

Donor Update Forum II
Friday, March 14, 2014
Terra Cotta Bar and Restaurant

On March 14, 2014 the CSA in conjunction with Tripartite members GC and LIPA held its second donor update forum at the Terra Cotta Bar and Restaurant. In the audience were representatives from the major donors of civil service reform – The World Bank, SIDA, and USAID – as well as other development partners such as the EU, UNMIL and the Soros Fund. The purpose of the forum was three-fold: First, each Tripartite Agency provided the donors a comprehensive progress report of the challenges and achievements of the last three months. Second, the forum invited key players in charge of driving the reforms to present their contributions to date. Last, the forum served as a further platform for donors and GoL to discuss concrete steps to strengthen the overall reform process.

I. THEME

If the first Donor Update Forum announced the Public Sector Modernization project, then the second Forum introduced some of the key players in charge of driving it. Directors and consultants working on key reform issues provided presentations of their assignments and activities to date.

A. CSA Progress Report

- Personnel verification and biometrics progress (Shadi Baki, Director of HRMIS)
- Challenges, successes, and current status of Payroll (Retta Vincent, Director of Employment Services)
- Pay analysis and implementation strategy (Jana Orac, Pay Consultant)
- Job grading and staffing analyses (Paul Nartey, Pay and Grade Consultant)
- Merit-based recruitment and selection manual (George Wah, M&E)
- SES/TOKTEN transitional strategy (Alfred Sayon, Director of SES)

B. GC Progress Report (Herron Gbidi, Policy Analyst)

C. LIPA Progress Report (Mariama Kamara, Director of Human Resources)

II. PROGRESS

CSA Progress Report. Achievements have been made in several areas that include the completion of the biometrics enrollment campaigns, the pay and grading analyses, the Merit Based-Recruitment and Selection Manual, and the drawing-up of transitional strategies for the SES and TOKTEN capacity building programs. First, the biometrics program has recently crossed a major milestone, completing two major campaigns that enrolled better than 90 percent of all civil servants. Initial findings from the two campaigns show the existence of 3,500 ghost names on government payroll. According to Shadi Baki, the Director of HRMIS, since 2009 the biometrics program has generated savings upwards of \$25.5 million USD for the Government of Liberia – by removing different categories of fraud and inconsistencies – and the deletion of the newly identified 3,500 ghost names, which Mr. Baki promised to do by April 5, 2014, will provide an additional \$5 million USD of savings per year.

The second presentation, given by Retta Vincent, the Director of Employment Services, provided an in-depth look at the efforts underway to securitize the payroll. Ms. Vincent began by explaining how the payroll transfer from MoF to CSA strengthened payroll controls when the two functions of management and processing were separated. Afterwards she laid out some of the key actions that reduced the number of illegal entry points such as the installation of the Civil Service Module, a new human resource software, which significantly reduced the number of individuals who had access to the payroll. In the next steps, Ms. Vincent argued that further work to clean the data needs to be performed, as well as additional training to reduce human and system errors. Closing all supplementary payrolls is likewise a top priority.

Third, the pay reform presentation outlined the work of the pay consultant and the grading consultant. The pay consultant's work consists of updating the Medium Term Pay Strategy, drafting the implementation strategy, and conducting a comparative wage survey that looks at trends in the broader labor market. As for the grading consultant Paul Nartey, his work consists of straightening out the grade and job descriptions to assign each civil servant in his/her correct grade and step and to provide an accurate job description. By tallying every position in every MAC, collating thus far 16 of 28 personnel listing, Mr. Nartey has laid the basic groundwork to perform staffing analyses, which are requisite to determine the optimal size of government. On top of this, Mr. Nartey has been working closely with CSA staff to train and capacitate the analysts in Employment Services so that they can carry out his work after his departure.

Fourth, the Merit-Based Recruitment and Selection Manual has been finalized and approved by President Sirleaf. The manual will go a long way to help institutionalize as well as operationalize merit- and performance-based principles in the Civil Service with both civil servants and presidential appointees. Furthermore the CSA is tasked with vetting appointees for critical positions. The next steps involve printing the manual and training all HR directors.

Lastly, the SES and TOKTEN programs are developing their transitional plans. Due to the withdrawal of donor support, the SES and TOKTEN programs can no longer sustain themselves and are looking for ways to reform themselves under the larger umbrella of the Public Sector Modernization project. Current discussions underway include how to absorb critical individuals into government, how and who will fund them, and whether their current salary schemes will be impacted. Of those who leave the program, questions surround the appropriate level of compensation for severance package.s

Governance Commission Progress Report. Although the Governance Commission admitted to having had a slow three months, some progress was made in forwarding three MFRs – MoHSW, MoJ, and MoICAT – for drafting, while another four MFRs – MLG, MGCSP, LNTA, LGA – were forwarded to the legislature for enactment. However large bottleneck remain as no staffing analyses have been conducted to date, which fully undermines the optimal sizing component of the PSM. To revive the process, the GC reports receiving \$150,000 USD and will work closely with the CSA to expedite the process.

LIPA Progress Report. For the last three months, LIPA has worked with the Kenya School of Government to conduct Training Needs Assessments (TNAs) to identify capacity gaps. The

TNAs were administered in 23 MACs, and some of the key findings show a Liberian Civil Service in dire need of performance management systems as well as equipment and materials. In addition, LIPA is working with a design specialist to strengthen and develop new curriculums for public sector training.

III. DISCUSSION

As expected, discussions became lively when they centered around the popular topics of ghost workers, the consolidation of basic salary and general allowances, and the establishment of policies that dismantle the “revolving door” of government. Donors were delighted to receive comprehensive quarterly reports and were encouraged with the progress.

In sum, the Donor Forum Update II was successful in (1) presenting the progress of the last three months and next steps, (2) introducing some of the key players in charge of driving the reforms, and (3) serving as a platform for discussion on how to strengthen the reform process. Most donors found the forum informative and were looking forward to the next Donor Update Forum, which should be held sometime in late June or early July of 2014.