

## **Liberia's Report on ITU Ad Hoc Assistance**

### **1.0. Introduction:**

Late March 2007, Sekou M. Kromah and I, Zotawon D. Titus, two staff of Liberia's Ministry of Posts & Telecommunications benefited ITU AD HOC CAPACITY BUILDING ASSISTANCE. That assistance was a part of ITU reform package for Liberia. The ITU Ad Hoc Assistance was an opportunity that provided a month-long fellowship for our participation at Spectrum Management courses at the seminar organized by the United States Telecommunications Training Institute, the USTTI. The seminar, which helped us acquire specialized policy skills, took place in the USA from the 6<sup>th</sup> of April to the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2007 covering key concepts in Spectrum Management.

### **1.1. Background of Sector Reform and Training at USTTI:**

Since 1998, ITU has ranked the need for comprehensive sector reform in Liberia as a special case. In the ITU mission reports, training was often recommended to mitigate the vexing brain drain problem affecting both the policy and the regulatory responsibilities of the sector. The missions also recommended that national authority exhibit the political will to establish the legal regime and the necessary framework to reform a sector damaged by 14 years of civil war and still saddled with a host of entry barriers and an unfortunate state of monopoly.

However, with the content of the package for reform inconclusive, ITU provided exceptional support that enabled the above named staffs to do specialized training at the United States Telecommunication Training Institute (USTTI) as part of its ongoing intervention to promote sector reform.

### **2.0 Course Contents:**

Courses taught at USTTI were detailed and tailored to advance strategies on how to help meet the communication needs in developing countries. The Spectrum Management course series, the courses we had gone to do fell in that category. Both the theoretical and practical values of Spectrum Management were explored. Analyses on existing legal framework, the gap associated with those practices and the demand for the use of

Spectrum in the wake of changing technology were examined and determined to be very crucial in our ongoing reform.

The courses took place at different localities and sites in the USA. Some took place in Washington, D C others took place in Gettysburg in the State of Maryland while the other one took place in San Jose in California. There were a number of field trips also to different sites to allow participants relate to best practices and to also familiarize themselves with equipment types and solutions.

As Policy Makers on the use of Spectrum in Liberia, we appreciated the new knowledge acquired on the dynamic nature of radio-communication systems and the concept of technology neutrality as a policy priority to induce innovation in the sector.

### **1.2 Course Outline**

The below chart-represents the courses, its descriptions as well as the duration and venues that housed those courses. The names of sponsors who made the offering of those courses possible are also included below:

<b>No.</b>	<b>Course #</b>	<b>Course Description</b>	<b>Venue &amp; Duration</b>	<b>Co-Sponsors</b>
<b>1.</b>	M7 – 105	Spectrum Management in the Civil Sector	Washington DC, April 9-20, 2007	COM search and Federal Communication Commission (FCC)
<b>2.</b>	M7 – 109	Radio Spectrum Monitoring & Measuring	Columbia, Maryland, April 23-27,2007	Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Zeta Technologies
<b>3.</b>	M7 – 110	Practical Applications of Spectrum Management & Spectrum Monitoring	Fremont, California, April 30-May 4, 2007	TCI, a Dielectric Company

## **2.2 Profile of Lecturers and Countries of Participants' Origin:**

The Seminar was attractive and intensive. About 48 participants from Countries in the Caribbean, Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and Latin America were in attendance.

Lecturers at the Seminar were professors and experts who have distinguished themselves in pursuit of the development of the sector. Principal among them were Dr. Saul Torrico, Principal Scientist for COM search and James T. Higgins, an expert and engineer of FCC who heads one of the working groups of ITU.

## **3.0 Analysis of Presentations:**

With our current sectors' status depicting a less developed Policy with the emerging needed political will and an out of touch legal framework characterized by the lack of National backbone and infrastructure and therefore less transparent, a number of factors were of interest to us:

1. Responsive National Telecommunication Policy
2. Contemporary National Telecommunication Law with focus on:
  - Spectrum Planning for liberalized sector
  - Spectrum Allocation for efficiency
  - Spectrum Organization with accommodation for security needs
  - Review of Spectrum for proactive compliance
  - Encouraging technology neutrality in Spectrum maximization
  - Equipment Authorization and
  - Frequency Direction Finding;

The above named Principles are essential in managing the sector. They also help in separating Spectrum for economic use from those of non-economic use (education, health and those of global security). The Search and Rescue (SAR) radio band is one of such allocations for global security purpose. In order for National administration to plan their Spectrum prudently, they are required to use the ITU Spectrum Management Handbook for Reference. We now need a copy of the Spectrum Management Handbook in Liberia to enhance our Policy formulation and application in line with ITU's resolutions.

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Special Report submitted to ITU from 2 Fellows from Liberia who attended USTTI under the ITU Fellowship April 2007.

### **3.1 USA Case Study of Spectrum Management:**

The United States has made significant benchmarks in the development of its sector. Revenue from the use of Spectrum is among the highest index in its economy. Transparency in the sector is also unprecedented. But all of these evolved gradually. FCC, the regulatory body which today allocates frequency through auction or bidding in a more transparent manner has initially done so by means of:

- Administrative Hearing – a discretionary process that tends to be selection and otherwise discourages competitions;
- Lotto – Allocation of frequencies not based on economic or any other reasonable principle. In other words, frequencies are allocated arbitrarily to one or two among several applicants.

### **3.2 Liberia's Lessons:**

Prior to the reform in Liberia, frequencies have been negotiated. Frequencies are assigned following administrative hearings. Consequently, the resulting revenues after been understated and therefore frequencies undervalued with net loss to the economy. Our exposure in this seminar will enable us to advance new way of marketing Spectrum for economic use, other than the existing practice of determining capable applicants through administrative hearing.

### **4.0 Admission to Columbia Training:**

Initially, we were accepted to two courses – Spectrum Management in the Civil Sector and Practical Applications of Spectrum Management and Spectrum Monitoring. But upon completion of the course (Spectrum Management in the Civil Sector), Barbara B. Cutts, FCC Technical Assistance Liaison Officer and United States Representative for ITU Fellowships who is also USTTI Administrator reasoned that we could do the next course with success.

We were then considered to do the third course. It was a course in Radio Spectrum Monitoring and Measuring. Some of the lecturers at the seminar as well as the curriculum coordinator seconded the consideration of the Administrator in our favor.

And that consideration helped us further explore sector issues such as how to track illegal users of the frequency. USTTI footed the extra cost in getting us to Columbia.

#### **4.1 Performance**

Our overall performance in the training was considered satisfactory. Besides, we the participants from Liberia were able to learn from practices of our colleagues in other countries. And that experience was very useful to us. Zotawon Titus of Liberia was one of the four distinguished scholars in the first session on the course “Spectrum Management in the Civil Sector” that took place in Washington, DC from April 9-20, 2007. In the class of 28 participants, he was recognized to appraise the possible outcome of the seminar with respect to its prospects on how it could enhance sector growth and development in participants’ countries.

Mr. Titus lauded the USTT for underscoring the need to help build the capacity of sector workers around the world and its strategy to enhance the vision of countries striving to bridge the communication gap affecting millions of people around the world. Mr. Titus accentuated that the seminar not only added skill to the participants capacity regarding the prudent planning, use and monitoring of spectrum as a scarce natural resource it also provided us the platform and opportunity to network with each other in overcoming Policy and regulatory constraints in Spectrum Management. He specifically emphasized the indispensability of knowledge acquired as key in Liberia’s reform process and the vintage point to which the seminar places Liberia’s participants to help move their sector forward.

#### **5. Constraints:**

The change in venue from Los Angeles to San Jose for our last course – Practical Applications of Spectrum Management and Spectrum Monitoring was a major constraint to us. Initially we routed our itinerary considering Los Angeles as a venue for one of the courses. It turned out to be oversight contained in our notice of acceptance. The venue for that course was San Jose. We raised that concern with USTTI and the Administrator fortunately intervened and secured tickets for both of us from Los Angeles to San Jose and vice versa.

## **6. ITU Fellows:**

We were four (4) ITU Fellows at USTTI. One came from UAE, one from Nigeria and two from Liberia. Interactions amongst participants were cordial. ITU Fellows had frequent interactions and that made the special ties amongst us as ITU Fellows as profound.

## **7. Conclusion:**

The challenges facing us in our endeavor to effect reform in our sector in Liberia is enormous and grave. We are however motivated by the advantages that other economies that have reformed their telecommunications sector are benefitting today.

We believe that our newly acquired knowledge has made us much relevant in our on-going sector reform. Both of us being a part of the committees that drafted the Telecommunication Act and the ICT and Telecommunication Policy remain grateful to USTTI for adding value to our skills as well as to ITU for the fellowships offered

Having returned from the seminar convened under the auspices of USTTI, we have acquired new policy skills needed in the sector in Liberia. We will use skills acquired to compliment the setting up of new vision that will prioritize effective planning, organizing and allocation of our national Spectrum. We will also prioritize procuring the Spectrum Management Handbook as required of every national administration as a necessary reference guide in our effort to help evolve prudent Spectrum policy in Liberia.

*This report was produced by Zotawon D. Titus and Sekou M. Kromah of the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications*