

Gambian Media Attend CPA Training Workshop

By Gail Robson

Over 30 participants attended CPA's workshop, 'Ethics in Reporting Child Abuse Cases', on February 26 and 27 at Manjai Lodge, Kotu.

Representatives from all media houses, along with two members of VOICE of the Young and two international reporters from Denmark and DRC, were among those who participated in the training. With children, GPU, media practitioners and child protection professionals present, these two days were an ideal opportunity for the sharing of ideas, experience and expertise.

The objectives set out prior to the workshop were, among many, to sensitize the media on the dangers and benefits of reporting on child abuse and child related issues; to update media on the activities and aims of CPA; and to create a strong relationship between CPA and Gambian media houses.

Presentations were given by media practitioners and child protection workers. CPA, in an aim to focus on participation, incorporated discussion, group

work, article analysis and case studies into much of the workshop content.

There were many outcomes and achievements of the workshop, but two very tangible results were the drafting of a Gambian code of ethics when reporting on child issues and a long list of recommendations on how CPA and the media can help each other in their respective work.

Patrick Beckett, of Free Speech Radio News USA, expressed his admiration for Gambian media; "I have to admit, I was shocked. It's not like this is say..England or America. Very seldom do you hear the media talking about advocacy and the good of the nation. You don't have many reporters who are willing to go to prison for what they believe in. What you have in The Gambia is media that despite their constraints, are starting out with a strong ideological foundation. Gambian media practitioners are very inspiring," he said. **Sainabou Jallow**, GRTS, a participant at the workshop, is one of these inspiring individuals. Jallow, who runs Youth Forum at

5:00 p.m. on Saturdays, says she's going to take her program one step further. "It is great having English language children's shows, but how many children are we reaching? I want to start having children's programming in local languages; it's about taking it to the grass roots."

Many of the participants expressed satisfaction with the workshop but nearly all agreed that there needs to be more such initiatives in order to build the capacity of journalists and keep them updated with CPA and children's issues in The Gambia.

Nyima Saïdy, a core member of VOICE, who was present during the two days, agreed that the workshop was successful and added, "Through this workshop we now understand the constraints on Gambian media. And the media has come to understand that when we talk about our rights, we are not trying to rebel against our parents or society. I think the media understands this and I think they are ready to help us achieve our aims and objectives."

Launch of Report on Child Sex Tourism

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Members of the High Table look over the Report during the Launch.

Tourism and the main findings of the Report.

The Report makes clear that tourists, including Dutch nationals, are coming to The Gambia in order to have sex with children. Both boys and girls below the age of 18 are victim of this sexual abuse and exploitation. Often

times foreign tourists are not the only ones involved: Gambian citizens may act as 'go-betweens' and provide potential abusers access to local children.

The Report provides a context to child sex tourism in The Gambia and how there are certain conditions, such as poverty, the overall

position of children within Gambian society and a culture of silence towards abuse that contribute to this type of abuse occurring in The Gambia. Local people may be too trusting, especially of foreigners. Authorities are in need of specific training on how to recognise and deal with child sexual abuse.

Many people attended the Launch ceremony, including **Honourable Fatoumata Jahumpa Ceesay**, National Assembly Member and President of the Select Committee on Women and Children. Other attendees included representatives from CPA member organizations, members of the tourism industry, and several reporters. Since the Launch, there has been much attention given to the Report and the issue of Child Sex Tourism in the press, both locally and internationally.



CPA Welcomes New UNICEF Representative

The new UNICEF Representative, Mrs. **Cheryl Faye**, arrived in The Gambia on 10th December 2002 and presented a Letter of Credence to the SOS for Foreign Affairs the following day.

Mrs. Faye joined UNICEF in 1994 as Information and Communication Officer in Ethiopia, where she was responsible for the conceptualization, planning, execution, monitoring and evaluation of an advocacy and communication strategy to promote respect for children's rights and support the mission of UNICEF. In 2000, Mrs. Faye served with the UN Mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) as Child Protection Adviser, where she assisted in developing a framework for co-ordination between the humanitarian affairs, human rights and child protection sectors.

Mrs. Faye holds a Bachelor's degree in Anthropology and a Master's degree in West African Area Studies from London University. She pursued postgraduate studies in Applied Linguistics and the Serer language.

Mrs. Faye is a national of the United States. She is married with two children.