



AUDIT SERVICE SIERRA LEONE

PUBLIC INFORMATION

USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS UNDER A NATIONAL EMERGENCY SITUATION

Freetown, Sierra Leone – 8th April, 2020: As part of its public education and information drive, the Audit Service Sierra Leone (ASSL) wishes to inform the general public about the procedures in the use of public funds under a national emergency situation including the manner in which imprest funds should be accessed and retired.

In order to ensure a prudent use of public funds under a national emergency situation, users of public funds are required to be mindful of public financial management and procurement rules and regulations when carrying out activities using public monies ;

1. There should be clearly communicated and, documented authority and approvals for all transactions.
2. All funds spent must be properly tracked and accurately reported including appropriations and all other sources of public funds for managing the emergency situation.
3. For Items not usually part of normal public spending, MDAs need to be clear on whether or not such spending is an appropriate use of public money
4. Section 40 of the 2006 Procurement regulations spells out the procedures to be followed under an emergency procurement, and section 117 highlights the approval arrangements to be followed for emergency procurement.
5. Part 10 of the Public Financial Management Regulations, 2018 deals exclusively with the establishment, utilization and retirement of imprests.
6. Section 117(1) of the Public Financial Management Regulations 2018 states that an imprest fund shall be established for making payments of petty expenditure that cannot be made through the ordinary payment Process required under the Act and these Regulations without undue inconvenience.

In line with the above section, an imprest can be defined as a fund disbursed to Ministries, Department and Agencies (MDAs) for small items of expenditure and restored to a fixed amount periodically. An imprest can also be referred to as an amount disbursed to an MDA to

undertake a specific activity. Imprests are paid into the accounts of the MDAs in advance, and the MDAs are required to retire imprest disbursed in full.

There are two types of imprest:

- **Standing Imprest** – A standing imprest fund is an amount allocated/dispensed to an MDA for the payment of small items of expenditure, and utilized amount of which can be replenished upon retirement and request. Standing imprest is maintained throughout a financial year.
- **Special Imprest**- A special imprest fund is established for making specific payments in respect of specific activities or events. A special imprest is not replenished, and must be fully retired 30 days after the completion of the activity.

Section 119(2) of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone mandates the Auditor-General to audit the public accounts of Sierra Leone and all public offices. It further states that the Auditor-General shall have access to all books, records, returns and other documents relating or relevant to those accounts. The MDAs expenditure relating to imprests are part of the records, returns and documents submitted to auditors for audit purpose.

Imprest holders are therefore expected to **FULLY** comply with the provisions in Sections 117 to 124 of the Public Financial Management Regulations 2018, in the management of all forms of imprest given out from public funds for both emergency and non-emergency use.

The ASSL will continue to carry out its mandate of being the guardian of Sierra Leone's Economic Security.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Information, Education and Communications unit of the ASSL for any further clarifications.

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