

Sierra Leone: Airport Transfer Project

The challenge:

Freetown International Airport is situated on the Lungi Peninsula, 176km from Sierra Leone's capital city, Freetown. Due to widespread destruction and lack of maintenance of the road infrastructure during the period of civil unrest (1991-1999), travel by road to the airport can take four to seven hours. As a result, passengers have been using alternative means to reach the airport, like ferry, hovercraft, taxi boats and helicopters.



However, there is little regulation or supervision over these alternative means of transportation resulting in major delays, high costs for passengers and poor safety standards. Lack of a regulatory framework to guide private service providers makes the situation worse. There are no proper landing facilities. Travel times are not adjusted to flight schedules. So even though a helicopter takes 12 minutes to physically fly from Freetown to the international airport, passengers have to allocate an average of 4 hours to ensure they can check into their flights on time. Ferry passengers have to allocate 6 hours. Moreover, helicopter activities at the airport whilst an international aircraft is on the tarmac are a violation of international regulations and standards, something that the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) have raised concerns about.

The solution:

ICF is working with the Government of Sierra Leone to provide safe, reliable and efficient airport transfer services for passengers and goods between Freetown and the international airport at Lungi, and to reduce the time and costs for the transfers. This is a crucial step in helping Sierra Leone improve its business environment and attract investors. The project will cost a total of US\$ 11.7m. Of this, ICF is providing US\$ 5m, the Government of Sierra Leone is providing US\$ 700,000, and the private sector is providing US 6m in the form of passenger and cargo vessels.

Expected impact:

The project has created an airport transfer regulatory framework which streamlines existing procedures and introduces clear responsibility and accountability. It has established an Airport Transfer Unit responsible for licensing, monitoring and regulating private sector providers. It has also rehabilitated jetties, heliports and terminal facilities, upgrading them to international standards for passenger safety and security.

Project duration: May 2009 – June 2014

The Investment Climate Facility for Africa is a grant providing organisation that works with African Governments to improve the environment in which businesses operate. ICF engages closely with implementing Government bodies throughout the life of the project. For more information about ICF please visit www.icfafrica.org