

Africa: Support to the African Union Border Programme (AUBP)

Effective and sustainable border management prevents conflicts between African states and promotes integration

The Challenge

Only a third of African borders are clearly delimited and demarcated. The AU considers ill-defined borders as potential sources of conflict, threatening peace and security, and impeding integration – especially when natural resources are discovered in the border regions. Unclear boundaries endanger peace and security and hinder regional integration, economic growth and development.

The Approach

In 2007, the African Union launched the AUBP as a direct response to these risks. Since 2008, the project has supported the implementation of the border programme at several levels:

Support to AU member states: The project currently supports 25 African countries in defining, demarcating and managing their borders. The project also supports partner countries in implementing and expanding cross-border cooperation and in the elaboration of local agreements and development plans, as an important contribution to combating the root causes of flight. In addition, the project promotes joint border management by various actors, including border police, customs, mayors as well as women's associations and youth organizations.

Cooperation with Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Western and Eastern Africa: In this regard, the focus lies on the development and harmonization of common guidelines for integrated border management. The regional organizations are also assisted in playing an active role in the resolution of border disputes.



Project name	Support to the African Union Border Programme (AUBP)
Commissioned by	German Federal Foreign Office
Lead executing agency	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
Project area	Africa supra-regional
Lead Institution	African Union Commission (AUC), Peace and Security Department (PSD)
Duration	01/2008 – 06/2020
Budget	24.250.000 € (current phase 2016-2020), total of 50 million €

Strengthening of the AU Commission: The project advises on the development and implementation of policies and strategies, such as the AU Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation (Niamey Convention), as well as on organizational development. In addition, the project supports the development of the AU Border Information System (AUBIS). It also promotes cooperation between the AU and African as well as European universities and training institutes.



Photo on the left: A landmark along the border between Algeria and Niger that was densified in 2017 © GIZ

Photo on the right: Representatives of Burkina Faso and Mali laying a boundary stone © GIZ

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Photo on the left: Building bridges through borders: Border crossing in Mozambique © GIZ

Photo on the right: A customs officer in the Kenyan-Tanzanian border area © GIZ

Results in figures ...

Significant progress has been made in recent years in better defining border lines on the African continent. With the support of the programme, more than 5400 km of previously ill-defined borderlines were delimited and demarcated at 26 borders. In addition, five states have signed treaties regarding their boundary line:

Comoros-Mozambique (2011), Seychelles-Tanzania (2012), Burkina Faso-Niger (2014), Côte d'Ivoire-Burkina Faso (2014), Namibia-Botswana (2017).

In terms of the capacities of African actors, the programme has supported the publication of seven manuals, i.a. on the issues of conflict management in border areas, demarcation of borders, establishing border commissions, improving access to expertise and setting continental standards.

Border officers in 28 countries can now fulfill their roles more professionally and efficiently thanks to training in various areas of cross-border cooperation. For example, more than 200 health officials in Mali and Guinea have been trained in Ebola prevention, helping to contain the Ebola epidemic in West Africa.

In addition, norms and foundations of peaceful cooperation could be established and formalized under international law: 17 African states have meanwhile signed the AU Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation (Niamey Convention), the development of which has significantly promoted the programme.

... and in stories

“In the past, people had to wait hours or even days at the border crossing because they had to go through the same process in Tanzania after completing their checks in Kenya,” says Dishon Njuguna, customs officer on the border between Kenya and Tanzania.

In order to facilitate a faster crossing of the border for persons and goods, a new border control system between Kenya and Tanzania was introduced in October 2017 with the support of the project. The introduction of a “One Stop Border Post”, in which goods and persons are controlled only once by a team of Kenyan and Tanzanian officials, allows to pass the border much faster.

The opening of the One Stop Border Post intensified economic relations between the two countries. “The new border post greatly facilitated the exchange of people and goods between Kenya and Tanzania. We operate day and night and allow 150 to 200 trucks a day and 1,500 people to cross the border,” says Dishon Njuguna.

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