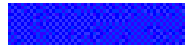
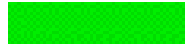


Sierra Leone Records Management: What's on?



Several decades of bad governance in Sierra Leone witnessed the deterioration in public sector management capacity and economic performance. During the ten-year brutal civil war, the public sector suffered incalculable losses. Against this background, there is the desperate need to build capacity for public sector management at both central and local levels through such initiatives as training, institutional capacity building, the introduction of modern management practices and improved conditions of service.



In recognition of this need, the Government of Sierra Leone created the organizational capacity for a long-term programme of reconstruction and reform in the public sector through the setting up of the Governance Reform Secretariat (GRS). The GRS has been established with the Department for International Development (DFID) UK funding as the focal point for public sector reform, local government reform and decentralization.

In order to restore efficiency and increase the capacity for delivering public services, the GRS and DFID decided to launch a programme for the creation of a Human

Resource Management Office (HRMO) and implementation of a Records Management Improvement Programme.



The log frame for this programme lists six main outputs expected from the HRMO and Records Management Components:

- Improved personnel records unit and payroll verification
- Management Service Unit created in the HRMO
- Pay and Grading Unit created in the HRMO
- Key in-service training programmes developed and run for senior and middle level civil servants
- New personnel policy, remuneration and management practices developed for the Civil Service
- A Records Management improvement programme for the whole Civil Service.



The principal outputs for the implementation of the Records Management Improvement Programme include:

- The decongestion and restructuring of registries
- The production of retention schedules and procedure manuals for the key areas of record management, including a Registry Manual for an updated classification and control system, and a User Manual for the Records Centre
- Enactment of a new law for managing the national archives and public records in a comprehensive and holistic manner (including provision for creating, and defining the functions of a new Department for Public Records and Archives)
- The creation and effective operation of a National Department for Public Records and Archives Administration to provide a National Records Service, staffed by a new cadre of trained records officers
- The completion of a new and larger Records Centre, subject to site acquisition and availability of funding.



At the time of writing, some consultancy firms have already bid for the project. Hopefully, we will soon hear the result of the evaluation. It is our sincere hope that the preferred bidder will do a good job that will stand the test of time. The records programme is for three years, with the possibility of a 12 months extension. Modalities are being put in place for the work to start in earnest early in 2005.



Indeed the present poor storage and retrieval of information situations slows down the work of the public service and impacts negatively on policy formulation, planning and financial control. A Records Management Programme, coming in the early phases of the administrative reform programme, will set changes in motion which will be much appreciated by administrators and personnel alike. It will strengthen the trend towards good records management in the country and will provide officials and record clerks with a lasting sense of professional confidence as a basis for taking up their responsibilities in their various working environments.

In short, with a bitter war experience, the Government is now committed to good governance as a National Strategy for development and improvement in the lives of its citizens, the reorganization of its records system to make it reliable, accessible, simple to operate, and cost-effective is a step toward effecting accountability and transparency. These are major prerequisites for a peaceful and democratic state. Hopefully, this will be achieved when the records management programme is fully implemented.

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