

Seminar Raises HIV law and Policy Awareness in Asia-Pacific Region

SYDNEY -- 11 December 2009 -- The International Development Law Organization (IDLO) and AIDS Projects Management Group (APMG) concluded a regional seminar to raise awareness and stimulate action on HIV law and policy in the Asia-Pacific region. The one-week seminar brought together 27 people from 12 countries in the region, including Australia, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka and Vietnam.

The seminar increased the capacity of participants to analyze public health and criminal laws that affect the spread and impact of HIV and AIDS, enabling them to develop strategies for reforms that strengthen legal frameworks and implement effective laws and policies. Many countries are committed to achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010.

"Well-intended laws can create negative public health impacts," said David Patterson, Manager of IDLO's Health Law Program. "By building an educated network of practitioners in the region, we will be better able to face critical challenges on the implementation of law and policies that work in developing countries."

Participants included national AIDS program managers, representatives of the Asia Pacific Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (APN+), lawyers involved in community legal services, officials from ministries of justice, regional consultants on HIV law and policy and academic and civil society organizations.

Specific issues addressed at the seminar concerned discriminatory legal frameworks (including laws limiting the travel of people with HIV), the need for laws to protect people from discrimination, and inappropriate criminal laws that drive people away from HIV testing, counseling and treatment. One fundamental issue that materialized was the difficulties that countries face in navigating the minefield of international trade agreements and patent law that complicate access to the medications needed to treat HIV illness and other diseases of public health significance.

The seminar was co-hosted by IDLO and APMG and will be adapted for other contexts and regions. It will be available online through the IDLO E-Learning platform in mid-2010. Funding for the seminar was provided by IDLO, APMG, and the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID). Participants were sponsored by UNAIDS and AusAID.

In the Asia-Pacific region, IDLO is currently engaged in projects to strengthen and expand HIV-related legal services in China (Yunnan), Indonesia and Papua New Guinea.



For further information and interview requests, please contact:
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Notes to Editors:

IDLO is an intergovernmental organization that promotes legal, regulatory and institutional reform to advance economic and social development in transitional and developing countries. Founded in 1983 and one of the leaders in rule of law assistance, IDLO uses its access to governments and interest groups of differing ideologies, as well as its expertise and vast stakeholder network, to create opportunity for those most in need.
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