suggests the complete digitization of customs and port systems, capacity-building for specific stakeholders, and alignment of customs policy with international trade facilitation standards. These steps are necessary to improve the Port of Kribi's position as a competitive regional logistics hub.

**Keywords**: customs clearance, Port of Kribi, containerized goods, logistics efficiency, stakeholder coordination, quantitative research, Cameroon.

1. **INTRODUCTION**

The Kribi Deep Sea Port, located on the Gulf of Guinea in Cameroon, was inaugurated to expand the country’s maritime trade capacity and as a logistics center for Central Africa. As Cameroon's second deep-sea port, succeeding Douala, Kribi is able to serve large container vessels and cargo. Its construction aimed to relieve pressure on the Port of Douala and enable international trade with a competitive edge for Cameroon and landlocked neighboring countries like Chad and Central African Republic (Frederic, et al., 2021). A major part of international trade, including import and export, relies on containerized goods. Customs operations are critical at this port in order to lower costs associated with value-added trade, expedite goods movement in the supply chain, and improve trade efficiency (Catherine et al., 2024; Yogananthan et al., 2025).

Nevertheless, even with the port's modern physical facilities, Kribi has continually struggled and is now facing new challenges with customs delays. These inefficiencies are multi-dimensional and include chronic neglect of the infrastructure, administrative gridlocks, endemic corruption, lack of modernization in policies and frameworks, inadequate technologic implements, and antivigil technological frameworks (Nkot & Amougou, 2021). As noted, customs delays are a form of operational administrative inefficiency or disorganization in the form where there is too much regulation or bureaucracy, slow processing, and unproductive clearing procedures involving many fragmented institution approvals (Oguche, 2023). Although Kribi Port was designed with enhanced logistics capabilities, the overwhelming amount of containerized goods has not been met with proportionate infrastructure scaling, resulting in chronic bottlenecks and excessive dwell times. (Nkot & Amougou, 2021).

Another notable problem is corruption within customs processes where unofficial payments and bribery inflate the cost of doing business. According to Transparency International (2018), customs corruption is a persistent problem at African ports, and Cameroon is no exception. Corruption diminishes the integrity of port activities and increases uncertainty resulting in a decline of legitimate cross-border trade. This problem is further exacerbated by other put regulatory blocks. The laws and regulations governing customs operations are often complicated, vague, and out of date. Such policies invite multiple document checks and extended physical inspections of the cargo which in turn leads to inconsistent application of the customs trade and other relevant pieces of legislation (Kamau, 2020; Gwardzińska, 2023; Katsieris, 2024).

Technological shortfalls also contribute significantly to customs delays. Attempts to implement ASYCUDA and digitized invoicing systems have not been fully automated yet and do not integrate all parties within the system (Seturidze, 2024). Document processing is still done manually which hampers communications between the port, shipping lines, customs agents, and other stakeholders, creating a backlog of inefficient work processes (UNCTAD, 2019; Machange & Yussuf, 2024). All these factors combine to have dire effects on the economy. Customs clearance delays add logistics expenses, erode business competitiveness, as well as cut into funds critical for supply chains operating on strict schedules. Time-sensitive shipments are especially risky, whereby the potential loss of perishables during transit means devalued import prospects. Furthermore, users of the port suffer economically due to high demurrage and storage fees (Benamar, 2023).

Changing the customs procedures of Kribi Port from a macroeconomic customs perspective alters Cameroon’s aim of becoming a regional trade center. Higher business predictability along with lesser operational costs is a must for foreign investors and global shipping companies, thus reducing their trust towards the port. Zaman (2022) stated that trade simplification is a major component of the relation between economic integration at multi-national scales and trade development of a country. Customs delays at Kribi serve as an anchor, paradoxically propelling port development and stunting economic growth in Cameroon and other neighboring landlocked nations. Not only are the maritime facilities of a port important to the World Bank, 2020, but also the port’s hinterland logistics and clearance systems which are the backbone of productivity.

An in depth analysis focusing on the underlying reasons of the KPorts customs delays alongside rapid delivery time objectives can shift trade efficiency and streamline customs processes, which will foster economic relationships within the region. As such, this is what the study seeks to accomplish through deliberating insights and guidance aimed at key movers and shakers in regards to containerized goods. By doing so, the goal is to not only fortify the customs processes but stimulate economical growth for the Central Africa region alongside Cameroon.

**1.2 Research question**

1. What are the factors influencing delay of customs procedure in kribi port?
2. What are the consequences of delay of customs procedure?
3. What are the proposed solutions to ameliorate the procedure for rapid delivery?

**1.3 Research objective**

1. To investigate the main cause of delay in the delivery of containerized goods from the kribi port
2. To investigate on the consequences of the delay in the customs procedure on Cameroon and the port users
3. Recommending some propose solutions to ameliorate on the delay of customs of procedure in the kribi port
4. **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The slow processing times at customs have become a major barrier into international trade, particularly for nations that are trying to improve their position in the global market. Customs delays are growing in noticeability and are recognized as more than just logistical hindrances; they are barriers to economic growth. Hummels and Schaur (2012) states that shipping delays significantly lower trading volumes, losing 1% for every day a shipment is delayed, which acts as a hidden tax on exports. These delays erode the ability of export-driven businesses to compete, increasing costs for consumers and producers.

In Latin America, there is research that indicates the region could benefit greatly from digital custom reforms. In a study conducted in Brazil by Ayarza (2022), it was noted that customs transparency improved due to the decreased clearance times associated with the implementation of the DU-E platform. Customs officers had access to databased which reduced the need for paper and streamlined clearance, thanks to the integrated digital systems. These efforts prove the significance of data integration and centralized documentation towards overcoming port delays.

Automated and secured customs systems interconnected with national and EU trade databases are in use by some European countries. For example, Rotterdam’s customs have integrated pre-arrival processing which allows for massive reductions in port latency. Additionally, Singapore is among the global leaders for customs clearance due to their efficient use of technology, institutional frameworks, and sheer efficiency. Such examples further demonstrate that customs management is achievable when advanced technologies are paired with inter-agency cooperation and strong legal systems.

Shifting our focus to Africa, several studies note persisting customs delays despite improved infrastructure. On a case study for the Port of Mombasa, Ndambuki and Mincu (2018) pointed out that Information Communications Technology (ICT) deficits, understaffed customs units, and excessive paperwork resulted in clearance delay surpassing ten days. Coupled with poor inter-agency collaboration from controlling bodies not under customs, these delays were compounded further. Such a study underlined that infrastructure spending must be paired with skilled workers and institutional framework changes to actually improve ports.

In Ghana, Ansah et al. (2020) studied the customs operations at the Tema Port and noted recurring logjams that stem which stem from excessive manual processes and insufficient automation technological bottlenecks. The introduction of a paperless system at the port did not ease the clearance processes because compliance from other stakeholders was poor, and training was inadequate. These findings support the argument that digital reforms need behavioral and structural reforms in port administration in order have a measurable impact on efficiency in clearing traffic.

In the same manner, Ojadi and Walters (2015) noted in Nigeria that informal payment surcharges and slow manifest processing along with arbitrary practices by customs officers impeded the cargo clearance significantly at Lagos ports. These governnance issues nested within corruption and a weakened business environment are highly unpredictable, raising the cost of doing business. The request is for a well-structured customs system supported by strong anti-corruption enforcement.

The experience of South Africa is somewhat different. Mthembu and Chasomeris (2023) reported some of the successes and persistent issues at the Port of Durban. While a lot has been done to develop the ports and modernize customs in South Africa, persistent problems caused by equipment failures, labor unrest, and disjointed supply chain management continue to reduce the efficiency of port operations. At least there are attempts to use performance management frameworks as well as stakeholder forums that are geared towards improving the clearance of vessels within reasonable timeframes.

In a regional context, Shibuya et al. (2023) focused on cross-border cooperation to mitigate customs delays. Their research conducted in West and Central Africa showed that customs and transit trade procedures industry standard customs policy cooperative frameworks facilitate vibrant trade among bordering countries. This is especially the case for countries with landlocked neighbors dependent on access via seaports for grant access to goods and services for importation and exportation.

As for the Cameroonian situation, Kribi Deep Seaport was built to curb the persistent congestion and operational inefficiencies exacerbated in Douala Port. However, other recent studies suggest that Kribi is experiencing the same challenges. Customs delay issues at Kribi were attributed by Mvogo and Tchindjang (2024) to poor inter-agency collaboration, low levels of digitization, and stakeholder apathy towards the port. These systemic problems, in spite of the port’s modern architecture, diminish the competitiveness of its operations.

Ngo (2019) also pointed out that Cameroon is non-compliant with international trade and maritime agreements like the World Trade Organization’s Trade Facilitation Agreement and the Abuja MoU. Such partial compliance damages the reliability and effectiveness of customs processes, which raises doubts among trade partners. Lack of full alignment in legal basis prevents the country from fully participating in global value chains.

Another aspect that impacts custom’s efficiency in Cameroon is the public administration’s institutional culture. Some documents and other sources have said that informal payments and discretionary enforcement of customs IT regulations still impede cargo facilitation at Kribi and Douala ports. In the absence of transparency and accountability mechanisms, reform of customs still remains cosmetic and ineffective. These problems indicate the existence of more fundamental governance challenges that need to make progress.

In addition, the implementation of CAMCIS (Cameroon Customs Information System) has not improved the management of customs because of lack of training and resistance to change attending the personnel. As Almeida (2023) warns, without full acceptance by stakeholders, legal frameworks, and constant updates to digital customs systems, their solutions cannot succeed. In Cameroon, however, gaps in implementation erode the intended purpose of automation.

Policy alternatives examining the construction of dry ports and inland customs stations is not an option Cameroon has fully tapped in to. Rodrigues et al. (2021) showed these models significantly lessened congestion at the main seaports by moving clearance activities further inland. For Cameroon, it would be more appropriate to implement this model to strategic areas like Ngaoundéré or Garoua to relieve congestion around Kribi while enhancing national trade development.

Cameroon’s customs capacity restraints with regards to customs border control are limited to human resource gaps and inadequate staff training. Chiganga (2015), based on Tanzania's experience, underscored the need for periodic training, operational handbooks, and measurable benchmarks as crucial components for enhanced efficiency within customs frameworks. It is possible that Kribi Port is suffering from an absence of tailored international standards staff development programs in port and customs management.

These factors combined have led to the scenario where goods series camo’s enormous trade fleet suffer massive excessive dwell times in Cameroonian ports. Locally, this situation dampens the business environment. Internationally, it can harm diplomatic and trading relationships. Regionally, it impedes economic continental cohesion. There is no doubt also that Kribi Deep Seaport has not achieved, as yet, its overarching goal of emerging as a central trading hub because of ongoing customs bottleneck issues.

There is a wealth of literature on Africa’s customs inefficiencies, and even more glaring is the lack of empirical studies specifically looking at the delay dynamics of Kribi Deep Seaport customs. Most of the literature available on the port tends to be either descriptive or policy-oriented, while a systematic analysis of institutional, technological, and operational customs delay factors at this port is missing. Thus, there is very little context-specific evidence to inform reform frameworks at Kribi Port.

This gap substantiates the reason for this research, which seeks to explore the factors, effects, and potential remedies concerning customs delays at Kribi Deep Seaport. The study seeks to implement global best practices and is based on empirical research to make useful suggestions aimed at improving customs operations. Fulfilling this gap is essential not only for Cameroon’s competitive position in trade but also for improving regional integration and transforming the economy of Central Africa.

1. **METHODOLOGY**

To understand the customs clearance processes associated with containerized goods at the Port of Kribi, this study employed an explanatory research design. As far as data collection and analysis is concerned, this research applies quantitative approaches. I adopted stratified random sampling to draw a sample size of 413 participants from several stakeholders in the logistics and port operations at Kribi.

The sampling procedure included various classes of stakeholders. More specifically, licensed customs brokers received 105 questionnaires, of which 100 were returned (a response rate of 95%). For the shipping lines, 60 questionnaires were sent out, yielding 55 completed questionnaires from the targeted respondents (a response rate of 95%). Regarding customs administrators, 80 questionnaires were distributed. Of those, 70 were returned positively. This represents a 90% response rate. For shippers, only 4 questionnaires were sent, all of which were returned completed. This represents a 100% response rate. In the case of consignees or importers, 150 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 120 were returned completed, representing a 75% response rate. For SGS Cameroon, 10 questionnaires were sent and 8 returned positively (an 80% response rate). Lastly, 4 questionnaires were issued to the PAK, receiving 2 positive responses and 2 non-responses, yielding a 50% response rate.

The total of 413 questionnaires given out across different logistics and port operations rems, 359 were completed positively while 54 went unreturned. This synthesis of data reflects the opinions of various participants involved with the customs clearance operations at the Port of Kribi.

1. **FINDINGS**

The effectiveness of customs clearance processes is crucial for international trade, efficient functioning of ports, and revenue increase for the country. Ports are primary international transport logistical centers, and any ineffectiveness at customs, for example, can disrupt the national and regional economies. Regarding Kribi Deep Seaport of Cameroon which is marketed as a focal point of international trade in Central Africa, it is very important to focus on the nature and causes of delays in the operations to improve the overall efficiency of the port and its competitiveness in trade.

**4.1** **Stakeholders of Delay and Their Number of Days**

This part discusses the outcomes pertaining to the primary actors who contributed to the customs clearance delays for the Kribi port, examining each stakeholder’s role regarding the operational inefficiencies and the impact delays have on the port and the economy of Cameroon as a whole. The analysis is developed from data evidence which captures notable actors such as the importers, customs brokers, customs administrators, and other members of the logistics chain and measures the average delays in days incurred by each actor to the customs clearance process. By identifying such delays, the research seeks to inform precise strategies and policy changes which could drastically minimize dwell times and enhance trade in Cameroon.

Figure 1: Stakeholders of Delay and Their Number of Days

Source : Field Survey, 2025

The findings presented in Figure 1 offer a critical empirical illustration of the actors contributing to customs clearance delays at the Kribi Deep Seaport, along with the magnitude of their respective impacts in terms of average delay days. The data clearly point to importers as the most significant contributors to delays, with an average delay of 90 days an exceptionally high figure compared to other actors. This strongly suggests a systemic issue among importers, most likely related to insufficient liquidity, poor financial planning, or bureaucratic hurdles in mobilizing funds for customs duties and port-related charges. The prevalence of delays associated with the importer highlights a critical gap pertaining to the pre-arrival and pre-clearance financing gaps that policy and operational approaches must address as a matter of urgency.

Customs brokers and administration officers closely follow importers as they contribute the next most impacted procedural delays with 15 and 10 days respectively. The inadequate digitization or rapidly evolving customs documentation procedures may account for the wait of 15 days attributed to brokers. The time of 10 days utilized by customs administrators is most likely attributed to slow manifests business release, poor intra-division collaboration, and insufficient automation concerning the monitoring and inspection of the cargo.

The other participants incur significantly less delay, but are still of some importance. SGS (8 days), Shipping Line (7 days), PAK & KCT (5 days), and Shippers (5 days). A quality inspection and certification body SGS might be causing delays of processes with late inspection reports or prolonged verification processes. Contributions could also come from shipping lines and port concessionaires’ slow offloading, document mismatches and limited coordination with customs. Even though these stakeholders incur relatively small portions of the delay, their collective impacts are important, especially when dealing with tightly scheduled logistics.

Interestingly, the graph also uses a logarithmic scale on the y-axis, which emphasizes the wide disparity between importer delays and those of other actors. This visualization choice is useful in depicting the dramatic influence importers have on the overall customs clearance time, making them the focal point for any policy reform aimed at improving port efficiency.

The illustration gives enough data to analyze that the customs delays at Kribi Port are not evenly distributed across all users of the port’s services but are, skewed towards a few particular players, in this case, the intermediaries and importers. Such an understanding of the problem geometry warrants a cross-level action approach: for constituents, financial support and regulatory streamlining, for brokers and customs officials, professional development coupled with accountability structures, and integration of workflows for all constituents in the logistics chain. Resolving these issues would dramatically improve efficiency within the operation, improve trade facilitation, and enhance revenue collection for the country.

* 1. **Analysis of Stakeholders’ Contributions to Customs Delays and Corresponding Durations**

Delays in customs clearance processes can significantly hinder port efficiency, increase the cost of doing business, and limit the competitiveness of a country's trade infrastructure. At the Kribi Deep Sea Port, delays during customs procedures are the result of several interrelated activities carried out by different stakeholders within the logistics chain. Understanding the roles these actors play and the corresponding time implications of their actions is crucial for identifying systemic inefficiencies and proposing relevant reforms. This section presents a detailed assessment of the key stakeholders, their contributions to procedural delays, and the estimated number of days associated with these delays.

4.2. table 1-Stakeholders, their contribution to delay and estimated days of delay

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ACTORS | | Activities leading to delay | Esimated delay days |
| Shipper | | Late preparation of documents | 1-5 days |
| Customs administrators | | Late manifest of goods at kribi | 1-10 days |
| consignée | | Lack of finance | 1-90 days + |
| Broker | | Lack of professionnalisme | 1-15 days |
| KCT | | Technical issue | 1-2 days |
| SGS | | Late issue of RVC report | 1-12 days |
| Shipping line | | Delay in issue of delivery order | 1-3 days |
| Other factors | Port congestion | | 1-6 days |

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The findings in table 1 reveals that delays at the port are not the result of a single factor but rather a combination of lapses from multiple actors. These range from individual inefficiencies to institutional and structural limitations. The table outlines eight distinct stakeholders and activities that cause delays, with estimated durations ranging from 1 to over 90 days. The combination of financial constraints and technical problems showcases the complexity involved in the customs clearance processes at Kribi port. This emphasizes the need for a multi-stakeholder focus toward improving operational effectiveness.

Evidence suggests that the consignee remains the primary source of customs clearance delays. Their delays range anywhere between 1 to 90+ days, primarily due to financial burdens tied to meeting a set of strict import requirements. This conclusion is particularly alarming because it indicates a significant portion of the delay is importers being demand-side liquidity constrained they lack the cash to clear, halting the entire system. As a result, port efficiency suffers along with cargo turnover, which in turn diminishes potential revenue for the state.

Customs office personnel lag behind with manifesting delays that range from 1 to 10 days. Their delays stem from the late manifesting of goods. This demonstrates an administratively procedural blockage which may indicate poor inter-agency collaboration or ineffective internal customs workflows. Such delayed manifesting inhibit timely clearance and introduce unpredictability for downstream stakeholders dependent upon the cargo release.

Customs brokers whose estimated delays range between 1 to 15 days, are also significant contributors, mostly because of unprofessional conduct. They include document mismanagement, failure to legally comply with customs processes, or lackers of effective communication. Their part is pivotal while assisting in the clearance, and any of their delays or mistakes will disrupt the entire chain.

SGS which performs pre-shipment inspections and issues the RVC report is responsible for additional delays ranging from 1 to 12 days. This process is sometimes an antecedent step for customs valuation, hence any delay in this step tends to throw off the entire clearance timeline. This showcases the need to improve the interaction of customs with third-party inspection and the prompt performance of external confirmations.

The shipper has been noted to be an active contributor to delays in the range from 1 to 5 days, mostly as a result of not timely issuing the shipping document. This also underscores the need to streamline processes so that documents are prepared well in advance of the cargo being sent out. Likewise, the maritime freight company stops the process for a period of 1 to 3 days when an order for the release of the goods from the terminal is not issued on time.

The Kribi Container Terminal (KCT), which is a part of the port’s functionality, experiences 1 to 2 days of delays as a result of possible downtimes. These are of minimal concern when measured against other stakeholders. However, such downtimes can prove to be significant in terms of the above hand when there is a high volume of cargo or if combined with other delays.

As port congestion falls under the “other factors” category, its estimated delay range is between 1 and 6 days. This is a combination of an infrastructural as well as a logistical problem which tends to be worsened by the accumulated delays from other users. Congestion hampers the efficiency of the port and serves as a barrier towards meeting the turnaround target for the port which can give rise to additional expenses like demurrage or storage fee on top of charge.

The findings from the Kribi Deep Sea Port show that customs clearance delays are caused by several actors, with the consignee being the biggest contributor due to financial difficulties, which can delay the process for over 90 days. This reflects what Chiganga (2015) found in Tanzania, where many importers struggled to pay required fees on time, leading to port congestion. Customs administrators and brokers also play a major role in delays due to poor coordination and lack of professionalism, similar to what Kahyarara and Simon (2018) observed in African ports where inefficient systems and weak institutions slow down clearance. In addition, delays caused by third-party inspections, document preparation, and minor technical issues at the terminal highlight the lack of modern technology, as also noted by Olapoju (2023), who emphasized that most African ports are not yet digitally advanced. Overall, the situation at Kribi shows that delays come from financial, institutional, and technological weaknesses, and solving them will require joint efforts to support importers, improve customs operations, and invest in digital tools.

**4.3 Consequences of Delay of Customs Procedure**

The impacts of the clearance customs processes are far reaching. At Kribi Deep Sea Port, these delays act as obstacles which increase logistics costs and undermines the Cameroon's import-export sector competitiveness. The delays do not stem from a singular entity, instead there is a lack of system inefficiency amongst multiple stakeholders which includes freight forwarders, shipping agents, and transport companies, all working towards the same goal but functioning separately. The multiple layers of inefficiencies and logistical unsophistication means over-stretched resources coupled with increased operational cost but hindered economic growth. Figure 2 illustrates the helpful allocation of each actor. This breakdown shows performing efficiencies will yield favorable economic results.

Figure 2: Consequences of Delay of Customs Procedure

Source Field survey, 2025

Figure 2 shows how various stakeholders affect the time spent by Kribi Deep Sea Port in custom clearances. The evidence unmistakably points to importers as the predominant stakeholders responsible for delays, accounting for 60% of the total delays. The primary impact indicates that most if not all bottlenecks are demand driven, which stem from inadequate financial resources, document unpreparedness, and payment postponement of duties and fees. These factors hinder the fluidity of port operations and demonstrate that there is a need to provide support to importers through enhanced trade financing and better awareness regarding procedures as a clearance awareness campaign needs to be conducted.

Brokers contribute next, also giving a 20% impact which shows the importance and susceptibility of inefficiencies within their segment of the logistics chain. Their unprofessionalism due to poor documentation, slow recourse to communication with customs and the importers, and non-adherence to time schedules can cause serious backlogs of work. This highlights the need for brokers to be better supervised in the control and use of regulatory frameworks which issue tail room for flexible compliance with rules designed to simplify exchange between participants.

The Port Authority is responsible for an estimated 10% of the delays, which is a combination of operational and infrastructural inefficiencies. These may be because of insufficient equipment, inefficient cargo management, or deep lack of synchronization with other stakeholders. While this figure is somewhat restrained in comparison to importers and brokers, any delays at this tier, even if minor, can stagnate the entire logistics system and drive up congestion during peak periods. Enhancing the Authority’s performance will come from further investing in the port’s digitalization and modernization efforts.

Other contributors such as the shipping lines with (5%), the state (4%), and SGS (1%) have negligible yet noteworthy impacts. Delays as a result of the shipping lines usually stem from the late delivery order issuance, while state impact can be attributed to ineffective policies or indeterminate regulatory frameworks. Lack of pervasiveness from SGS indicates that pre-shipment inspections and conformity reporting are done well, but not adequately timed with customs, causing affiliated delays. Collectively, the highlighted contributors show that the main sources of delay may be few, but the efficiency of the system as a whole relies on each link of the chain working together.

1. **CONCLUSION**

The examination of customs clearance delays at the Kribi Deep Sea Port indicates that the inefficiencies are largely the result of a blend of procedural gaps, stakeholder-specific factors, and overarching structural constraints. From the different categories of stakeholders, the importers (consignees) appear to constitute the most prominent category with regard to delays, and this is primarily due to insufficient funding and inadequate readiness to deal with customs obligations. Delays by customs brokers and customs administrators also comprise a large part of the issue, which is caused by poor handling of documentation, lack of professionalism, and prolonged manifest processing. All these problems suggest a highly interdependent hierarchy where the delays of one actor are exacerbated by others, efficiently sabotaging every participant, including the port.

In addition, third-party entities like SGS, shippers, and shipping lines, have a relatively low individual influence, but are significant in the context of the clearance customs contemporaneously. Their specific activities such as providing late delivery orders relative to the timeframe needed or late inspections contribute higher order delays and underscore some of the issues in communication within the logistics chain. Port authorities and other government agencies need to respond faster and upgrade their systems and processes to mitigate permanent delays. The delay analysis indicates that blame is shared inadequately which means that tailored responsibility for each stakeholder would be more beneficial rather than blanket reform.

As discussed earlier, solving matters pertaining to the customs clearance delay at Kribi Port requires heightened engagement from various stakeholders simultaneously. Proposed policy shifts should prioritise increasing the capacities offered to customs brokers financially, control importers, enable stricter compliance protocols to be lifted, and automate processes that require document submission or communication. In addition, active and constructive engagement from the public and private actors will determine the achievement of sustained port performance improvement objectives. The initiative aims to position ports in a way where they can accomplish increased trade activities, sustain decreased clearance durations, and enhance the country’s strategic access posture for Cameroon and the Central African region.

1. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

After reviewing the problems associated with customs procedures at the Kribi port, we proposed several recommendations that were aimed at improving operational efficiency. One of the most primary problems is the lack of digitalization and automation in the customs processes. Some of our proposals include a paperless procedure, automated risk assessments, and an outlined digital platform. The submission of a conspicuous manifest on the CAMCIS system no less than 72 hours prior to the goods’ arrival, alongside expedited liquidation by customs, improved responsiveness to demurrage discount requests, and expedited entrance into terminal sustenance, would help alleviate bottlenecks slowing down the clearance process. These changes would automate customs processing while providing better results to logistical efforts.

A reduction in the documentation needed for granting delivery orders would entail removing the quittance and declaration requirements which are only obtainable post duty payment. The shipping lines require more additional space for empty containers in Kribi to avoid congestion. An automatic order issuing system to transmit orders from Douala to Kribi needs to be set up, and extra charges that obstruct goods release should instead be sent early to consignees. Also, a reduction in demurrage discount approval delays to one day would greatly improve the ease of port operations and container dwell time.

License customs brokers and importers must also share in the responsibility of making customs processes faster and more precise. Upfront financing and honesty about the containers contents need to be addressed by the importers, and documentation needs to be in the hands of the brokers at least a week prior to the cargo’s arrival. To facilitate smoother procedures, they need improved knowledge of the importation process. We advocate deregulating the customs brokerage sector to as a means of improving its administration by instituting a compulsory minimum education level such as ‘A’ Level for practitioners and barring unlicensed brokers who impede orderly flow with their bad practices.

Customs bottlenecks are also the focus of government agencies and other institutions like SGS. Timely assistance on document uploads for the exporter portal and manual evaluations during RVC report delays would assist SGS. Customs should enable provisional declarations to be put on ‘hold’ for RVC while awaiting RVCs to aid the flow of clearance. In addition, SGS must not override customs defined valuation and HS code boundaries as conflicts will ensue. A reduced number of customs control posts would benefit the government while providing advance notice of customs duty changes to allow importers to adjust their plans and avoid financial turmoil.

All in all, the rest of the infrastructure is still a key impediment towards efficient customs. Transport and trade of goods are hard to execute in a timely fashion due to the existence of narrow roads and dangerous potholes heading into Kribi port. This region would greatly benefit from spending in road development and the research into other forms of transportation like railways would connect Kribi with other significant towns. With these improvements at hand, coupled with institutional and stakeholder changes previously discussed will enhance the sluggish customs procedures at Kribi port to a more efficient level, which in return will greatly aid the economy and improve the country's trading capabilities.

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