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FORUM NEWSLETTER

Publication of Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development

85 Percent of Indian MPs Say Population Is a Big Problem

The Person-to-Person Advocacy Project (PPAP) has proven to be the first major study that sheds light on the state of awareness on population and sexual and reproductive health, especially HIV/AIDS, Sexually-Transmitted Infections (STI), and Reproductive Tract Infections (RTI), among parliamentarians in the world's second most populous nation – India.

The PPAP-India has been conducted by the Indian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (IAPPD), in cooperation with the AFPPD and with financial support from the Hewlett Foundation.



Mr. M.V. Rajasekharan, Union Minister of State for Planning, right, talks to a PPAP discussant during an interview session.

The study covered 250 national parliamentarians. Among them 87 are members of Rajya Sabha (Upper House) and 163 members of Lok Sabha (Lower House), representing their constituencies from all parts of the country.

In response to a specific question to elected representatives about whether they consider population to be a big problem and whether they are concerned about it from country's development point of view, 85 percent of elected representatives in the survey mentioned that population in the country was a big problem. Statements gathered during the survey processes showed that they were of opinion that it is essential to control population growth in the country. Their awareness about family planning methods have been assessed by asking whether they had ever heard or read about modern methods of family planning, i.e. condom, pills, intrauterine devices as well as vasectomy and tubectomy. Almost all elected representatives (97 percent.) reported that they had heard or read about all modern methods of family planning. A large majority of parliamentarians received information about modern methods of family planning from television (97 percent) and radio (57 percent). Another 45 percent of the parliamentarians said that they received the information on family

planning in the course of playing their role as elected representatives both in seminars and workshops in the Parliament and in local situations with local leaders.

Almost all parliamentarians in the survey are fairly well informed about advantages of small family. Broadly speaking, reported advantages are of two types. One is that it provides increased opportunities for answering better economic, educational and better provision of health care possibilities for all family members, especially mother and children. The other is that practice of small-family norm by a significant portion of natural population increases chances of having sustainable development in the country. The elected representatives participating the study were asked a direct question – "To what extent they feel concerned about the problems of STI/RTI and HIV/AIDS in the country?". The survey found that more than 90 percent of the elected representatives reported that they are highly concerned about both the problems of RTI/STI (94 percent) and HIV/AIDS (92 percent). They also shared some reasons justifying their concern and gave some suggestions to prevent the spread of STI/RTI and HIV/AIDS.

The parliamentarians said that they were concerned about RTI/STI problems because "it ruins the health of the

Ms. Mari Simonen Named New UNFPA Deputy Executive Director



Ms. Mari Simonen

Ms. Mari Simonen has been appointed new Deputy Executive Director, External Relations, UN Affairs and Management at UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund. Ms. Simonen, of Finland, was most recently the Director of UNFPA's Technical Support Division, a post she had held since November 1999. Prior to that position, she was the Chief of the Office of the Executive Director at UNFPA, a strategic position from which she helped the Executive Director carry out her functions as the secretary-general of the 1994 Cairo International Conference on Population and Development. Before joining the UN in 1980, she worked at the University of California, Berkeley, where she had obtained a doctorate degree in international development education and public health.

mother”(34 percent); “it leads to infertility often which is not good for the family and society” (47 percent) and “if parents suffer from RTI/STI problems their marital life gets disturbed’ (51 percent). They are of opinion that both men and women and boys and girls should be given proper health education about personal hygiene, sanitation, and cleanliness (44 percent). If any individual is suffering from RTI/STI problem, he/she should get it treated (57 percent).

The information gathered in the survey indicates that almost all the parliamentarians have heard and know about HIV/AIDS. But when it comes to their knowledge about route of transmission of HIV, there is less number of them who reported to be knowledgeable of different routes of transmission. Only half of the responses deal with transmission through infected blood. Around three-fourth of the responses mentioned the route of sexual intercourse with multiple partners (76 percent) and transmission through syringes and needles (79 percent) as routes of transmission. Half of the responses related to ‘infected mother transmitting to the child’ (54 percent) and ‘use of same blade /razor for both the infected and not infected persons by the barbers’ said that the infections could spread through these routes. Overall, it is encouraging to note that, assessing the respondents’ awareness and knowledge, responses about routes of transmission of HIV is within the range of moderate to high (48 percent to 76 percent). However, considering the status of elected representatives and their education level, it is felt that a higher percentage of awareness and knowledge about the routes of transmission of HIV would have been in place.

In the course of discussing routes of transmission of the virus, the respondents mentioned several myths and misconceptions about it. For instance, “one gets HIV infection if he shares clothes, food, utensils, living accommodation, toilets and sharing work- place with HIV/AIDS infected person.” More than half of the responses in relation to transmission of HIV indicate that it is possible by sharing clothes (64 percent) and food and utensils (56 percent) . Less than half of the responses related to sharing common workplace and using common toilet mentioned them as transmission routes of HIV. Such myths and misconceptions are always expected to be there in many programmes which largely use one-

way impersonal media which give unplanned chances and brief exposures in the form of spot advertisements in the midst of entertainment programmes for which the audience mind is pre-set. The respondents of the study reporting facing such doubts and misconceptions and emphasized the need to remove them through person-to-person talks, discussions, in seminars and workshops. The parliamentarians also mentioned their potential in removing such misconceptions in the interpersonal interaction situation and through person-to-person communication..

They also expressed that they are very much concerned about the problem of misconceptions and myths in the society (94 percent and 92 percent for RTI/STI and HIV/AIDS, respectively). In their opinion, more parliamentarians’ commitment and effective advocacy role can substantially reduce these myths and misconceptions in the society. When asked about reasons for this very high concern, the responses indicated that ‘such ailments of RTI/STI are not good for the health of women (34 percent). These problems are not good for family, society, and the country as a

whole (42 percent); it ruins the family if father/mother gets HIV/AIDS (43 percent); number of orphan children will be high (55 percent); RTI/STI leads to infertility (47 percent) and ‘marital life of couples with RTI/STI is completely destroyed’ (51 percent). The elected representatives gave several suggestions to control and minimize the harmful effect of RTI/STI and HIV/AIDS. Some of them are education for improved personal hygiene and sanitation, importance of remaining faithful to wife, and promoting the use of condom as preventive measures for RTI/STI and HIV/AIDS. According to them, the mass media are giving very little exposure to RTI/STI as compared to HIV/AIDS. There is a great need for more involvement with electronic media for information dissemination in respect of RTI/STI. Ninety-five percent of the elected representatives are aware and knowledgeable about incidences of several types of violence against women. And they got those several types of violence against women. Over 75 percent and 54 percent of them received relevant information from television and radio while 39 percent each gave credit to interpersonal interaction at seminars and workshops and friends and neighbors, respectively.



Mr. Anantrao Gudhe, MP, left, talks to a PPAP discussant during an interview session.



Mr. A. Vijaya Raghwan, MP, right, talks to a PPAP discussant during an interview session.

South Asian Parliamentarians Meet on HIV/AIDS

On January 26-27, 2006, Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) hosted the Second Sub-Regional Parliamentary Seminar on HIV/AIDS in South Asia in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Parliamentarians and experts from 13 countries attended the seminar, including Sen. Chachvan Bunmee and Sen. Chao Maneewong, from Thailand, who were sponsored by AFPPD. The inaugural ceremony on January 26 received a statement by Chief Guest, H.E. Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, Honourable Prime Minister of Bangladesh, a keynote address by Dr. Nafis Sadik, Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General for HIV/AIDS in Asia and the Pacific and former UNFPA Executive Director, and remarks by Hon. Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Hon. Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Bangladesh. Hon. Md. Abdul Hamid, Advocate, MP, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, presented a closing statement on



Dr. Nafis Sadik at the Dhaka Seminar



Group photo of the participants at the Karachi seminar

January 27.

A Provincial Parliamentary Seminar on HIV & AIDS Policy was also held in Karachi, Pakistan, on January 30-31, 2006. It was jointly hosted with the Provincial Assembly of Sindh, the National Assembly and Senate of Pakistan, the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), and Aga Khan University (AKU). At the Seminar, Dr. Nafis Sadik's speech was read by Dr. Aldo Landi, UNAIDS Country Coordinator, Pakistan. In the speech, she warned that a general HIV/AIDS outbreak in provinces like Sindh would be not only possible, but also expected due to high rates of poverty, illiteracy, and gender equality. She added that very little information about HIV/AIDS was readily available to the general public and vulnerable groups. She also stressed that married women were an extremely high-risk category.

A Thai Parliamentarian's Take on HIV/AIDS in South and South East Asia



Sen. Chachvan Bunmee

Sen. Chachvan Bunmee, a 41-year-old former police lieutenant colonel, has been Thailand's youngest serving member of the Thai Senate. He attended the PGA seminars in Bangladesh and Pakistan on behalf of AFPPD. The following are excerpts from our conversation with him.

Q: What is your impression on the seminars?

A: To me, the seminars were very educational. It is very useful to learn about the HIV/AIDS situation in South Asia, especially at a time when globalization dramatically increases the volume of migration activities. It is particularly important for my work as a parliamentarian to take these lessons into account when we formulate HIV/AIDS policies.

Q: What do you think about HIV/AIDS situation in South Asia?

A: The situation in South Asia, particularly in Bangladesh and Pakistan, is different from that in Thailand in that here, we have long a high level of political commitment for HIV/AIDS.

In some countries, the commitment still is a big problem. I am personally quite concerned about the situation in India and Bangladesh. There are factors such as poverty, population density, and lack of HIV/AIDS knowledge, etc., that could lead to the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Anyway, I think this is a good start for South Asia. HIV/AIDS is not an issue that one needs to take side. Everyone agrees that we should do something about it.

Q: What was your role at the seminars?

A: In Bangladesh, I was a panelist on political commitment to intensify HIV/AIDS prevention in South Asia.

I shared Thailand's experience in the country's effort to reduce its HIV/AIDS prevalence and mortality rates.

Q: What is Thailand's strategy?

A: Political commitment is at the heart of our policy.

The Thai government and parliament have dealt with HIV/AIDS issues without any reservation....With the risks, recently, shifted to teenagers and migrant workers, we need to do more for these two groups.

Q: What is your position about the ongoing debate over installing condom vending machines at secondary schools' toilets?

A: Education is more important. When they know that unprotected sex involves high risk, they will find a way to get protection.

Where and how they get the condoms would be less important.

Q: Is parliamentarians' advocacy a worthwhile investment?

A: I think it is a worthwhile investment. Being a politician is not limited to terms in office....After finishing their term in office, the politicians can still work on the issues they have advocated for, in any other capacity.

Women's Participation at All Levels of Decision-Making Must Be Promoted: Ms. Steve Chadwick Endorses 50th UNCSW Session's Themes



Ms. Steve Chadwick

Ms. Steve Chadwick, MP (New Zealand) and Chairwoman of the AFPPD Standing Committee on Women, issued a statement on behalf of AFPPD to the 50th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, to be held from February 27 to March 10, 2006, at the UN headquarters in New York.

In the statement, she says that AFPPD is pleased to endorse the themes for the 50th session of the Commission on the Status of Women and, in particular, urges strong support for the second theme of "equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels". The AFPPD believes that the time has come to go beyond a focus on enhancing participation of women in development. The current situation of poverty and HIV/AIDS in Asia and the Pacific are also highlighted in the statement. The following is the full text of the statement.

The Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) is the coordinating body for national committees of Parliamentarians who work to generate support and cooperation among Asian and Pacific parliamentarians in the area of population and development, and related fields.

The AFPPD Standing Committee on Women serves to advise the AFPPD chairman and members of the Executive Committee on parliamentarians' activities on the status of women, gender equality and equity, and the involvement of women parliamentarians in AFPPD activities. The Committee is pleased to endorse the themes for the 50th session of the Commission on the Status of Women and, in particular, urges strong support for the second theme of "equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels". The Committee believes that the time has come to go beyond a focus on enhancing participation of women in development, and so welcomes the Commission's call for their participation in all levels of decision-making.

The Asia-Pacific region is at a critical point in its development. While dramatic social and economic progress has been made by some countries, the region includes a high number of vulnerable Least Developed Countries and Small Island States. Some countries are making significant progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals, while in others poverty is increasing. Furthermore, the centre of the HIV/AIDS pandemic is moving inexorably across the region with major implications for national and regional development, and hampering the achievement of the MDGs. The AFPPD Standing Committee on Women notes with deep concern that women are disproportionately affected by poverty and HIV/AIDS. Women lack the opportunity and decision-making power to escape the twin tyrannies of HIV/AIDS and poverty.

The committee believes responses to the pandemic of HIV/AIDS will not be effective unless they address the many power imbalances between men and women – imbalances in family structures, in sexual relationships, in education, in the economy, in cultural norms and in governance and decision-making at national and local levels. It is these power imbalances, rather than simple epidemiology, which have enabled HIV/AIDS to seize women in such a powerful grip. Strategies to respond to the HIV/AIDS crisis around the world have all too often failed because they do not include a gender perspective, because women have not been involved in leading the formation of policies and the implementation of strategies.

AFPPD is committed to advancing the goals of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action and Beijing Platform for Action for women, through informing, educating and motivating parliamentarians on the linkages between increasing population and issues such as sexual and reproductive health, family planning, food security, water resources, sustainable development, environment, ageing, urbanisation, migration, HIV/AIDS, and gender equality. AFPPD believes it is the right of every individual to have a life of dignity and meaning, rather the mere existence, and these linkages provide the key to this.

Globally, the overwhelming majority of HIV infection is sexually transmitted, or associated with pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding. Poor sexual and reproductive health and greater vulnerability to HIV infection also share common roots, including poverty and discrimination based on gender. Yet far too many policies and programmes for HIV and sexual and reproductive health do not take account of these commonalities.

At the 2005 UN World Summit, 151 countries recognised that HIV/AIDS and other infections diseases pose severe risks for the entire world and serious challenges to the achievement of development goals. To this end, they committed themselves to:

"Achieve universal access to reproductive health by 2015, as set out at the International Conference on Population and Development, integrating this goal in strategies to attain the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration aimed at reducing maternal mortality, improving maternal health, reducing child mortality, promoting gender equality, combating HIV/AIDS and eradicating poverty."— **World Summit Outcome Document, para 57(g)**

The AFPPD Standing Committee on Women calls on countries to turn rhetoric into reality and implement this commitment for the benefit of women and humanity.

IPPF and Partners Chart Out New Advocacy Strategy for SRH



From L. to R.: Dr. Duff Gillespie and Dr. Steven W. Sinding



Ms. Valerie DeFillipo, far left, and Ms. Sono Aibe, far right



From L. to R.: Mr. Neil Datta and Dr. Joerg Mass

International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) organized a meeting of key partners on increasing national and international financial and political priorities for sexual and reproductive health and rights in key G77 countries which was chaired by IPPF Director-General Dr. Steven W. Sinding, at IPPF Central Office in London, on January 12 and 13, 2006. The first day of the meeting featured an overview of the situation from the insights of various experts, namely Dr. Sinding on the context of global advocacy, Prof. Duff Gillespie, Senior Scholar, Gates Institute for Population and Reproductive Health, on reproductive health advocacy, and Mr. David Daniels, International Director, HILSP, on global advocacy opportunities. The meeting focused on Nigeria's advocacy experience which was presented by Dr. Moji Odeku, Federal Ministry of Health, Nigeria, and Ms. Hajija Bilkisu Yusuf, Federation of

Muslim Women's Associations of Nigeria. Hon. Saudatu Sani, Committee Chairperson, Women Affairs, Federal House of Representatives, Nigeria, spoke on the role of parliamentarians in the Nigerian experience. Converting an approach into an operational plan was the topic for Ms. Valerie DeFillipo, Director of External Affairs, IPPF. She highlighted the important components and connections for successful advocacy. The meeting also discussed development of the country to global pathway and regional advocacy with regard to increasing country ownership and global outcomes.

The meeting was attended, among others, by Mr. Shiv Khare, Executive Director, AFPPD, and Ms. Gill Greer, Chair, Asia Pacific Alliance (APA). Mr. Neil Datta, Secretary, Inter-European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (IEPPFD), Ms. Terri

Bartlett, Vice President for Public Policy and Strategic Initiatives, Population Action International, Ms. Lisa Carty, Senior Policy Officer for Global Health, Gates Foundation, Dr. Christian H. Jahn, Project Coordinator, GTZ, Ms. Susan Rich, Director of Women and population, United Nations Foundation, USA, Mr. Kole Shettima, Country Representative to Nigeria, MacArthur Foundation, Mr. John Worley, Team Leader, Reproductive and Child Health Team, Department for International Development, UK, Mr. Frans Baneke, Executive Director, EuroNGOs, World Population Foundation, and Dr. Joerg Mass, DSW, Germany. A strategy to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights advocacy was discussed. The meeting and follow-up activities were funded by Packard Foundation. Ms. Sono Aibe, Senior Program Manager of the Foundation, gave a brief background of the initiative.

UK Government to Contribute £3 Million to IPPF Safe Abortion Programme

With political and financial supports from the British Government, the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) is to launch a global safe abortion programme to support services and information to reduce unsafe abortion worldwide.

At the House of Commons, Hon. Gareth Thomas, MP and International Development Minister (United Kingdom), said that the UK would contribute an initial £3 million to the programme.

Dr. Steven W. Sinding, Director-General, IPPF, said that the Global Safe Abortion Programme, would help improve access to safe abortion services and would also help support other partners that have had to cut back on reproductive health services because of the impact of the so-called Global Gag Rule. The Gag Rule is an anti-abortion policy

which mandates that no US family planning assistance can be provided to foreign NGOs that use funding from any other source to support abortion.

The IPPF also launched its new report, entitled "Death and Denial: Unsafe Abortion and Poverty". The report calls on the international community to address the causes and consequences of unsafe abortion as a matter of urgency.

The report argues that unsafe abortion is a cause and consequence of poverty. It is directly linked to gender, social and economic inequalities, and cultural and religious norms that make it impossible for women, especially young women and girls, to enjoy their basic sexual and reproductive rights, or even to argue for them. If proper services are provided, abortion-related mortality and morbidity rates will be reduced.

IPPF-ESEAOR to Host UNAIDS Technical Support Facility

The UNAIDS Technical Support Facility (TSF) has recently been awarded to International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) East and South East Asia and Oceania Regional Office (ESEAOR) which is based in Kuala Lumpur. The selection highlights IPPF's role in HIV/AIDS agenda.

AFPPD at IEPPFD Meeting for Secretariats

Mr. Manmohan Sharma, Executive Secretary, Indian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (IAPPD), represented AFPPD at the Meeting of the Secretariats of All-Party Parliamentary Groups on Population and Development.

It was organized by Inter-European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (IEPPFD), in Brussels, Belgium, from February 2 to 3, 2006.

AFPPD, World Bank & CPA Discuss Parliamentarians' Role in Development



Group photo of participants at the seminar



From L. to R.: Mr. Jean-Christophe Bas, The World Bank, Mr. Bert Koenders, PNoWB, and Rep. Janette Garin, MP (The Philippines) and AFPPD alumna



From L. to R.: Ms. Rita Nangia, ADB, Ms. Sue Hooper, ADB, and Hon. Dato Mohd Sarit Yusoh, MP (Malaysia)



From L. to R.: Hon. Denis Marshall, CPA, and Mr. Niall Johnston, CPA

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and the World Bank, in partnership with AFPPD, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank (PNoWB), organized Regional Development Seminar for Parliamentarians, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from February 27 to 28, 2006.

More than 30 parliamentarians from South Asia and South-East Asia, along with CPA and World Bank staff, guest speakers, and invited observer organizations, attended the two-day meeting, which is aimed at engaging parliamentarians in dialogue and mobilizing parliamentarians and their staff on development challenges; enabling parliamentarians to formulate opinions and make informed choices when confronted with development and inequality issues; and deepening the roots of the "Vienna Alliance" of parliamentary organizations and others working on development at the regional level.

The sessions in the meeting covered the roles of the Bank in development and the dynamics of the partnership between the Bank and parliamentarians' movements. The session on "Development: The Big Picture" featured

Mr. Bert Koenders, MP (The Netherlands) and Chair of PNoWB. Mr. Peter Stephens, Communications Adviser, The World Bank, spoke on the introduction to the World Bank Group and overview of the Bank's work in Asia. The session on "Global Development Community – Working in Partnership in Asia" featured Ms. Rita Nangia, Director, Special Projects, Mekong Department, ADB, Ms. Sabina Bhatia, Deputy Chief of Public Affairs, External Relations Department, IMF, Mr. Yoshinobu Ikura, Deputy Resident Representative, Malaysia Office, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and Mr. Ramon Molina, Director, people-to-People Exchange, Asia-Europe Foundation.

In the session, entitled "Parliamentarians – Advocates for Development", partner parliamentary organizations presented case studies about their work on development-related issues. Chaired by Mr. Bert Koenders, MP (The Netherlands) and Chair of PNoWB, the session featured Mr. Jean-Christophe Bas, Development Policy Dialogue Manager, The World Bank, Hon. Denis Marshall, Secretary-General, CPA, Rep. Janette Garin, MP (The Philippines), Board Member of PNoWB, and AFPPD alumna, and Mr. Shiv Khare, Executive Director, AFPPD.

The parliamentarians also developed an insight into the country-level operation of The Bank's in the session on "Case Study: A Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) Consultation", presented by Mr. Andrew Steer, Country Director for Indonesia, The World Bank, and Mr. Peter Stephens. That insight was also further developed in the session on "Dialogue with a World Bank Country Director", presented by Mr. Andrew Steer and moderated by Mr. Niall Johnston, Director of Programmes, CPA.

Ms. Dipa Bagai, Principal Writer for "Tsunami Thailand One Year Later: National Response and Contribution of International Partners", of the World Bank, delivered a special presentation on the current situation in the tsunami-affected areas in Thailand. The roundtable discussion on "Building a Strong Investment Climate" featured Mr. Desmond Dodd, Senior Communications Officer, Corporate Relations, East Asia and the Pacific, International Financial Corporation, while Ms. Rita Nangia and Hon. Max Bradford, former MP and minister (New Zealand), spoke at the roundtable discussion on "Investing in Infrastructure and Ensuring Accountability", organized by ADB. The wrap-up session was presented by Mr. Jean-Christophe Bas, Hon. Denis Marshall, and Mr. Shiv Khare.

Hon. Dr. Sharman Stone Elected PGPD New Chair

Hon. Dr. Sharman Stone, MP (Australia), was elected unopposed to the position of Chair of Parliamentary Group on Population and Development (PGPD), Australia, for 2006. She has been a long-term and active member of PGPD. Her involvement in PGPD began with her participation in the study tour to Thailand and Vietnam, organized by AFPPD in 1997. In 2005, she represented PGPD at the 21st Asian Parliamentarians Meeting on Population and Development: Population in Emergency, organized by the Asian Population and



Hon. Dr. Sharman Stone

Development Association (APDA). She has taken a lead role in raising awareness of population and reproductive health issues.

Motion Supports UNFPA Report

In one of his last roles as Chair of PGPD, Hon. Michael Johnson, MP (Australia), sponsored a Private Members' Motion in support of the UNFPA State of World Population Report 2005. He stated that "without gender equality and the right to reproductive health, the goals of universal primary education, improving maternal health, reducing childhood mortality, combating HIV-AIDS and eradicating poverty are truly impossible." PGPD members were joined by other parliamentarians in speaking to the motion.

Australian Parliament Passes RU486 Bill

Both lower and upper houses of the Australian Parliament have passed a bill that removes the Minister of Health's veto power over the registration and importation of abortion pill, RU486, paving the way for the drug's availability in Australia. The Australian Reproductive Health Alliance (ARHA) and the Parliamentary Group on Population and Development (PGPD), which have long advocated for repeal of the Minister's veto power, welcomed the passing of the Therapeutic Goods Amendment (Repeal of Ministerial Responsibility for Approval of RU486) Bill 2005 in the Parliament on February 16, 2006. They have made a case for the Therapeutic Goods

Administration (TGA), which assesses every drug in Australia for its safety and efficacy, to be the appropriate body to oversee the regulation of RU486. Abortifacients were the only drugs subject to ministerial approval for registration. An ARHA statement says that the passing of this bill has ensured that evidence-based scientific evaluation remains the basis of Australia's drug evaluation process. Several PGPD parliamentarians narrated their personal experiences about abortion. The RU486 pill, also known as Mifepristone, is an alternative to surgical abortion for early stages of pregnancy.

Rev. Rodney Shaw Passes Away at 88



Rev. Rodney Shaw in a 2003 file photo

Rev. William Rodney Shaw, 88, a United Methodist Church minister whose work over five decades helped advance advocacy for population and development issues both in the United States and the developing world, passed away on February 5, 2006, in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Shaw was a founder of Population Institute and was associated with Population Communications International and the Population Media Center. He was Senior Vice President of Population Communications International from 1985 to 1998. He played a leadership role in establishing the US Commission on Population Growth and the American Future as well as in obtaining passage of the legislation which made family planning services available to all low-income women. He was also a board member of WAY USA Inc. He will be dearly remembered for his invaluable contribution to the world's population movement. AFPPD sends its deep condolences to his family.

APA Steps to Strengthen Network

Dr. Gill Greer, Executive Director of New Zealand Family Planning Association (NZFPA) and Chair of Asia-Pacific Alliance for ICPD (APA), Ms. Terri Bartlett, Vice President for Public Policy and Strategic Initiatives, Population Action International (PAI), USA, and Ms. Sumie Ishii, Japanese Organization of International Cooperation in Family Planning (JOICFP), visited Bangkok, from January 15 to 19, 2006, to meet APA members and partners to have consultations to further strengthen the organization. APA will soon set up its regional secretariat in Bangkok.

IFAD-AFPPD Partnership

Ms. Farhana Haque Rahman, Chief, Media Relations, Special Events and Programmes, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) visited AFPPD Office in Bangkok on January 18, 2006, to discuss about future cooperation between the two organizations. Both agencies agreed to jointly organize a parliamentarians' seminar on poverty alleviation in Hanoi in April.

Asia-Pacific AIDS Society Head Visits AFPPD

Prof. Myung-Hwan Cho, President of AIDS Society of Asia and the Pacific (ASAP), and Mr. Scott Hearnden, ASAP Executive Officer, visited AFPPD Office in Bangkok, on February 9, 2006, to discuss future cooperation between the two organizations.

Prof. Dr. Prasop Ratanakorn Felicitated at 8th AFPPD General Assembly

Prof. Dr. Prasop Ratanakorn, an AFPPD founding member and former Secretary-General, from 1990 to 2000, was felicitated at the 8th AFPPD General Assembly in Jakarta, Indonesia, on November 13, 2006. He has been a source of strength to not only AFPPD but also ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary organization (AIPO), International Medical Parliamentarians Organization (IMPO), and other parliamentarians' groups. Prof. Dr. Alwi Shihab, Coordinating Minister for Social Welfare, Republic of Indonesia, hosted a luncheon and presided at a special address by Prof. Dr. Prasop Ratanakorn on "Happy Memory and Success of AFPPD for Global Population Development". In his remarks, he narrated the history of his involvement with AFPPD since its formation 25 years ago. He also said he was happy to see AFPPD growing as an effective organization that involves parliamentarians in the region and playing an important role in global parliamentarians' movement.



Prof. Dr. Prasop Ratanakorn, AFPPD founding member and former Secretary-General, right, extended congratulations to Mr. Yasuo Fukuda, MP (Japan), new Chairman of AFPPD, left.



From L. to R.: Prof. Dr. Prasop Ratanakorn, Prof. Dr. Alwi Shihab, Mrs. Aisyah Hamid Baidlowi, MP (Indonesia), Chairperson of IFPPD, and Vice-Chairperson of AFPPD, Mr. Yoshio Yatsu, MP (Japan) and outgoing Chairman of AFPPD, and Dr. Malinee Sukavejworakit, Senator (Thailand) and Secretary-General of AFPPD, at the luncheon.

Upcoming AFPPD Events

- Asian Parliamentarians' Seminar on Poverty Alleviation, April 5-6, 2006, Hanoi and Tuyen Quang, Vietnam
- APDA-AFPPD Asian Parliamentarians' Meeting on Population in Globalizing Society, April 23-24, 2006, New Delhi, India
- 58th AFPPD Executive Committee Meeting, April 23, 2006, New Delhi, India
- Asian Women Ministers' and Parliamentarians' Conference, June 11-12, 2006, Wellington, New Zealand
- Central Asian Parliamentarians' Meeting on Adolescent Sexual & Reproductive Health, June 27-28, 2006, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
- Third International Parliamentarians' Conference on the Implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, November 21-22, 2006, Bangkok, Thailand

AFPPD Supports Balkan Conference on Young People and SRH

The Balkan Regional Parliamentarians' Conference on Young People in SRH Programmes will be organized by Inter-European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (IEPPFD), in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, tentatively on April 25, 2006.

The Conference will be hosted by the Bosnian Group in the White Hall of the Parliament. Participating parliamentarians will come from Balkan countries, including Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Albania, Romania and Bulgaria. This conference has been supported by AFPPD.

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