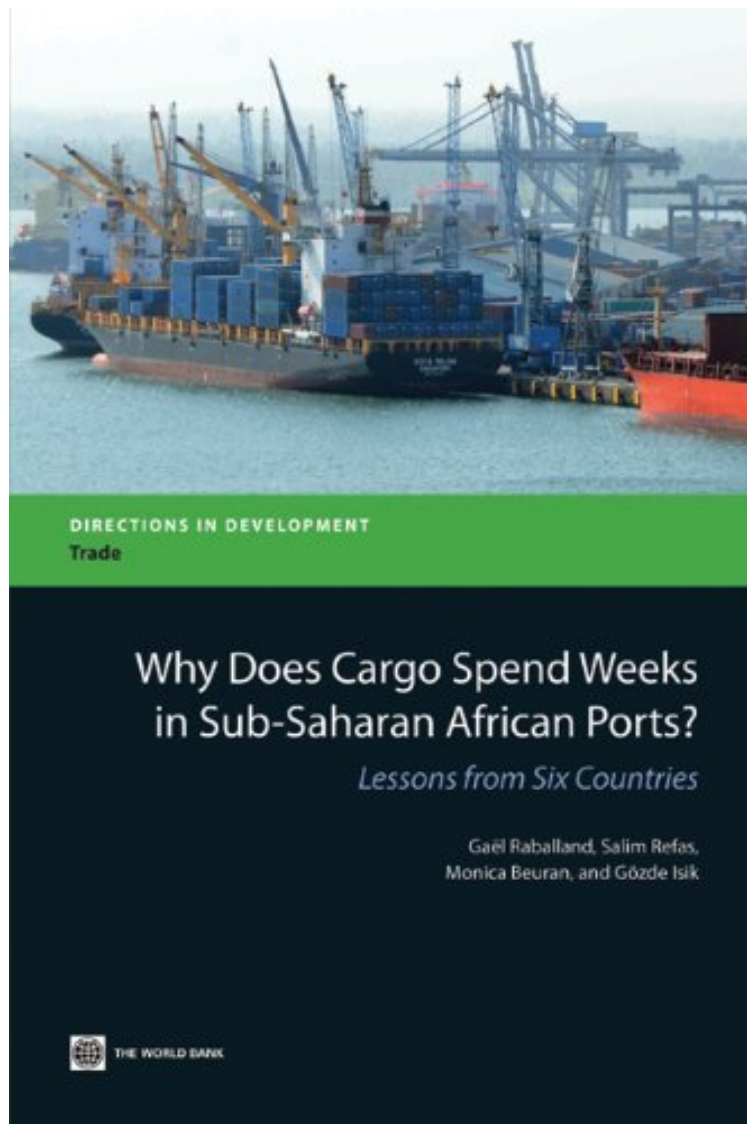


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Why Does Cargo Spend Weeks in Sub-Saharan African Ports? (Directions in Development)

Gael Raballand, Salim Refas, Monica Beuran, Gozde Isik
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Sub-Saharan Africa has a serious infrastructure deficit—estimated at about \$48 billion a year—which is impeding the continent's competitiveness and hence its economic growth. How to solve this problem? Some advocate building more infrastructure while others suggest privatizing, or contracting out to the private sector, the management of infrastructure so that the discipline of the market will lead to more and better quality services. This book graphically illustrates the problem in the case of Africa's ports. With the exception of Durban, cargo dwell times—the amount of time cargo spends in the port—average about 20 days in African ports, compared with 3–4 days in most other international ports. None of the past attempts to solve this problem have worked. The reason—and this is the major contribution of this volume—is that long dwell times are in the interest of certain public and private actors in the system. Importers use the ports to store their goods. Customs brokers have little incentive to move the goods because they can pass on the costs of delay to the importers. And when the domestic market is a monopoly, the downstream producer has an incentive to keep the cargo dwell times long as a way of deterring entry of other producers. The net result is inordinately long dwell times, ineffective interventions, and globally uncompetitive industries in African countries. The solution to decrease dwell time in these ports relies mainly on the challenging task of breaking the private sector's collusion and equilibrium between public authorities, logistics operators, and some shippers and not on investing massively in infrastructure. Addressing the challenge will also require that there be political support from the general public for reforms that will promote their interests. And before they offer their political support, the public needs to be informed. This book is a step in that direction.