

Parliament approves \$150m for GARID project

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PARLIAMENT HOUSE



PARLIAMENT has approved a \$150 million facility to finance the ongoing Greater Accra Resilient Integrated Development (GARID) project.

In spite of an earlier attempt by the Minority to block the loan approval, the House

eventually okayed it at the end of a headcount that saw 137 Ayes and 132 Nays.

The additional agreement is between the government of Ghana and the International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank Group.

The GARID project is in line with the government's vision of improving flood risk and solid waste management in the Greater Accra Region.

The project will mitigate the impact of

flood on families, businesses and offices located in flood prone areas along the Odaw River channel in Accra, thereby enhancing economic and social development of the area.

Background

To address flooding in the GAR, the government, among other interventions, initiated the GARID project in 2020 with a financing of \$200 million from the World Bank.

However, in the heat of the COVID-19 pandemic, an amount of \$65 million, with the agreement of the World Bank, was reallocated to finance COVID related expenses.

Additionally, the original financing did not include compensation for affected persons.

This additional financing has, therefore, become necessary to reinsure the \$65 million, and to make funds available for the payment of compensation to affected persons.

Opposition

The motion for the House to adopt the Finance Committee's report on the agreement was moved by the Majority Leader, Alexander Afenyo-Markin, on March 11, 2024, and seconded by the NDC MP for Bolgatanga Central and the Ranking Member of the Finance Committee, Isaac Adongo.

However, the Speaker could not put a voice vote for the House to either adopt or reject the motion last Friday, because the Minority Leader, Dr Cassiel Ato Forson, rejected the decision for a vote to be taken.

He informed the House that after the House had debated the report the last time and the motion was moved, the First Deputy Speaker, Joseph Osei-Owusu, who presided, referred the matter back to the Finance Committee for further deliberation and report.

He insisted that the report must first be presented to members for the House to address the new issues that occasioned its earlier referral.

"But Mr Speaker, as we speak the report has been presented but we are yet to have a bit on it," he said.

He recalled that the First Deputy Speaker tasked the Finance and Works and Housing committees to go back to the GARID project sites and report back to the House.

He, therefore, urged the Speaker to allow the members of the two committees to brief the House on what they observed during their visits, and members should be given the opportunity to debate the report once again before a decision could be taken.

Briefing the House, the NDC MP for Ho

West, Emmanuel Bedzrah, told the House that the Minority members on the Works and Housing Committee visited project sites last Thursday.

He said they visited four Lots out of the nine Lots sites, such as Akweyeyman Lot 1 where they noticed that only 25 per cent work was done as well as Agbogbloshie where only 20 per cent of the work was done.

"Mr Speaker, at Agbogbloshie Lot 2 only 15 per cent was done and we went to dredging of the Odaw River where not a single dredger was found on site and no work done.

"The reason why \$200 million GARID project was allocated was basically to stem perennial flooding in Accra but if the whole Odaw River has not been dredged for a whole two years and \$200 million has been allocated, I do not see why we need an additional \$150 million," Mr Bedzrah argued.

He added that the irony of it all was Lot 7 — improvement works at Nima — while the members were on their way to the site, they called the contractor on phone but he told them he had not gone to the site and had not started work yet in spite of receiving \$2 million mobilisation.

Forensic audit

On behalf of the Minority, he urged the

Speaker to call on the World Bank to institute a forensic audit into the project.

"We are saying this because we have noticed that payments were made but there is nothing to show for this project and so why should we continue to borrow more money

"We see some of our colleagues in court for the \$200 million that was taken for the Saglemi Housing Project that there are visible works but with this GARID project we do not see anything tangible that merits \$200 million," he said.

Assurance

Responding to the concerns expressed, the Finance Minister, Dr Mohammed Amin Adam, assured the House that he started discussing with the responsible ministry how they could ensure that the projects were done up to the specifications of the contract.

"So, Mr Speaker, the ministry responsible will be charged to follow up on the activities required to be done and I will make sure that I work with them to carry out these activities.

"I will want to be here within two weeks, Mr Speaker, to give a comprehensive report on the extent to which these activities have been carried out. I urge the House to approve the facility," he said.



Chamber of Parliament