

The Importance of Collaboration



Nancy Swartwood, Communications Manager and Fatoumata Gassama, VOICE, welcomed participants at the Annual Meeting

"The promotion and protection of the rights and welfare of the child also implies the performance of duties on the part of everyone."

- African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

As you will notice from the articles in this edition of the CPA Newsletter, one of our greatest strengths is the diversity among our member organisations, which represent several types of institutions (government, NGOs, international and local) from all sectors and levels of society. One of the primary goals of CPA is to promote collaboration among all such institutions to prevent child abuse and protect the rights of all children in The Gambia.

The strength of CPA's members was obvious at our Second Annual Membership Workshop. With opening statements from the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, the US Ambassador to The Gambia and Save the Children Sweden's Project Officer and presentations from UNICEF, BAFROW, Peace Corps, SOS Children's Village, GAMCOTRAP and Department of Social Welfare, a variety of perspectives and sectors were represented.

In addition to the Membership Workshop, the Top Stories section highlights another CPA part-

ner, Terre des Hommes Netherlands. TdH is a Dutch organisation that collaborated with the CPA to produce a report on Child Sex Tourism in The Gambia. The report was officially launched in early February, and has received much attention by the press.

To further our collaboration with the media, CPA and UNICEF, in collaboration with Gambia Press Union, sponsored a training workshop for representatives from Gambian media houses on ethics of reporting on stories involving children. The workshop is featured in our Major Events section, and CPA will be working with the participants to finalise a Code of Conduct for reporting on children's issues.

The CPA is also in constant collaboration with the Gambian Police Force. We focus on the Child Welfare Unit in our Membership Profile, and we encourage all member organisations to make use of the experience and capabilities of the CWU when faced with cases of child abuse.

Of course, none of these collaborative efforts and activities would be possible without the many donor organisations that support the CPA. In the Funders Acknowledgements, you will find specific details about these organisations. We are especially pleased to highlight the role of the British High Commission, which has recently provided funding for two new projects at CPA.

Finally, as a children's organisation, the involvement of young people is at the heart of all of our activities. On the back cover, you will find an update on VOICE's recent activities. Not only do they participate in all CPA programmes, but they are developing a strong plan of independent activities. Along these lines, the next issue of the CPA Newsletter will focus on the Child's Perspective. Please send articles and submissions from young people involved with your own organisation to the CPA office by 1st May.

Take care, and let's keep up all our hard work!

Membership Profile

Police Child Welfare Unit

By Lamin Camara

We profile a CPA member organisation in each issue of this newsletter. We invite members to submit information so we can let all of the CPA know about your hard work.

"Mankind owes to children the best it can possibly give..." Any disagreement? Not from the Police.

As Child Protection involves all sectors of society, the Police Child Welfare Unit (formerly the Juvenile Bureau) was set up under the Gambia Police Force, and is responsible for the welfare of children living in the Gambia. This unit is manned by specialists on Child Protection issues and is deliberately headed by a woman (partly because of their maternal instincts and also because children often feel more comfortable talking to women).

Among the unit's numerous responsibilities are:

- * Providing advice in all cases involving children;
- * Working closely with the Prosecution Unit in matters dealing with juvenile justice;
- * Counseling and offering assistance to children and their families;
- * Monitoring of children under correction and helping in their reintegration into the society.

With all the above tasks placed on its shoulders, one of the biggest obstacles to the unit's work is that people are often unwilling to give information to the police to help investigate children's cases (due to a culture of silence). Additionally, the low level of awareness on the existence of the Unit and a lack of community policing attitudes in

people can also make the Unit's work more difficult. They are in need of adequate and continuous training of staff to keep abreast with current trends in development. Can you do something? Want to collaborate? Then get in touch on the following address:

Police Child Welfare Unit
Gambia Police Force
Headquarters
ECOWAS Avenue, Banjul

Telephone: (220) 226561 Fax: (220) 226561

The CPA commends the work of our member organization, the Police Child Welfare Unit, as it continues its efforts to protect the rights of all children in The Gambia.