

Executive Summary

Although the history of the Sierra Leone Postal Service goes as far back as 1841 in the time of Jerome as Packets Agent, the first fully-fledged General Post Office was not established until 1853 at Gloucester Street in Freetown; and the position of a full time Postmaster was created in 1857 with Isaac Fitzjohn from Gloucester Village in Freetown appointed as the first Postmaster General in 1858.

Since independence, the Sierra Leone Postal Service has served the people of Sierra Leone, home and abroad for many decades. Over the years, the institution has undergone a series of reforms and restructuring under different administrations. In February of 1990, the Sierra Leone Postal Services was incorporated as a limited company by guarantee with the government of Sierra Leone as the majority (only) shareholder and renamed SALPOST Ltd.

In recent times, the Postal World, including SALPOST is faced with challenges from two major paradigm shifts. One is the advent of technology, especially the internet and its pervasiveness, and the other is the availability of consumer choice. As an institution, we believe it is important to constantly remind ourselves of the role we play in today's society, as we face these dramatic paradigm shifts.

- Firstly, internet pervasiveness has transformed the ways in which citizens communicate, interact, and do business around the world. Traditional ways and means of communication, including mailing physical letters which have significantly reduced in the digital age, for example.
- Secondly, customers in all industries are becoming more demanding in this age of digital and mobile technology; people want things right here and right now, and they want choice and control. There is increased competition to deliver fast with other value-added services (VAS).
- Thirdly, e-commerce and light logistics are exploding, growing at double-digit rates in most regions. We have to seize this opportunity to increase revenue for the Post Office by leveraging our Universal Postal Union (UPU) global network and national footprint and delivery network in all districts across Sierra Leone.

In this context and as a way forward, SALPOST is reinventing itself by embracing digitalization, redefining our value proposition, and developing new products and services as part of our Five-Year Strategic & Diversification Plan. Some of the new products and services include:

1. Agent Network of Financial Services (financial inclusion) through Partnerships

- Agency banking for last mile delivery of basic financial services to the unbanked or underbanked population.
- Forex Bureau Agent Network
- Remittance, including state aid disbursements
- Agent Network for TELCOs/MNOs for Mobile Top-Ups, last mile cash outs etc.

2. Develop Online/e-Shop Services Portal for E-Commerce & Logistics

Electronic Commerce or e-commerce offers growth potential for the postal industry. Most Postal Administrations are now considering the development of their own e-commerce capabilities and services for domestic, regional and cross-border markets.

SALPOST, in collaboration with Universal Postal Union (UPU) under a common project called, "Operation Readiness for E-Commerce" will set up a fully integrated e-commerce business that focuses on logistics while providing a multi-vendor marketplace for local SMEs with a view to facilitate trade. SMEs that deal with Sierra Leonean products on the e-shop portal, whilst also focusing on the downstream of e-commerce, as the main delivery agent for inbound international e-commerce items and logistics in the country.

3. Repositioning the Post Offices as a One-Stop-Shop for access to, and delivering of public services to the citizens of Sierra Leone, for example:

- Passport Renewal application & delivery
- Drivers' License application & delivery
- Pension Payments
- Utility Rates & Bill Payments
- Property Rate payments
- NRA Tax payments, etc.

The Postal Sector is an enabler of inclusive development (in line with UN SDG), and an essential component of our national economy. In the most remote and most populated areas of our nation alike, the Post Office can be a key agent for access to, and delivery of public services to our citizens using its footprints in all four corners of the country.

Our ultimate goal therefore, is to deliver these new products and services on an Automated and Digital Platform for efficiency, transparency and cost savings, over time.

Paradoxically, as these examples show, transformation of the Post Office will evidently be driven by the same technology that has threatened its very survival over the years.

In conclusion, SALPOST is very much on the right trajectory to serve and deliver for the people of Sierra Leone with the right investment, adopting new technologies and embracing both digital and cultural transformation plans.

We are here to serve again!

Brima Katta

Managing Director, Sierra Leone Postal Services (SALPOST) Ltd.

