

Difficulties of Railways in Developing Countries

Cambodia

Cambodia's short stretch of railway (from Phnom Penh to the Thai border and to Kompong Som on the Gulf-of-Thailand coast, totalling approximately 500 km) still suffers seriously from the aftermath of war and the postwar unrest and uncertainty. Although railway operation is resuming slowly, it will take a long time to recover full services. *(Photographs by S. Otsuka)*



Battambang-bound train with bulletproof armour standing at Phnom Penh Station



An open freight wagon coupled as a mine-sweeper in front of a valuable locomotive provides a good (but dangerous) view.



The poor condition of tracks means frequent unscheduled stops to check up ahead and keeps the average speed down to just 20 km/h.



Derelict railway station filled with munitions. No rehabilitation will be possible until the railways and the infrastructure are completely cleared of these dangers.



Abandoned track near the Thai border destroyed during the Cambodian civil war. This region of Cambodia is infested with minefields and entry is strictly forbidden.

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Africa

Most African railways suffer from various difficulties including severe weather, lack of funds and human resources, political and economic unrest, etc. Some examples are shown in the photostory below.



(Photographs by EJRCF)

Egypt

The first railway in Africa was opened in Egypt in 1854 and Egyptian National Railways today boasts one of the highest passenger traffic densities in the world. But the fare level is held low and the railway suffers seriously from lack of funds to modernize. The poor maintenance depot (left) is typical of the problems. But some passengers (right) still try to hitch a free ride!



(Photographs by T. Hirose)

Sudan

Sandstorms and high temperatures are a constant threat to railways in Sudan (left). Single-track operation necessitates use of tokens, forcing station staff to work under severe weather (right).



(Y. Akiyama)



(C-IHI)

Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire)

Japanese ODA loans were used to build a dual-level road and railway suspension bridge across the River Zaire near Matadi. In 1983, the ex-President Mobutu attended the opening celebrations (left). However, the railway link was never built because of a general deterioration in the country's economy and the bridge still functions only as a road link (right).

Viet Nam

Viet Nam's railways are recovering steadily, although they still suffer from lack of appropriate funds and technologies to restore war-damaged facilities and to modernize services.

So-called *Reunification* express trains linking Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City started to run after the war-damaged north-south trunk line was rebuilt, but journey time is long because of speed restrictions on damaged bridges and a lot of engineering works along the track. Services have been improved recently, and today, the fastest *Reunification* service covers the 1726-km distance in about 36 hours.

(Photographs by EJRCF)



Building a new railway bridge alongside a damaged existing bridge to increase track speed and capacity.



The centre part of Hanoi Station rebuilt after aerial bombing by the USA during the Vietnam War is in stark contrast to the older French colonial part.



Vietnam Railways also runs the local taxi services meeting trains at Hanoi Station.



Buses using converted trucks stand by at Hanoi Bus Station for short- and long-distance services.



Steam locomotives are still in use for shunting.



And trains even serve the growing market economy through advertising!