

Government of Liberia  
CIVIL SERVICE AGENCY



# SES Success Stories:

## The Faces Behind Civil Service Reform in Liberia



**Senior Executive Service**

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# Foreword

No post-conflict society can rebound without reintegrating the experience of its skilled manpower, and for Liberia, its diaspora community. Recognizing this, Liberia has set forth on an ambitious quest to absorb and build on the expertise of those who studied and worked in government, business and civil society while the country was experiencing conflict.

Among the key pillars of that effort is the Senior Executive Service (SES), established in 2007 as an immediate response to the need for civil service reforms and capacity-building. It aimed to develop a cadre of well-trained, technically qualified and professionally motivated personnel deployed throughout the civil service as change agents to drive reform and efforts to meet deliverables in the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS).

The goal-- to recover more than two decades of brain drain to drive civil service reform-- was, and remains, ambitious. But through 100 talented and experienced Liberians from home and abroad, the SES program is fostering an environment where government employees are proudly presenting themselves as civil servants, because they see first-hand the significant progress being made.

With the SES and its sister programmes the Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) and the Liberia Emergency Capacity Building Support (LECBS) project, Liberia has the building blocks it needs to support the government's capacity development efforts.

The surge in capacity provided by the SES has allowed the government to focus on its longer-term structural reforms, knowing that experienced professionals are positioned in the civil service to not only support those reforms, but to also help steer through the crucial shorter-term needs.

With that capacity in place, the government is well-placed to advance the newly launched National Capacity Development Strategy knowing that SES professionals are pro-

viding a foundation on which the much needed reforms can grow and deepen.

The decentralization of government authority and capacity is crucial to the reforms, and the SES is driving that effort, in particular through the SES professionals placed as county development officers in all 15 counties.

The SES is also a direct response to the PRS. Both government and international partners recognized the need for human change agents not just in Monrovia, but the counties as well. Through the SES that need has been addressed and the quickening pace at which PRS targets are being met reflects the impact those professionals in the field are making.


Here in these pages we have profiled the work of 15 SES professionals, and interviewed a selection of their supervisors and colleagues, to illustrate the ground-level structural reforms that are contributing to a better-performing, service-driven and results-oriented civil service. Their work is representative of the great progress being made by all SES professionals placed throughout government.

In many post-conflict countries civil service reform continues beyond a decade. As we look beyond the initial three-year phase of the SES it is clear that more time is needed to support the government's longer-term reform efforts.


That time will also allow government to continue its efforts to increase payroll capacity to absorb SES professionals. The SES was not intended as a short-term project, but rather as the beginning of a long-term programme that allows experienced professionals to begin meaningful careers in the Liberian civil service.

We ask that the international community take a hard look at the SES, to consider it as an important pillar in Liberia's reforms and to see it as worthy of support so that the structural reforms emerging through SES professionals can continue for years to come.



  
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**Moustapha Soumaré**  
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Resident Coordinator, Humanitarian Coordinator and UNDP Resident  
Representative

## Acknowledgements

This success stories write-up reflects the impact of the Senior Executive Service (SES) programme in making a difference in the on-going reforms in Liberia. It captures some key results emerging through the work of the SES professionals, showing how this is benefiting the people of Liberia. The stories emerge from direct interviews with 15 SES professionals who offer a representative sample of the work being done. Their input was supplemented by their supervisors and co-workers.

This initiative was conceived through the foresight of the SES Project Implementation Committee, chaired by the Civil Service Agency and composed of UNDP, USAID, MPEA, MOS, WB, Humanity United, GTZ, GC and MOF. As part of the programme's mid-term review, they called for a quick documentation exercise, capturing some of the successes emerging out of the SES that could be replicated elsewhere. Mr. Alfred Sayon, the Programme's Coordinator working closely with Mr. Cleophas Torori and Mr. Roland Lepol of UNDP transformed this idea into action, putting in all that was needed to get it accomplished.

The SES Program is administered by a secretariat, comprising of Alfred Chie Sayon, Programme Coordinator; Isaac G. F. Gorvego, Monitoring & Evaluation Officer; Joseph Boakai, Jr. Monitoring & Evaluation Officer; Walter Baker, Program Accountant, Ella Boekarto, Administrative Assistant

The actual documentation of the project involved a close partnership between the CSA, UNDP and UNMIL Public Information, with the latter providing support in photography as well as design and layout of the document. Many thanks go to George Somerville, Head of PI as well as Mathew Elavanalthoduka and Paddy Defoxy Ilos from the Publications department. The work involved extensive field travel and interviews with SES personnel, both in Monrovia and the counties for which we express appreciation to Mr. Christopher Mason, the lead writer, as well as all the SES professionals he interviewed.

Finally, special appreciation goes to Dr. C. William Allen, Director-General, Civil Service Agency for his leadership and guidance throughout the process, together with Hon. O. Natty B. Davis, Minister of State without Portfolio and Mr. Moustapha Soumare, Special Representative of the Secretary General, UNMIL, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, for availing their time for interviews with the writer, providing very useful comments on the SES Programme. A similar appreciation goes to all other partners who offered their time to support the project.

However, the views expressed in this document are those of the author and the SES beneficiaries interviewed and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the government or the SES partners.



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# Abbreviations

- CCA** — Common Country Assessment
- CDA** — County Development Agenda
- CDO** — County Development Officer
- CSA** — Civil Service Agency
- GC** — Governance Commission
- GTZ** — Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
- HIPC** — Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiatives
- LDHS** — Liberia Demographic and Health Survey
- LECBS** — Liberia Emergency Capacity Building Support
- MCC** — Monrovia City Corporation
- MOF** — Ministry of Finance
- MoHSW** — Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
- MOS** — Ministry of State
- MPEA** — Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs
- NGO** — Non-Governmental Organization
- PRS** — Poverty Reduction Strategy
- RFTF** — Results Focused Transition Framework
- SES** — Senior Executive Service
- SGBVCU** — Sexual Gender Based Violent Crimes Unit
- TOKTEN** — Transfer of Skills Through Expatriate Nationals
- UN** — United Nations
- UNDP** — United Nations Development Programme
- UNMIL** — United Nations Mission in Liberia
- USAID** — United States Agency for International Development
- WB** — World Bank

# Introduction

A pile of documents stacked on the meeting table in Dr. C. William Allen's downtown Monrovia office together provide a snapshot of the many reforms underway to rebuild a nation that had been shattered by years of conflict and neglect.

On top of those documents sits a magazine for Liberia's civil servants introducing and outlining a program-- the Senior Executive Service (SES) -- that has been central to this country's efforts to meet the targets in its Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS).

Dr. Allen, Director General of the Civil Service Agency (CSA), is proud of the SES that has brought nearly 100 experienced Liberians from home and abroad into the civil service to instigate a short-and-medium term surge in capacity to help get reforms underway.

"We realized very quickly that for the PRS to have any impact we would need human change agents, not just in Monrovia, but in the counties as well," Dr. Allen says. "We couldn't get past first base on the PRS targets without a program like SES."

Begun in 2008, the SES has brought some of Liberia's best and brightest into the civil service from the private sector, non-governmental organizations and from careers abroad to provide leadership and experience during the crucial reform and rebuilding period.

The nearly 100 professionals are positioned in 28 government ministries and agencies, and in all 15 of Liberia's counties, with the intent of being uniquely experienced and positioned to be a key driving force in meeting PRS targets.

Those professionals come from a wide range of backgrounds. Less than 20 per cent were drawn from the diaspora, though many more came into their positions with international work and education experience.

The SES is being supported by international partners such as the UNDP, The World Bank, USAID, the governments of Greece, Germany and Sweden, Humanity United and UNMIL.

The impact of SES was immediate, and continues as reforms become further ingrained in government. "Not a week goes by that I don't hear from cabinet ministers who tell me they don't know where they'd be without their SES members," Dr. Allen says.

One SES professional, Shadi Baki (see page 13), fully grasped how crucial SES was to the PRS when President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf held a retreat in 2009, inviting key PRS figures to discuss progress, challenges and the road ahead.

"I looked around the room and saw 90 per cent of my SES colleagues," says Mr. Baki. "It wasn't until then that I realized the SES and PRS were so intricately tied together."

In all, the SES and programs like it are meant to supply the capacity for the Liberian government to act on crucial policies. More than two decades of unrest and conflict sent many of Liberia's best and brightest fleeing to other parts of the world.

But today, the SES acts as a key driver in efforts to meet Liberia's PRS targets, helping to achieve goals that at first seemed daunting.

"In our first-year review of the PRS we identified that the lack of capacity was the number one constraint hindering us from achieving PRS targets," says Natty B. Davis, Liberia's Minister of State Without Portfolio. "Now we are seeing a lot more progress and a large element of that is directly related to SES."

Mr. Davis and Dr. Allen of the CSA were among the key government architects of the SES, ensuring that the program reflects the government's vision for reform and recovery.

"It has worked here because the current government has had a clear idea of moving from emergency relief to structured reform," says Moustapha Soumaré, the UNDP Resident Representative in Liberia.

Both the UNDP and World Bank see that as a key reason to support the SES. As other long-term reforms take place, the capacity and reform driven by the SES will be there to steer the transition to sustainable and structural change.

That transition will go well beyond the initial three-year plan for the SES, meaning the government and stakeholders are examining ways to extend the SES so that its members can continue driving civil service reform.

"The SES needs another two or three years before we can expect it to have its intended impact," says Smile Kwawukume, Senior Public Sector Specialist for the

World Bank.

Formulated jointly with the Government of Liberia and key development partners, the SES concept draws on the experience of countries like Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Tanzania. These scenarios have shown that a tightly-focused group of public service leaders can bring about a radical “surge” effect in a country, triggering a dramatic leap-- within a short space of time-- in national human and institutional capacity.

The SES currently focuses on three of the four PRS pillars: revitalizing the economy, strengthening governance and rule of law and infrastructure and basic services. These three pillars, and the fourth-- consolidating peace and security-- are crucial to long-term reform efforts and require a reformed and strengthened civil service.

Conceived in 2006, the SES is one of three short to medium term capacity initiatives designed to provide a “surge” capacity to the government.

The three initiatives-- Liberia Emergency Capacity Building Support (LECBS), Transfer of Skills Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) and SES-- fit into a big picture strategy to strengthen the way the Liberian government serves its citizens while eradicating factors that contributed to the years of conflict.

In a recent mid-term review, 64 per cent of SES supervisors and 60 per cent of their colleagues said the SES models the new civil service with respect to results orientation, skills in building relationships, team leadership and team playing skills. About 77 per cent of their supervisors report that the SES is already critical to meeting future needs of their organizations.

Despite strategies in place for rebuilding the public workforce, the civil service remains unable to offer competitive terms to recruit highly skilled professionals.

“Initially the government was to take over these programs in three years, but they are not yet ready because there are so many competing needs,” Mr. Soumaré says. “We as a donor community need to support initiatives like SES.”

Until the day comes when government can absorb SES professionals, support is needed to attract the minds and experience to implement the needed reforms.

Currently, the SES program requires an additional US\$4.75 million in donor support to sustain its

Overall public sector reform is focused on nine key elements:

1. A review of mandates and functions of central government ministries, agencies and commissions
2. Reform of the justice system
3. Reform of the security sector and public safety
4. Land reform
5. Decentralization and local administrative reform
6. Public sector pay reform
7. Public financial management reform
8. Re-profiling of public offices
9. Legislative capacity building

SES participants are putting these elements to action. Their work is forming a crucial part of the reform process by deploying donor resources to create short-term capacity while rebuilding Liberia’s government institutions through a new and distinct class of civil servants.

Within these broader strategies, SES has several key features:

1. Performance management
2. Separation incentives for those adversely affected by a re-profiling exercise
3. A roll-out strategy to create a “surge” for reforming the public workforce
4. Resource mobilization that would see the phasing in of more direct government contributions and the phasing out of donor support over the long-term

current workforce through June 2012. Even then, it is unlikely government will be able to absorb the wages of SES professionals into its payrolls. Consideration is being given to extending the SES program to allow time for further reforms to take place, and to give government more time to absorb its SES professionals.

Over the years, efforts to devolve genuine political and administrative authority to local levels have remained elusive. The SES program contributes to a more meaningful sharing of capacity and decision making power in regions outside Monrovia.

Besides the 15 county development officers placed in each of Liberia’s counties, SES participants hold key county-level positions throughout Liberia, from statistics officers to the 15 county human resource managers put in place by the SES through the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare.

“The process of decentralization will not be successful without efforts like SES,” Mr. Soumaré says.



# REVITALIZING THE ECONOMY

## Towards Creating Employment



**Marlene Bush-Gbolumah**  
Employment Specialist  
Ministry of Labour

With an estimated unemployment rate that peaked at 85 per cent, a revamped employment and skills training strategy was key to Liberia's rebirth.

At the centre of that strategy is Marlene Bush-Gbolumah, an employment specialist at the Ministry of Labour and also an SES professional.

Ms. Bush-Gbolumah came to the ministry with an extensive background in welfare-for-work programs and career planning in the United States, as well as a lengthy period at American company Lockheed Martin, with an educational background in workforce planning.

Through a National Employment Bureau, Ms. Bush-Gbolumah and her colleagues are surveying the needs of employers in Liberia, and working with high schools and colleges to establish training programs that will graduate students with the required skills to work in sectors where jobs are available.

"In the last two or three years Liberia has seen a lot of short-term jobs created through projects like road construction" she says. "But we are working with other ministries to identify and target long-term employment opportunities."

This is consistent with Pillar Two of the Poverty Reduction Paper (PRS) which focuses on revitalizing Liberia's economy.

Things are beginning to look up. The National Bureau

of Employment estimates some 200,000 jobs have been created in the last two years, though many are short-term and unemployment remains high.

Initially, Liberia's PRS saw road construction as a quick-impact means of providing jobs. But now the employment strategy is moving into a more sophisticated stage that seeks to base job growth on greater skills.

The ministry is trying to provide support for those doing short-term work so they can transfer those skills to a livelihood that provides a more sustainable future.

"We want to scale-up so that those who were digging trenches can do something more skilled," Ms. Bush-Gbolumah says.

She adds that agriculture is one of the largest growth areas, thanks in large part to a broader effort to encourage a return to the land for those who fled to urban areas during the war.

"Right now we would rather train more people in agriculture than in accounting, because there are opportunities there and it fits in with other strategies to improve food security and reduce urban density," Ms. Bush-Gbolumah says.

To aid that effort, Ms. Bush-Gbolumah is also helping the Ministry of Labour develop a plan for employment officers in each of Liberia's 15 counties. It is part of the effort to decentralize government services, and is a PRS deliverable.

A pilot project in Grand Bassa county is slated to begin next year to create a model that can be taken to other counties.

Another PRS deliverable, a Labour Market Survey, is also well underway, which will identify skills needed and skills available on the job market. The survey will help shape the work done by the county-level employment officers and also provide a reference point for both the National Bureau of Employment and the

National Bureau of Statistics.

The first round of analysis stemming from the survey is slated to be delivered by the end of summer 2010.

“That kind of information helps to establish an occupation handbook that helps both employers and job seekers,” Ms. Bush-Gbolumah says.

On the other end of the labour market, the ministry is seeking to find sustainable, long-term work for experienced Liberians, especially those who are internationally trained.

Many find the best opportunities are in the NGO sector, but many projects are short-term, and over time the number of employment opportunities in the NGO sector is expected to decline.

The ministry is developing policies and corporate relationships that seek to create an environment where skilled Liberians can find sustainable work with Liberian companies or in government.

Through facilitating long-term skills training and shorter-term job search and self-marketing training, the ministry is increasing the number of Liberians who not only have the tools to find work, but also the know-how on how to link those tools to a potential employer.

“There is work available for skilled Liberians who know how to sell themselves,” Ms. Bush-Gbolumah says. “Those people do not stay on the job market for long before someone hires them.”



## Clearing Debt Burden, Charting a New Path for Prosperity



**Jonathan Geegbae**  
Senior Economist and Acting  
Director of Debt  
Management Unit  
Ministry of Finance

In all the years Jonathan Geegbae spent working for Fortune 500 companies in the United States, little did he know that perhaps his most daunting challenge still lay ahead.

When Mr. Geegbae left the U.S. to return to Liberia and take up his post as a director and senior economist at the Ministry of Finance through the SES program, he was stepping into one of the world's thorniest government debt settings.

“Management and unsustainability of public debt is an age-old problem in most developing countries,” he says. “But in 2006 Liberia’s debt burden was the worst in the world, the ratio of debt to GDP was over 700 percent and the ratio of debt to exports was over 2,000 percent.”

Needless to say, the task was daunting. But today Mr. Geegbae sits at the centre of an intense effort to get Liberia’s debt under control, to free it up to focus on other reform efforts.

In 2009, the government passed into law the Public Financial Management law and adopted a comprehensive debt management strategy. Together, they provide the framework for the government to manage new borrowing so it can maintain its sustainable debt profile.

The path leading to a point where there can be discussion about a manageable debt was not an easy one. Mr. Geegbae was a member of the three-member delegation to negotiate the restructuring of Liberia’s debt with Ecowa Bank for Investment and Development, helped prepare Liberia’s 2009/2010 debt management strategy and presented that strategy to Cabinet.

The approval of that strategy was one of the benchmarks under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC), and Liberia’s significant progress on its debt recovery plan was rewarded early in 2010 with access to US\$6.8 million under the International Monetary Fund’s Extended Credit Facility.

Mr. Geegbae has also helped establish the Direct Debit Unit at the Ministry of Finance, and assisted

the Deputy Minister for Expenditure and Debt Management in developing terms of reference for the restructured Bank Reconciliation unit, all to help institutionalize change.

“Development is much more than setting rules, articulating standards, approving legislation and creating new institutions,” Mr. Geegbae says. “All are important, but ultimately behaviour must be changed if there is to be meaningful and lasting financial reform.”

The work is a significant change from the previous chapter of his career. He served as a senior corporate accountant with GE Capital, Oxford Industries and, most recently Aflac Inc., working as a Sarbanes-Oxley (SOX) subject-matter expert.

He moved to the U.S. in 1996 due to Liberia’s conflict, earning an MBA from Keller Graduate School of Management in Atlanta, Georgia, as well as several other certificates, most recently in Project Appraisal and Risk Management from Duke University Sandford School of Public Policy.

“I was not sure what to expect [when he returned], since I had not worked in Liberia for more than 12 years,” he says. “But I am extremely happy to be home to contribute in a small way to the development efforts of the government.”

Mr. Geegbae also plays a key role in civil service reform by working with colleagues from the Department of Expenditure and Debt Management launching a direct deposit payment system for government employees. Among other benefits, it saves up-country employees from travelling great distances to collect their pay each month.

The old arrangement not only cost employees’ money to travel, but also cut into their working time and limiting overall effectiveness.

In his time at the Ministry of Finance, Mr. Geegbae has seen great progress. As reforms deepen, he asks himself how best to ensure his work, and more broadly the impact of a program like SES, remains sustainable.

“The SES and other programs have a life span,” he says, adding the structure and length of the program must focus on the sustainability of the work so that the civil service does not regress after reform programs expire..

While the longer-term future of the program becomes more clear, Mr. Geegbae has in the meantime focused on creating opportunities to transfer knowledge whenever possible.

“This was among the fundamental purposes for which SES was established,” he says. “That transfer of knowledge will help make the program sustainable.”



## Coming Home to Strengthen Food Security



**Moses Zinnah**  
Principal Director of Research  
and Extension  
Ministry of Agriculture

Sitting in his second-floor office at the Ministry of Agriculture’s office on the outskirts of Monrovia,

Moses Zinnah discusses the wide range of reforms happening across Liberia, pointing out how nearly all of them require strengthened food security if overall recovery is to be achieved.

“Food security is at the heart of so much this country is trying to do,” Dr. Zinnah says. “If you are well-fed, you will not be chased by sickness, and if food is abundant it will be because we have strengthened domestic food production. Without food, you cannot have peace.”

Strengthening food security is also at the heart of Liberia’s Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), and professionals like Dr. Zinnah, hired through SES to work

as principal director of research and extension at the Ministry of Agriculture, are leading the drive towards delivering on the PRS targets.

A 2006 survey found 40 per cent of Liberians were either highly or moderately vulnerable to food security, while in 2008 more than two-thirds of households could not afford three meals a day. Reducing those figures became a key goal of the PRS.

Under the PRS, several strategic objectives deal specifically with food security and most of them are Ministry of Agriculture deliverables, making for a challenging task for Dr. Zinnah.

Efforts to strengthen food security depend on a strong rural agricultural sector. Liberia's food production plummeted as a result of war, as hundreds of thousands fled their home areas. The farming sector is slowly recovering, but there is still much to be done to reverse the flood of people who fled to Monrovia from villages throughout the country.

Solving the challenge of food security then means addressing several layers-- from urban and rural planning, education and health care reform, employment opportunities and strong agriculture programs.

"You can't tell people not to come to Monrovia. Everyone has a right to be here," Dr. Zinnah says. "But to convince young people there is something worthwhile for them to go to if they move to rural areas is crucial."

This means good roads, safe water, good schools, good clinics and a viable agricultural future that will provide a better life than working and living on the streets, he adds.

To achieve this end, Dr. Zinnah is developing a policy on how to deliver services to farmers through public-private partnerships, which will help fast-track progress that may otherwise have been slowed by

limited government resources.

He is also addressing rice production. Currently, Liberia imports the vast majority of its rice, as it has for many decades. But prior to the war, imports were a smaller proportion of consumption and at the very least many rural villages had sustainable local rice supplies.

"If we could fix our rice production we could save US\$200 million per year, which is the value of rice imports," says Dr. Zinnah, who has advised the Minister of Agriculture on food security. "For a poor country with a budget of about US\$375 million, that's a lot of money."

Prior to joining the ministry through SES, Dr. Zinnah spent more than a decade advising mostly West African countries on food security, and agriculture colleges on curriculum that meets the rapidly changing needs of citizens in the region.

Through those years as a senior manager for 13 agriculture programs in nine African countries through a U.S.-based NGO, Winrock International Institute for Agricultural Development, Dr. Zinnah continuously told himself that if given the opportunity to return home to Liberia he would do so without hesitation.

"It always hit me hard that I was improving other countries, but not my own," Dr. Zinnah says. "It was only then that I realized all those years were training for the day I'd have the chance to come home and do good work."

The task is daunting, but Dr. Zinnah is confident that Liberia is on the right track towards feeding itself and through that using food security to strengthen so many other sectors that affect the day-to-day life of Liberians.

"I can see change happening, and I am a part of it, so I can go to bed happy," he says.



# STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE AND RULE OF LAW

## Restoring Order to Employee Records



**Shadi Baki**  
Information and Records  
Management Specialist  
Civil Service Agency

Following Liberia's 14-year civil conflict it was clear that one of the major civil service-related reforms would have to focus on rebuilding the government's records of its own employees, which were largely destroyed in the years of lawlessness.

But instead of focusing on replacing what was lost, the government saw an opportunity to go one step further and institute a better model of employee records so innovative that other countries are now learning from the system being introduced in Liberia.

"During the war the government lost all employee records," says Shadi Baki, an SES member and an Information and Records Management Specialist with the Civil Service Agency.

Mr. Baki is leading the ambitious project to create a biometric identification database which creates a personal and work record for each employee. It also allows the government to reliably track who is an official civil service employee through both fingerprinting and facial recognition.

Having such a system that allows government to know who is, and is not, on its payroll is crucial to, among other things, improving pay scales which will help attract the talent needed to sustain reforms. In the civil service, a key objective of pillar three of the PRS, focusing on strengthening governance and the rule of law.



**Alexander Bassey**  
Database Specialist  
Civil Service Agency

"The biometric system forms the bedrock of the soon-to-be-deployed Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS) and Payroll System of the Integrated Financial Management and Information System (IFMIS) that CSA and Ministry of Finance is implementing," Mr. Baki says. "This will usher in a new day, allowing the government to have a reliable, accurate and functioning automated system so that government will have the information it needs to make informed decisions."

Mr. Baki is leading the operation out of a newly-established Biometric Identification Center in downtown Monrovia, an impressive facility with modern computer equipment, a secured wireless local area network system and a 72-hour back-up battery power system.

Stations are set up for teams to input the hard copy forms government employees are sending in, to populate the employee database system. The project began by building the employees' dossiers of government employees in Monrovia, but Mr. Baki expects that by October 2010, all government employees across Liberia will be entered into the system.

The project is so innovative, and the first of its kind in West Africa, that the World Bank, the project's partner, has used it as a model in similar implementations in Zimbabwe and Gambia.

Mr. Baki and his fellow SES colleague, Alexander

Bassey who is the project's database specialist, take pride in driving a project that seeks not just to replace what was lost in the years of war, but to go further and create a model that will be the envy of countries elsewhere.

Together, the two SES members bring a great deal of private sector technology experience, which allowed them to have the ambitious project up and running in a matter of months.

Mr. Baki spent nearly 20 years in Ghana working in the information technology sector, while Mr. Bassey worked for the United Nations for many years beginning in 1992 followed by a decade at the Liberian Bank for Development and Investment.

"We are bringing a results-driven, private-sector approach to government," Mr. Baki says. "It is one of the greatest impacts of SES. It is changing the culture of

government."

Both see the biometrics project as crucial not only to creating a reliable database of government employees, but also to eliminate payroll fraud so that scarce government resources can instead be dedicated entirely to driving the country's recovery.

"There is so much fraud, but with a system like this the cost savings can be used for the betterment of the country," Mr. Baki says.

Implementing a technology and resource-heavy project has been challenging, but the pair of SES members has pulled out all the stops to ensure they have what they need to get the project done.

"We came here because we knew there were challenges," Mr. Bassey says. "And we are determined to do something about it."

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## Leading the Fight Against Sexual and Gender-based Violence



**Felicia Coleman**  
Chief Prosecutor  
Sexual Gender Based Violence  
Crimes Unit, Ministry of Justice

For decades Liberia's Supreme Court motto was "Let justice be done to all men". But following renovations to repair heavy damage caused during the war, one word was dropped from the motto, signifying a symbolic change and a new way forward for Liberia's post-war justice reforms.

Beginning in 2008, the court's motto instead read "Let justice be done to all"-- a fitting change given the country's dedication to creating a justice system that introduced greater gender equality.

One of the key reform targets identified by Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is a makeover of the country's legal system to, among other things, deal more appropriately with incidents of violence, particularly when involving women and children.

Among the many key people working behind the scenes to achieve that policy target is Felicia Cole-

man, chief prosecutor and SES specialist in the Sexual Gender Based Violence Crimes Unit (SGBVCU) at the Ministry of Justice.

The unit was established under the Ministry of Justice in 2009 to specifically prosecute complaints of sexual offences in a newly created Court called Criminal Court "E" – sexual offence Court for Montserrado County. In the process, the unit is to help establish a justice system that, by dealing fairly with such cases, creates a more open environment for victims to come forward while discouraging such incidents in the first place.

It is a daunting task in a country where so many women experienced sexual violence during Liberia's 14-year conflict, not to mention the institutional destruction that took place over that period.

"As a result of the war, the entire justice system was broken," Ms. Coleman says in the SGBVCU's office in Monrovia, a short walk from Liberia's Supreme Court. "Every level of it required reform. A lot of our laws have not changed in decades, so today we are left with a damaged population and a system in dire need of reform."

Although the gender reform is or soon will be targeting all levels of the justice system, the reform has taken a very transparent approach by setting up a dedicated court room, known as Court "E", to deal with sexual offence cases.



By doing this, the reform can target key individuals in the justice system who can lead the path to greater equality of justice.

Ms. Coleman is also tasked with working and coordinating with key partners to improve response services for victims to include strengthened police investigation and evidence collecting capacity of gender-based violence (GBV) cases, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and NGOs to provide psychosocial support and safety to victims and the Ministry of Gender and Development to better respond to victims while developing and managing a strategy for coordinating GBV-focused donor funding.

This cross-sectoral approach aims at going beyond prosecution to treat the needs of victims and examine preventative measures through sensitization of the public.

“One of the main protocols we have introduced is that the victim gets medical attention and counseling first, and then prosecution comes later,” Ms. Coleman says.

In making such a transparent effort to reform all levels of gender-based violence, Liberia is not only targeting PRS deliverables, but also the third goal of the Millennium Development Goals, which is dedicated to promoting gender equality and empowerment of women.

It is a big task, and one that will take time to fully achieve.

Ms. Coleman has a long history in Liberia’s legal system, including two years as an associate justice at the Supreme Court, time as a court judge and extensive experience in private practice before joining SES.

Her experience is crucial to steering Court “E” through its early days. When it opened its first term in February of 2009, the backlog of sexual offence cases from Criminal Court “A” was transferred to Court “E”, meaning it had a backlog of more than 20 cases before it even heard its first case.

“We had a backlog from day one,” Ms. Coleman says.

Although the court’s judge, prosecutors and defence lawyers are trained on GBV cases, the court can only hear so many cases in its two terms each year, meaning the backlog will be slow to reduce.

“More cases are being reviewed and prosecuted than before, but during one term we may only hear three or four cases, but add six or 10 to the backlog,” Ms. Coleman says.

Plans are in place to expand the court’s capacity, and also take the court’s model to other counties. But that will take time, and funding. For now, Ms. Coleman says programs like SES are providing a capacity surge that ensures the progress will maintain its momentum.

“This is an ambitious program that requires highly qualified individuals,” Ms. Coleman says. “SES is allowing the government to access those qualified professionals while government gets back on its feet.”

## Tracking the PRS on the Ground



**James Davis**  
County Development Officer  
Sinoe County  
Ministry of Planning and  
Economic Affairs

Approaching nearly two dozen women scattered about the ground under a tree on the ocean's edge, James Davis Sr. raises his voice to get their attention.

"Yes hi, can I hear you people please?" says Mr. Davis, the county development officer for Sinoe County, and an SES specialist.

"Yes, hello!" the women answer in near unison.

Several hundred fish, some barely the size of a human finger and others a metre long, lay on trays and in bowls in front of the women, who are selling them to passers-by.

Mr. Davis talks with the women about a project proposal he is working on to build a cold storage facility near the water's edge so that the fish that now must be dried or eaten the day they are caught can instead be stored for consumption later and possibly transported to larger markets elsewhere to bring more income to the community.

The cold storage facility is directly in line with PRS deliverables to construct market infrastructure and is just one of many economic and social development projects Mr. Davis is working on to bring to this isolated county in southeastern Liberia.

"Sinoe is a county with great potential, but it has been lagging," Mr. Davis says in an interview in his office. "When I arrived I saw how many people are below acceptable quality of life standards, but I also saw the county's potential to help its own people."

In essence, that is the focus of much of Mr. Davis's work. He is creating county-level structures so that the government can track its PRS and its grassroots variant, the County Development Agenda (CDA) targets and ensure that new partners arriving in the county can shape their work and projects to suit the needs of the county and its residents.

Since arriving in early 2009, Mr. Davis has worked to overcome many challenges, from lack of financial resources for programming to his own lack of needed logistics such as transportation.

He has made local ownership of development issues in Sinoe County a key focus of his work. He has taken control of 15 field monitors spread across the county, who report on development work and needs in their areas. The monitors had previously been overseen by an NGO, but now they report to Mr. Davis.

"Through these kinds of changes we have the means to build capacity and evaluate progress on county-level needs," Mr. Davis says. "Before, county and ministry officials would wait for the UN or an NGO to call a meeting before anything would happen. Now things are changing."

Besides the facility for Greenville's fishing industry, Mr. Davis works on other projects. He aids in the assessment of the Greenville port, which has been dormant for two decades because of war, but would be key to the re-growth of Sinoe's forestry industry.

He has also been working to sensitize communities in Sinoe about the PRS and Sinoe's County Development Agenda (CDA), and distribute copies of both.

Mr. Davis runs a popular weekly radio show discussing the PRS and other development topics on the county's only radio station, Voice of Sinoe.

His goal is not only raise awareness of the development targets, but also encourage communities to consider what work they can do to facilitate the meeting of these targets.

"Sometimes, communities are not getting the support they need because they are simply inaccessible due to poor or non-existent roads," Mr. Davis says. "So communities are working to widen, or in some cases build from nothing, roads so that workers and supplies can reach their community."

Mr. Davis's impact is being felt by those around him.

"Things became a lot more manageable when James came on board," says McDonald Wlemus, the assistant superintendent of development for Sinoe County. "He is the connecting link between all the different line ministries and agencies working in development."

Mr. Davis' job as county development officer brings



together many of his core experiences and passions. Previously he worked on refugee and asylum cases in Liberia, as well as in development planning, counseling, HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence.

“When I was in the NGO sector I longed to work in government to build long-term solutions and impact the lives of people on the ground,” he says.

Sitting in his office, Mr. Davis reflects on the work done so far, and the road ahead, and sees good things coming to the region.

“I see in two or three years Sinoe being one of the key drivers in Liberia’s overall development growth,” he says. “Now we have a plan we can follow and every year we can build on progress. The future looks

very fruitful, which is a feeling this county hasn’t had in a long time.”



## At the Heart of Land Reform



**Morris Kanneh**  
National Land Reform  
Program Coordinator  
Ministry of Lands, Mines  
and Energy

During Liberia’s lengthy civil war, hundreds of thousands left their property and fled the country. With the return of peace, many have come back, only to find their land occupied by those who stayed behind.

Land disputes have been a large obstacle for many reforms, but among those focused on resolving the thorny issue is Morris Kanneh, an SES specialist and the National Land Reform Coordinator at the Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energies.

Mr. Kanneh is a veteran land surveyor whose relationship with the ministry dates back to 1980. Since joining SES in 2008, he has played a crucial role in the founding of the Land Commission, which was launched in 2009.

“The establishment of the Land Commission is key amongst our PRS targets,” Mr. Kanneh says. “With these policies now coming into force we have the pieces in place to meet the concrete land reform goals.”

In addition, the PRS calls on government to implement measures to harmonize land ownership, access to land and the enforcement of formal land titles, as well as effective dispute settlement mechanisms.

Years of conflict left Liberia’s land regulations vastly out of date, if not entirely destroyed. The Land Commission is part of the overall goal of developing a comprehensive national land tenure and land use system that will provide equitable access to land and security of tenure.

Such reforms are key to other development priorities as well. Land reforms will enable economic development, rural and agricultural growth, as well as addressing the many zoning challenges that face a crowded capital city of Monrovia.

Surveyor training has become one of Mr. Kanneh’s many focal points. There are barely 70 licensed surveyors across the whole country, and many of those are retired. Yet, the demand for land surveyors is growing fast, with so many building projects and questions surfacing over land ownership.

Increasing the number of surveyors is only part of the solution. Mr. Kanneh has also helped streamline the process developers must go through when seeking to develop property.

Sitting in the ministry’s library, Mr. Kanneh recites the process people used to go through when developing a property-- the owner would find a surveyor, the surveyor then would have to get a permit from government for permission to survey and publish a notice in newspapers for two weeks announcing the

surveying before any work could commence.

“It was reducing our ability to attract business and investors,” Mr. Kanneh says. “Investors would come and be so frustrated with the process that they would leave, so it was very important to develop a more effective and fair system.”

Now, surveyors do not have to get a permit for each project so long as they are licenced. The only delay between hiring a surveyor and doing the work is the need to publish a newspaper announcement for five days before work commences.

Reducing the number of layers is expected to not only attract more foreign investment, but also speed up the process of surveying and planning land for future development.

“Only 20 per cent of this country has been surveyed,” Mr. Kanneh says. “We need that figure to rise, and quickly, but to do that we need to strengthen the capacity of surveyors.”

He has begun establishing the framework for a surveyors’ school, which would go a long way towards enabling the policies that created the Land Commission.

“Without a school to train surveyors, we will have a difficult time enacting reforms because until we know the land, we will struggle to reform ownership of it,” Mr. Kanneh says.

In addition to strengthening the capacity and number of land surveyors, Mr. Kanneh is part of several efforts, including land survey and cartography programs supported by the World Bank, to strengthen the Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy to effectively manage and regulate growth in the natural resource sector and land reform policies.

“Our goal is first to return to pre-war capacity levels and then continue to grow beyond that,” Mr. Kanneh says. “The ministry’s capacity is growing and partnerships, including SES, have had an enormous impact on that growth.”



## From Behind a Desk into The Field



**Calvin Kollie**  
County Development Officer  
Bong County  
Ministry of Planning and  
Economic Affairs

For Calvin Kollie, his work has come full circle.

Previously, Mr. Kollie was a director in the Bureau of Regional Planning in the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs. In that role, he helped create the CDAs that drives development in each of Liberia's 15 counties, and also the PRS which constitutes the overarching national planning framework.

Today, he is in a job that took him from developing policy to implementing it on the ground, as the County Development Officer (CDO), and an SES specialist, in Bong County some three hours north of Monrovia.

"To be frank, I didn't expect to be going from behind the desk into the field," Mr. Kollie says. "But when this position came up it seemed like a perfect opportunity to put these policies into action."

Like many SES colleagues, Mr. Kollie is focused on translating theory into action. In particular the 15 CDOs deployed through SES are tasked with building county-level capacity across government ministries.

It's a daunting task, but one that Mr. Kollie and other CDOs have taken up with great enthusiasm.

Upon arriving in early 2009, Mr. Kollie introduced a structure of monthly meetings built around the four pillars of the PRS, as have SES county development officers across Liberia. Mr. Kollie made a particular point of ensuring the county took charge of coordinating the meetings documenting them and sharing reports that emanate from them with the appropriate authorities.

"We needed greater ownership of the development issues in our county," he says. "Now, we coordinate our own meetings, we produce our own reports." He adds that many of those duties used to be han-

dled by the local United Nations office, on which county and ministry officials depended on for everything from implementing projects to making photocopies.

"Despite the many challenges we face, we have managed to take greater ownership over the key development issues facing Bong County and its citizens," he says. "That's a big change from how things used to work."

Like many of his SES colleagues, Mr. Kollie has faced a great deal of logistical challenges-- lack of reliable electricity, lack of adequate transportation and office equipment-- but like his colleagues, Mr. Kollie has found creative ways to succeed in an otherwise harsh working environment.

"There are normal working hours, but we must adjust to the challenges that face our work," Mr. Kollie says. "If the power comes on only at night and we are doing work that requires our laptop, then we come in and work at night."

Mr. Kollie hopes government capacity will continue to strengthen to the point these logistics will be more readily available. But in the meantime, he is focusing on critical changes that support Liberia's PRS in general and Bong County's CDA in particular.

From the revamped meeting structure, extensive training for county-level government officials and sensitization in communities has come great progress in not only understanding PRS deliverables but also how solutions can come from the county and community levels, rather than only from the national or international levels.

"Our focus has been ownership and knowledge of responsibilities," Mr. Kollie says. "People did not know much about the PRS and CDA or in some cases line ministries did not even know they had deliverables under the PRS. We introduced training and then ongoing mentoring on deliverables, progress, challenges and how to achieve goals."

Mr. Kollie's impact is being felt by many in the county, not least Bong County's Superintendent, Ranney Jackson.

"This program has really helped us," Mr. Jackson says. "He has been generating a great deal of information, which for us is crucial. Once we have the information we can know what to do."

## Delivering on the PRS: One Project at a Time



**Lee Mason**  
County Development Officer  
Bomi County  
Ministry of Planning and  
Economic Affairs

As part of her “Reach Every Pregnant Woman” strategy, Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf hopes to strengthen education and health services to ensure every pregnant woman gets medical attention and delivers her baby at a health facility.

It is a tall order when maternal mortality nearly doubled to 994 deaths per 100,000 live births between 2000 and 2007, according to the Liberia Demographic and Health Survey (LDHS) and currently less than half of births are attended to by health professionals, according to the World Health Organization.

But on the ground, key individuals are developing strategies to meet the President’s goal. Among them is Lee Mason, an SES specialist and the County Development Officer (CDO) in Bomi County.

Mr. Mason came to Bomi County, northwest of Monrovia, with 15 years’ experience working for NGOs in Liberia. For many years Mr. Mason worked in an environment where the development agenda was driven by NGOs and other international partners when the government lacked capacity to do so itself.

Mr. Mason says he now sees the country regaining the ability to take control of its development agenda through increased capacity, drive and resources.

“With the new government installed in 2006, I saw a plan emerging, so when the SES opportunity came along I jumped,” Mr. Mason says. “I thought after so many years at NGOs I could help government assume ownership of the development agenda.”

Mr. Mason, and each of the 15 CDOs spread across every county, acts as a point person for county-level development efforts.

Recently, an American NGO, the Gbomai Bestman Foundation, contacted Mr. Mason while researching possible interventions the foundation could make in

Liberia’s health sector.

“I established contact between the foundation and the health ministry and sent them the national health plan so they could see what direction we are trying to head in,” Mr. Mason says.

He also put them in touch with Bomi’s county health officer and the Liberian Government Hospital in Bomi’s capital, Tubmanburg.

Based on this research the foundation turned to maternal and infant mortality, and made Bomi’s hospital their first intervention. In February 2010 they began renovating the children’s and maternity ward and built the hospital’s first neonatal room for newborn babies. They also provided kits to be distributed to new mothers that provided essential supplies needed to care for their newborn baby.

The impact was immediate. Hospital births doubled in the first month of the revamped ward and care packages to mothers who gave birth at the hospital.

“We have been fighting maternal mortality for many years now,” says Davidson Rogers, the hospital’s administrator. “When these changes were made, the effect was immediate. We had so many women coming in to give birth that we ran out of space for them.”

This is just one of several reforms that are changing the lives of patients and medical staff at Bomi’s largest hospital. One year ago, the hospital had only one ambulance but it was in disrepair, only one full-time doctor and no x-ray machine.

Today the hospital has two ambulances, three doctors and a new x-ray machine that did 60 tests during its first month in operation in April 2010.

Besides reforming county-level meeting and reporting mechanisms, this is the role SES-sponsored CDOs are having across Liberia, by matching donors with targeted, needed interventions that reflect a coordinated approach to development.

This type of ground-level progress, repeated often enough, strengthens the focus on maternal mortality as identified in the PRS. Success on tackling maternal mortality rates would add to the progress already made on infant and under-five mortality.

“There is a direct link between the PRS and these reforms, and we are trying to communicate that to anyone who will listen,” Mr. Mason says.

## Coming Full Circle on Civil Service Reform



**Retta Vincent**

Wage and Salary Administrator  
Civil Service Agency

When Retta Vincent joined the SES to work as wage and salary administrator in the Civil Service Agency, she had a good idea of what she was getting into. Ms. Vincent is a veteran of civil service reform in Liberia, having been a part of efforts in the 1970s to reform the country's bureaucracy.

That effort was thwarted by a coup in 1980, and when war broke out a decade later, Ms. Vincent left for the United States where she worked in human resource and project management.

Now she is home, playing a key role in the effort to rebuild and reform Liberia's civil service.

"I was in the States for about 20 years," she says from her office in busy downtown Monrovia. "But I had done my part, raised my children and knew it was time to come back and make a difference."

Her experience abroad, mixed with her work in the 1970s first as a senior staff analyst and later as personnel director at the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, has given her a deep knowledge of Liberia's pre-war civil service while also allowing her to bring in new ideas.

"I know how a civil service should be structured," she says.

Ms. Vincent's work falls under Pillar Three of the PRS, as part of efforts to strengthen governance. She is cleaning up the public sector's payrolls by shedding thousands of "ghost employees", getting off-payroll employees properly registered and developing job descriptions for every job in government-- a massive task given that more than 30,000 work for government.

She is the driving force behind the release of a new pay structure and grading system that is a large component of overall civil service reforms.

"Most civil servants did not know what grade they were in and what pay they should have," Mrs. Vincent says. "We brought in all personnel and finance heads and revealed to them the pay grades for every government job right up to the president. They had never seen anything like it. It was totally transparent."

By reforming its payroll and pay grade system, the government is striving to ensure the civil service will meet its long-term goal of being a competitive employer on the domestic market. The reforms will lead to better pay and conditions of service that will attract the type of talent and experience the government needs to drive its reform agenda.

In the meantime, programs like SES are helping to inject that depth and experience into the civil service to lead reform. All SES members are working in their respective ministries and agencies to create a stable, professional civil service, and Ms. Vincent is particularly well-placed to ensure that the civil service can attract and retain qualified professionals.

After the war, the lowest grade civil servant earned only US\$25 per month. Now the minimum for civil servants is US\$80. Though there are hopes to continue to grow that minimum figure, efforts are also in motion to strengthen the middle-and-high tier pay grades to allow the civil service to better attract and retain skilled and experienced Liberians.

"We're not quite to the point where civil service can attract the talent and experience it needs to carry out reforms, but we're getting there," Mrs. Vincent says.

Although she remembers being daunted by the sheer scale of the reform task at hand when she first joined the civil service through SES two years ago, Mrs. Vincent is buoyed by the progress she sees, and the optimism it gives her for the path reforms are on.

"Two years ago we didn't have the capacity," she says. "Now we are still working on overall reform, but localized strengths are emerging that can drive the overall reform."



# REHABILITATING INFRASTRUCTURE AND DELIVERING BASIC SERVICES

## Blazing the Trail on Human Resources



**Dr. Julie Brown**  
Director of Human Resources  
Ministry of Health and  
Social Welfare

On the second floor of Liberia's Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW) headquarters in Monrovia, the walls are lined with chart paper tracking the ministry's PRS deliverables, who is responsible for each deliverable and the status of each item.

The names of those who are responsible for various targets are written large enough so as to be visible to anyone walking past the long line of charts.

When perusing the chart, one name appears again and again throughout the ministry's targets: Dr. Julie Brown, the ministry's Director of Human Resources and an SES specialist.

"The team here is totally dedicated to the PRS," Dr. Brown says. "And walking past these charts every day reminds us how much we want to stay number one as the top-performing ministry on PRS deliverables."

Dr. Brown is the health ministry's first-ever human resources director, and her office, busy with folders, documents, reports and other signs of a hectic schedule, is a testimony to her large workload.

But she is driven to make a difference, and to bring her wealth of experience into the ministry because as far as she sees, the large-scale reform of entire national and local government bureaucracies requires guidance and experience to steer that reform.

"Here in Liberia, the war left us without mentors, without coaches," Dr. Brown says.

Based at the MoHSW as director of human resources, the SES specialist faces a monumental task in seeking to reform the entire ministry's HR policy at both national and county levels, while reforming an organizational structure that includes thousands of employees.

Among her achievements is the placement of human resource managers in each of Liberia's 15 counties. Having local level HR expertise contributes to the effort to decentralize government management, while introducing structure and procedures within the counties.

"Every one of them has a degree in administrative management and they are now getting specialized leadership and management training," Dr. Brown says. Dr. Brown is leading the creation of work plans and booklets outlining standard operating procedures to implement structure and systems for how the Ministry of Health operates.

"We are also introducing regular performance evaluations which will be used for bonus, promotion, transfer and any other HR decision," she says.

Those performance evaluations are proving to have an added benefit by helping attract donor support because they display a degree of transparency and accountability many donors expect.

In the 1980s, Dr. Brown worked in personnel at John F. Kennedy Memorial Hospital in Monrovia. She later completed her masters and doctoral degrees in the United States and worked there in HR for 15 years.

"When the SES position came along I felt like I was coming full circle," Dr. Brown says. "I saw this as my chance to follow through on what I started many years ago."

The work is paying off. More than 500 ghost employees have been found on the ministry's payroll, which has created room for those who had been working as volunteers to be added to the payroll and receive pay.

“We are going through staff at every department to interview them on what they do, what their role is,” Dr. Brown says. “We are putting in a structure where before there was none.”

The process has not been easy. Besides having logistical issues, such as lack of transportation to visit the counties, Dr. Brown says some resisted so much change.

“But as qualified people began arriving you couldn’t help but notice the improvement,” she says. “Those that at first resisted began seeing the strengths of

the departments and counties that were upgrading, and now are coming around to change.”

Although more and more of the PRS deliverables listed on the ministry’s hallway walls are being met, there is still a long way to go. But Dr. Brown sees things headed in the right direction.

“Most people feel Liberia will never be the same,” she says. “We’re changing peoples’ mindsets of what it means to work in government. Government too can be professional.”

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## Chasing a Dream While Making a Difference



**Gulu Gwesa**  
Microbiologist  
Ministry of Commerce and  
Industry

For many years, Gulu Gwesa thought he had one of two options: work abroad as a microbiologist, or sacrifice his dream career in favour of coming home to Liberia.

But today, Mr. Gwesa has the best of both worlds as the government of Liberia’s only microbiologist-- a position created through the SES program.

“People would tell me I was wasting my time because there would not be any jobs for a microbiologist in Liberia,” Mr. Gwesa says of his time studying in Nigeria.

Since taking up his position as microbiologist in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in July 2009, Mr. Gwesa has been busy helping to establish Liberia’s first National Standards Laboratory. Besides designing the lab, he has been having companies and business owners come in to get a preview of how their products will be tested.

The lab, established in July 2010, will test goods made in Liberia for export, and also products coming into Liberia.

The lab will address two key PRS targets-- strength-

ening food security and strengthening the landscape for nation-wide economic development.

“We’re a big part of pillar four of the PRS,” Mr. Gwesa says. “It calls on the government to ensure the quality of goods improves to strengthen the business climate.”

Domestically, the lab will review products on the Liberian market, helping to tackle the problem of countless substandard products.

Plans are in place for the lab to be internationally certified, which will help encourage an export market in Liberia and reassure investors who consider the Liberian market.

“If you want to have export capacity building in Liberia, having the lab is crucial,” Mr. Gwesa says. “Investors want to know that products coming in and out of the country will meet international standards.”

Mr. Gwesa is a driving force behind the lab. He and a single chemist were tasked with establishing the lab, with the hopes of adding a quality control manager and technical manager to help run the lab.

Also key to that certification is a laboratory manual, which Mr. Gwesa has been busy working on. The laboratory manual includes basic microbiology laboratory rules and requirements and test procedures for selected food items.

“The manual will establish procedures, which is needed if we are to be certified,” he says.

The manual has been developed in a format endorsed by the International Standard Organization (ISO), which will help in getting ISO certification for

the lab.

Both the lab and the manual fit into a broader regional effort to harmonize testing procedures among eight West African countries-- Guinea, Ghana, Nigeria, Cape Verde, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Mauritania and Liberia.

“Often we look very far away for new trade opportunities, but there is so much potential from within the region that will allow Liberia and her neighbours to help build the region’s economy,” he says.

Mr. Gwesa represented Liberia at the first regional meeting, in Ghana, of the countries to discuss the proposal.

“It will improve trade within the region by ensuring

food quality and food safety within the region,” Mr. Gwesa says.

Walking through the newly-built lab in Monrovia, Mr. Gwesa looks at all the new equipment that has been freshly unpacked from crates and boxes and reflects on the long road that took him to today.

“When I returned to Liberia it was not easy to find work,” he says. He lectured part time at a university, and worked as a laboratory supervisor at an environmental agency part-time, but they did not have the funds to put him on their payroll.

This lab and this career are two things that for many years seemed unachievable.

“This is a big step for our country,” he says.





## Paving the Way to a Better Future



**Christian Herbert**  
Transport Economist  
Ministry of Public Works

When it comes to what drives economic growth, the answer is loud and clear to Christian Herbert.

“It’s not a question of which comes first, the chicken or the egg,” Mr. Herbert says. “We know where to start, and it starts with infrastructure.”

In Mr. Herbert’s case, the focus is on roads in particular, and he has been tasked to implement a national transport plan as an SES specialist and transport economist working in the Ministry of Public Works.

“A well-developed road network will not only facilitate economic development in Liberia, but throughout the broader region,” Mr. Herbert says, citing the example of iron ore in Guinea that can be most easily shipped abroad if brought by train through Liberia to the port in Buchanan.

Principal among the fourth pillar of the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) is the rehabilitation, reconstruction and construction of roads, which when combined with marine and air transportation, forms the basis for a national transportation strategy that is paramount to the country’s recovery.

“When I heard one of the main focuses for this work was a transport strategy I saw a real chance to have an impact,” Mr. Herbert says.

Mr. Herbert has submitted a draft transport strategy to cabinet for review, but in the meantime he is working on the plan for implementing it so that once approved the strategy can be put into place.

“It’s little more than words on paper if it has no plan for implementation,” Mr. Herbert says.

Immediately upon joining the Ministry of Public Works in 2008, Mr. Herbert felt the capacity challenges. He has since been named the department’s assistant minister for planning, adding significant

duties to his SES responsibilities.

But rather than grow frustrated at the amount of work that comes his way as a result of his capabilities, Mr. Herbert sees it as a sign of how crucial programs like SES are to injecting talent and experience into a post-war civil service.

“There is a real need to recruit people who have an interest in strengthening the civil service and who can bring expertise,” Mr. Herbert says. “Too often you go to a meeting and ask for input on a strategy, but get no answers. Slowly, that is changing.”

Mr. Herbert is a key part of that change. He served as Minister of Planning and Economic Affairs in Liberia’s transitional government following the end of war from 2003 through early 2006. In that position he led much of the process to establish the Results Focused Transition Framework (RFTF), which was the precursor of the PRS in shaping Liberia’s recovery from war.

As a minister he got valuable experience working with the international community to develop big-picture, long-term strategies, including some that eventually formed the basis for the PRS.

“The most important thing I learned was to implement a national program, to take an idea and bring it into the practical realm,” he says. “You have to bring it down to measurable goals.”

That is what Mr. Herbert is doing now. He is committed to addressing the needs of Liberia’s rural population, who asked for better roads in PRS consultations.

“A rural road network is crucial,” he says. “You have students and teachers who can access schools, doctors who can get to clinic and hospitals, the cost of food and goods will drop and economic opportunities would be generated.”

In other words, with enough local roads comes a national impact. Among his priorities is Liberia’s southeastern region which during the rainy season is all but cut-off from the rest of the country, and as a result has developed close ties with neighbouring Côte d’Ivoire.

“In that region much of the population is Ivorian and everyone speaks French because it is so disconnected from the rest of the country and in particular Monrovia,” Mr. Herbert says. “An effective transnational highway would have an enormous impact, not just on Liberia but also on surrounding countries.”

## Restoring Monrovia's Lost Glory



**Frank Krah**  
Management Specialist  
Monrovia City Corporation

When Monrovia City Mayor Mary Broh travelled to the United States recently, she had to choose someone to temporarily take over her duties while away.

Her choice was obvious. It had to be the person who was drafting a new human resources policy for the city, led the creation of a new solid waste management plan, is coordinating an US\$18 million World Bank project, is leading the creation of a US\$5 million project with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and had just returned from Brazil where he presented a paper on managing urban conflicts at the World Urban Forum.

In other words, her acting mayor had to be SES member Frank Krah.

"He is my rock," Ms. Broh says. "So it made perfect sense for him to fill my shoes while I was away."

Officially, Mr. Krah is a management specialist with the Monrovia City Corporation (MCC), which is the municipal body that runs Monrovia. But his extensive experience at both city politics and in project management means he is behind nearly every effort to reform and strengthen how the city governs itself.

"We have a vision of creating a functioning, healthy city," Mr. Krah says. "The scale of the needs is enormous, but we are getting there one step at a time."

Mr. Krah was elected to Monrovia city council in the 1980s, and during the war acted as an adviser to several mayors. Having seen the city, and the country, go through so many, often destructive, phases over the years, Mr. Krah has crafted a key vision of best practices and how to avoid a repeat of Monrovia's darkest days.

Mr. Krah has taken on an assistant, and is mentoring others at the MCC to make sure he transfers as much of his knowledge and expertise as possible.

Among Mr. Krah's main areas of focus is developing and implementing a plan to manage solid waste management, which is a huge challenge in a city with little public land to create waste collection points, and a population with little ability to pay fees for such a service.

Eventually the MCC plans to coordinate all solid waste management fees into a single account that will help sustain the service. But in the meantime, the World Bank and more recently the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation have provided funds to help the reform get underway, through Mr. Krah's management.

"Some day the donors will go home," Mr. Krah says. "When that day comes we need to have the framework in place for a sustainable revenue stream."

He is buoyed by the fact that MCC's 2010 revenues are up 15 per cent from 2009. But the process has been challenging in a city that has become overcrowded following a war that brought hundreds of thousands into the city in search of safety.

Managing urban growth is a key responsibility for the MCC, as laid out in the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), and Mr. Krah has focused the bulk of his work around achieving that goal. He is also acting on another PRS deliverable by helping the Housing Authority develop a National Housing Strategy to chart a road ahead.

"We will have no choice but to follow a well-crafted plan," Mr. Krah says. "The services are in place for 400,000 people, but we have 1.3 million in Monrovia. So we need to come up with a new way of doing planning and implementing services, and that has to happen as soon as possible."

Mr. Krah's efforts to clean and organize neighbourhoods, while introducing structure to how the city manages community services and street vendors, are helped by the efforts of other SES members working in central government who are trying to provide Liberians incentive to move back to rural areas, so long as the necessary services – good schools, medical clinics, roads and economic opportunities-- are in place.

"Having the SES behind me has been hugely beneficial," he says. "On the one hand it raises respect, but on the other it also raises expectations, and that is a good thing."

## Supervisors and Co-workers share their experience with SES

With a large thud, Monrovia Mayor Mary Broh drops a pile of reports, studies, policy papers and other documents on her office desk.

In that pile, there are reports on Monrovia's waste management strategy, international studies on managing urban slum settlements and reports on global urban conferences, among others. Going through them one by one, Ms. Broh points out the common thread that ties them all together: the city's management specialist, and SES professional, Frank Krah.

"He has written, compiled or supplied every one of these documents," Ms. Broh says. "I call him my encyclopaedia. He knows everything."

Years of conflict wiped out institutional memory across much of the Monrovia City Corporation bureaucracy, and much of Liberia as well.

Experienced veterans like Mr. Krah, who first worked for the city in 1979, are working across all levels of government to help fill that knowledge gap and be key drivers of change as the country rebuilds. Those contributions are being noticed by those who work with SES specialists.

"Frank has helped me professionalize how the city functions," says Ms. Broh. "He has also been working very hard to transfer his knowledge to other managers here to raise their capacity."

Other supervisors of SES specialists give similar feedback, such as Jackson Wonde, the deputy minister for planning and manpower development at the Ministry of Labour, who supervises the work of SES specialist Marlene Bush-Gbolumah.

"Having the SES assign Marlene to our department has been a real blessing," Mr. Wonde says. "Having her here has allowed us to develop a national job creation strategy that easily links policy with an on-the-ground effect."

He added that his ministry has benefited from having international staff assigned to its offices, but that those placements are often shorter-term which challenges efforts to develop long-term strategies.

"With Marlene we can have some real continuity, and it is coming from someone who knows the country and the issues, but also has a great deal of outside experience that she can bring to our ministry," Mr. Wonde says.

It is not just supervisors who are grateful to have SES working under them. Those who are themselves working under SES specialists are likewise grateful to have experienced professionals guiding their departments and projects.

Retta Vincent, an SES specialist working at the Civil Service Agency, led capacity-training efforts with the agency's analysts who monitor personnel issues at government ministries and agencies.

"They had no self-confidence, but now they have it and are key to the process of re-documenting [government employees]," she says. "They appreciate the opportunity to grow and learn and be engaged in the work around them."

Augustine S. Bandakor, one of the agency analysts, says being informed and engaged in the issues surrounding his work has made him more productive.

"There is so much reform going on, but [Ms. Vincent] has kept us a part of the process every step of the way," he says. "She has given us more responsibility and made us feel a part of all the change that is happening."

Ann Lankah, a staff analyst assigned to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, says more is expected of her and her colleagues under the reforms, but that they are benefiting from the experience.

"We are sent into the field to conduct surveys of government offices and involved in assessing payrolls, which is the first time we have ever done anything like this," Ms. Lankah says. "This kind of work happens in the background but it is crucial if we are to have a reformed civil service."



## Where do we go from Here?

There is no doubt that the SES is making a positive impact in Liberia's reform efforts. Through the work of these highly skilled personnel, many functional capacities are being restored and new management practices introduced through hands-on training, mentoring and coaching. Significant gains are also becoming evident in terms of the practical application of knowledge, the introduction of internal controls and problem-solving approaches.

Going forward, the government intends to keep the SES in place over the medium to long-term. This will enable the government to accede to the CISRIP and the vision 2012 to 2017 frameworks, complete on-going mandate review and re-profiling exercises, and comprehensively reform the civil service to ensure that the gains cannot be easily reversed.

But even with significant progress on pay reform, it is highly unlikely that a full integration within the public wage bill can be achieved within the next two budget cycles at current levels of remuneration. Civil service wages, at the target grades, will not rise fast enough to reach levels comparable to the SES. Moreover, an 18 percent shortfall on revenue targets is already projected for the current fiscal year—meaning that salary increases will most likely not be as robust as anticipated.

“The most significant challenge we face is that we thought in a three-year period government would be catching up to the SES pay levels,” says Natty B. Davis, Liberia's Minister of State Without Portfolio. “We see now that will not be the case, and we need more time.”

Current projections show an additional US\$4.75 million will be required to sustain the workforce at the current levels to the end of the government July 2011 to June 2012 fiscal year. If the funding gap is not addressed, however, options going forward are limited. But to deepen, sustain and make permanent the gains under this first phase of the SES, the program needs to continue. The program has achieved considerable success in the competitive procurement of skills, in the management of performance contracts and in modelling a results-driven civil service.

The program is crucial not only for the impact it is having on civil service and overall governance reforms in Liberia, but also more broadly it has provided very valuable lessons on how best to address institutional collapse in post-conflict environments.

Among the challenges, capacity and expertise to fill roles remains a challenge. On the one hand, the diaspora provides a pool of talent, but retention and the fact that a large number of diaspora applicants are often at the end or beginning of their careers poses challenges for recruiting candidates who are likely to drive the program's ambition to introduce sustainable, long-term expertise.

So far, this issue has been addressed by maintaining a diverse staff list, allowing those at the beginning, middle and end of their careers, with international and national experience, to collaborate in their efforts to built out sustainable reforms.



# Full List of SES Professionals

No.	Name	Position	Ministry/Agency
1	Vaanii Baker	Senior Policy Coordinator	National Investment Commission
2	Dorsla D. Farcathy	Research & Project Officer	Bureau of Budget/Ministry of Finance
3	J. Levi Demmah	Economist	Bureau of Budget/Ministry of Finance
4	Shadi-Anthony-Bernard Abdul-Baki	Information & Record Specialist	Civil Service Agency
5	Alexander E. Bassey	Database Specialist	Civil Service Agency
6	Retta Vincent	Wages & Salary Administrator	Civil Service Agency
7	Oblayon Nyemah	Head, Civil Service Directorate	Civil Service Agency
8	Patrice Weah	Management Services Specialist	Civil Service Agency
9	George T. Wilson	Management Services Specialist	Civil Service Agency
10	David P. Kialain	Program Manager for Public Sector Reform	Governance Commission
11	George Tee Forpoh	Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist	Governance Commission
12	Herron Gbidi	Program Analyst Public Sector Reform	Governance Commission
13	Simeon D. Thompson	Management Information System Analyst	Governance Commission
14	Ruth Jappah-Samukai	Legal & National Integrity Prog. Mgr.	Governance Commission
15	Ara Voker Chea	Principal Director of Administration	Ministry of Agriculture
16	Moses Moroe Zinnah	Principal Director of Extension & Research	Ministry of Agriculture
17	D. Abugarshall Kai	Agronomist/Environment Scientist	Ministry of Agriculture
18	Norwood Langley	Senior Economist	Ministry of Agriculture
19	Cheryl A. Williams	Program Assistant - Food Security & Nutrition Secretariat	Ministry of Agriculture
20	Harry G. Wonyene	Monitoring & Evaluation Director	Ministry of Agriculture
21	Ounzuba Kemeh-Gama	National Data Specialist	LISGIS
22	Nicholas K. Dikenah	County Statistics Officer	LISGIS
23	Alfred Benedict Stevens	County Statistics Officer	LISGIS
24	T-Con E.B. Shaw	County Statistics Officer	LISGIS
25	Raymond B. Ziana	County Statistics Officer	LISGIS
26	Julie Y. Brown	Human Resources Director	Ministry of Health & Social Welfare
27	Lydia-Mai Sherman	Senior Social Welfare Coordinator	Ministry of Health & Social Welfare
28	Ka Rufus Morris	Procurement Coordinator	Ministry of Health & Social Welfare
29	Ruel Francis Dempster	Senior/Economic Analyst	Ministry of State for Finance, Economic and Legal Affairs
30	Naomie Gray	Asst. Legal Counsel	Ministry of State for Finance, Economic and Legal Affairs
31	Aissa Bright	Tourism & Marketing Specialist	Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism
32	Amos Sendolo	Communication Policy Analyst	Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism
33	Amos Harris	Senior Revenue Auditor	General Auditing Commission
34	Emmanuel B. Nyweswa	Permanent.Claims Advisor	General Auditing Commission
35	J.Helyn Togba	Youth Development Specialist	Ministry of Youth & Sports
36	James K. Kingsley	Guidance Counselor	Ministry of Youth & Sports
37	Ali Sylla	Psycho Social Counsellor/Trainer	Ministry of Youth & Sports
37	J. Bryant McGill	Program Officer	Ministry of Youth & Sports
39	Frank A. Krah	Management Specialist	Monrovia City Cooperation
40	Anthony D. Kromah	Criminal Justice Specialist	Monrovia City Cooperation
41	Sylvester S. Kemokai	Senior Research Officer	Ministry of Transport
42	Morris Kanneh	National Land Reform Coordinator	Ministry of Lands, Mines & Energy
43	James K. Mulbah	Planning & Manpower Development Officer	Ministry of Lands, Mines & Energy
44	Stanely Momo Kamara	Development Economist	Ministry of Planning & Economic Affairs
45	Henrique B. Wilson	Director/Coordinator, Monitoring & Evaluation	Ministry of Planning & Economic Affairs
46	Musu P. Twalla	Econ. Analysis & Poverty Lab Coordinator	Ministry of Planning & Economic Affairs
47	<sup>1</sup>	Reform Coordinator	Ministry of Planning & Economic Affairs
48	Felicia V. Coleman	Legal Counsel	Ministry of Justice

<sup>1</sup> Position been filled at the time of SES Success Stories Report

No.	Name	Position	Ministry/Agency
49	Yamie-Quiqui Gbeisay	Lawyer	Ministry of Justice
50	Edmund Anokwuru	Legal Research Officer	Ministry of Justice
51	Tanneh G. Brunson	Economist	Ministry of Finance
52	Jonathan Geegbae	Director/Senior Economist	Ministry of Finance
53	Dawo Z. Morris	Principal Director of Large Tax Payer Division	Ministry of Finance
54	Dixon W. Seboe	Principal Director/Small Tax Unit	Ministry of Finance
55	Andrew G. Tehmeh	Senior Policy Coordinator	Ministry of Gender & Development
56	Sieane L.B. Abdul Baki	Program Officer	Ministry of Gender & Development
57	James Whawhen	Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	Ministry of Gender & Development
58	Emmett A. Taylor	Senior Bridge Engineer	Ministry of Public Works
59	J.Jefferson Chesson	Procurement Specialist	Ministry of Public Works
60	Lester Z. Tenny	Strategic Management Specialist	Ministry of Public Works
61	Alvina E. Norman	Contract Management Specialist	Ministry of Public Works
62	Elijah Karnley	Urban & Community Planning Specialist	Ministry of Public Works
63	Edsel Smith	Architectural Engineer	Ministry of Public Works
64	B.Benjamin Jlah, Sr.	Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist	Ministry of Public Works
65	Manfred Verdier	Road Construction Equipment Maintenance Specialist	Ministry of Public Works
66	Christian G. Herbert	Transport Economist	Ministry of Public Works
67	Samuel Monger	Senior Industrial Policy Advisor	Ministry of Commerce & Industry
68	Samuel K. Ngaima, Sr.	Senior Commercial Policy Advisor	Ministry of Commerce & Industry
69	W.Coleman Foster, II	Legal Counsel	Ministry of Commerce & Industry
70	Gulu Gwesa	Microbiologist	Ministry of Commerce & Industry
71	Augustus Bailey	Senior Human Resources Advisor	Ministry of Internal Affairs
72	Laurentine H. Bass	Administrative Specialist	Ministry of Internal Affairs
73	Stephen F. Guzeh	County Development Officer	Montserrado, County Development Officer
74	James A. Jaber	County Development Officer	Margibi, County Development Officer
75	James F. Davis	County Development Officer	Sinoe, County Development Officer
76	Patrick O. Sawyer	County Development Officer	Grand Bassa, County Development Officer
77	William S. Jeffy	County Development Officer	River Gee, County Development Officer
78	Edmond R. Gray	County Development Officer	Grand Cape Mount, County Development Officer
79	Stanley Sheriff	County Development Officer	Lofa, County Development Officer
80	Mulbah Harris	County Development Officer	Nimba, County Development Officer
81	Sidiki Quisia	County Development Officer	Gbarpolu, County Development Officer
82	D. Emmanuel Williams	County Development Officer	Rivercess, County Development Officer
83	Numene Reeves	County Development Officer	Maryland, County Development Officer
84	Lee S. Mason	County Development Officer	Bomi, County Development Officer
85	Bryant J. Slah	County Development Officer	Grand Gedeh, County Development Officer
86	Joseph N. Kpanie, II	County Development Officer	Grand Kru, County Development Officer
87	Tinatua Calvin Kollie	County Development Officer	Bong, County Development Officer
88	Ophelia Mathies	Executive Director	James A.A. Pierre Judicial Institute
89	Henry Fahnbulleh <sup>1</sup>	Public Policy Advisor	Office of the Vice President
90	E. Othello Gongar <sup>2</sup>	Senior Policy Advisor	Ministry of Education
91	Forkpah Harris Kemah	Director of Library	Center for National Documents and Records Agency (CNDRA)
92	Edward Freeman	Legal Counselor	Ministry of Labour
93	Marlene Bush Gbolumah	Employment Specialist	Ministry of Labour
94	Sam D. Monbo, Jr.	Database Specialist	Ministry of Labour
95	Kumeh Salim Assaf	Climate Mitigation & Adaptation Specialist	Environmental Protection Agency
96	Paul C. Jaiblai	Senior Waste Management Specialist	Environmental Protection Agency
97	Yanquoi S. Borsay	Legislative Liaison Officer	Ministry of State
98	J. Marwolo Sonnie	Project Manager	Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications/MPT
99	Moses P. Roberts, Sr.	Planning Economist	Forestry Development Authority
100	Stanley Kamara <sup>3</sup>	Development Economist	Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs

1. Left SES in June 2010; 2. Appointed Minister of Education May 2010; 3. Left SES. Now National Economist UNDP



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