



PARLIAMENT OF UGANDA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

OFFICIAL REPORT

THIRD SESSION - THIRD MEETING

TUESDAY, 5 MARCH 2024



IN THE PARLIAMENT OF UGANDA

Official Report of the Proceedings of Parliament

THIRD SESSION - 16TH SITTING - THIRD MEETING

Tuesday, 5 March 2024

Parliament met at 2.19 p.m. in the Parliament House, Kampala.

PRAYERS

(The Deputy Speaker, Mr Thomas Tayebwa, in the Chair.)

The House was called to order.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable colleagues, I welcome you to today's sitting. Today, I am not handling matters of national importance. I would like to utilise Thursdays for those issues as provided for under Rule 25 of our Rules of Procedure. Next item.

BILLS FIRST READING

THE HUMAN ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY BILL, 2023

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, Hon. Sarah Opendi.

2.22

MS SARAH OPENDI (NRM, Woman Representative, Tororo): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I was almost caught off guard. On 21 July 2022, this Parliament granted me leave to move this Private Member's Bill; The Human Assisted Reproductive Technology Bill, 2023.

Mr Speaker, the Bill is intended to regulate the various fertility clinics that are operating and increasing in this country without any piece of legislation. We have consulted widely with all the stakeholders. To our surprise, many African countries that started these services 30 years ago do not have any legislation. Therefore, Uganda will be one of the few countries that other countries will benchmark, if this Bill is passed into law. I beg to lay the Human Assisted Reproductive Technology Bill, 2023. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Hon. Sarah Opendi. The Bill stands referred to the Committee on Health to report back within 45 days as provided for under Rule 129 of our Rules of Procedure. Next item.

LAYING OF PAPERS

D) SEMI-ANNUAL BUDGET PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2023/2024

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, honourable minister.

2.23

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR FINANCE, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (GENERAL DUTIES) (Mr Henry Musasizi): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I beg to lay, on the Table, the Semi-Annual Budget Performance Report for the Financial Year 2023/2024.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The report is referred to the Committee on Budget for processing and report back within 45 days. Next item.

II) THE HALF-YEAR MACROECONOMIC AND FISCAL PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2023/2024

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, Minister of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

2.24

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR FINANCE, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (GENERAL DUTIES)

(Mr Henry Musasizi): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I beg to lay on the Table the Half-Year Macroeconomic and Fiscal Performance Report for the Financial Year 2023/2024.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, honourable minister. The report is referred to the Committee on Budget for processing and report back within 45 days. Thank you. Next item.

MOTION FOR ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY AND NATIONAL GUIDANCE ON THE OPERATIONS AND PERFORMANCE OF THE UGANDA BROADCASTING CORPORATION

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Chairperson of the Committee on Information, Communication Technology and National Guidance, you have 20 minutes.

2.25

THE DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON, COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY AND NATIONAL GUIDANCE (Mr Tonny Ayoo):

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I beg to present the report of the Committee on Information, Communication Technology and National Guidance on the operations and performance of the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC).

Mr Speaker, I would like to lay on the Table a copy of the report and the minutes the committee meetings while we processed the report.

Mr Speaker, over the years, Uganda Broadcasting Corporation has experienced challenges in sustaining operations and in the face of competition, it has almost lost its status as the leading broadcaster in Uganda. This has occasioned the realisation of low revenue insufficient to support its operations. It continues to face challenges of unproductive sources of funding, deficit on wages, lack of funding for local content production and programming, un-automated business processes and high satellite charges.

Findings, observations and recommendations

Challenges

The committee observed that the positioning of UBC sites in far-flung locations attracts attendant challenges like inadequate monitoring, slow emergency response to breakdown and inadequate security of those sites, which affects safety, quality of the equipment and programming.

The committee recommends as follows:

- (i) The Government, through the Ministry of Works and Transport and its agencies, should support the routine maintenance of all roads leading to UBC sites across the country;
- (ii) The UBC staff at the regional centres and sites be provided with requisite facilitation including transport means to access the sites; and
- (iii) UBC should procure the necessary software like Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) and surveillance cameras for all sites.

Encroachment on UBC land across the country

Allegations of encroachment on UBC land were also made on upcountry sites like Nyaburiza Mbarara (Mwizi) and Soroti (Dakabela).

The committee makes the following observations:

- (i) UBC lacks proper ownership documentation for some of the pieces of land, including the ones at Buwalasi, Kololo, Wanyange and Namataala. The roads to most of the sites are not cleared; the land is idle and not fenced off. All these issues expose the land to threats of grabbing;
- (ii) There was giving out of some portions of UBC land under unclear circumstances like the one at Dakabela in Soroti and Namataala;
- (iii) The inadequate funding has affected the security and recovery of the encroached land;
- (iv) Most of the encroachment claims have not been reported to the Uganda Police Force for investigations and redress;
- (v) The operations of the corporation at Kololo National Operating Centre since the certificate of title for the land is in the possession of Uganda Telecommunication Corporation Limited, which is also in business with another private company, are at stake;
- (vi) The ownership of the land at Buwalasi offered by a resident has been affected by the lack of transfer of this land to UBC since this has never been formalised; the corporation's occupancy is under threat; and
- (vii) There is a need to open up boundaries for all UBC land to confirm the alleged encroachment and a need for an audit to all corporation's land.

Mr Speaker, the committee recommends that there should be urgent opening of boundaries of all UBC land with efforts geared towards surveying and securing ownership. Attention should be placed at the regulation of ownership of Buwalasi land.

The Government should secure and reclaim all UBC land at all sites that has been grabbed. The committee also recommends that Auditor-General audits all the land attached to UBC to ascertain its ownership and report the

finding back to this House within six months
–(Interruption)

MR SSEMUKU: Mr Speaker, the rules of this House are very clear on our sitting arrangement. I have not had any motion to suspend. The procedural issue I am raising is whether NRM people should come and contaminate our side yet clearly, in the rules, they have their own side.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable colleagues, I think what is critical is the strong word “contaminating.” I think by association you cannot contaminate each other. You know previously, we have even had cross pollination on of both sides where there are inter marriages and we end up getting products that are not contaminated. Let us respect the sitting because I have not called for it. *(Applause)*

I usually do that if one side is very full. Quietly, we do not need to rush, we can move. The front bench on this side is reserved for the shadow Cabinet and the front bench on this side is reserved for the Government Cabinet. I require all shadow Cabinet Members to come and occupy their seats on the front bench. We want colleagues to face and interact with each other. Procedure, from Hon. Kibalya?

MR KIBALYA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. In the same spirit, I think it has become a habit that some shadow Cabinet ministers are just reminded of their positions. Wouldn't it be procedurally right, through your office, that this becomes the last warning to all those shadow ministers who have forgotten their positions so that next time maybe we ask the Leader of the Opposition to relieve them of their positions?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am sure these colleagues always remember their position. They might forget where they are supposed to sit, but not their position, and so, the two are different.

MR SSEMUKU: Mr Speaker, this Parliament has spent money sending Members of Parliament to other Parliaments to learn. If you are part of the team that went to the

British Parliament, you will recall that there is consultation in the lobby on your side. When you see shadow ministers consulting, please do not be alarmed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I did not know that Hon. Ssemujju loves that seat. I would make an exemption for him to maintain his seat. I always see him very uncomfortable; he loves his corner just like any of us. What I usually see here is that the seats on this side are always empty, but I have never seen Hon. Kibalya seated on them; he is always standing *-(Laughter)-* even when the whole House is there. I do not know whether he is standing even now. That is a style that makes everyone of us comfortable. Honourable chairperson, please, are we progressing well?

MR TONNY AYO: Funding for Uganda Broadcasting Corporation

World over, National Public Broadcasters are funded fully 100 per cent by their respective Governments unlike UBC where the forces of demand and supply determine the funding modalities.

The sources of funding available to UBC according to the UBC Act, 2005 include grants of capital nature from Government; loans; money payable to the corporation in the discharge of its functions and commercial activities; donations made to the corporation; and the television viewing license fee, which was never implemented leaving UBC to rely on internally generated funds and Government Grants that have been inconsistent over time.

The committee established that UBC suffered budget cuts and unpredictable Government funding, where UBC's budget was reduced from Shs 24.83bn in the Financial Year 2022/2023 to Shs 6.1bn Financial Year 2023/2024.

Relatedly, in Financial Year 2022/2023, Parliament appropriated Shs 24.835 billion. The release by the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development was a mere Shs 8.29bn, which greatly affected the corporation's planned outputs including the

transmission of the direct to home services, as well as replacing the already obsolete equipment at the Kololo National Operating Centre.

The committee observes as follows:

- (i) Inadequate funding of UBC affects the operations and the expansion of radio and TV network and goes against the Directive Principle VIII of State Policy in the Constitution of Uganda which provides for the provision of adequate resources among the organs and institutions of Government for their effective functioning. Similarly, the inadequate funding is in conflict with the Ugandan Broadcasting Policy of 2006 which enjoins Government to adequately fund the public broadcaster in a manner that protects it from arbitrary interference with its budgets;
- (ii) UBC plays a critical role with regard to enabling Ugandans access information and therefore, necessitating adequate public funding in a predictable multi-year funding to allow for long-term planning so as to guarantee its editorial independence. This is however far from reality given that UBC is too underfunded to implement its statutory obligations;
- (iii) The UBC subvention, which includes salaries and wages for the staff, was equally affected by the 80 per cent reduction on funding to subventions and with this, the Corporation may fail to pay staff salaries and other operational activities; and
- (iv) Whereas many national public broadcasters operate under the Government ownership and funding, UBC is subjected to operate as a commercial entity, and forced to compete with private entities.

The committee recommends as follows:

- (i) The Government should always ensure that Uganda Broadcasting Corporation is adequately funded to enable it execute its mandate as is guided by the Broadcasting Policy of 2006;

- (ii) The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development should ensure that the Presidential Directive to annually provide UBC with Shs 30bn from Financial Year 2024/2025 is implemented, and in the interim ensure that the supplementary release of a minimum of Shs 24bn to UBC is provided to achieve efficient performance of the corporation;
 - (iii) UBC be granted increased Government support inform of funding and also treated as an entity dispensing public goods to the people of Uganda other than as a commercial entity; and
 - (iv) UBC should provide attendant work plans and budgets to support the proposed budgetary allocations from the Financial Year 2024/2025, alongside the revamp work plans and costing to enable adequate Government planning and funding.
- provision to take care of situations when a fault occurs. This means that repair cannot be undertaken when equipment is in use.
- (v) The committee further observed that there is no remote network monitoring system to ensure that the equipment is monitored and faults are detected in real-time. The absence of redundancy and a network monitoring system means disruption is inevitable; and
 - (vi) The failure to pay the satellite fee of \$1 million, or the equivalent of Shs 3.7 billion to Intelsat, resulted in the switching off of satellite connection to the country and thus it has only one Kampala station up and running but with the 17 upcountry stations off.

Committee recommendations

The Implementation of Phase III of the Digital Migration Project

The committee notes as follows:

- (i) The implementation of the Digital Migration Policy was haphazard, uncoordinated and lacked transparency. The process was rushed more to beat international deadlines than to secure the best outcomes for Ugandans and as such its implementation has been greatly affected with the failure to complete phase III which means that they are areas whose equipment ought to be urgently replaced;
 - (ii) Most of the equipment has exceeded its lifespan and is in urgent need of replacement, but most of those spare parts are no longer available on the market;
 - (iii) The obsolete equipment also means that Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) cannot host as many stations as it should, leading to a loss of the greatly needed revenue;
 - (iv) In areas where new equipment was installed, the equipment has no redundancy
- i. Phase III of digital migration should be implemented to ensure an uninterrupted smooth radio and television experience for all areas in Uganda;
 - ii. The debt of \$1 million or equivalent of Shs 3.7 billion owed to Intelsat should be urgently paid for switching on of satellite connections for the 17 upcountry sites, which will boost coverage of the national broadcaster. The Government should also budget for subsequent payments for the satellite fee;
 - iii. Government should speed up the connectivity of the DTT sites and upcountry stations through the fibre optic, under the National Backbone Infrastructure, whose connection will be safer, cheaper and more sustainable; and
 - iv. UBC should budget for the procurement of equipment to support redundancy and network monitoring systems for all sites and stations, which shall improve the quality of the network, and minimise the possibility of blackouts when faults occur.

The need to enhance coverage of the national broadcaster

A deliberate enhancement of radio and television coverage across the country will cater for the remote regions of the country as well as certain genres of public interest programming that private broadcasters are not willing or unable to invest in where they are to be left out on their own.

The committee recommends that the Government should urgently provide infrastructure to enable access to UBC Radio and television networks for all underserved areas.

Governments should also allocate the requisite funds to UBC for the provision of direct home service, which will amount to Shs 7.5 billion.

Mr Speaker, here the committee is recommending that if television networks like StarTimes and GOtv can provide a dish and decoder and receive satellites at home. Why can't UBC provide a dish and decoders so that the citizens can buy it once, and receive the signals for about 17 or 20 channels without paying for them? This has taken long. That is why we are asking for Shs 7.5 billion so that UBC provides the citizens of Uganda with a decoder and a dish to install, and be able to watch for free. In most cases, when DSTV switches off, it is difficult for the citizen to access information.

The revamping of UBC

In 2016, there was an effort to revamp the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation. This was informed by the recognition that Uganda Broadcasting Corporation was unable to execute its mandate in the status quo at the time contained. As part of the process to revamp the national broadcaster, a committee was set up to look into the operations of UBC. The review committee produced a report with a wide range of observations. These included:

(i) The Uganda Broadcasting Corporation Act was not aligned with the broadcasting policy;

(ii) The implementation of the Digital Migration Policy was marred by the lack of transparency and adequate public awareness; Uganda Broadcasting Corporation was not in compliance with several laws including; the Uganda Communication Commissions Act, the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Authority (PPDA) Act, the National Social Security Fund Act, and persistent violation of payment in the form of Pay-As-You-Earn to Uganda Revenue Authority;

(iii) There was no proper record of an up-to-date valuation of UBC assets;

(iv) UBC lacked a clear editorial policy to inform its decision-making and content strategy; and

(v) UBC radio and broadcasting infrastructure was completely run down and obsolete. Some of the transmission stations were not suitably positioned to achieve optimal coverage.

Mr Speaker, the Review Committee made recommendations that touched a variety of facets of UBC to enable the corporation to fully execute its mandate, and these included:

(i) The UBC Act (2005) should be amended to align it with a Broadcasting Policy 2006;

(ii) Guarantee of the corporation's editorial independence, transparency in board selection and accountability to the public through Parliament, and securing funding;

(iii) That an audit be undertaken to establish compliance gaps and a process set in place to ensure good legal and regulatory standing, including with the National Social Security Fund and Uganda Revenue Authority; and

(iv) The UBC programming should be informed by a clear positioning in the broadcasting market that is based on its mandate, among other considerations.

Mr Speaker, unfortunately, most of the recommendations of the UBC review committee have not been fully implemented several years later. The challenges observed by the review committee remain alive and have affected the operation of UBC.

Based on the above observations and recommendations by the review committee, the committee observes that the challenges that hamstrung the national broadcaster are still alive and well, and any attempt to improve UBC is bound to face stillbirth.

The committee therefore recommends that the recommendations of the UBC review committee should be fully implemented with a view of improving the operation of the national broadcaster.

The committee further recommends that the above recommendations be implemented within two years.

UBC should be restructured with relevant and vibrant human resources put in place, which will ensure that the mandate, performance management, terms of employment, and the nature of human resources will implement most of the recommendations of the review committee.

Enforcement of the collection of television licence fee

A television licence fee that had been introduced in 2005 was quickly abandoned at the inception following public outcry and the intervention of H.E. the President. This was a big blow to the Corporation because the licence fee indicated in Section 14 of the Uganda Broadcasting Act, would ease the corporation's financial burden.

The committee observed that in the countries where the licence fee has been maintained, the public broadcasters still command a considerable reach and share of the market, and this, coupled with the Government funding for a mixed funding model, may just be the solution for Uganda Broadcasting Corporation's financial challenges.

The committee recommends that Section 14(1) (e) of the Uganda Broadcasting Act, 2005 on the collection of television licences should be enforced.

Other operations of the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation

Penalties, and areas and obligations of UBC

The committee established that indeed, Uganda Broadcasting Corporation is encumbered with the various arrears, penalties and delayed obligations. Documentary evidence has been severely provided to the committee to demonstrate this, with this obligation amounting to Shs 84.063 billion, and broken down as follows:

- (i) Uganda Revenue Authority - Shs 18.16 billion;
- (ii) National Social Security Fund - Shs 46.670 billion;
- (iii) UCC two per cent levy of Shs 146,355 million,
- (iv) Payment to other suppliers and service providers – Shs 12.217 billion; and
- (v) Staff gratuity of Shs 6.864 billion. The UBC financials show clearly that a new financing model that is predictable, adequate and protects the corporation from undue political and commercial pressure is required.

The committee recommends as follows:

- (i) The Attorney-General should provide an opinion on the legal status of SIGNET, which will further facilitate the process of waiving off UBC financial obligations with the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA), amounting to Shs 2.41 billion;
- (ii) The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development should provide for sustainable funding, including but not limited to the provision of vote status;
- (iii) The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development should declare UBC's outstanding financial obligations in order to wipe out its debt and allow it to resume a clear and firm financial footing; and

(iv) The Ministry of ICT and National Guidance should provide a subvention to cater for at least half of the salaries of UBC staff and all other utility bills in order to reduce the pressure of administrative costs and corporations' finance as well as its ability to invest meaningfully in content generation.

(v) Amendment of the UBC Act, 2005

The committee observed that UBC Act, 2005 specified the source of funding for the corporation of which the following areas needs amendments:

Section 14(1)(a) of the Act provides for any grant of capital nature from the Government. This section needs to be amended to take into consideration the recurrent expenditures which consumes a lot of corporation's insufficient funding.

The committee therefore recommends that the UBC Act should establish a predictable and adequate public financing mechanism to support UBC's long term planning and align the Act with the policy.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, the centrality of Uganda Broadcasting Corporation to the provision of information to Ugandans through radio and television communication technology cannot be underestimated.

Despite the presence of other technologies such as the Internet, the simplicity of radio and television remains the easiest, cheapest and most readily available form of communication for most Ugandans.

However, Government commitment to UBC has overtime been piecemeal, with little effort to guarantee secure and predictable funding which allows medium and long-term planning.

The national broadcaster is challenged in securing its independence and to remain relevant in the eyes of the public thereby not inspiring much confidence. Clearly, UBC is a state owned broadcaster, but it is ill-equipped to survive in a competitive business environment.

Further still, given that most of the remote parts of the country are not serviced by the private media sector and can only be accessed by the national broadcaster, the Government thus has the responsibility to ensure that all its citizens have access to information, which can only be provided by the national broadcaster.

Mr Speaker, I beg to report. *(Applause)*

I would like to thank and recognise Members of the committee for the great work. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Hon. Tonny. Let us debate this for 30 minutes. I will start with Hon. Dr Nsaba-Buturo, followed by Member from Bungokho, Hon. Angura, Hon. Aber and then I will come to this side. We can use three minutes each, honourable colleagues.

2.53

DR JAMES NSABA BUTURO (NRM, Bufumbira County East, Kisoro): Mr Speaker, in 2004, while I was the minister responsible for information and broadcasting, I had the privilege of merging Radio Uganda with Uganda Television, which gave us Uganda Broadcasting Corporation. The idea was that Uganda should move away from what we were having –

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: What is the point of procedure, Hon. Enos?

MR ENOS ASIIMWE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I was wondering if we could also get a report on item No.6 so that we debate them at once, because they all relate to UBC.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Well, it is a good proposal, but Mr Chairman, I had talked to your colleague and we agreed on how to handle that item. Maybe we can have a quick one.

MR TONNY AYO: Thank you, Mr Speaker –

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I think that is appropriate, that will help us to do it at once.

MR TONNY AYOO: Mr Speaker, it would be appropriate that we handle them at once because the item is very small and straightforward.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please.
(Applause)

2.55

MR TONNY AYOO (NRM, Kwanja County, Kwanja): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I wish to present the report of the Committee on Information, Communication Technology and National Guidance on the petition by the National Association of Broadcasters, against the Presidential directive of Government advertisement exclusively through the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation.

I wish to lay on the Table the minutes of the committee meetings and the report we used for processing the recommendations.

His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Uganda, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, in a letter dated 6 March 2023, under the subject –(Interjection)- Mr Speaker, I beg for your protection from Hon. Ssemujju.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have not seen him attacking you so just keep focused. It is you focusing on him instead.

MR TONNY AYOO: Thank you, Mr Speaker. His Excellency the President of the Republic of Uganda, Yoweri Kaguta Tibahura Museveni –

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Tibuhaburwa, for the record. Please go on Hon. Tonny Ayoo. Oh, I have said go on and then you –

MR TONNY AYOO: Thank you, Mr Speaker -

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay, point of order.

MR SSEMMUJU: Mr Speaker, as far as I know, Mr Yoweri Museveni denounced his name under the laws of Uganda and adopted a new name ending with Tibuhaburwa. So, his name was changed by that process.

Is the chairperson of the committee in order to refer to Mr Tibuhaburwa by his old name that he denounced and was even published in the Gazette?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Ssemujju, you should have helped him also to – clearly these are the real names. Do it in an orderly manner, Hon. Tonny Ayoo.

MR TONNY AYOO: Thank you, Mr Speaker. His Excellency the President, in a letter addressed to Rt Hon. Robinah Nabbanja, the Prime Minister of Uganda, under the subject mentioned above, directed inter-alia that all Government advertising must be through the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation, and that any official who disregards the directive would have punitive measures taken against them.

This was a response to an appeal from Mr Agaba Winston David, the Managing Director of Uganda Broadcasting Corporation, about the underfunding of Uganda Broadcasting Corporation by Government, denial of advertising by accounting officers, the need to pay penalties and delays for their contribution to National Social Security Fund and Pay-As-You-Earn(PAYE), and the need to replace the now old and obsolete equipment at UBC.

In response to the said letter on 12 April 2024, the Rt Hon. Prime Minister wrote to all ministries asking the head of Public Service and Secretary to Cabinet to ensure that accounting officers fully comply with the directive, or else, have punitive measures taken against them, including dismissal from then Public Service.

This directive caused the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), on behalf of the Private Media Broadcasters, to write to the Rt Hon. Prime Minister a complaint that the directive by the President excludes the private sector media players, yet these have in the past and still to date support various Government projects and campaigns including the COVID-19, Ebola, *Emyooga* and the current Parish Development Model, through awareness creation and sensitisation.

National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) sought to have the implementation of the directive altered, so that the concerns of the private sector media players are addressed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Can we do 6.0?

MR AYOO: Mr Speaker, 6.0 is on the rescission of the directive by the President. Before reporting the findings and recommendations of the committee, the State Minister of Information, Communication Technology and National Guidance in a subsequent meeting informed the Committee that the President had rescinded the directive.

The committee formally sought confirmation and details of the rescission of the directive by H.E. the President from the Rt Hon. Prime Minister. However, this response was not provided.

Because the committee did not get a formal confirmation from the Rt Hon. Prime Minister, we found it challenging proceeding with making findings and recommendations on the subject of the petition.

In light of the above, the committee therefore recommends that the Rt Hon. Prime Minister provides Parliament and the nation with the details on the rescission and further still, how the Government resolved the financial plight of UBC. I beg to report and thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. The issue was very clear. The plight of UBC and others were not part of what we wanted you to do because the petition had very specific prayer, which was: “the Government should rescind the decision” which was done.

Therefore, we ask the minister to bring proof that indeed, they wrote rescinding that decision. Thank you, committee Chairperson. Hon. Dr Nsaba Buturo, please resume the Floor.

DR NSABA BUTURO: Mr Speaker, the intention of creating the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC), was simply for Uganda to do what other countries had done.

In Kenya, for example, there was Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), the same in South Africa (SABC), the British Broadcasting Cooperation (BBC) in Britain, and so on.

We found it sensible that a nation that is serious, that cares about its sovereignty, desires to have national values completely defended and popularised among the population, were so urgent that UBC was going to just do that; to become a national broadcaster.

The challenge we saw, at the time, was that many of my colleagues hardly understood what it meant; having a national voice that defends your interests and promotes your values. There was a problem there, to the extent that when I introduced the television tax, the purpose then was that we generate enough revenue for UBC to do its work.

Again, I met the Opposition partly because many of us, at the time, hardly understood the importance of having a national voice.

When you are a nation that aspires to be sovereign, you are not going to depend on others to speak for you and promote your interests. You must have your own voice and UBC was seen in that light.

That is why the idea that one equates a national broadcaster with other private television and radio stations is not being ingenious at all.

The idea must be - just like you and I have our interests, which may not necessary be interests of your friends and others - you must find a way that helps you to articulate, defend and promote your interests. UBC was seen in that light.

Unfortunately, over the years – and Mr Speaker, I must say that just listening to the Chairman - one would think that it is my statement in 2005 that he has copied, I am not suggesting that he has that but it is similar; same points arguing the Government to give support to UBC for purposes of defending our interests as a nation.

I commend the chairperson's statement but I must say that I am very sad that 20 years later, UBC is still having the same problems. A reflection of how unserious we are as a people, that we must be allowing others to speak for us.

I would not hesitate to say that because UBC is a national broadcaster, it would be wrong to compare it with other similar entities, which are private.

I therefore commend the chairperson but also urge the Government to get out of the complacency that I see we are in and allow UBC to be given resources that allows it to continue serving this nation ably.

The issue of funding is so critical and anyone who determines how serious we are, as a nation, will have to look at our national voice and how supportive we are, of it.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.

3.06

MR JOHN MAGOLO (NRM, Bungokho County North, Mbale): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would like to thank the chairperson and the committee for the report, about the UBC.

I pick interest on issues of land and protection of the land that belongs to UBC and specifically, FRV208F8, the land at Kololo, which is under contention. In the report, UBC has a title and at the same time, Uganda Telecommunications also has a title. It brings many questions because the original title takes precedence. How did Uganda Telecommunications Limited come to have a title over a piece of land, which also belongs to UBC? Was it a special certificate of title? Is it a leasehold? If so, were the processes of getting a leasehold from the freehold handled? And who handled them?

Is it a mutation and was it given officially? Those are the questions that did not come out clearly for the House to understand where the conflict of the land issues came about.

Mr Speaker, when it comes to protecting the land, I pick interest in the land which is in Namataala, Mbale City. As you enter Mbale City, it is the first very prime land and it is open and therefore, subject and an attraction to grabbing. It is a very serious asset that could have been protected to ensure that the corporation has an asset, which could be invested in to bring better resources that we are talking about.

Finally, when we talk about UBC being rundown, the state of the studios and site brings so many questions. The fact that many other broadcasters are coming up and showing potential in the field, we either choose to capitalise and put money in UBC or the Government changes its strategy of doing business so that UBC favourably competes with others by making money as a company and the proceeds come back to the people. Otherwise, it is a lamentation this far, given the fact that even the recommendations that were made by the review commission have not come to pass.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable colleagues, it is very important that when we support UBC, we should give it performance targets. You cannot go to UBC and they give you a free advert. You cannot run anything for free there including even Government agencies; you have to pay. If it is competing, we can put in money as a way of investing but we demand that they perform. I had allowed Hon. Angura.

3.10

MR FREDRICK ANGURA (NRM, Tororo South County, Tororo): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I would like to thank the chairperson and committee, for the report they have presented.

Picking up from what the honourable member has said about the UBC land, I am also aware that the land in Mbale has been occupied by veterans and you know how difficult it is to evacuate veterans when they settle on some land. How I wish that is handled very fast.

Mr Speaker, we need to put our feet firm on the ground. The \$1 million that has been outstanding for a long time deprives this country of an opportunity that we would get from this broadcaster to serve our people. For us from the east, we have known Radio Butebo for a very long time and old men keep searching for its frequency all the time and asking whether they can still tap into Radio Butebo.

The 17 upcountry stations that are not running are still depriving many of our people of the good opportunities that the Government has offered and are known for in the past.

For us who come from the east, especially, I, along Kilometre Zero and across the other side, Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), which broadcasts from very far is one of the darling stations we tune into. For any sensitive Government information, it is always relayed by those official stations. That is why what Hon. Dr Nsaba Buturo said is very important and we need to come in.

I appreciated the chairperson and the committee when they talked about getting decoders that are cheap. This would be an opportunity for us to also create competition for DSTV. When you ask what their corporate social responsibility is, you do not see anything. So, let us support UBC such that we can get those cheap decoders and our people can view many channels that are associated with it.

You have also talked about recommendations by the review committee. I am not surprised that those recommendations have not been implemented to date. Maybe they are supporting other private entities that are running. You know how the Government always generates good ideas but which end up going to other players.

I thank the committee and request that this House takes a stand and supports the Government in whichever way such that we can fund the activities of our broadcasters. Thank you very much.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: On decoders, chairperson, did you mean that we have specific UBC decoders or UBC can go into business of being a carrier for other stations?

MR TONNY AYOO: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The moment we are connected to a satellite, under the Direct-to-Home Programme, UBC is supposed to have a system that runs through its own decoders. So, we are going to allow citizens to buy a decoder and disc only once. You pay it off once, then you view. That is where we want to go.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is it specifically for UBC?

MR TONNY AYOO: It is for UBC but it will also run other channels because the signals for NBS and all these other private television networks in the country are transmitted or carried by Uganda Broadcasting Corporation. So, having the decoder means that even their channels will be viewed through UBC.

However, sometimes, you find the quality of pictures is low especially by these other television stations when they are transmitted through DSTV. They “squeeze” the quality of the picture of UBC, but here, we would be -

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: They reduce.

MR TONNY AYOO: No, they kind of compress it and then you see the quality of pictures are not very good.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: “Squeezing” is too tough.

MR TONNY AYOO: Mr Speaker, these other television stations were supposed to allow Ugandans to view other channels, including NBS and NTV. Even when your subscription on DSTV is off, you are supposed to view them for free, just like UBC.

However, you find that it is only UBC that they leave on; they stop Ugandans from viewing the rest. So, once it is on our decoder, then people

are able to view most of these channels and be able to –

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Chairman, this is something you should deeply look into when you are assessing the ministerial policy statement because it is a business case. This is a serious business so you need to interrogate it deeply and see its commercial viability before we give them money for this; it is something you need to look at.

3.15

MS LILLIAN ABER (NRM, Woman Representative, Kitgum): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I thank the chairperson and the committee for doing a good job. They have thoroughly done us justice.

To pick up from where the Member left off, we need to pilot this from the perspective of business. It is risky to invest money wholesomely on that suggestion because UBC is watched widely by the local man down there who cannot afford to pay for DSTV and indeed, yet it is doing a good job.

Of course, I have issues with quality. With media houses, this is a laissez faire economy. People who are looking for news or entertainment will go for the quality that suits them.

Mr Speaker, I have a problem with how we run our Government entities. We run them in a laissez faire way. We do not look at the business perspective. I support the need to fund UBC and make it run at a level of quality. However, we also need the leadership to run UBC as a business that brings money to the Government so that when we invest in it, we see where the money goes. This should be across the board, not only with UBC.

If you are to make a choice today on which media house you are going to tune in first, everyone will go for NBS because it has all the quality pictures, organised programmes, entertainment and news. So, we need to insist on having quality and proper administration in these entities. Otherwise, investing taxpayers' money being put in and we do not see results is not right for us. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable colleagues, in the public gallery this afternoon, we have Dr James Henry Olobolobobo, a health care practitioner specialising as an obstetrician and gynaecologist. He is here to observe proceedings of this House. Please join me in welcoming him. *(Applause)* Doctor, you can stand up for recognition.

Let us hear from Hon. Omara, Hon. Migadde and Hon. Katuntu - I am now looking at the side of Independents. I have picked NRM; I am going to the independents but I am trying to get a lady among them. There is one who is independent by association, in terms of where she is sitting - Hon. Rose Obigah. I will come to the Opposition side - I am going to pick more here to balance this off.

3.18

MR PAUL OMARA (Independent, Otuke County, Otuke): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I thank the chairman for the great submission he has made and I would like to re-echo what Hon. Lilian Aber has said.

Mr Speaker, the chairman, while making a presentation on the recommendations, provided a litany of investment plans. Given the situation we are in, I suggest that we prioritise those investments and stagger them over a period. It is a fact that the equipment they have is old-fashioned and they are completely outdated technology, compared to their private sector entities.

Mr Speaker, what the committee did not give us is the level of viewership and in the world of digital technology, one can easily find this one out. Based on the submission by Hon. Dr Nsaba Buturo, that it is important to have a national broadcaster, it is important for us to know how many people spend their time watching the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) news and other programs. I think going forward we really need to come up with these numbers to justify the level of investment we are doing.

The chairman talked about one very important issue; "The determination of editorial policy and product content." I think this is where the

problem is because we need to run this, Mr Speaker, as you have said, as a business case.

We need to look at profitability and the sense of competitiveness and therefore, the determination of editorial policy and product content should be given to the management of UBC and less of Government interference so that the investment over time can be realised to attract more people to watch UBC.

Therefore, I support the recommendations of the chairperson and his committee. We need to look into the budget proposal so that we can support greater investment in UBC. I submit.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Yes, Hon. Migadde.

3.20

MR ROBERT MIGADDE (NRM, Buvuma Islands County, Buvuma): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would like to add my voice in thanking the chairperson but draw my attention to page 8 of the report as far as land belonging to UBC is concerned.

Many Government institutions, of course, have lost land but it is even worse when Government institutions are losing land to other Government institutions. My interest is - the chairperson indicated that UBC's land at the Kololo Summit View is encroached on by not only the other private players but also by the UPDF and also indicated that UBC has to seek permission from UPDF to access their premises.

This is quite unusual - and that is the reason I am concerned. My interest is whether the committee was also able to interact with the encroachers.

Mr Speaker, you are aware, we are also facing the same problem as the Parliamentary SACCO on the other side. Hon. Angura also mentioned that in the east, it is the veterans. So, was the committee able to interact with the purported encroacher and if so, how are we going to help UPDF get off this land?

Other entities would employ private security to protect their land, but now that the land is encroached on by UPDF, one cannot employ the police to protect this same land. So, how are we going to help this institution safeguard their land? Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. The chairperson will respond to that. Let us hear from Hon. Rose Obigah then Hon. Katuntu.

3.23

MS ROSE OBIGAH (NRM, Woman Representative, Terego): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I join the rest in thanking the chairperson.

In my lifetime all as a village girl, I only knew about Radio Uganda. If you go down in most of our villages, the signals of Radio Uganda are perfect because the rest do not reach most rural and remote areas. Therefore, I support the chairperson on the recommendation that we should be able to give resources to UBC because even for educational purposes, the rates they charge are lower and better for the most vulnerable.

Again, I would like to challenge the committee on the issue of the post office. It is losing a lot of land like UBC Radio and this is under the Ministry of Information, Communications Technology and National Guidance. I have independently tried to alert the chairperson but I see he is sitting and sleeping on the job.

I do not know whether until after we have lost everything of the post office that he will think about the buses, land and other properties. Therefore, as you are doing good work for UBC Radio, do not forget about the post office. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Yes, Hon. Abdu Katuntu.

3.24

MR ABDU KATUNTU (Independent, Bugweri County, Bugweri): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I do not want to spoil the party. If there is anything that can go wrong in any

management of a company, it has gone wrong in UBC and do not shy away from it.

It does not pay gratuity, the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) and all its land is being taken. There is nothing going on correctly at UBC; and do not run away from it.

I have been the Chairperson of the Committee on Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises and UBC was one of them. You will remember that one time we did recover land - do you remember the famous goats story - land in Mbuya worth millions of dollars that had been stolen and this has been going on.

If you want taxpayers to invest money, colleagues, where is the return on investment? Let us speak like shareholders because it is our money that is being injected into the national broadcaster. Hon. Dr Nsaba Butoro says that it was during his tenure that Radio Uganda and Uganda Television (UTV) got merged. What was the purpose?

It is not exactly what he was saying, he fell short. The purpose was to run UBC as a business-like, to compete in the modern times. That was one of the purposes. Let us look at the viewership today. Has the viewership of UBC increased or decreased? Let us look at all these colleagues.

Mr Speaker, the point I am making is that the minister responsible of the sector, the board of directors and the management should up their act otherwise, this is money down the drain. Let us look at the editorial policy. What attracts anybody to watch UBC today? Why? Because it becomes propaganda. Let me tell you Hon. Dr Nsaba Buturo, one of the most profitable enterprises today is the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). The reason is, it runs both as a national asset but also in the business world. If you do not have that in mind, then nobody is going to either watch UBC or listen to UBC Radio because it will be a propaganda forum.

I beg the people responsible for the management of UBC, the corporate, to change or to up their

act. Radio Uganda was a small department in the Ministry of Information, but we made it a corporation. Does it have a corporate culture today? Do we see people and the managers there running that institution as a corporation or has it remained the culture of Radio Uganda, and UTV?

Mr Speaker, as I conclude, as we invest money and indeed we should, we need to demand a return on our investment because the world has changed.

Nothing is changing at Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC). Go there and see. If you cannot pay gratuity, Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) and the land is going. They cannot even pay the salaries of the employees and you are saying bring money. Money for what? What is the return on the money we are investing in UBC? That is what I want to see. That is when I will be comfortable saying, we need to invest more. This is not a bottomless pit where we just put money. No wonder the Government is now talking about a policy of rationalisation, including abolishing agencies that do not make economic sense. That is one of the reasons. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable colleagues and committee chairperson, I think that is what I had touched on earlier. I had expected your committee to do a serious assessment of UBC. You needed to look at their performance to give us the viewership because the question will be, "What will be the incentive for the UBC management to work hard when they can come here and we just appropriate money?" What would be your incentive to burn the midnight candle like other stations, to be creative? But also, we have to be very cautious when we are making our recommendations, chairpersons of committees, and this is an issue that clerks should look at.

We should be cautious when talking about money that we have not appropriated. It is not good for Parliament to resolve that the Government should go and bring a supplementary for this and that entity. Then how will you scrutinise that supplementary

once it is brought, when you are the ones who asked for it? You already judged that it is needed.

Therefore, it is critical that we – but most importantly, even if you give all amounts of money, if you do not want to move with the changing times, you will be putting in money when you do not have viewership. For example, chairperson, you need to ask Institut Publique de Sondage d'Opinion Secteur (IPSOS), they are the ones who usually have statistics for all these entities.

When you go to MTN for an advert, they will ask for viewership. If I put here my money, how much will I get it back? If they find you do not have viewers, they will not. We need to see a way of supporting UBC, but we should be hard so that they start running as a business. Let us hear from Hon. Aisha Kabanda, Hon. Ssemujju, Hon. Nsibambi, Hon. Bataringaya, and Hon. Nsereko.

3.31

MS AISHA KABANDA (NUP, Woman Representative, Butambala): Thank you, Mr Speaker. First I wish to submit to the –

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please, I am still on this side, do not waste time standing up until I come there.

MS AISHA KABANDA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I wish to submit on the second report. The committee says that they did not get evidence that the other directive was retracted. I want to say that what the President had directed is discriminative in nature. We are into liberalisation; promoting private companies. We cannot simply say we are creating another monopoly or they go through it. It is discriminative and must not be supported in any way. I am happy to hear that the President retracted it, but we need to get evidence of that fact.

Having said that, even Government anyway, the way UBC is now, would not wish to advertise with it. What pushed Government to change is that the private organisations had

chosen to boycott Government programmes because UBC does not have followership.

That is why the Government put up a regulation – I don't know whether it is a regulation - for all media houses to broadcast the President's speeches by force. They are compelled to broadcast the President's communication just because the national broadcaster is not doing us a service. What is very important is that at this time we must ask the minister to explain to us why they did not implement the recommendations of the review committee that were given to them in 2016.

Eight years down the road - they have told you your programmes are not appealing and you are marketing something but you do not do your best to make it better? Before we recommend that more money should be given to them, can we know from the minister why they have refused to implement the recommendations of a committee that was put in place to advise them on improving quality?

At one time I managed the media desk in the State House. It was working for us to take the President to private – that is how the President went to outside broadcasting platforms such as *Mambo Bado* because they were innovative. They thought of programs that were attractive to people and then it became very difficult for the Government to manage and sustain. So the President went there.

What the Government should have done then was to be as creative and attractive to attract the listenership. Instead, the Government compels these organisations to broadcast what they are doing even when they are not attractive enough.

Before we think of giving UBC money, can we ask them to account to us, why they did not implement the recommendations of a committee that was set to help the organisation?

Its problem is interference. We have continuously interfered in the operations. Shall we commit to stopping interference, restrain from making it a political organisation, and give the editorial the independence they

deserve so that they can be able to provide what is desirable? Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Yes, Hon. Ssemujju.

3.35

MR IBRAHIM SSEMUJJU (FDC, Kira Municipality, Wakiso): Thank you, Mr Speaker. The recommendations by the committee - one of them is that we should annually be giving UBC Shs 30 billion as directed by the President. Another one is that there was a supplementary of Shs 24 billion, which should be released.

You remember in this Parliament we authorised the borrowing at the time Radio Uganda and Uganda Television merged. If I recall - I can be corrected, we authorised the borrowing of up to Shs 70 billion.

Mr Speaker, the committee should have helped Parliament by looking at the audience sharing per station in Uganda. If you go to Kenya, the public broadcaster - Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), first of all, they are dominated by citizens at 10 per cent, the rest of the radio stations, KISS and so on and so forth.

The private broadcaster is relegated among others; their audience has become so minimal. You need to look at the audience sharing because you will be contradicting Bills and Acts of Parliament because in all the Acts that we are passing here, there is a standard section; advertise in the media of wide public circulation. It is illegal now. It is not just a directive of the President and that is why the directive that whoever wants an advert should get them through UBC, was against the statutory establishment.

So, I like UBC having grown up listening to only one radio station. But we need to live in the time. With the exception of BBC, I think public broadcasting is dying in the world; people no longer listen to it. If I ask the colleagues here who use UBC as their main source of news, you may find only one or two but you need to understand that the media

landscape is changing; newspapers are closing and the audience for radio stations is going down because now, the phone that you hold in your hand has become the main source of information.

Mr Speaker, I like UBC and want it to live. We can even use it for other purposes but I am hesitant to recommend, as Parliament, that we give them Shs 30 billion annually and another Shs 24 billion in supplementary that was not released, when the figures about these studies have not been displayed here.

I would rather – and I had made the recommendation - like Hon. Katuntu, I chaired the Committee on Commissions, Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises (COSASE) at one stage and I compared UBC with the *New Vision*. The *New Vision*, before privatisation, was 100 per cent owned by Government but it was run properly. If we have trouble with UBC, why don't we just transfer it, under now the rationalisation and merge it with the *New Vision*? The public stake in the *New Vision* is high.

We do not pass money here for the *New Vision*. If it is run properly and UBC is not, just rationalise UBC, take it to the *New Vision* and get the good managers there to run it, instead of recommending that we keep pumping money there.

Finally, Mr Speaker, there are things that you can hide. Public broadcasting has become almost obsolete. It is like old people dyeing hair to continue looking young. I was telling my neighbour here that at the age like that of President Museveni, even if you dye hair, you will continue looking old. *(Laughter)*

Therefore, public broadcasting has become obsolete and old. We need to take a decision as Parliament and say, thank you very much, UBC, for the work that you did. We retire you and then go to the new order of the digital communication. I thank you. *(Laughter)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable members, that is why Hon.

Ssemujju took an option of removing all his hair *-(Laughter)-* I had allowed Hon. Nsibambi.

3.41

MR YUSUF NSIBAMBI (FDC, Mawokota County South, Mpigi): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I just want to thank the committee and the chairperson for the report presented.

My only comment is about the land issue. With the coming into force of the Constitution and the land Act, there is nothing like public land. Land belongs to the people. Unfortunately, and repeatedly, we have been talking about public land and land grabbing. Now, land is vested in the people to be managed by the district land boards and the Uganda Land Commission. The mandate has to do with administering land, titled or not titled.

I was the Chairman, Kampala District Land Board and deeply involved in issues of managing prime land *-(Interjections)-* you do not have to be bothered because when you talk about prime land, majority of you here have no access to prime land. Your land is secure in Mutundwe or Lubaga. I was not managing that kind of land. I was managing land in Kololo and the central business district. *(Applause)*

Mr Speaker, on the report to do with land in Kololo, I think you need guidance of the Attorney-General because specifically, the land grabber actually is UBC. UBC was created in either 2003 or 2005, but this land has been there with private developers and owners since colonialism. Then you have UTL, which has shareholders, who are even foreigners.

Therefore, you cannot talk of now acquiring land when you were created in 2005 and there are private developers and owners who own that piece of land.

Two, the UPDF itself has a more legitimate right to that land than UBC. Why? When they came in, in 1986, they took over that land, which was not titled as a strategic military point. Now, in terms of possession, they are acquiring. Ugandan Land Commission must come in to protect the user as UPDF because it

came in 1986. UBC coming in 2005 to acquire that land, it must be allocated or transferred, which is not the case.

Mr Speaker, this is a little bit technical, and so, I suggest that the Attorney-General looks at the three stakeholders. You have UTL, which has shareholders who are even foreigners. They have a title prior to that of UBC. You also have other colonial owners and I do not want to say Asians who are in possession with the titles.

Therefore, you either have to go and get legitimate transfer by purchase or compulsory acquisition. I think this is a matter, which has not been properly investigated. I suggest that the committee should now involve the Attorney-General and other people who are technical enough to advise instead of saying that this land was grabbed. How can you grab land of a child born in 2005 when you existed before? *(Laughter)* That is my submission.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable colleagues, order. You people do not own prime land but now you have started – maybe, the clarification I wanted to make to Hon. Yusuf Nsibambi is that we also own prime land because the Government is holding it in trust for the people. We are the people so we have a stake in that, at least, by extension.

MR NSIBAMBI: By osmosis. *(Laughter)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The good thing is that I looked at the recommendations of the committee on issues of land. They are not calling so and so a grabber or saying this should go to this one. They are saying that let the Government study and ensure it resolves issues around UBC land.

3.46

MR BASIL BATARINGAYA (NRM, Kashari North County, Mbarara): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I join my colleagues to thank the chairperson, for the good report presented. During COVID-19 when children were required to have studies at home, it was those few remote areas where UBC penetrates that benefited. There are several Government

programmes that are being promoted now, like PDM and ICT in schools, especially those deep rural schools where they need the services of a strong national broadcaster.

However, I think UBC needs to present a bankable proposal to benefit from to us to propose financing. Why? In this era where we are rationalising non-performers, a broadcaster will be giving information but at the same time generating revenue for Government. It is therefore, important that they present a bankable proposal –

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Omara, we have a colleague holding Floor hence it is not good to have two standing.

MR BATARINGAYA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is therefore, very important that UBC presents a bankable proposal, not to attract annual disbursements, but rather money that will be generated from NTR by themselves so that they partially support their programmes. I beg to submit.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, Hon. Nsereko.

3.48

MR MUHAMMAD NSEREKO (Independent, Kampala Central Division, Kampala): Thank you, Mr Speaker. Regarding UBC and its matters, it is a double-edged sword because on one side, every nation needs a national broadcaster and the purpose for creation of these national broadcasters is basically to disseminate such information that might not necessarily be carried by private players for lack of profit.

A case in point, it has been long since Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) broadcasted this Parliament live and I do not remember when we paid UBC. The figures can be brought forward and I do not know how many broadcasters can go into such a venture.

However, the rationale is very simple; it is to support the legislative agenda by transmitting information from both committees and Plenary

to the most remote viewer –(*Applause*)– to provide connectivity and access to information.

Therefore, it might not necessarily look profitable but in the long run, the easy access to information that we debate here is not quantifiable.

Assuming every legislator would carry his or her programme to transmit what they submitted, whether in committees or here, you would find it so costly.

Secondly, there are very many programmes that are not profitable in the short-run but they are in the long-run. For example, the educational programmes on agriculture. There is no sponsor who is ready for that, and that is where the national carrier must come in and buffer. (*Applause*)

I will give you more examples; on issues of education, private broadcasters cannot carry programs to do with education because the appetite for sponsors on issues of education is less than “*Lugambo*” - rumour-mongering or musical programs.

The difference with UBC is that it has many stations to perform this and many languages for connectivity, which, as a private player, I would not find profitable. For example, there is Butebo FM to transmit in Ateso.

However, UBC, under its Act, holds the duty to transfer information in languages understandable by people all over this country. (*Applause*)

Therefore, you might find it not profitable in the short-run in terms of money, but in the long-run, it is quantifiable in form of awareness.

I would like to agree with my colleagues on digital transformation that it is true that all national broadcasters - I was looking at Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), they pumped in money but they are struggling. The reason is, no one can run such a payroll. However, let us come back to reality.

Assuming one of your voters comes to you, “It is me going to be laid off”, you will see everyone standing up in arms because UBC is the only guarantor of employment, to “a bit redundant people” -(*Interruption*)- what I am telling you is the reality.

From a private point of view, there is no reason why you would have that number of workers - but because it is a national broadcaster, therefore, national interests come first. You would employ people to speak Rukiga, Runyakore, Rutooro, Ateso, Swahili, and every language so that information goes out.

However, a private player would say, “Come here if you qualify and know about four languages” and before you know it - that is the reality that we should face.

Do we want to come here as a Parliament that passed a motion to adopt the resolutions of Parliament in the supplementary budget and say we are now overruling what we said? It is only natural justice that if there are arrears that were supposed to be paid and we passed them through a supplementary budget of say, Shs 24 billion -our obligation and that of the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development is to honour the resolution of Parliament because we supplied.

Going forward, the justifications must come from the committee, as you said. How do we make UBC much more profitable? - UBC, how do we make you more profitable?

How many rights should you reserve as a national broadcaster so that we give you some level of protection? The reason is, there are some programs we know you carry that are not necessarily profitable, but desirable to the nation.

Therefore, I would like to stand and support the matter because I know what it takes. UBC is a training ground for young journalists and you know it. It will take in as many interns as possible, train and produce them to a national level for even other carriers to take them on.

However, I would like UBC to adopt a plan that is used by other national broadcasters, of being the innovation centre - to host all of them. For example, if I have Radio Toro -(*Interjections*) - it is an FM.

Instead of creating offices in Kampala, I would create studios at UBC. It carries me through its signals and I pay them royalties for carrying me.

That is what other broadcasters have adopted; if you have the leverage of getting national funds, how do you carry the private players to help them grow? Should everyone start up an office or a broadcasting studio in the city and how do we help them so that it is *quid pro quo*? You take taxpayers’ money, but you also have a buffer.

Finally, on the collection of the SIGNET fund; with the arrival of other players like Star Times, you cannot imagine how much money Star Times collects. If that leverage was given to UBC through Non-Tax Revenue (NTR), UBC would not be here.

In addition, you can talk about the figures that they have, assuming they have about 3 million people and they collect a minimum, on average every month, one dollar from every person. That is \$3 million from every user and in a year, that would be \$36 million. That is a lot of money.

If you gave that leverage - like other countries protect their national carriers to be the ones to provide the single outlet of content, it would be profitable. Now, as a carrier, the single player is not protected.

Also, if it was to collect SIGNET fees from individual radios and TVs - it would be better to go to Star Times which takes you nearly freely than go to UBC.

However, UBC has the sole aim of delivering the desires and aspirations of Ugandans, no matter what and even if it is not profitable, we should make sure we only leverage by reducing the wage bill and improving the

products. However, for the arrears, it must pay and that is what we appropriated through the supplementary budget. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is a wonderful contribution Hon. Nsereko. In addition, it is in line with what colleagues were saying. Because they said, “We are giving you this money but we need performance indicators”.

In the end, if you are saying “I am only carrying desirable programs when you no longer have viewership, who is going to view?

Yes, if you do not have viewership, who will view those desirable programs? So you must strike a balance. Transmit desirable programs, but also maintain viewership so that you have people viewing those programs.

Otherwise, you will just get money for the sake of it. I need Hon. Santa, Hon. Christine, Hon. Hanifa and then Kiboga- I will need the doctor on nodding syndrome.

3.57

MS SANTA ALUM (UPC, Woman Representative, Oyam): Thank you, Mr Speaker. Allow me to join my colleagues in thanking the committee for coming up with a very good report. UBC is a national and public broadcaster but one wonders why despite the fact that it is state-owned, the viewership and listeners are extremely few.

At one point, I was listening to Radio Uganda and there were only two callers after the talk show that was presented on the radio. Mr Speaker, this sounds like there is something terribly wrong with UBC.

As you call on this Parliament and the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development to allocate money, I would like to urge the committee chairperson to go back and dig deeper. If the money is allocated but at the end of it all there are only two listeners or viewers, what would be the importance or rationale of this Parliament allocating money?

Mr Speaker, this is not to underscore the importance of –

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I hope you, who were in the studio were also listening. At least you were three –*(Laughter)*

MS SANTA ALUM: Thank you, for that correction. We were three. However, Mr Speaker, this is not to underscore the importance of UBC. Hon. Ssemujju talked about the world moving very fast and everything found on smartphones, but when you go to the villages where the majority of the women are, most of them do not have these smartphones. This means that if we do not have a national broadcaster like UBC and Radio Uganda, how will the majority of these poor people in remote areas get the information?

Much of the information from the Government, call it education, Parish Development Model – *(Interjection)*– not propaganda, please - can be accessed through a national carrier like UBC. When I was young, around 7.00 p.m. or 7.30 p.m. was time for news. Everybody would be listening to the information and receiving it at the same time.

Mr Speaker, the committee made a recommendation that there is a need to have a vibrant human resource. I think the problem at UBC is management. If we do not correct this problem, we are not going to see the light of what we are talking about.

The review committee mentioned some of the challenges, one being that the board and management flaunted the best practices in corporate governance by working without a strategic plan. Secondly, there was a lack of editorial policy. Even we politicians, the Government and at the household level, people have strategic plans. Even for the slightest thing that you have to do, you need a strategic plan.

To me, the problem is that we lack management so we need to have a serious human resource if the maximum potential of UBC is to be realised at the end of the day.

Finally, about the presidential directive, I think we should allow the private broadcasters to blossom alongside supporting the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation. Minister, please, clarify this. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable colleagues, I think we all watch UBC - [Honourable members: "Yes"] - I watch UBC at 8.00 and I have been watching Hon. Omara doing a fantastic job on UBC. I have also seen Hon. Ssemujju on UBC. I know our President is an ardent fan of UBC. Let it start with us watching UBC. Hon. Hanifa –

4.02

MS HANIFA NABUKEERA (NUP, Woman Representative, Mukono): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would like to thank the committee. Committee chairperson, my concern is about the cases of UBC in court under mediation. I do not know whether you are familiar with those cases. Most of them are about the land boundaries between UBC and the settlers on the land. Other cases are about two land titles on the same land.

I would like to recommend, in addition to the recommendation, that you open boundaries and the demarcation to know where UBC lies - there is what we call a cadastral map, which surveyors use. Most Government entities like the Uganda Land Commission do not use cadastral maps to do the boundaries. Therefore, UBC should take the initiative to get cadastral maps such that by the time they go to the ground, they know where they belong to avoid these cases and embarrassment. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable member for Kiboga.

4.04

MS CHRISTINE KAAYA (NUP, Woman Representative, Kiboga): Thank you, Mr Speaker. My issue is about the independence of UBC. Some of us, as we enter, there are some sheepish smiles as if certain sides do not have to over present certain issues on some of the media houses. The issue of independence is very important.

We need to conduct an exhibition of UBC, especially as far as employment is concerned. It is as if it is a depository of some unskilled people. We need to interrogate and see whether the workforce can bring the media house to the current competition. It is as if they are not motivated to compete because their salaries are assured. We need to build this amongst the staff and also identify some competitive staff. It is rare that somebody leaves NBS to serve at UBC; it is the other way around all the time meaning that the services there are low.

The mentality of watching UBC because you are poor and have failed to get money for the subscription – *(Interjection)* – yes, if some people they find others watching UBC news, they wonder whether the subscription expired. Yes, that is when they watch UBC. You see some of these thoughts need to wear off our people that you can watch UBC when you are interested. Therefore, we need to get updated on - for example, look at Women's Day. What is our main broadcaster bringing to us? How attractive is it to our women? We need to updated.

Mr Speaker, the issue of the business plan must be tabled. We must see when; for example, to leave the broadcaster to enjoy its independence economically. How can we help such an entity when we do not know whether it will be sustained or not or make a profit? That is why Members do not feel motivated to allocate a budget to it. We are like, until death do us part; you will die and leave UBC. There must be a business plan showing us how they are going to earn profit and how they are going to use the profit to improve performance. Otherwise, as a country, let us come up clearly and decide to maintain this broadcaster - *(Member timed out.)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. About the issues of perception, I think you have heard it properly. However, for clarification, UBC attracts some of the best talents. Mr Maurice Mugisha is one of the best talents. He left a very successful private entity, NTV and crossed over to UBC. Hon. Itungo, Hon. Teira and then Hon. Wanzala –

4.08

MR NATHAN TWESIGYE (Independent, Kashari South County, Mbarara): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would like to give an opinion. You heard Hon. Katuntu and Hon. Ssemujju who were the chairpersons of the committee. I used to be on the committee and still am.

Mr Speaker, the Auditor-General –

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is that The Committee on Public Accounts (Commissions, Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises)-

MR NATHAN TWESIGYE: Yes, the Auditor-General is a staff of this Parliament and he has made a report on the financial statements and other issues concerning UBC. In the findings, he commented on the financial statements, management, board, land human resources issues and the Auditor-General made recommendations. I just wanted to inquire from the committee whether you got an opportunity to read the Auditor-General's report and the recommendations. At the end of the day, we may have two conflicting reports. The COSASE report may conflict with this report.

I just wanted to inquire from the chairperson whether you got an opportunity to read through the Auditor-General's report and see if it can add value to your report, so that we avoid two conflicting reports from the same Parliament. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable colleagues, we are going to handle ministerial policy statements; issues to do with financing and all that will be interrogated at that level. That is why you will make a business case. We are putting in this much for this. We are now not at appropriation. Our concerns are general now, general principles in support of UBC. That is what I am picking from the committee. We must be very cautious on the ones which are financial, making a commitment now.

Indeed, like the colleague has said, we are processing the Auditor-General's report on UBC, and then you find we are contradicting each other. When it comes to reports of this nature, we must walk a very thin line so that we do not end up contradicting each other with resolutions of Parliament. Hon. Teira-

4.10

MR JOHN TEIRA (NRM, Bugabula County North, Kamuli): Thank you, Mr Speaker. One of the recommendations made by the committee is that which relates to encroachment. We have a Government entity on record for encroachment. It baffles me, especially where we have two arms of Government or two entities of the same Government, not being able to resolve issues that relate to issues like land when we have a central office, which is the Office of the Prime Minister.

These are matters which should not appear under recommendations time and again. They ought to be discussed and resolved at policy level probably or at the Executive level so that we avoid coming out in the limelight as if we are a disintegrated Government. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Hon. Noah-

4.11

MR NOAH MUTEBI (NRM, Nakasongola County, Nakasongola): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I stand to support the committee. I entirely say that people view UBC. Even now, our voters are viewing it to follow parliamentary proceedings. It is therefore important to fund UBC. UBC is bleeding internally, to my understanding and according to what I have been sharing with UBC officials and the Ministry of Information Communication Technology and National Guidance.

I want to cite an example where a UBC radio branch in Nakasongola that is UBC Buruli, which is sharing a transmitter with a private radio that is Salt FM. That signifies that UBC Radio has no money.

Mr Speaker, when you go to UBC studios, you find the consoles in some of them. A console is one of the sensitive machines, which are important in the radio, but you find substandard consoles, which are used by these *Kadongo Kamu* artists. It is important to fund UBC so that our people can really utilize it. Only that we have to see how we can see the management of the radio, and how we can bring it back on board so that the number of viewers can be increased. I beg to submit.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.
Leader of the Opposition -

4.13

MR JOHN BAPTIST NAMBESHE (NUP, Manjiya County, Bududa): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I want to thank the chairperson of the committee for the report. Let me commence with the petition on UBC and the directive by the President giving exclusive advertising rights to UBC; that in and of itself was an absolute infringement of Article 21 of our Constitution. It was unconstitutional.

It is common with our President's directives, which are very unconstitutional, and they become extremely difficult to enforce. That aside, the operation is under performance of UPC in the first report. Kiswahili is the *lingua franca* of East Africa. This is a local language that is spoken by over two million people.

I happen to host a number of friends and relatives from Tanzania, but particularly Kenya. The only TV that I tune on for them which broadcasts Swahili is UBC.

Mr Speaker, this UBC of recent has stopped attracting and retaining talent. It has become a serious hunting ground for the private media houses. Why, because of the reluctance to implement the recommendations by the review committee.

This committee, which was headed by a renowned media practitioner and professional, Dr Peter Mwesige, was a very good reporter. For instance, on issues of remuneration if they were implemented, UBC would not be a hunting ground for private media practitioners.

I realized recently when I engaged with several colleagues who were working there before, and the reason is why they shifted, one of whom is my superior, the Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Ssenyonyi and another who was there before joining NTV is my woman Member of Parliament - that is when I realized that UBC has become a shadow of its former glory. I would concur with the recommendation is to do everything possible to have it revamped. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR NAMBESHE: Yeah, information.

MR SSEWUNGU: Mr Speaker, I want to thank my boss for allowing me to take my information. This UBC has a lot of assets. If you recall, most of these new stations got most of the music, articles, films and works from UBC. The only way forward to focus on is how to safeguard all those interests in UBC.

Secondly, the archives of UBC are very strong, if they are not played with. Even then, why was Mpoma Satellite Station constructed at that time during Amin's regime? It was in the interest of UBC. All their assets have been shared by different entities. You have to strengthen them. I was teaching at Shimoni.

I know what was happening at UBC. Hon Nsereko's father, the late, was working there and many parents. The employment there, go to the management issues of UBC. Carry out a forensic audit on UBC. You will see it can generate funds.

Yes, you are giving them adverts, but as Members of Parliament, when you are invited for programs, do you go there? Give it attention because you need it.

Historically, it is known that you could overthrow the Government militarily by taking Parliament, UBC and the State House. That is what used to happen during those days. Of course, now, I do not know what course it takes. *(Laughter)* It may be the same story once things happen like that.

I believe the majority of the presenters - people who have big jobs in the new media houses - the majority of them came from UBC. We need to protect and give sanctity to those assets, and entities owned by the country that have been there. As Parliament, we should come out to protect them. Look at those young ladies.

I watch UBC by the way, Mr Speaker. How do you sign contracts when you are bringing in these powerhouses - DStv and others? UBC should be having a right, because they are using its masts to run some of these games live. I remember recently, UBC broadcasted the African Cup of Nations; they had all the rights. The management issues are the ones affecting this entity.

Lastly, here, we are in a multiparty political dispensation. These people want fair coverage. I was talking to Hon. Ssemujju who has just gone out, and he said when he goes there he hits the Government hard. Open that, because the debate is between a National Resistance Movement (NRM) member, Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) member, and National Unity Platform member. However, once they work under fear and duress, they cannot produce good work for you.

I believe that the assets and training from that entity would be very productive if we give it attention. However, I beseech and implore you, Members of Parliament, to be there. Once you are invited, you start giving excuses that you are not going to be around. Be there, attend those programmes and enjoy, because here outside they cover us. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable minister, you only need to - the questions for you were few. You need to just make a few clarifications, especially on the issue of Signet. People upcountry do not access UBC.

Even if people were denied access to UBC, on DStv it is accessible. We also had a programme with the Chinese Government, where Star Times was made accessible in villages. How do we support UBC? Signet - people who

want to access free-to-air, upcountry - we have talked about this issue. It is very little money. Honourable minister, kindly clarify.

4.21

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION, TECHNOLOGY AND NATIONAL GUIDANCE (NATIONAL GUIDANCE)

(Mr Godfrey Kabbyanga): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank the committee for a very wonderful report. I thank the honourable members for very good deliberations. I will start with the second petition, which is brief.

It is true we got a directive from the President, through the Prime Minister. Later, we got a communication from the Prime Minister informing us that following several consultations with all stakeholders, the directive had been rescinded.

Mr Speaker, I would like to lay the letter from the Prime Minister on the Table, so that this issue is settled.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable minister, kindly lay. Can you read the title of the letter and the subject matter?

MR KABBYANGA: The letter is addressed to all ministers and ministers of state. The title is, "Rescinding Government's Decision to Solely Advertise through Uganda Broadcasting Corporation."

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Date?

MR KABBYANGA: It is dated 15 August 2023.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable minister, we request you to provide full cooperation to the committee, next time. This is because the report shows that you did not cooperate with the sectoral committee, which is not good for our records.

MR KABBYANGA: Mr Speaker, by the time I interacted with the committee, I did not have a hard copy of the letter, so I apologise, but

now I have it.

Mr Speaker, the comments from honourable Members of Parliament were very good. However, Hon. Nsereko brought out what UBC is all about. It is about information dissemination. Some of the information is not profitable to the private media houses. Therefore, UBC still disseminates that.

Mr Speaker, we broadcast in 49 languages, we have 11 radio stations and 4 TV stations. There is no media house that can broadcast in 49 languages. Some of the radio stations are not breaking even, - (*Applause*) - but we must disseminate information, and we must maintain it.

I agree that we might have some management issues with UBC, and we are tackling that; we interacted with the committee and we promised to do that. Recently, we had the opportunity to put in place a new board and we started with that. We are going to strengthen it more.

On Signet, Mr Speaker, we are handling those matters, and very soon we are going to interact with the committee to tell them how we are going to sort out the issue of Signet.

However, at the moment, Signet is being run by UBC. It is a company run by UBC. We would like to see whether it could be a bit semi-autonomous as a company because it is generating money which is financing the operations of UBC. We are looking for a way of making it a bit semi-autonomous so that it can strengthen our signals.

However, it is also important to note that some of the equipment at UBC is obsolete. Sometimes when you see our things not moving well, it is because of obsolete equipment. The media world has now gone digital, but we still have some manual equipment, and we are facing challenges. That is why we are appealing to Parliament to please invest more in UBC. If you want to demand results, then give us money. Otherwise, if we leave UBC as it is with those meagre resources, we cannot produce the quality that you want.

It is good you have recognised that people go from UBC to other stations. Probably then, UBC is a good training ground. Why should other TV stations source from UBC? We should be proud that we are training manpower, which is becoming marketable to other TV stations.

Mr Speaker, there is something else the committee brought out clearly, the issue of land. If you read the recommendations of the committee, it talked about redundant assets. The media world has gone digital. We may not need all that land right now as UBC, because we are not in that field. I think we shall again discuss with the committee and look at what we should do to these redundant assets.

Right now, one does not need to put up a huge building to broadcast. You can even broadcast under a small room and you move on. So, we need to look at some of these things and see how we can turn them into productive assets instead of being redundant.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable minister, can we conclude because we are going to have a chance to handle most of these issues when processing the ministerial policy statement, where we shall be recommending to give you money.

MR KABBYANGA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. When UTV and Radio Uganda were merged into UBC, UBC took over all the assets and liabilities. So, the issue of being young or not is not necessary. When you inherit your father's land, you do not need to be very young or very old. We have already inherited everything and we have to protect those assets. I thank you, Mr Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Committee chairperson –

MR TONNY AYO: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank the honourable members, most especially for the submissions that came severally from Members on the management of UBC.

We have discussed this even with the ministry and when you look at our recommendations, we have touched on editorial, staff, the board and management. As Parliament, we need to emphasise that the Government looks into the issues of management of UBC to ensure that people who are competent and ready to work, are put both at the board and management.

All these other issues would fall in because if that is not done, Members will say money is being sunk and we are not getting output or anything out of it.

I totally agree with you and this is why we have come to re-echo the recommendation of the review committee plus other things.

Mr Speaker, I would like to mention one thing that the minister said. Regarding the Kololo land, UPDF has its land, but before Radio Uganda and TV Uganda were merged, they also had East African Post and Telecommunications Corporation within the same area.

However, the Ministry of ICT oversees the operations of both UBC, UCTL and Posta. So, this is the responsibility of the minister, who is supposed to sit and make a decision, and come up with a clear position whether it is UCTL, Posta or UBC to take charge of this land and then the instrument is provided.

I think that is what the ministry should take and we told them exactly that. To provide an instrument to stop this war so that whoever is going to be in charge is in charge but they should sort out the other entities on how they should operate on this land.

As for UPDF, they have their land legitimately and they fenced it off. UBC have got masts. Some of them are using guy wires that are very long, crossing into UPDF land. So, sometimes UPDF does not allow them to access in times of repair and servicing or fixing their network. It becomes a problem. The request to access the place can take so long. That is where the conflict is but not much from the land.

Mr Speaker, I agree that UBC has got viewership. Hon. Paul Omara, is always on UBC on Wednesdays “behind the headline”, a very popular programme. The problem is that we were not able to get exactly the millions of people who watch UBC. That was difficult.

To be sure, the number of people who view UBC has increased. Even the programmes are coming up, but we want them to step up, be more competitive, and become commercially viable, while at the same time providing the public good. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Committee chairperson, when you are coming for a Ministerial Policy Statement and you want to address issues around viewership, there is an agency called Ipsos. That is what many advertisers use. That is what Hon. Ebwalu wanted to talk about. [Mr Ebwalu: “*I am a radio man and that is my area.*”]

Whereas the Government can say we are putting out desirable information, as a private businessman, I follow viewership. If I place my advert with you, how many people will I reach? That is very critical and you may need to get - and then we will say, but UBC, why is it that this television is managing to reach this kind of viewership while you are not? Minister of Finance, Planning and Economic Development –

Honourable colleagues, please wait. We have two items that we must finish today.

4.34

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR FINANCE, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (GENERAL DUTIES)

(Mr Henry Musasizi): Mr Speaker, in the report, there was a matter touching the supplementary for UBC. I wish to inform the House that in this financial year, we provided a supplementary to UBC under 3 per cent and all the money has been given to them. How did this arise?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: How much was it?

MR MUSASIZI: It was about Shs 24 point something billion.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Your colleague, who is a minister, is saying money –

MR MUSASIZI: How did this arise? Mr Speaker, UBC is a subvention and we did a general rationalisation of 80 per cent across the board to all subventions. This affected even areas which were critical like UBC. When we realised this, we passed a supplementary to them and we have paid. Also in this budget, you may initially see a reduction in their budget, but we have picked it and we shall address it through corrigenda.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable minister, does NTR from UBC go to the Consolidated Fund or it is spent at source?

MR MUSASIZI: I need to check that, Mr Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable colleagues, this is a matter we shall handle at ministerial policy statement level, when we are going through the deeper part of – Honourable, do you have an amendment here?

4.36

MS AISHA KABANDA (NUP, Woman Representative, Butambala): Thank you, Mr Speaker. The amendment I wish to propose on page 18 -

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Aisha, a minute. Hon. Oboth wanted to make some – Maybe he wants to order UPDF to remove the gate and - was it cleared? Have you settled your matter? No, the honourable minister is here and I am giving him a chance. I am not giving Members a chance.

4.37

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE AND VETERAN AFFAIRS (DEFENCE) (Mr Jacob Oboth): Mr Speaker, thank you for your indulgence. When I listened to Hon. Tonny Ayoo, he explained the allegation on the UPDF. Actually, what he stated in the

explanation is conflicting with the report. He said that the UPDF has land there legitimately, but it is UTL that has constructed wrongly that to access their facility - their wires are hanging the other side-

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, he said that you fenced your land -

MR OBOTH: We fenced our land, which every prudent land owner should do, so did we encroach by fencing or it is something that this House can recommend and we sort it? It was not very clear.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The report needs to be very clear. If the Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF) is controlling their own land, Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) should be asking for access, on easement.

4.38

MR TONNYAYOO (NRM, Kwanja County, Kwanja): Thank you, Mr Speaker. Before UPDF fenced off the land, UBC had installed their mast and part of their wires were in the land at the border with UPDF's land.

Also, UBC is claiming that the fencing got a little bit inside their land. That would not be a problem, but the problem comes when they want to access and repair their mast because it is very difficult. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Oboth, they do not recommend anything about UPDF; but what I would advise the Hon. Prime Minister to do is to take up the matter. Minister for Information, Communications Technology and National Guidance (ICT) and Minister of Defence and Veteran Affairs meet and discuss.

This is the Government supporting Government and I am very sure that the UPDF is also giving serious security to the UBC installations up there.

Rt Hon. Prime Minister, let us have this resolved. Honourable Minister for Finance, Planning and Economic Development, I saw the signs and did not want to escalate it. I

propose that you go back and crosscheck if all the money has been released.

4.40

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR FINANCE, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (GENERAL DUTIES)

(Mr Henry Musasizi): Mr Speaker, some of the things are a bit technical –(Laughter)–, when we say that there was an understatement at the start of the Year and we collected this through a supplementary.

We issued the general cash limit of Shs 24 billion on the assumption that this will go throughout the year, yet we release money in quarters. That means, UBC has that budget and on a quarterly basis, we release it to them. By June, they will have received all.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is better. The information I have is that now they have received Shs 8 billion. Colleagues, because Hon. Musasizi said that these are technical matters, he also made a technical amendment to his submission and I think we take it as that. Hon. Aisha Kabanda–

4.41

MS AISHA KABANDA (NUP, Woman Representative, Butambala): Mr Speaker, you have saved your minister for ICT. I saw him very happy with the resolution. However, I propose an amendment on page 18 and it is to the effect of revamping UBC.

The recommendation that reads the recommendations of the UBC review committee should be fully implemented with a view of improving the operations of the national broadcaster. The committee further recommends that the above be implemented within two years.

Mr Speaker, for an organisation that has been adamant for eight years, to simply say, implement the recommendations of the other committee, may not help us.

I pray that we amend it and say that within a period of two months, the minister shall

make a statement on the proposed action plans for revamping UBC to self-sustenance and explain why they did not implement the recommendations of the review committee of 2016.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: That sounds brilliant but Hon. Aisha, when we are invoking rule 220 on an action taken report, we shall not invoke it in bits. It needs to be one. I propose that we task the sectoral committee, when they are processing the policy statement, it looks deeply into these issues of UBC.

I also think that the Committee on Commissions, State Authorities and State Enterprises (COSASE) should process the Auditor-General's report on UBC within one month and report back. So that it can aid the committee and the House, when we are appropriating and processing the policy statement. We can have in a win-win situation, I do not know what you think, Hon. Aisha.

MS AISHA KABANDA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I was only proposing to the effect that the recommendations of the committee that had been put in place by the minister are not on record.

However, if the minister makes an action plan, to revamp UBC, he would have made a formal commitment to the House but since you have proposed that we give way for the committee to study the recommendations you have guided. The committee will study recommendations deeply and later alone inform Parliament and the minister. I submit.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable colleagues, I put the question that the Report of the Sectoral Committee on Information, Communication Technology and National Guidance On the operations and the performance of the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation be adopted.

(Question put and agreed to.)

Report adopted.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable minister, we shall need you to report back to this House within three months. Honourable colleagues, I put the question that the report of the sectoral Committee on Information, Communication Technology and National Guidance on the petition of the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) against the Presidential directive of Government advertisement exclusively through Uganda Broadcasting Corporation be adopted.

(Question put and agreed to.)

Report adopted.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Next item, Procedure, Hon. Opendi.

MS OPENDI: Mr Speaker, on 19 May 2022, I brought a petition here on behalf of my people, from Tororo regarding land grabbing, by one Sylvia Owori. The committee completed its work in March 2023, the item was even put on the Order Paper and then removed.

To date, the report of the committee has never been presented and yet we all know that petitions have the first call on the Order Paper.

Is it procedurally right for us to have a very urgent matter just put aside and yet the people are still living in fear and are being harassed?

Some of them have been dragged to court and they keep calling me. When they see this petition being resolved today, they are going to call me, my phone is off but when I put it on, I know, I will get the calls.

Mr Speaker, I plead that the report of the committee be presented so that justice can be given to my people. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Opendi, do not mind, the report is going to be processed. In this period, we are fighting to ensure that we finish all pending reports because there are many, even some are before committees.

I would like to make it clear that rule 25 of our Rules of Procedure, which talks about Order of Business, does not give petitions the first call. In fact, it gives reports on 2(p). That is where you even go to reports of Parliament. There are others that are very critical because Parliament is designed in such a way that we give Government business more priority. However, the report is going to be handled. I am trying to ensure that we go through all these pending reports because all chairpersons would like to see their reports worked on.

Honourable colleagues, I see we are again going to be late. Yes, Member from Kiboga?

MS KAAYA: Mr Speaker, the same applies to the report by the minister on the stabilisation of maize prices. I am bringing this because we are just starting the planting season. The public wants to hear from us how we are planning for them on the issue of stabilisation of prices of such a crop.

Last Thursday, the minister promised to bring a statement here today but to my surprise, the statement was not allocated. I pray, Mr Speaker, that you allocate it.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: That means the statement is not yet with me because those statements are given priority. So, I am going to ask the minister whether he is ready, then we shall ensure he brings it here.

Honourable colleagues, let us move. Next item –

**MOTION FOR ADOPTION OF THE
REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON
RULES, PRIVILEGES, AND DISCIPLINE
ON THE PROPOSED ALIGNMENT
OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE OF
PARLIAMENT WITH THE PROGRAMME-
BASED BUDGETING FRAMEWORK OF
GOVERNMENT**

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Chairperson, Committee on Rules, Privileges and Discipline – Hon. Abdu Katuntu. He walks like a senior.
(Laughter)

4.49

THE CHAIRPERSON, COMMITTEE ON RULES, PRIVILEGES AND DISCIPLINE

(Mr Abdu Katuntu): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. [Hon. Oshabe: *“He is a founder member of a party.”*] I will take Hon. Nsamba’s comment as a compliment.

This is a report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Privileges and Discipline on the proposed alignment of the Rules of Procedure of Parliament with the Programme-Based Budgeting Framework of Government. I beg to lay on the Table the original signed report, as required by the rules, plus the minutes.

Mr Speaker, during the plenary sitting of Thursday, 25 January 2024, the Rt Hon. Deputy Speaker raised concern over the misalignment between the National Budget Framework Paper and the report of the Budget Committee. The Speaker noted that whereas the framework paper was programme-based, the report of the Committee on Budget was sector-based, contrary to the Public Finance Management Act of 2015.

In response, the chairperson of the Committee on Budget observed that the programme-based budgeting was not yet aligned at all stages in the budget process and that for such alignment to take place, it would require an amendment of the Rules of Procedure of Parliament to constitute programme committees.

Consequently, the Presiding Officer directed the Committee on Rules, Privileges and Discipline to study the issue as raised by the Chairperson of the Committee on Budget and report back to the House within three weeks.

Under item 2, we set out the terms of reference, item 3 was the methodology and then the findings on page 4.

Mr Speaker, Programme-Based Budgeting (PBB) is a budgetary reform introduced by the Government to strengthen the link between Government strategic objectives, budget allocation and service delivery outcomes.

The Programme-Based Budgeting approach allocates resources by programme in alignment with the National Development Plan (NDP).

The National Development Plan III (NDP III) has established 19 programmes aligned to the NDP strategic objectives on which the budget is structured. The PBB is a shift from Output-Based Budgeting (OBB), where budgets were grouped according to sectors and allocations linked to sector policies and objectives.

Mr Speaker, the committee reviewed the current legal framework governing the budget process to establish whether it supports the Programme-Based Budgeting framework. The committee notes that the budget process in Uganda is governed by the Constitution, specifically Articles 155 and 156.

Article 155(1) mandates the President to cause the preparation and laying of the budget for the next financial year before Parliament each financial year. Article 155(4) requires that before Parliament considers the budget, an appropriate committee of Parliament discusses and reviews the budget, and makes appropriate recommendations to Parliament.

To give effect to the above constitutional provisions, Parliament enacted the Public Finance Management Act in 2015, which, inter alia, provides for the process for the preparation, approval and management of the annual budget.

Section 3 of the Act defines “budgeting” to mean, *“the process by which the Government sets levels to efficiently collect revenue and allocate the spending of resources among all sectors to meet national objectives”*. I emphasise the word “sectors” -.

The Act further defines “sector” to mean *“a group of institutions or votes that have common functions, objectives and mandates”*.

Additionally, Mr Speaker, Section 13 of the Act provides as follows:

“Annual Budget

- 1) *The President shall cause to be prepared and laid before Parliament the proposed annual budget of Government for a financial year;*
 - 2) *The proposed annual budget shall be prepared in consultation with the relevant stakeholders;*
 - 3) *The minister shall, on behalf of the President, present the proposed annual budget of a financial year to Parliament by 1st of April of the preceding financial year; and*
 - 4) *The Speaker shall commit the proposed annual budget to the Budget Committee of Parliament and to each sectoral committee of Parliament the part of the annual budget that falls within the jurisdiction of that sectoral committee". I emphasise the word "sectoral".*
- b) The establishment of sectoral committees under Rule 187 of the Rules of Procedure was based on the current structure set up by the Government which is sectoral-based, and it is for this reason that sectoral committees were named according to the sectors they oversee;
 - c) The budget is appropriated and released to votes which fall under sectors and not programmes;
 - d) Amendment of the Rules of Procedure to align them with the Programme-Based Budgeting Framework should, therefore, be contingent upon the amendment of the Public Finance Management Act and the of the administrative structure of Government with the Program Based Budget Framework (PBB).

Mr Speaker, the rules governing consideration of the budget by Parliament are contained in Rules 144 up to 154 of the Rules of Procedure. Rules 145 and 148 provide for consideration of the Budget Framework Paper and submission of the proposed annual budget respectively and are a replica of Section 13(4) of the Public Finance Management Act cited above.

Additionally, rule 187 provides for the establishment of sectoral committees to oversee the various sectors of Government, while rule 189 provides for the function of sectoral committees, which include consideration of budgets for the sectors under their jurisdiction.

Observations

From the foregoing, the committee observes the following:

- a) The Public Finance Management Act, which is the principal Act governing the budget process, envisages a sector-wide approach to budgeting and not a programme-based approach. This is evident in the definition of the terms "budgeting" and "sector" in the Public Finance Management Act. Amending the Rules of Procedure to provide for programme budgeting would, therefore, be in contravention of the Public Finance Management Act;

Recommendation

The committee recommends that the Government tables amendments to the Public Finance Management Act to give legal effect to the program-based budgeting framework and conduct a comprehensive review of the Government ministries which are currently sector-based to be program-based, whereupon Parliament can make appropriate amendments to its rules or procedure to reflect the changes that could have been made.

Conclusion

Mr Speaker, the committee notes that whereas PBB framework, which is a program-based framework, has been in force for four budget cycles, the concept is not supported by the current legal framework. Therefore, amending the Rules of Procedure, to align them with the PBB framework at this stage, when the Public Finance Management Act the principal Act governing the budget process still refers to the sector is like putting the cart before the horse. It is, therefore, incumbent upon the Government to initiate appropriate amendments to the Public Finance Management Act that would inform the integration of the PBB framework in the Rules of Procedure of Parliament. Mr Speaker, I beg to report.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Minister of Finance Planning and Economic Development, do you need to make any comment?

4.59

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (PLANNING) (Mr Henry Musasizi): Thank you, Mr Speaker. The Chairperson of the Committee on Rules, Privileges and Discipline, who is a senior Member of this House, has presented the statement of fact. This is what the Public Finance Management Act provides.

It is now about eight years ago since we enacted the Public Finance Management Act and so many things have evolved. At the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED), we have decided to undertake the process of consultations, which will lead to amendment of the Public Finance Management Act so that it is able to take care of the current circumstances. In view of this, Mr Speaker, I beg that the report of the committee be adopted without debate. *(Laughter)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable colleagues, this a straightforward matter and there is nothing much we need - I put the question that the report of the Committee on Rules, Privileges and Discipline on the proposed alignment of the Rules of Procedure of Parliament with the Program Based Budgeting framework of the Government be adopted.

(Question put and agreed to.)

Report adopted.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Now, Honourable minister, how much time do you think you would need to really give us feedback because our recommendation is saying that you realign through amendment.

MR MUSASIZI: Mr Speaker, the Public Finance Management Act is a comprehensive law. I cannot commit on the time until when the consultation process is done.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I can understand the dilemma of the minister on this sometimes. Honourable minister, let me invoke my powers to give you one year. Yes, I can tell you that it is a long process for him to bring - but in the meantime, you can give us periodic updates.

MR MUSASIZI: For the meantime, Mr Speaker, the mismatch does not stop us from moving the way we are moving because Regulation 11-

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, we are concerned with the way we are moving.

MR MUSASIZI: Yes, we are concerned but we can still move. It does not cause any fatal harm. We can still do the budget because the budget we are making does not contravene any law.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable colleagues, we are now going to start discussing the report yet we have already adopted it. No.

MOTION FOR ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH ON A FIELD VISIT TO ACHOLI SUB-REGION TO ASSESS THE PREVALENCE OF NODDING SYNDROME

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Hon. Abdu Katuntu and the team for the clear guidance. This has now clearly gone on record that the ball is in the Government's court. Honourable colleagues, if you can remember, some time back; we received a report from the Committee on Health regarding nodding syndrome disease in Acholi Sub-region.

It came from an issue that had been raised by Hon. Christopher Komakech and the field report was received. I was supposed to appoint the date for debate and we chose today. I open the debate with regard to the same.

Yes, I will pick Hon. Kyooma, the Member from Tochi County, Hon. Andrew Oulanya, Hon. Santa, Hon. Christopher Komakech, Hon. Sarah Opendi Hon. Makhoha, Hon. Oguzu, Prof. Mushemeza, the Member from

Omoro, Hon. Joyce Acan, and the Member from Kitgum.

Yes, I picked the former minister, Hon. Sarah Opendi. Therefore, colleagues, you know your order. I picked you too, Hon. Rose Obigah - the ones who have stood up, you know your order please.

5.05

MR XAVIER KYOOMA (NRM, Ibanda County North, Ibanda): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity. I thank the chairperson of the committee for the report. The findings of the committee are very touching. The day when the chairperson was presenting this report, I was seated near Dr Ruyonga from Hoima and he actually shared with me what they found on the ground during the visit. It is very sad.

I remember that during the presentation of this report, the chairperson kept emphasising that it is the “nodding syndrome” and not disease. That is my point of concern; a nexus of symptoms and not the disease.

For almost every financial year, we normally appropriate funds for scientific research and considering the state of these symptoms, this is an area that should be given priority. My question to the Minister of Science and Technology, the Prime Minister and the Government therefore is as to whether they have considered studies in this area or we are simply looking at symptoms without actually getting the real cause of these symptoms and therefore establishing the disease. Simply looking at the symptoms implies that the situation is likely to prolong and considering the sad state in which these people are. Have we made any efforts to study this area so that we get an everlasting solution to the syndrome?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Procedure, Hon. Yusuf Nsibambi -

MR YUSUF NSIBAMBI: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I find this strange because this matter was adjourned for debate and it is a very serious matter but there is no Minister of Health –

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: We have one, Hon. Muhanga –

MR YUSUF NSIBAMBI: Yes, you had better take your seat. Why do you take the back?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, Hon. Yusuf, please when you see –

MR YUSUF NSIBAMBI: I withdraw. I thought there was no minister because she is not taking her rightful position.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: When you see a minister seated on that side, and in that section, you know there is an issue and I have raised it here.

MR YUSUF NSIBAMBI: Most obliged. Thank you.

MR KYOOMA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am very much interested in knowing the effort that the Government has put in place to study the symptoms and arrive at the causes to get a solution. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable member for Tochi –

5.08

MR PETER OKOT (DP, Tochi County, Omoro): Thank you, Mr Speaker. For us who come from a region, which is heavily affected by the Nodding Syndrome, each time a matter comes on the Floor regarding the Nodding Syndrome, we feel it. There were two centres, one in Omoro, and the other one in Kitgum, which were being run by private individuals to support the children with Nodding Syndrome.

These organisations or private individuals ran short of funding and they handed over these centres to the Government, directly to the local government with expectations that the Government would appropriate money to support the local government which in turn would support the running of the centres.

The last time money came from the Government to the district local government was way back

in 2018. To date, there has been no budget sent to the district local government to support these centres so that the children of Nodding Syndrome are supported.

If you visit the homes of these Nodding Syndrome children, you find that the parents who are supposed to be engaged in other viable activities to make sure that there is food security, do not have the time because they need to be near these children. When they try to leave them at home so that they can go to the gardens, these children fall into fire and get burned. Others are raped. We urge the Government to make sure that these centres are reopened and are up and running and that these families are supported.

When the organisations were supporting these centres and the families were being supported with food items - nutrition was also a factor. Children started showing signs of improvement with proper nutrition. We call upon the Government to make sure that funding to the local government is restored. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Do you have a procedural matter, Hon. Onekalit?

MR ONEKA LIT: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I beg your indulgence. The discussion surrounding the Nodding Syndrome is a very passionate one because it touches a very big population in northern Uganda.

My procedural matter is, as we talk, the Rt Hon. Speaker, Ms Anita Among permitted Acholi Members of Parliament to go for a field visit and fact-finding of the current issues about the Nodding Syndrome in the Acholi Subregion.

Parliament has offered transport and facilitated the Members of Parliament of the Acholi Parliamentary Group; we were all there. My humble appeal is, would it not be procedurally right that we halt the debate so that we wait for these pertinent issues, which are very current, coming from the field and sanctioned by Parliament, such that we combine them with the current report and we have an elaborate debate to have a permanent solution on this

issues of the Nodding Syndrome? I beg to submit.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Two things quickly, number one for clarification, this Order Paper we are having today was made by the Speaker of Parliament, Ms Anita Annet Among and she is the one who put it as an item. I did not make the Order Paper.

Secondly, I understand the MPs are already back and the report of a parliamentary group is not a report of Parliament. Therefore, it cannot hold the business of Parliament. I am sure you have picked out critical and current issues when you were – because we are not going to debate the report of the parliamentary group. Our rules of procedure do not allow us to do that.

I think what is very important is that we sort out this matter. We have such reports that are pending; we should sort them out. What is very critical, since this was a field visit report, is to pick out the salient issues and recommendations. As we are in the process of budgeting - because most of these issues have to do with budgeting and lack of funding, we push using the information we found on the ground to ensure that they are addressed within the budget. That would be my thinking Hon. Onekalit. Is that okay? Hon. Oboth wants to add something.

MR OBOTH: Mr Speaker, you have guided well and only to add that this House would benefit from enriched interventions from the members of the Acholi Parliamentary group who went to the field so that they can influence the direction of this debate and recommendations.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, sure. Thank you. Hon. Santa and then Hon. Komakech. What is the issue, Hon. Rose Obigah?

MS OBIGAH: Mr Speaker –

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: On what point? That is what I want to know.

MS OBIGAH: On the issue of saying the Acholi Parliamentary group when they go, will come back to enrich – this issue was on the Floor of Parliament less than three weeks ago and money was already spent, people went on the ground. I live with the people of Terego and I get every information I know from my friends on the Acholi Parliamentary Forum who have been with our people who are suffering from Nodding Disease. This is a very embarrassing disease in the community. Much as I am from Terego, we all know we know Nodding Syndrome.

Mr Speaker, this is a very embarrassing disease in the community. Much as I am from Terego, we all know that nodding syndrome has not been given attention in the area of research. We are all interested in talking and getting solutions to this. It is already on the Floor of Parliament. I do not see any reason of deferring this, but propose that debate continues. If there is anything additional, you always give chance to all the Members from that area to add it here on the Floor of Parliament because it is so current. Thank you.

5.17

MS SANTA ALUM (UPC, Woman Representative, Oyam): Thank you, Mr Speaker. This disease has been with us for a very long time. When you come into contact with these children, you cannot fail to shed tears.

Much as the Members of the Acholi Parliamentary Group are on the ground, I believe that they are handling the issue of Acholi Subregion. However, even in Lango, we have many of these children. A case in point in Lira is Erute North where we have very many of these children. We talked to the chairperson. Even in Oyam District where I represent, we have two subcounties affected by this very bad disease. I would like to know whether the committee has also gone to some of these areas affected outside Acholi Subregion.

Mr Speaker, in the next debate, I would like to beg that all the areas affected by the nodding syndrome should be handled once and for all.

Secondly, the problem that we are facing as a district is that we are lacking the commodities to help in addressing this problem. The drug that we are using is antiepileptic. I would like to ask the minister; we were told at one time that there was research being done. How far has this gone and when will the Government come to address this issue?

Thirdly, there is no special day assigned for this very serious problem. It is just left to whom it may concern. Even some of the staff, when the patients come, they look the other direction.

Therefore, I would like to ask the minister, who is seated here that, wouldn't it be good for you to assign a special day to handle these children and above all, feeding? When you have a child suffering from this disease, you cannot do any other work. If you go to the garden, you will find the child burnt, giving them full time engagement with these children.

I request the Minister of Finance, Planning and Economic Development who is here, Hon. Henry Musasizi, to try to allocate for us funding to help these parents suffering with these children without any help coming from the Government. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Santa, the committee report on page 4 shows that they visited families in Gulu and Omoro districts. They also visited the health centres in Omoro, Pader and Kitgum, meaning that they did not go to Lango.

What is very important, honourable members, is getting a full picture even if the committee does not go there. We have a way of getting it. During budgeting, we will ensure that all these issues are looked at. Hon. Komakech –

5.21

MR CHRISTOPHER KOMAKECH (Independent, Aruu County, Pader): Mr Speaker, I do not know how I should pray to God to bless you and the Rt Hon. Speaker. On several occasions, we have sought for this platform to address the issue of these children and have failed.

On that note, I would like to thank everyone who has come out to hear the plight of these children. I thank the President; he took his own way and donated heads of cattle to these children. In Pader, each family received two heads of cattle so that they can get milk. However, this is just a smear of an ice cream.

I would like to paint for you the exact picture as a technocrat in that field and as a Member of Parliament who represents these children. Honourable members, nodding syndrome is a disease for the children and it is not curable at whatsoever case. The worst part of it is that as these children grow, they develop another form of mental illness. They upgrade from nodding syndrome to a more severe form of mental illness. It could be bipolar or schizophrenia, whatever you call it.

We should note that every time the children get a seizure – a seizure is a feat – they get mental retardation. These children cannot feed themselves or do daily activities of living, meaning that they are property of the Government.

How it pains if the Government – I am not saying this to demean the Government. We always receive food grants once a year. Thanks to the Prime Minister who gives. Each family gets 10 kilogrammes of maize flour and five or 10 kilogrammes of beans, once a year.

The medicine that these children take aggravates appetite for eating. The only way you can treat the brain or improve it is by eating well. Their appetite goes high and they end up eating dust on the roads. This is the problem we go through.

The Government allocated Shs 1 billion in the Tenth Parliament and this money was squandered. In Pader District, I can confirm to you that no family benefited from the Shs 1 billion that was released. Iron sheets were donated, mattresses were donated, but none of the families received this help.

Mr Speaker, I invoke and pray to this august House that in the coming budget, let us consider the plea of the children suffering from nodding

disease, who have now turned into adults. Some of them have given birth to children having Nodding Disease Syndrome. So, it is a generation that will go on and on. I implore us to put funds aside.

I request the Minister of Health – the President had pledged establishment of two rehabilitation centres, one in Omoro and another in Pader. To date, we are still waiting for these rehabilitation centres so that our children can seek help.

Thank you very much. I will be very glad if our request is put into consideration.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable colleagues, this is a very sad tale. When you look at the numbers, they are scary. This is only in Acholi. We have been told that there is also Lango.

I want to pick from both sides. I had picked Hon. Oulanyah and Hon. Sarah.

5.25

MR ANDREW OULANYAH (NRM, Omoro County, Omoro): Thank you, Mr Speaker. For consistency of the record, I request that we correct pages 3 and 7, where we have written “Orapwoyo” as “Orafayo”. There is no subcounty as such in Omoro District.

When I raised this matter on the 6th of last month, the Minister of Health was the first to say there was misappropriation of money. I would expect that within the recommendations of the committee, there will be a section where we shall audit what has been given to the beneficiary communities.

About what my colleague has also mentioned, it is important to know what has been given to the communities and how they have benefitted. If there has been any misappropriation, they should be held liable.

Secondly, the issue of outreach has not been very sustainable. With these rehabilitation centres, at least we knew that there is a central point. In the case of Omoro, the rehabilitation centre is in Odek and the nearest health centre is about five kilometres away from that point.

Therefore, it is our request that, that rehabilitation centre is converted into a Health Centre III so that it also caters to the wider community.

Furthermore, on the issue of support to the families. These children can be rehabilitated after they have recovered but they need special education. Our request is that even within that health center there should be integrated support for special needs education. I thought I would add that to the report. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Hon. Opendi?

5.27

MS SARAH OPENDI (NRM, Woman Representative, Tororo): Thank you, Mr Speaker-

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will come back honourable colleagues.

MS OPENDI: This matter is not new in this Parliament and it comes up in each term. The very last time that I handled this matter was in 2018 when it was raised by Hon. Franca Akello on the Floor of this House. It made me to go and visit all the districts to ascertain exactly what was on the ground.

As we all know, Nodding Syndrome neurological disorder is severe in some of the affected children and also mild but unfortunately, some of them are completely bedridden. When I visited, the majority were falling in the last category of those who were severely affected, comprising about 74 percent of the patients.

At that time, the majority of the cases were in Pader but when I visited, what I found on the ground was that there was confusion between Nodding Syndrome and Epilepsy, which is rampant in most of the districts. This is where there is need for the minister - I hope she is still here; oh, she is hiding the other side.

There is need for the minister to tell us the current statistics - (*Interjection*) No, I withdraw that. She is not hiding; I had not seen her.

The Government has done its best to support the families with the clinical care. And when the NGOs that were operating in Kitgum and Omoro closed, the Government was providing for those services at the health facilities.

However, we found out that the actual number of Nodding Syndrome cases was dropping. What was going up were the cases of epilepsy. But of course, we also found the black fly in the community and Government was supposed to spray and kill them.

However, the people must also cooperate and take Ivermectin because there was lack of cooperation from some of the population. If everybody took that medication, we would definitely be able to deal now with the challenge of epilepsy caused by the black fly.

I need to know from the ministry the real Nodding Syndrome and Epilepsy cases because there is a mix of the two. Otherwise, I want to thank - When you meet these children, you feel sorry for the parents. It was a pathetic situation, seeing your normal child turn into something else and becoming completely helpless.

The child has to be fed, some parents because they do not have anybody to leave this child with, they would either lock them in the house or tie them with some rope outside so that this child does not wander.

What I can say is that by then, the numbers for the nodding syndrome were going down while epilepsy was going up. So, we need to get clarity on that. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Joyce. Honourable colleagues, I am balancing sides but I am first giving preference to members of Parliament from that area so that we get information from them which would enrich our debate.

5.31

MS JOYCE ACAN (NRM, PWD Representative): Thank you, Mr Speaker. The plight of these children with the Nodding Syndrome, I can say, is really worrying. I happen to come from Lamwo District and I

know some of the areas that are mentioned in the report.

The report highlighted that this disease is not curable. And yesterday when some of the team from Acholi went to the ground, they were saying, “We are proposing that these children be accommodated under special interest groups, especially people with disabilities”.

However, there is a challenge in our Act, Schedule 3, that highlights the type of disability that is supposed to be accepted. Unless we amend the Act to include people with Nodding Syndrome, that is the only way we can have these people acknowledged as people with disabilities.

Again, some researchers are arguing that Epilepsy can be cured. That when children grow up, they outgrow Epilepsy. The other challenge is the closure of the rehabilitation centre in Omoro, Tumangu and others.

As Hon. Sarah Opendi said, most of these children are locked in the house and are so stigmatised that they cannot overcome the challenge of this disease.

However, if these children are brought into the rehabilitation centre, they can be catered for very well and some of them can recover and maybe go back to school. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. [Hon. Member rose] Clarification applies when you have someone on the Floor. There is no one. that is what your rules say.

5.34

MS JUDITH ACHAN (NRM, Woman Representative, Nwoya): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for giving us the opportunity to debate this report. I want to thank the Committee on Health for going on the ground to ascertain the magnitude of the plight of our people and what we have been going through.

I have been privileged to be among the few MPs who visited the site, not once, but more than thrice and I would like to comment on the

report presented by the Committee on Health on this Floor.

First of all, on page 19, the committee said that they were informed that the Office of the Prime Minister distributed 270 pieces of iron sheets to the households affected by Nodding Syndrome.

However, what we got on the ground was that they only received 200 pieces of iron sheets, and on the same page, there was also an allocation of Shs 18 million to Gulu District, to enable them to cope up with increased demand of handling patients but we found that only Shs 8million was received and not 18 as it is in the report.

Mr Speaker, when I go back to the issue of iron sheets, the prayers for the affected families are that - when you look at the population of the people that are affected with the nodding disease – we were in Omoro and Pader. I had a commitment so I had to run back, but the people affected are over a thousand and when you take 20 iron sheets to the population, I find it strange because what these parents go through to take care of the children is terrible. They chain them up when they are going out to look for a livelihood.

They cried and said - Mr Speaker, we saw some of the victims seriously burnt and when we arrived in Pader District at Awere, we found tears still rolling down the faces of the parents because they had just lost a child who drowned in the river since the child was not tied up, he escaped. They told us that when the moon is about to set, that is when they get serious attacks. When they are attacked and there is no older person around, they become so wild that they can beat and overpower you.

What happens is that they can even burn the grass-thatched houses; they have been burning houses so the community, the families and the affected have requested that the Government supplies every affected household, be it in Acholi - because we are debating nationally or Lango to distribute at least 20 pieces of iron sheets to the affected families so that they are

saved from the fire disaster when the houses get lit ablaze by the affected children.

Secondly, the report of the committee talks about a monthly expenditure on feeding of Shs 32 million. Even I, as a Member of Parliament, cannot afford Shs 32 million for a family in the village breakfast, lunch, supper and fruits to enable them to cope with the disease. What these people demand is that the Government provides a supplementary grant to empower the families to do business. In addition to that, the grant that goes to disabled persons should also - because of the impact of the attack, some have become disabled – they should be included among the disabled persons to receive these grants such that they can be empowered to sustain themselves. Otherwise, how long shall we distribute food items?

Mr Speaker, what pains me most is the inconsistency in the supply of drugs. I was a translator to the white people who constructed the Nodding disease centre in Omoro District. I was there in 2011 before I joined the bank. The centre has been abandoned; a fully-fledged structure has been abandoned. If the Government can take it over - even now the owner of the land is threatening to withdraw the structure and land. This is an opportunity for the Government to take it over and upgrade it to a health centre IV, specifically to manage this disease.

Lastly, can we find a long-lasting solution and have this disease investigated thoroughly? What is the cause? They say it is the flies but our great-grandparents were bitten by those flies and they did not get it. Where did it come from? What causes it? What is the means of transmission? We need to know all that because from our visit, we found a two-year-old child, a three-year-old child, and a five-year-old child affected. The report cannot say that the disease is no longer there but we only have people that were affected. It is still there. There are two-year-olds, three-year-olds and five-year-olds.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable colleagues, I guide as follows: One, at the end of this debate, I request the

Government Chief Whip to link up with the Chairperson of the Acholi Parliamentary Group and organise a multi-sectoral meeting with the Prime Minister on this issue for action. The voices I have heard from the Government are not – the Ministry of Health needs support.

Two, we establish whether we have new cases because I have heard Government officials say we no longer have new cases but Members of Parliament on the ground say, there are new cases.

Three, the best solution –even when you say we support these families with money and alternative means of income and all that yet you are saying these families cannot leave these children to go and look after the business or a plantation, they must be at home to look after these children. Should we revamp the shelters and the children are given care under the shelters where they get a pool of food, medicine and then the Government gives it serious attention?

All this is food for thought that will be discussed with the Executive at that level. It pains me for us to sit here and debate. We say, we spoke and even resolved but when you look at what has been done, Hon. Komakech and the team come back here crying. You feel pain. Hon. Lamwaka and then Hon. Alyek.

5.43

MS CATHERINE LAMWAKA (NRM, Woman Representative, Omoro): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity. I would like to thank the Committee on Health for the report that was presented to the House on Nodding Syndrome. I agree with the committee on their findings and recommendations.

Mr Speaker, I would like to refer to a few issues that came out prominently in the committee report. I confirm to this House that the earlier statements the ministry has been making that there are no newer cases of Nodding Syndrome are not correct. I implore and suggest that among the recommendations that we should adopt today after this debate is that the Ministry of Health gets on the ground and assesses the

current situation of Nodding Syndrome in the subregion in the particular areas referred to.

I was in Odek, Awere just two days ago and there was a new case discovered in 2024 and taken to the health workers. This new case is a seven-year-old boy. It is the newest case in that area.

Mr Speaker, what worries me more is that the Ministry of Health from the time the Nodding Syndrome came to be heard about, has been doing research upon research but we have never got any concrete position as far as the research they have been doing is concerned.

In 2012/2013, when I was working in Pader as a Resident District Commissioner (RDC) - I would like to thank the President for his intervention in this matter. The President had to go on the ground in Angagura Subcounty to attend to this matter after his attention was drawn to it. He directed for an inter-ministerial committee to be constituted and supervised by the Prime Minister. The Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries and other ministries were members of this committee.

However, from the time that recommendations were arrived at; the aerial sprays, river dousing took place but three years after that, a lot changed totally.

I want to state clearly on the Floor of this House that ministries have been implementing their interventions on nodding syndrome in a very haphazard manner, without proper coordination.

Mr Speaker, when we talk about the issue of nodding syndrome and supply of drugs, most of these children have stayed for five months without medication. It is the anti-seizure drug that helps them normally. I visited the children in September last year and found that they stayed for seven months without medication. You can imagine the kind of situation we are in.

I want to appeal to the Ministry of Health to get on the ground and assess the situation now and give the most current report to this Parliament on their intervention as far as case management is concerned.

I want to add my voice on the issue of reopening rehabilitation centres. The rehabilitation centre in Owaja Village, Malaba, Omoro District has been closed since 2017 because of funding.

It is true that the President made a commitment and recommended that the Ministry of Health should take over these facilities and plan for them. In the last financial year, we raised this matter to the Ministry of Health but nothing was done.

Now, in this planning process, I want to agree with your proposal that we have a meeting with these ministries and the Prime Minister so that some of these issues are taken care of in the forthcoming budget. These centres to be reopened with the establishment of health centre IIIs so that they can take care of the medical needs of these children. Alongside the care aspect of giving care to these children.

Mr Speaker, if you get to visit these facilities once open and children are being attended to properly at the care centres, you may not even believe that they are sick. They tend to improve very quickly. Once they are attended to with proper feeding and medication in time, their condition improves so fast. That time when they were under proper attention, some of them were even able to go back to school. However, the situation has totally deteriorated. I really agree that with the proposal so that these centres be reopened -

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.

MS CATHERINE LAMWAKA: If I may finish -

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable, please. You know, you do not allocate yourself more time. You ask for it. You do not just switch on again because once it has gone off, your

time is up. Conclude. I want us to be orderly.

MS CATHERINE LAMWAKA: Thank you, Mr Speaker for your kindness. Finally, on the issue of the mothers, the parents of these children, who are not able to do any productive activity; we are rolling on Parish Development Model to bring people on the money economy.

We are bringing so many programs, but this community is so much disadvantaged that they can never benefit from such in any better form. My humble appeal and recommendation would be that we need a deliberate move to have these categories of people to be attended to in terms of them being productive.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries has a role to play here. Earlier on, recommendations were made that the ministry should come in to support these families, grow some fast maturing crops to take care of the children around at home. However, all this is not being done.

The parents are now requesting that if they could be supported by the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries with opening land and to provide them with quick maturing seeds that can help them take care of the needs of the children at home, it would help as we look for alternative means. Maybe this should be put into consideration, Mr Speaker. I thank you for the opportunity.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Thank you so much, Hon Judith Alyek then Hon. Lagen -

5.50

MS JUDITH ALYEK (NRM, Woman Representative, Kole): Thank you, Mr Speaker. When I was working in Pader, I was the technical advisor for maternal and child health and HIV/AIDS and nutrition with households with AFCA Foundation. We visited households with Nodding Syndrome cases, and we used to supply blankets and other household items to the families affected. A child with Nodding Syndrome is so stressing to the parents.

We have those parents still living up to now with those children? What amount of stress, sincerely, do they have from that time up to this time that we are discussing the disease in this Parliament?

I thank the Government for trying their best to support these people. However, there are people who do not care; the people who swindle what is given to support these families. These people must be investigated. We would now be at peace and feeling at home because the children and the parents would be supported by the amount of money we are hearing of the Shs 1 billion that was given to support the families.

The Nodding Syndrome cases are also in Lango as submitted by Hon. Santa Alum. I was requesting that the number of these cases in Lango subregion, most especially in Erute North in Oyam District, should also be ascertained to add on this number of the Nodding Syndrome cases in Acholi, so that if there is going to be any intervention, they would go together.

I heard you were talking of the Chairperson of Acholi parliamentary group going together with the Government Chief Whip to the Rt Hon. Prime minister. I would also interest myself and I request you if Lango parliamentary group can also join in and we ascertain the number in Erute North and also in Oyam districts.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: If the Government Chief Whip leaves behind his people of Lango, he should be in trouble. He will be in include you. Sorry, I forgot about that.

MS ALYEK: Yes. Lastly, Nodding Syndrome disease is closely related to onchocerciasis, which is river blindness caused by Simulium flies. I heard Hon. Sarah Opendi talking about the treatment; the Ivermectin that was given that time. Probably we could still do small research if onchocerciasis or the Simulium flies still exist in that area because we are hearing of new cases coming up and where are they coming up from? There could still be some cases of onchocerciasis and existence of those flies.

Some research can still be established. It is not yet late. So that we know if the previous research that was done can match with what is being done right now. Then we compare notes and see how to fight Nodding syndrome in Northern Uganda. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before Hon. Lagen, I have Hon. Paska Menya online on zoom. If Hon. Paska Menya is not able to join us for now.

5.55

MS PASKA MENYA (Independent, Woman Representative, Pader): Thank Mr Speaker. Hello?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: We can hear you, Honourable -

MS MENYA: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for giving us this opportunity to have this on the Floor of Parliament. As we speak, I am on my way from the constituency with the team that was on the ground. I want to appreciate Hon. Judith for the elaborate report that she has brought in the House. What I want to add on to my colleague's submission is concerning the girl-child. The girl-children are the most affected in this Nodding Syndrome victims. Why do I say this?

Mr Speaker, they are sexually abused, they get unwanted or unconditional pregnancies, and they produce, adding more burden to the parents who are already burdened by the children.

Mr Speaker, the parents of these children are crying out every day.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Menya, you could increase your volume.

MS MENYA: The parents of these children are in so much pain that they cannot do any economic activity which can allow them to support their children. This is because they are so vulnerable and cannot move anywhere.

Mr Speaker, as the woman MP for Pader District, I tried to intervene by giving a

supportive hand, making them form a group which is helping them. The support that the Government is giving to these people is not reaching them, because this support is extended to districts, which in turn expect the family or the parents of these victims to go to the district or the subcounty to pick the support.

They prefer the Government extending support directly to them in their households because they cannot leave their children at risk to come and get 10 kilograms of beans and 10 kilograms of *posho*. The support should go directly to their households if there is any.

Mr Speaker, I support the view of the rehabilitation centre. It is very important that it is created because when these children are brought together, like honourable colleagues said, it will be easy to track and find where they are and give them direct support. When we give them the support, we are able to find a better way of bringing their mind-sets and also helping their parents to come out of the stress and trauma they are going through in communities.

Mr Speaker, I inform the House that as we speak, we do not have a clear statistic of these children in the community. Every day they are dying and there are also new cases that we can confirm. My appeal to the Government is to send teams on ground so that we are able to ascertain how many have died, how many new cases we have, and what we can do to have a permanent solution.

These people are crying and we, the people or the leaders of the Acholi Subregion, cannot move on when our people are crying and believe we are not doing much to support them. This is because every time we go, they are not given any permanent solution and support to help them live as any other normal Ugandan.

My cry is for the people of Acholi Subregion and Lango Subregion. This is a very unique disease which the community suspects could be a post-war effect that we may not know. We do not want to dig deep, but we want to find solutions so that these people –(*Member timed out.*)

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Hon. Paska. Honourable colleagues, and the IT team, when a Member is presenting on Zoom, their video should be shown. Otherwise, one day a stranger will come in, present in the name of one of us, and make better presentations. *(Laughter)* As a must, we should always see the person on video.

I allowed Hon. Lagen. I am picking MPs from Lango and Acholi, to begin with.

6.00

MR DAVID LAGEN (NRM, Agago County, Agago): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I join my colleagues on these matters. I thank the committee for the report presented on the Floor of Parliament. I also thank you so much for the guidance that you have given us to have a meeting with the Office of the Prime Minister for action.

What we need now is action. We have been talking a lot. We need the Government to take immediate action to rescue and support the people of Acholi. We are going through tough times. We are bleeding from one level to another. If the Government delays responding to these issues, there will be several deaths.

Mr Speaker, I met a woman who wanted to kill all her children and at the same time kill herself, because it has become very difficult for her to take care of them. She cannot afford to get food. Medication is very difficult. She is very traumatised. The clan cannot help her. She is very stranded.

It is a very difficult moment for the people of Northern Uganda, including the Members of Parliament. You normally see us walking - we are very traumatised. That is a fact. We are going through a series of unending events, which is very tough for us. Sometimes when we walk, we do not feel good about what is going on in Northern Uganda. We need the support of the Government.

It is my humble appeal that at this time, the Ministry of Health should come out openly with a commitment, and take serious responsibility.

I also feel that the ministry should take things to another level. If they can take a sample and take it out of the country so that we get the result of the cause of this. This is because the committee was saying that maybe it is caused by the black fly. They are not yet sure. We want to have evidence. We want to be sure of the cause of this disease.

It is our humble appeal, Mr Speaker, that we need the support of the Government in this case. We also need the government to follow up. You know, there is a mafia who has made Northern Uganda their investment place. Any money taken to Northern Uganda is squandered; God will judge you for this. I am telling you the truth, God will never spare you. Money meant for the vulnerable people, which is supposed to support them in their livelihoods - you will pay for that. I thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Hon. Lagen, we are with you in all this- the whole House. This is not an issue for Acholi, Lango or Northern Uganda; it is for all of us and these are children of Uganda. Count on the support of this House strongly.

Hon. Onekalit, then Hon. Oguzu Lee.

6.04

MR DENIS ONEKA LIT (FDC, Kitgum Municipality, Kitgum): Thank you, Mr Speaker. Previously I stood up on a procedural matter that was ruled.

Mr Speaker, as my colleagues have stated, we need action. Let the debate of today be the debate that will bring a lasting solution to the people suffering from Nodding Syndrome. Let this report of the Committee on Health, really create a space that the Government can provide enough, and sustainable support to the people suffering from Nodding Syndrome.

Mr Speaker, if you look at the dilapidated health facilities which used to help the people suffering from Nodding Syndrome, bushes have covered them. They are totally out of use. The Government should go ahead, renovate and bring these health centres into work, so that the

children affected by the Nodding Syndrome are taken back into these health facilities and kept very well. Meanwhile, the households where these children come from need to be equally supported by lasting food item facilities.

Some support like seeds and construction materials for housing need to be given to the families affected by the Nodding Syndrome.

Generally, Mr Speaker, as the leadership of Acholi and Lango, I would like to say that our discussion is geared towards requesting the Government to come up with a lasting solution which is practical. The money for Nodding Syndrome put in the budget should be enough to help these people who are suffering a lot. I submit.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Hon. Denis Oguzu and then Hon. Lucy Akello -

6.07

MR DENIS OGUZU (FDC, Maracha County, Maracha): Thank you, Mr Speaker. We have had several discussions on this particular problem. From what I pick, you could tell that this problem has been neglected.

I know that this Government has been very successful in fighting so many wars. I believe that if they looked at this problem as one of those wars, they would have fought it. However, the question is that why has this problem persisted?

Mr Speaker, it had to take the intervention of this House under the leadership of the then Speaker of Parliament, the late Hon. Jacob Oulanyah, for this House to look for resources to be able to respond to the problems the people of Acholi and Lango are going through.

I thank you because you have been able to accord time for us to deliberate on this matter again. What is coming out clearly is that the resources that have been availed to confront this problem are inadequate. For example, if we allocate Shs 1 billion to maybe the Ministry of Health or the various sectors, how do we expect this money to do all the things we have

been talking about here? Research, feeding, drugs, that money certainly is inadequate.

I, therefore, want to invite the House again that this is a multi-sectoral issue which requires resources and these resources may not have to be spread everywhere. Again, what I am clearly seeing here is how the resource usage is coordinated. You find the Prime Minister's Office is doing something, health is doing something, local government is doing something and yet, these resources are spread thin.

Therefore, this House should be able to consolidate these resources and ensure very clear action plans that seek to confront this problem is addressed.

From the discussions here and the report of the committee, they are saying that Dr Onjivuwa is doing studies on people who are dead. About 70 of them have been examined, but the report is nowhere. In some circumstances –(*Member timed out.*)

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Just conclude, honourable.

MR OGUZU: Uganda is a party to the Convention on Biological Weapons. Some people actually in the village are saying this thing is a biological weapon being used. Why can't the Government under that framework request these samples to be taken and examined by experts so that we get to the root cause of this problem? Why are we not exploring all those options if we do not have capacity? I know the Ugandan government is a party to that convention which should have helped us to identify the root cause of this problem, but that is not happening.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, honourable. Hon. Lucy Akello -

6.11

MS LUCY AKELLO (FDC, Woman Representative, Amuru): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak about this issue.

A doctor called Dr Suzanne Gazda proved that with adequate nutrition, treatment, physiotherapy, these children can actually live some sort of normal life. That is why she opened up this centre in Omoro. Unfortunately, when she saw that there was no support coming through, she said, there was no point, this was not sustainable and she went back to the United States.

Personally, I was giving nutrition support because I saw it work. I remember when we visited this centre as Committee on Gender, Labour and Social Development, we were very impressed with the progress of these children. It was giving the parents ample time to even do their normal work. Now with the closure of all these centres, parents are now forced to stay at home and keep these children.

Mr Speaker, the problem has been that every time noise is made on this Floor, the Government then quickly looks for some money and throw it there. Once the noise goes down, that is how the money also disappears. So, the problem has been not just the lack of the funding, but the inconsistency.

With the management of this disease, as a country, we need to be very consistent. Most of these children are actually adults. They may look like children, but they are adults. They need to eat, they need the medicine, but when it is inconsistent, that is how we get these lapses. My prayer is, we have talked about this, and we will continue to talk until maybe something is done.

As a Christian, we say, push and pray until something happens. Perhaps we will talk until something eventually happens, and we see that these people are regarded as Ugandans, as you rightfully put it, Mr Speaker.

These are Ugandans who need to be cared for. I remember when we visited them as a committee, there is a way they just run to you and they want that affection. I do not know how many of us can even find time and just go and spend even one hour with these people now. Now, - *(Member timed out.)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Conclude.

MS LUCY AKELLO: If it is difficult to spare that one hour, what about the parent or the caretaker who has lived all her life, actually I will say her life comfortably because it is mostly women who are suffering as a result of this. What about them?

Children are being tied up because she has to look for some food in the garden. It is very painful. I think as a country, this should be the last time we talk about inadequate funding towards the cause of Nodding Syndrome.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Chairperson on Children Affairs Forum?

6.14

MS MARGARET MAKHOHA (Independent, Woman Representative, Namayingo): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I appreciate you for the opportunity, and the committee for the report.

As Chairperson, Forum for Children, I am deeply concerned, and more so that this disease targets the children.

Children who are more vulnerable, who need the attention of the parents, who need good feeding, and at such a time they are the ones who are affected.

I thank the Government for the interventions, but it is still challenging, they need to do more research.

When you talk of the black fly, does it only bite the children? Why not the adults? There must be another cause, because surely you cannot say that it is the flies which are now causing the disease. They cannot target only the children and leave out the adults.

I think that more research should be done to find out why children are targeted.

Leaving that aside, I hear that the affected children are being defiled, raped, impregnated. I have a problem with the implementation of

the laws of this country. Don't we have laws in this country? (*Member timed out.*)

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, honourable member. Prof. Mushemeza?

6.16

PROF. ELIJAH MUSHEMEZA (Independent, Sheema County South, Sheema): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I have three points. One is on methodological issues. I have observed that some of our reports tend to marginalise methodology and yet this is a very important way of how to check whether the findings would be the same.

On this particular report, there was a good attempt on the methodology. One can follow because there are issues being raised. Are there new cases or is there an exaggeration? Except that the report mentions district reports, yet none of the report is being mentioned here and I tried to check through the report but I could not find anyone mentioned.

On statistics, we can use our systems. Every village in Uganda has two Village Health Team (VHT) members and I find them very accurate. We can use them to find these records very fast because not every time shall we send a team from Kampala up to there and yet we have systems in place.

The second point comes in the conclusion of the report that a lot still remains unanswered about Nodding Syndrome like the exact cause and treatment and the Government should continue with the research.

I want us to be specific that in the next policy statement from the Ministry of Health, let there be a particular proposal on the money for research so that we can establish the cause of this syndrome.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Hon. Muzaale – I gave more time to the Northern team for the purpose of them sharing a lot of information.

6.18

MR MARTIN MUZAALE (NRM, Buzaaya County, Kamuli): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I have two issues. One, is the issue that colleagues said that even the little funds that were being sent to the region were mishandled or abused. It is funny that we have not heard that there were at least police cases reported against abuse of such funds, taking into account the pain that the parents who are having these children are going through.

On a similar note, if I take you to Table 2, on page 9, you will find that nodding syndrome in Kitgum District. The numeral is 261 and when you go to page 19, that is table 7, it will give you that out of the 261, 209 with Nodding Syndrome produced. That shows that - I do not know - first of all, whether these people with Nodding Syndrome can also fall in love.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Martin Muzaale, let us not question things around that line. These are people who are being raped. It is a very sensitive matter. I would urge you to stop.

MR MUZAALE: Mr Speaker, my concern is whether these children are being raped and at that whether there are cases that have been reported and whether something has been done about this. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable member for Ruhaama?

6.20

MR BENJAMIN KAMUKAMA (NRM, Ruhaama East County, Ntungamo): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for this chance. I put myself in the shoes of that parent who once had three healthy children and right now he has nothing completely. I once watched a documentary about the Nodding syndrome and almost shed tears. I have recommendations.

One, we have the Ministry of Science and Technology in this country that has allocated billions of money to do research. Can we have some billions of money ring-fenced to do this research?

We are talking about the Ministry of Health but we have money in the Ministry of Science and Technology. I have been looking at over 70 projects of research being carried out but they are almost useless. Let us put money into this research.

Secondly, I support the idea of the MPs from northern Uganda to have rehabilitation centres, because they have proved that once children are put in these rehabilitation centres and are fed well they improve.

Let us have the caregivers being paid by the Government so that we can have children of Northern Uganda grow into men and women in the future because the moment we keep looking at the old people and do not care for children, that means we will not have a population in northern Uganda in the coming years.

Lastly, when HIV/AIDS attacked this country in the 1980s, the Government rushed and established the Uganda AIDS Commission. It was a tough disease.

Right now, can't we start a commission or put a nodding syndrome under Uganda AIDS Commission so that we have this problem solved once and for all? Those are my recommendations.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Ssewungu -

6.22

MR JOSEPH SSEWUNGU (NUP, Kalungu West County, Kalungu): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I went with Hon. Beatrice Anywar by then when she was on our side, we spent four days in all these areas. I want to put it on record that it is very painful that the challenges we saw are the ones still resurfacing.

The biggest problem is that the Ministry of Health does not take our recommendations seriously. We saw these children and the issue of feeding is key.

In Uganda, we have a lot of fish like *mukene* - I do not know how they call it in English - *(Interjection)* - Yes, silverfish alone is very key in feeding these children.

Members are talking about health centres or rehabilitation centres. We visited all these areas where you put a rehabilitation centre but you failed to give it enough facilities as required.

In Uganda, as we speak, we had challenges of the six killer diseases. It is painful to see that this disease is continuing and sometimes, the Ministry of Health denies it. I am praying seriously that the children of these people from the Ministry of Health also get this disease - *(Member timed out.)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable member for Rukiga - No, you cannot wish that to a colleague, Honourable.

6.25

MS CAROLINE KAMUSIIME (NRM, Woman Representative, Rukiga): Thank you, Mr Speaker for the opportunity. Sincerely speaking, when you hear everyone talking about Nodding syndrome, it is a painful situation. It is really bad and it hurts at the same time - this is not the first time this issue is being raised on this Floor of Parliament. We come, talk but there is no action.

We have heard how mothers suffer feeding them, they cannot leave their children at home to dig or do anything. I thank you for the recommendation of meeting the Rt Hon. Prime Minister. Let them think of feeding them. Sincerely speaking, if we can offer food to people affected by disaster who are able to dig and help themselves, what about these families? These people and their children are suffering.

Mr Speaker, I heard a Member saying that they give only 10 kilogrammes of rice and 10 kilogrammes of *posho* in a year. Sincerely speaking, it is painful. Let us agree as Members of Parliament that they should be fed because we all know that their parents are not able to feed them. It hurts that for the women, even their husbands sometimes desert them. They are the only ones suffering in those homes, looking after them - *(Member timed out.)*

6.26

THE CHIEF OPPOSITION WHIP (Mr John Baptist Nambeshe): Mr Speaker, thank you. I was one of the seven members of a select committee constituted by the then Deputy Speaker, the late Rt Hon. Oulanyah, who visited a number of districts, including those rehabilitation centres. The situation was extremely catastrophic because parents are literally in prison. Those parents that take care of the victims of Nodding Syndrome cannot move or do anything; it is a prison.

Much as proposals are being made to revamp the rehabilitation centres in Kitgum and Omoro, the report has mentioned some good Samaritans, like Archbishop John Baptist Odama. I know his centre has been overwhelmed, but it has accorded lots of psychosocial support to the victims, including nutritional support.

The Government should consider giving more support to rejuvenate these centres that they are able to handle even more cases. By the way, the centre does not only handle victims of Nodding Syndrome. They also have the elderly, persons with disabilities, those with epilepsy and others.

Mr Speaker, you mentioned the establishment of what is termed as “foster homes”. Foster homes would be a solution if the Government considered establishing them. A foster home is where guardianship and care is given to not only children whose parents have died, but also those whose parents are alive, but unable to take care of the children. In that way, these parents will be able to fend for themselves and even those that are maybe registered under SACCOS for the Parish Development Model programme will be able to work for their own livelihood. As of now, they are in prison, Mr Speaker. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, LOP. Honourable minister?

6.29

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH (PRIMARY HEALTH CARE) (Ms Margaret Muhanga): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker and all Members who have

contributed to this report. From the onset, I would like to note that I feel so much pain when I listen to Members who have come across these children and seen them suffering.

I have come across them, not in a rehabilitation centre but in a home. I have seen the pain of a mother who has a child with Nodding Syndrome. I want to commit that the Minister of Health is doing all it takes under the circumstances and with the limited resource envelope to make sure this ends. It is so sad for everybody. None of us may have that child but most of us are parents and we know what it means to have a condition that is not treatable and is out of your control.

However, I would like to clarify a few things. As the Ministry of Health, we know that this Nodding Syndrome is in eight districts and two of them are in the Lango Subregion. Oyam and Lira are in Lango, isn't it? The Ministry of Health is already there. They are working with Omoro, Gulu, Kitgum, Lamwo, Amuru, Oyam, Lira and Pader.

Regarding this Nodding Syndrome, the Ministry of Health has a number. There are 2,200 children who have been reported and are under care and treatment. Out of these, some healed completely. Others even got married and have had children. We have others who sat senior six exams. Actually, their performance was not very good because of mental retardation but they grew into useful human beings. So, they need to get that treatment and also live productive lives.

In one of the letters that the Ministry of Health wrote to the Permanent Secretary/Secretary to the Treasury requesting for funds -most of you people from Northern Uganda are aware that the money that came through the Ministry of Health was not sufficient. It was little money. Nonetheless, the Ministry of Health at least provided treatment for these children, which is their core mandate.

Mr Speaker, Nodding Syndrome requires a multi-sectoral approach. The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development has got to come in. The Office of the Prime Minister

which deals with relief food should help these children find a proper diet.

When we say the Government has not done much, especially in research, I recall that Makerere University School of Public Health did research on Nodding Syndrome in the last Parliament. There is also a professor called Dr Richard Idro. Actually, his PhD research was on Nodding Syndrome in Uganda and it actually informed the decisions of doctors on what treatment to give these children. There is also a focal person in the Ministry of Health called Dr Mubangizi. His work is specifically to do research on Nodding Syndrome and also find rehabilitation for these children.

We shall also write to the President who promised two rehabilitation centres. The gender ministry advised the Ministry of Health that it is not nice to throw these children out of their homes to a rehabilitation centre. It is better to deal with the children when they are in their own homes, with their parents taking care of their other needs.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Margaret Muhanga, can I propose that on issues of that nature, since we have agreed that you are going to have a multi-sector meeting with the Prime Minister and leaders of the area, you know buy-in is very important –(*Hon. Ssewungu rose*) No, please, Hon. Ssewungu.

Buy-in is very critical. All these steps you are talking about are important for the community and leaders to buy-in. That is the first step to succeed. So, please organise this meeting as soon as possible because Hon. Judith Acan told me the report is about to be ready. I am sure you can have this meeting next week so we urgently look into these issues.

MS MUHANGA: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the guidance. I also call upon the Members of Parliament from Acholi Subregion that if you have noticed a new case, kindly come and inform us because the Ministry of Health does not live in homes or communities. As the Ministry of Health, we know right now that the remaining numbers –

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable minister, conclude - I wish we could conclude.

MS MUHANGA: Mr Speaker –

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Ssewungu, kindly take your seat.

MS MUHANGA: I just want to say lastly- I have already talked about Dr Richard Idro, who did his PhD research in nodding disease-

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable colleagues, let me guide you. When you stand up on a point of procedure and I do not pick you, you do not have to change it to a point of order when you are still standing. That is senior legislators know.

You have to first take your seat then you stand up again on another point. Honourable minister, I think you had concluded.

MS MUHANGA: I would like to thank the Members of Parliament from Northern Uganda who are concerned because they live with this problem; others just want to act to the gallery. However, currently, we have children who do not have the nodding disease and they are okay.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Hon. Sarah Opendi alluded to the fact that some patients actually have down syndrome, others epilepsy and they are all being managed but people think it is all nodding disease, which is not the case.

However, as I conclude, I want to allay the Members' fears and also commit that the Ministry of Health will still send a team, and I will be present with that team. Honourable members, you can call me in the night and tell me anything you want because I do not switch off my phone. I want to know what is happening in the health sector all the time.

Mr Speaker, I also commit that we shall have this multi-sectoral meeting with the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and the Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development and make sure that whatever interventions we are doing in Northern Uganda are known to the Members. I beg to submit.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable minister. Chairperson-

6.38

DR SAMUEL OPIO (Independent, Kole North County, Kole): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would like to clarify on some of the few issues that have been raised.

First, in the case of Lango. I state that the cases we found in Omoro District were coming from Oyam because Omoro District borders Oyam District and the rehabilitation centre that is at Adek is actually at the border between Omoro and Oyam.

Secondly, the cases from Lira were actually being reported also under those in Pader because it borders Lira District. What we found was that most of the cases in Oyam and Lira were moving towards Omoro and also Pader because that is where the services were available unlike in Lira and therefore it needs intervention in all those areas.

Thirdly, these rehabilitation centres are health centres, social centres and also educational centres where they acquire vocational skills and they are integrated back into the community.

We found out that some of the cases were integrated back into the community but there were some which were very severe and in the end, they went back home but still they could not be managed.

That is the reason we proposed that a monthly support is given to those families because they have to stay close to them and they cannot go to their gardens, shops and businesses because if they do that, then there is a higher risk on them.

Lastly, in regard to the new cases, in what we presented, we said that what they observed was that wherever there was a high population of the black flies, there was a high prevalence of nodding disease syndrome, mainly along the River Aswa.

However, that hypothesis had a challenge. There are parts of the world in Latin America and Asia with a high black fly population but no nodding disease syndrome. Therefore, there could be possibilities that new cases may have emerged because the black fly hypothesis was not conclusive.

Therefore, the proposal to support research will help to address this. In science, they say, "absence of evidence is not necessarily evidence of absence." Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable colleagues, I put the question that the report of the Committee on Health on a field visit to Acholi sub-region to assess the prevalence of nodding disease syndrome be adopted.

(Question put and agreed to.)

Report adopted.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable colleagues, you will meet with the Prime Minister- what we are focusing on is action. I talked to the Government Chief Whip and we are going to have a meeting where we shall focus on action and it would be very important to report back within one month. Thank you, Mr Chairperson and the team.

Honourable colleagues, House adjourned *sine die*.

(The House rose at 6.41 p.m. and adjourned sine die.)