



PRESS RELEASE

The First Lao PDR National Parliamentary Workshop with AFPPD Successfully Concluded in Vientiane



The first AFPPD-LAPPD National Parliamentary SDGs Workshop in Vientiane brought together Parliamentarians and government representatives from Lao PDR, experts from non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies. (Photo: AFPPD)

VIENTIANE, 31 May 2017 – Over 25 Lao Members of Parliament and Vice-Ministers committed themselves to intensify their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the first parliamentary workshop co-organized by the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) and its member national committee, the Lao Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (LAPPD), in Vientiane, Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR).

In the opening session of the workshop, AFPPD Executive Director, Dr. Mika Marumoto, stressed the role of parliamentarians as catalyst of change in advancing the SDGs. “Parliamentarians play a crucial role in adapting the global development agenda to the national and local levels. They have the power to amend relevant laws and policies, monitor its implementation and allocate budgets to priority development and population issues.”

Participating parliamentarians and government representatives highlighted major challenges in implementing legislation and policies related to gender equality and women’s empowerment, investing in youth and active ageing.

"Legislation and budget allocation are crucial to addressing issues of women and girls. However, we must work harder to make people understand the root causes of the issues such as gender-

based violence and gender inequality in order to change their behaviors,” said Hon. Mr. Savanhkhone Lasamonti, Member of the National Assembly of Lao PDR.

Ms. Frederika Meijer, UNFPA Lao Country Office Representative, acknowledged Lao PDR’s development efforts over the last decades. She reiterated, however, that investing further in education and health, including ensuring sexual reproductive health and rights for adolescent girls, is among the keys to achieving sustainable development in Lao PDR. She introduced the Noi campaign which addresses the need to invest more in adolescent girls. Noi is one of the most popular names for girls in Lao PDR. The country has the earliest age of marriage and the highest adolescent birth rate in the region.

Introducing the voices of adolescent girls and parents who married off their daughters at the age of 14-15, Ms. Mona Girgis, Country Director of Plan International Lao PDR, warned that some deep-rooted cultural barriers often push ill-informed girls to opt for early marriage themselves. She reminded the parliamentarians of the need for evidence-based urgent actions and the importance of targeted advocacy work to prevent early, child and forced marriage.

The workshop concluded successfully with all parliamentary participants sharing their action plans and commitments to conduct parliamentary advocacy to address the shared strategic priority issues of AFPPD and LAPPD: gender equality and women’s empowerment, child marriage, investing in youth, and healthy and active ageing. LAPPD President, Hon. Dr. Somphou Douangsavanh, urged Lao parliamentarians to continue to work together towards the common agenda of sustainable development. “Our collective efforts will help support Lao PDR to achieve its major goal of graduating from the Least Developed Countries (LDC) status by 2020,” he added.

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The AFPPD-LAPPD Parliamentarians Workshop: Legislating for the Full Achievement of the SDGs/ICPD Goals and Targets, was supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

Background: AFPPD is a network of 29 parliamentary committees from across the Asia-Pacific region. AFPPD advocates for parliamentary action and change, in support of population and development issues: gender equality and women’s empowerment including sexual and reproductive health and rights; investing in youth; active ageing; and population dynamics.

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