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FORUM **N**EWSPLETTER

Publication of the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development

Parliamentarians Best Advocates of Change for Effective Population Programmes

Person-to-Person Advocacy with Parliamentarians

Successful and effective programmes require political commitments in which governments play a pro-active role in advocating public concerns, especially with regards to population issues. As parliamentarians are in the best position to be advocates of change, AFPPD, with funding from the Hewlett Foundation, introduced a new and innovative Person-to-Person Advocacy with Parliamentarians whereby each parliamentarian is met individually to assess their level of knowledge, attitude and commitment regarding population issues. Each discussion comprises of a research component (assessment) and an action component (advocacy). These meetings normally last between 60-90 minutes and are tape-recorded. Since the programme commenced in November 2001, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines have participated in the programme, and more than 1,775 parliamentarians and elected representatives have been personally met. As this year marks the ten year anniversary of ICPD, we at AFPPD would like to take this opportunity to share the views and opinions of those 1,775 elected representatives who to date have graciously participated in the PPAP project.

Parliamentarians Committed to Improving Population and RH Conditions in Cambodia



Cambodia is characterised by very high maternal, infant, and under-five child mortality rates. Access to quality health care as well as primary and secondary education for large sections of the rural poor is very limited. In terms of reproductive health care, there is a large unmet need for contraceptives and birth spacing services. Additionally, with a population growth rate of 2.49%, Cambodia has the highest population growth rate among all ASEAN nations. Moreover, even though Cambodia has had some success in reversing the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, it is still the most affected country in Asia with the current prevalence rate at 2.6%. In such a political and

trained discussants met and discussed with 131 MPs and Senators in the first phase of the project at the national level and 736 Commune Council Members so far in the second phase at the provincial local. Of those personally met, 83% of the MPs are male and 17% are female, whereas 89% of the Commune Council Members are male and 11% are female. The results of the PPAP survey indicate that the Parliamentarians and Councilors awareness of population and family planning issues in Cambodia is very high, particularly as it relates to safe motherhood and HIV/AIDS issues. Moreover, in the opinion of both respondent groups, the most critical development obstacle facing Cambodia today is the prevention and management of HIV/AIDS.



social environment, the Cambodia Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (CAPPD) began implementing the PPAP programme in March 2002.

In regards to family planning related issues, 84% of the MPs and 98% of the Commune Council Members met indicated that families with too many children was the most critical population issue at present. Due to the sensitivity of the topic, the respondents were not asked directly about abortion issues. However, regarding reproductive health rights, 87% of the respondents believe couples should have the right to choose the number of children they would like to have and the Government should not enact policies to limit the number of children parents are allowed. Within this respondent group, over 95% of the women were in favor of having a choice whereas 86.1% of the men were also in favor of such a choice. Moreover, support for birth spacing differs among religious groups with over 72% of the Buddhist respondents having indicated support for birth spacing compared to 64% of the Muslim respondents.

The PPAP programme in Cambodia commenced with CAPPD developing a baseline survey that was sent to all Members of Parliament and the Senate. Responses were received from only about 25% of the total target group. This was followed by a general survey using the person-to-person advocacy methodology. Four highly skilled and

The PPAP survey indicates that inadequate testing and care facilities for HIV/AIDS is the most critical issue hindering sustainable development in Cambodia today (86.7%). The second most pressing issue is high maternal and child mortality rates (73.7%)

Health Education and Services a Top Priority



Cambodia's First National Population Policy

The Royal Government of Cambodia recognizes the inter-subjective relationship between population issues and poverty as well as the central role of reproductive health services. Consequently, Cambodia has recently enacted its first National Population Policy. This population policy is to be used by the Royal Government of Cambodia to influence population and development dynamics to be more proportionate with the socio-economic development and with the natural and human resources available to Cambodia. Moreover, it is part of broader policy directions and explicitly linked to the Socio-Economic Development Plan II for 2001-2005, the National Poverty Reduction Strategy 2003-2005, and the Cambodia Millennium Development Report 2001.

Cambodia's National Population Policy is defined by its recognition of the central, critical and crosscutting role of population as is reflected in the special targeting of reproductive health and family planning services, opportunities for women in employment and education, and the identification of the relationship between poverty and rapid population growth. Additionally, the right for all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children is to be upheld.

The Asian Forum would like to acknowledge the significant contributions that UNFPA-Cambodia and the Cambodian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development have made toward creating an enabling environment for such a landmark achievement as Cambodia's first national population policy.

Moreover, most parliamentarians felt Cambodia is in critical need of skilled service providers. All 131 Parliamentarians met were of the same opinion that it is necessary to strengthen health education, especially in Cambodia's rural communities.

Similarly, almost 80% of the Commune Council Members met specified that inadequate testing and care facilities for HIV/AIDS was the issue of most urgent concern. Interestingly, 99% of the Councilors indicated that PLWA should not be isolated from the community at large. The second most important issue identified by 73% of the Council Members is inadequate safe motherhood services.

willingness to support such services by working to include them in Cambodia's commune development plan, participate in workshops, advocate in their commune, and mobilise community support as well as human and financial resources.

Balanced Population Growth and Development Preferred

In Malaysia, population issues and programmes exist in a political environment that places a great deal of importance on maintaining social cohesion, ensuring future political stability, and propagates to increase the size of the population to 70 million within 50 years. Malaysia's national population policy is aimed at creating a balance, where a larger population not only serves as a means to support a generation of higher economic growth, but also provides a sufficiently large domestic market for goods and services. The current population growth rate in Malaysia is 2.2%.



The PPAP programme was initiated in April 2002 to identify the views and perceptions of each Senator and Member of Parliament on Malaysia's national population policy and related issues. Since that time, 358 MPs and elected representative have been individually met for person-to-person discussions. Of those that participated, 79% are male and 21% are female. The result of these discussions indicates that a majority of elected representatives believe Malaysia's current population growth rate is not a problem. However, family planning could be encouraged to prevent unwanted births, but most indicated disinclination for mobilizing financial resources for such programmes.

The PPAP project revealed that a majority support the concept of family planning. 79% of the Senators and 71% of Representatives view family planning as something that should be encouraged for maintaining the health of mothers and the establishment of a stable and prosperous family. They cited the real purpose of family planning as merely preventing unwanted birth rather than killing unborn babies. Moreover, wider acceptance of family planning in Malaysia is achievable with a multi-sectoral approach that encompasses religious leaders as well as the dissemination of correct information.

However, according to 21% of the Senators and 29% of the Representatives, family planning is viewed as an intrusion to family privileges and as such should not be part of a national policy. It is also seen as contradictory to the national objective of increasing the population as stipulated in the 70 Million-Population Policy. Many proponents of this view cited cultural and religious perceptions of some sections of the society where, for example, Muslims in particular would object to family planning if the purpose was strictly to prevent pregnancy or fear of being unable to maintain a family. Christians, on the other hand, often prohibit the use of condoms among its followers.

The opinions put forth regarding Malaysia's population suggests that most consider Malaysia's current population growth rate of 2.2% is about right. This view, which represents 61.5% of the MPs and 50% of the Senators, links the wealth of a nation as depending on its population growth. Under current economic conditions, the rate of population growth is not burdening the economy, with

Family Planning Awareness High

The results of the PPAP survey suggests that the Parliamentarians met are now more committed to taking action in support of improving the population and reproductive health conditions in Cambodia. All Parliamentarians, regardless of age supported addressing RH and population problems through educational programmes, comprehensive services, enhancing health education and increasing allocations within the national budget for such activities.



More than 98% of Parliamentarians stated they would vote for applicable policies in the future. Slightly fewer Parliamentarians

(95.5%) indicated they would advocate for RH health issues in their constituencies while 61% indicated they would be willing to support a group or coalition in order to address population and RH issues.

Similarly, in the opinion of the Commune Council Members, the issues they expressed the most willingness to commit to are regular family planning, HIV/AIDS and safe motherhood services. Over 99% of the Councilors expressed



abundant resources still available to meet the demand of a growing population. This is also based on the current trend among the middle and upper class of the population that prefer small families in order to maintain a higher quality of life, including giving priority for investment in their children's education.

Just over 30% of the MPs and 45% of the Senators indicated the current population growth rate is too low. The primary reason behind such a perspective is that a 2.2% growth rate is too low to attain the national objective of a population of 70 million. Secondly, there is fear that the current population growth rate will lead to imbalances between the age groups when the elderly group outnumbers the younger age groups.

A very small minority of the respondents indicated that the population growth rate in Malaysia is too high. This view, which represents only 2.9% of the MPs and 4.5% of the Senators, is based on the idea that such a population growth rate creates additional burdens on the part of the government to create more employment opportunities in various sectors. Concerns were also cited regarding the Malay section of the population, especially on the need to balance their family size with their economic status.

In general (over 60%), the Senators and MPs met by PPAP staff in Malaysia expressed a willingness to vote for, speak at debates, participate in workshops and advocate in their constituencies on issues pertaining to population and development. However, many (70%) indicated a reluctance to mobilise financial resources for reducing the population growth rate, family planning and/or reproductive health concerns.

Parliamentarians Aware of the Need for an Improved Population Policy



Indonesia is the largest Muslim nation in the world and fourth most populated country today. In such circumstances, population and family planning issues and programmes have existed in a highly centralized political economy that, since the 1970s, has focused on reducing the population growth rate and improving the overall quality of life. As a result of continuous information and education as well as Indonesia's National Population Policy, the total fertility rate has dropped sharply from 5.6 in 1975 to 2.35 in 2000. Moreover, the population growth rate has also dropped from 2.34% in 1980 to 1.49% in 2000.

Although the overall quality of life of the population has improved, there are still areas and population subgroups, which are generally poorer and for which access to health services, including reproductive health and family planning services, remain insufficient. Moreover, Indonesia's highly centralized political economy is being phased out and a new era of decentralisation has begun. As a result, there has been a serious rethinking of how to advocate more affectively the complex inter-relationship between population and development issues. This rethinking includes the idea that the role of parliamentarians has greatly increased making MPs a primary agent for change in Indonesia. Consequently, great emphasis has now been placed on advocating population and development issues directly with parliamentarians and elected representatives on a person-to-person basis. Moreover, because Indonesia's National

Population Policy (Law No.10/92) no longer matches the challenges facing the people of Indonesia today, a concerted effort is being made to amend the spirit of Indonesia's National Population Policy to more accurately reflect current apprehensions as well as international norms and expectations such as human rights, good governance, democratisation, decentralisation and globalisation.

With these issues and objectives in mind, the Indonesian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (IFPPD) began implementing the PPAP programme and a survey instrument was tested and subsequently initiated in April 2002. Phase one of the programme targets parliamentarians at the national level and phase two targets elected representatives at the provincial level.

Phase one has now been completed with 402 out of a possible 500 MPs at the national level having been met



individually on a person-to-person basis. Interestingly, the results of the programme indicate that parliamentarians in Indonesia are very well informed, supportive of implementing population and RH measures, but not as committed to addressing and carrying out such concerns in practice.

On the subject of population and development, the Human Development Index (HDI) was used to gauge their attitude toward these issues. Currently, Indonesia ranks 54th among all countries around the world. In the area of HDI, most MPs were more familiar with the HDI than RH issues, and there is a tremendous amount of support (91.9%) for improving Indonesia's status among the HDI index.

In the opinion of the parliamentarians met, a majority (67%) indicated that the existing laws on population and health are inadequate. Moreover, more than 84% are of the opinion that the amount of the public budget that is allocated to health is not sufficient. However, parliamentarians indicated much less support for actually implementing a new RH law (37%); less support for including safe abortion in a RH edict (36%), and even less support for including a measure for PLWA (25%) in such a RH bill.

In regards to reproductive health, a majority of the MPs met demonstrated a high level of knowledge on population-related issues. The PPAP survey revealed strong support for free contraceptive services (82.9%) and sex education (85%), although this support differed among religious groups. However, the survey also evinced that while support for various RH services was high, actual RH advocacy at the constituency level was not a priority.



Moreover, the majority of MPs met indicated existing laws on health and education are inadequate (66.7%), and most (59%) have not taken any action in this area. Of the 41% that did take action to promulgate these laws, the most common means to do so included proposing such needs in the Commission's session, legislative body and faction. A small minority also highlighted these issues through the public media. However, less than 33% of the parliamentarians met indicated that they would want to discuss population issues, particularly RH ones, when they visit their provinces, districts and cities.

One of the most favourable outcomes of the PPAP programme in Indonesia is that a growing number of parliamentarians now support amending Indonesia's population policy. Through IFPPD's rigorous advocacy efforts, reform of Indonesia's National Population Policy (Population Bill No. 10/1992) is now viewed a priority within Indonesian Parliament. The amendment has been accepted by the Speaker of the House. Due to the many draft laws on the Parliament's waiting list, Population Bill No. 10/1992 is likely to be ratified following the General Elections in April 2004.

Mobilising Parliamentarians through Local Advocacy



A political and social environment that is heavily influenced by the Catholic Church characterises the Philippines. In such an environment, population and family planning programmes are met with much resistance and there is a strong need for developing more effective advocacy practices for countering such traditional resistance.

Thus, since the PLCPD's formation in 1989, the PLCPD has employed a grass roots approach that incorporates a bottom-up strategy that focuses primarily on building and arousing interest of *locally* elected legislators towards advocating population and development issues and concerns. Consequently, the PLCPD was AFPPD's first national committee to introduce person-to-person advocacy and began implementing the PPAP programme in November 2001. The primary objective of employing this unique method of advocacy was to create awareness among local legislatures in the Philippines of the inter-relationship between population and social-economic development in order to incorporate these concerns into public policies and programmes. As local legislatures' knowledge base and awareness improves by way of person-to-person advocacy, the PLCPD encourages interaction between members of local legislative bodies at the district level and legislators at the national level, in order to facilitate a two-way flow of insights that can aid both entities. Such advocacy practices have strengthened national legislators with a mandate that can be moved forward on the strength of local legislation. Similarly, local legislators can gain insights to guide them in the crafting of local policies.

Due to the PLCPD's vast experience in advocacy practices, there are several characteristics that are unique to the PPAP project in the Philippines. To begin with, the PPAP project in the Philippines started at the local level and has gradually worked its way up to the national level. Thus, in the first year of the PPAP project, the PLCPD's focus was on developing a nation-wide structure and network for advocating population and family planning concerns in the Philippines from the grass roots level. Six project areas were initially targeted. Now in the second year of the programme, local

mechanisms have already been established in all six project areas, with a Local District Officer in each target area having formed their own municipal advocacy team (MAT). A municipal advocacy team is formed by initiating person-to-person advocacy and networking in the participating cities and municipalities. The project team then conducts discussion meetings and presentations of the PPAP project to local legislative bodies and local chief executives (LCEs). Secondly, the PLCPD has incorporated several advanced advocacy practices into the PPAP project that includes political mapping, area clustering, immersion, strategic media communications and legislative linking to name a few. A PPAP survey is also currently being implemented and the final results are scheduled to be tabulated and published in June 2004.

Despite strong opposition from the Catholic Church, person-to-person advocacy is having an impact at all levels in the Philippines. A positive climate has been created at the local government level for galvanizing domestic resources and generating action on population and reproductive health issues and concerns. Elected representatives are openly working with the PLCPD on population issues and, in the case of the Senate, providing the PLCPD with office space in their building. Awareness of linkages between population and development issues, including family planning and reproductive health concerns, has improved over the course of the PPAP project, as has the involvement of local governors and elected representatives in the advocacy process. The PLCPD membership has now grown to include 72 Members of Parliament. Additionally, a number of municipal ordinances, legislative decrees and amended policies have been implemented, including Reproductive Health Care Bill #4110 in the House, and Reproductive Health Bill #2325 in the Senate.

PPAP - Coming to a Country Near You?

The success of the PPAP programme has generated a lot of interest in person-to-person advocacy with parliamentarians. Currently, the PPAP programme is expanding into Lao PDR with activities scheduled to commence in March 2004. Vietnam and several other national committees have expressed interest in implementing the PPAP programme in their country. However, the growth and achievements of the PPAP project could not have been possible without the support of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and close collaboration with UNFPA.



Spare a thought for those women who are less fortunate this Valentine's Day....



Examining Capacity Development and Political Commitment

International Symposium on Capacity Development in Tokyo

while Mr. Govindan Nair from the World Bank Institute, talked about intergrating capacity building within a result framework as part of the development effectiveness agenda. Mr. Hiroshi Kato from JICA highlighted the goals, agenda and the expected outcomes of the symposium.



L. to R: Mr. Aoko - Ms. Monique Bergeron, DAC - Senator Lim Kee Moi Malaysia - Mr. Jan Waltmans, the Netherlands Embassy

This was followed by the presentation of four case studies. The first two studies were based on decentralisation, participation and the securing of peace in Guatemala, and capacity building of citizen leaders and elected representatives of local self-governance in India. This was followed by a discussion. The last two studies focused on the sustainable community development programme in Nepal, and strengthening capacity for participatory development under decentralisation in Indonesia, also followed by a discussion.

It was during session three that the audience broke into working groups. Many suggestions for future actions on effective capacity development were proposed. One group devoted itself to the political dimensions of capacity

development, and this was chaired by AFPPD Executive Director Mr. Shiv Khare.

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and UNDP organised the International Symposium on Capacity Development on the 4th to the 6th of February in Tokyo. The World Bank Institute, CIDA Canada, and GTZ Germany co-organised the event. The primary objective of the symposium was to analyse the process of supporting capacity development with a special reference to the role of external partners as catalysts for change. A number of case studies were presented during the symposium to determine the circumstances under which external development partners could add value to the capacity development process. The emphasis during the event was predominantly on what works in practice partnerships, on stories with generalisable lessons on the conditions favourable to results – achievement capacity development, and on future actions needed to support more effective capacity development. Participants, approximately 120 of them, comprised external partner and developing country representatives, NGOs and academics. Also in attendance were Ms. Sumie Ishii the Executive Director of JOICFP and Senator Lim Kee Moi from AFPPD Malaysia who was a panel speaker.

The meeting came to a close with remarks from Mr. Ikufumi Tomimoto, JICA on the findings and lessons learned from initial practices, and the way forward for better capacity development.

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The Asian Forum was one of the few regional NGOs invited to contribute a room paper, which focused on the theme of AFPPD's contribution to political commitment for capacity development. The paper detailed how AFPPD has supported capacity development within parliamentary committees on population and health as well as among individual members of parliament.

The symposium was addressed by representatives from CIDA Canada, UNDP, the World Bank Institute and JICA. Mr. Real Lavergne from CIDA Canada presented an overview of the concepts of capacity development and spoke on the outcome of the last symposium, which took place in Manila. He rounded up by explaining the key issues for taking action towards effective capacity development. Mr. Shoji Nishimoto from UNDP gave a presentation entitled 'From Concept to Practice: Mainstreaming Capacity Development Principles,'



Photos showing the visit to Mr. Yatsu's office and meeting with Dr. Taro Nakayama MP

Tokyo - During a recent visit to Japan, Mr. Shiv Khare Executive Director of AFPPD discussed AFPPD programmes and plans for ICPD+10 with Mr. Yoshio Yatsu MP, Chairman of AFPPD, and Dr. Taro Nakayama MP, Chair of the Japanese Parliamentarians Federation on Population (JPFP) and President of IMPO. He also met with officers from the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA) and AFPPD Tokyo including Mr. Tsuguo Hirose, Mr. Osamu Kusumoto and Ms. Ryoko.



Dr. Taro Nakayama MP



Parliamentarians Meet in Paris to Ensure Governments Stay on Track towards the MDGs

Fifth Annual PNoWB Conference

The Fifth Annual PNoWB Conference, which took place on the 19th of February, brought together 190 parliamentarians from 75 countries from all regions to Paris to interact with PNoWB and with World Bank President James Wolfensohn and representatives from multilateral

organisations, civil society groups and parliamentary assemblies. Representing AFPPD were Senator Malinee Sukavejworakit Secretary General, and Mr. Shiv Khare Executive Director. Also participating were Mr. Neil Datta from the Inter-European Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (IEPPFD), and Mr. Joseph Atiku from the Forum of African and Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development (FAAPPD).



L. to R: Senator Malinee Sukavejworakit AFPPD - Mr. Roger Hallhag - Mr. Joseph Atiku FAPPD - Mr. Neil Datta IEPFPD



L. to R: Mr. Rick Stapenhurst - Mr. Bert Koenders MP - Mr. Jean Christophe Bas

Attending MPs heard about various PNoWB activities, including in the field of HIV/AIDS, as well as how PNoWB can assist them in monitoring their government's work toward the MDGs and the work of PNoWB regional chapters. The conference marked an important step in creating regional chapters in East Africa and in Latin America. The challenge facing the participants was mobilising political will and building political alliances in order to obtain the MDGs.

The conference, which was hosted by the French Senate, included regionally and thematically-focused workshops and, in keeping with tradition, separate Q&A sessions with the World Bank President and the International Monetary Fund's Deputy Managing Director, Agustín Carstens. Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula Da Silva addressed the conference by direct video link from Brasilia.

In an address to participants, Mr. Bert Koenders MP from the Netherlands, chair of PNoWB said "We parliamentarians bring a much-needed ingredient to the mix: political capital. Many well-meaning initiatives to help the poor fail because of one thing: lack of political will to carry them through."

Mr. Wolfensohn, during his presentation, noted that global annual spending on defense stood at \$1,000 billion, compared to \$55 billion for development assistance. "What is needed is not just a bold push here and there but a concerted and deep-seated insurgency on behalf of development and peace," he said. "You (parliamentarians) are the people to make it happen."

Participants also learned how the Bank-financed KDP community-driven project in Indonesia has touched some 28,000 villages and 35 million people and how Uganda has brought down the HIV prevalence rate from 30% to 6% since 1986.

"Our hope is that participants will return home with concrete and attainable ideas of what elected officials and parliaments can do to spur development and put the world

on track to meet the MDGs." Mr Bert Koenders MP added.

Details of the two-week old Millennium Challenge Corporation,

set up by U.S. President George Bush to administer the results-oriented Millennium Challenge Account were given by International Outreach Manager Mr. Richard Morford. Mr. Paul Boateng from the UK Treasury presented the British-proposed International Finance Facility, which aims to raise an extra \$50 billion for development in capital markets.

"Well-informed parliamentarians know their constituents, what they want, what they need," said Jean-Christophe Bas, Manager of the Paris-based Development Policy Dialogue team in the World Bank's European Vice Presidency, which organised the conference. "The World Bank is increasingly engaging parliamentarians, through PNoWB and other parliamentary organisations, as change agents in order to scale up action on development issues such as trade, governance, education for all, HIV/AIDS, and aid effectiveness."

The new Executive Board elected Ms. Hironaka Wakako a Japanese senator as a member of the Board along with Senator Malinee Sukavejworakit, Secretary General of AFPPD.

The Fifth Annual Conference of the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank ended with a call for action to Parliamentarians and the World Bank to put pressure on governments, in the North and South alike, to stay on track towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Senator Malinee Sukavejworakit MD spoke at the closing ceremony

PNoWB Special Sub-committee on HIV/AIDS

The Parliamentary Network on the World Bank (PNoWB) has a sub-committee on HIV/AIDS which met during the conference. Senator Malinee Sukavejworakit MD spoke about the HIV/AIDS situation not only in Thailand, but throughout Asia. She also presented an AFPPD paper on enhancing political commitment for HIV/AIDS.



Importance of Population Planning Highlighted at National Seminar in Laos



L.to R: Mr. Shiv Khare AFPPD - Dr. Thongphan Chanthalanonh LAPPD - Dr. Lien Tikeo CPC - Ms. Nobuko Horibe UNFPA

Laos - thirty members of parliament from Lao PDR convened at the National Parliamentarians Seminar on Population and Development in Vientiane on the 8th and 9th of January. The seminar had three main goals. These were to raise awareness of the linkages between population, RH and poverty; to promote a better understanding of the importance of integrating population issues into development planning; and establish the role of parliamentarians in promoting population and development issues.

The meeting was organised by the Laos Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (LAPPD), in cooperation with AFPPD and UNFPA.

The seminar's opening ceremony was addressed by the President of LAPPD **Dr. Thongphan Chanthalanonh**. She expressed her hope that results from the seminar would encourage concerned sectors to integrate population factors into socio-economic plans. **Dr. Lien Tikeo** the Deputy Vice President of the Committee for Planning and Cooperation and Chair of LAPPD, in his opening remarks, reminded participants that regardless of the achievements already made, there is still much to be done. He expounded that the search for ways to improve and implement policies, action plans and monitoring the population policy in Lao/PDR is ongoing. **Mr. Shiv Khare** Executive Director of AFPPD informed participants that AFPPD plans, in the future, to enhance programme-based relations with the country, particularly for educational and motivational programmes for parliamentarians in the population and development field.

UNFPA representative for Laos, **Ms. Nobuko Horibe**, spoke on UNFPA country programmes. In her presentation she reviewed the progress made by Lao/PDR in the implementation of the ICPD PoA and gave an astute analysis of the constraints. The Laos Government has made substantial commitment to reinforcing and promoting ICPD principles and as such significant progress has been made.

Ms. Simonetta also from UNFPA Laos, discussed ICPD and ICPD+5 principles and linkages between population and poverty. She highlighted the ICPD PoA and ICPD+5 before going into a detailed presentation of key ICPD issues. These issues include RH and sexual rights, sexuality education, gender and RH. Ms. Simonetta then went on to describe how each one of these factors is integrally linked with population and poverty.



Mr. Stirling Scruggs

Mr. Stirling Scruggs the former Director of UNFPA IERD, broached the role of parliamentarians in promoting population and development, RH and women's empowerment. He began with a brief history of parliamentarians dealing with population and development, and said that as trusted public servants and key decision makers, parliamentarians play a crucial role. He explained that national and regional parliamentary groups have worked over the years to advance population programming and women's rights, but the momentum is now slowing as the largest youth population enters its reproductive years.

Presentations on population growth and development issues as they relate to trade and investment, migration, urbanisation and development, HIV/AIDS, gender, RH and rights, and environment were also given. In the closing session, Mr. Shiv Khare gave a presentation on AFPPD programmes and parliamentarian groups around Asia. Mr. Steve Dashiell, AFPPD Programme Associate also attended the seminar.



Senator Virapong Skolkitiwat

Village Leaders Learning About HIV/AIDS in Thai Province

The Thai province of Songkhla was the venue for another Tambon Leaders' meeting on HIV/AIDS on the 19th of February. The Tambon Leaders' Programme was initiated two years ago (2002) with the aim to educate and involve village level leaders on issues such as RH, HIV/AIDS, ageing and geriatrics.

Hosted by the Health Department of Thailand, the meeting was opened by Senator Virapong Skolkitiwat Chair of the Senate Committee on Public Health, and Lt. Gen. Panya Yooprasert, the first Vice Chair of the Senate Committee. Senator Skolkitiwat and Lt. Gen Yooprasert both imparted valuable information on modes of HIV transmission and HIV/AIDS prevention methods and strategies to an audience of around fifty-five tambon leaders. AFPPD was represented by Ms. Patsuda Patanasuwanna, Accounts Associate.



World Bank's HIV/AIDS Study Visit of Parliamentarians to Ethiopia

PNWB organised a workshop and study visit on HIV/AIDS in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 12 and 13th of January. The two-day workshop, which served to illustrate some of the salient policy debates in the fight against the HIV/AIDS epidemic worldwide brought together eleven parliamentarians from ten countries. The parliamentary delegation heard from



Senator Jon Ungphakorn, Thailand

government and non-governmental groups working on all aspects of the fight against the disease and the donor community. Furthermore, part of the workshop's mission was to share experiences among elected representatives on initiatives which rarely find a voice outside of their national borders.

The field visit, which was broken down into two parts, enabled the parliamentarians to see first hand the work and challenges faced by NGOs working to care for HIV patients and affected populations. The first part consisted of a visit to a local HIV/AIDS project known as 'MEKDEM. This was followed by a meeting with Mr. Bauny makinawa from UNAIDS Ethiopia.

The second day began with a meeting with Dr. Getachew Demeke from the USAID HIV/AIDS Programme and was followed by a lunch meeting with NGO representatives from various organisations around Ethiopia. Finally, the parliamentarians attended a workshop and case study-based presentation on **'How can parliamentarians make an impact in the fight against HIV/AIDS: successes and failures.'**

Representing AFPPD were Rep. Cielo Krisel Lagman-Luistro from the Philippines and Thai Senator Jon Ungphakorn.

Funding Target must be Met if ICPD is to Succeed

IPPF Director General Dr. Steve Sinding Addresses ACP – EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly in Addis Ababa

The ACP – EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, which brought together delegates from Africa, Caribbean and Pacific group countries as well as those from the European Parliament, held its 7th session in Ethiopia on the 16th to the 19th of February.

Dr. Steven Sinding, the Director General of IPPF, addressed participants during the conference. He declared that political and financial recommitment to the 1994 Programme of Action (PoA) of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) is necessary if the goal of universal access to sexual and reproductive health services by 2015 is to be met. He further said that the basis for

achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and eradicating poverty, is when families, women in particular, can exercise control over the number and spacing of their children and can protect themselves against STIs, including HIV/AIDS. In terms of funding, Dr Sinding felt that unless the target agreed to for 2005 is met, universal access to services will not be realized and the MDGs will not be achieved.

After Dr. Sinding's speech, voting on the resolution 'Poverty, Diseases and RH in ACP Countries in the Context of the 9th EDF' took place. It was later announced that the vote on the resolution was passed almost unanimously and adopted on February the 19th 2004.

Elected Representatives Discuss Education, Population and HIV/AIDS in India

Educational Development, population change and HIV/AIDS was the topic of the National Parliamentarians Conference organised by the Indian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (IAPPD) in Rajkot Gujrat, India. The conference, which took place between the 13th and 16th of February, was organised in cooperation with AFPPD, UNFPA and the Government of India.

Dr. Vallabhbai Kathiria, the Union Minister of State, Health and Family Welfare, Mr. Lakshman Singh MP Vice Chair of AFPPD, Ms. Urmilaben Patel MP, former Union Minister and associate of AFPPD, and Ms. Emilia Timpo from UNAIDS, all spoke at the opening ceremony.

The conference began by examining education, population and development. Mr. Jyoti Singh, former Deputy Executive Director of UNFPA, spoke on the changing face of population and Ms. Meera Seth from NCERT Delhi discussed education and the girl child. This was followed by a presentation on population education given by Dr. Bimal Buch and a discussion on ageing and women empowerment presented by Dato' Fookwengchin MP from Malaysia.

Also attending the conference was Mr. Nizamuddin, UNFPA Senior Advisor on Ageing, who spoke on rapid demographic shifts and unprecedented growth of the elderly population. He also focused on the critical challenges for planners and policy makers in this regard. Ms. Benita Sharma from UNIFEM spoke on women empowerment.

HIV/AIDS was the focus for the final session of the conference. The extensive scope of HIV/AIDS was highlighted by Mr. P.L. Joshi from NACO. This was followed by a technical session on HIV/AIDS, which was addressed by Dr. Suresh Joshipura from the Doshi Hospital and Research Center. Mr. Deepak Gupta, International Consultant, focused on the role of political leaders.

The conference concluded with an open discussion and several field trips.



Married Women Face High HIV Risk

Dr. Nafis Sadik



"AIDS has added to women's vulnerability," says Dr. Nafis Sadik, Special Advisor to the UN Secretary General. Dr. Sadik was in India to give the Inaugural Sat Paul Mittal Memorial lecture at Jawahar University in New Delhi on Women and Population. "Contrary to cultural perception, marriage no longer provides safety and economic security to a woman," she said. "Instead, it has become a hazard to a women's health. 90 to 95%

married women in South Asia, who are HIV positive, are infected by their husbands. Married women have a higher incidence of HIV than men in the same age group. The fact that girls continue to get married at a young age to men much older than them adds to the risk."

Sex Education very Important for Women

Dr Sadik said that it is not impossible to introduce sex education even in the most conservative societies. "Pakistan has introduced sex education, and provincial governments everywhere, including in the frontier states, have agreed to make it part of the curriculum in schools." She felt that sex education is a must for women. They need to be educated so that they can protect themselves against unwanted pregnancies and AIDS.

There must be a Greater Commitment from Male Decision-Makers

"We have to involve men as they are the decision-makers, but unfortunately, many in the women's movements don't want them and are happier to keep the issue going instead of resolving it," she said.

Most political leaders shy away from addressing these sensitive issues publicly. "Religious leaders have been an asset in population stabilisation and AIDS prevention in Bangladesh, Indonesia and Iran, but we need more from them in India."

India is doing a good job in population stabilisation, but Bangladesh is far ahead. Pakistan, she felt, is the laggard. India's total fertility rate is 2.85 births per woman, with 48% of married women using contraceptives.

Only 7%, however, use spacing methods such as condoms, oral contraceptives and IUDs. "Spacing methods have to be made more popular to stabilise population as most women opt for permanent solutions such as tubectomy only when they are older and have had many children."

Quick Facts

- ❖ A study of 12- to 16-year-old girls giving birth in Peru found that 90 percent said they had become pregnant by rape, often by incest.
- ❖ Somali refugee women said they cooked fewer meals for their children because they feared being raped while collecting firewood.

Historical First - Filipino Muslim Leaders Support Family Planning Campaign

The Mindanao Times documents that a press statement from the Commission on Population (Popcom) announced that approximately 200 Muslim leaders in the Philippines are expected, in March, to express their support for family planning.

According to the Mindanao Times, **this will be the first time in the history of Islam in the Philippines that the 'Ulama' or Muslim religious leaders will endorse a religious decree on reproductive health and family planning.** The press statement added that the declaration of support is still being studied by Muslim leaders as its provisions are being finalized. The draft of the declaration was started last year in a dialogue with Muslim leaders. According to the statement, the declaration of support will require Muslim scholars to disseminate Muslim communities the importance of family planning.

Pocom Executive Director, Mr. Tomas Osias, was reported by Push Journal as saying 'the decree is a real manifestation that family planning cuts across religious and cultural norms, that its noble intention is to achieve quality of life through parenthood in its ideal form.'

UK Opinion Leaders Want Government to Support Safe Abortion Worldwide

Faced with the fact that almost 80,000 women die each year from unsafe abortion in developing countries, three quarters of UK public opinion leaders believe that the British Government should fund safe abortion as part of a range of sexual and reproductive health services.

This is one of the key outcomes of an independent survey commissioned by global sexual and reproductive health organisation Marie Stopes International and carried out by Opinion Leader Research. A total of 182 opinion leaders from the media, NGOs, academic, political and corporate sectors were consulted about their attitudes to sexual and reproductive health and rights in the developing world.

For more information on the survey or for a copy of the full report, please contact the MSI Research Team: research@mariestopes.org.uk or phone (+ 44) 0 20 7574 7400

Corrigendum

In the last edition of the AFPPD newsletter (Nov - Dec 2003), we published the list of IMPO's newly-elected office bearers following the International Medical Parliamentarians Conference, which took place in December last year. It has been brought to our attention that some of the names included on the previous list were, in fact, incorrect. Please find the updated names below:

Regional Vice President - Europe
Senator Dr. Alain Destexhe Belgium

Regional Vice President - Africa
Dr. Bounhir Jamal MP Morocco



Interview Togo

Dr. Michel Dossim Assang MP Togo

Dr. Michel Dossim Assang, Vice President for Defence and Security, is a Member of Parliament from Togo. He is also a surgeon and trauma consultant. Dr. Assang came to Bangkok to attend the AFPPD-organised International Medical Parliamentarians Conference on Family Health in December last year. He was interviewed by AFPPD Editorial Associate Ms. Mikaella Lock.

In your opinion, what do you think is the most pressing population and development-related issue in Togo today?

Togo is a developing country and, as such, one of the major problems facing the country today is a lack of resources, predominantly financial. This lack of essential support evokes many problems in the overall development of Togo, for example in areas such as education, health, and status

of women, etc. I shall go into details a little later on, but for the moment, I would like to highlight the 'the inequality of opportunity' the Togolese people are subjected to. Togo produces a vast array of agricultural products, which are sold for export. However, the developed countries that purchase our produce very often set the prices for sale themselves, meaning they are able to buy our

goods at a very cheap rate and sell them on for a significant profit. This means our farmers, our people, are not able to reap the fruit of their labours, and when you work very hard and earn very little, I call this inequality of opportunity. So, to reiterate, there are not enough financial means to support and develop the country, and this in turn detrimentally affects the population.

Additionally, collaboration between Togo and the European Union was halted and this has had a serious effect on the country. The assistance we received from the EU was an immense support to the Togolese people and if this collaboration were re-established, we would be able to better resolve many of the issues we face. For the time being, however, we have to manage our problems with internal resources, which as I mentioned earlier, are inadequate.

You have spoken about inequality of opportunity, but what about inequality between men and women? Is this a problem in Togo?

Here I would like to say that the female population is more important than the male! However, for cultural, psychological or traditional reasons, women have been and are perceived as secondary to men. In Togo, there is a large unbalance between men and women. For example, parents frequently fail to send their daughters to school because they believe girls should stay at home and work in the kitchen until they are old enough to marry and have children. The result of this of course is the number of illiterate girls is significantly higher than that of boys. The school attendance rate for girls is quite high in the beginning, with 100% attendance



for pre-schoolers and a drop by 10% by the time they reach primary school. There is a further drop of 20% by the time they reach secondary school. But at university level, it is another story. In a class of twenty students, there may be only one girl. This is because numerous girls get pregnant or married.



In an effort to resolve this problem we, the Togolese parliamentarians and the Togolese Government, have come up with an initiative known as 'promotion of young girls'. We are making an effort, on a local scale, to encourage parents to send their daughters to school and we have done this by reducing school fees for girls. It now costs half as much to send a girl to school than a boy.

Additionally, we brought into effect anti-rape laws to protect girls from their teachers and other male students who could attack them and get them pregnant. Unfortunately, in Togo, many girls drop out of school because they become pregnant and once that happens, the likelihood of them gaining a good education and reaching full potential is very slim indeed.

You mentioned that uneducated girls are often unemployed and, therefore are forced into prostitution to earn a living. Is unemployment for both young men and women in general a problem in Togo?

As there is a lack of resources in Togo, not all professional frameworks are properly adapted to receive upcoming, young professionals. Togolese youth work very hard, but sadly they often have a hard time finding a suitable job fitting to their qualifications. This is especially the case with full-time work, apprenticeships or high-level positions.

What mechanisms are in place to assist under-educated mothers?

Reproductive and maternal health is obviously very important to a woman, and if a woman is uneducated, maintaining good sexual health or coping with motherhood can be very difficult. It is for this reason the Government is doing what it can to help these women. Literacy institutions have been set-up to teach women and girls to read and write, as well as bring up their level of comprehension. Teaching is either conducted in the local language or in French.

Concerning women's health, this sector has developed greatly in recent years with much progress made in the research of breast and uterus cancer. Pregnancies are regularly followed-up. Young girls learn about contraception so as not to become pregnant with unwanted babies.

Is water quality and accessibility a problem in Togo?

The Togolese Government had established water points around the country, which provided drinking water to every-



body for free. Thirteen years ago, however, collaboration between Togo and the European Union, which was providing assistance to us, was cut due to a misunderstanding between the governments. Since the cessation of this collaboration, there was no choice but to place taxes on water so whereas the water boards had previously been able to provide water for free, they now have to charge for water. Those who are unable to pay for drinking water have to resort to drinking unclean water to survive. The consumption of unclean water leads to many illnesses, some of them very serious such as cholera. As a matter of fact, the majority of all diarrhoeic diseases in Togo can be linked to the drinking of unsafe water. This is a huge problem, particularly in urban areas.

Could you explain to me the situation with regards to HIV/AIDS in Togo?

For a long time Togo was spared from HIV/AIDS, but due to the war between our neighbouring countries, Togo has seen an influx of refugees who have carried the HIV virus with them into the country. Currently, the HIV prevalence rate among adults is around 5%.

We have taken action towards HIV/AIDS prevention. This includes campaigns for the promotion of condoms, encouraging fidelity between couples, and generating as much public awareness on the issue as we can. All our laboratories where we conduct blood transfusions are equipped to screen blood. If we discover a mother is sero-positive, we provide her with medicine to try and stop her baby from contracting the disease. Finally, we try to do everything we can to eliminate discrimination against HIV positive people.

We have promoted systematic detection of HIV where people can voluntarily and anonymously go to a clinic and have a blood test to determine whether they are infected or not. These clinics can be found in all hospitals and in some schools. Encouraging people to come discreetly and have a blood test also enables us to know more accurately the level of HIV/AIDS prevalence in the country.

For HIV positive patients, simply trying to eliminate discrimination is not enough. They must receive counselling and be given back their confidence. They need to realise that they are still an important part of society, and they need to feel useful.

that they are still an important part of society, and they need to feel useful.

Lastly, treating HIV/AIDS and the provision of ARV drugs is quite a problem. ARV drugs are expensive. The Government made an effort and approached the pharmaceutical companies to ask them to reduce their prices. They did indeed reduce their prices, but even with this reduction, we are still struggling to pay for ARV drugs, which is obviously quite a problem for us. Furthermore, the mentality some people take towards their HIV status and medicine taking is very negative. For example, a patient may take ARV drugs for six months, but then tires of the routine so he or she stops. Of course this can only be resolved through education.



Do you think that many of the problems experienced in Togo are due to an elevated population rate?

In a sense, yes, but I would like to add that the population growth rate is a problem, but it is not as important as the economic growth rate. When there is an imbalance between these two rates that is when problems such as unemployment, which leads to poverty, emerge.

What do you think organisations such as AFPPD can do to further motivate parliamentarians to be more proactive on population and development-related issues?

This is the first time I have been to Asia and it is also the first time I have participated in an event organised by AFPPD. I believe this is a very good initiative and it greatly interests me. This type of forum presents a perfect opportunity for parliamentarians and leaders to come together and exchange country experiences and best practices as well as brainstorm new ideas for the betterment of existing programmes, legislation and strategies. It is very important to encourage collaboration between parliamentarians, and organisations such as the Asian Forum are in an excellent best position to do this.



An official lunch with the Ministry of Labour organised by AFPPD in Bangkok on the 30th of January 2004.

L. to R: Mr. Nakorn Silapa-archa, Director General of the Department of Employment – Senator Malinee Sukavejworakit MD, Secretary General of AFPPD – Prof. Prasop Ratanakorn MD, Chairman of the Statesman Foundation – Mr. Charupong Ruangsuwan, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Labour – Dr. Virapong Skolkitvat, Chairman of the Committee on Public Health – Ms. Wanwisa Dhamrongwattana, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



Proposed AFPPD Events in 2004

❖ Regional Training on Management, Monitoring and Evaluation of Advocacy Programmes for National Committees	Bangkok, Thailand	3 - 7 May
❖ Asian Medical Parliamentarians Conference	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	19 - 21 June
❖ Asian Women Parliamentarians and Ministers Conference	Australia	27- 28 July
❖ Meeting of the Standing Committee on Women	Australia	27 July
❖ Inter-country Parliamentarians Meeting on HIV/AIDS for Youth	Bali, Indonesia	22- 24 Sept
❖ South East Asian Meeting of Professional Parliamentarians on ICPD+10	Bangkok, Thailand	16 - 17 Nov
❖ APDA - AFPPD Parliamentarians Seminar	Kazakhstan	to be decided
❖ Advocacy Programme at the National Level	Asia Pacific and CIS countries	Jan - Dec
❖ Hewlett Foundation-Funded Person-to-Person Advocacy Programme	Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines	Ongoing

Participation in ICPD+10 and Other Events in 2004

❖ Tokyo International Symposium on Capacity Development - Organised by JICA	Toyko, Japan	4 - 6 Feb
❖ 5 th Annual Conference of the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank	Paris, France	14 - 15 Feb
❖ UNFPA Population Commission Meeting	New York, USA	22 - 24 Mar
❖ 4 th Council Meeting of the Inter-European Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development	Ankara, Turkey	1 - 4 Apr
❖ Global Population Forum - organised by the Population Institute	Washington DC, USA	13 - 14 May
❖ The 10th International AIDS Conference	Bangkok, Thailand	6 - 11 July
❖ IPPF's South East Asian Regional Roundtable on ICPD+10	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	21 - 23 July
❖ IPPF's South Asian Regional Roundtable on ICPD+10	Katmandu, Nepal	4 - 6 Aug
❖ IPPF's International Roundtable on ICPD+10	London, UK	30 Aug - 2 Sept
❖ International Forum on ICPD and MDGs - organised by Partners in Development and the Government of China	Yichang City, China	7 - 10 Sept
❖ High Level Symposium - organised by Population 2050	Tokyo, Japan	13 - 15 Sept
❖ International Parliamentarians Conference on ICPD - 2004 - follow-up to Ottawa	Strasbourg, France	17 - 19 Oct

Meeting on Women Empowerment and Gender Equality

On the 27th of January, the Thematic Working Group on Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality convened at the Emerging Social Issues Division of the UN in order to discuss the upcoming International Women's Day in July. The thematic group will be organising an event on the theme of 'women and HIV/AIDS' to commemorate the day. Representatives from UNESCAP, UNIFEM, ITP, UNDP, FAO, UNESCO, AIT and AFPPD attended the meeting. Ms. Lilibelle Austriaco, Programme Associate, represented AFPPD

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