**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Government of Liberia through the Civil Service Agency commissioned two independent evaluation consultants to conduct a final evaluation of the Senior Executive Service and Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals Programmes in Liberia. This evaluation was undertaken by the aforementioned evaluation team from mid-December 2013 to March 2014.

**Purpose**

The main objectives of this evaluation were to a) identify and take stock of the challenges and opportunities (SWOT analysis) of the current programme implementation and performance in Liberia; b) assess and document significant impact, success stories, lessons learned, insightful findings and recommendations from key stakeholders based on its inception and the entire implementation process; and c) develop recommendations on whether or not there is need for continuation and how differently should a new programme be designed in the future, and should there be need for continuation. Project impact and contributions will also be assessed.

**Methodology and approach**

The SES and TOKTEN Programmes were assessed in accordance with six evaluation criteria: design and relevance, partnership strategy, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The evaluation team paid keen attention on evaluating the desired outcomes, strengths and weaknesses of the existing programmes. Success stories, lessons learned, and insightful findings and recommendations were also verified and documented. The evaluation also emphasized a participatory approach involving all stakeholders and key informants, which was evidenced-based and analytical. A qualitative method of data collection, utilizing mixed methods, was used. The mixed methods included desk reviews, the administration of semi-structured questionnaires, and open-ended interviews. The field assessment including County Development Officers, County Government Authorities, UNMIL Civil Affairs Officers was carried out in the following six counties: Bomi, Bong, Gbarpolu, Grand Cape Mount, Margibi and Nimba counties. The Civil Service Agency, United Nations Development Programme and beneficiary institutions have been consulted on their perspectives of the two programmes.

**Key Findings**

The evaluation found that the SES and TOKTEN programmes were and still remain highly relevant to Liberia’s post-conflict rebuilding priorities. The programmes are aligned strategically with and in support of achieving the national development priorities of the country. The current capacity support is focused specifically on the much needed capacity building of the Government of Liberia (GOL). There is therefore a need to continue the programmes with special emphasis on key strategic areas of targeted line Ministries, Agencies and Commissions (MACs).

The SES programme was effective in terms of the recruitment and deployment of 98 SES professionals in 29 MACs for initial period of 3 years. Qualified Liberian professionals were hired locally and internationally to perform certain contractual functions for the government at the national and country levels. The 98 SES professionals included fifteen (15) County Development Officers (CDOs) who were deployed in all of Liberia’s fifteen (15) counties. Similarly, the TOKTEN Programme recruited and fielded one hundred twenty-nine (129) professionals in variouscapacities within 26 government institutions for a period of 6 to 18 months. Together, this was an impressive reach in the provision of mid-level managerial and technical skills to support and build the capacity in the Civil Service at the national and county levels.

The programmes also achieved results in a more efficient and cost-effective manner by attracting qualified professionals in the Liberian Civil Service. The evaluation compared the expenditures of the SES and TOKTEN Programmes with those of the Economic Governance and Institutional Reforms Project (EGIRP) and Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme (GEMAP). Both EGIRP and GEMAP relied heavily on international consultants as compared to the SES and TOKTEN Programmes employing the services of competent Liberian professionals.

The SES Programme has a formal monitoring and evaluation system for tracking progress towards achieving the desired outcomes, while a major constraint for effective implementation of the TOKTEN Programme was that it did not have an operational monitoring and evaluation system from 2006 to 2013. County authorities were especially disappointed with the level of regular monitoring and reporting. All professionals including County Development Officers also expressed grave frustration regarding inadequate maintenance of vehicles and other logistical support from the government.

The evaluation further revealed that the SES and TOKTEN Programmes are unsustainable due in large part to dependency syndrome on development partners and donor funding to meet the salaries and allowances of the professionals. Now is the time for the GOL to demonstrate strong political will, commitment and ownership to the programmes in the national budget. Thus, the GOL must now implement the exit strategy of the SES Programme consistent with a clear objective of integrating the professionals into civil service and available funding and other support in the future.

**Conclusions**

The evaluation found that the programmes were and still remain highly relevant and the right intervention to Liberia’s post-conflict rebuilding process. General strategic areas did not get addressed because of insufficient attention and funding. The evaluators conclude that the current capacity building support could be strategic for and coherent with any programming in the future.

On the other hand, the evaluation found the programmes to be cash-strapped and unsustainable because they are mostly dependent on development partners and donors’ support. As one key informant explains, “***It was a mistake not to ensure GoL financial commitment to the programmes from the initial stage.***” After eight years of capacity gains, Liberia now faces a potential threat of skilled professionals leaving if the current exit strategy is not implemented properly in a timely manner.

Donors and development partners did well and were generous in supporting the programmes over the years. With the ending of donors’ funding on December 31, 2013, the GOL has made a significant contribution of US$1.0 million through the national budget for salaries of the professionals and SES Secretariat for the period July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014. At present, there are fifty-four (54) SES professionals assigned in 23 MACs that need to be integrated into the wage bill of the various government institutions. Funding requirement of US$1.6 million is required from the national budget to integrate 54 SES professionals into the Civil Service as well as the SES Secretariat for a period of one year from July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015.

**Key recommendations**

Given the desire to ensure the usefulness and relevancy of this report, the evaluators have divided recommendations into key strategic recommendations and detailed operational recommendations. This report highlights the following:

1) ***Strategic programme design***: a. Overall, the SES Programme recruited and deployed 98 professionals to strategic areas where they were most needed. The programme was highly relevant and the right intervention. The GOL should implement the exit strategy for the SES Programme aimed at ensuring planned government financial commitment to any future programming and reducing a complete reliance on donor funding.

b. The GOL should expand the resource base of the SES and TOKTEN Programmes to ensure long-term ownership, support and sustainability. Of paramount importance is the consolidation and integration of all capacity building support from the public and private sectors as well as donor community into a broader programme including both SES and TOKTEN Programmes.

c. The GOL should undertake concrete efforts to link the programme from the national level to county level to district level --- in support of national decentralization policy and implementation plan. It is critically important for all 15 counties to undertake and experience enormous challenges in management their own affairs in the face of decentralization reform including political, administrative, financial, and planning capacity, among others.

d. Properly integrate the SES Programme into the Liberian Civil Service. The GOL should ensure that the SES programme is not seen as a programme outside of the Civil Service. This was the original purpose of the programme and it still remains critically significant for the future of programme. The GOL should provide the necessary budgetary support to integrate the SES professionals into Civil Service under the National Capacity Development Unit within CSA.

2) ***Strategic capacity building***: a. Anchor the programme to address the current capacity gaps and restructure the programme to be able to target the real needs and demand of MACs. To maximize the impact of the programmes in the future, a critical need assessment will be required to match programme support to planned incremental implementation of the Agenda for Transformation The GOL should identify unique skills and develop two to three core areas at each MAC.

b. Create better merit-based remuneration and good incentives to attract, maintain and retain top-notch specialists. Pay professionals based on a merit-based compensation scheme to promote performance and productivity, as opposed to current flat rates for the three tier-positions (*Tier 1, 2 and 3*) across assigned beneficiary institutions. The aim should be to ensure more competition and productivity amongst professionals in the public sector.

c. Design future programming around a more robust monitoring, supervision and reporting mechanism as a guaranteed form of effective performance management and programme sustainability.

d. Develop an effective communication strategy that will inform and educate all relevant stakeholders regarding programme implementation in order to enhance ownership and support by beneficiary institutions at national and county levels.

3) ***Detailed operational recommendations***: a. Adequate financial, logistical and human resources should be made available to strengthen the systematic monitoring, coordination and supervision of the programme implementation and the tracking of progress of assigned institutions and beneficiaries towards achieving desired outcomes.

b. Specialized training should be offered to enhance skills and knowledge of professionals for performance improvement as well as to review the overall achievements and productivity of the programme over the coming years.