



**Report on the AFPPD symposium on “Translating Political Commitment into Action” and satellite session on “Feminization of HIV/AIDS” at the 9<sup>th</sup> ICAAP on 8-12 August 2009 in Bali, Indonesia submitted by the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development**

## **1. Introduction**

The 9<sup>th</sup> International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific was held in Bali, Indonesia from 8-12 August 2009. It was officially opened on 9<sup>th</sup> August by Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhono. This year’s Congress focused on the theme “Empowering People – Strengthening Network” and was attended by more than 3500 delegates and participants from 65 countries, who actively participated in plenary sessions, poster and oral presentations, skills building sessions, community forums and exhibitions. The next ICAAP will be held in Korea in 2011.

The goal of the Congress was to promote scientific excellence and inquiry, provide a forum for meaningful dialogue, foster accountability, and encourage individual and collective action in addressing HIV/AIDS in Asia and the Pacific and ensure the sustainability of the response.

At this Congress, the Asian Forum with partners mobilized parliamentarians from the region and organized three sessions as follows:

### **1.1 A symposium on “Translating Political Commitments into Action” on 10 August 2009**

Political commitment with respect to AIDS is the decision of leaders to use their power, influence and personal involvement to ensure that HIV/AIDS programmes receive the visibility, leadership resource and ongoing political support that is required to effectively control the spread of HIV and mitigate the impact of the epidemic. This commitment is often underscored by an accurate understanding of the dimensions of the crisis of HIV/AIDS in much of Asia-Pacific. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that political commitment goes beyond mere statement of support, and instead directly support the implementation of HIV/AIDS programmes and initiatives.

### **1.2 A satellite session on “Feminization of HIV/AIDS” on 11<sup>th</sup> August 2009 at the BICC in Bali, Indonesia**

While progress has been made in the response to HIV/AIDS over the decades, it still remains a considerable challenge, as several worldwide and regional trends point to the need for an even stronger, more intergraded and gender sensitive advocacy to the epidemic. At the end of 2007, it was estimated that more than 33 million adults worldwide are living with HIV and AIDS and half of them are women. A UN study reveals that percentages of adults living HIV/AIDS who are a women have increased in all region surveyed, indicating a worrisome “feminization” of the epidemic. Therefore, there is a need to highlight this issue by engaging women parliamentarians and leaders to raise awareness of the linkages between gender inequality and HIV/AIDS.

## **2. Objectives**

AFPPD aimed to bring around 20 parliamentarians from across the region to address HIV/AIDS issues in Asia and the Pacific during the 9<sup>th</sup> International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific (9<sup>th</sup> ICAAP). It had specific goals as follows:

- To provide parliamentarians an opportunity to engage in intensive consultation among themselves and with experts to exchange information, expertise and good practices.
- To share policy recommendations and commitment on action among parliamentarians in order to improve the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS programmes at the national level.
- To propose the formation of HIV/AIDS committees within national parliamentary committees on health and population; and
- To encourage wider public discussion by parliamentarians on deep-rooted social and cultural factors that enable discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS at national and constituency level and efforts by them to mobilize their peers as a key factor in the response to AIDS.

## **3. AFPPD Parliamentary Programmes**

### **3.1 Response beyond Border Workshop on 8 August 2009**

This is a follow-up to the First Asian Consultation on the prevention of HIV related to drug use, and the subsequent two regional workshops which were held in SE Asia and South Asia, by the Asian Consortium on Drug use, HIV, AIDS and Poverty. This workshop is designed to continue the discussions initiated in Goa and foster greater cohesion in improving the quality of life of people who use drugs in Asia.

Several parliamentarians and high level government officials were invited to the workshop in order to garner a perspective on country policies and take the discussion back to the ears of their governments and advocate for change towards harmonized policies and improved access to prevention, treatment and care services, including harm reduction and greater involvement of people who use drugs.

The objective of this session was thus to strengthen civil society's capacity, create opportunities for greater coordination and encourage transparency in the overall response to HIV.

**Chair:** 1. Hon. Senator. Dr. Pinit Kullavanijaya, Senate of Thailand

**Speakers:** 2. Hon. Dr. Tien Nguyen, MP, Vietnam  
3. Hon. Senator Ms. Clair Moore  
4. Hon. Ms. Datuk Noraini Ahmad, Mp, Malaysia  
5. Hon. Ms. Francesca Semoso, Deputy Speaker, Bougainville, Papua New Guinea

**Closing Chair:** 6. Hon. Dr. Rajitha Seneratne, Minister of Construction and Engineering, Sri Lanka

### **3.2 Symposium on "Translating Political Commitment into Action" on 10 August 2009**

AFPPD with a view to educate and involve elected representatives and Ministers organized a symposium to discuss their role in translating political commitment into action. In this session, parliamentarians were invited to discuss:

1. The level of political commitment around Asia-Pacific on HIV/AIDS issues;
2. What kind of action parliamentarians have taken in response to HIV/AIDS programmes;
3. How parliamentarians succeeded in programme implementation, such as mobilizing human and financial resources for HIV/AIDS programme;
4. Whether parliamentarians have been successful in reforming and adopting the laws or regulation to protect the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS; and
5. National level strategies for the future.

**Chair:** 1. Hon. Mr. Danish, Minister of Family Welfare

**Co-Chair:** 2. Hon. Senator. Dr. Pinit Kullavanijaya, Senate of Thailand and Secretary-General of AFPPD

**Special Speaker:** 3. Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, OHCHR

**Speakers:** 4. Hon. Dame Carol Kidu, Minister of Community Development, Papua New Guinea  
5. Hon. Mrs. Sapna Malla, MP, Nepal  
6. Hon. Dr. Nguyen Van Tien, MP, Vietnam  
7. Hon. Senator Ms. Clair Moore, Australia

### **3.3 Satellite Session on Feminization of HIV/AIDS on 11 August 2009**

AFPPD, in cooperation with UNAIDS and ASAP, organized a satellite session on "Feminization of HIV/AIDS" to examine why women are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS. In this session, parliamentarians were invited to discuss:

1. The status of their national policy on HIV/AIDS with special reference to gender issues
2. Achievements, strengths and weaknesses in country-level actions
3. Budgeting and financing strategies
4. Monitoring and evaluation with a focus on accountability and transparency
5. Personal commitment, recommendation and ways to enhance political commitment

**Chair:** 1. Hon. Dame Carol Kidu, Minister of Community Development, Papua New Guinea

**Co-Chair:** 2. Hon. Senator. Dr. Pinit Kullavanijaya, Senate of Thailand and Secretary-General of AFPPD

**Speakers:**

3. Hon. Senator Ms. Chieko Nohno, Japan
4. Hon. Senator Ms. Claire Moore, Australia
5. Hon. Ms. Francesca Semoso, Deputy Speaker, Bougainville, Papua New Guinea
6. Hon. Dr. Jeanet Garin, MP, Philippines

## **4. Briefing on AFPPD sessions**

### **4.1 Response Beyond Border Session on "What parliamentarians can do for harm reduction" on 8<sup>th</sup> August at the Grand Hyatt in Bali, Indonesia**

**Senator Dr. Pinit Kullavanijaya and Secretary-General of AFPPD** stated in his presentation that there was a strong need to examine the current situation of HIV infection through drug use and the current government response to drug use and the need to raise awareness among parliamentarians and political leaders.

**Hon. Dr. Nguyen Van Tien, MP, Vietnam** emphasized that parliamentarians do not know much about harm reduction and some still do not support harm reduction programmes. Significantly, people living with HIV/AIDS are still facing stigma and discrimination in communities in Vietnam. He mentioned that governments and especially UN agencies need to provide more support in educating and training government staff and MPs.

In her presentation, **Hon. Ms. Datuk Noraini Ahmad, MP, Malaysia** stated that Asian governments should enact and strengthen HIV/AIDS and drugs laws to ensure that IDUs have equal rights and the laws must be based on a human rights approach. The government will also need to ensure that IDU and other vulnerable populations have full access to treatment, rehabilitation and health services and give more opportunity for employment.

**Hon. Ms. Francesca Semoso, Deputy Speaker, Bougainville, Papua New Guinea** stated in her presentation that the government should review and revise laws that discriminate and criminalize drug users. They should also work for prison reforms. She emphasized that “we are the agents of change and we need to have the passion and commitment to drive these changes for a better community, a better nation and a better region – the Asia/Pacific region.”

**Hon. Dr. Rajitha Seneratne, Minister of Construction and Engineering, Sri Lanka** was the chair at the closing ceremony and he urged parliamentarians to commit themselves to continue to work for the prevention of HIV-related drug use and removal of related stigmatization and discrimination.

#### **4.2 Symposium on “Translating Political Commitment into Action”**

**Hon. Mr. Dinesh Trivedi, Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, India** chaired the symposium on “Translating Political Commitment into Action.” He emphasized in his remarks that power of parliamentarians is significant in the response to HIV/AIDS. The success in ending stigma relies upon the political will and commitment of policy makers in monitoring the implementation of policies and allocating more budgets.

In her remarks, **Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights** urged that parliamentarians should put human rights at the centre of HIV/AIDS response. She proposed four points to parliamentarians. First, parliamentarians must use their bully pulpit to break the silence, prejudice and misconceptions that surrounds the epidemic. Second, parliamentarians must undertake legal reforms to create an enabling environment for effective responses to HIV. She said that the latest report of the Secretary-General indicates that over 60% of countries have policies that interfere with their ability to provide access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support to vulnerable populations. Third, in their role in holding governments accountable to the decisions they make, parliamentarians have a key role in improving oversight and consideration given to HIV-related issues. Parliamentarians should therefore monitor the human rights impact of laws, policies and programmes and involve people living with HIV/AIDS in the decisions that affect them. Finally, as resource allocators, parliamentarians must ensure that national budgets invest in the HIV response and that together with international sources of funding, resources are allocated in proportion to HIV prevalence rates.

**Hon. Dame Carol Kidu, Minister for Community Development from PNG** stated in her presentation that the highest level of political commitment for PNG was demonstrated first at the National Summit on HIV Prevention in 2006. The HIV/AIDS Management and Prevention Act was passed since 2005. She said that this act covers for example the rights of people infected with HIV, pre and post test counseling, discrimination, and purposeful transmission of HIV. The government also funds the PNG IMR to conduct research on HIV in order to inform decisions and actions.

**Hon. Mrs. Sapna Malla, MP from Nepal** suggested that there is a need for better coordination and policy coherence among different government agencies, civil society organizations, UN agencies, donors and development partners. While recognizing the progress that has been made thus far she emphasized the need for governments to be held accountable for translating their commitments into programmes ensuring greater protection for most vulnerable groups including women, girls, men who have sex with men, transgender people, sex workers and people who use drugs.

**Hon. Dr. Nguyen Van Tien, MP, Vietnam** gave his presentation on “Vietnam Parliament Action on HIV Control.” He cited the work of the Vietnamese government in 2005 when the government approved the Ordinance on AIDS Control and passed a law on AIDS control in 2006. He said that parliamentarians should propose and support new legislations and budget for HIV programmes and oversee their implementation. He argued that MPs who act individually or in isolation will find it difficult to make a difference in changing law or policy. But he recommended to set up a key group of MPs, who understand and support the issues, to advocate for the understanding and support from other MPs. Moreover, he said that UN agencies should cooperate with MP groups in other countries to broaden advocacy and facilitate cooperation among MPs and policy makers on AIDS law and policy. UN should engage MPs and share good models and practices on AIDS law and policy. Dr. Tien also asserted that the countries needed more scientific evidence for policy making on AIDS and the United Nations should also help in capacity building for NGOs.

**Hon. Ms. Clair Moore, Senator, Australia** emphasized in her presentation about the need to strengthen policy and programme linkages and coordination between HIV/AIDS, sexual and reproductive health, national development plans and strategies, including poverty eradication strategies, and to address, where appropriate, the impact of HIV/AIDS on national development plans and strategies;

The session was closed by **Senator Dr. Pinit Kullananijaya**.

#### **4.3 A Satellite Session on Feminization of HIV/AIDS on 11 August 2009**

**Hon. Dame Carol Kidu, Minister of Community Development, Papua New Guinea** was the chair. She gave an example of one model of care in her country that reaches women affected by HIV and AIDS through a community-based approach, providing care and support. Minister Carol emphasized that this programme which is being implemented by the Catholic Diocese of Kundiawa in Simbu Province is not an orphanage but a service point to provide additional resources for vulnerable people. "The programme delivers integrated protection, care and support through an adaptable, community-based approach with strong participatory focus," Minister Carol said. In response to the challenges arising due to AIDS, Minister Carol said the Government of PNG has developed a strategy that seeks to improve the well-being of women vulnerable to violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect by increasing their access to essential services.

**Hon. Ms. Chieko Nohno, Senator from Japan** said there is an urgent need to prevent the feminization of HIV/AIDS by enacting gender equality laws, providing extensive sex education as part of education about life, formulating and implementing DV prevention laws and GBV prevention laws, and conducting strict surveillance of and managing human trafficking laws. These actions should reach every citizen and elevate their awareness, and change their behaviour. AIDS is also connected to the feminization of poverty because the social vulnerability of women makes it difficult for them to refuse sexual demands of men, or ask for condoms to be used. Again, there is a need for legislators to improve women's social status by promoting gender equality and respect for women.

**Hon. Senator Ms. Claire Moore, Australia** spoke of the need to put greater resource into developing new women-centred prevention methods such as microbicides. She said that "women can initiate and control the use of these microbicides and cooperation." They offer a real option and an ability to negotiate the terms and nature of sexual relations. She also emphasized that governments should continue to strengthen laws and sanctions to address gender-based violence, including sexual abuse, as intrinsic elements to stopping the spread of HIV.

**Hon. Ms. Francesca Semoso, Deputy Speaker, Bougainville, Papua New Guinea** highlighted some effective measures in stopping the feminisation of HIV/AIDS in the Pacific, such as an increase of financial and technical support to initiatives - governmental and non-governmental - that promote women's economic empowerment, including opportunities for women's paid employment and entrepreneurship and link these interventions to HIV prevention interventions. She also urged Pacific Island governments to enact and strengthen family laws to ensure that women have equal rights during and upon breakdown of relationships, including de facto and same sex relationships. More vigorous efforts are needed to implement national policies to promote the education of girls at all levels and to increase their legal empowerment, especially in countries where gendered barriers to education still exist. "Hopefully, what has been presented during this 9<sup>th</sup> ICAAP meeting will be translated into action by those at the decision making level like us parliamentarians. "We are the agents of change and we need to have the passion and commitment to drive these changes for a better community, a better nation and a better region - the Asia/Pacific region," Hon. Ms. Francesca said.

**Hon. Dr. Jeanet Garin, MP, Philippines** pointed out that an increased awareness campaign and youth education on HIV/AIDS can help prevent the rise in number of cases. To combat HIV/AIDS, Dr. Garin said that coordinated and sustainable effort at both national and local level is needed through the strict enforcement of the Republic Act 8504 or the Philippine AIDS Prevention and Control Act of 1998. "After more than 10 years of implementation of RA 8504, the results today highlight the fact that the establishment of the law without adequate investments in education and enforcement is insufficient to achieve real change," she said. There is also a "serious need" to improve the communication plan of HIV/AIDS to include the use of tri-media campaign and intensified campaign program in schools.

The session was closed by **Senator Dr. Pinit Kullananijaya**.

## **6. Outcomes**

1. Greater understanding of HIV/AIDS issues among parliamentarians and a wider mobilization on HIV/AIDS prevention at national level.
2. The presence of more than 20 parliamentarians and three ministers could promote interest, dialogue and action with civil society, UN and government officials on HIV/AIDS related issues.
3. Deeper understanding of the linkages between drug use and HIV/AIDS.
4. Stronger political commitment among parliamentarians to take concrete and effective steps to implement legislation adopted and fashion a new approach to HIV/AIDS programmes.

## **5. Expenses**

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