

Parliamentary Group on Population and Development

Spring 2005



Welcome

Welcome to the first quarterly newsletter of the Parliamentary Group on Population and Development (PGPD). This issue covers PGPD activities over recent months.

There is a new PGPD web site, www.pgpd.asn.au, which is updated regularly with speeches by members, PGPD newsletters, PGPD fact sheets and member information.

OUR MISSION

"The PGPD supports the empowerment of women and girls through our commitment to gender equality and the advancement of women as set out in the ICPD Programme of Action. We affirm that equality goes hand-in-hand with investments in sexual and reproductive health, education and economic opportunity. Taken together these investments can lift millions of people out of poverty."

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) State of the World Population Report Launch 2005

Each year the PGPD hosts the launch of the UNFPA State of World Population report. This year the Report was launched by Mr Ian Howie, UNFPA Representative in Vietnam, at a lunchtime function hosted by PGPD Hon Secretary Senator Marise Payne. Dame Carol Kidu MP, Minister for Community Development in PNG, gave the keynote address at the launch which was attended by the Hon Bruce Billson MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bob Sercombe MP, Shadow

Minister for Overseas Aid and Pacific Island Affairs, parliamentarians, members of the diplomatic corps, other UN agencies and academics. In introducing the report, Senator Payne gave a powerful speech on the importance of the MDGs and reproductive health in combating poverty. She stated that: *Investing in political, economic and educational opportunities for women and girls, yields quick wins and high pay-offs that lead to improved economic prospects, smaller families,* (cont. page 2)

Chair:

Michael Johnson MP (LIB)

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Senator Lyn Allison (DEM)
Senator Claire Moore (ALP)

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Ian Howie UNFPA with Dame Carol Kidu MP and Senator Marise Payne

The PGPD is grateful to the UNFPA, the Hewlett Foundation and the Packard Foundation for their support.

In Parliament

World Summit and the Millennium Development Goals

In the lead up to the World Summit in September, the PGPD joined international advocacy efforts to ensure that world leaders recommitted to meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Of particular note, the PGPD met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon Alexander Downer MP and wrote to Prime Minister John Howard urging the Australian Government to stand firm on its commitment to the MDGs. Additionally, PGPD Members Hon Bob McMullan MP, Kelly Hoare MP, Margaret May MP and Maria Vamvakinou MP spoke to a Private

“My particular interest in the MDGs is the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women in developing countries. Achieving this goal will protect the human rights of women, including their reproductive rights.” (Margaret May MP speaking in the House of Representatives)

Member’s Motion in the House of Representatives, which urged the Australian government to recommit its support for the MDGs and the fight against global poverty.

Senator Claire Moore also made three speeches in the Senate on the importance of the MDGs, stating:

We have to make sure that the federal government stands firm on the commitments it has made to the promotion and protection of the human rights of women and girls through gender equality and women’s empowerment.

State of the World Population Report continued from page 1

healthier and more literate children, lower HIV prevalence rates and reduced incidence of harmful traditional practices.

Ian Howie officially launched the report, and outlined its key themes in his speech, stating:

We cannot make poverty history until women enjoy their full social, cultural, economic and political rights. Nor can we make poverty history until we stop violence against women and girls. Those are the messages of this year’s report.

Following the launch of the Report, the Hon Bruce Billson MP issued a media release in full support of the Report.

“The report highlights the need for a greater focus on women, young people and population growth in developing countries... if women are not fully involved... you are tackling poverty with one arm tied behind your back.” (Hon Bruce Billson MP statement from media release in support of the Report)

Additionally, members in the Senate, Western Australian, South Australian, Tasmanian and New South Wales Parliaments put motions forward in their respective states highlighting the Report. The motions urged the Federal Government:

To continue to support the MDGs because they have led to significant improvements in women’s health, safety and economic participation and increase their share in the benefits of... economic growth.

Hon Michael Aird MLC, Leader of the Government in the Tasmanian Legislative Council, said in Parliament:

The reason for my raising this issue... is that it is a way of raising consciousness about issues which are facing the world... and that we have a need... a commitment to deal with these issues in any small way we can, even in the State of Tasmania. I hope that by raising this issue we can, in some way, put our own lives in the context of what is going on in the rest of the world.



Senator Marise Payne speaking at the launch

Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development

3rd Asian Women Parliamentarians Conference, Sri Lanka

Senator Claire Moore, Vice-Chair of PGPD, represented the Group at the 3rd Asian Women Parliamentarians' Conference held in Colombo, Sri Lanka in August. The theme of the conference was "Engendering MDGs".

This conference provided a forum for the exchange



Senator Claire Moore with Imelda Henkin, Deputy Executive Director UNFPA

of success stories and challenges in policymaking and program implementation relating to reproductive health, gender, and their linkages with the MDGs. Senator Moore also chaired the annual meeting of the AFPPD Standing Committee on Women.



Senator Claire Moore and Mrs Rafat Bayat MP from Iran

21st Asian Parliamentarians Meeting on Population and Development, Cambodia

Hon Dr Sharman Stone MP and Kelly Hoare, the Chair of the Standing Committee on Women for the AFPPD, attended the 21st Asian Parliamentarians Meeting on Population and Development: Population in Emergency, held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in April.

Hon Dr Stone chaired the session on "Reproductive Health and Rights in International and Domestic Disputes" and Ms Hoare presented a paper at the conference entitled "How can parliamentarians encourage their governments and aid agencies to include gender considerations in humanitarian assistance in emergency situations and disaster situations."

In her speech, Ms Hoare stated that:

With many competing demands and needs it is not surprising that issues regarding gender, reproductive health and family planning can become lost. As relief efforts are occurring we need to be questioning our governments and relief agencies: do women have all the sanitary supplies they need? Is there somewhere safe for pregnant women to give

birth? Are there adequate bathroom facilities, do they provide privacy for women? Are people safe in camps – free from all types of abuse and violence? Do women have the means available to them for preventing pregnancies? We need to be asking these questions, demanding answers to them.



Hon Dr Sharman Stone MP chairing session

Focus Group Discussion on SRH and MDGs, Philippines

Senator Claire Moore attended the Focus Group Discussion on Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) and MDGs held in Cebu, Philippines in June. This meeting aimed to provide parliamentarians with a

sound understanding of the links between SRH and the MDGs to assist in advocacy efforts leading up to the World Summit which was held in September.

Dame Carol Kidu MP Australian visit

On her recent visit to Australia Dame Carol Kidu MP met with the PGPD to discuss the dire HIV/AIDS and reproductive health situation in Papua New Guinea. Dame Carol gave an overview of key issues in the areas of community development and HIV/AIDS, and discussed the practicalities of policymaking in these fields. While in Australia, Dame Carol also met with the Hon Bruce Billson MP and Bob Sercombe MP to discuss her portfolio responsibilities and various issues affecting Papua New Guinea and the Pacific.

“In PNG issues to do with reproductive health are charged with irrational and moralistic emotional arguments that justify policies and laws that contribute to the poor health and death of many women and girls.” (Dame Carol Kidu in speech at the UNFPA report launch)



Dame Carol Kidu speaking at a forum on Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

White Paper Submission by the PGPD

The Australian Government is currently undertaking a review of its overseas aid program through the development of a new White Paper which will provide a medium-term blueprint for Australia's aid program.

The PGPD met with Hon Bruce Billson MP and Bruce Davis (Director-General, AusAID) to discuss the upcoming White Paper. PGPD members discussed population and Reproductive Health

issues, in particular the empowerment of women, prevention programs and services, the integration of HIV/AIDS programs with sexual and reproductive health programs, and the level of funding for population activities.

Based on the discussions at this meeting, the PGPD made a formal submission to the White Paper process, which is available on the PGPD website.

World Population Day 11th July

On World Population Day PGPD members supported motions and made speeches in Parliament on the theme of World Population Day - Gender Equality. Hon Robyn Parker MLC, in the New South Wales Legislative Council, spoke of the work of the PGPD:

The theme of World Population Day this year is central to our group's advocacy, particularly in the

context of equality for women [which] in broad terms, calls for the same access to services and opportunities that most men have had for so long. When women are empowered in this way there is a positive flow-on to their families and their communities and, as a consequence, the burden of poverty and the harmful effects on the environment are alleviated.

OUR MISSION

“We work to mobilise political will in addressing discrimination and violence against women and to reverse the appallingly high rates of maternal deaths and disability by advocating for safe reproductive health care services. We also affirm that integrated reproductive health care and HIV/AIDS policies and practices are a critical tool for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the empowerment of women in our region.”