

# The 21<sup>st</sup> Asian Parliamentarians' Meeting on Population and Development

## *Population in Emergency Situations Parliamentarians' Response to Social and Economic Recovery*

The 21<sup>st</sup> Asian Parliamentarians Meeting on Population and Development was held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of April. The meeting was co-hosted by the Asian Population and Development Association and the Cambodia Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development.

The focus of this year's conference was Population in Emergency Situations and Parliamentarians' Response to Social and Economic Recovery. The conference drew together parliamentarians from Australia, Kingdom of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Fiji, New Zealand, China, India, Republic of South Korea, Kazakhstan, Japan, Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Philippines and Malaysia. As many of the countries in attendance had been severely impacted upon by the Boxing Day Tsunami or supportive of the relief effort this years theme was of great relevance to many in attendance.

Papers given at the two day conference highlighted ways in which population issues are exacerbated in emergency situations and the role parliamentarians can play during the social and economic recovery phases of disasters. Presentations given by Ms Imelda Henkin of UNFPA, Professor Osamu Kunii Nagasaki of the University Institute of Tropical Medicine and Dr Ouk Vathiny of the Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia all called on parliamentarians to ensure that the sexual and reproductive health needs of populations were not ignored in the aftermath of natural and man-made disasters and reminded participants that they are in fact vital elements of the rebuilding phase. Areas they highlighted as being vital in any emergency response included ensuring pregnant women have somewhere safe and clean to give birth, people still are able to access contraceptives and family planning, that HIV/AIDS patients are able to access treatments and that the safety of women and children is properly ensured.

Both Australian participants at the conference were actively involved in the conference. Ms Kelly Hoare MP spoke on "Parliamentarians' Role in Emergency Situation to Reconstruct the Living Conditions and Enhance Socio-Economic Development", and the Hon Dr Sharman Stone MP chaired a session on "Reproductive Health and Rights in International and Domestic Disputes".

For further information on population issues in emergency situations go to

[http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/issues/conflict\\_disasters/downloads/bn\\_tsunami\\_women.pdf](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what_we_do/issues/conflict_disasters/downloads/bn_tsunami_women.pdf)