THE REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON TOURISM, ARTS, CULTURE, YOUTH AND SPORTS.

COUNTRYWIDE OVERSIGHT TOUR TO GTBOARD, NEDI, AND TDR PROJECT SUPPORT AREAS INCLUDING SELECTED HOTELS FROM 20TH - 26 APRIL 2026.

SEPTEMBER, 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD

Tourism is an important contributor to national development, providing opportunities for economic diversification, employment creation, cultural preservation and community development. For The Gambia, our natural environment, cultural heritage, historic sites, rivers, wildlife and sporting potential provide a strong foundation for the development of a more diversified, inclusive and resilient economy.

It is against this background that the Select Committee on Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth and Sports undertook an oversight tour across various regions of the country. The exercise was undertaken in fulfilment of the Committee's parliamentary oversight mandate to assess the implementation of programmes, examine the performance of institutions within its remit, engage stakeholders and identify issues requiring legislative, policy or administrative attention. The tour provided the Committee with an opportunity to observe developments first-hand and to hear directly from institutions, operators, communities and other stakeholders.

The Committee noted a number of positive developments across the sectors. In particular, the Committee observed the contribution of interventions under the Tourism Diversification and Resilience (TDR/Yokute) Project towards improving tourism facilities, supporting employment and livelihoods, promoting the use of renewable energy and enhancing services in beneficiary communities. The commitment and resourcefulness demonstrated by tourism operators, entrepreneurs, community stakeholders and institutions were also commendable.

At the same time, the oversight exercise identified several challenges requiring attention. These include unfinished or abandoned projects, inadequate infrastructure and road access, limited institutional capacity, insufficient staffing and mobility, weak maintenance arrangements and constraints in accessing finance. The condition of some tourism and heritage facilities was also a matter of concern. The Committee considers timely project implementation, effective supervision, proper asset management and sustainable maintenance essential to safeguarding public investment and preserving the country's cultural and tourism assets.

The Committee further recognizes the considerable potential for tourism diversification beyond the traditional tourism centres. Eco-tourism, cultural and heritage tourism, river-based tourism, community tourism and nature-based tourism offer opportunities to expand participation in the sector and create employment and enterprise opportunities, particularly for young people and communities in rural areas. Destinations such as Janjanbureh, Kiang West, Kunta Kinteh, Baboon Islands and other emerging sites demonstrate the potential for a broader national tourism offering.

The Committee also emphasizes that the development of tourism, arts, culture, youth and sports requires effective coordination across sectors. Reliable roads, electricity

and water supply, digital connectivity, environmental protection, heritage conservation, skills development, access to finance and adequate institutional capacity are essential to achieving sustainable outcomes. Similarly, investment in youth and sports infrastructure should be viewed as an investment in talent development, employment, discipline, social cohesion and national development.
This report therefore presents the Committee's observations and engagements during the oversight exercise, highlights progress and challenges identified, and sets out recommendations for consideration and appropriate action by the relevant institutions. The Committee considers effective follow-up to be an essential component of parliamentary oversight. The value of the exercise will ultimately be measured by the extent to which identified issues are addressed, recommendations are acted upon and public investments deliver tangible benefits to citizens.

The Committee wishes to commend the Honourable Members for their commitment, diligence and constructive participation throughout the exercise. Appreciation is also extended to the officials, project managers, tourism operators, regional authorities, community representatives and other stakeholders who received the Committee and provided valuable information and perspectives. The Committee further acknowledges the administrative, technical and logistical support provided by the Office of the Clerk and the National Assembly Service.

The Committee hopes that this report will serve as a useful instrument for accountability, informed decision-making and follow-up action, and contribute to strengthening the development of tourism, arts, culture, youth and sports for the benefit of the people of The Gambia.

••

Hon. Saikou Bah

Chairperson, Select Committee on Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth and Sports

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Honourable Members of the Select Committee on Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth and Sports express their sincere appreciation to all institutions, authorities, officials and stakeholders who contributed to the successful conduct of the Committee's oversight tour across the various regions and institutions visited.

The Committee extends its appreciation to the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Gambia Tourism Board (GTBoard), the Tourism Diversification and Resilience (TDR/Yokute) Project Management, NEDI, regional authorities, site managers, tourism operators and other stakeholders for their cooperation and for providing the information and perspectives that informed the Committee's observations and findings.

The Committee particularly acknowledges the Governors and authorities of the North Bank and Central River Regions for receiving the delegation and engaging with Members on matters relating to tourism development and other challenges affecting their respective regions. Appreciation is also extended to camp managers, eco-lodge and hotel operators, conservation officers, entrepreneurs and community representatives who shared their experiences, concerns and recommendations with the Committee.

The Committee further recognizes the assistance provided by tour guides, park rangers, technical personnel and field officers who facilitated access to tourism sites, project locations and other facilities inspected during the exercise.

The Honourable Members also express their appreciation to the Office of the Clerk and the staff of the National Assembly Service for the administrative, technical and logistical support provided in the planning and execution of the oversight tour.

Finally, the Committee acknowledges the cooperation of all individuals and institutions who contributed to the exercise. Their engagement and contributions were valuable to the Committee's assessment of the progress, challenges and opportunities within the sectors under its oversight.

INTRODUCTION

The Select Committee on Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth and Sports undertook an oversight tour to selected tourism sites, eco-lodges, heritage centres, sporting facilities, hospitality establishments and regional tourism offices across the country. The purpose of the exercise was to obtain first-hand information on the status and performance of facilities and projects within the Committee's mandate, assess sectoral developments, and identify challenges and opportunities requiring appropriate attention.

The exercise was undertaken pursuant to the Committee's constitutional oversight mandate under Section 109(2)(b) of the Constitution of the Republic of The Gambia and Clauses 97(1) and 97(2)(b) of the Revised Standing Orders of the National Assembly. These provisions empower Committees to monitor and assess the activities, programmes and performance of Ministries, Departments, Agencies and other institutions falling within their respective mandates.

During the tour, the Committee engaged directly with project beneficiaries, tourism operators, regional and local authorities, officials and other stakeholders. These engagements enabled Members to assess the implementation and impact of the Tourism Diversification and Resilience (TDR/Yokute) Project, examine the condition and utilisation of tourism, heritage and sporting infrastructure, and identify policy, institutional, financial and operational challenges affecting service delivery and sector development.

The exercise also provided an opportunity for the Committee to assess the potential for tourism diversification, particularly in eco-tourism, cultural and heritage tourism, community-based tourism and nature-based tourism, while considering the contribution of youth and sports development to employment, skills development and social cohesion.

The delegation comprised Honourable Members of the Committee, officials of the National Assembly Service and representatives of relevant Ministries, agencies and institutions. Site managers, tourism officials, technical personnel and other local stakeholders also participated in various engagements and facilitated the Committee's inspections.

The Committee visited a range of facilities and institutions, including eco-lodges, camps, national parks, museums, hotels, sporting facilities, tourism offices and heritage sites across the **North Bank Region, Central River Region, Upper River Region, Lower River Region and the Greater Banjul Area**.

The findings and observations arising from these engagements form the basis of this report, which sets out the Committee's key observations, identifies issues requiring attention and presents recommendations for consideration and appropriate action by the relevant authorities.

OBJECTIVES OF THE TOUR

The overall objectives of the oversight tour were to:

1. **Assess** the operational status, implementation progress and performance of tourism, cultural and sporting facilities and programmes within the Committee's mandate;
2. **Examine** the implementation, outputs and impact of the Tourism Diversification and Resilience (TDR/Yokute) Project on beneficiary institutions, communities and tourism-related enterprises;
3. **Inspect** the condition, utilisation, management and maintenance of tourism infrastructure, heritage sites, eco-tourism facilities and sporting facilities visited during the tour;
4. **Engage** relevant Ministries, Departments, Agencies, regional authorities, operators, project beneficiaries and community stakeholders on challenges affecting service delivery, tourism development, youth participation and infrastructure management;
5. **Assess** opportunities for tourism diversification, including eco-tourism, cultural and heritage tourism, community-based tourism and regional tourism development;
6. **Examine** institutional coordination, operational arrangements and compliance with relevant policies, standards and programme objectives within the sectors under the Committee's oversight; and
7. **Identify** priority issues and formulate evidence-based recommendations to strengthen implementation, accountability, infrastructure management, stakeholder coordination and the sustainable development of tourism, arts, culture, youth and sports.

METHODOLOGY

The Committee employed the following methods during the oversight tour:

1. **Site visits and physical inspections** of selected tourism, heritage, hospitality and sporting facilities;
2. **Consultations and engagements** with relevant Ministries, institutions, regional authorities, operators, project beneficiaries and community stakeholders;
3. **Direct observation and assessment** of infrastructure, project implementation, operations, maintenance and service delivery;
4. **Question-and-answer sessions and briefings** to clarify issues and obtain relevant information; and
5. **Field documentation**, including notes and photographs, to support the Committee's observations and findings.

FINDINGS

1. VISIT TO BARRA ECO LODGES – BARRA

The Committee's first engagement was at Barra Eco Lodges, where members were received by Mr. Abdoullah K. Jagne of the Gambia Tourism Board (GTBoard), who guided members through the premises and provided a detailed briefing on the status of the facility.

Members were informed that the construction contract for the lodge had been awarded to a Gambian construction company, Lerr Group; however, works have remained stalled for over one year. It was explained that one of the principal challenges affecting the project is the physical nature of the site, as the area is flat, swampy, and prone to water retention, thereby complicating foundational works and long-term structural stability.

The Committee further noted that a previous fire outbreak had damaged portions of the facility. Although the exact cause of the incident remains unknown, several affected structures were found to be severely dilapidated, with some sections partially collapsing. In addition, Members observed the presence of abandoned roofing grass materials on site, some of which had been burnt, further reflecting the extent of neglect and exposure of the project to environmental and fire risks. Members were of the view that certain buildings may require complete demolition and redesign if rehabilitation efforts are to resume.

GTBoard officials informed the Committee that consultations are ongoing with GAMWORKS to determine a practical way forward, and that efforts are being made to complete aspects of the project. However, it was indicated that there is uncertainty as to whether Barra Eco Lodge is included in the current priority interventions, and no formal resumption timeline or approved recovery plan currently exists.

The Committee also observed that Negmar is constructing a terminal facility in the vicinity, which may have implications for the surrounding area and could potentially influence future planning and utilization of the lodge site.

Challenges

1. Prolonged suspension of construction works for over one year.
2. Swampy terrain and poor drainage conditions affecting structural stability.
3. Fire damage to sections of the facility.
4. Deterioration and collapse of unfinished structures due to prolonged abandonment.
5. Lack of a clear recovery plan and implementation timeline.
6. Exposure of the site to environmental and safety risks.

Recommendations

1. The Ministry of Tourism and GTBoard should undertake a comprehensive technical and financial reassessment of the project to determine feasibility and sustainability.
2. GAMWORKS should expedite its assessment and provide a clear implementation roadmap with timelines for completion or redesign of the project.
3. A proper drainage system should be designed and installed to address water retention and flooding risks.
4. Damaged and unsafe structures should be demolished or rehabilitated based on expert engineering advice.
5. Security and fire prevention mechanisms should be strengthened to safeguard the site from further deterioration.
6. The Government should clarify the future status and intended utilization of the facility in light of surrounding infrastructural developments.

2. VISIT TO JERREH CAMP – SITA NUNKU

The Committee's second engagement was at Jerreh Camp, where members were received by the Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Fakebba Senghore. The visit focused primarily on accommodation expansion and renewable utility interventions under the Yokote Project.
Management informed Members that the facility now benefits from 35 solar panels, supported by a 24k battery storage system, generating approximately 300 watts during daytime and 120 watts at night. This has significantly improved the camp's electricity reliability.

The Committee was informed that room capacity had increased from 23 rooms to 43 rooms over a two-year period, reflecting substantial growth linked to project support. Members also learned that staff underwent a six-month capacity building programme to strengthen operational efficiency, hospitality service, and facility management.
The CEO stated that the camp's borehole had been donated by Hon. Ahmad Bah during his tenure as Minister of Tourism. He further noted that the camp now has 43 furnished rooms, including 20 master bedrooms, while 10 rooms are earmarked for future air-conditioning installation.

Members were informed that staff strength has increased significantly from 5 employees prior to the intervention to 15 employees currently, demonstrating the project's contribution to employment creation. The CEO further stated that economic gains at the camp have improved substantially, with performance reportedly increasing to 100% following support from the Yokute Project.

The Committee was also informed that water had previously been a major challenge at the facility, to the extent that it contributed to the departure of a previous occupant, Sita Nunku, who could not sustain operations due to inadequate water supply. However, this challenge has now been effectively addressed through the availability of the borehole, which has significantly improved operations and expansion capacity. In light of the improved water supply, Members suggested that management should consider cultivating some of the vegetables used within the camp as a cost-saving measure. The CEO welcomed this recommendation and confirmed that it forms part of the camp's future plans toward self-sufficiency.

Furthermore, the TDR Project Director, Dr. Ceesay, informed Members that the Project does not ordinarily include construction support. However, Jerreh Camp was treated as a unique case, as construction works were already underway at the time of intervention, which warranted exceptional consideration and support.

Positive Impacts Highlighted

Water Availability Enabled Expansion: Management stated that prior to the intervention, limited water supply posed a major obstacle to construction and expansion. With the borehole now operational, water access has improved considerably, enabling growth in accommodation facilities and guest services.

Support for Agricultural Self-Sufficiency: The availability of water has also enabled gardening and food production activities. Management indicated that while produce is still sourced partly from surrounding markets, the long-term objective is to adopt a "grow what you eat" model to reduce operational costs and promote sustainability.

Increased Revenue and Financial Stability: The CEO reported that business performance had improved significantly, with revenue gains estimated at 100%. This increase has reportedly enabled savings, reinvestment, and long-term planning.

Employment Creation and National Inclusion: Staff strength has risen from 5 employees to 15 employees, with recruitment extending beyond the locality into other regions of the country, including Foni. This demonstrates that the project has contributed not only to local employment but broader national labour participation.

In his closing remarks, the CEO appealed to Members to consider using Jerreh Camp for official retreats and government programmes as a means of supporting domestic tourism enterprises and promoting regional economic growth.

Challenges

1. Limited air-conditioning coverage in some accommodation blocks.
2. Dependence on continued maintenance of solar infrastructure and water systems.

3. Need for sustained marketing to maximize occupancy and profitability.
4. Operational costs associated with expansion and maintenance.

Recommendations

1. Management should continue expanding renewable energy systems to support full facility operations.
2. The camp should strengthen domestic tourism promotion and institutional partnerships to improve occupancy rates throughout the year.
3. Management should implement agricultural and gardening initiatives to support food sustainability and reduce operational costs.
4. Government and development partners should continue supporting skills development and hospitality training programmes for staff.
5. A long-term maintenance plan should be established for solar systems, boreholes, and accommodation facilities.

3. VISIT TO KUNTA KINTEH ROOTS CAMP – JUFFUREH

The Committee proceeded to Kunta Kinteh Roots Camp, where members were received by the Manager, Mr. Njie Cham of Bakau, who is recognized as one of the first restaurant owners in The Gambia, having established his first restaurant in 1975 with an initial capital of D400.

Management briefed Members on the improvements realized through the Yokute Project. It was reported that the facility has significantly expanded its assets, including CCTV systems, gas cookers, refrigerators, solar panels, and battery storage units. CCTV coverage, which previously consisted of only one camera, now extends across key sections of the premises. Electricity supply from NAWEC has also improved overall operations. The Manager further stated that income generation has increased from approximately 20% to 35%, indicating improved business activity and stronger visitor demand.

Members were informed that staff strength has increased from 9 to 18 employees, with prospects for further expansion upon completion of ongoing construction works. Management also highlighted the recruitment of experienced hospitality personnel from across the country to train local staff in hotel operations, thereby facilitating skills transfer within the community. Capacity building programmes under the project reportedly range between six and nine months, depending on operational needs. The facility further disclosed that it benefited from a grant amounting to D1.5 million.

In terms of accommodation and facility upgrades, the camp currently has 65 deluxe rooms. Accommodation rates were stated as D1,200 per night for modernized rooms and D1,000 per night for round huts. Members recommended the installation of closets in all rooms to improve guest convenience, to which management responded that implementation is already in progress, with completed examples demonstrated during the inspection.

Management further informed the Committee that savings generated from project support may be invested in the development of an innovative tourism attraction extending toward Kunta Kinteh Island, with the aim of increasing heritage tourism traffic and enhancing the region’s visitor appeal.

Challenges

1. Inconsistent electricity supply prior to intervention.
2. Poor road access affecting visitor movement and logistics.
3. Coastal erosion threatening sections of the facility.
4. Need for continuous upgrading of accommodation facilities.

Recommendations

1. The government should prioritize road improvement projects leading to major tourism facilities in the region.
2. Relevant authorities should undertake shoreline protection and erosion control interventions to safeguard the facility.
3. Management should continue upgrading accommodation standards and guest facilities.
4. The GTBoard and the Ministry should support heritage tourism initiatives linked to Kunta Kinteh Island to increase visitor traffic.
5. Continued investment in staff training and local capacity building should be encouraged.

4. COURTESY VISIT TO THE GOVERNOR’S OFFICE – KEREWAN

The final engagement of the day was a courtesy call on the Governor of the North Bank Region at his office in Kerewan. The Vice Chairperson of the Committee provided a summary of the day’s observations and engagements. Discussions thereafter focused on tourism development concerns within the region.

Matters Discussed

The Governor raised concerns reportedly expressed by the Alkalo of Barra regarding the prolonged inactivity of Barra Eco Lodge, suggesting that the site could be converted into a garage rather than left idle.

Honourable Members responded that any future decision concerning the facility should be guided by existing National Assembly resolutions to the Barra Eco-Lodge Petition, and Cabinet responses. Members also suggested that the site may be more beneficially used as a youth recreational centre, particularly considering the surrounding developments.

Road Access to Jerreh Camp: The Governor commended Jerreh Camp as a valuable tourism facility but raised concerns regarding poor road connectivity, which limits access for visitors and service providers.

a. Engagement with GTBoard Representative – North Bank Region

Before concluding the day's programme, Members engaged the GTBoard Representative for NBR on achievements, constraints, and future plans for tourism administration in the region.

Key Highlights

a) Growth in Guest House Establishments: The representative informed Members that the number of guest houses in the region has increased to 26 establishments, reflecting growing private sector interest in regional tourism.
b) Capacity Development Efforts: Ongoing efforts are being made to strengthen service quality, management systems, and standards compliance among operators to improve competitiveness.
c) Human Resource Constraints: The representative disclosed that he remains the only GTBoard officer assigned to the entire North Bank Region, creating challenges in inspections, licensing, data gathering, and stakeholder engagement.
d) Need for Office Infrastructure: It was recommended that more GTBoard personnel be deployed to the region and that an office complex be established to support efficient operations and improve tourism statistics management.
e) Access to TDR Funding: Six businesses in the region have reportedly benefited from the TDR Fund. However, many enterprises continue to struggle with application procedures, documentation requirements, and eligibility standards.
f) Partnership with ActionAid: The representative stated that a recent collaboration with ActionAid has been secured, including plans to procure a speed boat to facilitate tourist movement to Kunta Kinteh Island and enhance heritage tourism access.
g) Five-Year Tourism Roadmap: Plans are underway to conduct a tourism assessment that will guide preparation of a structured five-year development roadmap for the region.
h) Rise in Cultural Activities: The representative noted an increase in local cultural events and performances that are helping to attract visitors. However, many cultural groups remain unregistered and outside formal support systems.
i) Unlicensed Guest Houses: A significant number of guest houses reportedly continue to operate without proper licences, limiting regulatory oversight and revenue mobilisation.
j) Double Taxation Concerns: The representative identified multiple fee demands from both GTBoard and Area Councils as a major challenge for operators. Tourism businesses are often required to pay licensing or operational charges to separate authorities, which many perceive as burdensome.

Members noted that this issue appears to be common across the country and recommended stronger coordination between institutions. It was suggested that GTBoard remain the principal tourism licensing authority, with an annual revenue-sharing or subsidy arrangement developed for councils to reduce conflict and improve compliance.

Mobility Constraints: The representative concluded by stating that lack of transport and mobility support limits his ability to effectively supervise tourism activities across the geographically dispersed region.

Challenges

1. Delays in decision-making regarding abandoned tourism facilities.
2. Poor road infrastructure affecting tourism accessibility.
3. Limited regional tourism support infrastructure.
4. Acute shortage of GTBoard personnel within the region.
5. Lack of office infrastructure and mobility support.
6. Unlicensed guest house operations.
7. Double taxation and multiple fee demand on operators.
8. Difficulties faced by businesses in accessing TDR funding.

Recommendations

1. Government should expedite decisions regarding abandoned tourism projects to prevent further deterioration and resource loss.
2. Collaboration should be strengthened between the Ministry, Area Councils, and GAMWORKS to improve tourism access roads.
3. Greater regional planning should be undertaken to integrate tourism infrastructure with local development priorities.
4. GTBoard should deploy additional officers to the region and establish a permanent regional office complex.
5. Government should provide mobility support to facilitate effective monitoring and supervision.
6. Stronger enforcement measures should be implemented to address unlicensed tourism establishments.
7. GTBoard and Area Councils should harmonize licensing and fee collection systems to reduce duplication and improve compliance.
8. Capacity-building support should be strengthened to assist businesses in accessing tourism development funds.

5. VISIT TO KAUREN RIVER CAMP – KAUR, CRR NORTH

The Committee's first engagement was at Kauren River Camp in Kaur, where members were received by the caretaker, Mr. Tijan Baldeh. The caretaker informed Members that the word Kauren is a local Fula expression meaning Let's Meet, symbolizing hospitality and gathering.

Upon arrival, the Vice Chairperson of the Committee outlined the purpose of the visit, emphasizing that the delegation was undertaking its constitutional oversight responsibility to monitor the implementation and impact of the TDR Project on beneficiary institutions.

Impact of the TDR Project

The caretaker stated that the project had significantly improved the camp's operations and visitor experience.

1. Provision of Equipment and Utilities: Through a grant amounting to approximately D1.2 million, the camp reportedly received several essential items and facilities, including: Washing Machines, Gas cookers, A borehole and Twelve Solar Panels.
Management explained that these additions greatly enhanced convenience, efficiency, and service delivery within the camp.

2. Transition from Generator to Solar Backup Power: Prior to the intervention, the camp depended heavily on a generator as a backup source of electricity. However, this has now been replaced by solar energy backup systems, which are more sustainable and cost-effective. The solar system is also used to pump water from the borehole.

3. Improved Customer Satisfaction: The caretaker informed Members that customer ratings had risen substantially since the intervention, estimating satisfaction at 10 out of 10. This was attributed largely to improved comfort levels, uninterrupted utility services, and reliable backup power.

4. Employment Creation: The camp initially operated with only one staff member, but staffing levels have since increased to three employees, demonstrating modest but meaningful employment growth resulting from project support.

6. Seasonal Operations and Room Tariffs: Management stated that the busiest operational period falls within the peak tourism season, particularly between November and December.

Room rates were disclosed as follows:
D2,500 for single occupancy
D3,000 for couples

The Committee noted the importance of sustained marketing and domestic tourism promotion to improve occupancy levels during the off-season.

At Kauren River Camp in Kaur, members were received by the caretaker, Mr. Tijan Baldeh. The caretaker informed Members that the word Kauren is a local Fula expression meaning "Let's Meet," symbolizing hospitality and gathering. Upon arrival, the Vice Chairperson of the Committee outlined the purpose of the visit, emphasizing that the delegation was undertaking its constitutional oversight responsibility to monitor the implementation and impact of the TDR Project on beneficiary institutions.

The caretaker stated that the project had significantly improved the camp's operations and visitor experience. Through a grant amounting to approximately D1.27 million, the camp reportedly received several essential items and facilities, including washing machines, gas cookers, a borehole, and twelve solar panels. Management explained that these additions have greatly enhanced convenience, efficiency, and overall service delivery within the camp.

Prior to the intervention, the camp depended heavily on a generator as a backup source of electricity. However, this has now been replaced by solar energy backup systems, which are more sustainable and cost-effective. The solar system is also used to pump water from the borehole, further improving operational efficiency.

The caretaker informed Members that customer satisfaction has risen substantially since the intervention, estimating ratings at 10 out of 10. This improvement was attributed to enhanced comfort levels, uninterrupted utility services, and reliable backup power.

Management further indicated that the camp initially operated with only one staff member, but staffing levels have since increased to three employees, demonstrating modest but meaningful employment growth as a result of the project.

Members were also informed that the camp currently has ten standard rooms, all of which are fully operational. All rooms are equipped with spacious toilet facilities, while a number of rooms have been fitted with water heaters, thereby improving guest comfort and service quality.

Management stated that the busiest operational period occurs during the peak tourism season, particularly between November and December. Room rates were disclosed as D2,500 for single occupancy and D3,000 for couples. The Committee noted the importance of sustained marketing and the promotion of domestic tourism to improve occupancy levels during the off-season.

Challenges
1. Seasonal low occupancy during off-peak tourism periods.
2. Limited staffing capacity.
3. Need for stronger marketing and tourism promotion.

Recommendations
1. Intensify domestic tourism promotion and marketing.
2. Improve room facilities and guest amenities.
3. Support staff training and service improvement.

7. VISIT TO BABOON ISLANDS / RIVER GAMBIA NATIONAL PARK – KUNTAUR

At the Baboon Islands, River Gambia National Park in Kuntaur, members were received by Park Ranger Mr. Mawdo Barry, who provided a comprehensive briefing on the park's history, wildlife conservation efforts, and operational challenges.

Members were informed that the River Gambia National Park was established in 1974 and later operationalized in 1979 through the efforts of two women conservationists, Stella Marsden Brewer from the United Kingdom and Janice Carter from the United States of America. The ranger explained that the project began with eight imported pet chimpanzees as a five-year trial rehabilitation initiative. Following the success of the trial phase, additional chimpanzees from different backgrounds were introduced into the park. The park reportedly covers an estimated 585 hectares and consists of six islands, three of which are currently rehabilitated and occupied by chimpanzees.

The ranger informed Members that there are currently four social groups of chimpanzees living across three islands, with an estimated total population of 150 chimpanzees. Each chimpanzee is assigned an individual name for identification and monitoring purposes. He further explained that staff conduct daily feeding exercises not due to lack of food in the wild, but to facilitate observation, counting, health monitoring, and behavioural tracking. Members were also informed that female chimpanzees generally have their first offspring at approximately 14 years of age, with a gestation period of eight to nine months, followed by breastfeeding for up to three years. Young chimpanzees often remain dependent on their mothers for additional years to learn social behaviour and survival skills. The ranger further noted that chimpanzees construct nests high in trees each evening, which are abandoned the following day to avoid parasites.

The islands are also home to a variety of wildlife species, including red colobus monkeys, green vervet monkeys, baboons, hyenas, antelopes, bushbuck, leopards, caracals, jackals, and other primates. Members were informed that no lions exist within the park. Due to safety concerns, neither staff nor visitors are permitted to enter the chimpanzee islands, and feeding is conducted from boats by throwing food onto the islands.

The ranger explained that tourist activity is highly seasonal, with significantly lower visitor numbers during the off-season, sometimes going weeks without a single tourist visit, while peak activity occurs during the main tourism season.

Members were informed of several operational challenges affecting park management. Illegal fishing activities remain a persistent issue, with fishermen often attempting to fish near protected zones where fish are more abundant. It was further noted that some of these illegal fishers originate from as far as Mali, creating additional enforcement challenges and occasional conflicts with park authorities.

The ranger also highlighted staffing challenges, stating that only about six youth rangers are currently employed, and recruitment remains difficult due to the remote nature of the work and relatively low salaries, reportedly below D10,000 per month. He further explained that staff have never benefited from training opportunities in other African countries, limiting their exposure and capacity development. In addition, the rangers reportedly have no other benefits apart from their salaries, although they occasionally receive tips from visitors.

Limited institutional support was also raised as a concern. The ranger stated that salaries are financed through a United States-based foundation, Friends of Animals, and that support from wildlife authorities is reportedly infrequent, although local coordinators and trainers remain engaged. He therefore emphasized the need for improved support, including mobility resources such as boats and engines, better remuneration to attract and retain staff, and provision of lawful defensive equipment for emergency situations.

Members were further informed that where chimpanzees require medical attention, treatment is administered by mixing medication into their food. Some female chimpanzees are also given contraceptives to regulate population growth and maintain ecological balance.

In addition, the ranger noted that The Gambia is unique in West Africa for hosting three species of crocodiles, namely the West African crocodile, the dwarf crocodile, and the slender-snouted crocodile.

Challenges
1. Persistent illegal fishing within protected areas.
2. Inadequate staffing and difficulty retaining rangers due to low salaries.
3. Lack of operational equipment such as boats and engines.
4. Limited training and international exposure for staff.
5. Seasonal tourism resulting in inconsistent revenue.
6. Limited institutional support for park operations.

Recommendations
1. Strengthen surveillance and enforcement against illegal fishing.
2. Improve ranger salaries, welfare, and working conditions.
3. Provide boats, engines, and safety equipment for patrol operations.
4. Facilitate international conservation training and exchange programmes.
5. Increase government and partner support for conservation management.
6. Enhance eco-tourism marketing to attract year-round visitors.

7. VISIT TO WASSU STONE CIRCLES – WASSU

At the Wassu Stone Circles, Members conducted an on-site inspection and engaged with the Museum Manager to assess the current state of the facility. Upon visit, the Committee observed with concern that none of the recommendations made during previous oversight engagements had been implemented, with the exception of the provision of a borehole.

While the borehole has improved water accessibility, the overall condition of the site remains unsatisfactory. Members noted that there is still no electricity supply at the facility, despite the fact that National Water and Electricity Company (NAWEC) infrastructure is already available within the surrounding neighbourhood. This lack of electricity continues to negatively affect museum operations, visitor experience, and preservation of artifacts.

The Committee further observed that the museum infrastructure is in a deteriorating state, with visible signs of structural decline requiring urgent rehabilitation. In addition, sanitation conditions remain poor, with inadequate and poorly maintained toilet facilities for visitors, which significantly undermines the site’s suitability for tourism and public use.

Members were also informed that the Museum Manager resides in the nearby village and is required to walk approximately 700 metres daily to access the site, highlighting the lack of basic operational support and staff welfare considerations.

Overall, the Committee expressed serious concern regarding the neglect of previously identified issues and emphasized the urgent need for immediate and practical interventions to restore the site to acceptable standards, particularly given its cultural and historical significance.

Challenges

1. Failure to implement most previous oversight recommendations.
2. Lack of electricity despite nearby NAWEC infrastructure.
3. Deteriorating museum buildings and infrastructure.
4. Poor sanitation and inadequate toilet facilities.
5. Limited operational support and staff welfare arrangements.

Recommendations

1. Urgently connect the facility to the national electricity grid.
2. Rehabilitate and preserve museum infrastructure.
3. Upgrade sanitation and visitor facilities.
4. Improve operational support and welfare for staff.
5. Develop a comprehensive heritage conservation and tourism improvement plan.

8. VISIT TO BASSE MINI STADIUM – BASSE, URR

At the Basse Mini Stadium, Members were received by Mr. Alhagie Muya Baldeh, who briefed the Committee on the current status of the facility. Upon engagement, the Committee observed that there has been no significant development at the stadium, noting that conditions remain largely unchanged from the time of their previous visit two years ago.

Mr. Baldeh informed Members that efforts have been made on several occasions to engage the Ministry regarding the development of the facility; however, these requests have not yielded any tangible results. He further stated that the stadium now has a management structure in place, which is expected to support coordination and future development efforts.

Members were informed that the Basse Area Council recently expressed interest in developing the field and indicated that an amount of D12 million had been set aside for the project. However, the Ministry reportedly advised that this amount would be insufficient and proposed to contribute an additional D7 million, bringing the total expected investment to D19 million. It was further disclosed that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has since been signed between the relevant parties. Mr. Baldeh emphasized that the field is relatively large and is intended to serve as a multi-purpose centre, rather than being limited to football alone.

The Committee also explored the issue of project financing and documentation. Members stressed the importance of relying on properly documented and verifiable commitments in development planning and requested that official documentation be made available for validation and reference.

In terms of revenue generation, Members were informed that the facility has generated approximately D70,000 since the previous year. Event charges were reported as D10,000 for finals, D5,000 for semi-final matches, and D2,000 for quarter-finals. Members observed that the revenue generated remains relatively modest and may not be sufficient to support long-term maintenance and development. It was therefore suggested that management consider more structured and transparent revenue models to improve sustainability.

Management further informed the Committee that although water supply is now available, meeting the cost of water bills remains a challenge. Members also inquired whether QCell is making payments for branding and advertisement around the field. In response, management confirmed that payments are being made, although no specific amount was disclosed.

Despite these developments, the Committee identified several key challenges affecting the stadium. The facility remains underdeveloped, limiting its usability and attractiveness for major sporting events. Its current condition also restricts opportunities for generating higher income or diversifying activities. The absence of electricity continues to affect operations, security, and the ability to host events during evening hours. Additionally, supporting infrastructure remains inadequate, and concerns were raised regarding weak communication and coordination among stakeholders involved in the project.

In its observations, the Committee noted the absence of a clearly defined budget line dedicated to the development of the stadium, as well as concerns that any proposed Ministry contribution may rely on non-budgeted sources. It was further observed that the current project scope appears to focus primarily on the football pitch, rather than a comprehensive multi-sport facility as intended.

Members therefore emphasized the need for stakeholders to work closely with the Ministry and the Area Council to clearly define project scope and responsibilities, align expectations with available resources, and expand the facility to accommodate multiple sporting activities such as basketball and volleyball. The Committee also stressed that the stadium should be viewed not only as a revenue-generating entity, but as a platform for youth engagement, employment creation, and community development.

The Committee concluded that while there are emerging efforts toward development, significant gaps remain, and stronger planning, proper documentation, improved infrastructure investment, and better coordination among stakeholders will be essential to realizing the full potential of the Basse Mini Stadium.

Challenges

1. Lack of significant infrastructure development over the years.
2. Absence of electricity and inadequate supporting facilities.
3. Weak coordination and communication among stakeholders.
4. Limited revenue generation and sustainability concerns.
5. Lack of a clearly defined and budgeted financing framework.
6. Difficulty meeting water utility costs.
7. Current development focus limited mainly to the football pitch.

Recommendations

1. Establish a clearly budgeted and documented financing framework.
2. Install electricity and improve supporting infrastructure.
3. Strengthen coordination between the Ministry, Area Council, and stakeholders.
4. Develop diversified and transparent revenue-generation mechanisms.
5. Expand the facility into a multi-purpose sports complex for basketball, volleyball, and other sports.
6. Position the stadium as a youth development and community engagement centre.

9. VISIT TO SOTOMA SAMBA KOI ECO LODGE

At Sotoma Samba Koi Eco Lodge, Members observed that there was no site management present to officially receive the Committee. However, the delegation was guided by Mr. Abdullah Jeng, a staff member of the Gambia Tourism Board (GTBoard), who had been assigned to accompany and brief the Committee throughout the tour.

During the inspection, Members were informed that, similar to the situation at Barra Eco Lodge, the facility had been affected by a fire outbreak. While the exact cause of the fire remains unknown, it is believed to have originated from a bush fire. An assessment of the site indicated that several structures had sustained damage, with some buildings punctured and sections significantly affected.

Despite this, the Committee observed that Sotoma appears to be at a more advanced stage of completion compared to Barra Eco Lodge. Although parts of the structures were damaged by fire, some rooms had already been fitted with toilet facilities and tiling, indicating that construction works were nearing completion prior to the incident. Members also noted that the entire site is well fenced with quality materials, suggesting a higher level of structural preparation and site security.

Members were further informed that a technical assessment had previously been conducted by GAMWORKS between late 2024 and early 2025 to determine the feasibility of continuing the project. Subsequent directives from the Ministry of Tourism have reportedly shifted priority toward completing projects at Sotoma and Kunkiling, with GAMWORKS expected to take the lead in completing the facility.

At the time of the visit, some minor remedial works had been undertaken, including door fittings in affected structures. However, the Committee noted that substantial work remains to be done to fully restore and complete the lodge.

Challenges
1. Fire damage to several structures.
2. Delays and prolonged inactivity in project completion.
3. Lack of active site management during the visit.
4. Need for substantial restoration and rehabilitation works.

Recommendations
1. Expedite restoration and completion works through GAMWORKS.
2. Conduct detailed structural and technical assessments.
3. Strengthen project supervision and site management.
4. Introduce stronger fire prevention and environmental protection measures.
5. Prioritize operationalization of the facility to prevent further deterioration.

10. VISIT TO KUNKILING ECO LODGE – URR

The Committee thereafter proceeded to Kunkiling Eco Lodge as part of the ongoing tour, where Members were briefed by a representative of the Gambia Tourism Board (GTBoard), Mr. Abdullah Jeng.

Members were informed that the lodge is currently abandoned, although there are ongoing intentions to complete the project. It was noted that, similar to Barra and Sotoma Eco Lodges, works at Kunkiling have been at a standstill for over one year. The Committee further observed that the site exhibits structural defects comparable to those identified at Barra and Sotoma, raising concerns regarding design quality and construction standards.

Mr. Jeng informed Members that efforts are being made to complete the lodge, and that an assessment has already been conducted by GAMWORKS to guide the next phase of development. He further stated that plans are underway to explore a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) arrangement, with potential partners to be identified, in order to mobilize resources for completion.

During the inspection, Members observed evidence of poor resource management, including abandoned cement bags that had hardened and could no longer be used, resulting in financial loss. An abandoned caterpillar (construction equipment) was also seen on site, further reflecting the prolonged inactivity of the project.

Notwithstanding these challenges, the Committee noted that Kunkiling Eco Lodge possesses a strategic advantage, as it is accessible by both road and river. This dual access makes it a potentially valuable tourism investment if properly completed and managed.

Overall, the Committee observed that while there are plans to revive the project, the prolonged delays, structural concerns, and resource wastage underscore the need for stronger planning, supervision, and implementation going forward.

Challenges
1. Project abandonment and over one year of inactivity.
2. Structural defects and concerns regarding construction quality.
3. Poor resource management and wastage of materials.
4. Presence of abandoned construction equipment on site.
5. Incomplete infrastructure and lack of financing progress.

Recommendations
1. Resume construction works and addresses structural defects urgently.
2. Conduct technical audits and quality assessments.
3. Improve project supervision, accountability, and resource management.
4. Fast-track Public-Private Partnership arrangements for financing.
5. Leverage the lodge's road and river accessibility for tourism development.

11. COURTESY VISIT TO THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE – JANJANBUREH, CRR

The Committee later paid a courtesy visit to the Governor of the Central River Region, who personally received the delegation.

In his remarks, the Governor emphasized the importance of parliamentary oversight, noting that such engagements play a critical role in reducing development gaps and promoting accountability among implementing agencies and contractors.

He further informed the Committee that the Central River Region (CRR) possesses significant tourism potential, which must be properly harnessed and protected. He stressed that, particularly in light of ongoing global conflicts and uncertainties, there is a need to preserve the region, and the country at large, for future generations, while positioning it as a safe and attractive tourism destination.

The Governor highlighted that Janjanbureh is the second-largest tourist destination in the country, yet it continues to face challenges, particularly the lack of adequate and suitable guest house accommodation for visitors. He noted that with the right level of support and investment, only a small push is needed to unlock the region’s full tourism potential.

The TDR Project Manager, who accompanied the Committee, concurred with the Governor’s position and affirmed that the Central River Region has all the essential components required for a thriving tourism sector, including heritage sites, natural attractions, and cultural assets.

Despite these opportunities, the Governor also cited ongoing development constraints, including climate-related challenges, physical accessibility barriers, and broader geopolitical factors, all of which continue to impact progress in the region. He therefore called for coordinated efforts from all stakeholders to accelerate development.

In their interventions, Honourable Members emphasized the urgent need for infrastructural improvements, particularly at key heritage sites such as the Wassu Stone Circles. Members also highlighted the potential for developing island-based tourism facilities, including eco-lodges around areas such as the Baboon Islands, to further strengthen the region’s tourism appeal at both national and international levels.

12. VISIT TO HIPPO BUSH CAMP - JANJANBUREH

At Hippo Bush Camp, Members engaged with Mr. Davis Adams of Fire-Play Gambia, who provided insights into his experience as an eco-tourism operator and investor in The Gambia. He explained that he was initially drawn to the country by the River Gambia while travelling to Ghana, and has since settled permanently, where he is now married to a Gambian and actively involved in tourism development.

Mr. Adams stated that his investment is largely inspired by the country’s natural environment and river-based tourism potential. However, he expressed concern that many aspects of tourism, particularly nature-based activities such as hiking, remain underexplored in The Gambia.

Reflecting on the Tourism Diversification and Resilience (TDR) Project, he acknowledged that the initiative is commendable and confirmed that he was part of the first cohort of beneficiaries. Nonetheless, he emphasized that the core objectives of diversification and resilience are not being fully realized, as support appears to be focused more on strengthening existing ventures rather than promoting new and innovative tourism products.

He further noted that one of the key challenges of the project is that those directly engaged with beneficiaries are often not the final decision-makers, resulting in limited flexibility and delays in addressing practical concerns. He recommended that greater decision-making authority be extended to field-level implementers to improve responsiveness and effectiveness.

Mr. Adams also highlighted the need for broader inclusion within the tourism sector, suggesting that travel media and influencers should have been integrated into the project to enhance visibility and international promotion. He stressed that The Gambia is not fully leveraging eco-tourism opportunities, and proposed the introduction of an eco-rating system to guide visitors in identifying environmentally responsible operators. He further suggested that Janjanbureh should be positioned as a central hub for eco-tourism development in the country.

While acknowledging some positive reviews of his operations in recent years, he stated that business conditions have generally been challenging. He informed Members that the camp currently employs three full-time staff, supported by additional casual workers who assist with various tasks.

Mr. Adams also raised concerns about the country's tourism model, noting that The Gambia's reliance on low-cost tourism limits revenue potential. He advocated for a shift toward quality-driven tourism that generates higher returns, emphasizing that tourism development does not necessarily require heavy investment, but rather a strategic focus on promoting the country's natural environment and unique experiences. He further expressed concern that small-scale operators are often not prioritized in government support frameworks, despite their role in diversifying the sector.

In terms of grant utilization, he confirmed receiving approximately US$40,000 (estimated at D1.4 million) under the TDR Project. He stated that about D1 million was invested in timber for the construction of cruise boats, while D400,000 was used to procure tents and related camping equipment. Additional personal funds were also invested in engines and other operational necessities. He indicated that the boats are expected to be operational by the next tourism season, with plans to offer river cruise experiences across multiple destinations along the River Gambia.

During the inspection, Members observed that the camp consists of basic eco-friendly facilities, including tents, muddy accommodation structures, and compost toilets, reflecting a low-impact, nature-based tourism model.

In his concluding remarks, Mr. Adams reiterated the importance of environmental protection, innovation, and stronger institutional support for small operators. He also recommended the revival of a previously inactive association that once supported small-scale tourism enterprises, noting that such a platform could enhance collaboration, advocacy, and sector-wide development.

Challenges
1. Underdevelopment of eco-tourism products such as hiking and nature tourism.
2. TDR Project support focused more on existing ventures than innovation.
3. Limited support for small-scale tourism operators.
4. Heavy reliance on low-cost tourism with low revenue returns.
5. Difficult business environment and limited institutional support.

Recommendations
1. Promote innovation and diversification in eco-tourism products.
2. Decentralize decision-making authority to field-level project implementers.
3. Integrate travel media and influencers into tourism promotion strategies.
4. Establish an eco-rating system for environmentally responsible operators.
5. Support revival of associations representing small-scale tourism enterprises.
6. Position Janjanbureh as a national eco-tourism hub.

13. VISIT TO GTBOARD REGIONAL OFFICE – SOMA, LRR

At the Gambia Tourism Board (GTBoard) Regional Office in Soma, Members were received and briefed by the Regional Tourism Officer for the Lower River Region, Mr. Lamin Kinteh.

Mr. Kinteh informed the Committee that the region holds significant potential for sustainable and eco-tourism, noting that such forms of tourism are particularly suited to the Lower River Region and should therefore be prioritized. He emphasized that there are numerous untapped opportunities that can be explored to strengthen the sector. He further highlighted that the region is strategically located along a tourist transit corridor, which has contributed to increased private sector interest, including the construction of new hotels and guest houses.

The Committee was informed that there are currently 21 registered lodges in the region, out of which 17 are fully operational and actively paying their operational licence fees, while additional facilities are at various stages of construction and completion. This, according to the representative, reflects steady growth and improved compliance within the sector.

Mr. Kinteh also explained that a recent tourism assessment resulted in the classification of tourism activity areas into five distinct zones. This zoning framework is intended to enhance planning, improve site management, and support better coordination of excursions. He noted that tour operators are increasingly extending their activities into the region, further demonstrating growing interest in inland tourism destinations.

Despite these positive developments, he outlined several operational challenges affecting effective service delivery. Chief among these is the issue of limited mobility, as the absence of reliable transport makes it difficult to conduct regular inspections, enforce standards, and adequately cover the region. He further informed Members that he is currently the only GTBoard officer assigned to the entire Lower River Region, which significantly constrains administrative efficiency and oversight capacity. This challenge, he noted, has been exacerbated by broader staffing shortages following institutional restructuring, with similar situations reportedly affecting other regions such as the West Coast Region and Upper River Region.

The Committee observed accessibility challenges within the office, noting that it is located upstairs without provisions for persons with disabilities. As a result, physically challenged visitors are often attended to downstairs, which limits inclusivity and ease of access to services.

In discussions on tourism development, Members emphasized the importance of expanding infrastructure within national parks, particularly at Kiang West National Park, to meet international tourism standards. It was noted that while the park falls under wildlife authorities, its tourism potential cannot be fully realized without stronger collaboration between relevant institutions. Members therefore called for a stakeholder engagement forum to deliberate on the future development of national parks in The Gambia.

Further proposals included the consideration of a Green Corridor initiative to facilitate wildlife movement across protected areas while enhancing biodiversity conservation. The Committee also underscored the significant tourism potential of Kiang West, identifying activities such as hiking, bird watching, kayaking, river cruising, camping, and other nature-based experiences as viable opportunities for development.

In their concluding remarks, Members highlighted the need to review the status of Kemoto Lodge, with a view to exploring its possible revival, given its strategic importance to regional tourism accommodation and development.

Challenges
1. Inadequate staffing, with one officer covering multiple regions.
2. Limited mobility and transport for inspections and monitoring.
3. Accessibility barriers for persons with disabilities.
4. Operational inefficiencies caused by institutional restructuring.

Recommendations
1. Recruit additional GTBoard officers for regional offices.
2. Provide vehicles and transport support for field operations.
3. Improve accessibility infrastructure for persons with disabilities.
4. Strengthen coordination among tourism and wildlife stakeholders.

5. Convene stakeholder forums on national park and eco-tourism development.

14. VISIT TO TENDABA CAMP – KIANG, LRR

At Tendaba Camp, where the Vice Chairperson declared the purpose of the visit, Members were received by the host and management representative, Mr. Demo Jawo, who briefed the Committee on the camp's progress, benefits received, and ongoing challenges since support under the TDR/Yokute Project.

The host informed Members that some concerns raised during previous engagements with public officials had seen progress. Flooding, which had been a longstanding challenge, was partially addressed through installation of a drainage system. While the issue has not been fully eliminated, management confirmed that the situation has significantly improved compared to previous years.

The Committee was also informed that solar panels provided under TDR support have relatively low generation capacity. Although they offset some electricity costs, the system mainly serves the restaurant area and remains insufficient for rooms and wider camp operations. As a result, accommodation blocks and other facilities continue to rely heavily on electricity supply, which management stated comes with substantial charges.

Management explained that TDR support thus far has been largely technical rather than direct financial assistance. The camp is reportedly yet to receive a previously anticipated grant of D2.3 million, having only recently graduated from the last cohort of eligible applicants. Members were informed that, if secured, much of the funding would be invested in expanded solar energy systems to reduce utility costs.

The host further stated that the camp is generally quiet during the off-season and remains heavily dependent on workshops, conferences, and retreats for operational continuity. It was disclosed that the camp has two halls used for professional events and group gatherings. Members were also informed that Tendaba Camp currently employs 57 full-time staff, and that during the off-season it becomes difficult to meet salary obligations, further emphasizing the reliance on non-tourism activities to sustain operations.

Management indicated that while TDR support contributed to increased economic activity, it has had limited effect on staff retention because direct financial support was not included. The camp nonetheless continues to support the surrounding community by allowing public access to water taps, providing transport assistance during emergencies where possible, offering practical training attachments for tourism students, and employing some trainees upon completion.

Members were informed that the camp's major clientele consists mainly of bird watchers, nature lovers, and eco-tourists.

In response to management enquiries on the future of Kiang West Park, Members stated that a stakeholder forum to discuss the future of the park is under consideration.
Engagement with NEDI on Entrepreneurship Support and Business Formalization Constraints

While at Tendaba Camp, the Committee also held discussions with representatives of NEDI and one beneficiary entrepreneur. The NEDI representative, Ms. Amie Touray, informed Members that she currently serves as the focal officer for both the Lower River Region and North Bank Region, and is the only representative covering both regions. She explained that this creates operational strain, as it is often difficult to effectively cover multiple locations.

Members were informed that NEDI interventions include entrepreneurship training, mentoring, coaching, online support services, and onsite advisory services.
However, several key constraints were highlighted. The representative noted that limited funding continues to affect the delivery of expanded and standardized training programmes. She further explained that business formalization processes are highly centralized, requiring frequent engagement with the head office, which often results in delays. In this regard, she emphasized the need for the decentralization of services through the establishment of an extension of the Attorney General's Chambers within the region to ease business registration challenges. She also underscored the need for start-up financing to support young entrepreneurs after training, enabling them to effectively launch or expand their businesses.

Members suggested stronger collaboration with the Regional Youth Office and other development programmes to improve coordination, avoid duplication, and enhance regional impact. The representative confirmed that such collaboration is already ongoing to some extent.

In her concluding remarks, she informed Members that an ongoing capacity-building initiative supported by GIZ is currently underway.

The Committee also heard from Mr. Gibril Touray, a beneficiary of NEDI support, who stated that he owns a 300 by 300 orchard enterprise. He acknowledged that NEDI had supported him in formalizing his business, improving visibility, and strengthening his entrepreneurial capacity. However, he expressed concern that despite multiple attempts over the past four years, he has been unable to access grant support and appealed for financial assistance to expand his enterprise.

Presentation on River Gambia Jetty Assessment and Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development

To conclude the engagement, a presentation was delivered by the TDR Project Director, Dr. Ceesay, on a comprehensive assessment of river jetties across The Gambia.

He informed Members that the assessment, which cost approximately US$200,000, covered 20 jetties across the country, out of which the best 10 were selected for potential development. He emphasized that now that the study has been completed, there is a need for Members to support advocacy efforts by promoting the initiative within their respective regions.

Dr. Ceesay further disclosed that approximately US$500,000 has been allocated to the Jufureh–Albreda Project and stressed the importance of developing feeder roads to support access and enhance tourism potential in those areas.

He also informed the Committee that a Public-Private Partnership arrangement is being explored for the development of Kiang West National Park, noting that such collaboration would be critical in unlocking the park's tourism value.

In closing, he stated that detailed presentations and reports would be shared with the Clerk of the Committee for onward circulation to Members for further review and consideration.

Challenges

1. Persistent flooding despite drainage improvements.
2. Limited solar generation capacity insufficient for full operations.
3. High electricity costs affecting sustainability.
4. Dependence on workshops and conferences during off-season periods.
5. Delayed access to anticipated grant funding.
6. Difficulty retaining staff during low tourism periods.

Recommendations

1. Expand solar energy systems to reduce electricity dependence.
2. Improve drainage and flood mitigation measures.
3. Expedite pending grant support under the TDR Project.
4. Diversify tourism products and activities beyond conferences.
5. Strengthen support for eco-tourism and staff retention initiatives.
6. Enhance collaboration among tourism stakeholders.

15. PRIME ATLANTIC HOTEL - BANJUL

The Committee visited the hotel, which was recently taken over in February 2026 by Ms. Haddy Ndow and her husband from its former Libyan management. During the visit, Members were informed that the hotel has only recently resumed operations and is gradually picking up, with plans underway to reposition it as a business-oriented hotel, given the nature of Banjul as a commercial and administrative hub rather than a traditional tourist destination.

The hotel has a total of 200 rooms. Although the structures are largely old-fashioned, Members conducted a tour of the facility and observed the rooms firsthand. The rooms were found to be relatively small but cozy. The hotel also features a presidential villa. However, Members noted the need for significant renovation works, including replacing old bathtubs, removing outdated tiles, and converting existing windows into verandas to improve ventilation and guest experience.

Management further indicated concerns regarding unusually high water and electricity consumption, suggesting the possibility of leakages within the system. In response to rising operational costs, the hotel is exploring the installation of solar energy as a more sustainable alternative.

The Committee was informed that the hotel currently employs 67 staff, all of whom are Gambian, except for the General Manager, who is of Turkish nationality and brings extensive experience in five-star hotel management.

Management expressed intentions to undertake aggressive promotional activities to reposition the hotel within the market. However, it was noted that there has been limited engagement with the Gambia Tourism Board beyond registration processes. Management emphasized their willingness to strengthen collaboration going forward, particularly in the areas of marketing and branding.

Members advised that the hotel should leverage the unique history and cultural identity of Banjul as a tourism product. Suggestions included developing themed experiences centered on New Year cultural festivities such as hunting traditions, "*tanabirrs*", "*halam*" and *kora* performances, as well as storytelling sessions. Members further recommended the establishment of a fine dining African restaurant offering local cuisine at reasonable rates, including traditional dishes such as "*chebe*" (benachin) paired with cultural storytelling to create a distinctive dining experience.

In addition, Members encouraged management to explore international marketing strategies, including engaging Nigerian-based marketing agents such as those involved in Calabar tourism promotions, and targeting the Caribbean diaspora market through festival tourism.

Management also highlighted plans to transform a former nightclub space into an African-themed restaurant that will promote local food, arts, culture, and storytelling as part of the hotel's broader revitalization strategy.

The room rate was disclosed at D3,000 per night. Members emphasized the importance of aligning pricing with improved service delivery and upgraded facilities to ensure competitiveness.

Further advice was given to engage previous hotel management to better understand historical challenges, including flooding, faulty sewage systems, and unsafe swimming conditions, which reportedly require coordinated intervention from institutions such as NAWEC, PURA, and the Gambia Tourism Board.

Overall, while the hotel presents significant potential due to its size, location, and local ownership, Members noted that substantial investment, strategic marketing, and infrastructural upgrades will be essential to restore it to its former prominence.

Challenges

1. Aging infrastructure requiring major renovation.
2. High water and electricity consumption and possible leakages.
3. Weak engagement with GTBoard on marketing and promotion.
4. Structural issues relating to sewage systems and flooding.
5. Need to reposition the hotel competitively within the market.

Recommendations

1. Undertake phased renovation and modernization works.
2. Conduct technical assessments of water, sewage, and utility systems.
3. Invest in solar energy to reduce operational costs.
4. Strengthen collaboration with GTBoard on branding and marketing.
5. Develop culturally themed tourism products linked to Banjul heritage.
6. Explore international and diaspora-focused marketing opportunities.

16. KAIRABA BEACH HOTEL - SENEGAMBIA

The Committee visited Kairaba Beach Hotel, one of the oldest hotels in the country, historically named after former President Dawda Jawara. Upon inspection, Members observed that the facility is currently in a deteriorating condition, with visible signs of poor maintenance. At the outdoor restaurant area where the Committee was hosted, the walls and ceilings were notably dirty, reflecting a general lack of upkeep.

Management was not present during the visit; however, the Committee engaged the Head of Operations and the Front Office Manager, Mr. Alpha Saine, who provided a briefing on the hotel’s status. Members were informed that the hotel is owned by the Karaffi and Sons family, who also own the Sheraton Hotel Gambia, which is currently not in operation.

The Committee noted that although the hotel has introduced a new outdoor restaurant and had undertaken partial renovations of two blocks in the previous year, with plans to renovate additional blocks, the overall condition of the facility remains below acceptable standards and requires substantial upgrading.

Management indicated that tour operators remain the hotel's primary source of revenue. In the past year, operators such as The Gambia Experience and Rainbow Tours had brought in guests. However, the hotel has struggled to secure contracts with more cost-sensitive tour operators due to its current condition.

The Committee was further informed that conference and event services, which previously contributed significantly to revenue, have declined considerably. This downturn was attributed to increasing competition from newer hotels and the Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara International Conference Center.

Due to financial constraints and declining income, the hotel has reduced its staff strength and is facing challenges in retaining employees. Members were informed that all current staff are Gambian, with no expatriate employees.

It was also highlighted that the hotel had not secured contracts through the Gambia Tourism Board in the past four years until recently, which contributed to a decline in patronage and the loss of returning clients to competing establishments.

Overall, the Committee concluded that while the hotel retains historical significance and strategic value within the tourism sector, its current state requires comprehensive renovation, improved management engagement, and stronger market positioning in order to regain competitiveness and restore its former status.

The Committee notes that it was unable to engage with the Gambia Tourism Board (GTBoard) Regional Officers in both the Upper River Region (URR) and the West Coast Region (WCR) as initially in the itinerary, as the officers assigned to those regions had been recalled at the time of the visit. Additionally, planned visits to Gunjur and the Sheraton Hotel Gambia could not be undertaken, as both facilities were found to be closed and not in operation during the period of the Committee's tour.

Challenges
1. Deteriorating infrastructure and poor maintenance standards.
2. Decline in conference, event, and tourism business.
3. Financial difficulties affecting staff retention and operations.
4. Inability to secure contracts with major tour operators.
5. Weak recent engagement with GTBoard support mechanisms.

Recommendations
1. Undertake comprehensive renovation and upgrading works.

2. Strengthen partnerships with GTBoard and tour operators.
3. Improve service standards and facility maintenance.
4. Diversify revenue streams through conferences and events.
5. Strengthen staff retention and capacity-building programmes.
6. Develop a long-term recovery and repositioning strategy for the hotel.

CONCLUSION

The Committee’s oversight tour confirmed that The Gambia has significant potential to further develop and diversify its tourism sector, particularly in eco-tourism, cultural and heritage tourism, and river-based tourism. However, the realization of this potential remains affected by infrastructure gaps, delays in project implementation, institutional capacity constraints and inadequate maintenance.

The Committee recognizes the positive contributions of the TDR/Yokute Project in several locations but considers that greater attention is required to ensure timely implementation, equitable access to interventions, effective project supervision and sustainability of completed investments.

The Committee is of the view that a more diversified and sustainable tourism strategy, supported by improved infrastructure, stronger institutional coordination, effective maintenance and targeted investment, is necessary to expand economic opportunities and employment, particularly for young people and communities across the country.

The Committee therefore urges the relevant authorities to give due consideration to the findings and recommendations contained in this report and to strengthen follow-up on their implementation. Effective and sustained action will be essential to ensuring that the country’s tourism, cultural and related assets contribute meaningfully to national development.

COMPOSITION OF THE DELEGATION

1. Hon. Abdoulie Ceesay - Vice-Chairperson
2. Hon. Alieu Baldeh - Member
3. Hon. Maimuna Ceesay - Member
4. Hon. Omar Jammeh - Member
5. Hon. Pa Dembo Sanneh - Member
6. Ms. Rassiatou H. Jallow - Committee Clerk
7. Mr. Ebrima Ceesay - Communications Officer
8. Ms Maryam Jarju - Intern
9. Ms Fatoumatta Fadera - Intern
10. Mr Buba Colley - Driver
11. Mr. Abdullah Nyang - GTBoard
12. Mr. Ebrima Jawo - MoYS
13. Mr. Ebrima Baldeh - MoT