



**His Excellency President Adama Barrow
President of the Republic of The Gambia
No 1 Anne Marie Javouhey Ave
State House
Banjul**

8 August 2020

Dear Mr. President

Request for urgent action and leadership in combating COVID-19

We the signatories of this letter and supporters of the demands contained in this letter, extend our greetings and compliments to you and your entire government. We also understand that your status as per the results of the COVID 19 test, you took last week came out negative. However, many members of your cabinet and colleagues at State House have not been so fortunate. We wish them a speedy recovery.

Mr President we are following up on a letter, we sent to you, on 10 April, 2020, signed by: Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCI); BPAS- Democratic Union of Gambian Activists (DUGA); Gambia Participates; Gambia Conference of Reforms and Democracy (GAMCORD); Right to Know (R2K) Gambia; The Association of Non-Governmental Organizations in the Gambia (TANGO); and Team Gom Sa Borpa. In that letter we had appealed to your government to prioritize resource allocation to the poor, vulnerable and struggling SMEs and strategic businesses. We also proposed the introduction of systems and mechanisms to obtain data on the informal sector, like taxi drivers via the Transport Union to assist them with fuel subsidy using fuel coupon schemes, to incentivize those who adhere to the 50% passenger regulation. We went further to propose support to SME's/businesses affected by the economic slowdown in the form of tax and import duty rebates, access to foreign currency, concessional loans and other economic stimulants. Added to this, the tourism sector, which has taken the greatest economic hit, needs urgent support. The Gambia Bar Restaurant and Night Club Association (G-BRANA), has made some valid and reasonable suggestions as to how the COVID-19 funds could be utilized to support this sector. Their suggestions fell directly in line with the original proposal sent to your government, which urged you to set aside financial package of thirty million dollars for stimulating and supporting venerable sectors of the economy. We had at the time, not mentioned the priority that needed to be given to the health workers, because that was taken as a given. An obvious focus that did not need to be stated. Nevertheless, it is now evident that we underestimated the need to state the obvious. As a result, we are once again enjoining you to refocus on your COVID response strategy, and consider the plight of the frontline workers, SMEs, and the hotel industry, which has been decimated due to your government's poor response to the COVID-19.

Frontline workers:

Since the pandemic started, one colleague has died, and more than a hundred frontline workers have been infected. The infections, and possibly the deaths, could have been prevented had the staff been adequately protected, and had the working conditions been conducive to shield them from fatigue, and unnecessary exposure in the line of duty. The current situation is very worrying. Infected healthcare workers that are under supervised quarantine rarely have access to a doctor. Most do not receive medication. More concerning still is the sad fact that health workers have not received their salaries, and allowances, despite lofty promises, and astronomical figures being bandied about of funds earmarked for the COVID-19 Relief. We have also learned, with utter dismay that, 10,000 medical masks, 1000 N95 respiratory masks, 100 protective suits, 100 safety goggles, 79 infrared thermometers and 15 sewing machines, which were gifts from a province in China, had been diverted from the health sector to the Office of the First Lady. We are concerned by the ill-advised actions of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, to bypass the health sector, and instead, deliver these vital items, we so desperately need in the sector, to the First Lady. We demand answers, as to why and how, was this allowed to happen under your watch, during the deadliest pandemic this country has ever known.

Our demands:

- **We urge you to face the nation, and speak to us, within the next 72 hours**, as to the next steps to be taken by your government in dealing with this stage of the pandemic, as well as steps being taken to address our urgent requests below. It is inappropriate, and unacceptable to leave such a responsibility of steering such a response to your spokespersons.
- **We request a report from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to why he handed over the PPEs to the office of the first lady** and what she did with the PPEs, and evidence of who she gave these PPEs to, as well as who involved.
- **We request a full medical package to be accorded to front line workers**, and any healthcare worker that contracts COVID-19 in the line of duty.
- **There should be basic medication available at treatment facilities for front line workers** and a doctor should be attached to these facilities to attend to the health needs of healthcare workers while under treatment. A doctor should review each healthcare worker under treatment at least every two or three days and be provided with the required medication where necessary.
- **Provision of daily allowance for front line health workers as well as equal payment for frontline workers be effected immediately.**
- **The ministry should have a distinct criteria of levels of risk, and categories of front line workers in its workforce.**
- **The ministry should communicate such criteria and categories** to the frontline workers by making such criteria public.
- **The ministry needs to rethink its modus operandi**, and adopt best practices, to ensure optimal, effective and efficient deployment of the talent, abilities and experiences of health workers.
- **We request the daily allowance of a minimum of D750 be paid to us.**
- **The MoH needs to provide adequate accommodation to frontline responders**, especially those that are exposed to infected patients.



The country has now been visited by the inevitable surge of the COVID 19 Pandemic. We have surpassed the 600 mark of active cases. The death toll has risen exponentially. The economy has taken a battering, as the unemployment rate in the seasonal sectors, like the hospitality industry, and other mainstream sectors like SMEs have been shaken to the core. Lives and livelihoods have been destroyed, as poverty rates have spiraled out of control. We are therefore, asking you to act, as we make these demands in the spirit of advancing our mandate as health workers, workers in the hospitality industry, CSOs and citizens of this country, with the right to fair and equal pay, right to protection from harm, and right to protect our families, communities and the country.

We are giving the Gambia government seven days, from the date of this letter to respond to our demands, failing which, we shall explore other legal and necessary means to have these demands met.

Sincerely:

Democratic Union of Gambian Activists (DUGA);

Gambia Participates;

Gambia Conference of Reforms and Democracy (GAMCORD);

The Gambia Bar Restaurant and Night Club Association (G-BRANA);

Right to Know (R2K) Gambia;

The Association of Non-Governmental Organizations in the Gambia (TANGO);

Team Gom Sa Borpa

Cc: Vice President and Head of the National Security Council

Speaker, National Assembly

Attorney General and Minister of Justice

Chief Justice

Secretary General and Head of Civil Service

The Ombudsman

Chairman, National Assembly Select Committee on Health

Majority Leader, National Assembly

Minority Leader, National Assembly



Minister of Health

Minister of Tourism and Culture

Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs

PS, Personal Management Office

Inspector General of Police

Head, Department of Labour

President, Gambia Workers Union

President, The Gambia Bar Association

President, The Gambia Press Union

Diplomatic and Consular Corps

AU Advisory Board on Corruption- Hon. Begoto Miarom

African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights- Commissioner Jasmina Essie King

AU Commissioner for Political Affairs H.E. Minata Samate Cessouma

ECOWAS Commission- H.E. Jean-Claude Brou

European Union Ambassador- H.E. Attila Lajos

IMF Resident Representative for The Gambia- H.E. Ruby E. M. Randall

UN Resident Representative- H.E. Aissata De

UNESCO Director-General- Mme. Audrey Azoulay

US Ambassador the United States of America to the Republic of The Gambia- H.E. Richard Paschal