

UNIVERSAL ACCESS FUND
PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION UNIT
PIU

YEARLY ACTIVITY REPORTS
Y2019, 2020 & 2021

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i. Abbreviations/Acronyms

#.	Abbreviations/Acronyms	Descriptions
1	GCA	Governance Consumer Affairs
2	GSM	Global System for mobile
3	ICT	Information Communication Technology
4	LBS	Liberia Broadcasting System
5	LTA	Liberia Telecommunications Authority
6	LRTP	Liberia Rural Telephony Program
7	MNO	Mobile Network Operator
8	MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
9	NUAP	National Universal Access Program
10	PIU	Project Implementation Unit
11	POC	Proof Of Concept
12	UAF	Universal Access Fund
13	UHF	Ultra-High Frequency
14	VHF	Very High Frequency
15	VSAT	Very Small Aperture Terminal
16	WIFI	Wireless Fidelity

ii. Terminology

Broadband	In telecommunications, broadband is wide bandwidth data transmission that transports multiple signals at a wide range of frequencies and Internet traffic types, that enables messages to be sent simultaneously, used in fast internet connections According to the FCC, the definition of broadband internet is a minimum of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload speeds . Broadband provides high-speed internet access via multiple types of technologies including fiber optics, wireless, cable, DSL, and satellite.
	EDGE Enhanced Data GSM Environment (EDGE) is a high-speed wireless data service that can deliver speeds of up to 384kbps using all GSM channels. This speed now enables the possibility of the delivery of multimedia and other broadband application to mobile phones and computer users
TV White Space	TV White Space refers to the unused TV channels between the active ones in the VHF and UHF spectrum It has since been researched and proven that this unused spectrum can be used to provide broadband Internet access while operating harmoniously with surrounding TV channels.
VHF	Very high frequency (VHF) is the ITU designation for the range of radio frequency electromagnetic waves (radio waves) from 30 to 300 megahertz (MHz), ...
UHF	UltraUltra-highcyuenuency (UHF) is the ITU designation for radio frequencies in the range between 300 megahertz (MHz) and 3 gigahertz (GHz) UHF stands for “Ultra High Frequency” while VHF stands for “Very High Frequency.” UHF can range from low band (378-512 MHz) to high band (764-870 MHz) while VHF ranges from low band (49-108 MHz) to high band (169-216 MHz)
VSAT	A very small aperture terminal (VSAT) is a small-sized earth station used in the transmit/receive of data, voice, and video signals over a satellite communication network, excluding broadcast television. ... The transceiver receives or sends a signal to a satellite transponder in the sky

	A very small aperture terminal (VSAT) is a data transmission technology used for many types of data management and in high-frequency trading . VSAT can be used in place of a large physical network as it bounces the signal from satellites instead of being transported through physical means like an ethernet connection.
WIFI	WiFi is a universal wireless networking technology that utilizes radio frequencies to transfer data . WiFi allows high-speed Internet connections without the use of cables. The term WiFi is a contraction of "wireless fidelity" and is commonly used to refer to wireless networking technology

1.0 Background

The platform upon which these annual activity reports are erected encompasses the frantic efforts of the Government of Liberia to provide the required goods and services to a whole population threatened by ecumenical issues ranging from social protection to economic stability. These efforts are not unique to Liberia for they resonate across the whole global nation bridled by recurrent, existing, and emerging needs. While Western nations claim advancement in their social, and economic aspirations, developing countries including Liberia, are in the business of employing those advancements to serve their “served” and “underserved” populations.

Over the decades, the quest for uninterrupted access to communication means emerged as the ecumenical dire need of governments to provide services to their underserved populations. This desire has in turn engendered the replacement of archaic and otiose methods of communications to a new dawn and innovation of internet communications technology (ITC).

Liberia, as a member of the global village, therefore, has taken actions to ensure it remains in sync with the global quest to provide uninterrupted access to ICT by promulgating regulations to establish conduits such as the LTA with its auxiliaries including the UAF and the PIU.

The creation, management, and deployment of the Universal Access Funds 2015 developed by the Liberia Telecommunications Authority (LTA) under the National Universal Access Program Strategy 2011 (NUAPS), the National ICT and Telecommunications Policy, 2011 (ICT Policy), and sections 22 and 23 of the Telecommunications Act of 2007 of the Republic of Liberia.

As a national strategy gleaned from best practice in other nations, the establishment of the Universal Access Fund comprises of the Universal Access Governing Board (Board). The Universal Access Implementing Committee (Committee) and the Universal Access Project Implementation Unit (PIU).

While a key responsibility of the Governing Board is to pass edicts and resolutions for the continuity of the PIU it approves the budget. The PIU as an independent unit within the LTA is directed by the committee, for the management and implementation of the tasks required to implement the NUAPS. The role of the PIU is to undertake the day-to-day implementation tasks necessary to accomplish the UAF's objectives and to ensure effective and flexible coordination and implementation of the UA projects under the management of the Implementation Committee. The PIU reports directly to the Implementation Committee and prepares reports, documents, and advisory inputs as directed by the implementation committee.

To ensure efficacy, the PIU is headed by a project coordinator assisted by seven (7) other support staff and two permanent consultants. As a best practice, the efficacy of the UAF/PIU is measured via the efficiency and quality of the programs and projects it implements, as its name implies; this is what makes it perfunctory for all of the units to work collaboratively. Based on its major responsibility to conduct the day-to-d project implementation activities of the UAF, the PIU is charged with the responsibility to submit regular reports on all activities over at various intervals.

It is to those ends that this report chronicling the intendments, innovations, and achievements of the PIU over the period 2019 -2021 have been prepared.

1.1.0 2019 ACTIVITY REPORT

1.1.1 Strategic Planning Workshop

In August 2019 a two-day Strategic Planning Workshop was held at the offices of the Liberia Telecommunications Authority (LTA) Board room from the 9-10 of August A Private Agency was hired to assist in the Process. The purpose of the workshop was to develop and commission a three strategic Plan-year for the PIU, the road map of the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) The workshop was facilitated by Mr. Moses B. Jackson the marketing and research Officer. In attendance at the workshop was (10) staff of the PIU and some staff of the LTA.

Mr. Elijah GlayUAF Coordinator

Mr. James Monbo.....PIU Coordinator

Mr. Moses B. JacksonMarketing & Research

Mr. Ceiba KarmonController

Ms. Mai DakinahM & E Officer

Mr. Dixon GrearFinance Officer
Mrs. Elveria KruahProcurement
Mr. Theophilus BrowneProcurement
Ms. Michaeline KollieAdministrative Assistant
Mr. Aaron WillieDriver

1.1.2 International Field Trip

In April 2019 the Universal Access Fund dispatched a team to Ghana and engaged with three institutions KNET Limited, NRG Wireless, and Ghana Investment Fund for Electronic Communications (GFEC).

The purpose of the study tour was to learn from experience how to deploy Liberia's universal access fund, particularly the various projects in the rural telephony program of Ghana. In addition to the visit with the firms providing the platform for the RTP and drawing ideas for the development of a strategic plan for the UAF.

1.1.3 Adoption of the Rural Telephony Project

Rural Telephony Program: is a national initiative focused on providing last-mile voice and data access to people in underserved and unserved communities in the 15 counties; which is the main focus of the Universal Access Fund to establish communications access. Underserved means network serves poorly

1.1.4 Signing of the MOU to Implement the Proof of concept

KNET Limited bided as the only vendor on the account that the proof of concept would have been done at NO COST to the Universal Access Fund (UAF).

On November 3, 2019, a team comprising of commissioners, lawyers of the LTA, a technician from LIBTELCO and project coordinator of UAF and the executives of K-Net Ghana signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the proof of concept phase of the Rural Telephony Program in two Rural Towns in Gbarpolu and Grand Kru Counties. The trip lasted for 4 days

1.1.5 Signing of MOU and Construction of the VSAT HUB

According to the agreement between K-NET and the UAF/LTA, a major requirement of the RTP is for a VSAT head to be installed and hosted at a data center in Monrovia. The VSAT Head and data center will be used as a host booster for the towers in the currently identified counties where based stations will be constructed and future counties that will be identified

December 22, 2019, a contract was signed by PIU and Liberia Broadcasting System (LBS) boss Hon. Ledgehood Rennie for the construction of the cement slab for the installation of VSAT Head and renovation of the facility to host the HUB at ELBC Compound.

1.1.6 Recommendations

There should be either follow-up visit to Ghana or an open line of communication to enable the PIU/UAF make a determination regarding which entity would be preferable.

1.2.0 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES

Earlier in February 2018, the UAF undertook a trip to seven counties to assess sites to be earmarked for the construction of base stations in underserved” and “unserved” for future UAF projects/programs

1.2.1 Follow-up Assessment of Selected County Sites

As follow-up to the 2018 7-county trips, a 12-day trip Nov. 25, 2019 – Dec. 7 was taken in 2019 to assess in Gbarpolu and Grand Kru regarding suitability for the construction of a mobile communications tower under LTA’s UAF Rural Telephony Program. The towers are to demonstrate a proof of concept to determine whether they can enable the towns to have access to voice and data services in these underserved areas.

1.2.2 Gbarpolu (Nov. 25-30, 2019)

Consequently, on November 25, 2019, a team of 4 PIU staff was posted in Gbarpolu County for six (6) days to hold consultations with opinion leaders over the acquisition of land space to host the base station, and to collect the relevant data:

1. Mr. Elijah GlayTeam Leader/UAF Chief
2. Mai DakinahM & E Officer/PIU

- 3. Dixon GearData Collector
- 4. Aaron Willie Chauffeur

Achievements

Upon arrival, they held meetings with officials of the relevant surrounding towns to provide information and obtain their support to the RTP. Attendants at the Gabrpolu meetings included (1) a team of Elders, (2) Town Chief, (3) Youth Leader, (4) the Assistant superintendent for development, and (5) Township Commissioner all of which represented the town of Gbarnga Gborquoita, Gbarpolu County.

The meetings concluded with the town people accepting our proposal which includes giving us the land in principle. It was agreed that the follow-up team would visit the county to sign a memorandum of understanding with the responsible parties.

1.2.3 Grand Kru

Consequently, on Dec. 2, 2019, the PIU team of 4 staff went to Parluken, Grand Kru County for six (6) days to hold consultations with opinion leaders over the acquisition of land space to host the base station, and to collect the relevant data:

- 1. Mr. Elijah GlayTeam Leader/UAF Chief
- 2. Mai DakinahM & E Officer/PIU
- 3. Dixon GearData Collector
- 4. Aaron Willie Chauffeur

Attendants at the Parluken, Grand Kru meetings included (1) Team of Elders (2) Town Chief and (3) Youth Leader.

1.3.0 Challenges

In both Gbarpolu and Grand Kru counties, access or road condition dangerous bridges were serious challenges and could impede the progress and effectiveness of the RTP program.

Due to the road condition, regular monitoring and troubleshooting could be almost impossible and could cause glitches in the provision of the services to unserved and underserved

1.3.1 Access to proposed sites

Grand Kru

In Grand Kru the major challenge was that the bridge to enter Parluken was broken. There were big gaps in between the logs the town people had on the bridge. Our team had to get logs from the forest to close the holes on the bridge before entering the town.

Gbarpolu

Our team had to use the Bomi highway to get to Gbarpolu, and it was timeconsuming. There were a lot of booms on the road that made our team tngo take a whole day getting t our destination.

1.3.2 Mobilization of Logistics

Acquisition and Transportation of local material in selected site Grand Kru and Gbarpolu was

Cross border of movement of K_NET equipment and staff was a challenge

Unforeseen immigration bureaucratic red tape

1.4 Recommendations:

Due to the challenging road conditions, subsequent trips should have two vehicles

PIU should conduct a feasibility study to fix the bridge leading to the RTP project in the town (Parluken)

The change of vehicle or the maintenance of the present vehicle to make iroadworthyhy

2.0 2020 ACTIVITY REPORT

During Y2020, the major achievement of the UAF/PIU was the consummation of the procedure leading to the completion of a hub at the LBS and the establishment of base stations to two counties of Grand Kru and Gbarpolu counties.

2.1.1 Completion and Launch of the VSAT HUB

Arrangement over the acquisition of the site and construction of the cement slab for the installation of VSAT Head and renovation of the facility to host the HUB at LBC Compound was completed and launch on January 18, 2020.

2.2.0 Challenges

The site provided for the VSAT was ideal; however massive renovation and equipping of the structure/office space was required. Since the financial implications were not anticipated, challenges posed were later addressed by the PIU

2.2.1 Signing of the MOU and Base Station Construction –Grand Kru and Gbarpolu

Achievements

At the onset of the base station construction phase of the RTP, a Gantt Chart was prepared by the market Analysis unit and submitted to the M &E unit to map out and monitor the process.

According to the GANTT Chart, construction of the base stations was scheduled to be preceded by the acquisition of land spaces and signing of a memorandum of understanding with opinion leaders in Gbarpolu and Grand Kru;

However, due to the time elapsed between the implementation period, the signing of the MOU and the base station constructions were accomplished concomitantly.

2.3 Recommendations

There should be routine maintenance of the VSAT Head to avoid a major break down especially during the rainy season where we have frequent storms, lightning and thunders.

A PIU staff with specific skills and TOR should be assigned or posted at the VSAT site to ensure efficacy

2.2.2 Trips to Grand Kru & Gbarpolu Counties

A 16-day trip to Parluken town, Grand Kru County from Feb. 4-19, 2020 to (1) sign the MO, (2) to negotiate with the town people to assist with the labor force of the construction (3) negotiate and make payments for labor and local resources;(4) commence construction/installation of the base stations by KNET Ghana.

Following the Grand Kru trip, another 16-day trip by the technical team to Gbarnga-Gboakota Gbarpolu County from March 6-21, 2020 with a similar purpose (1) sign the MOU and (2) to negotiate with the

town people to assist with the labor force of the construction (3) negotiate and make payments for labor and local resources;(4) commence construction/installation of the base stations by K-NET Ghana.

The team was comprised of K-NET technicians from Ghana and high-level team of 4 UAF/PIU staff visited Grand Kru and Gbarpolu counties.

1. Elijah Glay Team Leaders
2. James Lynch Monbo PIU Coordinator
3. Mai Dakinah M & E Officer
4. Aaron Willie Chauffeur
5. Five staff K-NET Ghana

Achievements

Meetings were held with high officers and opinion leaders, At both locations Elders, Town Chiefs, Development Superintendents, youth Leaders, the Town Commissioner, and two members of the PIU team, Mr. Elijah Glay and Mr. James Lynch Monbo signed the memorandum of understanding for the sites where the construction of the base stations will be.

The construction of the base station was successfully completed on February 19, 2020 and the team returned to Gbarpolu.

2.3.0 Challenges

The roads are a major Challenge. K-NET truck carrying the equipment had a break down on the way back from Parluken.

And the laborers had a hard time bringing the materials to the site because the distance was very far especially the crushed rocks.

2.4 Recommendation

Routine maintenance of these towers is very important.

Achievements

Similar as was the case in Grand Kru, the team held meetings with relevant officials over the purpose of the trip. The meeting concluded successfully. The team of Elders, Town Chief, Development super intendant, youth Leader, the Town Commissioner, and two members of our team Mr. Elijah Glay and Mr.

James Lynch Monbo signed the memorandum of understanding for the sites where the construction of the base stations will be.

The construction of the base station was successfully completed on March 21, 2020, and the team returned to Gbarpolu.

2.5.0 Dedication of Base Stations in Parluken Forpoh District, Grand Kru County

On Nov. 27, 2020, an 11-member team was posted in Parluken for seven (7) days from Nov.27, –Dec. 4, 2020 for the dedication program of the rural base station to the town. This rural base station is the first proof of concept to be tested.

The team was composed of the following:

1. Mr. Israel kinsanya..... Commissioner Governmental Consumer Affairs
2. Mr. Cooper W. Kruah.....Minister Ministry of Post and Telecommunications(MOPT)
3. Mr. Elijah Glay..... Universal Access Fund Coordinator (UAF)
4. Mr. James L. Monbo..... Project Coordinator (PIU)
5. Mr. George Smart..... Program Consultant (PIU)
6. Mr. Morris Baryogar..... Cameraman (LTA)
7. Henry S. Tolen..... Security (MOPT)
8. Derrick Smith Driver (LTA)
9. Aaron F. Willie Driver (PIU)

Achievements

Upon arrival, there was a dedication ceremony held at the village square with relevant officials of the town. Attendants at the ceremony from Parluken included: county commissioner, county Superintendent, Paramount Chief, county development superintendent, town chiefs from various towns.

2.6.0 Dedication of Base Stations in GbarngaGborkota, Gbarpolu County

On Dec. 5 -7, 2020 a team of eleven (9) staff was posted in Gbarnga Gborkota for two (2) days for the dedication program of the rural base station to the town. This rural base station is the first proof of concept to be tested.

1. Mr. Israel kinsanya..... Commissioner Governmental Consumer Affairs

2. Mr. Edward K. Goba Dep. Minister for Post and Telecommunications (MOPT)
3. Mr. Elijah Glay.....Universal Access Fund Coordinator (UAF)
4. Mr. James L. Monbo.....Project Coordinator (PIU)
5. Ms. Mai Dakinah Monitoring and Evaluation Officer (PIU)
6. Ms. Michaeline Kollie Administrative Assistant (PIU)
7. Mr. Morris Baryogar..... Cameraman (LTA)
8. Horatio Bobby Willie Public Affairs Officer (LTA)
9. Aaron Willie..... Driver (PIU)

Achievements

Upon arrival, there was a dedication ceremony held at the village square with relevant official The town attendants at the ceremony from Gbarnga Gborkota included: county Commissioner, County Superintendent, Paramount Chief, county development superintendent, town chiefs from various towns.

3.0 2021 ACTIVITY REPORT

3.1.0 Testing Period for the Base Stations

In March 2021 of this year, an independent evaluator (Absolute Solutions INC.) using the KPIs outlined in the MOU as key indicators, was hired to carry out the Site Verification and Acceptance Test Procedures of the two base stations. This was during the (45) forty-five days testing period for the proof of concept.

The report verified the following:

- I. Site RF Parameters: Latitude, Longitude, Antenna Height, and Antenna type
- II. Call Quality Test (CQT): Call setup rate, call failure rate, SMS success rate, and SMS failure rate
- III. Drive Test: Site coverage is in 2G network

- IV. Civil Works Acceptance and Maintenance: BTS Cabinet, Cabling and Grounding
- V. Recommendations

Results

At the end of the services provided by Absolute Solutions INC, the UAF Governing board convened to receive the reports and subsequently resolved that the reports be accepted with a recommendation that the vendor addresses all issues raised by the evaluator while executing the contract.

3.1.1 Signing of the service contract with K-NET

In September 2021 a team of UAF/LTA staff traveled to Ghana for one week to negotiate a service contract with K_NET Ghana. On September 14, 2021, the negotiations ended with the signing of an MOU of service contract with the management of K_NET Ghana for the supply and Installation of Rural Telephony solution in Liberia. Minister Cooper Kruah signed on behalf of UAF while Mr. TBD represented the management of K-NET Limited.

Members of the Liberia UAF/LTA team were:

- Min. Cooper KruahMinister Post and Telecommunications
- Comm. Israel AkinsanyaCommissioner Governance and Consumer Affairs
- Mr. Elijah GlayUAF Coordinator
- Mr. Emmanuel Tomah Legal Person GCA
- Mr. James L. Monbo.....PIU coordinator

3.2.0 Challenges faced by the UAF 2021

Prominent among the challenges encountered by the implementation of activities 2021 include bad road conditions that made it difficult to transport personnel and materials to remote sites; Difficulties in finding construction materials in rural Liberia, and the outbreak of Covid-19. These challenges delayed implementation for 5-6 months behind schedule.

Other challenges were lack of funding from GoL through budgetary support and Lack of funding from donor partners

4.0 Conclusions

Concisely, the UAF/PIU successfully implemented 90% all tasks assigned and responsibilities as spelled out in the regulations that created it. While there may be gaps that need to be narrowed or bridged, the years 2019-2021 embody several incredible success stories.

First, the effective management of the new concept of an autonomous PIU over three years, by seven staff who initially did not possess the requisite professional acumen and skills in the ICT terrain was an amazing success story.

Second, the solidifying and vision sharing of the concept of its rural telephony program (RTP) and the support received stands as a colossal milestone and success story of the PIU over the three years in review.

Third, the supports garnered towards the establishment of two base stations in hard to reach areas to provide services to underserved populations amidst huge challenges ranging for policy differences, difficulties in mobilizing logistics, to unfriendly road conditions, touts one of the successes of the PIU team in its ability to mitigate challenges over the three years (2019-2021)

Fourth, the signing of a new agreement, and the resumption of activities to construct 15 base stations over the 15 counties of Liberia is a success story that could not have been told anytime earlier than now.

As 2021 rolls by with its success stories, it is therefore with much confidence, anticipation, and hope that the PIU anticipates Y2022. The aura of our workplace indicates that the energy which has been built over the last three years appears to be positioned as precursor to greater heights.

5.0 Appendices

5.1 Snapshot

PIU

SNAPSHOT OF ACHIEVEMENTS /EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

2018-2021

#	Goals	Activities	Timeline	Focal Person (s)	Cost	Indicators	Comments
1.	*Establish PIU Office *Proposal	Passing of the Resolution	2018	Chairman of the Governing Board	\$306,691.05	Passed resolution signed and available and in operation at PIU office	
		Signing of the Budget	2019	LTA/MPOT	0	Signed budget available and in operation	
		Establishment and Operation of the Project Implementation Unit (PIU)	2019	Commissioner Israel Akinsanya/James Lynch	17,900	PIU Coordinator and support staff contracted and deployed	
		Opening and Operating the Account	2019	Commissioner Israel Akinsanya	0	PIU bank account documents available	
2.	Develop & commission Strategic Plan	Recruit private agency to develop Strategic Plan	2019	Mr. Moses Jackson	\$6,000.00	Contract signed with private agency and available	

		Conduct two day strategic plan workshop with PIU & LTA staff	2019	Moses Blonkanjay Jackson	5,600	3-year strategic plan developed and available at conclusion of workshop	
3.	International Field Trips	Market Research Assessment meeting to K-NET, NRG Wireless, GIFEC in Ghana	April 2019	Commissioner Israel Akinsanya/James Lynch	3,000	Comprehensive report prepared and available	
		Adopt rural telephony project (RTP) K-NET Ghana/GIFEC model	June 2019	Commissioner Israel Akinsanya/James Lynch	3,000		
		Sign with MOU with K-Net Ghana to construct Proof of Concept base stations in Gbarpolu & Grand Kru	Nov. 3, 2019	Commissioner Israel Akinsanya/James Lynch	2,500		
		Sign service contract with K-NET Ghana construction of 15 RTP base stations	Sept. 16, 2021	Commissioner Israel Akinsanya/James Lynch	3,000		
4.	Local Field Trips	Conduct assessment trip to 7 counties: Nimba, Grand Kru, Grand Gedeh, Gbarpolu, Bong, Sinoe	Dec. 2018	Elijah Glay	5,700	NA	
		Identify future POC construction sites in Gbarpolu	Nov. 2019	James Lynch			

		Identify future POC construction sites in Grand Kru	Dec. 2019	Elijah Glay			
		Acquire L-RTP site, sign MOU and commence construction of K-NET in Grand Kru	Feb. 2020	Elijah Glay		# of staff that went on the trip to Gbarpolu and Grand Kru	
		Acquire L-RTP site, sign MOU and commence construction of K-NET in Gbarpolu	Mar. 2020	Elijah Glay		# of staff that went on the trip to Gbarpolu and Grand Kru	
5.	Signing of the MOUs	KNET –Ghana for the Proof Of Concept	Nov. 2019	Commissioner Ivan Brown		# of staff that signed the MOU	
		KNET –Ghana for the RTP	Sept. 2021	Commissioner Israel Akinsanya			
6.	Construction of the VSAT Hub	Sign contract with LBS	Dec. 2019	Commissioner Israel Akinsanya			
		Construct concrete slab; renovate facility at ELBS	Jan. 2020	K-NET Ghana			
		Launch VSAT-Hub	Jan. 2020	Commissioner Israel Akinsanya			
7.	Dedication of base stations	Present L-RTP base station to Representative of District #2 in Grand Kru	Dec. 2020	Hon. Cooper Kruah/Min. of Post & Telecomms	5,500	# of staff that went on the Trip to Gbarpolu and Grand Kru # of staff that went on the trip for the program	
		Present L-RTP base station to Development Supt. Of Gbarpolu	Jan. 2021	Commissioner Akinsanya	3,000		

