



Inroads

Volume Q3/2008, Volume Q4/2008, Volume Q1/2009
July 2008 - March 2009

Financial Woes Hit Hard

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In the time that has passed since the last issue of Inroads was released, the financial crisis severely affected economies all over the globe. It came as no surprise that WAO, too, felt the pinch. Tightening of belts all round signalled dire consequences for WAO, whose funds are mainly channelled from public donations, and the RM 70,000 per month running costs became increasingly difficult to scrape together. WAO also incurred a shortfall of RM 600,000.



In these trying times, funds are scarce but all the more needed. WAO wants to prevent the already victimised women and children it helps from falling prey to the financial crisis—and it needs your help.



Concerned by the possibility of having to close the Child Care Centre, WAO launched into full swing to raise funds and cut costs. WAO implemented a 10% pay cut for its entire staff and sent out an appeal for aid. A variety of fundraising activities was organized, all of which helped raise the much-needed money to keep the CCC afloat.



Putting the Fun in Fundraising

What WAO has been up to these few months...

La Gourmet Charity Dinner

Food and charity often go hand-in-hand—who hasn't been to or heard of charity bazaars overflowing with food stalls, soup kitchens and World Vision's 30-Hour Famine?

WAO and La Gourmet Restaurant in The Curve have taken advantage of this close link between food and charity to raise funds beginning in 2007, when they decided to forge a partnership by going beyond serving delectable cuisine and engaging in charitable causes.

La Gourmet House, founded in 2005 by 30-year-old Manila-born Head Chef Anthony Valenzuela, serves Mediterranean cuisine that is not only visually appealing but also scintillating to the palate. Valenzuela's 10 years of experience, including a three year stint mastering culinary arts in Spain, ensures La Gourmet's dishes truly tantalize.

Starting in 2007, La Gourmet was not merely a place to go to for a great culinary experience. They took one step further by placing WAO donation boxes at the restaurant. Proceeds collected went towards the maintenance and upkeep of the WAO Refuge and Child Care Centre.



La Gourmet once again came to assist WAO in its time of need by organizing a fundraising buffet dinner on 5th December 2008.

Invitations were by minimum donation of RM 200.00 and guests were treated to an evening of music and scrumptious food. With performances courtesy of Malaysian Idol's Zamil Idris, a string quartet and a cello performance by friends of the organization, diners were kept entertained throughout. To add to the festivities, a raffle draw with attractive prizes up for grabs and a live salsa performance were held.



A tremendous success, the total amount of funds raised was RM 31,000.00, which would greatly help WAO to continue its noble efforts to help women and children in need. Given the success of the dinner, it's hoped there will be plenty of future collaborations between La Gourmet and WAO to come.



WAO JUMBLE SALE



An array of quirky, unique goods at dirt-cheap prices was the main draw at the WAO jumble sale on the 29th and 30th of November 2008. The sale, held at Amcorp Mall on the two dates from 10.00 am to 6.00 pm was the latest in a series of jumble sales held as fundraising volunteer activities.

Prior to the jumble sale, the public donated second hand items ranging from clothes to toys, shoes to handbags and books to household items. Volunteers priced and tagged the items, which were then brought to the booth at Amcorp Mall and sold at prices as low as RM 1.00.

Even before the booth had been set up on the 29th, interested shoppers started milling around the booth—a good omen for the rest of the day, which saw plenty of shoppers finding something special from WAO's wares on sale.

There's a little something for everyone at the WAO jumble sale, so come join us for a fun time at our next instalment, which will be on the 4th and 5th of April 2009.

ABWM Charity Bazaar

There's no better way to spend the festive season than taking time to consider people in need, and in light of this, the ABWM (Association of British Women in Malaysia) organized a Christmas Charity Bazaar at Nikko Hotel. It was held on the 23rd of November 2008, and a WAO booth was set up selling WAO merchandise.



Just a few of the many unique knick-knacks on sale at WAO's booth at the ABWM Charity Bazaar

There's always something for everyone at WAO's jumble sales—whether you're looking for tableware or toys. Join us at our next jumble sale, on the 4th and 5th of April 2009 at Amcorp Mall.

A total of RM 1,400 was raised from the sales of WAO merchandise at the ABWM bazaar and from the WAO jumble sale proceeds.



A statistic: (59%) of women if affected by domestic violence, claims they would confide in a friend, yet a much smaller porportion would turn to official authorities such as the police (21%) or a support group (14%).

The Body Shop 2008 Stop Violence in the Home campaign aimed to highlight how essential it is for women to help friends who've been victims of domestic violence. According to the statistic which states victims turn to friends for comfort, it's important that as responsible friends and confidantes, we show our friends that we're there for them.

Having worked together for ten years, The Body Shop and WAO united once again to celebrate the beauty of friendship at Hari Wanita 2008, as well as raise funds.

Every year, The Body Shop raises funds for WAO by allocating one product for sale. In 2008, customers at Body Shop outlets were able to purchase 'For Me, For You' Shea Lip Care Duo at RM 38.00. RM 28.00 from the sale of each product was contributed to WAO. The Body Shop has managed to contribute from RM50,000 to RM100,000 towards WAO's operational costs.



Snapshots



The event was officially launched by Dato' Dr. Ng Yen Yen, Minister of Women, Family and Community Development.



Make a note of the date!

WAO's upcoming fundraising events—help us keep the Refuge and the CCC up and running.

Every bit counts.

26th March	" Give Peace a Chance" Charity Art Exhibition
(7.30pm)	at <i>Art Loft</i> , Lot F-03, Capsquare Center, Capital Square, No. 7 Persiaran Capsquare
29th March	WAO Charity Futsal Tournament
	This is going to be a huge event! See next page for details.
4th & 5th April	WAO Jumble Sale
(10am to 6pm)	at Amcorp Mall, Petaling Jaya
31st May	Golf Tournament
	All are welcome! (Details to be confirmed)
21st - 23rd August	Charity Cut-a-Thon
	by A Cut Above
18th June	<i>The Good Body</i> by Eve Ensler,
(7.30pm)	directed by Susan Lankaster
	Location: Sime Darby Convention Center Auditorium
	Ticket prize: RM 100

Proceeds from all events are donated to WAO

For more information, log on to
www.wao.org.my



WAO Charity Futsal Tournament

Got a neighbourhood futsal gang that plays in the park? A team that trains together every week? Futsal-crazed friends who've never touched a futsal ball in their life? Whoever you are, whatever your past experiences with futsal have been like, it doesn't matter—we want you to join in! Here's your chance to participate in a major fundraising event.

WAO is organising its first ever WAO Charity Futsal Tournament to raise much needed funds for the WAO Refuge and Child Care Centre. So start getting your futsal *kakis* together and polish those futsal shoes because the tournament is coming up in March. Details are as follows.

Date	:	29/3/2009
Time	:	9.00 a.m. – 6.00 p.m.
Venue	:	The Sports Plaza, Lot 14, Jalan Bersatu, Section 13/4, Petaling Jaya (same row as Colgate Palmolive in section 13, right opposite the Nissan service centre.)
Fee	:	RM 150 per person (8 persons per team)
Closing date	:	20th March 2009-02-03
Prizes	:	Cash prizes to be won!

And even if you're not big on the game, you can still participate. We're opening booth space to vendors who wish to sell their products during the event. Booth space costs RM 250.00, inclusive of 2 plastic square tables, 3 chairs and a tablecloth.

Please write to annie@wao.org.my or call 03-79575636/0636 if you're interested. An application form will be sent to you via email to be filled in and returned. Kindly enclose your cheque to Women's Aid Organisation or you can bank into the Public Bank savings account no.: 4-5230685-13.

We would like to thank

- Mr .Steward Chen - Gofutsal.com
- Mr. Bernard Nair - sound system
- Mr. Ping Teo - 1 Utama
- Mr. Andrea Villa - Cafe 1920
- Mr. Patrick Xavier - Sports Plaza
- Mr. Yuswanis Yusof - GCH Retail (Guardian)
- Dutch Lady
- Fusion Excel
- Maybank



Standing Up and Being Heard

WAO and advocacy

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

MALAYSIAN NGOs

+

facebook

=



DEFENDING WOMEN
DEFENDING RIGHTS

Social networking site Facebook, used by so many for finding old friends and making new ones, for bridging gaps and keeping people posted, has found its place in 21st century culture—and in the NGO scene as well. 2008's 16 Days of Activism campaign—organized by WAO in cooperation with Amnesty International Malaysia (AI), Sisters in Islam (SIS), All Women's Action Society (AWAM) and Persatuan Kesedaran Komuniti Selangor (EMPOWER)—was carried out via a group on Facebook, which has become the world's most popular social networking site, as a fresh new method of reaching out to people.

The campaign lasted between November 25th and December 10th, with four significant dates to symbolically link violence against women and human rights and to emphasise that any such violence is a violation of human rights. In accordance with this, Malaysian NGOs chose the theme "Defending Women; Defending Rights". The theme advocates for the quest to end gender inequality, and to create a world free from violence, discrimination and injustice.

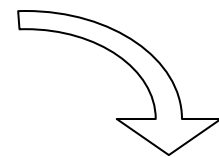
Online activism may be a very different approach from the original 16-day series in The Star newspaper in 1998—but it seems to have worked just as well. The use of a Facebook group enabled the NGOs to spread the word through online activities. The public was encouraged to show support by joining the group, using a specially designed logo as their profile picture, joining the T-shirt design activity or by doing anything at all that highlighted the cause. The group, which currently has a total of 927 members, helped the NGOs reach out to the younger generations as well, enlightening them about the issue of violence against women.



The press conference on
November 29th at Amnesty
International

THE COMANGO REPORT

Malaysia is coming up for review by the Human Rights Council (**HRC**) in February 2009 whereby our country's human rights record will be reviewed through a process called the Universal Periodic Review (**UPR**). This is a crucial opportunity to highlight human rights issues in our country as NGOs are allowed to make their own submissions and recommendations to highlight issues of concern. The COMANGO report will form part of the Stakeholders Report which will be used in the universal periodic review (**UPR**) by the Human Rights Council of the United Nations (**HRC**). The other reports which will be referred to are the country report by the Government of Malaysia, and the compilation of relevant official documents by the United Nations regarding Malaysia.



The Coalition of Malaysian NGOs in the UPR Process (**COMANGO**), the Malaysian Bar Council, Amnesty International (**AI**), International Federation for Human Rights (**FIDH**) and its Malaysian member organisation **SUARAM**, and the Migration Working Group (**MWG**) are among the NGOs which submitted their respective stakeholder reports on 8 September 2008 to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (**OHCHR**).

WHAT THE COMANGO REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

1. Politicisation of race and religion;
2. Discrimination in the areas of health, sexuality, women, students and youth, children, persons with disabilities, non-citizens and indigenous peoples;
3. The restrictions of freedom of expression, information and assembly;
4. The housing woes of the urban poor; and
5. Detention without trial, the need for an Independent Complaints and Misconduct Commission for the Police, the impunity of human rights abusers, and the imposition of corporal and capital punishment.

Following the submission of the NGO reports, the plans are to disseminate the reports as fully as possible to the public, have dialogues with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, **SUHAKAM**, brief the diplomatic missions in Malaysia, and to be present and intervene during the processes in Geneva, Switzerland in 2009.

Violence Against Women: it's never acceptable.

Learn more about what it is and what you can do to help victims.

STARTWO WOMAN T9

Appeal for aid

WOMEN'S Aid Organisation (WAO) is a leading women's group that has put domestic violence on the national agenda. It provides crisis intervention services by offering shelter and counselling to victims of domestic violence, abused migrant domestic workers, trafficked women and women facing marital problems.

Malaysia's first refuge for battered women and their children was opened in 1982. The WAO Refuge shelters an average of 100 women and 100 children

revenue. This is due to the rise in prices of goods and commodities, and donations have slowed down.

WAO requires RM900,000 annually to make ends meet and the organisation has only managed to obtain RM500,000 this year. Without further funding, the WAO may cease to exist in six months.

This is an example of how contributions benefit domestic violence victims:

- RM200 will provide one woman with a five-day stay at the Refuge, away from the abuse.
- RM100 will provide four

per year (the children come with their mothers) for a period of one to three months.

Besides meals and toiletries during their stay at the Refuge, these women also receive counselling, legal advice and help in restarting their lives. WAO social workers organise weekly programmes to impart legal advice as well as self-confidence, self-worth and job skills to the residents towards helping them to live independently.

For women seeking information or counselling on issues such as domestic violence, rape, incest, child sexual abuse, marriage and divorce, and very basic legal queries, telephone counselling is provided. Last year, social workers attended to 1,200 calls and 158 e-mail enquiries of which 61% were related to violence.

The WAO also runs the Child Care Centre (CCC) to care for and support about 30 children of ex-residents of the WAO Refuge as the women rebuild their lives. The centre has an average of 15 children per month, of which 80% of them are of kindergarten/school-going age.

telephone counselling sessions by professional social workers for four women in one day.

- RM50 will provide five women with two meals per day at the Refuge.
- RM20 will pay for water and electricity usage per day at the Refuge.
- RM100 will provide two days of child care by a child social worker at the CCC.
- RM50 will provide school transport for a child at the CCC for one month.
- RM10 will provide breakfast and lunch for one child for a day at the CCC.

In aid of WAO, La Gourmet (located at The Curve, Mutiara Damansara) will host a fundraising buffet dinner on Dec 5, offering live music and songs, delicious food and a live salsa performance. Dina and Zamil Idris from *Malaysian Idol* will also be belting out popular numbers.

Invitations can be obtained with a minimum donation of RM200. Guests can look forward to a raffle draw with attractive prizes. For details, contact Didie at 03-7957 5636/062.

The WAO Child Care Centre



It's time the heroes of the WAO CCC were acknowledged—aside from the caring and dedicated staff at the CCC, teams of volunteers who consistently come every week on different days to give extra classes in languages, science, maths and drawing and to entertain the children truly deserve recognition. Without the following people, among others, the staff would have just 'burnt out' and would not have been able to give all-rounded assistance and attention to the children.

There was a volunteers' meeting in November to introduce one another and to learn more about the CCC and its children. Volunteers responded positively and wanted to be in the loop to be aware of the development of all the children. Hence, a book was started to write each one's lesson plan and remarks, in order to enable others to read or meet up for continuation.

EVA

The CCC is necessary to shelter these children because of what they've gone through. I've enjoyed my experiences with the kids. They're very cute and passionate.

JOGINDER

Last year I taught 3 children, one of whom was quite slow. It was very encouraging when he improved under my care. I realized what he really needed was someone to show interest in him.

LYDLIA

Volunteering at the CCC has been good. It's enriching for myself. Sometimes I sit and talk with the girls about life. The only sad part is that at the end of their time there, some of the children return to the same abuse.

PATRICIA

It's been really good volunteering at the CCC. I think that's the reason I've been hanging around so long! I never realized how much work it takes to run the center until Mary told us how much effort she puts in. The commitment the staff has is impressive. They're going the right way.

RACHAEL

Overall my experiences there have been very rewarding. I've seen kids come in who can't even speak English or spell, but over a few months they learn to read and speak more. Mary has told me they're improving.

VARA

I found that the children didn't know the basics, so when I started teaching them I used kindergarten books. I wanted them to enjoy class so I taught them nursery rhymes and we sang songs, so they looked forward to learning. When they started improving, it was very fulfilling for me. I think the children enjoy themselves at the CCC, but they need to understand the importance of knowledge, social skills and communication skills. They need to be exposed to reality.

Meet Jeevan

In a half-hour chat with one of the children at the CCC, I learn a bit about an 11 year old boy—and a lot about how important the CCC is to children like him.

Jeevan is a tad shy when I first meet him at the WAO Child Care Centre—he returns my smile, but with some reservation. CCC Supervisor Mary Selina has told me that he's made everyone at the centre proud because he's become a prefect at his school, S.K. (2) Sultan Alam Shah, and he tells me he's "very happy and proud" at this achievement.

He likes school, and his favourite subjects are Bahasa Melayu and English. "When I first went to school I didn't know anything," he admits, "but my teachers Cikgu Azlan and Cikgu Vhinotini helped me a lot." His UPSR is coming up, and he's been doing revision, but manages to find time for hobbies like cycling and watching his favourite TV shows *Tom and Jerry* and *Ben 10*. When I ask if his friends respect him as a prefect, he laments, "Not at all!" They must be jealous, I theorise, and he agrees.

When we start talking about his interests, he brightens up considerably. An ordinary 11-year-old, he dreams of going to Sunway Lagoon and the funfair. He wants to be an astronaut because he loves "learning about planets, stars and galaxies." He also tells me Science is his least favourite subject, because of his long-winded teachers.

He gets even more excited when we talk about football, and starts enthusiastically expounding the merits of his favourite team Manchester United. His favourite player is Edwin VEN DER SAR. "I love the players from MU", he explains. "They're not like other players from other teams."

Towards the end of our interview, he's chatty and candid, and eager to share.

"I'm the only boy in the family", he tells me proudly. "I have 9 sisters. And my mom is a single mother." I'm worried this might be a sensitive topic for him, but he tells me plainly that he hates his father for taking a second wife. "So when you grow up, are you going to be different?" I ask. "Yes", he says vehemently, before I even finish my sentence. "I'm going to be a good person."

I tell him I'd like to snap a photograph of him in the newsletter, and he impishly asks, "Can I pose in my prefect's uniform?" He then runs off to carefully iron it before putting it on, complete with maroon tie. After, I've taken the picture and confessed shamefully that I still can't tie a tie to save my life, he decides to teach me, and shows me how, step by step.

As I'm leaving, I think back to his vow. Despite the pain that his family has had to endure, he's optimistic about the future. I'm suddenly enormously glad he has the CCC staff, who make sure he goes to school, finishes his homework and gets solid meals; the funds from sponsors of the Anak Angkat programme, and of course the volunteers who spend time with him and help mould his bright future. With so much support and love around him, I'm sure he'll have no problem fulfilling his vow.



You can make a difference for Jeevan and his friends at the CCC through the

Anak Angkat Sponsorship Program.

What is it? The Anak Angkat Sponsorship Program was started in 1991 to help the children of ex-residents to go to school. Each child receives RM70 per month (RM840).

What do I do? Contribute RM 840 per year + RM 20 for administrative costs.

Why? Many survivors of domestic violence find it extremely difficult to afford to put their children through school when they have just begun to live independently. The money will go towards the child's schooling expenses of books, uniforms, stationery and transport to and from school.

How? Call 03-7957 5636 or e-mail wao@po.jaring.my



A Volunteer Speaks

Satyan shares his WAO experience

In late October 2007, I attended a workshop on journalism at the Women's Aid Organization. I learned about radio and the Audacity software, enjoyed myself and gained plenty of knowledge. But what I learnt that had the greatest impact on me was not from the workshop itself; it was from daydreaming. I studied the walls and realised that there is so much domestic violence happening in the world, and so many of us are neither aware of it, nor do we care. Then I wondered: "What is domestic violence?"

When we had a break and were free to walk around, I decided to find out for myself, and to my astonishment, discovered that it was something beyond my imagination. I could have never imagined someone would actually perform such cruel and heartless deeds on a woman, or on any person, for that matter. If such cruelty is so rampant in the world, what can I, a normal person, do to make it a better place?

I decided to start small: by volunteering for the Women's Aid Organization. The world is cold, and in times like these, bold men (and women) have to take action to prevent it from getting colder. I alone may not be able to make a large impact, but if I unite with many, we can send a strong message. WAO was already an up-and-coming Non-Governmental Organization, so I decided to join it and strengthen its voice. When I attended the volunteer meetings, I often found that I was the only male volunteer there, and also the youngest.

Soon enough, a bring-it-home project came up. It was called 'The Coin Jar' project.

Throughout the course of the project, the volunteers were asked to bring home a hand-painted jar and put any spare change we had into it. After three months we were required to return it. I thought that since it was only spare change, the jar would never fill up in three months, and even if it did, the value of its contents might not have been much. As the months passed, the jar was eventually filled to the brim, and when it did, I decided to count the contents. To my surprise, it was nearly RM50. At that moment, I realised that we should take nothing for granted. What may seem small may not be insignificant. RM50 may not have been enough to cover the NGO's annual budget plan, but I was just one person. Who knew how much could have been collected by everyone else who took home Coin Jars?

Recently, I went to a shelter to interact with children and play with them. When I first went, I didn't enjoy myself much; but in time, I realised that the children were a bunch of good kids who just wanted someone to play with. If we, as the more fortunate ones are able, then should we not help those who aren't? I've learned countless values from more than a year of volunteering, and who is to say this'll be the end of it?

I've got a long way ahead of me. I've found that I should be less selfish, that I should think rationally before making decisions. I should also help out more as it will not only benefit the person I'm helping out, but also myself. And finally, the most important value that I have learnt is this: what I do DOES make a difference.

WAO depends on its volunteers for their help—even more so now that the recession's effects are being felt everywhere. Visit www.wao.org.my to find out more about joining the team of dedicated, selfless individuals who are helping to share WAO's workload.



WAO Wish List



IMMEDIATE NEEDS

Furniture and fittings for Refuge & CCC

Sofa set for living and waiting room

ONGOING NEEDS

- Basic needs

- Towels
- Shampoo
- Combs
- Talc powder
- Women toiletries
- New undergarments for women and children (all sizes)
- Detergent
- Toilet rolls
- Sanitary towels

- Medical needs

- Panadol – syrup for children
- Cough syrup
- Dettol
- Burnol
- Vicks

- Household needs

- Bedsheets
- Blankets
- Pillows and pillow covers
- Curtains
- Rubbish bags

- Foodstuff

- Cornflakes/cereals
- Eggs
- Milk powder
- Dried prawns

- Wet goods
(a week)

- Chicken – 2 birds
- Fish – 1 kg
- Vegetables: Cabbage
Corn
Leafy vegetables
Beans
Cauliflower
Tomato
Potato
Red and green pepper
Tauhu
Bean sprouts
- Coconut milk and grated coconut
- Fish cakes/fish balls
- Wet noodles
- Onions/garlic/ginger



If you can provide any of these items or make a cash donation, please contact us at 03 7957 5636 / 0636 or drop us a mail at wao@po.jaring.my.





Women of WAO

President: Meera Samanther

Vice President: Shanthi Dairiam

Secretary: Mok Chuang Lian

Treasurer: Carol Chin

Asst Secretary: Sharon Hariharan

Committee Members: Wong Yut Lin
Vizla Kumaresan
Musfiza Mustapha

Executive Director: Ivy Josiah

Finance & Admin Manager: Sharmini Kanesamoorthy

Projects & Admin Manager: Annie Varghese

Admin Asst: Ruhil Amal Abdul Razak

Programme Officers: Kerina Francis
Thillai Mohandas

Social Worker Manager: Shoba Aiyar

Social Workers: Jessie Ang
Nazlina Abd Ghani
Uma Devi a/p Rajah Denram
Wong Su Zane

Night Supervisor: Normah Md. Noor

CCC Supervisor: Mary Selina

CCC Child Minders: Vijaya Anumiah
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No one deserves to be battered

This edition of the newsletter was compiled by WAO's volunteers, Soraya Sunitra Kee Xiang Yin and assisted by WAO's intern Ariane Le Juene.