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# Ensuring food sufficiency... Parliament approves \$54m rice agreement

by **Awoko Publications** — 14/12/2020 in News

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Increasing rice production and also ensuring food sufficiency across the country, Members of Parliament (MPs) on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2020 unanimously approved a \$54m quality rice production agreement. **The Foreign investment agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and Elite Agro Sierra Leone LLC, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates was tabled in the Well of Parliament on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020.**

Presenting the agreement for approval, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture Samking Koihinah Brima maintained that Elite Agro is a household name in Dubai and have bases all over the world and are about to invest in Sierra Leone in the subsector, which the country has struggled over the years to attract investors.

According to him the Company is committed under the agreement to cultivate 14,700 hectares of rice in Port Loko district, disclosing that Elite Agro will invest \$54m with no guarantee or percentage of the investment from the government of Sierra Leone. He assured that in the first year of implementing the agreement, the country will take the bold step starting the process towards food self-sufficiency with projection of 32,500 metric tonnes of rice equivalent to 650,000 50kg bags of rice.

“By year 3 this production will increase to 130,000 metric tonnes of rice, which is equivalent to 2,600,000 50kg bags,” he assured, explaining that is sufficient to cover over 25 percent of the gap in rice production that stands at 500,000 metric tonnes.

The Deputy Minister assured that with the start of this project, 5,000 jobs will be created locally, which will lead the process to stimulate the local economy, disclosing that agreement of such nature will attract few concessions considering the quantum of money that will be invested into the project.

Based on the agreement, he said all rice that will be produced under this agreement will be sold locally to the people and where they produce in excess they will be allowed to export, disclosing that their selling price locally will be a little bit lower as compared to the international best practice as at the time of production.

Contributing to the debate, the Chairman of the Agriculture Committee, Honourable Sallieu Osman Sesay, assured parliamentarians that the agreement is in the interest of the country and people with the first giant step towards addressing the issues of agriculture across the country.

“Getting the agriculture sector correct will lead to a stable economy,” he maintained, explaining that 14,700 hectares is a massive investment which according to him will create jobs and also transform the economic status of the people of Port Loko and also strengthen the country’s economy. Hon Abdul Kargbo representing the people of Lungi said if the country begins well in mechanized farming, then the economy will improve. assuring of their fullest support



towards the success of the project that seeks to create jobs for the people of Lokomasama and its environs.

He called for the project to be replicated in the other provincial districts as a way of improving the agricultural sector.

According to the Leader of the Coalition for Change (C4C), Hon Saa Emerson Lamina, the project if implemented will address the issue of 'hungriculture' in the country, disclosing that huge money was spent under the Agenda for Prosperity on tractorization with no concern on the topography, which led to the failure of the project.

He however supported the idea of replicating the project to other districts including Kono that has about 7 dedicated Chiefdoms on agriculture. AMK/14/12/2020

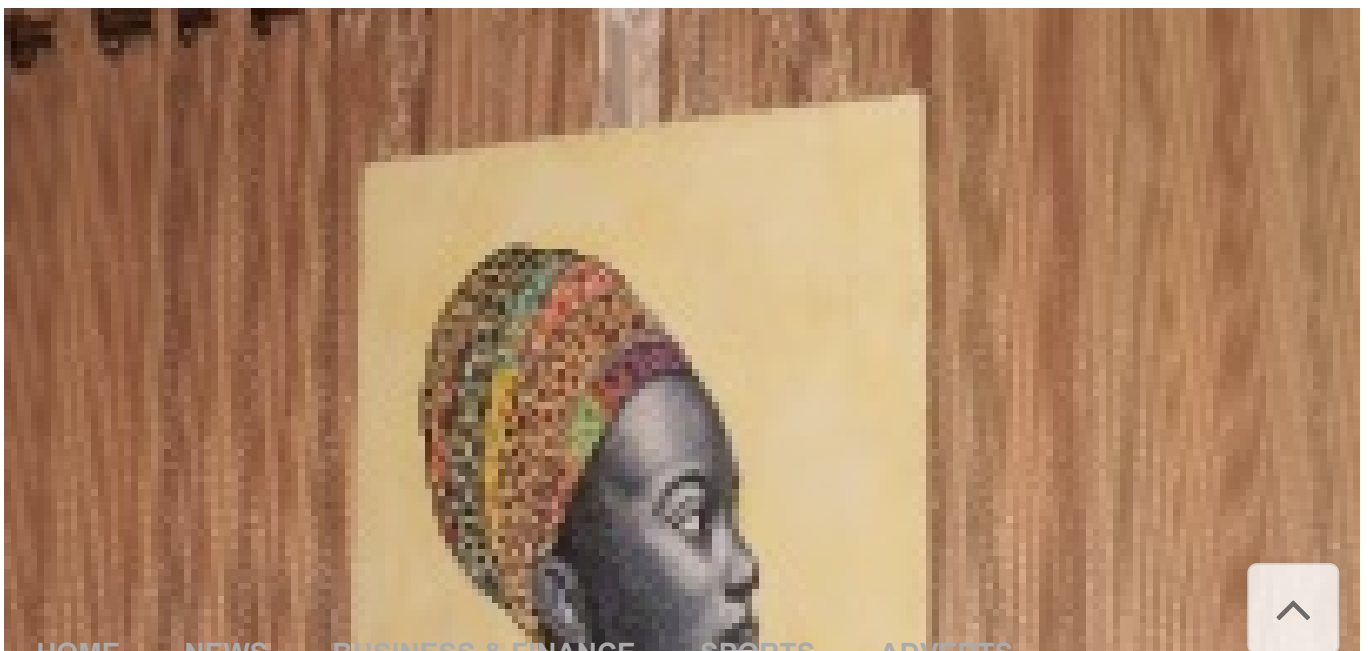
**By Alhaji Manika Kamara**

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# The Barray black art exhibition ends

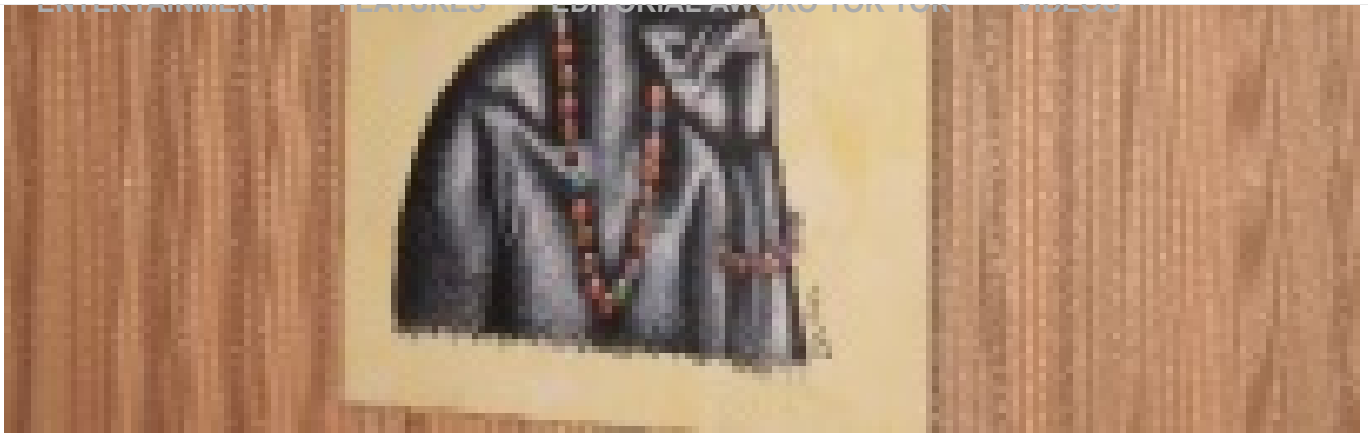
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On Sunday 13th December 2020, the curtain went down on the breathtaking and magnificent Barray Art Exhibition held at the Toma complex, Aberdeen. The theme of the week long art display was 'In Black We Trust', and showcased the struggles Africans at home and abroad face and how the artists sought to address them.

Jeneba Ojeh, an artist whose work was on display, stated "through art, I seek to portray my ideas through drawing and sharing them with others. I live for art and it's my favorite passion. Growing up in Freetown, I became fascinated with arts at an early age." In 2016, she joined The Barray, a group of contemporary Sierra Leonean artists and started her progress in the journey of art.

For her part, Hawa Jean Bangura, an artist whose art work was exhibited, expatiated on the premise of her depictions 'Know They Self', 'The Black Man's Burden', etc.

"In 1809, Rudyard Kipling (Jungle book author) wrote the poem, 'The White Man's Burden', the title and theme of which articulated the long held belief of the western world that the white man has a moral obligation to rule the none white peoples of the Earth, while encouraging their economic, cultural, and social progress through colonialism and 'missionary work'."

She continued, "This painting is about the very real burden that the black man has been forced to carry as a direct result of the type of thinking epitomised by Kipling's poem of the general mentality of white supremacy, of the mass genocide that was the slave trade (past and present), of imperialism and colonialism that destroyed all traces of the rich history of African culture and replaced it with artificial borders, foreign religions, names and languages. The kingdoms, power, wealth and majesty of the golden ages, of the Pharaohs, Mansa's, and Emperors of centuries past, long since desecrated and long forgotten, while only the image of the black man as slave and inferior remains."

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Jean Bangura who is a legal advocate and co-founder of The Barray narrated, “Despite our shared humanity, being a black man in today’s world is without doubt the harshest existence on earth. There are more racial slurs and epithets for the black man (black race) than any other human being. Black men are incarcerated at disproportionately higher levels than other races in the USA and the rest of the west. While colonialism and slavery may ostensibly be ‘over’, they continue to cause damage in more subtle ways. Racism and discrimination remain real.”

The other co-founder of The Barray Art Group, Tindae Feika, said they promote Sierra Leonean art, seek local artists and give them a unique voice. “We train and support them especially those with passion but lack the skills. We also give artists the opportunity to sell their products during our exhibitions,” he noted, adding that “the next exhibition will be in April 2021.”

Meanwhile, there were over 100 fantastic, magnificent and brilliant artworks on exhibition during the week long show which saw popular Sierra Leonean artists such as; Julius Parker, Felix Rhodes, Hawa Jean Bangura, Jeneba Ojeh, and Ranya Nirva (nee Abess El-Ali) showcasing their talent.

What’s missing in our art industry now is to have a sophisticated art gallery where art lovers at home and abroad can come and revel in our wonderful art collections. DT/14/12/2020

By David Thoronka

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# GUMA launches Le14.6bn water project at Mambo

by **Awoko Publications** — 14/12/2020 in News

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A Le14.6 billion water supply project has been launched by the Guma Valley Water Company at Mambo, Western Rural Freetown. The Mambo Community Water Supply Project supported by the Government of Sierra Leone comprises the construction of a weir, treatment and storage facilities, pipe distribution network and installation of 20 water kiosks, of which 15 and five will be located in Mambo and Hamilton respectively.

Speaking at the launch, the minister's representative, engineer Francis Moijueh, admonished the contractor, Brunnenbau Conrad (BBC), to be very transparent in its dealings with the community and ensure that grievance redress and stakeholder engagement mechanisms are put in place for the smooth execution of the project.

Moijueh added that they will be strictly monitoring the contractor's work and advised that Guma considers connections to households as one of the project's deliverables. Making a statement on behalf of the Ministry of Finance, engineer Francis Lahai said the Medium Term National Development Plan 2019 – 2023 is founded on government's strong political commitment to deliver results that would improve the welfare of Sierra Leoneans.

"That is why in 2020, government invested Le23 billion and Le150 billion in Guma and SALWACO respectively to improve on water supply across the country." The Headmen of Mambo and Hamilton communities, Mohamed Samai and Morlai Conteh, praised the government for such a laudable development project and pledged the full support of their

community members for the project as they have been yearning for pipe borne water supply for a very long time.

In his statement, the Managing Director of Guma, Maada Kpenge, apologised to the people of Mambo community on behalf of the company for lack of pipe borne water supply for nearly 60 years, adding, “The main transmission pipes pass right through the Mambo community, but it is only now we are about to provide safe and clean pipe borne for its residents.”

Kpenge said, “His Excellency, President Dr. Julius Maada Bio is very passionate about improving the lives of every Sierra Leonean; and so when we proposed this project, the government was happy to support us fully.” Director Peter Amara, a member of the Board of Guma, said they are always ready to give strategic direction and support to the management of Guma to carry out the water sector policy of the New Direction Government, which targets 80% access to water supply for all Sierra Leoneans by 2023.

The construction phase of the Mambo Community Water Supply Project is expected to last for six months and will provide access to safe and clean water supply for over 5000 residents in Mambo and Hamilton when completed. OG/14/12/2020

By Ophaniel Gooding



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