

Official launch of the SPRINT Initiative at Parliament House in Canberra

On 18 February 2008, Mr. Bob McMullan, Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance in Canberra officially launched the SPRINT, a 3 million dollar AusAID initiative managed by the International Planned Parenthood Federation – East, South East Asia & Oceania Region (IPPF ESEAOR). The initiative aims to ensure that persons have access to sexual and reproductive health during crises as a basic right.



Mr. McMullan attributed the Australian Government's support as part of its efforts towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly those related to maternal and child health in the region. He lauded the work of IPPF, UNFPA, ARHA and UNSW in the area of sexual and reproductive health in crisis and called for more support to this initiative.

Dr. Tran Nguyen Toan, Medical and Technical Programme Manager /SPRINT at IPPF ESEAOR, stressed that SRH services during crises form an important part of any humanitarian emergency response needed to save lives. During his speech, he highlighted the role Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for SRH in crises, as an essential component of the initiative, especially in areas where standards are below minimum. Dr. Toan highlighted that the SPRINT Initiative was about people, illustrating that over 80% of programme budget went directly into the field. He appealed for donor support to further expand and enhance this essential initiative in the region.

Dr. Wilma Doedens, Technical Specialist in the UNFPA Humanitarian Response Unit of UNFPA stressed that "refugees and displaced people have the same rights to reproductive health, without discrimination, as everybody else", especially since reproductive health risks often increase during crisis. She explained that reproductive health was recognized as a right following the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development.

Dr. Doedens and gave a background of the Interagency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Crises (IAWG) and the subsequent development of the MISIP. In Dr. Doedens.

Dr. Anna Whelan, Associate Professor at UNSW, explained the university's role in research and monitoring & evaluation within the SPRINT Initiative. Together with Dr. Toan, she played a role in directing the attention of IAWG members to focus on the natural disaster prone Asia-Pacific. It subsequently led to the first IAWG regional meeting in 2006 at UNSW and set the grounds for developing the SPRINT Initiative.

The launch was followed by a seminar with national and international NGOs to provide details on the SPRINT Initiative and set the grounds for establishing an SRH in crisis network. Both the launch and the event had been organized by the Australian Reproductive Health Alliance (ARHA) through the efforts of Ms. Jane Singleton and her team.

Also read:

<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/SODA-7BX7CR?OpenDocument>

http://www.unsw.edu.au/news/pad/articles/2008/feb/Crisis_survivors.html

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