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Quarterly Newsletter

The Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development

January



Fourth Annual UNFPA-AFPPD National Committees Planning Session

Strengthening partnerships between national committees and UNFPA country offices was the core objective of the 'Fourth Annual UNFPA-AFPPD National Committees Planning Session' last January 28-29, 2015 in Bangkok, Thailand. The two-day meeting gathered over 40 participants that include parliamentarians, representatives of national committees, partner organisations and representatives of UNFPA country offices. Sessions of the planning meeting were designed to encourage collaborative efforts in implementing the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of action into the post 2015 development framework. *Continued on page 2 ».*



Keynotes from the Chair at the 4th UNFPA-AFPPD NatComm Planning Session

- As we enter into an ageing society, universal health is becoming a more important concept and needs to be carefully considered and designed to create a comfortable, fair and equitable society;

- We need to look at the breakdown of achievements in MDGs because while they show an overall improvement, there is also a widening gap evident at the sub-national level;

- Data is essential to frame arguments for pushing improvements to population change, and AFPPD and its network can contribute in this aspect;

- We urge National Committees to explore new alternatives by finding and establishing partnerships with alternative parliamentarian groups besides AFPPD network. e.g. ASEAN Inter-parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) Then, identify champions within these other networks;

- ICPD agenda is vulnerable not from growing opposition but the risk of dilution of position and range of issues it covers in a more universal and horizontal space. Hence there is a need to focus on showing the relevance of ICPD agenda for other inter-governmental processes;

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February



International Steering Committee Meeting: 8th APCRSR

The International Steering Committee for the 8th Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights met at Nay Pyi Daw, Myanmar on February 4, 2015. This meeting is a follow up to the meeting last September 4, 2014 when initial agenda for the Nay Pyi Daw meeting was set. *Continued on page 3 ».*

March



Timor Leste, Law against Domestic Violence discussed on Women's Day

Timor Leste had a meaningful celebration of the 2015 International Day of Women (March 8). As part of the campaign to fully implement the Beijing Declaration Platform of Action, Centre for Capacity Building and Information on Gender Equality (CEGEN) at the Parliament of Timor-Leste and the Grupo das Mulheres Parlamentares de Timor-Leste Women's Group of the Parliament of

Continued on page 3 ».

»»» Keynotes from the Chair



Hon. Takemi addressing the plenary during his lecture.

- AFPPD needs to equip parliamentarians with strong arguments in support of adequately placing ICPD agenda in the broader and horizontal SDG framework;
- Accountability is key characteristic of the post 2015 space, and parliamentarians should keep actors accountable;
- AFPPD has an advantage by working with Central Asia because it is shared between Asia and Europe. This strategic position helps to bridge the link between Asia and Europe;
- Nepal's history of success had been through the use of national level advocacy;
- Cambodia suggests to strengthen the capacity of the central information database so that parliamentarians can access and make use of the information in their advocacy work;
- The Cook Islands is focused on modernizing the Family Law Bill through the use of consultation workshops to gather feedback and support for the Bill in parliament;
- Let's make a suggestion to resolve disconnect between national advocates and the permanent missions by approaching the individuals who are making the statement rather than waiting for the meeting in New York City.

»»» Fourth Annual UNFPA-AFPPD...

"AFPPD and UNFPA recognise the value of bridging parliamentarians' ICPD work with the work of UNFPA country offices," said Ms. Kochkina, AFPPD Programme Specialist for Central Asia. "Consolidated efforts and joint resources are essential to successfully integrate ICPD Programme of Action issues into the Post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)," she added.

Hon. Keizo Takemi, MP of Japan and Chair of AFPPD, pointed out the need for AFPPD to equip parliamentarians with

strong arguments that support placing ICPD agenda in the broader and horizontal SDG framework. 2015 marks the end of ICPD Programme of Action and the commencement of the Post 2015 SGD.

Universal Healthcare: An Important Concept in Ageing Society

Hon. Takemi, who is an expert on global health and development issues, gave a brief lecture on universal healthcare. He explained that universal healthcare is becoming a more important concept that needs to be considered in population dynamics especially in ageing societies. Hon. Takemi explained that a universal healthcare system should be one that both supports

in their advocacy. The political mapping workshop on the first day set the mood for the second day's sub-regional and national advocacy planning.

AFPPD – UNFPA Program based Partnership 2015 and Beyond

UNFPA has two main goals in working with parliamentarians in line with implementing ICPD Programme of Action and with linking goals of Post 2015. These goals are: to create an enabling environment at the national level; and to advocate for resource allocation such that the project is implemented. UNFPA's work is also increasingly on advocacy, policy and also knowledge management. Knowledge



South Asian NatCom and MP doing stakeholder analysis.

public health and provides a foundation for sustainable economic growth. He suggests that in developing universal healthcare, countries should create a seamless process that takes into account the young population and the ageing population. "Policies on universal health should be carefully designed to create a comfortable, fair and equitable society," added Hon. Takemi.

Strategic Sessions

The two-day event was a combination of workshops and sharing and planning sessions. There were six strategic sessions that included sharing of learning and best practices on ICPD and Millennium Development Goals (MDG), and workshops on stakeholder analysis and on messaging and communications, sub-regional planning and on monitoring and evaluation.

The objective of the sharing sessions were: to create a shared understanding of the need to integrate ICPD into the Post 2015 Agenda; to share common and best advocacy practices and learning; and to foster stronger relationships between national committees and representatives of UNFPA Country Offices. Specific workshops on communication and stakeholder analysis were designed to give participants first-hand experience into creating an advocacy message and medium that they can use

management is seen as particularly significant in forming messages to the public that are evidence based.

Recommendations

At the end of the two-day planning, key recommendations were made to strengthen the relationship and the advocacy work of the national committees and UNFPA Country Offices. These recommendations are:

- To create a knowledge management system that would facilitate inquiring and sharing of information among and between the national committees and UNFPA Country Offices. This knowledge management system requires situational analysis and needs assessment of countries.
- To increase the capacity of national committees and to bridge the knowledge gap of moving from MDGs to SDGs. National committees need to be able to access, interpret and use data. Recommendation included the need to strengthen the implementation of bottom up budgeting approach that addresses the realities and challenges.
- To revise AFPPD's monitoring and evaluation forms. The national committee unanimously agrees that M&E information is essential, however, the questions and the structure needs to be revised to meet its purpose.

>>> International Steering Committee Meeting...

The meeting concluded with the review and updating of the membership of Scientific sub-committee of the Local Organizing Committee, finalisation of theme and objectives, proposals of meeting tracks and a finalised list of sub-committee members, reviewers, chairpersons and co-Chairpersons for the 8th APCRSHR.

AFPPD was represented by Mr. John Hyde, who stressed the importance of the role of parliamentarians in providing sustainable solution the issues surrounding reproductive and sexual health and rights (RSHR).

PLCPD: Media series on MDGs, Women's Health and Rights, Children's Rights and HIV/AIDS

The Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development (PLCPD) organised a press conference entitled "From the Millennium Development Goals to the Post-2015 Development Agenda: Marami pang Dapat Gawin (There is still much to be done)" on February 24 at Quezon City, Philippines. This event is the first of PLCPD's series of media activities. The series is called "Closing gaps, expanding opportunities: a kapihan (café) series on various issues of our time," which aims to discuss various human development issues including the MDGs, women's health and rights, HIV and AIDS, and children's rights.

During the press conference, National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) representative Mr. Michael Provido, Department of Health (DOH) Assistant Secretary Enrique Tayag, AAMBIS-Owa Party List representative and AFPPD Champion Sharon Garin and PLCPD Executive Director Mr. Romeo Dongeto discussed Philippines' progress in achieving the MDGs and the country's preparations for the post-2015 global development agenda.

Representative Sharon Garin lamented that while Congress has passed laws in the last 14 years that aim to contribute in achieving the country's MDG targets, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done. "Congress remains committed in crafting laws that will help us meet our national targets. The challenge, however, to meet our MDG targets is not the sole burden of the government. It is upon each and every one of us to contribute in our own little ways to this huge endeavour. Now more than ever, we, the key stakeholders in society—the government, the business sector, civil society, mass media—should join hands to drum up our efforts to achieve our MDGs," said Rep. Garin.

"We have to make sure that our efforts address the different needs of different sectors in our society and more effort should be invested for those who need the extra hand. Inclusive growth means no sector will be left behind as our country moves to achieve our

development targets," she added.

Mr. Dongeto discussed the MDG targets that the Philippines are not achieving. These targets include reducing maternal deaths (MDG5 target) and halting the spread of HIV (MDG6 target). He pointed out that in the 2011 Family Health Survey, maternal mortality ratio in the Philippines is 221 deaths per 100,000, which increased from 162 in 2008 and is a far cry from the MDG5 target of only 52 deaths per 100,000 live births by 2015. He aired his concern on the alarming increase of new cases of HIV in the country. The latest DOH HIV and AIDS Registry confirms 6,011 new HIV cases in the country in 2014. 5,758 or 96% of the 6,011 new cases were male, and the age group 20-29 year old had 58% of the cases.

"You know something is not working for our women, our mothers, and our young people when we have figures like these—increasing maternal deaths and increasing new HIV cases—at a time when everything else [is reported to be] improving everywhere else," he added.

Dongeto also echoed the sentiment of Congresswoman Garin. "We have to make sure that the progress we've been making is inclusive and does not exclude any sector in society. Be it in the area of health or gender equality, we should examine our progress and gaps across all regions, all age groups, all economic classes.

IAPPD-FPA India joint meeting for MDG, SRHR advocacy

The Indian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (IAPPD) partnered with the Family Planning Association of India in gathering parliamentarians from different political parties to discuss sexual and reproductive health and rights particularly on maternal and reproductive health. The meeting was held on February 26, 2015 at New Delhi, India.

AFPPD Champion parliamentarian and IAPPD Vice Chairperson Hon. Viplove Thakur, MP in India, presided the meeting. 12 members of Parliament, 9 technical experts from IAPPF and senior officers of FPA India were attended the meeting.

With only months until the deadline of the Millennium Development Goals, IAPPD and FPA India call upon legislators to seriously attend to the target set in the MDGs. According to the meeting's organizers India is still far behind achieving the MDGs. The meeting aimed to create champions among the elected representatives and garner support for sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The meeting concluded with Parliamentarians' promise to raise awareness on sexual and reproductive health and rights both on the floor of the Parliament House and at the grass-root level.

>>> Timor Leste...

Timor-Leste (GMPTL), with support from UN WOMEN, organized simultaneous study tour to celebrate the special day for women. The study tour included visits to three districts including Baucau, Manufahi and Viqueque districts.

Simultaneous to the educational trip, GMPTL organized a seminar entitled 'Sensitize Public on Law Against Domestic Violence (LADV).' The purpose of the seminar is to disseminate information on the legislation, to improve the implementation of LADV and to evaluate the implementation of Beijing Declaration Platform of Action in Timor-Leste. The seminar was designed to gather the thoughts and insights of women and men in the rural areas on LADV and use their suggestions to improve the implementation of the legislation.

Issues raised during the seminar included: the risky situation of having the police station located far from the victims' houses; women's economic dependency to their husbands that create challenges for women to proceed their domestic violence cases to the court; the lack of access to transport and communication to proceed cases; and the locality's inadequate knowledge of the law against domestic violence.

The seminar was well attended. The total participants was 412, of which 232 were women. The participants include 16 MPs, Prosecutors, District Administrators, local authorities including Sub-district Administrators, SUCO council members, Civil Security Officers, PNTL, SEM Focal Points, staff of MSS, members of District Women Associations, PDHJ, district youth representatives, local NGOs, FOKUPERS, UN Women, students, women and men from community.

The grassroots community presented three recommendations to the parliamentarians and the other government officials present on the event. These recommendations are: allocation and approval of budget to implement LADV adequately; establishment of shelters; and allocation of budget for transport for VPU.

Eliminating child marriage in Australia

In March 2015, the Attorney-General Michael Keenan introduced legislation to clarify that children under the age of 16 are presumed incapable of consenting to marriage. This means that anyone who forces a person under 16 to enter a marriage, including those arranging or officiating at a marriage, will be breaking the law. For a person aged between 16 and 18 to get married, they will need the approval of a court of law.

The Government is also increasing penalties for people found guilty of forcing a girl into marriage from four years imprisonment to seven. These and other changes will bring the penalties for forced and under age marriage in line with the most serious anti-slavery provisions under the Australian criminal code.

The Government has provided \$350,000 to Anti-Slavery Australia to expand its legal advice service to assist people

March

facing forced marriage. The Government has also launched the Forced Marriage Community Pack, which provides information and resources on forced or underage marriage to frontline officers, such as police and medical practitioners, community organisations, government agencies and vulnerable groups. This Pack builds on the almost \$500,000 provided for civil society organisations in July 2014 for projects to prevent and address forced marriage.

Throughout April and May the Government will host a series of workshops in each capital city to raise awareness of forced and underage marriage amongst frontline officers and service providers.

Putting Youth at the heart of Bangladesh's Development

The Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat and the United Nations Population Fund country office in Bangladesh organized a round table discussion entitled 'Challenges and Opportunities of the Demographic Transition in Bangladesh: Prioritizing Investments in Youth' in March 31, 2015 at the Bangladesh Parliament. This conference is part of the 'Strengthening Parliament's Capacity in Integrating Population Issues into Development' (SPCPD) project that is funded by UNFPA Bangladesh.



The conference aimed at sensitizing and motivating parliamentarians on the need to consider youth as high priority in drafting policies and implementing programs in the country. Bangladesh has huge young population that affects the country's demographic transition. 51 participants including members of parliament, high-level government officials of the Parliament Secretariat and selected ministers, academics, civil society organisations, journalists and other stakeholders attended the event.

Population planning expert and Country Director Population Council Dr. Ubaidur Rob made the key note presentation. Dr. Rob discussed the status of the country's demographic transition and its relations to the demographic dividend and to the country's economy. His recommendations included: drafting and implementation of labour market policies that encourage employment; investment in healthcare and education; enforcing policies that enable girls to go to technical/vocational schools; educating girls to delay pregnancy and

marriage; investment on infrastructure and facilities that would boost economic growth; legitimate and efficient policy environment; sustainable solution to income and social inequality; prioritising youth in developing policies and programs among many others.

The Chairperson of the conference was Hon. Convener, Sub-Committee, Youth Development, BAPPD Ms. Sanjida Khanam, MP. Conference was inaugurated by Hon. Chief Whip and respected member of BAPPD Mr. A.S.M. Feroz MP. Special guests included Hon. Whip and BAPPD member Ms. Mahbub Ara Begum Gini MP, Hon. Former Minister of Health and Family Welfare and BAPPD member Dr. A.F.M. Ruhul Haque MP and Mr. Pranab Chakraborty, Additional Secretary (IPA), Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat who was moderator of the conference discussions.

The conference concluded with a set of recommendations that included: recognised need to allocate budget to education and health; cooperation in dealing with urban health; parliamentarians must find ways to create jobs in their regions; social welfare initiatives that will benefit the youth, children, persons with disabilities, and the other marginalised groups; establishment of youth development centers that provide technical and vocational skills; inclusion or reproductive and sex education into school curriculums; and the need to urgently make affirmative actions among many others.

JPPF's General Assembly Meeting: Welcoming UNFPA's Executive Director

The Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population (JPPF) welcomed two distinguished guests to its General Assembly meeting held on March 17: Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and Mr. Arthur Erken, Director of UNFPA's Asia and the Pacific Regional Office, who were visiting Japan at the time.



Hon. Sadakazu Tanigaki, JPPF Chair, gave the opening address, in which he noted that the Earth's population was projected to exceed 9 billion by 2050, which will present the world with serious environmental and food security issues. He also noted that at the same time, as many countries such as Japan faced aging populations, action would be needed to build societies with older populations that remained economically vibrant. This, he said, stressed how important

it was for the "JPPF, as the world's first non-partisan parliamentarians' group to concern itself with the issues of population and development, to fulfill a more active role in tackling population issues, which are growing ever more diverse".

Dr. Osotimehin followed with a speech in which he expressed his thanks for the financial and political support that Japan has given to UNFPA since it was founded, and he praised JPPF for the important role it has undertaken in the work of parliamentarians in the field of population and development throughout the world.

Following his participation in the 3rd World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan, Dr. Osotimehin emphasized that "to reduce the risk of disasters and for the recovery of affected regions, we must place women and girls at the center of rebuilding not as victims, but as individuals who hold the key to solutions". Given how essential it is to provide expectant and nursing mothers with services even in the midst of disasters, and given furthermore that gender-based violence tends to increase in the circumstances that disasters throw up, he appealed for stronger measures to deal with this problem. In addition to these issues, Dr. Osotimehin also called on JPPF to lobby the Japanese government to have areas such as women's and girls' rights, women's empowerment, and young people's access to reproductive health (RH) services, incorporated into the Post-2015 Development Agenda, which is scheduled to be adopted in September of this year.

Hon. Aiko Shimajiri, Secretary-General of JPPF, then took over to guide the meeting, sharing with the members present a report of JPPF's activities for FY2014. Presentations were then given by Teruhiko Mashiko and Hiroyuki Nagahama, JPPF Vice-Chairs also present at the meeting, with respect to the Japan Trust Fund (JTF) project in Zambia carried out by APDA in September.



Mr. Mashiko reported that this project had contributed to raising ODA accountability and transparency in the field of population and development in developing countries including in Africa, and had therefore given momentum to advancing good governance and democracy in these countries. Giving a specific example, he said that seven years ago there was no reporting of ODA in the parliaments of almost all the countries of African parliamentarians participating in the

project, which made it difficult to get hold of ODA information. Today, however, legislation has been adopted in Uganda and Zambia to implement such parliamentary reporting, and in Kenya through the participating parliamentarian the project is contributing to a process to amend the country's constitution, alongside a motion that has been introduced to provide legislation on this topic.

Mr. Mashiko explained that the project had yielded one result or another in all the countries participating in the project, including India where a relevant proposal has been submitted to the country's President, and Indonesia where discussions are underway on introducing relevant legislation.

Through his observing of a project to provide young Zambians with access to RH services, Hon. Nagahama noted how important it was to gain an understanding of how young people themselves think and act on this issue. He also noted that the project had allowed for knowledge and information-sharing on the Banana Paper project, which is contributing to reducing poverty among Zambian women and to their participation in society. Hon. Nagahama described this project as being very significant.

Hon. Keizo Takemi, Executive Director of JFPF and Chair of the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD), then reported that AFPPD had set up a special task force which was introducing changes designed to bring AFPPD's secretariat in line with certain standards so as to improve its governance, transparency and accountability.

Hon. Ryuhei Kawada, a JFPF Director, is currently a member of the Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS in the Asia-Pacific Region of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). Concerning his work in Japan, he has been promoting the development of laws to protect the health of women over the course of their lives, and he stated that in the future he would like to provide more active cooperation in this area both at home and abroad, for example by participating in conferences and other events.

On a motion tabled by Sadakazu Tanigaki, the Chair of JFPF, a resolution was adopted approving JFPF's activities plan and proposed budget for FY2015. With respect to new office bearer appointments, a resolution was adopted appointing Hon. Ichiro Aisawa, currently a Vice-Chair of JFPF, as Senior Vice-Chair, and Hon. Keizo Takemi, Executive Director of JFPF, as Chair of the International Cooperation Committee. A further resolution was adopted delegating the appointment of other office bearers to the Chair, who would receive recommendations in that regard from each party.

NZPPD's New Chair and Vice Chair

The New Zealand Parliamentarians' Group on Population and Development (NZPPD) is now fully formed after members elected Barbara Kuriger, National Party Member of Parliament, as Chairperson in March. Barbara is supported by longstanding NZPPD member Kevin Hague in his role as Vice-Chair.

Tackling forced labour and human trafficking

In December 2014 the Australian Government announced a suite of measures to tackle human trafficking, slavery and forced marriage. The National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Slavery 2015-19 sets the aims of Australia's whole-of-community response to human trafficking and slavery over the next five years and provides measures to monitor the impact and effectiveness of efforts to combat these crimes both here and internationally.

The Australian Government's Support for Trafficked People Program provides individualised case management support and helps people access a range of services for accommodation, financial support, counselling, medical treatment, legal and migration advice and interpreter services

In June 2014 the Australian Government joined the international community in supporting a new International Labour Organisation Protocol seeking to eliminate forced labour, including human trafficking and slavery. Almost 21 million people still experience forced labour each year, with over half of these people coming from the Asia-Pacific region. Fifty-five percent of victims are women and girls and one quarter are under the age of 18.

Hon Dr Sharman Stone, Chair of the Australian Parliamentary Group on Population and Development, Chair Women's Committee, AFPPD

AFPPD Champion Parliamentarians Push for SRHR priorities in Kyrgyzstan

Central Asian parliamentarians made a strong push for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights at the recent National Women's Forum of Kyrgyzstan.

Over 1200 participants from government, civil society organisations, rural health care specialists and experts attended the conference held on March 2-3 in the Kyrgyzstan capital Bishkek.

Hon. Damira Niyazalieva, Vice Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan and Hon. Nadira Narmatova, Vice-Speaker of the Parliament, were key speakers at the forum's thematic session on "Women's and Girls' Health." Both women leaders are Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) champions on International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) issues.

Hon. Niyazalieva spoke about the efforts to initiate and promote the Reproductive Rights Bill in Kyrgyzstan and the need for better access to sexuality and reproductive health education and services, especially for young girls.

In her speech, Hon. Narmatova acknowledged the contributions of AFPPD in advancing this Reproductive Rights Bill. The Kyrgyz parliamentarian acknowledged her participation at two of AFPPD's advocacy and capacity building conferences: the AFPPD Central Asian Parliamentarians Conference on ICPD Issues in November 2014 in Almaty and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) – AFPPD National Committees Planning Session in January 2015 in Bangkok.

Ms Nurbubu Kerimova of the Kyrgyz Alliance on Reproductive Health, which is a key partner of AFPPD in the country, acknowledged AFPPD's and UNFPA's role in advocating for the SRHR Bill's adoption in the official presentation of Hon. Damira Niyazalieva at the 47th UN Session on Population and Development at UN New York in April 2014.

"Policymakers, especially members of the parliament, have an important role in women's empowerment," said Hon. Damira Niyazalieva at the Forum.

The Reproductive Rights Bill in Kyrgyzstan is still under discussion in Parliament but its support is growing. Mdm. Raisa Atambayeva, the First Lady of the country, expressed her support for the bill and said she will continue to advocate for it. She noted its importance from the perspective of a health care specialist and women.

The newly promoted Parliamentary Chair of Committee on Social Issues Hon. Mr. Sakebayev also committed to involve more male parliamentarians in advancing the bill.



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From
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AFPPD is supported by the United Nations Population Fund and the Japanese Trust Fund

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We would like to thank Ms. Nenita Dalde, **Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development Foundation, Inc.**, Mr. Khondker Zakiur Rahman, **Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat**, Ms. Olivia Sarmiento, **CEGEN**, Ms. Alexandra Lamb, **Australian Parliamentary Group on Population and Development (PGPD)**, Ms. Viktoria Degerman, **The New Zealand Parliamentarians' Group on Population and Development (NZPPD)**, Ms. Hitomi Tsunekawa, **Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population and Indian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development** for your contributions to this quarterly newsletter.