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Booker Washington Institute
2007-2008 Progress Report
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I. INTRODUCTION

BWI has existed for more than 79 years and made enormous contributions to human resource development in Liberia. Like other institutions, BWI was devastated by the civil crisis in Liberia. Hence the immense need for resources to rehabilitate the institution's infrastructures and human resource base can not be overstated. However, we are proud of our achievements in restoring glory to the institution and the contributions made to the peace process in Liberia over the last several years. Amidst limited financial and material resources, BWI has remained calm and operating since it was reopened in 1997 unlike some of the major institutions of higher learning in Liberia.

The purpose of this report is to brief Members of the Board of Governors and BWI Alumni on progress made on the restoration of BWI and the challenges thereto.

II. ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

n Enrolments

Enrolment has increased steadily from 22 in 1997 to 1,375 students in 2007/2008. Enrolment is 1,287 in the 2008/2009 academic year. About 35% of the students live in dormitories while the rest commute to school from various communities. Approximately 32% of the enrolment is female students.

n Graduations/Outputs

BWI has graduated over 1,100 youths in agriculture, auto mechanic, business education, building trades, electricity, electronics and home economics. Additional 250 plus will graduate in August this year.

III. PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES

n Internship Program

BWI had a very successful internship program in 2007/2008. We were able to place 265 interns in various workplaces across the country for six months and additional 318 will be placed this year on job training. After a colorful return of seniors to campus, BWI had an industrial day to provide opportunity for administration to obtain feedbacks from employers regarding the workplace performance of interns. We are extremely proud of the quality of training as reflected in the performance appraisals by various employers. However, our computer program needs some attention and we are making efforts to increase the computer training time from 90 minutes to three hours weekly. The industrial day was also marked by the honoring of 87 scholars.

n Computer Literacy Program

We now have two computer labs fully equipped, furnished and operating. We have just procured from Computer Aid International additional 30 computers to establish a third lab in order to increase training hours. To further improve the computer literacy program, we have initiated hardware/computer repair and networking as an integral part of the Electronic Department which will eventually be the Department of Communication and Information Technology at college level. This initiative was a direct result of feedbacks from employers and interns. The 2007 pledge by the BWINAANA to adopt the Electronic Department remains an excellent opportunity to expand this component of the program.

n Internet services

We established a limited internet service to students and staff in 2006. There plans to increase the bandwidth in 2008 so that one of the computer labs provide internet services to students and staff. The system has benefited students, faculty, staff and community people but in a limited way with glaring demand. The needs are additional 30 computers, upgrading the bandwidth and monthly premiums up to \$750. This needs to be done most certainly because of the importance attached.

n Website development

Browse our website which is in a very infantile stage. We need photos and information about our partners for inclusion in the development process. The Website address is bwitech.org. You can buy a space to assist with the premium and procurement of computers if you like.

n Automation of accounting system

The accounting system has been computerized for more transparent management of meager resources and easy access to financial reports and detail transactions by Administration and auditors.

n Automation of Student Records

We have automated the record systems in the Admission Office. BWI can now conveniently issue transcripts and other student records from computer prints.

n Leadership Training

For the first time, BWI hosted a leadership development workshop. The objective of the workshop was to improve the leadership capabilities of administrators, department and section heads as well as instructors and support staff. We are very grateful to Alumnus Joe Isaac for this personal initiative and hope that the process continues.

IV. BWI TECHNICAL COLLEGE INITIATIVES

A National Conference of Stakeholders was held in July 2007. The Conference resolved to giving a mandate to the Government of Liberia to elevate BWI to a technical college. A thirteen member committee was set to work with the BWI Administration in facilitating the process. Although the committee has not been very functional, Administration has initiated implementation of the mandate to transform BWI into a technical college. Specifically, the followings have been achieved:

n Substantial works have been done on the foundation of the new 20 classrooms academic building. Ground breaking

ceremonies are now scheduled for July 26 when the President will be in Kakata for the 2008 Independence Day

celebration

n Draft legislation has been submitted to the Ministry of Education for forwarding to National Legislature through the Office

of the President of Liberia.

n An ad has been published to solicit a consultant/facilitator to work with Administration and Board of Governors to develop

an integrated curriculum for the college.

n BWI has begun testing the water for the inclusion of computer hardware and networking components into the curriculum to

lay foundation for the Department of Communications and Information Technology.

n In order to address some of the staffing needs, BWI has begun consolidating a data bank of potential, interested technical

people to serve instructors for the college. They include graduates (overseas and local) and other professors of other

colleges and universities, and technician,

V. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Locally, we are partially supporting nearly a dozen young staff who have made so much sacrifices and are determined to remain with the institution when elevated. They are enrolled in the University of Liberia, AME University and the Cutting Junior College. The Business Manager is in the Cuttington University Graduate Program.

We hired two expatriates to build the capacity of electronic Department staff in information technology and to begin the computer hardware and networking training with the students. Though a good beginning, this is rather a temporary measure which needs to be strengthened along the road to technical college. Specifically, at least two staff members need to be trained in information technology and this is a part of the staff development plan.

Mr. Jacob Swee, Head of Agriculture Department is presently in a graduate program at Strayer University with scholarship from the Government of Liberia and assistance from the BWINAANA. The needs are for scholarships

and grants to train additional technical staff members and have been among the appeals to the Government of Liberia.

VI. RECONSTITUTION OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

BWI has been blessed by reconstitution of the Board of Governors of BWI following years of appeal to previous Governments. The seventeen members are the President of Liberia, Chairperson Ex-Officio, Minister of Education, Member Ex-Officio, Principal as Secretary & Chief Executive Officer, the Ministers of Agriculture, Public Works, Labor, Foreign Affairs and Finance, Phelps Stoke Funds, BWINAANA, BWIAA National Chapter, Lutheran Church, Episcopal Church, United Methodist Church, Lebanese Cultural Union, Salala Rubber Corporation, Firestone Plantation Company, and the Harry Morris Foundation.

VII. SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES

In the near future, BWI intends to generate internal resources so as to reduce its dependency on GOL subsidies. Strategies include expansion of the agriculture farm and construction of a mini hydro plant.

n Agriculture Expansion;

In 2004/2005, the European Union (EU) supported rehabilitation of 60 acres planted in 2002/2003. We managed to plant additional 48 acres of rubber in 2007/2008 making a total of 108 acres compared to 50 acres in prewar times. This planting was out of internal resource allocation. Plans are to plant 98 more acres of rubber and at least 100 acres of oil palm contingent upon available of resources. We have expanded the livestock multiplication project by adding nine heads of breeder cattle in addition to pig and poultry.

n Mini Hydro

Approximately 15 - 20% of BWI current running cost is for the generation of electrical power. It costs up to US\$125,000 annually to operate generators for only 11 – 15 hours daily and therefore have to ration training hours. Hence BWI proposed the construction of a 180 – 200 KVA mini hydro plant on Du River to reduce running cost. The cost was approximated \$1000 per Kilowatt or US\$180,000 - \$200,000. Since completion of the feasibility study in 2005/2006, nothing has been done about the proposed mini hydro plant due to lack of funding. We hope to secure funding for this worthy venture in the near future. We are in contact with UNIDO via Mr. David Parker of the Equatorial Biofuels to assist with this project while fetching other sources of funding.

VIII. STATUS OF UNMIL ACCOMMODATION ON BWI CAMPUS

UNMIL finally turned over our dormitories in the boys' quarters. Unfortunately, they took away their generators and reduced fuel supply drastically from 3200 liters to 600 weekly.

We are managing to operate a 150 KVA generator newly purchased from our limited resources until the next fiscal period. Fuel supply is indeed a challenge until the next budget period.

IX. PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

We have been and will continue to forge ahead with building partnership with institutions, agencies and organizations so as to be able to exchanging resources and technology. Presently, the Government of Liberia is the single largest partner in terms of financial support. We are in regular contact with the Board of Governors, Phelps Stokes Funds and those alumni of BWI that

are in reach, i.e., officers and members of the BWINAANA and National Chapter in particular providing them with updates about problems and challenges at BWI. BWI is also in contact with Tuskegee University and Prairie View A&M Universities trying to strengthen existing relationships.

While heading a delegation of six in Boston, Massachusetts on a US Government sponsored Citizen Exchange Program on workforce development and job creation, we initiated contact with Worcester State College with the hope of developing a partnership that will bring some accreditation to BWI in the near future. Attached is a list of other potential partners' contacts that need follow-ups.

BWI has collaborated with the Public Diplomacy Section of the US Embassy to establish an American Corner Library on campus. The library is now functioning providing services to BWI and the Kakata community at large. It is more of a cultural exchange mechanism for the American Embassy. The American Corner Library at the US Embassy has been providing monthly training for two of our librarians on how to use e-library.

X. MAJOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND APPROXIMATE COSTS

n New 20 classrooms academic building – Cost of construction, furnishing, equipping science laboratories, books for the mini

library, office equipment, etc. (US\$748,000.00).

n Rehabilitation of existing infrastructure & Landscape – Renovation and modernization of existing structures, furnishing,

landscaping the campus including pavements, water & sewage systems, reviving existing power transmission system (\$1

,280,000.00).

n Expansion of the agriculture farm – Plant 75 acres of oil palm, additional 92 acres of rubber, improve livestock facilities,

increase stock animals (\$120,000.00).

n Construction of the mini hydro plant – Construct materials, high tech labor force, low speed 180 KVA generator, turbines,

automated powers house, synchronization, etc. (\$225,000.00).

n Staff improvement/development – scholarships for training and retraining key staff members locally and overseas (\$250,000 - \$350,000).

n Refurbish training shops – Industrial equipment such as lathes, milling machines, shapers, cutters, drill presses, etc. for

Mechanical Department comprising Auto and Machine Shops, Building Trades, auto student driver education vehicles, auto

lifts, auto diagnostics computers (\$450,000.00)

XI. MAJOR CHALLENGES

1. The greatest challenge is accessing funding to implement programs designed for rehabilitating and developing the institution. BWI is still grossly under funded as the Government of Liberia which is experiencing enormous pressure to rebuild postwar Liberia remains the primary source of funding. Prewar funding was US\$2.6M compared to the current US\$0.851M 2007/2008 GOL subsidy.

2. Efforts to contact donors have experienced a sense of fatigue and donors' own development priorities.

XII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Board sets a 5-Member Resource Mobilization Committee to vigorously pursue donors and other friends of Liberia to the programs outlined above.

2. Advocate increased GOL funding for BWI so as improve wages and living conditions for staff members and to reduce operational constraints such as petroleum products, instruction supplies, food for students, etc.,