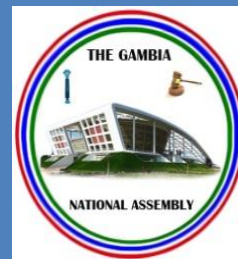




REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

National Assembly, New Assembly Building, Reg. Pye Lane
Banjul, The Gambia



FINAL REPORT OF THE SPECIAL SELECT COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE OF PUBLIC EMERGENCY

MAY 2020

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Abbreviations

CRR	Central River Region
EPR	Emergency Powers Regulations
GBoS	Gambia Bureau of Statistics
GCAA	Gambia Civil Aviation Authority
GFRS	Gambia Fire and Rescue Services
GIA	Gambia International Airlines
GID	Gambia Immigration Department
GPF	Gambia Police Force
GRA	Gambia Revenue Authority
LRR	Lower River Region
NAM	National Assembly Member
NBR	North Bank Region
OIC	Officer-In-Charge
OPD	Out-Patient Department
PHO	Public Health Officer
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
RHT	Regional Health Team
RHD	Regional Health Directorate
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
URR	Upper River Region
WCR	West Coast Region
WHO	World Health Organisation

❖ Background

Pursuant to Standing Order 95(5), the establishment of a Special Select Committee by the National Assembly was premised on the objective of holding the Executive to account as it delivers on its commitment to the people during the forty-five day period of the State of Public Emergency that was approved by the National Assembly of The Gambia. The mandates of the Committee are to, among other things, critically scrutinize the regulations, monitor the effectiveness of their implementation and engage the relevant stakeholders.

The Committee is to ensure that the requisite platform is provided that would facilitate the implementation of the regulations and demand periodic updates from any Ministry, Department and Agency that the Committee considers appropriate and integral, regarding the situation and or the implementation of the State of Public Emergency and advise the plenary accordingly.

In the week following its establishment, the Committee designed a work plan which guided its activities. Ministries, Departments, Agencies and non-state stakeholders have been invited to present their activities in relation to Covid-19.

Furthermore, the Committee visited 38 places across the country which includes ferry terminals, health facilities, markets, border posts, fish landing sites, fishmeal factories and security sectors where it gathered firsthand information on the level of implementation of the Emergency Powers Regulations and assessed the preparedness level of the implementing/enforcement agencies in handling and containing the spread of Covid-19 in The Gambia.

❖ Objectives

This report seeks to:

- Apprise National Assembly Members (NAMs) on the extent to which the Committee has delivered on its mandate.
- Inform NAMs about state of implementation of the regulations and their effects on the lives and livelihood of people and institutions in the country.

❖ Methodology

- Internal Committee meetings
- Consultation meetings with Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs)
- Consultation meetings with Local Government Authorities and Non-State Stakeholders
- Site visits

❖ Activities

➤ Internal Committee Meetings – 7th to 9th April, 2020

The Committee met and developed a work plan that would guide and shape the conduct of its work. It developed questions that it also used as guide during its meetings with stakeholders. During its first meeting, the Committee identified the following:

- The Regulations do not indicate any plan that shows how vendors/shops, vehicle owners, drivers and vulnerable families that would be affected by the Regulations would be compensated as guaranteed in the Emergency Powers Act 1965;
- The places of worship such as mosques and churches are not being cited as part of the ban on public gatherings; and
- The Regulations do not specify the maximum number of persons that could be allowed in any public place at a time.

➤ Consultation Meetings with Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs); Local Government Authorities and Non-State Stakeholders such as The Gambia Transport Union, Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry, The Gambia Christian Council and Gambia Supreme Islamic Council – 14th to 17th April, 2020

The Committee, during this period, had meetings with officials from the Ministries of Finance and Economic Affairs, Interior, Justice, Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment, Lands, Regional Governments, Religious Affairs, and Works, Transport and Infrastructure; National Public Health Emergency Committee, the Security Sector (Inspector General of Police, Gambia Navy and Gambia Immigration Department); Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Local Government Authorities, The Gambia Christian Council, and The Gambia Supreme Islamic Council.

❖ Objective

The objective of these meetings was to make exhaustive consultations with relevant stakeholders so that by the time the Committee rolled out to the field, it would be in a position to make assessments and deduce conclusions from the submissions made on the extent of implementation or other issues relating to the Emergency Powers Regulations against what prevails on the ground.

❖ Findings

The Committee's findings are wide and varied, and could be summarized according to each Ministry or department as follows:

✓ **Ministry of Justice**

The Committee observed that there was no effective communication and coordination between the Ministry of Justice (being the custodian of the Regulations) and the Ministry of Interior (being the enforcement authority). While the Minister of Interior reported that his Ministry, up to the time of the Committee's engagement, did not receive copies of the Regulations, the Attorney General and Minister of Justice on the other hand argued that he had handed over copies of the four Regulations to the Police. The Ministry of Lands, Regional Government and Religious Affairs (MoLRG&RA) also reported that it had not received copies of the Regulations. Both the Ministry of Interior and the MoLRG&RA were asked if food vendors and non-food vendors/shops at the market could alternate. In response, the Attorney General and Minister of Justice said amendments to the Regulations are underway and that would be noted.

✓ **Ministry of Interior**

The Ministry of Interior reported that those who are to enforce the Regulations (security service) have no prior training on any of the Regulations. The Ministry indicated it was further constrained by the lack of personal protective equipment such as masks to help protect themselves in the course of their work as enforcement might sometimes require physically handling or coming into contact with individuals. The Ministry expressed concern on the non-compliance to social distancing and the generally low awareness rate among the public on the Regulations.

✓ **Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs**

The Ministry revealed that The Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS), in collaboration with the UNDP, is currently cleaning up the data it has on the number of households in the country in order to ascertain the vulnerable families that would require government support.

The Committee challenged the Ministries particularly that of Finance, to come up with something concrete regarding compensation to the public before the end of the Emergency period. The Justice Minister, in his expert opinion, was of the view that the law, as per Emergency Powers Act 1965, does not specify a timeframe as to when compensations that are to be made as a result of an emergency situation should be made.

The Ministry of Finance revealed that of the D500 million pledged to the Ministry of Health, D172 million has already been paid. It indicated that D100 million (of the D172 million) was added to the grant approved by the World Bank toward the procurement of ambulances and other medical equipment from Turkey because the total bill of the Ministry of Health for that purpose was US\$12 million. The Ministry further revealed that the World Bank actually approved US\$5 million (instead of US\$10 million) and the other US\$5 million was taken from the US\$35 million that was earmarked for the State-Owned Enterprises Reform Program.

✓ **Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment (MoTIRIE)**

The MoTIRIE was confident that there was enough stock of essential commodities to last the country beyond the period of the State of Public Emergency. However, the Ministry was worried that if the trend at which goods are being smuggled out of the country continues unabated, their expectation could falter. For instance, the Ministry revealed that as at 6th April, 2020, up to 37,000 metric tons of rice was available in the country. By 14th April, this quantity dropped to 23,000 metric tons. They indicated that the only explanation that could be provided for this exponential drop was that smuggling was taking place on a massive rate, citing coastal sites as gateways.

MoTIRIE further disclosed that 9,170 tons of rice, 19,000 tons of sugar and 15,638 cartons of milk are among a shipment of commodities that are expected to arrive in the country soon. The Ministry revealed that flour is produced locally in the country and that there is adequate stock of raw materials for it. They reported that 6075 metric tons of tomato paste, 15000 cartons of milk, 1,364,380 litres of cooking oil, 4900 cartons of whole chicken and 37,762 cartons of chicken legs, among others, are already in stock.

✓ **Ministry of Fisheries and Water Resources**

The Ministry of Fisheries indicated that it has established a departmental Covid-19 Taskforce at all landing sites. They reported that the decision to allow fishmeal companies to operate along the coastal fish landing sites was based on consultations with, and advice from the Ministries of Health, Justice and Environment. The Ministry's taskforce highlighted some of the challenges which include the inadequate supply of PPEs and refusal of sailors to be quarantined among others.

✓ **Ministry of Works, Transport and Infrastructure (MoWTI)**

The Ministry of Transport revealed that the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic has taken a great toll on some operators such as The Gambia International Airline (GIA), Gambia Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA), Gambia Transport Service Corporation (GTSC), Gambia Ferry Services (GFS) and the commercial vehicle operators. They, therefore, appealed for essential relief support for these operators in order to mitigate the effects on them as they still have to pay their staff among other commitments.

The GIA projected it would lose as much as D110 million if it does not resume operations from now against November, provided Hajj operations are allowed to proceed. On the other hand, if Hajj operations are also halted, the company expects losses of a whopping sum of about D275 million. The GCAA revealed a potential loss of over D600 million if operations are not resumed in earnest.

The President of The Gambia Transport Union appealed for a reduction of the pump price of fuel to D35 or D40 as mitigation strategy for commercial vehicle owners/drivers but the Ministry of Transport rendered this unrealistic as it reported that the government only earns a D2.00 profit on

each litre of fuel. The Gambia Ferry Services reported that, contrary to allegations, they have cut down their ferry capacity from the maximum of 2,000 people to 1,000 and that their ticket machines help to control this number.

✓ **Security Services**

The Gambia Navy lamented the poor condition of their facilities and low allocation of fuel as challenges that bar them from patrolling the sea as effectively as required. They reported that, monthly, the department is allocated 12,000 litres of fuel for their patrol and other official engagements. They said 9,000 litres of this total goes to patrol which could only cater for three patrols in a month. They emphasized that in order to do their patrols and quick interceptions effectively, they would need high speed patrol boats.

The Inspector General of Police revealed that 13 trucks have been intercepted and found wanting for smuggling food commodities out of the country, and 34 drivers have been arrested in connection with breaking the Regulations. Asked if he was aware that active football activities were going on across the country despite the ban on public gathering, he replied in the affirmative and added that they do try to initiate dialogue and avoid confrontations as enforcing some regulations would require the use of force and they do not have the luxury of personal protective equipment.

The Immigration department echoed the porosity and vulnerability of the borders, though they said they do sensitise communities on the need for all hands to be on deck to combat the coming in of people into the country without being quarantined. They expressed the need to have public health officers stationed at Denton Bridge in Banjul to take the temperatures of people who might arrive on boats at the site.

✓ **Religious Leaders**

The Gambia Christian Council (GCC) and The Gambia Supreme Islamic Council (GSIC) have also indicated that, even though they do encourage their followers to abide by the government Regulations, the ban on public gatherings has affected their way of worship. They said while it is acceptable for them to worship in their homes, coming together to form congregations in mosques and churches is what they would have preferred particularly on Sundays and Fridays, especially as Ramadan approaches for Muslims.

The GSIC in particular queried that just as places of worship are completely closed, the kind of information being circulated about the spread of Covid-19 should require banning public transportation instead of just placing restrictions. They noted that if the vehicles of the security officers enforcing the Regulations are always overcrowded, it would be difficult to convince ordinary citizens that social distancing must be observed. They cautioned that any decision affecting people's faith and worship should be taken in consultation with the affected stakeholders.

The Committee called on the authorities of GCC and GSIC to prevail on their congregations to comply with the regulations as any negligence or disregard could be catastrophic for the country.

✓ **National Public Health Emergency Committee (NPHEC)**

The objective of establishing the National Public Health Emergency Committee (NPHEC) is to coordinate a robust resource mobilization campaign for Public Health Emergency (PHE) preparedness, prevention and response operations. The committee is chaired by the Minister of Health and co-chaired by WHO Country Representative.

On the advice of the Accountant General and the Ministry of Finance, a Special Projects Account was opened at the Central Bank of The Gambia to receive all funds and donations relating to Covid-19. The account, as reported by NPHEC, is managed by the Accountant General.

The D500 million earmarked by the government is meant for the Ministry of Health but would still be used to finance the services of other Ministries, Departments and Agencies whose works are directly linked to the fight against Covid-19, and whose services have been hired by the Ministry of Health. NPHEC reported that treatment centers for Covid-19 were being established in all regions and that plans are on the way to build permanent structures to hold patients in all regions across the country as well as maintain those structures to be used for other purposes even after the Covid-19 pandemic.

The NPHEC reported that D20 million fund raised by GCCI is to be handed over to the Ministry of Health. They revealed that GCCI is already constructing a structure at Sukuta which is expected to accommodate about 600 patients. However, the funding for that project does not come from the funds raised on behalf of the Ministry of Health by GCCI.

Experts at the Ministry of Health revealed that over 181,000 people could be infected with the Covid-19 if the country fails to strictly adhere to the rules of social distancing. At least 20% of this figure is expected to require medical attention, and 5% might die. The Ministry was worried that should this happen, it would exert immense pressure on the already debilitating health facilities, as the situation would require as much as 3,300 beds to care for patients. However, if each person is conscious about social distancing and seriously takes it into account, the possible maximum infected cases of the country was projected at 53,000 with 1000 beds to care for patients, hence the importance of social distancing.

✓ **The Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Chamber (GCCI)**

GCCI disclosed that it has raised approximately D20 million from which they refurbished and equipped the Sanatorium, arranged the AGIB Guest House in Basse that was used as isolation center for those traced to be connected with the confirmed case at Numuyel and provided 50 oxygen flow meters to Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital.

The Chamber indicated that the sources of foreign exchange to settle Gambia's predominantly import-driven economy are usually from remittances, tourism, foreign aid, grants, and re-export trade. It pointed out that the disruption of these sources by the pandemic would be further

aggravated by the lack of air travel to facilitate currency shipments, which would also hamper local banks to credit their foreign accounts. GCCI, therefore, recommends that:

- The Central Bank, in collaboration with commercial banks, establish the value of existing Letters of Credit for essential commodities and allocate them with required amount of foreign exchange at the prevailing market rate. The Chamber is certain that doing this would guarantee price stability and timely settlement and reordering of commodities. The Chamber further suggests that in order to ensure that basic commodities are still available in the country while there is no pressure on the Dalasi, the Central Bank should continue to intermittently intervene by providing foreign exchange to the market in a deliberate manner to protect both the Dalasi and market liquidity.
- The Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank to encourage the commercial banks to support the government initiatives in the form of providing “interest rate rebate or discount”. It observed that looking at the current lending rates, high cost of energy and low productivity levels, many businesses would struggle to pay their loans, which would inevitably result in their closure, downsizing or completely defaulting thus putting pressure on the banking system.
- The Ministry of Finance to waive payment of Payroll Tax for 90 days to encourage businesses to maintain employment during these difficult times. Further to that, the Finance Ministry to instruct Social Security to support businesses in the Tourism sector, especially their contributors, by providing their salaries for 90 days based on the current payrolls; and The Gambia Revenue Authority to revert to old valuation methodology for imports up till the end of December to avoid disruption in the importation of commodities.

✓ **Local Government Authorities (LGAs)**

The Local Government Authorities (LGAs) indicated that the enforcement of the Emergency Powers Regulations would continue to pose huge challenges as the Councils that are part of the key implementing authorities have neither been consulted nor served copies of the Regulations to comprehend their contents. The Council authorities vented out their frustration at the government, citing gross inconsistencies across regions in the enforcement of some Regulations such as those that deal with the times of opening and closure of markets, and the shops that are to be closed or opened. They disclosed that the new prices for commodities were done without consulting the LGAs.

There was consensus among the authorities that the rural Councils, most of whom highly depend on the revenues collected from the weekly “lumos” conducted within their areas, would be more adversely affected by the economic implications of the Regulations. They indicated that if the government does not intervene by paying their subventions, some of them would not be able to pay the salaries of their staff.

The Council authorities expressed concern over a potential food insecurity post-Covid19 as most farmers in the rural areas have already started consuming their seeds for the coming rainy season. They called for immediate support and intervention for the rural poor as they have observed that most philanthropists' interventions stop within the Greater Banjul Area. They recommended and emphasized that any relief support from government should be channeled through the Councils to ensure equitable distribution as each of them already has a reliable data set on their area.

The Committee acknowledged that the meeting has brought to light the existence of serious communication gaps between the central government and the LGAs which they said could have been avoided had each opened up to the other. Nevertheless, the Committee urged the LGAs to liaise with their line Ministry for government to address their concerns. They said it is rather regrettable that even though the Councils do not know the contents of the Regulations, the government considers and relies on them as key implementation or enforcement authority.

The Committee also tasked the LGAs to draw up their respective strategic plans that would explain how their operations and finances would be adversely affected by Covid-19. Asked if they have developed any immediate strategies to deal with Covid-19, all the LGAs answered in the affirmative. However, it was only the Kuntaur Area Council and the Kanifing Municipal Council that submitted their financial strategies to the Committee.

❖ **Observations**

The Committee observed that the government has recently announced some amendments to the Emergency Powers Regulations. Some of these include those amendments that were made and adopted at the National Assembly plenary as well as new insertions. The Minister of Justice noted and assured the Committee that it would have to seek the affirmation of the Assembly on the revised Regulations.

OVERSIGHT/MONITORING TOUR

The Committee visited and inspected 2 ferry terminals, 12 health facilities including the Medical Research Council, one police station, a Naval base, 4 markets, 6 fish landing sites including fishmeal factories at the respective sites, a car park and 6 border posts among others across the country. The Committee also visited Pacharr rice fields and had engagement with the proprietor of Maruo Farms Ltd.

❖ **Objectives**

The tour was meant to:

- Give the Committee the opportunity to determine at firsthand the level of implementation of the Emergency Powers Regulations (EPR).
- Enable the Committee identify any gaps that might exist in the implementation of these Regulations.
- Help the Committee to better advise the plenary on the status of the implementation of the State of Public Emergency.

❖ Sites Visited

1. **BANJUL FERRY TERMINAL**

The Committee started the tour at the Banjul Ferry Terminal and the findings are as follows:

Committee's observations:

- Hand washing facilities were placed at the vehicle and ticket entrances as well as other entry points of the terminal.
- The number of passengers at the waiting shed was low and less crowded; however, as they entered the ferry, social distancing was not observed.
- Essential commodity shops were still opened after 1:00pm
- Restaurants were serving take-aways as per the Regulation
- None of the staff wore a mask.

Interview with ground personnel:

The authorities reported that:

- Half of the ferry's capacity is 1000 passengers but currently they carry less than that.
- Fumigation of the ferries was done every three (3) days.
- The staff was provided with face masks but they barely use them.

2. **BARRA FERRY TERMINAL – NBR**

Committee's observations:

- The waiting shed was clear of passengers but the corridor from the vehicle entrance leading to the ramp was crowded with waiting passengers.
- None of the staff wore a mask.

Interview with ground personnel:

- The staff reported insufficient supply of face masks and gloves.
- A youth volunteer working with the Red Cross expressed the urgent need for support in the form of masks and gloves as well as making people comply with hand washing and social distancing

3. BARRA POLICE STATION – NBR

Committee observations:

- Hand washing facility was placed at the entrance.
- There was no social distancing among the officers as well as those detained in the cells.

Interview with ground personnel:

- The police reported that they have been supplied with face masks but none of them was seen wearing them.
- The use of one ferry by the ferry services leads to over-crowding and outrush of the people. They suggested that at least two ferries should be in service to avoid overcrowding onboard.

4. ESSAU HEALTH CENTER – NBR

Committee's observations:

- Hand washing facility was placed at the hospital entrance

Interview with ground personnel:

- The Officer-In-Charge (OIC) reported that Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) were supplied to the Special Covid-19 Team set up in the hospital but materials for the Isolation Centre were not still in place.
- Some rice and cooking oil were available but there was no money to buy other ingredients, as such no cooking was taking place to provide meals for patients.
- The isolation centre was being used to keep only suspected Covid-19 cases separate from where suspected and active tuberculosis (TB) cases are kept.

5. AMDALIE BORDER POST – NBR

Committee's observations:

- Most shops and other places have hand washing facilities in place.
- Food and non-food shops were all open in the morning.
- Frontline workers had no PPEs.
- There was little adherence to social distancing.

- En route to the border, officers at Kerr Jatta Police Checkpoint were advised to be vigilant on drivers that carry more than the specified number of passengers in their vehicles.

Interview with ground personnel:

- Public Health officers reported acute shortage of PPEs. For the police, they have no PPEs.
- It takes time before isolated suspects are transported by the Response Team
- There is no standby ambulance to facilitate speedy response
- No allowance has been paid to frontline workers
- Food, water and electricity were not available at the holding center. The Gambia Revenue Authority (GRA) briefly supplied electricity to the centre but this service was later disconnected.
- The waiting shed is usually very hot thus the need for an office space
- The security services rendered their support to the health officers in making people wash their hands and have their temperatures taken.
- The police reported porosity of borders and limited resources to patrol, and that they sometimes patrol on foot.
- Both the police and the health officers do collaborate with their Senegalese counterparts to help curb any irregularity on either side of the border
- The security personnel reported conducting sensitizations at border villages to report any abnormalities

6. FARAFENNI GENERAL HOSPITAL – NBR

Committee's observations:

- There was hand washing facility at the gate
- There was nobody to take the temperatures of visitors as they entered the hospital
- Posters of Covid-19 were posted on the walls
- No staff of the hospital was seen wearing mask or any other protective equipment

Interview with ground personnel:

- The Infection Prevention Control Unit built for Ebola has been designated as isolation center
- The hospital is meant to identify, recommend and facilitate the evacuation of suspects to treatment centers
- The temperature of everyone at the Out-Patient Department (OPD) was reported to be taken before any services are rendered
- A Frontline Committee comprising nurses, doctors and public health officers has been established for advocacy. The two radio stations in Farafenni have each allocated a one-hour airtime per week for sensitization on Covid-19.

- Though not enough, some PPEs are available and a step-down training has been conducted on the use of the equipment.
- Feeding was provided for all in-patients.
- The hospital no longer receives patients from Senegal.
- The hospital was not yet disinfected; tanks were available for disinfection/fumigation but the chemicals were not yet received.

7. FARRAFENNI BORDER POST – NBR

Committee's observations:

- The Committee for the first time has seen an officer at the GRA identified as Inspector enforcing the Regulations
- Vehicles were still coming from the other side of the border

Interview with ground personnel:

- The public health has a temporal holding center which was the facility built for Ebola.
- PPEs were reported to be in short supply. Equipment and materials for fumigation were also not provided.
- There was no supply of food, water and electricity.
- There was no allowance paid to frontline workers.
- Senegalese vehicles carrying essential/perishable commodities were only allowed to pass through the border after taking the temperatures of the persons onboard.
- The ambulances that pass through the border were mostly on transit to Cassamance.

8. KAUR DISTRICT HEALTH CENTER – CRR

Committee's observations:

- A hand washing facility was placed at the gate.

Interview with ground personnel:

- The hospital still receives patients from Senegal
- Patients were often reluctant to give certain details during interview particularly travel history.
- The hospital has not had any suspect yet.
- Basic screening materials and PPEs like masks and gloves were available and used when dealing with potential suspects.
- In the event suspects are registered, there's no food to cater for them

- Since they were not trained on sample collection, suspects could only be isolated, pending evacuation by the national evacuation team.

9. PANCHANG BORDER – CRR

Committee's observations:

- A hand washing facility has been placed at the entrance of Panchang open border area.
- Red Cross volunteers were stationed at the border to facilitate hand washing by people.
- The Red Cross volunteers were not using any PPEs.
- The volunteers are students residing in Panchang.

Interview with ground personnel:

The Red Cross volunteers reported that:

- They are on voluntary service and they do not have any PPEs.
- It's difficult to get people to cooperate and wash their hands.
- The police sometimes have to intervene to make people wash their hands.

10. KUNTAUR HEALTH CENTER – CRR

Committee's observations:

- A hand washing facility was placed at the gate of the health center.
- During a brief stop at Wassu Lumo area, en route to Kuntaur Health Centre, the Committee observed that only a few shops had hand washing facilities in place.

Interview with ground personnel:

- The health center reported shortage in the supply of PPEs.
- Waa Niani Association donated over 1000 masks to them.
- Lot of porous borders, which unless managed, will make the fight against Covid-19 difficult.
- They conducted sensitizations to satellite border villages with the National Assembly Member for the area.
- There was no isolation center. Suspects can only be isolated for a few hours.
- Amdalie, a village near the border, does not have water. The villagers fetch water from villages in Senegal. Border closure would have excruciating effects on their lives.

11. BANSANG GENERAL HOSPITAL – CRR

Committee's observations:

- A hand washing facility was placed at the gate.
- The temperature of visitors was checked at the entrance.
- Most of the health personnel at the gate had face masks on.

Interview with ground personnel:

- The hospital reported that a clinical taskforce committee, which gives daily briefings to the staff, was established when a case of Covid-19 was announced in the country.
- In collaboration with the office of the Regional Governor, the hospital conducts daily radio programmes which they said helped to clear so many misconceptions surrounding Covid-19 to the public.
- The hospital was disinfected every morning and afternoon
- Some PPEs were available, though not enough
- The temperature of staff, patients and visitors are checked before entering the hospital.
- The hospital divided the staff into two groups. The ‘Negative Group’ stays at home while the ‘Positive Group’ goes to work so that in case the ‘Positive Group’ is exposed to the virus, the ‘Negative Group’ would emerge to pick up the fight.
- Patients were categorised according to the nature of their diseases such that those with heart, cough or breathing related diseases are easily traceable.
- The hospital and the RHT have formed a surveillance team.
- There was isolation center but it was not ready to accommodate any suspect.
- Since land was already available, the hospital recommended the construction of an isolation center as soon as possible.

12. BASSE DISTRICT HEALTH CENTER – URR

Committee’s observations:

- A hand washing facility was placed at the gate.

Interview with ground personnel:

- The management reported that preparation against the spread of Covid-19 was poor.
- PPEs were in acute shortage.
- The hospital only has clinical thermometers and no thermometer gun; they said this increases the chance of those working on the frontlines contracting Covid-19.
- The isolation center was not ideal as it was too close to the pediatric ward, with no water or toilet facility.
- Some frontline health workers have received their allowances but most of them are yet to be paid.

13. SABI BORDER POST – URR

Committee's observations:

- A hand washing facility was in place.
- Passage of vehicles was low.
- Temperatures of persons on transit were not recorded on arrival.

Reactions of ground personnel:

- The borders are porous, so the security finds it difficult to curb movements along the many unguarded entry and exit points
- There was no official vehicle at the post to facilitate patrol; officers reported that they fuel and use their personal motorbikes in the event they need to pursue any suspect.
- There were no PPEs.
- Some frontline staff have been paid their allowance, but there were others who reported they were not paid. They reported that some were paid who were not entitled to.
- They conducted house-to-house sensitization with the NAM of the area
- The environment is extremely hot so they requested for a fridge or water dispenser.

14. PACHARR RICE FIELD – CRR

The Committee had a stopover at Pacharr rice fields and had discussions with Musa Darboe, the Manager of Maruo Farms Ltd to assess his level of preparedness in supporting the local farmers.

- Mr. Darboe revealed that he was putting on trial a hybrid variety of rice, one hectare of which can produce up to 13 tons in 2½ months; the total arable land area of the Jahally-Pacharr rice fields is 1480 hectares.
- According to Mr. Darboe, he currently needs a financing of D20 million interest-free loan, D10 million of this would be used to buy the harvest of the local farmers; D5 million to support farmers with inputs like seeds, fertilizer and ploughing; and the other D5 million would be used to build a store/warehouse and put in place flood control mechanisms.

15. MISERA/SENOBA BORDER POST – LRR

Committee observations:

- A hand washing facility was in place.
- Temperatures were checked on arrival.
- Health and security personnel had their masks on.

Interview with ground personnel:

- There was strong teamwork and collaboration between the health and security personnel.
- The security was trained on the use of the thermometer gun.
- They liaise with their Senegalese health and security counterparts.
- Individuals were only isolated when they recorded high temperatures (38°C or above)
- The PPEs were not enough.
- Allowance for frontline personnel has not been paid.
- RHD only gave a dry ration of biscuits to its officer. PHO shared the food of the security personnel.

16. SOMA MARKET – LRR**Committee observations:**

- All shops with essential and non-essential commodities were open in the morning.
- The market was crowded as ever, no sign of social distancing or any Regulation in force.

Interview with ground personnel:

- The LGA reported they do not have the Regulations so they could not enforce it.
- The Committee advised the LGA to get the Regulations by all means necessary as they are duty-bearers that they should not wait for anybody to supply them before they could begin to enforce.

17. BWIAM GENERAL HOSPITAL – WCR**Committee observations:**

- Hand washing facility was placed at the gate.
- Most health personnel have face masks on.

Interview with ground personnel:

- There was a holding facility though not fully equipped
- Different thematic teams have been established to facilitate a robust and effective response to Covid-19 related issues.
- The hospital lacks sufficient PPEs.
- Some members of staff have been trained by the WHO on Covid-19 response, who in turn had a step-down training with their colleagues.
- Frontline workers have not been paid any allowance. The hospital requested for Covid-19 response to be clearly and operationally defined by the Ministry of Health as there have been calls to include only a few names at the hospital.

- The hospital's only ambulance at the hospital was being diverted to take care of Covid-19 activities.

18. GIBOROH/SELETI BORDER POST – WCR

Committee's observations:

- Hand washing facility put in place.
- The temperatures of visitors were recorded on arrival.

Interview with ground personnel:

- The Ebola facility has been designated as Covid-19 holding center but there was no food, and electricity supply at the center.
- There was close collaboration between the health personnel and the various security units at the border.
- So far, 23 Gambians who came through the border have been subsequently referred for quarantine.
- Fish supplies were allowed into the country but essential commodities as stipulated in the Regulations were not allowed to be taken out of the country.
- Vehicles were available but there was no fuel allocation for patrol.
- There was inadequate supply of PPEs.

19. DENTON BRIDGE

Committee's observations:

- Hand washing facilities were placed at different locations.

Interview with ground personnel:

- No PHO was found at the site but GID officers do occasionally visit.
- Entrance to creek was controlled by the Navy at the bridge & Warfi Njago.
- Fishing boats were still fishing but passenger boats have stopped.
- The Navy usually intercepts and assesses boats and then alerts the GID or Fisheries officials as and when necessary.
- They reported that PPEs were in short supply.
- Naval post was manned 24-7 with changing shifts of officers on duty.

20. EDWARD FRANCIS SMALL TEACHING HOSPITAL

Committee's observations:

- Hand washing facilities were placed at different locations.
- The temperature of every visitor to the hospital was checked at the different entrances of the hospital.
- Most of the health personnel were using masks.

Interview with ground personnel:

- All clinics, except Accident & Emergency, were reported to be closed.
- A holding center was available and used to keep suspected cases before confirmation.
- A screening form was available to interview all those who have high temperatures and respiratory-related complaints

21. GAMBIA PORTS AUTHORITY

Committee's observations:

- There were hand-washing facilities in place.

Interview with ground personnel:

- The crew of vessels is not given Shore Pass so they remain onboard for the time they are in the country.
- Crew does not allow people without PPEs (mask) to come onboard their vessels.
- There was only one PHO at the site and he goes onboard the vessels to assess the crew and those onboard.
- Crew list is taken, they are sanitized and their temperatures taken.
- Since the advent of Covid-19, cruise ships were not allowed to dock.
- Only one temperature checking machine was available for the whole of GPA.
- Vessels drop anchor and wait for clearance before docking at Ports.
- Seafarers live at sea so their contact with the shore is minimized
- Should there be a suspect onboard a vessel, the PHO and entire crew will be quarantined.
- Dock workers have their own union so they are not controlled by GPA.
- There was no law on occupational health & safety covering dock workers.
- GPA used to supply dock workers with PPEs but that has stopped.

22. GAMBIA NAVY BASE (WARFI NJAGO)

Committee's observations:

- There were hand-washing facilities in place.

Interview with ground personnel:

- Committee was briefed at the Maritime Operations Centre (MOC).
- The Navy uses equipment from the Spanish Grant for irregular migration.
- There was report of some PPEs being received but these were inadequate.
- Navy vessels were in operation but only go out to sea on calls.
- More fuel allocation would enhance more effective patrol as the Navy radar could only detect boats at sea and whether they are moving or not but cannot take any further details such as boat name, number, etc.
- Fuel that was set aside to curb illegal migration was what was being used by the Navy on their patrols but that is now exhausted.
- The deployment of a platoon greatly improved situation at Tanji fish landing site.
- To operate effectively, Naval equipment needs to be centralized and interfaced.
- Efficient patrol boats are needed to complement tracking equipment.
- Although a PHO was stationed at the Ports, the Navy also has its own medical officer.
- There was only one thermometer for all the fish landing sites at the Ports.

23. BANJUL ALBERT MARKET

Committee's observations:

- Hand washing facilities were placed at different shops and other places in the market.
- Most of the shops that were not supposed to open at the time of visit were closed.

Interview with ground personnel:

- It was reported that vendors did comply with the Regulations because the health precautions are for their own good.
- However, the health precautions cannot be effectively followed as required due to hunger and poverty.
- Sales were reported to be better in the morning hours thus the call to review the regulations.
- To relocate vendors to different locations might cause loss of clients

24. SERREKUNDA GENERAL HOSPITAL

Committee's observations:

- Hand washing facilities and screening stations were in place.
- The temperature of every visitor was checked at the gate.

Interview with ground personnel:

- A Taskforce comprising nurses, doctors and support staff has been established at the hospital.
- The staff was trained on the use of PPEs and case management.
- Isolation facility has been identified and ready to use. Suspected cases could only be isolated and the National Response Team would be alerted.
- Staff and services have been scaled down; clinical patients were given longer appointments.
- Adequate supply of PPEs, sanitisers, N95 masks and infrared thermometers were a challenge.
- Radio and television sensitization talk shows on Covid-19 were conducted.
- Allowances for most of the frontline staff have not been paid; no payment criteria have been communicated.
- Transportation of staff to and from work should be facilitated in respect of this critical time.

25. SERREKUNDA HEALTH CENTER

Committee's observations:

- Hand washing facility was placed at the entrance.

Interview with ground personnel:

- There was an isolation center but not ready for use.

26. SERREKUNDA MARKET

Committee's observations:

- Hand washing facilities were placed at the market entrances and by several other shops.

- Shifts for opening and closure times between essential and non-essential commodities have been observed in some parts of the market.
- The market was as congested as ever – no social distancing.

Interview with ground personnel:

- It is difficult to disperse the vendors who started the morning shift.
- Complaint was made that the afternoon vendors lose a lot as most sales are made in the morning.
- The Market Management was only responsible for enforcement within the vicinity of the market while the KMC was responsible for all other areas within and beyond the 100-metre threshold.

27. MEDICAL RESEARCH COUNCIL (MRC)

Committee's observations:

- All visitors sanitized their hands at the entrance.
- Hand sanitizing facilities have been installed all over the premises.

Interview with ground personnel:

- The MRC reported to be part of several national committees on Covid-19, and it was the only place where tests were conducted.
- Plans are on to equip the National Public Health Laboratories (NPHL) to roll out testing services.
- MRC conducts 100 tests a day. There were plans afoot to extend testing services upcountry to meet 400 daily tests.
- In addition to its 42 clinical beds, the MRC has prepared 30 beds at Fajara and 10 beds at Keneba (LRR) in anticipation of an upsurge of Covid-19.
- Series of research were reported to be underway at the unit to understand the nature, transmission and behavior of Covid-19 in our setting. They said this is important for vaccine development.
- Emphasis was laid on contact tracing as an important factor in understanding the genome of the virus.
- PPEs are becoming more and more difficult to purchase due to lockdowns around the world. Some prototype PPEs such as face shields were 3D printed at the unit but some of the raw materials would still have to be imported.

- Use of equipment such as ventilators would pose acute challenge in The Gambia as this requires skill and advance level of care. Only 2 non-Gambians were trained on managing intensive cases involving the elderly and severely ill patients.
- The MRC advised that it is important that the disease or the people infected are not stigmatized. They said if people are sick, they should not feel shy to visit a health facility.

28. BAKAU FISH LANDING SITE

Committee's observations:

- Hand washing facilities were in place, though inadequate.

Interview with ground personnel:

- Only security personnel from The Gambia Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) were permanently stationed at the site, no PHO or GID officers was present.
- No training on Covid-19 has been provided for Fisheries personnel at the site.
- Senegalese boats were reported to carry not only fishermen, but smuggle in ordinary passengers sometimes.
- Fishermen complained about the Constitutional Review Commission not seeking their inputs for the Draft Constitution.
- The fishermen suggested that a permanent security post be mounted at SunWing Hotel area, 2 boats reportedly landed there on the day of the Committee's visit.

29. OLD YUNDUM MARKET

Committee's observations:

- Hand washing facilities were in place but not all shops in the market have it.
- Social distancing was disregarded at the vegetable vendors' areas.
- Vendors along the roadside cause congestion, thereby limiting social distancing
- Some non-food vendors only covered their wares and usually sold at the slightest opportunity.

Interview with ground personnel:

- No exact measurement was done to determine where the 100-meter boundary ends.
- The police reported not having PPEs and sanitisers to effectively enforce the regulations.
- To decongest the market, some of the vendors need to be transferred elsewhere.

30. GCCI TRADE FAIR CENTRE

Committee's observations:

- A hand washing facility was in place.

Interview with ground personnel:

- The area being paved with concrete is intended to house 300 tents with 600 beds (2 beds per tent). The design was done in consultation with the Directorate of Medical Services.
- The project is financed by GCCI with a view to complement government's efforts in its response to Covid-19. The site is primarily meant to be used as Trade Fair Center.
- GCCI provides the space and tents but Ministry of Health would equip the tents with the required medical facilities.
- The Chamber recommended government to approach private hospitals and clinics to offer their beds and facilities at the commercial rate for cases that might require intensive care.

31. BRIKAMA CAR PARK

Committee's observations:

- Hand washing facilities were placed at different locations.

Interview with ground personnel:

- The car park management recommended a significant reduction in fuel prices to ease the burden on drivers
- They decried the heavy fines that defaulting drivers are asked to pay.
- They acknowledged that fighting Covid-19 requires the collaborative efforts of everyone.

32. BRIKAMA HEALTH CENTRE

Committee's observations:

- Hand washing facilities were placed at the entrance and different locations of the health centre.
- The temperature of every visitor was checked on entry.

Interview with ground personnel:

- Hand sanitizer was reportedly not adequate for all the frontline workers and facilities.
- Visits to the facility have been stopped and all entrants were checked for Covid-19.
- Inadequate security personnel on the ground pose a challenge in controlling people's movement around the facility.
- Suspects that are taken to the isolation centre are attended to by a nurse before evacuation.
- To ease loneliness and depression, the isolation centre needs a TV, WiFi, food and water.
- There was no incinerator at the health centre and as such there was no proper disposal of medical waste.
- More advocacy is still needed to convince the general public about the existence of Covid-19.
- Pa Modou Bojang of Suu Radio donated D11,000 that was used to renovate the isolation centre.
- Transportation has become a nightmare for officers changing shifts at the facility.
- Out of the 37 members of the Rapid Response Team of the health center, only 21 were paid allowance. 6 other names that the health center knows nothing about were also added on to the list to make it 27.
- By virtue of the above irregularities, none of the officers accepted the allowances.
- There are two ambulances, one exclusively designated for Covid-19 and the other for routine referrals.
- Labourers and Orderlies were urgently needed because the current Orderlies were all volunteers

33. BRIKAMA MARKET

Committee's observations:

- Some hand washing facilities were in place but most shops do not have.
- General environmental hygiene, particularly around the Fish Market, was appalling.
- The market was congested at the time of visit, no social distancing.

Interview with ground personnel:

- The market management reported how bad opening and closure times have affected their businesses, and as such asked for extension of closing time for essential commodity vendors to 3:00pm.
- They said vendors do come from as far away as Foni and that the current time does not favour such vendors.

34. DARSILAMI BORDER POST

Committee's observations:

- There were public health and immigration personnel at the border.
- A hand washing facility was put in place.
- A thermometer gun was available.

Interview with ground personnel:

- GID officers have reported posting their men along some of the illegal entry routes into Gambian territory.
- There is no official mobility at the post so personal motorcycles of individuals are used to deploy officers.
- Incoming Gambians are kept for quarantine but Senegalese nationals are sent back.
- A holding centre was available but too small and not ideal to hold any suspect.
- 3 PHOs work at the post 7 days a week but there is usually no officer during night shift.
- No allowance has been paid to any of the personnel.

35. KARTONG FISH LANDING SITE

Committee's observations:

- There was a hand washing facility in place.

Interview with ground personnel:

- 3 PHOs, who work in shifts, were posted to the site..
- They do not have office space, no easy access to water and they were not paid any allowances.
- There was no holding center.
- The security officers do not have mobility or fuel to conduct patrols at other crossing points.
- The security forces collaborate with PHOs to enforce hand washing and temperature checks.

36. GUNJUR FISH LANDING SITE & FISHMEAL FACTORY

Committee's observations:

- Hand washing facilities were placed at different locations at the site.

- Posters on Covid-19 awareness were posted on walls.
- The fish landing beach was chaotic with crowds, no social distancing. People were rushing to offload fish from incoming boats to the Golden Leads fish factory.
- Some truckloads of fish were seen waiting to supply fish to the factory.

Interview with ground personnel:

- Authorities at site reported that they registered 150 boats which operate in shifts of 50 boats at a time.
- Registered boats were said to include Senegalese fishermen that are resident in the community.
- Concerned youth from the community insisted that boats still come from Senegal to Gunjur.
- GFRS, GPF, GID and Navy officers were seen on the ground.
- No PHO was found at the site.
- At the Golden Leads fishmeal factory, the management reported that their demand for fish has been reduced significantly.
- They said only 5 boats were allowed to supply fish to the factory on a daily basis.
- They reported supplying their fishermen with masks but none of them was seen wearing it.

37. SANYANG FISH LANDING SITE & FISHMEAL FACTORY

Committee's observations:

- Hand washing facilities were in place at the GFRS post, the fishmeal factory and other places on the landing site area.
- No social distancing.

Interview with ground personnel:

- The GFRS reported that local boats were registered and their movements to and from sea are also booked.
- There are no PHOs but GID and Navy occasionally visit the site.
- The GFRS indicated they are not aware of any Covid-19 Taskforce Committee being set up.
- Officers on the ground lack mobility and adequate PPEs so they cannot handle any suspects.
- Only local boats were said to be allowed and whenever a foreign boat arrives 1025 is called.

- Management of the fishmeal factory reported having only 30 employees: 6 Chinese and 24 locals in service at the time of visit.
- Record of factory's daily tonnage was requested but the Committee was told that this could only be obtained from Head Office at Denton Bridge.

38. TANJI FISH LANDING SITE

Committee's observations:

- Hand washing facilities were in place, and some of them were manned by Red Cross volunteers.
- Social distancing was not seen to be observed around the congested fish landing areas.

Interview with ground personnel:

- Security officials at the site said they received directives that the crowd should be dispersed at 2pm daily.
- Boats are recorded on departure and foreign boats are either sent back or quarantined.
- Details of boats that are recorded include the names of Captain, Crew and Gambian host.
- Information sharing has greatly enhanced the interception of foreign boats.
- The Navy boat was not operational thereby limiting the patrol of our territorial waters.
- There was an inadequate supply of PPEs for the personnel on the ground.
- No PHO was found at the site but GID and Navy officers were available 24/7.

❖ Clarification Meetings with MDAs

Following its nationwide oversight tour, the Committee summoned Ministries and institutions to seek clarity on a number of issues that were particularly raised during the tour. Fresh consultations were also made with the tourism sector on the level of Covid-19 impact on the sector.

✓ Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs

The Committee requested from the Ministry to provide a comprehensive report on all Covid-19 related funds that it has so far received on behalf of government, and detailed information on the budget lines affected by the virement for the humanitarian relief. The Permanent Secretary (PS) who reported on behalf of the Ministry of Finance promised to make the provisions.

Asked why the Rapid Credit Facility (RCF) did not come to the National Assembly for ratification, the PS revealed that the RCF was an agreement between the Central Bank of The Gambia (CBG) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). He said the CBG is not a State Owned Enterprise (SOE) but an autonomous monetary institution that has a quota at the IMF. He said this quota is often raised during emergencies to allow banks of developing countries access more fund. He said it is not IMF's policy to give loans to governments. Instead, it works with countries through their central banks.

The PS further revealed that the CBG has the prerogative to either loan this money to the government or give it out as support package to the government as the case may be in some other countries. However, all arrangements of repayment are made between the CBG and the IMF.

The Committee insisted that the CBG is an instrument of the government and must therefore not enter into any loan agreement, domestic or foreign, without seeking approval from the National Assembly. They emphasized that any fund that comes into the consolidated revenue fund must be spent in accordance with the approved estimates.

Asked how the D500 million that has been mobilized, the PS said that it has been vired and a new budget entity named 'Covid-19 Food Relief' was created. The Committee argued that by law, virement can only be done from an existing budget line to another existing budget entity. On how the commodities for the humanitarian food relief was done, the PS revealed that an advertisement was made and small, medium and big businesses were all encouraged to apply. He said 70% of the purchase was made by small and medium enterprises while 30% was made by big businesses.

✓ **Ministry of Health**

The Minister of Health, in his response to questions relating to widespread reports of shortage of PPEs in almost all the institutions visited by the Committee, denied any such shortage. Instead, he said that it has to do with communication. He revealed that the Ministry still has over a million masks and gloves in its stores. He also reported that over 500 infrared thermometers are available in stock, and a lot more of PPEs are being procured.

As for supplying the security sector with PPEs, the Minister said that a liaison officer has been identified by the Ministry of Interior who would facilitate all such requests. As for the frontline personnel not being paid allowance, the Minister expressed his frustration over some wild and unrealistic demands that his office has to deal with. He indicated that for now, they have come up with some criteria that would cater for every health worker depending on their degree of risk. He said they divided the risk categories into high, moderate and low levels and proposed to pay

each of these categories D500, D300 and D200 respectively on a daily basis, emphasizing that any allowance or compensation mechanism has to be affordable and sustainable.

The Minister concurred that if drastic measures are not applied to decongest public places, Covid-19 could escalate to an uncontrollable level. As such, he said that security forces have been provided with essential resources to commence immediate deployment of personnel across the country. He further revealed that an assessment has been made on the conditions of holding centres across the country and that the World Bank is willing to support Ministry of Health in that regard.

The Minister further noted that the reason for advising the Ministry of Fisheries to allow operations go on at the fishmeal factories but on a reduced scale of their staff and services was informed by the fact that a lot of Gambians do work along the supply chain who ought to feed their families and for whom the factories are not directly responsible. So they thought that scaling down would have been better.

As for providing temporal or permanent structures in all holding centres across the country, the Minister indicated that this too posed some challenge for his Ministry as most of the quotations on the invoices received for erecting temporal structures were enough to build permanent ones. He said the Ministry therefore chose to embark on building permanent structures as holding centers.

✓ **Ministry of Tourism and Culture**

The Minister of Tourism indicated that the fate of the country's tourism sector depends on what obtains in the source (Western) countries where tourists would come from after the pandemic. He revealed that consultations are going on with UNESCO to solicit support in mitigating the negative impact of Covid-19 on the tourism sector. He said the Ministry has already submitted a request to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs for intervention, and that the latter would advise accordingly on what could be done and how. The Minister further disclosed that the Ministry of Finance is also liaising with commercial banks to see what could possibly be done about loans taken by tourism stakeholders.

✓ **The Gambia Hotel Association and Travel and Tourism Association of The Gambia**

Officials from The Gambia Hotel Association and the Travel and Tourism Association of The Gambia reported that they have hired the services of a consultant to assess the impact of Covid-19 on their sector. The association revealed that between April and June, the consultancy projected a loss of about D6.7 billion that would be potentially incurred by the tourism industry. The association disclosed that it has laid off most of its staff, and is currently struggling with its bank loans NAWEC bills and other costs attached to maintaining their hotels. It said a request has been made to the government to implore on commercial banks to place a moratorium on the loans repayment of hoteliers and suspend their interest payments too. A similar request was

equally sent to Municipalities and Area Councils to grant a moratorium on the payment of the various charges on hotels, but none of them responded.

The Tour Operators reportedly owe to The Gambia Hotel Association a total sum of D350 million. The association expressed concern over the trickling down effects of the fall of the tourism sector as the country risks falling into general insecurity demonstrated by criminal activities due to the high level of job losses in the hotel industry. The association reported that over 100,000 youth have been laid off from the hotel industry and that even when the industry resumes after Covid-19, it is highly unlikely that all of them would be absorbed

Both Gambia Hotel and the Travel and Tourism Associations called for the immediate intervention of the government to salvage the industry. They emphasized that intervening when the industry is completely dead would be meaningless as bouncing back under such circumstances would be near impossible. They stressed that it is important for restaurants and local entertainment centers to open up sooner rather than later in order to save them from sinking for good. They directed the attention of the Committee to the Labour Laws or employment regulations regarding redundancy which they said need to be considered under the current circumstances.

✓ **The Gambia Public Procurement Authority (GPPA)**

The GPPA in its submission indicated that its Act does not make provisions for a clear-cut procedure as regards procurement during emergencies. It says the law only caters for direct or single sourcing, which it said has implications as it could lead to overpricing of invoices. The Authority noted that since the Act is not explicit, there is bound to be discretionary actions which could be counterproductive.

The GPPA acknowledged that the response to Covid-19 has to compromise certain key principles of procurement which, under normal circumstances, must have to be adhered to at all times and this includes value for money, fair opportunity, transparency, accountability and following the due process. When such compromises are being made, the Authority was concerned that it could as well lead to unreported procurements.

The Authority reported that it is currently working with the World Bank to digitize its operational procedures by developing an E-procurement system through which all procurement processes would be done to avert lapses.

CONCLUSION

It has been observed that social (physical) distancing as directed by the Regulations is generally not observed at markets, beaches and other public places across the country. This can either be attributed to a general disregard by members of the public and due to weak or non-enforcement by the enforcement authorities (the Councils and Security Sector). It was also observed that the borders are porous and as such people continue to illegally enter the country without notice, and without being quarantined.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee hereby presents the following recommendations by sector:

Justice

1. A regulation to be in place to make it an offence for anyone, transport driver or compound owner, who assists any unauthorized traveller to enter the country or harbors any visitor or guest from abroad in his/her compound without notifying the health authorities (1025 call line);
2. A regulation making it an offense for anybody who enters the country and refuses to be quarantined or refuses to report to the appropriate health authorities for the mandatory quarantine; all such illegal entrants shall bear the costs associated with their quarantine.

Security

3. The closure of all borders must be fully enforced with the deployment of armed and security forces. The army should be used to reinforce the regional taskforces in the implementation of the Regulations;
4. The Ministry of Interior, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, should ensure that the quarantine and isolation centers are off-bound to visitors 24/7;
5. The Ministry of the Interior should be equipped with more vehicles and communication equipment to allow them to go to any part of the country to enforce the Regulations;
6. There is need to deploy the navy to sea immediately to curb illegal entry into the country and to ensure foreign fishermen do not dock on the Gambian shores without being subjected to mandatory health checks and quarantine. The Navy should endeavor to stay at sea 24/7 with periodic shifts in place to ensure their own well-being.

Finance

7. The Ministry of Finance may need to revise the 2020 budget to give more support to the operational activities of the Ministry of Health in the fight against Covid-19;

8. The Ministry of Finance, in collaboration with the Central Bank, to facilitate the acquisition of foreign exchange for importers to continue importation of goods into the country;
9. The government to engage the State Owned Enterprises, LGAs as well as the private sector, especially tourism, to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on their businesses. This will allow continuity of the essential services provided by these institutions;
10. There is a need to holistically review the Public Finance Act 2014 to ensure that laws that contravene the Constitution are corrected and at the same time formulate other laws within the Act that would be in line with best practices in Public Finance Management;
11. The Committee strongly recommends the creation of a Contingencies Fund through an Act of Parliament that would appropriate certain amounts of money to be used with very clear guidelines during emergencies like natural disasters, epidemics and pandemics.

Local Government

12. The Ministry of Lands, Regional Government and Religious Affairs, in collaboration with the LGAs should come up with a financial strategy that would keep the Councils in operation;
13. There is a need for the Local Government Authorities and Market Committees throughout the country to find ways to decongest the markets so that social/physical distancing can be observed. To do this, we recommend that all those without canteens or tables inside the markets as well as vendors on the streets be moved to designated areas that would be clearly demarcated for each vendor to sell during the opening times.
14. For the Regulations on Open Markets and Shopping Areas Emergency Powers, we recommend the following:
 - a. To decongest the markets through the recommendations mentioned earlier and then increase the opening times as follows:
 - i. All markets to be opened from 6:00am to 4:00pm daily;
 - ii. The LGAs to fumigate the markets on a daily basis from 5 – 6pm;
 - iii. Mandatory facemasks to be worn by everyone selling or entering the markets.

Health

15. All health facilities and points of entry be equipped with infrared thermometers for temperature check, incinerators should be provided in all health facilities to ensure proper management and disposal of medical waste;
16. Health and enforcement authorities to design a consistent and standardized format that would be used to collect detailed personal information of individuals entering the country and in all health facilities across the country for purposes of easy contact tracing;
17. Makeshift tents be provided at all border entry points and Public Health Officers across all borders must be the first point of contact for all incoming people, and shall supervise all hand

washing temperature checks and screening before new entrants interact with any security official;

18. The fact that epidemics and pandemics are on the rise globally, we recommend the building of well-equipped and fully resourced permanent treatment centres in all regions as well as isolation centres at all border points to better prepare for the future;
19. The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with Gambia Standards Bureau to initiate the production of standardized re-usable local facemasks for nationwide distribution and for regulations to make it mandatory to wear them in public;
20. The Ministry of Health and stakeholders to engage in regular disinfection of markets and other public places across the country;
21. The Ministry of Health should come up with a training plan for all doctors and nurses and expedite the trainings to ensure there is enough manpower to handle any potential surge in infected people.

Trade

22. The Ministry of Trade must be in constant touch with importers to ascertain essential foods are in stock. There must be a weekly confirmation with verifiable data;
23. The Ministry of Trade, in collaboration with the Ministries of Agriculture and Finance, should come up with a mechanism on how to handle the perishable goods that are being produced by the women gardeners across the country.

Fisheries

24. The Ministry of Fisheries, in collaboration with the taskforce committees at the landing sites, should ensure that all foreign boats that dock on the shores of the country are impounded and the persons on-board be subjected to the necessary health checks and mandatory quarantine;
25. Places should be identified and designated at the fish landing sites, different from the seaside, for fish vendors to sell their fish. This is to create enough space where social distancing can be observed. Additionally, we strongly recommend that all sellers use facemasks during the entire time they are in these places;
26. Although the fishmeal factories claimed to have scaled down production thereby reducing crowds and public interactions, the evidence on the ground shows total disregard for social distancing and high risk of spreading the virus. We therefore strongly recommend that the fishmeal factories be temporarily closed during this pandemic to avoid large crowds gathering to pick the fish from the boats to supply the factories.

RESOLUTION

Cognisant of the fact that Covid-19 cases continue to rise in neighbouring Senegal;

Having considered the steady increase in the number of infected cases in The Gambia, most of whom are either from or traced to our immediate neighbour, Senegal;

Noting the apparent under-resourced medical facilities across the country as well as the inadequate supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) to frontline health personnel and enforcers of the Regulations;

Aware of the fact that the Ministry of Health is yet to be in receipt of the medical equipment that were procured for the fight against the Corona virus pandemic;

Aware of the ill-equipped and under-resourced state of the holding and isolation centres as well as the lack of treatment centres across the country;

Considering the fact that a lot of people in The Gambia continue to live in denial of the existence of Covid-19 and as such grossly disregard social distancing or any protective measures at public places particularly in the markets;

The committee hereby resolves that:

1. The State of Public Emergency be extended to a further 21 days subject to strict adherence to the implementation of all the State of Public Emergency Regulations.

The Committee further resolves that this august Assembly recognises:

1. The relentless services of the health workers in the country;
2. The contribution and support of the Medical Research Council – The Gambia (MRC-G);
3. The invaluable support of the World Health Organisation (WHO).

APPENDICES ATTACHED

LIST OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

National Assembly Members

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Hon. Alhagie Mbow | - Chairperson |
| 2. Hon. Dawda Kawsu Jawara | - Vice Chairperson |
| 3. Hon. Ousman Sillah | - Member |
| 4. Hon. Sunkary Badjie | - Member |
| 5. Hon. Ya Kumba Jaiteh | - Member |
| 6. Hon. Omar Darboe | - Member |
| 7. Hon. Salifu Jawo | - Member |

Support Staff

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Mr. Landing Jobe | - Director of Committees |
| 2. Mr. Alhagie M. Dumbuya | - Senior Research Officer |
| 3. Mr. Sulayman Jallow | - Senior Legal Officer |
| 4. Mr. Lamin E. Manneh | - Editor |

LIST OF WITNESSES

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. Ahmadou Lamin Samateh | Minister of Health |
| 2. Mambury Njie | Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs |
| 3. Abubacarr Tambadou | Attorney General & Minister of Justice |
| 4. Yankuba J. N. Sonko | Minister of Interior |
| 5. Musa S. Drammeh | Minister of Lands, Regional Govt & Religious Affairs |
| 6. Lamin Jobe | Minister of Trade |
| 7. Hamat N. K. Bah | Minister of Tourism and Culture |
| 8. Cordu L. Jabang-Senghore | Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism & Culture. |
| 9. Mariama Ndure-Njie | Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Lands |
| 10. Assan Tangara | Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Interior |
| 11. Muhamadou Lamin Jaiteh | Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health |
| 12. Buah Saidy | Permanent Secretary, MoFEA |
| 13. Buba Sanyang | Permanent Secretary, MoLRG&RA |
| 14. Prince Bubacarr A. Sankanu | Senior Info Officer MoICI/National Health Emerg. Comm. |
| 15. Cherno Marenah | Solicitor General |
| 16. Fatou Gibba | MoLRG&RA |
| 17. Modou Njai | Director of Health Promotion and Education |

18.	Dr Desta A. Tiruner	WHO Country Representative
19.	Babanding Sabally	Director of Pharmaceutical Services
20.	Ignatius Baldeh	Director of National Public Health Laboratories
21.	Dr. Charles Roberts	Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital
22.	Dr Buba Manjang	Acting Director of Public Health
23.	Dr. Mustapha Bittaye	Acting Director of Health Services
24.	Dr Mariama Drammeh	Medical Officer
25.	Fatou L. Njie	Ministry of Justice
26.	Ousman Bojang	Ministry of Trade
27.	Abdoulie Jammeh	Ministry of Trade
28.	Lamin Dampha	Ministry of Trade
29.	James Gomez	Minster of Fisheries,
30.	Bamba Banja	Permanent Secretary, Minster of Fisheries
31.	Nfally Fadera	Ministry of Finance (Assist)
32.	Karamba Keita	DPS-T
33.	Gibril Jarjue	Director of Planning, Ministry of Health.
34.	Ya Awa Nyassi	Senior Planner, Ministry of Tourism & Culture.
35.	Mariatou Ngum	Information Officer, Ministry of Tourism & Culture.
36.	Daouda Niang	Director General, GTHI.
37.	Prof. Pierre Gomez	Chairman, GTHI Board.
38.	Ronald Williams	DFA, National Council for Arts and Culture.
39.	Abdoulie Touray	Chairman, Gambia Tourism Board.
40.	Abdoulie Hydara	Director General, Gambia Tourism Board.
41.	Fatou J. Baldeh	Gambia Navy
42.	Lt. CDR Farra Jobe	Gambia Navy
43.	Hulay Jallow	Gambia Immigration Department
44.	Pateh Jallow	Gambia Police Force
45.	Lt. CMD Ebrima B. Jallow	Gambia Navy
46.	Commissioner Baboucarr Janneh	- Gambia Immigration Department
47.	Seedy Kanyi (General Manager)	- Gambia Transport Services Corporation (GTSC)
48.	Abdoulie Colley (Dir of Operations)	- Gambia Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA)
49.	Abdoulie Gassama (Snr Accountant)	- Gambia Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA)
50.	Mamour Jobe (Inspector General)	- Gambia Police Force
51.	Momodou Senghore	National Roads Authority
52.	Essa Drammeh	Ministry of Transport
53.	Ebrima Garba Cham	Gambia National Trade Union Congress
54.	Hali A. Gai (Deputy MD)	GPA Ferries
55.	Abdoulie Touray (President)	Transport/Drivers Union
56.	Siaka Touray (Health Officer)	Gambia Ports Authority
57.	Kulay Manneh (Harbour Master)	Gambia Ports Authority

58.	Omar Ceessay	Gambia Transport Union
59.	Lamin Cham	Gambia International Airlines (GIA)
60.	Awa Samba-Jeng	Gambia International Airlines (GIA)
61.	Suwaibu Keita	Gambia International Airlines (GIA)
62.	Muhammad L. Touray	President, Gambia Supreme Islamic Council
63.	Sheriff M. Badjan	1 st Vice President, Gambia Supreme Islamic Council
64.	Ibrahim Jarju	2 nd Vice President, Gambia Supreme Islamic Council
65.	Julius T. Freeman	The Gambia Christian Council
66.	Edrissa Mass Jobe	Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Chamber (GCCCI)
67.	Sulayman M. Joof	Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Chamber (GCCCI)
68.	Ousman Touray	Basse Area Council
69.	PaaSait Ceessay	Mansakonko Area Council
70.	Malamin I. L. Bojang	Kerewan Area Council
71.	Ibrahim Janko Sanneh	Janjanbureh Area Council
72.	Rohey M. Lowe	Banjul City Council
73.	Foday Danjo	Basse Area Council
74.	Mustapha Batchilly	Banjul City Council
75.	Pa Nfansu Darboe	Kuntaur Area Council
76.	Hon. Saihou Jawara	Kuntaur Area Council
77.	Seedy K. Touray	Kerewan Area Council
78.	Samba M. K. Leigh	Janjanbureh Area Council
79.	Musa Bah	Deputy Mayor
80.	Sainabou Martin Sonko	Kanifing Municipal Council
81.	Kajali Janneh	Kanifing Municipal Council
82.	Dembo Jassey	Brikama Area Council
83.	Modou Jonga	Brikama Area Council
84.	Saloum Malang	DG, Gambia Public Procurement Authority (GPPA).
85.	Samba J. B. Tambura	MCPP, Gambia Public Procurement Authority (GPPA).
86.	Jim Johansen	Vice Chairperson, Gambia Hotel Association (GHA).
87.	Fatou Mass Jobe	Chairperson, Gambia Hotel Association (GHA).
88.	Gane Salah	Chairperson, Travel & Tourism Association of Gambia (TTAG).
89.	Bunama Njie	Executive Member, Gambia Hotel Association (GHA).
90.	Alfred Blell	MD, Senegambia/Princess/Sunset Hotel
91.	Marc Van Maldegem	Member, Travel & Tourism Association of Gambia (TTAG).
92.	Kebba M. Njie	Executive Secretary, Travel & Tourism Association of Gambia.