



Progress and challenges in strengthening the protection of human rights of older women' - The Gambia experience.

Bully Camara

Ageing with a Smile Initiative (ASI) – The Gambia

Date: 09 August 2018

What do we know?

“Though no study has been conducted to systematically assess the situation of elderly persons in The Gambia, insights from our research indicate that ***the elderly are vulnerable to a number of risks, owing to their economic and physical dependency. In The Gambia there is very little social protection support for elderly persons, which makes them susceptible to idiosyncratic shocks to income as they become unable to work due to their old age and/or lack of care...***”

Source: Moving towards an Integrated and Equitable Social Protection in The Gambia- Analysis of Social Protection Systems in The Gambia

Although in traditional Gambian society older persons are typically cared for by family members and the broader community, our fieldwork in Burong village suggests that elderly persons can also be subject to neglect.

High out-migration of young people from the village typically has negative effects on the care of elderly left behind.

Chronically poor elderly persons may also risk social exclusion from support within the village, owing to both their economic and age status, as illustrated by the following life history interview conducted with an elderly woman in Sami Pachonchi village, CRR”.

Source: Moving towards an Integrated and Equitable Social Protection in The Gambia- Analysis of Social Protection Systems in The Gambia

The Gambia - demography in brief

- Land area 10,120 Km²
- Pop density 214 per Km²
- Current pop size 2,168,806
 - About the size of Accra
 - Equivalent to 0.03% of global pop
- Approx. 61% of pop is urban
- Median age is 17.1 years

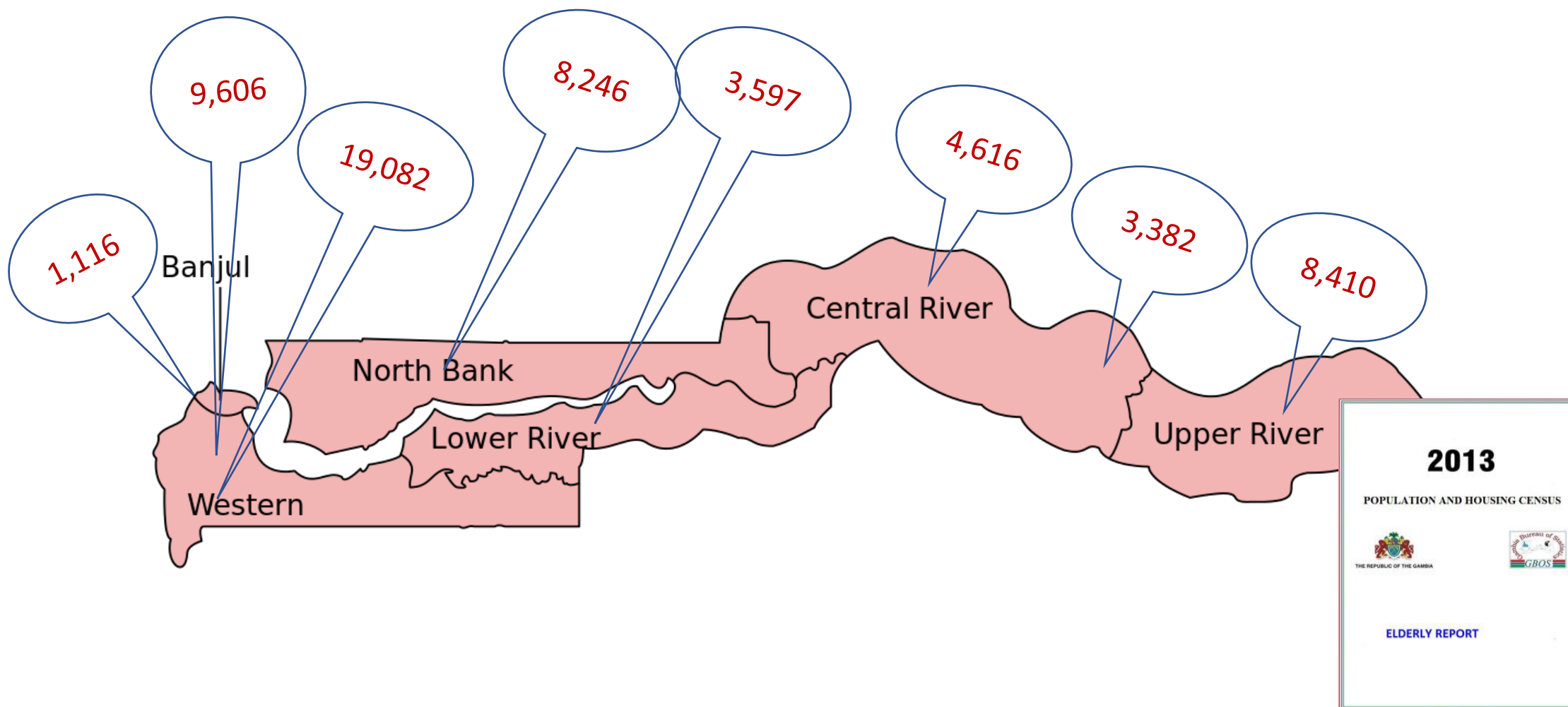


2013 census: How many were elderly & female?



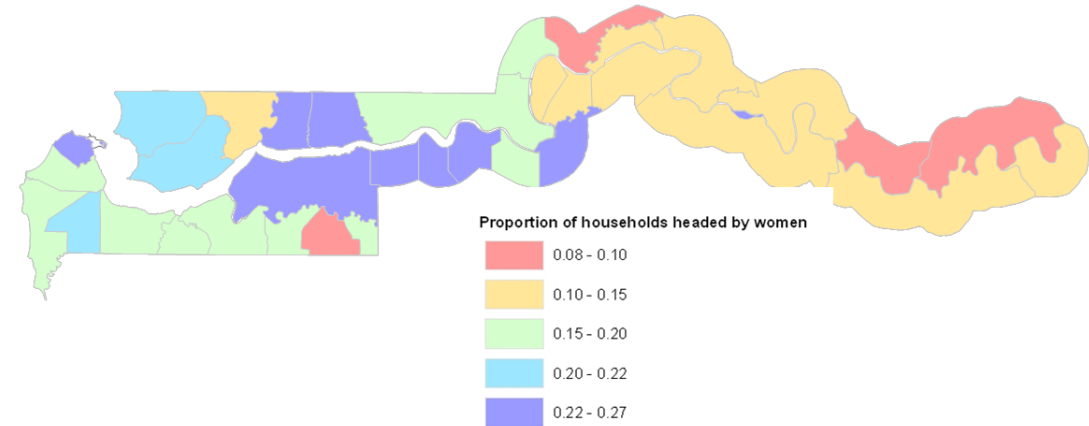
- **Total:** 1.8million
- **Elderly (≥ 65 yrs):** 58,055 (3.2%)
 - 1983: 25461
- **Female:** 51.1%
- **Elderly (≥ 60 yrs):** 88, 353 (4.8%)

Where do you find the elderly in Gambia?



Elderly women in Gambian society

- Family level
 - Raising the young
 - Household heads (2013 Census)
 - Hospital escorts
- Community level
 - Keeping society's fabrique
 - TBA duties
- National level
 - Agriculture & economic activities



Untold issues of elderly women

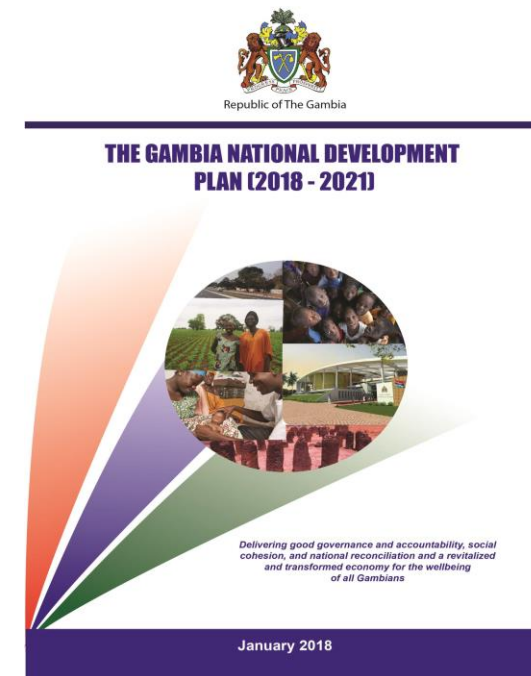


- Abuse – isolated cases
- Psycho-social issues from isolation
- Health problems
 - Increasing burden of NCDs
 - Poor access to proper care
- Economic issues (unsecure income source)
- Burden of responsibility (household heads)
- **Poor awareness & advocacy**

Do we have adequate political commitment?

- Office of the vice president – women's' affairs minister
- Ministry of health & social welfare
- Some policies
 - The Gambia National Development Plan (2018 – 2021)
 - The Gambia National Social protection policy 2015-2025
 - National Health Policy 2012 – 2020
 - Disability bill?
 - The National Gender Policy 2010 – 2020
 - National Nutrition Policy 2010 – 2020
 - National Disaster management?

Directorate of Social Welfare (DSW)
 The Department comprised of the Directorate of Social Welfare (DSW). It is responsible for the promotion and protection of the rights and welfare of vulnerable persons such as children, the elderly, persons with disability and adults in difficult circumstances. To enable them maximize their potential and minimize problems arising out of the imbalance between themselves and their environment as a result of social change. Their services focus on the social protection of individual families and groups. This includes the welfare services to the vulnerable families and individuals, child rights and protection services, elderly care, disability care services and regional social welfare services provision and management.



Programmes of organisations – supporting the elderly



- Social security & HFC: Pensions
 -mission is to provide adequate **social protection for workers**, facilitate **social shelter** delivery on a sustainable basis and **invest funds** of the Corporation to achieve optimum returns.....
- Ageing with a Smile Initiative
- Home for older women (SOS village) - empty
- Network against Gender Based Violence
- Cash transfer schemes??

ASI in brief!



Who we are?

07 August 2009

Legally registered voluntary CBO



10 January 2010

Launched by the former MOH, the Late Dr Abubacarr Gaye



Our rationale?



In traditional Gambian society, older persons have always been adequately cared for by family members, neighbours and the wider community. Their contributions have been valued.

We are witnessing unprecedented changes in our lives.

The elderly face an increasing burden of chronic diseases including diabetes, hypertension, arthritis, cardiovascular problems and failing eyesight.

Our vision & mission

Vision Statement

The elderly in The Gambia enjoy good health, remain productive and are valued and cared for by society.

Mission Statement

ASI exists to support the elderly in The Gambia to lead healthier and dignified lives.



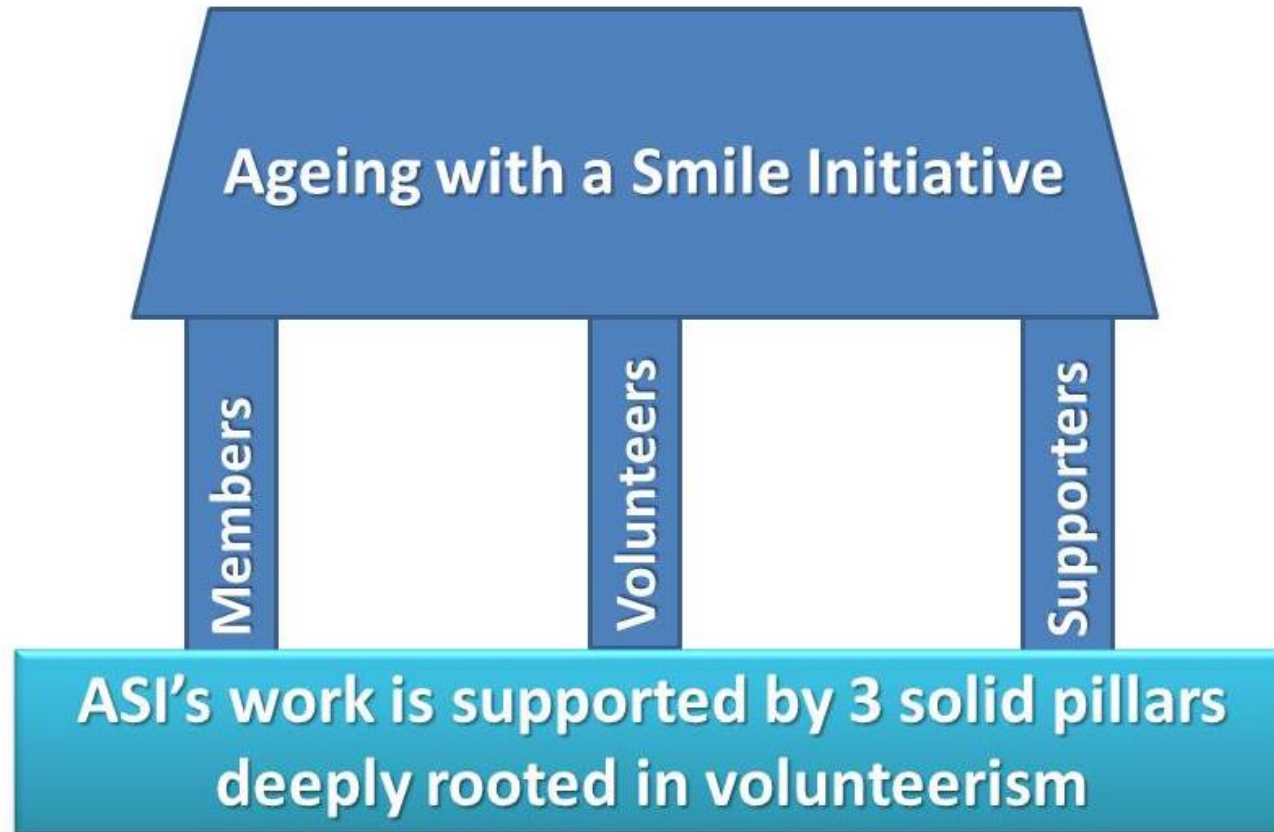
What have we set out to accomplish?

- 1) **To improve access to basic health care services** for disadvantaged older persons in The Gambia;
- 2) **To promote inter-generational dialogue** and solidarity;
- 3) **To advocate for the rights of the elderly** in the country;
- 4) **To promote the re-integration of the elderly** in Gambian social life.

Who supports



work?



Our focus since existence?

To improve access to basic health care services for disadvantaged older persons in The Gambia



To promote inter-generational dialogue and solidarity

To promote the re-integration of the elderly in Gambian social life



To advocate for the rights of the elderly in the country.

7 BUILDING BLOCKS OF ASI

**Highly Committed and Motivated
Members & Volunteers**

Effective Teamwork

**Transparent
Management**

**Strong Partnerships &
Community Participation**

Evidence –Based Interventions

Visibility and Publicity

Solid Funding Base

HelpAge International

global network

As we celebrate World Health Day this year, we want to remember Dr Mamo Jawla and Dr Abubacarr Gaye who passed away on the 7th November 2010 and 2nd December 2010 respectively. May their souls rest in perfect peace.

Dr Abubacarr Gaye, former Minister of Health & Social Welfare officially launch of ASI in January 2010

Dr Mamo Jawla, former staff of the WHO Office in The Gambia



www.postermywall.com



Some key events?

October 2011, participated in an experience sharing meeting organised by the Africa Platform for Social Protection in Accra, Ghana

April 2012: Co-organiser of World Health Day on the theme- '*Health and Ageing*'

June 2012; Partnered with MhLAP to organise the first training on social protection for civil society organisations

June 2012: Chaired the interim Committee on the Social Protection Platform for civil society organisations

March 2013: Won a grant of £800 from Gambia Experience

June 2013, Won a grant of £4,200 from the British Embassy

December 2013: SG of ASI elected as the Chairperson of the Social Protection Platform- The Gambia (SPPG) at the platform's congress.

Summer of 2014: Aisha Metta Kongira participated in the Washington- Mandela Fellowship

June 2015: Started a partnership with HelpAge International

October 2015: Launched the Age Demand Action Campaign in The Gambia

April 2016: Commemorated World Health Day in partnership with the Ministry of Health & Social Welfare, Ministry of Youths Sports & Culture, UN Agencies and other NGOs.

November 2017: Approval to join HelpAge Global Network

Celebration of IDOP

1. Access to basic health care services (Right to health)

- Conduct of free community screening, consultations & rx through partnership with government, private facilities & associations.



The British High Commission awards £4,000 to support ASI's work in the prevention and management of non-communicable diseases in older persons

In March 2013, the British High Commission invited local Gambian organisations to submit bids for funding by its Bilateral Programme Fund. Ageing with a Smile Initiative (ASI) was one of 200 organisations that submitted a proposal to complement the government's development agenda. On the 28th May 2013, we received the good news that ASI's bid was successful.

The award by the British High Commission which amounts to £4,000 will be used to purchase essential diagnostic equipment and medical consumables, organise 3 public seminars and produce information sheets on non-communicable diseases. The support will strengthen ASI's capacity to conduct more community-based health screening and consultation programmes in The Gambia and prepare the grounds for the development of relevant policies to promote and protect the welfare of older persons in the country.

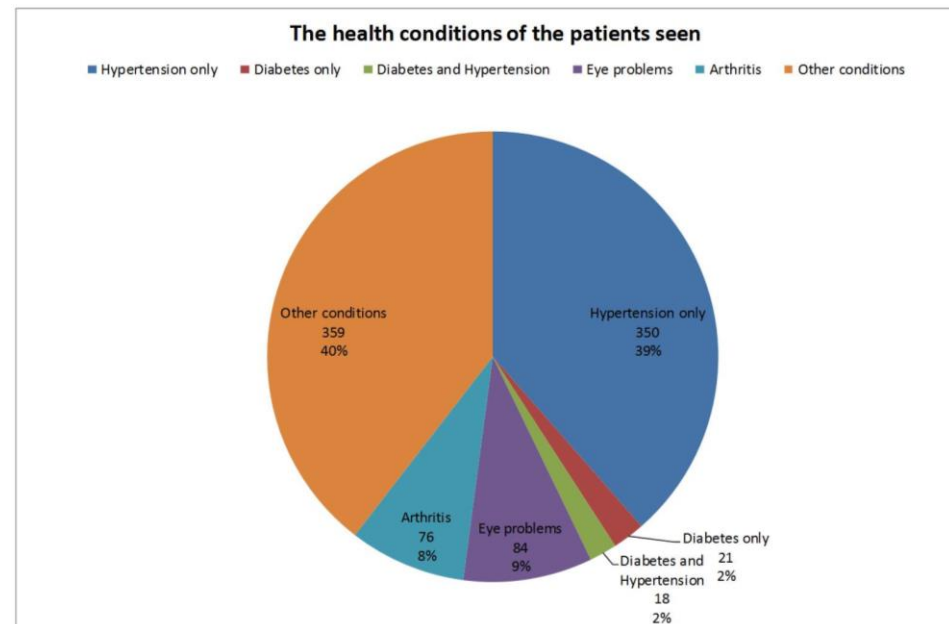
The community-based health screening is a continuation of ASI's drive to promote and protect the health and welfare of older persons in The Gambia. Up to 2000 older persons are expected to benefit directly from this support by March 2014.

ASI is a community-based organisation which was launched in The Gambia in January 2010. It runs a project that aims to improve the health of older persons in The Gambia through a team of medical volunteers. We provide free community based screening and consultations for older persons in partnership with local communities, staff of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and private clinics. The screening sessions support older persons, particularly those who are disadvantaged to detect and effectively manage their health problems. Follow up services are facilitated by ASI and patients that need further care and management are referred to specialists. Those with chronic conditions are supported by ASI through routine home based care. The project aims to promote and protect the health of older persons by providing routine screening and consultations with a particular focus on diabetes, hypertension and eye problems. The project also creates awareness for family members on the importance of good nutrition and regular exercise to prevent and manage non-communicable diseases.



For more information about ASI and its work visit the following:

Website: asigambia.weebly.com
 Facebook page: www.facebook.com/ASIGambia
 Email: asi.gambia@gmail.com



On a typical community screening day.....!



We monitor the blood pressure and blood sugar of the patients.



We escort the patients to see the health care providers in the consultation rooms.



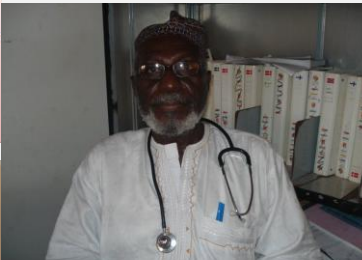
We dispense medications to patients based on the prescription of the medical doctors.



We educate patients on the prevention and management of non-communicable diseases particularly hypertension and diabetes.



We test the visual acuity of the elderly and refer those that need further management.



The Late Dr Ibrahim Malick Samba



We see patients and advise them on appropriate actions to take.



We listen to the patients in order to understand their needs and help them with appropriate interventions.



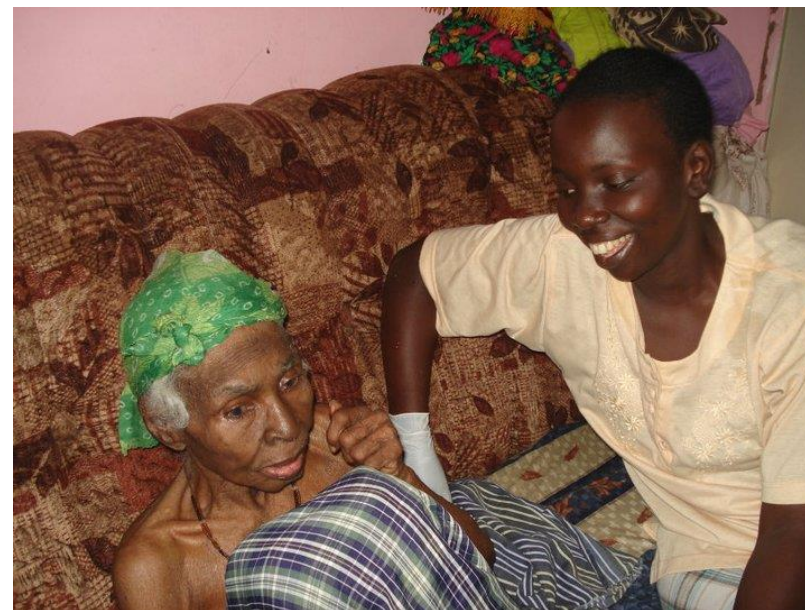
FD's Case

A woman aged over 100 years; too frail to walk or even eat without support

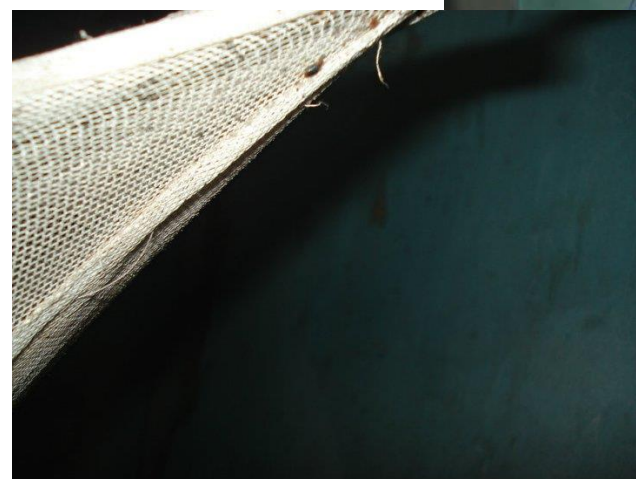
Neglected by her family. She was closer to a herd of goats and sheep than family members.

Her bed was heavily infested with bedbugs. Her bed was placed under exposed electrical wires.

ASI mobilised support for her but she passed away in September 2011.



Hard evidence of neglect & isolation!



2. Promoting inter-generational dialogue & solidarity



Inter-generational Dialogue on Ageing

Join us to discuss the experiences, fears, concerns and



Promoting inter-generational solidarity

"When a younger and older person dialogue, they both benefit". N. Keita

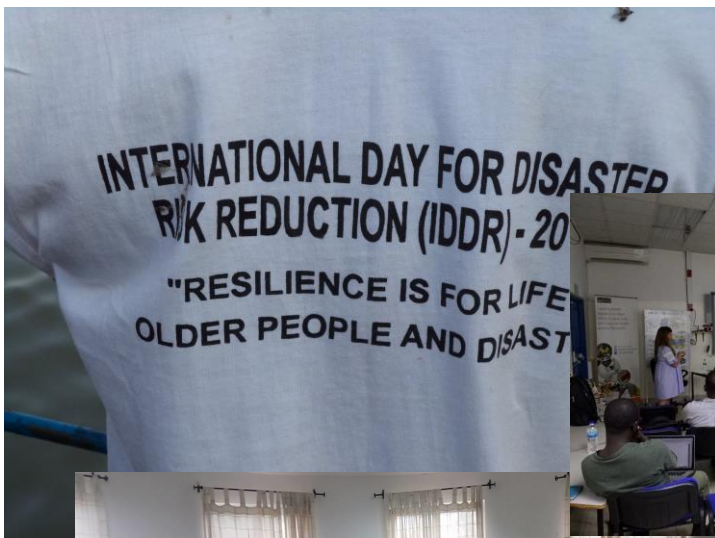


3. To advocate for the rights of the elderly in the country

- ❑ Radio & TV programmes
- ❑ Press conferences
- ❑ Newspaper coverage
- ❑ ASI Newsletter
- ❑ Website
- ❑ Facebook Page
- ❑ Social Protection Platform
- ❑ At the community-screening programmes



From the grass-root to the streets.....



PROTECTION TRAINING

for civil society organisations in The Gambia
from the 11th - 13th June 2012 at the CIAM/NMCP Hall, Kanifing

led by ASI and mhLAP- Gambia with funding from the Africa Platform for Social Protection

Visibility and Publicity



Solid funding base



To deliver on the organisation's mandate, we need to mobilise resources from diverse sources.

"The good news and take home message is that with simple measures like checking a blood pressure and checking a fasting blood sugar within 3 - 5 minutes, hypertension and diabetes can be screened or diagnosed and with institution of early measures the fatal consequences can be avoided".

Dr. Bally Camara, Chairman & Head of the ASI Medical Team- speaking on the importance of screenings at Fajikunda on August 24, 2013.



People and organisations will support ASI when they know about the noble work we do and have the opportunity to see it for themselves.



Stake-holders & politicians



4. Promote re-integration in Gambian social life



- ✓ The attainment of good health is a top concern for the elderly in The Gambia.
- ✓ Screening for NCDs & visual acuity testing impacts lives of the elderly.
- ✓ MOHSW, the private sector and the media are supportive
- ✓ Need to evaluate effectiveness of health care & welfare services for elderly
- ✓ Gambians are motivated to provide resources & expertise in giving back to the elderly
- ✓ The health of chronically ill older persons largely depends on family support
- ✓ The elderly and society appreciate our services
- ✓ Most assume that the elderly are cared for in homes adequately
- ✓ Presence of neglect & poor access to basic human rights
- ✓ Low awareness & advocacy on rights of older women
- ✓ Inadequate policies & poor implementation of existing policies



ASI's experience – The challenges!



- ✓ Raising adequate funds to support the work of the organisation.
- ✓ The organisation is run by volunteers
- ✓ Lack of transport/mobility limits the team's ability to visit rural communities
- ✓ No office space .

The opportunities?

DEMOCRACY
OF THE PEOPLE BY THE PEOPLE FOR THE PEOPLE



Growing interest & Networks



West

Made with Sprightly

Women

University of Ghana, Legon



Protocol To The African Charter On Human And Peoples' Rights On The Rights Of Women In Africa

The Gambia	signed	ratified
	11/09/2003	25/05/2005

Banjul, 24 April 2017 press release on promotion of the mission & peoples' right to the republic....

The Gambia yet to sign and ratify;
Protocol To The African Charter On Human And Peoples' Rights On The Rights Of Older Persons In Africa



Thank you!!!



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA



Engaging, Inspiring and Equipping a New Generation of African Women Leaders

