



Thailand HIV/AIDS Mission of Discovery for NZ and Pacific Parliamentarians NZ and Pacific Parliamentarians' Study Visit to Bangkok



Bangkok was the third destination for a group of New Zealand and Pacific-country parliamentarians and FPA representatives who were participating in an 'Indo-China country visit.' Prior to their arrival in Thailand, the group comprising delegates from New Zealand, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and Samoa, had spent some time learning about population, RH and HIV/AIDS in Vietnam and Cambodia. A period of two days (21st – 22nd April) was dedicated to informing and motivating the delegation on HIV/AIDS issues in Thailand. The site visits and special meetings organised for their visit enabled the parliamentarians to obtain valuable information on HIV trends in Thailand as well as how HIV/AIDS issues affect the Thai community.

A total of six parliamentarians participated in the visit along with seven FPA representatives and staff members. New Zealand was represented by Ms. Steve Chadwick MP; Ms. Lynn Pillay MP; and Ms. Metiria Turei MP. Fiji was represented by Mr. Asaeli Masilica MP, Papua New Guinea by Lady Carol Kidu MP, and Samoa by Mr. Talalelei MP. Family Planning Associations (FPAs) were represented by Mr. Jonquil Brookes, Executive Director of DRC; Ms. Gillian Greer, Executive Director, FPA; Ms. Emma Dunlop-Bennett, FPAID Programme Manager; Ms. Helen Eskett, former president of the FPA National Council; Ms. Linda Penno, President of the FPA National Council; Mr. Chris Te'o, FPAID Programme Coordinator; and Mr. John Woolfe, photographer.

Planned Parenthood Association of Thailand

21st April - The first site visit was to the Planned Parenthood Association of Thailand (PPAT) where the group was received by PPAT President Mr. Pichet Soontornpipit. Mr. Soontornpipit proceeded to introduce the PPAT Deputy Executive Director Mr. Montri Pekan, well-known in Thailand for his work and endeavours on population, RH and HIV/AIDS issues in the country.



L. to R: Mr. Pichet Soontornpipit - Ms. Steve Chadwick MP - Mr. Montri Pekan



Mr. Pekan commencing his presentation with an overall view of the Thai HIV/AIDS situation before explaining the measures the Thai Government and various concerned agencies are employing in order to tackle the many problems that arise due to HIV/AIDS. He spoke in depth on preventive strategies and programmes, highlighting Thailand's many successes in this area. In conclusion, he underscored the importance of PPAT's work and the need to ensure parliamentarians as policy and decision-makers remain motivated and active on the frequently thorny HIV/AIDS issue.

Mr. Pekan's presentation was followed by an in depth commentary and slideshow by Ms. Duanne Punpiputt on HIV/AIDS in Thailand and PPAT projects are making a difference.

PDA – Senator Meechai

In the evening, the Chair of the Population and Development Association (PDA) Senator Viravaidhya Meechai organised a dinner meeting for the visiting parliamentarians at his restaurant 'Cabbages and Condoms.' Senator Meechai – aka the 'Condom Man' as he is known in Thailand – spoke on the multi-pronged strategy PDA utilises to deal with HIV issues. He felt that in order to tackle the scourge of HIV successfully, special attention must be paid to young people and issues must be aired frankly and openly. He also strongly advocated the distribution of condoms, explaining that condom usage should be promoted and that condoms should be easily accessible in all public places such as hotels, restaurants and even airports.



Senator Malinee and Senator Meechai at 'Cabbages and Condoms' Restaurant

Senator Malinee then took the floor and addressed the group. She reiterated some of Senator Meechai's points, and strongly advocated the use of condoms as a preventive measure. The evening concluded with a visit to EMPOWER, an NGO that provides assistance to sex-workers in Bangkok.



Dr. Chaiyos and Ms. Gillian Greer

Visit to UNFPA/CST

where the delegation was briefed by Dr. Chaiyos Kuananusont, HIV/AIDS and STI Advisor. Dr. Chaiyos gave an interesting presentation on the dynamics of HIV/AIDS in not only Thailand, but in neighbouring countries as well.

22nd April – The day began with a visit to UNFPA/CST



Delegates at UNFPA/CST

Visit to UNAIDS

The group then proceeded to UNAIDS where Mr. Tony Lisle, Team Leader of UNAIDS and Mr. Tony Bates from APLF briefed them on UNAIDS's and APLF's programmes and highlighted the impact their work is having. They also spoke on the promotion of political commitment for HIV/AIDS.



Visit to the Thai Senate



The visit concluded with a meeting at the Thai Parliament with the Senate Committee on Public Health under the Chairmanship of Dr. Virapong Skolkitivat and Gen. Panya Yooprasert, first Vice-Chair. A luncheon meeting, funded by AFPPD, was arranged for the visiting parliamentarians, during which they received information on working methods of the Senate Committee and how it monitors the HIV/AIDS programme in Thailand. Additionally, they learnt about the Tambon Leaders' Programme, which aims to educate and motivate tambon leaders to be more proactive on HIV/AIDS issues. Finally, they were briefed on AFPPD programmes.

Parliamentarians Visit Cambodia and Vietnam

As reported on the front page of the AFPPD newsletter, New Zealand and Pacific parliamentarians visited Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam in April on a 10-day study tour focusing on the successful management of HIV/AIDS.

This study tour brought home the reality of HIV/AIDS. The group visited a range of care situations, witnessing the face of HIV/AIDS in all its tragedy. In Cambodia, the enormity of the problem was evident at a hospital overwhelmed by the need to care for more than sixty critically ill people in a ward with the capacity for twenty. In Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam, the group visited an orphanage of sixty children and babies, all HIV positive.

MPs Witness 'Face' of AIDS

However, in meeting with a number of providers, Asian MPs and officials, the parliamentarians also saw a positive side to the management of HIV/AIDS in Asia. Thailand and Cambodia offered good examples of what can be accomplished with a targeted prevention programme. In the 1990s, both these countries identified sex work as the key source of new infections, mounting pragmatic and well-funded campaigns – aimed at clients and sex workers – warning of the risks of being involved in sex work, and encouraging 100% condom use. As a result, HIV prevalence rates have fallen dramatically in Thailand. What is now evident in confronting HIV/AIDS is that a multi-pronged approach is needed to target the mainstream population which HIV/AIDS is now affecting. At particular risk are the wives of high-risk men; whose

only risk was to marry a man they believed to be faithful. Babies and children are also vulnerable to transmission through childbirth, breastfeeding, contaminated blood transfusions and medical equipment, and sexual abuse. There is much being done at a community level to help people affected by HIV/AIDS. For example, the delegates met with Buddhists for Development, an organisation in Cambodia that places monks into social service, counselling and home care situations.

The trip was also an opportunity for parliamentarians to build an understanding of how the pandemic might develop in the Pacific. With latest figures placing the number of people in the Pacific living with HIV/AIDS at 10,000 (likely to be 10 times higher due to under-reporting) the stage is set for an expanding and widespread HIV pandemic in the region. However, because current prevalence levels remain low, there now exists a unique opportunity to curb the spread of the virus before it is too late. The visit showed the effectiveness of early intervention, and the very limited window of opportunity. It also demonstrated ways in which Asia, Pacific and New Zealand MPs can work together on the issue of HIV/AIDS.



Ms. Steve Chadwick MP (left) and Ms. Lynne Pillay MP with a baby orphan in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam

Advocacy Training for Tambon Leaders



Kampongpetch province in Thailand was the venue for a tambon leader's meeting on advocacy training for HIV/AIDS on the 11th and 12th of March. L. to R: senator Malinee Sukavejworakit, Secretary General of AFPPD - Lt. Gen. panya Yooprasert, first Vice-Chair of the Senate Committee - Senator Virapong Skolkitiwat, Chair of the Senate Committee.

Corrigendum

In newsletter edition Jan-Feb 2004 in an article entitled 'Married Women Face High HIV Risk,' AFPPD reported on Dr. Sadik's visit to India where she spoke on women and population. Her speech she delivered for the Inaugural Sat Paul Mittal Memorial Lecture was at Jawaharlal Nehru University. IAPPD organised and funded the event in collaboration with the University.

AFPPD Malaysia 'Caring Parliamentarians' Project

The Asian Forum for Parliamentarians on Population and Development Malaysia is currently embarking on a new and ambitious project entitled 'Caring Parliamentarians - Malaysia.' The programme is designed to involve and motivate parliamentarians, senators and state legislators in achieving political commitments on population and development issues in Malaysia. In order to mobilise the necessary resources and political will required to achieve such an objective, AFPPD Malaysia is attempting to build and establish, state-by-state, a nation-wide network of "Caring Parliamentarians" who are committed and devoted to population and development issues.

Initially, this project is to cover seven of the thirteen states in Malaysia for a period of one year, with the intention of extending the project for another year to cover the remaining states.



Women Speak Out on Abortion Rights in Washington DC

Over one million pro-choice supporters marched on the 25th of April, galvanised by what they see as an erosion of reproductive freedoms under President Bush and policies that hurt women worldwide. The march was led by internationally recognised celebrities and seven organising groups: American Civil Liberties Union, Black Women's Health Imperative, Feminist Majority, NARAL Pro-Choice America, National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, National Organisation for Women, and the Planned Parenthood Federation of America.



Abortion Supporters in Pink T-Shirts

The demonstration was officially opened in the morning by soprano singer Margie Adam singing "We shall go forth," the spiritual song she had written for the abortion march 25 years ago. By the time she sang, the 1.5 mile-long mall was filled with women, men and even nursing babies wearing bright pink t-shirts identifying them with the demonstration and listening to a virtual 'who's who' of the women's movement.

At the morning rally before the walk, New York Senator Hilary Clinton received a rousing welcome as participants assembled on the national mall. Referring to the 1973 Supreme Court decision legalising abortion, she said the Administration is "filled with people who consider Roe v. Wade the worst abomination of constitutional law in our history," she said.

President Criticised on the Mall

Then, in a two-mile walk from the Washington Monument down Pennsylvania past the White House and towards the US Capitol Building, demonstrators returned to their starting point on the National Mall for a four-hour late-afternoon rally. Brandishing a white clothes hanger, comedian and actress Whoopi Goldberg kicked off the afternoon rally with a vow never to return to the days of back-alley abortions that prevailed before the Supreme Court legalized abortion in 1973.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, former Secretary of State addressed the protestors and told them that abortion rights are being weakened at the margins through federal and state restrictions and will be at risk of reversal at the core. "Know your power and use it. It is your choice, not the politicians," she exhorted to the crowd.

Other speakers included Madeleine Albright, feminist leaders including Gloria Steinem who founded the National Organisation for Women, and Executive Director and Founder of Law Students for Choice Carrie Siestra. Speakers representing the African American, Hispanic, gay and lesbian communities also delivered messages to the crowd.

Speakers' messages throughout the day resonated with a calm crowd constituted a cross-section of the US, including leaders from more than fifty countries. More than one-third of the mostly female crowd was college age or younger. Many speakers pointed this out and said that it belied the conventional wisdom that young people were politically apathetic.

The delegation of pro-choice republicans was 500-strong with representatives from twelve states. Jennifer Blei Stockman, head of the Republican Pro-Choice Coalition, said that her members were marching because they oppose government's intrusion into individual lives and are deeply concerned by recent actions by Congress and the White House that attacked women's right to choose. "We support our party on many traditional issues," Ms. Stockman said, "but we do not agree with the recent actions that limit personal freedom." It was a reference to what many demonstrators here consider an intensifying and frontal attack on abortion rights since 2002, when an anti-choice White House and Congress began using legislation, judicial appointments and executive fiat to roll back the clock on abortion rights.

Anti-Choice Supporters Protest 'Death March'

A smaller contingent of abortion opponents assembled along a portion of the route to protest what they called a 'death march.' Among them were women dressed in black who had had abortions they regretted. Tabitha Warnica, 36, from Phoenix, said she had two abortions when she was young. "We don't have a choice. God is the only one who can decide," she said.

Although Roe v. Wade still anchors abortion rights, some states have imposed waiting periods before abortions, requirements that girls under 18 notify their parents, and other limits that have closed abortion clinics or discouraged doctors from performing abortions. President Bush has signed a ban on what critics call partial-birth abortion, and the first federal law to endow a foetus with legal rights distinct from pregnant women. Abortion-rights supporters say a fragile Supreme Court majority in favour of Roe v. Wade could be lost if Bush is president long enough to fill vacancies that come up in the court.



The Global Gag Rule

Most prominent is the Mexico City Policy, or the so-called global gag rule. It bars US family planning assistance to any foreign health care agency that uses funds from any source to perform abortions, provide counselling and referrals for abortion, or lobby to make abortion legal or more available in their country. To receive US funding, the agencies may perform abortions only when there is a threat to the women's life or the pregnancy is a result of rape or incest. Announced by the Reagan Administration, the ban was lifted by President Bill Clinton on his first day in office. The Bush Administration reinstated it on Bush's first day in office, 22 January 2001.



UNFPA Launches APD Newsletter

As part of the ongoing UNFPA effort to improve communications and information exchange between its headquarters, field offices and partner agencies, the Asia and the Pacific Division (APD) of the Fund has launched a quarterly newsletter starting from February 2004.

Titled *Asia and Pacific Division News*, the electronic newsletter covers major events taking place at headquarters and in the region. It also discusses achievements, challenges and successes of some country offices.

In each edition, country reports will be selected in alphabetical order. The first issue of the newsletter covers activities undertaken by UNFPA in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It also includes a short report on the Fund's emergency relief work for Iranian earthquake victims.

In addition to the newsletter, an Asia and the Pacific Division website (www.unfpa.org/asiapacific) was launched in early March.

Food for Thought *'Instead of controlling the environment for the benefit of the population, maybe we should control the population to ensure the survival of our environment.'*
❖ Sir David Attenborough

John C. Caldwell Receives UN Population Award

Demographer, John C. Caldwell and the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia have won the 2004 UN Population Award, which inner recognises annually the work of individuals and institutions in the fields of population and development.

Mr. Caldwell, Prof. Emeritus of demography at the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University in Canberra, has published over three hundred articles and conducted unparalleled work in framing the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa as a demographic, epidemiological and sociocultural phenomenon. Mr. Caldwell has also attended various AFPPD events

The Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, which was founded in 1974, specialises in the treatment and care of women living with obstetric fistula, has treated more than 25,000 women and, every year, provides free medical treatment and care to more than 1,200 women.

Each winner will receive a certificate, a gold medal and an equal share of a monetary prize. Awards will be presented to winners in July at a ceremony at UN headquarters in New York.

Happy Birthday Dr. Prasop



Prof. Dr. Prasop Ratanakorn former Senator, former Chairman of the Senate Committee on Public Health and former Secretary General of AFPPD celebrated his 84th birthday on the 24th of April. AFPPD wishes to extend its congratulations to him.

UK Parliamentary Group Hearing on HIV/AIDS

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Population and Development organised a hearing on the integration of RH and HIV/AIDS for the UK parliamentarians. Dr. Siripon Kanshana, Deputy Director General of the Department of Health, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand, was sponsored by the Asian Forum to attend the hearing. Dr. Kanshana briefed the assembled UK parliamentarians on the current HIV/AIDS situation.

Manto Tshabalala Reappointed Health Minister of South Africa

An active participant at the AFPPD Cairo Parliamentarians Conference as well as at other parliamentary meetings, Dr. Manto Tshabalala has been reappointed as the Health Minister of South Africa.



International Women's Day Focus on HIV/AIDS in Bangkok



L. to R: Ms. Cravero - Mr. England - Ms. Okaido

March 8th, International Women's Day, is celebrated throughout the world and it was in honour of this day that the UN Thematic Working Group on Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality in Thailand co-organised an event with the National Council of Women of Thailand (NCWT). The event this year focused on women and HIV/AIDS and was held at the United Nations Conference Center (UNCC) in Bangkok. Participants included representatives from the Thai government, NGOs and community groups.

Ms. Keiko Okaido the Deputy Executive Secretary, UNESCAP, opened the event. This was followed by addresses from the UN Resident Coordinator Mr. J.K. Robert England and Ms. Yowvares Shinawatra, the President of NCWT. The keynote address was delivered by the Deputy Executive Director of UNAIDS from Geneva, Ms. Kathleen Cravero, who spoke on the issues related to women and HIV/AIDS.



Sen. Malinee Sukavejworakit



Ms. Yowvares Shinawatra - Ms. Director General of Psychiatry

An expert panel discussion, organised by UNIFEM focusing specifically on the HIV/AIDS situation for women in Thailand then proceeded. Speakers included AFPPD Secretary General Senator Malinee Sukavejworakit MD; Senator Meechai Viravaidya, Thailand; Director of the Office of Women's Affairs and Family Insitutions for the Ministry of Social Development and Human Society Mr. Chanuyth Kosirinond; Hon. Udomprachathorn, a monk from Phrabahtnampu Temple; Deputy Director General from the Ministry of Public Health Dr. Sriwana Poolsappasidh; and Advisor on the HIV/AIDS Research Project for the Thai Red Cross Mrs. Somboon Suprasert. A major highlight of the event was a film festival featuring documentaries throughout the day on women's issues in the Asia Pacific region.

The Asian Forum supported the event and was also represented by Executive Director Mr. Shiv Khare, Programme Associate Ms. Lilibelle Austriaco, Administrative Associate Ms. Pariyaporn Techanaparak, and Accounts Associate Ms. Patsuda Patanasuwanna.

Parliamentarians Visit to World Bank on HIV/AIDS

Five parliamentarians travelled to Washington DC to participate in the PNoWB committee on HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis. The meeting took place on the 19th and 20th of April. Parliamentarians attending were Congresswoman Betty McCollum (USA); Hon. Dorothy Hyuha MP (Uganda); Senator Jon Ungphakorn (Thailand); Hon. Norbert Mao MP (Uganda); and Senator Mary Henry (Ireland).

On their visit, MPs met with Mr. Allen Hamilton and the Global Business Council on AIDS as well as representatives from the private sector, attended a lunch arranged by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and had a meeting at Capitol hill where they met with NGOs and groups working on HIV/AIDS. They also met with World Bank representatives and discussed the World bank's AIDS programme and had a roundtable meeting with members of the House and Senators.

Dr. Taro Nakayama Meets with Kofi Annan

As Special Envoy of Prime Minister Mr. Junichiro Koizumi, the Chairman of the Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population (JPFP), and Chairman of the International Medical Parliamentarians Organisation (IMPO), Dr. Taro Nakayama MP met with Secretary General of the United Nations Mr. Kofi Annan at the United Nation's Headquarters in New York on December the 17th to discuss the reconstruction of Iraq.



L. to R: Mr. Kofi Anan - Dr. Taro Nakayama MP Japan



Latin American and Caribbean Countries Endorse Population Policy in Chile

It was on the 10th and 11th of March in Santiago, Chile, that the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) organised an Ad Hoc Meeting on Population and Development where Latin American and Caribbean health policy decision-makers united in support of the Cairo Consensus. About 300 delegates from governments, United Nations bodies, non-governmental organisations, study centres and experts in population and development attended to support ICPD.

The main purpose of the meeting was to advance a proposal for further implementation of the 1994 Programme of Action on Population and Development and fine tune preparations for the Ordinary Committee meeting, to be held during ECLAC's 30th session on the 29th and 30th of June in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

By a forty to one margin, country delegations agreed to issue a formal declaration regarding the past decade of progress on the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). The United States was the only delegation that opposed issuing a declaration.

The meeting's results became the region's contribution to the United Nations Population and Development Commission session, held at UN headquarters in New York, from the 22nd to the 26th of March, 2004.

Quick Fact

- ❖ 51% out of a sample of 600 families in a survey in southern Asia reported having killed a baby girl during her first week in life.

New Director for UNFPA Asia - Mr. Aziz Visits AFPPD



L. to R: Mr. Shiv Khare - Mr. Sultan Aziz - Mr. Jayonti Tuladhar

The new Director of the Asia Pacific Division, Mr. Sultan Aziz, visited Bangkok recently. During his trip, he also paid a visit to AFPPD where, in order to familiarise himself with AFPPD programmes, he discussed parliamentary involvement in population and development-related issues and the impact these issues have. Mr. Aziz recognised the importance of AFPPD's work with parliamentarians and expressed his hope for closer cooperation with the Asian Forum.

An Afghan national, Mr. Aziz is a development economist with wide-ranging experience in Asia as well as in the UN. Most recently, he was involved in reconstruction, disarmament and reconciliation efforts in Afghanistan, as Senior Advisor to the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General. On his visit to AFPPD, he was accompanied by Mr. Jayonti Tuladhar, UNFPA/CST Advisor.

Upcoming Women's Conference Discussed in Canberra



L. to R: Ms. Diane Proctor - Ms. Kelly Hoare MP - Mr. Shiv Khare - Mr. Michael Johnson MP

AFPPD Executive Director Mr. Shiv Khare visited Canberra to finalise arrangements for the 2nd Asian Women Parliamentarians' and Ministers' Conference, which will be held in Canberra from the 29th to the 30th of June. During his visit, Mr. Khare also met members of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Population and Development (APPGPD) in Australia where he met with Chairman Mr. Michael Johnson MP and Ms. Kelly Hoare MP, the Chairwoman of AFPPD's Standing Committee on Women. Mr. Khare also met with Ms. Diane Proctor, the Executive Director of the Australian Reproductive Health Alliance (ARHA), which is supporting the APPGPD.

Population Expert Mr. Seetharam Meets with APDA Officials

Mr. K. Seetharam, a Population Expert with UNESCAP recently went to Tokyo, Japan, to meet with APDA representatives in order to discuss project development.



L. to R: Mr. Michio Ozaki, Executive Director, APDA - Mr. Masamori Takemoto, International Affairs, APDA - Mr. K. Seetharam - Mr. Tsuguo Hirose, former Executive Director, APDA

Food for Thought

'In a country well governed poverty is something to be ashamed of. In a country badly governed wealth is something to be ashamed of.'

❖ Confucius



Filipinos Out in the Streets for Population and Reproductive Health Rights

The Philippines Legislators' Committee on Population and Development (PLCPD), a member of AFPPD, has been at the forefront of promoting population and reproductive health issues among elected representatives in the Philippines. The support of population and RH has come under much criticism from the Catholic Church in the country, and even when faced with this opposition, Filipino elected representatives and PLCPD have continued to exhort the importance of tackling RH issues.



Parliamentary elections will be taking place in May in the Philippines, and with this in mind, PLCPD and other dedicated NGOs have been pushing RH and rights into the open in an effort to seek more support from the people.



In April, 12,000 Filipinos rallied through the streets of Manila in support of reproductive health and rights holding signs and banners, many of which bore the slogan 'A vote for reproductive health is a vote for life.' PLCPD, in collaboration with several other NGOs organised the

march. In support of the population and RH programme are UNFPA along with Government, NGOs and international foundations. AFPPD has been supporting PLCPD.

Parliamentarians at AIDS and Young People's Meeting in Kyrgyzstan

A roundtable meeting on HIV/AIDS and young people was held in Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan from the 5th to the 7th of June 2003. The roundtable brought together parliamentarians, representatives from civil society, experts, workers in the field and, most importantly, young people as well as others concerned with the HIV/AIDS situation in the region. Participants from eight ECO (Economic Cooperation Organisation) member countries, namely Azerbaijan, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan attended as well as officials from UNFPA, the ECO Secretariat and other relevant international organisations, providing an ideal opportunity for reaching an agreement on what needs to be done for combating HIV/AIDS in the ECO region.



Obituary – ‘The Doctor with Golden Hands’ Prof. Ton That Bach

Ass. Prof. Ton That Bach, a Vietnamese MP, population expert and great friend of AFPPD, has died unexpectedly of a heart attack whilst on a mission to Lao Cai, Vietnam. As a medical doctor, Prof. Bach became one of the leading surgical experts in Vietnam and contributed greatly to the cause of health care and protection for the

Vietnamese people. He was particularly renowned for heart surgery and his colleagues frequently referred to him as the ‘doctor with golden hands.’ A memorial service was held for Prof. Bach in Hanoi.



Prof. Ton That Bach MP

Prof. Bach was a People’s Teacher, Director of the Vietnam – Germany Friendship Hospital, and Vice Chairman of the National Assembly Committee for Social Affairs. He was also National Assembly Deputy to the 9th, 10th and 11th legislatures and was Rector at the Hanoi Medical Hospital for over ten years. Furthermore, he was also Vice Chairman of the Vietnam Surgical Association, Graduate of the Paris Surgery Academy, and an honorary doctor of the Ukraine University and Lille University in France. He participated in various AFPPD activities, most recently at the Inter-country Parliamentarians Workshop on HIV/AIDS and Preventive Vaccines in December 2003. He also participated in an interview with AFPPD, which we are printing commemoration of Prof. Bach. His sudden death came not only as a great shock to the Asian Forum, but is a tremendous loss to the healthcare sector and the people of Vietnam ■

Interview



Prof. Ton That Bach MP

Domestically, what is at the top of Vietnam’s legislative agenda with regards to

population and development?

In Vietnam, population and development issues are considered very important. However, we give particular importance to gender development and empowering women. After the Independence, our first priority was to better the lives of women and empower them to participate more in all aspects of society.

Would you say that the level of HIV/AIDS awareness among the Vietnamese public is high?

I think that depends on the province. HIV/AIDS is a significant problem in Vietnam and in some areas the entire population is infected. The source and level of infection varies from region to region. In the north of Vietnam, the predominant cause of infection is injecting drug use while in the south, prostitution serves as the main mode of transmission. In the Mekong Delta, unprotected sex is responsible for 50% of HIV infections, while in the north it is responsible for only 8%.

What is the Vietnamese Government doing to address the IDU and prostitution problem?

Prevention through education is key. As Vietnam is a developing country and relatively poor, our budget for tackling issues such as this is quite low and we have to ensure that allocations are used accordingly and effectively. Health education is conducted in schools, women’s organisations and organisations dealing with high-risk groups so that people may be aware of the importance of protecting themselves and what the consequences of ignorance could be. Furthermore, the Vietnamese Government is striving to mobilise resources both nationally and internationally to better address HIV/AIDS-related issues.

In Vietnamese schools do you have sex education?

Sex education is a difficult topic to approach as the Vietnamese people are traditionally very conservative. We have, in the past, drafted various strategies for the integration of sex education into the curriculum, but the majority of parents are against this type of education.

Where could young people in Vietnam go if they wanted to obtain information on sex-related issues?

There are various government organisations, NGOs and voluntary organisations that offer this kind of information freely.

What have you done personally as a parliamentarian to generate greater awareness on HIV/AIDS and population issues in your country?

Our national strategy for the prevention of HIV/AIDS is the driving force behind assisting IDUs and treatment of infected persons. There is an HIV/AIDS committee within our National Assembly of which I am a member and it is the responsibility of this committee to solve the problems that arise due to HIV/AIDS. We have found that in order to tackle HIV, we must first visit the affected areas and then observe and survey the activity in the region. Vietnam is a very diverse country geographically, and access to certain regions can be arduous, but it is essential that these study missions are conducted if we are to understand HIV. Once we have made our observations, we report to the National Assembly and then we are able to figure out better strategies for dealing with the disease and we are also in a better position to ensure funds are being spent accordingly and efficaciously in that area.

Do you think conferences specifically for parliamentarians are very useful?

es, absolutely. Conferences present an opportunity to exchange experiences and best practices, and we, the parliamentarians, learn much from each other. Establishing good working relations with other countries is extremely beneficial and I firmly believe, through cooperation, no issue is insurmountable.



Women's Participation in Society at All Levels Discussed in Ankara

IEPPFD 4th Council Meeting Held in Turkey

"Women in Society – Towards the Tenth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women" was the topic for discussion for parliamentarians from twenty-five countries assembled in Ankara, Turkey on the 1st and 2nd of April. The meeting took place on the invitation of the Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, H.E. Bulent Arinc and the Chair of the Turkish Parliamentary Group on Population and Development, Hon. Mafuz Guler MP, and was held in the Senate Hall of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. The Fourth Council Meeting of the IEPPFD was attended by representatives from parliamentary networks in Asia, Africa, and the Arab world as well as from World Bank, international NGOs, IGOs, Turkish civil society and national NGOs – one hundred and twenty participants in total. AFPPD was represented by Senator Malinee Sukavejworakit MD, Secretary General of AFPPD

H.E. Bulent Arinc inaugurated the meeting and addresses were given by Ms. Imelda Henkin, the Deputy Executive Director of UNFPA, Mr. Steve Sinding, Director General of IPPF, and Hon. Ruth Genner MP Switzerland and President of the IEPPFD. In their addresses, both Ms. Henkin and Mr. Sinding called upon European parliamentarians to continuing taking the leadership in reaffirming the Cairo Programme of Action.

Hon. Gudal Aksit, the Turkish Minister of State responsible for Women and Family, and the Hon. Recep Akdag, the Turkish Minister of Health, both addressed delegates and reaffirmed Turkey's commitment to the Cairo Programme of Action as well as the Beijing Platform of Action. A panel of women leaders of the main political parties in Turkish politics debated the issue of women's empowerment and participation in political life. Keynote speakers included the head of the

UN CEDAW, Dr. Feride Acar, the Vice-President of the European Women Lobby, Ms. Denise Fuschs, the President of Catholics for a Free Choice, Ms. Frances Kissling, the President of the International Women's Health Coalition, Ms. Arianne Germain, Dr. Lori Heise of the Global Campaign for Microbicides, Dr. Sema Kut, President of the Turkish Family Planning Association, and Dr. Rob Chase, Senior Economist at the World Bank.

IEPPFD Welcomes New Members

The IEPPFD Council welcomed parliamentary groups on population and development from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Latvia and Germany as new members, raising the total number of member groups to twenty-one. The Council members elected Hon. Carina Hagg MP Sweden as the new First-Vice-President of the IEPPFD and the Hon. Anne Van Lancker MEP Belgium onto the Executive Committee. The Council also extended a warm welcome to Ms. Safiye Cagar who was recently appointed to head the UNFPA Division of Information, External Relations, Resource Mobilisation and Executive Board.

IEPPFD Reaffirms Commitment to ICPD PoA

Finally, the IEPPFD Council announced its activities scheduled for this year, which included participation in the Global Roundtable on ICPD+10, hosting the International Parliamentarians Conference on ICPD Implementation, holding a meeting for Central and East European countries, strengthening the Young Decision-Makers' Initiative, and continuing to play a role in defending and reaffirming the ICPD PoA in UN regional meetings.

Population Policy Update

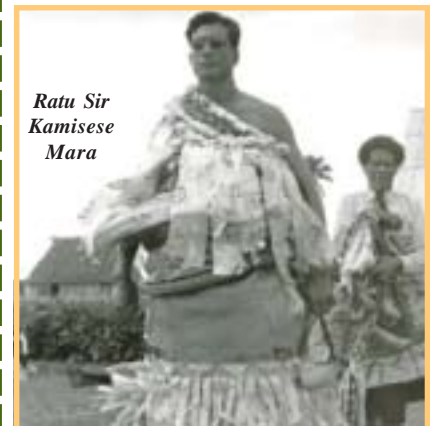
UNFPA/IERD regularly publishes the 'UNFPA Global Population Policy Update.' Twenty-three issues have been published electronically so far. Most recently, the update provided information on New Zealand's policy plan on HIV/AIDS, the Philippine's law on elimination of child labour and protection of child workers, and on the UK's sexual offence act. The update can be found at <http://www.unfpa.org/ipci/newsletters/> Alternatively, you can sign up to receive the updates by writing to said@unfpa.org

Upcoming IPPF Roundtables

IPPF will organise a South East Asian regional roundtable from the 21st to the 23rd of July in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Participants expected to attend include parliamentarians and representatives from family planning associations, NGOs, and others. AFPPD is the cooperating agency for this meeting. Similarly, IPPF will also be organising a South Asian roundtable in Kathmandu, Nepal from the 4th to the 6th of July.

Fiji's Founding Father Passes Away Aged 83

Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, Fiji's first prime minister and the father-in-law of AFPPD Vice-Chair and Speaker of Fijian Parliament Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, died on the 18th of April at the age of 83. AFPPD wishes to express its heartfelt condolences to Ratu Kamisese Mara's family and friends.



Ratu Sir
Kamisese
Mara



FAO's Food Security Concept should Be Embraced Mr. Shin Sakurai MP Japan Addresses FAO/SEARCO Regional Workshop

Ch a - a m ,
venue for FAO –
R e g i o n a l
took place from
March. The topic
was 'Policy
I n v e s t m e n t
Hunger and Food



*Mr. Shin Sakurai MP
Japan attending the FAO /
SEARCO regional
Workshop in Cha-am,
Thailand. Pictured here
third right*

Thailand was the
S E A R C O ' s
Workshop, which
the 4th to the 6th
of the workshop
Issues and
Options to Avert
Insecurity in Asia.'

Mr. Shin Sakurai
Chair of AFPPD's
Committee on

MP Japan and
S t a n d i n g
Food Security

addressed the meeting. He informed participants that parliamentarians are the natural catalysts between the people and the governing bodies, and that if we are to achieve sustainable development, it is imperative the issue of population growth is addressed.

He said, "World population is continuing to increase and the number of people our Earth is able to support is unknown. What we are aware of is the fact the Earth's capacity is limited and, consequently, we cannot expect to enjoy infinite food production increases. Current WTO discussions fail to take into account the possibility of food production shortages and are apathetic to the planet's limited capacity and trends of population increase.

It is essential that WTO rules are consistent with the food security concept advocated by FAO and when the occasion for WTO rules review arises, we must work to obtain this goal."

He called upon participants to work with their respective countries and devise a new rule, which incorporates both cooperation and competitiveness. He felt that our future would be considerably brighter if we were to follow these steps.

UNFPA/IERD Officers Visit AFPPD

Resource Mobilisation Officers for UNFPA/IERD, Ms. Lene K. Christiansen and Ms. Kae Ishikawa, paid a visit to the Asian Forum to discuss AFPPD programmes specifically related to the Japan Trust Fund for Parliamentarians (JTF).



*L. to R: Ms. Ishikawa -
Mr. Khare - Ms.
Christiansen*

Senator Malinee and Mr. Sakurai MP Meet in Bangkok

Mr. Sakurai MP Japan and Chairman of the AFPPD Standing Committee on Food Security, stopped over in Bangkok before going to Cha-Am to meet with Senator Malinee Sukavejworakit MD, Secretary General of AFPPD. Mr. Sakurai and Senator Malinee had discussions on future actions and directions of the Standing Committee on Food Security.

Mr. Ozaki New Director of APDA

Mr. Tsuguo Hirose, the Executive Director of the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA) and Director of AFPPD Tokyo, has retired after a long and dedicated service to APDA. Mr. Hirose has greatly contributed to the positive development of not only the organisation itself, but also to the parliamentary movement in Japan. Over the years, he has assisted in the development of the Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population (JPFP) and also worked with several former Prime Ministers and high-profile parliamentarians. Mr. Hirose's commitment and services will be remembered.



Mr. Tsuguo Hirose

Replacing Mr. Hirose, is the equally dynamic Mr. Michio Ozaki who has an extensive background in population as well as experience with government agencies such as the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Japanese Organisation for International Cooperation in Family Planning (JOICFP). Mr. Ozaki has also worked for a leading newspaper and been involved in population education programmes.



Mr. Michio Ozaki



Updated AFPPD Events in 2004

❖ Asian Medical Parliamentarians Conference	Bangkok, Thailand	To be decided
Asian Women Parliamentarians and Ministers Conference	Canberra, Australia	29 - 30 June
Meeting of the Standing Committee on Women	Canberra, Australia	29 June
Regional Training on Management, Monitoring and Evaluations of the Advocacy Programme for National Committees	Bangkok, Thailand	26 - 30 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

Updated ICPD+10 and Other Events in 2004

❖ Global Population Forum - organised by the Population Institute	Washington DC, USA	13 - 14 May
❖ The 10th International AIDS Conference	Bangkok, Thailand	11 - 16 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

AFPPD at ESCAP's 60th Session in Shanghai

The 60th Session of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) was held in Shanghai, China from the 22nd to the 28th of April. The theme was 'Meeting the Challenges in an Era of Globalisation by Strengthening Regional Development Cooperation.' Discussions focused upon regional, economic and social situations, poverty alleviation and globalisation. The Asian Forum was represented by its Vice President, Dr. Guowei Sang MP China, who is also NPC Vice-Chairman of the Education, Science, Culture and Public Health Committee

Food for Thought

"Unlike plagues of the dark ages or contemporary diseases we do not understand, the modern plague of overpopulation is soluble by means we have discovered and with resources we possess. What is lacking is not sufficient knowledge of the solution but universal consciousness of the gravity of the problem and education of the billions who are its victims."

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

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