

WAO ANNUAL REPORT 2000

Prepared by Ivy Josiah, Executive Director on behalf of the Hon. Secretary, WAO
Executive Committee 2000/01

1. THE FOLLOWING WERE ELECTED AT THE 17TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 22 APRIL 2000 AT 2.30 P.M. AT APDC, KUALA LUMPUR

President: Meera Samanther
 Vice - President: Shanty Dairiam
 Secretary: Asha Dhillon
 Assistant Secretary: Sharon Hariharan
 Treasurer: Lim Gim Bee (resigned on 1 Dec 2000)
 Yeow Ai Lin (wef January 2000)
 Assistant Treasurer: Yeow Ai Lin
 Committee members: Mary Fatima (resigned 31 May 2000)
 Fawzia Hanoum Ariff
 Farah Abdul Samad (resigned 25 June)

Co opted Committee members: Louise Platt (wef July 2000)

The EXCO conducted 11 committee meetings in 2000.

1.1 WAO COMMITTEES AND GROUPS

Staff Committee Meera Samanther
 Yeow Ai Lin
 Shanty Dairiam
 Ivy Josiah

House Group Meera Samanther
 Dulcie Abraham
 Mary Fatima
 Fawzia Hanoum Ariff
 Lim Gim Bee
 WAO staff

Research Group Wong Yut Lin
 Shanti Thambiah
 Su Saminathan
 Shoba Aiyar
 Vijayaledchumy Ramanathan
 Jessie Ang
 Nazlina Abdul Ghani

DV /JAG committee: WAO Social Workers
 Lee Shook Fong
 Meera Samanther
 Ivy Josiah

CEDAW Baseline committee: Rozana Isa
 Noraida Endut

Asha Dhillon
Ivy Josiah
Shanty Dairiam (IWRAW, AP)

Anak Angkat Coordinator Jessie Ang

2. PATRON

WAO did not have a patron in the year 2000

3. TRUSTEES

The trustees are as follows:

Toh Puan Datin Dr. Aishah Ong
Rashidah Abdullah
Noor Farida Ariffin
Puan Sri Chong Eu Ngoh (wef March 1996)

4. MEMBERSHIP

In 2000 WAO had 88 listed members and approximately 15 active volunteers. Not all these volunteers were members of WAO.

5. STAFF

Refuge

Subbalakshmi Aiyar	Social worker
Normah Mohd Nor	Night Social worker
Jessie Ang	Social worker
Nazlina Abd. Ghani	Social Worker
Enizahura Abdul Aziz	Social Worker (wef 5 th November)

Child Care Centre (CCC)

Vijayaledchumy Ramanathan	Social worker
Mary Selina Santhanasamy	Social worker
Engammah Anumiah(Vijaya)	Child minder
Murugammah Rajagopal	Child Minder (resigned 1 st November)
Vasanda Vello	Child minder (dismissed 11 March)
Mary Fatima Vasupillay	Night supervisor (wef 4 June)
Azlina Mohd Lazim	Tuition Teacher

Executive staff

Annie Varghese	Administrator
Rozana Isa	Project Manager (wef 16 June)
Shirley Hardin	Accounts Executive (resigned 19 July)
Bann Thony Pasang	Accounts Executive (wef 11 July)
Ivy N. Josiah	Executive Secretary

Project Staff

Uma Devi Chandran	Research officer (resigned 29 January)
Lee Shook Fong	Legal Reform Officer (wef 10 July
Sumithra Woodhull	Legal Reform Officer (resigned 31 December

Temporary staff

Enizahura Abdul Aziz	Admin. Assistant (5 June – 5 th November)
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6.0 WAO SERVICES

Refuge	105 women and 90 children
Face to face Counselling	44 women
Telephone Counselling	981 calls
Child Care Centre	27 children

6.1 HOUSE GROUP

The House Group comprising a small group of committed volunteers and staff met every first Wednesday to discuss cases of the residents at the Refuge and of the CCC that needs follow-up and assistance from volunteers.

Policy issues in the overall social work were also discussed regularly. The policy to continue giving refuge to Foreign Domestic workers(FDWs) was discussed thoroughly. There were concerns that a lot of our resources were being spent on foreign women. However it was reiterated that WAO should continue to provide and advocate for FDWs, as our mission is to aid all women in Malaysia who are in crisis irrespective of their nationality. Although direct service and advocacy meant more resources, it was agreed that we should look for funding to hire more people to cope with the demands.

The House Group also supervised the Anak Angkat Programme and the TTTS Memorial Fund, which is a loan scheme for residents.

6.1 The REFUGE Report

WAO provided shelter for 105 women and 90 children who came from different races, socio-economic backgrounds and religions. There were 64 victims of domestic violence, 17 foreign domestic workers, 9 single mothers and 15 women who sought shelter due to other factors affecting their lives. Some examples of these factors were women whose drug-addicted husbands were caught and jailed, migrant women who had been trafficked and ex-residents who were suddenly homeless.

Of the domestic violence cases, each case had a different twist to it and this made our work more challenging. There were incidents at the gate, of husbands in search of their wives. We had to deftly handle the situation and managed to contain the situation to protect our clients. Some police and welfare personnel were very helpful and cooperative in some of the above situations sensitive to the needs of our clients.

Social workers were particularly busy because of the increase in the number of foreign domestic worker abuse cases. Managing a case involved liaising with the Respective agencies: police, immigration, agent, labor office, lawyers and the courts.

WAO also made an effort to meet for dialogue sessions with government agencies to improve our services and to have a better understanding between WAO and the respective agencies. Among them were the University Hospital, Petaling Jaya District Police Station and the Immigration Department at Pusat Damansara and various NGOs. By having dialogues with the top officials, we were able to iron out policies and procedures, which affected our clients, and to seek better cooperation when dealing with their personnel. We also had a better understanding of how each one functioned and they of ours. One important dialogue session was with the Immigration authorities soon after the unexpected raid on our Refuge. Although the Immigration authorities did not apologize for the raid, they indicated that their officials would be more sensitive to the needs of FDWs.

Visits from local and foreign visitors from Indonesia, India, Bangladesh, America, and Myanmar fostered better understanding of our services for women and we were consulted by many on how to set up shelters and programs for women.

In the skills building area, social workers were updated on the latest issues on the Domestic Violence Act, the Laws on Rape and the Sexual Harassment Code. Social workers were introduced to use a novel therapy called Laughter therapy whereby an expert taught and demonstrated how to carry it out. Laughter therapy focused on simulated laughter as form of a stress reliever. Three of our staff were part of a study group of women NGOs to Singapore to learn about the family court systems and services offered to women and domestic violence survivors. This study visit was organised by WCC Penang and sponsored by SEA Gender Equity Program, Canada.

From November onwards, a chambering student from AWAM's legal clinic comes to the Refuge twice a month on Saturdays to give legal consultation to our clients.

On the 16th of December, we had the annual gathering cum Christmas Party for our ex-residents, residents and volunteers. Some volunteers and well-wishers put up programs like puppet shows and games for the children and donated refreshments. It was a success as we managed to see quite a few ex-residents and were updated with their development. We were quite saddened by some of the stories as the single mothers were struggling with their low pay and demands of their children.

Report by Shoba Aiyar

6.2 The CCC Report

In 2000, 27 children belonging to 10 mothers used the services. The year began with 20 children and ended with 5. Of the 27 children who were at the CCC, the following is a breakdown of age:

13 to 16 years	4
7 to 12 years	15
4 to 6 years	7
Below 4 years	1

22 children left the Centre in 2000. Of the 22:

- 3 children, all from one family, left to stay with the father
- 11 children belonging to 4 mothers went to live with the mothers
- 8 children went to live in permanent children's homes.

As usual, the children at the Centre were busy with school and schoolwork. And of course, there was plenty of fun and playtime. Azlina Lazim, the tuition teacher and the staff helped children with their schooling and educational needs.

In the year 2000, the need for a senior staff to manage the CCC during the nights was identified. The CCC increased the staff from 4 – 5 by hiring a Night Supervisor. The Night Supervisor also was able to be on call when there was no staff at night at the Refuge.

There were also ample opportunities for children to discuss their feelings and thoughts individually and in groups. Group discussions, activities and projects were especially popular with the children – and turned out to be a great way for them to learn, and to play in the CCC. There were the fun outings, like the movies, swimming, parties and picnics, organised and facilitated by volunteers and staff. Children just loved to go to nearby playgrounds with picnic baskets filled with goodies; this has become quite a regular event during weekends and holidays.

Mothers spent their “off” days and holidays with their children at the CCC. Mothers sometimes joined the children during outings and trips. Children who had left the CCC and their mothers continued to be in touch with the staff, sometimes it was just to say hello, but usually it was for assistance or support.

The year-end annual holiday gathering organized by the CCC staff and it was even more memorable for the children as it was held in Port Dickson. This yearly gathering, which is for current and ex residents of the CCC, is an event the children look forward to. Besides the fun and the experience, they so look forward to meeting their friends again, and keeping in touch with WAO. When they leave after the event, the children are already discussing the following years gathering – with plenty of suggestions.

The CCC also created space when the International Women's Association donated an outdoor cabin, which was turned into a library.

Report by Viji Ramanathan

7. ANAK ANGKAT SPONSORSHIP PROGRAMME

Started in 1991 to cater to the needs of the children of ex-residents who would otherwise be hard-pressed to put their children through school. In 2000, 32 children from 22 mothers were the beneficiaries of this program from 22 sponsors. Coordinated by Jessie Ang, the work involves sourcing sponsors, interviewing mothers and keeping sponsors informed by sending thank you letters and a short report on the child to all the sponsors in the beginning of the year. To all our kind sponsors who have kept this program alive, WAO acknowledges our appreciation to:

Albert Chin
Annapoorni Chandrasekharan
Bupinder Singh

Cho Foong Khuan
Debbie Dennis
Dr Fatimah Yakin

Dr. Tuen Kam Sim
 Indra Kulasegaran
 Jane Carlos
 Kamala Jeshurun
 Zeenath Begum

Prayoon Damrongchietanon
 Ravindran V.
 Richard Harding
 Robert Gan
 Roy Chok Wai Kim
 Syed Akbar Ali
 Tracy Wong
 V.Kanesan

Kathleen Chin
 Lim Gim Bee
 Peter Eu

8. INTERNS AT WAO

WAO hosted 9 interns, who became an integral part of our work and staff support. Although staff had to spend some time supervising, the interns who were sponsored by their respective agencies contributed in assisting staff, running programs for children, writing newsletters, organizing the library and assisting wherever they could.

From 6 March – 20th May, 4 students from the Department of Social Administration and Justice, Faculty of Arts & Social Science, University Malaya, spent time both at the Refuge and the CCC. They were Siah Pei Shi, Lim Sok Min, Lin Lit Jeng and Ang Sze Yoon

ABM (AFS) Overseas Intern Program arranged for Marie Predo from Canada who was with us from 18 April to 31 July. Marie spent a lot of her time researching and drafting the information sheet on VAW that eventually became the WAO - Body Shop brochure.

Cheryl Chan, a Singaporean studying at Harvard joined us in June – August for 10 weeks. Cheryl came under a Harvard University program called BHUMI, “a student organization focused on sending interns to developing nation so that they can explore the process of development from the most realistic viewpoint-- from the roots where most small NGOs are working”

At the end of the year in September, Metchild Juliane Von Vacano, under the ABM Program began her internship, which ended in February 2001. Mesh, as she was fondly called took on the enormous task of organising the library. She also created fun activities for the children, took minutes, typed notes, worked on brochure on the Internal Security Act and produced a newsletter.

9. RESEARCH & ADVOCACY

9.1 MONITORING THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT

This project started in 1996, opened the year's activities. On January 19th, the National Consultation on the DVA was held at the Crystal Crown Hotel in Petaling Jaya. 30 participants from NGOs, Police, AG Chambers, Press and survivors were given the findings of the Monitoring. The findings highlighted:

- A survivor's ordeal in obtaining protection from the police
- A social worker's experience in dealing with agencies
- Delays in obtaining an Interim Protection Order (IPO)
- Costs involved in obtaining an Interim Protection Order

The participants were asked to suggest proposals for reform to the Act and its procedures.

With the resignation of Uma Chandran, the Research officer in January, the monitoring came to a standstill, as we were unable to find anyone suitable. In June, we hired Lee Shook Fong to continue with the monitoring process. Shook Fong's tasks among others were to clean and complete the documentation carried out in 1999.

In 2000, the monitoring of the DVA focused on the duties of the police officers and investigating as to why in some jurisdictions there were different protocols for the application of the IPO.

In 2001, the DVA will have been in place for 5 years. WAO plans to have a National Meeting to share our findings and put forward our recommendations for change on the DVA in a form of a memorandum. Since Datuk Abdullah Badawi, the Minister of Home Affairs in charge of the Police had announced in May 2000, that the DVA needs a review WAO will take this opportunity to invite YB and the new Minister of Women and Family Development to officiate the National Meeting.

National Steering Committee on VAW

In Oct. 2000, Dato' Sharizat, then the Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department in charge of HAWA, and now the newly appointed Minister of Women and Family Development initiated a National Steering Committee on Violence against Women (VAW), which comprised governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations. WAO joined this committee in the hope of bringing about change on a national level so as to stop and prevent VAW, to push for changes in the laws and protocols and to network with governmental agencies on issues of violence and gender equality.

WAO has been playing a key role by co-chairing two of its sub committees. We played an active role in contributing to the committee's understanding that gender-based violence exists in part from women's subordinate status in society and that and it is imperative to eliminate discrimination to combat VAW.

By co-chairing the Sub Committee on Law 7 Policy, we could place on the agenda the urgency of reform to the DVA and other laws related to VAW. WAO co-chairs the Strategy and Planning Sub Committee which is responsible for a media campaign. We have assisted Leo Burnett, assigned by the Ministry to chart a multi media campaign against VAW by providing conceptual clarity and arranging for survivors to share their experiences with their creative team.

9.2 Monitoring the Fulfillment of the Malaysian Government's Obligation to Women's Equality- A CEDAW Baseline Report on Marriage and Divorce

This project started in 1998 with funding raised by IWRAW Asia Pacific. Based on the feedback from the Training cum Meeting on the Women's Convention from 3 – 5th November 1999 at Crystal Crown, Petaling Jaya, we set about rewriting parts of the report so that it can be more government friendly. We also began liaising with HAWA (Women's Affairs Department) to fix a date when WAO can brief HAWA staff on the baseline report.

The aims of this critical WAO – HAWA meeting were:

- Introduce HAWA to the WAO Baseline Report
- Identify and prioritize the recommendations outline in the report
- Plan and strategize an inter- ministerial meeting to put into place the recommendations.

This meeting did not take place in 2000. Unfortunately the officer at HAWA we were liaising with was transferred thus breaking the continuity. HAWA itself was very busy restructuring itself as the department became a department under the Prime Minister's Department in late 1999.

In December 2000, Rozana Isa and Noraida Endut attended a Conference in Manila to meet with partners and funders of this project. The Asia Pacific Gender Equality Programme (APGEN) project under UNDP also brought together government agencies so that both NGO and government can have an understanding of the CDEAW project and see the need to work together.

Puan Norasmah Shamsudin the new Director General of HAWA also attended the meeting and this was again another opportunity for WAO to network and confirm that HAWA will be initiating an inter- ministerial meeting to promote the use of the Women's Convention.

WAO continued its advocacy on the recommendations as outlined in the Baseline Report, one of which was to institute equality under the Guardianship Act. This Act was amended in November 1999, to recognize that both parents were equal guardians under the law. However in practice women reported to WAO that they still could not apply for passports for their children. Immigration forms still has "father/guardian" printed on them.

WAO supported a joint memorandum by Sisters In Islam urging the government to give an administrative directive to all government departments that all Malaysian mothers were now equal guardians and they should be able to sign any official form which asked for the signature of the guardian. WAO made many press statements about this form of discrimination and lobbied with government agencies (Ministry of Home Affairs and HAWA) to announce the administrative directive to mark Hari Wanita which falls on 25 August.

On 27 August at the national celebrations of Hari Wanita, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Home Affairs, Datuk Abdullah Badawi announced that the administrative directive will be put into place, enabling mothers to sign as guardian for passports, school transfers and medical operations for their children.

WAO continued to monitor this new directive and found that Immigration Officials were still not paying any heed to this announcement. WAO had to intervene by phone calls and letters to Immigration to assist 3 women apply for passports for their children. We gave feedback of this discrepancy to government through informal channels. To date, it appears that the Immigration authorities are accepting the mother's signature as a guardian.

In the year 2000, WAO intend to pursue the next phase of the CEDAW project which is being funded by Asia Pacific Gender

9.3 FOREIGN WORKER DOMSTIC (FDWs) ABUSE

17 FDWs sought Refuge and WAO 's media strategy was successful enough to get the issue on the front pages of all the major newspapers. The Nurjanah Matyak case captured the attention of the nation and for weeks in February there was great debate and discussion on how to prevent abuse against FDWs. There was a lot of debate on the rights of employers and their problems.

Out of this public debate, a national hotline to the police was put in place. WAO's meeting with the Secretary General of the Ministry of Human Resources On 3 March was disappointing, as he did not seem to have the sensitivity to tackle this issue. Thus, most of the rhetoric by various government agencies remains rhetoric.

At WAO we continue to render assistance to the foreign workers but advocacy has slowed down due to lack of resources. WAO plans to get funding to hire a project officer (one Malaysian and the other Indonesian) to focus on advocacy at 4 levels:

- Prevent violence against FDWs
- Protect the rights of FDWs
- Monitor the court proceedings against the perpetrators
- Advocate for a model contract

10. NETWORKING

10.1 WOMEN'S AGENDA FOR CHANGE (WAC)

Women's Development Collective (WDC) became the secretariat for this joint initiative. The WAC organizing committee represents six women NGOs and a worker's union. They include WDC, Sisters In Islam, All Women's Action Society, Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall Women's Section, Wanita JIM, Women's Aid Organisation and Malaysian Metal Industries Employees Union.

Both Ivy Josiah and Meera Samanther continued to represent WAO on the WAC committee. Lee Shook Fong also began participating in WAC activities too.

In March WAC organised a national meeting of NGOs to look at each of the 11 issues and see how we cal lobby our MPs. Most NGOs felt that they cannot allocate resources to work and build the capacity of their local MP.

The year was spent in lobbying MPs to understand and accept the WAC as an agenda that they can take on. Members of WAC spent time at Parliament talking to MPs. We held focus meetings with Barisan Nasional and Barisan Alternatif MPs. Although the turnout was poor for both the meetings there was support for the issues raised in the WAC.

12. PUBLIC EDUCATION

Talks: WAO gave 15 talks throughout the year to rotary clubs, students, office personnel and conference participants.

Exhibitions: Exhibition on VAW and WAC at Low Yat Plaza organised by final year graphic students from Unicorn Creative.

Print Media: WAO was featured in the newspapers in the news pages, women sections or feature articles at least 65 times throughout 2000. The Star carried for 3 consecutive weeks, the WAO – Body Shop poster with related articles on VAW during the month of August. To commemorate November 25th, WAO worked with Sin Chew Pit Poh to deliver for 5 consecutive days articles on VAW. Cleo, Marie Claire, Jelita and Keluarga ran stories on WAO and interviewed our residents.

Television: 3 Interviews on TV 3's women's programmes. Nazlina is our main spokesperson for TV3; Ivy was interviewed on one on Moving on 2 of RTM 2 on FDW abuse. Asia News Broadcasting interviewed Shoba on her work as a social worker and Ivy was interviewed by NHK when she attended an Experts meeting on Violence in Tokyo, Japan,

Radio: 1 interview on WOW Radio to discuss domestic violence and 3 interviews for BBC World on domestic violence within the Asia Pacific Region, The issue of abuse against FDWs and the impact of religion on women in Malaysia.

WAO Resource: Approximately 20 either received information from us or were given interviews by our social workers to assist them write their research papers for their respective courses at college.

WAO Website: We launched our website 25th November at an Internet café. This project was coordinated by Rozana Isa and Loise Platt who worked with Julian Matthews based in Ipoh. Julian volunteered to give his technical and expert support through e-mail.

12. FUNDING

We began the year with donation of RM 10,000 from the KLSE and ended the year with RM 50,000 from Country Heights. In total WAO raised RM 386, 722 Of which RM 147, 575 were for specific projects. WAO's annual budget now stands at RM 500,000 as our staff and programmes have grown. We now have staff 17 and thus it is imperative that in 2001 we raise funds for operational costs.

Two new corporate sponsors stepped forward to work with WAO. The OCBC Bank launched its MasterCard in October and through negotiations by our treasurer, Lim Gim Bee, OCBC mastercard holders will be able to direct their bonus points as donation to the Canon Marketing also approached WAO to be the receiving charity of a Golf Tournament. Canon intends to have an ongoing relationship with WAO.

13. SPECIAL EVENTS & PROJECTS

18 March : Vocational Award from Rotary Club of Pudu

WAO and 3 other women Ngos, Tenaganita, AWAM and Sahabat Wanita received a Vocational Award from the Rotary Club of Pudu in recognition for our work in promoting women's rights.

10 August: Ministry of Finance Dilaogue Session with the NGOS,

WAO prepared a Memorandum on for the Ministry of Finance for their Ngo dilaogue session entitled: Enhancing the Quality of life with Special attention to the Socially Disadvantaged Groups” Meera Samanther, Asha Dhillon and Shoba Aiyar represented WAO and during this dilaogue we tried to convince the Minister and his officials who included the Governor of Bank Negara, Datuk Zeti that the Ministry of Finance must allocate more funds for police and child care facilities. WAO proposed a gender budget be included in the 8th Malaysia plan.