

# 5<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights

REPORT

of the AFPPD-UNFPA Satellite Session on

## Engaging Men and Boys in Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls: New Initiatives and New Alliances by Male Parliamentarians from Asia-Pacific

October 18, 2009

Beijing, China



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## **INTRODUCTION**

In cooperation with UNFPA and with support from the Government of Japan, the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) organized a satellite session on October 18 on **“Engaging Men and Boys in Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls: New Initiatives and New Alliances by Male Parliamentarians from Asia Pacific.”**

This is part of the 5<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Conference on Reproductive Health and Rights (APCRSHR), which was held in Beijing, China from October 18-20, 2009. The conference focused on ‘working for universal access to reproductive health and rights’ and ‘promoting and enhancing partnership in SRHR.’

This session is the first among a series of anticipated actions undertaken by the Asia-Pacific Standing Committee of Male Parliamentarians on Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls (hereafter “Standing Committee”), which was formed in Bangkok in September 2009 on the occasion of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentarians Meeting on ‘Engaging Men in Preventing Violence against Women and Girls.’ The Standing Committee consists of 10 male parliamentarians from Asia-Pacific and is chaired by Hon. Sir Dr. Puka Temu, Deputy Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea.

These events and actions by the Standing Committee are central components of a programme initiated by AFPPD to involve male parliamentarians in preventing violence against women and girls.

The satellite session featured a keynote address from Ms. Purnima Mane, UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Programme), and a panel of male parliamentarians who are members of the Standing Committee.

## **OBJECTIVES**

Both the parliamentarians' meeting in Bangkok in September and this satellite session were organized with the recognition that men and boys have the responsibility to, and can play a central role in, the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls.

The satellite session aims to:

- Enhance political leadership and commitment among male parliamentarians in the on-going global effort to involve men and boys in preventing violence against women and girls (VAWG) and address its causes and consequences;
- Promote sharing of knowledge, good practices and positive outcomes of involving men and boy in violence prevention strategies and promotion of gender equality; and
- Mobilize male parliamentarians nationally, regionally and internationally and enhance their awareness of VAWG issues and promote their involvement and leadership in policy and legislation development and monitor implementation of programmes at the country and constituency levels.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE SESSION**

The session began with welcome remarks by the chair, followed by the presentation of a short film on Men's Action for Stopping Violence against Women (MASVAW). MASVAW is an unregistered network of individuals and social organizations. It is a campaign to involve men in the journey towards gender justice. It is working actively in 20 districts of Uttar Pradesh state in India through district forums with various groups such as adolescent boys in schools, colleges and university, academicians, journalists, advocates and social activists. This led into a keynote address by Ms. Purnima Mane followed by presentations by male parliamentarians on aspects of male involvement in preventing gender-based violence, and was concluded with a forward-looking speech by the Deputy Secretary-General of AFPPD.

### *Welcome Remarks from the Chair*

**Hon. Dr. Shen Yan**, Member of the Education, Science, Culture and Public Health Committee of the National People's Congress, China

### *Short Film*

### *Keynote Address*

"Enhancing leadership to fulfill commitments of ICPD: partnering with men for prevention of violence against women and girls"

**Ms. Purnima Mane**, Deputy Executive Director (Programme), UNFPA

"Harnessing synergy: partnership with civil society to enhance male accountability to prevent gender-based violence"

**Hon. Mr. P.D. Rai**, MP, India

"Policy reforms: effective and enabling actions by men in prevention of gender-based violence"

**Hon. Mr. Robert Oakeshott**, MP and White Ribbon Ambassador, Australia

"Violence prevention in the context of promoting Sexual and Reproductive Health: our commitment as male parliamentarians"

**Hon. Mr. G. Zandanshatar**, MP, Mongolia

### *Concluding Remarks*

"The way forward: our vision as committed men for 2010"

**Hon. Congressman Edcel C. Lagman**, The Philippines

## **SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS**

### **Welcome Remarks from the Chair**

**Hon. Dr. Shen Yan**, Member of the Education, Science, Culture and Public Health Committee (ESCPHC) of the National People's Congress, China.

Representing the ESCPHC, a national committee of AFPPD, Hon. Dr. Shen welcomed all attendees and speakers and reminded them that this session comes in a critical time as the world prepares to mark the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, the seminal outcome document of the World Conference on Women in 1995 in Beijing.

While recognizing the progress made on gender equality and women's empowerment across the globe, Dr. Shen cautioned that much work remains, especially in the Asia-Pacific region, where violence against women and girls persists in every society and presents a major obstacle to social and economic development.

"Men and boys are essential partners in promoting positive social change," said Dr. Shen. He called for men and male parliamentarians to take actions with the aim to transform the "entrenched male-dominated social, cultural, political and economic structures of our society."

### **Keynote Address**

Ms. Purnima Mane, Deputy Executive Director (Programme), UNFPA.

"As a result of gender discrimination and their lower socio-economic status," said Ms. Mane, "women and girls have fewer options and fewer resources at their disposal to avoid or escape abusive situations and to seek justice."

The role and responsibility of men and boys are recognized by international frameworks. The Programme of Action of the 1994 Cairo International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) challenged men to play their full part in the fight for gender equality. Subsequently, in 1995, the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing restated the principle of shared responsibility, and argued that women's concerns could be addressed only in partnership with men.

Ms. Mane commended the efforts by male parliamentarians in the Asia-Pacific region to form the Standing Committee to address gender-based violence and address deep-rooted inequities. "Men may be the primary perpetrators of gender-based violence," she said, "but they are also a major part of the solution.

She called for a reassessment of social perspectives on masculinity to engender positive behavior of men and boys that enable women and girls to enjoy their inalienable human rights. This requires the transformation of oppressive gender stereotyped expectations of male behaviour, which are harmful not only to women and girls but also to men and boys.

Since these expectations and behaviours are socially determined, they can also be transformed by expanding the choices available to men and boys and holding them accountable for their decisions and actions.

Ms. Mane introduced UNFPA's human rights-based and culturally-vested approach to male involvement and concrete efforts at the regional and country level to outreach to men and boys. In particular, the regional joint programme Partners for Prevention was set up to closely support the emerging efforts for policy development in the region, strengthen the role of male advocates and opinion leaders under a framework of social change at policy and community levels and through the mass media, to raise public awareness and to foster a culture of non-violence.

Ms. Mane concluded by applauding the new initiatives of AFPPD and by male parliamentarians to prevent violence against women and girls and contribute to the achievement of the MDGs and other international development goals.

**"Harnessing synergy: partnership with civil society to enhance male accountability to prevent gender-based violence"**

Hon. Mr. P.D. Rai, Member of Parliament, India

Working in partnership with civil society and NGOs to address violence against women was one of the commitments made by male parliamentarians at the

Asia-Pacific Parliamentarians' Meeting on Engaging Men in Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls, held in Bangkok in September 2009.

In India, civil society is vibrant and has been proactive in conducting advocacy, claiming rights, providing information to the public, and bringing change through impact litigation. Non-governmental organizations have been important partners in promoting sustainable development.

Mr. Rai said that parliamentarians have a central role in introducing and reviewing legislations aimed at preventing violence against women, but legislations alone cannot solve the problem. Their implementation requires a broader coalition between parliamentarians and civil society in order to make their impact felt at the grassroot-level. He commended the work of MASVAW as shown in the short film and believed that similar initiatives can be replicated elsewhere in India to effectively combat gender-based violence in partnership with men and boys at the community level.

To bring about positive change at the community level, Mr. Rai believed that empowerment of women and girls through education and its reform, as demonstrated by the literacy programme of the Indian government. Economic empowerment is also another proven method through which women and girls have gained greater access to resources and opportunities, thereby reducing their vulnerability to violent behavior towards them.

Finally, social and political empowerment may prove to be most important. The transformation of oppressive gender stereotypes and norms through partnership with men is simple yet very powerful. Members of the Standing Committee of Male Parliamentarians feel this is doable and necessary, and it will be even more effective when done in cooperation with civil society. NGOs will broaden and deepen the scope, reach and impact of parliamentary action to involve men in preventing gender-based violence.

#### **“Policy reforms: effective and enabling actions by men in prevention of gender-based violence”**

Hon. Mr. Robert Oakeshott, Member of Parliament and White Ribbon Ambassador, Australia.

Hon. Mr. Oakeshott expressed his appreciation of the organizers' effort in bringing parliamentarians to the APCRSHR. He recounted his positive experience at the last APCRSHR in India. He said that conferences like the APCRSHR are vital in supporting face-to-face advocacy. Similarly, the September meeting in Bangkok was instrumental in engaging male parliamentarians and enhancing their commitment to preventing violence against women and girls.

Mr. Oakeshott remarked that women's health issues and gender-based violence are great concerns in Australia where support and funding for related programmes need further scaling up. The Australian Government has placed gender-based violence high on its agenda and Australian parliamentarians are working hard to translate commitment into actions.

At the policy level, parliamentarians can be drivers of policy reforms and, more importantly, monitor and audit implementation of reformed policy and programmes. Parliamentarians can intervene in a number of areas, including the justice system, access to justice and support services for survivors, and perpetrator programmes aimed at behavioural change.

With respect to prevention, Mr Oakeshott called for institutional reform at the workplace, in schools and in government in order to ensure women's and girls' equal access to economic, educational and political resources and opportunities. There is also a need to further explore effective fatherhood strategies to ensure equality in the household and address the inter-generational nature of domestic violence.

In closing, Mr Oakeshott identified areas of challenges, including lack of resources, need for community-level ownership of advocacy efforts, lack of regard for local context, violence in conflict situations and violence directed against marginalized and vulnerable groups. He commended efforts by UNFPA, AFPPD and other partners in encouraging actions in these areas.

### **“Violence prevention in the context of promoting Sexual and Reproductive Health: our commitment as male parliamentarians”**

Hon. Mr. G. Zandanshatar, Member of Parliament, Mongolia

Mr. Zandanshatar began with an introduction of a conference he is helping to organize at the Parliament of Mongolia on the topic of male involvement in

preventing violence against women and girls. The conference will be organized under the sponsorship of the Prime Minister of Mongolia, bringing together male parliamentarians as well as representatives from non-governmental organizations to discuss topics such as human trafficking, use of drug and violence against women and children.

Furthermore, together with UNFPA, Mongolian parliamentarians will organize serial transmission on the topic through national broadcasting systems in order to raise public awareness of these serious issues. Parliamentarians will support the efforts of women parliamentarians to address root causes of discrimination and abuse.

The Government of Mongolia has been undertaking comprehensive interventions to ensure gender equality and to empower women, including a range of legislative and administrative measures supportive of gender equality. The National Committee for Gender Equality (NCGE) headed by the Prime Minister was established and represents an important step towards addressing gender issues at the national level and acceleration of the national programme implementation.

However, Mongolia still faces the challenge of insufficient political empowerment of women, which he deemed an important component in achieving gender equality. Women make up only 3.9% of the Parliament. A survey showed that women make up only 35% of managerial positions within decision-making bodies of the government.

Following the ICPD, the first and the second National Reproductive Health Programmes had been approved and implemented. Now the government is implementing the third National RH Programme (2007-2011) aimed at supporting sustainable population growth by means of improving reproductive health and providing health and social services in an equitable, accessible, high quality and reliable manner, based on reproductive rights and free choice.

Parliamentarians and the government have introduced legislations and mechanisms to improve maternal health, reduce maternal mortality, prevent HIV infection, and improve access by youth to reproductive health services. In order to ensure the effective implementation of all these legislations, measures and mechanisms, Mr. Zandanshatar called for the mobilization of "all our resources and opportunities to maintain the progresses we have gained in the past and to successfully achieve the goals."

**Concluding Remarks: "The way forward: our vision as committed men for 2010"**

Hon. Representative Edcel C. Lagman, House of Representatives, the Philippines.

Rep. Lagman stressed that while men have often been considered the root of the problem of violence against women, they can be a part of the solution. "If we are to hurdle the obstacles that have hobbled the campaign to end violence against women," he said, "we do not need only committed men. We need men who understand and appreciate why male participation is sorely needed to help combat and hopefully put an end to sexual assault and domestic violence."

He believed that violent behavior is learned and therefore can be unlearned. This has to be achieved through concerted efforts at all level to eliminate oppressive gender stereotypes, norms and practices through education that empowers men and boys to address problems in a peaceful way.

Male involvement is still an emerging movement in many countries and it is imperative that we increase the number of men taking actions in their communities to prevent and end violence against women and girls. Men tend to listen to their peers, so it is important the male leaders such as parliamentarians speak out against violence against women and take a proactive stand to put a stop to gender-based brutality. When men are good role models, their message will be stronger and more effective.

Not only are men invaluable partners in awareness raising, their influential role in policy-making and implementation also necessitates their involvement in concrete actions to prevent violence. Rep. Lagman said that men must be reminded that violence against women diminishes us all and it is the obligation of male political leaders to protect human rights for both women and men.

Rep. Lagman said that a major challenge is that silence still surrounds gender-based violence and impedes efforts to end it. Violence against women is often seen as a marginal issue affecting a 'minority group.' He called for all men and boys to stand up for the rights of women and girls, which encompass half the world's population.

He called for actions to realize the commitment male parliamentarians made at the Bangkok meeting in September and to help redefine and craft a new model

of masculinity that underscores traditionally “non-masculine” traits such as the ability to nurture, communicate effectively and show compassion. Preventing violence against women and achieving gender equality will contribute tremendously to the attainment of the MDGs and other development objectives.

## ANNEX I – Agenda

Sunday, October 18, 2009	
15:30-15:35	<p>Welcome Remarks by the Chair:</p> <p><b>Hon. Dr. Shen Yan</b>            Member of the Education, Science, Culture and Public Health            Committee of the National People’s Congress            China</p>
15:35-15:40	Short film
15:40-15:50	<p>Keynote Address:</p> <p>“Enhancing leadership to fulfill commitments of ICPD: partnering            with men for prevention of violence against women and girls”</p> <p><b>Ms. Purnima Mane</b>            Deputy Executive Director, UNFPA</p>
15:50-16:50	<p>“Harnessing synergy: partnership with civil society to enhance            male accountability to prevent gender-based violence”</p> <p><b>Hon. Mr. P.D. Rai</b>            Member of Parliament            India</p> <p>“Policy reforms: effective and enabling actions by men in            prevention of gender-based violence”</p> <p><b>Hon. Mr. Robert Oakeshott</b>            Member of Parliament and White Ribbon Ambassador            Australia</p> <p>“Violence prevention in the context of promoting Sexual and            Reproductive Health: our commitment as male parliamentarians”</p> <p><b>Hon. Mr. G. Zandanshatar</b>            Member of Parliament            Mongolia</p>
16:50-17:00	<p>Concluding Remarks:</p> <p>“The way forward: our vision as committed men for 2010”</p> <p><b>Hon. Congressman Edcel C. Lagman</b>            The Philippines</p>

## ANNEX II – Beijing Call to Action

5<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights:  
Beijing, China, 20 October 2009

### BEIJING CALL to ACTION

**Background.** Over one quarter of the world's people were born since the ICPD, yet even today they do not fully enjoy the guarantees of services and rights promised by 179 nations in 1994. Many adolescents remain ignorant of their reproductive and sexual rights. In some societies they are taken out of school prematurely to be thrust into marriages arranged without regard to their personal preferences. Too often they are subject to gender based violence and disrespectful treatment. Women and men continue to struggle in many societies to obtain the services that would guarantee safe childbearing and achievement of their family formation goals. The elderly remain victims of social stereotypes that relegate them to the category of "dependent" despite the continuing contributions they make to society. Their sexuality is overlooked by most programmes of reproductive and sexual health.

The Asia-Pacific community represents an intricate mosaic of cultures and religions, reflecting a full range of reproductive and sexual health and behaviour challenges. It is in this region that many sexual and reproductive challenges are clearly manifested, and it is in consideration of these challenges that we representatives of civil societies, universities, parliaments, governments, donors and youth organizations have gathered for the 5<sup>th</sup> APCRSR in Beijing.

We recognize that reproductive and sexual rights and the associated need for universal access to relevant education, social and health services are critical for the development of each individual. Reproductive rights guarantee that all couples and individuals have the basic right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and to have the information, education and means to do so. Sexual rights include the right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. These are crucial for achieving gender equality, and are key components of effective programs to eradicate poverty and achieve equitable sustainable development. Governments, parliaments,

and civil society organizations across the Asia-Pacific region urgently need to act on these issues.

**We the participants of the 5<sup>th</sup> APCRSRHR reaffirm our individual and collective commitment to collaborate to achieve the full realization of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) by 2015. We recognise that this requires the simultaneous reaffirmation to achieve the Beijing Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).**

We recall the outcomes of previous APCRSRHR conferences in Manila (2001), Bangkok (2003), Kuala Lumpur (2005), and Hyderabad (2007), and acknowledge that progress has been made on several issues, especially the integration of population concerns into socio-economic development strategies, the adoption of laws and policies to protect women's rights and empower women, and efforts to increase access to reproductive and sexual health services. But much remains to be done, and the need for action is urgent, particularly in the following areas:

**Reproductive Health and Rights.** Governments should fully recognize sexual and reproductive rights through effective education, policies and services supported by adequate budgets. To do so requires greater commitments to comprehensive family planning and health education and services. This is the most effective way to achieve the ICPD and MDG 5B targets of universal access to reproductive health by 2015. Continuing high levels of mortality surrounding pregnancy and childbirth should alert everybody to the need to include voluntary family planning, skilled birth attendance and emergency obstetric care in efforts to strengthen primary health care services. Research by WHO and other organizations has reminded us that even in countries where abortion is legal women suffer from the risks of unsafe procedures. In many countries debates about morality of abortion eclipse the commitments made to protect the health and well-being of women. While recognizing the value of traditional health practices, governments need to ensure that medications and practices provided for reproductive and sexual health are safe and effective. In facing all these challenges governments need to ensure that poverty and lack of

education are removed as barriers to services for reproductive health and safe childbearing.

**Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women.** Governments and civil society organizations need to increase their efforts to promote gender equality and equity through laws and policies protecting women's sexual and reproductive health and rights. They should take action to eliminate all forms of violence, trafficking and exploitation of women and girls. This will require them to address inequitable and outmoded cultural practices that stand in the way of women's empowerment. Men and boys who challenge the patriarchal norms and laws that reproduce gender inequalities from generation to generation deserve recognition and support. They help to establish the necessary foundations of gender equality and empowerment of women, and in doing so they create new and more socially productive roles for men.

**Youth.** We recognize the distinctive content of the *Youth Declaration* made by the youth participants to this conference and support its full implementation. We join them in urging Governments to provide universal access to non-judgmental and respectful sexual and reproductive health services including counselling. Such initiatives will be enhanced by increased resources for meaningful youth participation in decision-making processes.

**Ageing Population.** Though the populations of the Asia Pacific region are ageing rapidly, this is not necessarily the disaster portrayed by many observers. Older people continue to make productive contributions to their families and communities, and are in fact major carers of members of their own and younger generations. Governments have responsibilities to establish effective social welfare systems and would do well to promote self reliance of older persons by facilitating their continued participation in a full range of economic and social activities. Society in general also needs to respect the continuing sexual health needs and rights of older people, including appropriate health services. Issues of sexuality among older people should be informed by social realities rather than blind stereotypes and judgmental expectations.

**Migrants.** In a region of massive internal and international migration there are numerous ways in which the sexual and reproductive needs and rights of

migrants are ignored or violated. Trafficking is frequently connected to sexual exploitation. Governments have attempted to control the worst aspects of this trade, but much more needs to be done. There is a need for greater international cooperation and national action to protect migrants, including well designed programmes addressing the sexual and reproductive health needs of all migrants, especially those displaced by conflicts and natural disasters. In this context civil society organizations play a crucial role in advocacy and services of vulnerable people.

**Climate Change.** There are complex linkages between population, resource consumption, and the environmental concerns exemplified in current international discussions of climate change. These are justifiably commanding the attention of governments, and sparking debates about steps to be taken for prevention and amelioration of environmental degradation. Nations should remember that rights based reproductive and sexual health services can make a crucial and direct contribution to sustainable development and welfare in the face of environmental challenges from climate change. We need to avoid false and fruitless competition for ODA and national funding. These are complementary issues, not financial trade-offs.

**HIV/AIDS.** While HIV/AIDS remains the single most recognised disease focus of international health collaboration its setting within sexual and reproductive health behaviours is often overlooked. We urge governments to link HIV/AIDS interventions more effectively within established programmes of primary health care and comprehensive reproductive health services as a means to strengthen efforts to prevent the transmission of HIV. Effective programs must specifically address mother to child transmission of the virus and ensure that all people living with the virus have access to appropriate life extending medications, free from stigma and discrimination.

**Resources and Partnerships.** The current global economic crisis has hit developing countries particularly hard with damaging fallout for the achievement of the MDGs. They have been hit by the double blow of reduced domestic resources and failures in international development assistance. Despite the tardy recognition of reproductive and sexual health in the MDGs through the adoption of MDG 5B, there has been a lacklustre reaction by

governments, donors and development institutions to the calls for predictable and long-term financing of policies and programs. We urge governments and donors to increase their official development assistance to create and support strong and sustainable reproductive and sexual health programmes.

This is not exclusively or even primarily the responsibility of governments. Civil society institutions and private enterprises play an important role both on their own and in partnerships with governments. To be effective they need adequate funding. This requires the mobilization of domestic resources and the coordination of innovations across a range of sectors including efficient use of development assistance funds.

We strongly urge rapid response by civil society, parliamentarians, governments, donors and young people to our call to action on the unfinished agenda of the ICPD to achieve universal access to reproductive health by 2015.

Meeting in Beijing recalls the proverb that **“In today’s actions, take the perspective of 1000 autumns.”** In other words, the actions we begin today will determine the welfare of our region, not only tomorrow, but for the whole millennium to come. For this reason, we urge governments to act wisely and decisively.