

## **Male Parliamentarians Taking the Lead to Prevent Violence Against Women**

### **AFPPD Standing Committee Meets in Australia**

"We recognize the issue of ending violence against women and children is of critical importance for all countries and communities across our region, and indeed across the globe, as a priority for achieving equality, security, development and peace," proclaimed male ministers and parliamentarians from 13 countries who attended the Standing Committee of Male Parliamentarians on Prevention of Violence against Women Meeting.

Organized by AFPPD with the Parliamentarian Group on Population and Development (PGPD), Australia Reproductive Health Alliance (ARHA) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the committee met in Port Macquarie, Australia on 18 December and was hosted by Hon. Robert Oakeshott, MP from Australia.

AFPPD in cooperation with the UNFPA and the Japan Trust Fund has been working to mobilize parliamentarians on gender issues with a focus on eliminating violence against women (EVAW). To this end, AFPPD initiated a programme for the involvement of male parliamentarians, resulting in the establishment of the Standing Committee of Male Parliamentarians on Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls in 2009.

**Hon. Robert Oakeshott**, MP from Australia warmly welcomed the participants and discussed the significance of domestic violence in the community, noting that 25-30% of court work is taken up by domestic violence cases. "By addressing some of these issues in a substantial way we can save the courts and governments a lot of time, a lot of money, as well as the moral case for safer communities for all of us".

AFPPD Secretary-General, **Hon. Sen. Dr. Pinit Kullavanijaya**, MP from Thailand gave the opening address by reminding participants of their purpose: to involve male parliamentarians in the elimination of violence against women and girls. MPs should "take an oath that they will not tolerate violence against any woman or girl and the person who does that should not be socially accepted in society."

**Dr. Michael Flood**, University of Wollongong, Australia spoke on gender roles and relations, social norms and practices related to violence, access to resources and systems of support. Re-



*participants of the AFPPD Standing Committee of Male Parliamentarians on the Prevention of Violence Against Women Meeting*

viewing the many types of gender based violence (GBV) he noted that, "many of these behaviors which may be violent, abusive or coercive have become normalized. But these behaviors involve patterns which are underscored by the need for power and control." Men's violence against women both expresses and maintains gender inequalities.

**Mr. James Lang**, Programme Coordinator, Partner for Prevention (P4P), a United Nations Joint Program gave an overview on the primary prevention of violence against women, suggested policy actions for standing committee members and discussed how P4P could support parliamentarians' efforts. He stated that, "Violence is an essential element of gender inequality, rooted in unequal power relations. Men are overwhelmingly the perpetrators of VAW, and the beneficiaries of gender inequalities, therefore they must be involved in stopping violence."

**Ms. Kiran Bhatia**, Regional Gender Advisor, UNFPA Asia-Pacific Regional Office, sent a video presentation on UNFPA's work with men and boys toward achieving gender equality and reducing violence against women and girls. She stated, "Men have the power to influence change. As community, political or religious leaders they often control access to reproductive health information and services, finances, transportation and other resources. As heads of state and government ministers, as leaders of religious and faith-based institutions, as judges, as heads of armies and other agencies of force, as village heads, or indeed as husbands and fathers, men often wield enormous power over most aspects of women's lives." ~

#### **Collective Statement**

"The Standing Committee recognizes the vital role that Members of Parliament can play in promoting policies that will help reduce violence against women and children and prevent violence in the future. We also recognize the unique role that individual men can play in supporting violence prevention efforts in partnership with women as role models within our own families and communities."

**We call upon our peers within all governments in the Asia and Pacific region to join in taking the following actions:**

1. Being role models as male leaders who speak up against all forms of violence against women and children and promote Zero Tolerance.
2. Actively participate in public awareness campaigns and raise our voice on what men and boys can do for violence prevention.
3. Advocate for all male parliamentarians to join this cause.
4. Enact and support legislation, policies and programmes that reduce and prevent violence against women and children.
5. Support and work in partnership with non-government organizations and community initiatives to promote good practices and effective interventions.
6. Provide and share information within and among parliaments, and we will support the efforts of women parliamentarians to address the root causes of discrimination and abuse and stand together to do all we can to end violence against women and girls in our region.