

# Findings

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Good Practice  
Infobrief



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*Sierra Leone*

## Development during Conflict: the Roads Rehabilitation and Maintenance Project

This project, with a total cost of US\$ 92.74 million (IDA, the government of Sierra Leone and five other donors) was declared effective in 1993 and closed in 2001, with country operations being suspended in 1998 and 1999 due to the security situation. The main objectives were: (i) to remove physical bottlenecks in the country's transport network through a sustainable road rehabilitation program; (ii) to build institutional capacity to better plan and manage the repair and maintenance of roads and promote a sustainable system for funding and road maintenance; (iii) to strengthen transport sector institutions and to foster market-oriented policies; (iv) to encourage new methods of infrastructure rehabilitation and maintenance, using labor-intensive technology and local resources, in order to increase employment generation and to provide sustainable maintenance systems; (v) to increase the share of private sector participation in road maintenance and develop the capacity of small contractors to maintain the road network; and (vi) to promote the use of non-motorized transport to reduce head-loading by women and to increase rural mobility, improving transport services available for the rural poor.

### Impact on the ground

- The transfer of responsibility from the Department of Works to the Sierra Leone Roads Authority (SLRA) improved the management of the road network.
- Improved maintenance practices brought the share of the road network in good condition from 10% to over 30% and the share of the network in fair condition from 20% to over 30%.
- The rehabilitation of the main roads (15.8 km) in Freetown was completed. There has been an appreciable increase in labor-based and machine-based maintenance and pothole patching by private contractors.
- Technical assistance was organized to help organize, manage and train SLRA staff and domestic contractors. The project began with 10 staff at SLRA and ended with 507. SLRA staff received 266 man-months of domestic and 38 man-months of overseas training. This helped the SLRA administer all its major contracts. At the mid-term review in 1996, SLRA was able to administer 100% of its contracts independently.
- A computerized Road Maintenance Management System has been established by the SLRA to enhance its ability to prioritize road maintenance works.

- While the Road Fund, which was established before the project, met its objective during the early project period, at the end of the project, its allocations were only 47% of its targets at appraisal due to the economic and logistical problems related to the security situation.
- At the beginning of the project, there were only 20 small contractors and no single-person contractors; at conclusion, there were 57 labor/light equipment-based contractors trained and undertaking 30% of the periodic maintenance, 50% of the mechanized routine maintenance and 100% of pothole patching by contract. The number of single-person contractors grew to 540.
- The ability of the SLRA to maintain almost all its managerial staff and the quality of its performance during the difficult security situation has been an exception amongst public sector agencies in Sierra Leone.
- An important impact is that an institutional framework for the sector has been established, which ensures effective, transparent and accountable roads management and administration.
- In 1996, IDA built on the foundations provided by the project by providing further support to the sector through a Transport Sector project.

### **Lessons learned**

- A very difficult conflict situation is not necessarily a reason for poor performance. Through this project, a small, strong, well-staffed and motivated institution was created. The SLRA illustrates the benefit of the “green field” approach in post-conflict situations where new institutions are set rather than slowly adjusting non-functioning oversized institutions.
- In order to consolidate the progress in institutional development, it is important to have a follow-up project that provides additional funding for road rehabilitation and maintenance.
- The SLRA Act separated the Road Fund from the Ministry of Works and it was placed under the SLRA board. While an improvement over the earlier arrangement, it would have been better to separate the Road Fund (resource mobilization) from SLRA operations (implementation). This would have enhanced the system’s transparency and accountability.
- Donors need to be pro-active in recommending contract termination soonest in a situation of force majeure to avoid paying unnecessary stand-by costs.
- In a country with recurrent civil strife, it is advisable to have contracts as small as possible to avoid long implementation times between bid and works completion. This has to be balanced, however, with the necessity to have large enough packages to attract bidders.

*This Infobrief has been largely excerpted from Implementation Completion Report No. 23348. The Team Leader was Zaza Manitranya Ramandimbarison; the primary authors of the ICR were the Team Leader and Farida Khan. For more information, e-mail [Fkhan@worldbank.org](mailto:Fkhan@worldbank.org)*

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