

## Program News and Update

### No. 1, December 2008

**T**he HIV Consortium for Partnerships in Asia and the Pacific is funded by AusAID to implement a three-year Program (2008-2011) aimed at strengthening the role of organisations and individuals to respond effectively to HIV.

The Program supports organisations which have played key roles in the Australian HIV response to build strategic partnerships and linkages. It complements and adds value to programs supported by AusAID and other donors.

The Program supports capacity building through partnerships. Activities are aimed at assisting partners to achieve long-term, self-sufficient and sustainable responses to HIV.

After a six-month workplanning and establishment phase, January-June 2008, the Consortium began implementation of its Year 1 Program Plan in July 2008.



Consortium booth at the ASHM Annual Conference, Perth September 2008

The Program Plan is made up of 30 Program Components in Indonesia, Pacific, Greater Mekong, Timor Leste and Asia Pacific Regional.

Activities include:

- Assisting the organisational development and activities of established counterparts (i.e. healthcare worker organisations, health services, community or peer-based organisations, regional peak bodies, research organisations)
- Facilitating the development of a counterparts through up-skilling individuals, loose networks and nascent organisations
- Supporting networking and collaboration within and across sectors, and across countries

Selected highlights of member activities so far include:

- Albion Street Centre (ASC), together with the Thai Red Cross and in collaboration with Champasak Health Service, the Laos Centre for HIV/AIDS/STI and World Health Organization, has conducted a capacity assessment of HIV services in Champasak Province, Laos, ASC has also begun a healthcare worker development project with the Fiji School of Medicine.
- Australasian Society for HIV Medicine (ASHM) organised the International Short Course in HIV and Related Issues, and Annual Meeting of the Regional Professional HIV and Sexual Health Societies in

September. ASHM assisted with the Oceania Society for Sexual Health and HIV Medicine Annual General Meeting in September, and organised country based meetings to discuss support and projects in PNG, Timor Leste, Indonesia and the Mekong.

- Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO) hosted a three-week study tour with the coordinator or the Indonesian Male Sexual Health Network in September, and has been meeting with network members to discuss and identify priority capacity development needs. AFAO has also been assisting the Asia Pacific Council of AIDS Service Organisations in organisational development and advocacy. AFAO and the AIDS Council NSW are planning with the Pacific Sexual Diversity Network for a training workshop in February.
- Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL) took part in regional planning for AusAID's HIV/AIDS Asia Regional Program, and discussed possible collaborations with drug user networks in the region, including Response Beyond Borders, an important harm reduction initiative.
- Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS) and National Centre in HIV Social Research (NCHSR) organised the inaugural meeting of the Asia Pacific Network of HIV Social Researchers in September.
- ARCSHS is planning an intensive training program with social researchers from the Hasarnuddin University, South Sulawesi, and working with the AusAID bilateral HIV program and National AIDS Commission on a capacity building workshop.
- NCHSR has been working with the Fiji School of Medicine, University of the South Pacific, Secretariat of the South Pacific, OSSHHM, FJN+, and UNAIDS to establish a Pacific HIV & STI Research Institute. Two interns from Timor Leste Institute of Health Services have also undertaken training at NCHSR.
- National Serology Reference Laboratory (NRL), in collaboration with ASHM and St Vincent's Hospital Sydney, conducted the Regional HIV Laboratory Seminar in September. Fifteen delegates participated from PNG, the Pacific, Timor Leste and Cambodia. The Seminar focused on HIV testing strategies, particularly strategies using rapid tests which are soon to be implemented in many countries.
- National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research (NCHECR), in partnership

with the National Centre for HIV/AIDS, Dermatology and STD Control in Cambodia, has begun planning the structure of a field research training and mentoring support program in epidemiology. Opportunities for integration with other relevant programs are being explored. NCHECR is also liaising with the National AIDS Commission in Indonesia to develop a call for expressions of interest from potential partners across Indonesia.

- Scarlet Alliance, Australian Sex Workers Association, has been meeting and discussing with sex worker networks and other stakeholders in Fiji and Timor Leste to build links and establish plans, as well as planning regional activities around the ICAAP conference, 2009.

The 20th Annual ASHM Conference was held 17-20 September 2008 at the Perth Convention Centre. A total of 152 conference participants came from countries in the region.

The HIV Consortium had a dedicated exhibition booth, and members presented and participated in the International Stream of conference sessions including:

- Women, risk and HIV
- Global policy vs local responses
- Papua New Guinea
- Indonesia
- Counselling and testing
- Harm reduction in Asia

HIV Ambassador, Murray Proctor, and Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance, Bob McMullin, met with Consortium members during the conference.

McMullin presented in a plenary on Australia's response to HIV in the region, and supporting new partnerships in the aid program.

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