



IAPG

Parliamentary Dialogue

Inter-American Parliamentary Group on Population and Development

Special Edition: International Parliamentarians Conference on the Implementation of the ICPD Program of Action

Content

- International Parliamentarians Conference on the Implementation of the ICPD Program of Action 1
- News from the Region:
 - Emergency Contraception Regional Conference..... 2
 - Quito, Ecuador
 - Visit to Managua, Nicaragua 4
- New Legislation:
 - Universal Mother and Infant Health Insurance Law (SUMI) - Bolivia 3
- News Briefs 7
- Publications 5
- At the United Nations 5
- Calendar of Events 7
- Links 8

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The International Parliamentarians Conference on the implementation of the ICPD Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) was held November 20 to 22 in Ottawa, Canada. Over 200 people actively participated in the conference, including more than 100 parliamentarians from all over the world, as well as representatives of regional parliamentary groups, ministers from donor countries and developing countries, and representatives from foundations and other organizations.

Senator Rose - Marie Losier-Cool, Chair of the Steering Committee, and Acting Chair of the Canadian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development, CAPPD presided at the inaugural ceremony. Stirling Scruggs, Director of the Information, External Relations and Resources Mobilization Division (UNFPA) spoke on the purpose of the conference in promoting dialogue between parliamentarians of all regions and on the implementation of the ICPD Program of Action. He highlighted the importance of strengthening the agreement in favor of collective actions to mobilize resources and to create an enabling environment for population and development issues.

The conference was divided into sessions with international experts acting as moderators and panelists. In the first and second sessions participants debated the successes and constraints observed in the eight years fol-

lowing ICPD, as well as the role that donors play in the mobilization of resources.

In the third and fourth sessions parliamentarians divided into discussion groups of approximately 30 participants. The following issues were discussed: HIV/AIDS, Reproductive Health Commodity Security, reproductive health in emergency situations; adolescent reproductive health; poverty, population and development; food, water, population and the environment; violence against women, reproductive health and human rights; and ageing.

In the fourth session the draft Statement of Commitment, presented by Yoshio Yatsu, President of the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD), was discussed.

The sixth session was led by Dr. Hernán Sanhueza, Executive Coordinator of the Inter-American Parliamentary Group on Population and Development (IAPG), who spoke on follow-up activities to the parliamentarians conference. Finally, in the closing session, Senator Loisier-Cool, Chair of the Conference, presented the statement created by the conference: the "Ottawa Commitment." The statement includes concrete actions that the parliamentarians can take to mobilize more resources and to create an enabling environment for the imple-



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mentation of the ICPD Program for Action. It also suggests strengthening mechanisms to increase cooperation and alliances between parliamentarians.

An important challenge to advancing the ICPD Program for Action continues to be the creation and nurturing of an enabling environment in each country. This could be realized by informing and involving decision makers so that they introduce positive changes in policies, programs and/or national legislation dealing with population and development. At this time, some 54 countries have adopted measures suggested by ICPD. These countries have formulated new national policies on population or have integrated the issue of population in their long term development plans, including questions related to the quality of health services, gender equality, sustainable development and the environment, education, poverty, demographic information and information systems. It is clear that parliamentarians can play an important role regarding the mobilization of resources, in bringing about normative and legislative changes, and raising awareness on the issues of population and development at the national level.

The conference was organized by the Canadian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (CAPPD); the Inter-American Parliamentary Group on Population and Development (IAPG); and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The hosts included the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD); the Forum of African and Arabic Parliamentarians on Population and Development (FAAPPD); the Inter-European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (IEPPD); and Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA).

Emergency Contraception Regional Conference

The 1st Regional Conference on Emergency Contraception (EC) titled: *“The Right to Emergency Contraception in Latin America”* took place in Quito, Ecuador on October 16-18, 2002.

The Conference had a multiple audience, with the participation of representatives from the USA and nineteen Latin American and Caribbean countries, between the ages of 16 and 60. The event was organized by the Latin American Consortium on Emergency Contraception (LACEC), which is based at the Pacific Institute for Women’s Health (PIWH), and CEMOPLAF, service-delivery organization from Ecuador. The LACEC Advisory Committee and the Ecuadorian Consortium on EC was involved in the organization of the Conference during the first phase, as well as CEPAM, Family Care International (FCI) in Ecuador, Population Council Mexico, IAPG, International Planned Parenthood Federation/Western Hemisphere Region (IPPF/WHR), and other organizations members of the Consortium.

The conference was funded by the Compton Foundation; USAID through the Population Council Mexico; Wallace Global Fund; UNFPA; PAHO; PROGRESAR of ICIMER; IPPF/WHR; PIWH, Global Fund for Women and CEMOPLAF.

The movement to protect EC as a sexual and reproductive right continues to face many challenges throughout the region, including: opposition from reli-

gious groups and conservative governments, conservative attitudes from the population on sexuality issues, lack of knowledge about the functioning mechanisms of the EC pills, lack of knowledge of EC from service providers, and inadequate funding and supplies.

The conference had three main objectives:

- Contribute to the sensitization and education of a diverse audience in Latin America on EC as a safe and effective method to prevent an unwanted pregnancy after an unprotected sexual encounter.
- Advocate among health officials and legislators to incorporate EC to the family planning and violence norms, as well as to promote their implementation in the provision of health services.
- Develop action plans by countries and sub regions for future follow up by the Consortium and its collaborating agencies.

Within the framework of the conference, the IAPG organized sessions with parliamentarians who attended the meeting. These MPs contributed to the general discussion and participated actively on the debates. Following are some observations:

Representing Bolivia, Dr. Oscar Sandoval, MP, Ms. Severina Pérez, MP and Ms. Alexandra Sánchez, MP, raised concerns about the lack of clarity about the mechanism of action of emergency contraception.

They stated that there is no dedicated product in their country, and that the health institutions do not offer the product. The general public and health providers and legislators don't have much knowledge about the method. In addition, women's situation is precarious in rural areas where there aren't many NGOs that work on this issue. Male participation could be key to reach the women in these areas.

The participants from Peru were Mr. Santos Jaimes and Dr Victor Velarde and Ms. Emma Vargas. They pointed out that working with domestic violence survivors is a good initial strategy, but that emergency contraception should be made available to all women. A public information campaign targeting different audiences is crucial to expanding access and knowledge. Dr Velarde MP added that the political climate in his country is not favorable although efforts are being made to move SRH issues forward.

From Colombia, Senator Piedad Córdoba stated that the political situation in her country is not propitious to sexual and reproductive health issues, since most of the political actors are focused on problems related to internal violence and national defense. However allows flexibility to push legislation forward on SRH with little opposition, such as a proposal to decriminalize abortion and legislation on same sex marriage she authored.

From Ecuador, Ms. Anunziata Valdez, MP, stated that that sexual and reproductive rights include a woman's right to choose the number and spacing of children. This can only be achieved through access to

comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and services. EC is included as a contraceptive method in the family planning norms of the Ministry of Health, but no funds were designated for its provision or promotion in the budget. There is an Ecuadorian Consortia on EC and the main challenge is to disseminate information to the general public at large, instead of targeted risk groups.

Ilda Mayeregger (MP Paraguay) and Daisy Tourné (MP Uruguay) noted that the IAPG meeting on emergency contraception held in Chile in April 2002 was crucial to understanding what emergency contraception is and how it works. Daisy Tourné, MP, explained that Uruguay has made great strides in making EC available. Currently, there are three dedicated products on the market (average cost of US\$3) and the political climate is favorable. Nevertheless adolescents, the sectors most affected by high unwanted pregnancy, do not know about the method.

Among the conclusions were that in very few countries EC has been included in the reproductive health, family planning or violence norms. It is important to continue working so that EC is included in the norms and implemented in order to offer women more choices. It is key to involve youth, men, academic institutions, scientific societies, parliamentarians, ministries, and SRH activists and religious communities open to SRH issues. It is important to promote, publicize and offer the emergency contraception pill as a dedicated product.

New legislation

Universal Mother and Infant Health Insurance Law (SUMI) - Bolivia

On January 1, 2003 the Bolivian Universal Mother and Infant Health Insurance Law (SUMI) went into effect. The new law provides free medical care to pregnant women from the beginning of pregnancy to six months subsequent to birth. It also provides medical care to children from birth to five years of age.

This insurance covers hospitalization, complementary diagnostic services and medical and surgical treatments. It also provides provi-

sions, essential medicines and traditional natural remedies.

The body responsible for regulating, coordinating, supervising and managing the implementation of SUMI is the Ministry of Health and Social Services. The municipal governments are in charge of its implementation.

SUMI coverage includes all of Bolivia and is obligatory for all public health centers and all Short Term Social Security health centers. Coverage includes all Bolivian men and women as well as foreign-

ers who are legal residents. SUMI financing will be provided by the Public Treasury, the Ministry Finance via the National Solidarity Fund and by the Municipal Joint Tax Fund.

The Ministry of Health and Social Security will develop information, education and communication campaigns for the community and health providers in order to create and encourage demand as well as to improve quality of and access to medical attention.

Parliamentary Coalition against the Exploitation of Children and Adolescents. A Visit to Casa Alianza in Managua, Nicaragua.

The Parliamentary Coalition against Exploitation of Children and Adolescents was officially launched in April 2001 during the meeting of the Commission on Equity and Gender of the Latin American Parliament (Parlatino) in Montevideo, Uruguay. Daisy Tourné, MP (Uruguay), was elected coordinator in recognition of her commitment and extensive experience in the subject.

As part of this initiative, IAPG coordinated representative Daisy Tourné's visit to Nicaragua to discuss prevention strategies with parliaments and domestic institutions. IAPG organized a study visit to Casa Alianza in Managua. Casa Alianza is a non-governmental organization dedicated to the rehabilitation and legal protection of street children in Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua. Every year they are responsible for and provide care for approximately 8,961 street children, the majority of whom have been orphaned by civil war, or have been abused or rejected by dysfunctional or poverty-stricken families.

Representative Daisy Tourné of Uruguay and Giselle Carino, IAGP program associate, visited various shelters and crisis centers staffed by Casa Alianza in order to better understand children and adolescents' problems in Managua. They interviewed Zelmira García, executive director, and Evelyn Palma, director of the legal department, in order to evaluate children's circumstances and the implementation of the Children's Code approved in Nicaragua in 1998.

Additionally, Maria Eugenia Sequeiros, Chair of the Nicaraguan Commission on Women, Family and

Youth, visited Casa Alianza in Managua after IAPG organized a visit to Casa Alianza in Guatemala City where she had conversations about Casa Alianza providing technical training for the commission.

The political situation in Nicaragua has had a tremendous impact not only on social conditions but also on the economic situation of children. Approximately 24,000 children lost one of their parents during the war and 10% of those lost both. A UNICEF study in 1991 found that 107,500 children fight daily for survival and another 1,100 live and sleep in the streets; 3,500 children are victims of abuse and abandonment; 267,000 are victims of armed conflicts; 182,000 are victims of natural disasters; and 113,000 children have specific unmet medical care needs. Given that the economic and political situation has not improved in recent years, it is highly likely that these numbers have increased. Hurricane Mitch alone affected approximately 400,000 children in 1998. Adolescent pregnancy is the largest problem; 53% of the population is under 18 years of age and about 21% of children are born to young women.

The Nicaraguan Penal Code does not reflect the standards outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was ratified by Nicaragua in 1990. The convention establishes that a person is considered a minor until reaching 18 years of age; in Nicaragua, judges do not make a distinction between offenses committed by adults and those committed by children.

The lack of special courts and codes that take into account international norms, as well as the lack

of special centers and educational programs for youth mean that more than 300 minors are incarcerated in adult detention centers in Nicaragua. Many times these minors spend days or weeks in the police station with adults before they are transferred, in spite of laws stating that minors cannot be detained for more than 48 hours. International regulations indicate that a minor should be detained in a juvenile detention center.

The ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography has been debated in the assembly but has not yet been approved.

The Parliamentarian Coalition's presentation was held in the National Congress of Nicaragua on October 14, 2002 attended by parliamentarians from the Commission on Women, Family and Youth; the Commission of Health; and the Commission on Population and Development, as well as by representatives from UNFPA and journalists. Representative Tourné presented a report on sexual violence against children in the region to the National Congress and explained the Parliamentarian Coalition's objectives and plan of action.

Following Representative Tourné's presentation, the majority of the parliamentarians recognized the need to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and discussed obstacles to its implementation. The chair of the Commission on Women, Family and Youth, as well as the chair of the

Commission on Population and Development, explained the need for training on the implementation of NGO and governmental agen-

cies' public policies in order to alleviate the problems of violence and trafficking in children. Casa Alianza was invited to the presen-

tation to speak with the parliamentarians and educate them on these issues.

At the United Nations...

The 36th Session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) was held in New York from March 31 to April 4, 2003 on the issues of population, education and development. During the sessions, governments reaffirmed their commitment to follow-up to the Cairo and Beijing conferences. IAPG actively participated and supported the declaration as part of the coalition on sexual and reproductive rights. Among other things, the final resolution included language in reference to the education of girls. Population, development and HIV/AIDS, with special emphasis on the issue of poverty will be discussed at the 2005 session. A copy of the resolution and other documents can be found on the United Nations CPD web page: www.un.org/esa/population/cpd/comm2003.htm.

* * *

On April 17, a meeting was held at the United Nations in New York to inform NGOs of the plans established by General Assembly session number 57 for the Ad-Hoc Working Group. The Working Group will be in charge of evaluating and writing recommendations to assure a coordinated follow-up process to the international meetings and conferences in the social and economic arena. At the April meeting, the NGOs expressed their doubts and worries regarding follow-up to the conferences and the participation of the NGOs in the process in general.

Publications

Legislative Module on HIV/AIDS

This publication, funded by the Central American Action Project against AIDS (PASCA), offers a series of conceptual tools highlighting the fundamental rights that should be included in HIV/AIDS legislation, as well as problems in the adoption and implementation of these laws. documents can be found on the United Nations CPD web page: www.un.org/esa/population/cpd/comm2003.htm.

* * *

Legislative Commitments on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: A Five Year Review of the Cairo and Beijing Conferences - Latin America and the Caribbean

This report produced in conjunction with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Latin America Division, presents a summary of the commitments made by governments at the Cairo and Beijing Conferences and a review of their implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean. (1999)

The annual IAPG Board of Directors meeting was held on April 14, 2003 via telephone. The board officially welcomed representatives Ms. Laura Carneiro (Brasil) and Ms. Alexandra Sánchez de Lozada (Bolivia). The IAPG Board of Directors now has a total of six active members from parliaments from the region.

"Every minute, a woman dies from a pregnancy-related cause. About 58 million women give birth each year without any medical help and 350 million women are denied access to safe and effective family planning methods."

-Thoraya Obaid, Executive Director of UNFPA, International Parliamentarians' Conference in Ottawa. OTTAWA, 21 November 2002

The Creation of Enabling Circumstances: Eight Years after Cairo - Successes and Constraints

In the first session of the conference on Thursday, November 21, Dr. Javier Torres Goitia, member of the Advisory Council of IAPG and representing the Bolivian Ministry of Health, spoke about the parliamentarians' important mission to promote human development and defend human rights.

He observed that above and beyond the two traditional functions of parliaments, that is, legislating and monitoring the budget, there is an additional function: to be a bridge between the civil society that elects them and the state of which they are part; this function becomes more important every day, especially for developing countries. Dr. Torres Goitia stated: "... the need for this bridge is more evident when it involves spreading and debating issues as vital as those put forth in the Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development which was held in Cairo in 1994, or in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. These conferences have served to consolidate human rights, reproductive rights and new concepts of population and development that rejuvenate the old, coldly arithmetic demographics and enrich it with features that seek to eradicate poverty, achieve social justice and guarantee health and education to all people, as well as rights."

In each of our countries there still exist conceptual errors or mistaken interpretations about population and development, sexual and reproductive health, and gender equality he stated. There is

also a lack of a political will to contribute to the creation of a citizenship made up of the entire population and not only part of it, with both sexes, not just one, having a clear understanding of their civil, political, and social rights, including the "Fourth Generation Rights" such as women's and children's rights. These are the unavoidable responsibilities of politicians and all the political parties in all of our countries.

Dr. Torres Goitia spoke about Latin America and the poverty that restricts the freedom of large sectors of the population. "... *It is unjust to allow millions of adolescents to live in a labyrinth of frustrations and disorientation because some want to impose their fallacious hypocrisy that the pleasure that can come from sexuality is a sin. It is worse still to keep young people in ignorance of the basic and simple elements of their sexuality, knowing that that ignorance can result in unwanted pregnancies leading to unsafe abortions, or life illnesses like AIDS, or to take refuge in the painful escape of drugs and violence.*"

He also emphasized that it is unacceptable but true that children born in families with higher incomes live in better conditions, learn to read precociously, and even before entering school know how to use a computer and the internet, while other children compete for survival, even before being born. When those children overcome the risks of an unwanted pregnancy, which can end in unsafe abortion, they then have to surmount the vicissitudes of a birth without proper medical attention and the imminent dan-

gers of malnutrition, or dying in the first year or before the age of five. If they survive to attend school and manage to own a pencil, a notebook and a book, these will be the sum total of the resources within their reach to exercise their citizenship, defend their rights and fight for a place in a democratic society in the free market system in which all are supposedly equal and possess the same rights.

Dr. Torres Goitia cited as an example a law up for debate in the Bolivian parliament. The law will create universal health coverage and provide free medical attention for at least one area of Bolivian women's reproductive health: pregnancy. It would also provide comprehensive medical care for children under the age of five. In this way, commitments made at various parliamentary meetings and specifically at the meeting organized last year by IAPG and the Bolivian Senate (attended by Peruvian, Colombian, Ecuadorian and Venezuelan parliamentarians), can become reality.

According to information provided by Torres Goitia, last year in Bolivia 1,055 mothers died out of a total of 355,000 during childbirth, orphaning at least twice or three times that number of children. The Universal Mother and Infant Health Insurance Law (SUMI) is a concrete measure to reduce the elevated maternal mortality rate in Bolivia. "*We still must implement other, complementary measures, but given the scarcity of our economic resources this can be considered a necessary first step in moving forward.*"

Calendar of Events

| EVENT | DATE |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Latin American and European Parliamentarians' Study Visit to Colombia and Brasil | May 14 to 24, 2003 |
| XXI PARLATINO Meeting of the Commission on Equity and Gender – Panama | May 7 to 9, 2003 |
| XVI European Union/Latin America Inter-Parliamentary Conference– Brussels | May 20 to 22, 2003 |
| Executive Committee Meeting of the Inter-European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (IEPPFD) – Lisbon | May 24 to 27, 2003 |
| Information Session on EC in Uruguay | June 2003 (to be confirmed) |
| Parliamentarians Visit to Brasil | June 2003 (to be confirmed) |
| Seminar in the Caribbean | September 2003 (to be confirmed) |

News Briefs

The Canadian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (CAPPD) met on April 10, 2003 and elected Ms. Raymonde Folco, M.P. as the new chair, Senator Losier-Cool as Co-Chair, and Mr. Yves Rocheleau, M.P. as representative for the Bloc Québécois. Ms. Sue Barnes, M.P. will continue as the secretary/treasurer. CAPPD's executive committee is made up of 15 members.

* * *

IAPG participated as an observer in the Fourth Annual Conference of the Parliamentary Network of the World Bank in Athens, Greece on March 9 and 10, 2003. One hundred and forty parliamentarians from sixty countries attended the meeting. The representatives from developing countries exchanged different perspectives with the representatives from donor countries, as well as from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Representing the Latin American region, three representatives from Guatemala attended: Nineth Montenegro, Olga Camey de Noack and Sulema Paz. More representatives from the region are expected to participate in the next meeting.



Sulema Paz, MP (Guatemala) and James Wolfensohn, President, World Bank

During the conference, a parallel session on population and development was organized by the regional groups from Europe and Asia (IEPPFD y AFPPD) with the collaboration of IAPG, to debate on the issues of poverty, health and population. This session was chaired by Senator Malinee Sukavejworakit (Thailand). Mr. Tony Worthington (UK), Ms. Olga Camey de Noack (Guatemala), and Ms. Magda De Meyer (Belgium) gave presentations during the session.



Nineth Montenegro, MP (Left), Olga Camey de Noack, MP (Middle), Sulema Paz, MP (Right)

Links

Information on ICPD and the Ottawa Conference can be found at the following web sites:

www.unfpa.org/icpd/index.htm

<http://www.familycareinternational.org/icpd/icpd.html> (English only)

http://www.reproductiverights.org/ww_adv_icpd.html

http://www.afppd.org/Issue_Dec'02/issue_nov_dec_02.htm#Lawmakers (English only)

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IAPG is on the internet! www.iapg.org

Thanks to financial support from the Japanese Trust Fund for Parliamentary Activities and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), IAPG will soon launch its web site in English and Spanish. On the web site you will be able to find information on legislative work from different countries of the region in the area of population and development, as well as information on United Nations events and conferences. The web site will have a parliamentarian center where legislators can exchange experiences and information on legislative issues.

The web site will serve as an instrument for the education, promotion and dissemination of information for the general public and parliamentarians from the region, focusing on the issues of population and development.

Parliamentary Dialogue is a newsletter produced by the Inter-American Parliamentarian Group (IAPG) that promotes the human rights of women in the Americas.