

VOICE Vice-President Speaks at Annual Membership Meeting

(By Satang Nabanne, Gambia's Representative to the World Children's Parliament)

Just over a year ago, we were gathered in this very hall to witness the first Stakeholder's Meeting of the Child Protection Alliance which is a bodied group of organisations and institutions interested in the protection of Children, promoting collaboration and preventing child abuse in the Gambia. The CPA is now a household name in the Gambia and is being recognised as one of the chief champions of Child Rights Promotion and Protection. The success registered so far are badges you stick on your coats and be jubilant over them.

The Child Protection Alliance recognises the fundamental role children can play in creating positive social change on issues that affect them, taking into consideration their vulnerability with regards to abuse and exploitation. In this regard, the CPA deeming it necessary to mainstream children's participation as part of its activities in supporting the empowerment process of children as worthy Ambassadors of change in the society, created "VOICE of the Young" commonly referred to as VOICE.

VOICE members are trained on child protection issues for them to become child peer educators to other children. It is said that

he who feels it knows it, so we feel and therefore know it!

Adults! Adults! Adults! Listen to us carefully and please give us the opportunity to speak up,



speak out our views. Listening to children is not just to hear for hearing sake but to understand and react positively to what we are saying. Adults must reach out to children and enable them to participate in making decisions that affect our lives.

Your Excellency, distinguished personalities, this meeting will be addressing a very pertinent child abuse issue that gravely affects children and this is the Commercial Exploitation of Children (CSEC). The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) is recog-

nised as a global problem that impacts millions of children each year in countries around the world and the Gambia is no exception. CSEC, distinguished guests, is not new, but the growing extent of the issue is worldwide. Children are being subjected to it against their own will.

This is a fundamental violation of children's rights as enshrined in articles 3, 34, 35, 36 and 37 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This violation de-humanizes children and treats them as commercial items or tools. The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children happens in a number of ways and these include child pornography, child trafficking and child prostitution. Most of the people engaged in this inhuman act are local people, but a growing number however, are leisure visitors (tourists) or business travelers in a particular host country.

Finally, Your Excellency, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, we the children are calling on everyone, everywhere to do as much as he or she possibly can for children, in his or her own way. The time has come, the time to act has come, the time to break the silence is here and anything that can be said and done must be said and done. Together we can do it. Let's do, we can.

"States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child."

-Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child



CPA Members Organise Girls Science Clinic

By Yamai Secka-Jack

The Third National Science/ICT Clinic for Girls sponsored by UNICEF and organized by FAWEGAM in collaboration with DOSE and Peace Corps was held at the Girls Guides and YMCA from January 26 to February 1. 96 girls participated and 4 college women acted as mentors. PCVs implemented the Clinic to encourage girls to take on the study of math/science and technology. Peace Corps' role in this Science Clinic is to help implement it, through the contribution of its Staff to the planning

of the event and the utilization of our Volunteers to conduct the clinic in the areas of physics, chemistry, biology, environmental science and Information Communication Technology.

The clinic indeed excited the girls enough to take more interest in the subjects covered. The way the clinic was designed was so hands-on that it made the students discover the joys of learning about science and technology and not fear it. It is such activities that really directly

touch and impact on the lives of the students.

During the clinic the students obtained a better understanding of the concepts behind the theories of Information Communication Technology, biology, chemistry, physics and environmental science. They were challenged to experiment, explore, analyse and to problem solve using scientific methods and did word processing and Internet use. The good thing was

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