



Happy New Year!

Newsletter

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The Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development

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AFPPD Multi-Country Advocacy Workshop in New Delhi

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AFPPD Workshop on ICPD and SDGs in Tajikistan

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International Conference on Universal Health Coverage in Tokyo

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Kazakhstan MPs discuss population issues in SDG era at AFPPD Workshop



Hon. Mme. Aitkul Samakova, MP, Kazakhstan, and Vice-Chair, AFPPD

On 12-13 November 2015, the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) convened a workshop on “Legislating for the Full Achievement of the SDGs/ICPD Goals and Targets,” focusing on Kazakhstan. The workshop was co-hosted by the Social Council under the Nur Otan Party in the Lower House of the Parliament of Kazakhstan. The Social Council is chaired by **Hon. Mme. Aitkul Samakova, Member of Parliament (MP) and Vice-Chair of the AFPPD.** The main goal of the workshop was to better inform MPs on SDGs and the ICPD agenda focusing on national priorities. In total, 26 participants attended the workshop, including 13 MPs, 5 government officials, three parliament staff, two CSO representatives, and UNFPA and UNESCO representatives.

Kazakhstan has one of the largest territories in the world with very low population density. Among the country’s priorities are to prevent population decline and improve overall living standards. Investing in human capital throughout the life course of people’s lives remains the country’s top most priority. **“Kazakhstan has reformed its health care programs, including maternal health care. As a result, the maternal mortality**

rate decreased from 55 per 100,000 live births in 1999 to 11.8 in 2015. Further decreases in maternal and infant mortality rates, a reduction in the age gap (life expectancy) between men and women, and protection of family are among our future priorities,” said Hon. Mme. Aitkul Samakova in her opening speech.

At the workshop, AFPPD introduced the policy mix of some Western

European countries that enabled them to reverse fertility declines, namely, strong gender-sensitive policies with access to family planning at the core. Despite prevailing myths, family planning has not resulted in lower birth rates in these countries.

Kazakhstan’s achievements in gender equality are widely acknowledged. The World Bank Group’s publication *Women, Business and the Law 2016* ranks Kazakhstan among the best performing countries in terms of gender equality. Yet, the participants at the workshop agreed that much remains to be done to improve gender-related legislation and policy implementation, including access to family planning.

Kazakhstan also faces huge challenges related to youth reproductive health. **Mr. Raimbek Sissemaliev, UNFPA Assistant Representative in Kazakhstan,** warned that teenage pregnancy would cost Kazakhstan approximately US\$100 million within the next 5 years. He presented the result of a five-year pilot programme on comprehensive sexuality education in the eastern region of Kazakhstan. Contrary to common myths, comprehensive sexuality education did not promote



Mr. Raimbek Sissemaliev, UNFPA Assistant Representative in Kazakhstan

risk behavior among young people. For the control group with no sexuality education offered, sexual debut came earlier, while it stayed at the same level or even decreased for the experimental group who participated in classes on sexual and reproductive health. The level of awareness on HIV protection also increased among the group with sexuality education.

In response to questions raised by MPs on the implementation of comprehensive sexuality education, **Dr. Mika Marumoto, AFPPD Executive Director**, recommended that Kazakhstan come up with its own best scenario of providing comprehensive sexuality education. **“Soliciting ideas and understanding from key parents’ groups may be a key to success. Other effective methods may include integrating sexuality education into a broader “healthy lifestyle throughout one’s life course” curriculum, together with addressing other pressing health related issues such as alcohol consumption among youth,”** responded Dr. Marumoto.

“I was very skeptical about benefits of offering reproductive health education at school,” said **Hon. Ms. Gulmira Issinbayeva**. **“But now, after the**



Hon. Ms. Gulmira Issinbayeva, MP, Kazakhstan

workshop I have a different view about comprehensive sexuality education. It may work and be beneficial if the curriculum is properly developed and teachers are well-trained. Medical experts should also be invited to speak to students.”

Kazakhstan MPs also showed a keen interest in the topic of active ageing. Currently, Kazakhstan is a pre-ageing society, with those who are 65 years or older accounting for 6.8% of the

population. Yet there is no specific policy for elderly care except for the existing pension schemes. Dr. Marumoto cited one projection that it would take Kazakhstan 60 years (1994-2054) to become an aged society with the elderly population accounting for 14%. “Yet now it is the right time for Kazakhstan to learn lessons from other countries that have gone through the stages of being aging, aged and super-aged societies. Kazakhstan can consider and choose proper ageing policies, in a broader national social security framework for healthy life for all throughout their life cycle,” said Dr. Marumoto.

The AFPPD workshop produced a set of recommendations for Kazakhstan’s action plan. Among the priority topics were increasing access to reproductive health services and information for young people, developing healthy ageing policies, and enabling policymakers to access reliable demographic data for effective policy implementation and monitoring. **The recommendations will be presented to the Deputy Prime Minister on Social Affairs and the Presidential Administration.**

Link:<http://www.inform.kz/rus/article/2838345>
(In Russian language)



Dr. Mika Marumoto, Executive Director, AFPPD





AFPPD Multi-Country Advocacy Workshop in New Delhi

On 30 November - 1 December, the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD), in collaboration with the Indian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (IAPPD), organized a Training Workshop for Parliamentarians and Parliamentary Staff on Prioritizing ICPD in the SDGs in New Delhi. The workshop was attended by 18 members of parliament and parliamentary staff from four countries, Afghanistan, Bhutan, India and Indonesia, as well as representatives from IPPF SARO and the Family Planning Association of India. **Vice-Chair of IAPPD Hon. Mrs. Viplove Thakur, MP India**, opened the workshop, which was facilitated by a consultant Ms. Lucy Jones.

The training was intended to strengthen parliamentarians' advocacy skills and capacity to address ICPD issues within the new development agenda. The training used two AFPPD materials that carry key messages, and include information and tools that can be used to advocate for ICPD in the national SDGs planning process: *The Parliamentarian Resource Kit on SRHR and Population and Development Links in Asia and the Pacific*; and *the Advocacy Manual for*



Hon. Mrs. Viplove Thakur, MP India, flanked by Ms. Lucy Jones and AFPPD Executive Director Mika Marumoto

Asia-Pacific Parliamentarians Advancing Population and Development Issues beyond 2015.

Overall, the workshop highlighted the importance of raising the visibility of issues pertaining to the ICPD agenda, as well as methods for messaging and using evidence in the national context for advocacy purposes. This workshop

provided key 'take away' messages that participants can use to strengthen their advocacy work to ensure that national SDG plans and monitoring frameworks are strong and inclusive.

Advocacy materials are available at www.afppd.org/resources.php
A short video from the workshop: www.youtube.com/watch?v=VpHSTMHLE44





AFPPD Workshop on ICPD and SDGs in Tajikistan



Hon. Mrs. Khayriniso Yusufi, Vice-Speaker of the Lower House of the Parliament of Tajikistan; Chair of National Committee of Tajikistan on Population and Development

On 3-4 December 2015, AFPPD convened a workshop in Dushanbe on “Legislating for the Full Achievement of the SDGs/ICPD Goals and Targets,” focusing on Tajikistan. It was the second AFPPD workshop in Tajikistan, for the first time in seven years. The workshop gathered a variety of stakeholders, including 14 Members of Parliament (MPs), seven representatives from the Government of Tajikistan, three Parliament staff, two CSOs and three UNFPA staff members from the Country Office, for a total of 29 participants. The workshop was hosted by the National Committee of Tajikistan on Population and Development, spearheaded by Hon. Mrs. Khayriniso Yusufi, Vice-Speaker of the Lower House of the Parliament of Tajikistan.

Hon. Mrs. Yusufi is a charismatic leader who was able to bring together MPs from different Standing Committees, including the Committees on Social Issues and Healthcare, Education and Science, Economics and Finance, Legislation and Human rights. In 2014, Hon. Mrs. Yusufi initiated the National Committee on Population and Development as a platform for multi-sectorial dialogue. She has been successful in mobilizing not only MPs but also Government representatives to become members of the National Committee, including: Ms. Lola Bobohodjjeva, First Deputy Minister of Health and Social Protection, Mr. Emin Sanginzoda, First Deputy Minister of Labour, Migration and Employment, Mrs. Tojiniso Mahmadova, Deputy Minister of

Education and Science, and Mrs. Gulnora Hasanova, Director of the National Statistics Agency. They all attended the workshop, together with other government officials.

At the workshop, AFPPD presented and discussed the newly adopted sustainable development goals (SDGs). AFPPD also presented international policy practices on gender, family planning and youth reproductive health. Transparency and accountability was given particular emphasis as one of the 17 SDGs, as well as a means to achieve SDGs. Discussions centered on how to collect accurate data and gather reliable evidence for policy monitoring. Over the past years, Tajikistan has made significant progress towards the achievement of the MDGs and ICPD goals. According to the

World Bank, Tajikistan's poverty rate has dropped from 70% to 30% over the past 20 years. Tajikistan has also achieved a significant decrease in maternal and infant mortality rates. Tajikistan also demonstrated innovative approach in legislation and policymaking, and the legislative portfolios on reproductive health, gender and youth have expanded over the last ten years. All the legislation is made in accordance with international norms and standards. However, policy implementation and monitoring remains a huge challenge.

All participants agreed that the workshop was timely and had a significant impact on their future work. They also called on AFPPD to conduct more national-level activities.



Hon. Mr. Sharif Rahimzoda, MP Tajikistan & Member of AFPPD Standing Committee on Investing in Youth

AFPPD Executive Director meeting with the Speaker of the Parliament, Tajikistan

On 3 December 2015, Dr. Mika Marumoto, AFPPD Executive Director, had a meeting with **Hon. Mr. Shukrojon Zhuhurov, Speaker of the Lower House of the Parliament in Tajikistan**. Honorable Speaker thanked AFPPD for collaboration over the years. Tajikistan became a member of the organization in 2001. He highlighted the accomplishments of Tajikistan in implementation of the 2000-2015 development agenda, including poverty reduction, increased access to reproductive health services, and improved status of women and women's political participation. He also highlighted AFPPD's support to the establishment of the new policy dialogue platform – the National Committee of Tajikistan on Population and Development initiated by Hon. Mrs. Khayriniso Yusufi.



Dr. Marumoto congratulated Tajikistan on its achievements of key MDGs. She particularly commended Tajikistan's National Committee on Population and Development for officially establishing a committee that brings together different stakeholders, including MPs, government representatives, CSOs and media. By creating a multi-sectoral platform, said Dr. Marumoto, Tajikistan has already met one of the prerequisites for successfully

Hon. Mr. Shukrojon Zhuhurov, Speaker of the Lower House of the Parliament in Tajikistan, welcomes AFPPD Executive Director Dr. Mika Marumoto

embarking on formulating implementation plans to achieve the 2030 development goals.

The Speaker and AFPPD Executive Director agreed that the main areas for future collaboration should center

on youth policy and universal health coverage.

Link:

<http://http.asiaplus.tj/en/news/tajik-parliament-speaker-affpd-head-discuss-cooperation-issues>

Key achievements of the National Committee of Tajikistan on Population and Development:

In 2013, a **Law on Domestic Violence** was adopted for the first time in Tajikistan. The law defines different types of violence, including physical, sexual, psychological, and economic. It sets up administrative measures to deal with domestic violence, including up to 15-day imprisonment and fines for offenders. The law was initiated and drafted by Hon. Khayriniso Yusufi, MP and the Chair of the National Committee of Tajikistan on Population and Development, a member of the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD). The draft law was passed after more than 10 years of struggle and advocacy work by different groups of stakeholders. Hon. Yusufi recognizes that one of the major challenges was to convince the Parliament, which is dominated by male parliamentarians with conservative views.

In 2014, a **new multi-stakeholder committee** was established at the National Committee of Parliamentarians'

initiative, bringing together MPs, CSOs, media, as well as Government representatives from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment, Committee on Youth, and National Statistics Agency. It operates within the Parliament structure. Among its members are MPs from the Standing Committees on Social Issues and Healthcare, Education and Science, Economics and Finance, Legislation and Human rights, among others.

In 2015, the **Law on Reproductive Rights** was amended to ensure better access to reproductive health education and services for young people. According to the new amendment, reproductive health education will be compulsory for students of 10th and 11th grade in secondary schools in Tajikistan. Reproductive health education has been a sensitive issue for Tajikistan's Islamic society. Yet, parliamentarians and government officials recognized the importance

of reproductive health education. "We need to pay special attention to reproductive health education in order to prevent sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies among adolescents," said the **Deputy Head of the Ministry of Health, Mr. Naseem Olimov**, during Parliament debates.

In 2015, the National Committee on Population and Development held a special session to discuss inclusion of a **budget line for contraceptives into the national budget**. As a result of this session, the Government of Tajikistan has agreed to create a special budget line for purchasing contraceptives. Previously, all contraceptive supplies were purchased by UNFPA for Tajikistan. However, starting from 2016, UNFPA will no longer be able to provide for the country's needs. Today, Tajikistan's unmet demand for contraception is at the 23% level, according to the World Bank.





International Conference on Universal Health Coverage in Tokyo

The international conference on universal health coverage (UHC), held 16-17 December 2015 in Tokyo, saw over 300 global leaders in the field of health and human security gather to debate global health challenges.

The Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE) and the Government of Japan convened the event, which was time to coincide with the celebration of **International Universal Health Coverage Day on 12 December**. That day has been designated by the international community since 2014. The conference attracted high-level political leaders, including Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Thailand's Minister of Public Health Piyasakol Sakolsatayadorn, as well as the heads of international organizations and philanthropic groups including the World Bank Group, World Health Organization, UNFPA, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, to name a few.

A key player in the organizing of this high-level UHC Conference was Japan's key parliamentary champion of UHC,

Hon. Prof. Keizo Takemi, Senior Fellow of JCIE and Chair of the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD). Prof. Takemi challenged all participants with a thought-provoking question: how best can each country maximize the utility of the vertical approach in tackling diseases such as malaria, HIV or polio, while strengthening horizontal health systems, including UHC approaches? Hon. Prof. Takemi was joined by AFPPD parliamentarians **Hon. Dr. Jetn Sirathranont (MP, Thailand)** and **Hon. Dr. Linabelle Ruth Villarica (MP, Philippines)**. Both of those countries are spearheading the implementation of UHC in order to achieve equitable access to quality health services, a higher level of financial risk protection, as well as improvement in the health systems' resilience and general capacities.

The UHC Conference --- held at a critical juncture following the recent adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and in the run-up to 2016's series of related global events such as Japan's G7 Ise-Shima Summit --- delivered useful outcomes and recommendations on UHC

in the new development era with a view to building resilient and sustainable health systems globally.



Chair Hon. Prof. Keizo Takemi, A Champion MP Advocating UHC



Hon. Dr. Jetn Sirathranont and Hon. Dr. Linabelle Ruth Villarica, with AFPPD Executive Director Mika Marumoto



From
the People of Japan

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