



**National Assembly, New Assembly Building,**

**Reginald Pye Lane, Banjul, The Gambia.**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**[HANSARD]**

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**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT**

**SECOND ORDINARY SESSION**

**WEDNESDAY 17<sup>th</sup> JUNE, 2020.**

*SESSION – 2020*



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**Reginald Pye Lane, Banjul, The Gambia**

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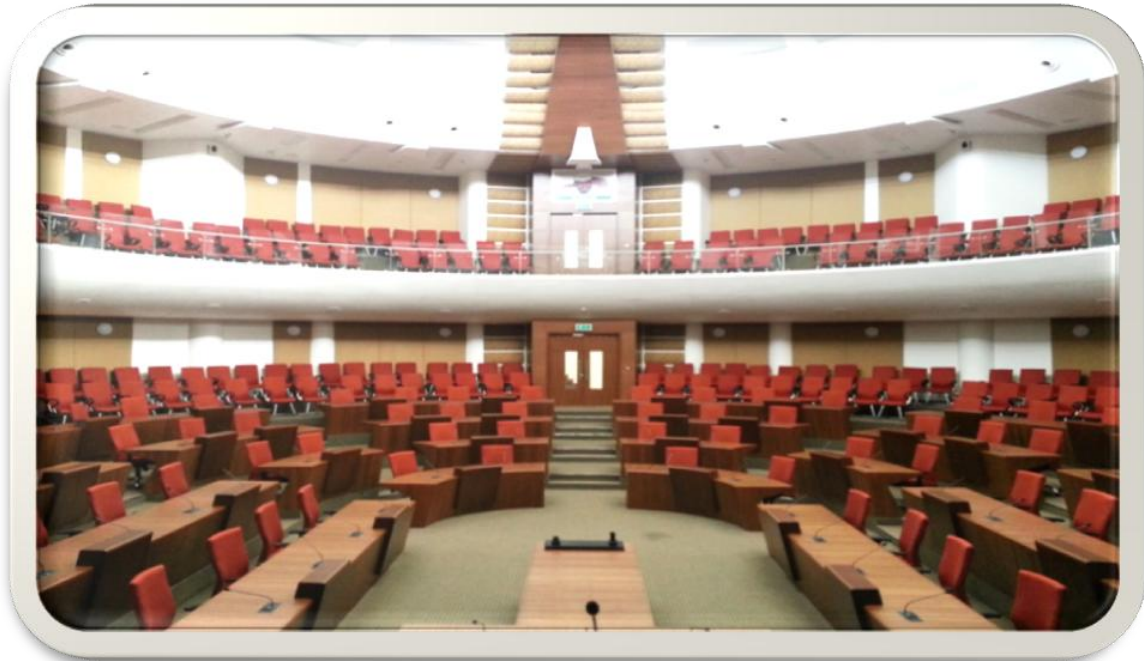
First Meeting of the Fifth Session of the Fifth Assembly  
of the Second Republic of The Gambia.  
Proceedings of the Sitting of Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2020

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**THE CHAMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE GAMBIA  
OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE**

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**SECOND ORDINARY SESSION  
OF THE FIFTH ASSEMBLY  
OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC**

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**WEDNESDAY 17<sup>th</sup> JUNE, 2020**

## **1. PRAYERS:**

*[The Speaker, Hon. Mariam Jack Denton, read the Prayers].*

*[The House met at 10:00 a.m. in New Assembly Building, Reginald Pye Lane, Banjul].*

*[The Speaker, Hon. Mariam Jack Denton, in the Chair].*

*The House was called to Order*

## **2. Correction and Approval of Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Tuesday, 16<sup>th</sup> June, 2020.**

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much. Good morning Honourable Members, Honourable Ministers and Members of the Press. Once more, we are all welcome to today's sitting. There is no formal communication from the Chair, except to inform Honourable Members, that this morning we received communication from the Ministry of Higher Education that they are withdrawing the Bills that were submitted for tabling until next session. They have some administrative hitches [I was made to understand] in terms of gazetting and other things. They are withdrawing it but it will be tabled at the next ordinary session, hopefully.

The Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Tuesday, 16<sup>th</sup> June 2020, is before us for correction and approval. Can any Honourable Member please move that the said Record of Votes and Proceedings be corrected and approved?

**HON. KAJALI FOFANA [JARRA WEST]:** Thank you Madam Speaker. I rise to move that the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Tuesday, 16<sup>th</sup> June 2020, be corrected and approved.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you, any seconder?

**HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]:** Seconded.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much. It has been moved and seconded that the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly sitting of Tuesday the 16<sup>th</sup> of June 2020, be approved. Any issues, observations or corrections, from Honourable Members, starting with Page 1?

**HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]:** Page 2, under the attendance, the first sentence there; we have two absentees there and so it would read "Members" and "was" should be changed to "were".

**THE SPEAKER:** Are you on page 3 then, not 2?

**HON. MAHTARR M. JENG [LOWER NUIMI]:** The following National Assembly "Members", instead of "Member" "were" absent instead of "was", thank you.

**THE SPEAKER:** Anymore on Page 3?

**HON. OUSMAN TOURAY [SABACH SANJAL]:** On the attendance, number 51, Honourable Yaya Gassama, I think he was absent yesterday.

**THE SPEAKER:** Page 4

**HON. ALHAGIE DARBOE [LOWER FULLADU WEST]:** Thank you, on Page 4, question put and agreed to, the third line, those in favour please say "AYE" those not in favour please say "NO". "Please" is missing there, for consistency purposes, thank you.

**HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]:** Thank you. If you go all the way down, paragraph before the last one and the second line after ratification: instead of "of", I believe we should put "ratification by" the Assembly'.

**THE SPEAKER:** Anything else on Page 4, Page 5?

**HON. MAHTARR M. JENG [LOWER NUIMI]:** Question put and agreed to; the third line, the Honourable Member for Serrekunda seconded "the" Motion, the article was left out.

**HON. SUNKARY BADJIE [FONI BREFET]:** Page 5, question put and agreed to; be it resolved that this Assembly do stand adjourn... "ed" until Wednesday.

**THE SPEAKER:**

*[Question Proposed, Put and agreed to]*

*[That the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Tuesday, the 16<sup>th</sup> of June 2020, be approved with amendments]*

***1. Questions for Oral Answers by the Honourable Minister of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology.***

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, as per the Order Paper which has been circulated already and according to Clause 41, Sub-Clause 1 of the Standing Orders, today is for question for oral answers. Just by way of reminder, I want to refer to Clause 43 of the Standing Orders that limits supplementary questions to 7 in total; two [2] for the Honourable Member asking the question and five [5] amongst other Members. It is provided for in the Standing Orders that have been approved by this honourable Assembly.

Therefore, we will proceed with the Honourable Ministers as scheduled for today for them to give their Oral Answers. Now we proceed with the Minister of Higher Education Research, Science and Technology.

Question for which due notices were given to Honourable Minister for Higher Education, Research Science and Technology by Honourable Members for oral reply. Today we will deal with the backlog i.e. the March questions; questions that were supposed to be responded to during the first Ordinary Session in March. Question Number **6** of **2020** [Honourable Member for Foni Brefet].

**HON. SUNKARY BADJIE [FONI BREFET]:** Thank you Honourable Speaker. Can the Honourable Minister of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology, inform this august Assembly if his Ministry has any timeframe for the completion and operationalization of Ndemban Multipurpose and Vocational Skills Training Centre?

**HON. BADARA JOOF [MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION]:** Thank you very much. Honourable Speaker, we have nine (9) million Dalasi in the budget for Ndemban Skills Centre and intend to start with Automotive, Welding and Fabrication, Carpentry and Horticulture within the next few months. We will do so in consultation with representatives from Ndemban and environs and obviously with the Honourable Member of the National Assembly for that area, thank you.

**HON. SUNKARY BADJIE [FONI BREFET]:** Honourable Minister, thank you very much for that information. However, I would be very much interested if you would be in a position to inform this august Assembly with regard to the timeframe, what timeframe do you have in mind, 6 months, 3 months or one year?

**HON. BADARA JOOF [MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION]:** Actually, in consultation with the staff, we had planned to invite you last Friday together with some Members to kick-start the process. We were also expecting certain funding so we wanted to firm up that funding before you are invited. Hopefully, we are looking at now against September, Covid-19 permitting.

**THE SPEAKER:** You can have an additional one.

**HON. MUSA AMUL NYASSI [FONI KANSALA]:** Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. I just want to ask the Honourable Minister, hearing the figure that has been earmarked for the Ndemban Skills Centre. In your view, do you think the estimate of D9 million would be able to complete the works and get the centre operational?

**HON. BADARA JOOF [MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION]:** Certainly not because the curriculum would expand and we had asked for more but the constraints of budget did not allowed Ministry of Finance to give us what we ask for. For a start, we are starting with D9 million and that is why I said that we are in consultation with other development partners to help us in this area.

**HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]:** Honourable Speaker, would the Minister also inform this august Body whether there will be any linkage between training and

productivity i.e. applicability of the training thereafter. Is there any plan for any linkage in terms of providing small scale funding for those who would be graduands of those institutions?

**HON. BADARA JOOF [MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION]:** That is the ideal. In fact, the training will be done in such a way that people in these entrepreneurial areas will be the resource persons to these centres so that the training is relevant to world of work. As to the seed money to kick-start them, those are things that we can discuss with development partners and Ministry of Finance and certainty that is the way to go.

**HON. LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]:** Thank you very much Madam Speaker. Honourable Minister, the D9 million in question that has been approved for you, is it already transferred to account for implementation or is it with the Ministry of Finance and if so will this affect the intended timeframe of implementation?

**HON. BADARA JOOF [MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION]:** It is with the Ministry of Finance but before we make the request, certain things have to be done. The Ministry, from its own resources, took the Army to clear the place and do certain things. As I said last week, we were intending to call in the Member so that we can discuss this. At the appropriate time, we will make the request from Ministry of Finance.

**HON. MAHTARR M. JENG [LOWER NUIMI]:** Honourable Minister, in like manner, do you have any plan to establish the same in the North Bank Region, particularly the western part of the North Bank Region?

**HON. BADARA JOOF [MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION]:** I think it will be answered in the second question that would be asked by the Honourable Member for Kombo South.

**HON. SIDIA JATTA [WULI WEST]:** Honourable Minister, considering the resource constraint that you have mentioned, do you not think it would be better to consider this Skills Centre construction within the framework of regional perspective rather than

anywhere else because you cannot afford it? Do you not think so, to make it more efficient and more effective?

**HON. BADARA JOOF [MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION]:** Certainly that could be an option. The constraints are: one, political expedience – because each one wants his or her constituency to have a Skills Centre for political expedience; the second thing is mobility; the third is accommodation. Considering these constraints, it might be a challenge to go for that option but certainly that is one thing you could do in a strategic centre, where people would come and it is more effective and efficient.

**THE SPEAKER:** We can still have one more supplementary question. Then we proceed with the next question, **7 of 2020** [Honourable Majority Leader and Member for Kombo South].

**HON. KEBBA K. BARROW [KOMBO SOUTH/MAJORITY LEADER]:** Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. Can the Honourable Minister of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology inform this august Assembly about his Ministry's plan to construct a Multipurpose Skills Centre in Kombo South constituency?

**HON. BADARA JOOF [MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION]:** We will certainly build a Multipurpose Skills Centre in Kombo South and also in other regions, especially the North Bank side of the country, if funds are available.

**HON. KEBBA K. BARROW [KOMBO SOUTH/MAJORITY LEADER]:** I want the Honourable Minister to also help us on the timeframe because as I said earlier, looking at the population of Kombo South, the number of students coming out from school annually is increasing. How soon will this construction start in Kombo South?

**HON. BADARA JOOF [MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION]:** The timeframe is budget conditioned, it is budget-driven. I am sure we are doing everything in consultation with other partners like GTZ, YEP, World Bank and ITC to see if we can raise more funds. As soon as we do that, we will make sure that we deal with it expeditiously.

**HON. ALFUSAINY CEESAY [SAMI]:** Honourable Minister, would it be possible for your Ministry to liaise with the Ministry of Works? There is a camp at Sami Tenda and the work is coming to an end. Would it be possible for your Ministry to turn it into a Skills Centre in Sami?

**HON. BADARA JOOF [MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION]:** I can take it up with the Minister of Works but I cannot guarantee a positive response. Certainly, I will take it up with my colleague at the Ministry of Works.

**HON. FATOUMATTA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]:** Madam Speaker, the Honourable Minister has said that the construction is budget-driven. We all understand everything is budget-driven. Is the Honourable Minister telling us that this government has not taken the education of our youths as priority?

**HON. BADARA JOOF [MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION]:** Madam Speaker, I do not see the link in terms of the scale of priority of things. Even in the scale of priority of things, there are priorities within priorities. Education is a frontline priority for this government because everything hinges on education. Certainly, we take it very seriously but at the end of the day we also have to face the stark reality that this country is not that much resource endowed. If we were Brunei Darussalam or Kuwait, I think it would have been a different story for this country not only in the education sector but in other sectors. I would like to assure the Honourable Member for Banjul South that this government take education seriously.

**HON. YA KUMBA JAITEH [NOMINATED MEMBER]:** Honourable Minister, if this government indeed takes education very seriously, I think you should have been able to provide this honourable Assembly with a plan [a policy plan] on when exactly you want to build the Skills Centres in the North Bank Region. What strategies have you put in place to access funding? Which funding departments have you reached out to, to get these finances, what is the plan? The answer that if funding is available is so empty for me. There must be a policy strategy on how you want to access funding to build these Skills Centres in these areas; something solid please.

**HON. BADARA JOOF [MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION]:** I did mention that there is a framework or strategy and I even mentioned some development partners with whom we are in consultation. I mentioned KOITA, World Bank, GTZ, YEP and other partners that we are in consultation with and I had a bilateral discussion with the Member for Kombo South about that a while ago on the framework. We do have a policy direction. Our itinerary towards making education a priority and accessing the funds and getting all these things is not a journey without maps. We have clearly signposted issues in terms of our policy and strategies and also the funding framework in the consultations that we have been having. We have even gone as far as to have consultations with CIDA in Canada, Finland, Sweden, the Qataris and all those people. Really, we do have a funding strategy and I do not think that is empty.

**HON. LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]:** Honourable Minister, did your Ministry conduct a feasibility study in the whole country, to look at which communities would be provided with these multipurpose centres if there is availability of funds?

**HON. BADARA JOOF [MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION]:** Certainly, we have regional differences and that is why in my answer to the Member for Foni Brefet, I said it will be done in consultation with them so that we know what skills are required. We also know naturally you cannot prevent it but you do have skills migration. People feel that when they are training somewhere, they have to come in the urban areas and so on. In order to stem the rural-urban drift, we do have that kind of demography specificities that will address the type of labour force for that area.

**HON. SAIKOU MARONG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]:** Honourable Minister, did your Ministry have any policy in place on the mobilization of a local fund in order to be able to construct some of these facilities in the various regions?

**HON. BADARA JOOF [MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION]:** If I could define local funds in terms of some of the development partners in country like GTZ YEP and ITC then yes, we do have that. We also wrote to some big institutions likes the Q-Group,

Central Bank, Social Welfare and others to see how best we can also garner some funds for these purposes.

**HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]:** Thank you very much. Honourable Speaker, you have the Ministry of Works, the construction team that built the Laminkoto-Passamas Road. They have some residential quarters and now the construction is over. Do you have any plans to work with the Ministry of Works to transform some of these residential quarters into Skills Centres for the youths?

**HON. BADARA JOOF [MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION]:** Honourable Speaker, it is not that we have plans but we will consult with them, perhaps they also have their own ideas. It is just my response to the Honourable Member for Sami but we can talk to them. Our experience has been rooted in the Janjanbureh case; when we wanted to use the former Public Works Department, they said they wanted to revive it. So, we have to discuss with them and see.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much Honourable Minister, for those answers/responses given to the questions posed by the Honourable Members. We are supposed to have June but we want to finish the backlog of May. By next week, we will come to your questions.

### ***3. Questions for Oral Answers by the Honourable Minister of Youth and Sports***

**THE SPEAKER:** Question for which due notices were given to the Honourable Minister of Youth and Sports by Honourable Members for oral reply.

#### **POINT OF OBSERVATION**

**HON. SIDIA JATTA [WULI WEST]:** I want to observe that we are not going by the order of the Order Paper that we have in our hands. What you are saying does not exist on my Order Paper here.

**THE SPEAKER:** We are not going by the sequence of the questioning but we are going by the Order Paper. The Order Paper talks of Questions and Answers. Just because the

Honourable Ministers are not here and we do not want to waste any more time, we want to deal with the Honourable Ministers who are present at the moment. That is why we have jumped Defence and we go to Youth and Sports because the Honourable Minister is here. Question Number **37** of **2020** [Honourable Member for Brikama North]

**HON. ALAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH]:** The Independence Stadium and Friendship Hostel are in such a deplorable condition and thus underutilized. The situation demands immediate attention from the government to demonstrate its total commitment to sports development. In view of that, can the Honourable Minister for Youth and Sports indicate to this august Assembly the plans that his Ministry has in addressing the dilapidating nature of the stadium and the Friendship Hostel as the only main stadium?

**HON. HADRAMMEH SIDIBEH [MINISTER OF YOUTH AND SPORTS]:** My Ministry, in consultation with the relevant Ministries, has developed and costed a plan to engage partners for construction and refurbishment of the said facility, and the construction of new ones across the country, on a BAT basis. Gambia Football Federation is also in consultation with FIFA, in financing a sixty thousand seater capacity stadium in the West Coast Region. With regards to government intervention Honourable Speaker, this august Assembly will recall that in June 2019, Cabinet gave approval for a given percentage of all the incoming international calls, including other subsidiaries, all geared towards the development of youth and sports development initiatives and interventions. Honourable Speaker, please also know that this august Assembly has ratified a Bill requesting a levy meant for youth and sports development. we hope that this project will be carried out this year.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, you have two [2] supplementary questions.

#### **POINT OF OBSERVATION**

**HON. ALAGIE JAWARA [LOWER BADDIBU]:** Honourable Speaker, we do not have the copy that the Minister of Youths and Sports is reading. We have the questions but the exact copy we do not have that.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, you have revised your Standing Orders.

**HON. ALAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH]:** Honourable Minister made reference to Youth and Sports Development Levy that was earmarked for youth and sports development. We are now in the 6<sup>th</sup> month, so far at this stage, how much fund has been raised towards that Youth and Sports Development Levy?

**HON. HADRAMMEH SIDIBEH [MINISTER OF YOUTH AND SPORTS]:** Up to the last time I discussed with Ministry of Finance, we had about D45 million and today approval has been given by GPPA to construct a Mini Stadium in Kiang Manduar. They will lay the foundation stone on Saturday and it should be completed in 24 weeks. My Ministry and the contractors are going upcountry. Kombo Kafuta in West Coast Region and Fulabantang in the Central River Region have already been evaluated and advertisements should be going on for the construction of Mini Stadia. Then the following week, this crew will move on to Basse, Diabugu and Janjanbureh for the design and onward processing of a Mini Stadium in those regions. As we move, then we have also consulted with GAMWORKS to do the design for the Basse Main Field, Bakau and Barra. I would believe that by the end of this year there should be at least three or four projects going on as far as the development of infrastructure is concerned.

**HON. ALAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH]:** It is good news to hear that D45 million has been raised but what is the total projected fund per annum and do you have any policy guidelines as to how that fund will be managed and utilized?

**HON. HADRAMMEH SIDIBEH [MINISTER OF YOUTH AND SPORTS]:** We have a committee that would sit over it, including representative from all stakeholders so that whatever we do, all the stakeholders are involved and if approval is given, then we move forward to the GPPA and other procurement procedures so that we implement the project. This first project carries a budget of about D7 million. That is why I am sending in contractors like GAMWORKS and others so that, they bring up designs and quotations for all these pending football fields or recreation centres. Then we will get back to you people and inform you.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much Honourable Minister. Now we have additional five [5] but I have already taken down those that I have seen earlier on. Please let us just follow the procedures. We have stated that you are entitled to two [2] supplementary questions and you have already asked two [2] supplementary questions.

#### **POINT OF OBSERVATION**

**HON. ALAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH]:** The aspect of my question pertaining to the total projection per annum, I think that is not answered.

**HON. HADRAMMEH SIDIBEH [MINISTER OF YOUTH AND SPORTS]:** Yes, that is what I am saying. The only time I can give you that is when these contractors come back. We will design all these things and put it on a silver plate for discussion.

**HON. DAWDA KAWSU JAWARA [UPPER FULLADU]:** The Honourable Minister did mention in his response that there is a policy framework that they have developed. I just want to ask the Honourable Minister if he can share this with us, particularly the relevant committee. Also, you mentioned that there is a committee that you actually instituted. I want you to inform us, who are the stakeholders in this particular committee?

**HON. HADRAMMEH SIDIBEH [MINISTER OF YOUTH AND SPORTS]:** You have my Ministry as Chair, then you have Ministry of Finance and a representative from the private sector also and you have Ministry of Works and Office of the President. I think this also reminds me of the fact that you should be involved. This committee was just setup last week; we have not been able to even do a meeting at the moment. I think it is an opportunity, and a reminder that the Members of Parliament should be in this Sports Committee as representatives.

**HON. OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NUIMI]:** Honourable Minister, the Honourable Member emphasized in his question that the Stadium and Friendship Hotel is underutilized. He asked for you to demonstrate your total commitment to sports development in the country and the plans you have in place to change the condition of

the stadium. Can you please tell us the immediate plans you have in place to change the face of the stadium right now?

**HON. HADRAMMEH SIDIBEH [MINISTER OF YOUTH AND SPORTS]:**

Honourable Speaker, my immediate, short-term and medium-term plan is to engage GAMWORKS. They should even be there last week but due to administrative problems they were not. They should be there this weekend. They have to assess these things for me in the short-term. That is the level that we can finance at this moment. If you want to do a total revamp, we need big investment. It might not be possible in the short-term. GAMWORKS is going to take care of that in the short-term.

**HON. BILLAY G TUNKARA [KANTORA]:** Honourable Minister, I think you are aware that the levy on the Gateway is supposed to be given to your Ministry. I would like to know, has it materialized? If yes, what are your plans to put in similar structures in the URR South Bank, notably Kantora and Tumana?

**HON. HADRAMMEH SIDIBEH [MINISTER OF YOUTH AND SPORTS]:** It is almost in the process of completion, to be handed over properly to the Ministry of Youth and Sports. I know, politically, we all want something in our area. I think we just have to be patient. This year, there are people who have it but next year it is a process that we can work on. It is being collected, as I said, the initial stage has started. The issue of funding Manduar is obviously coming from that fund.

**HON. ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM]:** Honourable Minister, you made mention of the sixty thousand capacity stadium to be built in the West Coast Region. Can you tell this august Assembly the timeframe, when and which of the communities is going to benefit from this stadium within the West Coast Region?

**HON. HADRAMMEH SIDIBEH [MINISTER OF YOUTH AND SPORTS]:**

Honourable Speaker, the sixty thousand capacity stadium is in two folds: GFF is taking responsibility for the Brikama one, where we have issues of intruders. I think during our last tour, an official letter was sent to the Governor's Office about how to stop these people who intrude into that field. I can remember about three properties that started

building in that area but we sent them the letters. The following week, Department of Physical Planning also made a Press Release concerning these intruders. That part of the arrangement is not yet clear. The former Governor is moved and this Governor also has been engaged again to settle those disputes. Our main challenge here is about land disputes in this country and sometimes we have to work on that. If not, GFF is taking number one responsibility. For us, we are engaging international partners on a BAT basis to do another one.

**HON. SAINY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]:** Honourable Minister, you were talking of the mini stadium to be built in provinces; one is in Kaur since 2015. Already there was money which was allocated and the construction has taken place but still now the stadium is there without being used, with no improvement and with nothing. Can you inform this august Assembly about the situation of the Kaur Mini Stadium?

**HON. HADRAMMEH SIDIBEH [MINISTER OF YOUTH AND SPORTS]:** Thank you very much. Kaur Mini stadium, I think during our tour we even discovered that the community could not access their funds due to the fact that one of the signatories is no long in government. I even instructed my Permanent Secretary [PS] that he should write to the Bank and make sure these funds are transferred to the community; that was one thing. I committed myself that we will do something about that stadium because when I went there, I found young people training under very difficult conditions and I felt we should do something; we will do something. We are on the process. Not everybody will benefit this year but as we go, we will definitely do it.

**THE SPEAKER:** I think we have exhausted our seven [7] supplementary questions and Honourable Minister for Youth and Sports, thank you very much for the replies given to those questions. You are now released but current questions will come later, thank you.

#### ***4. Questions and Answers by the Honourable Minister of Agriculture***

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much. Question for which due notices were given to the Honourable Minister of Agriculture by Honourable Members for Oral reply: Question Number **52** of **2020** [Honourable Member for Jimara]

**HON. ALHAGIE H. SOWE [JIMARA]:** Can the Honourable Minister of Agriculture tell this august Assembly the criteria that was used to choose Mankamang Kunda as beneficiary of a Milling Machine from her Ministry?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Honourable Speaker, the selection of Mankamang Kunda, as a beneficiary of a Milling Machine was based on a needs assessment in consultation with the Agricultural Regional Directorate of URR. Secondly, there is Mixed Farming Centre at Mankamang Kunda that is used as a learning hub for farmers and extension workers in the region. In addition, there is also another distribution of equipment to the communities of Sutoma Samba, Mama Sutu and Kosemari. Under your constituency, they are supplied with tractor 1, power tiller 2, multipurpose milling machine 1, thresher 1 and reaper 1. For each of the aforementioned communities, there is also construction of access road of 4.5 kilometres and 0.5 kilometres for Sutoma Samba and the Mama Sutu respectively, by Agriculture Value Change Development Project. Furthermore, my Ministry distributed power tillers, rice milling machines, groundnut seeds and fertilizer to the communities of Sutoma Sere and Gambisara.

Finally, Honourable Speaker, as alluded to earlier, all the equipment and the accessories were distributed based on a needs assessment, in consultation with the Agricultural Regional Directorate in the region.

**HON. ALHAGIE H. SOWE [JIMARA]:** Thank you very much Honourable Minister for taking all those developments to Jimara. We have a Mixed Farming Centre in Mankamang Kunda. We are expecting that if there is any agricultural equipment in Mankamang Kunda, those equipment should be kept at the Mixed Farming Centre because the Mixed Farming Centre is there for the whole constituency and the region at large but that is not happening. The equipment you took to Mankamang Kunda is kept by the villagers and is only used by the villagers. That is why I ask the question.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Mankamang Kunda Mixed Farming Centre was established before early 60s and it is a learning centre for all the

farmers in the region, not only Mankamang Kunda. The equipment we distributed is for the surrounding villages, because Mankamang Kunda Mixed Farming Centre has catchment areas. Obviously, you have the Mixed Farming Centre in the region i.e. Mankamang Kunda and we have our storage facilities. When the Mixed Farming Centre was not yet ready, I went and handed over the equipment to the Alkalo and the people of Mankamang Kunda. Because we have a Mixed Farming Centre in Mankamang Kunda, we cannot deny other farmers around Mankamang Kunda from having access to those equipment.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member for Lower Nuimi, please can you be seated?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** This is the way I speak. Maybe you want me to slow down but this is normally the way I speak.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, I sit here and some people will be shouting at me, we are all witnesses to that. Nobody will raise his or her voice to say calm down you are dealing with the Chair. Nobody does it.

**HON. MAHTARR M. JENG [LOWER NUIMI]:** The cases might not be related.

**THE SPEAKER:** Let us allow her to finish your first supplementary question and then we go on.

**HON. ALHAGIE H. SOWE [JIMARA]:** Thank you very much. Honourable Minister, I did not say the Mixed Farming Centre is there for the people of Mankamang Kunda. I said the Mixed Farming Centre is there for the constituency and the region at large. Then, the Mixed Farming Centre was under rehabilitation. Now I think what is important is, let them take the equipment to the Mixed Farming Centre. Let it be used by the constituency people and not one community. That is what I am trying to tell you.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** I want to assure you that those equipment are for the Mixed Farming Centre. The time I was handing over those equipment, it was under rehabilitation but all those equipment will be stationed at the

Mixed Farming Centre so that Mankamang Kunda and the surrounding villages will benefit.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you, can we take 5 other supplementary questions?

**HON. ALFUSAINY CEESAY [SAMI]:** Honourable Minister, your Ministry has supplied some milling machines to certain communities but I believe some communities were given the wrong milling machine. Areas that cultivate coos were given rice milling machine, particularly my own area. What are you going do to those areas? Are you going to give them coos milling machine or still maintain the rice milling machine which is not beneficial to them? Thank you.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** I am surprised because rice being our staple food in this country, any compound you go to, they consume rice. With our assessment, we have seen that we need to promote rice production, if we want to be self-sufficient in rice production, farmers should have access to machinery and equipment because threshing and milling of rice is so bothering for the woman. If you mentioned that your people do not need that rice milling machine, we can take it away and anytime we have the coos milling machine, we can give it to them because other communities are there and are in need of those rice milling machines.

**HON. BAKARY CAMARA [KIANG CENTRAL]:** Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor.

#### **POINT OF OBSERVATION**

**HON. BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA]:** I am saying, it is like we are deviating from the political question. What is being asked to the Honourable Minister...

**THE SPEAKER:** I do not think that is a decision you take. Thank you, with all due respect, please be seated.

**HON. BAKARY CAMARA [KIANG CENTRAL]:** Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. The issue of Mixed Farming Centre has been mentioned. I want to believe that the Mixed Farming Centres are very important and have been in existence since. You

have one in my constituency i.e. in Kwinella; virtually nothing serious is happening. I do not know whether your Ministry has any plan to uplift it and try to make it a functional centre.

**THE SPEAKER:** I think before the Honourable Minister responds, we should all be mindful of the rationale, the reason why supplementary questions are allowed; they meant to clarify, in case there is any ambiguity but we cannot bring new elements. Let the questions be direct, let us avoid making a statement of fact. If you want to make a statement of fact or have some suggestion, I am sure the offices of the Honourable Minister and her team are open. This is just by way of reminder so that we will follow the procedures.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Honourable Speaker, Kwinella Mixed Farming Centre; at the moment we have posted a new staff and I will assure you that that Mixed Farming Centre will be functional. There will be changes.

**HON. YA KUMBA JAITEH [NOMINATED]:** Honourable Minister, you mentioned that one of the criteria used to give these milling machinery to Mankamang Kunda was that there is a Mixed Farming Centre in Mankamang Kunda and the Honourable Member for Jimara asked why this milling machinery is with the Alkalo. In your response, you said it should be because the Mixed Farming Centre was under rehabilitation so it should be with them. My question is, from here, what efforts would you make to make sure that this milling machinery is immediately transferred to the Mixed Farming Centre for the benefit of Mankamang Kunda community and the surrounding communities.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** As a rural person, if you want to do any extension work at village level, anything you want to handover, you have to involve the Alkalo because that person is the village head. We handed over the machines to the Alkalo so that when the Mixed Farming Centre is ready, we will just select a portion whereby at least we can mount those equipment. I want to assure you that if we are ready and we deploy our engineering people, we will fix those machinery and the communities and the surrounding will use it immediately.

**HON. DEMBO K.M. CAMARA [ILLIASA]:** It is not a question, mine is commentary. There is no harm giving Mankamang Kunda... *[Interruption]*

**THE SPEAKER:** If you are not prepared to listen to the Chair, then the question is rolled out.

**HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]:** Thank you Honourable Speaker. The Minister did mention that the milling machines are allocated to Mixed Farming Centres. My question is, what about areas or districts that do not have Mixed Farming Centres, what do you do under that condition? There is no Mixed Farming Centre, for example, in Wuli East. So, what do you do in that situation?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** In fact, the machines I mentioned, almost one hundred and four communities benefited from those machines. We are doing it gradually. With my tenure in the office, I want to ensure that every village producing rice or millet has a machine.

**HON. NDEY YASSIN SECKA [NOMINATED]:** Honourable Speaker I want to ask the Honourable Minister. In her statement she said that these equipment should be handed over to the Alkalos. Is it that when you give it to them, you give it to them and that is all? Are there any mechanisms put in place to make sure that you monitor these Alkalos to know who gets what and how it is being used within the whole community, to avoid what was happening before? We all heard what had happened.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** That is a very good question. Yes, I said the Alkalos because they are the village heads. It does not mean that the Alkalos own those equipment. In our presence, the Alkalo will further hand them over to those beneficiaries. Those are the women farmers and we have a mechanism whereby these machines are thoroughly monitored.

**THE SPEAKER:** We have exhausted our limit so we move on to question number **53** of **2020** [Honourable Member for Kantora].

**HON. BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA]:** Honourable Speaker, can the Honourable Minister of Agriculture inform this august Assembly about level of implementation of the US\$ 50 million grant from the French government which was earmarked for rice production in URR?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Honourable Speaker, the US\$ 50 million grant was a pledge in response to the National Development Plan Brussels engagement. Subsequent to that, the French government has committed €10 million as co-financing of the recently ratified roads project.

**THE SPEAKER:** First supplementary question.

**HON. BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA]:** Thank you very much Honourable Minister, for informing us that the French government has given €10 million as financing. What is level of implementation for these particular projects?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** This is the roads project ratified here i.e. the \$80 million project. At the moment, the project was supposed to be launched since March 23<sup>rd</sup> but unfortunately with this Covid-19, we could not launch it. IFAD are doing their utmost so that, the implementation can start this month [June].

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much. We take supplementary questions on this.

**HON. YA KUMBA JAITEH [NOMINATED]:** Honourable Minister, from what I understand; only \$10 million from the \$50 million that was pledged was given by the French government. Are you making any efforts to get the rest of the \$40 million pledged? Are you expecting any other money from these pledges?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** In fact, this question has been answered. Subsequently, they have even reduced the \$10 million to \$7 million for the roads. Obviously, the balance of that money is committed to NDP and you do not have only agriculture under NDP so I cannot assure you that we can have the balance for agriculture. That means that the other sectors also will be denied.

**HON. NDEY YASSIN SECKA [NOMINATED]:** Honourably Minister, are you making any efforts since you are saying that you are not foreseeing any money coming to the Ministry. Is there any mechanism put in place so that you can raise funds in your Ministry, are you thinking about that?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** If I mention that we are not expecting any funds, we are talking of this \$50 million because they already allocated some amount to us. Obviously, every day we [our Ministry] are knocking the doors of the donors so that at least we can have support. We are always developing a proposal so that at least the needs of our farmers can be addressed.

**HON. SIDIA S. JATTA [WULI WEST]:** I am confused and I want clarity. The questioner mentioned \$50 million grant from the French government. The Honourable Minister, in her early answers mentioned €10 million and eventually she said this is now reduced to \$7 million. So, which is which? \$50 million does it stand and where is the \$10 million how do you... €10 million there, \$50 million there, and \$7 million dollars there, which is which? I want clarity.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** This was an agreement between the French government and the Ministry of Agriculture. They agreed to give us \$10 million but subsequently, few months ago, they wrote to us to tell us that they are ready to offer \$7 million. They did this maybe because of this Covid-19 because lots of funds are being committed to COVID.

**HON. LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]:** Thank you. Honourably Minister, the \$50 million in question that has been pledged by the French government, is intentionally for rice production, not any other aspect of the NDP but specifically for rice production. That is what the parent question is intended. As a Ministry, are you making any effort to get this \$50 million so that we can boost rice production in the country?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** As I mentioned to you, we are still developing proposals. Anything on rice production, we are trying to push it with the Ministry of Finance because the money is not coming directly to us [i.e. \$50 million]

because it is a pledge. It is not that the money is in The Gambia. It is a pledge so we will continue to develop proposals so that we can have access to this \$50 million.

**HON. ALAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH]:** There is still no clarity on the \$50 million. The Honourable Member indicated that, this is the money that has been pledged by the French government, earmarked for rice production. On the other way, the Honourable Minister is trying to say that it is meant for the National Development Plan; the aspect for agriculture is about €10 million. Can the Honourable Minister confirm whether, as indicated by the Honourable Member for Kantora, that is the case; that the \$50 million is what is earmarked for rice production alone?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Thank you very much. This is a pledge earmarked for rice production but nonetheless, the €50 million is not here in The Gambia, it is just a pledge. Based on that pledge, agriculture was able to have the €7 million. At the beginning, they recommended that they are giving us €10 million out of that €50 million but at the moment they give us €7 million so that we can start with that. We do not have that €50 million in the country at the moment, it is a pledge.

**HON. FATOU K. JAWARA [TALLINDING KUNJANG]:** Honourable Minister, going by the answer you just provided, I have a similar question with Honourable Jatta. You made mention of the pledge which was €50 million and this number has been scaling down from €10 million to €7 million. Before giving out the answer, did you make any further consultation with the donor partner whether there are certain criteria that your Ministry needs to meet before they give you the €50 million or it is because of the pandemic?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** In fact, before the pandemic, it was €10 million but during the pandemic period, they changed to €7 million. Obviously one can conclude, it is because of the COVID that is why they reduced it to €7 million. As I mentioned earlier, we will continue to approach the French government so that at least we can have the €50 million.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much. We move on to question number **54** of **2020** [Honourable Member for Niani].

**HON. ALHAGI S.B. SILLAH [NIANI]:** Honourable Speaker, can the Honourable Minister of Agriculture inform this august Assembly in detail, the agricultural equipment that was recently distributed in some villages in the country during the month of February 2020?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Honourable Speaker, my Ministry has recently distributed different types of farming equipment. The equipment include: 50 units of power tillers and accessories, 10 units of irrigation water pumps of different sizes, 20 multi-purpose threshing machines, 100 tarpaulins, 80 rice dehullers, 50 coarse grain milling machines and 50 rice milling machines of different types. The aforementioned equipment and accessories were distributed to the following communities:

- North Bank Region [45]: power tillers 10, rice dehullers 20, tarpaulin 2, and coarse grain milling machines 13.
- Central River Region North [47]: power tillers 9, rice dehullers 12, tarpaulins 14, coarse grain milling machines 4, multi-purpose threshers 5, pumping machine 3.
- Central River Region South [56]: power tillers 12, rice dehullers 14, tarpaulin 16, coarse grain milling machine 1, multi-purpose coarse grain thresher 10, pumping machines 3.
- Upper River Region [30]: power tillers 5, rice dehullers 6, tarpaulin 6, coarse grain milling machines 7, multi-purpose coarse grain threshers 5, pumping machine 1.
- Lower River Region [28]: power tillers 7 rice dehullers 8, tarpaulin 3, coarse grain milling machine 10.
- West Coast Region [22]: power tillers 3, rice dehullers 5, coarse grain milling machines 14.
- Kanifing Municipality [6]: power tillers 3 rice dehullers 2, coarse grain milling machine 1.

There are remaining equipment and accessories to be distribute to the beneficiaries, like power tiller 1, rice dehullers 63, tarpaulin 59 and the pumping machine 3.

**HON. ALHAGI S.B. SILLAH [NIANI]:** Honourable Minister, I want to know who purchased this equipment.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** I can fully remember during the handing over we were together at your constituency. These equipment were purchased by the Japanese and it was handed over to The Gambia government.

**HON. ALHAGIE SB SILLAH [NIANI]:** It is a concern to me this is why I asked who purchased these equipment. I have a problem in my constituency about these equipment in a village called Sukuta. They are having push-and-pull over those equipment saying that it is Barrow government who bought it and it is for Barrow Youth Movement and the machine is going to be wholly and solely handled by the Barrow Youth Movement in Sukuta. It is a big row and problem there. This is why I wanted it to be clear so that they can know it is purchased by the Japanese government.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Thank you for that information. You personally have approached me and during the handing over I made sure that you were part of the handing over. The Regional Governor was part of the handing over, the Seyfo of that District was part of that handing over and even the Alkalos were part of the handing over. Obviously, I handed over personally to the Governor. The Governor handed over to the Chief, the Chief handed it over to the Alkalo and the Alkalo handed over to the women. The machines are brought to the communities to reduce drudgery on women. I am surprised you mention it here again, because it has already been resolved. I want to make sure that all the women in that village benefit from the machine.

**HON. MUHAMED MAGASSY [BASSE]:** Madam Speaker, the questioner did make emphasis on two words in "detail" and in some "villages". The information that the questioner is looking for, is the agricultural equipment that was recently distributed in some villages. We want to know the villages that benefited from those materials and in

detail but in the answers the Honourable Minister give us the information by region. So, it might be a technical problem but if the pending information can be provided to the parliament it will help us or if the Minister has the answers just now she can help the parliament to understand it thank you?

**THE SPEAKER:** I think that is a reasonable request.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** I will make sure by tomorrow you have the list of the villages.

**HON. FAKEBBA N.L. COLLEY [KIANG WEST]:** Could the Honourable Minister tell us why during her distribution of machines, the National Assembly Members were not consulted?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** I think you assigned a Selected Committee to us. At the moment, I think I would allow the Chair of the Select Committee for you to liaise with him. Any region we are going to, we always liaise with them. Maybe it could be an oversight.

**HON. DAWDA KAWSU JAWARA [UPPER FULLADU West]:** Thank you very much Honourable Minister, for the laudable efforts you making to address the plight of the women especially the farming womenfolk. However, I just want to ask a question about three areas, knowing that these machines will not suffice the need of all the women in the country. I want you to inform us [if you can please] what criteria did you use to ascertain who should get this particular lot now? On what conditions did you give them and what is the sustainability aspect of it, because that is very key? You cannot, time and time as a government, be giving people these machines. They should actually be able to sustain them. Can you please help us with those information?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** I would start with the sustainability. Anywhere we do the handing over, we make sure that they have a very strong committee to look into these machines. Although as a government it is free to them but for them when implementing or using that equipment they should ensure that

they charge a token. At least, if it is D100, let them not consume D50. Let them save it in case there is a breakdown because a machine is just for a period. So, we gave it out to some communities, as we mentioned. We are doing our best to have more as I mentioned earlier so that other communities without machines can have it. Every day we are developing a proposal, because we know what our farmers need. We have a Central Projects Coordinating Unit. They always develop a project proposal so that we can have support of donors. As I am standing here, just two weeks ago we received some support from the Chinese. It is based on the request and the proposals we are pushing.

**HON. MAHTARR M. JENG [LOWER NUIMI]:** I heard the number of equipment that were given in the North Bank amounts to 47. Could you water it down to the beneficiary villages so that we would know?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Thank you very much for that question. I can remember your area, Fass Njaga Choi, they benefited. Just at the border, they benefited; they have coos milling machine. I will provide all the lists, we have it. If you go to Medina Seringe Mass, they benefited. I can say it off head but I think is important for me to give you the list.

**HON. KADDY CAMARA [FONI BONDALI]:** I have withdrawn my question. My concern was addressed by the Honourable Member for Basse.

**HON. SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]:** The Honourable Minister, made mention of a lot of authorities in the handing over process but I believe since you have the VDCs in the various villages they could be used in the handing over process so that sustainability can exit and we can avoid political problems among the groups. I think that is a good recommendation that I am making.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** It is a very good recommendation. In fact, I forgot to mention the VDC but they were part of the handing over.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much. We proceed to question number **55** of **2020**  
[Honourable Member for Niani]

**HON. ALHAGI S.B. SILLAH [NIANI]:** Can the Honourable Minister of Agriculture update the august Assembly on the progress and state of the rehabilitation of the Mixed Farming Centres in some parts of the country such as Kuntaur Fula Kunda in the Central River Region?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Honourable Speaker, the rehabilitation of the Mixed Farming Centres countrywide is in progress. Some of the Mixed Farming Centres have 90% of work done, e.g. Pirang Mixed Farming Centre.

**HON. ALHAGI S.B. SILLAH [NIANI]:** How soon is production going to take place?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** In fact, if you go to in Kuntaur Fula Kunda, the staffs assigned there are already clearing the site so that at least this raining season production can be started. This question was March. In fact, at the moment, the Mixed Farming Centres are about to be completed.

**HON. ALHAGIE SB SILLAH [NIANI]:** From past experience, how are you going to decide the human resources? Normally, human resource labour is always limited. That causes low production in the Mixed Farming Centres?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** That is a very good point. Human resources are important for those Mixed Farming Centres because they are well rehabilitated. My ministry and the Department of Agriculture are working on that. At the moment, if you go to Kuntaur Fula Kunda, you have new staff.

**HON. YAYA GASSAMA [KIANG EAST]:** Honourable Minister, are there plans to increase the number of Mixed Farming Centres right across the country? There are some areas that are far from the existing Mixed Farming Centres. Do you have such plans?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** The Ministry of Agriculture and the Department are planning on that but we need to rehabilitate the 27 Mixed

Farming Centres first. If not, the old Mixed Farming Centres will not be utilised properly. There are plans to increase the mixed farming centres.

**HON. SIDIA S. JATTA [WULI WEST]:** My view is that there are two types of rehabilitation: first, infrastructural rehabilitation then functional rehabilitation. You are talking about rehabilitation of Mixed Farming Centres and this was a primary issue in 2017. Now we are almost 2 to 3 years and we are still talking about rehabilitation of the Mixed Farming Centres. Are you making any plans or are you preparing those who are going to be running these Mixed Farming Centres with the new mandate that they are going to have?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** In fact, we already planned for that. At the moment, if you go to some of the rehabilitated Mixed Farming Centres, we already posted some staff and will make sure that it is properly utilised because it is a leaning hub for the farmers. In fact, that is why we supplied some of these Mixed Farming Centres with equipment. Kuntaur Fula Kunda received some equipment. Ngayen Sanjal received and Pirang also receive the equipment.

**HON. DEMBO K.M. CAMARA [ILLIASA]:** Honourable Minister, out of these 27 Mixed Farming Centres you are rehabilitating, is Yalal Mixed Farming Centre among these 27 Mixed Farming Centres?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** In fact, for the third phase, we are going to rehabilitate. Yalal Mixed Farming Centre is one of them. It will be rehabilitated, and also Kiang Karantaba.

**HON. OUSMAN TOURAY [SABACH SANJAL]:** Honourable Minister, I first of all want to thank your Ministry for rehabilitating the one at Ngayen Sanjal, which is a real need for that community. I want to know the mechanism you put in place to sustain it. If you look at that Mixed Farming Centre, it was built a long time ago but due to poor, planning, the Mixed Farming Centre has gone to a very dilapidating state until your intervention. Do you have plans to sustain this in the long term?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Yes, we have plans to maintain those Mixed Farming Centres because we cannot spend money on Mixed Farming Centres without fully utilising them. We have plans, even this coming raining season there will be production. At the moment, I assigned my Permanent Secretary to assign the Director General and the Regional Directors to make best use of these Mixed Farming Centres because they are learning hubs for the farmers.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, we exhausted the upper limit of our seven [7] supplementary questions. We move on to the next question which is Question Number **56 of 2020** [Honourable Member for Serrekunda].

**HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]:** Could the Honourable Minister of agriculture, explain to this august Assembly whether her office has any plans to cooperate with the Ministries of Fisheries, Environment and Energy, to identify the agricultural value change potential of KM and Banjul Administrative Areas in addition to the other administrative areas, especially when it comes aquaculture, bioenergy, production of sweet potatoes, poultry, the rearing of small ruminants and general processing and sale of produce?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Honourable Speaker, my Ministry has plans to cooperate with the Ministries of Fisheries, Environment and Energy to identify the agricultural value chain potentials of KM and Banjul Administrative Areas. In addition to the other administrative areas, especially when it comes to agriculture, bioenergy and production of sweet potato, poultry, the rearing of small ruminants and generally processing and the sale of produce. In addition, with the completion of the OMVG project in the area of energy, agriculture can benefit from hydroelectric energy and the running cost of energy on agro processing in KM and Banjul administrative areas would be lower. For Climate Smart Agriculture [CSE], the National Agriculture Research Institute, has been working very hard in developing and promoting technologies in the area of orange-flesh bio-fortified sweet potato production and other CSE-variety crops targeting areas such as Bakau, Bakoteh and the Abuko gardens and catchment areas within the KM and Banjul. For small ruminant value chain, my Ministry

has been keen in improving and upgrading the abattoir, livestock holding and the show grounds that is environmentally friendly in KM, Abuko and Banjul. Furthermore, the construction of a meat processing and the marketing facility in Kotu, as well as the purchase of Blast Freezers for storage and preservation of poultry product in KM, Abuko and Banjul dwellers are part of our plans. Our projects have been into aquaculture development and enhancement. Therefore partnering with the Ministry of Fisheries to add value to the product is part of our plans for sustainability purposes.

Finally, Honourable Speaker, there is a Directorate of Urban Agriculture under my Ministry, whose objectives are to support the urban settlements engaged in the aforementioned activities as well as horticulture productions.

**HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]:** Honourable Speaker, the Honourable Minister has indicated the milling machines that have been distributed but particularly to end drudgery. The question is really linking agricultural production not only for consumption but for meeting the general needs of the population to reduce importation and that is where the question is heading to. Is there any concrete plan or proper assessment of how much we are producing in terms of coos etc. and what could be done to be able to process the rice and the coos for the markets because we have half a million consumers in this side of the urban areas? Sometimes we see agriculture as just producing but rather we should also see it as a chain, the actual consumption. Is there a plan where we now move stably towards even using appropriate technology not huge industry to process for our local markets to reduce importation of consumer goods?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** It is a very good question. In fact, our Ministry is working towards that because we want to ensure that what we produce, we process it and package it properly. In fact, at the moment, I can even mention one to you. There is a young guy who is almost 29 years old. He is in Bakau, just adjacent to the stadium [President's Award Scheme]. That young guy has a matching grant from one of our projects and at the moment the young boy is processing chilly. He has out-grower schemes upcountry. He gives them inputs, seeds, fertilizer and at the end of the day the young guy will buy those chilly from the farmers

then he will just processes it and add value. Now we can be proud that we have our Gambian-made pepper properly packaged for the market. We are working towards that because we have GHE also. He has some matching grant from one of our projects. That guy also is processing some mango [dry mango], also processing mango into juice and jam. There is another guy also in Serrekunda, around Jeshwang end. They called it Tropingo. Still we are working closely with the private sectors and also our farmers so that at least we can improve on value addition because what you are asking is all about adding values so that at least we can reduce losses in our crops.

**HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]:** Honourable Speaker, I would want the Minister [if that has not actually happened] to actually look at an entirely different value chain scenario. I had encouraged a group of farmers to link their farms and they were able to put that together to be almost 50 to 100 hectares and they are able to produce. There are some Gambians who are ready to process whatever they produce. There are also Gambians who are able to use what they produce because they are expanding bakeries all over the place so that even the coos that is processed, they will be able to consume the flour to produce bread for all of us. That is a chain but those farmers will not be able to buy this appropriate technology of a tractor that may cost about D400,000. Is the government thinking in that direction of encouraging these farmers to come together? They own their independent farms but they will be able to get this technology to produce on a large scale and get Gambians who will be able to process. These milling machines distributed everywhere, if it is concentrated into certain catchments, they will be able to process what is produced from that particular area. From that processing, the others afar will be able to be linked to it to produce what we need. That is the scenario that I am talking about. Is that not a possibility? If it is, would the government move in that direction?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** There is a possibility because in order for us to be self-sufficient in food production, we need to support the farmers, private sector or groups. We are ready to support any group. In fact, I can even mention I know I will come to that because there is a question for that. Go to

Jahally Pacharr where you have Maruo Farms; we are working closely with that guy. He is an individual and we are ready to work with any other individual or even groups of farmers who are interested in adding value to our agricultural produce.

**HON. DAWDA KAWSU JAWARA [UPPER FULLADU West]:** Honourable Minister, considering that apart from the D484 million that we approve in this 2020 budget, we have over 200 million dollars in-country between the GCAV, SDF, NEMA now called ROOTS, the FASDEP etc. All these projects are sitting on good money and all that we are hearing is plans. As we speak today, Honourable Speaker, I do not know whether you are aware of this; the women of The Gambia particularly those in the North Bank of CRR from Farafenni down to Nianija, going towards the Saloum, have tonnes and tonnes of onion that is sitting there. I remember during our monitoring process of the Covid-19, we brought these people, the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Finance together, to see how they can actually take these goods from them and it was priced at about D18 million. Honourable Minister, I think it is time to put these plans into actions and help these womenfolk. They spent months and months in these gardens and fields to grow these produce but yet, they are sitting there and it is all going into ruins. Can you tell me now, are you aware of this particular problem that is existing now and if you are, what are you doing not to address it?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** My Ministry is aware of those onions, because we even collected data that is why you are able to know that D18 million for buying of onions. We have a Covid Committee and Honourable Fatou Kinteh is responsible for that sub-committee of buying onions. The data collected is being distributed and she has the copy of that data and she is making arrangement with private sector to buy those onions from the farmers.

**HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]:** Honourable Speaker, this question is very important, because many women in the semi-urban areas are very much interested especially in poultry production and they form organisations/associations for this but their problem is how to engage with the government with micro finance etc. to

be able to start. That is their problem. What specifically would your Ministry be doing with such enthusiastic women that are interested in this area?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Since I was appointed, I mentioned that I want to ensure that [for agriculture] we are self-sufficient in all aspects of food production and poultry is part of it. I want to mention to you that if there is a particular group that is interested in poultry production, we have our Regional Directors all over the regions. Let them liaise with the Regional Directors so that there will be documentation. If there is a project for poultry, they can be considered because we have a Director of Department of Agriculture and we have a Director of Livestock Services in all the regions.

**HON. MAHTARR M. JENG [LOWER NUIMI]:** Madam Speaker, I applaud the knowledge of the Minister countrywide. She seems to be spot on almost every district every village but notwithstanding, how far are you regarding the lessening of the importation or the export of cashew nuts by the Indians. If I relate the question to that of the Honourable Member for Serrekunda, you would need to encourage the indigenous cashew growers so that you could add value to try to lessen the buying from these Indians because the rate at which they are buying these things is almost killing the indigenous growers.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** If you talk about the technical aspect i.e. our production, we will make sure that our farmers produce quality cashew and export also. I think we have a Ministry of Trade, who can be responsible for that. Nonetheless, with our support, we want to ensure that we invite other private people to engage in exportation of cashew. In fact, not long ago, the Vietnamese approached us so that at least they can have some processing plans at around Barra because around that area [around Nuimi] they produce a lot of cashew. We are still working on that but I want to assure you that we will make sure that cashew becomes a very important cash crop in this country.

**HON. OUSMAN SILLAH [BANJUL NORTH]:** The Honourable Minister indicated that the plan is for her Ministry to cooperate with Ministries such as Fisheries, Environment and Energy, to identify the agricultural value chain potentials for KM and Banjul. In order, to make the value chain complete from the farm to the table, would the Ministry also consider involving the Ministry of Trade so that urban youths will be part of the outlet for this process i.e. agricultural products or agricultural produce by establishing kiosks. Would you consider also engaging the Ministry of Trade to assist the urban youths to have outlets in the forms of kiosks to be selling these products and produce?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Thank you very much, the points are noted. I will ensure that I work closely with Ministry of Trade but I also want to inform you that with the ROOTS project, it is because of Covid, if not, the work should have been started. Banjul will benefit from a cold storage facility.

**HON. ALAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH]:** Honourable Minister, it appears the questioner would like to know whether your Ministry has any plans to cooperate with the various Ministries which include the Ministry of Fisheries. To that point, do you have any plans to cooperate with the Ministry of Fisheries? If so, does this include the aspect of fishpond production? I was privileged to be part of the Youth and Sport Minister's tour at Niani Berreh Farm. We were quite impressed with the level of production of the fishpond at that particular farm. I believe they need support and encouragement.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Thank you very much. Our Ministry is ready to collaborate with any Ministry to improve agriculture production and the productivity. The aquaculture you mentioned, we will be closely working with the Ministry of Fisheries, because even the FASDEP Project was working closely with the Fisheries Ministry. We will continue that collaboration.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much. Honourable Members, we exhausted our upper limits of seven [7] supplementary questions so we move over to Question Number **57** of **2020** [Honourable Member for Foni Brefet].

**HON. SUNKARY BADJIE [FONI-BREFET]:** Can the Honourable Minister for Agriculture tell this august Assembly if her Ministry has any plan and timeframe for the rehabilitation of Somita Mixed Farming Centre?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Honourable Speaker, rehabilitation of all Mixed Farming Centres is part of our top priorities and Somita Mixed Farming Centre is envisaged to be included in the 2021 batch of the next Mixed Farming Centres to be rehabilitated.

**HON. ALHAGIE DARBOE [LOWER FULLADU WEST]:** Thank you very much. Madam Speaker, can the Honourable Minister give us the statistics of how many Mixed Farming Centres have already been rehabilitated and how many are left?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** We have a total of 27 mixed farming Centres. Six [6] were rehabilitated before and now we are rehabilitating six 6, making it 12.

**HON. MAHTARR M. JENG [LOWER NUIMI]:** Honourable Minister, within this rehabilitation do you have Bakindik in question?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Honourable Speaker, I am surprised the Parliamentarian is asking me whether Bakindik is part of it. Bakindik has been rehabilitated; they were the first place to be rehabilitated. It means that you do not visit your Mixed Farming Centres. I know the Mixed Farming Centre more than you. It is just unfortunate but Bakindik has been rehabilitated and is functional because that is where your women in Bakindik grow their vegetables for consumption.

**HON. KEBBA K. BARROW [MAJORITY LEADER/KOMBO SOUTH]:** Honourable Minister, I also want you to give more clarity on these rehabilitations. Some of the Mixed Farming Centres have Staff Quarters and they also have farmers' fields within the Mixed Farming Centres. The rehabilitation process, is it going to include the Mixed Farming Centre Staff Quarters and also the field farms that they have for display or training of farmers in seed production and other measures of agricultural activity?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** That is a very good question. Anyway, you have the Mixed Farming Centres; all the Staff Quarters will be rehabilitated. In fact, in some places we construct because some of the old Mixed Farming Centres, have these mud houses which are not guaranteed. Obviously, we construct new ones for them for durability. The farms you talk about, we want these Mixed Farming Centres to be a model. It is going to be an integrated Mixed Farming Centres, where you will have crop production, livestock production and research. That is our aim.

**HON. MUHAMMED MAHANERA [SANDU]:** Regarding the Mixed Farming Centres, we have one Mixed Farming Centre in Sandu that is virtually serving from Sandu to Wuli. I do not know if the Ministry has any plan to put that into consideration. The Mixed Farming Centre was in a serious dilapidated condition.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Can you tell me that Mixed Farming Centre, if you can name the place?

**HON. MUHAMMED MAHANERA [SANDU]:** Yes, it is in Nowdi

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** I take it that you are the same as the Honourable Member for Lower Nuimi. Nowdi Mixed Farming Centre was among the first Mixed Farming Centres to be rehabilitated. In fact, that is why I ask you which one, because we are expecting that we are going to rehabilitate Ja Kunda Mixed Farming Centre but now it has been rehabilitated during the first rehabilitation.

**HON. MUHAMMED MAHANERA [SANDU]:** The issue is we have serious water problem there still now; the water shortage is still serious. I do not know how? The borehole is not functioning.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member for Sandu, I think your issues have been addressed.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** That point is noted. Personally I will go there again and visit the place but I know the water available in all

those Mixed Farming Centres can provide adequate water for the Mixed Farming Centres because it is the same volume.

**HON. MOMODOU S. CEESAY [JANJANBUREH]:** I just want clarification because I was confronted by somebody saying this Mixed Farming Centre rehabilitation that is currently going on, the contractor did not bid the right prices. Also, he is getting problems from the Ministry in terms of payment; just for clarification so that people can understand.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Let me tell you, for the rehabilitation of the Mixed Farming Centres, there is no fixed allocation for the rehabilitation of the mixed farming centres. Anytime the contractor completed a stage, they will request. It has to go through a process. Sometimes the process becomes delayed but it is not that they are not being paid. If it was underestimated, these Mixed Farming Centres were started before my assumption of office. Obviously, I cannot say that it is underestimated but I know the process of payment is in stages. The moment they complete one stage they will request for payment.

**HON. SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]:** The Honourable Minister made mention of livestock, crop production and research. We all know that agriculture cannot be developed without investing into research. Are you ready to come up with your budget or to invest more into the research so that our agriculture can move?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Research is important for any country because without proper research we cannot move our agriculture. After research, the development partners or agencies will use that research to disseminate to our farmers. Obviously, my Ministry is ready to support research. In fact, even the National Seed Secretariat [although a stand-alone body] is under Ministry of Agriculture. They work closely with research because at the moment we can buy our own Gambian seeds in this country without going out to buy seeds from other countries. Two or three years back, we spend millions of Dalasi to go outside this country, either Senegal, Mali or Nigeria to look for certified seeds but last year and this year all the seeds we

purchased are purchased from our local farmers because they can certify. I can also tell you that even our certified seeds can go outside, to other countries, to support them.

**HON. BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA]:** Although the original question was Somita Mixed Farming Center, you are giving opportunity to others to ask about their constituency. Currently, the military are occupying our mixed farming center in Fatoto. What plans do you have to relocate or try to get them another?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** I think that is a very good question but you can liaise with our Select Committee so that our Select Committee also can liaise with the Military Select Committee in this parliament to see how best we can address that.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much Honourable Members. Can we move over to question number **58** of **2020** [Honourable Member for Lower Fulladu West].

**HON. ALHAGIE DARBOE [LOWER FULLADU WEST]:** Can the Honourable Minister of Agriculture inform this august Assembly how far her Ministry has gone in purchasing tractors for the farming communities before the rainy season which has already started in some part of country, especially rice growers in the Jahally Pacharr project?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Honourable Speaker, the procurement processes is ongoing and we are hopeful to secure fifty [50] units of tractors and accessories before the rainy season starts. We have also planned to setup a farm agriculture mechanization scheme. That is the ploughing scheme. The scheme is intended to provide appropriate mechanization services, to increase farmers' access to such services across the length and breadth of the country. For the sustainability of the equipment i.e. the machines, the Ministry plans to setup a training center for both agricultural mechanics and machine operators in the near future. This will go a long way in tackling the perennial problems of machines not living their useful life. Some Mixed Farming Centers will be used to serve this purpose.

**HON. ALHAGIE DARBOE [LOWER FULLADU WEST]:** Thank you Honourable Speaker. Can the Honourable Minister inform this august Assembly how soon, because the raining season has already started in some parts of the country? Farmers in my constituency cannot go to Cassamance to hire tractors to come and do their work as they used to because of Covid-19.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** I think the question you are asking is one of your questions for this session so I have an answer for that. Should I answer that one? This was the third question for this month's questions so I can answer it directly. I already have the answer with me because he already sent the question to us at the Ministry so that is what he is asking. Can I answer it?

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member for Lower Fulladu, you submitted two [2] substantive questions for Agriculture, am I right? The Honourable Minister has responded to the first question. Now we are taking supplementary questions on that. Your first supplementary question, according to the Honourable Minister, is a question directly linked to your second substantive question.

**HON. ALHAGIE DARBOE [LOWER FULLADU WEST]:** Okay then, I will withdraw this and wait for the second question.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member for Janjanbureh, supplementary question.

**HON. MOMODOU S. CEESAY [JANJANBUREH]:** When it comes to these tractors for this raining season, I am not trying to answer for the Minister but as the Chairperson of the Agriculture Select Committee, we have been engaging them as to the D100 million that was allocated by this National Assembly and we will be presenting a report on that when time permits.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, is that a supplementary question?

**HON. MOMODOU S. CEESAY [JANJANBUREH]:** No, I am just trying to inform...

**THE SPEAKER:** No, I do not think you can do that, Honourable Member, can we just follow procedures?

**HON. MOMODOU S. CEESAY [JANJANBUREH]:** Madam Speaker, we are talking about tractors that are to be procured and that is among...

**THE SPEAKER:** We are talking about tractors but we are taking questions and answers. Now, if you want to clarify anything for your honourable colleagues, I do not think this is a proper forum. That is all I am saying, thank you.

**HON. LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]:** Honourable Minister, the 50 tractors you intend to procure, is it coming from the D100 million that was saved by the National Assembly during the last budget bilateral?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** It is not coming from that D100 million because these tractors are coming from the KR2. We are purchasing fifty [50] tractors for the farmers.

**HON. KAJALI FOFANA [JARRA WEST]:** My question is, with the presence of this Covid-19 pandemic, do you think you will be able to get tractors from outside The Gambia immediately before the rainy season?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** In fact, the process has started and the signing is done. Now we are waiting so that they can supply.

**HON. MOMODOU L.K. SANNEH [DEPUTY SPEAKER]:** Honourable Minister, in the first republic, a tractor ploughing team was introduced in almost all the regions in this country and it pays well. Does your Ministry have any plan to introduce tractor ploughing teams in the country rather than buy tractors for individual farmers? That is not sustainable.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** It is in the plans; we are not buying tractors for individuals but we want to empower our ploughing team and we also want to engage the private sector because we want these tractors to be a pure business so that we can generate more funds and buy more tractors. That is our aim.

**HON. ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]:** Actually it looks like she just answered the question but what I had is, the buying of tractors is really capital intensive. I was

just going to ask her whether she has any plans to link up with the micro finance institutions in this country to be able to expand it so that they would have more tractors instead of just buying everything at bulk.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** You already read my mind because that is my plan. I already learnt lessons from the first and second republic so this third republic should be different.

**HON. DAWDA KAWSU JAWARA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]:** If I understand, the objective the question is trying to address is about timing. Timing is key in farming; you know this better than I do, Honourable Minister. I just came back from Jahally Pacharr on Friday and I do not know whether you are aware that there is a great concern that even though you are trying everything to bring the National Seed Secretariat with this local farmers, there is a high possibility that their this crop farming season will go in vain because the rains have come when they have not actually done what they are supposed to do. I do not know whether you are aware of this. If not, can you take it up with them and see what their concerns are?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** I am just from the field two [2] weeks ago, I was in Jahally Pacharr. In fact, those people who started planting earlier are harvesting. So, it is the people who started to transplant late that will be affected but we will also consider them.

**HON. MOMODOU CAMARA [FONI BINTANG]:** Honourable Minister, I think if you could remember, the Janneh Commission has seized many tractors lying over at Governors' offices, police stations and somewhere else. Do you not have any plan to bring those tractors to life so that it can ease the problems of farmers?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** You mentioned Janneh Commission; I think they came up with a report. One should implement it according to that report. Based on that, unless I do some consultations, I do not think I can assure you that I can take over those tractors to implement them because it is already a commission set. They came up with a report, thank you.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, with all due respect, we have exhausted the seven [7] questions upper limit. We move over to the June questions this session for the Honourable Minister and that takes us to Question Number **121** of **2020** [Honourable Member for Niamina East].

**HON. OMAR CEESAY [NIAMINA EAST]:** Honourable Speaker, can the Honourable Minister of Agriculture inform this august Assembly about her Ministry's plan to address the anticipated food shortage in the upcoming months?

**HON. SPEAKER:** Three [3] Honourable Members appear to be on the floor at the same time so I am confused. Yes, I have seen one, two, a third, fourth, fifth and sixth.

**HON. OUSMAN SILLAH [BANJUL NORTH]:** Honourable Speaker, I think what we have started is that we are going to deal with March. Now we are having the Honourable Minister of Agriculture doing June when the others did only March. I think what we should do is to have the Minister for Petroleum to come and deliver.

**THE SPEAKER:** Apparently, the Honourable Minister herself did indicate to us yesterday that they were not ready for their June questions because they received it late. Not knowing that it was already in the pipeline. When they came this morning with the answers, we thought we can put it on. That is why I said, we have not changed the order of business, what we have varied is the questions. Higher Education was not ready with his questions that is why. I am sorry but since she is here and ready for her questions, we are all here. We are trying to avoid backlogs. Covid-19 created a lot of backlogs for us so we are trying to clear the backlogs.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Honourable Speaker, my Ministry has put in plans to address the anticipated food shortage by developing an emergency response plan in collaboration with WFP on food assistance based on the food needs in metric tonnes which can be delivered in kind or cash to the estimated 22,073 highly vulnerable households and the estimated 69,499 marginally food insecure households. Basic food commodities: rice, beans, vegetable oil and salt. Crisis, i.e. phase 3, highly vulnerable population food requirements [April to May] is 22,073

households for two months, then for rice is 3,443 metric tonnes, beans 317.9 tonnes, vegetable oil 159 tonnes then salt 26.5 tonnes.

Then, under pressure i.e. phase 2 and 3: highly vulnerable and marginally food insecure food requirements [June to August]. The total amount is 91,572 households for 3 months. For the metric tonnes: rice 21428, beans 1978, vegetable oil 989, then salt 164.9. The current plan will be implemented as a joint effort between the government of The Gambia, the UN Agencies and other government development partners. The response plan seeks to complement the ongoing and planned government interventions, built on the collective efforts of the stakeholders and it is in line with the government priorities.

**HON. OMAR CEESAY [NIAMINA EAST]:** Considering the Covid-19, most of the people are already suffering in terms of social support. The people in the provinces, the said food supply that was distributed, most of the communities cannot have access to it. How soon do you think these items you are listing will be in place so as to be distributed for people to have their social support?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** We are working closely with partners; WFP and other donor partners. I know before we say August, we will have something for the vulnerable farmers because August/September is the peak period. These are the hungry months for some of these farmers so we are considering that.

**HON. MUSA AMUL NYASSI [FONI KANSALA]:** I want to draw the attention of the Honourable Minister to the just ended food relief as per the Covid-19 where, at some distribution centers, there were challenges of certain households being omitted. Now listening to the data of the 22 and 69, I want ask the reliability of this data to avoid a replica of what happened during the distribution of the relief packages as per the Covid-19. We realised that certain families were excluded and when it was done, as representatives of the people, they came to us. Again, we have to commend the NDMA

because during the distribution they had a table that was there to receive queries. In order to avoid a replica of what happened, I want to question the reliability of the data.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Thank you very much. The data is reliable because we have our data collectors i.e. the Department of Planning in collaboration with WFP. WFP has experience; we are collaborating closely with them. We are using their expertise to come up with this data. In fact, we are also working closely with FAO and other stakeholders and even NDMA is part of it.

**HON. SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]:** Honourable Minister, by looking at the question [anticipated food shortages in the coming months], as a Ministry, do you have any plan to introduce early maturing varieties of food crops?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** In fact, some of the rice varieties distributed are early maturing varieties. Some will take only 3 months to mature and also beans, a fast growing crop and we have some maize also. We are trying hard so that at least farmers have access to these early varieties.

**HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]:** Honourable Minister, as you know, there is a serious disaster in URR affecting a lot farmers who have lost their seeds as well as foodstuffs. Is your Ministry considering making a survey to see how best you can ameliorate their problems within this period?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** In fact, for this emergency response plan and the rapid assessment, all the regions were surveyed by WFP, my people and other stakeholders so they are part of it. In fact, at the moment, if you go to URR Regional Directorate office, they are supporting farmers with some seeds.

**THE SPEAKER:** We can still take additional supplementary questions.

**HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]:** Honourable Speaker, would the Honourable Minister indicate which institution is the partner in terms of data collection, regarding vulnerability of the farmers and would she be looking into establishing a linkage between production and getting social support?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** We have our Department of Planning but they are also collaborating with GBoS so that at least we can have reliable data.

**HON. SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]:** Honourable Minister, we all know that extension is very key in agriculture. At the moment, do you have any plan with your extension workers, whether they will communicate to farmers about these early varieties? If more farmers are concentrating on groundnut and other crops that cannot be eaten easily, it is a problem. I do not know whether you embark on any campaign for farmers to invest in or plant more food crops this year.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE]:** In fact, we have started the campaign because our Regional Director in North Bank Region, Demba Sanyang, is on the radio today so that he can say something in North Bank Region about agriculture. All other Regional Directors also are on radios so that people will know what to grow, when to grow, and how to grow. We are on it and we will also do sensitization. My Permanent Secretary is also going out next week with the Deputy Permanent Secretary to meet the regional staff and some other farmers.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you we move over to question number **122** of **2020** [Honourable Member for Niamina East].

**HON. OMAR CEESAY [NIAMINA EAST]:** Honourable Speaker, considering the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on farmers, can the Honourable Minister of Agriculture inform this august Assembly about the plans her Ministry has in place to support farmers in the upcoming season?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Honourable Speaker, my Ministry has put in an emergency response plan for Covid-19 to support farmers in the coming season, targeting the farming households in the country. IFAD, through the NEMA project, purchased 100 metric tonnes of certified seeds through the National Seeds Secretariat and is being distributed to the Regional Directorates for further

redistribution by the Regional Directors. In addition, NEMA will purchase or procure an additional 20,000 bags of fertilizer: 10,000 bags of NPK and 10,000 bags of Urea.

Honourable Speaker, I am also pleased to inform this august Assembly that 310 metric tonnes of certified seeds are purchased by the government of The Gambia through the National Seeds Secretariat and are being distributed to the Regional Directorates of the Department of Agriculture for further distribution to the farmers.

**HON. OMAR CEESAY [NIAMINA EAST]:** Honourable Speaker, the fertilizer in question, I do not actually know whether they are distributed or not. Even whereas they are distributed, are we thinking of narrowing down the price so that farmers [most especially the vulnerable people] will be able to buy, considering the impact of Covid-19 on the farmers?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Honourable Speaker, that is a very good question but I want to tell the Honourable Member that these fertilizers are highly subsidized because if it is not subsidized, it will be difficult for farmers to have access to this fertilizer. At the moment, the selling price for the fertilizer is D700. This means that the government is paying D1000 for every bag of fertilizer for farmers. I think it is fair enough to sell that fertilizer at D700 because in the international market, fertilizer prices are very high.

**HON. OMAR CEESAY [NIAMINA EAST]:** Honourable Minister, when the issue of Covid-19 never came up, we have been selling the fertilizer in question at that amount. I think with the issue of Covid-19, we can further think of how we can narrow it down. Again, are we thinking in the long run? Farmers are on the season and we are expecting outcome at the end of the day. Are we also thinking of buying the products at the end of the day from the farmers at a very good price?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [NIAMINA EAST]:** Thank you very much. Your concern is noted but as I mentioned, we look at the international market, the price of fertilizer. If you do not subsidize it at D700, it means a farmer will buy one bag of fertilizer at D1,700. I think selling it at D700 with Covid-19 is reasonable. If not, it could be great

losses also for the government and the amount we are subsidizing is a lot. I think you can understand that. The buying of the product also, we are planning for that before the raining season ends. We will start our planning immediately.

**HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]:** Honourable Speaker, it is in relation to the question I earlier asked. Is there any plan to link the social support to production of crops? What I mean by that is, instead of given the rice support, you actually give seeds and fertilizer free of charge, is there any linkage? Are we studying the possibility of farmers having that option, to receive production inputs that would be a means of providing social support to move them out of poverty by their own work rather than waiting to get rice, sugar and oil?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** In fact, for my Ministry, we are giving production support to the farmers because that is our domain. We need to support the farmers to have access to certified quality seeds so we are doing that.

**HON. DAWDA KAWSU JAWARA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]:** Madam Speaker, I believe the Honourable Minister is misled because I do not think she would deliberately come here to mislead the honourable House. I just purchased a bag of fertilizer from Tabanding for D1,125. These regional structures are actually allowing this to happen. I think, Honourable Minister, you need to look into this matter very well. Maybe it is not from your part but people that are representing you are actually misleading you as well as taking advantage of the poor people that stand to benefit from these subsidies that you are extending.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Your point is noted, to inform me about that price. If you are following QTV or other media, even the GGC Manager has mentioned it; the price of fertilizer is D700. It could be it is not our fertilizer possibly but if it is our fertilizer, the price should be D700.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, I know that almost all supplementary questions are related in one way or the other, especially agriculture but please let us try as much as possible to relate the supplementary questions for clarity purposes to the main

question that is being asked. Secondly, our Standing Orders limit us to 7. I cannot go beyond seven [7] supplementary questions and I can only list the Honourable Members' tags that catch my eye immediately. Please you have to understand that. Now I have on my list Honourable Member for Niani.

**HON. ALHAGI S.B. SILLAH [NIANI]:** Thank you Madam Speaker. My concern here is a specific fertilizer which is Urea. As we are speaking, myself and other famers in my area, are really in need of Urea. Without Urea, I can say our yield will drop drastically. What plan do you have about supplying Urea i.e. nitrogen fertilizer in that area?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Thank you very much. At the moment, we already have Urea in the country; 1500 metric tons of Urea is already here. We are planning at least for Mixed Farming Centers to receive this Urea or some of the fertilizer so that farmers can have easy access to fertilizer. At the moment, if you go to depots, they have fertilizer.

**HON. ALFUSAINY CEESAY [SAMI]:** Honourable Minister, some of the farmers find it very difficult to have access to this fertilizer. Are you thinking of taking this fertilizer to various Seccos so that they can have access to it?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Thank you very much. Not all the Seccos can have access to fertilizers but the potential people without arrears, without loans, I know the Manager can support them. It is not easy because there are a lot of loans in GGC. I do not want us to replicate those kinds of things. That is why this time round he even engaged some financial institutions whereby the nearest farmers can go and pay for their fertilizer [the amount they need] to the institution then they collect the receipt and go and access their fertilizer. Nonetheless, as I mentioned earlier, we are arranging because all the districts have Mixed Farming Centers so that we can have fertilizer in that place.

**HON. MUHAMED MAGASSY [BASSE]:** Madam Speaker, we are discussing the impact of Covid-19 on the farmers. Something extraordinary is happening, I do not know whether the Honourable Minister is aware. The most support that we can give to

farmers is to help them to get access to their farms and most of these border villages are farming in the territory of Senegal. In my constituency at this point in time I am talking, the farmers are facing that challenge of getting access to their farm because due to border closure in relation to this Covid-19 pandemic. I do not know what the Ministry and the relevant authorities in the country can do in other to have that negotiation so that the farmers can get access to their farms.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** That point is noted. I am not aware of that but I would pick it up to discuss with the relevant authorities.

**THE SPEAKER:** Ordinarily, we would not have allowed it but I think it is important. That is the only reason why it is allowed, it is an exception. Honourable Member for Foni Kansala, I am apologizing. I thought it was Foni Bondali, so my apologies but I will keep you in mind for next supplementary questions. We have exhausted our seven [7] questions limit so we will move over to Question Number **123** of **2020** [Honourable Member for Lower Fulladu West].

**HON. ALHAGIE DARBOE [LOWER FULLADU WEST]:** Honourable Speaker, can the Honourable Minister of Agriculture inform this august Assembly how the Ministry would help rice growers in the Jahally Pacharr rice fields in terms of ploughing since the farmers cannot hire tractors from Cassamance due to Covid-19 border closure as the raining season has already started?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE]:** Honourable Speaker, my Ministry has procured the tractors through the intervention of NEMA and already distributed to Boiram, Kudang, Sotokoi, and Barrajjally clusters. They are supplied with 2 combine harvesters, 2 rice threshers and 1 milling machine. The NEMA project has ploughed 105 hectares for farmers in Pacharr, 200 hectares in Boiram valley, 58 hectares in Sunchu Jundor and 200 hectares in Sotokoi. In addition, we are also anticipating additional 50 tractors.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member for Lower Fulladu, any supplementary question?

**HON. BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA]:** Thank you very much Honourable Minister, for informing us about the latest procurement of tractors for the country. What is important is about maintenance. How do we maintain these things? Do you have in mind to put a structure in Pacharr specifically for the maintenance of these equipment there, whenever there is a breakdown?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE]:** Thank you very much. We have a full-fledged Technical Service Unit i.e. engineering. They are responsible for assembling these tractors, maintenance and even training the tractor operators. I want to assure you that we will maintenance these tractors and there would be sustainability.

**HON. LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]:** Honourable Minister, there is a huge investment in the procurement of farming implements to boost productivity of farmers which is costing government a lot. What plans are in place by your Ministry in order to avoid a replica of last year's marketing season, where most of our valuable cash crops have been bought by outsiders?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Buying of our cash crops by other foreigners is not a wish because last year our government's official price was D18,000 Dalasi per metric tonne, compared to our neighboring country; their official price was D17,500 per metric tonne. Their private sectors are very organized that is why you have outsiders coming to their country to give them money to come to our country and buy groundnuts. It means they are bringing a lot of foreign money to our country so that is why we could not stop them to buy from our farmers. The money is coming to our farmers; it is not that the money is going outside. If the government offers D18,000 per metric tonne, I have seen it like we are trying to empower our farmers to have more money. Nonetheless, if at all it is a big concern, we will plan it better next season to see how best our groundnut buying price can be improved. I know it is not losses for the government because the foreign money is coming to our farmers. It is our farmers who are going to use that money.

**HON. OMAR CEESAY [NIAMINA EAST]:** Honourable Minister, it is very evident that our farmers are poor and you talk about the issue of the maintenance which will be taken care of by your Ministry in consultation with other partners. If some of these farmers request to have these tractors to work on their farms, they will be charged. I want clarity on whether they are supposed to be charged for the fuel allowance or they are supposed to be charged for the work that the tractor is doing on their farms? Most of them wanting to have the tractor to work for them on their farms cannot do so upon being charged. They are unable to provide such and as a result they would find it challenging to have the work done on their farms.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** That is why we are trying to have cooperatives across the country. I mentioned some clusters here whereby they have these tractors. For example, if you go to Boiram there is a cluster. They have tractors and other machinery. They can arrange with other farmers whereby they can provide services. At the end of the harvest, they can pay those cooperatives, it is all possible. We are doing our best to have a lot of cooperatives around the country so that at least this ploughing thing can be history. These 50 tractors we are talking about, [as I mentioned earlier] we want to have more tractors. For that one, we will arrange how best we can have some of these private sectors to be engaged.

**HON. OMAR CEESAY [NIAMINA EAST]:** I am not asking a different question. To my understanding, my question is not answered. I am simply asking whether it is a condition that farmers must pay before they have the tractors work on their farms. This is what I want to be clear about so that I can convey this to my people.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** That is why I mentioned cooperatives. If at all a farmer does not have money to pay, the farmer can liaise with the cooperative so that he or she can have the services, after harvest he pays. If at all there is a tractor, a private tractor, obviously they have to pay. If at all I have a tractor, I am a private person and I want to render service, obviously I would ask the farmer to pay me. If at all they have a cooperative in their associations or in their villages, they

can arrange with that cooperative so that they can have services and at the end of the day they can pay for the services.

**HON. SIDIA S. JATTA [WULI WEST]:** As I understand, the cooperative the Honourable Minister is talking about is in the process of becoming. It does not exist in every part of the country; it does not exist in my place anyway. If a farmer, like he is asking, wants the services of agriculture, is he or she going to pay for it before the tractor comes to the farm? That is the question he is asking. Cooperative does not exist in every place in The Gambia.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** In fact [for example], the ploughing I mentioned, the number of hectares I mentioned with NEMA project is free. For example, if you want to plough your field and the owner of the tractor wants you to pay, obviously you have to pay. For the NEMA project, the number of hectares I mentioned is free.

**HON. OUSMAN TOURAY [SABACH SANJAL]:** The Honourable Minister is going around the same issue. Those tractors that are assigned to plough at the Jahally Pacharr and other areas you mentioned, is it that after ploughing there, they would stop ploughing for the rest of the year or they can extend their ploughing to the rest of the communities and they are supposed to pay? Do you make a fixed price for a particular hectare, for example the cost of ploughing a hectare is this amount or whether it is based on negotiation?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE]:** I know for private tractors, they have their own fixed price. They do charge based on a hectare. Some can charge up to D4000 per hectare but some can even charge below that. It depends on negotiation. Those ploughing, if at all it is a private tractor and they are willing to go to other parts of the country, why not? For the government tractors I am talking about, that one is yet to be received.

**HON. ALHAGI S.B. SILLAH [NIANI]:** Based on clarity for tractor ploughing teams or any tractor ploughing, even in the agricultural sector; as a community, people gather an

amount of money and take it to the particular station so that they can be able to have a number of hectares which they are supposed to plough. In any area, they have to know that a hectare is this amount so people will pay. Based on what they have paid, their farms can be ploughed.

**HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]:** Honourable Speaker, now that the Minister is talking about mechanization and extending that facility to the farmers, is there any plan to standardize cost so that poor farmers would be able to get the facility? Or, would they continue to link that poor farmer to mere cost recovery from those who are seekers of profit?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** With the 50 tractors we are expecting, we will standardize the cost; we will work closely with stakeholders to standardize the cost.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much Honourable Minister, for the responses given to those questions posed by Honourable Members. We have come to the end of her questions.

**HON. OMAR CEESAY [NIAMINA EAST]:** No, one more.

**THE SPEAKER:** Just a second please, let me confirm. I think I am right... We still have Question Number **124** of **2020** [Honourable Member for Lower Fulladu West].

**HON. ALHAGIE DARBOE [LOWER FULLADU WEST]:** Honourable Speaker, can the Honourable Minister of Agriculture inform this august Assembly about the plan the Ministry has to support the Maruo Farms in the Pacharr fields?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Honourable Speaker, my Ministry has supported Maruo Farms in the Pacharr fields. We recently allocated Maruo Farms 1 combine harvester, 2 power tillers, 2 rice milling machines, 1 multipurpose thresher, 3 tarpaulins and 1 pumping machine. We are also working on providing Maruo Farms with a revolving funds of D10 million to be used as micro financing to support the small scale farmers in country to boost production and productivity. In addition, the

Central Projects Coordinating Unit is also formalizing a Public Private Partnership with Maruo Farms and the Ministry of Agriculture is supporting the process.

**THE SPEAKER:** You can ask, or you do not have any supplementary questions?

**HON. ALHAGIE DARBOE [LOWER FULLADU WEST]:** I just have to thank the Honourable Minister for allocating that technique.

**THE SPEAKER:** Okay, I will take supplementary questions from Honourable Members: Jarra West and then Serrekunda.

**HON. KAJALI FOFANA [JARRA WEST]:** Thank you Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, we know Maruo Farms has a lot of partners in terms of ordinary farmers. Is there any specific Memorandum of Understanding or agreement between the company and the farmers that are linked to the company?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Obviously, there is Memorandum of Understanding between him and the farmers. As a Ministry we are working closely with him because we want to be self-sufficient in rice production. That is why you the parliamentarians and myself should convince our private sector to engage themselves in rice production so that at least we can be self-sufficient in rice production in a short period.

**HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]:** Honourable Speaker, there is the claim of self-sufficiency in rice production via public private partnership. In this case with the Maruo Farms, who really owns the land? How is ownership manifested, how is it secured? Is it through leasing the land to that particular farm or is there another mechanism of ensuring ownership. If it is giving land to these private companies throughout the country, where would the small farmers go after the land is concentrated in the hands of a few? Is the Ministry really thinking about the future of that small farmer in this equation?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** Thank you very much for that question. It is a good one; Maruo Farms is contracting the small scale farmers. It is

giving them ploughing services, fertilizer, and even monitors them. At the end of the harvest, he just buys those seeds from the farmers. Then he will process it and add value. I think it is a very good negotiation. The land is owned by the small scale farmers. It is just a matter of contract farming.

**HON. BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA]:** In the Honourable Minister's response, she did emphasize the public private partnership. Do you consider that there has been the initiative of the military in rice production? Do you have any update in that respect?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** In fact, we are working closely with them because they brought an MOU [Memorandum of Understanding] so that we can review it to see how best we can partner with them. We are working closely with them.

**HON. MAHTARR M. JENG [LOWER NUIMI]:** Madam Minister, what is this Maruo Farms? Is it an indigenous body or an outside body that is using this land for whatever initiative it may be?

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE]:** Maruo Farms is a Gambian private person. He is engaged in rice production and he wants to ensure that Gambians are self-sufficient in rice production. He is in line with our National Development Plan, our agric policy and also our G9. We are here to support him so that we can be self-sufficient in rice production.

**HON. LAMIN F.M. CONTA [KOMBO EAST]:** We must thank the Honourable Minister of Agriculture for supporting Maruo Farms. I would like to know if the Honourable Minister can extend this gesture to replicate the same to the people of Nianija so that they can have bumper harvest.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE]:** Of course, if you have a private sector that is so willing to be in Nianija, why not? We have to work with anyone who is ready to support our agriculture to improve our production and productivity. In

fact, even around Nianija, we are also supporting them with some farm equipment to improve their production.

**HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]:** Honourable Minister is your Ministry willing to venture into Wuli communities that are interested in starting rice production because there are many communities like Passamas and Boro Kandeh Kasseh that are close to the river. Those are all areas that are interested in rice production but they do not know how to start.

**HON. AMIE FABUREH [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]:** As I mentioned earlier, in The Gambia we have almost 6 to 7 Agricultural Directorates all over the country. If any community is interested in venturing in any agricultural production, let them liaise with the Regional Directorate. Any project or intervention we have, it goes through the Regional Directors so that they can have their documentation with the Regional Directorate for easy access.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much Honourable Minister of Agriculture for the responses provided [oral answers] to the questions posed by Honourable Members. I think that is the end of the session with you Honourable Minister so you are now released. Thank you very much.

***5. Question for Oral Answers continues by the Honourable Minister for Petroleum and Energy.***

**THE SPEAKER:** Questions for which due notices were given to the Honourable Minister of Petroleum and Energy by Honourable Members for oral reply. We start with question number **26** of **2020** [Honourable Member for Kantora]. Apparently, the Honourable Minister does not finish his March questions so we are very current with him.

**HON. BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA]:** Honourable Speaker, can the Honourable Minister of Petroleum and Energy inform this august Assembly about the steps taken on the Rural Electrification Expansion Project particularly in Kantora constituency?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** Honourable Speaker, the Rural Electrification Expansion Project, which was the second phase of the rural electrification project, came to a close in December 2019. However, Kantora and most areas in the Upper River Region, parts of the Central River North and South and North Bank Region will be covered under the World Bank funded Gambia Electrification Modernisation Project [JAM]. Funding for this project is already secured and the initial assessment is being done to be followed by a detailed feasibility study by a Consultant as part of the project implementation process.

**HON. BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA]:** Thank you very much Honourable Minister, for informing us that you got some funds from the World Bank for the expansion project. Can you inform this august Assembly specifically, the timeframe your Ministry intends, having got this money in country?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** Honourable Speaker, to be on the safe side, we have a plan of electrification in our roadmap 2005 – 2007. This actual project has almost commenced; we are now in the feasibility stages. It would be implemented within this year and next year. I cannot tell you the exact time of when it will be completed. I do not want to be quoted wrongly by saying this time it will be finished; I cannot tell that. We are working within the framework of the World Bank procedures. Definitely, I would not be here telling you that exactly this is the time it will be finished. We have secured funding and the progress is on.

**HON. BILLAY G TUNKARA [KANTORA]:** Thank you Honourable Minister for informing us that you got some funds from the World Bank for the expansion project. Can you inform this august Assembly specifically the timeframe Ministry intends, having got this money in-country?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** Honourable Speaker, to be on the safe side, we have a plan of electrification in a road map [2007 – 2015]. This actual project has almost commenced. We are now at the feasibility stages. It will be implemented within this year and next year. I do not know and I cannot tell

you the exact time it will be completed. I do not want to be quoted wrongly by saying this time or this time it will be finished. We are working within the framework of the World Bank procedures. Definitely, I will not be able to tell you exactly this is the time it will be but we have secured funding and the project is on.

**HON. BILLAY G TUNKARA [KANTORA]:** Would the Honourable Minister be in a position to submit or inform us about the beneficiaries of this project in the region in Kantora Constituency?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** Honourable Speaker, still I cannot tell you the villages that will be covered. That is what is being surveyed and I do not have any list here but I know there will be a survey in the area. Definitely, I do not have that list of villages that are going to be covered exactly by this project.

**HON. ALHAGIE H. SOWE [JIMARA]:** Honourable Minister, we are talking about electricity; for the past three months the people of Upper River Region have been suffering lack of electricity. Do you have any plan to resolve that problem of electricity in the region?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** Honourable Speaker, we are very much aware of the issues of Upper River Region i.e. Basse Power Station. Actually, what happened was that we have a capacity that served the area but in Ramadan there was a surge in demand that the capacity cannot meet. There was also some kind of rehabilitation or maintenance of the systems that caused the problem. Definitely, we have plans and we have planned also to increase the capacity. We are trying to work with the private partner that can actually provide much generation to the capacity. We also have a plan for a solar plant [at least 4.5 megawatts] for Basse. We have a surge in it and we also have a maintenance problem.

**HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]:** My question is, how equitably is this project distributed within URR? I know he is talking about Kantora but we are talking

about URR. So, how expansive is it within the URR? I Hope it is not only put in one side and the others are complaining?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** What happens is, when we talk about a region, we are looking at the region as a whole. When we design a project, say this is URR, we look at URR as a whole and then we survey and try to see how to electrify as planned, not necessarily Kantora and whatever area, they are all in URR. That is why we give answers to URR, not specifically Kantora. It is expansive.

**HON. OUSMAN TOURAY [SABACH SANJAL]:** Honourable Minister, I just want to know [regarding this rural electrification project], if a particular community wants to, for example, pre-finance their connection to get their transformer, would you be able to supply that community with meters and poles to access electricity there?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** If there is such a proposal, if it comes to my attention, I will take it to NAWEC to look at it. If you look at the Salagi area where I live, the electricity expansion there is being done by our community using one of the suppliers. We have an agreement with NAWEC whereby we do our own expansion of the electricity there. Definitely, it is something that still I have to present to NAWEC.

**HON. ALAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH]:** The Honourable Minister indicated that the rural electrification expansion project closed in December 2019. Can you inform this august Assembly, the communities that have benefited from the project?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** Honourable Speaker, I do not have that list of the project because the project has been going for long. I am sure most of the rural areas that we electrified in the past within the GBA also Foni areas, not Kiang of course but NBD and URR they are part of this project. Most of these were part of this; it is a big project. That is why we are now having this JAM project [a similar one] but I cannot exactly tell you the communities. Definitely, I know it covers most of the regions.

**HON. ALAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH]:** Can the list be provided to us later?

**HON. MUHAMMED MAHANERA [SANDU]:** I was going to ask the same question; whether the Minister will be in position to provide the list of villages that will be covered by this project.

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** Right now [with me] I have my Power Manager, also from NAWEC. I just gave directive to do the list and pass it on to this Assembly. I will definitely provide it.

**HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]:** Would the Honourable Minister, in light of the question that has been asked, to satisfy the growing interest of this National Assembly, provide us with the rural electrification expansion master plan and annual work plan if they exist? If they do not exist, would the Minister consider putting such tools in place so that we can continue to monitor progress?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** That is a very good idea because we have the master plan; it is a World Bank project. Normally, budgets are designed and presented for funding. When it comes to annual implementation, what we have now is that every month the World Bank is provided a progress reports on this JAM project so we can definitely share that with you.

**HON. SPEAKER:** Thank you Honourable Minister. **Question Number 027/2020 [Honourable Member for Serrekunda].**

**HON. HALIFA SALLAH SERREKUNDA:** Honourable Speaker, could the Honourable Minister of Petroleum and Energy explain to this of august Assembly, how much has been derived from the mining of minerals at the original sites of Kartong, Batokunku and Sanyang by the investors in particular and the State on the other hand in 2019 and what has been done with the funds accrued?

**HON. [FAFA SANYANG] MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY:** Honourable Speaker, the license covers the mineralised coastal strip including the sites mentioned i.e. Kartong, Batokunku and Sanyang. Sanyang was the only site being mined during

2019 and mining is yet to take place in other sites. Net income derived from the shipment of **4,617.85** metric tonnes of heavy mineral concentrate, stands at **\$323,280**. In line with the license condition, the royalty of One Thousand Nine Hundred and Ninety-Three point Nine Three [**\$1,993.93**] was paid to the State by GACH which represent 60% of the net income. The same royalty is lodged in an account with the Central Bank under the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs.

**HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]:** Honourable Speaker, the question goes on to say what has been done with the funds; I did not hear that answer?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** I think I have answered it. The funds have been paid to Ministry of Finance. We pay the wealth to Ministry of Finance. We do not have access to that. We just deposit it, maybe it is going to centralized services or wherever. Definitely, we do not have that. Maybe Minister of Finance will be able to provide that to you.

**HON. ALAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH]:** Can the Honourable Minister inform this august Assembly as what is holding the commencement of mining in the remaining two areas?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** Mining is done sequentially. Even Sanyang is not the only area that is mined; you mine here and then progress. If you exhaust that, you then jump to another site. You have to mine, exhaust and continue. That is what is preventing it for now.

**HON. DAWDA KAWSU JAWARA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]:** Honourable Minister, can you inform us on this mining issue you are talking about; what programs or processes are there in place to make sure that after the mining is done, there is a sustainable aspect that is put in place to make sure that the people who were using those lands, particularly the horticultural gardeners, can still use that land and have a good yield?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** What happened was, we have this environmental assessment at the beginning, that was when Carnegi Minerals had a license and then that is what was adopted by this license. We have mining plan to rehabilitate the site but before the end of mining, you remap the area and then plan for of rehabilitation. Sometimes when you do the physical assessment at the beginning, at the end it will differ. That is why when we mine Sanyang for example, by the time we move out of Sanyang, then we do a reassessment and then we work together with other partners i.e. the National Environment Agency and it is within the TDA also. We also consider those who are there already i.e. the market gardeners, then we plan for the rehabilitation and then we implement the rehabilitation. Definitely, mining of this nature needs to be rehabilitated.

**HON. SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]:** Can the Honourable Minister inform the august gathering whether the funds generated from this mining centres, the communities also get any benefit from it, for example Sanyang?

**HON. [FAFA SANYANG] MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY:** Communities benefit from these projects on basically a few things such as employment opportunities. We also have what we call Corporate Social Responsibility where the company will plough back some of this revenue at their own cost to do certain projects for the community. That is where it stops. We do not encourage giving physical cash to create problems but then the community comes with a project and we implement the project. That is where the community comes into play. I think that is going on.

**HON. LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]:** Honourable Minister, with regards to the Corporate Social Responsibility that you talked about, how do you ascertain that as a Ministry, that the company is ploughing back that to the community?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** The Company designs its Corporate Social Responsibility. Sometimes they go in for water supply to the community but most of the time if the communities make a demand that they need assistance in this area, then they meet the company and the company provides that to

them. It is within the general principle that the company provides assistance to the community based on proximity to the mining area. When it happens, we get information from the company that it has done A, B, C and D for a particular community. Some communities may want to come to me directly, to say we want A, B, C and D and we refer them to the company. Definitely, it is between the company and the community.

**THE SPEAKER: Question Number 028/2020 [Majority Leader and Member for Kombo South].**

**HON. KEBBA K. BARROW [MAJORITY LEADER & MEMBER FOR KOMBO SOUTH]:** Can the Honourable Minister of Petroleum and Energy inform this august Assembly how much money was paid by GACH Company since the issuance of license to the company to extract the black sand at Sanyang?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** Honourable Speaker, since the issuance of mining license, GACH company paid a total of **US\$ 649,001.04** as royalty to the State for the shipment of almost **15,386.45** metric tonnes of heavy mineral concentrate.

**HON. KEBBA K. BARROW [MAJORITY LEADER & MEMBER FOR KOMBO SOUTH]:** As part of the Corporate Social Responsibility, can you inform this august Assembly how much money had the company spent on programmes related to Corporate Social Responsibility in Sanyang?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** Honourable Speaker, I do not have that information but at same time also, Corporate Social Responsibilities are not part of these resources. It is purely companies own resources they put in. It is not part of whatever revenue they are getting or paying to the government but the company can only give us how much they spent. I do not have that figure here and I never asked for that. We ask them to work with the community and help the community but it is not actually part of the license that you have to provide X amount to the community.

**HON. KEBBA K. BARROW [MAJORITY LEADER & MEMBER FOR KOMBO SOUTH]:** Honourable Minister, I think you need to expand on the Memorandum of Understanding and the license processing program that you do with these companies because there are a lot of issues that are happening on the ground which are not being fulfilled. I think this Corporate Social Responsibility should be an issue. A clause should be there that will determine how much money should go to the communities that are suffering from these things. If you look at the impact, environmental impact assessments that are done, sometime the companies will leave and then no assessment will be done and the places are not habitable for any other productive activities.

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** I think there are two issues here: you have the Corporate Social Responsibility and also rehabilitation. Corporate Social Responsibility, as I said, is the company actually putting some money into the communities. Definitely, our laws are saying that you compensate owner occupier. That is the form of compensation that is within the laws. When you come to Corporate Social Responsibility, it is that you need to provide all communities. You are right; I mean you can put in clauses but then how to determine that because if you put a cap, it may be to the disadvantage of the communities. You can always put a minimum but you do not put a cap. The company can give anything to the communities, whatever they want to give, as much as they can do that to the community. Let us say, for improvement, that we can put in a special clause on Corporate Social Responsibility and put some monetary figures on it.

**HON. DAWDA KAWSU JAWARA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]:** Honourable Minister, Corporate Social Responsibility is a condition in the issuance of licenses or permits for companies or entities not to conduct certain businesses. It is therefore prudent that as the regulator you follow to monitor the implementation of these responsibilities and evaluate them to see that they are actually yielding dividend. To ensure that we avoid misuse of these licenses or permits and to make sure there is social cohesion between these contractors or business and the communities where they are actually enjoying

their businesses. I think we need to look into these issues as a matter of policies to make sure there is evidence-based implementation of this CSR.

**THE SPEAKER:** In fact, I had a short recess but even your number one supplementary question appeared to me to have been a statement. Are you making a statement or making a suggestion?

**HON. DAWDA KAWSU JAWARA [FULLADU WEST]:** Honourable Minister, can you please look into and inform this august Assembly how much so far has this company done in terms of their Corporate Social Responsibility to this individual community that they are working in?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** Honourable Speaker, I think I have answered the second one. I said I do not have that with me. What I am trying to say here is that Corporate Social Responsibility and local content are coming into the industry. Right now it is a policy worldwide that companies, carry out our Corporate Social Responsibility and to create jobs for the community. That is definitely now a policy, whether reasonable or not, and it helps companies to have good relationship with the community. It should be entrenched in the law of course, but even where it is not entrenched, it is in the interest of the company itself to go out and reach the community. It is an issue that is coming up into statutory industry laws now. Definitely, we are taking note of that and it is within our petroleum laws and we are going to review this regulation also. Definitely, there is something that is coming. It was not there in the past but it is now a thing that is coming up in the statutory industry as a condition not a privilege.

**HON. MUSA AMUL NYASSI [FONI KANSALA]:** Looking at the question I have in relation with the parent question, I think it is important for me to do justice by allowing other Members to ask questions and I will come up with a fresh question because it does not connect with the parent question.

**HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]:** Honourable Minister, apart from the company having good gesture towards the community, is there no arrangement where

some form of royalty will be paid to the community where this mining is taking place? Is there no royalty from the State or in the agreement in any form?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** Well there is no provision for royalty to be paid to the community directly but there is a provision for compensation for people affected. Royalty is paid to the State and just like taxes are paid to the State not to the community directly. Of course, I can see some problems in that payment to the community, who do you pay to? It can create problems. That is why it is better to bring in new projects. That is my personal view of it because I have come across this many times. Sometimes you give physical cash, definitely the community is fractured. Legally there is no such provision that royalty is paid to individuals or whatever but you create compensation to the people who are affected; that is part of the laws. There is some that is debatable, something that is not static. The industry is dynamic and as I said before, the CSR was not part of this business before, it is now coming up. In some jurisdictions, I know that for oil and gas in some parts of US, royalty is paid to the owner but now it is paid to the State. There is a long history to this; from agriculture in Indonesia, businesses come up but that is the case. There is no provision in our laws that royalty is paid to a particular person; it is paid to the State.

**HON. SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]:** Honourable Speaker, if you look at the question, the money generated from issuance of a license, does your Ministry have any plans in ensuring that the money that is raised and given to the Ministry of Finance [I do not know which account]; do you have a plan to see to it that the money is ploughed back to protect the environment? We all know that mining has its effects on our environment and coastal erosion is getting higher and higher. Do you have any plan on how to mitigate coastal erosion?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** The rehabilitation of the mining site is the responsibility of the company. The company does the rehabilitation but in case there is a default and there is a problem, government takes it up to rehabilitate. For example, if that happens, we as a Ministry will take over

a project and then present it to the Minister of Finance to get funding to do the rehabilitation. When that happens, the company will be punished for not doing the job. Definitely, rehabilitation is at the expense of the company not the government but government will take responsibility if things fail to come up. In normal practice, in the industry, the rehabilitation is the company's responsibility.

**HON. OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NIUMI]:** Coming to the Minister's answers, Six Hundred and Forty-Nine Thousand US Dollars [**US\$649,000**] is somehow accrued. I will also like to know how much is extracted from the mining grounds in term of tonnage or whatever terminology you may use.

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** A total of **15,386.45** metric tonnes had been extracted. That is what has been shipped.

**HON. SAIKOU MARONG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]:** Honourable Minister, did your Ministry have any clear cut policy in terms of this Corporate Social Responsibility you are talking about? Do you have any policy in place that is going to guide the mining companies in the Corporate Social Responsibility?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** Corporate Social Responsibility is between the company and the communities but we have not developed policy guidelines for that. That is why we mentioned that we should put that in our laws, that we have Corporate Social Responsibility. When we are putting the laws, we also put guidelines for that. Even with that they still has to go to the communities to look for their needs. In some places I know, they put issues in the license for Corporate Social Responsibility that may not reflect the needs of the community. If you happen to put guidelines, then you have to contact the community. Sometimes needs changes as mining continues over the years. Some of these needs would change so we have to be flexible. The idea here is to have Corporate Social Responsibility in our agreements and then we develop guidelines for all that. I think that is the concept the Honourable Member was talking about and I think that is true.

**THE SPEAKER:** We have exhausted our upper limit of 7 questions. We move over to **Question Number 29/2020 [Majority Leader and Member for Kombo South].**

**HON. KEBBA K. BARROW [MAJORITY LEADER & MEMBER FOR KOMBO SOUTH]:** Can the Honourable Minister of Petroleum and Energy inform this august Assembly on the status of implementation of water and electricity supply in Kombo South, especially in the villages of Tujereng, Tanji, Mamouda, Jambur and Sanyang?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** Honourable Speaker, the electricity expansion project which covers the areas mentioned is ongoing and is 57% completed based on the information I got from NAWEC. The water projects are also implemented and has reached 45% completion rate at the moment. The villages of Tanji, Sanyang and Tujereng will benefit from a water project funded by the African Development Bank through the Ministry of Water Resources to the tune of **US\$6000,000**. NAWEC is the implementing agency and each of these villages will have a storage water tank capacity of 500,000 litres with a distribution network expanding 30km. The ongoing Indian government supported water project has already installed a 500,000-litre water tank in Jambur Village and will extend pipe networks in some parts of Mamouda to enable the community to have access to potable drinking water for the first time.

**HON. KEBBA K. BARROW [KOMBO SOUTH/MAJORITY LEADER]:** Honourable Minister, as you talk about these villages and looking at the communication infrastructure there, is the project also going to take care of the road network to ensure that this water supply have been done. I mean the water supply in the communities, because where you have the boreholes are different from the communities where the supplies are taking place. What are you doing to ensure that where you have the boreholes also benefits from this project?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** If I understand you, you have a borehole here and the water is being supplied somewhere else. That is important, I will take note of that. What I know is that we have boreholes

in specials areas because you look at the catchment areas where you can dig a borehole and get water supply but sometimes that area may not be a beneficiary of that particular project. That is your idea, I will put that to my team but it does happen sometimes. What I am saying is that we have a project that is being implemented whereby you have networks to some of these areas. If there is an area where there is a borehole and they do not have water supply, the Water Manager is here and he will take note of that. It depends on how the project is designed.

**HON. DAWDA KAWSU JAWARA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]:** Madam Speaker, I will ask my question. I do not know whether you will accept it because it is connected to the response of the Minister in terms of the NAWEC being the implementing partner in some of the projects he mentioned and also the \$6 million.

**HON. SPEAKER:** Supplementary question is to seek clarification so you can go ahead.

**HON. DAWDA KAWSU JAWARA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]:** The Minister mentioned NAWEC as the implementing partner in some of these projects in these highlighted areas and also mentioned another \$6 million African Development Bank project that is coming to address some of the water issues. I just want to know because there is a rule now where PURA has actually started to fine NAWEC to the tune of about half a million Dalasi per town plus another (D25, 000) dalasi every day until they actually start addressing this water issue. Is the Bansang area affected by this policy?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** Wherever NAWEC provides water, PURA regulates. If NAWEC is supplying water in Bansang which definitely they do, PURA will regulate that one also just like here. I know there is a water quality problem in Bansang; the nitrogen content is high. You know Bansang is a rocky area; there is a lot of iron-oxide. That is giving problem to the water supply there, we know that very well. Just to answer you straight away, wherever water is being supplied by NAWEC, PURA regulates that one. Where water is being supplied by the rural water supply system, normally these are free, it is the Department of Water

Resources. NAWEC has no hands in those ones unless and until they have a project. The project I am talking about [\$6 million], NAWEC will implement and run it, and then definitely PURA will regulate that. Any other water supply in the rural areas is for the Department of Water Resources. Sometimes they will pass that to NAWEC like Kaur which started with the rural water supply system then NAWEC took over but wherever NAWEC goes PURA regulates that one.

**HON. SAIKOUBA JARJU [BUSUMBALA]:** First of all, I want to tell the Honourable Minister that I am also affected by having a borehole in our area and they are not supplying us water. Mandinari, Makumbaya and Babylon have boreholes but there is no water there. Going to my question, in relation to the main question, the questioner is asking about villages; I want to ask whether you have plans because there are areas in some villages that have electricity but there are some areas which were not residential before but one way or the other they were not captured. It is just like an island in that community without electricity and water. Do you have it as part of your plans in this project that is going on to provide electricity and water to those island areas in communities?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** Wherever there is no electricity or water, it is a concern to the government; they should be provided, they have a right to it. There is always a plan to provide it there. Sometimes what happens is that when the project is designed, originally it is meant for certain areas. When it comes to implementing them, changing the plans will be a bit difficult. We are always concerned that any area that is left out in the communities we will come back to restore it. Right now if you look at the current project that is going on, there are areas which are left out in some places, one area will have water and the next door they do not have. We are going to those areas; that is why we are digging almost everywhere. If there are areas within a cluster of areas where they do not have water supply, definitely they will plan to extend it there. It may not be this project but definitely it is always planned.

**THE SPEAKER:** I think Honourable Member, on a more serious note, it appears as if we are going outside the parameters of the purpose of supplementary questions. Not just you, I think we have been very lenient today. Please let us just bear in mind the fact that there are rules of procedure guiding supplementary questions. It is not anything that is agriculture you can ask, is not anything that is energy or petroleum; it has to be related. We are at liberty to ask any question, you can bring up new questions but we cannot hide behind supplementary questions to ask issues that are unrelated. Ask for clarification, you need to clarify A, B and C but definitely not to bring in new substances. Let us just be fair.

**HON. SAIKOUBA JARJU [BUSUMBALA]:** Madam Speaker, to be honest with you, I think you are not going to be fair to me if you said it is not me. Rules have been violated since and nothing has been said.

**HON. SPEAKER:** What I am saying is applicable to all of us. I said we have been very lenient. I am appealing, let us just ensure [all of us] that we just follow the rules.

**HON. SAIKOUBA JARJU [BUSUMBALA]:** My question was related to the main question but I want to ask the Honourable Minister if it is possible. I am part of communities that are affected as I just suggested; areas which are being jumped by electricity and water and then I am seeing the progress of the project going on but those areas are not being approached or included. Would it be possible for me to come and suggest those areas then then your men can go and see how best to include those areas in your future projects?

**THE SPEAKER:** Please you cannot dialogue amongst yourselves. You are asking the Honourable Minister whether you can, let him respond.

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** Honourable Member, everybody has a right to tell us where you think you need facilities. There is nothing stopping you from telling us why you want it. I am saying that the projects have been designed and implementation is going on. If it means that you need to go there or whatever the case may be, then that have to be reported to my team. I cannot

tell you here that we can go to your area now and do A, B, C there. Definitely, I do not want to commit myself to that but definitely you can come and put your case before us.

**HON. SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]:** Once Jambur is mentioned, I have to come up. Honourable Minister, I would like to know [in this community that you are operating] whether you have a road map that you use or how do you make a selection pertaining to a particular village because in Jambur there are certain areas that have electricity and this expansion also is following the same trend when Bafala, a region, is marginalized. I do not know what criteria you used?

**HON. Fafa Sanyang [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** The Indian project we are talking about has two components: one we are trying to change some pipes in some areas so they will follow your trend because we about to change those pipes; and there are also areas that we are going to extend into. If you say they particular trend, most of the time they are changing. You see the big pipes that they putting all the way from Fajara, they are changing those pipes from those areas. There is already what we call changing architecture and changing the water pipes and extending into some areas. The specific areas that you talked about, I do not know but normally these are all planned. If you do not plan you cannot implement; you just do not dig anywhere like that. It is pre-planned, it has a project presented to the donor or whatever and when you get the funding, you implement it. That is the condition.

**HON. MAHTARR M. JENG [LOWER NUIMI]:** Madam Speaker, I will have to crave your indulgence in case I sway off but this relates to Kanuma where we have a borehole that has been supplying Essau, Barra, Berending and, amazingly enough, not Kanuma?

**HON. Fafa Sanyang [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** Let me give you examples; there was a time you were getting water supply from Lamin all the way to Banjul and Lamin area did not have water supply. Sometimes the water source could differ from where you actually supply. I think if there are issues of providing water to them, we can take that up but this is how the project is designed from the beginning.

The borehole is there and the supply goes somewhere that is where the source of water is, not necessarily you put the borehole here and you put the water supply in that place. This is how the project is but that notwithstanding, my Project Manager is here. These are issues that are concerns that we take up but this is how it is, I am reporting to you on how it is now. It is the same thing, the same as what the others are talking about. I know there is a similar one in Brikama, around the power station. They do not have power and the power is being supplied somewhere. Sometimes also, you have power station somewhere and settlements come around it. The power station predates the settlement in some areas. What happen when you already have a network?

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much Honourable Minister. I think water is something that everybody needs and electricity as well. The conversations can continue, I am sure you can have further consultations with the Minister and I am sure the Minister can even accommodate me to go and complain about the electricity situation around Churchill Town. We now proceed to the next question, which is Question Number **030/2020 [Honourable Member for Foni Bintang]**.

**HON. MOMODOU CAMARA [FONI BINTANG]:** Honourable Speaker, can the Honourable Minister of Petroleum and Energy inform this august Assembly why the villages of Arrangallen, Kabokorr, Tampoto and Jalokoto in Foni Bintang Karanai and Foni Brefet were omitted from the implementation works under the on-going electrification project financed by Indian government?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** Honourable Speaker, the villages in Foni referred to by the Honourable Member were not omitted. The electrification expansion project funded by Exim Bank of Indian is on-going and the villages of Kabokorr, Tampoto and Jalokoto will be connected.

**HON. MOMODOU CAMARA [FONI BINTANG]:** As far as you said they will be connected, how soon? Also, you skipped because I have four villages here. You mentioned three and I mentioned four. Arrangallen is not mentioned.

**HON. Fafa Sanyang [Minister of Petroleum and Energy]:** Arrangallen is not part of the design of the project so it can come later but not this phase of the project. How soon is the project going to take place? They are now connecting works in Kiang and then they are also working on some parts of West Coast Region. Work is in progress and that particular project is definitely on-going.

**HON. Momodou Camara [Foni Bintang]:** You said the work is on-going but they started with Kiang and now from Kiang they skipped to Kombos. This is why I am asking this question because we do not know why they skipped from Kiang to Kombo. They skipped to Kombo East.

**HON. Fafa Sanyang [Minister of Petroleum and Energy]:** Honourable Speaker, the work [as I said] is going on schedule and definitely the engineers are working according to their schedule. I will not be able to tell you why they jumped here and there. Even in the Kombos, it is not everywhere they cover. It depends on how they schedule their work but definitely I am not in a position to tell you why this position and not this position. What I know is that it is part of it and it will be done.

**HON. Lamin J. Sanneh [Brikama South]:** Honourable Minister, in relation to the southern part of Brikama: Kabekel and Marakisa up to Darsilami are omitted. Are they part of this particular project?

**HON. Fafa Sanyang [Minister of Petroleum and Energy]:** I do not even know those areas. I cannot tell you exactly whether they are part of it or not. I know they are in Brikama but I know not if every area is covered so I cannot tell you exactly whether those areas are covered or not. I am sorry about that.

**HON. Sunkary Badjie [Foni Brefet]:** Honourable Minister, thank you very much for that sweet information. However, the information is that those communities highlighted by Honourable Member for Foni Bintang were omitted. Would you be patient enough to give us any evidence to ascertain if actually these communities are not omitted, because we are very worried?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** When this question was posed, I personally call the Project Manager because it was on 4 villages and they have started working there. I asked him the actual villages that are going to be covered to let me report properly. These are the three privileged villages he mentioned to me i.e. from the Project Manager. Definitely, they give me the assurance that they are part of the project. I found out myself yesterday, to make sure those particular areas are part of it.

**HON. KADDY CAMARA [FONI BONDALI]:** Can the Honourable Minister tell us whether they have put it in the document or not?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** Well it looks like my neighbours in Foni are not sure of what we are saying. Definitely, if is not covered, I will tell you it is not covered because I have mentioned to others that I am not too sure whether they are covered. Definitely if the area is not covered, it is not covered. Look at it, the project that takes electricity to Foni from Serrekunda all the way to Kalaji, did not cover all the villages. Even whereas there are areas in Foni that are not covered, there is still a project that is coming up which is the World Bank project. That will definitely cover Foni, LRR and other areas too. For this particular project, these are the 3 villages that I was informed will be covered. As I said, projects cannot cover everywhere at every time. We are catering for everyone but cannot do it all at the same time. That is why I said they are not omitted. Foni area is not being omitted but it cannot cover all the areas they want it to cover.

**HON. YA KUMBA JAITEH [NOMINATED MEMBER]:** Actually, I think what they are asking for is whether you can provide the strategic plan of this project or documentation to show them exactly [convince them] that these villages are part of it..

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Nominated Member let your question be directed to the Minister and as opposed to what others are asking.

**HON. YA KUMBA JAITEH [NOMINATED MEMBER]:** My question is relating to the same question, we are asking the same thing. I just want the Honourable Minister [if

possible] if there is a strategic document on this project, listing the villages that are involved, can you provide this information to us, please?

**HON. Fafa Sanyang [Minister of Petroleum and Energy]:** I have my team here to take note but obviously all the questions here about the other area too, the project is on-going there and I do not think we are provided any kind of that list. I think that is the matter of Foni thinking that they will be omitted and I mentioned it here that we are not discriminating and Foni will never be discriminated. Obviously, that is impossible. When we say we are going to provide it. Definitely, we can provide the list. I can ask them to provide the list and send it to you. Sometimes what happens is, even if you provide the list, some villages are left out. They will start giving problems and you cannot provide everywhere; that is the thing. Sometimes it is not the desire of a Member to say put electricity here and there. It does not go like that. There is a plan.

**HON. Dawda Kawsu Jawara [Upper Fulladu West]:** I just want to know this information from the Minister. Gambia is poised to be one of the countries in Africa to have universal electricity because we are talking about certain areas having and certain areas not having. How is this realistic and when can we look forward to actually having a Gambia that is electrified completely?

**HON. Fafa Sanyang [Minister of Petroleum and Energy]:** Universal access is MDG7 and many countries including The Gambia are committed to that. The projects that are going on now are the projects we are implementing but other project are coming up, like the EU project and others. They are all part of trying to reach that goal. The goal is 2030 but we have within our roadmap this program of at least getting universal access by 2025-2030. It cannot all be on grid. That is why we are talking of development also off-grid and mini-grid projects for some area where we cannot extend on grid. That is the plan but the MDG7 is 2030 for universal access and we are going towards that.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much. Now we move on to the June Questions.  
**Question Number 088/2020 [Honourable Member for Kiang Central].**

**HON. BAKARY CAMARA [KIANG CENTRAL]:** It is important that when somebody does something good you acknowledge it. As far as electricity is concerned and as we speak, poles are being erected in Kiang so we do not have that problem. Honourable Speaker, can the Honourable Minister of Petroleum and Energy inform this August Assembly why petrol stations are operated or constructed within residential areas?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** Honourable Speaker, the Ministry is aware that many service stations are established in residential areas. However, this may not be an issue if the necessary health and safety measures are put in place. However, in 2018 and 2019, the Ministry developed several Petroleum Product Regulations in accordance with the Petroleum Act 2016, which is intended to sanitize the downstream petroleum sector. The regulations developed include the Petroleum Products Importation Regulations, Health and Safety Regulations, Service Station Regulations, Transportation Regulations, Storage Regulations and Emergency Supply Plan Regulations. These regulations are imposed on both legacy and newly constructed stations.

**HON. BAKARY CAMARA [KIANG CENTRAL]:** Honourable Minister, I am really worried and concerned. Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to be part of a meeting organized by the National Environment Agency and this issue was raised. I asked questions on whether they have not been consulted to give environmental impact assessment, because it is not safe. I will suggest that you liaise with National Environment Agency to see how best or whether it is feasible to have petrol stations in certain residential areas?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** Honourable Speaker, no license is issued to a service station to establish a petrol station in an area without getting that clearance from NEA. They must have environment clearance and development permit, these are the new conditions. You get the development plan permit, you get environment impact assessment to be able to establish in an area. There were actually stations that were established before this law came into being. That is a problem and sometimes also people will build without getting those permits.

What PURA does is that they stop the development until they get things done properly. Definitely, we are concerned and we are following that up. In fact, right now as I am speaking to you, PURA have just put a stop to some stations being built without getting these things. Sometimes people will do when they get the business registration. Even if they get the environment clearance, that does not even give you the right to go and establish the station, you must get others. Gambia Fire and Rescue Services must give you a clearance, Department of Physical Planning must give you their permit and PURA will also determine before they recommend to the Minister to give the license. We are working with these teams but you are right, it is a concern. Some will do it without following the due process and if that is known, we just stop them. What I am saying here is that it is a concern generally and we have developed a regulations on that and we are trying to enforce those regulations.

**HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]:** Madam Speaker, this is a crucial issue but the question is what happens to those who are already issued with license prior to the existence of any regulation? Would the Ministry be considering a study of the problem itself so that no accusation upon fairness would be levelled against it?

**HON. Fafa Sanyang [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** There have been established stations before these regulations come into being. Most of them are these big stations like PetroGas at Churchill Town and all those areas. What we are going to do is to get them to regularize their status by applying for a license and go through a similar process. They have already been established for years but we will still force them to regularize their status.

The actual study and everything were done when we were formulating the regulations and these were validated. If a station is established before this law comes into being, we are going to make sure that you regularize your status: apply for license and then you run according to that license. That is what is going on and virtually all of them have regularized their status because if you do not, PURA will have a right to stop your operation. It happened to one petrol station, PetroGas station at Turntable, the

operation was stopped. It is a big station established a long time ago but because they do not fulfil the condition, they were stopped from operating.

**HON. OUSMAN SILLAH [BANJUL NORTH]:** Honourable Minister, petroleum and petroleum related products are highly inflammable and that makes the possibility of fire not remote considering the incident that occurred the last time at the Kanifing Industrial Estate where a gas bottling factory went into flames destroying all the surrounding businesses. What compensatory mechanisms are in place or could the Ministry come up with so that those that are operating petrol stations would factor that in the event that when there is a fire and it happens to affect the surrounding neighbourhood they would compensate them?

**HON. Fafa Sanyang [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** It is a very good suggestion. I do not think there is any regulation or law pertaining to that. I am not too sure about it but definitely something needs to be considered that if your business affects the other party, out of negligence or whatever [because sometimes it could be out of negligence], you compensate or else government will have to do some kind of compensation to the people who are affected by such kind of accidents. Definitely, I think if it is not factored in the regulations then definitely it is something that we need to reconsider. I agree with you 100%.

**HON. SAINY TOURAY [JARRA EAST]:** Madam Speaker my question has been ably answered [asked by the Member for Banjul North] but nonetheless I just want to ask another question. Honourable Minister, according to the NEMA Act i.e. National Environmental Management Act, land fields and petrol stations are not supposed to be built in the residential areas how do you see that?

**HON. Fafa Sanyang [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** I do not know whether NEMA is saying stations not in residential areas because I think what NEMA would actually say is put in some mechanisms. That is why they do the embankment impact assessment. Now it is the environmental and social impact assessment. That is what the Honourable Member for Banjul North is coming up with.

For land field sites, they are not supposed to be in residential areas. Let me tell you one thing, most of these land field sites you see: Bakoteh, Kotu and others, when those were designed or placed there, there were no residential areas. People come in closer to the area. That is what happened but when they were being placed there, there were no residential areas. Even Youna now, where there was a quarry they put land field and people are throwing garbage there because there are settlements surrounding it. Bakoteh, a layout was placed there. When it was there, there was no settlement at the Kotu quarry; it was a no-man's land at that time. It is settlements that come closer to those areas. It is a matter of when we create new land field sites, we create a buffer so that even when settlements come, they cannot go closer to certain distance. We are trying to do the same thing to for petrol stations. If you are in a residential area, you must have certain distances and you must create certain conditions towards whatever so that if there is any fire it does not jump out. Unless it is gas because when gas fire comes, sometimes it can jump over fences but we have to put mechanisms in place.

**HON. YA KUMBA JAITEH [NOMINATED]:** Honourable Minister, this issue of petrol stations being in residential areas is quite worrying because if you travel abroad you will notice that this does not exist in developing countries and it is really important that we put up a regulation. For example, at Bakoteh dump site [just right next to the dump site] they are building a petrol station and we all know that at that dump site there is fire all the time and you are building a petrol station next to it. Which department is responsible for giving clearance to businesses to build and what is the mechanism to make sure that the impact assessment has been made and who approves it at the end?

**HON. Fafa Sanyang [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** That particular gas station was not sanctioned. There was no license for him to operate there. They build it and then in fact when there was this fire at the Bakoteh dump site, I was called at 3:00am that there is a petrol station there and there is a gas. They are not supposed to be there and the idea is to put it down because they do not have the license. Many stations are built without getting license. That is what I am talking about. We are going to stop all those activities but definitely it is not proper. Proximity of

certain activities to petrol stations can never co-exist but there are regulations in place. That is why I am saying now we have regulations that need to be enforced.

The other aspect of your question is you said they do not have petrol stations in developed countries. I have seen them in some areas where petrol stations are even underneath high buildings. Definitely, I have seen that in many places. It depends on the management of the area. I even give examples in Banjul here, there is petrol station BP. If you go towards McCarthy Square, you see it on the right hand side. That petrol station has been there since we were kids. It could be dangerous but if it is properly managed and regulated, it can work but we do not want it to happen or be closer to the residential areas.

If they are already there, we have put mechanisms in place to make sure that when there is fire it can be contained within the area not to expand. Definitely, industrial accidents are sometimes inevitable. It happens; it can be out of negligence, mistake or operational default. It is worrying to everybody, including us and the regulators.

**HON. MOMODOU CAMARA [FONI BINTANG]:** Honourable Minister, you made mention of these petrol stations having safety regulations. Do you think all these are petrol stations which are constructed inside the villages or towns have proper safety regulations and monitoring team that make sure that all these petrol stations have proper and necessary safety measures in place?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** We work with Gambia Fire and Rescue Services and also with other agencies like National Environment Agency and PURA is the regulatory body. PURA officers go round to stations to do spot monitoring on the stations. Of course, they do not have the mechanism where they can remotely see all the stations but once in a while they go round to see whether those safety measures are in place: fire extinguishers, whether there is this "No Smoking" sign, etc. but sometimes also it is the attitude of people.

There is a sign i.e. not to put on your mobile phone. The sign is already there, that is what the regulation says but you put it on. Sometimes even the staffs working there do

not know that you have put it on. Sometimes people can do anything, just like bushfire; there are thorough regulations but sometimes people will smoke and throw it and bushfire happens. Those are industrial accidents so we have to put measures to make sure that if there should be an accident we know what to do to contain it. I think that is very important but definitely PURA is the one regulating, going round and monitoring.

**HON. MOMODOU S. CEESAY [JANJANBUREH]:** Honourable Minister, I want to believe that there is a committee responsible for authorizing the building of these petrol stations and I assume among the members there is one that is to do the monitoring to find out. When that petrol station was being built at the dump site, was there no report about it, together with the one at Kotu that also is in the residential areas?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** I am not sure when it was built there but PURA regulates. I think there was an issue for that station not to be there. PURA found it out and then they asked it to stop the operation there. What you are saying is that when it was being constructed, that is the time they should proactively stop the operations. Sometimes also they build up to a certain level before PURA will be aware and they go in there to stop the operations. They seal the place to stop the operations or further construction. If there is need for mitigation measures to be in place then they enforce that. Or else, if it is built with no regulations or permit, whatsoever, then they have the right to pull it down. However, enforcement is the issue and the key word here.

**THE SPEAKER:** We have exhausted the 7 questions allowed by the Standing Orders.

**Question Number 089/2020 [Honourable Member for Illiassa]:**

**HON. DEMBO KM CAMARA [ILLIASSA]:** Honourable Speaker, can the Honourable Minister of Petroleum and Energy inform this august Assembly why the expansion of the rural electrification project has been late particularly at Katchang and No-Kunda?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** Honourable Speaker, the second phase of the rural electrification project ended in December 2019

and a total of 44 villages in NBR, CRR and URR respectively were electrified. I am aware that many rural communities, including Katchang and No-Kunda, are yet to be electrified but efforts are currently underway to electrify these community through the World Bank funded project that is the \$66 million ECOWAS Energy Access Project. The other engineer for the project is been recruited to guide the tendering process and supervise the implementation of the works.

**THE SPEAKER:** Do you have any supplementary questions Honourable Members?

**Question Number 090/2020 [Honourable Member for Kombo East]**

**LAMIN F.M. CONTA [KOMBO EAST]:** Honourable Speaker, can the Honourable Minister of Petroleum and Energy indicate to this august Assembly, when Kiang and some parts of Kombo will benefit from electricity supply through the Indian Project.

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to inform the Honourable Member that the electrification of Kiang and several communities in the Kombos funded through the Indian line of credit is progressing well despite of some delay due to Covid-19. The contractor is redoubling effort to complete all the remaining works before end of this year. As I indicated earlier, Covid-19 has delayed the impact of the progress of the work but we are optimistic that some of the communities will start enjoying electricity supply in a few months' time.

**HON. LAMIN FM CONTA [KOMBO EAST]:** How many phases does this project component consist of?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** The Indian project has this first phase which is ongoing now but we have some additional funds we are try to access to be the second phase to implement some other areas that will include particularly Kiang and other parts in Foni. We are now working on that. As I am talking to you now, the contractor is giving us proposals that we can take to the Exim Bank through NAWEC.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you, any more supplementary questions?

**HON. MUHAMED MAGASSY [BASSE]:** Thank you Madam Speaker I want to raise this question, even if the Minister is not having the answer it for now, he can have it in mind in relation to rural electrification. There is a community between... [*Interruption*]

**THE SPEAKER:** Sorry, did I get you well that you said your question is not related?

**HON. MUHAMED MAGASSY [BASSE]:** No, my question is very related. I mean if the Minister does not have the answer now, he can have it in mind so that later on he could provide the answer to us.

There is a community between Santanto Boubou and Saran Manson called Sambuya. This community is a very important community as far as national development of this country is concerned. In this community there is one of the most sensitive institutions which I do not want to mention here but the Minister knows what I am referring to. That challenges that the community are facing now is lack of electricity and lack of water. Due to the importance of that institution I am talking about, that community cannot go without electricity and water. I do not know what the Honourable Minister could do for such a situation in order to mitigate the suffering that they are facing. The only problem that they are facing is to have a transformer which is costing them huge money. Neither the community nor the institution is in position to have that sum so I do not know what the Ministry can do for such a situation.

**THE SPEAKER:** Sorry, with all due respect, I think we can all agree that that was not a supplementary question. No matter how important, it was definitely it is not a supplementary question. Please, I am again appealing to the Honourable Members, if you have issue of such importance we can always consult the relevant Ministries but we cannot hide behind supplementary questions. There are rules and regulations to be followed. Honourable Minister, maybe you can help or take note of it.

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** Madam Speaker, let me assure him that I am aware of the issue and I think I saw a message from you on that on WhatsApp so I am taking that up with NAWEC to see what we can do. The transformers are also very expensive and can cost up to D500,000 which could

be beyond the means of the community but because of the sensitivity of that area, I will talk to the Minister responsible in that particular business to look at how we can work together.

**HON. NDEY YASSIN SECKA [NOMINATED]:** Honourable Minister, this is a concern; I think with all these projects that we are talking about, still there is no enough water and no enough electricity. When shall we be there and where does the problem lie?

**HON. FAFA SANYANG [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** We are having some problems and most of the problems are basically on the transmission and distribution lines. When you come to the integrity of the lines, the lines are very old and especially at this particular time [we are entering the raining season], we are going to have more problems. Before, we were trying to tackle the power generation. Of course, there is also power transmission and distribution; that is what some of these projects are going to address. Not only expansion of the network to communities but also to modernise it. That is why we call it The Gambia Electricity Modernization i.e. to modernize it in a way that at least we will be able to avert these power shortages.

When you come to water supply also, there is a general supply-demand imbalance. That is a major problem so we are now digging more boreholes and also when there is power problem at the boreholes, the pumping machines do not operate and it creates water problems in many areas. Before water comes, gets the pressure and goes to the places, it becomes a problem. Whenever you have power shortages definitely it goes to the water. Water supply is still dependent on electricity. That is the challenges we were facing now but most of these projects are meant to address that. Within the Greater Banjul Areas also, the OIC Project is coming to help the integrity of the power lines and to develop them. Definitely, it will end but it is work-in-progress. It will take some time to completely alt the situation. That is the honest opinion.

**HON. YA KUMBA JAITEH [NOMINATED]:** I was going to ask the exact same question, I withdraw.

**HON. SAINÉY TOURAY [JARRA EAST]:** Honourable Minister, what is the fate of Jarra East in the rural electrification programme?

**HON. Fafa Sanyang [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** Jarra East is within the 100 kilometre radius of the Soma Sub-Station. That is where the OMVG project is trying to electrify. It is meant for that [100 kilometres surrounding the Soma OMVG project]. That is the ECOWAS Access Project sponsored by the World Bank, it is part of our plans.

**HON. Sulayman Saho [CENTRAL BADDIBU]:** It is the same expansion; do you have any plan to expand in the Northern part of Baddibu [from Njawara to Minteh Kunda]? Do you have any plan for that in the expansion project?

**HON. Fafa Sanyang [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** Honourable Member, we have plans to electrify The Gambia and we either have it on-grid or off-grid so there is nowhere that we do not want to electrify. Njawara is off the road just like Katchang but it is a very important community. Definitely, we will look into this within our projects but I cannot tell you exactly the design of the ECOWAS project because it has not been at that level. We know everywhere: where we have electricity and where we do not have it, we know all the places.

**HON. Yaya Gassama [KIANG EAST]:** Thank you Honourable Minister for raising our hope that by the end of the year Kiang will start having electricity. However, I am worried about the Kabada part of Kiang; how soon are we going to see that area electrified?

**HON. Fafa Sanyang [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY]:** I think the projects that are ongoing now [the Indian project] will definitely be completed before end of the year but not everywhere will be electrified this year. I want this to be understood. When you come to Kabada end, that is what I am saying that we cannot connect everywhere on-grid, to get power lines everywhere. It is not possible so where we cannot and we have other means to electrify them through off-grid means [through solar power], we will do that. What is happening in Kabada around LRR and the West

coast region is covered within the ECOWAS access development project. I think when that happens, Kabada also will be part of it. There are important communities in Kabada and there are some border and security posts in some areas that need to be electrified.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much Honourable Minister. We exhausted our 7 questions. Thank you very much for the oral answers given to the questions posed by the Honourable Members. You are now released.

### **QUESTIONS FOR ORAL ANSWERS**

#### **Hon. Minister of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment**

**THE SPEAKER:** Question for which due notices were given to the Honourable Member of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment by Honourable Members for Oral Reply. These are the March 2020 Question.

#### **Question Number 038/2020 [Honourable Member for Old Yundum]:**

**ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM]:** Honourable Speaker, can the Honourable Minister of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment inform this august Assembly how many expatriate quotas were allocated or approved from 2017 to 2019?

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** Madam Speaker the expatriate quota, as used in The Gambia, refers to the allowable number of non-citizens to be employed by businesses operating or wishing to operate in The Gambia. Such businesses may be fully owned by foreigners or joint ventures or fully indigenous. The positions to be filled by non-Gambians are referred to as expatriate positions or expatriate quota. These are positions which cannot be filled by citizens in terms academic qualifications, training and experience.

Madam Speaker, this is something which I [in person] have asked my office to review because when it comes to expatriate quota, we have a lot of qualified Gambians now who can man these positions and they are given to foreigners. This we need to review.

The application of the expatriate quota is based on the provision of the amended Payroll Tax Act of 2008, which states "Employers in The Gambia are allowed to employ non-Gambian citizens up to 20% of their total staff strength". That is what the expatriate quota talks about. Employers and businesses wishing to employ non-Gambians have to make a formal application to the Expatriate Quotas Board under the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment through the Expatriate Quota Secretariat at the Department of Immigration. The Board reviews applications and recommends to the Ministry for approval or otherwise. The Board, from 2017 to 2019, approved 1067 applications. If I may just add to that, each person applies separately so they have approved a total of 1067 applications.

**HON. ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM]:** I have two supplementary questions. I wanted to give the Minister an option, if you would allow me. I wanted to ask both questions together and give the Minister an option either to respond right now or to provide this august Assembly the administrative formalities in the authorization of the expatriate quota to stay in The Gambia and also the legal formalities as well. If you can provide that and respond to the Assembly right now, it is fine. Otherwise, you can provide the details for the National Assembly.

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL, INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** Honourable Speaker, as he rightly said, I need time to elaborate on that and I will provide the answer in due course.

**THE SPEAKER:** It will be copied and circulated to Honourable Members, thank you.

**HON. KEBBA K. BARROW [MAJORITY LEADER & KOMBO SOUTH]:** Can the Honourable Minister provide this Assembly with the list of the members of the Expatriate Quota Board?

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** The Expatriate Quota Board mostly comprises of the Ministry of Trade as focal Ministry, Department of Immigration under the Ministry of Interior, Gambia Revenue Authority under the Ministry of Finance and Economic

Affairs, and Department of Labour, which is a satellite institution under the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment; these are the co-members.

**HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]:** Madam Speaker, would the Minister also be ready to provide us with the list, if we do not believe that is prohibitive, of those people whose applications have been approved as well as the countries of origin. Would that be proper to do? If it is proper to do, would he be willing to provide us with that list?

**THE SPEAKER:** Are you thinking of any period or blank?

**HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]:** The period is as recommended by the Member. Once he has decided to submit what the Member has requested for, it should be included. The request is for that to be included in that package.

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTRY FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** We will provide that list when we respond to the Honourable Member for Old Yundum. We will provide that exhaustive list together.

**HON. MUHAMMED MAHANERA [SANDU]:** Could the Honourable Minister inform this august Assembly how soon they will come to review the policy regarding the expatriate quota and also the Labour Act, considering the nature of the businesses in the country and our own institutions graduating students every year? If you go to these businesses, you can see that 80% of the people who are working there are all foreigners and Gambians are only given labourer jobs to do.

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** My answer to that is that the process is on. In fact, right now we are liaising with the Ministry of Justice for this review. I think because of these Covid-19 engagements, things have been a bit slow on that side but we are following up and we will come up with the review as soon as possible.

**HON. MOMODOU S. CEESAY [JANJANBUREH]:** Honourable Minister, going along Kairaba Avenue now, you find a lot of these Indians shops with some boys in positions

that could be occupied by Gambians. How are those people charged? Are they under expatriate quota or what type of tax do they pay?

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** As clearly defined, the expatriate quota are those non-Gambians being employed in those institutions, shops or whatever. That is why I said I [myself] have a question on that which we need to review because not only Kairaba Avenue but go to Brusubi area or elsewhere you find people occupying positions which Gambians can occupy. They have the qualifications and the experience to do it. They are occupying positions which Gambians can. We are definitely looking into it and the process is on.

**HON. YA KUMBA JAITEH [NOMINATED]:** Honourable Minister, I do not want to name names but there is a major telecommunications company in this country that is known for putting expatriates in the main positions of the company even though there are qualified Gambians to occupy these positions. Whilst you are doing the review, I would like you to put this company under investigation because as you said the main criteria of allowing expatriate is that there are no Gambians who are able to fill those positions in term of qualifications. Regardless of the quota, this is the condition so I would be pleased if the Ministry has any information on why these non-Gambians are in these positions at this particular company when there are Gambians to fill these positions? Why were they allocated these quotas?

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** I think this is part of the responses I have just given. We are reviewing such positions in different companies. It is just that this 20% being talked about is something we have to think about also. I mean the 20% is restraining us but giving me qualifications, Gambians are well qualified to handle such positions. Given the investor protection aspect of it, someone can invest millions: 50 million, 100 million or whatever and will need his investment to be protected by someone he trusts. This is something we have to discuss and find an amicable solution

to that but we will definitely look into it. There are a lot of things to look into regarding this expatriate quota system that we are working on.

**THE SPEAKER:** I am sure the Trade Committee will provide the necessary details.

**Question Number 039/2020 [Honourable Member for Bakau]**

**HON. ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]:** Honourable Speaker, can the Honourable Minister of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment inform this august Assembly about the measures that have been taken by Government to curb youth unemployment in the Country?

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** The government, over the past years, have taken many steps in curbing unemployment, especially for youth unemployment. Such steps include the 2018 Gambia Labour Force Survey which was conducted to know the realities of the labour market and support evidence based on policy making. 2020-2025 National Employment Policy and Action Plan to provide a strategy policy direction for employment creation, especially for the youth through skills development, entrepreneurship and enterprise development across different sectors of the economy. This was supported by the Entrepreneurship and Private Sector Development Project funded by UNDP and the Gambia Government. Youth are being trained in different marketable skills and areas such as solar and satellite installation, laptop and mobile phone repairs, and Cisco networking, among others.

Madam Speaker, there is the Entrepreneurship and Private Sector Development Project which I said was funded by the UNDP, under My Ministry which is also supporting improvement in the regulatory framework and business environment to build productive capacities of entrepreneurs, skills development and enhanced public-private dialogue for job creation. With the support of this project, we were able to trained 393 entrepreneurs, 352 business advisers and service providers, resulting to creating 723 jobs and 2675 livelihoods in 2018.

In the same year, the project supported the training of 119 youth in various agro-related skills at the Gambia Shanghai Initiative Centre in Chamen. 800 rural women were trained in bookkeeping and banking techniques to improve their access to finance. In addition, 116 youth were trained by Real Tech Starling and GTMI in various skill areas that were in high demand in the market. Similarly, 554 youth were trained in entrepreneurship, business advisory service, cyber security, vehicle diagnostic, fibrous plastering and Cisco networking.

Employment Creation for Youth and Building Sustainable Peace in The Gambia, funded by the government of Japan, through the International Labour Organisation; this project trained 250 young people including people with disabilities to start and improve the business skills of such people and then deploy the trainees to work on road construction that is based on Japanese technology called the Donu technology.

The beneficiaries are brought together to form an enterprise called Community Roads Development Enterprise. They were supported through the Ministry to be awarded a contract at the Kanifing Municipal Council to rehabilitate drainages and we are working also to link them with other municipalities like Brikama Area Council (BAC) and others.

Last year, when I was going to the TICKA in Japan, this project sponsored one of the leaders of this project to come with me. We went together to Japan for her to showcase and explain her experience under this project. The project was in two phases: one was in Gunjur [building the road to the fish landing site] and then Kotu area. The lady did very well and people were highly impressed and then they promised to come up with follow-up projects so as to encourage the youth to be self-employed.

The Youth Empowerment Project is an European Union funded project which aims at addressing the root cause of irregular migration, especially among the youth, through skills training, agro value change development, tourism and culture, business development by linking businesses to the market and also improve their access to finance as well as support to the fashion industry.

As at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019, YEP has created 2,400 jobs in the country; 2,500 youth were trained in various vocational skills whilst 3050 were trained in entrepreneurship, including 140 returnees or back-way people. The Tekki-Fi initiative [known as make it here in The Gambia] provides start-up capital to young entrepreneurs in selected industries such as agri-business and solar related businesses. This is a partnership with the Germany International Cooperation [GIZ] and IMVT and funded by the European Union. These are all contributing to youth employment which I think is being felt all over.

The Ministry is also working with a number of partners like the ADB, AU and NEPAD to leverage the economic potentials of the Senegambia Bridge by creating a special economic zone on both sides of the bridge. The aim is to support the development of the economy by creating agro-processing zones, trade and logistics centres and tourism hub as well as revitalize river transport to support the transportation of farm produce and tourist related activities from the rural to the urban areas. The project has the potential to reduce rural urban migration.

**HON. ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]:** I have no supplementary question but I want to suggest to the Honourable Minister to provide a copy of the data for us for reference purposes.

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** These were sent to the National Assembly.

**HON. ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]:** It has not been circulated, that is why.

**THE SPEAKER:** In addition to your request do you have any supplementary question based on the answer that you are just given? It is your right that is why I am asking.

**HON. LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]:** Honourable Minister, by looking at the efforts your Ministry is doing as a policy adviser to the government, are you ready to advise the government to engage the youth into public-private partnership? Looking at the number of trainings you have done to enhance capacity, you have more youth

that are unemployed. Are you ready to engage the youth, by advising the government as a policy adviser, for them to engage the youth into public private partnerships as a way of job creation for the youth since they have a lot of capacities now since much training has been done.

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** Your suggestion is very sound. The PPP is under the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs but I will take note and engage my colleague to put your suggestion forward to him and see. The best we can do to get them engaged as you rightly said.

One thing is training people, just as I have elaborated, but another thing is keeping them engaged and through this collaborative efforts i.e. public-private partnership even private alone to see how best you can raise something for them to start. That is my own area and I am very much particular about that.

Not only these projects but we are trying to come up with seed funds under the government. The cabinet paper was done but we are redoing and resubmitting it. These projects come and go but when they go, if we do not have supporting projects to engage the youth and those we have trained, it goes into the drains so we are trying to make sure that we come up with something which will keep them busy: create more self-employment, more spin-off effects so that the youth could be meaningfully engaged.

**HON. OMAR CEESAY [NIAMINA EAST]:** Honourable Minister, with all the efforts you have done, we have seen most of the young people out there unemployed. Generalization, in my own views, does not solve the problem because we have so many young people out there with different talents and skills and most of the things that you are talking about are things that are done for us by the donors. I believe tapping our own resources or the little resources we have and trying to innovate in order to invest some of the little resources we have on the young people will be more meaningful. The donor out there, the resources or the support that they are giving normally will not last

and at the end of the day we end up seeing most of the young people out there losing their jobs. Are you thinking of negotiating with the Finance Minister or whatever Ministry responsible to see how best we can tap from our own resources to ensure that these young people are employed because we have people who are coming from the university, they graduate with degrees. You have people who are coming from Gambia College, MDI, GTTI and so on aside the training you are talking about but yet we have seen most of these young people are not employed. What are you doing in order for us to use own resources and not rely on the donors?

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** I think I have answered your question already. I said we cannot depend on these projects coming and going. We have to get our seed funds. It is of great concern to government to see people being trained under these skills projects; people are coming out of the universities and we do not have only one university in The Gambia. Now we have other private universities or so but it is of great concern. This initiative we are talking about will make sure that we have funds which our own government will provide to that seed fund. Now, instead of coming with small aids from here and there, we are already being contacted by some international bodies that once government sets of this fund, which will attract government funding, they will also chip in. I have even started talking to people like the Turkish government. I have been there several times and I have engaged them on this. India, where I studied, said whenever this fund is set they are ready to participate very well. We are pushing it and I think by next week we will resubmit this to Cabinet and I foresee no resistance to that. It will come here to be endorsed. This will give us a very strong base to take care of your concern, my concern and the whole country's concern.

**THE SPEAKER:** Please can we ask supplementary questions again?

**HON. SUNKARY BADJIE [FONI BREFET]:** The emphasis is on the curbing of youth unemployment and irregular migration. Would the Honourable Minister be in a position to inform this august Assembly if there was any assessment carried out to ascertain the impact of some of the trainings that were conducted by the government to see whether

those training have really contributed towards curtailing youth unemployment and irregular migration?

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** Honourable Member, during my answer to this question, I have mentioned different areas where employment is being created, skills being developed and employment being created. I have given some statistics on that but we are not leaving it at that. We want more openings for the youths being trained so as to be engaged more productively.

**HON. FATOU K. JAWARA [TALLINDING KUNJANG]:** Honourable Minister, the youth constitute 62% of the population and going by the figure that you just read, did your Ministry have any plan to scale down the number of youth especially those who came back home from irregular migration in order to reintegrate them into society.

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** that is a good question, Madam Speaker. In fact, we have been engaging the IOM; the Chief of Mission in the country comes to my office regularly for us to review. We are engaging the returnees. I have given a little statistics on that in my response. We are telling them to do more if they want the youth not to take the irregular route. Tekki-Fi is providing for them to stay and make it here in The Gambia but we want them also to chip in more to make sure that the youth are given the opportunity to stay here and make it here. We will continue to pursue that but once we get our own thing here i.e. "*NDIMBAL NACHI FEKA LOHOL BOROM*", we will be able to do more in that direction.

**HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]:** Would the Honourable Minister not agree that there is a policy gap which needs to be addressed to deal with the issue of youth unemployment in two sectors:

1. With the Labour Department adhering to the law in terms of being the depository of information regarding the status of young people in the country who are seeking employment; and

2. Integrating the plans of the Ministry with that of the Ministry of Youth and Sports that is now given levy to accumulate state wealth which should be properly planned in such a way that we provide the means of production to those who are trained. Knowledge without means of production can never lead to any form of productivity. Would the Minister not agree that those are the two policy gaps that could be addressed in the short run to move toward greater addressing of the problem of unemployment?

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** I will first answer your second question. We are moving in that direction and the government is very much aware. We are trying to make sure that after training the youth meaningfully engage and when this seed fund is approved and funds are collected, we are setting up a very strong regulatory system to make sure that the effect is felt throughout the country including youths, non-youths, elderly and so forth. This one is an umbrella fund meant for the youth, men, women and whomsoever, to engage productively. In Ghana, for example, this type of fund graduated to be a bank which is lending at a very reasonable rate, encouraging people with training and skills to be able to tap those funds and come up with meaningful projects which will have spin-off effects on the economy.

Regarding your first point, we are about to open a centre under the Labour Department, a focal point funded by the IOM. It is to be a centre where people who are not employed but have the skills and want employment can go to that office. It is almost complete now. They will go to that office to register themselves so that the sourcing and matching of jobs according to qualifications would be done so that people would, as early as possible, be engaged instead of them having to jump from pillar to post looking for employment. Here is a centre that would collect qualifications and skills that they have and trying to match with all sectors of the economy that can engage them very well. I think in the next month or so, I would be called to go and open that centre. Even youths who want to photocopy their papers would run from office to offices saying "Please photocopy this for me". All will be provided in that office.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, can we please avoid putting two questions is one supplementary question so that at least we would give others a chance.

**HON. ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]:** Honourable Speaker, would the Honourable Minister responsible for Trade and Employment clarify certain things for me because I am still lost in terms of the labour needs of the country? Is there any collaboration between this Ministry and the Ministries of Basic and Higher Education in terms of the curricula that are being taught in our schools and also in the tertiary institution, to match with the labour needs of the country? In as much as they are fighting unemployment for the youth, I would want to find out if there are any collaborative efforts to see if we can bridge that gap where we know these are the labour needs and whether that matches the curriculum in the basic and higher education institutions we have in this country.

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** In fact, we are very hard in that path. We are engaging the Ministry of Higher Education for that matter, university graduates coming out. We have a Department of Employment in my office. They are the ones overseeing this office. I am just talking about being funded by the IOM, at the Labour Department. What you have just said is part of what that office is going to do to make sure that we link with the institutions not only the university, there are other tertiary institutions that are graduating Gambians who would find it difficult to find jobs. That office will be coordinating that together with my Director of Employment sitting here in the hall and the Commissioner of Labour. They will all be jointly doing this to make sure that youths who have the qualification and requisite skills are placed as soon as possible.

**HON. FATOUMATTA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]:** My question was regarding the curbing of youth unemployment. We now have many universities and every year we have hundreds of graduates. Likewise, we have hundreds of people retiring out of the system. How do you correlate to make sure that those are replaced by these new graduates? Do you have a system?

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** In fact, this issue was on my table just last week. We have people graduating and people retiring but we have more people graduating and coming into the employment and labour markets than those who are retiring. We find some people retiring coming to my office because it is the Ministry in charge of employment to say you know we are very strong can you please give us contract to at least be still engaged. I say government has discouraged that, when you retire, you retire and give chance to others to come up. Just last week we have taken due note of that and we are trying to see how best to address it by creating these employment opportunities but not maybe engage the retired people in some other areas which, due to their experience they can be productive. They may still be productive and we can engage in some other areas but let us give the others along the line to climb and those coming in to be engaged.

**Question Number 40/2020 [Honourable Member for Bakau]**

**HON. ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]:** Honourable Speaker, our local businesses are losing out in competition with imported products. Can the Honourable Minister of Trade Industry, Regional Integration and Employment inform this august Assembly what measures are in place to address the situation?

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** Honourable Speaker allow me to first of all reiterate that The Gambia maintains a free market economic principle and a liberal trading environment. In such an economic environment, The Gambia does not interfere with the efficient and effective functioning of the market unless there is a market failure. Therefore, competition is an embodiment of a liberal market economy.

To ensure the effective competition in the market, the government in her wisdom established the Gambia Competition Commission in 2010 and was upgraded to include Consumer Protection in 2014. The main objectives are to ensure effective competition in the market and ensure consumer protection. To achieve the above objectives, the

Ministry ensures that there is a fair-trade practice through the effective implementation of the Gambia Competition Act by the Commission. We also work very closely with the Gambia Standards Bureau to ensure that locally produced goods meet the standards requirement of both local and international markets. We also work with the various Ministries and development partners such as the World Bank, UNDP, etc. on the business environment to reduce cost of doing business and enhance the competitiveness of our businesses.

Madam Speaker, to ensure that our local business are able to compete with imported products, the Ministry, through her agency – The Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency [GIEPA] has installed an EMPRETEC programme that provides entrepreneurship and enterprise training to locals as well as business advisory services. The financial supports of these services are from the UNDP through the Entrepreneurship and Private Sector Development Project domiciled in my Ministry.

In addition, the Ministry is also working with the International Trade Centre [ITC] on seed trade programme to support some of the local women producers in the agricultural value chain to improve their products qualities. For marketing promotion and facilitation, we are also supporting local business to participate in Trade Fairs [both local and international] and to learn and also network with other business around the world to improve their capacities.

In addition, we provide other policy support to our local infant industries in the form of protection to enjoy market advantage over imported products when they demonstrate some level of capacity to satisfy the market. The case in point is the moratorium we annually give to Mac-Food in terms of onion and potatoes produced locally in the country.

Finally, in the Ministry it is our preoccupation to design policies and programmes that would improve our business environment and ensure competitiveness of our local businesses to enable them compete effectively not only in the local/domestic economy but also internationally.

**HON. YA KUMBA JAITEH [NOMINATED]:** Honourable Minister, you mentioned the moratorium that is in course. This practice started since 2012 and in 2020 you imposed one from March to July, if I am correct. There is a committee that is responsible to implement this moratorium policy and this committee reviewed an application and did not approve of it from Futa Enterprise during this period of Covid-19 to import the 40-foot container. Yet still, that container came in and the onions flooded the market and also we are now having onions from Senegal giving us problem. This was a question asked to the Minister of Agriculture, that the women are having problem selling their produce particularly the onions and an amount of D18 million is needed and they are still negotiating with the private sector to buy these onions. Why did this happen after you imposed the moratorium? You flouted your own moratorium and allowed these containers to come in and flood the markets while the women are struggling to sell their produce?

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** Your question is well noted and as far as my Ministry is concerned, we have taken adequate measures to avoid such. We, are at the level of coming up with this moratorium [of course with a committee to enforce it], the key enforcing authority is usually Gambia Revenue Authority [GRA]. We receive such concerns and took action to make sure that it does not happen again. We are trying to encourage our local industries. If these people import onions or potatoes, they are defeating the purpose of this moratorium. We expressed our concern and we met over it and made sure that it does not happen.

The moratorium works like this: as early as January, we write to all importers of these commodities that effective March 1<sup>st</sup>, we are not going to allow anything in. Sometimes businesses always try to beat the system i.e. some will import to make sure that the imports arrive here around the end of February because the moratorium starts on 1<sup>st</sup> of March. Technically or legally, you cannot say no because they have arrived before the moratorium started. You can see some of those people will pump their product into the market thereby disturbing the local produce. We went to the extent of trying to get the

major importers to come and buy off these onions from the women which they accepted. We also got the ITC under this YEP Project who were ready to provide logistics i.e. transportation, sorting out the produce in collaboration with the regional agriculture Directors to make sure that these produce [the onions] in the provinces are sorted out. They provide the logistics, brought to the Greater Banjul Area where these major importers, I mean is that the local guys, will be able to buy them and that relieve the women for that matter. In fact, they are right now in the field doing that. The forms are provided and it will be bought, the logistics are provided for and everything will be in place. This situation will strongly safeguard against it. Come the next season, it will not happen again. We really felt very bad about that.

**HON. DAWDA KAWSU JAWARA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]:** Honourable Minister, would you agree that there is a distinction between competition and boosting local content and also enhancing our domestic economic activities. If you agree with me, there are already funds at the SDF. My suggestion will be to repackage that SDF to make it accessible for the youth you have been training as well as these women who are producing locally to make sure that they have access to financing to be able to boost their operations to be able to compete in the natural competition around.

Also, would you agree that it is wise to have a quota [like you said business people are very smart and they will import a lot during the months of January and February to cater for the time the moratorium is in place]? Would there not be necessity to assess how much production of such products we have every year to give a quota to how much they can import every year, especially around that time?

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** We have been doing that, in fact we do weekly stock and price level reviews so as to be in a good position to advise accordingly. We engage them to be more focused, more business-oriented in order to make use of that moratorium period to be able to engage well in making sure that the produce within the country, they can buy.

We had some issues with ones we were trying to protect during this moratorium period, in that they were trying to engage only two or three people in country to be selling their produce. We said no, that should not happen; engage people if they can come with bank guarantees or their own funds, engage them. Sell your produce to them so that maybe instead of March to August or July your produce will be finished before that so that the market could be opened.

In fact, this year during the Ramadan period, we had an issue i.e. all of a sudden there was a shortage in potato supply. Then I called my Deputy Permanent Secretary in charge: "What is the problem was? Go to them and find out. We are protecting them and there is shortage now. It is defeating the purpose." They were supplying 2 containers in the market; we asked them to increase it to 4. Because of that shortage, we asked them to increase it to 6 so as to be able to cater for the market. Let them open up let them not restrict themselves to those two or three distributors [they call them].

It is being well taken care of and [for your information] we have other people. We are encouraging many other companies to come up and settle here. Like Honourable Jaiteh said, people like Fouta, Ceesay Enterprise and so on, we are encouraging to produce in the country. We have a lot of good land to produce these onion and potatoes just like Mac-Food is doing. That will reduce our import bill and create employment in the country so that we would not have to be busy importing at very high cost to our exchequer; we are right on that part.

**HON. FATOUMATTA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]:** Honourable Minister, we all appreciate the fact that we run a competitive market policy but nonetheless we must also ensure that there is fair balance. I remember from way back that we had price controlling mechanism. Would we consider that to avoid our people being starved to death because of high cost of living? We all see the prices. The average Gambian sometimes cannot even pay for their meal for a month based on the salaries that they earn. We appreciate the competitive mechanism that we run but notwithstanding, protect our people because the constitution gives them the right to live and by any

means they should be protected by this government to be able to afford the standard of living to a certain level so that they can afford [at least] the food that they eat from the salaries that they earn.

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** First let me tell you that I was a senior staff of this price control you are talking about. We had this price control before and as development came it was seen as a disincentive for private sector development. That was how this price control was abolished in 1985 or so. We try to encourage people [the demand and supply forces] to dictate the prices. As you rightly said, people have different levels of earning. In fact [during this Covid period], we came up with regulations to cap the prices levels at certain levels so that the ordinary person can be able to buy basic essential commodities. This was well done and after a period we also saw that there were certain commodities like the high value rice [Saddam] costing D1600, D1500 and the like. We saw that that one is not for the common person. There was no need to regulate. The rice which the common person uses, we still stick to that until the regulations ends.

We are quite aware of that and people are even floating the idea of not living it open. Maybe there are few basic commodities which we may need to come and control again but that is subject to debate. If accepted, this is the real body which it will come to for it to be enforced. As of now, the price control or cap on prices will only prevail during the period of this Covid-19. When it passes there is no legal backing to control prices.

**HON. LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]:** Honourable Minister, you might be aware of the ECOWAS Protocol that is talking about movements of person, service and goods within Member States. I know there is moratorium, do you have extensive strategy that is talking about the protection of our local industry so as to compete and possibly triumph over the foreign investment into the country.

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** For your information, I am the Minister in

charge of the ECOWAS matters. We have the ETLS – ECOWAS Trade Liberation Scheme and other protocols we have signed under ECOWAS. It is just that there comes a time when you are leaving it open and your neighbours are tightening up. Situation in example is our neighbours; we have only one neighbour in fact. We are very good in adhering to protocols but when it comes to our goods getting in, NO. I can tell you we bring in more than 150 products from them but for our products to go in... and we should all be observing the ECOWAS protocols.

When it came now to certain commodities coming from our neighbours, sometimes like during this Covid-19 period, except if food items like rice, sugar or whatever are short in the country. Otherwise, we do not allow any importation to come from anywhere within the sub-region. Thank God we do not reach to that stage. We have been having enough replenishment all the time; we have been monitoring our stock all the time. In fact, now we have already written to the Minister of Justice to relax the re-export because the countries we are importing from have opened up. During the start of the Covid, they all closed; nothing going out because they did not know. Now they have relaxed. They are exporting, imports are coming, and our stock levels are going higher. Now if we do not allow staggered re-exports bit by bit, we will be overstocked. Our revenue, which we depend on, will also go down. By re-exporting, we will earn foreign exchange from our neighbouring countries. We are looking into it and maybe in the next few days we will come up with a solution.

**HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]:** Honourable Speaker, would the Honourable Minister not see the correlation between protecting the local industry with managing the whole issue of import substitution? Should that not be the key way of ensuring that local products compete with imported goods by protecting the producer at the level of production and ensuring that we produce enough for local consumption and therefore that competition would actually be in our favour rather than in favour of imported goods?

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** In fact, I have answered that in part of my

answers earlier i.e. we are encouraging local production like the Mac-Food example which I gave. We are still encouraging others to come because we have enough arable land. They can come in and people are giving proposals. When they come into local production i.e. import substitution which you are talking about, we are highly welcoming that. We are encouraging them to also come into that. Encouraging in the sense that when they come to that, we will be offering them incentives to get into that business. If they are within the Greater Banjul Area, we give them 5% tax holiday. When they go up country, it is 8 years tax holiday. This is to encourage, not only the onions and potatoes we are talking about; we have people coming up with proposal to get into the rice. Even today, my DPS is here, I met him in his office with some Indians who want to do rice production. We welcome them; we want to do import substitution instead of having to import. We are right on that tract.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much Honourable Minister. We have exhausted our 7 questions Honourable Member, I am sorry.

**Question Number 041/2020 [Honourable Member for Bakau].**

**HON. SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]:** Honourable Speaker, as the price of basic commodities is skyrocketing, can the Honourable Minister of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment tell this August Assembly the measures in place to arrest the situation?

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** Honourable Speaker, I would want to remind this august body that The Gambia still maintains a free market economy and the liberal trading environment. Whereas he said the prices are skyrocketing, prices of goods and services are determined by their market forces i.e. the demand and supply. I have mentioned that before. However, the government has responsibility to ensure that consumers are not exploited through market failures including anti-competitive practices. The government also ensures that the essential food commodities are available, adequate and accessible at reasonable prices. To achieve this, my Ministry

continues to monitor the prices and stock levels of essential commodities on a weekly basis, I have mentioned this also before.

In addition to the weekly monitoring of these essential commodities, my Ministry also engages the major importers and retailers on a regular basis, particularly during the periods of price hikes. The objective of all these efforts is to ensure availability and stability of prices of these essential commodities. During the past period, stock levels were reviewed, the analysis showed that domestic prices of some of the essential commodities such as rice, sugar, flour and edible oil increased slightly while other commodity remained stable. This period I am talking about is just before this Covid-19, because when the COVID came, there were regulations to cap prices as of 18<sup>th</sup> March.

The increment I am talking about is shown in the table below: the rice type we called the American type [50 kilos] was selling for D1,050 and it went up to D1,095 a marginal increase; sugar D1,190 to D1,205; flour D1,192 to D1,207; and edible oil D835 to D1,085. As a result, my Ministry convened a consultative meeting with the major importers to discuss such issues with a view to addressing the situation. Principally, some of the reasons for these hikes can be attributed to the recent fluctuations in the international commodity market.

The international commodity prices of such essential commodities, have also increased as shown in this table i.e. American rice increases from \$240 to \$250 per metric tonne, sugar from \$570 to \$600 per metric tonne and this soya bean oil from \$771 to \$821 per metric tonne. During the period under review, it was important to note that some of the Municipalities in the country also increased their Municipal Rates by at least 50% as indicated below. We have Brikama Area Council that increased by 50%, KMC by 100% and BCC by 100%. In addition, during this period the cost of fuel had increased slightly and the service cost of some of the shipping agency, were also increased slightly.

Madam Speaker, all these dynamics have led to the rise in domestic commodity prices. My Ministry will therefore continue to strengthen its surveillance mechanism through the weekly stock level monitoring and the regular engagement with the importers of

essential commodities to ensure that we have reasonable stock levels and stable prices for these commodities. We will also continue to monitor the behaviour of international market prices of these commodities as it has direct effect on the domestic prices. My Ministry undertook a countrywide spot checking on the markets during the first quarter of 2020. The objective is to have first-hand information on market prices of these commodities, to ensure informed policy decisions.

Madam Speaker, notwithstanding, you may recall that on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, His Excellence the President of the Republic, in response to Covid-19 pandemic and pursuant to the proclamation of the State of Emergency, has promulgated the Essential Commodities Emergency Power Regulation 2020. The objective of the regulations is to regulate supply and prices of all essential food commodities in The Gambia. Under the regulation, the wholesale and retail prices of all essential commodities were fixed on the prices they were sold in the open market as of 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020. Since then, the prices of essential commodities were controlled. My Ministry, in collaboration with the Essential Commodities Control Committee is regulating and monitoring the market to ensure that the essential commodities are sold at the regulated prices. This is for the COVID period.

Given that globally most of the countries are easing up their trade restrictive measures including countries where The Gambia sources its imports, government is reviewing the emergency regulations with the view of relaxing some of the trade restrictions measures to support recovery of the economy from the effect of the pandemic. The Ministry will continue to engage the importers to mitigate any potential surge in prices of these essential commodities, once the measures are lifted. Finally, we will continue engage the line institutions like the Gambia Competition and Consumer Protection Commission to ensure that certain anti-competitive practices in the market are prevented through the effective implementation of the Consumer Protection Act.

**THE SPEAKER:** I am not sure whether the Honourable Member left any supplementary question but going by his previous record, I am sure he would not have. Thank you, we can have 7 supplementary questions.

**HON. SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]:** Honourable Speaker, the Honourable Minister made mention of going to all parts of the country to find out this pricing issue. We see serious difference in pricing, particularly in the rural Gambia. I do not know whether you have come across this during your monitoring. What is your relationship with the business fraternity in the rural Gambia?

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** As I have said, we go round, send our staff to monitor stock levels and prices and then revert back to the major importers to tell them of the situation so that the negative effects of any hikes will be prevented so that the final consumers will be protected in that regard. We are definitely engaging the private sector in making sure that commodity prices are not hiked unreasonably. This survey was done just before the Covid-19 but when the Covid-19 started, the regulations comes into effect and we engaged the Police, Immigration Department and Weight and Measures who are spread all over the country to enforce these price regulations, to make sure that the consumers throughout the country are not affected. We made sure that businessmen do not take advantage of the low income of the consumers.

**HON. BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA]:** Honourable Minister, you believe or you will agree with me that the issue is surrounding price control for basic commodities. The only way we can have an impact or effect on prices of commodity is to grow in-country i.e. to encourage local production and then we can determine the price of a bag of rice and tomato paste. However, if you look at even the local productions in-country, there are certain factors that really affect the prices.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, can you please ask a supplementary question?

**HON. BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA]:** I am trying to lay the foundation as well.

**THE SPEAKER:** I am sorry, I do not like interfering, I do not want to interrupt anybody but please let us just ask supplementary questions. If you have any suggestion or you have some proposals, the Ministries are always open.

**HON. BILLAY G TUNKARA [KANTORA]:** What I am saying is the issue of price skyrocketing. I am saying there are factors affecting not only import pricing but locally. The issue of electricity cost and the processing cost they charge on local production are all factors. What is the Ministry doing in terms of coming to aid or rescue in those areas so that, at least, it can have an impact on the final product being produced in-country?

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** We encourage local production i.e. import substitution. As my honourable brother said, we give all the encouragement for them to produce locally. Through that, we give some incentives to make sure that their costs are not high so that the consumer can get it at reasonable prices.

There are some people, we know quite a number of them here, after giving them all incentives, they still hike prices. There is no law which will back us to pounce on them. We have seen, for example, the rice which your august Body has given the approval to waive certain taxes in order for pricing of rice to come down. What are they doing? It is very important that we appeal to them, which we are doing that. After all, the ultimate intention this incentive is to bring down prices. That is why we are now encouraging our local Gambians to get involved in some of these commodities which we talk about. We know most of them are dominated by non-Gambians. We are encouraging them and some have started. For example, I can say when this COVID started, a local Gambian i.e. Hamidou Jah of Jah Oil, imported rice into the country. He imported only 4000 tonnes and he was selling 25-kilo bag for D400, which means 50-kilo bag will be D800 which is quite good. We called him and encouraged him but by then the exporting countries have closed their borders, nothing to come out. We said after that period is relaxed, please we encourage you to come up with more importation so that the ordinary persons will benefit.

Not only that, we have been meeting some other Gambians. We went to London and somebody even came and ordered quite a big stock but during the Covid-19, he could not pay the seller the 100% which he was asking for. At first they agreed on instalment payment but when he could not pay 100%, on the way he diverted the consignment to

some other country [which the seller could have been sued for but they are coming]. I am sure with this move they will definitely do something just like the Maruo Farms. We have people also getting into that area so as to bring imports substitution.

**HON. BILLAY G TUNKARA [KANTORA]:** The electricity cost of production in the entire region where Gambia is the highest in term of cost, how is the Ministry now collaborating with other partners to beat that thing down?

**THE SPEAKER:** I am not going to allow that. It is not a supplementary question.

**HON. DEMBO KM. CAMARA [ILLIASA]:** Honourable Minister, are you aware that all imported rice and food in this country were given 20% reduction by GRA but still, that 20% reduction was not reflected on the price of the goods. What is your Ministry's response on that issue?

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** I think this thing has been answered in the past questions or the answers I have just given. In fact, I am the one who even came up with that. We are giving them that allowance but still they are not complying to make good use of that incentive offered by government. That is why I still gave the example of a Gambian, Hamidou Jah, who is making best use of that incentive, bringing rice and selling it at D400 per 25-kilo which is very good. We are encouraging him and other Gambians to fall in line. It makes no economic sense to give those allowances [tax reliefs] when they are not being trickled down to the end consumers.

**HON. ALHAGIE H. SOWE [JIMARA]:** Honourable Minister, we were told by the President that a bag of rice will be D700 and you are here telling us that the price of a bag of rice is just increasing, what is the problem?

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** Madam Speaker, I just want to clarify that point. I told you before Covid-19, the prices I give you here. When Covid-19 came, I give you what happened. The prices were capped at the 18<sup>th</sup> March price level. They

are not increasing, to the best of my knowledge. We are closely monitoring it with the Police, Immigration Department and Weights and Measures. They are not increasing at all and that the marginal increase I am talking about was before the Covid-19.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you, Honourable Members, sorry I think in hindsight we should have had a lunch break but of course it is late to go for a break now.

**HON. FATOUMATTA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]:** I think I will go back to my former question about the competitive measures; you are telling us that there are some measures and we all know because it was passed to cap the prices. How effective has it been and if it is very effective, would you consider having it in post-Covid-19 because we all know the effects are not just going to fade away just after Covid-19. Would you consider having this price controls post-Covid-19?

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** I am sorry, NO. Simply, we have no legal backing post-Covid-19 to continue with that.

**HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]:** Honourable Speaker, this issue is a very important issue because we all know that the Dollar, which The Gambia is using most of the time to do our business, is appreciating against the Dalasi. We know that producing locally, consuming it internally and exporting it to get more foreign exchange is what is going to help us so that the Dalasi appreciates against the Dollar. If we produce locally and then we are not giving that priority for our goods to appreciate against the imported ones then we will not be able to solve the problem. What policy is your Ministry thinking to undertake that will ensure that the gap between import and export is reduced drastically so that we have price reduction?

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** In short, you are still talking about this import substitution which we are doing right now. As I said, we are encouraging and some have started. We are encouraging others to come into it, produce rice locally, produce potatoes and onion locally among other things. If we produce locally, we will not use

our foreign exchange. As you are saying now, the Dollar is gaining grounds against the Dalasi but if we produce locally we will not be burdened by that. Any country that wants to encourage local production will ease the country of that flight of foreign exchange. Some people are coming into it as I said, like the Maruo Farms. There are other Gambians who are well advanced into starting similar projects, not only rice but potatoes, onion and other items. At my level, we are encouraging them a lot.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much, we proceed with the June questions and that is **Question Number 097/2020 [Honourable Member for Serrekunda]**

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** Sorry Honourable Speaker, I am not yet ready to proceed with the June questions. We got them late, we have worked on them but the discussions necessary before coming to answer the questions have not yet been done.

**THE SPEAKER:** It is alright, we are surprised because Table Office Director is telling me that he did communicate with your technical team. Maybe there was a breakdown of communication between you. Definitely, we were ready for it today but that notwithstanding, we will take your explanation.

**HON. HASSAN M. JALLOW [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT]:** Thank you Honourable Speaker, as I said now I have the answer here.

**THE SPEAKER:** No, we will be bringing it up during the course of the session, maybe next week Wednesday. Thank you very much, you are released Honourable Minister.

#### **QUESTIONS FOR ORAL ANSWERS BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF WOMEN, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL WELFARE**

**THE SPEAKER:** Questions for which due notices were given to the Honourable Minister of Women, Children and Social Welfare by Honourable Members for Oral reply. **Question Number 143/2020 [Honourable Member for Banjul South]**

**HON. FATOUMATTA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]:** Honourable Speaker, can the Honourable Minister of Women, Children and Social Welfare tell this august Assembly what post-Covid-19 plans her Ministry has to support women especially the market vendors to get back on their feet?

**HON. FATOU KINTEH [MINISTER OF WOMEN, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL WELFARE]:** The Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare is currently expediting preparations for the implementation of the Women Enterprise Fund to address the vital needs of female entrepreneurs which, of course, include the market vendors. We also plan to include support to market vendors. I am talking about Covid-19 as a budget line in our budget for 2021. I am hopeful that funds will be appropriated by the National Assembly. Arrangements are also at an advance stage to procure the onions of the farmers in The Gambia, the majority of whom are women.

**HON. FATOUMATTA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]:** Thank you very much Honourable Minister. We applaud you for those initiatives that you have taken but we want you to consider the gendered nature of the informal sector, bearing in mind that women are at the lower end of the ladder and most of these women are not literate. I think there must be some mechanism to make them understand all these Bills because we have this laws coming and they are not translated into our locally languages and we all know that they are the least educated in the system bearing in mind their status within the society. What has the Minister got to make them understand that these things are coming and how would they benefit to the maximum?

**HON. FATOU KINTEH [MINISTER OF WOMEN, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL WELFARE]:** Last year, after the launching of the Women Enterprise Found [I mean the national launching], we embarked on a countrywide tour to do the regional launching. There was enough sensitisation of the communities about the Woman Enterprise Found. As I am speaking, we are receiving calls from rural areas and also from the urban areas from women individuals and groups asking us as to when they can apply for the Women Enterprise Fund. And for the fund, we have met all the requirements as we speak. We went to the Ministry of Finance to request for the release of funds when we

were made to understand by EU that we need a legal framework which was never communicated to us. Then we started work on the legal framework.

As I am speaking, the Bill has been presented at Cabinet. It was approved and also presented the Sub-Committee on Women and Children chaired by Honourable Sillah. As I am speaking now, the Bill is ready to be handed over to the National Assembly, then we can agree as to when it can be presented. For the communities, they have been thoroughly sensitised on the Women Enterprise Fund. That is the reason why they are always calling to find out when the funds will be ready for them to apply.

During the tour [I was in the tour], it was led by the Vice President but I gave a thorough explanation as to how the Women Enterprise Fund can be accessed, why it has been approved by the Government of The Gambia and how it is going to support women. Women of The Gambia already know what is the Women Enterprise Fund and what is there for them. This is the reason why they are always calling to find out when they can apply for the fund.

I also want to say that all the structures have been put in place. There is a temporary Coordinator from the Central Bank and then there is a Steering Committee which has also been inaugurated. We have sent the criteria to the Governors to set up the structure at the regional level. Anything that is required for its functioning has already been made. All that is left is the legal framework and that is the Bill that we have to present. Once that is approved we will move with the implementation. We have also make a request to the Ministry of Finance to release the D6 million the Government of The Gambia has contributed. An account has been opened already with the Central Bank and even this morning I was talking to the Minister of Finance, letting him know where we are in terms of the Women Enterprise Fund so that once the Bill is passed, part of the €3 million that EU is supporting us with will be released to us so that we can start the process.

Once we receive the applications with the requirements, we have also sensitised them on what the requirements are. Once the application meet the requirements, we first of

all assess the groups and individuals to see the level at which they are in terms of running a business. When necessary, we will train them on a livelihood skill of their choice which will be followed by training them on entrepreneurship before the funds are released to them. This is important because you need to know how to run a business at whatever level before funds can be resourced to you for you to start business.

Already, all of these have been clarified to the women and they are already aware. I can say there is enough sensitization and all that we are waiting for now is just to pass the Bill and we will start the process of releasing the funds to them.

**HON. FATOUMATTA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]:** Madam Speaker, I think she is giving us a good briefing of what she has done about it. If you have it documented, can we have it? As one of the few female MPs, I am not part of the Gender Committee but I am very close to the women, especially the market women. I would like to have the document so that I can start the conversation with the women. If you have them documented, can you present them to this august Assembly so that we can also familiarize ourselves with it and talk to them about it; not about the Bill but the assessments that they have taken so that they will know how to have access to them because these are just laws. Some of these assessments are not included. Like you have said, when you do these assessments, many things are omitted. We want the whole report so that we can have them laid and then communicate to those people. You said you are teaching them entrepreneurship and some of them are old women.

**HON. FATOU KINTEH [MINISTER OF WOMEN, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL WELFARE]:** Honourable Member for Banjul South, we will provide you with the information that you request so that you can sensitise your women so that they can become more aware. Let me also inform you that our Lady Councillors are also aware of the way and manner that this fund is going to be operated. Since they represent all the women of The Gambia, they are also busy sensitising them. That notwithstanding, I will provide you with the information so you can go ahead and do some further sensitisation as to how the funds can be accessed and how it can benefit the women.

Let me also make one point clear, for the Women Enterprise Fund our long term objective is to create a Women's Bank for women of The Gambia.

**HON. BILLAY G TUNKARA [KANTORA]:** Honourable Minister, in your response you did mention that you have earmarked some funds from the Women Enterprise Fund. How much did you earmark from there and how do you plan to implement it in terms of the parent question [post-Covid assistance].

**HON. FATOU KINTEH [MINISTER OF WOMEN, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL WELFARE]:** For the Women Enterprise Fund, EU has pledged €3 million and the Government of The Gambia, D6 million We have opened an account with Central Bank of The Gambia. The money will be lodged into that account and as individuals and groups apply, they will be assessed based on a set criteria. Once they qualify, they will be contacted again to see whether they have a livelihood skill of their choice. If they do have a livelihood skill, we will train them on entrepreneurship before the funds are disbursed. If they do not have a livelihood skill, we will train you on livelihood skills and then train them on entrepreneurship before the funds are disbursed. Our staffs are going to work very closely to them because we also want to build a savings culture in them. We will work very closely with them because we want to make sure that the funds are properly utilized and they also have a savings culture. Once they are provided with the money, it would be like a revolving loan scheme and it will be at a very low interest rate.

I have been fortunate to have led the women reference groups which mainstream gender into the NDP. Then I was with the UN and we came up with the idea of having this fund, the reason being women do not have access to micro-credit and microfinance. All that we have are the bank loans and the bank loans go with a rule. They ask you for collateral and many a time, the collateral is a title deed. How many Gambian women [even though some are literate] are in a position to have a title deed? If you have a title deed, when you eventually submit that to the bank, the interest rates are so high. You end up becoming poorer by the time you finish paying the loan. This is the reason why my colleagues and I [at that time] agree that we put in a Women Enterprise Fund in

the NDP and then we costed it. Luckily it attracted the EU and they are putting in €3 million and Government of The Gambia is putting in D6 million.

Our long term objective is to create a bank for women and the interest rate of this loan is going to be very low because we are learning from other countries. Last year we sent a team to Uganda because I met the Minister of Women's Affairs of Uganda in Nairobi and she made a presentation on their enterprise fund which their Ministry is managing and is fully funded by the government. I had a discussion with her and what she explained was quite interesting. On my return, I sent a team led by my Permanent Secretary to Uganda to learn from their best practices, to return and to replicate. We have learnt from that and we will be replicating the best practices of Uganda in The Gambia in terms of the implementation of the Woman Enterprise Fund.

**HON. SAIKOUBA JARJU [BUSUMBALA]:** Thank you Honourable Speaker, I withdraw because my concerns have been taken care of.

**HON. OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NUIMI]:** The Honourable Minister answered that the plans are on the way to purchase the women's onions which were produced this particular season. I just want to know what criteria the government used to make the Ministry responsible for purchasing these onions from farmers because the women alone are not doing agriculture. You have men and youths as well so what criteria did they use to make you responsible to do this?

**HON. FATOU KINTEH [MINISTER OF WOMEN, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL WELFARE]:** Honourable Speaker, because of the Covid-19, women farmers face a lot of problems in selling their produce. One of the reasons is because the Lumos do not exist anymore and as we all know, if you look at the location of the Lumos, about 90% of them are very close to the border with Senegal and during the Lumos the Senegalese come to Gambia to buy the produce and women are able to earn an income. Because of Covid, this was not happening so at the level of the Covid Sub-Committee of Cabinet, we agreed that we should set up a small committee to buy women's produce, more especially the onions. The committee members are myself as Chairperson, and the

Ministers of Agriculture, Trade and Finance as members. Ministry of Agriculture went ahead and collected data about onions across the country. The amount that has been collected is to the tune of 612 metric tonnes of onions across the country.

The larger amount is from North Bank with 365 metric tonnes. Initially, government wanted to buy but it was not possible because we were not able to use the budget lines we wanted to use to buy them. Luckily, a buyer emerged; a gentleman who had imported onions during the moratorium was not allowed to open his containers. He is now willing to buy all the onions the women have produced. As we are speaking, ITC have sent some personnel in the communities to collect the onions and there is monetary transfer. Once the onions are all collected, payment will be effected.

This gentleman has told us that now that he knows that Gambian women produce this amount of onions, he is now ready to give more support if we can form them into an association which we are very willing to do, so that he can also give support in terms of seeds, fertilizer and other forms of support to increase their productivity in onions. He is ready to buy all the onions starting from next year. Once we effect the payment to the farmers [I do not want to say women because there are also some men and young people who are producing onions]. Once all the payment is effected, we will come together again as a committee to develop a criteria and go out to the Directors of Agriculture in the regions and form these farmers into an association. We will then inform this buyer so that he can give all the support required to these farmers. Come next year, they can increase their productivity and he is willing to buy all the onions before importing from other countries.

**HON. MUHAMED MAGASSY [BASSE]:** Initially, I thought the parliament will be very material in sensitizing our women about this Women Enterprise Fund but I did learn from the Minister's response that the rural women have understood this Woman Enterprise Fund to an extent that she is receiving calls from rural woman. To be sure and to be in a better position, I want to know whether you received calls from women within Basse constituency and there is a reason why I ask this question.

**HON. FATOU KINTEH [MINISTER OF WOMEN, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL WELFARE]:** I received calls from all women across the country and I am not the only one receiving calls. The Lady Councillors are receiving calls, my staffs are also receiving calls but that does not stop National Assembly Members from sensitising the other women. I think we are in this together; you represent all the Gambians. I think you are also at liberty to do sensitization on the Women Enterprise Fund. After all, it is for all women, more especially woman in the rural areas. I am not saying that those in the urban areas will not benefit but we are going to put a lot of emphasis on the rural women because our objective is to ensure that every woman in The Gambia is economically empowered. Rest assured, you are at liberty and you will be provided with all the information so that you also sensitise all the woman that you represent, on the Women Enterprise Fund. Our sensitization alone is not adequate.

**HON. ALHAGI S.B. SILLAH [NIANI]:** Honourable Minister, as we all know, Lumo is no longer exiting. As we are speaking, women vegetable growers are on their vegetable production such as okra, sorrel and egg plants. What plans do you have for them to be able to market their produce?

**HON. FATOU KINTEH [MINISTER OF WOMEN, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL WELFARE]:** We are not only concerned about the onions but we are also concerned about all vegetables. Once we have finished the procurement of the onions, we will do an assessment of other vegetables which are available. The reason why we did not do it at the same time as the onions was that when they started going to the fields the women have already sold their carrots, cabbages and others. We did not know that around this time they are also harvesting. We will engage Ministry of Agriculture once more so that they will send their relevant staff to go in the field and then conduct an assessment. Based on that, we will see what next we can do. Rest assured that our interest is to make sure that all their produce are procured.

**HON. KEBBA K. BARROW [MAJORITY LEADER/KOMBO SOUTH]:** The Honourable Minister did inform us that one of their main aims is to organize these

women groups into associations. Do you want to go further to register them legally as a legal entity for the operationalisation of the activities that they are going to do?

**HON. FATOU KINTEH [MINISTER OF WOMEN, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL WELFARE]:** My Ministry and Ministries of Trade and Agriculture are working on forming these women into a cooperative because some of us have experience in that from other countries. We are working on forming them into a cooperative and also coming up with cold storage. This is important simply because when we form women into a cooperative and you also have a cold storage, the woman are sure of a market as soon as they harvest. Those with the cold storage will buy everything upon harvest and store in the cold storage. For some women, it will be a win-win situation because they will be a part of the cooperative and they will also be the producers. They will produce, sell everything to the cooperative and the cooperative puts it in the cold storage.

The women from urban areas will be buying from the cold storage and selling at the market. This is what is happening in Senegal and interestingly sometimes they come to Gambia to buy our produce, go to Senegal and store it in their cold storage and our woman later on go and buy those same produce and come and sell in The Gambia. We are going to learn from the Senegalese experience. I have some experience with that when I was managing the UNDP project. We are working together [myself the Minister of Trade and Minister of Agriculture] to see how best we can form our women into a cooperative and then link that to cold storages so that women's produce will be bought as soon as they harvest, we store in the cold storage and then we start selling as the year goes on. Something is being done in that area.

**THE SPEAKER:** We have reached our upper limit of 7 questions. Thank you very much Honourable Minister for those answers provided to this august Assembly. The release will be very temporary because you are coming back. It is just for the questions but we are not releasing you yet.

#### **BILLS:**

#### **Under Standing Order 65, First Reading of the following Bill:**

**Women Enterprise Fund Bill 2020 by Honourable Minister of Women,  
Children and Social Welfare.**

**The SPEAKER:** Thank you very much. Honourable Members, in accordance with Clause 65 of the Standing Orders, only the first reading of the following bills will be done today:

1. Women Enterprise Fund Bill of 2020
2. Persons With Disabilities Bill 2020?

Therefore, I will now invite the Honourable Minister of Women, Children and Social Welfare who is in charge of the Bills to hand over a copy of each of the Bills in sequence to the Clerk of the National Assembly who will then read aloud the short title where upon the Bill shall have been deemed to have been read a first time. Honourable Minister, hand over to the Clerk. The Clerk will read the title, thank you.

**BILL:**

**The Gambia Woman Enterprise Fund Bill 2020**

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much, the second Bill.

**BILL:**

**Persons With Disabilities Bill 2020**

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, the respective Bills have been read the first time. The next stage of the Bills is appointed for tomorrow, Thursday the 18<sup>th</sup> of June, 2020 for the Honourable Minister of Women Children and Social Welfare to move a motion for the respective Bills to be read a second time in accordance with the Standing Orders Clause 62(2) which reads:

*“At the conclusion of the producing’s on the first reading or any subsequent stage of a Bill, the next stage maybe taken either forthwith or upon a day to be named provided*

*that the second reading shall be taken no sooner than one working day after the first reading."*

That is the relevant clause. Now we have come to the end of today's business and I now put the question: be it resolved that this august Assembly do stands adjourned until Thursday the 18<sup>th</sup> of June 2020 at 11:00 am.

***[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]***