

Enhancing the Parliamentary Response to the HIV/AIDS Crisis

PROGRAMME

Tuesday, 12 June - from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.
Rayburn Room 2255

The international response to the HIV/AIDS crisis revolves around the action of intergovernmental organizations, governments, donors, civil society, and the private sector. However, it seems that parliament does not figure prominently in the response, and that the legislature could do more as a central locus of decision-making, monitoring, and guidance. There is a need for parliaments and their members to be more involved and better equipped in the response to the disease, especially in the most affected developing countries. Global strategies by the donor community should be better targeted to the parliament in each country in order to optimize available resources and obtain more sustainable results. To help achieve this, an international effort is in the making to help mobilize parliaments by exchanging experiences, sharing information, and providing mutual support.

Speakers:

- Hon. Pier Ferdinando Casini (Italy), President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union
- Rep. Donald Payne, Chairman, House Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health
- Rep. Betty McCollum, Co-Chair, Congressional Global Health Caucus
- Hon. Elioda Tumwesigye, Uganda, Chairperson of the Committee on HIV/AIDS
- Hon. Henrietta Bogopane-Zulu, South Africa, South African National AIDS Council
- Dr. Pauline Muchina, Senior Partnership Adviser, UNAIDS

Main topics:

- establishing a common understanding among parliamentarians of prevention, care and treatment;
- exercising effective oversight of national policies to help achieve universal access to treatment and care;
- monitoring and coordinating international aid to maximize benefits in accordance with national priorities;
- ensuring the involvement of affected communities in parliamentary processes and decision-making;
- training and education for members of parliament in the social, economic and human rights dimensions of HIV/AIDS.

Biographical notes on the IPU presenters:

Hon. Hendrietta Bogopane-Zulu - Member of Parliament, South Africa

Ms. Bogopane-Zulu is a disability rights, gender, and HIV/AIDS activist. She works on children and youth policy, and researches disability, development and HIV/AIDS. The youngest member of the Parliament of South Africa, Ms. Bogopane is visually impaired. She was previously employed by Disabled People South Africa as the National Coordinator of the Disabled Women's Development Programme.

She was elected to the South African National Assembly in June 1999 and was re-elected for a second term in April 2004. In parliament, she served on numerous parliamentary committees; was Chairperson of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Improvement of Quality of Life and Status of Youth, Children and Disabled Persons from 1999 to 2004. She currently serves on the Portfolio Committee on Social Development. In addition to this, she introduced the first trafficking legislation in parliament and established the children's parliament.

Mrs. Bogopane serves on the South African National Aids Council representing the disability sector. She participates in many organizations and projects representing disability issues. She has also trained physiotherapists and occupational therapists on the impact of HIV and AIDS on disabled people.

Hon. Elioda Tumwesigye -Member of Parliament, Uganda

A medical doctor, epidemiologist, and parliamentarian, Dr. Tumwesigye was recently re-elected as Chairperson of the Committee on HIV/AIDS and Related Matters in the Parliament of Uganda. The Committee on HIV/AIDS is mandated, inter alia, to coordinate HIV/AIDS activities of parliament and provide a link between parliament and the Uganda Aids Commission, scrutinize HIV/AIDS policies, and monitor and evaluate activities of government, local government and other bodies aimed at combating HIV/AIDS.

Originally intending to work as a general practitioner, Mr. Tumwesigye switched his focus to HIV/AIDS after witnessing the tragic course of the epidemic in his country, and he now directs a care centre for people with AIDS catering for some 4000 patients.

Among other published works, Mr. Tumwesigye has authored a Teacher's Handbook on HIV/AIDS Prevention in Schools.

Mr. Jesudas Seelam, Member of Parliament, India

Mr. Seelam joined the Rajya Sabha (Upper House of parliament) for Andhra Pradesh in 2004. He is currently a member of the Consultative Committee for the ministry of social justice and Empowerment. In his work as a social activist he has worked with many NGOs.

He is a core group member of India's Parliamentarians Forum on HIV/AIDS. Today the Parliamentary Forum has over 300 members who are dedicated to provide leadership to

the HIV/AIDS response in India. Its aims are to strengthen and support initiatives on prevention, care and support being implemented by the government, NGOs and others. It also seeks to address stigma and discrimination faced by people living with HIV, enhance the response to HIV at the national, state, district and constituency level, and sensitize other Members of Parliament on HIV/AIDS.