



# USAID | LIBERIA

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

## Governance & Economic Management Support Project (USAID-GEMS)

### USAID-GEMS NEWS BULLETIN: 2014 in Retrospect

#### In This Edition

Spotlight on Contributions by USAID-GEMS to Liberia's Ebola Response ..... 1

Highlights of USAID-GEMS 2014 Achievements in Asset Management... 2

Mobile Money Transforming Payroll for Teachers ..... 3

Conversation with our Partners ..... 4

USAID-GEMS Supports Capacity Building through President's Young Professional Program ..... 5

Highlights of USAID-GEMS 2014 Achievements ..... 5

#### Government Ministries, Agencies and Commissions working with USAID-GEMS

##### WAVE 1

- Central Bank of Liberia (CBL)
- Civil Services Agency (CSA)
- General Service Agency (GSA)
- Governance Commission (GC)
- Liberia Institute of Public Administration (LIPA)
- Ministry of Finance/Department of Revenue/Department of Expenditure (MOF/DOR/DOE)
- National Bureau of Concessions (NBC)
- National Investment Commission (NIC)
- Public Procurement and Concessions Commission (PPCC)

##### WAVE 2

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Forestry Development Authority (FDA)
- Ministry of Agriculture (MOA)
- Ministry of Education (MOE)
- Ministry of Health (MOH)
- Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications (MOPT)
- Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS)

#### Spotlight on Contributions by USAID-GEMS to Liberia's Ebola Response

The Ebola virus hit Liberia at a vulnerable time when the country was on its third successive year of budget shortfalls and low global prices in export commodities, with a resulting high inflation and soaring exchange rate.

Clearly, this has been more than a clarion call for any well-meaning organization and a test to true partnership.

In continuing to pursue long-term goals and with a determination to strengthen the capacity of the Government of Liberia, the USAID-GEMS project provided technical advice to the Ministry of Health, the General Services Agency, and the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications to support their response to the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD).

USAID-GEMS also provided expert ICT advice and supported the visit of Mr. Stephen VanRoekel, USAID's Chief Innovation Officer, to understand and harmonize ICT actors in the Ebola response.

USAID-GEMS continued to operate during the entire EVD crisis and subject matter experts contributed to the following initiatives:



*USAID Chief Innovation Officer (middle) meets with Liberian colleagues*

#### Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

USAID-GEMS's ICT Advisory team partnered with NetHope, under the USAID Global Broadband and Innovations Alliance, to conduct a rapid assessment to address the information technology needs required to respond to this complex health emergency.

USAID-GEMS conducted an ICT software assessment and contributed significantly to an infrastructure assessment. The work included the analysis and review of the current state of

ICT in Liberia and requirements for acquiring effective technology support to the Ebola response.

USAID-GEMS conducted the assessment of the e-payments opportunities and challenges with a particular focus on the use of mobile technologies. USAID-GEMS, in partnership with UNICEF, launched the uReport and mHero systems, key tools available to the Ebola Response.

USAID-GEMS assisted in the development of protocols to allow the safe utilization of call data records.

### ***Fleet and Assets Management***

The General Services Agency (GSA), which is responsible for managing and maintaining all government logistics, has been designated as the Logistics Distribution Hub for the Government of Liberia's Ebola response.

The GSA recognized the specialized knowledge of the USAID-GEMS Assets Management team and involved them in the national "Ebola Taskforce Logistics Cluster," coordinated by the Ministry of Health (MOH).

The Assets Management Advisor worked within the GSA to support the management and to prepare for the maintenance of Ebola response vehicles.

The Assets Management team also in collaboration with the MOH and GSA has:

- Helped establish an Asset Data Collection Management System to monitor the influx of donated equipment and government seconded equipment for the Ebola response, and
- Assisted with developing a plan for monitoring, tracking and maintaining vehicles used for the Ebola Response.

### ***Procurement Management***

USAID-GEMS Procurement Advisor assisted the MOH to process the procurement of items under funding provided by the World Bank's Ebola Response facility.

## **Highlights of USAID-GEMS 2014 Achievements in Asset Management**

Working in close partnership with the General Services Agency (GSA) and other key Government assets stakeholders, the USAID-GEMS intervention in Asset and Fleet Management has resulted in the following successes:

- A universal fleet registry for 2,700 cars, trucks, and motorcycles was created and is being maintained.
- New Government maintenance guidelines were developed and approved for vehicles, motorcycles, and generators.
- There has been an overall improvement of more than 15% in vehicle maintenance knowledge and 24% in generator preventive maintenance knowledge due to on the job training for drivers, mechanics, and fleet managers in eight USAID-GEMS partner Ministries and Agencies.
- There is increase use of vehicle and assets tracking and maintenance forms and systems.
- 14 separate formal trainings were provided on Operational Fleet Management of the Government of Liberia assets.



*Group Picture of GSA Coordinators*

## Mobile Money Transforming Payroll for Teachers



*Central Bank of Liberia stakeholders meet to re-launch Mobile Money*

On March 18, 2014, USAID-GEMS assisted in hosting a Mobile Money Stakeholders meeting chaired by the newly-appointed Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Liberia, Boima Kamara. The purpose of the meeting was to finalize the overhaul of the Mobile Money Guidelines, which were initially adopted in August 2011. These revised Mobile Money Guidelines are designed to attract additional investment into the Liberian market by allowing non-banks to offer Mobile Money. They also

clarify the rules governing the agents and merchants, making it easier for consumers to cash-in and cash-out Mobile Money, and enabling the creation of a separate mobile wallet denominated in US Dollars.

USAID-GEMS provided substantive revisions to the draft Mobile Money Guidelines which resulted in bringing the Mobile Money regulatory framework up to or exceeding international standards. More than thirty-five representatives from all aspects of the industry attended the stakeholder meeting, including commercial banks, mobile companies, and credit unions.



*Liberian teachers participate in Mobile Money training*

USAID-GEMS, in collaboration with the National Teachers' Association of Liberia, the Civil Service Agency (CSA), and Lonestar MTN, launched a mobile money salary payment pilot program in Margibi County on Friday May 30, 2014. An informational brochure prepared in collaboration with the CSA was a helpful tool to both generate interest in attending this launch event and to be used as a sign-up tool for those interested in participating.

At the event, Lonestar MTN signed up teachers and installed the mMoney services on their telephones. The CSA took on the role of verifying the teachers' employment status through the CSA's biometric processing system. In the end, 59 public school teachers from 3 districts—Gibi, Marshall, and Kakata—were signed up and deemed eligible for the pilot program.

The Minister of Education, Etmonia Tarpeh, has endorsed the payment of public school teachers through mobile money, stating that "mobile money is the best way to go forward."

Irene Kollie, one of the teachers who participated in the pilot program, noted her experience. "I was in the classroom when I received a text message on my phone. I am not in a rush to cash-out my salary. I spent LD \$500.00 on a basis to cash my pay check. Using mMoney I had no transportation cost." The pilot program was extended through December 2014.

With an endorsement from the Minister of Education and clear cost savings from the payment recipients, this pilot has proven successful at opening a new door for the Government of Liberia to use mobile money for salary payments, paving the way for its widespread use, and savings, throughout other employment sectors in Liberia.

## Conversation with our Partners



*GSA Director General, Madam Mary T. Broh, greeting our team*

**USAID-GEMS:** Good afternoon DG. Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to discuss USAID-GEMS interventions at GSA.

**DG Broh:** You are quite welcome. First, I would like to thank the USAID family and also USAID-GEMS. I want to thank USAID for always being there for me. I've had a relationship with USAID since 2007, starting from my time at the passport office bureau and then the Monrovia City Corporation. USAID has given me visibility, and empowered me to do whatever we had to do at the passport bureau to be able to give passports on a timely basis. The software was provided by USAID. USAID came to assist while I was at the Monrovia City Corporation through the former American Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield. I go a long way with USAID.

And now USAID, through USAID-GEMS, is here at GSA assisting us with procurement, asset and fleet management, finance, and human resources. This is great! USAID is in the forefront of helping GSA, the core agency, to build capacity.

**USAID-GEMS:** How have USAID-GEMS interventions improved GSA?

**DG Broh:** It is just great! To me the success story is, USAID has come in as GEMAP, now GEMS, to continue capacity building, which I am very grateful for, because capacity building training costs a lot of money and the intervention here is to save us money to help move our agenda forward to be able to train our staff. And you know training is very essential. USAID-GEMS has come in to train my staff in Public Building Management, Procurement, Financial Management, HR and Fleet Management. I am grateful! It is a real savings!

Eventually GSA should be well grounded because we are the core agency; we are doing a lot of things.



*Mack Mulbah, National Coordinator, Liberia Youth Employment Program (LYEP), Ministry of Youth and Sports, showing youth employees how to use mobile money*

**USAID-GEMS:** How have USAID-GEMS interventions improved the LYEP program?

**Mack Mulbah:** When we started the program, the major issues were getting money to recipients. We had made it a policy that we would not take money in a truck and go around the country trying to pay people, so we had to go through the banks. Every time we went through the banks, it costs us a lot. Our first month payment cost us 27,000 USD; the next month increased to 30,000 USD. It was difficult paying youth workers because banks were not operational in all parts of the country. Places where they had no branches, we had to carry cash in personal vehicles, creating great security risks. We were then approached by the USAID-GEMS Mobile Money team and they told us about a better option called Mobile Money. So we began Mobile Money sensitization and piloted it.

**USAID-GEMS:** What successes have you had so far?

**Mack Mulbah:** The first month we dropped down [costs] from 30,000 USD to 13,000 USD, almost a 50% savings. We were able to track payments in the systems, so no one could claim they were not paid. This has improved transparency. Since then, with USAID-GEMS's support, we have been using Mobile Money to pay youth working in areas where there are no banks. It's a great success!

**USAID-GEMS:** How many youth employees have you paid through Mobile Money?

**Mack Mulbah:** We have paid 819 young people in Lofa, Maryland, Bong, Rivercess, and Bomi counties.

## USAID-GEMS Supports Capacity Building through President's Young Professional Program



In support of the Government's efforts to build the capacity of the next generation of Liberia's civil servants, USAID-GEMS sponsored 22 young professionals during 2014. These young professionals were placed in the Department of Budget, the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Bureau of Concessions, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Forestry Development Authority to support the timely and effective preparation and execution of the Medium Term Expenditure Framework budget and the development and implementation of the Concessions Information Management System. Among the 22 young professionals sponsored by USAID-GEMS, four of them are being trained to support the technology requirements of concessions management.



PYPP Class IV ends their two-year program in December 2014 and will take up positions within the new Ministry of Finance and Development Planning and other ministries following the official graduation.

The young professionals provide support to government ministries by performing a variety of critical tasks. The two-year program includes a strong training and mentoring component, pairing each young professional with a seasoned professional within a ministry or agency, as well as offering a monthly professional and technical training, one-on-one training, and evaluation with the overall goal of contributing to top development priorities within the Government of Liberia.

## Highlights of USAID-GEMS 2014 Achievements

### Highlight: Financial Management

Comprehensive Financial Management Policies and Procedures Manuals were developed for 13 MACs, two of which have been approved by their management for implementation.

With the help of regular on-the-job training in the use of an automated, multi-user accounting software, four ministries have been able to produce more accurate, timely, and reliable financial information.

The finance, human resources, procurement, assets and fleet management departments of the EPA, LIPA, MOPT, FDA, MOA, and MOYS were provided with computers, printers, servers, anti-virus software, and an IT infrastructure platform to enable them work more efficiently and improve performance.



*Financial Management training at LIPA*

## Highlight: Collectorate Payment System

In an attempt to assist the Government of Liberia to build an efficient national revenue collection system, USAID-GEMS is working with the newly established Liberia Revenue Authority to improve revenue collection efficiency.

In 2014, USAID-GEMS provided equipment and furnished a new decentralized revenue window at the Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy, enabling taxes and fees to be collected more quickly and efficiently.

Decentralized revenue windows located in the Freeport of Monrovia, the Temple of Justice, and the National archives processed over 65 million USD from July 2013 to February 2014, using a new software interface. The amount collected makes up over 20% of the entire government's revenue collection.

USAID-GEMS assisted the Liberia Revenue Authority with an online tax return submission that automatically calculates income taxes owed for small taxpayers. These payment interventions are enabling the Government of Liberia to produce its budget and manage its revenue collection and distribution, ensuring its proper use of funds.



*Collectorate revenue window at the National Archives*

## Highlight: Procurement at the General Services Agency



*USAID-GEMS Procurement Workshop at GSA*

To ensure efficient procurement within the General Services Agency (GSA), the USAID-GEMS procurement team provided training to GSA's Procurement Unit and procurement practitioners to enhance their compliance with Liberia's procurement laws.

Through on-the-job training sessions, the USAID-GEMS procurement team worked with the GSA Procurement Unit to properly file procurement documents; update Procurement Plans to reflect actuals; to generate the first report on procurement carried out by GSA during the 2012/13 financial year; and to conduct workshops for Procurement Committee members and procurement end users on their roles and responsibilities.

In 2015, USAID-GEMS will begin supporting the implementation of the 2014/15 procurement plan and train staff using the Public Procurement and Concessions Commission Handbook for Procurement Practitioners.

## Highlight: Building Financial Management Capacity at the General Services Agency



*USAID-GEMS conducts Financial Management training at GSA*

GSA uses the Government's Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS). To enhance the ability to prepare PFM statutory accounting reports, USAID-GEMS developed templates of accounting tools, such as Journal Entry Form, a Statement of Cash Receipts and Payments, a Bank Reconciliation Template, and a Statement of Budget Execution to ensure the reliability and accuracy of their accounting analyses and reports.

USAID-GEMS also developed an agency-specific Chart of Accounts for the GSA in order to capture and record their transactions against their fiscal appropriations compatible with IFMIS.

A Medium Term Expenditures Framework budget appropriation and allotment spreadsheet was developed to facilitate budgeting, GSA departmental appropriations, and monitoring the allotments against the appropriations. To enhance the accounting knowledge of the GSA Finance staff, USAID-GEMS facilitated an accounting skill workshop on the eight steps of the accounting and reporting cycles—from the journal entries through the production of financial statements.

As a result of USAID-GEMS interventions, the GSA is now managing their operational funds and petty cash in accordance with the PFM requirements. The GSA can now account for their budgetary appropriations as required by IPSAS and the PFM Act & Regulations.

For more information about the USAID-GEMS project:

[www.gemsliberia.com](http://www.gemsliberia.com)

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