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USAID/LIBERIA GOVERNANCE AND ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT SUPPORT PROJECT (USAID-GEMS) RENEWAL AND TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY FOR ENHANCING DELIVERY OF LIPA LIBRARY SERVICES

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AND ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT
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STRATEGY FOR ENHANCING DELIVERY OF LIPA
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DISCLAIMER

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CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION.....	I
LIPA Library.....	I
Vision	I
Mission.....	I
Core Values.....	2
Objectives of the Library.....	2
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis.....	2
Quick wins.....	4
II. THE STRATEGIES.....	5
III. CONCLUSIONS.....	9

I. INTRODUCTION

The information world is undergoing a transition from a library-centered to an information-centered entity; from a paper-based environment to a predominantly digital interface, where search engines, online databases and data mining is the norm; and from a library as an institution to a library as an information provider with ICT skilled staff functioning in an automated environment. The new global library and information environment is defined by an increase in the quantity of information, greater access to a wider range of information sources via the internet, increasing speeds in acquiring and disseminating information, constantly evolving ICTs (hardware and software), the need for continuous learning for library staff and users, and the need for bigger financial investments to avail electronic resources. One is bound to ask whether there is a need for libraries and librarians in the electronic age. Of course the answer is yes. Libraries and librarians are becoming more and more important, but there is a need to change and make them efficient, focused and needs-driven.

LIPA LIBRARY

The LIPA act mandates LIPA to develop a library suitable for the information needs of its research program and for use by public officers, including ministries, agencies and commissions. The library mandate is envisioned to be extended to provide library and information services to the Liberian public. As such it will also act as a national library for Liberia with the key function of preserving the national document heritage and producing the Liberian national bibliography. That is, it will act as a repository of all documents generated within the country including government publications. The clientele will come from the entire Liberian public to include individuals, students, children, youth, researchers, government agencies, private institutions, pensioners, prisons, hospices and hospitals, schools, orphanages, and people with disabilities, among others.

Due to rapid political, economic, socio-cultural and technological changes in our external environment, a review of the LIPA library as a national library service is critical to ensure that its services and products remain relevant to its customers and stakeholders. The library also has an obligation to contribute to the LIPA's strategic objectives and, by extension, to the objectives of the Government of Liberia, which are broadly aimed at holistic development of the nation.

As alluded to earlier, there is a need to develop a library suitable for the needs of the LIPA staff and students, and for use by public officers. This will entail facilitating capacity building and performance improvement processes through automation of the LIPA library and ensuring that library patrons have access to training, research, and information resources, both in print and in electronic formats, which address their needs and expectations.

VISION

To be LIPA's gateway to the world of information and scholarship

MISSION

To provide general and scholarly access to relevant information resources, placing high value on the needs and expectations of users, and enabling academic success and lifelong learning by teaching and promoting information literacy across the LIPA community.

This mission incorporates all available media and document formats, both physically available and remotely accessed via the internet

CORE VALUES

- Service
- Access
- Innovation
- Collaboration
- Inclusiveness
- Professionalism
- Preservation

OBJECTIVES OF THE LIBRARY

- Anticipate and respond to changing user requirements and service needs.
- Select and acquire up-to-date information resources in all formats that are relevant to the information needs of the LIPA library user community.
- Organize the collection using internationally accepted standards to allow for easy retrieval.
- Adopt information dissemination strategies, current awareness services, and selective dissemination of information to ensure optimum utilization of available resources.
- Establish, promote and maintain a wide range of services that will support the academic programs of LIPA and encourage optimum exploitation of library resources.
- Build the information literacy skills of LIPA library user community continuously by conducting proper user education and instruction through a variety of methods in order to provide guidance about the library's collection.
- Adopt technologies that will make information resources accessible to the LIPA community in an efficient and effective manner.
- Create, maintain and preserve locally produced knowledge within LIPA and provide access anywhere and at any time.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS (SWOT) ANALYSIS

SWOT is a powerful tool in strategic management that helps organizations realize their potential and identify areas of weakness that need to be addressed. Strengths are built on to propel the organization while taking cognizance of threats, which have to be mitigated or managed.

Below is a summary SWOT for LIPA library

1. Strengths

- LIPA Support
- Government support
- Potential user population
- Strong cooperation and networking with other institutions
- Opportunities for increased revenue from income-generating projects
- Supportive LIPA management
- One para-professional staff and one library clerk

2. Weaknesses

- Limited funding for collection development
- Inadequate information materials
- Inadequate stack and reading space
- Inadequate professional staff
- Lack of adequate equipment, including computers
- Unfriendly procurement procedures
- Poor maintenance of facilities
- Poor management skills
- Poor customer service
- Poor signage
- Poor organizational structure

3. Opportunities

- ICT infrastructure development
- New Programs
- Donor support
- ICT growth and its applications to information access and library management
- Income-generating opportunities

4. Threats

- Decline of financial sustainability to support the library's growth
- Competition from other special/public libraries
- Internet (globalization and digitalization)
- Negative perception of the library and staff
- Lack of a win-win strategies as an approach to library priorities
- Changing information needs and expectations of library users

QUICK WINS

- Hire professional librarians
- Develop vision, mission and objectives of the library, including a strategy to enhance collections and services
- Implement all projects and actions of the library strategies
- Improve on library space and furnishings
- Work on both power and network infrastructure
- Improve signage
- Supervision of library infrastructure maintenance
- Clearly define the library organizational structure

II. THE STRATEGIES

The strategies were informed and based on the key findings and recommendations from the library services and information needs assessment. The strategies take cognizance of developments at both national and international levels and in conformity with new and evolving policies, while taking advantage of current and emerging opportunities in the information industry.

The strategies will serve as a vehicle for achieving LIPA's objectives, functions and mandate. The successful implementation of these strategies will hinge on motivated leadership, passion, hard work, sacrifice, determination, and the creation of strategic partnership and linkages.

1. Develop vision, mission statements and objectives, including manuals and procedures, to guide in collection development and service provision that relate to the vision and mission of LIPA.

Projects and actions to advance this strategy:

- Create library vision, mission statements and objectives.
- The vision, mission and objectives should be clearly stated and made available to all staff and users on the library notice boards.
- Develop operational manuals and procedures.
- Develop key library policies, including copyright and open access policies.
- Enhance efforts of documenting work processes and knowledge transfers.
- Conduct a workshop for librarians to sensitize them on the new global library and information environment.

2. Create inviting, flexible and engaging spaces to enhance the institutional learning and research environment.

Projects and actions to advance this strategy:

- Strategically allocate space to meet ongoing and anticipated needs.
- Improve of library furnishings (reading tables, chairs).
- Work with LIPA Facilities Management to remove old compact shelving and acquire proper book shelves.
- Improve network infrastructure and internet connectivity inside the library.
- Improve on electrical outlet access for use by users with laptops.
- Seek out space in other buildings where appropriate to create space a computer lab where users can access e-resources.

3. Increase access to information through development, equipping and maintenance of the current library space into a functional library.

Projects and actions to advance this strategy:

- Install building signage to improve the ability of patrons to orient themselves within the library and collection areas.
- Develop a comprehensive Library Guide, instructional handouts and support webpages.
- Explore ways to effectively serve an increasing body of remote users, expanding web-based services.
- Offer library instruction on information literacy for students and staff.
- Work with departments to embed information literacy skills in the curriculum, exploiting e-learning technologies.
- Create interesting library displays for walk-in users.

4. Enhance access, services and communication with users at point of need and through users' preferred channels.

Projects and actions to advance this strategy:

- Automate the library.
- Implement a single user interface to all library resources, including the library catalog as well as other electronic resources and services.
- Increase the number of computers and electrical outlets for the library.
- Partner with trainers and academic departments to incorporate an appropriate component about the use of library resources across the curriculum.
- Effectively communicate information about library services and collections through the library website, the library newsletter, electronic notes, announcements and other appropriate communication channels.

5. Build and align collections with current LIPA priorities through collaboration with trainers and academic departments.

Projects and actions to advance this strategy:

- Prepare and submit a budget that will cover both print and electronic resources in consultation with the trainers and academic departments of LIPA.
- Expand efforts to systematically withdraw dated and unnecessary titles/volumes from the library collection to keep the quality of the collections high and relevant to our user needs, and to address overcrowding in the stacks.
- Publish an annual summary of library statistics and accomplishments to highlight the scope of library services and resources.
- Develop and submit proposals for book donations.
- Lobby for support, including donations from friends of the institution locally and overseas.

6. Integrate ICT into service delivery, enhancing the availability of information resources through the utilization of modern technologies and strategic partnerships.

Projects and actions to advance this strategy:

- Create a library webpage to introduce new web services that meet user needs.
- Participate in the project to redesign LIPA’s website to insure optimal web presence and functionality for the library.
- Provide links to information resources available on the internet.
- Integrate e-resources within the curriculum and facilitate off-campus access to cater for varied training opportunities.
- Provide virtual reference services designed to provide instantaneous responses to questions over the Internet (ask a librarian).
- Develop, implement and maintain online user education tutorials.

7. Develop electronic collections that include e-journals, e-books and other forms of electronic full texts to meet the needs of the LIPA library user community in a federated library environment.

Projects and actions to advance this strategy:

- Broaden and strengthen staff ICT skills.
- Create a website for the library that contains the library catalog and make it available on the internet.
- Train staff on how to implement electronic services.
- Undertake retrospective catalog conversion.

8. Through a joint e-resource coordination scheme (Liberia Library and Information Services Consortium (LLISC)), spearhead a partnership with public and private universities in a cooperative effort to collectively subscribe to electronic resources in order to cope with the increasing cost of information subscriptions.

Projects and actions to advance this strategy:

- Consult with other librarians with an intention of forming a Liberia Library and Information Services Consortium to enhance and to simplify access to library print and electronic books and journals.
- Seek collaborative efforts with other institutions and research libraries locally and overseas.

9. Develop, enhance access to and promote LIPA library special collections (projects, reports, manuals, research papers, exams, etc.) in both physical and digital forms to support teaching, learning and research.

Projects and actions to advance this strategy:

- Establish a digital Institutional Repository (IR) using Dspace.

- Develop procedures and skills for managing the intellectual property rights of content owned by the LIPA library in order to facilitate its use.
- Conduct training on collection digitization.
- Develop policies to facilitate the management of knowledge generated within the LIPA through the Institutional Repository and create a mechanism to curb plagiarism.

III. CONCLUSIONS

Rapid advances in technology offer exciting opportunities and previously unimaginable ways of working. Lack of space may not necessarily be an issue with today's users, who have an expectation of accessing 'anything, anytime, anywhere' using mobile technologies. It is now necessary to implement mobile solutions in order to form an essential part of systems that meet their expectations. It is with this in mind that development of an electronic library is key to improving service delivery and will entail a web-based catalog, online reference, remote access to electronic resources, electronic services and digitized collections via a library portal. Implementing these strategies will ensure that the LIPA library becomes a dynamic and inviting learning environment where the interaction of people, ideas and information empowers discovery and inspires the life-long pursuit of knowledge.

However, even as electronic resources and multi-point delivery of library services expand, high quality physical facilities and collections are critical for research and scholarship. A building expansion and renovation will provide the technology-rich infrastructure and crucial space needed to support faculty and students, remote users, the development of digital information resources, and community-based learning environments.

USAID/Liberia Governance and Economic Management Support (USAID-GEMS)

Coconut Plantation, UN Drive

Adjacent to Atlantis Guest House

Mamba Point,

Monrovia, Liberia

Tel: 231 (0) 88-688-3502

www.gemsliberia.com

IBI International

2101 Wilson Blvd

Suite 1110

Arlington VA 22201- USA

Tel: 1-703-525-2277

www.ibi-usa.com