

INCLUSION WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF PARLIAMENTARIANS ON  
POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

In July 2009 after a lengthy administrative process, the Canadian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (CAPPD) was officially accepted into the Inter-American Parliamentary Group on Population and Development. IAPG is the regional coordinating body for all parliamentary groups in the Americas.

Canada is now one of the seventeen (17) Parliamentary Associations throughout the Americas committed to ensuring governments keep their commitments to the CAIRO 1994 Programme of Action and its inter-linked 2000 Millennium Development Goals of which there are eight.

As a new member, Canada's Parliamentary Association now has an official voice and influence in the international arena on issues of gender equality, women's reproductive health and rights and other poverty reduction strategies.

There are four (4) regional Parliamentary Forums or Groups around the world. These are the:

1. Asian Forum for Parliamentarians on Population and Development - AFPPD
2. European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development - EPF
3. Forum of African and Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development - FAAPPD
4. Inter-American Parliamentary Group on Population and Development - IAPG

Our Association now joins these other Parliamentary Forums (through the IAPG), to collaborate more effectively in finding ways to promote and achieve these goals.

While in Addis Ababa in October 2009 for the High Level Meeting on Maternal Health and the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Parliamentarians on Population and Development on the Implementation of the 1994 Cairo Programme of Action, we had an opportunity to visit the *Kirkos Youth Centre* and an HIV/AIDS Prevention Care and Support Organisation (HAPCSO).

**The Kirkos Centre** is in the heart of the city where up to 50,000 young people live. The Centre was opened in 2005 with support from the Ethiopian Government who donated the building. The Centre is located next door to the local high school, allowing the students to use the library's well-worn materials for their studies.

Other international donors to the Centre's programmes include the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Care Ethiopia (supported through the Canada Fund for Africa) and the International Planned Parenthood Federation which also supports the Centre's work through the Family Guidance Association of Ethiopia.

A team of doctors, nurses and technicians carry out preventative care and testing for HIV AIDS and other Socially Transmitted Infections (STIs). At the same time they provide space for learning about reproductive and maternal health, the art of being in respectful and healthy relationships that excludes all forms of physical and emotional violence against women, and other communication skills through various counselling techniques.

We also had an opportunity to see some of the emerging talent of youth who entertained their visitors through both traditional and modern music and dance. It was wonderful to witness the excellent work carried out by the dedicated staff at the centre. It was an excellent chance to see the good work Canada continues to contribute in creating a healthy and equitable environment in which men and women can live and work.

## ***ABOUT HAPCSO***

Hiwot HIV/AIDS Prevention Care and Support Organisation, (HAPCSO) was established by an Ethiopian nurse, Sister Tibebe Maco in 1999. It is dedicated to the care and treatment of individuals, mainly women, who have been ostracised by society because of contracting the virus that causes AIDS, or has full blown AIDS. Many of these women are young mothers with children.

They are sustained with enormous tenderness in their will to live, through counselling and other psychological support. Individuals also have an opportunity to learn new skills such as sewing, crocheting and knitting in order to support themselves, their children and the work of the organisation. Work includes the *Memory Project* where parents are taught how to write a will, nominate guardians for their children while they still can, and prepare family mementos in the inevitable event of death.

The organisation has received several international awards in recognition of their work. If you wish to donate to the organisation or require further information, please visit their website at [www.hapcso.org](http://www.hapcso.org)