

Progress and Achievements of the Ministry 2008

The Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications explores means to connect rural communities and low income areas using postal services and ICT programs to other parts of the country during 2008.

The Ministry concluded arrangements with the International Telecommunication Union and the UNHCR for the construction of ICT Training Center in Voinjama. The ITU-UNCHR cost-sharing project valued at US\$63,400.00, seeks to build skills and capacity in project management, proposal writing and in developing idea on how to help returnees, students and residents of Voinjama and the surrounding areas manage small businesses. ITU will procure the necessary equipment in Geneva and construction will begin early 2009. ITU contributes \$38,400.00 and UNHCR contributes US\$25,000.00 covering equipment, rehabilitation of class room, training among others. The program will be run by UNHCR for the first two years. Thereafter, ownership will revert to Government. There will be a minimum fee charged to ensure sustainability of the project. The project will be replicated into other regions of Liberia helping to add value to the skills of our citizens.

The Ministry constructed or rehabilitated 21 Post Offices nationwide including those in Montserrado, Bomi, Grand Bassa, Margibi, Bong, Grand Gedeh, Nimba, and Lofa counties. Construction work at the Voinjama Post Office has begun

The Ministry signed a grant of US\$303,000.00 in July 2008 with the US Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) on behalf of LTC for the purpose of conducting a feasibility study for the construction of fiber optic network in Monrovia and its environs. The project will drastically reduce communication cost and provide a reliable backbone for the sector. The Ministry has restored Liberia's voting rights at the Universal Postal Union (UPU) and at the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) by acceding to all ITU and UPU protocols neglected since the 1990's that led to suspending Liberia's voting right at those global organizations.

The Governments of the United States of America and Switzerland each donated high-capacity Locked Boxes to Liberia's Postal Administration supportive of its expansion programs. The Post also witnessed an increase in the Inbound Mail Delivery 5,728kg in January to 39, 718kg in December, while Outbound Mail delivery increased from 2,225kg in January to 21, 603kg in December.

Government discovered that some unscrupulous business men have been illegally trading stamps in the name of Liberia at philatelic markets around the world, using nude women on their stamps to promote their trade. The Ministry is collaborating with the Department of the United States Postal Inspectorate to bring those responsible to book.

The following constitutes the immediate plan the Ministry is working on: introducing Track and trace system as a safeguard on all out-going and incoming mail, deployment of

Close Circuit Television (CCTV) to enhance mail security introduce an improved Zoning Code for all regions and counties, introducing Postal Financial Service and Electronic Money Order.

The Ministry has identified 27 postal windows to be opened in other areas of the country that do not have any outlet to posts and construction work in Voinjama and rehabilitation work at the Sanniquellie Post office will be effected this dry season. The Ministry of Posts and Telecommunication is also collaborating with all stakeholders to uphold their respective roles in promoting ICT in enhancing national development initiatives in areas such as e-education, e-health, e-agriculture, e-security, and other e-applications.

The Ministry has been working with the Ministers in charge of the development of Telecommunication in the MRU basin to solicit a grant of US\$276,400.00 from ITU to facilitate feasibility study for sub-regional connectivity. Liberia has already circulated the draft proposal among MRU countries with meeting scheduled in Monrovia early 2009 presenting MRU as a unit seeking to explore the financial and technical viability of low latency undersea fiber connectivity to the rest of the world. This project, if realized, will result in lower cost and more accessibility of reliable communications for the entire region.

The ICT and Telecommunication Policy on the Sector is nearing completion following a host of consultations both at the national and the international level while the postal policy is being drafted. However, funding remains a problem for a host of projects in the Post and Telecommunication Sector including the need for capacity building and related infrastructures.

The Ministry has also enforced measures to prevent mal practices and actions inimical to the interest of the public. In recent past, the image of the Ministry regarding its programs and services was less satisfactory. A review and evaluation of activities at the Ministry found out eight corrupt practices, as elements of fraud and waste.

They are:

1. Mail Smuggling-placing mail into the system illegally
2. Mail Theft-converting customer's mail into one's own
3. Mail Tampering-the illegal extraction of the content of mail
4. Mismanagement of Government's assets-the willful misuse of assets with the intent to fraud the system
5. Misapplication of gas/fuel-the wrongful use of fuel to the disadvantage of a given task leaving such task undone to the effect of creating operational constraints
6. Flawed Procurement Process- overstating the cost of services and goods in collaboration with the vendor to dupe government
7. Power Theft- the smuggling of the Ministry's power supply to others
8. Embezzlement- the diversion of ministry's fund into personal use

While the Ministry has put into place internal mechanism to prevent these activities from taking place, it is at the same time appealing to the general public not to do business with people other than those authorized. For mailing purpose, the Ministry has no agent in any corner and likes to announce that its authorized staffs are only seen behind the Postal

Counter wearing uniforms that are visible. These are the personnel with whom the public is advised to transact with.

All officials and staff of the Ministry of Posts & Telecommunications are strongly advised not to indulge in corrupt practices as those who would violate will have themselves to blame. Let 2008 prepare all of us as those called to serve the public and approach 2009 with the new determination to add value to services to help move the sector forward.

This report represents the progress made by the Ministry of Posts & Telecommunications during 2008 as submitted by the three Departments (Administration, Postal Operations and Telecommunications) and was summarized by Mrs. Yassah Padmore, Special Assistant to the Minister and Hon. Zotawon D. Titus, Assistant Minister for Telecommunications, Ministry of Posts & Telecommunications.