

# Republic of Liberia

Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications

## Policy Directive

*National Policy on The Use of The .Gov.Lr Domain Name*



UGDn-RL/MPT-FBN/ZT/ddw/2015/005

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## **Message from the Minister**

The need to standardize the Government of Liberia's (GoL) Web presence and electronic mail mechanisms is not only crucial to its e-Government initiatives, but an imperative in this Information Age. Currently, many officials of Government as well as public and civil servants, are using non-official and free Internet email services such as Yahoo! or Gmail, while communicating government policies, programs and information. In addition, there are Government Ministries, Agencies, and Corporations/Commissions (MACs) that are using domain names that do not imply that they are Government of Liberia entities. Moreover, the official second level domain (SLD) name, the .gov.lr, assigned to the Government of Liberia by the Internet Corporation for Assigning Names and Numbers (ICANN) can be registered by any web development company or contractor who meets the requirements of the Domain Registrar. All of these put GoL's information and operations at great risk making it a matter of national security.

Obviously, our failure to take ownership of the Government of Liberia's unique second level domain name (.gov.lr) and to utilize it presents problems that require solutions. These problems include the lack of clear governing structure; the non-existing authority of GoL over the matter; and the commercialization of the SLD at the expense of MACs, among others. This policy directive seeks to address these kinds of problems by taking control of its SLD and by providing guidelines that will minimize risk in the use of the platform for Government communication services over the Internet. Our Government has learned lessons from others whose programs precede ours. Countries in this category have succeeded to more robustly provide services to their citizens, improve their internal operations and save cost of doing business. As a member of the global community, we too now appreciate how the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can facilitate and enhance the process of interaction and integration among all three branches of government, its citizens and other stakeholders nationally, regionally and globally.

This initiative is a whole-of-government approach and its success largely depends on the role of each stakeholder in the public sector. The use of the .gov.lr second level domain (SLD) by all MACs will ensure their official representation online and stimulate all authority concerned to ensure that they actively conform to Government's e-government initiatives.

Dr. Fredrick B. Norkeh  
Minister of Posts and Telecommunications,  
**Republic of Liberia**

# **1. Introduction**

## **1.1. Authority**

The Liberia National Telecommunications and ICT Policy of 2010 authorizes the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications to provide direction through policies for all activities related to ICTs in the Republic of Liberia. Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in this document is an umbrella term that includes any communication device or application, encompassing: radio, television, cellular phones, computer and network hardware and software, satellite systems and so on, as well as the various services and applications associated with them.

## **2. Problem Description**

The Government of Liberia has embarked upon an e-government initiative that will enable it bring online its services and information to citizens and businesses. Part of this initiative is to ensure that all Ministries, Agencies, Corporations/Commissions (MACs) have a web presence or a website that provides information about them and the services they provide to citizens and businesses. In view of this, several MACs began establishing a presence on the Internet enabling citizens and business to gain access to information about their services.

Over the years, the establishment of a web presence or websites by MACs has been done in the absence of standards, policies and a governing body within the Government of Liberia. This allowed vendors, hosting services providers, Web developers and other contractors who were hired by MACs (to manage their websites) to unilaterally decide which top level domain name to be selected and used by MACs. With this authority, these vendors, hosting services providers, Web developers and other contractors have been able to manipulate MACs websites at will. This has also caused several problems for MACs, some of which have led to litigation against vendors, hosting services providers, Web developers, and contractors

The consequence of the above mentioned is a disorganized conglomeration of government websites utilizing top level domain names such as .com, .org, .net, and so on, that do not indicate that they are Government of Liberia entities, or conform to

international best practices. Moreover, the absence of a policy to govern the use of the .gov.lr domain name exposes it (.gov.lr) to cybercrimes, internet monitoring and other internet security issues.

### **3. Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to provide a guide that ensures that all Government of Liberia (GoL) ministries, agencies, commissions/corporations heretofore referred to as MACs, conform to and are in compliance with the e-Government standards and best practices, by utilizing the official second level domain space assigned to the Government of the Republic of Liberia. This second level domain(SLD) space is listed as .gov.lr.

### **4. Scope**

This policy is applicable to ALL MACs under the Government of the Republic of Liberia.

## **5. The .Gov.Lr Second Level Domain (SLD)**

### **5.1. Background**

The Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA), which is an organization under the Internet Architecture Board (IAB) of the Internet Society, allows the creation and delegation of Country Code Top-Level Domains (ccTLDs). The creation and delegation of ccTLDs is described in Request For Comments (RFC) 1591, corresponding to ISO 3166-1 alpha-2 country codes. Liberia has been assigned the Internet Country Code Top-level domain (ccTLD) .lr. Any entity requesting this ccTLD is required to have a local presence and intent in Liberia. In addition, registration of the .lr ccTLD requires specific second-level domains including but not limited to the following:

- **com.lr**: For Commercial purposes or entities
- **edu.lr**: For educational institutions granting baccalaureate degrees
- **gov.lr**: For entities under the Governmental of Liberia
- **org.lr**: Not for profit organizations

- **net.lr**: Network infrastructure or institutions based primarily on the internet

The focus of this policy directive is the .gov.lr second level domain and it (policy directive) has been developed for use by institutions of the Government of Liberia.

## **5.2. Mission**

To secure and standardize the Government of Liberia's web presence, email and other collaboration systems while conforming to international best practices and standards.

## **5.3. Vision**

- a. To make the .gov.lr second level domain the official platform on which ALL MACs can form a third level domain (Mac.Gov.Lr.) that will enable them maintain an official web presence and an official email and collaboration system.
- b. To ensure that the .gov.lr domain assigned for use by government entities in Liberia remains under the control of the Liberian Government, and is fully utilized by all Liberian Ministries, Agencies and Corporations/Commissions (MACs) in order to facilitate the provision of e-Services to citizens, businesses and other government institutions.

## **5.4. Goals and Objectives**

### **5.4.1. Goals**

- a. To contribute to building a secure network for government operations.
- b. To ensure that all government institutions have a standardized web presence.
- c. To increase internal operational efficiency.
- d. To effectively market government policies and programs.
- e. To ensure that all stakeholders take ownership over the .gov.lr domain name space.
- f. To contribute to making Liberia a digital society.
- g. To contribute a new approach to inclusive decision making process.
- h. To enhance e-governance.
- i. To facilitate all processes involving e-discovery.

### **5.4.2. Objectives**

- a. To situate the .gov.lr domain service within the authority of GoL
- b. To provide the platform enabling officials of Government, public and civil servants utilize the official GoL email addressing format: [user@mac.gov.lr](mailto:user@mac.gov.lr)
- c. To eliminate the use of unrestricted internet emails such as Gmail or Yahoo! for official government business.
- d. To set the basis for a robust cybersecurity regime that protects the integrity of GoL systems.
- e. To contribute to the process of putting GoL services online.
- f. To increase the level of access to ICT in providing public services online

## **6. Gov.Lr. Core Policy Issues**

Having a managed domain name such as .gov.lr assures citizens, residents, businesses, the international community and other stakeholders that they are accessing an official Government of Liberia site. Therefore, this policy directive focuses on the .gov.lr second level domain which is to be utilized by all Government of Liberia MACs. The directive shall guide the request, use and administration of third level domains (e.g. mac.gov.lr) by Government of Liberia institutions. This policy directive shall ensure domain name integrity of third level domains within in the .gov.lr domain space. In addition the following shall also be adhered to:

- All MACs under the Government of the Republic of Liberia shall operate within the .gov.lr domain space.
- The .gov.lr and all third level domain name (MAC.gov.lr) shall be managed by the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications through the Chief Information Office.
- All gov.lr domain names must only be used for the official business of the MACs.
- All third level domain name (MAC.gov.lr) must be used specifically and exclusively for the stated purpose.

- Request for a third level domain shall be made by the head or a designated authority of a MAC through an official letter. This letter shall be addressed to the Chief Information Office, R.L.
  
- Each third level domain shall have TWO Persons of Contact for the domain. The Administrative POC and the Technical POC. The Administrative POC of every third level domain shall be the Chief Information Office, R.L. represented by the Head, the Chief Information Officer, R.L. The Technical Person of Contact (POC) of all third level domains shall be the CIO/IT Director/Manager or Senior IT personnel of that organization. There will be no one single point of contact.
  - **Administrative Person of Contact:** The Administrative POC is the person who controls the content of the domain and is the manager of the operations of the domain.
  
  - **Technical Person of Contact:** The Technical POC is the person that operates the Domain Name System (DNS) and takes care of technical operations such as security patches, programming etc.
  
- The Minister of Posts and Telecommunications, Republic of Liberia shall be the Authorizing Authority (AA). Alternatively, the Minister shall designate the Deputy Minister with oversight responsibility for ICT as the Authorizing Authority (AA).

*The Minister of Posts and Telecommunications, R.L. is the Authorizing Authority (AA). The Minister can designate the Deputy Minister with oversight responsibility for ICT as the Authorizing Authority (AA).*

This policy document shall be formally reviewed every (FIVE) 5 years.

## **7. Governance Framework**

1. The Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications (MoPT) through the Chief Information Office, shall be responsible for management of the gov.lr domain
2. All new policies and major policy changes are endorsed by the Minister of Posts and Telecommunications.
3. The Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications reserves the right:
  - a. to remove a third level (mac.gov.lr) domain name from the registry if it is considered to be in breach of gov.lr policies, or if the organization using the domain space is no more in existence.

The above governance framework draws from an Internet Corporation For Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) requirement which states that managers of domains must demonstrate administrative and technical ability to operate a domain competently without jeopardizing or compromising the stability and security of the DNS. Internet naming functions, have been run by ICANN has since 1998.

## **8. Eligibility**

The Eligibility criteria to make use of the .gov.lr second level domain (SLD) are based on the following provisions:

- a. Gov.lr Policy Core Policy Issues as discussed in Section 6.
- b. Gov.lr Governance Framework as discussed in Section 7.

The Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications through the Chief Information Office will assess third level domain name requests. Unless otherwise indicated, domain names must meet each of the criteria listed.

### **8.1. General Criteria**

It is the responsibility of the MAC requesting domain name to provide sufficient information to demonstrate Eligibility.

## **8.2. MAC Criteria (*Organization requesting the domain name*)**

The MAC must be an organization established by an Act of Legislature or Government regulation as a Government department or agency; a local government entity; a statutory authority; or other defined government body.

## **8.3. Domain Name Format Criteria**

Domain names can only be registered using the jurisdictional extension of the MAC.

*E.g. Ministry of Gender and Development can only register domain names with mogd.gov.lr extensions.*

Domain names must bear a direct semantic connection to the stated purpose. Furthermore, such names should represent a readily recognized concept associated with the stated purpose.

However, domain names must not:

- exceed 60 characters in length, including the first, second and jurisdictional levels of the domain name (e.g. hr.mopt.gov.lr or example.mopt.lr);
- consist entirely of numerals;
- express a political statement or bear any semantic connection to a registered Liberian political party;
- contain obscene or offensive language or otherwise prejudice the reputation or credibility of the gov.lr domain;
- Infringe the intellectual property rights of other parties. It is the responsibility of the Requesting MAC to ensure compliance with this requirement.

## **9. Composition of Domain Names- Technical**

### **9.1. Domain names must:**

- i. be at least 2 characters long;
- ii. contain only letters (a-z), numbers (0-9) and hyphens (-), or a combination of these;
- iii. start and end with a number or a letter, not a hyphen; and
- iv. not contain hyphens in the third and fourth position (e.g. ab-cd.gov.lr).

## **10. Ethical Guidelines on The Use of The .gov.lr Domain Name**

1. The Government of Liberia requires all MACs to ensure that all third level domain names operating under the .gov.lr domain space abide by the rules governing its usage. These rules include but not limited to:
  - a. Ensuring that domain names are used for official business
  - b. Ensuring that the domain name shall only be used for purpose for which it was created
  - c. Ensuring that only authorized personnel shall manage the domain
  - d. Unauthorized disclosure of security code and other classified info to anyone shall constitute a breach of national security
  - e. Ensuring that such values as competence, dedication, commitment, honesty and patriotism are cultivated to guide the technical team
2. Contravention of these Ethical Guidelines shall result to the following actions where applicable:
  - a. Letter of warning
  - b. Suspension of domain
  - c. Revocation of domain
  - d. Suspension of staff
  - e. Dismissal of staff

- f. Prosecution of violator by Ministry of Justice
- g. Other penalties to be determined by Ministry of Justice

## **11. Expected Outcomes**

By conforming to and being in compliance with the GoL's e-Government standards and best practices, especially through the use of the .gov.lr second level domain name, implementation of projects identified in the e-Government strategy will be seamlessly facilitated. Some of these projects include the national web portal also known as "eLiberia" and the "One-Government" email system. Both the former and the latter require the use of the .gov.lr second level domain name for implementation.

The development of the national web portal or "eLiberia" has four main stages which include: Presence stage; Interaction stage, Transaction stage; and Transformation stage. The Presence stage involves the development of an inclusive website or network of sites dedicated to different MACs to set the stage for further advancements. The site shall provide information on official addresses, list of e-services, forms, public documents, regulations for businesses, among others.

The Interaction stage involves the enabling and/or development of basic interaction/services. This stage details job application forms, permit, driver's license registration and renewal, e-postal services, among others.

The Transaction stage begins direct interaction with relevant MACs. It makes online services available for the citizens, businesses, and governmental agencies to utilize. Some of the services include: bill and fine payments, online procurement, health records, e-agriculture, etc.

The Transformation stage involves the setting up of a call center to handle issues regarding eLiberia. Training and public awareness shall characterize this stage as well. Issues of security are also addressed at this stage. These four stages draw extensively from the online service development approach enshrined in the United Nations E-Government Survey of 2014 (UN E-government Survey, 2014).

The stages of e-portal development provide direction in terms of actions and processes required to put e governance in place. In Liberia, we are generally at the Presence stage, even though, ultimately our Government intends to interact with citizens online regarding the provision of all services across government. Our Government also intends to allow online transactions with citizens and businesses including payment of taxes, obtaining passports, birth certificates, finding and applying for jobs and all other services provided by Government. Overall, our goal is to become digitally responsive to our citizens and businesses.

In addition, the deployment of a “One-Government” email system is dependent on the use of the .gov.lr second level domain name. The GoL intends to utilize a collaborative platform (email, chat, document-sharing, etc.) that amalgamates all Government entities in order to enhance the flow of information. Standardizing domain names at each MAC to conform to the GoL’s e-Government strategy is a paramount step toward achieving such goal.

## **12. Conclusion**

Situating the second level domain (.gov.lr) under the authority of the GoL who owns the domain is an obligation. This obligation can now be fulfilled as the governance framework and ethical practices are now in place. Besides, it will enable us to standardize our web presence.

Standardizing our web platform and all other ICT related initiatives as a Government is a critical requirement under our e-Government program. Therefore, all Government entities are required to conform to the .gov.lr standard which shall help to minimize risks and improve internal operations across government while also fostering operational efficiency and reduce costs. Requiring all Government entities to channel their request for the use of the .gov.lr second level domain name through the Chief Information Office, R.L. situated at the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications prior to establishing a web presence has a common objective: to ensure that they are in conformity and compliance with the GoL standards.

### 13. Glossary of Terms

<b>Acronym/Abbreviation</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>AA</b>	Authorizing Authority
<b>AC</b>	Administrative Contact
<b>ccTLD</b>	Country Code Top Level Domain
<b>GoL</b>	Government of Liberia
<b>Gov</b>	Government
<b>IANA</b>	Internet Assigned Numbers Authority
<b>ICANN</b>	The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communications Technology
<b>ISO</b>	International Standards Organization
<b>ITU</b>	International Telecommunications Union
<b>MAC</b>	Ministries, Agencies, Commissions/Corporations
<b>MoPT</b>	Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications
<b>PoC</b>	Person of Contact
<b>RFC</b>	Request For Comments
<b>SLD</b>	Second Level Doman
<b>TC</b>	Technical Contact
<b>TLD</b>	Top Level Domain
<b>UGDn</b>	Use of the .Gov.Lr Domain Name

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