

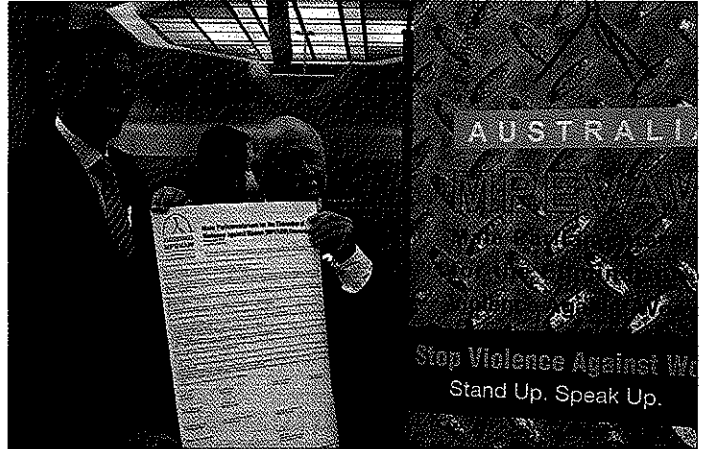
Australian Male Parliamentarians: Fighting Violence Against Women and Girls

Canberra - The Australian Parliamentary Group on Population and Development (PGPD) and the Australian Reproductive Health Alliance (ARHA) launched a new sub-committee 'Male Parliamentarians for the Elimination of Violence against Women' (MPEVAW) on the 24th of November at Parliament House in Canberra.

Membership of MPEVAW has been extended to all male parliamentarians who are existing members of the PGPD. Both state and federal members have joined the Group to date. Members of the MPEVAW recognise that men have the responsibility to, and must play a central role in, the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls. Members are focused on the engagement of men for EVAW and feel that the elimination of violence against women is a fundamental aspect of gender equity.

The launch was preceded by an inaugural meeting of the Group, which is convened jointly by Dr. Mal Washer, MP, and Hon. Mr. Rob Oakeshott, MP and also a member of the AFPPD Standing Committee of Male Parliamentarians on Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls. The meeting commenced with presentations by guest speakers Libby Lloyd, AM, Chair of the Violence against Women Advisory Group,

and Matt Miller of the National Leadership Group, White Ribbon Foundation. The launch event included a communiqué signing ceremony in which the participants committed to a number of time-bound and targeted actions to demonstrate their on-going dedication to taking a leadership role to address the issue.~



Hon. Mr. Rob Oakeshott and Hon. Dr. Mal Washer

INDO-CHINA PARLIAMENTARIANS MEETING ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

LAPPD initiated to strengthen AFPPD GBV efforts

Vientiane – The Lao Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (LAPPD), member of AFPPD, organized a first Sub-Regional Parliamentarians Conference on Gender Based Violence (GBV) for regional lawmakers on November 25 as a follow up to the Regional Ministers' and Parliamentarians' Conference on the "Review of Parliamentarians' Actions and Legislations on the Elimination of Violence against Women" organized by AFPPD on October 21-22 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

About 100 parliamentarians from Lao PDR and the neighboring countries of Cambodia, Thailand, Viet Nam and Myanmar attended the event, organized in cooperation with the Lao Women Parliamentarians Caucus and support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Lao PDR and other UN agencies. Topics addressed include the

economic cost of violence, the situation and responses in the region and the role of parliamentarians in fighting GBV.

Laws have not translated into better protection

Hon. Douangdy Outhachak

The Lao government and most sectors of society need to acknowledge the seriousness of domestic violence, according to Hon. Douangdy Outhachak, LAPPD Chair and head of the Socio-cultural Affairs Committee of the National Assembly. "People consider violence in the home an internal affair, not to be discussed. Violence is an unsuitable tradition that has been practiced for many years. It is hard to change tradition." Eighty percent of women in a national 2006 survey said a husband was justified in hitting them if they went out without telling him, neglected the children, argued with him, refused sex or burnt a

meal. He added, "It [domestic violence] already is a crime in our country, but women are too shy to report for fear of shame. There is much education to be done because violence is accepted as a casual occurrence in the home."

80% of Lao women surveyed believe their husband could be justified in hitting them

De facto Protection for Women

The government has ratified major conventions to protect women and children, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. But a 1992 criminal law makes no mention of domestic violence, marital rape is not a crime and "less harmful acts between

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participants of the Sub-Regional Parliamentarians Conference on Gender Based Violence (GBV)