

UNIFEM and APN+ launch *Diamonds* at ICAAP

Bali, 2009 – “Now my life is so much better than before. I am happy because I have broken through a wall,” says Neri. She is one of the women whose stories are featured in ***Diamonds: Stories of Women from the Asia Pacific Network of People Living with HIV***, a publication and documentary launched by UNIFEM and APN+ at ICAAP, the 9th International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific.

The launch, held at the ICAAP Symposium “Empowerment and Positive Women’s Leadership in the Asia Pacific Region” on 10th August 2009, features a panel of speakers, including the author, Dr. Susan Paxton, and three of the women whose stories were featured in the book. Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir, Malaysian AIDS Council Advisor will officially launch the publication at this event.

An increasing number of women living with HIV are overcoming enormous challenges to become leaders and advocates involved in the global AIDS response. They are determined to alter the status quo, improve HIV prevention and care and reduce AIDS-related discrimination. Yet these dynamic leaders remain invisible and tend to go unrecognized in the public sphere.

Diamonds focuses on the personal narratives of ten women and one girl who are HIV positive. Their stories are honest and passionate, providing a deep insight into the lives of women and girls living with HIV. The book plots key moments in their lives, from diagnosis to the realization that they could be part of the change, documenting the journey each woman went through to emerge as an advocate for individuals living with HIV and a powerful voice in the global dialogue on AIDS.

Dr. Jean D’Cunha, Regional Program Director of UNIFEM East and Southeast Asia will deliver the welcome address. And Mr. Prasada Rao Director of the Regional Support Team for Asia and the Pacific at UNAIDS will close the event.

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UNIFEM is the women’s fund at the United Nations. It provides financial and technical assistance to innovative programmes and strategies that promote women’s human rights, political participation and economic security. UNIFEM works in partnership with UN organisations, governments and non-governmental organisations and networks to promote gender equality. It links women’s issues and concerns to national, regional and global agendas by fostering collaboration, and providing technical expertise on gender mainstreaming and women’s empowerment strategies.

Women of APN+ is the women’s working group of APN+. Its vision is the empowerment of women living with HIV and AIDS in the Asia-Pacific region to provide a united voice, improve the quality of our lives and ensure our leaders protect our rights. WAPN+’s mission is to increase solidarity and communication among women living with HIV in the Asia Pacific region and improve our skills, knowledge and opportunities to fully participate in an effective response to HIV and AIDS, and to advocate for the needs of women living with HIV at a regional level.

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