

The Gambia, West Africa Launches The Association for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (TAPEA)



The Association for the prevention of elder abuse (TAPEA) was launched on Tuesday 20th Dec. 2005 at Corinthia Atlantic Hotel in Banjul.

Speaking at the ceremony, Alhaji Omar Taal, deputy permanent secretary for Health and Social Welfare, expressed his joy at this new initiative which he noted will greatly help improve the status of the elderly in the society.

Elder Abuse is a phenomenon that is beginning to rear its ugly head into our society. This is beginning because we have traded our typical African culture values and norms for alien cultures which shun and relegate the elderly, leaving them helpless; he remarked.

He therefore commended the founders of this new association for their foresight and taking this 'bold and giant step' in assuming responsibility for the protection of elderly people in The Gambia through public sensitisation.

In her presentation, Ms Priscilla Jones, president of the Association, defined elder abuse as 'a single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person'. She noted that elder abuse, serious as it is, is still not well acknowledged and is under reported globally.

She also made mention of the different types of abuses meted out to the elderly, which includes physical or inflicting physical pain or injury on the elderly, emotional abuse, which involves verbal assaults, insults, threats, harassment and intimidation of the elderly and neglect among others.

She attributed elder abuse in Africa to some cultural and superstitious beliefs and accusations of witchcraft associated most of the time with older women. "Some of us Africans always tend to associate old age with witchcraft and the most people even believed that old women are witches," she lamented. She urged society to change its attitude towards the elders. On her own part, Mrs. Fanta Bai-Secka, Director of social welfare, stated –that the protection of elders from abuse and



and exploitation in society is very important as the elders are the custodians of our history, tradition and culture, she revealed.

Mr. James C. Nwodo, secretary general of the association for the prevention of elder abuse, said creating awareness on the prevention of elder abuse will clear a lot of doubts from the minds of the people and that this message will be communicated to the youth through future workshop and through media.

