

WACREN 4TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE



**LOME, TOGO
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Building Capacities for Collaborative Innovation in Higher Education



**LESSONS OF THE NREN-
LIBRARY CONSORTIUM
ECOSYSTEM IN SIERRA
LEONE**

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OUTLINE



- **Background**
 - The higher education landscape in Sierra Leone
 - Academic libraries
 - ICT infrastructure
- **The development of SLREN and ConSALIS**
- **Collaboration: Tensions and Synergies**
 - Successes
 - “Possibility for Possibilities”
- **Conclusion**

BACKGROUND



BY THE NUMBERS

- POP 7+ MILLION
- 3 PUBLIC & 2 PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES
- 3 POLYTECHNICS/TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGES
- MULTIPLE OTHER INSTITUTIONS



PREVAILING ENVIRONMENT in HEIs



- Academic staff – low numbers, few Ph.Ds and Professors, low motivation, gender imbalance
- Aged infrastructure
- Rising student enrolment
- Inefficiencies in service delivery

PREVAILING ENVIRONMENT **cont'd**



- Competition among institutions -- blurry lines of missions.
- Competition for students -- duplication of courses
- Little collaboration among HEIs – few opportunities for joint projects pursued.

PREVAILING ENVIRONMENT



- INSIGNIFICANT USE OF TECHNOLOGIES FOR TEACHING, LEARNING, RESEARCH OR EFFICIENT SERVICES:
 - ✦ No smart classrooms, learning management systems
 - ✦ No automated library catalogues/ILSs
 - ✦ No integrated information management systems
- Poor research capabilities
- Landscape crowded by a combination of mostly uncoordinated, local and international actors

ACADEMIC LIBRARIES



“IT is foundational in the twenty-first library” (Stachokas)

- Patchy technology solutions
- No automated library catalogues/ILSs
- No overarching vision, plan, policies and strategies on how to roll out IT- dependent services
- Majority of staff not IT literate

NATIONAL ICT STRATEGY



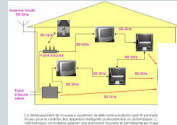
- Government and development partners taking the leadership in ICT/Telecom infrastructure modernization –ICT Policy in **2007**
- Successfully landed sub-marine fiber cable through ACE (**2011**)
- Deployed terrestrial fiber backbone to take the huge traffic from the landing station to be distributed across the country.
- SIERRATEL completed the deployment of the Freetown Metropolitan Area Network
- Commercialisation of the Fiber Landing Station
- Operationalising the Sierra Leone Cable Network (SALCAB)

NATIONAL ICT INFRASTRUCTURE

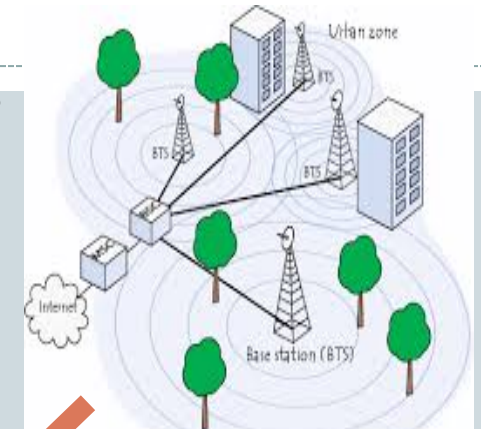
Integrated Infrastructure with a hybrid Last mile solution of aerial Fibre and High Speed wireless (4G-LTE/WIMAX)



Phase 3- Aerial FTTH/FTTP



Network Operation Centre



Phase 1-MDAs connected with WIMAX and Ariel Fibre for e-Governance platform for central and local government

NATIONAL FIBRE BACKBONE



Phase 2(c)- Operators Towers connected to Backbone (better quality, lower cost, higher band width)



Phase 2 (b) Community-Based wifi Start-ups and remote rural schools, health centres

FTTX Fiber Architecture



Phase 2 (a)- SMEs and Industries universities, schools, hospital etc.

NEW SYNERGIES



- **2014:** INASP partners with University of Sierra Leone and Njala University → joint workshops for researchers and librarians, seminars, conferences triggering interest in research again
- **2016: SLREN formed**
- 7 HEIs partner to apply for DfID grant

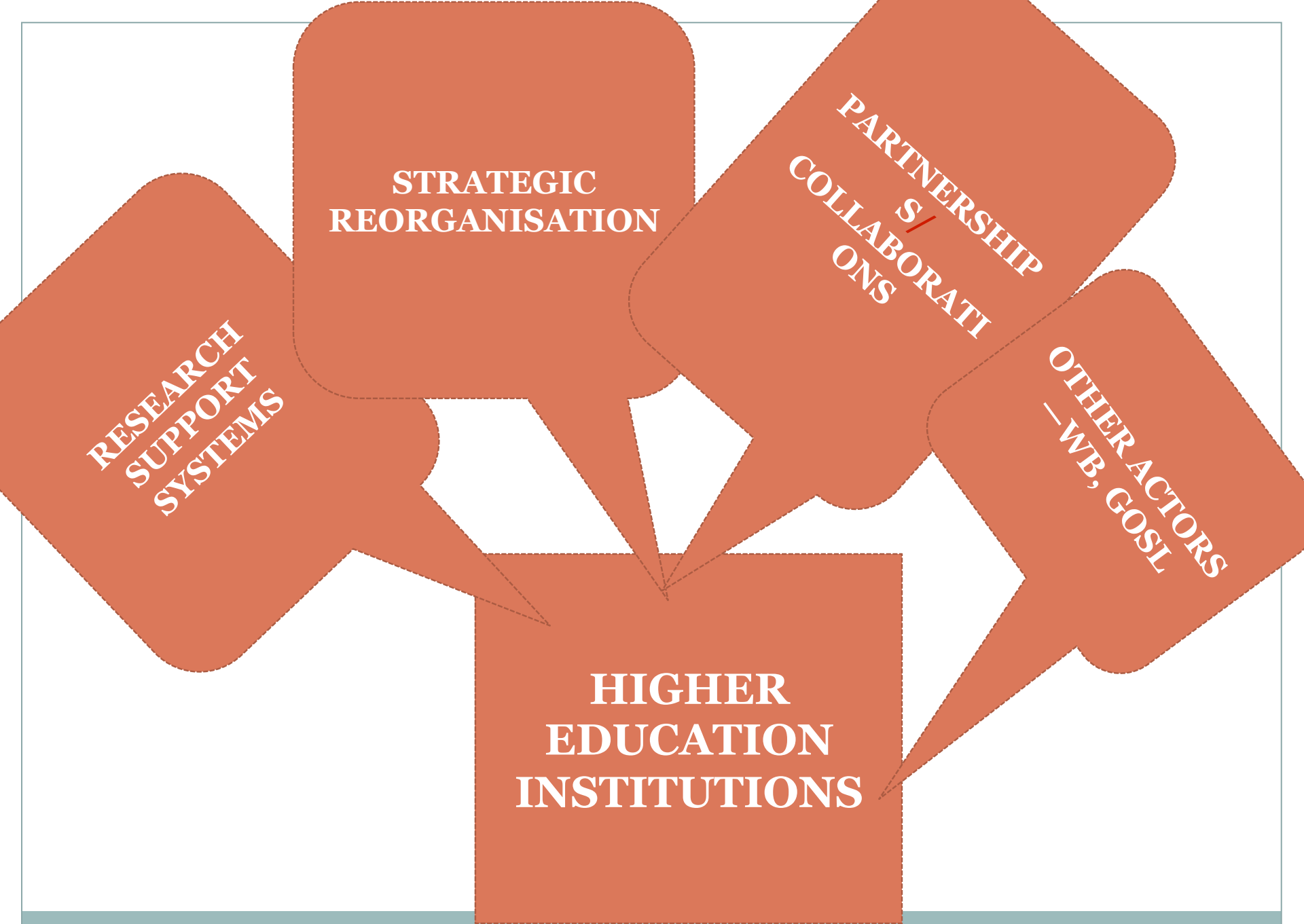
2017

- Fibre connectivity brought to universities and schools (pilot led by SLREN)
- HEI partnership wins DfID grant
- Consortium of HEIs (CHEI-SL) formed
- Conference of Vice-Chancellors & Principals (CVCP) formed
- **Consortium of Sierra Leone Academic Library & Information Services (ConSALIS) formed**

“TRIPLE R” PRIORITIES OF HEIs



- SLREN and ConSALIS have come together to support HEIs in:
 - **R**ebuilding (capacities and systems and infrastructures)
 - **R**ealigning (visions, curricula etc)
 - **R**esearch strengthening (rethinking funding, new partnerships/common agendas)



RESEARCH
SUPPORT
SYSTEMS

STRATEGIC
REORGANISATION

PARTNERSHIP
/
COLLABORATI
ONS

OTHER ACTORS
-WB, GOSL

HIGHER
EDUCATION
INSTITUTIONS

LIBRARY-led INITIATIVES



- Discovery Platform To Leverage Teaching, Learning And Research – IR + Journal Publishing
- USL-NU training on research writing for early career researchers
- Cross-institution training of early career researchers
- LIBRARY CONSORTIUM
 - Subscription to e-journal databases
 - National union catalogue
 - Cooperative services (cataloging, interlibrary services etc)

SLREN-led INITIATIVES



- **BUILDING ICT INFRASTRUCTURE TO LEVERAGE TEACHING, LEARNING AND RESEARCH IN HEIs:**
 - FIBER OPTIC BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY
 - BUILDING CLOUD INFRASTRUCTURE AS A SERVICE
 - LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (MOODLE)
 - SUPPORTING WEB PORTAL DEVELOPMENT
 - PROMOTING e-LEARNING
 - PROMOTING ICT CAPACITY BUILDING

WINNING STRATEGIES



- **INFLUENCE MAPPING**
 - MOST INFLUENTIAL (e.g. VC&Ps, FDs, Former VC, deans)
 - STRONGLY SUPPORT (advocates for research, progressives)
 - STRONGLY OPPOSE (none identified)
 - LEAST INFLUENTIAL (monitor & engage periodically as status could change)

CREATE
a sense of urgency

INSTITUTE
change

BUILD
a guiding coalition

*the big
opportunity*

FORM
a strategic vision
and initiatives

SUSTAIN
acceleration

GENERATE
short-term wins

ENLIST
a volunteer army

ENABLE
action by
removing barriers

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS



- Librarians acquire advocacy, lobbying, marketing and other key competencies and skills to showcase their importance and contribution to the success of their organizations. This would help in the funding of library projects and activities.
- Libraries and librarians create a new organisational culture that privileges updated professional values and philosophies of librarianship.
- NRENs and library consortia organize joint training courses for librarians to acquire ICT skills and ICT applications in libraries and for IT staff to understand library issues.

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS



- SLREN and ConSALIS consider extending their cooperative sharing to include expertise and equipment to help less endowed libraries to introduce and sustain ICT services.
- HEIs in Sierra Leone develop institutional IT policies that are aligned with the national government's and SLREN's.
- HEIs to introduce new courses which would enable their students to cultivate and imbibe new competencies and skills. Courses on advocacy, lobbying, proposal writing, managing ICT projects in library / systems librarianship are examples.



Thank You