

Transport Infrastructure Development and Maintenance



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Despite considerable progress made by many landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) in infrastructure development and maintenance, large gaps still remain which result in high transport costs and continue to make trade physically difficult.

The average distance to the nearest seaport for the LLDCs is 1,370 km. Kazakhstan (3,750 km) and Kyrgyzstan (3,600 km) have the longest distance from the sea. High transit costs, resulting from poor transport physical transport infrastructure, inadequate transit procedures and unreliable logistics systems are major stumbling blocks to international trade and ultimately to the economic growth and development of LLDCs. The LLDCs pay more than double what the transit countries incur in transport costs and take longer time to send and receive merchandise from overseas markets.

According to the World Bank Doing Business Report 2014, the average cost of exporting a container for LLDCs was \$3,203 in compared with \$1,287 for transit countries and similarly \$3,884 compared with \$1,602, respectively, for importing a container. Reducing these high costs requires investment into hard or physical transport infrastructure, such as roads, rails, airports, seaports etc. in LLDCs and transit developing countries, closing of the missing links, and into soft infrastructure including effective cooperation with transit countries on policy and regulatory reforms, making border control, procedures and regulations efficient and more transparent. These improvements depend on effective transit transport cooperation between the LLDCs, their transit neighbours and development partners.

Since the adoption of the Almaty Programme, LLDCs and their transit neighbours with support from partners have made some improvements in the development of their transport infrastructure through upgrading and expanding their transport networks including closing some missing links. The proportion of roads that are paved in LLDCs increased from 28% to 37% in 2011. The total length of the railway network in LLDCs increased from 34,192 km to 45,960 km, and the total length of pipelines increased by 17% from 63,002 km to 73,632 km. With regard to air transport, the use of cargo airfreight has increased in some landlocked developing countries as well, from 363.63 million ton-km to 1157.08 million ton-km.

In Asia, there was development and upgrading of the Asian Highway and the Trans-Asian Railway networks. The Asian Highway network that currently comprises of about 141,000 km of roads passing through 32 member States experienced an upgrading of 6.5 per cent of the total (about 9,300 km) to a higher class between 2006 and 2010. In South America, the Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA) is supporting the development of transport, energy and telecommunications infrastructure and in 2012 had 474 transportation projects, with highway projects accounting for the largest share at 47.5 percent, while multimodal projects accounted for the smallest share with 3 percent.

In Africa, improvements have been made on the Trans-African Highway which has a total length of 54,120 kilometers. The regional economic communities have upgraded to higher class standards sections of the highway that fall in their sub-regions along with the construction of several missing links. The Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) is supporting priority infrastructure projects on energy, transport, transboundary water and information and communications technology that are being implemented under the priority action plan for 2012 to 2020. Dry ports are being established in all regions with LLDCs, for example: Nepal, Burkina Faso, Mongolia and Ethiopia.

Outstanding Challenges

Despite the progress, there are still significant infrastructure gaps that need to be addressed in order to improve the competitiveness of the LLDCs. There are missing links in both the road and railway networks. Railway is a cheaper form of transport, but LLDCs and transit countries face challenges in utilizing it because of gauge differences, lack of replacement of rolling stock, and insufficient equipment. It is also important to increase sustainability of infrastructure projects, through developing businesses and development corridors along transit highways, railroads and inland waterways and designing sustainable (green) and resilient transit transport systems.

Financing needs of transport infrastructure development and maintenance remain huge in all regions with landlocked developing countries. Mobilization of increased financial and technical support to infrastructure development and maintenance is crucial, including through national budgets, official development assistance, Aid for Trade, foreign direct investment and South-South cooperation. Financial and technical assistance from multilateral and regional financial and development institutions is important. Another important aspect is to explore innovative sources of funding such as regional infrastructure funds, public private partnerships and debt markets. ■