



Newsletter

Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on
Population and Development

First Quarter: January-March 2017

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Activities of AFPPD's Sri Lanka National Committee Launched in Negombo

On February 16-17, AFPPD and its member National Committee, the Sri Lanka Forum for Parliamentarians on Population and Sustainable Development (SLPPD), convened a workshop to officially launch the activities of SLPPD in Negombo. **Page 4**



Asia-Pacific Parliamentarians Committed to "End Human Trafficking in All Its Forms" in AFPPD Conference

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Hearing on the Implementation of Health Law Held in National Assembly of Vietnam

On March 1, the Committee for Social Affairs at National Assembly of Vietnam held its fifth plenary session with the Minister of Health to discuss the Vietnam Social Security Report and the implementation of the law on health insurance. **Page 13**



The Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development (PLCPD) and the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) join the Philippines in mourning the loss of Senator Leticia Ramos Shahani.

Senator Shahani was PLCPD's founding Chairperson. She was a pioneering advocate of population and development issues, including reproductive health. Her involvement on these issues covers not only her tenure as a politician but virtually all aspects of her public life—as educator, diplomat, citizen, and quintessential public servant.

Senator Shahani has paved the way for the next generations of policy champions in the Congress of the Philippines to sustain its advocacy efforts to push for people-centered laws.

PLCPD is the member National Committee of AFPPD in the Philippines.

Strengthened Coordination between AFPPD and UNFPA Discussed in UNFPA Asia-Pacific Regional Planning Meeting

BANGKOK, THAILAND – On January 19, the Executive Director and staff of the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) were invited to participate in the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Asia-Pacific Regional Planning Meeting. The meeting highlighted many key issues, including the importance of strong coordination between AFPPD and UNFPA country offices. The meeting reiterated the critical and strategic roles that AFPPD and member parliamentarians can play in advocating for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and other issues of common at the country level. The coordination meeting also emphasized the urgency of the strengthened partnership between the two organizations to improve the delivery of results for the women and girls of the Asia-Pacific region.



**Member National Committee
Highlight: Philippines**

Groups Decry Bill Lowering Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility in the Philippines



Groups held statements at the launch of the campaign against the lowering of minimum age of criminal responsibility on January 12, 2017 in Quezon City, Philippines. Hon. Rep. Teddy Brawner Baguilat (AFPPD Vice Chairperson and MP, Philippines) was among the supporters, sitting third to the right. (Photo: PLCPD)

PHILIPPINES – From January to March, several regional press conferences were conducted by the Child Rights Network and the Philippine Action for Youth Offenders (PAYO) to oppose the decision by the Congress of the Philippines to lower the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 15 to 9 years old. The Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development (PLCPD) is the convener of the Child Rights Network. These press conferences were held in various areas of the Philippines including the National Capital Region, Cordillera, Bicol (Southern Luzon), Cebu (Visayas) and Davao (Mindanao).

The groups called on the legislators to vote against House Bill two and 5 other bills that seek to amend the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act (JJWA). The groups have also brought the campaign online through the #ChildrenNotCriminals social media campaign and an online petition at Change.org.

PLCPD is the member National Committee of AFPPD in the Philippines.

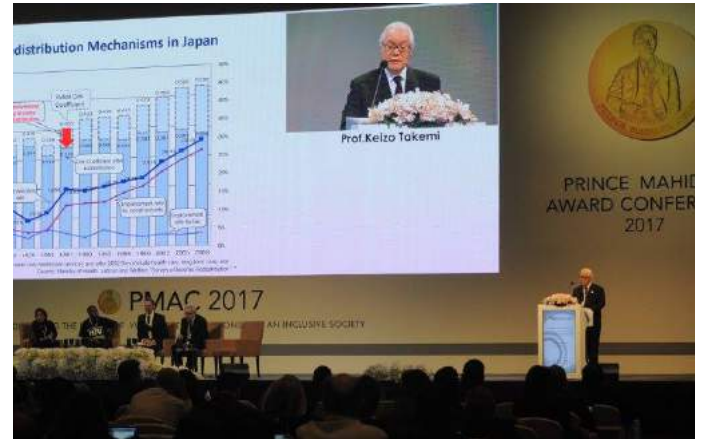
Universal Health Coverage Addressed by AFPPD Chairperson at Prince Mahidol Award Conference

BANGKOK, THAILAND – On January 29-February 2, the annual Prince Mahidol Award Conference (PMAC) was held under the theme “Addressing the Health of Vulnerable Populations for an Inclusive Society.” The conference, hosted by the Prince Mahidol Award Foundation, the Thai Ministry of Public Health, Mahidol University and other global partners, welcomed 888 participants from 72 countries to discuss policy-related health issues. The focus of this year’s conference was on the health of the vulnerable population, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on social inclusion.

Hon. Professor Keizo Takemi, AFPPD Chairperson and Member of Parliament, Japan, delivered a presentation on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in a side event prior to the main conference on January 30. The event was organized by UNICEF Thailand and Regional Office for East Asia and Pacific. Hon. Professor Takemi spoke about Japan’s UHC experience, particularly highlighting its political



Hon. Professor Keizo Takemi (AFPPD Chairperson and Member of Parliament, Japan) presented in a side event on Japan's Universal Health Coverage experience at the 2017 Prince Mahidol Award Conference on January 30 in Bangkok, Thailand. (Photo: AFPPD)



Hon. Professor Keizo Takemi (AFPPD Chairperson and Member of Parliament, Japan) presented in the Plenary Session on the Political Economy of Social Inclusion at the 2017 Prince Mahidol Award Conference on February 2 in Bangkok, Thailand. (Photo: PMAC)

leadership role for realizing and sustaining UHC for women and children. He noted the challenges faced by Japan. While maternal mortality ratio dramatically decreased with increased coverage of facility birth after World War II, there were increased burden on chronic conditions in children. Following the past experiences, he concluded that today's policies targeting towards ageing must also include support for women and children.

On February 1, the main conference was opened by Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn of Thailand. This was followed by the Keynote Address by former Prince Mahidol Award Laureates, Sir Gregory Paul Winter, Dr. Vladimir Hachinski, and Nobel Memorial Prize Recipient in Economic Sciences, Professor Amartya Sen of Harvard University.

On February 2, Hon. Professor Takemi was among the panelists in the Plenary Session on "Political Economy of Social Inclusion." Other panelists included Professor Ernesto Zedillo, former President of Mexico, Mr. Anele Yawa, General Secretary of the Treatment Action Campaign, and Piya Argee Macliing Malayao, Secretary General of KATRIBU. The panel was moderated by Professor David Harper, Deputy Head of the Centre on Global Health Security at Chatham House. The panel aimed to share the perspectives from the government and civil society on UHC and its ties to the principles of human rights. Panelists also discussed lessons learned on how to improve the health of vulnerable populations, and how to prioritize their needs under UHC reforms.

In the session, Hon. Professor Takemi spoke about Japan's history towards achieving UHC, noting key factors including the expansion of the middle class and direct social welfare assistance for the vulnerable. The creation of a healthy and educated middle class became an incentive for the government to implement policies that built up the social welfare of Japan. This led to the implementation of several laws that support socially vulnerable people, including the Public Assistance Act, resulting in the achievement of UHC in 1961. Hon. Professor Takemi noted economic and political benefits of these achievements. For example, the universal health insurance has played an important role in redistributing financial resources from the wealthy. This allowed Japan to benefit from economic growth without significantly widening income gaps. From the political perspective, Hon. Professor Takemi stressed that a society with a healthy middle class contributed to political stability in Japan.

Hon. Professor Takemi also highlighted that the recipient of public assistance has rapidly increased over recent decades. A new vulnerable population has emerged in Japan - rapidly growing elderly. In concluding, Hon. Professor Takemi asked the PMAC delegates to reflect on challenges in achieving UHC while coping with an increasing ageing population to ensure that no one is left behind. Ageing is no longer only Japan's issue but a common agenda in Asia as a region.

Activities of AFPPD's Sri Lanka National Committee Launched in Negombo



The "AFPPD-SLPPD National Inception Workshop" was opened by Dr. Mika Marumoto (AFPPD Executive Director), Hon. S.B. Dissanayake (Minister of Social Empowerment and Welfare and MP, Sri Lanka), and Ms. Kristine Blokhuis (Officer-in-Charge, UNFPA Country Office in Sri Lanka) on February 16, 2017 in Negombo, Sri Lanka. (Photo: AFPPD)

NEGOMBO, SRI LANKA – On February 16-17, the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) and its member National Committee, the Sri Lanka Forum for Parliamentarians on Population and Sustainable Development (SLPPD), convened a workshop to officially launch the activities of SLPPD in Negombo. The "AFPPD-SLPPD National Inception Workshop" engaged 36 parliamentarians, ministers, government officials and resource persons on topics related to active ageing, investing in youth, gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

SLPPD was initiated in October 2016 under the leadership of the Minister of Social Empowerment and Welfare of Sri Lanka, Hon. S. B. Dissanayake, who delivered opening remarks at the workshop. He stressed on the country's demographic shift and rapidly ageing population, noting that one out of four is expected to be over 60 years of age by 2040. Ms. Kristine Blokhuis, Officer-in-Charge of UNFPA, praised Sri Lanka for the country's social development progress over the last decades. Ms. Blokhuis added "Sri Lanka ranks well in indicators on health and

education for women. At the same time, however, we are aware of the gaps that still remain." Ms. Thushara Ranasinghe, Executive Director of Family Planning Association Sri Lanka, highlighted the importance of the strategic partnership that exists between AFPPD and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) of which FPASL is a member. She highlighted that this inception workshop was an enriching opportunity for Members of Parliament to understand the strategic directions of AFPPD and to equip themselves with relevant tools developed by AFPPD, including the Briefing Cards for Parliamentarians.

Dr. Mika Marumoto, Executive Director of AFPPD, presented on the role and responsibilities of AFPPD's member National Committees and highlighted that parliamentarians are catalysts of change in the era of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Challenges on various population and development issues in Sri Lanka were addressed by experts in the workshop. Dr. Janaki Vidanapathirana, Ministry of Health, and Ms. Madu Dissanayake, Director of



Members of Parliament, Ministers and Government Officials of Sri Lanka, AFPPD Executive Director, Representatives from UNFPA and Family Planning Association of Sri Lanka, at the AFPPD-SLPPD National Inception Workshop on February 16–17, 2017 in Negombo, Sri Lanka. (Photo: AFPPD)

Family Planning Association for Sri Lanka, warned about the social and economic consequences of Sri Lanka's lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services, particularly for vulnerable populations. Additionally, Ms. Kumudini Samuel, Director of Women and Media Collective, highlighted women's empowerment issues, noting that women benefit disproportionately from the social development of Sri Lanka.

In addition to the challenges faced by the country, government representatives of Sri Lanka also spoke about the progresses towards sustainable development. Dr. K. A. S. Keeragala, Additional Secretary, Youth Affairs at the Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs, highlighted some achievements of Sri Lanka in terms of youth development, referring to the Global Youth Development Index 2016. Dr. Yalagama, Director-Planning at the Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs, spoke of the holistic approach that is being undertaken by the Ministry to develop the Sustainable Development Act (SD Act). The SD Act mandates every government organization to prepare its national policy and strategy up to 2030. He further added that the SD Act will also establish a Sustainable Development Council consisting of 11 members representing the National Government and the Provincial Councils. It will prepare the

draft National Policy and Strategy in compliance with the SDGs and concurrence with Ministries, Departments and Provincial Councils, forwarding it to the Cabinet, which will then submit it to the Parliament for approval.

The role of SLPPD for effective formulation of legislation was stressed by Hon. Seyed Ali Zahir Moulana, Member of Parliament of Sri Lanka and Assistant Secretary of SLPPD. He added that parliamentarians also play a critical role in the oversight for policy implementation. He highlighted the five key foundations for sustainable development, known as the 5Ps representing people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. Professor Lakshman Dissanayake, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Colombo, urged parliamentarians to take advantage of the demographic dividend, and act and adopt evidence-based policymaking.

In closing, AFPPD Executive Director, Dr. Marumoto, recalled the main recommendations stemming from the presentations made during the workshop. On behalf of the SLPPD and its members Hon. Minister. S. B. Dissanayake committed to preparing, developing and consolidating the SLPPD Action Plans.

AFPPD Executive Director and SLPPD Chairperson Participated in Regional Expert Forum on Integrated Care for Older Persons



Hon. S.B. Dissanayake (Minister of Social Empowerment and Welfare of Sri Lanka) and Dr. Mika Marumoto (AFPPD Executive Director) participated in the Regional Expert Forum on Integrated Care for Older Persons on March 17-19, 2017 in Nanjing, China. (Photo: AFPPD)

NANJING, CHINA – On March 17-19, Hon. S.B. Dissanayake, Minister of Social Empowerment and Welfare of Sri Lanka and the Chairperson of the Sri Lanka Parliamentarians Forum on Population and Sustainable Development (SLPPD), and AFPPD Executive Director, Dr. Mika Marumoto, attended the Regional Expert Forum on Integrated Care for Older Persons. The Forum was organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Zhongshan College in Nanjing, China.

The purpose of the Forum was to provide a space for experts on population ageing from the government, civil society organizations, and academia to meet and share knowledge and lessons learned on three specific aging related topics: (i) human resource requirements for meeting the needs of an ageing society; (ii) analysis of the good practices to challenge the transition towards an ageing society in Asia and the Pacific by using appropriate technologies to enhance the access of older persons to services; and (iii) gender implications of population ageing: roles and rights. Government representatives also spoke about the implementation status of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA).

Hon. S.B. Dissanayake, delivered opening remarks and a keynote speech, sharing vital statistics on ageing and the challenges faced by Sri Lanka. He spoke about the Protection of the Rights of Elders Act, which established the National Council for Elders under the Ministry of Social Empowerment and Welfare. Additionally, he also highlighted Sri Lanka's need for more well-trained specialists in gerontology. In closing, Hon. Dissanayake proposed that the experts in the forum partner with more parliamentarians to push forward the movement on ageing into an international convention on active ageing, such as a Convention for the Rights of Older Persons, while proceeding with the MIPAA review process in 2017.

In addition to the forum sessions, Hon. S.B. Dissanayake and Dr. Marumoto also conducted field visits to four sites: (i) Zhongshan elder services human resources development areas; (ii) apartments for the aged of Jiangsu Province; (iii) province hospital and Qixia district government cooperation Program – Qixia rehabilitation clinic branch of Jiangsu province hospital; and (iv) Wangzilou service spot of Yaofangmen home elderly service center.



Member National Committee Highlight: Kyrgyzstan

Malnutrition Addressed in Round Table Organized by AFFPD's National Committee in Kyrgyzstan, NCKPD



Hon. Osmonbek Artykbayev (MP, Kyrgyzstan and Chairperson of NCKPD) spoke in the round table on providing adequate nutrition to the population of Kyrgyzstan on February 3, 2017 in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. (Photo: NCKPD)

BISHKEK, KYRGYZSTAN - On February 3, the National Committee of Kyrgyzstan on Population and Development (NCKPD) conducted a round table on providing adequate nutrition to the population of Kyrgyzstan. According to the World Bank and UNICEF, Kyrgyzstan loses up to \$32 million annually as a result of malnutrition. It will also contribute

to the elimination of iodine deficiency diseases among children. The participants of the round table acknowledged the contribution of Hon. Osmonbek Artykbayev, Chairperson of NCKPD, in adopting the law on baking four fortification in 2009. The round table resulted in resolutions to resolve pending issues related to nutrition in Kyrgyzstan.

NCKPD is the member National Committee of AFPPD in Kyrgyzstan.



Member National Committee Highlight: Kazakhstan

AFPPD Vice Chairperson Highlighted Education Challenges in Kazakhstan

ASTANA, KAZAKHSTAN - On February 20, the Parliament of Kazakhstan held a joint session with the government to discuss education reform. Hon. Ms. Gulmira Issimbayeva, Vice Speaker of the Lower House of the Parliament and AFPPD Vice Chairperson, delivered a comprehensive review of the implementation stages of the 2016-2019 National Programme on Education and Science. Despite considerable progress, she mentioned that the reforms are "chaotic and spontaneous"

and often not fully implemented. She also highlighted the challenges concerning education and employment. "Currently, the labor market and the education system function separately. The educational grants by the Government are poorly linked to the labor market needs," said Hon. Ms. Issimbayeva. Hon. Ms. Gulmira Issimbayeva is also the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Socio-Cultural Development of the Mazhilis.

The Standing Committee on Socio-Cultural Development of the Mazhilis is the member National Committee of AFPPD in Kyrgyzstan.

Asia-Pacific Parliamentarians Committed to “End Human Trafficking in All Its Forms” in AFPPD Conference



Participating Members of Parliament and representatives of intergovernmental and civil society organizations have adopted the Statement of Commitment to “end human trafficking in all its forms” at the Regional Parliamentarians Conference on Combatting Human Trafficking. (Photo: AFPPD)

BANGKOK, THAILAND – On March 21-22, over 40 Members of Parliament and 20 experts from 21 Asia-Pacific countries adopted the Statement of Commitment to “end human trafficking in all its forms” at the Regional Parliamentarians Conference on Combatting Human Trafficking in Bangkok. The two-day conference, funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of the Government of Australia, was co-organized by the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) and the South Asian Initiative to End Violence against Children (SAIEVAC), the apex body of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SARRC).

AFPPD Secretary General, Dr. Jetn Sirathranont, Member of the National Legislative Assembly of Thailand, welcomed the participants, followed by opening remarks delivered by four dignitaries. H.E. Paul Robilliard, Ambassador of Australia to Thailand, congratulated ASEAN leaders from six countries on the ratification of the Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women

and Children (ACTIP) which came into force in March 2017. The Ambassador further stressed the importance of accelerated efforts in achieving the human trafficking related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including Target 8.7.

H.E. Amjad Hussain Sial, Secretary-General of SARRC, highlighted the challenges especially in coordination among key stakeholders. “It is a pressing need of the hour to evolve a concerted and well-coordinated response to address the global menace of human trafficking.” Thailand’s efforts in tackling human trafficking were also highlighted by Mr. Suthi Sukosol, Inspector General at the Ministry of Labour of Thailand, noting the establishment of a specialized anti-trafficking prosecution and court division, and increased training for local actors, such as the police, judges, labour inspectors, and social workers. H.E. Mr. Isra Sunthornvut, Secretary General of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, also urged fellow parliamentarians to address the implementation challenges of anti-trafficking measures.



Dr. Mika Marumoto (Executive Director, AFPPD), Dr. Rinchen Chophel (Director-General, SAIEVAC), Mr. Suthi Sukosol (Inspector General, Ministry of Labour of Thailand), Hon. Dr. Jetn Sirathranont (MP, Thailand and Secretary-General, AFPPD), H.E. Paul Robilliard (Australian Ambassador to Thailand), H.E. Amjad Hussain Sial (Secretary-General, SAARC), and Hon. Mr. Isra Sunthornvut (Secretary-General, ASEAN InterParliamentary Assembly) posed following the opening of the Regional Parliamentarians Conference on Combatting Human Trafficking in Bangkok, Thailand. (Photo: AFPPD)

Experts from Australia Asia Program to Combat Trafficking in Persons, ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC), ECPAT, Plan International, UNESCAP, UN Women, UNICEF, UN-ACT (COMMIT)/UNDP, ILO, SDGs Alliance 8.7 contributed to subsequent knowledge sharing and discussion sessions.

The Statement of Commitment was unanimously adopted after much deliberation at the final session of the conference chaired by H. E. Dr. Seree Nonthasoot, Representative of Thailand to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights. It ensures a zero tolerance policy against all those involved in trafficking in persons, reaffirming the critical role of parliamentarians to review, amend, enact and enforce legislation on prevention, prosecution, protection, including rehabilitation of survivors, and other measures through accelerated coordination. Parliamentarians committed to reinforcing the accountability of their respective governments in addressing and ending human trafficking.

AFPPD Held First National Committee Sub-Regional Strategy Meeting of the Year



Participating Members of Parliament and representatives of intergovernmental and civil society organizations have adopted the Statement of Commitment to “end human trafficking in all its forms” at the Regional Parliamentarians Conference on Combatting Human Trafficking. (Photo: AFPPD)

BANGKOK, THAILAND – On March 23, the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) organized the National Committee Sub-regional Strategy Meeting for its members in Bangkok. The meeting provided participants with a venue to review and re-define their respective national, sub-regional and regional-level advocacy strategies. The members were encouraged to engage in the voluntary national review process of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly the ten AFPPD member countries which will conduct the reviews in 2017: India, Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Japan and Tajikistan

Discussions were also held on the utilization of the AFPPD legislation analysis and fact sheet project which aim to identify gaps between national legislation and international commitments relating to AFPPD’s strategic priorities. It also aims to analyze and evaluate each country’s compliance with the international commitments and identify each national committee’s priority legislation and advocacy issues for the medium to long term.



Hon. Ria Bond (Member of Parliament, New Zealand) and Hon. Selina Napa (Member of Parliament, Cook Islands) presented in AFPPD's National Committee Sub-Regional Strategy Meeting on March 23 in Bangkok, Thailand. (Photo: AFPPD)

South Asian participants discussed a sub-regional common agenda. They included trafficking for forced labour or sexual exploitation, the usage of drugs by the young generation, climate change impacts on all aspects of life, and the negative effects of industrial food on health. Members from South-East Asia identified the following issues to be addressed collectively: gender equality and women's empowerment, advocacy work related

to adolescent pregnancy, strengthened protection of migrant workers, and proper implementation of the quota system. The Central Asian members identified: reproductive health and rights, adolescent reproductive health and access to services, cervical cancer prevention, and active ageing. The Pacific members identified organizing mock parliaments as an effective measure for increasing the political participation of women and youth.

Political Participation of Women and Youths Discussed in AFPPD's Standing Committee Joint Meeting



The political participation of women and youth was discussed among AFPPD member parliamentarians at the 2nd Standing Committee Joint Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, and Investing in Youth, on March 23 in Bangkok, Thailand. (Photo: AFPPD)

BANGKOK, THAILAND – On March 23, the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development held its 2nd Standing Committee Joint Meeting on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment, and Investing in Youth. The thematic focus was on political participation by women and youth in Asia and the Pacific. Attendees included 44 representatives and two experts from 19.

Ms. Caroline Horekens, Monitoring and Reporting Specialist at UN Women, delivered the keynote presentation highlighting the importance of political participation of women and youth in fulfilling the potential of democracy. She identified four key areas for action: (i) ensuring free and fair local and national elections (including through quotas) for women and youth in order to increase their representation in politics to achieve parity; (ii) building accountability rights in public institutions, through constitutional revisions, reforms of electoral laws, and gender-responsive budgeting, in order to

ensure harmonization with international standards on women and youth rights; (iii) supporting women and youth movements and civil society organizations by establishing coalitions to enhance their decision-making and oversight capacity when elected to public office; and (iv) providing capacity building and skills development training.

Standing Committee representatives from Tajikistan, Nepal and Cook Islands shared good practices from their country in increasing women and youth political representation. Lessons learned for increasing women’s empowerment and gender equality were also shared by representatives of New Zealand, Philippines, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Vietnam, and Lao PDR. Youth empowerment initiatives were also highlighted in the meeting with experiences shared by representatives from Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Malaysia, Kazakhstan, New Zealand and Tajikistan shared their experience.



Member National Committee Highlight: Philippines

PLCPD and NGOs Called for Removal of Barriers to Full Implementation of the Reproductive Health Law in the Philippines



The Annual National Dialogue on SRHR, participated by national and local legislators, advocates, government agencies and health service providers was held last March 28-29, 2017 in Quezon City. (Photo: PLCPD)

QUEZON CITY, PHILIPPINES – On March 28, nearly 200 representatives of government agencies, civil society organizations and people’s organizations met at a national dialogue on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) organized by the Philippine Legislators’ Committee on Population and Development (PLCPD) in partnership with five other non-governmental organizations, under the support of the European Union and Oxfam.

The advocates called on the government, particularly the Supreme Court, to remove barriers to the full implementation of the Reproductive Health and Responsible Parenthood (RPRH) Law. Development partners from the National Capital Region (NCR) and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) were among the attendees.

The law was enacted in December 2012 but faced several legal and practical obstacles to its full implementation. In August 2016, the Supreme Court denied the government’s motion to lift the temporary restraining order, issued in 2015, on public promotion, procurement and distribution of select family planning supplies. This decision also instructed the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Department of Health (DOH) to develop rules governing the registration, re-certification and procurement of family planning products, including the conduct of public hearings as part of the process for issuing product registration.

PLCPD Executive Director, Mr. Romeo Dongeto, called the public to support the campaign on lifting this temporary restraining order. The National Dialogue on SRHR is the first of a series of annual stakeholders’ dialogue to be organized by PLCPD under the Improving the Availability of RH Services in the ARMM (ARCHES) project.

PLCPD is the member National Committee of AFPPD in the Philippines.



Member National Committee
Highlight: Vietnam

Hearing on the Implementation of Health Law Held in National Assembly of Vietnam



Hon. Mme. Nguyen Thuy Anh, Chairperson of the Committee for Social Affairs and VAPPD, delivered the opening speech at the National Assembly’s fifth plenary session on March 1, 2017 in Hanoi, Vietnam. (Photo: VAPPD)

HANOI, VIETNAM - On March 1, the Committee for Social Affairs at National Assembly of Vietnam held its fifth plenary session with the Minister of Health to discuss the Vietnam Social Security Report and the implementation of the law on health insurance. Among the participants were Hon. Mr. Vu Duc Dam, Deputy Prime Minister, and Hon. Mme. Nguyen Thuy Anh, Chairperson of the Committee for Social Affairs and the Vietnam Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (VAPPD).

At the meeting, participants commended the efforts of the Government of Vietnam to increase the coverage of health insurance towards universal health insurance. By 31 December, 2016, the number of health insurance recipients was nearly 75.9 million people equivalent to 81.7% of the population. This exceeded the 80% coverage target set by the National Assembly for 2020. Additionally, the participants discussed the implementation of the Law on Health Insurance as well as the management and use of the health insurance fund. These discussions are critical to provide strategies and solutions to expand health insurance coverage in Vietnam.

VAPPD is the member National Committee of AFPPD in Vietnam.



**Member National Committee
Highlight: Tajikistan**

Health Code Adopted in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE, TAJIKISTAN - On March 15, the Parliament of Tajikistan has adopted the Health Code of the Republic of Tajikistan. This is the first Health Code in the history of the country, which replaces 16 previously adopted laws regulating the healthcare system. The members of the National Committee of Tajikistan on Population and Development (NCTPD) have worked on the development of this Health Code since 2016.

NCTPD is the member National Committee of AFPPD in Tajikistan.



**Member National Committee Highlight:
Nepal**

Workshop on SDGs and Local Governance Successfully Held by NFPPD in Besishar

BESISAHAR, NEPAL - On March 27, the National Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (NFPPD), Nepal organized a national workshop on “Capacity Building of Local Political Stakeholders to Mainstream Population and Sustainable Development Issues in Local Governance and Development,” held in the Besisahar district headquarter of Lamjung. Among the 250 participants were the Minister of Education, Hon. Mr. Dhaniram Paudal, Members of Parliament from Lamjung, chiefs and representatives from different political parties of the district, women’s network, women teachers, NGOs and the media. The program was chaired by Hon. Ms. Dina Mahalaxmi Upadhyaya who serves as Member of Parliament in Nepal, Chairperson of NFPPD and Co-Chair of AFPPD Standing Committee on Investing in Youth.

The overall objective was to sensitize local political stakeholders and government offices to mainstream population and sustainable development issues at the local level, particularly to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into local plans and strategies.



Participants from the parliament, government and civil society attended an interactive workshop on the SDGs and local governance organized by NFPPD on March 27, 2017 in Besisahar, the district headquarter of Lamjung in Nepal. (Photo: NFPPD)

Honorable Mr. Dhaniram Paudal, Minister of Education of Nepal, opened the workshop while Hon. Dr. Bishma Nath Adhikari, Member of Parliament in Nepal and General Secretary of NFPPD, delivered the welcoming remarks. Hon. Dr. Adhikari explained about the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, highlighting that Nepal’s local plans and strategies must include SDGs indicators. He also stressed on the importance of women’s participation in the development process.

Following the opening, there were panel discussions on topics such as women’s participation at the local level, implementation challenges of various laws, the role of the media in advancing women’s empowerment, and educational status in Lamjung. Dr. Tirtha Thapa, Director of Lamjung District Community Hospital (LDCH), presented on health services provided by the hospital and the need to increase awareness on the benefits of health checkups, including maternal and child health. Local political leaders also provided comments, stressing on the role of women in local governance and the development process.

NFPPD successfully concluded this workshop with an open discussion from the floor where participants asked questions and provided comments. This was the first interactive workshop on sustainable development issues in the district. Participants expressed their interest on the topics, particularly the concept of the SDGs and its integration into policies and programs at the local level.

NFPPD is the member National Committee of AFPPD in Nepal.

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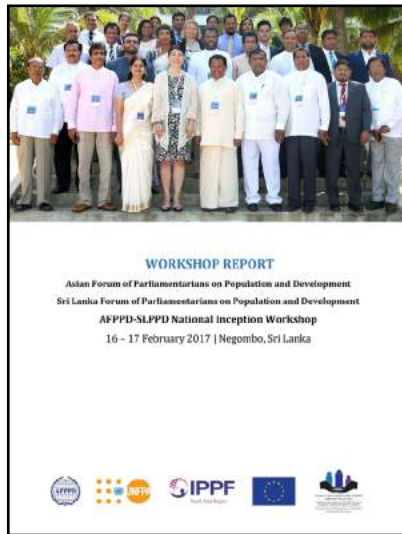


Briefing Cards for Parliamentarians

The briefing cards highlight evidence-based good policy practices and legislation, and support data and statistics, on issues related to gender equality and women's empowerment, investing in youth and active ageing.

Draft version: shared with 67 MPs, Ministers and Experts for comments.

Final copies: distributed to 29 National Committees and 3 Associate Members.



AFPPD-SLPPD National Inception Workshop February 16-17, 2017 Negombo, Sri Lanka

PARTICIPANT STATISTICS Total: 52

Members of Parliament: 22
Male: 20
Female: 2

Government Officials: 8
Resource Persons: 6
National Secretariat Staff: 10
AFPPD Staff: 6



Regional Parliamentarians' Conference on Combatting Human Trafficking March 21-22, 2017 Bangkok, Thailand

PARTICIPANT STATISTICS Total: 106

Members of Parliament: 39
Male: 17
Female: 22

Parliamentary and Government Staff: 16
Resource Persons: 24
Observers: 14
SAIEVAC Staff: 3
AFPPD Staff: 10

AFPPD's UPCOMING EVENTS

AFPPD-LAPPD Parliamentarians Workshop
30-31 May 2017, Vientiane, Lao PDR

AFPPD Central Asian Sub-Regional Conference
28-29 June 2017, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan



AFPPD would like to thank our donors, National Committees and Members of Parliament for their valuable support throughout 2017. AFPPD would also like to thank Ms. Daphne Hazel P. Valdez, PLCPD; Aizhan Aaliyeva, PA to Hon. Osmonbek Artykbayev; Ms. Vũ Thị Bình Minh, VAPPD; Hon. Dr. Bhisma Nath Adhikari, NFPPD; for their contributions to this First Quarter Newsletter.

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