



National Assembly, New Assembly Building, Reginald Pye Lane, Banjul, The Gambia

[OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT]

**5TH SITTING OF THE 3RD ORDINARY
SESSION OF THE 6TH LEGISLATURE**

National Assembly Proceedings of
Wednesday [**Morning**] 21st September 2022 –

**QUESTIONS FOR ORAL ANSWERS IN
ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDERS 36 & 41**

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CONTENT

1. Prayers
2. Corrections and Approval of Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Tuesday 20th September, 2022
3. Questions for Oral Answers [*in Accordance with Standing Orders 36 and 41*] for His Excellency the Vice President and Some Honourable Ministers

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1. PRAYERS

[The Speaker, Hon. Fabakary Tombong Jatta, read the prayers.]

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

[The Speaker, Hon. Fabakary Tombong Jatta, in the Chair]

The Assembly was called to Order.

2. Corrections and Approval of Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Tuesday 20th September, 2022

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Tuesday 20th September 2022 is before us for corrections and approval. Please, can any Honourable Member move a motion for corrections and approval of the said Record of Votes and Proceedings?

Honourable Members, I hope you all have the Record of Votes and Proceedings as usual. We will do the corrections page by page starting from page 1.

HON KEBBA JALLOW [JARRA CENTRAL]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I rise to move a motion for the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Tuesday 20th September 2022 be corrected and approved.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, any seconder?

HON SAINY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I second the motion.

THE SPEAKER:

[Question Proposed]

You have got the record of votes and proceedings so Honourable Members may come up with any issues or observations. As usual, we will begin with pages 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

HON KEBBA JALLOW [JARRA CENTRAL]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. The penultimate paragraph, *"In accordance with Order 25[2], the Vice President of the Republic is not continuing and the following ministers will speak on the issues raised and wine up the debate"*. The phrase, *"of The Gambia"* is missing there.

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THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, any comment on that? This problem of *"the Republic"* or *"the Republic of The Gambia"* has been a common issue.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: I think it is okay in its original form. Just putting *"the Republic"* suffices for The Gambia.

THE SPEAKER: Okay, Honourable Members. I think it is in accordance with Order 25[1] & [2] that I quoted.

HON LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: Honourable Speaker, for consistency purpose, the Honourable Member for Jarra Central quoted a statement which only stopped at *"the Republic"*, and if you look at the list of Ministers and the Vice President on Page 6, it is written

"Honourable Alieu Badara Joof, His Excellency the Vice President of the Republic of The Gambia". So, we have to be consistent in our reporting.

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THE SPEAKER: You are suggesting that wherever we have "*the Republic*" be written as "*the Republic of The Gambia*" for consistency suppose.

HON LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: Yes, because the Honourable Member for Jarra Central observed that it was only written "*the Republic*" without "*of The Gambia*", so here it is written as "*the Republic of The Gambia*". Which procedure are we going to follow?

THE SPEAKER: I understand you well.

HON LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: So, I want us to put "*of The Gambia*" to qualify "*the Republic*".

THE SPEAKER: You suggest that we use "*the Republic of The Gambia*" instead of "*the Republic*".

Honourable Members, to clear all doubts I think there is nothing wrong with "*the Republic of The Gambia*". So, where it appears as "*the Republic*", we should just put "*Republic of The Gambia*". Table Office will take note of that when writing the Records of Votes and Proceedings.

Honourable Members, let us look at Page 6.

HON LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: Again, if you look at the question put and agreed to, "*The Assembly do adopt the State of the Nation Address of the President of the Republic*", we should qualify the word "*the Republic*" with "*of The Gambia*".

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, wherever it appears "*the Republic*", let us complete it with "*of The Gambia*".

HON ALHAGIE BABOU CEESAY [SABACH SANJAL]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. If you look at Page 6, the date is "*Tuesday 20th September, 2022*" but on Page 5, it is captured "... at 19 minutes after 1 o'clock in the morning of 21st September 2022". I think the date should also reflect here as far as it has been captured on Page 5 that the list of these Ministers responded to questions.

THE SPEAKER: You must note that at 19 minutes after 1 o'clock on Page 5 would be on the 21st that is why that time factor was inserted. Are you comfortable, Honourable Member? Oh, okay.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: I think his concern is on Page 6, where you have "*Tuesday 20th September, 2022*" which should be "*Wednesday 21st September 2022*" because these are the Ministers who took part in the debate. They are being captured to reflect the other day.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Honourable Member for Kiang East, you may take the floor.

HON YAYA GASSAMA [KIANG EAST]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I think on Page 6 [the Title Page] "*Tuesday 20th September, 2022*" is referring to the date of the sitting. If you look at all the pages, it is exactly as it is written. So, I do not think it is an issue.

THE SPEAKER: Any more comment from any Honourable Member? I also tend to believe that the date "Tuesday 20th" was the day of the proceedings which continued into "Wednesday 21st". Are there any more questions, observations, comments, Honourable Members?

[Question proposed, put and agreed to]

*[That the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly
Sitting of Tuesday 20th September, 2022 be approved with
amendments].*

3. Questions for Oral Answers [in Accordance with Standing Orders 36 and 41] for His Excellency the Vice President

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, as per the Order Paper and Standing Order 41[1], today is questions for oral answers. Furthermore, as a reminder, Order 43 of the Standing Orders limits Supplementary Questions to 7 in total, 2 from the Honourable Member asking the question and the remaining 5 from other Members. Therefore, we will now proceed starting with His Excellency the Vice President. I thank you all.

Honourable Members, let us begin with **Question No. 0114 of 2022** by Honourable Member for Latrikunda Sabiji.

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Thank you very much for giving me the floor, Honourable Speaker. I would also thank His Excellency the Vice President and all the Ministers present here.

Honourable Speaker, could His Excellency the Vice President inform this august Assembly what disaster mitigation measures the Government has put in place for disaster prone areas particularly in the swampy corridors of Faji Kunda and part of Abuko?

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Honourable Speaker, the Government of The Gambia is currently in the preparatory

phase of a 40-million-Dollar project with the World Bank called West Africa Coastal Areas [WACA] which is a resilient investment project. Negotiations will take place in December this year, and the project will be effective in January 2023. This project will construct a comprehensive drainage system along the Kotu Stream from Abuko to Kotu to minimise flooding in the Kanifing Municipality and part of West Coast Region.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you Your Excellency. Is there any Supplementary Question, Honourable Member?

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: I do not have any supplementary question.

THE SPEAKER: We move to the next question then.

Honourable Members, after answering the question if any Honourable Member has a supplementary question for His Excellency or the Honourable Ministers, he/she can just raise his/her tag.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and His Excellency the Vice President of the Republic of The Gambia. With regards to the swampy areas, I heard you say that the project starts from Kotu Stream to Abuko and the same stream also connects Old Jeshwang to the Abuko areas. What are your plans towards Ebo Town and New Jeshwang because they are all within the swampy or stream areas?

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Thank you very much. That will be covered under the OIC Project.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Yes, Honourable Member for Brikama North.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

Your Excellency the Vice President, you said that the drainage system will cover part of West Coast, would this extension be up to Brikama particularly in Nyambai Jambarr Sanneh area which is a flood prone area?

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Part of it would be covered. I remember visiting Jamisa, your area, so part of it will be covered. Also, we are in consultation with EU because half of the project is EU fund, so we need EU to complete it for us. So, it will be funded partly by World Bank and also EU.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Honourable Member for Tumana is next.

HON NFALLY M. KORA [TUMANA]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I would like His Excellency the Vice President to take us through the route of the drainage system because I am very much particular about Nema Kunku central field area where cars are unable to pass through. So, will the drainage system reach Nema Kunku?

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Honourable Speaker, I am sorry that I do not have the geographical map of the area at the top of my head, but the project design will surely determine the routes of the construction work. In any case, I can find out from the appropriate quarters and then get back to you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Honourable Member for Kiang East, the floor is yours.

HON YAYA GASSAMA [KIANG EAST]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Your Excellency, is this intervention just going to be limited to Greater Banjul Area and West Coast Region? Are you considering intervening in other parts of the country, especially places affected by flooding in up-country? Thank you.

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Yes, this particular project will be in the Greater Banjul Area, but that does not mean that the Office of the Vice President has neglected or has oversighted other areas. We are in discussion with other development partners trying to find a permanent solution to this perennial problem.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Can we have Honourable Member for Lower Saloum?

HON SAINY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Thank you for those brilliant accommodations, Your Excellency. How far is the negotiation with the World Bank on the project?

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: As I said, the negotiation starts in December and the project will start in earnest, January. So, it is a space of about a month or a month and a half if you take the whole of December and part of January.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Honourable Members, we now go to *Question No. 0115 of 2022* by Honourable Member for Brikama South.

HON LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: Thank you so much, Honourable Speaker. Could His Excellency the Vice President update the august Assembly about the status of the comprehensive study for proper drainage system which he promised Gambians upon visiting the victims of the recent heavy downpour of rain?

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Thank you very much. Honourable Speaker, the Government can confirm that there exist two feasibility studies; one for the Banjul Drainage and Sewage in 2015 and another for the Storm Water and Sewage Systems for the Greater Banjul Area in 2014. Both studies have been submitted to the Ministry of Finance and are waiting for funding. The main issue with the drainage related problems in Banjul is the presence of the solid waste clogged up drains and outfalls. To prevent this clogging, waste need to be removed from the drains frequently and a resolution of the present situation by the implementation of the emergency measures therefore requires urgent attention.

Plans to resolve the issue include extending concrete drains into the flood area and then building a ring channel for conveyance towards the Bund Road holder. Also, it is recommended that the pumping house structure itself be demolished and replaced with a much smaller pumping house.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: Thank you so much, Your Excellency. I do not know to what extent the study involves the indigenes with regard to their knowhow of the drainage pattern,

especially some areas prone to flooding with existing reservoir. Are they consulted during the study?

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Well, given the timeline of 2014 and 2015, I believe that the consultations must have been extensive. Notwithstanding, just during the last two weeks when we had a retreat, we decided to revisit this by going back to the drawing board because this was about five, six years ago. So, we need to update it by doing extensive and intensive consultations with both stakeholders and the indigenes having knowledge of the geography of the area and the expertise or the experience.

HON LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: Your Excellency, I want to believe that most of the problems are designed, especially in Brikama. I mean the way highways are constructed covering certain altitude without drainage system thereby blocking the natural flow of water to the other side which bounce back. Are you going to reconsider the design to factor drainage and probably construct an Irish Crossing to allow the flow of water to the other side of the road in highways constructed without drainage causing this problem?

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Well, certainly when we come to do the design, I am sure the experts will decide as appropriate after surveying the area since they are with the experience, the expertise and the pedigree.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Yes, Honourable Member for Latrikunda Sabiji.

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Honourable Speaker, thank you very much for giving me the floor and I thank the

Vice President for his response to this very important question. What we fail to understand is that not all the floodings in this country are caused by lack of drainage facilities. I think the country needs to adapt to new technologies called ground water harvesting and rain water harvesting. Have you consulted any technicians with regard to that? Thank you.

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: As I said, these are internationally funded projects and certainly will have some consultancy. People will be updated. I am sure in their knowledge as to what is the best way forward when they come to look at the topology or geography of the area and how it impacts on disaster, so they will decide as appropriate.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Yes, Honourable Member for Kiang West.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Thank you very much, Your Excellency the Vice President. I want to look at the drainage around Tallinding and Buffer Zone down to Latrikunda to the end of German clinic where it stops. The refuse and water from the drainage flows down to Faji Kunda in which kids play during the rainy season which seriously harms the kids and the society. I do not know what best you are doing to ensure that we have a complete drainage system from the road down to the river. Thank you.

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Thank you very much. We are aware of these things and we saw the need to have a permanent solution rather than just having short term intervention with food aid, especially during the raining season. It keeps repeating itself hence the retreat we had had policy segments: a strategy in the

short term, medium term and long term. From the medium to the long term, it will be an aerial survey of not only the Greater Banjul Area but also the entire country to map out the respective waterways being blocked or could cause flood or whatever it is. That is something we will have a comprehensive programme on to at least discuss with the development partners to see how best they can index it into their budget to help us address this issue once and for all. It could include the drainage, the culverts and a resettlement programme for the people in waterways.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Yes, Honourable Member for Jeshwang.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you very much, Your Excellency the Vice President. I think it is good to build drains, but when the drains are already built, the end points of the drains are very important, so what are the plans towards those end points?

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: The project does not terminate or abort mid-way. It goes to its logical conclusion. You know, from where it starts to where it ends [where it empties itself], so we will obviously take care of that. That was what happened in Jamisa and then we had a problem there, so these are lessons learnt and will be factored in.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Lower Saloum, you may ask your question.

HON SAINY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Thank you, Your Excellency the Vice President. You have factored in consultancy in the project, so is it going to be local or international consultancy?

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: My philosophy is that you have a hybrid through which skills can be transferred to the local ones so as to bring them to the international standard. Hence, we do not have to outsource it in the future rather we will do it domestically.

THE SPEAKER: Let us now have Honourable Member for Kantora.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: Thank you very much, Your Excellency the Vice President. In the quest to addressing the issue of drainage, would you not see it prudent to plan expanding the road?

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: The taskforce to look at this is multifaceted and the National Roads Authority together with their parent Ministry, the Ministry of Transport, is part of this. I am sure there are lessons learnt in terms of road construction without some of the facilities so that at least we are able to address those things in future.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Your Excellency. We now have *Question No. 0116 of 2022* by Honourable Member for Brikama South.

HON LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: Thank you very much. Honourable Speaker, could His Excellency the Vice President inform this august Assembly whether the President of The Republic of The Gambia would fulfil the promise he made during the 5th Legislature to restore the Brikama street lighting with CCTV cameras as well as Wi-Fi and a state-of-the-art hospital?

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Honourable Speaker, the Government of Qatar promised to support the Government of The Gambia to build the Brikama Hospital but the plans were derailed by Covid-19 Pandemic. However, a Qatari mission was recently in country and they expressed interest in funding the said project. The Qatari Project got delayed, so Government decided to include the Brikama Hospital in the World Bank Funded Essential Health Strengthening Project which is currently being implemented and there is an allocation of **4 million US Dollars** to build **a 200-bed capacity** in Brikama. The issues with the land allocation for the hospital with the Ministry of Lands, Regional Government and Religious Affairs, and the community of Brikama need to be sorted out.

Regarding the Wi-Fi and CCTV for Brikama, an interested investor actually started work there. However, it turned out that their equipment was not compatible with that of Gamtel so the mission was abandoned.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Your Excellency the Vice President.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: Your Excellency, the emphasis here is led on the restoration of the street lighting. It was his gesture to add the Wi-Fi and the CCTV cameras, but now we want to forgo that. Let our streetlights be restored, especially within that trapezium. On the issue of the hospital, I vividly remember the President came to Brikama during the 2018 Meet the People Tour, and he was hosted in the Southern Part of Brikama where we expressed certain major concerns notably the two which I highlighted above. He promised

with emphasis that he already spoke to the Saudi Government and that they are ready to construct a state-of-the-art hospital for us. So, the issue of land was not a major problem because am constantly in touch with the council of elders. I do not know whether the indigenes of Brikama were consulted. If they were consulted, I think we would be able to provide the land for the hospital.

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Thank you very much. I think the source of funding has shifted. As I said, World Bank is now going to do it, but my information on the ground is that the issue of land is still a problem. For the streetlights, Government is firmly committed to providing the streetlights as promised.

HON LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: Your Excellency, I think from 2018 to date, it has been long overdue and I do not know whether the 6th Legislature will also end without the restoration of the streetlights. So, if there could be a timeline, you can give us when you come.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, ask your question.

HON LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: I am posing my question. I want him to understand the build up. What I am saying is can he give us the time frame when we are going to get the street lights. In addition, when you come to the consultation with regards to the land...

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you can only put one question at a time.

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: No, I cannot give a definitive timeline because this is a World Bank project. World Bank has rules and regulations when it comes to negotiations and when the project would be effective which we do not have control over.

THE SPEAKER: Any supplementary question?

[Point of Order]

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NIUMI]: Honourable Speaker, this is to remind Honourable Members about Standing Order 43[3] which states "*The time taken to ask a supplementary question shall be no longer than one minute and an answer to a supplementary question shall be no longer than two minutes*". It seems that the Members are exceeding the time of asking this supplementary question. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Member. Members are fully reminded now. Is there any more supplementary question, Honourable Members? Yes, Honourable Member for Wuli East.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Your Excellency the Vice President, the question is emphasised more on the street lighting system and the CCTV. So, do you actually have any comprehensive project plan in place before you even get to the World Bank?

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: As I told him, the building of the streetlights will be done and it will be in consultation with the Brikama Area Council and the people in order to ensure the mapping and all those things. Certainly, we are in consultations and we will come to a definitive conclusion when we exhaust the dialogue.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Sami, you may take the floor.

HON ALFUSAINY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you very much for giving me the floor, Honourable Speaker. Thank you very much Your Excellency the Vice President. When are you going to start the construction of the said hospital in Brikama?

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: As I said, this is being funded by World Bank which has its procedures and I know the procedures very well because I worked with that institution for 12 years. It is not something like instant coffee instead it is a process. So, after the negotiations, we would know when effectiveness would take place because certain conditions take precedence over effectiveness which we need to fulfil.

THE SPEAKER: Ask your question, Honourable Member for Latrikunda Sabiji.

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker for giving me the floor and Your Excellency the Vice President for his answers. I just want to make the Government to be very wise in managing land as far as project interventions are concerned. If you go to Brikama, they have existing...

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you are not to make a statement.

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Ok, let me ask the question now. Can the Government...

THE SPEAKER: When I take the floor, you should sit down and listen. You are to ask a supplementary question and not to tell them what to do.

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Your Excellency the Vice President, if you go to Brikama right now, there is an existing health structure. Probably, we can build storey buildings to occupy this hospital instead of occupying another huge hectare of land. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, what is your question?

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: My question is whether the Government has any plan to use the existing facilities instead of acquiring another new plot of land for the project intervention.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you.

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: No, there are certain conditions attached. We cannot use an existing project and go longitudinally, so it has to be a different site.

THE SPEAKER: We now have Honourable Member for Kiang East.

HON YAYA GASSAMA [KIANG EAST]: My question pertains to the Wi-Fi for Brikama that Your Excellency the Vice President said it was abandoned because of the incompatibility of the equipment of an interested investor and that of Gamtel. Are you not thinking about outsourcing another investor so that the Wi-Fi project is not left entirely like that?

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: No, it is not on our cards to start engaging another investor for the time being. It might be in the medium to the long-term in the future. I mean the immediate priorities are the hospital and the streetlights.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Brikama North, can we now move to *Question No. 0117 of 2022* by the Honourable Member for Bakau.

HON ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: Thank you very much. Honourable Speaker, could the Vice President tell this august Assembly if there are any plans to refurbish state owned buildings in Bakau to accommodate Government guests instead of using expensive hotels?

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Yes, there are plans to cover the two state owned houses: one closed to the Bakau Market and the other where the Vice President used to stay. So, those two will be refurbished and furnished to standard for dignitaries to occupy which will help Government save money.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: You talked of only two state owned houses and there are other Government buildings as well. How about those ones?

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: The intention is there but the resources are not available. So, we will concentrate on those two for the time being with the limited resources at our disposal.

THE SPEAKER: Any other supplementary question? Yes, Honourable Member for Janjanbureh.

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANGBUREH]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Why is the Vice President not occupying the said State House in Bakau?

THE SPEAKER: That is not a supplementary question.

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANGBUREH]: It emerges from his respond, please.

THE SPEAKER: That is not a supplementary question. Honourable Member, sit down please. Is there any other supplementary question? Yes, Member for Foni Bintang Karanai.

HON BAKARY K. BADJIE [FONI BINTANG KARANAI]: Thank you very much, Your Excellency the Vice President. You did say that there is no fund. So, what plans have you put in place to generate fund? Thank you.

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: The Government is in the process of redoing the National Development Plan and resource mobilisation will be indexed into that when we have the roundtables and other kinds of consultation to attract funds.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Upper Niumi, you may ask your supplementary question.

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NIUMI]: Honourable Speaker, I withdraw.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Let us have ***Question No. 0118 of 2022*** by Honourable Member for Foni Kansala.

HON ALMAMEH GIBBA [FONI KANSALA]: I thank you very much. Honourable Speaker, could His Excellency the Vice President inform this august Assembly when will the President commission an investigation into the financial activities of the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Transport, Works, and Infrastructure in relation to the expenditures of Covid-19 and the Banjul rehabilitation Project respectively? Thank you.

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Honourable Speaker, both the Covid-19 funds and the Banjul Road Project were audited and audit queries were raised and recommendations made. The audit recommendations are being currently implemented by Government, so there is no need for the President to commission an investigation.

THE SPEAKER: Please, when the Vice President answered your question, you can just rise up and then ask your supplementary question.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON ALMAMEH GIBBA [FONI KANSALA]: Thank you. Your Excellency the Vice President, can you help us with the total revenue of the Covid-19 funds generated so far?

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THE SPEAKER: That is a substantive question. Are there any more questions? Please, go ahead.

HON ALMAMEH GIBBA [FONI KANSALA]: Thank you very much. Can you tell us the name of the main contractor of the Banjul Rehabilitation Project? Who was the project contracted to?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I do not know what the problem is because you wanted a commission of inquiry on a project that you had researched and believed there were fraudulent activities. Also, you have been told that the accounts have been audited and Government is looking into the audit queries to put in measures to at least avoid or correct whatever might have gone wrong. You are now talking about the contractor.

HON ALMAMEH GIBBA [FONI KANSALA]: Noted.

THE SPEAKER: We now have Member for Latrikunda Sabiji.

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and Your Excellency the Vice President. You said that the Government has started implementing the Audit Report. How far are you in the implementation process?

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: I think certain things are not measurable in quantitative terms, but I am sure it is a comprehensive implementation of the recommendations. It cannot be measured in percentages or whatever.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Kiang West, you may ask your question.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Your Excellency the Vice President, I would like to know if the Government is still spending funds on Covid-19 because the Honourable Minister rightly stated that Covid is still affecting people as they are receiving cases. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: It is a substantive question. If you want, you can put a question for that and it will be answered. Can we have Honourable Member for Tallinding Kunjang?

HON MUSA BADJIE [TALLINDING KUNJANG]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Your Excellency, could your office confirm to this august Assembly with regards to the first question on Banjul Road Rehabilitation if the Government is in custody of the contract document because the contractor did mention that even the President did not see the contract document?

[Point of Order]

THE SPEAKER: Can we hear the Point of Order?

HON FATOU K. JAWARA [NOMINATED MEMBER]: I withdraw.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, Member for Kantora.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: I rise on Order 43[1] which states: "*Supplementary questions may be put for the purpose of elucidating an oral answer*". So, if you are really asking a supplementary question, it must be related to the Minister's oral answer for further elucidation or clarification. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Member for Kantora and Majority Leader. Honourable Member for Tallinding, can we hear you again?

HON MUSA BADJIE [TALLINDING KUNJANG]: The first question alludes to investigations and other things, and my supplementary is about the same matter, so it is in line.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I just told you to repeat your question, so nobody said you are offline.

HON MUSA BADJIE [TALLINDING KUNJANG]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Could His Excellency the Vice President confirm if the Government is in custody of the contract document for the Banjul Road Rehabilitation Project?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you are just told that the accounts have been audited. How can you audit an account without the necessary documentations and all that? Honourable Minister, can you just clear that air?

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: I think the contract was awarded by the Government to whoever the contractor is, so it is just obvious that the Government would be in custody of the contractual document. So, that is as Fibonacci said "In plain sight."

THE SPEAKER: Indeed. Honourable Member for...

[Point of Order]

THE SPEAKER: Can we hear the Point of Order, please?

HON MUSA BADJIE [TALLINDING KUNJANG]: When we start our Assembly business, we always skip a very important point which is the Administration of Oaths. I think this event is so important that we have to administer oaths with the Ministers answering our questions.

THE SPEAKER: Can you quote the relevant Standing Order?

HON MUSA BADJIE [TALLINDING KUNJANG]: Standing Order 14[2], "*The Business at each Sitting shall be transacted in the following order: (a) Administration of Oaths; (b) Communication from the Chair; (c) Communication from the President of the Republic; (d) Correction and approval of Record of Votes and Proceedings; (e) Matters of the day;...*" We skipped Administration of Oaths and had Communication from the Chair as well as Correction and Approval of Records of Votes and Proceedings, but we skipped this important point.

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THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, sit down please. When I take the floor, you sit down. You miss everything; that is the order of Business. It does not necessarily mean that people coming here are going to take an oath. There are times when taking an oath is done in the Assembly. When you were speaking, you never took an oath again.

Honourable Members, we now invite the Honourable Member for Wuli East.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you very much. Honourable Speaker, both Ministry of Health and Ministry of Works are mentioned in this question, so my question is, are the audit queries raised on the two Ministries and if they are raised on just one, which one?

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: I guess the Covid-19 funds are under the Ministry of Health and the Banjul Project is under the Ministry of Works. So, the audit report obviously covered both Ministry of Health and Works respectively.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Banjul Central.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. Your Excellency, the audit queries that you have highlighted pertaining to the Covid-19 funds and the Banjul Rehabilitation Project, it is obvious that you have mentioned that Government is looking into these things. So, my question is if at all upon finding of misdemeanours or deficits or lapses within, is the Government ready to put due diligence to these queries?

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Thank you. Honourable Speaker, as I said, we are implementing these, and I am sure when we come across those things, the Government has the courage of its own convictions.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we now move to ***Question No. 0119 of 2022*** by Honourable Member for Upper Saloum.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you. Honourable Speaker, the Government of The Gambia pays millions of Dalasi on rental properties on yearly basis. Could the Vice President tell this august Assembly if there are plans to use unoccupied Government properties in the Greater Banjul Area to cut down expenditure on rent?

THE SPEAKER: I tend to believe that the Vice President may not see the answer because even on our records question number 0119 of 2022 is missing on the sheet where answers are provided. It is only stated on the documents of your questions, so if the Vice President could not find it, it means something must have happened and we will have to take note and reposed the question again.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. With your kind permission, I would like to withdraw this question so that I can pose it again.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much because the question is in fact similar to the previous question as regards Government properties that was specific to Bakau. Thank you very much. We now move to ***Question No. 0120 of 2022*** by Honourable Member for Upper Saloum again.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you. Honourable Speaker, could the Vice President confirm to this august Assembly if the Government has identified and protected key national infrastructure?

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Before answering this question, we were in consultation with the Honourable Member because when he say national infrastructure, it could be roads, buildings, IT, infrastructure

and so on for clarification. It is on the basis of that clarification we forward this answer.

Honourable Speaker, the Government is aware of the security risks to key institutions such as the Central Bank, Gamtel, Gamcel, NAWEC as well as vital systems and services such as the IFMIS, Banking Networks and the Internet Landing Sites. Adequate physical security is in place for all these vital Government infrastructure and services. With regard to cyber security, it is relatively new here. So, when the Information and Communications Act of 2009 was being formulated, it took only into context computer misuse and cyber-crime. Currently, legislation of the IC Act has provisions to combat cybercrime and specified what constitutes an offence with the corresponding penalties.

However, procedural matters involving evidence gathering and handling as well as investigations were not detailed. Due to these reasons, Government, through the Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, acted swiftly to make the IC Act more comprehensive by conducting a review to incorporate cyber security provisions whilst specifying critical information infrastructure protection, cyber security legislations as well as to provide the mandate to The Gambia's Computer Security Response Team under PURA for cyber threat intelligence gathering and alerting its constituencies. Other activities being embarked on include the formulation of a holistic Cybercrime Bill which is in Cabinet awaiting endorsement. As part of the IC Act Review, the draft has been submitted to the Ministry of Digital Economy and it is awaiting stakeholder comments.

Also, National Cyber Security Policy has been validated and submitted to Cabinet for endorsement. The vision of this policy is to ensure that The Gambia has a secure, resilience and trusted cyber space for enhance inclusive socio-economic development. Specifically, for the IFMIS, there is data encryption between the routers of the sites as the data moves from the sectors to the Accountant General's Department. This provides cyber protection known as the Man in the Middle Level Attack. The system uses an encrypted Virtual Private Network (VPN) for all users connected from the internet like the embassies, sub-treasuries and sub vented institutions. This service is provided by a fire wall that is positioned between the internet and the IFMIS Network. There is also a Disaster Recovery Site in the Kombos which provides backup in case of a disaster like fire at the primary site at the AGG Office in Banjul so that Government businesses can continue without much interruption.

For the Central Bank, there is a Virtual Private Network in place to deny unauthorised access to the Central Bank Network and System. Additional networks diagnosis tools such as solar winds together with the fireworks and firewalls are deployed to protect the system. Cognizant of the rise and sophistication of attacks, the bank has embarked on the modernisation of its ICT Infrastructure which includes enhanced cyber security service tailored to monitor, detect and prevent cybercrimes. This enables the bank to take quick and efficient measures to handle incidents efficiently and build additional resilience into the ICT Infrastructure.

THE SPEAKER: If you have supplementary question, you can just rise to ask your supplementary question immediately he finishes. If you sit

down, it denotes that you do not have supplementary, so we will move to the others.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I thank the Vice President for that in depth answer to the question and that is exactly what I was looking for. Now, would you consider creating a policy to help guide and identify such infrastructure not only on the Government side but also the private sector because the two can actually form a very formidable force in terms of infrastructure that would make this country to work? Thank you.

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Thank you very much. Well, the logic of interest dictates that we do it.

THE SPEAKER: Any other Member? We now move to *Question No. 0121 of 2022* by Honourable Member for Lower Saloum.

HON SAINÉY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the floor. Honourable Speaker, could His Excellency the Vice President tell this august Assembly the efforts of the National Disaster Management Agency on the recent flood?

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Thank you. Honourable Speaker, when the floods happened, the President of the Republic of The Gambia and the Vice President visited and engaged communities with affected population. The Vice President convened an emergency meeting that set out the following actions and he continues to give strategic guidance to the NDMA and the partners involved in the response effort.

Responses to the disaster so far include the following:

- procurement of food items: 850 bags of sugar, 850 drums of 20 litres of cooking oil, and 1500 [50 kilos] bags of rice worth 6 million Dalasi for the affected population across the country;
- partners support with non-food items such as tents and bed nets which have been distributed to the affected population;
- relocation of severely affected households;
- provision of temporary accommodation and medical support to internally displaced population within the Greater Banjul Area; and
- provision of various household items such as mattresses, fans and nets to the victims.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON SAINÉY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Thank you, Your Excellency the Vice President. I must also commend you and the President and the other Members of the National Assembly having seen you entering into huge amount of water.

THE SPEAKER: Ask your supplementary question, Honourable Member.

HON SAINÉY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Yes. I am coming up because he did something that is commendable that we have to say. The reason why I come up with this question is just to make things happen.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, do you have a supplementary question? Are there any more supplementary questions from Honourable Members?

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: You listed an amount of items rice, gallons of oil and mattresses. How are these distributed to the affected families?

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Thank you very much. Some of them were direct distributions. Others were sent to the Regional Governors' Offices for distribution.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Your Excellency the Vice President, there are affected families in Lower Saloum [my constituency], but there was no response to those affected or victims.

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: I would check with the appropriate authorities as to why that was not done. And if it were not done, I would ensure that it is done.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member for Bundungka Kunda.

HON SULAYMAN JAMMEH [BUNDUNGKA KUNDA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Thank you very much Your Excellency the Vice President for coming up with a permanent solution as far as flood is concerned.

Notwithstanding, I want you to inform this august body the temporal solution on flood because the permanent solution is coming but is there any contingency in place before the completion or the implementation of the project that can mitigate flood? Thank you.

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Thank you very much. We dealt with the ones that happened the past two weeks, and we hope and pray that we do not have something like that, but in

case happens, it will follow a similar pattern for the time being until we put our house in order to deal with it comprehensively.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Foni Kansala, you may ask your question.

HON ALMAMEH GIBBA [FONI KANSALA]: Thank you very much, the Vice President. What always causes delay in response from the NDMA side in terms of disasters?

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Thank you very much. I do not consider it as a delay. They must have a rational step because something cannot happen and they just jump into it without knowing the head and the tail. Firstly, they need to assess the impacts of the disaster. Secondly, they need to know the target groups. Thirdly, they also need to determine what type of aid to give, and these take time. It is not like it just happened now and you act now. It will be irresponsible for any institution to act like that. It must take a rationale step in order to do the proper assessment to know what the needs are and how to address them and then take the appropriate measures to address them.

THE SPEAKER: We now have Honourable Member for Foni Jarrol.

HON KEBBA TUMANDING SANNEH [FONI JARROL]: Thank you Honourable Speaker and Your Excellency the Vice President. I just want to find out whether there is any emergency fund either created or kept by the Director or the Minister for immediate response to emergency situations as there is always a delay in response.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, with regards to the delay in the response, he said that they have to do a lot of logistical investigations or finding out before they can act.

HON KEBBA TUMANDING SANNEH [FONI JARROL]: I am now asking where there is an emergency fund because if there is no emergency fund, I do not think they would be able to respond on time.

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Honourable Speaker, the answer is yes.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Banjul North.

HON MODOU LAMIN B. BAH [BANJUL NORTH]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I just want Your Excellency to update us. Is there any plan in terms of supporting the families affected by the recent flash floods in Banjul who are currently at the Friendship Hostel because I was told that they were asked to vacate the place before Friday? Thank you.

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Yes, they were moved to Friendship Hostel and then the Government provided breakfast, lunch and dinner. I think they became so comfortable that they invited some of their families outside. We have increased numbers then we gave them notice to vacate, but they said that we should pay their three months rent arrears.

Some of them live at Tobacco Road and we realised that they owed the landlords rent arrears which they know they cannot pay, so we told them to go back, but they said "No." They want to go somewhere else and we should give them three-month rent. Then, we investigated

further and realised that the places they wanted to go require three months rent deposits, and I do not think it is Government's mandate to do that. However, His Excellency the President will give the 11 families each ***D10,000*** and then they have to vacate the area because it is not permanent. It was suggested temporal.

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THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Upper Fulladu West.

HON BAKARY KORA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]: Thank you so much, Honourable Speaker. I want to ask the Vice President whether the Government of the day has any plan to relocate the inhabitants within the flood areas.

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Yes, we have plans. I am not sure whether I forgot to indicate that or not. But as I said during the retreat, we had medium to long term plans and there is a provision in the plan for Government to relocate and resettle them on high ground layouts and where it involves compensations, we will take care of it. So, there are plans to do that.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we now move to ***Question No. 122 of 2022*** by Honourable Member for Serrekunda West.

HON MADI M.K. CEESAY [SERREKUNDA WEST]: Honourable Speaker, could the Vice President inform this august Assembly the extent of the devastation caused by the current floods across the country, relief giving to victims, and plans to mitigate the effects of floods in the future?

HON ALIEU BADARA NJIE [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Honourable Speaker, as of Wednesday 7th September 2022, a total of ***4,811***

households with a population of ***56,624 people*** was affected by the disaster. In total, 13 people lost their lives. Damages caused by the flood included houses and properties.

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As previously mentioned, Government purchased rice, sugar and oil worth 6 million Dalasi which is being distributed across the country. Also, unconditional cash transfers by the National Disaster Management Agency funded by the World Food Programme are ongoing across the country. The activity is targeting ***5,460*** most vulnerable household victims across the country. Each household is entitled to ***D2,350*** ***monthly*** for a period of 3 months. The Government is currently developing a National Disaster Management Policy Strategy and an Action Plan which will build the resilience to disasters by ensuring that the country has the requisite capacity to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters.

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THE SPEAKER: Let us have Member for Latrikunda Sabiji.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the floor and thank you Vice President. When disaster hits, the first thing we should do is to collect the data. When it happened the last time, I went to National Disaster Management Agency and they said that all their vehicles were not in order. I do not know whether your office has any plan to make them resourceful.

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: That did not come to my notice. Certainly, I went round with them the very day these things happened, and they responded without telling me they

have some logistical issues. If they do have, I expect the Managing Director to come to the Office to see how best we can address that.

[Point of Observation]

HON SAINY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Honourable Speaker, may I please observe?

THE SPEAKER: Who is saying observation, please? Lower Saloum, you want to observe what?

HON SAINY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: The question I asked the Vice President is the same question with that of the Honourable Member for Serekunda West.

THE SPEAKER: I am not getting you.

HON SAINY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: What I am saying here is that the question I asked the Vice President about the flood is the same as that of Member for Serrekunda West. It is the same response that the Vice is also giving, so why not we move to another question?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Jeshwang.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Your Excellency, what are your plans with regards to the blocked waterways that caused most of the disasters, especially within my constituency? Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Vice before you answer, Majority Leader and Member for Kantora reminded us of the provisions regarding supplementary questions, Honourable Members, so let every Member note it down or make reference to it. I do not want to put Members off. We make sure we are in line. Your Excellency, you can go ahead.

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: I think I have outlined the generic nature of floods in this country, and of course a holistic plan to address those hopefully in future and Jeswang will not be an exception to that.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Kiang West.

HON LAMIN CEEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Your Excellency the Vice President, you have indicated that the World Bank funded project to respond to the flood disasters. There is a monthly disbursement of two thousand plus if I am right to number of households, so I do not know how much is the total cost of the project because it is lasting for 3 months.

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Thank you very much. It is not for every 3 months. What I said was they will help them for 3 months and then the project stops.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Tumana.

HON NFALLY M. KORA [TUMANA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I want to ask if the Government of The Gambia has any plan to partner with the National Assembly Members [NAMs] through National Disaster Management Agency [NDMA] on the issues of disaster as the victims are looking directly on us. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have a right to ask your substantive questions to the Minister. We are regulated by our own regulations that supplementary questions must be informed by the answers given to you. You cannot bring something new into

supplementary questions. Please, let us take note of that. Member for Wuli East, you may ask your question.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Could His Excellency the Vice President please explain to us what method is utilised to determine the compensation given to a victim? If one victim has one cement block line house devastated and another victim has a mud block hut, how do you determine the compensation because I heard you gave **10,000** to each? Are they to be given the same?

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HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: I thank you. In a way, you answered the question because there is differential disaster, one is mud block and the other one is cement block and so on. So obviously, there will be differential response. It cannot be in the same playing field that would not be social justice.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we now move to **Question No. 0123 of 2022** by Honourable Member for Sabach Sanjal.

HON ALHAGIE BABOU CEESAY [SABACH SANJAL]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the floor. Honourable Speaker, could His Excellency the Vice President inform this august Assembly of Government's strategic plan to minimise the high unemployment rate? Thank you.

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Honourable Speaker, the Government has formulated a new National Employment Policy and an Action Plan 2022-2026. The main objective is to create more gainful and descent employment opportunities for the growing

labour force, particularly the young people and women. The target is to create up to **1050 jobs** over a period of 5 years.

Also, Government has developed a major strategic plan to mitigate unemployment rate in the country and promote decent work by reviewing and repealing the Labour Act 2027 as some aspects of the Act are outdated and no longer address the emerging challenges in the labour market. In addition, a new Labour Bill 2020 which aims to provide for the administration, recruitment and hiring of labour; provide protection of wages; and registration of employers, organisations, trade unions and other matters connected therein is in place. Under the new bill, the scope and implementation of the expatriate quota system has been strengthened, and businesses will no longer be able to employ foreign workers except where such expertise does not exist in The Gambia.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON ALHAGIE BABOU CEESAY [SABACH SANJAL]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I thank His Excellency the Vice President for that answer. I think you have answered my question. I do not have any supplementary question. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Niani.

HON OMAR JOBE [NIANI]: Thank you very much for giving me the floor. Honourable Speaker, could His Excellency the Vice President inform this august Assembly on what plans do the Government have in

restoring the GPMB Rice Processing Factory in Kuntaur so as to promote employment opportunity for the youths around that end?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, what is happening? We are on supplementary questions on the question asked by the Honourable Member for Sabach Sanjal. We may have Members who have supplementary questions to ask.

HON BAKARY K. BADJIE [FONI BINTANG KARANAI]: Thank you Honourable Speaker and the Vice President. The Vice President spoke of policies and strategies but remember that he is asking for implementation. So, how soon are you going to implement these things?

[Point of Observation]

HON ALHAGIE BABOU CEESAY [SABACH SANJAL]: I said Government's strategic plan to minimise the high unemployment rate not implementation. Thank you

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you never asked the question. If you want to ask your question, you can ask a supplementary. Do not attribute to somebody's. The questioner himself said that he is satisfied with the answer. Who are you to say that he is not satisfied?

HON MUHAMED KANTEH [BUSUMBALA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I thank the Vice President for appearing before us. My question would be you did mention the minimum wage being captured in the New Labour Bill. Can we have an idea or be enlightened about how much are we talking about here? Thank you.

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: I think it will be in the Labour Bill that will come before you, and then you will have to confirm that given the proposal therein.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Kantora.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the floor. Thank you Your Excellency for providing answers. You did mention in your utterances/responses that you will be providing 1050 jobs. Would these jobs be across all regions or would they be concentrating in the Greater Banjul Area?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, is it 1050 or 150,000? I have on my records that the target is to create up to **150, 000 jobs** over a period of **5 years**.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: Is it an error then?

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: My error then, what is here is **150, 000**. I am sorry about that.

THE SPEAKER: We now have Member for Banjul Central.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: He is responding to my question. Thank you.

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Of course, it will be across the country not only one Region.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Banjul Central.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Your Excellency, with regards to Government Strategic Plan which is really welcomed in minimising the high unemployment rate. Is there anything special within the Strategic Plan to cater for those back-way people being repatriated from the western countries?

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Obviously, it is an all-inclusive strategy, so they will not be left out.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, let us have ***Question No. 0124 of 2022*** by Honourable Member for Sabach Sanjal.

HON ALHAGIE BABOU CEESAY [SABACH SANJAL]: Thank you once again for giving me the floor. Honourable Speaker, could His Excellency the Vice President inform this Assembly whether Government would consider facilitating Gambians abroad to vote in the next election cycle? Thank you.

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Thank you very much. Honourable Speaker, the Government of The Gambia is willing and committed to facilitating Gambians in the diaspora to vote in elections. Consultation and engagement between the Government and all relevant stakeholders started and will continue. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Corporation and Gambians abroad and the Ministry of Justice will soon restart the engagement with all the relevant stakeholders, particularly the diaspora representatives, the Independent Electoral Commission and the National Assembly, to find solutions to the hurdles impeding the operationalisation of the diaspora voting and representing.

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[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON ALHAGIE BABOU CEESAY [SABACH SANJAL]: Once again, thank you Your Excellency for that honest answer. As I stated before, I have no supplementary question. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Brikama South.

HON LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: Thank you very much, Your Excellency. I think the issue of diaspora voting is captured in the Election Bill placed before the Assembly here. I do not know whether your office or Government is looking into re-tabling it for us to work on the process so that people in diaspora can take part in our next election cycle.

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Thank you very much. Honourable Speaker, can the Honourable Member enlighten me because he said the bill is here? So, is it here or is it with us?

HON LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: No, it was tabled in the 5th Legislature, and we have done all the consultations. It was about to be reported to the plenary, but unfortunately, it was overtaken by the Presidential Election so it was not tabled. It is still here. So, I do not know whether you are...

[Point of Order]

THE SPEAKER: Can we hear the Point of Order?

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Yes, I am rising on *Order 33 [Anticipation]* which states: *"It shall be out of order to anticipate the discussion of a bill which is before the Assembly by discussing the subject matter of that bill on a motion."* We cannot discuss it because it is already with us to work on it.

THE SPEAKER: A bill before the Assembly cannot be here for discussions. Have you heard that? If the bill is with the Assembly, you do not ask others about the bill.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Honourable Speaker, I have withdrawn my question since the bill is in the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we have come to the end of questions for His Excellency the Vice President. Thank you very much, Your Excellency the Vice President, for ably answering the questions of Honourable Members.

HON ALIEU BADARA JOOF [THE VICE PRESIDENT]: Thank you very much.

▪ **Questions for Oral Answers [in Accordance with Standing Orders 36 & 41] for the Honourable Minister of Agriculture**

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, let me welcome the Honourable Minister of Agriculture.

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: We now move to *Question No. 075 of 2022* by the Honourable Member for Kiang Central.

HON YUNUSA N. BAH [KIANG CENTRAL]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Vegetable gardening contributes immensely to the socio-economic development of a good number of women within the Kiang

Central Constituency. Currently, they are faced with numerous constraints such as lack of water, markets, poor road network and animal intrusion due to improper fencing. Could the Honourable Minister of Agriculture tell this august Assembly what his Ministry has towards addressing these constraints continuously faced by the women gardeners in Kiang Central? Thank you.

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you Honourable Speaker, all the Honourable Members in the Chamber, His Excellency the Vice President, colleague Cabinet Ministers, both the Majority and Minority Leaders, and our chief whip.

Honourable Member for Kiang Central, I would be happy to inform this august Assembly that there are two projects under my Ministry namely: the ROOTS and the GIRAV Projects which are supporting vegetable gardening throughout the country.

As we speak the ROOTS Project which is a demand driven projection is currently receiving requests for assistance from vegetable gardeners of which villages in the LRR are on the list.

Under the GIRAV Project, a massive sensitisation was conducted throughout the country and currently reconnaissance survey to determine the suitability of sites in terms of soil meant for vegetable production is ongoing. Moreover, Sibito a village located in Kiang Central [your constituency] is a beneficiary to one of the gardens from one of the projects we said earlier.

HON YUNUSA N. BAH [KIANG CENTRAL]: I thank you. You have answered my question well.

THE SPEAKER: Any Member with supplementary question? Member for Lower Niimi first then the Member for Upper Niimi can follow.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON TAMSIR CHAM [LOWER NIIMI]: Honourable Speaker, I want to ask the Honourable Minister issues affecting my constituency relating to the same question. Are these projects only...

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, the question should not be generalised but specific to Kiang Central or you pose a substantive question for your constituency.

HON TAMSIR CHAM [LOWER NIIMI]: Ok, thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Upper Niimi.

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NIIMI]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the opportunity. Honourable Minister, sites have been identified in this particular constituency. Sibito is chosen but we were told by the Regional Director of Agriculture at CRR that when survey and site selection were done, they listed villages and submitted it to the Project Coordinating Unit. They came up with their own special list and those villages were not found on even the list that has provided for them. Were you aware of this?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you Honourable Speaker and Honourable Member for Upper Niimi.

What I am aware of is a list of 40 gardens, 20 youth led and 20 women led. The list is with us and I mentioned specifically Sibito because the question did ask about Sibito and I ensured that Sibito was captured.

However, sites that were identified have not changed as far as we know. So, there are 20 sites for women led and 20 sites for youth led.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Sanimentereng

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the floor. I want to ask the Honourable Minister if there are measures in place to allocate cold stores to women for their products in order for them to enjoy the benefits of gardening, and also if there is any possibility to create international markets for some of their products. Thank you.

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you Honourable Speaker and Honourable Member for Sanimentereng.

Yes, I think we said this in our previous deliberations. The ROOTS Project will be building 15 cold store facilities nationwide and 3 are being built in Soma, Basse and Wassu in 2022. So, 15 will be nationwide and that is going to help mitigate post-harvest loss, especially for the women gardeners. That aside, we also made mention of 2 agrology centres and these centres will be one stop shops with storage facilities all geared towards mitigating post-harvest loss for vegetable gardeners.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Illiassa.

HON SANKUNG DAMPHA [ILLIASSA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I withdraw my question.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member for Illissa. Can we have Honourable Member for Sami?

HON ALFUSAINY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. He has already addressed my question.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member for Sami. Minority Leader, you can come up.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, the numerous constraints faced by the women vegetable gardeners in Kiang West includes poor road network. Since Sibito village is a beneficiary of the garden, do you have any plan in place to consider addressing the road network in Sibito?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and Minority Leader.

In our deliberations, I think we have explained that the GIRAV Project has 200 kilometre feeder road and this feeder road is going to be implemented by the National Roads Authority. The purpose of the 200 kilometre feeder road is to create access to both the fields and the market and kiang is no exception.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Minister and the Honourable Member for Brikama North.

Honourable Members, we now move to ***Question No. 076 of 2022*** by Honourable Member Foni Brefet.

HON AMIE COLLEY [FONI BREFET]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Would the Honourable Minister of Agriculture consider providing agricultural garden to the people of Besse Village in Foni Brefet Constituency to help augment their livelihood, especially the women?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and Honourable Member for Foni Brefet.

Honourable Speaker, may I inform the Honourable Member for Foni Brefet that in my Ministry there are 2 projects as I said earlier supporting vegetable production based on demand driven. I, therefore, advise the Honourable Member to link with my Regional Director and ROOTS Project Director in West Coast Region for further information and collection of forms. However, I will also be happy to inform the Honourable Member for Foni Brefet that the currently existing women gardens in Bullock and Brefet are part of those supposed to be upgraded by the ROOTS Project. They are part of the former NEMA gardens to be upgraded by the ROOTS Project. Thank you.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON AMIE COLLEY [FONI BREFET]: Honourable Minister, since the ROOTS Project is a continuation of the NEMA Project, I want to know whether the ROOTS Project will continue to construct the road leading to the Bullock garden as it is too rough.

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Member. I am sure access to fields is our concern. You are from Foni Brefet and you are aware of the construction of a feeder road from Somita going all the way inside. I cannot be specific about the construction of a feeder road for the specific village you asked about. However, construction of feeder roads by NRA is part of the project but I cannot give specific villages to benefit from the feeder road. However, Somita in Foni Brefet is a beneficiary and I am

sure you have seen that the road construction has already started. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable Members, do you have any more supplementary question? Yes, Member for Foni Bondali.

HON PA DEMBO SANNEH [FONI BONDALI]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, does this programme include the disables in Foni Brefet?

THE SPEAKER: Can we hear your question again?

HON PA DEMBO SANNEH [FONI BONDALI]: I asked whether the programme includes the disables in Foni Brefet.

THE SPEAKER: Which programme? Is it the gardening programme?

HON PA DEMBO SANNEH [FONI BONDALI]: Yeah, women gardening in the ROOTS Project. Minister of Agriculture considers providing horticultural garden to the community of Besse in Foni Brefet Constituency to help improve their livelihood, especially the women. So, does this include the disables in that area?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: The answer is yes. Our programmes are non-discriminatory and any activity either by the Ministry of Agriculture or the Government of The Gambia is not discriminatory based on ability or disability. So, our programmes include every individual Gambian or resident of The Gambia.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Sandu.

HON EBRIMA JAITEH [SANDU]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Earlier on this year, I accompanied the Honourable Minister of Agriculture on a tour in URR. We visited a project site where a cold store

was under construction for the women there. Could the Honourable Minister inform this august gathering whether the project is wholly funded by the ROOTS Project or not?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, your question is a substantive question.

HON EBRIMA JAITEH [SANDU]: It is under the ROOTS Project.

THE SPEAKER: We are not talking about the ROOTS Project. Look at the question itself.

HON EBRIMA JAITEH [SANDU]: Okay, I withdraw.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Foni Jarrol.

HON KEBBA T. SANNEH [FONI JARROL]: Thank you Honourable Speaker and Honourable Minister. I just want to find out whether there are plans for new communities interested in horticultural gardening?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you Honourable Speaker and Honourable Member for Foni Jarrol.

For the GIRAV Project, the initial women and youth led 40 gardens have already been identified. However, I think I have mentioned in my speech here that the gardens are demand driven which means if you need it, you have to collect the form and apply. So, I will encourage that you do so.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Sami.

HON ALFUSAINY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister of Agriculture did mention 2 gardens in the constituency, when is his Ministry going to start those gardens?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you Honourable Speaker and Honourable Member for Sami.

I think I have said that under the GIRAV Project a massive sensitisation was conducted through the country and currently there is a reconnaissance survey on soil samples to establish suitability, so we are at the stage of soil analysis, and based on the result of the soil analysis, hopefully implementation will soon start. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Wuli East.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, are the beneficiaries expected to pay something in addition to what this garden project taking place is offering?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you Honourable Speaker and Honourable Member for Wuli East.

No, the GIRAV Garden Project is funded by the project. Individuals are expected to have their part when there are matching grounds and that must be applied to the individuals and SMEs but the gardens are funded by the projects and there is no individual contribution. Of course, the women or youth groups that normally apply have certain criteria such as they must have been registered for at least about a year; they must have a bank account with the minimum amount. There is set of criteria but no contribution. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Member for Wuli East and Honourable Minister. Honourable Members, we now move to ***Question No. 077 of 2022*** by Honourable Member for Kombo East.

HON ABDOU SOWE [KOMBO EAST]: Thank you very much for giving me the floor. Honourable Speaker, could the Honourable Minister of Agriculture consider reviving the Scan Gambia Fish Farming Company which was a major source of employment for women and youth in Kombo East Constituency?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and Honourable Member for Kombo East.

Honourable Speaker, I want to advise that the question be directed to the Ministry of Fisheries and Water Resources since Scan Gambia never operated under the Ministry of Agriculture.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Honourable Member for Kombo East, you can still redirect your question to the relevant ministry. We now move to *Question No. 078 of 2022* by Honourable Member for Jarra Central.

HON KEBBA JALLOW [JARRA CENTRAL]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Could the Honourable Minister of Agriculture inform this august Assembly whether his Ministry has any plan to build food stores in each of the following communities in Jarra Central: Buba Jallow Kunda Village, Foroya Wollof, Mingna Village, Sarebully and Buiba Musa Njarey?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and Honourable Member for Jarra Central.

Honourable Speaker, I wish to inform the Honourable Member that my Ministry through its active projects will be constructing cold storage

facilities for vegetable produce and food stores. ROOTS Project is currently constructing cold stores and one is located very close to Jarra Central that is in Soma behind the Police Station whereas the GIRAV Project will be providing two states-of-the-art agrolgy centres, one in Farafenni and one in Wassu, as mentioned earlier in my speech.

Honourable Speaker, may I also inform the Honourable Member for Jarra Central that before December 2022 my Ministry with support from ISDV will be building 2 mega stores measuring 20 by 40 as part of our medium- and long-term food security strategies. We intend to have such stores in every region of the country as highlighted during my speech yesterday.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON KEBBA JALLOW [JARRA CENTRAL]: Thank you Honourable Speaker and Honourable Minister. To be more specific, what I meant is the local food stores we called "*Mangasines*". Since the existence of former Jawara regime, the communities I have mentioned used to have the said "*Mangasines*" constructed. Since Jawara's time, these communities have never benefited from cold stores. So, these are the specific ones I am requesting.

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much, Honourable Member for Jarra Central. We are aware of your concern, but the storage facilities I mentioned are the ones we are doing now. The Ministry of Agriculture just like any other ministry cannot do everything at the same time. We are aware of the need for your community and we will have it at the back of our minds. The Ministry

will be operating on need basis and the available resources, but we recognise the need. Thank you so much.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Jarra Central.

HON KEBBA JALLOW [JARRA CENTRAL]: It is okay.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Tumana.

HON NFALLY M. KORA [TUMANA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I want to know if the vegetable food stores are going to be provided in my constituency because we have a line of villages from Dampha Kunda all the way to Tinkinjo to Sanunding which concentrate heavily on vegetable production, so they have a problem to sell their produce in Basse.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I just reminded us not to ask substantive questions to the Honourable Minister. Your questions must be related to the principal question or to the answers given. Member for Lower Saloum, pose your question.

HON SAINY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Thank you, Honourable Minister. In your submission, you mentioned that ROOTS is building cold stores, so are you aware that the women gardeners paid 20% and the average they should pay is over *500,000*?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and Honourable Member for Lower Saloum.

I was in Jarra Soma at the laying of the foundation stone for the cold store in Soma. Yes, the qualified beneficiaries [normally the woman groups] go through a very competitive process and group that qualifies

to own the store will be operating it on a commercial basis. As such, they do pay certain amount as part of their ownership and process. Yes, it is 20% but that does not mean they have to pay cash value of the 20%. They pay something equivalent to 20%. Be it land, equity or whatever but it must be 20% of the overall cost of the Cold Storage Project. The women are expected to contribute because they will operate by themselves. It will be theirs and it will be on a commercial basis. Individuals who will be storing things in the facility are expected to pay at least a token to be able to keep the facility running. Thank you.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. My question is whether the Ministry has actually made a survey to identify communities in dire need of the seed stores. I could remember we provided something to Agriculture to build some seed stores, but they could not build all so the process continues. Do you continue to make a survey to identify because a lot of the seed stores are needed in my constituency? Thank you.

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Wuli East.

The Ministry through help from Islamic Development Bank [ISDB] will be restructuring all the seed stores. Seed stores should be undergoing rehabilitation in 2023 and the Ministry has made need assessment of the seed stores. I am sure the committee that went to URR has seen one of the projects building seed stores and dry floors in URR and CRR. So, there has been a need assessment throughout the country on the

current seed stores that are old fashioned like the Honourable Member mentioned. "*Mangasines*" will undergo rehabilitation in 2023. Thank you.

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HON LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, with regards to the 20% payment of the cold store, are you aware of the at the value of the land in Jarra Soma has been provided sells more than ***D200,000*** and the remaining ***D300,000*** has been mobilised by the women themselves?

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HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Brikama South. Yes, I am aware. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, let us have ***Question No. 079 of 2022*** by Honourable Member for Wuli East.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Could the Honourable Minister for Agriculture update this august Assembly on the state of implementation of the Agriculture Rice Value Chain Programme? Thank you.

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Wuli East.

Honourable Speaker, may I inform this august gathering that the Rice Value Chain Transformation Project just completed its mid-term review which was rated satisfactory. Today, the project has supported farmers in CRR and URR with improved and certified rice seeds namely, 200kg of breeder seeds of Orylux 6, Nerica L-19 sub-1 and ***15.35 metric tons*** of foundation seeds. The Orylux 6 and Nerica L-19 sub-1 were facilitated

by this project and this high-yielding variety also has the ability to resist flood conditions.

The project also provided so many other rice seeds to farmers in URR and CRR. We did also provide through this project power tillers, rice-milling machines and threshers to the farmers. So, we think the implementation rate as evaluated by the donors is satisfactory. Thank you.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. This project was supposed to provide pumping machines for the irrigated rice projects and then a tractor and a store for the beneficiaries. So, if you just provide seeds and foundation seeds, how about the rest of the equipment, the store and the road construction?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Wuli East.

There is a little bit of confusion among people differentiating Regional Rice Value Chain and Rice Value Chain. These are 2 different projects under the Ministry. The Regional Rice Value Chain Development Project is supposed to do the hard part of the work [i.e. land development and the provision of tractors] whereas the Rice Value Chain which you asked about is supposed to do the soft part [i.e. provision of seeds, extension services and all the services I mentioned earlier]. The Regional Rice Value Chain which you did not ask about was supposed to do what you asked. So, the Rice Value Chain is rated satisfactory and it is

providing as expected for now. The Regional Rice Value Chain will do its part as soon as we have clearance from BADEA. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, any more supplementary question? Yes, Member for Upper Niumi.

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NIUMI]: Thank you so much. Honourable Minister, you quantified the number of kilograms you have given to the farmers in URR and CRR. You also mentioned about the power tillers and threshers, but you did not quantify how much was supplied?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Upper Niumi. I do not have those figures, but I will be happy to provide them for you once our technicians are consulted.

THE SPEAKER: We now move to *Question No. 080 of 2022* by Honourable Member Wuli West.

HON NFAMARA SABALLY [WULI WEST]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Could the Honourable Minister of Agriculture inform this august Assembly of any intervention programme for farmers to maximise crop production to ensure household food security and to achieve SDG Goals 2 and 12 respectively?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Wuli West.

Honourable Speaker, I am happy to inform this august Assembly that in 2021-2022 production season the Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration

with Agro-Engineering Unit distributed about **525 sets of small farm implement** like eco-seeder to small holder farmers across the country to boost their yield. Furthermore, the Department of Agriculture in collaboration with the GIRAV Project distributed **50 tons of improved maize seeds** and about **200 tons of certified rice seeds** to smallholder farmers as another intervention programme initiated by the Ministry. This is all geared towards attaining food and nutrition security and by extension income security. However, the issue of climate change is a serious concern hurting Agriculture in its attainment of food and nutrition security. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Anything, Honourable Members?

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Minister of Agriculture, do you have plans to work with the Ministry of Forestry in the case of mitigating illegal logging as it is also contributing to climate change?

THE SPEAKER: When the question is actually about intervention programmes to maximise crop production for farmers, you can send your question to the Honourable Minister; he will answer the question.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Speaker, he has talked about illegal logging as a contributing factor to climate change, so this is why I asked the intervention of the Ministry with respect to this hazardous activity. Thank you.

[Point of Observation]

HON ALHAGIE BABOU CEESAY [SABACH SANJAL]: I think that question should be directed to the Minister of Environment and not Agriculture. In fact, the questions are not even related.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: No, Honourable. I think you did not listen very well.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you are relating your question to an answer given by the Honourable Minister. Has the Honourable Minister talked about logging and climate change? I am asking Honourable Member.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: What is the question?

THE SPEAKER: You said that your question is informed by the answer given by the Honourable Minister.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Exactly.

THE SPEAKER: Your question relates to climate change and illegal logging that he talked about. I am not aware of that. Probably, I was talking.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: The questioner of the question asked about the realisation of the SDG 2 and 12, and the Minister in his deliberations talked about the steps they are taking to combat climate change as well as issues that can hinder the realisation of these things. Illegal logging, indiscriminate cutting down of trees, is also contributing to climate change, so what is his Ministry doing to combat it? That is what I am asking.

THE SPEAKER: Probably, he mentioned it but is that question on climate change relevant to the Honourable Minister? I want to hear you, Honourable Member.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Of course, it is.

THE SPEAKER: Let me hear the Honourable Member who posed the question.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: My question is...

THE SPEAKER: Not your question. I said is your question relevant to the Honourable Minister or the Ministry responsible for climate change?

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: This is why I said in my deliberation that one should listen very well. It would be multi-sectoral approach. This is why I said what his Ministry is doing with the Ministry of Forestry which would have been a multi-sectoral approach to ensure that they stop that activity. This was my question.

THE SPEAKER: Your question is multi-sectoral approach if I heard you well.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Exactly.

THE SPEAKER: And whether he is consulting the other ministry.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Exactly.

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Kiang West.

The Ministry of Agriculture is aware of the fact that indiscriminate cutting of trees will have a major impact in our climate resilient and it

will also have an impact in food security because there is a lot of food source in our wild forest. However, of recent the Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with the Ministry of Forestry had a joint workshop where we talked about agro-forestry. So, I am happy to inform you that we are aware of the connection between keeping our forest and our progress in Agriculture. Thank you.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable speaker, we know that maize is among the seeds that are now modified and we also know the impact of the maize because they are trying to replace our local seeds. So, the maize seeds the Ministry is distributing are they modified or our local because that is causing some difference to us? Thank you.

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Wuli East.

They are not modified because I think when you say the word modified, you are thinking of Genetically Modified Products [GM Products]. The maize seeds are not modified. They are improved varieties and this we even do in animal breeding. That is why you have breeds like "ladumia". They are improved varieties so that their productivity can be higher, but they are not modified. Thank you.

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NIUMI]: Thank you. Honourable Minister, the Honourable Member asked for the intervention programme to maximise crop production for farmers and to ensure household food security. Honourable Minister, you are aware of the Rice Development Strategy developed by your Ministry. Are you thinking of costing this

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particular important strategy [the Rice Development Strategy] that is drive towards achieving food security for our people and also incorporating it into the National Budget? Thank you.

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Upper Niumi.

We have under the Ministry what we called the National Food System Pathway and at this stage every country in the world has a Food System Pathway that is to talk about the National Food Security Mid-term and Long-term. We just concluded our paper which was validated at a workshop, and the consultants are now putting their inputs under Food System Pathway. This pathway is not only for rice but the entire food system of The Gambia. The next stage after the input of consultants is to put a cost to it and then we will move to the stage of a fund raising. Yes! As a Ministry, our Food System Pathway will be costed soon which will be followed by fund raising. Thank you very much.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Honourable Speaker, I withdraw.

THE SPEAKER: Next is *Question No. 081 of 2022* by Honourable Member Lower Saloum.

HON SAINY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Thank you Honourable Speaker and the Minister. Honourable Speaker, could the Honourable Minister of Agriculture explain to this august Assembly how the Japanese Rice was sold in the country and who were the buyers?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Lower Saloum.

Honourable Speaker, I would like to inform this august Assembly that the Government of The Gambia through the Ministry of Agriculture in March this year received a consignment of **2596 metric tons of 30kg rice** from the Government of Japan under the Japan Rice Programme equivalent to *86,053 bags* shipped to The Gambia. The consignment upon arrival was transported from the seaport to a warehouse by the Ministry of Agriculture at Bund Road. Previously, the rice was sold directly from the seaport, and the buyers were identified by the Office of the President and sold at **D550 per bag** to meet the minimum deposit requirement in the counter account at the Central Bank of The Gambia in lots of thousand bags per buyer.

The payment process was facilitated by the Accountant General. The rice was redistributed to potential buyers by the Ministry of Agriculture in the month of April, and all buyers have received their rice.

Honourable Speaker, to put this in a context, the rice was sent in the name of the Ministry of Agriculture in March. It was received and put at a warehouse in Bund Road. Individual buyers were supposed to be allocated in lots of thousand, and they go to the Office of the President to do the paper work. They pay the money directly at the Treasury and take the receipt. They go to the warehouse to collect the thousand bags. That was how it was operated and this was in March 2022. Thank you.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON SAINÉY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Thank you Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, did you identify whether the buyers are Gambians or non-Gambians?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. Every buyer as far as we know was a Gambian. Did the Gambian buyers transfer it to non-Gambians? We cannot guarantee that. Thank you.

HON SAINÉY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. You cannot guarantee that. Honourable Minister, are you aware that 2 trucks were apprehended in the Senegalese border? If yes, what was the cause of that?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you. I am aware of the apprehension of 2 trucks at the Mauritanian border. Thank you.

HON SAINÉY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Honourable Speaker, no. I am trying to make... *[Interrupted]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please you have it all. Honourable Member for Latrikunda Sabiji, you may ask your question.

HON SAINÉY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Honourable Speaker, the reason of the question is because I want to clear doubts... *[Interrupted]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please take your seat. Member for Latrikunda Sabiji, you may proceed.

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Minister for Agriculture. Honourable Minister, you said that the rice came through the ports, collected at the

Bund Road and Office of the President identified the buyers. Why did the Office of the President identify the buyers?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I cannot tell you why Office of the President identified the buyers. Ministry of Agriculture did not identify the buyers, so I will advise that you redirect your question to the Vice President.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you very much. Honourable Speaker, would the Honourable Minister consider giving out this rice to the needy people instead of selling it and later on the government goes back to buy rice for some needy people. Would they consider, giving out the rice to the needy people instead of selling it?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Upper Saloum. This rice from Japan is part of the Japanese aid and it has condition attached. Instead of giving us the money, they give us this rice to sell so that we can use that money for our development agenda. Thank you very much.

HON ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, you have indicated that buyers were identified by the Office of the President, so as a responsible Ministry did you find out what were the criteria used to identify the buyers?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Bakau.

I cannot be specific as to what the criteria were. If you want more details regarding this question, my technicians will be happy to help supply you as to what the criteria were for the identification of the buyers. However, I am pretty sure that the buyers were Gambian nationals.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Lower Baddibu.

HON KEMO GASSAMA [LOWER BADDIBU]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. The question I wanted to ask, that is the 2 trucks which were apprehended at the border, has been asked already and answered.

HON MUHAMED KANTEH [BUSUMBALA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, when your Ministry knew about the 2 trucks being apprehended outside the jurisdiction of the country, what did you do?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Busumbala.

When these trucks were apprehended in Senegal, I was notified and we have established that none of the rice was stolen in this country. The rice was clearly sold out to Gambians and if those Gambians sell it to a Senegalese or a Mauritanian, it is regrettable. The rice should have stayed in The Gambia but it is the Gambians who bought the rice and decided to sell it outside of The Gambia. There was no contractual agreement between us and the buyers that once they buy the rice they could not move it out of the country. So, if they so did, it is unfortunate

that they were so interested in business than the population. However, there was no crime committed.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. This is a request to the Honourable Minister. Maybe, not now but later if your Ministry can provide us with a list and the address of the potential buyers of the rice.

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: I did not understand the word potential. Is it future buyers?

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Let me qualify it then. Not potential per se but the list of the buyers of the rice and if your Ministry can provide us the list of buyers of the Japanese rice through your experts or technicians?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Unfortunately, my Ministry did not identify the buyers, nor did we receive the money. It was paid directly to the Accountant General, and I would advise the Honourable Member to re-direct his question to the appropriate Ministry where the money was paid or where the buyers were identified. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: We now have *Question No. 082 of 2022* by Honourable Member for Upper Saloum.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, rice production in Upper Saloum has reduced for the past years due to salt intrusion and the lack of access to the freshwater areas. Could the Honourable Minister of Agriculture inform this august Assembly how his Ministry intends to remedy such

situation in Upper Saloum, especially in the communities of Batti, Njarreng and Nbantanto?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Upper Saloum.

Honourable Speaker, I am pleased to inform this august gathering that projects under our Ministry, particularly GIRAV has supported many Gambian farmers with salt tolerance varieties which is one of the efforts put in place to address our salt intrusion and climate challenges.

With regards to access roads in the communities mentioned by the Honourable Member for Upper Saloum, previous projects such FASDEP has constructed some access roads. However, I want to bring this to his notice that the recently launched GIRAV Project will also be constructing access or feeder roads for the communities mentioned earlier to access freshwater.

The Department of Agriculture gives technical advice to rice growers in the catchment area; e.g., training farmers on best agronomic practices of rice cultivation as one of the mandates of the department.

In addition to this, the Soil and Water Management Unit also trained farmers on the application of the force in treating soil acidity levels. So, these are things the Ministry is doing currently. Thank you.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you Honourable Speaker and Honourable Minister. Honourable Minister, I would like you to give me a direction on what I should do as the representative of the

people to ensure that we contact GIRAV to get assistance for the construction of this road networks because the Ministry may not know them but as a representative, I would like to get some kind of direction so that I kick start the process.

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I would advise the Honourable Member to contact our GIRAV Project Directorate and possibly contact National Road Authority. He will be aware of the targeted communities and if Upper Saloum is involved or not. The Member will be duly informed. Thank you.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Minister, do you have any other livelihood activity in your responses to the salt intrusion in the identified area by the questioner. Is there any other solution that the inhabitant of these communities could engage into hence their farmlands are intruded by salt?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Kiang West.

I am sure salt intruded areas only affect rice fields as salt intrusion hardly affects corn fields or vegetable gardens. So, communities that live in areas like lower part of Kiang, Fonis and parts of North Bank are the most affected. Salt intrusion still does not affect the traditional production of corn, traditional production of vegetables, traditional breeding of animals and traditional rearing of small ruminants, so their livelihood still exist. The salt intrusion has more to do with rice production. As a result, NARI which is our research arm is in high gear

in the production of very salt tolerant varieties. As we speak, there is already a salt tolerant variety available for cultivation as a way to mitigate the expansion of their rice cultivation aspect. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Jeshwang.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Minister. Do your Ministry have a similar plan for the Jeshwang Rice Field in Old Jeshwang which is also affected by the same conditions?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable for Jeshwang.

I think the rice production in Jeshwang is no exception from the rice production in salt affected areas. Like I said, the Ministry being aware of the salt challenge has introduced rice varieties that can grow extremely well in salty water. So, I will advice Honourable Member for Jeshwang to contact our Directorate of Urban Agriculture for information and access to the varieties that are salt tolerant. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Central Baddibu.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you. Honourable Minister, could you inform this august gathering whether you have a framework or a strategic plan to ensure that access to the fields and the markets are really catered for, by looking at the past projects of FASDEP and ROOTS?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Baddibu Central.

Yes, we have a strategy and a road map. There is what we called the Gambia National Agricultural Investment Plan as well as Food and Nutrition Security. These are all agricultural policies. However, to be specific about access to markets and fields, I think I have elaborated on this in my previous deliberation that part of our GIRAV Project is going to be dedicated to constructing **200 kilometres** of feeder roads and these feeder roads are going to improve access to the fields and to the vegetable gardens.

Also, I talked about us constructing agrology centres. These agrology centres as I said are going to be one stop shops. That means they will have a garage that will give access to the women to bring the produce. It will have a market for them to sell and if there are leftovers the agrology centre will also have storage facilities to store them. Once they sell, they do not have to go home with the money. There will also be banks at those centres. So, this is what we are doing as far as access to the fields and access to market is concern. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Busumbala.

HON MUHAMED KANTEH [BUSUMBALA]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Minister for Agriculture. I want the Minister to enlighten us about his Ministry's support and readiness to improve the traditional farming he talked about in the area of maize cultivation and others.

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Busumbala.

Yes, we are fully aware of the need to improve our traditional maize cultivation because maize forms the basis for our chicken feed. Until we develop that feed, we would not be protein sufficient. This is the reason why this year we distributed **50 metric tons** of improved varieties of corn. They are very high yielding and disease resistant seeds, and I think that is one step towards improving our traditional production of corn or maize. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Tumana.

HON NFALLY M. KORA [TUMANA]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, are there plans to prevent salt intrusion into other areas such as upper parts of LRR, CRR and URR? Thank you.

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much. I think I heard the Honourable Member for Wuli saying that there is no salt in URR. Yes, I think he is right. There is no salt in URR. Preventing salt intrusion is an extremely daunting challenge and it is a major climate phenomenon. What we can do or should do is to try to live with the salt intrusion by introducing varieties that will grow in salty water. I think that is a cheaper and more sustainable way of dealing with the salt intrusion than trying to stop it because it is extremely costly and a major phenomenon. So, the Ministry's focus is to introduce varieties that will do well in salty areas, so you do not have to worry about the salt intrusion.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we now move to **Question No. 083 of 2022** by the Honourable Member for Serrekunda West.

HON MADI M.K. CEESAY [SERREKUNDA WEST]: Thank you, Honourable Minister. Honourable Speaker, the indications are that our

farmers are faced with very high price fertilizer during the current farming season. Could the Honourable Minister of Agriculture provide an update to this august Assembly on the tons of fertilizer bought for this farming season?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Serrekunda West.

Honourable Speaker, fertilizer price just like most commodities was affected by disruptions in our global supply chains cause by Covid-19 and of recent the Ukraine War. However, the Government has made subsidies of fertilizer available to the farmers in this country and in 2021-2022 season **14,000 metric tons** of fertilizer were imported for the farmers of The Gambia. Thank you.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON MADI M.K. CEESAY [SERREKUNDA WEST]: Honourable Speaker, this august Assembly is aware of the current season, that is this 2021-2022 season, fertilizer was bought and in stock. I am not talking about what you have purchased recently. These things are purchased before the Ukraine War. What happens to those tons of fertilizer?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Serrekunda West.

There was purchase of fertilizer prior to the season of 2021-2022 and the plan was for it to be sustaining this country for 2 years. However, I

think part of the question from our Honourable Member for Jokadu yesterday dealt with the issue of fertilizer leaked across the border in the previous year and the very fertilizer bought could not be here for 2 years because it leaked out of the country through scrupulous practices, and I think we did address that yesterday. So, the entire fertilizer stock that we have is the stock bought for the 2021 -2022 season. We do not have stock from previous years. Thank you.

HON MADI M.K. CEESAY [SERREKUNDA WEST]: Thank you very much, Honourable Minister. Could you inform this august Assembly what were the measures you have taken on those scrupulous people who managed to smuggle fertilizer meant for our Gambian farmers to outsiders?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much. See for us to do something, I guess crime must be committed. We at the Ministry of Agriculture understand that people behave immorally but might not be illegal. So, buying fertilizer and taking it across the border at that time probably was not a crime, but it was immoral, un-Gambian, unhelpful and undignified to do. Yes, businessmen who put money first instead of The Gambia did so, and as far as we know, it is very unfortunate. Our role is to put in place mechanisms to stop that kind of practice happening and that is exactly what we did for the 2021-2022 season. Individuals can only buy from their known local cooperatives and also from the mixed farming centres of the Ministry of Agriculture. This year we have not heard any report of fertilizer being smuggled out across the border. However, we could not establish what happen in the previous year that any law was broken and

we did not have any advice in that line. However, we think it is immoral and un-Gambian. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Illiassa.

HON SANKUNG DAMPHA [ILLIASSA]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Minister. As Gambians are crying for the high price of fertilizer this year, what plan do your Ministry has to reduce the price of fertilizer for an average farmer to purchase next year? Thank you.

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member from Illiassa.

Fertilizer price or fertilizer as a commodity like I said earlier is no exception from all other commodities that have gone through the current socks in the world. Fertilizer I am sure you are aware of did cost the Government on average **D3,500** per bag and the Government subsidise about **D1,500** per bag leaving the farmer to pay **D2000**. This price as high as it may sound is competitive in the sub region and it is reasonable giving our economic challenges. This is the current price we think is mid-way and it will help the farmers but also allow the Government a breathing space so that we are able to buy another stock next year. The price we think is reasonable.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Central Baddibu.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, could we safely conclude that you are not ready to fight corruption because you confirmed to us by

calling the people who were engaged in the fertilizer deal are unscrupulous, yet you are telling us it is difficult to tell that they committed a crime. Can you define crime?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I do not know what the Honourable Member for Baddibu is trying to allude to when you say corruption. These are not individuals under the Ministry of Agriculture. These are not civil servants, but individual Gambian businessmen who bought the fertilizer and took it to Senegal. You call that corruption. That cannot be corruption. It would be corruption if these people were our staff or civil servants or under the Ministry of Agriculture. However, the Ministry had a limit to the amount of fertilizer an individual can buy, and if an individual collected 7 of his relatives and each of them bought 7 bags that will afford him 70 bags. If he took that to Senegal, why would the Ministry of Agriculture be asked about corruption? I do not think that has anything to do with corruption and the Ministry was not responsible for that either. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Upper Fulladu West.

HON BAKARY KORA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, some farmers were complaining that last year enough fertilizer was brought into the country yet farmers cried that they could not have fertilizer. Do your Ministry have any plan in order to have that good control over the way fertilizer is sold to farmers in this country?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Upper Fulladu West.

Currently, we have about **82 cooperatives** in the country, and we have quite a number of mixed farming centres as a way to control fertilizer leakage across. We have decided that fertilizer be sold at our mixed farming centres and using their cooperatives. There are cooperative societies and mixed farming centres nationwide, so fertilizer is available and accessible. I will advise Honourable Member for Upper Fulladu West to check with the nearest mixed farming centre or the cooperative society in and around his constituency. That is a way to mitigate what we have learnt in the previous years and it is a control measure. However, the access to fertilizer is sufficient and people know where fertilizer is. So, there is access and it is still available. Thank you.

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. My question to the Honourable Minister will be, when was the first consignment of the 2021 farming season fertilizer received by the Ministry of Agriculture?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Speaker and the Honourable Member for Janjanbureh. I know it was in the country sufficient time before the beginning of the rainy season. However, I cannot be date specific as to the day exactly the fertilizer got into the country, but I am pretty sure that it was in the country sufficient time for the farmers to access for the rainy season. Thank you.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. We know that fertilizer is a very expensive commodity and as you said the Ukraine War has even made it worse, but we are aware of recent that Russia is providing fertilizer to poor African countries free of charge. Is your Ministry aware of this and if yes, have you made any attempt to actually access this provision? Thank you.

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Wuli East. As far as we are concern, we are not aware of Russia giving free fertilizer to African countries. However, we will be interested in such an offer because our interest is to get fertilizer for our farmers. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we now move to *Question No. 084 of 2022* by Honourable Member for Lower Baddibu.

HON KEMO GASSAMA [LOWER BADDIBU]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Minister. Honourable Speaker, could the Honourable Minister of Agriculture consider providing security fence to the women vegetable gardens in the southern part of Lower Baddibu which are currently without proper fences? Thank you.

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Lower Baddibu.

Honourable Speaker, the ROOTS and the GIRAV Projects both have a component to boost production and productivity of women vegetable producers. These projects will rehabilitate vegetable gardens and establish new gardens. The projects are operating in almost all

Agricultural regions of The Gambia. For the Department of Agriculture, there is a vote line called Agricultural Inputs, Land Levelling and Fencing due to resource constraint the Department cannot solve the problem of poor fencing for some vegetable gardens.

However, progress has been made in the 2020/2021 season where some vegetable gardens were provided with chain-linked wire ranging from 5 to 15 bundles to about 10 gardens. They were able to do this to enhance the capacity and income security of the vegetable gardeners. To add on to this, I think I mentioned earlier that vegetable gardening is a major priority for the Ministry and that projects [GIRAV and ROOTS] are demand driven. The GIRAV Project has already identified 40 gardens, and the ROOTS Project is rehabilitating NEMA gardens and also it will build 30 new gardens. So, what I will advise the Honourable Member to do is to liaise with our Regional Directorate and the Director of ROOTS in the North Bank to be part of the applicants for the prospective gardens to be constructed or rehabilitated. Thank you.

[Supplementary Questions Answers]

HON KEMO GASSAMA [LOWER BADDIBU]: Thank you. I do not have any supplementary question.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member. Go ahead with your question, Honourable Member for Basse.

HON SAIKOU BAH [BASSE]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. My question was partially being answered by the Honourable Minister because my concerned was garden fencing. The Ministry has giant projects which are constructing cold stores for the vegetables, but the first step is to have good fencing so that the women can at least have

ease in cultivating the vegetables and get them to the stores. Thank God, the Minister has already addressed that so I withdraw my question, Sir.

HON SANKUNG DAMPHA [ILLIASSA]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Minister. I want to concur with my colleague the Honourable Member for Lower Baddibu that it is true people around the southern part of our area like from Kerewan down to Farafenni are definitely not benefitting as far as these garden projects are concern. So, I do not know what your Ministry is doing to help those people to benefit from these projects.

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Illiassa.

I am happy to inform you that Illiassa is no exception to the projects. I do not know if we spoke directly about this or not, but Illiassa plus both the Baddibus have quite a number of gardens allocated to them as part of the 20 women led and the 20 youth led gardens. So, if you want to know the exact communities qualified or are to benefit in your area, we will be happy to provide you with the information or you can directly contact our Director of GIRAV Project. I can assure you that there are communities in the North Bank and specifically in the Baddibus which have definitely qualified for the gardens. Thank you.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Minister of Agriculture, of recent we have realised mass intervention in the area of women gardening and fencing which is one thing, but sustainability is another thing. If you move around, you will realise that the fencing

mechanism has a problem. The length between wire poles is too far and therefore the wires will fall in a short period of time. What is the sustainability mechanism you guys are doing in consultation with the beneficiaries? Thank you very much.

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Kiang West.

This is a very important question and I think I like it for enlightenment purpose. Part of the project has a component of sustainability. I think we have learnt this in the previous Agriculture projects which come in do very well; they wrap up and everything collapse. Part of the components of projects now is sustainability and ownership by the beneficiaries because if they operate in a garden for a period of 5 years, I think they should be able to collect a minimal amount from every beneficiary so that they are able to maintain their gardens as they harvest and sell because these projects are not going to be here for eternity. They are not going to be here forever as projects come maximum 5 or 6 years and they phase out.

So, part of the sensitisation programme itself even before these gardens are built is the issue of sensitising the beneficiaries about sustainability, so we are fully aware of the sustainability challenge. That is why it is inculcated as part of the programmes for project beneficiaries to take ownership and be aware of the fact that projects will phase out, so they must be able to sustain them. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Sami.

HON ALFUSAINY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the floor. Honourable Minister, the Honourable Member for Illiassa is saying that most of the villages in his area are not included, so what criteria did you use as a Ministry to identify those villages?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Member for Sami. I am not sure if he says most of the villages. Of course most villages will not be included since we are only talking about *40 gardens*. Gambia has *1881 villages*, so it is natural and obvious that most villages will not be included. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. We now have the Honourable Member for Bundungka Kunda.

HON SULAYMAN JAMMEH [BUNDUNGKA KUNDA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, I think this project is very important but it seems most of the Members do not understand the contact. I just want to know the contact persons on behalf of the beneficiaries in various communities who normally facilitate their applications. Is it the National Assembly Members or the Ward Councillors because this project is mainly community driven and most of such projects go directly to the Councillors? So, this is what I want you to clarify for me, please. Thank you.

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Bundungka Kunda.

A nationwide sensitisation was conducted by these projects. Groups were invited to apply. Based on the information they supplied, an assessment was done and groups qualified. These facilities will be extended to the qualified groups in the locations where they dwell, so they were not given through Councillors or Honourable Members of the Assembly. These projects were given based on the applications submitted by women groups or youth groups and a set of criteria. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Member for Bundungka Kunda and the Honourable Minister. We now move on to ***Question No. 085 of 2022*** by Honourable Member for Sabach Sanjal.

HON ALHAGIE BABOU CEESAY [SABACH SANJAL]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Could the Honourable Minister for Agriculture inform this august Assembly of the Ministry's plan to minimise post-harvest loss of local vegetables?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Sabach Sanjal.

Post-harvest loss is a major concern for the Ministry and our Food System Partway. In fact, like I said yesterday, there was a whole week summit of African Agriculture Ministers in Kigali talking specifically about food waste. So, in our part of the world about 30% of our food is wasted either during harvest time or at the time of consumption.

Honourable Speaker, I want to inform the Honourable Member for Sabach Sanjal that the ROOTS and the GIRAV Projects under my Ministry will be constructing cold storage facilities and we think these

facilities will help prevent the waste of vegetables from our women gardeners. We also mentioned that the ROOTS Project will very soon build two agrology centres which will have a market, a cold store, a bank and also a garage. This will also help in handling our post-harvest waste. We also talked about the mega stores we intend to build in every region and as I said the first two will be erected in CRR and URR measuring 20 by 40. I think this will help in the storage of our produce and minimise post-harvest loss. Thank you.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON ALHAGIE BABOU CEESAY [SABACH SANJAL]: Thank you, Honourable Minister. You mentioned that centres are to be constructed to minimise post-harvest loss; what plans are you making to make it across the country, to make sure that at least every part of the country has a storage facility? In Sabach Sanjal, for example, the women engage a lot in vegetable production, especially tomatoes, but there is no storage facility which results to huge post-harvest loss. Honourable Minister, what plans are you making to make sure that these centres are cross-cutting across the whole country? Thank you.

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Sabach Sanjal.

We are aware of the need for these facilities nationwide, and that is why the fifteen that are under the ROOTS Project are going to be nationwide too. However, fifteen will not be sufficient to cover the entire country, village by village that is why the agrology centres are coming in handy because the agrology centres are huge. I think if you are in Sabach

Sanjal, the nearest biggest market for your produce is Farafenni that is why Farafenni has been identified to have one of the agrology centres. That way, communities around Sabach Sanjal, Illiassa and parts of even the Baddibus would be able to use this agrology centre to sell any produce leftover. It will have the capacity because it is going to be a mega site to help in the food waste management.

HON ALHAGIE BABOU CEESAY [SABACH SANJAL]: Thank you, once again. If that centre is built in Farafenni, what mechanism is the Ministry putting in place to make sure that all those living in that area would have access? If Farafenni says the centre belongs to them, I am afraid that my people might not benefit from it.

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable for Sabach Sanjal.

I think it will be part of our sensitisation programme hence this project is for the entire Gambia and not for specific village[s]. Also, the goal is to minimise food waste, so we will do whatever it takes for this project to cover as many people as possible and for the facility to be utilised as it should be. We will endeavour to achieve that goal. Thank you.

HON SAINY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Thank you Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Minister. I will take you back to your submission under ROOTS. Do you not think that the cold stores that ROOTS is trying to build in constituencies or regions are too small? The cold store perimeter is 8 by 10, so only Lower Saloum can occupy that because we have 4 women gardens and the 20% that is to be paid by women will be equivalent to ***D525,000*** which includes the land

acquired, and the land is less than **D25,000**. In fact, it is for free and there is constraint on the women now...

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, ask your question now. You are not debating, please.

HON SAINÉY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: No, I have to help the Minister.

THE SPEAKER: No, just ask your question. You can give a small preamble for him to understand instead of giving a long speech.

[Point of Order]

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: As Order 43 [Supplementary Questions] states in [1], "*Supplementary questions may be put for the purpose of elucidating an oral answer.*" [3] "*The time taken to ask a supplementary question shall not be longer than one minute and an answer to a supplementary question shall be no longer than two minutes. This period may be extended at the discretion of the Speaker.*" The Honourable Member has taken more than one minute.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, just please ask your question.

HON SAINÉY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Do you think it is sufficient for five regions to get one cold store of 8m by 20m or 10m?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Lower Saloum. Do I think it is enough? No, it is not. Thank you.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, post-harvest loss I believe is

beyond building cold stores. Do you have other means to reduce post-harvest loss?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Central Baddibu.

Post-harvest loss starts from us as individuals. In fact, post-harvest loss includes the amount of food you put on your lunch plate. We all waste food and the food mostly wasted is wasted after it has been prepared, so post-harvest loss is very cross-cutting and not only the farm perspective. When we talk about post-harvest loss, our mind only goes to the farm and the warehouse. Post-harvest loss is a social responsibility and has a national dimension. We must think of post-harvest loss as food on our tables as well, so the strategy is:

- To sensitise the entire country about post-harvest loss as a major issue first;
- Cold stores are not the only solution but part of the solution because the most perishable ones need cold stores. Yes, we are building other stores like dry floors, stores in URR and CRR, and also mega stores.

So, being aware of the concern for post-harvest waste as a country is the beginning of the solution, and I think the conversation has started. I think we need to spread in our families, in our individual homes that every small thing matters, and there is serious food challenge in this world.

I think India is our biggest supplier. Last week, they have announced that they are banning export of rice. Pakistan is also a major rice

producer, but you are all aware of the flooding in Pakistan which covered about 70% of the country this year, so their supply of grains is going to be tighter in the world. Let us manage our post-harvest loss but also grow our grains. Thank you.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Would the Honourable Minister consider CRR North and South for the cold stores because CRR is very big and other ministries actually have started to consider it as two regions, North and South?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Upper Saloum.

Yes, in CRR North, Wassu is a beneficiary of the cold store and that one is the first three to be built. I think I mentioned earlier that one will be in Soma, one in Basse and one in Wassu. These are areas that have already been started. Actually, the construction period is 12 months, so Wassu is a beneficiary. Also, the agrology centres that I talked about, one should be in Farafenni and another one in Wassu. That means CRR North is already over catered for. Thank you.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Minister of Agriculture, the subject of post-harvest loss has ever been great, but there is pre-harvest loss also. The women will engage in gardening until a little prior to the harvest, their produce will be damaged by either the intrusion of particular animals or an outbreak of diseases. Do you have recovery plan for women who spend time, money and energy farming and before they harvest, everything is gone?

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member Kiang West.

Yes, whether it is pre-harvest or post-harvest, food loss is a concern. Currently, recovery is a challenge. Our Technical Department of Pest Control is supposed to help women from the get-go as far as disease control is concerned. We also have Soil and Water Management that will help to mitigate issues arising from diseases or production, and under the Department of Agriculture, our extension workers are spread nationwide.

Therefore, the structures are there to help our vegetable producers from the first stage all the way to the level of the marketing, so I will advise them to take advantage of the existing structures. We will endeavour to control as much as we can as regards the pre-harvest and post-harvest loss our women are facing. The issues of store that we talked about are just part of the solutions which are not exhaustive. Thank you.

HON AMIE COLLEY [FONI BREFET]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Talking of post-harvest loss, I know sometimes post-harvest loss occurs through the market glut. Honourable Speaker, I would like to ask the Honourable Minister whether they have any plan to stop the Senegalese vegetable producers coming into The Gambia which leads to the market glut and post-harvest loss.

HON DR DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Member for Foni Brefet. I would advise the Honourable Member to redirect her

question of trans-boundary trade issue to Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Members. Honourable Minister of Agriculture, let me thank you very much for ably answering questions posed by Honourable Members.

Honourable Members, I must apologise because many people were looking at me in the eyes for we were just trying to deal with the Ministry of Agriculture.

We now proposed to suspend the sitting for about an hour to have lunch and other issues, but let us please try to come back at an agreed time so that we do not stay here longer than necessary. It is almost 19 minutes after four. Can we agree that by half-past five we are all here to start, please?

The Assembly now stands suspended until 5:30 prompt.

The Assembly is Suspended