This chapter assesses how well the Bank manages its own organisation in Sierra Leone. It looks at the three main themes that the Bank has identified as key to its organisational capacity: decentralisation, high-quality human resource management, and efficient business processes. Each of these has associated indicators and targets.

Part of the Bank’s approach to building its capacity in fragile states is to increase its physical presence in-country through decentralisation. Since we established our Sierra Leone country office in 2007, the country team has been progressively strengthened and given more management responsibility. This has helped to deepen the quality of our dialogue with the Government and our collaboration with development partners. It has also resulted in improved management and supervision of our operations.

The role of the field office in fragile states

Decentralisation

Fragile states offer challenging operating environments. The political context can be volatile, and national institutions weakened by conflict require hands-on support. In this context, a strong country presence is key, enabling the Bank to forge close partnerships with the government and development partners and more broadly with civil society and the business community.

Since establishing its Sierra Leone field office in 2007, the Bank has been an active partner in policy dialogue and aid coordination

Since the Bank established its Sierra Leone field office in January 2007, the Sierra Leone team has been progressively strengthened through the decentralisation of staff from headquarters and the recruitment of Sierra Leonean specialists. As a result, the country team has been able to take on more responsibility for the management of the portfolio. Today 36% of project tasks are managed from the field office1, compared to just 11% in 2011. By 2015, we aim to boost this to 53%.

One of the major benefits of decentralisation has been the improved quality of our advisory services and dialogue with the Government and development partners. Through our advisory work, we supported the mainstreaming of green growth and gender equality in the Agenda for Prosperity. The field office has been an active supporter of the New Deal process, helping the Government organise the fourth Global Meeting of the International Dialogue on Peace-building and State-building in June 2014. The Bank has been a sponsor of the EITI, helping Sierra Leone strengthen its management of its natural resource revenues. Through its presence in the country, the Bank has acquired a much deeper knowledge of the national context.

This has resulted in higher-quality analytical work that addresses the most pressing issues facing Sierra Leone today.

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1 A green bullet indicates good progress has been made, and we are on track to meet our target.
Level 4: How efficient AfDB is as an organisation in Sierra Leone?

Table 4: **How efficient AfDB is as an organisation in Sierra Leone (Level 4)**

This table presents the Bank’s progress in achieving its target for organisational performance:

- Good progress has been made, and we are on track to meet our target
- Little progress has been made, and we are at risk not achieving our target
- No progress has been made, or we have moved even further away from our target
- Data points are missing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATOR</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2014*</th>
<th>Target 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DECENTRALIZATION: MOVING CLOSER TO OUR CLIENTS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Projects task-managed from the field office (%)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecting to field offices (% successful video conferences) (%)</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average downtime of the Wide Area Network (WAN) (hours)</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **HUMAN RESOURCES: ENGAGING AND MOBILISING STAFF** |      |      |       |             |
| Operations professional staff based in the field office (%) | 47   | 67   | 69    | 70          |
| Share of staff who are women (%) | 13   | 13   | 13    | 30          |

| **BUSINESS PROCESSES AND COST EFFICIENTLY** |      |      |       |             |
| Disbursement request for special account processed and paid with (%) | 38   | 92   | 100   | 100         |
| Disbursement request for direct payment processed and paid with (%) | 25   | 88   | 84    | 100         |
| Time taken to process procurement documents (days) | ..   | 255  | 205   | 180         |
| Training to strengthen fiduciary capacity (numbers) | 0    | 1    | 2     | 2           |

.. = Data not available.

* The last year 2013 has been chosen as this reflects the status of the operations prior to the Ebola crisis.

**Note:** Targets are based on the combination of the corporate target and the comparison with the baseline year.

**Source:** African Development Bank.

A strong field presence has also led to better project design and implementation. Our sector specialists are well placed to design interventions that are tailored to the country context. Our staff are able to work more closely with national counterparts, providing technical support to cover national capacity gaps. The team carries out regular field visits, over and above the usual twice-yearly supervision missions.

Finally, decentralisation has facilitated stronger collaboration with development partners in Sierra Leone. For example, we are coordinating with the EU to complete the missing link of the Trans-West African Coastal Highway, which will link Sierra Leone to the wider ECOWAS region.

**Information technology**

In Sierra Leone, as in most fragile states, the communications infrastructure is not well developed. In the absence of the landline LAN facilities that the Bank usually relies on, satellite links are used to ensure that the field office is plugged into the Bank’s central communications and knowledge infrastructure – an example of “leapfrogging” to the most recent technology.

A strong communications infrastructure is fundamental to operating a decentralised organisation. It enables the secured transmission overruns. This is particularly important in a context of limited capacity in both the Government and private sector contractors. In addition, the delegation of authority to the field office provided more flexibility to task managers to approve procurement activities.
of data over the Internet through a Virtual Private Network. Our videoconferencing facilities give staff members in the field the opportunity to participate in meetings and training opportunities at headquarters, reducing both travel costs and the Bank’s environmental footprint. We also have various ICT tools that enable collaborative work on documents across different sites and provide secure access to the Bank’s knowledge facilities. In 2014, 95% of videoconferences were successful, while • downtime on our Wide Area Network was reduced to 155 hours, from 180 in 2011.

In response to the Ebola crisis, the field office activated its business continuity process, allowing staff to continue their work in a virtual working environment

The Bank’s advanced communications infrastructure also benefits Sierra Leone. Our facilities have been used for loan negotiations and other high-level meetings between national officials and AfDB headquarters, with savings for both sides. We have established a Public Information Centre in Freetown, where Government officials and private researchers can carry out research on Bank-related topics. The field office has also made this facility available to university staff and students, as a contribution to building a national dialogue on development policy.

Engaging and mobilising staff

AfDB field offices handle a wide range of subject matters, requiring skills across different sectors and technical specialities. Our Sierra Leone field office takes a flexible approach to human resource management, to enable it to respond quickly to dynamic needs.

As the country programme has expanded, the Bank has responded by decentralising appropriate sectoral experts from headquarters. For example, when the Bank took on a leadership role among development partners in Sierra Leone on water and sanitation, it added a water expert to the country team. In other instances, skills gaps are filled through multifunctional roles. For example, the agriculture specialist in the field office is also supporting the rural electrification component of an energy project. Doubling up roles in this way is a cost-effective way of responding quickly to emerging needs. We also make use of specialists from our regional centre in Ghana; for example, our energy sector projects are supported by a regional-level expert.

We now have 69% of our professional staff based in the field office, which is in line with our target. However, we have just 13% women in the country team, against a target of 30% by 2015.

To meet our aspirations to be a centre of excellence in development assistance, we must continuously strengthen the capacity of our staff. Increased knowledge and technical skills among the country team, including among locally engaged staff, is in turn passed on to national counterparts. In a fragile context, we find this direct transmission of skills and experience to Government to be one of the most effective mechanisms for capacity building.

Box 4.1 During the Ebola crisis the Bank continued to operate through an effective business continuity plan

The Bank has a range of business continuity procedures that it can implement in response to a major crisis such as Ebola, to ensure the minimum disruption to its operations. In August 2014, in the face of an accelerating crisis, the field office activated its business continuity process, allowing staff to continue their work in a virtual working environment. Staff members were provided with the means to stay connected to each other and to the wider Bank. This enabled us to test the effectiveness of recent ICT investments, notably our Virtual Private Network, which gives staff remote access to key applications and resources. Internet communication tools such as Skype and Viber formed part of the communication platform that staff used to remain in touch and collaborate with the Government and other partners. Staff were also able to participate in meetings from home, using the videoconferencing application on their laptops. Thus the Bank was able to participate in coordination processes for the emergency response.

Figure 4.3 Business processes and cost efficiently

Improving business processes and practices

As our field presence has increased, we have been able to streamline our business processes and practices. Bank staff are now able to provide more training to Government counterparts on procurement and financial management: in 2014 we held two fiduciary training workshops. Staff also provide hands-on support through the implementation process. As a result, the turnaround time for disbursement has fallen dramatically. Our recently approved Rural Water and Sanitation Project, for example, was fully operational within five months after approval. The proportion of disbursement requests paid on time reached 100% for special...
accounts and 84% for direct payments, compared to just 38% and 25%, respectively, in 2011.

Conclusion
Altogether, the impact of an increasingly well-staffed field office in Sierra Leone has transformed the quality of support we are able to offer the country. It has given us a better understanding of the complex country context and a much closer and more responsive relationship with the Government, development partners and civil society. It has also resulted in major efficiency gains in our portfolio, through hands-on capacity building and support for national counterparts.

We recognise that rebuilding states after conflict is a long and challenging process. We are committed to supporting Sierra Leone over the long term, and will continue to strengthen the skills and capacity of our country team to identify and address the root causes of fragility.