World off-track to meet sustainable development goals
Contents

REGULAR FEATURES
4 Editor’s comment: Enjoyable and enlightening
5 News briefing
8 Agriculture
22 Health
32 Food & agriculture
36 Digital
50 Livestock health
52 GIZ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
60 Practical Action Technical Brief
64 Forthcoming

SPECIAL FEATURES
14 Aquaculture
The cool women of Malaita
16 Special feature
Reflections on 20 years of change
21 People
FAO appoints new Director-General
30 Smart technology
Connecting farm, city and technology
35 Forestry
Investment models for African forestry
42 Training
Training boost for Tanzanian farmers
44 Community agriculture
Farming with your local community
46 Crop research
Scottish researchers focus on crop production advances in Africa
49 Poultry
World poultry chief sees positive developments in Nigeria
56 Development
Feed Africa – new vision for an export based 2025
58 Disease research
£1.75 million to investigate drug resistance in African cattle
59 Renewable energy
Africa’s ethanol progress needs policy backing
66 Biotech
Seventy countries adopt biotech crops for first time in 2018

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Front Cover: A woman carries a bag of seeds at a FAO-supported distribution site in South Sudan. Credit @FAO/Stefanie Glinski (see page 32)
Progress report on Liberian road maintenance project

The Ministry of Public Works of Liberia (MPW) and GIZ have just completed an important pilot road maintenance project in Greater Monrovia. The following report, written by advisor, Abdul Mansaray, concludes that the successful completion of the project will increase opportunities for further developments in the future.

The project started in August 2018 with the signing by MPW and GIZ of the necessary financing agreement, with all funding being channeled through the newly established Liberia’s National Road Fund (NRF). This allowed work to begin, with the targeting of selected road defects across the project area.

This was a first-time test for Liberia’s recently established road maintenance structures, involving the entire circle of necessary services and procedures and their interaction with MPW. The learning experience was invaluable with the whole project being successfully completed by 12 August 2019.

GIZ and MPW adopted a hybrid implementation method whereby MPW engineers served as project managers, supported by GIZ Road Maintenance Advisors, with ‘on-the-job training’ being given throughout the year-long operation.

This enabled all involved to gain essential experience in the following:

- Quantifying and pricing maintenance works;
- Preparing bidding documents, based on newly developed Standard Bidding Documents (SBDs), as supported by GIZ;
- Holding pre-bid meetings that included technical training in relation to competing Small and Medium Scaled Enterprises (SMEs) in the preparation of their respective bids;
- Evaluating bids and award contracts;
- Monitoring and supervising the actual work;
- Checking the quantity and quality of invoiced services and the release for payment certificates.

The success of the pilot is good news for MPW, which now has greatly improved the prospects for implementing further maintenance projects in the future, and with positive anticipation of achieving good results.

Procurement-related activities were also managed by MPW, starting with planning procedures and the new SBDs. Support from GIZ for smaller works proved very useful in preparing tender and contract documents both for this project and for other maintenance operations which will, in due course, also be financed by NRF.

Quality control and quality assurance templates, used during the supervision of the work, were also valuable, with SMEs exchanging excellent communication between the various contracting firms, project managers and employer. Furthermore, Contract Management Procedures (CMPs) are becoming increasingly familiar to local contractors.

Overall, the project was a success.
for MPW, GIZ and the local SMEs. As a result, the capacity to manage road infrastructure projects and account for road asset funds has been greatly improved.

One can safely say that, at this stage, we have a good foundation on which build for future progress, potentially involving many other maintenance projects.

Abdul Mansaray is a road maintenance advisor providing professional advisory services to political & implementing partners such as RMMU (Ministry of Public Works), private sector institutions and other relevant stakeholders.

Regular road management

Liberia’s ‘Capacity Development in the Transport Sector Project’ was first launched by the German Cooperation, to be implemented by the GIZ in 2008, with the aim of establishing the necessary institutions to enable the country to implement financially sustainable, and data-based, regular road management.

An IT-supported road management system was promoted to make regular maintenance possible on a properly planned basis. To ensure the financial sustainability of the sector, GIZ supported the setting up of a National Road Fund (NRF), supported by co-funding from the European Union.

As a result, when sufficient funds for road maintenance now become available, the responsible institutions are supported in awarding contracts, on a fully transparent basis, according to newly developed tender documents.

Advisory project support is also provided to enable governmental officials and decision-makers to set priorities for road maintenance projects. Work has also begun on establishing data-based, transparent and sustainable processes for prioritizing such activities, which is making procurement processes more transparent and efficient, while also improving the supervision of commissioned projects.

The approach to road maintenance in the country is now well set-up, enabling the newly commissioned project phase to focus on continued training and the use of the new systems. Additional outputs include TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training), decentralization and road sector safety. There are still a lot of challenges, however.

The major task now is to make the successfully finalized MPW-NRF-GIZ small works contracts for road and bridge maintenance a common practice in Liberia. Rigorous and continuous compliance with rules, standards and processes is the major challenge on the way towards the development of a data-driven, transparent road assets management program. In addition, the planning and implementation processes should be faster and smoother, an objective which will be assured when planning is based on nothing else but sound data.

Potential

Road sector development in Liberia, particularly in relation to road maintenance, have huge potential, as follows:

1. Routine road maintenance is predominantly a labour-intensive activity which could deliver exponential job creation benefits. Given Liberia’s high rate of youth unemployment, an intensive approach in road maintenance could help boost the local economy.

2. The continuous development of technical capacities across Liberian SMEs is still needed, as well for MPW’s engineers and management, potentially supported by study tours or international programs.

3. Most important of all, there is an urgent need for a road maintenance training centre to be created in Liberia to ensure the development of qualified road construction and maintenance personnel. The need for training is vital if the sector is to be able to move forward on the basis of improved efficiency and professionalism.
Implementing a bridge management system in Liberia

A strong network of bridges is essential for connectivity in Liberia, a country which has numerous rivers and has faced a major bridge reconstruction challenge since the establishment of a democratically elected government, following 15 years of civil war. During the country’s period of unrest, the registers, schemes and descriptions of many bridges were either lost or destroyed, adding significantly to Liberia’s reconstruction needs.

Responding to a request from the country’s Ministry of Public Works (MPW) for assistance in implementing a new Bridge Management System (BMS), GIZ has provided an Integrated Expert (IE), with a vast experience in bridge construction and bridge maintenance, to help with the reconstruction programme.

**Task and Challenges**

BMS is a tool which facilitates the appropriate management of bridges through the implementation of good original design, construction, operation and maintenance. In this context the tasks undertaken by the Bridge Management Team are as follows:

- Implementing a fully functioning BMS - this includes training of local staff.
- Creating a design office for structures, especially bridges.
- Improving quality control aspects concerning all bridge projects.

As most previous bridge drawings had been destroyed prior to 2017, no database of the country’s bridges was available. Even the exact number of bridges was unknown. As a result, the new BMS had to be started at the very beginning with the creation of a whole new database.

**Assessments**

Working with the assistance of experts and advisors of the project ‘Capacity Development in the Transport Sector in Liberia (CDTS)’, the MPW Bridge Unit has assessed the relevant structures, producing a cost estimate for all minor repair works.

As drawings were not available for relevant structures, the first assessment step involved getting an overview of all bridges in Liberia and producing drawings of each of them. With 4,000 bridges to be assessed, this was a Herculean task, especially as the MPW Bridge Unit consists of just three civil engineers and a team leader.

To enable assessments to be completed in as short a time as possible, assistance was sought from the Faculty of Civil Engineering at the University of Liberia. The idea was to involve graduating students to the geometric repro-
Production of the structures, after structures were measured under the supervision of a Bridge Unit Team engineer.

Cooperation
The Bridge Unit collaborated successfully with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), supported by GIZ, in an advisory capacity. Compatible data formats were identified between MPW and MCC for the registration of bridges to enable the long-term usability of different IT systems.

As a result, the full cataloguing of bridges in Liberia is now underway with about 50% of the country’s bridges having already been recorded.

MCC enhanced the project by providing the University with 20 computers, equipped with the necessary CAD software, while the Bridge Unit’s engineers taught the students how to use the facilities provided.

With bridge data captured and digital drawings created, the results of the work to date have been accepted by the Volpe Center of the US Department of Transportation as representing a ‘high quality’ operation.

The project “Capacity Development in the Transport Sector in Liberia” is being implemented by GIZ and co-funded by the Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany (BMZ) and the EU.

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