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 PRINCETON UNIVERSITY



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

Building Institutions, Escaping Development Traps

Breaking through Barriers to Infrastructure Improvements

Investments in infrastructure -- especially for power and transport -- often bring immediate and significant economic returns. Mismanagement, corruption, and political obstacles interfere with important infrastructure projects however. ISS case studies illustrate how leaders overcame hurdles to complete critical facilities in [Sierra Leone](#), [Liberia \(Roberts International Airport and the Freeport of Monrovia\)](#), and [South Africa](#).

In 2008, the residents of Freetown, [Sierra Leone](#) had electricity for only two or three hours every few days, and businesses struggled with the high cost of maintaining private generators. Construction of a massive new hydroelectric plant in nearby [Bumbuna](#) lagged, and international donors threatened to suspend support for the project. Administrative bottlenecks caused by a lack of coordination among government ministries and poor communication between contractors and ministries prevented completion. At the direction of President Ernest Bai Koroma, Victor Strasser-King orchestrated regular ministerial meetings and implemented performance management systems to motivate employees, successfully completing the project in November 2009.

When Ellen Johnson Sirleaf took office as president of [Liberia](#) in 2006, just a few years after the 14-year civil war ended, the nation's largest airport and only functioning seaport were in distress. Reliant upon government subsidies, [Roberts International Airport](#) was deep in debt and suffered from a culture of corruption, no auditable trail of revenues and expenditures, a bloated payroll, and a skills shortage. The [Freeport of Monrovia](#) had endured war damage and years of neglect and now faced corruption, cargo theft, and a glut of untrained workers. The Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program (GEMAP) negotiated an agreement between international donors and the Liberian government to hire internationally recruited financial controllers to improve financial management at the airport and the port. Successive managing directors augmented these efforts, enacting critical reforms that made these two transportation centers viable again.

Featured Interview

In an interview with ISS, [Jeremy Cronin](#) discusses the challenges of repairing and extending infrastructure in South Africa. Deputy minister for transport at the time of the interview, Cronin describes the roles of agencies like [SANRAL](#) in fostering cooperation between the private sector and the government.

Featured Partnership

To reach new readers, ISS now collaborates with [Democracy Lab](#), a project of [Foreign Policy Magazine](#). Democracy Lab publishes abridged versions of ISS cases. The first nine published stories include:

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- [Solo, Indonesia reforms](#)
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Share Your Feedback

The ISS web repository is an idea bank that enables practitioners and scholars to

Apartheid governments in [South Africa](#) underfunded road construction and maintenance, especially in rural areas. In 1998, shortly after the country's transition to majority rule, the South African National Roads Agency, Ltd. -- [SANRAL](#) -- began to apply the logic of private sector business management to agency operations and established public-private partnerships to improve service delivery. SANRAL reconfigured the procurement process and financing models for planning, design, construction, maintenance, and operations. It increased transparency in contracts, leading to greater accountability from project managers and contractors. As a result, SANRAL more than doubled the country's road network to 16,000 kilometers in its first decade.

Improving Government Accountability and Leading Reform

[Innovations for Successful Societies](#) (ISS) helps public servants, policy makers, and scholars share institution-building strategies that work in especially challenging contexts. [Interview-based](#) case studies facilitate these exchanges and provide a basis for scholarly research. To date, ISS has published [103 reformer-focused case studies](#) and more than [350 interviews](#) all of which are available for free on a [web repository](#). Thousands of people around the globe access these web resources each month. Governments use the materials to learn from each other, inspire discussion in their ranks, and recall the steps they took to implement a reform. Universities and training programs use the cases in the classroom to engage students in the operational and strategic aspects of public sector reform.

ISS Readers Respond

"I'd just like to thank all of you for coming to Liberia, choosing Liberia to come and do this research. I believe this is an opportunity: giving us, as Liberians, the chance to tell our stories. Not many persons have heard about the good things Liberian things are involved with. They've only heard the negative aspects, especially during the war.... So we just want to thank you."

- ISS Interviewee

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Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and

evaluate the pros and cons of different reform strategies and weigh the effects of context. ISS welcomes feedback on its cases, including suggestions of additional topics and questions to be considered, corrections, and how case studies are being used:
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Where ISS Has Worked

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