



## “Strategies from the South” at the 9<sup>th</sup> International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific (ICAAP)

Bali, Indonesia  
August 9-13, 2009

The 9<sup>th</sup> International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific (ICAAP), with the theme of “**Empowering People, Strengthening Networks**”, was held at the Bali International Convention Center in Bali, Indonesia from August 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>, 2009. The Congress was attended by representatives of many of the networks from the Asia Pacific region that participate in the international advocacy project “**Strategies from the South**”. In the framework of the project, these networks jointly organized a number of important events at the Congress, using it as a space for strategizing, networking and sharing the project’s experiences and goals with new audiences.

The initial Strategies from the South gathering was among the Asia Pacific Regional Co-coordinators and the General Coordinator, and was held on August 10<sup>th</sup> from 8:00 to 9:00 a.m. At this meeting, Vince Crisostomo of the Seven Sisters Coalition and Rodelyn Marte of APCASO, together with Mabel Bianco of the Foundation for Studies and Research on Women (FEIM) and Coordinator of the International AIDS Women’s Caucus (IAWC), finalized the preparations for the larger group meeting to be held the following day. Together they discussed the actions of the Coordination Group of the three regions –Asia Pacific, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean- to plan its future activities through March 2010.



On the second morning of the Congress, on August 11<sup>th</sup> from 8:00 to 10:00 a.m., representatives of the groups and networks in “Strategies from the South” gathered together for a working breakfast meeting where they discussed priority issues in the region and jointly mapped out the next steps and activities.

Three representatives of the Asia Pacific Council of AIDS Service Organizations (APCASO) attended the meeting: Moi Lee Liew, Executive Director; Rodelyn Marte, Program Officer and Asia Pacific Regional Co-coordinator of Strategies from the South; and Kirenjit Kaur, Administrative Officer. Kirenjit Kaur is one of the women living with HIV from the region whose life story was compiled in the new book “Diamonds: Stories of Women from the APN+”, supported by UNIFEM. From the Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers (APNSW), Meena Seshu, who is an Asia Pacific Regional Co-coordinator of Strategies from the South, and five other people from her organizations in India -SANGRAM and VAMP- attended. They are Meenakshi Kamble, Coordinator of Miraj at VAMP; Sushila Kunde, Coordinator of the Rural Women’s Programme at SANGRAM



who works on prevention issues with rural Indian women; Vinayak Khadape, Coordinator of the MSM Programme for MUSKAN; Rajendra Naik, Project Coordinator for VAMP; and Shantilal Kale, Administrator and Translator for SANGRAM. All of these participants also had different presentations at the Conference. The International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (ICW) Asia Pacific was represented at the meeting by Anandi Yuvraj, who is the Regional Coordinator, and Jaya Nair, India Focal Point. Vince Crisostomo attended as a representative of Seven Sisters - the Coalition of Asia Pacific Regional Networks on HIV/AIDS. Also in attendance was Callie Long, Communications Manager for ICASO, whose presence in representation of an international network served as an important liaison. As General Coordinator of Strategies from the South, Mabel Bianco was also present at the meeting.

Together the participants at the working meeting discussed how to continue the project's work into the future. The following upcoming meetings and events were highlighted by participants as spaces especially in need of community input and intervention: the XVIII International AIDS Conference in Vienna from July 18-23, 2010; UNGASS on HIV/AIDS in June 2010 or 2011; and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for 2010 and 2015. In preparation for the abovementioned events, the participants planned several initial activities in the framework of the project, specifically: pro-actively getting and sharing relevant information and news; coordinating civil society's plans for critical engagement with the process; and concretely planning for advocacy interventions, especially on UNGASS and its lead-up processes. A series of immediate plans of action for the group was also defined, including a global conference call and a regional face-to-face planning meeting.

Liping Mian of the Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights, one of the networks in Strategies from the South, was unfortunately unable to attend the meeting because of her many commitments at the Congress. She served as leader of the youth group, which organized a wonderful space in the Global Village, and was a Civil Society Speaker representing youth in the first plenary session. All of our members participated in many important sessions throughout the Congress.

Later that day, in the evening of August 11<sup>th</sup> from 5:45 to 7:15 p.m., Strategies from the South held the satellite session **"Deal Makers and Breakers: Learning from HIV/AIDS Networking and Partnership Building Initiatives"**. The session's other co-organizers were: APCASO; Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO); GAYa NUSANTARA; Laos Youth Action Programme (LYAP); and Sampada Grameen Mahila Sanstha (SANGRAM). The session focused on how partnerships could make HIV/AIDS work much more meaningful and effective, but that they are neither easy to establish or keep. The speakers shared lessons from regional and global partnership building initiatives in order to engage participants in an open discussion of partnership issues afterwards, including ways to face controversial issues and come to joint agreements based on commonalities in order to make successful impacts.





The meeting was opened by a welcoming and presentation by Rodelyn Marte of APCASO, followed by a presentation on GAYa NUSANTARA/Community Advocacy Network (CAN) about their regional partnership initiative. They discussed CAN's history evolution as well as the difficulties encountered in partnership issues. Vieng Souriyó of the LYAP followed, addressing the challenges in establishing partnerships and working together in partnerships in difficult socio-political environments, such as the context of Laos, and focused especially on the difficulties in mobilizing marginalized communities such as sex workers, transgender people, injecting drug users. Vieng Souriyó also addressed the role of partnerships in pushing for change in cases such as Laos. This was followed by Mabel Bianco, who presented the case of building partnerships among a diverse range of 36 regional and international networks in the project "Strategies from the South". She addressed the benefits of partnerships as well as the key issues of consensus-building necessary for making them successful. She explained the evolution of the project and examples of joint advocacy carried out by the networks that participate in the project. Afterwards, David Traynor of AFAO discussed alternative HIV partnership modalities and their role as a network in certain initiatives and as donor in others.

The speakers' presentations were followed by an open forum for dialogue coordinated by Meena Seshu of SANGRAM/APNSW. During the dialogue the speakers took a series of questions from many of the audience members who asked for additional examples and more information on partnerships and also shared their own experiences. Afterwards, Meena Seshu closed the session with some words on putting CBOs in the center of partnerships, based on her experiences directing SANGRAM.

Despite having coincided with another meeting that convened other Strategies from the South members, the "Deal Makers and Breakers" satellite session had a high attendance level. In addition to presenting the experience with the project and contextualizing it with other HIV/AIDS partnership initiatives in the region, it also provided an opportunity to disseminate the project through digital and print publications and other Strategies from the South materials, which were made available to the public.

The experience at ICAAP was very positive for the project and for its participants. It allowed fellow Strategies from the South members to meet both formally and informally, giving some of them who had not met before a chance to put a face to the emails. The experience also helped involve a larger number of members from the different networks that participate in the project.

