SNAPSHOT

Reform within Liberia's Center for National Documents and Records Agency

Liberia Modernizes Deed Registry at CNDRA

CNDRA's Scanning Center

Many deeds dating back to the early 20th century still need to be entered into OpenTitle so that they can be protected

OpenTitle allows CNDRA to easily georeference deeds that were not tied to geographic locations in the past.

Liberia's Center for National Document and Records Agency (CNDRA) has undergone ambitious reform over the last year, highlighted by the installation of OpenTitle. The USAID-funded Liberia Land Policy and Institutional Support (LPIS) Project initiated assistance at CNDRA by conducting a thorough baseline study of existing processes within the Agency, followed by developing numerous recommendations for modernizing the institution. A key recommendation was the need for a secure, electronic deed registry software solution.

In late 2011, OpenTitle, a Thomson Reuters software product, was installed for the management of the deed registry and, with additional support from the World Bank, a Digital Scanning Laboratory established. Twelve (12) CNDRA staff members were trained in document management, scanning, indexing and overall usage of OpenTitle. Director-General Bloh Sayeh, the head of CNDRA, commented how exciting it was to have a system that will for the first time digitize new deeds. "We have been digitizing old records, but now it will be concurrent with newly registered properties straight into the computer database."

Such a software-driven deed registry is beneficial to CNDRA for numerous reasons. It provides an electronic backup for records, limiting wear and tear on historical handwritten paper records. Based on predefined workflows, it also eliminates the opportunity for manipulation of paper records. The deed registry is also now electronically searchable. OpenTitle allow deeds to be spatially tied to their geographic location and properties delineated, viewable from online maps, which allows CNDRA to quickly identify who has what rights to land and where those lands are located.

Since early 2012 when fully established, the Scanning Laboratory has digitized and indexed close to 6,000 deeds, representing almost 15,000 individual pages. The Digital Scanning Lab is only expanding, as it is anticipated that additional scanning stations will be added, and more staff trained. With an estimated four million deeds that still need to be scanned, much work remains to be done for the CNDRA.