Capacity development in the transport sector in Liberia

Context
As consequence of 14 years of civil war and lack of maintenance and construction activities, Liberia’s transport infrastructure has been severely damaged, and less than 10 per cent of the country’s roads are paved. Major parts of the country cannot be reached during the rainy season and more than half of the population is not connected to the road network. This limits economic development. An improved transportation network could therefore significantly contribute to poverty reduction.

The Liberian Government has begun to award road construction contracts to the private sector, but opportunities for job creation might not be used. The planning capacities within the public sector and the services provided by Liberian construction companies remain insufficient. Above all, the country lacks law enforcement and qualified workers. The organizational prerequisites for efficient development of the transport sector and, in particular, of the road sector are weak. Regular road maintenance is planned, but the necessary financial resources as well as qualified workforce are not always available.

Objectives

- Performance in the transport sector is increased
- Transport sector policy is implemented
- Road maintenance has improved
- The prerequisites for increased employment in the construction sector have been created

Our approach

GIZ provides support at various levels. It advises the government on the implementation of a modern transport policy and the National Transport Master Plan. GIZ supports the establishment of a Road Agency and the setup of a Road Fund. For this purpose, an IT-supported road management system is promoted to make regular maintenance plannable. The project advises the governmental institutions on road safety and prepares the introduction of an overload weight control system for trucks, which is to be implemented by GIZ International Services.

GIZ applies measures to strengthen the local construction industry to carry out more public contracts. The Liberian Government is supported in making the award of contracts transparent and in practicing to use the newly developed tender documents. The construction companies receive appropriate training to become more competitive and create more jobs – in particular, for young people. A training course for road construction and maintenance craftsmen is being developed and a dialogue between the ministries and the private sector is being promoted to address the challenges local companies are confronted with.
Results

A National Transport Master Plan was developed with support from GIZ and adopted by the Liberian Cabinet in 2012. Within this context, GIZ has supported the government in developing a modern legal framework and implementing various reform projects in the road sector. A law on axle load control was adopted in 2015 and the corresponding regulation followed in 2016. Regulations and manuals on traffic signs were standardized. The National Road Fund to finance road maintenance based on fuel levies was introduced in 2017. A competence-based training program for road construction and maintenance craftsmen was developed by the industry and the Ministry of Education.

Advisory support provided by the project has helped to build up planning capacities and enabled officials to set priorities for road maintenance. The work has begun on establishing data-based, transparent and sustainable processes for prioritizing activities. This makes the procurement processes more transparent and efficient and improves construction supervision.

Human resource development has taken place not just within the ministries, but also in small and medium-sized enterprises. Among other things, this included training on business planning, cost estimates and construction management for company owners. These measures ensure that Liberia’s private sector is better qualified to participate in public tenders. In a parallel process, the project is supporting the Ministry of Public Works in introducing transparent tendering policies which involve local construction companies to create more jobs in the country.

Processes from planning, tendering and contracting to maintenance works, monitoring and contract handling are being tested and practiced through pilot measures.

Why transport as a focus?

Transport is a fundamental part of social and economic development. Access to markets is one of the main prerequisites for overcoming poverty, particularly for the rural population. Especially in a sparsely populated country like Liberia, a good transport system is essential.

Why maintenance?

Regular road maintenance ensures usability and reduces costs over the entire road life cycle. The global climate change leads to an extension of the already heavy rainy season in Liberia. Large parts of the country are therefore difficult to access for ever longer periods of time. Maintenance measures may also have high employment effects, especially if labor-intensive methods are applied.

Why policy development?

Especially in a developing country, it is important to define the strategic direction in order to use limited resources effectively. At the same time, it is important to reduce political uncertainties to encourage investments.

Why promoting local small and medium businesses?

Above all, small and medium-sized companies contribute to sustainable national economic growth and stability in the economy as well as provide jobs for the youth.