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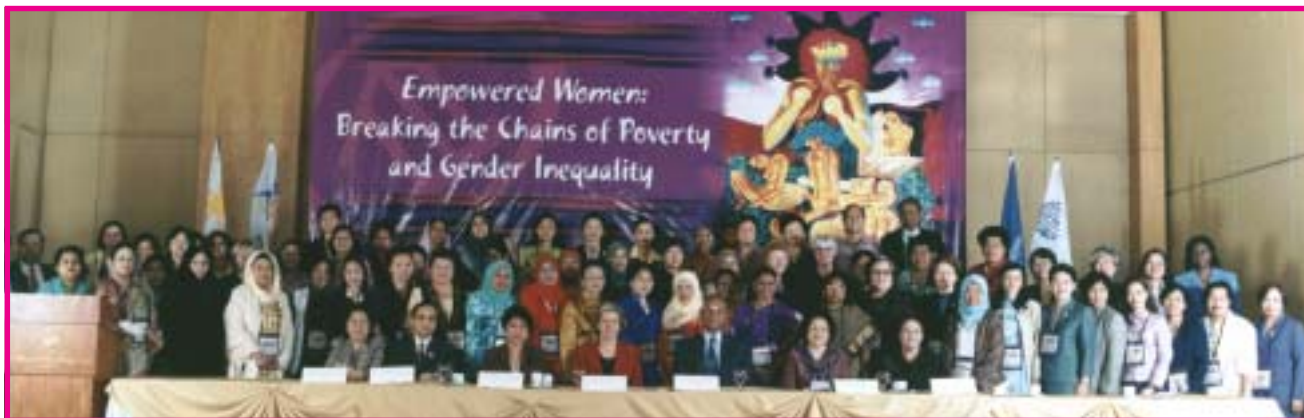
FORUM **N**EWLETTER

Publication of the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development

Family Planning and RH Should be Tackled Objectively

Message from the President of the Philippines at the Asian Women Parliamentarians and Ministers Conference on the Empowerment of Women in the Philippines

Organised under the auspices of AFPPD's Standing Committee on Women, the Philippines Legislators' Committee on Population and Development (PLCPD) and in cooperation with UNFPA and the Government of Japan, the Asian Women Ministers and Parliamentarians conference took place in Manila, the Philippines, on the 2nd and 3rd of October. It was attended by over seventy women parliamentarians and ministers from twenty-two countries in the Asia Pacific region as well as representatives from various UN agencies, NGOs and the media. The overall aim of the conference was to strengthen the role of women parliamentarians and ministers in order to address deeply rooted and pervasive population and development issues, particularly violence against women and the reproductive health status of women.



Chaired by Representative Maria Blanca Kim-Bernardo Lokin from the Philippines, the opening ceremony was addressed by Senator Rodolfo Biazon, Co-Chair of PLCPD the Philippines, Senator Malinee Sukavejworakit, Secretary General of AFPPD Thailand, and Mrs. Kelly Hoare MP Australia, Chair of AFPPD's Standing Committee on Women. Ms. Imelda Henkin Deputy Executive Director of UNFPA and Dr. Zahidul Huque, UNFPA Representative in the Philippines were both guest speakers.

Sensitive Issues Must be Addressed Objectively

"The success of women's goals for gender equality and poverty alleviation lies in every nation's willingness to tackle such sensitive issues as reproductive health and family planning objectively." This was the message to participants from the President of the Philippines, H.E. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, delivered on her behalf by Executive Secretary Mr. Alberto Romulo. The links between population size, carrying capacity of natural resources and families' quality of life were highlighted and the importance of family planning in addressing population issues was stressed. In closing, the President made three points: 'Firstly, all participants commit themselves to widespread information dissemination in their respective countries. Secondly, the success of efforts depends on convincing not only the women, but the men of Asia, and, finally, that all parliamentarians in Asia should unite to sustain the region's fight for the protection of its women and children, and the fight against poverty.'

Advocates of Change

In his welcome address, Senator Biazon informed participants that the culture perpetuating conceptions of women as full-time homemakers subordinate to men, people against whom violence is a private matter, a reserve labour force and as sexual objects remains deeply embedded among Asians and other nationalities around the world. He said, "we must raise our voices in unison with other advocates of change to do all that we can so that disenfranchised women become empowered, attain a critical mass in political and legislative bodies and, for those already in positions of influence, to assert their leadership and address urgent social development issues confronting all nations today."

Address Gender Disparities in All Areas

"The nagging issue of gender inequity and inequality is what the AFPPD Standing Committee on Status of Women has been tasked to address," Mrs. Kelly Hoare MP Australia stated. Empowerment of women must, therefore be social – where a woman is given space for herself; economic – where a woman has the ability to acquire capital and the strength to decide how she wants to use it; and political – whereby a woman can assert her basic right in decision-making.



L. to R: Senator Blazon - Senator Malinee Sukavejworakit MD - Mrs. Kelly Hoare MP

The Deputy Executive Director of UNFPA, **Ms. Imelda Henkin**, a guest speaker at the conference was introduced to participants by Dr. Zahidul A. Huque, UNFPA Representative in the Philippines. In her message, Ms Henkin commenced by highlighting the gravity of women's issues. "In all parts of the world, women are facing threats to their lives, health and well-being because they are overworked and undervalued, and because they lack power and influence," she lamented. "The poverty they face is deeper than income poverty. It is a poverty of opportunity, freedom and choices. Many are stuck in a life where they remain barefoot and pregnant, unable to read, unable to manage their own fertility and unable to determine the number and spacing of their children."

Women Stuck in Vicious Circle

Senator Malinee explained to participants how some countries such as Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia and Cambodia are working hard on VAW legislation. "In Thailand, with AFPPD support,



Dr. Zahidul Huque, UNFPA

two bills on VAW have been processed and ready to be presented to the Parliament. For 2004, AFPPD has made plans to further extend empowerment of women activities for male and female parliamentarians across the region," she said. Senator Malinee felt the conference would provide an excellent opportunity to deepen parliamentarians' knowledge of women's issues and it would propagate innovative ideas to promote the status of women and reduce male domination, particularly in the political arena.

Enhance Knowledge to Propagate Innovative Ideas for Women's Empowerment



Ms. Imelda Henkin, UNFPA - Hon. Alberto G. Romulo

*Broken down into four segments, Session one, entitled 'Overview of Issues' was chaired in the morning by Representative **Cielo Krisel Lagman-Luistro** from the Philippines. Presentations were given by **Ms. Imelda Henkin**, Deputy Executive Director of UNFPA and Representative **Bellaflor Angara-Castillo**, the Philippines.*



Rep. Cielo Krisel Lagman-Luistro

Gender Disparities a Pervasive Problem Worldwide – Ms. Imelda Henkin, Deputy Executive Director of UNFPA

"Gender inequality and disparities are widespread across the globe," commenced Ms. Imelda Henkin in her presentation 'Poverty, Gender and Reproductive Health: A Regional Perspective. "Certain socio-cultural norms, beliefs and attitudes related to perceived gender roles, son preference, early marriage, child-bearing, gainful employment outside the home and other stereotypes on relative roles of men and women restrict the choices of women even further and also prevents them from recognising and using their reproductive rights."



Ms. Imelda Henkin

based groups." She then listed various articles under the Philippine Constitution and explained that the crucial pieces of legislation are aimed not only at addressing women's issues, but also correcting flawed gender stereotypes in the country.

Narrowing the Gender Gap Essential

She pointed out it had been proven that countries narrowing the gender gap and improving the status of women develop faster. Quoting former British Prime Minister Lady Margaret Thatcher, Rep. Angara-Castillo said "You may have to fight a battle more than once to win it' and we shall continue to push for women empowerment in Asia. We will win this battle. And soon, we will break the rusty chains of poverty and inequity." ❖



Rep. Bellaflor Angara-Castillo

Barriers to Addressing Gender Issues

Addressing the constraints policy-makers face in the "The issues that arise from poverty, gender-based violence, unemployment, widespread gender discrimination, and socio-cultural attitudes related with gender roles in society often pose many barriers when it comes to policy-making," she continued. "Obstacles may be on account of religious perceptions and prevailing, socially accepted norms or they may take the form of legal barriers for instance. These need to be urgently addressed, if issues are to be resolved through effective policy-making." ❖

Women's Movement Making Progress in the Philippines– Representative **Bellaflor Angara-Castillo,**

'Poverty, Gender and Reproductive Health in the Philippines: A Legislative Perspective' was the title of Rep. Angara-Castillo's presentation. She said that the women's movement is alive and continually growing in every sector of the Philippines, even in religious and faith-

*Focusing on progress made towards the elimination of VAW, session one was chaired by **Senator Malinee Sukavejworakit MD** in the second segment. Papers were presented by **Ms. Chandni Joshi**, Regional Programme Director, South Asia Regional Office, UNIFEM and **Ms. Aurora Javate De Dios**, Chair of the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women.*

Unequal Power Relations Are Unacceptable – Ms. Chandni Joshi, UNIFEM

Ms. Chandni Joshi the Regional Programme Officer for UNIFEM in South Asia elucidated that VAW is one of the major factors impeding the realisation of human rights and fundamental freedom of women and girls in South Asia. It is also the single largest deterrent to any kind of empowerment. The causes of VAW are endemic and diverse and its source systematic in nature. It includes within its ambit institutions of state and society, the conditioning and

Quick Fact: Of the 192 countries in the world, only 12 have a female head of state



Ms. Chandni Joshi

socialisation of individuals, and the nature of economic and social exploitation. Among the numerous things that perpetuate it is the so-called 'gender neutrality' of organs of state, of policy-makers, of leaders, of enforcement and educational institutions, and also of families.

Collective Responsibility for Rights Should be Recognised

In conclusion she said "VAW has become an important area to address for all stakeholders in the South Asian region. To move forward, reality needs to be documented from women's perspectives with research providing gender specific information and data as a national priority. Collective responsibility in ensuring women's human rights, including implementation of CEDAW and enforcement of national legislation, needs to be recognised. Combating VAW needs to become a mainstream agenda and a commitment for change involving both men and women is the need of the hour." ❖

Importance of Women Recognised in the Philippines – Ms. Aurora Javate-De-Dios, NCRFW



Ms. Aurora Javate-De-Dios

During her presentation, Ms. Javate-De-Dios from the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women informed participants of the Philippine experience in progress made towards the elimination of VAW. She said, "In the Philippines, tremendous progress has been made in addressing and eliminating VAW by both government and non-governmental organisations. This development is due in no small measure to the impact of international initiatives in the United Nations and international women's movement. Apart from being supportive of the UN Declaration on VAW and the work of the CEDAW on this issue, the Philippines brought international attention to the problem of trafficking of women and girls, and of the violence against migrant workers through its various UN resolutions. The very presence of Asian women parliamentarians today is a testimony to the recognition of the importance of women. Although women still constitute the minority in most parliaments and legislative bodies in the world today, their presence and visibility are making a great impact in these once male dominated institutions."

Much Still Remains to be Done

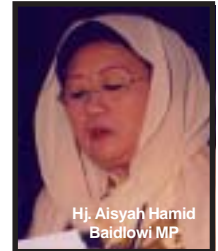
"Despite many advances in every aspect of life including representation in the public realm, gender inequality still persists globally and especially in the Asian region. The Human Development Index (HDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) indicators show consistent disparities between women and men in the basic dimensions of human development such as life expectancy, educational attainment, employment and per capita income." ❖

In the third segment, Culture, Religion and Advances in Science: How they Affect Population, Reproductive Health and Family Planning Issues was the topic for discussion in Hj. Aisyah Hamid Baidlowi's presentation. Ms. Susanne Wendt from the Asian Development bank and

Ms. Lucita S. Lazo from UNIFEM both focused on information and communication technology: reducing poverty and equalising opportunities for women.

Laws and Bills Should be 'Socialised' – Hj. Aisyah Hamid Baidlowi MP Indonesia

Mrs. Hj. Baidlowi, an MP from Indonesia cited various efforts made for the advancement of women's status in Indonesia. Two bills on anti-trafficking of women and children and domestic violence as well as two laws on RH and population and family well-being are currently in the process of amendment and finalisation. However, Indonesia is up against numerous constraints vis-à-vis woman empowerment and, frequently, cultural and religious aspects play a large role in perpetuating these constraints. Mrs. Baidlowi made several suggestions in order to overcome these constraints including working together with related government agencies at all levels and inviting various stakeholders at all levels to seminars and workshops in order to 'socialise' laws and bills in the amendment and finalisation process and obtain as many inputs as possible. ❖



Hj. Aisyah Hamid Baidlowi MP

ICT Important for the Empowerment of Women – Ms. Susan Wendt, Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Ms. Susan Wendt, Social Development Specialist in the Asian Development Bank's Social Sectors Division, commenced with an explanation as to why information and communication technology (ICT) is so important to the empowerment of women. "ICT is dramatically changing the way people communicate, learn, access services and trade," she said. "It can provide a voice to the disadvantaged as well as promote transparency and good governance. And perhaps most significantly, it can be a tool used to promote gender equality and enhance the economic, political and social empowerment of women." She said that ADB is committed to helping bridge the growing digital divide and provides technical assistance and financing for the successful implementation of ICT initiatives through loans, special funds and private sector investments. Encouraging results so far include improved delivery of government services, increased participation and communication, better environment for economic growth and the empowerment of women. ❖



Ms. Susan Wendt

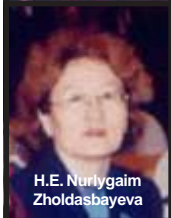
ICT Advantageous to Women – Ms. Lucita Lazo, UNIFEM

Ms. Lucita Lazo, Regional Programme Officer for UNIFEM presented the Filipino situation vis-à-vis women and ICT. She revealed that over nine hundred women in the Philippines have been specially trained in ICT and that thirty training courses had been held to date in distant municipalities in the country. She also imparted that 20% of Asian-born women entrepreneurs do business on the web, 37% of women in the world have access to a PC and that one third of the world's ICT market is in Asia (USD 3 trillion e-commerce market). However, two thirds (876 million) of the world's illiterates are women and many women are still unable to obtain techno access so there is much to be done in order to increase opportunities for these women. ❖





Mrs. Fatemeh Khatami MP



H.E. Nurlygaim Zholdasbayeva



Mrs. Kelly Hoare MP

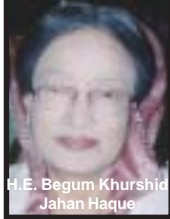
Session two, a panel discussion, was based on policies and programmes. It was chaired by the Executive Director of the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW), Ms. Emmeline Versoza. Speakers included H.E. Begum Khurshid Jahan Haque, Minister of Women and Children's Affairs, Bangladesh; H.E. Nurlygaim Zholdasbayeva MP Kazakstan; H.E. Kelly Hoare MP Australia; H.E. Losena Sabula, Assistant Minister on Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation, Fiji; and H.E. Fatemeh Khatami MP Iran. It was followed by a discussion. ❖



H.E. Losena Salabula

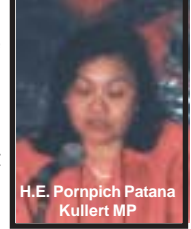


Ms Emmeline Versoza



H.E. Begum Khurshid Jahan Haque

face many risks such as STDs and unplanned pregnancies, which more frequently than not end in abortion. It was found in 2000 that 46% of women hospitalised for abortion complications were under the age of 25. Violence against women is another serious problem that has been increasing. A recent survey of 2,818 married women between the ages of 15 – 44 revealed that 44% of them had experienced domestic violence at some time or other.



H.E. Pornpich Patana Kullert MP

Government Must Take Action on Women's Issues

"In order to respond to the need of women and adolescents, all governments should reaffirm that adequate and sufficient support should be extended to meet the basic requirements of women and adolescents, including the provision of access to adequate accommodation, education, protection from violence, health services including reproductive health and family planning and other basic social services, including clean water, sanitation and nutrition." ❖

Population, Reproductive Health and Rights, Policies and Programmes: A Response to the Needs of Women and Adolescents was next to be addressed with presentations by H.E. Fang Xin MP China, H.E. Pornpich Patanakullert MP Thailand and Mr. Tomas M. Osias, the Executive Director of the Population Commission of the Philippines. It was chaired by Ms. Emmeline Verzosa.

China Attaches Great Importance to Family Planning – H.E. Fang Xin MP China



H.E. Fang Xin

Speaking on reproductive health and family planning services in China, Ms. Xin MP China, stressed the importance China's leaders have given to population and development, and family planning. She cited various programmes China has conducted over the decades and also divulged some of the country's successes.

"At present, the birth rate in china is at 1.523% as opposed to 3.334% in the 1970s. Thanks to the implementation of family planning, there has been a reduction of 0.388 billion births over the last thirty years and this has alleviated many of the problems associated with population increase."

Laws on Population in China

Ms. Xin elaborated on three population laws currently in effect in China. The Law of Population and Family Planning in China was formally implemented in 2002 and is expected to have a great impact on China's family planning policy, safeguarding the legitimate rights of its citizens as well as enhancing family harmony and accelerating national prosperity and development. The Law of Protecting the Health of Mothers and Children in China enables couples considering having a child to enjoy their reproductive health rights. ❖

VAW Increasing in Thailand – H.E. Pornpich Patanakullert MP Thailand

"Although Thailand has achieved remarkable success in population control and family planning, some challenges remain," began Hon. Patanakullert. "Young people engaging in premarital sex seldom use contraception and, therefore,

Philippines Faces Many Challenges – Mr. Tomas Osias, Commission on Population, the Philippines

Speaking on the response to the needs of women and adolescents, Mr. Tomas Osias, the Executive Director of the Commission on Population in the Philippines, presented some of the challenges the country is up against. He revealed that in the Philippines one in six pregnancies end in abortion, that at 49% contraceptive use is low, there is a lack of male participation and most husbands prefer to have more children. Violence against women is also a big problem and accounted for 77% of reported crimes against persons in 2000.



Mr. Tomas Osias

Four Pillars of Population Policy

Mr. Osias then shared the steps the Filipino Government is taking to address these issues. Quoting President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, he said "the government has the responsibility to provide information on medically safe and socially acceptable means to address our high birth rate and its consequences on maternal and child health as well as population growth." He explained that population policy could be broken down into four segments - responsible parenthood, respect for life, birth spacing and informed choice – and that the government is committed to the adherence to these four objectives. ❖



Dr. Robia Kosai MP



Dr. V. Saroja MP

A panel session then took place with presentations from Mrs. Steve Chadwick MP New Zealand, Hon. Ms. Amara Ratnayake Minister of Women's Affairs, Sri Lanka, Dr. V Saroja MP India and Dr. Robia Kosai MP Malaysia. The session was chaired by Ms. Emmeline Versoza and the topic for debate was the role of women parliamentarians in poverty reduction, women empowerment and RH policies and programmes. This was followed by a discussion. ❖



Hon. Amara Ratnayake



Mrs. Steve Chadwick MP



Lessons to be Learned from Last Year's Population Conference – Ms. Mere Kisekka, UNFPA/CST



Ms. Mere Kisekka, Advisor on Gender and Socio-Cultural Research for UNFPA/CST Bangkok presented the lessons learned from the week long 5th Asia-Pacific Population Conference. Taking place in Bangkok, the ministerial segment of the 5th Asia Pacific Population Conference took place on the 16th and 27th of December 2002, with twenty-six ministers from twenty-three countries in attendance. The key messages delivered by high-level officials during the ministerial segment identified the major problems the Asia Pacific region must confront, and highlighted actions needed to address these issues. Most of the countries participating in the conference reaffirmed their commitment to the ICPD Programme of Action either in the formulation of population and RH policies, in the implementation of overall development or at regional follow-up conferences.

Political Commitment to ICPD PoA Essential

It was recognised during the conference the importance of political commitment to address development issues, that population and RH issues are inextricably linked to development and poverty, and RH services provide direct benefits for women's health and empowerment, for their children's health and life chances, for reducing poverty and for combating the scourge of HIV/AIDS. Education is also a powerful tool and serves to empower the people, especially women and girls. Finally, the necessity of partnership arrangements with international and national agencies, NGOs and academic institutions was highlighted in a number of areas. Ms. Mere Kisekka informed participants that much valuable information could be extracted from conferences such as the 5th Population Conference and put to good use to involve more parliamentarians in their respective countries.

Securing the Commitment – Signing of the Manila Declaration

Mrs. Kelly Hoare MP Australia and Chair of AFPPD's Standing Committee on the Empowerment of Women presented the Manila Declaration on Women Empowerment, Population and Development. It was approved and signed by all participants.



Conference participants signing the Manila Declaration

Conducted by the Master of Ceremonies, **Rep. Blanca Kim Bernardo Lokin**, the Philippines, the conference concluded with a vote of thanks from **Mr. Shiv Khare**, Executive Director of AFPPD and **Rep. Cielo Krisel Lagman-Luistro**. Messages were given by **Senator Rodolfo Biazon**, Co-Chair of PLCPD, **Mrs. Kelly Hoare MP** Australia and **Senator Malinee Sukavejworakit MD** and Secretary General of AFPPD. The closing remarks were delivered by **Hon. Bellaflor Angara-Castillo**, Co-Chair of PLCPD.

Europe to be the Venue for ICPI 2004



L. to R: Mr. Neil Datta, Executive Secretary of IEPFPD - Mr. Stirling Scruggs, Director of UNFPA/IERD - Ms. Harumi Kodama, Public Affairs Officer, UNFPA/IERD

Convening in Brussels, the Steering Committee of the International Parliamentarians Conference on ICPD Implementation 2004 took place on the 17th of October and was opened by Mrs. Ruth Genner MP Switzerland, President of the Inter-European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (IEPFPD,) and Mr. Stirling Scruggs, Director of UNFPA/IERD.

Parliamentarians and officials from global and regional parliamentary groups including FAAPPD; IAPG; IEPFPD; PGA; UNFPA; IPPF; EPWG; PNoWB; and the Council of Europe attended the meeting. AFPPD was represented by Senator Malinee Sukavejworakit MD, Secretary General, and Mr, Shiv Khare, Executive Director.

The meeting was organised by UNFPA in cooperation with the Inter-European Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (IEPFPD) in order to discuss the agenda and directions for the upcoming ICPI 2004, which will focus greatly on 10th anniversary of the ICPD. The ICPD's Plan of Action will reach its mid-point next year and it was decided to commemorate this and the ICPD through the pragmatic and constructive country-by-country analysis of achievements, constraints encountered and lessons learnt so far. The upcoming conference will also provide an opportunity for

ICPD PoA at Mid-Point in 2004



L. to R: Senator Malinee Sukavejworakit MD, Secretary General of AFPPD - Ms. Ulla Sandbaek, MEP Denmark, Vice Chair of AFPPD

reflection on ICPD goals and demonstrations on how, with parliamentarians support, achieving these goals will contribute to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

First on the Steering Committee's agenda was the review of the purpose and proposed outline of the ICPI conference delivered by Mr. Stirling Scruggs, UNFPA. *Continued overleaf*

**Ottawa Conference 2002
Produced Encouraging Results**



Parliamentarians Support Development and Trials of AIDS Vaccines

Inter-country Parliamentarians Workshop – ‘The Challenge of HIV/AIDS: A Special Focus on Preventive Vaccines’



L. to R: Ms. Kate Bourne, Vice-President of IAVI New York - Mr. Prithviraj Chavan MP India - Pol. Gen Pracha Promnong, Thai Deputy Minister of Public Health - Senator Malinee Sukavejworakit MD, Secretary General of AFPPD

Bangkok was the venue for the Inter-country Parliamentarians Workshop on HIV/AIDS where over one hundred and twenty participants, including forty MPs, gathered to discuss the AIDS situation in the Asia Pacific region, the measures necessary to address HIV issues and, most importantly, the potential development of an HIV/AIDS vaccine. The workshop took place on the 30th to the 31st of October and was organised by AFPPD in cooperation with the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI). Parliamentarians from Australia, Cambodia, 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 media personnel. **Prof. Dr. Prasop Ratanakorn**, former Secretary General of AFPPD and **Dr. Virapong Skolkitivat**, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Public Health, Thailand, were honourable guests.

The workshop was opened with a welcome address delivered by **Senator Malinee Sukavejworakit**, Secretary General of AFPPD. She spoke on some of the activities AFPPD has undertaken to enhance political commitment in the region for HIV/AIDS, highlighting the approval of two HIV/AIDS-related bills in the Philippines and Cambodia. AFPPD also provided support for tambon (village) level leader training on HIV/AIDS and Dr. Malinee expressed her happiness that other countries are undertaking similar activities. With regards to AIDS vaccines, Dr. Malinee reported that several AIDS vaccines trials are underway in Thailand and she stressed the importance of creating an enabling environment for vaccine development and trials if the disease is to be defeated.

Vaccine Trials Essential to Defeat AIDS

“Development of a vaccine to prevent HIV/AIDS has been one of the scientific community’s highest priorities since the early 1980s,” began **Pol. Gen. Pracha Promnong**, Thailand’s Deputy Minister of Public Health. “Small pox, polio, measles and hepatitis B are among the earlier global epidemics where preventive vaccines administered through national programmes have yielded positive results. As with many other developing countries, Thailand urgently needs an HIV vaccine to supplement ongoing intervention measures.” He explained that while annual HIV infection in Thailand has dropped from 29,000 to 25,000, the recent trend of HIV infections among the adolescent population is particularly worrisome. He then informed participants of Thailand’s second phase III study and its community clinical trial – the largest in the world – which were both launched on the 29th of September this year. Results from these two trials are expected to greatly benefit not only Thailand, but many other countries in the Southeast Asian region.

HIV Vaccine Highest Priority Among the Scientific Community



Continued from page 5

L. to R: Mr. J. Bas, Pan Dialogue Manager, PNoWB - Mr. Tony Worthington MP UK

He spoke on the impacts the first IPCI had on parliamentary programmes and achievements and Ms. Harumi Kodama gave the evaluation of and feedback on the 1st IPCI, which took place in Ottawa in 2002. Reports on follow-up activities undertaken as a result of the Ottawa Conference in 2002 were then presented by the executive directors of AFPPD, FAAPPD, IAPG, IEPFPD and PGA. Other points for discussion included an overview of plans for the ICPD+10, identification of priorities for the IPCI 2004 and ICPD+10 such as focus areas, issues and topics, specifications on the date, venue and programme of the conference and coordination and synergies of IPCI 2004 with other ICPD +10 related activities.

During her remarks, Senator Malinee Sukavejworakit MD and Secretary General of AFPPD told participants that AFPPD would be conducting several regional activities as well as working with IPPF regional offices for major events. The Steering Committee meeting concluded with a message from Mr. Stirling Scruggs and closing remarks from Mrs. Ruth Genner MP Switzerland.



H.E. Maj. Gen. Manoonkrit Roobkajorn

In his speech, **H.E. Maj. Gen. Manoonkrit Roobkajorn**, President of the Senate of Thailand, warned participants of the toll the HIV virus is taking on economic growth and individual households. "The virus is reaching our most productive age group," he said. "Their income loss has a major impact on their family, the society and the nation as a whole. The impact on labour, education, and the health and rural areas affects government revenue and promotes poverty and exploiters." H.E. Roobkajorn also remarked, "if the challenge HIV presents us is to be met in the 21st century, it is essential to develop a multi-sectoral, multi-ministerial strategy. Achieving this means allocating an AIDS budget in all ministries, integrating HIV into national economic and development planning, and having a strong, political will to address the issue."

Virus Taking Its Toll on Youth

Ms. Kate Bourne, Vice-President of IAVI, spoke on the workshop's objectives. With an HIV vaccine expected to be available in the near future, Ms. Bourne noted that various issues have to be taken into consideration including vaccine availability, sustained behavioural prevention and financing mechanisms. In order to meet the accessibility challenge, she informed participants that sustained, collaborative efforts on a global scale are required and it is essential that the vaccine is reachable to those who really need it, particularly in the developing countries. She expressed her wish for those attending to extract as much valuable information from the workshop as they could and put it to good use in their respective countries.

Vaccines Must be Accessible

Mr. Prithviraj Chavan MP India highlighted the integral role and essential involvement of elected representatives in the advancement of an effective attack on the HIV virus. He urged parliamentarians to advocate for HIV/AIDS prevention programmes and be motivated to create a positive political environment for HIV vaccine trials and studies. "Parliamentarians must demonstrate their strong leadership and explore avenues for further enhancing and strengthening cooperation to fight the HIV/AIDS crisis," he said.

Vaccine Trials Essential to Defeat AIDS

Overview of HIV/AIDS in Asia was the first topic of the workshop and resource person **Mr. Paul Toh**, Inter-country Programme Development Advisor for UNAIDS / SEAPICT gave the first presentation focusing on the AIDS situation in South and Southeast Asia and whether enough is being done to combat HIV/AIDS. The session was moderated by **Representative Patricia Sarenas** from the Philippines.

the topic for discussion in session two. **Prof. Emeritus Prasert Thongcharoen** gave a presentation during the first segment with **Ms. Patricia de Lille MP** South Africa moderating.

Prevention is Better Than Cure – Prof. Emeritus Prasert Thongcharoen, MOPH

Political Courage in Thailand – Mr. Paul Toh, UNAIDS



Mr. Paul Toh, UNAIDS / SEAPICT - Rep. Patricia Sarenas, the Philippines

"Asian AIDS epidemics spread through specific, identifiable behaviours and populations, and these epidemics are vulnerable to focused efforts," Mr. Toh explained. "Prevention efforts can reap immense benefits in Asia; a good example of this would be the case of Thailand, which was able to avert over five million new infections." "However," Mr. Toh continued, "it takes political courage to 'do the right thing' and the way forward is through effective as opposed to easy prevention programmes, ensuring resources are focused on the right populations, to take a pragmatic rather than dogmatic approach and to be more open about the extent of risk as HIV 'thrives in the dark.'" In conclusion, Mr. Toh said that the lessons still have not been learned as awareness and condom use are low in many countries, coverage of prevention programmes is limited, and effective responses are rare. He felt that if prevention efforts were focused and paid specific attention to adolescents, the opportunity to significantly decrease the number of HIV infections would be tremendous.

Prof. Prasert, Chair of the Subcommittee on HIV/AIDS Vaccine Development, Ministry of Public



Prof. Prasert Thongcharoen - Ms. Patricia de Lille MP South Africa

Health, Thailand, listed various methods for effective HIV/AIDS prevention, including education and behaviour modification, drug abuse treatment, condoms, topical microbicides, and vaccines.

Prof. Prasert was optimistic that an AIDS vaccine would be developed in the not too distant future as there are sound scientific and strategic reasons that support the extensive efforts in HIV vaccine discovery and development. He then went on to describe in detail the steps taken in vaccine process and the types of experiments that are undertaken during the vaccine development process. Finally he provided insights into the ongoing Phase III efficacy trials in Thailand.

In part two of session two, **Dr. Jean-Louis Excler**, Scientific Director of IAVI India and **Dr. Pannee Pitisuttitham**, Associate Professor, Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University, gave presentations. **Ms. Kate Bourne**, Vice-President of IAVI New York moderated.

Multi-Sectoral Response Necessary – Dr. Jean Louis Excler, IAVI India

"The global scale and entrenchment of the HIV/AIDS epidemic mandates a multi-sectoral response that is dynamic and inclusive, and takes into account diverse behaviours, values and social structures," commenced Dr.

Broken down into two parts, 'Introduction to Vaccine Research, Development and the Clinical Trial Process' was



Dr. Jean Louis Excler - Dr. Pannee Pitisuttitham

Excler. “Broad public involvement in AIDS vaccine development is therefore needed to support the

development of new technologies for public health, while also promoting other fundamental human rights related to biomedical research, such as the right to individual freedom and security, and the right to individual, voluntary, and informed consent to participate in the research.” He then explained that the different vaccine concepts developed by IAVI come from various sources including academic institutions, biotechnology companies, and pharmaceutical industries while manufacturing and quality control are performed through contract manufacturers and laboratories or by biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies.

In conclusion, Dr. Excler told participants it would be prudent to consider HIV vaccines within a reasonable timeframe of availability in order to manage expectations and avoid creating false hopes. Overall, Dr. Excler felt that ten to twenty years may be needed from now before there is any tangible impact on the HIV epidemic.

First HIV Vaccine Trial in 1988 – Dr. Pannee Pitisuttitham, Mahidol University

Dr. Pannee Pitisuttitham, Associate Professor, Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University Thailand went into specifics regarding HIV trials and the development process or a vaccine in her presentation. She revealed that the first HIV vaccine trial enrolled volunteers in 1988 and that, so far, forty-nine trials of twenty-six vaccine candidates have been studied through NIAID’s AIDS Vaccine Evaluation Group. She explained that good clinical practice is to have regulations governing the conduct of clinical studies and that good laboratory practice is to have regulations governing the conduct of non-clinical safety studies and in vitro practices.

Reasons to Remain Optimistic

Dr. Pannee said that there are many reasons to remain optimistic for the development of a successful and effective AIDS vaccine. She divulged that passive transfer of anti-HIV or anti-SIV antibodies to chimps and monkeys has prevented infection under certain conditions, several HIV vaccine candidates in early human trials have proven to be ‘safe’ and immunogenic, and biostatistical modelling suggest that even a partially effective preventive intervention may have a powerful effect on the AIDS epidemics.

Site Visits to BVEG

After session two, the workshop participants were divided into two groups. The first group went on a site visit to the Thai AIDS Vaccine Trials’ Phase I and II Trial Center, while the second group was briefed by the Phase III BVEG center. Presentations were given by **Dr. Pannee Pitisuttitham**, Mahidol University, and **Dr. Kachit Choopanya**, Principal Investigator, Bangkok AIDS Vaccine Evaluation Group (BVEG) during the BVEG briefing.

‘Experiences and Key Priorities of Parliamentarians’ was the title of session three. **Dr. David Apuuli**, Director General of the Uganda AIDS Commission, moderated.



Dr. David Apuuli

The session focused specifically on recapturing the experiences of the site visit and previous discussions on the role of parliamentarians in creating a facilitating environment for vaccine development and use. Participants spoke on country-by-country issues and exchanged views, and key priorities.

Action points parliamentarians should focus on were identified.

Moderated by **Mr. Andy Quan**, Representative of the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations, session four sought to identify actions and find ways to minimise existing hurdles in order to maximise future access to all HIV-related services. **Dr. Praphan Phanupak**, Director of the Thai Red Cross AIDS Research Center and **Dr. Surya Chandra MP** Indonesia both gave presentations.

Good Knowledge on HIV Crucial for all Elected Representatives – Dr. Praphan Phanupak, Director of the Thai Red Cross

Dr. Phanupak provided some insightful directions and food for thought for parliamentarians with regards to HIV/AIDS. He said first and foremost all parliamentarians must be aware of how to prevent either themselves or their family members becoming infected by the virus.



Dr. Praphan Phanupak

They should know the raw, updated HIV infection statistics in their own countries – and, in order to keep the data ‘fresh,’ continuing surveillance is pivotal. Finally, all parliamentarians must be well informed on the controversies and accepted international norms that surround HIV/AIDS. At the governmental level, parliamentarians need to know how to get things done with budget allocations, in their own constituencies, with inter-country collaboration, and with bilateral, regional, and international collaboration.

Many Challenges Ahead – Dr. Surya Chandra MP Indonesia

Dr. Chandra MP, speaking for a comprehensive approach towards ending the epidemic, noted the difference in



L. to R: Dr. Surya Chandra MP Indonesia - Mr. Andy Quan

challenges between industrialised and developing countries when conducting preventive HIV vaccine efficacy trials. Developing countries are particularly concerned with exploitation and unequal partnerships, lack of funds and infrastructure and training needs such as good clinical practice. Industrialised countries exhibit mistrust of researchers and governments and this exacerbates misunderstanding and mistrust of vaccines in general. He then went on to say as HIV is a relatively new disease, many drugs are also new and, consequently, are marketed at very high prices, but if the HIV/AIDS epidemic is to be controlled, then it is imperative these drugs are made available to those who need them and efforts to improve access must be increased.

Quick Fact: 41.8 million people were living with HIV/AIDS by the end of year 2002



The role of media in supporting HIV/AIDS vaccine development was presented by **Mr. Dillip Cherian**, India, and **Mr. Tawee Jantrapromlin** Thailand. The session was moderated by **Mr. Ajoy Bose**, IAVI, Advisor for Public Affairs.



L. to R: Mr. Dillip Cherian, India - Mr. Ajoy Bose, IAVI - Mr. Tawee Jantrapromlin, Thailand

Media is an Important Advocacy Tool

Mr. Cherian and Mr. Jantrapromlin explained to parliamentarians how they could use the media as an advocacy tool and how best to interact with journalists. They also provided some useful tips on how to get key messages across and how to deal with misquoting and misreporting.

Identifying key resources – financial, policy and social – that are needed to promote continued research in vaccine development, **Ms. Kate Bourne**, IAVI Vice-President spoke in session five. **Dr. Li Honggui MP** China was moderator.

HIV/AIDS Vaccine the Only Long-Term Solution to the Epidemic – Ms. Kate Bourne, IAVI

In her introduction, Ms. Bourne cited IAVI's mission statement: 'IAVI's mission is to ensure the development of safe, effective, accessible, preventive HIV vaccines for use throughout the world. She clearly outlined the four elements to developing country focus: Advocacy – build worldwide support and demand for AIDS vaccines; Science – accelerate promising vaccines into development and human trials; Industry – create markets and incentives to encourage private sector investment and involvement in AIDS vaccines; and Access – Assure policies and infrastructure for global access to AIDS vaccines. She told participants to imagine a world without AIDS and then challenged them to address HIV/AIDS issues at the local, national, regional and global level.



L. to R: Mr. Wang Youchun MP China - Mr. Li Honggui MP China

After Ms. Bourne's presentation, participants were divided into two working groups to come up with recommendations. The first group worked on accelerating research and development while the second

focused on accelerating access. Each group then presented its findings and recommendations during a facilitated discussion.

The final substantive session focused on 'the next steps – regional and international mobilisation of parliamentarians and the upcoming Global AIDS Conference in 2004. Presentations were given by **Senator Meechai Viravaidya**, President of the Population and Development Association of Thailand (PDA), and **Mr. Shiv Khare**, Executive Director of AFPPD. **Dr. Jagganath Manda MP** India moderated the session. This was followed by the adoption and signing of the Call to Action, which was moderated by **Mr. Prithviraj Chavan MP** India.

The workshop drew to a close with messages from **Senator Malinee Sukavejworakit MD**, Secretary General of AFPPD and **Ms. Kate**



L. to R: Dr. Jagganath Manda MP India - Senator Meechai Viravaidya

Bourne, Vice-President of IAVI New York. **Mr. Shiv Khare**, Executive Director of AFPPD delivered the vote of thanks.

African Women Parliamentarians Re-Commit to ICPD

On the 24th of October 2003, sixty-five women ministers and parliamentarians from twenty-three West and Central African countries adopted a declaration reaffirming their commitment to and support for the ICPD PoA. They adopted the declaration at a sub-regional workshop on 'Gender Responsive Budgeting for ICPD Goals in National Development Frameworks: PRSPs and SWAPs.' The workshop was held from the 21st to the 24th of October in Cotonou, Benin, and was organised by UNFPA in partnership with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Other organisations that provided assistance were the World Bank, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Government of the Netherlands.

UNFPA Officials Visit AFPPD

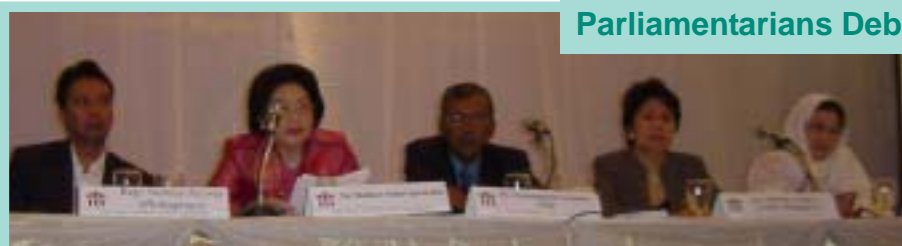
Mr. Vernon Mack, Chief of the Resource Mobilisation Branch of UNFPA along with Ms. Kae Ishikawa, UNFPA Resource Mobilisation Officer visited AFPPD to discuss Japan Trust Fund arrangements with AFPPD Secretary General Senator Malinee Sukavejworakit and Executive Director Mr. Shiv Khare. Mr. Mack and Ms. Ishikawa also attended a lunch where they met with other AFPPD member parliamentarians who had come to Bangkok to attend the 2nd Asia Pacific Conference on Sexual Health.



Mr. Vernon Mack bottom row, far left - Ms. Kae Ishikawa, top row, far right

HIV/AIDS Workshop for Parliamentarians – Kiribati

A two-day workshop on HIV/AIDS for parliamentarians with the theme 'Increasing Political Commitment on HIV/AIDS' took place in Kiribati in October. It was attended by a large number of MPs and various NGO representatives. One of the highlights of the workshop was the presentation by the Office of Economic Planning whose deputy director presented a paper on the 'Economic Impact of a Full-Blown AIDS Epidemic in Kiribati,' citing papers from studies conducted in Asia and Africa.



L. to R: Rep. Nereus O. Acosta - Senator Malinee Sukavejworakit MD - Dr. Gunasagaran Gounder MP - Rep. Bellaflor Angara-Castillo - Dr. Tariq Aziz MP Pakistan

Parliamentarians Debate RH and Sexual Right's Legislation During 2nd APCRSH

The 2nd Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health, which spanned a period of five days, was held in Bangkok on the 6th to the 10th of October. The theme of the conference was 'Moving into

Action: Realising Reproductive and Sexual Health Rights in the Asia Pacific Region,' indicating the need to link advocacy and research with implementation in order to improve the reproductive and sexual welfare of the people in Asia and the Pacific. The aim of the conference was to strengthen and expand stakeholder networks in the region and move them on from 'awareness' to 'action' through its regional call to action, which highlighted pragmatic actions to be taken by policy-makers, civil society, activists, government and private entities.

The 2nd APCRSH was hosted by the Thai Department of Health and the Ministry of Public Health, the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of Mahidol University, the Raks Thai Foundation, and the Youth Family Community Development Project of Chiang Mai University. Senator Malinee Sukavejworakit MD, Secretary General of AFPPD, was the Chair of the 2nd APCRSH Steering Committee. Over 1,400 participants attended including parliamentarians, policy-makers, UN officials, programme managers, health professionals, researchers, social scientists and activists as well as NGO and donor agency representatives.

AFPPD organised a Symposium of Parliamentarians on Sexual and Reproductive Rights Legislation, which was held on the 9th of October at the 2nd APCRSH. Speeches were given by Rep. Nereus O. Acosta, the Philippines, Dr. Gunasagaran Gounder MP Fiji, Rep. Bellaflor Angara-Castillo, the Philippines, and Dr. Tariq Aziz MP Pakistan. Senator Malinee Sukavejworakit MD, Secretary General of AFPPD, chaired the Symposium, and Mr. Shiv Khare, Executive Director of AFPPD moderated.

Parliamentary Advocacy for ICPD +10 National Parliamentarian Committee Staff Discuss Plans

AFPPD organised a meeting for full time staff of the national parliamentarian committees on population and development in Southeast Asia on the 1st of November at the Siam City Hotel in Bangkok. It was attended by the national committee executive directors from Australia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, and Vietnam as well as AFPPD staff.



Mr. David Bridger

The meeting was addressed by Mr. David Bridger, Asia Pacific Leadership Forum, UNAIDS who highlighted UNAIDS's programme on political leadership in the region. Staff also discussed plans for the upcoming ICPD+10 in 2004, the Japan

Trust Fund and Hewlett Foundation project implementation with an emphasis on transparency and reporting.

The WHO Centre for Health Development in Kobe, Japan, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, and the Government of Tanzania, convened its 4th International meeting on Women and Health on the 5th to the 8th of October in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. Participants included government ministers, parliamentarians and other policy-makers, health-related NGO representatives, and leading researchers and professionals.

WHO Meeting on Women and Health in Tanzania

AFPPD was represented by Thai Senator Jitra Yooprasert MD. The aim of the meeting was to follow-up on three other successful meetings in 2000, 2001 and 2002 respectively, and advance the Kobe Plan of Action for Women and Health. Gender perspective for better health and welfare system development was given a special focus during the meeting.

The Thai UNFPA, led by Mrs. Sheila McCrae launched the Status of World Population Report in Bangkok during the 2nd Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health Rights, which took place on the 6th to the 10th of October. The launch was attended by senators and over three hundred population activists from all over the Asia Pacific region. Mr. Kim Hak-Su, Executive Secretary of UNESCAP and Ms. Keiko Okido, Deputy Executive Secretary were also in attendance.

State of the World Population Report Launch

Special AIDS and RH Seminar for Elected Representatives in Bangkok
HIV/AIDS and reproductive health in tambon administrations was the topic for discussion in the seminar organised by the Senate Committee on Public Health, Thailand, which took place on the 15th of October at the Senate. The meeting was conducted under the chairmanship of Dr. Virapong Skolkitivat and was attended by parliamentarians and tambon representatives. The main theme, advocacy projects to educate and motivate elected representatives, was explained by Mr. Shiv Khare, Executive Director of AFPPD, which is funding a project in that area

Good health is essential to leading a productive and fulfilling life, and the right of all women to control aspects of their health, in particular their own fertility, is basic to empowerment. Neglect of women's reproductive rights severely limits their opportunities in public and private life, including opportunities for education, economic and political empowerment. The ability of women to control their own fertility forms an important basis for the enjoyment of other rights. Governments should, therefore, pursue social, human development, education and employment policies to eliminate poverty among women in order to reduce their susceptibility to ill health and improve their own health.

Quote from Beijing Platform of Action, 1995



with the
AFPPD Chairman

Mr. **Yoshio Yatsu** MP Japan



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

I would say probably family planning as well as population issues in developing countries.

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

I believe so as HIV/AIDS incidence is relatively low in Japan. I put this down to having a good social education system and a large number of organisations throughout the country that disseminate information on the issue.

What type of services are available to HIV-infected persons in Japan?

The number of HIV-infected persons in Japan is relatively small as is the number of persons requesting HIV tests, but certain hospitals have been assigned to conduct HIV testing. Every precaution is taken to ensure total confidentiality and not disclose the patient's name as sadly there is still a great deal of social stigma attached to HIV/AIDS. Important information on HIV/AIDS can also be obtained at these facilities.

What type of programmes are there in Japan to assist elderly people?

There are many programmes in Japan specifically catering to the elderly. For example, we have a day care scheme, which enables old people who are disabled or suffering from illnesses to obtain help to enhance their social adaptability as well as receive adequate health care. My mother, who is nearly one hundred years old, receives assistance from this welfare service and has someone who visits her and helps her with shopping, housework and other activities that she may have difficulty with.

With regards to health care, the elderly can go to the hospital and see special consultants who only charge for their first visit. Any further visits are free of charge.

In addition, we also have what is known as the 'Silver Employment Human Resources Center'- a unique establishment that provides people over sixty years old an opportunity to obtain paid work on a daily basis. This has proven to be a great success as it not only enables the elderly to earn some money, it is also an excellent way of ensuring they remain active for as long as possible. Frequently, elderly persons have specialised skills and an extensive knowledge in unconventional fields, which can be put to very good use. I think it is important to keep the elderly actively involved in the community as it promotes a positive mind frame and ensures they don't lead a dull life just sitting at home.



Do you think that sustainable development is possible without population planning?

Population planning is crucial to sustainable development. Needless to say our resources and global carrying capacity are limited. Nowadays, due to the severe impacts of population growth, we are facing insurmountable environmental problems around the globe. Population growth has slowed somewhat over recent years, but global population is still increasing by 70 million people annually. Lamentably, rising population is synonymous with environmental degradation, pollution and biodiversity decrease. The hard fact is we, human beings, cannot survive without other species as we are a part of a 'biological matrix' and this must be respected. We cannot allow our population to rampantly grow. Population planning is a very humanitarian method of population stabilisation and is in fact a basic condition for a sustainable society.

Do you think Japanese parliamentarians focus enough on violence against women?

My birthplace is famous for its strong women! When I was young, I had heard about violence against women, but nowadays I don't think it is a major problem in Japan.

Which factors do you think have a negative impact on population and development programmes?

I think religion has a great impact as certain faiths condemn family planning outright. Societal customs and traditions are influential in many countries and this can also pose difficulties for those trying to work for family planning in those regions. Poverty and lack of education are also major factors.

What do you think AFPPD could do to increase motivation among parliamentarians on population and development issues?

We have had numerous achievements in this field. Conferences are an excellent way to generate awareness, enable parliamentarians to meet and exchange valuable experiences on population and development issues, and maintain their commitment to the population and development cause. Parliamentarians are more aware of the population and development-related obstacles facing the world today than they were a decade ago. They are focused on the issues, they are proactive and many committees have already been set up within their parliaments as a result of these conferences.

The Japan Trust Fund for Parliamentarians has played a crucial role in funding such conferences and numerous events and activities have taken place and been supported under the auspices of the Fund. The Hewlett Foundation has also played an important role supporting the Asian Forum's activities by providing one million US dollars for AFPPD activities. Indeed, the Asian Forum is rapidly expanding and gaining global recognition for its endeavours in the population and development field.

My predecessors, Mr. Shin Sakurai MP, Mr. Sato MP, and Mr. Fukuda MP, and myself have always said 'this is not a forum where we simply meet and talk. This is where we get involved and take action.'



UNFPA Meets with Regional Partners Ahead of New Cycle

At the dawn of a new cycle of programme assistance (2004 – 2007), the Asian and Pacific Division of UNFPA convened a meeting to consult with regional partners. The UNFPA Regional Programme for Asia and the Pacific Consultative Meeting was held from the 29th to the 31st of July in Bangkok. Representatives from UNFPA Headquarters, UNFPA Country Offices and Country Technical Services Teams (CSTs) from Kathmandu, Suva and Bangkok attended the meeting as well as UNFPA partner agencies in the region; UNESCAP, UNESCO Bangkok, AFPPD, ICOMP and JOICFP.

Organised by UNFPA CST, the three-day meeting reviewed experiences of regional projects for Asia and the Pacific supported by UNFPA from 2000 to 2003 and their impacts and lessons learnt discussed. The discussions, including on the topics of emerging issues and on the strategies to strengthen linkages between regional projects, country programmes and CSTs, contributed to drawing lessons for the future. AFPPD also presented an impact assessment at the meeting.

Poor Nations Suffer Huge Burden of Deaths During Childbirth

An unacceptable number of women in developing countries die giving birth compared to the rest of the world and the imbalance must be corrected with better access to health care. Of some 529,000 maternal deaths in 2000, 95% occurred in Africa and Asia, against 4% in Latin America and less than 1% in more developed regions, according to research conducted by WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA.

Food For Thought

VAW is the most pervasive violation of human rights in the world today. Its forms are both subtle and blatant and its impact on development profound. But it is so deeply embedded in cultures around the world that it is almost invisible. Yet this brutality is not inevitable. Once recognized for what it is—a construct of power and a means of maintaining the status quo—it can be dismantled.

Charlotte Bunch, Executive Director, Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University (US)

New Director for WHO/SEARO



A celebratory lunch was held on the 11th of November for Dr. Samlee Plianbangchang who has just been elected as Director of WHO/SEARO. The meeting, which was organised under the auspices of Mr. Virapong Skolkitivat Chair of the Senate Committee on Public Health Thailand, AFPPD and IMPO, was attended by parliamentarians, UN officials and NGO representatives.

Special Programme for HIV/AIDS Prevention among Young People



UNFPA, IPPF, AFPPD and AIDScem Malaysia are implementing a programme to prevent HIV/AIDS among young people. The programme includes the design of an advocacy intervention package, formulation of regional advocacy strategies and a national planning proposal. Attended by all stakeholders, a workshop on capacity building in advocacy for HIV/AIDS prevention in Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea took place in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia, where these issues were discussed.

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