

Report from the Ninth ICAAP Conference in Bali

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John Trigg attended the [ICAAP](#) [1]International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific. IX Conference as NAPWA Delegate. Here he reports on his experience of the Conference.

The 9th ICAAP was held in Bali's Nusa Dua Resort at the Bali International Convention Centre and surrounding locations from August 10-13, 2009 along with pre-conference satellite community meetings occurring from August 7-9 2009. The Community Forums included specific events for drug users, sex workers, women (including Lesbians), youth, migrant & MSM populations.

Day One (August 7) plenaries and workshop sessions were based around the issues of "Identification of the Main Problems" faced by the various sections of the community. Workshops included "Treatment Access & Human Rights" & [PLHIV](#) [2]Person (or people) Living with HIV. This term is now preferred over the older PLWHA. Leadership & Resource Mobilization". Afternoon plenaries included the preparation of recommendations to be presented at the congress proper and also an information session designed to assist members of the community forums in their preparations for the main congress.

As the various forums were held at the same time on the same day (August 8) and in differing locations, it was only possible to attend one. The MSM forum – hosted by APCOM - was titled "Forum 200" to signify & acknowledge that – in the Asia Pacific region – 200 MSMs & transgendered people are infected with the HIV [virus](#) [3]A small infective organism which is incapable of reproducing outside a host cell. every day. It was a useful & sobering fact that there were just over 200 attendees at the forum, which enabled that point to be driven home with maximum visual effect – "Every one in this room. Everyday."

The issues explored included updates on the road so far: Government & donor responses; advocating for MSM services; needs and solutions; and community feedback via the mechanism of regional breakout sessions. A report-back statement from this forum was drafted to be presented at the final community forum plenary on August 9.

The other community forums also prepared statements for the final community plenary forum & a general community statement was then to be prepared for presentation at the official congress. "Empowering People, Strengthening Networks" was the theme of ICAAP IX. The number of local grass roots organizations who came from many countries and perspectives were able to take advantage of differing opportunities in order to learn and listen, but - most importantly – to share. The whole gamut of different topics which all pertain to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in our Region were there to be discussed, to inform, to warn, to alert, to report and to be questioned. There were plenaries, symposia, oral abstract sessions and skills building workshops of every order from which to choose.

My activities were mainly centred around MSM issues, although I also followed a loose connection of interfaith lectures. They presented data on many fronts which put together the issues of men being same-sex attracted whilst living within a code of strict religious, moral, traditional structures. As always, funding is a major issue and many are run on a voluntary basis at considerable risk of violence, arrest, social shunning. From the point of view of MSM activities, there are local organizations which are striving towards and succeeding in providing services to their local HIV+ communities. Many are successful projects, but funding is always a major issue and in some cases, continued existence cannot be guaranteed. Again, what is heartening is that there is a new generation of young men coming of political age across the Asia Pacific & they were determined and able in getting their points & their issues across.

I was impressed with the passion and eagerness with many of the younger delegates. It seems to me that there is a groundswell of disturbance, of impatience at the lack of progress and of rising anger amongst many of them. The many who are standing their ground and demanding their rights include young women, IDU organizations, sex workers as well as MSMs. The pandemic is more frequently now being referred to as "genocide by omission".

Overall, I think that ICAAP IX can be a success if the energy expressed IX can – in concert with donors, governments, regional bodies and activists – be captured and channeled into areas which will see results for those people who

live in the reality of poverty-stricken, violent, repressed lives and who also live with HIV as well as belonging to a minority group. A growth in the efficacy and success of community based projects will go a very long way towards achieving an assault on the effects the HIV virus can engender.

Almost all projects, surveys, abstracts, statements made are by now to be found on the Internet. It is perhaps in recognition of a new era of communication that the organisers placed a memory stick in every conference bag. This ability to be more intimately connected seems to have finally reached down to the ground and it will therefore be possible to more readily and ably assist/support those of our regional neighbours who are in need.

In my capacity as Australia's [APN+](#) [4]Asia-Pacific Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS. Delegate, it was good to see and feel that those connections the member countries have made are bearing fruit across the board. A team which is beginning to know itself and each other well can expect an increase in the success of its projects and the

Below is the link to an interesting and thought provoking radio documentary about the challenges of responding to HIV in the Asia-Pacific, focused on the ICAAP conference. Speakers include Michel Sidibé, Julio Montaner, Michael Kirby, Bill Bowtell, Don Baxter, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and others. The audio is one hour long but worth the investment.

www.abc.net.au/rn/backgroundbriefing/stories

- [Defeating HIV](#)
- [drug holidays](#)
- [HIV in our region](#)
- [report](#)
- [The global HIV epidemic](#)

Links:

[1] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/395>

[2] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/689>

[3] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/125>

[4] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/384>

[5] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/486>