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FORUM NEWSLETTER

Publication of the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development

Population, RH and AIDS Activities' Supporters Shine through in Elections Across Asia

Dubbing 2004 the 'Year of Elections' would not be entirely inappropriate as Asia has witnessed elections in profusion. So far elections have taken place in Iran, Sri Lanka, India, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, and Mongolia, and are imminent in Australia and Kazakhstan.

Overwhelmingly, population activists and AFPPD members have been re-elected in their respective countries, sending out a clear message that Asian societies are deeply concerned with population and development related issues. Notably in the Philippines the victory gained by legislators supportive of population and reproductive health measures who ran for various local and national positions reflects the true voice of the Filipino people. Now, it is clear that the Filipino populace is clamoring for leaders who push for policies that impact on the lives of the majority.

Filipinos Strongly Back Supporters of Family Planning and Reproductive Health Programmes



Senator Rodolfo G. Biazon

In a survey conducted by Asia Pulse in February earlier this year, it was revealed that 97% of the 1,800 respondents would favour candidates advocating for family planning programmes, regardless of the Catholic Church's threats to campaign against candidates in support of contraceptive usage. This certainly

rang true when legislators supportive of population and reproductive health measures running for various local and national positions won in a hands down victory.

Members of the Philippine Legislator's Committee on Population and Development (PLCPD), all of whom aggressively advocate population and RH policies, were re-elected, as was the majority of RH supporters within the Philippine Congress who have earned either a three-year or six-year term.

PLCPD Co-Chair Candidates Emerge Victorious

Leading the winners is the Co-Chair of PLCPD, Senator Rodolfo G. Biazon who has made tremendous efforts to legislate both a population and reproductive health policy in the country. His win entitles him to a six-year term. Congresswoman Bellaflor Angara-Castillo, another Co-Chair

of PLCPD, ran for governor in her home province of Aurora and also emerged victorious.



Congresswoman Bellaflor Angara-Castillo

Other prominent legislative advocates of population, RH and family planning policies who were re-elected include the following congressmen and women: Mr. J.R. Nereus O. Acosta (AFPPD Deputy Secretary General); Ms. Cynthia Villar; Mr. Gilbert C. Remulla; Ms. Nerissa Soon-Ruiz; Mr. Emilio C. Macias; Ms. Darlene Magnolia Antonio-Custodio; Ms. Etta Rosales; and Ms. Liza Largoza-Maza among others. They are all entitled to a three-year term.

Filipinos Recognise the Need for RH and Family Planning Policies

In the Philippines, the Catholic Church is against any policy that promotes the free use of modern contraceptives and, as such, there were fears of an 'election backlash'. However, the success of family planning advocates during the elections denotes a widespread recognition among the Filipino population of the necessity to implement population-related policies and programmes, and a decreased inclination to concord with the Catholic Church's opposition on contraceptive usage.

Mr. Francisco 'Kit' Tatad, a member of the conservative 'Opus Dei' and staunch family planning opponent - widely believed to enjoy the Catholic hierarchy's electoral support - failed to obtain a seat in the Senate.



Many Population Advocates become Ministers in India



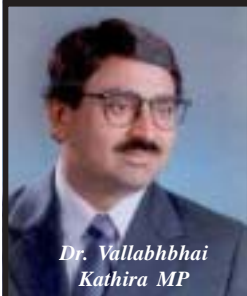
Mr. Lakshman Singh
MP



Ms. Renuka
Choudhury, Minister of
State for Tourism



Mr. Prithviraj Chavan,
Minister of State in the
Prime Minister's Office



Dr. Vallabhkhai
Kathira MP



Dr. Chandrakala
Pandey MP



Dr. Jagganath
Manda MP

Elections in **India** this year have seen a large number of IAPPD (Indian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development) members elected as ministers of the 14th Indian Parliament - the majority of which have been actively working in the field of population stabilisation and have frequently participated in AFPPD-organised events.

AFPPD Vice Chair re-elected as MP

Mr. P. Chidamberam, speaker at the 'Forum of Parliamentarians on ICPD Review', which was held at The Hague in 1999, is now India's Finance Minister. Others who have now become ministers include Mr. M. V. Rajashekharan the Minister for State Planning; Mr. Prithviraj Chavan the Minister of State in the Prime Minister's office; Mr. P. M. Sayeed the Union Minister for Power (formerly the Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha); Ms. Renuka Choudhury the Minister of State for Tourism; and Mr. Kantilal Bhuria the Minister of State for Agriculture, Food and Civil Supplies, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution.

Furthermore, AFPPD Vice-Chair Mr. Lakshman Singh; Ms. Chanderkala Pandey; Dr. Jagganath Manda; Mr. Kishan Singh Sangwan; Mr. Prasanna Kumar Patasani; and the Ex. Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Dr. Vallabhkhai Kathira, have all been re-elected and are sitting members of parliament.

Prominent AIDS Activists Become Ministers

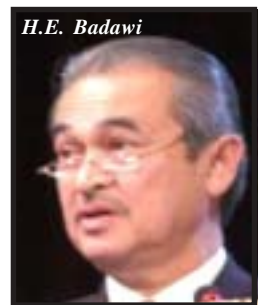
Lastly, Mr. Kapil Sibal, a prominent AIDS activist, has become the Minister of State for Science, Technology and Ocean Development. Mr. Oscar Fernandes, another AIDS activist, is now the Minister of State for Statistics and Programme Implementation.

Former Chair of Sri Lankan Parliamentarians Committee a Health Minister

H.E. Mr. Nimal Siripala de Silva has been reappointed as Minister of Health in Sri Lanka. It was in fact under his chairmanship as Minister of Health and Indigenous Medicines that the Sri Lankan Parliamentarians Committee on Population and Development (SPCPD) was first established. He has been deeply involved in AFPPD's work and attended the International Parliamentarians Conference, which took place in Ottawa in 2002, as a representative of AFPPD.

Malaysian PM a Founder of AFPPD

H.E. Abdullah Badawi, one of the founders of the Asian Forum, has been elected as Prime Minister of Malaysia. Mr. Badawi attended AFPPD's founding conference in 1981 in China as a parliamentarian representative for Malaysia and has participated in many AFPPD events since, particularly AFPPD-organised activities in Kuala Lumpur. More recently, the newly elected Prime Minister visited Japan where he met with AFPPD leadership in Tokyo including AFPPD's Chair Mr. Yoshio Yatsu MP Japan, and the JPFP Chair Dr. Taro Nakayama MP among others.



H.E. Badawi

Also in Malaysia, Datuk Zainal Abidin Zin, the Chair of AFPPD Malaysia has been re-elected as a member of parliament.

Paraguay National Congress Hosts Forum against Discrimination

The first of a series of five such meetings due to take place throughout 2004, the 'Forum Against All Forms of Discrimination' took place on the 14th April in the Hall of Paraguay's National Congress. It was organised by the Center of Documentation and Studies (CDE) and UNFPA Paraguay in recognition of the Convention Against Discrimination. The Forum was opened by the President of the Equality and Social Development Commission Senator Mirtha Vergara de Franco and Deputy Rosa Merlo Drews, President of the Social Equality Commission.





Political Leadership and Advocacy on the Prevention of HIV/AIDS in Asia

A Special Look at AFPPD HIV Programmes and Events

The ICPD Plan of Action clearly defines the world's most pressing population related issues and among these problems is the spread of HIV/AIDS. The Asia Pacific region has been harshly hit by the disease and currently has 7.4 million people living with AIDS with an estimated 1 million people who contracted HIV in 2003. It is feared that rising rates of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and increasing intravenous drug use will exacerbate the HIV/AIDS situation in the near future. Efforts to expand access to care and treatment in Asia are inhibited by obstacles such as insufficient resources, limited health care capacity, weak political support, as well as widespread stigma and discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS.

In 1994, the Asian Forum included HIV/AIDS as an important component of its agenda for parliamentarians' advocacy through seminars, workshops and conferences. UNFPA, UNAIDS and other national and international agencies provided their support in this area. Since 1994, AFPPD has devoted a considerable amount of time, energy and resources toward the fight against HIV/AIDS. Among the Asian Forum's efforts are the organisation of special study visits and a large number of HIV/AIDS specific events at both the national and regional level. The next few pages will highlight some of the most significant HIV/AIDS-related events organised by AFPPD and some of the results obtained due to these events.

Study Visits

AFPPD has discovered that study visits are very effective motivational tools and greatly help increase parliamentarians knowledge and understanding on HIV/AIDS. This type of activity enables participating parliamentarians to not only meet experts in the field face-to-face, but also unites them with the people suffering from the disease itself.

A delegation comprising 6 parliamentarians from New Zealand, Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Samoa as well as 7 FPA representatives and staff participated in an **Indo-China country visit** - 2 days (21st and 22nd of April 2004) of which were to spent in Thailand to enable them to gain useful insights into HIV trends in Thailand as well as learn how HIV issues affect Thai communities. Prior to their arrival in Bangkok, the delegation had travelled to both Cambodia and Vietnam to learn about population, RH and HIV/AIDS in both countries.



Asia Pacific parliamentarians in Bangkok, Thailand

During their stay in Thailand, the delegation met and discussed with a number of HIV/AIDS experts who provided the parliamentarians with valuable information on HIV. Among these experts were Mr. Montri Pekan, the Deputy Executive Director of PPAT - well known in Thailand for his population, RH and HIV endeavours - Dr. Chaiyos Kuananusont, UNFPA HIV/AIDS and STI Advisor, Mr. Tony Lisle, UNAIDS, and Mr. Tony Bates, APLF Team Leader.

They also called upon Chair of PDA Senator Meechai - a.k.a. the 'Condom Man' as he is commonly known in Thailand. Senator Meechai informed them of the multi-pronged strategy PDA employs to deal with HIV issues. Senator Malinee Sukavejworakit, the Secretary General of AFPPD, was also present. This was followed by a trip to EMPOWER, an NGO providing assistance to Bangkok sex-workers.

The study visit concluded with a meeting with Senator Virapong Skolkitivat, the Chair of the Senate Committee on Public Health, and Gen. Panya Yooprasert. The delegation learned about the Tambon (village) Leader's Programme, which aims to educate and motivate tambon leaders to be more proactive on HIV issues, and were then briefed on AFPPD programmes.

On the 5th to the 14th of January in 2002, the Inter-European Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (IEPFPD), in cooperation with AFPPD, arranged for a **five-member delegation to visit Thailand** to observe RH and HIV/AIDS related programmes. During



European parliamentarians study visit to Thailand Mong Hill Tribe

their time in Thailand, the European parliamentarians visited a large number of treatment centers, had a meeting at the Department of Communicable Diseases and Control





as well as meetings with various Thai parliamentarians. Notably they engaged in policy dialogue with Dr. Ladawan Wongsriwong, the Thai Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, attended a roundtable meeting on AIDS in the S.E. Asia situation with UNFPA/CST, UNAIDS, ILO-IPEC, UNICEF and other related agencies, and travelled to PPAT's northern regional office to see a presentation on AIDS as well as visit a hill tribe community (Mong tribe) to observe prevention and care services for AIDS patients. The study visit enabled the five parliamentarians - Mrs. Doris Stump MP Switzerland; Mrs. Carina Hagg and Ms. Christina Husmark, MPs Sweden; Mrs. Maria Mertjarvi MP Finland; and Senator David Norris, Ireland - to absorb valuable inside information on the HIV/AIDS situation in Thailand. On their return, the majority of these parliamentarians spoke on their study visit experiences, sharing what they had learned and raising awareness on HIV/AIDS in S.E. Asia. Several other study visits organised either by AFPPD or AFPPD counterparts include:

- ❖ **The Australian and New Zealand Parliamentarian Initiative (17th - 25th July 1997)** - 11-member delegation visited RH and HIV/AIDS related institutions in Vietnam and Thailand. Increased Australian support for HIV/AIDS resulted from this visit. Organised by Partners in Development and the Rockefeller Foundation
- ❖ **Canadian Parliamentarians' Study Visit (5th - 15th July 1998)** - 6-member delegation travelled to Japan and Vietnam to study health programmes. Upon their return to Canada, the parliamentarians briefed the Prime Minister and sought to ensure that support for health programmes wouldn't be curtailed. Organised by UNFPA and CIDA Canada.
- ❖ **Japanese Parliamentarians in Africa (12th - 19th January 2002)** - 6-member delegation visited Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania over a one week period to observe UNFPA and JICA-funded programmes as well as Japanese-funded projects in order to gain first-hand knowledge of the RH and HIV/AIDS situation in these three countries. Organised by JPPF, APDA and FAAPPD.

Special Advocacy Meetings

AFPPD has a long history of organising and holding conferences, seminars and meetings at national, regional and international levels. Recognising the importance of addressing the scourge of HIV/AIDS, the Asian Forum has arranged a number of HIV/AIDS-specific meetings for parliamentarians in order to provide them with a platform so they exchange ideas and initiatives, and learn from best practices and share knowledge on HIV/AIDS. Prominent speakers from UN agencies, NGOs or civil society organisations are frequently requested to give presentations throughout main sessions, ensuring that parliamentarians receive the most up-to-date information available.

The Asian Forum, in cooperation with the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI), initiated a programme to explain to elected representatives various aspects of vaccine

development. Consequently, **the Inter-country Parliamentarians Workshop on HIV/AIDS with a Focus on Vaccines** was held in Bangkok, Thailand on the 30th - 31st October 2003. Parliamentarians from Australia, Cam-



L. to R: Ms. Kate Bourne, Vice President of IAVI - Mr. Prithviraj Chavan MP India - Hon. Manoonkrit Roobkajorn, President of the Thai Senate - Senator Malinee Sukavejworkait, Secretary General of AFPPD

bodia, China, India, Indonesia, Lao/PDR, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, South Africa, Thailand and Vietnam participated as did officials and representatives from a multitude of NGOs, UN agencies, Embassies and the media. Themes included Introduction to Vaccine Research, Development and the Clinical Trial Process; Experiences and Key Priorities of Parliamentarians; A Comprehensive Approach to Ending the Epidemic: Prevention, Treatment and Vaccines; and Vaccine Development and Access - A Global Responsibility, among others. The workshop concluded with the adoption of a formal call to action on which parliamentarians pledged to work for the support of vaccine development and trials.

In a major initiative to facilitate an effective response through multi-sectoral partnerships, strong leadership and political commitment in addressing HIV/AIDS-related issues, a two-day conference on the advocacy role parliamentarians can play in HIV/AIDS prevention was convened in New Delhi, India on the 1st and 2nd of August - the **International Parliamentarians Conference on HIV/AIDS in South Asia**. The overall goal of the meeting



was to develop a strong leadership forum among South Asian nations. It was also hoped that the conference would promote advocacy with respective governments for the allocation of adequate funds for HIV programmes. The conference brought together a total of one hundred and seventy-six participants with over fifty leaders from 15 countries and seventy-four leaders from all over India. Also among the participants were special guests and representatives from various UN agencies, NGOs, embassies and civil society organisations. It was organised by IAPPD, AFPPD, the Indian Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, UNFPA, and UNAIDS (South Asia).





Other important events organised specifically for HIV/AIDS issues:

- ❖ **HIV/AIDS Workshop on Networking and Partnership between Young People and Governments on HIV/AIDS Prevention for East and South East Asian Countries (18th - 22nd March 2002)** - event organised in Bangkok, Thailand in order to mobilise agencies and to encourage them to share their experiences on young people and HIV/AIDS. Organised by AFPPD in cooperation with UNAIDS and UNFPA/CST and with support from JICWELS, the Ministry of Labour and Welfare and the Japanese Government.
- ❖ **Asian - African HIV/AIDS Activists Meeting with Thai Senators (22nd August)** - Organised by AFPPD and the Thai Senate Committee on Public Health at the request of PPAT. Held in the Thai Parliament where over 40 officers had talks with Thai senators.
- ❖ **SAARC Conference of Parliamentarians on RH and HIV/AIDS (13th - 15th May 1998)** - 40 parliamentarians from 7 countries attended this event in Kathmandu, Nepal in order to discuss HIV preventative strategies. Organised by AFPPD and IMPO in collaboration with WHO/SEARO and the Population and Social Committee of the Nepalese National Assembly.

AFPPD Advocacy Started in 1994

The Asian Forum, since its inception, has always recognised the importance of addressing the issue of HIV/AIDS, and its efforts to enhance political commitments in this area have resulted in widespread awareness among parliamentarians. One of AFPPD's initial efforts was the organisation of the **'First International Meeting of Medical Parliamentarians on HIV/AIDS'**, which was conducted in cooperation with IMPO. This meeting took place in Paris, France 1994 in the French Parliament. HIV/AIDS and related issues figure as major components in numerous AFPPD-organised activities. Furthermore, AFPPD is frequently represented at other organisations' HIV-related events, most recently in Shanghai at APLF's stakeholders meeting, which took place in May this year. Collaboration with other agencies is high of AFPPD's agenda and, as such, much work is conducted with organisations such as UNFPA, UNAIDS, UNIFEM and APLF in cooperation with AFPPD affiliates like APDA and JPFP. The involvement of parliamentarians from the grassroots up is of the utmost importance if the challenges HIV presents us with are to be overcome.

Thai Village Leaders Discuss HIV/AIDS and RH in Three Provinces

A series of three 'Tambon (village) Leader Meetings', organised under the auspices of the Thai Senate Committee on Public Health with support from AFPPD and the Thai Ministry of Public Health, were held in various Thai provinces in May. The theme of the three meetings was 'Advocacy Training on AIDS and Reproductive Health for Tambon Administration'.

The first meeting took place at the Health Service Center on the 13th of May in **Minburi**. The day commenced with a welcome address from the Executive Director of the Center and opening remarks from the Chair of the Senate Committee Senator Virapong Skolkitivat. Participants then heard presentations from various community representatives on the HIV/AIDS situation in the area and what activities on HIV/AIDS the Health Center is conducting.

Mudaharn and Amnart Charoen province was the venue for the second gathering held on the 20th of May. The welcome address was delivered by the governor of Mudaharn followed by an introduction to HIV/AIDS by a doctor of the Public Health Office. Senator Virapong then spoke on HIV/AIDS prevention measures and also gave an in depth presentation on reproductive health. The meeting concluded with various presentations on Thailand's National Health Insurance Programme.

The final in the series of Tambon meetings was conducted in **Sukhothai province** on the 27th of May. The agenda for the Sukhothai meeting was the same as that for the Mudaharn and Amnart province meeting.



Tambon Leaders Meeting in Sukhothai



Tambon meeting participants



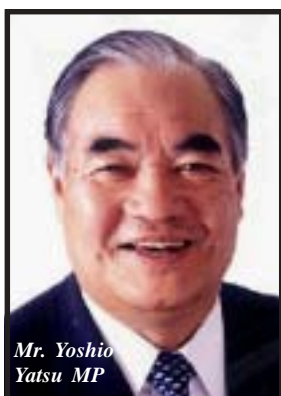
Senator Virapong at the Health Center in Minburi province





Impossible to Create Jobs if Population Continues to Increase Global Forum 2004

Marking the 10th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), representatives from 180 countries attended the Global Population Forum, which took place on May 13th - 15th in Washington DC. The Forum was opened by Population Institute President Mr. Werner Fornos and Population 2005 President Mr. Jyoti Singh. Also delivering opening speeches were AFPPD Chair Mr. Yoshio Yatsu MP Japan, an under-secretary of the UN H.E. Anwarul Karim Chowdhury, and Deputy Executive Director of UNFPA Mr. Kunio Waki.



Mr. Yoshio Yatsu MP

In his speech Mr. Yatsu said "A large number of NGOs and other organisations have conducted highly commendable work for population, family planning, and reproductive health in the States. I heard of a case of successful mobilisation only a few weeks ago when more than one million women took to the streets here in Washington DC demanding reproductive health

rights. It is indeed very important to keep in mind when we speak about family size that individuals have the right to decide themselves. We can provide information and educate them, we can try to motivate them, but the ultimate decision is the individual's alone.

Family Planning Measures Needed to Help Reduce Population Growth

Population is still growing, particularly in Asia; India, China, Bangladesh and Indonesia are the most populated countries in the world. They are, however, making considerable economic progress with India recording economic growth of 10.4%, Indonesia 5% and China 9.7%. But still there are far too many people who remain poor and hungry. No theory or formula can create jobs and remove hunger if population continues to grow for it is impossible to provide billions of people with jobs if millions are added each year. This is where family planning comes in.

Japan Considers HIV/AIDS a Catastrophe of the Highest Magnitude

We also have to contend with HIV/AIDS. It is estimated that more than 8 million people are infected with the disease in the Asia Pacific region alone. Japan considers this a catastrophe of the highest magnitude and is providing all possible support through the Global Fund as well as bilaterally to the majority of severely affected countries, especially those in Africa. New treatment may help reduce mortality, but we must aim to reduce the number of new infections. Political will is important here and the Asian Forum is working in this area."

H.E. Anwarul K. Chowdhury, in his speech, spoke on the dragging effect rapid population growth is having on the least developed countries (LDCs) and how social and economic development efforts are seriously hampered by poverty, hunger and disease.



H.E. Chowdhury

"Least Developed Countries Face Serious Challenges with Regards to Population"

"The LDCs face serious challenges in their population growth. As highlighted graphically in a recent UN report, in the period 1994 and 2004, the

growth rate of the LDCs in particular remained very high at 2.4%, especially when compared with the rate of growth in the more developed regions of the world, which is only 0.3%. Africa, the continent that hosts 34 out of the 50 LDCs, is the fastest growing major area.

Eradication of poverty and achievement of other development goals by the LDCs would depend in a large measure upon successful response to population and related issues in an integrated and coordinated way. To this end, an incredibly effective role can be played by strong partnerships between civil society, advocacy groups, professional organisations, media, parliamentarians and the United Nations system."

Global Forum Hears from a Wealth of Speakers

The Forum's main sessions focused on four topics: ageing, HIV/AIDS, migration, and reproductive health and rights. Among the many speakers were Mr. Mohammed Nizamuddin, a professor at Colombia University; Mr. Desmond Jones MD, Director of UNAIDS New York, and Henry L. Gabelnick PhD., Director of the Contraceptive and Research Development Programme; Mr. Joseph Chamie, United Nations Population Division Director; Ms. Peggy Curlin, President Emerita of the Center for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), Ms. Gunta Lazdane MD from WHO, and Ms. Valentina Leskaj, Albanian MP and women's rights and reproductive health issues activist.

Historic Affirmation Signed by Global Forum Participants

A special 'Global Population Overview' session, chaired by Mr. Werner Fornos, was held and among participants in this session was Ms. Jane Roberts, the founder of 34 Million Friends for UNFPA. This was followed by regional caucuses focusing on the Arab States, Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America / Caribbean. The Global Forum concluded with the signing of a historic affirmation of the importance of RH health care, the availability of voluntary family planning, and the improvement of the status of women. Notably, the United States representatives also signed the declaration.



Malaysian Prime Minister Meets Japanese Parliamentarians in Tokyo



L. to R: Mr. Michihiko Kano MP - Dr. Taro Nakayama MP - H.E. Abdullah Ahmad Badawi - Ms. Kayoko Shimizu MP - Mr. Michio Ozaki

The Prime Minister of Malaysia H.E. Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, travelled to Japan in order to attend an international seminar on the 3rd of June entitled 'Asian Future', organised by Nikkei, a Japanese newspaper. Recently elected as Prime Minister, Mr. Badawi was formerly the Minister of Foreign Affairs as well as the Speaker of the House. He is one of the founding members of AFPPD and has taken part in numerous AFPPD activities since its inception in 1981.

During his stay in Tokyo, the Prime Minister had a meeting

with members of the Japan Parliamentarians Federation on Population (JPFP), which included JPFP Chair Dr. Taro Nakayama MP, Deputy Chair Mr. Michihiko Kano MP, Secretary General Ms. Kayoko Shimizu MP, as well as Mr. Michio Ozaki, the Secretary General of the Asian Population Development Association (APDA).

Japanese Women Marrying Later in Life

Dr. Taro explained to H.E. Mr. Badawi Japan's situation with regards to declining birth-rate and ageing population, and stressed that system changes are required in the country to address these problems. He said that Japanese women are now marrying either much later or not at all and as such this is placing a heavy burden on Japan's current pension system.

Teenage "Misbehaviour" Worrying in Malaysia

In Malaysia ageing population is becoming an issue, replied H.E. Badawi, however, drug abuse and increasing "misbehaviours" among Malaysia's younger generation is a greater concern at the moment. He then described the various measures the Malaysian Government is employing in an attempt to rectify the problem.

Later on in the discussion H.E. Badawi discovered that JPFP Deputy Chair Mr. Michihiko had previously held the position of Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and expressed his appreciation of the Japanese contribution to Malaysia's agricultural sector. He stressed his wish that Japan and Malaysia continue to cooperate in this area. As the talks drew to an end, Dr. Taro Nakayama MP presented the Prime Minister with APDA's research report 'Educational Projects on Population and Development in Malaysia and Japan'.

IMPO Members at 57th Health Assembly in Geneva



Dr. Nouradin Pirmoazen MP Iran pictured center

The 57th World Health Assembly, which was held in Geneva, on the 22nd of May. The Assembly adopted WHO's first global strategy on reproductive health, which targets five priority areas including antenatal care, family planning and sexually transmitted diseases (STIs). The strategy aim to provide a roadmap towards the improvement of reproductive health and acceleration of progress towards the achievement of the health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Two representatives from the International Medical Parliamentarians Organisation (IMPO) participated in the Assembly. They were Iranian MP Dr. Nouradin Pirmoazen and a Regional Vice-President of IMPO Mr. Abylkasymov Yerassyl, an MP from Kazakhstan.



African and Arab Parliaments Renewed Commitment for ICPD+10

Dakar, Senegal – More than 400 African experts gathered for a four-day regional ministerial review conference in Dakar, Senegal on the 7th to the 11th of June committed to strengthening the implementation of the 1992 Dakar / Ngor Declaration and the programme of Action of the 1994 Cairo International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).

Special Roundtable with a Focus on Parliamentarians

It was on the 6th of June, however, that over twenty African members of parliament and nearly fifty UNFPA and country staff gathered for a side event entitled 'Roundtable on ICPD+10 Review: A Focus on Parliamentarians'. During this event participants reaffirmed their commitment to the principles, objectives and actions contained in the ICPD PoA, and in the document '*Key Actions for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development*' (New York, 30th of June – 2nd of July 1999). Furthermore, they dedicated themselves to the implementation of recommendations from the ICPD at Ten Review, which builds on the Ottawa Parliamentarians Commitment (21st – 22nd November 2002) and is within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

Parliamentarians' Pivotal Role Highlighted

The Roundtable was hosted by the Forum of African and Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development (FAAPPD), and co-sponsored by UNFPA and Population Action International (PAI). The roundtable was opened by the Speaker of Senegal's National Assembly who delivered the welcome address. Other speakers included the President of FAAPPD Hon. Alhaji Abdullah Salifu MP, the Director of UNFPA's Africa Division in Dakar Mrs. Fama Hann Ba, and PAI representative Ms. Mercedes Mas de Xasas who highlighted the pivotal role parliamentarians play vis-a-vis their constituents. PAI representatives Ms. Zonibel Woods from Canada and Ms. Suzanne Ehlers from the States also attended.

Strong Commitment to ICPD PoA Made

A declaration of FAAPPD's unwavering reaffirmation to the ICPD PoA was adopted at the end of the meeting. Participating African and Arab parliamentarians pledged, as public advocates, legislators and policy-makers, to carry out the actions stated therein and to systematically and actively monitor the progress made in doing so. Moreover, they pledged to report on an annual basis, through the regional parliamentary groups, on progress made and results achieved.



Participants at the Roundtable

AFPPD Secretary General Dr. Malinee at IEPFPD 4th Council Meeting in Turkey

As reported in the previous edition of the AFPPD newsletter, Senator Malinee Sukavejworakit, the Secretary General of AFPPD, was invited to attend the Inter-European Forum's 4th Council meeting in Turkey on the 1st and 2nd of April. She's pictured here with Ms. Imelda Henkin, the Deputy Executive Director of UNFPA, Ms. Marjatta Vehkoaja, the Chair of IEPFPD and Irish senator Mrs. Mary Henry.



L. to R: Senator Mary Henry - Senator Malinee Sukavejworakit MD - Mrs. Marjatta Vehkoaja MEP - Ms. Imelda Henkin

Food for Thought

'Think of the earth as a living organism that is being attacked by billions of bacteria whose numbers double every forty years.....either the host dies or the virus dies; or both die'.

Gore Vidal (1925) American Novelist and Critic



UNFPA Executive Director Meets Japanese Parliamentarians and NGO Representatives

Mrs. Thoraya Obaid, the Executive Director of UNFPA, visited Japan from May 23rd to the 27th, along with Ms. Safiye Cagar, Director of UNFPA Geneva, Mr. Vernon Mack, Chief of Resource Mobilisation, UNFPA, Ms. Kae Ishikawa, Officer UNFPA/IERD, and Ms. Kiyoko Ikegami, Director of UNFPA Tokyo. During her time there, Mrs. Obaid was awarded with an honorary doctorate (Law) from Kansai University.

Mrs. Obaid also had a meeting with members of the Japanese Parliamentarians Federation on Population (JPFP). Mrs. Obaid expressed her gratitude vis-à-vis Japanese contribution to UNFPA and to the field of population, and outlined UNFPA's activities on ICPD+10. Also present, among other parliamentarians, was AFPPD Chair Mr. Yoshio Yatsu MP Japan.

Population Issues Discussed

After her speech, population issues were discussed and questions on UNFPA activities, population planning and the ageing issue were raised by several Japanese MPs.

Mrs. Obaid said that one of the main foci of UNFPA activities is alleviation of extreme poverty. Therefore, many of UNFPA population-related activities are conducted in sub-Saharan Africa, which has been experiencing rapid population growth.

Ageing Potentially a Serious Problem in the Future

It was also revealed that many developing countries will face ageing issues in the future and it is predicted that ageing will become more of a problem for these countries than the developed ones.

During her time in Japan, Mrs. Obaid met with many Japanese MPs and made a number of courtesy calls, notably to Mr. Ichiro Aisawa, the Senior Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs; Ms. Yuriko Koike, the Minister of Environment; and Mr. Hiroyuki Hosoda, Chief Cabinet Secretary.

She also attended a number of luncheon meetings and participated in a reproductive health right's study meeting organised by women MPs held at the Diet Member's Office Building.



Mrs. Obaid speaking with JPFP members



*Meeting with JPFP members
From L. to R: Ms. Kayoko Shimizu MP - Mrs. Thoraya Obaid -
Ms. Kazuko Nose MP*



Mrs. Obaid with Dr. Taro Nakayama MP



Interview

with

**Mrs. Kelly Hoare
MP Australia**

**Chairwoman of AFPPD's
Standing Committee on the
Status of Women**

**Domestically, what is at the top of
Australia's legislative agenda in
relation to population and
development?**

"I would say that the predominant
problems facing Australia today are

population decline and ageing. Our fertility rate is below replacement level and declining. In 1976 the fertility rate was 2.1 for Australia as a whole. It has now reached 1.7 babies per woman. To replace each generation an average of 2.1 babies per woman is required given current mortality rates. Policy makers have therefore been focusing their efforts on the environment created for families, and women in the labour force in particular, to have children. Strategies in the areas of work and family policies, such as paid maternity leave and flexible working arrangements, and reviews of family support payments and tax arrangements are currently being considered by all political parties.

What type of population and reproductive health programmes are running in Australia at the moment?

"We have a number of programmes in this area including the 'Family Planning Program under the Division of Primary Care in the Department of Health and Ageing,' the 'National Cervical Screening Programme,' 'Breast Screen Australia,' and the 'National Indigenous Sexual Health Strategy.' These are all Commonwealth programmes, but there are various state-administered programmes.

Do you think the Australian public is adequately aware of the dangers of HIV/AIDS?

"Compared to many other countries, Australia has a relatively low incidence of HIV and I think, for the most part, the Australian public is very aware of the risks HIV/AIDS presents. Whether that awareness is operative in people's behaviour, however, is another matter. There are some concerns of an increasing attitude of complacency towards HIV/AIDS, and this is particularly apparent among the high-risk groups such as men who have sex with men. Moreover, the success of anti-retroviral drug therapies has created a climate of 'treatment optimism.' These two factors combined with the adoption of 'risk management' strategies in sexual behaviour, which are designed to minimise the risk of transmission, have begun to pose new challenges for HIV educators in Australia."

What services are available to people who are HIV/AIDS-infected in Australia?

"Our first strategy, known as the 'National HIV/AIDS Strategy,' was released in 1989 with the overriding goals of eliminating the transmission of HIV, and minimising the personal and social effects of HIV infection. This strategy has been promoted by the maximization of the development and application of new treatments for HIV infection

and ensuring access to them for all affected groups, ensuring that at-risk groups have access to prevention information and the means of prevention such as condoms and unused needles and syringes, and the provision of appropriate health care for those affected by HIV."

What type of programmes do you have to assist elderly people in Australia?

"Many types of programmes are in place to assist Australia's elderly population. Support is provided through a variety of channels, either specifically to the aged community or through mainstream programmes that the elderly can access. Our elderly can benefit from financial advantages such as pensions, rent assistance, disability payments and public housing as well through medical benefits, including hospital, home and community care support. Assistance is also provided to carers of the elderly in the form of both support payments or support services such as the carer resource centers. Much of the Commonwealth's general expenditure in the fields of health, disability support and housing and accommodation is earmarked for Australians over 65 years of age."

Do you think sustainable development is possible without population planning?

"According to the Brundtland Report of 1987 'Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.' Population is indeed one variable that impacts on achieving sustainable development. Quite simply, if the total amount of either resource usage, energy consumption or pollution generation exceeds the environment's capacity to cope then sustainable development will be unobtainable. However, it is important to note that population increases have a different environmental and resource usage impact depending upon whether a country is rich or poor. Per capita resource and energy usage as well as pollution generation can be reduced, and this will offset some of the population increase, but, eventually, unchecked population growth can overwhelm the environment and the resources available per capita."

Do you think population is a major factor in poverty and how do you think population planning could or should be implemented?

"While I wouldn't consider the relationship



between population and poverty a direct one, I do think that the issue of population cannot be ignored in the discussion of poverty and how to end it. Fertility rates and population growth are highest in the poor countries and it is certainly true that a large number of dependents can hold back development, and this in turn is often driven by environmental and / or economic collapse and hardships within the country.

Within Australian Parliament is there a specific committee on population and RH and / or HIV/AIDS?

“The Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs and the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs conduct inquiries into health related issues. While HIV/AIDS has not been the main focus of any recent enquiries, related enquiries such as the current House of Representatives enquiry into substance abuse in Australia may touch upon these issues. The Senate Committee is currently conducting an enquiry into Hepatitis C and blood supply in Australia and into poverty and financial hardship. We do, however, have a Joint Standing Committee on Migration which is currently conducting an enquiry into skilled migration.”

Do you think that parliamentarians in your country focus enough on violence against women?

“Violence against women (VAW) is taken very seriously in Australia and as Chair of AFPPD’s Standing Committee on Women, it is an issue I take a great personal interest in. Australia’s role in addressing VAW formally commenced in 1986 with the National Agenda for Women Consultations. This was followed in 1987 with a three-year public education campaign and national survey by the Office of the Status of Women (OSW) to gauge community attitudes to VAW.

Australia’s Partnerships Against Domestic Violence (PADV) initiative was launched at the National Domestic Violence Summit in November 1997 and is the main national programme aimed at addressing this issue. The PADV initiative funds pilot projects which focus primarily on prevention and entail work with all sectors of society. It also funds the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, which publishes research on key issues in family violence policy and practice.

What is the ratio of male parliamentarians to female parliamentarians in your Parliament?

“Out of 226 parliamentarians, 60 are women.”

Which factors do you think have a negative impact on population and development programmes and what obstacles does Australia face in implementing these programmes?

“The extent to which government in a liberal democracy can influence fertility rates is limited; the focus of debate in Australia is on removing or alleviating obstacles that are preventing people who want children from exercising this choice. At any realistic level immigration has only a negligible effect on the age structure of the population. While it does provide a tool for Australia to continue to grow and stabilise its population, Australia will in the future be facing problems of population ageing, and will face more intense competition with other countries for the highly skilled young migrants who contribute immediately to the economy. Immigration settlement also presents some difficult-to-resolve issues, with the bulk of migrants settling in the major cities, especially Sydney, rather than in the regional centres where economic development is needed.”

Japanese Parliamentarians at Human Rights Meeting

Nantes, France was the venue for the World Forum on Human Rights, which convened from the 16th to the 19th of May. The Forum was organised under the initiative and with the support of UNESCO and aimed to offer a platform for participants to exchange their experiences and knowledge, to establish contact, to create networks, and to learn about opportunities for joint action. It was organised in order to better face the most pressing issues related to human rights, including terrorism, discrimination and poverty - the event’s three main themes. AFPPD was represented at the Forum by Mr. Hiroyuki Nagahama and Mr. Yoshihiro Kawakami, both MPs from Japan.

AFPPD Treasurer Retires

Ms. Napsiah Binti Omar, member of parliament from Malaysia and former Treasurer of the AFPPD Executive Committee, has now retired from parliament. She didn’t contest the seat during Malaysia’s recent elections. Also retiring is IFPPD Chair Mr. Surya Surapaty Chandra MP Indonesia. AFPPD wishes both Mrs. Omar and Mr. Chandra happy retirements.

AFPPD at UNAIDS/APLF Stakeholders Meeting

An Asia Pacific Leadership Forum Stakeholders Meeting to discuss APLF’s programme implementation was organised by UNAIDS on the 26th of May. It took place in Shanghai and was chaired by the UN Secretary General Special Envoy on HIV/AIDS Dr. Nafis Sadik and was addressed by Mr. Peter Piot, the UNAIDS Executive Director. Various other HIV/AIDS activists spoke such as Ms. Marina Mathiar and Ms. Lois Bradshaw from USAID among others. AFPPD Executive Director Mr. Shiv Khare, Mr. Tony Lisle from UNAIDS, Mr. Tony Bates from APLF, and Dr. Suman Mehta from UNAIDS Geneva also attended.

Erratum

Please note that in the last edition of our newsletter (March - April 2004), on page 11 the title should have read ‘Mr. Shin Sakurai MP Japan Addresses FAO/SEARCA Regional Workshop’. SEARCO is the acronym for Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture.



RH and AIDS Services' Parliamentary Hearings in the UK

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Population and Development (APPG) held Parliamentary Hearings on the 'Integration of RH and HIV/AIDS Services' on the 19th and 20th of April 2004. The group heard evidence from NGO, UNFPA, WHO and UNAIDS representatives, Ministry of Health officials from South Africa, China and Thailand, health workers from Thailand and Uganda as well as representatives from the Global Fund, World Bank and DfID. Following the Hearings, the APPG decided to approach the Global Fund and the EU Commission with the cases presented to it during the Hearings.



Dr. Siripon Kanshana left -
Dr. Baige Zhao second right

Mr. Tony Worthington MP and Chair of the Hearings was noted to say that more than 75% of HIV infections are transmitted through sexual relations. As such, linking certain SRHR and HIV services will be important in the common aim to fight the HIV epidemic and improve maternal and child health.

The report findings and recommendations will be launched at the Ottawa +2 Parliamentary Conference in Strasburg on the 18th and 19th of October later this year.

Two of AFPPD contacts attended the hearings; Dr. Baige Zhao from the National Population and Family Planning Commission of China,

and Dr. Siripon Kanshana from the Ministry of Public Health, Thailand. Dr. Kanshana spoke on the Thai situation with regards to HIV/AIDS and reproductive health, and she cited some examples of progress made.

AFPPD Efforts to Promote Gender and Population-Related Programmes

AFPPD has always recognised the importance of gender equality and has always ensured equal gender involvement in its programmes. As such, it was decided to establish a Standing Committee on Women, initially under the chairmanship of Mrs. Sawhney. The Committee is now chaired by Mrs. Kelly Hoare, an MP from Australia. Several steps to enhance involvement of women parliamentarians have been taken. AFPPD invited its National Committees to submit innovative programmes for support, several of which have been approved, including one at the national level on violence against women.

Cartoon Corner



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