



"It is important that the underlying causes of child abandonment are understood; otherwise, sound practical remedies can hardly be found... If we are to develop services which are preventative and which will save the lives of children and stop young women from destroying their lives then we must listen more and start to deal with creating the right environment within which sex education can give the information that young people need to protect themselves not only from pregnancy but from exploitation and abuse."

- Mrs. Fanta Sisay



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She stated that It s very important to us that children are not looked upon as passive victims who should be given charity, but that you - the children - are seen as the capable and active citizens - with your own rights.

The first day of the workshop consisted of reviewing the previous year s activities. Various topics were discussed including the recommendations and outcomes of the first stakeholders workshop of November 2001; the National Plan of Action for 2002; and several international meetings, such as the UN Special Assembly on Children and the ECPAT Second General Assembly. **Mr. Ousman Jammeh**, an attorney based in The Gambia, explained the current international conventions on children s issues and their relationship to relevant legislation in The Gambia.

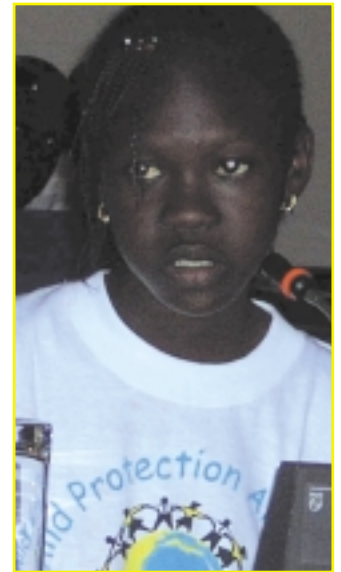
The final presentation of the first day began a series of discussions on specific child abuse issues. The Director of Social Welfare, **Mrs. Fanta Sisay**, facilitated the presentation on Baby Abandonment. Her remarks highlighted the growing trend of baby abandonment amongst young mothers in The Gambia. Some of the causes mentioned include denial of paternity by the father, fear of societal stigmatization, and fear of their parental reaction. Participants were encouraged to disseminate helpful information, such as the services provided by Social Welfare.



The Director of Social Welfare presenting information on Baby Abandonment

Beginning the following morning, the presentations focused on a serious problem in The Gambia, the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). The first presentation elaborated on the relationship between CPA and ECPAT International, an organization whose main goal is to end child prostitution, child pornography and trafficking of children for sexual purposes world wide. The relationship between CPA and ECPAT International is based on the exchange of information, technical assistance and financial support. Knowing the relationship between CPA and ECPAT provided a solid basis for the presentation on CSEC. **Mr. Salifu Jarsey**, UNICEF Child Protection Officer, explained the many forms of abuse common in The Gambia and the effects of this abuse on children. He also emphasized ways in which to eradicate and prevent child abuse such as Joint investigations, networking, communication, joint care planning, and follow-up by a variety of actors including nurses, police officers, social workers, teachers, and parents/guardians in both the urban and rural areas.

The last three presentations focused on ways to improve communication and increase collaboration in order to prevent child abuse and encourage the healthy growth of children. The information on Mainstreaming Participation of Children was presented by VOICE PRO, **Sheriff Gaye**. Participants were given ideas for how to involve children in their own organisation s activities. **Mr. John Njie**, Director of the SOS Children s Village, presented on Effective Parenting. Adults were provided with information to assess their parenting styles and discover how that style and the means of correction affects children. The participants were also given tips as to how to work with their children and help them develop healthily. The last presentation



Bintou Sonko, Secretary General of VOICE of the Young

encouraged collaboration between CPA s member organizations. **Mrs. Yamai Secka-Jack** of Peace Corps The Gambia, encouraged participants to branch out and network with a variety of organizations, especially those without direct links to one s organization.

The last activity involved small group work that focused on the topics of Mainstreaming Child Participation, Networking, Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Baby Abandonment. The key ideas from the group work included the following suggestions: a need for community awareness and education, the importance of all CPA members supporting VOICE as they take on more responsibility, the need for effective parenting and elimination of fear in changing parenting habits, and keeping members up-to-date, informed and included through a member databank and capacity building activities.

The workshop provided a solid start to the Child Protection Alliances 2003 activities and we can hope to see even more good work from all CPA member organisations.