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In order to make the “Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) Response and Economic Impact Monitoring and Analysis” initiative sustainable and far-reaching, it is important that a government agency be capacitated to carry on similar work beyond the life of the EVD crisis. The Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) as per its mandate stands out as the foremost research institution, tasked with collecting and disseminating official statistical and spatial information/data for Liberia. LISGIS collaboration and coordination partnership with local and international institutions involved in the fight against EVD will allow skills and knowledge to be transferred and pave way for similar monitoring and tracking activities in the future.

Data (Statistical and Spatial) Collection, Research and Analysis Efforts Relating to the EVD Epidemic in Liberia

While responses to the EVD outbreak in Liberia have largely been in the form of much needed emergency response, there are an increasing number of entities who are initiating responses in the form of research. Of course, while much of this involves medical research, a number of ministries, NGOs, and international organizations are focusing on statistical and spatial data collection and research activities, which aim at understanding the impact that the EVD is having on economic indicators and segments of society, some of which are described below:

- a. Ministry of Finance’s Macro Fiscal unit, alongside the International Monetary Fund (IMF), is revising the country’s growth forecasts to take into account the effects that Ebola is having on Liberia’s economy;
- b. International Growth Centre (IGC) provides high quality economic research to support and advise policymaking on Liberia’s key growth challenge. IGC and Building Markets are conducting an impact analysis to assess the impact EVD is having on Liberian Businesses. IGC is providing technical support in questionnaire

and sample design, as well as leading on the research, while Building Markets is using their extensive business database and knowledge to lead on the data collection;

- c. The World Bank is leading a study (a Telephone Survey being led by Gallup, a USA based institution) whose aim is to assess the impact of EVD on Liberian households. The Bank is using baseline data collected by LISGIS from households that have been interviewed in the six months of data collection completed for the Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2014/15. The impact analysis will be based on revisiting these households, and implementing a questionnaire designed to assess how the household has been affected in terms of income (through employment, business, and agriculture), remittances and food security;
- d. In addition, there seems to be a number of uncoordinated efforts attempting to collect geo-information data on the spread of EVD in varying levels of detail and geographical focuses. iLab Liberia, a non-profit organization who facilitates information sharing through technology, is producing maps of EVD cases in Montserrado County based on Ebola call center and dispatch information. Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW) is producing less detailed maps at the county level on a daily basis. More Than Me, a non-governmental organization responsible for setting up an Academy providing education for girls in West Point, Monrovia, has initiated GIS mapping of the spread of EVD in West Point with the assistance of a US based GIS consultant; and
- e. The World Food Program has begun to conduct an impact analysis of the EVD on Markets and Food Security. The data comes from an ongoing data collection effort, which is being carried out by staff from LISGIS, WFP, FAO and MOA. This survey is being jointly funded by WFP, FAO and MoA. This survey involves bi-monthly market price data collection on a limited group of commodities some of which include rice, palm oil, charcoal and rubber. This data is currently being collected in twelve of Liberia's fifteen counties, with plans to increase coverage.

3.2 LISGIS' Involvement and Potential Capacity

In addition to LISGIS' involvement as mentioned above, in terms of providing Household data to support the Bank's efforts in analyzing the impact of EVD on households, and in collecting market price data to support WFP's analysis of the impact of EVD on markets and food security, there are other means by which LISGIS potentially can support in EVD related data collection and analysis.

LISGIS has a strong Geo-Information Services Division, but has limited transport and GIS equipment and software. It needs refresher training for its staff to carry out GIS mapping activities across the country in order to support the EVD response, the HIES and the upcoming 2015/2016 Addressing Home System (2015/2016 AHS), and 2018 NPHC. In addition, the fifteen county offices are each staffed with GIS and data collection specialists. Unfortunately due to financial and logistical constraints, LISGIS has been unable to map out the current Ebola epidemic in Liberia.

3.3 LISGIS' Key Priority Areas

LISGIS will be focusing on four key areas during and post EVD crisis:

- (i) EVD Emergency Response;
- (ii) Completion of 2014/15 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (1014/15 HIES);
- (iii) The 2015/2016 Addressing Home System (2015/2016 AHS); and
- (iv) The 2018 National Population and Housing Census (2018 NPHC)

(i) EVD Emergency Response

LISGIS has an experienced team who are dedicated to spatial data collection, processing, analysis, reporting and dissemination. LISGIS also has the statistical and spatial infrastructure such as the Enumeration Area (EA) Sample Frame and the Spatial Shape File, which were prepared from the 2008 National Population and Housing Census (2008 NPHC) and a list of all establishments (including registered and non-registered establishments), that were compiled from the 2013 National Establishment Census (2013 NEC). With these experienced teams and the limited statistical and spatial infrastructure, LISGIS will be willing to provide support to and/or learn from all national and international institutions involved in this EVD fight through case mapping and delivery of relief items (emergency operations) or conducting researches on the impact of the EVD on the Liberian's economy. This is because at the end of the EVD crisis, LISGIS will be expected and must carry on its mandate.

LISGIS, during the EVD emergency response, will actively be working with international and local organizations, Addressing Home, the Ministry of Postal Affairs and other local NGOs, to identify and assign unique address numbers to every structure/house. This exercise will be very useful for the Ebola emergency response and the post Ebola activities such as 2017 Presidential and General elections, the 2018 National Population and Housing Census, etc.

(ii) Completion of 2014/15 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (1014/15 HIES)

The Government of Liberia and its key Development Partners decided in 2013 to conduct a household income and expenditure Survey (HIES) for the first time since 1964. The purpose of the survey is to collect comprehensive data that would feed into the Consumer Price Index (CPI) construction at the national level, poverty analysis and update of the household expenditures section within the National Accounts. The project is also expected to provide a detailed agricultural productivity analysis and serve as baseline information for the “Agenda for Transformation (Aft)” set by the Government of Liberia. Other components of this project include capacity building and cross-country knowledge sharing, alongside efforts to improve survey methodologies in Liberia.

The data collection for the survey, which was expected to last for twelve months, started in February 2014 after an intensive training and deployment of ninety-six field staff throughout the country. The data collection exercise lasted six months before suspending it due to the outbreak and spread of the EVD epidemic in the country. Thus the commencement of the data collection of said survey in February 2015, hopefully the Ebola crisis could be over by December 2014, would provide clear picture of the Ebola crisis impact on the socio-economic life of Liberians.

(iii) The 2015/2016 Addressing Home System (2015/2016 AHS)

Liberia does not have a sustainable postal address system. It has ad-hoc postal address system in Monrovia (the national capital) and its environs, which cannot be used to delivered mails and relief items. It is in this light that the Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Postal Affairs (MOPA) contacted the Universal Postal Union (UPU) for financial and technical assistance to establish a sustainable national postal address system. Thus the AIMTEC and Addressing Home, an international technological organization, has been contacted by the MOPA and the UPU to assist Liberia. Hence, the MOPA and LISGIS will be working closely with the AIMTEC and Addressing Home to implement the sustainable address system in Liberia to response to the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) crisis and the post EVD development activities such as 2017 Presidential and General Elections, 2018 National Population and Housing Census.

(iv) National Population and Housing Census (NPHC)

The next National Population and Housing Census (NPHC) is scheduled to take place in the year 2018. The objective of the 2018 census would be to provide the following:

- The size, composition and spatial distribution of the population;
- Components of population change i.e. fertility, mortality and migration;

- Levels of education, labor force, urbanization, housing conditions, agricultural productivity and the population involved; and
- The update of the national sample frame and shape files.

This census will not only be a follow-up of the 2008 NPHC, but will give the impact of the EVD epidemic on the population as a whole. In preparation of this national exercise, which includes geographic planning and mapping of the entire country, LISGIS will learn and greatly benefit from the contact tracing and case mapping of the Ebola incidences at the village/town level by local and international players involved in the fight against the EVD.