



*Parliamentarians, Vice President and H.E.
Goodluck Jonathan © GPN*

Goodluck Jonathan's Organisation Trains the Gambia's 6th Legislature

Former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan's Foundation hosted a two-day training for The Gambia's 6th Legislature from Thursday 14th and 15th July 2022. The event which took place at Paradise Suites Hotel aimed at building the capacity of Parliamentarians towards the promotion of sustainable development.

The opening ceremony was attended by National Assembly Staff, Gambian Parliamentarians, Government Ministers and Politicians. Speaker of the House, Hon Fabakary Tombong Jatta delivered the keynote speech alongside the former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan and the recently appointed Vice President

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Hon Maimuna Ceesay: Unacceptable to have 3 Patients on a Bed

Hon Maimuna Ceesay is one of five female National Assembly members in the Sixth Legislature. She is also one of two nominated female NAMs by the President as provided for in the Constitution. As a nominated NAM she does not represent any Party or specific Constituent. Hon Ceesay is a member of the Select Committee on Gender, Children and Social Welfare which held a meeting with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare and its Satellite institutions

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Four Institutions Kicked Out of Parliament's Committee Meeting

Parliament's Select Committee on Monitoring and Implementation of Government Projects ejected four institutions working under the Ministry of Transport, Works and Infrastructure (MoW) on Wednesday 22nd June 2022 due to the absence of Minister Ebrima Sillah. Also missing from the meeting, much to the displeasure of the Committee were the MoW's Permanent Secretary and the CEO of Gambia's Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) Secretariat to name a few.

The institution representatives who attended the meeting but were unceremoniously booted out of the meeting include the National Road Authority (NRA), Gambia Civil Aviation

Authority (GCAA), representatives from the OIC and the MoW.

In an exclusive interview with the Chairperson of the Select Committee on Monitoring and Implementation of Government Projects, Hon Yahya Menteng Sanyang informed GPN that the committee is only interested in meeting with the principal actors and not their representatives.

"We just want the principal actors, the Minister, the Permanent Secretary, the Chief Executive Officer and the Managing Directors to appear. Not for them to delegate their powers to anybody to come

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Police Find no Suspect for Arson Attempt at Residence of Banjul North NAM

The National Assembly Member (NAM) for Banjul North, Hon Modou Lamin B. Bah told GPN that he reported a case of arson at his residence to the Police for action. The incident occurred just days after Hon Bah celebrated his Parliamentary elections victory which took place on Saturday 18th June 2022. On 21st June 2022, the former Banjul City Council Spokesperson, posted on social media that "someone wanted to set my house on fire in the early hours of Monday 20th June 2022 in Banjul. I urge the defence and security forces

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Inside this edition -This is the third edition of the Gambia Parliamentary Newsletter which focuses on the activities of the Gambian Parliament. Our team of reporters report from the National Assembly for Gainako Online Newspaper.

This edition focuses on the Committee Sitzings of the National Assembly, the first Extraordinary Session of 2022, the safety of a Parliamentarian, a Publication by Hon Suwaibou Touray on the D100K Clothing Allowance and Parliament's Engagement with the Goodluck Johnathan Foundation, NAO, NYC and much more.

Hon Maimuna Ceesay: Unacceptable to have 3 Patients on a Bed



Hon Maimuna Ceesay (c) GPN

on Friday 24th June 2022.

A GPN reporter held an exclusive interview with the Nominated Member after listening to her deliberation on maternal mortality during an engagement with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare. Our reporter asked the Parliamentarian to explain what their committee can do to ensure the Government increases its efforts to address maternal mortality in the Gambia.

The Hon Member noted that the responsibility rests on the Government, pregnant women and their partners to take more responsibility to address maternal mortality.

She noted that “this starts with the iron tablets been given to women [during] maternity” which she believes “needs to be taken religiously”.

Some of the benefits she cited include helping pregnant women avoid anemia while pregnant.

“You can see someone who is conceived but will not show up for check up until four or five months” said the Parliamentarian who says such

negligent behaviour is “very dangerous to your health and much more not taking the pills”. She urged partners to be more involved during pregnancy.

Shifting her attention to the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Gender she explained that “they have to double their efforts”. In her view “there should be community sensitisation and community registration” and in every center “they need to know how many pregnant women are in this community from January to December”. She urged hospitals to engage the communities more “to make sure that women who are pregnant go to the hospital”.

The Nominated member opined that officials should consider passing legislation to compel people to seek the appropriate help at the appropriate time. “When you go to the hospitals its very disheartening to see where some of the women have to go it’s not very conducive. There’re challenges but I think [the Government] needs to do more both Health and Gender Affairs”. She called for medical equipment to be upgraded to meet the required medical standard.

Dire State of Maternal Wards in the Gambia



Women sharing beds (c) UPI

A video published by UPI News 321 on 2nd October 2021 showed a Senior Nurse at the Bundung Maternal Ward raising concerns about the dire conditions that medical staff face at the facility. The Senior Nurse was concerned about the large number of patients seeking medical assistance from their Ward. She says it “is overwhelming us. Our staff on the ground are not much. I have 19 midwives but some are on confinement leave, some are on annual leave and so on”.

“Just look at the beds we have about three patients to each bed. This month we recorded 629 deliveries and we only have 14 beds to take care of these 629, only 6 delivery rooms with limited staffing” she explained to the journalist on camera.

Trying her utmost best with the limited resources the Senior Nurse explained that “patients’ rights is saying we don’t have the right to send patients away but if the capacity is no more there what should we do?” she asked. “Instead of helping them we cannot give them the best quality of work that we wish to give them because the work load is too much, the crowd is too much at the end patients health is not being taken care of,” she bemoaned.

“One bed to one patient. We are saying one bed to one patient social distancing of one meter and then you have three patients with three babies on the same bed how do we experience social distancing. Some beds are covering four patients to a bed. The beds are full to capacity so you have mothers sitting with

their babies because they don’t have beds,” she exclaimed.

“We only have 4 to 5 Doctors that are taking care of these 629 [patients] every month and they are tired,” said the Senior Nurse. “Our conscience won’t allow us to allow women to sit on the chair after giving birth. To be quite frank its disturbing to us. We want the media to know what is happening in case of any complications. Gambian Women’s Lives Matters they need to know about what is happening. You cannot just be crying about Gambian Women’s Lives Matters outside when you don’t know what the nurses and the health care workers are facing,” she said.

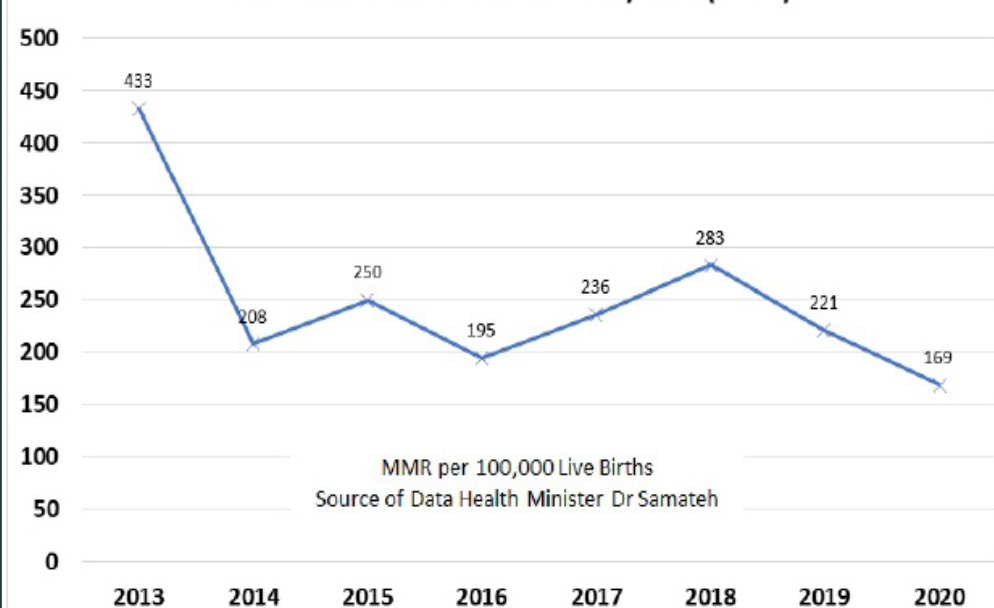
Our GPN Reporter highlighted the dire situation facing patients and health care workers. This is what the Nominated member had to say.

“Those are very unacceptable [conditions] whatever condition we might find ourselves but to share three babies or three mothers in the same bed is unacceptable”.

In her view regardless of “any health condition or any other circumstances they need to find a better way not to be doing that”. This practice of patients and their babies sharing beds and women sitting after delivering could affect the parents and cause infections which could affect the family.

Hon Ceesay does not “think it’s fair” for an innocent baby to be a victim of somebody’s negligence. She believes that people need to stand for their right and demand for better health care service.

The Gambia - Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR)



Four Institutions Kicked Out of Parliament's Committee Meeting



Hon Sanyang – Center © GPN

From front page

and sit in front of us,” said the Hon member for Latrikunda Sabiji.

Also missing from the meeting was the Managing Director of the National Water and Electricity Company (NAWEC). Chairperson Hon Sanyang told GPN that he received information from a Manager at NAWEC notifying him that the Managing Director of NAWEC was summoned to the office of the President in State House, Banjul.

According to the Chairperson, that is “the most annoying part” even though it’s an “arm of government and we are another arm of government we called you before the President you went to answer to the President and neglect our call that one is very unfortunate”.

He stressed that the Assembly Business takes “precedence over everything so, therefore we don’t take that as a good excuse. We don’t take those as genuine excuses that can precede the business of the National Assembly”.

Chairperson Hon Sanyang of the Committee has work experience in the OIC and defeated his predecessor Hon Saikou Marong in April 2022 to occupy the Latrikunda Sabiji seat. Both NAMs won their seat via the United Democratic Party ticket in 2017 and 2022. However, Hon Saikou Marong shifted his allegiance to President Adama Barrow’s National People’s Party and lost to a protest vote in April 2022.

Chairperson Hon Sanyang

questioned the representatives present “why the Principal actors [failed to] appear instead of the representative” and noted that the Minister and Heads of Institutions “are the ones directly accountable to [the National Assembly] so, that’s why we want them to appear before us face to face and mood to mood.”

As a result of the absence of Principal Actors, the Committee meeting was suspended. Chairperson Hon Sanyang seized the opportunity to warn the Principal Actors that “if they don’t appear next time, we are going to charge them with contempt of the process of the National Assembly”.

He added that Ministers, Permanent Secretaries and Institutions that will be appearing before Parliament cannot delegate their appearance to the Committee to anybody else. Hon Sanyang reiterated that Principal Actors “must appear [before Parliament when summoned] or we do the needful because we are empowered by the law”.

Our reporter asked Chairperson Hon Sanyang if he had any notification or information on the absence of the Minister and his Permanent Secretary and responded to say that the MoW’s Deputy Permanent Secretary informed him that Minister Ebrima Sillah had “travelled and his Permanent Secretary is new and taking up responsibilities”.

He closed the meeting by highlighting that the Sixth Legislature’s business should be taken very seriously and that the Committee proceedings will no longer be business as usual.

Minister of Works Refuses to Take Oath to Testify Before Committee Meeting



Hon Sillah in yellow © GPN

Recently appointed Minister of Works and Infrastructure, Hon Ebrima Sillah failed to swear in at a Parliamentary Committee meeting held on 27th June 2022. Minister Sillah who was the former Minister of Information and Communications appeared before the National Assembly Committee for Monitoring of Government Projects and clashed with acting Chairperson of the Committee Hon Yahya Sanyang. In attendance at the Committee meeting were a number of Officials from Institutions under the Ministry of Works such as the Organisation of Islamic Countries Project Implementation Team and others. Hon Sanyang instructed Minister Sillah to take his oath if he wanted to speak on the progress of Government Projects. In response Hon Sillah refused to take an oath, highlighting he took an oath of office before assuming his duties.

Hon Sanyang explained that all witnesses who are to testify before the Committee of the National Assembly must take an oath, however, Hon Sillah insisted that as a sworn in Minister he wouldn’t be taking any other oaths. In response Hon Sanyang warned that if he refused to take an oath he would be dragged out of the Building by a Sargent of Arms.

Hon Sillah challenged acting Chairperson Sanyang to provide the legal provisions requiring him to take an oath which he obliged. When Hon Sanyang showed Minister Sillah the provision, he requested for the Chairperson to read it out loud. Initially, refusing to read out the section Hon

Sanyang threw the book to Hon Sillah to read the quoted section himself.

Eventually, other Parliamentarians urged Hon Sanyang to read the quoted section out, however, Hon Sillah still declined to take an oath after the read out. The Minister of Works insisted that he had already taken an oath of office before assuming his duties. Other officials from the Ministry of Works and the OIC swore in to testify before the Committee. Our research has revealed that Section 109(3) of the Gambia’s 1997 Constitution empowers any Committee of Parliament as are vested in a High Court at trial in “enforcing the attendance of witnesses, including examining them on oath, affirmation or otherwise.”

Equally, this Constitutional provision is reproduced in the Standing Orders of Parliament under Order 101(1)(a). Furthermore, Standing Order 103(7) provides that an “oath or affirmation taken or made by any witness shall be administered by the Chairperson of the Committee, or by the Committee Clerk.”

Goodluck Jonathan’s Organisation Trains the Gambia’s 6th Legislature

From front page

Alieu Badara Joof.

It can be recalled that the former Nigerian President played a key role in engaging Political Party Leaders to revive the Draft Constitution which was rejected by Parliament. Unfortunately, that effort did not reap the desired outcome of reviving the Draft Constitution.

Agriculture PS Fails to Testify over Fertiliser Procurement



The National Assembly's acting Chairperson for the Select Committee on Agriculture warned Officials from the Ministry of Agriculture that he would move a motion to set up a Commission of Inquiry if the delays in procurement of fertilizer occur in subsequent years.

This was after the Permanent Secretary (PS) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Hassan Jallow shocked Parliamentarians of the Select Committee when he admitted that he had no idea of the latest fertilizer procurement to testify on the matter. According to PS Jallow, he is not aware of when the process of fertilizer procurement started. "I don't exactly know when this process started, I may not have been at the Ministry at the time it started," said PS Jallow to Parliamentarians during a Committee meeting held on 4th July 2022.

In reaction to his admission the acting Chairperson of the Committee, Hon Yahya Menteng Sanyang quizzed the PS to confirm if he will "not [be] giving any testimony [at the Committee Meeting]?" Mr Jallow responded in the negative with a short response saying "I don't think so".

Acting Chairperson Hon Sanyang put it to Mr Jallow that "Permanent Secretaries are the chief technocrats of the Ministry [and]

this whole process happens under your — mandate and you don't have anything to say? Is that what you are telling the Hon members [of the National Assembly]?"

PS Jallow confirmed to the Committee, that's "exactly — what I am saying". He gave more details when he explained that he has not been part of the recent fertilizer procurement process. However, in the past as the Deputy Permanent Secretary, he was involved in the procurement of fertilizer.

Our research revealed a professional LinkedIn Profile for Hassan Jallow who identifies himself as the PS for the Ministry of Agriculture. According to the profile, Hassan Jallow has been the PS at the Ministry of Agriculture on two occasions since the change in Government in 2016. His first stint was from December 2017 to July 2019 and again from March 2021 to date.

Parliamentarians were quite surprised that the Permanent Secretary had nothing to say on the fertilizer issue. However, the Deputy Permanent Secretary, the Finance Officer and Staff from the Gambia Groundnut Corporation (GCC) which recently changed its name to National Food Security, Process and Marketing Cooperation, testified at the Committee meeting after swearing-in.

Next Time Commission of Inquiry Will Investigate Fertiliser Procurement Delay

In response to PS Jallow's admission, acting Chairperson Hon Sanyang warned him that "this is not going to be accepted" and that the Ministry of Agriculture should not delay fertilizers procurement which Gambian farmers depend on for their produce.

The Hon member for Latrikunda Sabiji, Hon Sanyang thanked the witnesses for attending the hearing on time, however, he warned them not to delay fertilizer procurement in subsequent years. The member who won a seat via a United Democratic Party (UDP) ticket reminded officials that

"Permanent Secretaries are the accountant officers, but next time I will advise you to pay attention to this type of sensitive details under your watch because it's very important".

He continued to express his dissatisfaction with the procurement delays when he noted that Gambian "farmers will not continue to suffer because of certain institutions' negligence or lack of institutional collaboration to deliver fertilizer at the appropriate time for farming. This is not going to be accepted by this committee in our subsequent engagement".

To avert another delay Hon Sanyang informed officials that "next time it happens I will move a motion for this committee to set up a commission of enquiry by way of section 109 subsection 3 paragraph c of the 1997 constitution."

The aforementioned section 109 subsection 3 (c) of the 1997 constitution, states that "for the purpose of effectively performing its functions, each

of the committees shall have all the powers, rights and privileges as are vested in the high court at a trial in respect of the issue of a commission or request to examine witness abroad".

Acting Chairperson Hon Sanyang explained that the report of the Commission of Inquiry will not be submitted to the Executive for action, instead, it will be tabled at the National Assembly for action. He warned Officials from the Ministry of Agriculture to be very careful to avoid a repeat of the delay.

After the exchange, four delegates as mentioned above testified before the Committee. The discussions began to flow prompting PS Jallow to chime in with clarifications. At that point, Hon Sanyang ordered PS Jallow to take an oath before providing additional clarifications on the challenges that his Ministry faced. PS Jallow duly obliged by swearing-in and seized the opportunity to elaborate on some of the challenges around the fertilizer bids.

Police Find no Suspect for Arson Attempt at Residence of Banjul North NAM

From front page

of The Gambia to accelerate their efforts in protecting the lives and properties of the people"

The member who won a Parliamentary seat via a United Democratic Party ticket sent a photo of a burnt hole in a wire guzz at his house. He confirmed to GPN that the arsonist(s) escaped before managing to set the house ablaze. According to Hon Bah, after he reported the incident to the Police they sent Officers to his residence to take some photos.

The Parliamentarian who is survived by his wife and children took to social media to reiterate his commitment to serve: "Even though someone wanted to set my house on fire, I decided to join my Hon. Comrades at the Assembly to represent the voices of the people of Banjul North Constituency and by extension The Gambia. Together for a better Gambia."

Our reporter asked the young Parliamentarian if Police had apprehended any suspects, to which he responded in the negative. According to Hon Bah, "the police haven't apprehended anybody yet because the unfortunate part of

it is that my family and I don't have any suspect, so it's still under investigation."

Hon Bah informed our reporter that he "wrote to the office of the Clerk of the National Assembly for the attention of the Office of the Speaker concerning the emergency of providing security or protection at my house". In pursuance of his request, the Banjul North Parliamentarian confirmed to GPN that the office of the Clerk wrote to the Office of the Inspector General of Police on 28th June 2022, to provide security for his residence. However, this hasn't materialised yet.

The letter from the Clerk noted that Hon Bah "forwarded the report to the Offices of the Speaker and Clerk of the National Assembly for the attention of the authorities as well as request[ed] for personal security protection".

Asked about his family's safety the Banjul North Parliamentarian explained that since the unfortunate incident occurred he has been very vigilant and taking extra precautionary measures to ensure his family's safety to his best ability.

Hon Touray Explains Start of Clothing Allowance



Hon Suwaibou Touray (Centre) © GPN

This publication was released by the Hon member for Wuli East Hon Suwaibou Touray of the People's Democratic Organisation for Independence and Socialism (PDOIS) on the start of the D100,000 Clothing Allowance allocated to NAMs. Below is his publication.

By Hon Suwaibou Touray

Gambia National Assembly members were never receiving this allowance save 2022. Initially, it was only the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, that benefit from this allocation. For example, Robbing or Clothing allowance for the Speaker for the year 2021 was D60, 000 and for 2022 it is D120,000. The Deputy Speaker also received D in 2021 and D in 2022.

Now that the Gambia National Assembly attained financial autonomy in 2022 before the National Budget was laid before Parliament. It is the National Assembly Authority that prepares the National Assembly budget. There was no occasion where members were involved in debate regarding budget of the Assembly. All the proposals in the budget were from the authority.

While Committees were assigned to have bilateral with Ministries and Departments on their budget proposals, there was no Committee that was identified to scrutinise the Assembly's budget as it has been done to other sectors. If any it could have been only the Finance and Public Accounts Committee as they had the responsibility to

prepare the Consolidated report on the Estimates and report back to the Plenary.

During that debate, only the Motion on the loan for NAMs was debated but no other issue was raised regarding the National Assembly budget.

If the Assembly budget was scrutinised by a Committee, I believe they would surely seek for clarifications on the figures on allowances and ask for disaggregation so that it becomes clear as to what sort of allowances are allocated for NAMs but the approved total for all allowances including all the staff amounts to D107 Million.

Now when it comes to implementing the budget, the responsible authority said clothing allowance is catered for and decided to make it a one-off payment at D100, 000 for the period of 5 years.

The objective of now providing clothing allowance, I am told is to do away with the discrimination between members but on a second look, the discrimination is glaring when you look closely you will see that Nominated Members are provided Responsibility Allowance and the Speaker too is also provided with Professional allowance of D250,000 per year. These and many others are anomalies that must be addressed in the next coming 2023 budget. Practice dictates that members are not provided for professional allowance but wrong precedent is set for the outgoing Speaker as a Lawyer.

The next edition will detail how Hon Touray spent his D100K Clothing Allowance on his constituency.

NAO Engages Parliamentarians from FPAC and PEC

From back page

with, the Auditor's report thereon". On the other hand provision 120(2) of the National Assembly's Standing Order legislates that "it shall be the duty of the Public

Enterprises Committee to scrutinise, consider and advise upon all matters connected with the public enterprises".

Meanwhile, according to the first

presentation delivered today, the NAO "was established under section 159(1) of the 1997 Constitution of the Republic of the Gambia Gambia as the Supreme Audit Institution (SAI), to assist the Auditor General (AG) in the performance of the functions conferred on him or her by the Constitution or any act of the National Assembly".

The presentation continued to note that "the AG has the responsibility to audit the accounts of all Government institutions, Local Government Authorities, and other public bodies. The functions of the AG and NAO

are described in detail in Section 160 of the 1997 Constitution. The NAO was granted autonomous status by the National Assembly through the National Audit Office Act 2015".

There are five different Audit Units at the NAO and they are;

1. Performance Audit,
2. Development and Project Audit,
3. Extraneous,
4. Municipalities and Area Councils,
5. Ministries and Departments.

Key Performance Audit Reports Submitted to the National Assembly

Audit Topic	Year Submitted	Remark
Solid Waste Management by Banjul City Council	2015	Not discussed
HIV/AIDS Prevention, Treatment, Care & Support Programmes by National Aids Secretariate	2016	Not discussed
Distribution of Electricity in The Greater Banjul Area by NAWEC	2017	Not discussed
Management of Community Fisheries Centres by Ministry of Fisheries & Water Resources	2018	Not discussed
Storage & Distribution of Drugs by Central Medical Stores	2018	Not discussed
Monitoring of Education System by Ministry of Basic & Secondary Education	2019	Not discussed
Emergency Obstetric Care in Public Health Facilities by Ministry of Health & Social Welfare	2020	Not discussed
Provision of Farm Input (Seed & Fertilizer) to Groundnut Farmers by Ministry of Agriculture	2021	Not discussed
Cargo Handling by Gambia Ports Authority	2021	Discussed

Only NIA hasn't been Audited says NAO Deputy AG

The National Audit Office (NAO) conducted an orientation workshop with Gambian Journalists at the New Metzy Hotel on 14th July 2022.

Delivering a presentation on the Performance Audit Unit Mr Baba S Drammeh, Deputy Auditor General 2 noted that 8 out of 9 Audit Reports submitted to the National Assembly have not been discussed.

The picture above contains a list

GRTS Fails to Submit 2020 Activity & Financial Reports because of Elections Coverage

The Director General of the Gambia Radio and Television Services (GRTS), Mr Malick Jeng told Gambian Parliamentarians of the Public Enterprise Committee (PEC) that his institution's 2020 Activity and Financial report were not ready for submission due to their busy schedule with Elections coverage. Speaking to Parliamentarians on Tuesday 5th July 2022, GRTS DG, Mr Jeng made this revelation much to the disappointment of National Assembly Member members who ordered the DG not to repeat the no-show again. When questioned why his Institution was not prepared to submit its Reports and deliver a presentation to Parliamentarians DG Jeng noted that the 2021 Presidential and 2022 Parliamentary Elections hindered

of all the Audits submitted by the Performance Audit Unit.

Pa Majagne Ndow, the Deputy Auditor General 1 responded to Journalists queries to explain that only the National Intelligence Agency - NIA (now known as State Intelligence Service) have not been audited. The NAO are currently discussing how to ensure that the NIA/SIS will be audited.

the timely submission of their reports.

"It's been an extremely busy period for us and I think probably that's the only excuse [elections coverage] we can give for the delay but we are working hard, working diligently on this report at the moment [and] we should be able to get it ready as soon as possible," said Mr Jeng.

Hon Lamin Ceesay for Kiang West questioned the Director General on the busy schedule "that could warrant the institution not to be able to present their financial and activity report of 2020?" which should have actually been submitted in 2021.

In response, DG Jeng explained that the delay is due to "at least two activities" which he disclosed

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National Assembly Convenes First Extraordinary Session of 2022

The Gambia's Sixth Legislature held its first Extraordinary Session of the 2022 Legislative Year on Thursday 28th July 2022 to ratify two loans from the Kuwaiti Fund and the Islamic Development Bank "to finance Bertil Harding Highway and the University of The Gambia" and to approve "a Revised Budget 2022" to allow for a 30% salary increment.

The National Assembly's proceedings were conducted and the two motions tabled by the Hon Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs were approved after debates and amendments.

The two loan agreements are from the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development for the widening of the Bertil-Harding Road Project and the Islamic Development Bank Loan for the development of the University of the Gambia Phase 2 Project.

According to the loan agreement document the Kuwait Fund Loan amounts to a total of Six million Kuwaiti Dinars equivalent to US\$20 million and is referred to as the "BADEA Loan". The loan agreement also references another loan agreement referred to as the "Islamic Bank" totalling US\$14 Million.

The second loan agreement document for the Islamic Development Bank amounts to a total of US\$7 million for the project which is estimated to be executed over a period of 18 months from the date of the first disbursement. The project description notes that three Departments will be built in Faraba Banta in addition to other services that will be financed by the fund.

It can be recalled that over D23 billion was approved back in 2021 for the 2022 Budget for some 29 Government Institutions. The Revised 2022 Budget Appropriation approved by Parliamentarians has increased the number of Government Institutions to 31 and reduced the total 2022 Appropriation down to just over D22.7 billion.

This represents a reduction of over D923 million with the biggest cut coming from Centralized Services where D673 million has been cut from over D2 billion approved to be spent in 2022. In total up to 19 different government institutions and Ministries have been cut a total of D1.61 billion from the 2022 Approved Budget.

More details on the Loans and the Revised 2022 Budget to be featured in the 4th GPN Edition.

GRTS Fails to Submit 2020 Activity & Financial Reports because of Elections Coverage



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GRTS DG - Middle (c) GPN

are "the Presidential election and the National Assembly election". According to him "these are the two major engagements that — took a lot of [GRTS] time".

In an attempt to appease the Hon members, DG Jeng revealed that the financial statement for the period under review is complete, however, they were not in a position to submit it.

This prompted Hon Ceasay to fire more probing questions to the GRTS DG asking if they

came with "the complete version of the financial statement?" In response, GRTS Finance Director, Mr Jamo Sowe, explained that "the financial statement been worked on is very ready but as the required presentation of this report it has to be a complete package so, in that regard, we could not come with any of the reports to present," however, "the financial statement is ready and the management letter".

Upon hearing that Hon Ceasay expressed his disappointment

noting that: "it's so unfortunate that an institution like the State Broadcaster are not able to present their 2020 activity report, which is a big lapse for them [GRTS]".

Requesting for a second change the GRTS DG requested another date to submit both documents when they would be able to deliver a presentation to Parliament. To which Chairperson of the

Committee Hon Lamin J Sanneh obliged and gave a date of Monday 25th July 2022.

However, the chairperson warned them that it should not be repeated in the future as it "is a very important institution which needs to be accountable".

The meeting was then adjourned to the stated date.

PAP Chairperson Hon Mbow: "I Intend to Promote the Spirit of Togetherness"



The newly elected Chairperson of the West African Caucus of the Pan African Parliament (PAP), Hon Alhagie Mbow has promised to promote unity and good governance within the region. Hon Mbowe is currently serving his second mandate as a Parliamentarian for Upper Saloum in the Gambia's National Assembly.

Hon Alhagie Mbow was elected as the Chairperson of the West African caucus on Thursday 30th June 2022. A GPN reporter questioned Chairperson Mbow on his plans and how they could benefit the Gambia.

In response, Hon Mbow says he will "have discussions on current issues affecting the region in terms of inflation, immigration, and climate change to name a few with a view of addressing them effectively in collaboration with other stakeholders".

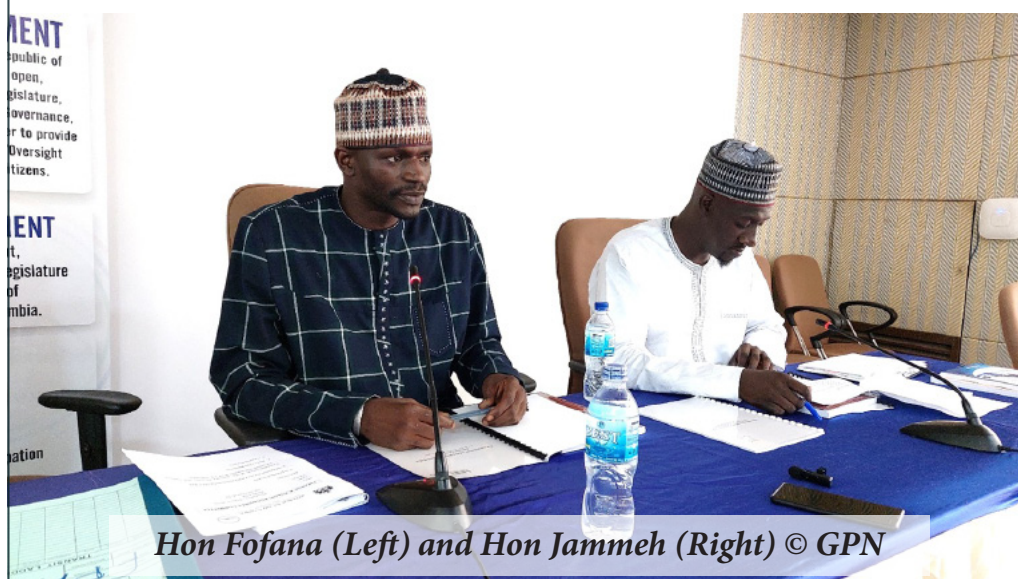
"As the chairperson of the Western Africa caucus, I intend to promote

the spirit of togetherness and reaching out to each other in the promotion of good governance across our region. Part of doing that is to collaborate with our colleagues at the ECOWAS parliament where we can work together on a common agenda for the promotion of very reasons these parliaments were set up" said PAP Chairperson Hon Mbow.

He expressed his gratitude for being elected by his peers which he called a great privilege and honour and thanked the Gambian embassies in South Africa and Ethiopia, the President, the speaker and the Clerk of the Gambia's National Assembly "for the tremendous and unflinching support".

Reacting to his appointment, Hon Mbowe highlights that it was a moment of joy however, he is reminded of "the need to get ready to tighten up and work for Mama Africa".

MDI: D19.5 million Lost from Covid in 2020



Hon Fofana (Left) and Hon Jammeh (Right) © GPN

The Gambia's Management Development Institute (MDI) discussed its 2020 Annual Report at the National Assembly revealing that D19,598,500 was lost due to the impact of Covid 19 and the closure of the Institute in early 2020. In addition to this MDI is currently owed D15,158,139 in unpaid tuition fees from 2014 to 2020.

MDI's Deputy Director, Mrs Fatou A Barry noted that most of the tuition fees owed are from Ministries and Government Institutions. She explained how she "personally took two invoices to two Ministries, to their Permanent Secretaries, up until now not a single butut and

those are over D1 million going to D2 million for services rendered between 2019 and 2018".

During the discussions, the acting Chairperson of the Finance and Public Accounts Committee (FPAC) Hon Kebba Lang Fofana revealed that "D13.6 million out of the D15.1 million was incurred during the last three years," which he described as quite significant.

The Nominated member who is a Chartered Accountant noted that "if you also compare the value of outstanding debts to the total revenue that MDI generates you will realise that it is a significant chunk of your strength that is lying out there".

D19.5 million Lost due to the Covid 19 Pandemic in 2020

The MDI 2020 Annual Report states that "after the early, unexpected and unconsultative closure of the higher and tertiary institutions by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (MoHERST), tuition fees could not be collected so, there was a loss of revenue of about D9,598,5000. In addition, the same estimated amount of D9,598,5000 was also lost because there was no enrolment

for Semester Two".

With regards to enrolment, the Report highlights that the number of students enrolled dropped from 1,485 in 2019 to 948 in 2020. Although this represents a reduction of 537 students this "is the first time in the history of the institution that male and female enrolments are at par". With 489 males and 489 females enrolled, the institute had a balanced gender ratio in 2020.

MDI: D15.1 million of Tuition Fees Owed from 2014 to 2020

Besides the impact of Covid-19 causing losses to the Institute, the MDI is trying to recover over D15 Million in tuition fees owed from 2014 to 2020. The two amounts are different in that the first loss of D19.5 million due to the closure of the Institute cannot be recovered, however, the D15.1 million owed from 2014 to 2020 are fees which may still be recovered.

According to the Audit Report prepared by an independent audit firm, HAD & Co Chartered Accountant and Business Advisors, out of the D15,158,138 owed to MDI over D10 million is owed

between 2020 and 2019. Below is a table highlighting the amounts owed from 2014 to 2020.

Ministries Owe MDI Millions

Speaking on the recommendation of the Audit Hon Fatou Cham of Sanneh Mentereng asked what the management is "doing to avoid these losses" and if they had "any other strategy different from the auditors to avoid these losses?" MDI's Deputy Director Mrs Barry explained that tuition fees come in two folds, the "regular programs from students and short-term programs". The short-term programs are "tailor-made programs for the public sector, private sector and the NGOs," said

Mrs Barry. The Deputy Director added that MDI is facing challenges to recover funds from Institutions. To recover the funds Mrs Barry says MDI has written several invoices and "can quote one institution, a Ministry that owed us over D1 Million, or let me say D2 Million in the accounts of 2019. So that's on short term alone". Turning her attention to regular programs paid by students and individuals Deputy Director Mrs Barry explains that they "send students home, denying them of exams or withholding certificates until they pay". They soon realised that denying students certificates was not addressing the issue and when they started denying students from writing exams, they started to register some progress in recovering tuition fees owed.

Another mechanism they are exploring is an Online Students Portal where students can only register for courses after paying their fees. Mrs Barry solicited the Assembly's support in engaging Ministries to recover the tuition fees owed to MDI.

To assist the MDI in recovering the tuition fees owed, Hon Sulayman Jammeh of Bundungka Kunda requested for a list of all the Ministries owing MDI. This will enable the Assembly chase Ministries to pay the amounts owed. As a former student of the MDI, Hon Jammeh recounted his experiences when he said "students will come and they will just pay the first instalment, finish [not pay the rest]. I think this is a big amount, D15 Million that's too much".

Another tactic revealed by Deputy Director Mrs Barry is that MDI will withhold transport refund or training allowance for students enrolled in the tailor-made courses for institutions and Ministries who haven't paid their fees. The allowance is then deducted from the students' fees to bring down the outstanding balances.

She revealed that "in terms of our regular programs you'll be surprised that most of the sponsored students

by their Institutions are the ones that don't pay. So that's another challenge".

Asked when the list would be made available, she responded to say the next day.

Hon Musa Cham of Serrekunda and Hon Fatou Cham urged the MDI to consider taking legal action to make an example. Hon Fatou Cham recommended that "taking legal action would be the best idea because as you start it other Ministries will get afraid to try such action". MDI's Mrs Barry explained that the legal avenues "attracts cost and it's time-consuming". She added that "it's difficult to take your partner to court, so all we could do is just to negotiate and then manage the debt for the collection".

When Hon Musa Cham and Hon Fatou Cham continued to urge the MDI to consider legal actions acting Chairperson Hon Lang Fofana interjected to recommend that other avenues should be considered and exhausted including the efforts of Parliamentarians. He insisted that the list should be provided and the Committee will add its weight to recover the balances.

Hon Lang Fofana urged the MDI to ensure that there is an in-house mechanism to facilitate the recovery of tuition fees. The meeting continued as the MDI and members of the FPAC discussed additional mechanisms such as an Online Portal for students and learning from other institutions such as the University of the Gambia.

Another issue of misappropriation highlighted in the Audit Report revealed that "some senior management staff are paid telephone and fuel allowances whereas they are provided with official vehicles fuelled by the Institute and post-paid mobile phones sims at the cost of the Institute".

The Audit Report also revealed that "there is a high risk of misappropriation of fuel leading to financial losses to the Institute" and the late payment of pension contributions amongst others.



MDI Management in Parliament © GPN



Voice of the Nation

The Voice of the Nation is a regular column featuring engagements between Parliament and the citizenry. In this edition the National Assembly Staff's engagement with Academia and the National Youth Council is featured alongside the National Audit Office's engagement with Parliament.

National Youth Council Trains NAMs on Good Governance



Youth Parliamentarians sworn in after the April 2022 Parliamentary Elections undertook a three-day training organised by the National Youth Council (NYC) from 24th to 26th June 2022 at Prestige Global Hotel in Kololi. The training supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) aims to strengthen the capacity of National Assembly Members (NAMs) in terms of good governance.

Clerk of the National Assembly, Momodou A Sise told delegates and Parliamentarians that over 60% of Parliamentarians sworn in to the sixth legislature are youths. Clerk Sise added that "societies that give youth an equal chance to prosper and participate freely in social, political, and economic life are more peaceful and more prosperous. In this regard, parliament and parliamentarians shall be encouraged to continue creating the enabling environment for youth participation in the political decision-making process".

Clerk Sise urged Parliamentarians to take advantage of the training to

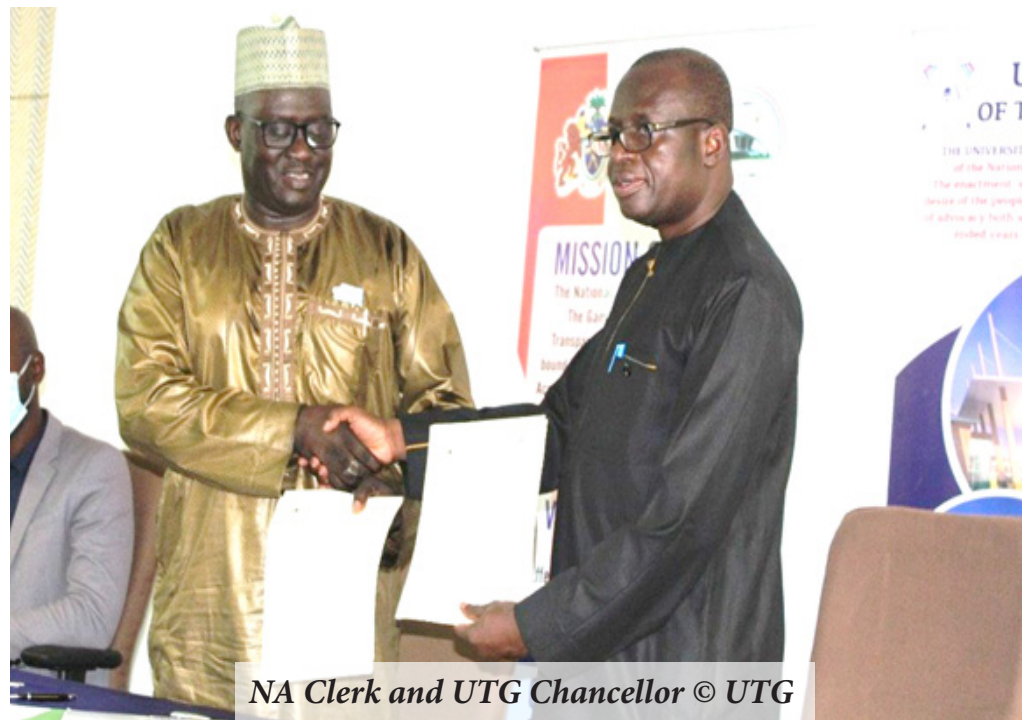
better represent their electorates in parliament. He applauded the NYC for coming up with the brilliant initiative.

During the opening speech delivered by the Minister of Youth and Sports, Hon Bakary Badjie, he highlighted the participation of Youth in the 2021 Presidential election as a sign of their commitment in building a peaceful Gambia.

"Young Parliamentarians are social actors of change and progress and their contribution to national development cannot be overemphasized. National Assembly members must be provided appropriate exposure and opportunities to be mainstream and be the change we want in society" said Youth Minister Hon Badjie

The Deputy Clerk of Legal & Procedural Matters of the National Assembly, Mr Kalipha MM Mbye delivered presentations on the functions of the legislature. Among other thematic areas introduced by Mr Mbye, includes the voting in the National Assembly, introduction of bills and acts, Government's Annual Budget (Estimates), guidelines governing NAMs to name a few.

National Assembly Signs MoU with UTG for Internship Programme



NA Clerk and UTG Chancellor © UTG

The University of the Gambia (UTG) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Assembly on Thursday 23rd June 2022 to begin an internship programme with university students. The MoU aims to provide an opportunity for students to gain working experience of Parliamentary proceedings and Parliamentary Democracy.

The Vice Chancellor of the UTG, Professor Herbert Robinson, noted during the signing ceremony that interns (s) will be attached to Parliamentarians to support them in their work and acquire more knowledge in Parliamentary proceedings and exchange ideas.

Clerk of the National Assembly, Mr Momodou A Sise, noted that

the signing of the MoU will grant privileges to about 100 students with exceptional academic and extra-curricular accomplishments from UTG. Mr Sise further notes that interns will surely learn many functions in terms of national assembly proceedings including law making, executive accountability, securing financial accountability to name a few.

This initiative is supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) through the UTG. UNDP Representative to The Gambia, Ms. Aissata De, commended the historic initiative which will provide support to both Elected and Nominated parliamentarians.

NAO Engages Parliamentarians from FPAC and PEC

On 2nd July 2022, the National Audit Office (NAO) engaged National Assembly members from Parliament's Finance and Public Accounts Committee (FPAC) and the Public Enterprise Committee (PEC) on the mandate of the NAO and its work.

At least 12 Parliamentarians from both Standing Committees are present at the workshop. In total there are 9 NAMs in each Committee making a total of 18 NAMs, meaning six are currently not present.

The role of the FPAC and PEC are often confused by members of

the public however the National Assembly's Revised Standing Orders gives clear definitions for their roles.

Provision 112(2) of the National Assembly's Standing Order mandates that "it shall be the duty of the Finance and Public Account Committee to examine the accounts showing the appropriation of the sums granted by the Assembly to meet the public expenditure and such other accounts laid before the Assembly as the Assembly may refer to the committee together

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AUTHORS

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