

**Women's Aid Organisation**



*Annual  
Report  
2016*

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Written by the WAO Team

We would like to acknowledge the  
contributions of staff, volunteers, partners  
and our clients in the production of this  
2016 Annual Report.

# We are WAO:

**S**ince 1982, Women's Aid Organisation has provided free shelter, counselling, and crisis support to women and children who survive abuse. We help women and children rebuild their lives, after experiencing domestic violence, rape, trafficking, and other atrocities. Learning from women's and children's experiences, we advocate to improve public policies, reform response systems and shift public attitudes.

**W**AO's work is enabled by our dedicated team of staff, volunteers and partners. These committed, skilled and brave women and men help us achieve the positive impact that immediate crisis response and long-term support can have on survivors' lives. We must also honour and support the people who work to make a difference in the lives of women and children survivors of abuse.

**W**e honour the brave and empowered women and children who are surviving and have survived abuse. Their experiences are mainstreamed throughout this Annual Report. Survivors help us understand the risks and struggles women and children endure even when courageously seeking to leave their abusive home to forge a safe, peaceful future.

**O**ur work aims to increase women and children survivors' access to justice and protection. We do this through many platforms, including advocacy, shelter services at the WAO Refuge and Child Care Centre, counselling and social work support. We keep survivor support, safety and empowerment at the front and centre of our work. Together, we **can** change lives for the better.

"You are braver than you believe,  
stronger than you seem,  
and smarter than you think."

AA Milne

**T**his Annual Report is our story for 2016. Before we begin, we want to share our metaphor for the year. It's all about the bird. In all its myriad manifestations, the bird so aptly symbolises the story of WAO in 2016. It was a year full of challenges. Yet, we remained focused, resilient and keen to keep soaring upward and forward. Our cover of the owl resonates with our persona: strong, vocal, observant, protective and resourceful.

**W**e continued watching, assessing and reacting through our monitoring of government, state responders and others. We protected, nurtured and gathered together resources for our community of survivors, ensuring all that was needed was available. Mostly, we took joy in the company of our supporters, seeking out opportunities and celebrating successes together.

**O**ur quote for the year is about believing, being and promoting that we can be the best that we choose to be. Life hands all of us challenges. Our Team WAO community buoys, inspires and motivates us every day to get back up, whatever knocks us down. We are so grateful for the example of our woman and child survivors, who teach us, every day, the lesson of resilience. We are humbled and thankful for this.

**O**rnithologists know that the bird is a hardy species. Regardless of size, fragility or ferocity, the bird's instinct is to overcome challenges, adapt and survive. This year, we showed we can do exactly that.

All best wishes from,

*The WAO Team*

## What We Believe

**W**e want to see positive change within society, government and for the women and children we serve. We have a clear **Vision** to create a society that is free from violence against women. Our steadfast **Mission** is to promote and create respect, protection and fulfilment of equal rights for women, to work towards the elimination of discrimination against women, and to bring about equality between women and men.

We believe our **Strategic Objectives** will help us achieve this and guide us:

- To provide on request to women and their children suffering from mental, physical and sexual abuse, temporary refuge services that empower and enable them to determine their own future.
- To offer emotional and social support to any women who request for it, resident or otherwise, and offer support and after-care.
- To undertake and encourage research into any of the factors that contributes to the inequality and subordination of women.
- To undertake and advocate with government and non-government organisations the eradication of factors that contribute to the inequality and subordination of women

through law, policy and institutional reforms.

- To create an awareness and better understanding among individuals, public and relevant agencies on the issues of violence against women and the underlying inequalities.



WAO strives to walk our talk. We have identified and are motivated everyday by our **Core Values**. In all that we do as a team, we always:

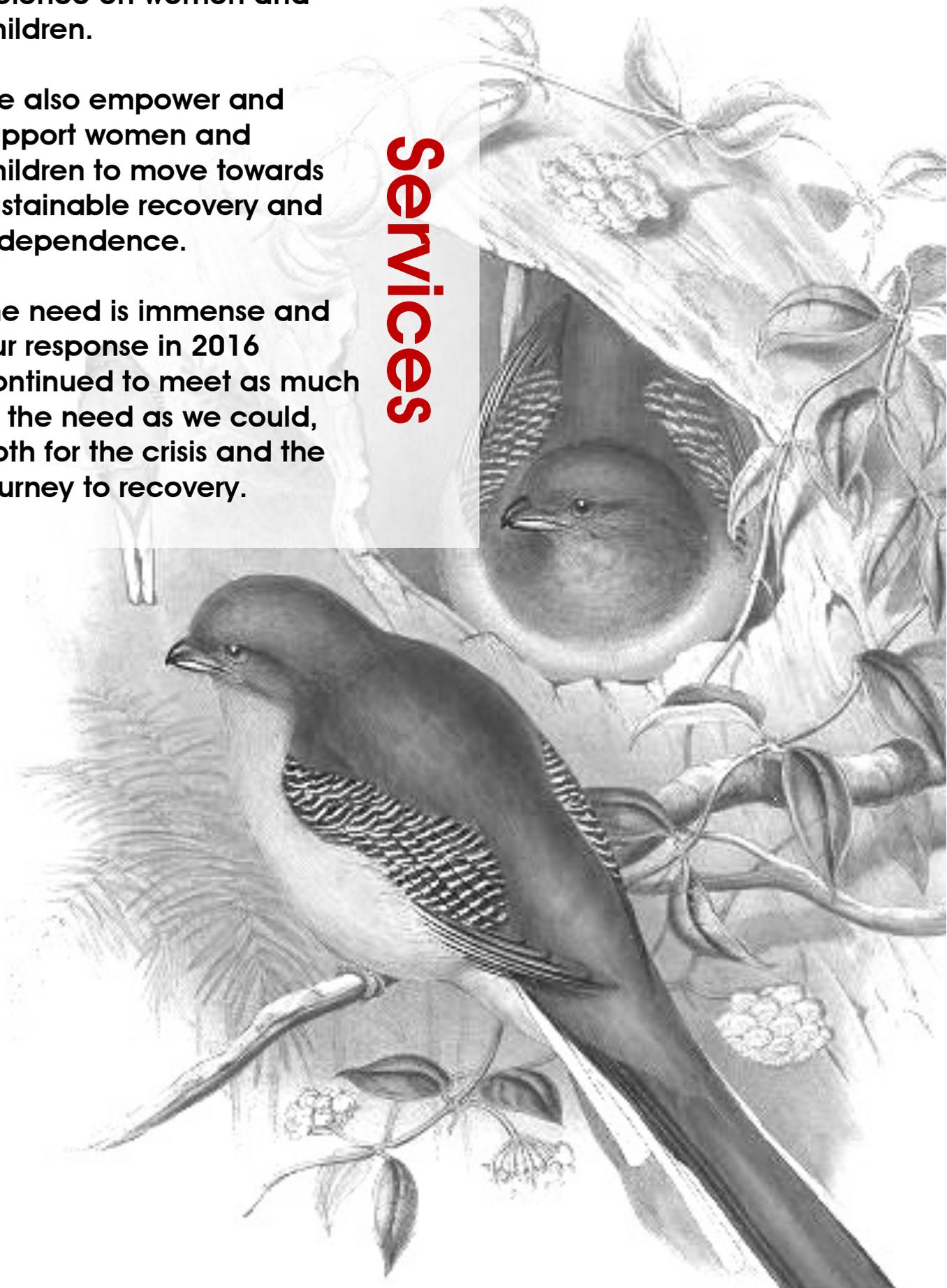
- Act with Respect & Compassion
- Ensure we are Non-judgmental and Inclusive
- Act with Accountability
- Are Courageous
- Are Fun-loving and Professional

**We make possible survivor access to rights, justice and protection, limiting the adverse consequences of violence on women and children.**

**We also empower and support women and children to move towards sustainable recovery and independence.**

**The need is immense and our response in 2016 continued to meet as much of the need as we could, both for the crisis and the journey to recovery.**

## **Services**



# WAO's services impact survivor strength and resilience

In 2016, we continued to be motivated, inspired and energised by the women and children we serve. The team experienced an important transition in 2016 following the departure of some long-serving staff. By year end, we had in place a new team of trained social workers and managers, a reframed accountability structure, all of which was supported by a highly skilled and reform-oriented supervisor.

We reviewed our outputs from 2015, learnt from them and intensified our drive to reform our core services in 2016. We had three important changes to implement.

**F**irstly, we reflected on the psychosocial impact of violence, compared against the efforts we have put in so far to strengthen survivors. We recognised the criticality of trained and qualified personnel to conduct counselling and therapy, including through psychological first aid (or PFA) for women and children in crisis. We sought and received, the support we needed to move this forward through a grant from Yayasan Hasanah. We now have a team of Crisis Counselors able to provide the dedicated focus on the survivor's psychosocial health.

**S**econd, we recognised that we needed to update our knowledge, skills and ideas on social work. We brought in the services of experts, to gain a fresh perspective on our services and its value to survivors. We learnt that we need to not just address the type of service we provide for survivor sustainability and resilience but to also fortify our own internal capacities and structures to ensure quality service. We worked to build our own ability to provide the best response for the benefit of survivors.

We implemented some key service reforms. We were able to bring new vigour and innovation to our thinking and action. We were fortunate to receive a grant from the Australian High Commission to help us move this forward. With their generous support, we were able to implement a comprehensive core social work learning program, using expertise from the Malaysian Association of Social Workers through their newly developed competency framework for social workers. We were also able to implement debriefing and psychosocial support for staff and key volunteers to help us all navigate through the personal challenges we face when serving survivors of violence.

**T**hird, the year also required the coming together of the critical teams we had established – social workers, WAO's Hotline volunteers (or now known as Crisis Support Officers) and the newly established Crisis Counselor service. In addition, the social workers in particular forged stronger links for collaboration and information exchange with the Advocacy team. This helped sharpen our individual case advocacy, as well

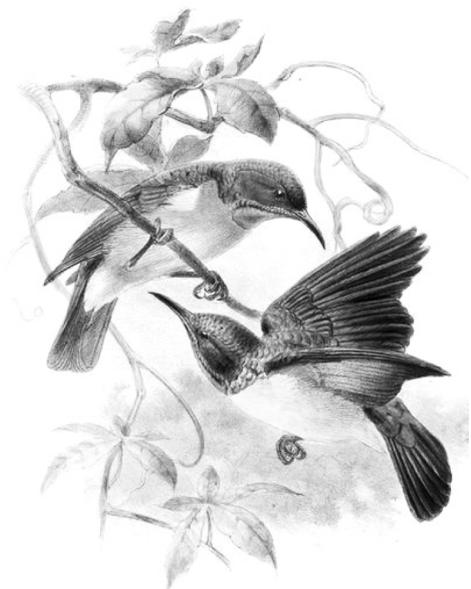
strengthened our evidence collection to better inform our reporting and lobbying for better state response to women and child survivors of violence.

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## The WAO Refuge

**O**ur Refuge is one of the leading crisis shelters in Malaysia for women domestic violence survivors and their children. We also shelter women who are survivors of other forms of violence. The Refuge provides a safe haven for survivors to receive intensive social work support, counseling and benefit from our empowerment programs.

It is a diverse place, hosting residents representing different cultural backgrounds, nationalities, ethnicities and languages.



At the Refuge,  
women are  
connected and  
bonded by the  
shared experience  
of abuse and the  
empowering  
journey of healing.

**O**f the 118 women sheltered in 2016, four women were residents since 2015 and one woman returned to WAO Refuge in the same year. One resident was previously a resident of the Child Care Centre and as she turned 18, she moved to the Refuge. 113 women were new residents.

The majority of our residents (70 women) were from Malaysia, 25 women from Myanmar and Indonesia. The rest were from Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Philippines, America, Australia, India, Vietnam and Thailand.

The Malaysian residents were mostly from Selangor and Wilayah Persekutuan.

90 residents were between the ages of 20 and 39, 18 residents were aged 40 and above, eight residents were below 20 years old and two residents were unable to provide their age.

We partnered with the United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) to also provide shelter services for women refugee survivors of violence. We sheltered 22 refugee clients in 2016.

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## WAO Child Care Centre



**15** children were supported by the WAO Child Care Centre in 2016. Children are entirely dependent on their parents or caregivers for physical nourishment, love, and warmth. When the children's mother seeks refuge due to domestic violence, her children need to adapt to a different environment than that they were used to at home.

Protection from threats to a child's sense of safety, self-esteem and wellbeing, is essential for both physical and emotional development. Ideally, the physical, social and emotional atmosphere within a home should provide a child with a safe and development-stimulating environment. The Child Care Centre (CCC) is designed to reduce their trauma, through support and nurturing.

The CCC shelters children of women who had previously sought refuge at the WAO Refuge. Whilst the survivor's children are temporarily under the care of the CCC, the mother is able to re-establish a safe and independent life to ensure that her children would live in a loving and nurturing environment.

At the CCC, we aim to shelter a maximum of 15 children at a time to ensure that they are given special care and attention by a team of trained childcare providers under the supervision of the CCC manager. The role of the manager is to support the children with all matters relating to education as well as their physical and emotional wellbeing. As the end goal is to ensure that the children return to a safe environment with their mother, the CCC manager works with the social workers to support and empower the mother to strengthen her livelihood opportunities.

We encourage the survivor to have as many engagements and interactions as possible with her children. We ensure that she visits or stays in the CCC on weekends, and takes her children home during school holidays, unless she has yet to establish a living space.

Exposure to domestic violence adversely impacts the children's

emotional wellbeing, and cause a decrease in their academic achievement. We offer group and individual therapy, such as play therapy, where children are offered the opportunity and the assistance to address the trauma that they have experienced. The children will be strengthened, empowered and become aware of their rights.

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## The CCC Fire

On Sunday 13 November 2016, the Child Care Centre was severely damaged by fire from a lightning strike that hit the building. All staff and 13 child residents were quickly evacuated and none were injured. However, they lost most of their belongings and the house is no longer liveable. We would like to mention the critical role played by our CCC volunteer and WAO member Vivienne Lee, in the emergency response that day.

We were very fortunate to be within a community that is warm and generous. After hearing our plight, many individuals immediately came forward to offer assistance either by providing necessities like food and clothes or giving financial help. The community showed us so much kindness and we are deeply appreciative of the support.

Our immediate need to find a suitable alternative accommodation was met when we identified a new home for the children by December 2016. The home is a temporary measure while we rebuild our damaged house.

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## Social Work Case Management

**W**AO's case management is a holistic approach, taking into account all factors and opportunities, to ensure each and every survivor's needs are taken care of. Our goal is to enable women survivors to be aware of options they have when faced with the conundrums, and to assist and guide survivors in making an informed decision about dealing with domestic violence issues.

The survivor is the main actor in finding solutions and taking charge to improve her life in a sustainable way. We work to raise survivor awareness of her rights and in supporting her to access those rights by focusing on empowering the survivor at every stage of her journey. Case management is a critical part of our work, as it synergizes closely with systematic and substantive improvements that are needed when state responders do their work for domestic violence survivors.

The police play a critical role in providing protection for survivors of domestic violence and their families, as well as providing survivors an avenue to seek the legal redress they duly deserve. WAO social workers inform survivors of their rights and assist survivors to report domestic violence crimes and liaise with the police, as well as conduct trainings and meetings to enhance protection for the survivors.

In 2016, 74 residents reported that they had lodged police reports before approaching WAO. During their stay at WAO, social workers assisted 22 women to make police reports. Some were reports requesting police to take action and open investigations, while others were cover reports for record purposes as they did not want to take action.

Out of those who made police reports, 19 women requested for an Interim Protection Order (IPO). 10 women successfully received their IPOs. The rest were unsuccessful, as the police did not open investigation because their cases were deemed not serious enough or did not fall under a penal code which corresponded with the Domestic Violence Act (DVA).

WAO continues to lobby for better police response for survivors, including following up with the cases where police action was lacking or insufficient.

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## Counselling and Therapy

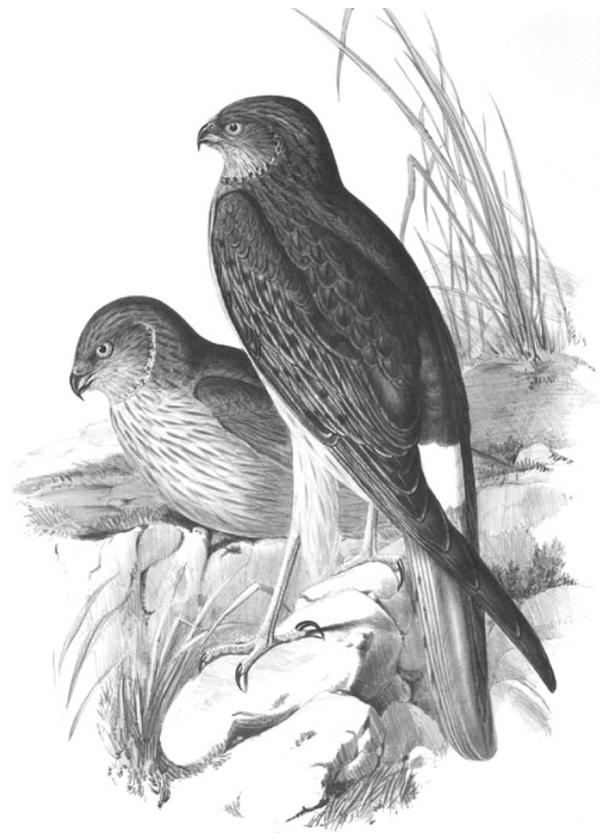
**W**AO recognises that enhancing access to specialised domestic violence information and counselling services is critical so women can get access to the form of support most needed, when they need it.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that as many as 25-30% of survivors are likely to withdraw their requests for protection through the Interim Protection Order (IPO). Hopefully, access to specialised counselling and guidance that enables the woman survivor to make informed choices with confidence, may greatly contribute to lowering the rate of withdrawals of police reports by survivors and help her get a step closer to justice and protection.

Learning from this, we sought and received support from Yayasan Hasanah for an innovative project to ensure the availability of psychological first aid for women survivors at the time of crisis, including at the hospital and police station.

At year end, we were still in the initial implementation of the Project. We hope to be able to provide more information, including statistical data, in 2017.

We remain grateful for the support from the donor community for this initiative, that will expand WAO's services into the area of counselling and therapy for survivors.



## WAO Hotline

In 2016, we moved to place equal emphasis on our SMS and WhatsApp service, TINA, and our regular Hotline. From the third quarter of 2016, we progressively built TINA's capacity to become a 24-hour service.

This was a good strategy, as it led to a marked increase in the number of women we were able to reach in the third and final quarter of the year. Moving forward, WAO will continue to build on this, including implementing our plans to further expand our force of Hotline volunteers, now referred to as Crisis Support Officers, as well increase the service hours of the landline number, 79563488. In 2015, we attended to 2230 landline calls and TINA mobile texts. In 2016, this number increased to 2339 in total.

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## 03 – 7956 3488

This is the regular Hotline landline number. Majority of the calls were about domestic violence issues (56.77%) while others (35%) called about legal matters, sexual harassment and unwanted pregnancy. 8.23% of calls were regards to matters such as assault, migrant domestic worker complaints, single pregnant women, sexual harassment, incest, child abuse and rape. Many women called simply to express their emotions or call

to seek emotional support to someone willing to listen.

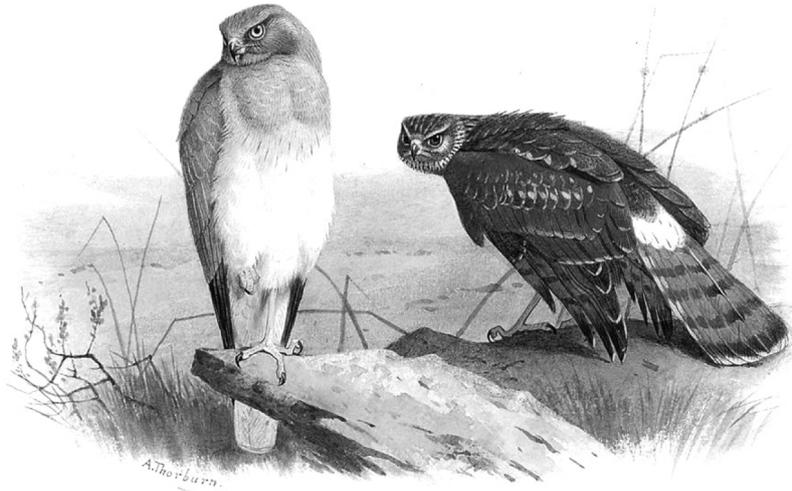
Most callers were from the Klang Valley although there were calls from other states including Johor, Negri Sembilan and Perak. We also received calls from other countries outside of Malaysia, which we referred to the appropriate agencies abroad. 40% of the WAO Hotline calls were handled by trained interns and para-counsellors (para-counsellors completed their training in September 2015).

We counselled 106 women in individual, direct sessions (Face-to-Face) in 2016. Some women required direct sessions as they were unable to speak openly over the phone (lack of privacy or to avoid being observed by the abuser). Some felt more comfortable in a face-to-face setting instead of talking on the phone. Some women were advised by social workers to come in for face-to-face counseling owing to complex issues needing resolution. Amongst the 106 cases, 61 women reported domestic violence which makes up 57% of the calls.

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## Email Enquiries

We received an average of 20 emails per month and a total of 199 emails by the end of 2016. Emails were requesting information about our services, procedures on getting birth certificates, welfare aid, shelter homes, housing and even highlighting crisis issues.



WAO is also currently a preferred option for students researching on women's issues. They request for interviews and information on violence against women, the women's rights movement in Malaysia, single pregnant women and sexual harassment, among other issues.

WAO ensures that all emails are responded to promptly. As emails are a very one-dimensional mode of communication, the language and tone that the message carries are given utmost priority to ensure that the clients feel reassured and get the support that they need.

A total of 88 (44.22%) email enquiries were in regards to domestic violence, making it the highest percentage in comparison to all other topics emails enquiries were about. Other queries were in regards to dealing with sexual harassment (8.04%), enquiring about their legal rights (14.07%) and many other issues.

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## TINA

**T**his SMS helpline service became available 24 hours and also expanded to WhatsApp. It is staffed by volunteer Crisis Support Officers.

TINA offers women an alternative platform to reach out for help as some may not be comfortable, or able to call the WAO landline. TINA also serves as a 'friend' for women who need to chat about their problems and receive information from WAO before taking action on their situation.

For 2016, TINA had attended to 699 conversations, as compared to 396 SMS conversations in the previous year. 267 (38.2%) SMS conversations were about domestic violence while 139 (19.89%) SMS conversations were on non-domestic violence issues, including relationship issues (with boyfriend or family members), depression, and requests for information on divorce procedures.



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## Asylum-Seekers and Refugees

### **Collaboration with UNHCR**

Our work with the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) began in 2003. WAO gives counselling services to women refugees at UNHCR premises on alternate Tuesdays.

In 2016, WAO provided 41 counselling sessions for refugee women at UNHCR. These cases involved rape, attempted rape, sexual harassment, depression and domestic violence. There were also other issues such as difficulty coping with living in Malaysia.

We provided shelter services for refugee women survivors of Gender Based Violence. UNHCR referred one refugee woman and one child for shelter, both of whom were domestic violence survivors.

In December, WAO conducted two trainings for UNHCR's staffs from all departments to create awareness on issues related to Gender Based Violence (GBV).

In addition, UNHCR funded a community-based shelter project with the Chin Mang Tha Refugee Community. UNHCR approached WAO to provide training for their caretakers for the shelter and women under Mang Tha's economic empowerment project. WAO conducted three trainings for them which included sessions on shelter management, awareness of Gender Based Violence (GBV) issues and basic helping skills.

### **Collaboration with ICMC**

WAO continued our collaboration with the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC). This programme started in October 2010 with the aim to recruit 25 women from various refugee communities to form a Refugee Women Protection Corps (RWPC). The

RWPC will in turn raise awareness in their community on Gender Based Violence (GBV) issues and provide assistance for refugees who face Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV).

WAO was contracted to conduct Training of Trainers' workshops for refugee women who were recruited under the RWPCs. WAO also conducted awareness training on Gender Based Violence for community leaders. Besides the usual training, ICMC had also engaged WAO to conduct 24 hours of training to assist the community in building a team of peer counsellors to assist survivors of GBV.

For 2016, two trainings were conducted by WAO in which 30 RWPC were trained. These RWPC had reached out to 3,000 residents during their outreach programme by providing their participants with knowledge on GBV.

Due to the overwhelming demand from the refugee communities, ICMC engaged WAO to assist them in developing a pool of peer counsellors. WAO provided them with a thirty hours training, through which the participants were trained on basic counselling skills to enable them to provide psychological first aid via ICMC's helpline or during their house visits. WAO also conducted post-training evaluations. In 2016, WAO trained 15 participants and seven were selected to become ICMC's peer counsellors.

We also provided shelter services for survivors who were identified by the RWPC through ICMC's helpline and outreach program. ICMC referred 22 refugee women and 28 children for

shelter – all from different ethnic groups from Myanmar.

Among them, 18 were domestic violence survivors, two were trafficked and one was referred to WAO to facilitate attendance for an interview session with UNHCR.

Also in 2016, ICMC started a branch in Penang where similar programmes were conducted for the Refugee population in the Northern Region. As such, when their clients needed to attend an interview at UNHCR, ICMC would request for WAO to take them into the shelter to stay for a night before they could attend the UNHCR interview on the following day. In 2016, among ICMC referrals, six women and six children fall under this category.

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## The Dynamics of Domestic Violence

Throughout 2016, we listened to the testimonies and experiences of courageous women survivors. These stories inform us of important factors, trends and gaps. This helps us understand the dynamics of domestic violence in Malaysia, and to also frame and propel our advocacy work.

In 2016, the most prevalent source of abuse was the intimate partner (husband or boyfriend). The most prevalent form of abuse was both psychological and physical abuse. This mirrors previous year's data, which captures a higher prevalence of physical abuse, which could be due to greater awareness among survivors.

Psychological abuse, continues to rank high up in the many forms of abuse amongst survivors of domestic violence, impacting the survivors as adversely as physical violence. Financial abuse was also rampant (46.2%). Women shared that their husbands would control their expenditure for basic necessities while not providing them with the financial means to take care of the family. The lack of financial independence cripple survivors in taking charge of their own lives. Abusive husbands also took financial loans in the woman's name and did not subsequently service those

loans. These plunged women into debt and blacklisting by financial institutions. These women were severely economically disadvantaged even though gainfully employed, thereby restricting their financial independence even after leaving the abusive situation.

Social abuse is the type of abuse that make women feel isolated and afraid to seek help. Women shared that they were not allowed to make friends with others, which made them feel trapped and afraid to move out from the cycle of abuse. Some had lost contact with their family members, as they were not allowed to do so soon after they got married. When women were being isolated, it also made them have a high sense of hopelessness and helplessness, which resulted in most of them spending many years in such cycle.

Approximately 11% of the women reported that the perpetrators abused them with no associated triggering issues, whilst 37.1% mentioned that the perpetrators abused them with no reason. Among the reasons of abuse, the highest number recorded as jealousy (36.1%), suspicions (39.2%) and financial problems (27.8%). Substance abuse by the perpetrator was also a factor, including alcohol (30.9%) and drugs (24.7%) reported substance abuse involving mainly "ice", "shabu", "ubat batuk").

Most of the time, women reported a mix of triggering factors such as jealous and suspicious husbands, abusing them while under the influence of alcohol.

31.1% of the perpetrators and 25.8% of the survivors have a history of

violence in their family. 34.4% of the women did not have knowledge on whether the perpetrators grew up in an abusive family environment. The husband or ex-husband perpetrated the abuse for 90.32% of residents, while parents, family members or boyfriends were the source of abuse for 16.5%. One woman reported her father-in-law as the perpetrator. 7.53% of the women also reported being abused by a second perpetrator such as parent, sibling, stepparent, in-law family member or relative.

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## Survivors in Court

**S**ocial workers, interns and chambering students accompanied survivors to attend court hearings and mentions in 2016. This includes providing emotional support, preparing survivors for the court process, monitoring the proceedings, holding watching brief and liaising with court officials and other authorities. Not all cases reported to the police were brought to court, and court hearings can be long, time-consuming and emotionally draining. Support is critical for survivors in their quest towards justice.

Last year, WAO attended 101 court hearings or mentions, of which 40 were for domestic violence related offences, 12 were to obtain Interim Protection Orders and Protection Orders, 8 were for divorce-related matters, 13 were for custody-related matters and 8 for Interim Custody for WAO's Child Care Centre.

Through WAO's intervention, a survivor was able to deliver her Victim Impact

Statement (VIS) in court, which contributed to the perpetrator being sentenced with a fine of RM3,500 and 7 months' jail. However, another perpetrator was charged with causing grievous hurt to the victim (severe beatings and hitting a woman's head with a motor chain lock), but the punishment meted was 2 months' jail term. The perpetrator continued his abusive acts towards the survivors after he served his jail term.

WAO continued to monitor the domestic violence murder case of Nurhidayah Abdul Ghani, a woman who was beaten to death by her husband, and provided support for the family members of the victim. We also followed cases outside of Semenanjung Malaysia; One police investigation in Sabah and a domestic violence court case in Sarawak.

A case that we monitored under the Anti-Trafficking in Person Act has been given a prima-facie decision, and the hearings will continue in 2016. WAO continued to assist S. Deepa in her fight to get custody of her children, who had been unilaterally converted to Islam by her ex-husband without her consent.

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## Return to the Abusive Home

**16** women returned to their former situation after careful consideration and weighing of options. While ensuring appropriate counselling to help women heal emotionally and regain their self-confidence, WAO will

always support our clients in whatever decisions they make regarding their future. We aim to ensure that the decisions are informed and voluntary.

Women return to the abusive home for various reasons. It is quite common for women to make multiple attempts before finally leaving the abusive situation for good. The critical need is for WAO to stand ready to continue supporting women, in whatever choices they make, and to ensure access to protection and safety is always available.

In 2016, 44 (47.3%) residents informed that they have left their abusive situations at least once before.

Seven women left and returned to the abusive home more than five times. Out of the seven women who left their husband for more than five times, five still returned back to their husband after they sought help from WAO. They reconciled with their husbands for various reasons, especially after intervention by family members.

- her husband's attitudes improve after attending counselling
- she receives threats from the perpetrator
- her family member suffers with illness
- family members become the mediator and they had a discussion with her husband
- she hopes that her husband will change after UNHCR's interference
- she was pressured by family members
- for the sake of her children's safety
- she wants to save her marriage and keeps her family
- she needs the husband to renew her spouse visa

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## Why They Return

- she wants to give her husband a chance
- she cannot afford to live on her own
- her husband has agreed to change
- she worries about her children's schooling



We recognize the vast challenges survivors face in reframing a new life and building resilience for the future. Their time spent with us is the opportunity for WAO to assist in starting off this journey of surviving violence.

We network and link with businesses, the community and within WAO to help survivors face the emotional healing, and practical livelihood challenges. WAO partners with skilled volunteers and agencies for programs to advance empowerment for our women and children.

## Programs & Funds

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## Women's Programs

In 2016, various activities and programmes were carried out for women at WAO Refuge. Partners such as Quota Club, Soroptimist International, Shopee, Klinik Kelana Jaya and Bloc 48 supported many activities and programmes.

Through our diverse volunteers, interns and partners, we were able to design a wide variety of programmes and events catering to the many different interests of the women living in the Refuge.

Weekly classes such as yoga, beading, creative writing, DIY Beauty Care,

Coaching, Self-Love and Empowerment were conducted. Women were also given access to basic computer lessons and economic empowerment programs.

The Economic Empowerment program, the "Back to Work" fund continued in 2016. Residents who secured jobs are supported through financial aid of RM100 – 300 to be used for transportation, food allowance and clothing. 14 women benefited from the programme in 2016.

The social entrepreneurship program which was started in October 2015 continued in 2016. The objective of this project is to equip WAO's women (including ex-residents) with skills to produce homemade products in order to earn additional income for their living. In March 2016, two women participated in the KPMG's Charity Bazaar where the total sales came up to RM580.

Another economic empowerment program that took place in 2016 was the 'Momprenuer Campaign, Shopee's Mighty Mom Challenge.' Shopee, an online application where one can buy and sell clothes on mobile phones, conducted this. This challenge was targeted at single mothers where they were given personal mentorship to learn more about mobile commerce and to master the art of selling via online app.

There were three special educational programs in 2016.

First was the 'Justice for Survivors' program. Two sessions were held in 2015, the first legal talk was on Divorce and Child Custody that was

conducted by Mr. Ramu of K.A. Ramu, Vasanthi & Associates and was attended by our clients and para-counselors. The second legal talk was on Syariah Court Proceedings, which was conducted by Sisters in Islam. Participants of this talk were former clients, current residents, para-counselors, staff and interns.

Second, was the Briefing on Health and Hygiene by Dr. Easware. The briefing was targeted on personal hygiene including children's hygiene and good preparation. Participants of this briefing were residents of the Refuge.

Third, was the 'Internet Safety Talk,' by EMPOWER. The talk covered broadly on social engineering – how every single online activity leaves pieces of information behind and discussed how individuals can harness enough information about us which may lead to psychological and physical harm. Empower proposed a strategy to circumvent this and to ensure too much information is not shared online. Participants of this talk were the residents of Refuge.

Our Annual Gathering was held on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 2016 at DIB Café at PJ Trade Centre. Between 150 -180 participants comprised of residents, ex residents, children, staff and volunteers attended the get together which was comprised of activities, food, gifts and games. Massages and manicures were arranged for the women, and as for their children, there were activities such as dancing and musical chairs. Door gifts by Body Shop were given to the women who attended and there were door gifts for the children as well.



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## Children's Programs

### Child Sponsorship

The WAO Child Sponsorship Programme, previously known as the WAO Anak Angkat Sponsorship Programme, was developed in 1985 as a support service to assist former residents of the Refuge.

As cost of living continues to increase, the former residents who are single mothers struggle to manage their daily demands, and risk poverty. As such, this programme aims to assist the mothers with the cost of keeping their children in school, and also to ensure that their children have the opportunity to receive formal education. In 2016, WAO's sponsors provided monetary assistance of RM1,200 per child, to a total of 37 mothers and 62 children. This money disbursed on a monthly basis of RM100/monthly per child, and used to ensure that the children's daily school-going needs are met. A programme officer from WAO is responsible to coordinate, monitor, and act as a medium between the sponsor and the sponsored child. The programme officer is also responsible to provide the sponsor with the child's

progress report, as provided by the school or the mother of the child, and this is done biannually.

We are always grateful for the generous support from all our sponsors, and are actively seeking new sponsors for the increasing numbers of mothers on our waiting list. With this programme, we

are committed to enrich the lives of women and their children and journey with them in their quest for a life free from violence.

### **Access to Education**

Out of the 15 children staying in the CCC, 14 attended formal school. Two children were in Secondary School (Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan), nine children were in Primary School (Sekolah Kebangsaan), and three children were in Kindergarten. One child was too young to attend school, however was home schooled by staff, interns, or volunteers. The home schooling programme was also extended to the children who resided with their mothers in the Women's Refuge.

Furthermore, we conducted structured and regular tuition classes for children between the ages of eight and 17 years old, to ensure continuing access to education for children who have been exposed to domestic violence.

### **Play Therapy**

Play is a fun, enjoyable activity that elevates children's spirits and brightens their outlook on life. Play therapy intends to relieve feelings of stress and guilt, connects children to people in a

positive way, stimulates creative thinking and exploration, and boosts their self-esteem. At WAO, we ensure that all children who reside at the Women's Refuge as well as the CCC have continued access to Play Therapy.

In 2016, a total of 292 play therapy sessions were conducted for the children sheltered at WAO.

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## **Children's Program Partners**

### **Care2run**

Care2Run is a community sports project which provides opportunities for underprivileged children to run with mentors who are seasoned runners. The aim of the programme is to use sports as a tool to break down barriers and help children feel good about themselves, both physically and mentally. It also aims to help reduce stress and build self-esteem.

In 2016, a total of 7 children from the CCC who were above the age of 10, participated in the program.

### **Standard Chartered Comedy Theatre**

On 18 September 2016, a total of 10 CCC children were sponsored by Standard Chartered, to watch a comedy theatre play titled "Shakespeare Goes Bollywood". The aim of this activity was to inspire the children, and to ensure that they

understood the importance of pursuing a talent. Other than that, the aim of the activity was also to help reduce stress.

### **KPMG CSR Activities**

The CCC receives numerous CSR project invitations each year from companies and organisations. In 2016, KPMG staff visited the CCC children and conducted fun activities and games with them.

### **Other Activities by Volunteers and Interns**

- Computer Classes
- Art & English Classes
- Yoga Classes
- Group Counselling

### **Enriching the Refuge Experience for Children**

We aim for effective identification and intervention for a child who exhibits symptoms from witnessing violence in their lives. We also seek to move towards prevention, building resilience and providing the right level of support for both mother and child to heal and recover.

A programme called 'Memory Box' was initiated in 2016. A child who comes to

Refuge will be given a gift box when they leave. The gift box will remind children of good memories that they have while staying in the shelter, and this will in turn help them improve their self-esteem and self-care. Children were given a box and asked to decorate them creatively. They were provided with color papers, scissors and things to decorate them as they

wish. This was done so children have ownership over the box.

At the Refuge, there are weekly programmes that are run for children of the residents. Firstly, there is home schooling, which takes place every Monday to Friday from 9.30am to 1pm and for children from the ages of six years old and above. For children who are younger than six years old, they are sent to the Child Care Centre (CCC) where they attend kindergarten classes.

Secondly, Art Therapy that is conducted bi-weekly is a platform for self-expression, which involves creative process that helps to develop interpersonal skills, manage behaviour of the child and reduce stress.

Thirdly, the Speech and Drama classes are conducted weekly and are designed to enable children to communicate orally in storytelling and public speaking as it's their venue to learn, apply thinking skills which boosts self-confidence, self-expression, presentation skills and creativity. Our children were thrilled to be given the space to play superheroes in one of the classes.

For play therapy, the Refuge tapped into the services of CCC. The children of our clients were sent to CCC to receive play therapy when deemed necessary. A total of 292 sessions were conducted in 2016.

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## **Legal Aid**

After they have completed their university education, these lawyers in

training are required to spend 12 days during their chambering period at various NGOs so that they are able to experience practical and real world experiences before they enter the legal workforce.

The experience of rendering their services with WAO is an opportunity for them to explore and better understand the predicament and circumstances survivors go through before they reach the court system, and thus providing them the exposure of how their future roles would hopefully benefit these survivors of violence.

Prior to WAO, the chambering students were trained in three main areas; Syariah law, family law and NGO work. Syariah and family law trainings are conducted by LAC KL, whereas the Women NGOs' training is conducted by SIS, AWAM and WAO at LAC KL, Wisma Hang Sam KL. From WAO, Meera Samanther conducted a session on Feminism, while Nazlina bt Ab Ghani conducted a session on Helping Process and Case Management.

In 2015, we had 13 chambering students –Goh Wai Ping, Rachel Tan Mei Chien, Nur Raihan Chia bt Farid Chia, Nur Aifaa' Zahrah bt Nazaruddin, Fatin Multazimah bt Mohammad Multzam, Rasika a/pa Dharmasena, Wan Nur Sarah, Tan Lay Kuan, Nur Syazah bt Mohammad Noh, Adele' Natasha bt Allatif, Debra Leow Khai Yi, Melissa Wong Qing Ling and Ros Shahira Saida bt Sirin.

Each chambering student handled telephone calls, watching briefs, face-to-face interviews, documented cases and compiled statistical data of residents and ex-residents. They also

accompanied some of the women to courts, police stations and clinics. These lawyers in training were enthusiastic and eager to learn more about how they could assist clients with the knowledge and expertise they were equipped with.

From November 2015, the chambering students conducted an In-House Legal Aid Clinic every Friday between 2pm-4pm. Residents and ex-residents who need legal advice can come during these clinic hours to get professional legal advice.

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## WAO Funds

### **Tun Tan Siew Sin Memorial Fund (TTSS)**

Upon the passing of our patron Tun Tan Siew Sin in 1988, the TTSS Memorial Fund was set up in 1990 to provide financial assistance in the form of a nominal sum to help the women set up new homes or start a small business. Loans ranging from RM300 to RM1,000 were offered to our ex- residents.

In 2016, 16 women benefited from this fund. A total of RM10,710 was dispensed.

### **Legal Aid Fund**

Services of lawyers are crucial in custody issues but these services can be expensive. We began the Legal Aid Fund in 2012 to assist women with court expenses, usually related to custody issues. In most cases, the recipients do not have the financial means to employ lawyers and they are unable to

wait for the services of lawyers from the Legal Aid Centre or Legal Aid Bureau, due to the urgency of their cases.

WAO's Legal Aid Fund was used for disbursement costs related to the unilateral conversion case at Federal Court in 2015 and 2016. In addition, the Fund was used to support watching brief activities for one domestic violence case and one case of child abuse. The Fund is currently in need of replenishment.

### **Flight Fund**

This fund provides financial assistance for migrant women to purchase flight tickets if they wish to return to their home country. In view of increasing demand from trafficked survivors sheltered at WAO, the flight fund has been extended to include settling overstaying fines, getting special passes, and covering domestic travel expenses and some pocket money to bring home. In total, WAO gave out RM1 700 for four women in 2016.

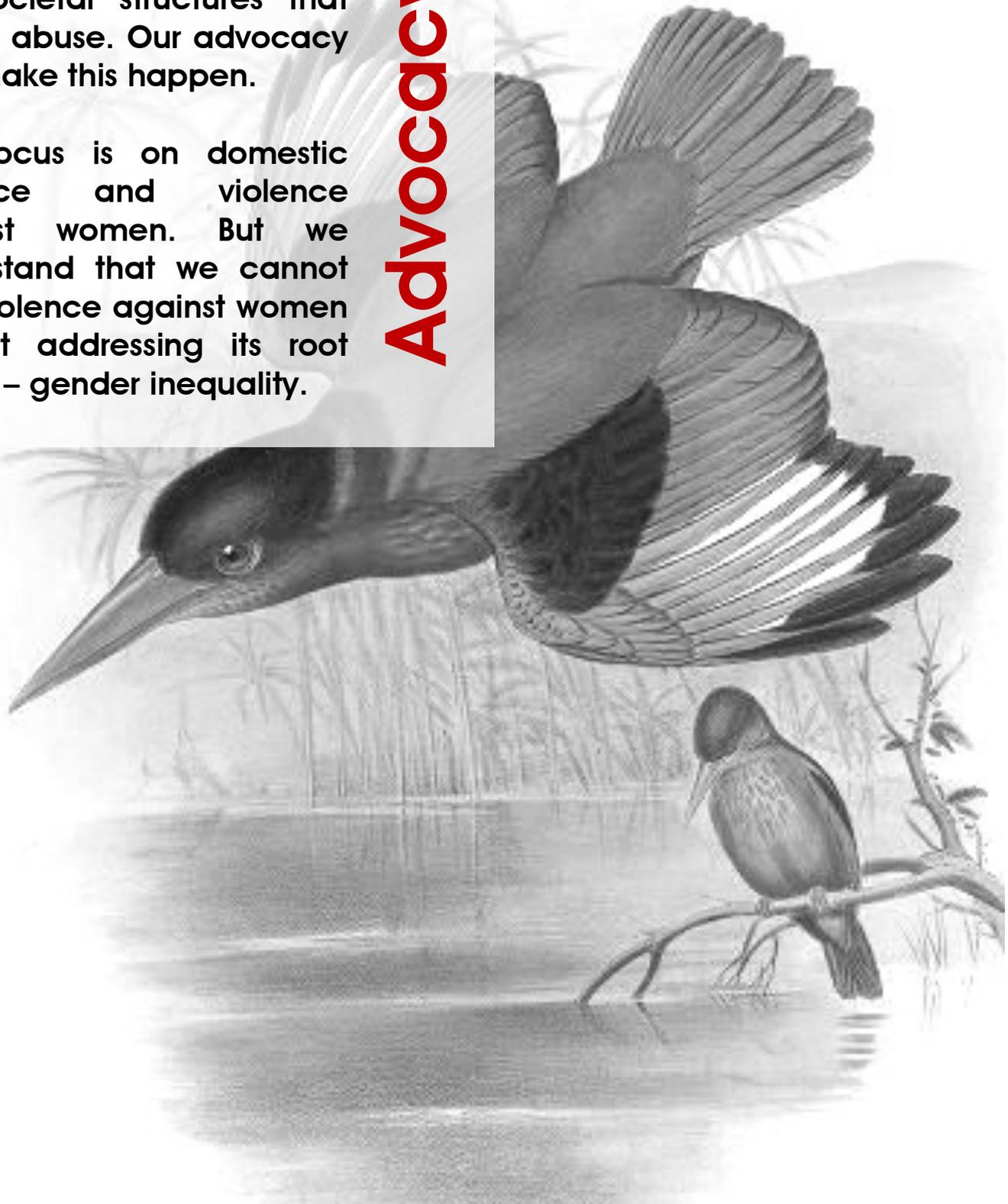


WAO envisions a society that is free of violence against women. Our core work, providing crisis support to women, helps change the lives of thousands of women who face violence.

Alone, we can't reach every survivor. We need to change the societal structures that permit abuse. Our advocacy is to make this happen.

Our focus is on domestic violence and violence against women. But we understand that we cannot end violence against women without addressing its root cause – gender inequality.

## Advocacy



The experiences of survivors guide our advocacy work, to:

- 1) Improve public policies
  - Improve **laws and public policies** relating to violence against women
  - Improve **enforcement** of those public policies
  - Use **international human rights mechanisms** to improve domestic policies and demand implementation of international standards at the national level.
- 2) Change **mind-sets** to reject violence against women

Our focus is on domestic violence and violence against women. But we understand that we cannot end violence against women without addressing its root cause – gender inequality.

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## Improving Laws & Public Policies

Malaysian women's groups, including WAO, campaigned for 11 years before the Domestic Violence Act 1994 (DVA) was passed into law. It took another two years before the act was enforced. Since then, thousands of domestic violence survivors each year have obtained some form of protection through the DVA.

Law and other public policy reform often takes years. Nonetheless, they are crucial tools to ensure that domestic violence survivors have the legal right to protection, justice, and remedies – and towards achieving gender equality. Additionally, public policies send strong messages to the public, and can shape behaviour and mind-sets.

The majority of WAO's public policy advocacy is collaborative – as part of the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG). We also work with the National Council of Women's Organisations (NCWO), and of course with government agencies, including the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (KPWKM), the Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM), hospitals, the Prime Minister's Office, and others.

## Improving Public Policies on Domestic Violence

### **Impact**

Public commitment by Minister of Women, Family and Community Development in October 2016 to amend the **Domestic Violence Act (DVA)** in early 2017. Amendments likely will include (most of which are JAG recommendations):

- *Strengthening the interim protection order (IPO)*. This includes making it possible for a judge to include specific orders (e.g. restricting abuser from coming close to survivor) in an IPO.
- *Improving counselling*. Eliminating reconciliatory counselling as a possible court order, and requiring courts to get a survivor's consent before ordering her to undergo counselling.
- *Creating the Emergency Protection Order (EPO)*. The EPO would widen the options for a survivor to get immediate protection, and allow a survivor to temporarily get protection without a police report.
- *Closing potential gaps in protection*. Specifying when protection under the IPO ends and protection under the PO begins.

### **What we did**

These amendments are a result of a JAG initiated campaign which started in 2013: lobbying, providing technical input to, and working with relevant policymakers including the Attorney General's Chambers, KPWKM, the Prime Minister's Office, the Women's Parliamentary Caucus, and other relevant entities.

In 2016, WAO – with JAG and NCWO – continued to work with KPWKM to refine the amendments. We met with, submitted written feedback to, and made presentations to KPWKM, resulting in further improvements to the amendments.

### **Why this matters**

While the DVA in its current form offers important legal protection, there are critical gaps in protection, some of which the amendments address.

However, some gaps are not addressed through the amendments, including recognising stalking as an offence and recognising violence between non-married intimate partners. WAO will continue to advocate for these changes.

## Upholding Rights of Non- Converting Spouses and their Children

### **Impact**

Announcement by (de facto) Minister of Law that the **Law Reform (Marriage and Divorce) Act** will be amended in early 2017 to address the unilateral conversion issue. The draft bill was released (in 2017), with the amendments that in the event one parent converts to Islam:

- Both parents must agree before their children's religion is changed to Islam.
- The spouse who converts to Islam has the right to petition for divorce in the civil court.

Decision on 10 February 2016 by the Federal Court of Malaysia in the **case of S. Deepa**, to uphold existing legal

precedent that issues relating to a civil marriage must be resolved in the civil court.

- o S. Deepa is a survivor of domestic violence, whose husband converted to Islam, then unilaterally converted and gained custody of their children through the Syariah Court.
- o The court ruling ensured that matters like custody, having to do with a civil marriage, must be resolved in the civil courts.

### **What we did**

Since 2014, WAO has supported S. Deepa's court case, through engaging human rights lawyers and generating public pressure around the issues. In 2016, WAO continued to support S. Deepa, until her case finally concluded in February 2016. Our lawyers included Joanne Leong, Fahri Azzat, and Aston Paiva.

WAO, with JAG, met with and sent written documents to the Cabinet Committee on unilateral conversion, the (de facto) Minister of Law, the women's parliamentary caucus, and political parties, with law reform recommendations. WAO also sent official communications to United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights about the case.

In addition to WAO and JAG, a number of other stakeholders have advocated on this issue, including faith-based organisations, the Bar Council, and political parties. In addition to S. Deepa, another woman in a similar situation – Indira Gandhi – also took her case to court, generating a large amount of public pressure.

### **Why this matters**

Unilaterally converting and obtaining custody of children breaches the constitutional right to equality of the non-converting spouse. It is used as a tool for abusive husbands to further abuse their wives. It is crucial that this practice is not allowed in law.

However, it is important that any positive changes on this issue are not cancelled out by regressive amendments elsewhere.

## Creating High Standards for Domestic Violence Shelters

### **Impact**

Guidelines for establishing and running shelters, **Domestic Violence Shelter Standards & Toolkit**, published by WAO and officially adopted by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development.

### **What we did**

Published the guidelines based on international good practices and WAO's experience running a shelter, in consultation with KPWKM and various government agencies and NGOs.

Launched the guidelines with the Minister and Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development.

### **Why this matters**

Malaysia severely lacks shelter space and related crisis support for domestic violence survivors. Each year, only a few hundred women are able to seek shelter services at one of the 42 shelters gazetted by the Malaysian government (which includes WAO). In

contrast, a 2014 *Universiti Sains Malaysia* study estimated that hundreds of thousands of women in Malaysia have experienced domestic violence. This is orders of magnitude larger than existing services capacity.

The *Domestic Violence Shelter Standards & Toolkit* can help government and non-government groups start new shelters and improve existing shelters.

## Steps Towards a Gender Equality Act

### **Impact**

The Minister of Women, Family and Community Development announced in Parliament in November 2016 that the government is working to introduce a **Gender Equality Act**.

### **What we did**

This buy-in is a result of joint advocacy by JAG and Malaysia's AICHR (ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights) Representative with KPWKM and the Attorney General's Chambers in 2016.

WAO with JAG also organised a workshop in November 2016 for JAG organisations to improve JAG's existing draft Gender Equality bill – working with a subject matter expert.

### **Why this matters**

While the Federal Constitution protects against discrimination on the basis of gender, the courts have interpreted this provision narrowly – only applying it to the public sector. Further, the constitutional prohibition of discrimination under article 8.2 is

inadequate as there is no legal definition of discrimination. Neither does the Constitution provide for the fulfilment of the right to equality as obligated by CEDAW.

The Gender Equality Act would domesticate CEDAW, ensure gender discrimination is legally defined, and clarify that constitutional protections against gender discrimination apply to the private sector.

## Other Initiatives

Engaged with the Council for Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Anti-Smuggling of Migrants (**MAPO**) and diplomatic missions on new regulations on the freedom of movement and right to work for trafficking survivors and on improving services for trafficking survivors.

Organised discussions with government consultants on the **National Human Rights Action Plan** related to women's and refugee/migrant worker rights.

Participated in a Ministry of Health meeting to draft a **national women's health action plan**. Provided input on violence against women and sexual and reproductive health.

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## Improving Enforcement of Public Policies

Sarah (pseudonym), a survivor WAO supported in 2016, had filed 12 police

reports over the years, but no investigation paper was ever opened; rather, the police simply called Sarah's husband and gave him a warning. When seeking a divorce, a registration department officer, instead of assisting Sarah, advised her to return to her husband.

The actions by both government officers are not in line with policies, yet they happen all too often. Without effective implementation, public policies do not improve lives. To ensure policies are implemented effectively, government responders must be trained, well resourced, and supported to carry out their mandates. To improve enforcement of public policies, WAO:

- Monitors, and provides feedback to, authorities handling violence against women cases
- Trains government responders
- Facilitates multi-stakeholder collaboration between government responders

## Monitoring and Providing Feedback to Authorities

### **Impact**

Violence against women survivors obtained case management support, to help ensure they get protection, justice, and remedies under the law (see Services Report for more information).

Implementation of policies on violence against women improved. For example, after WAO engaged a new public hospital regarding a rape case that the hospital handled poorly, the hospital created a One Stop Crisis

Centre (OSCC) committee and began implementing OSCC protocols.

Case studies of survivors from 2015 and 2016 documented, which will be analysed and compiled in a 2017 WAO report.

### **What we did**

WAO provided *case management* services to survivors, to help ensure that survivors get the protection, justice, and remedies from government authorities that they deserve to get under the law. This includes engaging with authorities to ensure that appropriate policies are being implemented generally.

WAO documented 20 cases of survivors supported by WAO, in order to draw out highlights and recommendations for government authorities. These case studies, and accompanying analysis, will be presented in a report in 2017.

### **Why this matters**

WAO's "competitive advantage" in advocating for public policy reform, is that we directly serve survivors of gender-based violence. This gives us first-hand knowledge of how current policy works for survivors (or not). By supporting survivors, WAO not only helps women directly – we are also able to learn from and channel their experiences to inform public policy.

## Training Government Responders

### **Impact**

Around 150 government responders – including police, hospital personnel,

and magistrate and legal officers – trained by WAO on understanding domestic violence, their roles in handling domestic violence cases, and NGOs' role in handling domestic violence.

### **What we did**

With the Judicial and Legal Training Institute (ILKAP) and Women's Centre for Change (WCC Penang), WAO trained around 30 magistrate and legal officers on understanding domestic violence.

With PDRM's D11 unit, WAO trained around 30 police investigation officers (IOs) from across the country, on the role of NGOs in domestic violence cases.

With PDRM's D11 unit, WAO trained around 30 junior police investigation officers from across the country, on the role of NGOs in domestic violence cases.

Trained around 30 nurses and hospital staff at Universiti Malaysia Medical Centre (PPUM) on domestic violence.

Trained around 30 nurses and *Klinik Kesihatan* staff at *Pejabat Kesihatan Daerah Klang*, on the role of NGOs in domestic violence cases.

### **Why this matters**

Training helps ensure that government responders are aware of their duties and know how to them carry them out.

Additionally, by being part of these trainings, service providers can provide their unique insight into handling domestic violence cases. WAO is Malaysia's largest service provider for domestic violence survivors.

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## Using International Human Rights Mechanisms

International human rights mechanisms can be important advocacy tools. Firstly, international mechanisms set global standards for countries to follow. Secondly, international mechanisms, through peer pressure and publicity, motivate governments to take positive steps on human rights.

WAO takes the lead on many international mechanisms, helping to bring together women's groups to engage collectively in these platforms. We work with the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG), the Coalition of Malaysian NGOs in the UPR Process (COMANGO), the Southeast Asian Women's Caucus on ASEAN, and the ASEAN Peoples' Forum (APF), among others.

### Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

#### **Impact**

The Malaysian government submitted its *combined third to fifth periodic reports* to the CEDAW Committee in September 2016.

Malaysian civil society organised to write a "Shadow Report" to submit to the CEDAW Committee in 2017.

### **What we did**

WAO has advocated for the government to submit its report, including through public pressure, in technical reports, and directly engaging with the government.

WAO, with JAG, coordinated civil society to prepare for writing the NGO Shadow Report, including:

- o Organised a training on CEDAW for NGOs interested on contributing to the Shadow Report.
- o Set up a working committee consisting women's rights organisations to coordinate the Shadow Report.

Provided feedback to the CEDAW Committee on updating of General Recommendation 19 (submitted to the Committee as part of IWRAW Asia Pacific's submission).

### **Why this matters**

CEDAW is the primary international standard on women's human rights. The convention, and recommendations by the CEDAW Committee to Malaysia, is regularly referenced by civil society and government to inform domestic laws and policies on women's rights.

Every 4.5 years, governments must send a report to the CEDAW Committee on the status of women's rights in their country. NGOs submit "Shadow Reports" to make sure the CEDAW Committee received as full a picture as possible. The Shadow Report will also be used to lobby the Committee, and to raise public awareness.

## Universal Periodic Review

### **Impact**

Coalition of Malaysian NGOs in the UPR Process (COMANGO) completed mid-term report.

### **What we did**

WAO led the drafting of the women's rights section of the COMANGO mid-term report, coordinating input from other women's rights groups.

As part of the COMANGO working committee, WAO helped coordinate the report.

### **Why this matters**

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a United Nations process, where every country's human rights record is reviewed by other countries, every 4 years. Malaysia was reviewed in 2013, and made human rights pledges, including 25 pledges on women's rights.

Malaysia will be reviewed again in 2018, making 2016 the "mid-term" period. The COMANGO mid-term report monitors the progress Malaysia has made towards fulfilling its 2013 pledges.

## ASEAN People's Forum

### **Impact**

Civil society in Southeast Asian countries organised the APF 2016 in August 2016 in Dili, Timor-Leste – a conference bringing together 800 civil society activists from across the region.

### **What we did**

WAO representatives were members of the Drafting Committee and Media Committee. We contributed to drafting the APF 2016 statement (which captures the aspirations of ASEAN people and the APF's primary lobby document) and with media engagement.

At APF 2016, WAO presented on enhancing women's access to justice on economic and social rights.

### **Why this matters**

The APF is the largest gathering of civil society in Southeast Asia, taking place yearly. It is a platform for civil society to collectively engage with governments, exchange ideas, and build solidarity.

At APF 2016, for the first time, a sitting head of state (Timor Leste Prime Minister, Dr. Rui Maria de Araújo) attended the forum and participated in an open dialogue with the audience.

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## Changing Mindsets

Nurhidayah Abdul Ghani was a domestic violence survivor who was ultimately murdered by her husband in 2013. In January 2017, the husband was found guilty. Yet nothing will bring Nurhidayah back. Enforcement agencies failed Nurhidayah. But even before she sought help from authorities, why was the abuse allowed to happen? Nurhidayah's husband felt entitled to abuse her. Nurhidayah's neighbours never helped her, despite her appeals.

Effective public policies can ensure protection and justice. But ultimately, we strive for a society where fewer people abuse, and when abuse happens others intervene. To get there, we need to change mind-sets. Public policies can shape behaviour, **but we also must reach individuals directly, with a message that violence against women cannot be tolerated.**

WAO reaches individuals through:

1. News media
2. Social media
3. In-person engagement

In 2016, we were fortunate to work with a number of partners, including Perspective Strategies, Bloc48, Astro Vinmeen HD, NYLA Sdn Bhd, and POPCLUB Magazine.

### Highlighting pregnancy discrimination

WAO, partnering with Perspective Strategies, ran a media campaign in August 2016 to highlight pregnancy discrimination. Surveying 222 working women in Malaysia who had been pregnant, we found that 40% had faced workplace discrimination based on their pregnancy. The campaign generated conversation on the need for protections against gender discrimination, generating more than 30 news articles, in newspapers, online media, radio, and television.

### IKnowHerMy

WAO partnered with Bloc48 to run a campaign starting October 2016, to overcome the "none of my business"

attitude when it comes to domestic violence, and instead equip people to take action when confronted with domestic violence, including by calling the WAO Hotline and TINA. The message was disseminated on social media through influencers, a microsite, and through radio interviews.

## Gender Equality Talks

In conjunction with 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, WAO organised the Gender Equality Talks, a series of four public forums on gender equality in November and December 2016. The series was attended by around 80 guests, generating 20 news stories.

## Majalah Komik Upin & Ipin

WAO continued our partnership with NYLA Sdn Bhd, publishing material in each monthly publication of the Upin & Ipin children's magazine. The material aimed to empower girls and introduce gender sensitivity to children.

## Clean and fair elections

As an endorsing NGO of Bersih 2.0, supporting clear and fair elections, WAO contributed to a number of efforts, including:

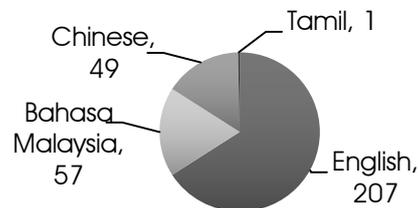
- Facilitating a monitoring team from Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) of three international observers prior and during the Bersih 5 rally held on 19 November 2016.

- Contributed to the content and editing to APWLD publication "*Speak and Be Heard: APWLD Guide to Women's Tribunals*", launched in September 2016.
- Help lead and participate in the Women for Maria protest which saw over a thousand women walk to parliament, demanding the release of Bersih 2.0 chairperson Maria Chin Abdullah.

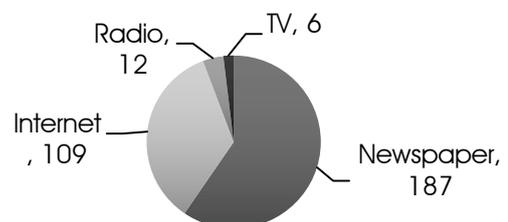
## News Media

There were **314** media mentions of WAO in 2016.

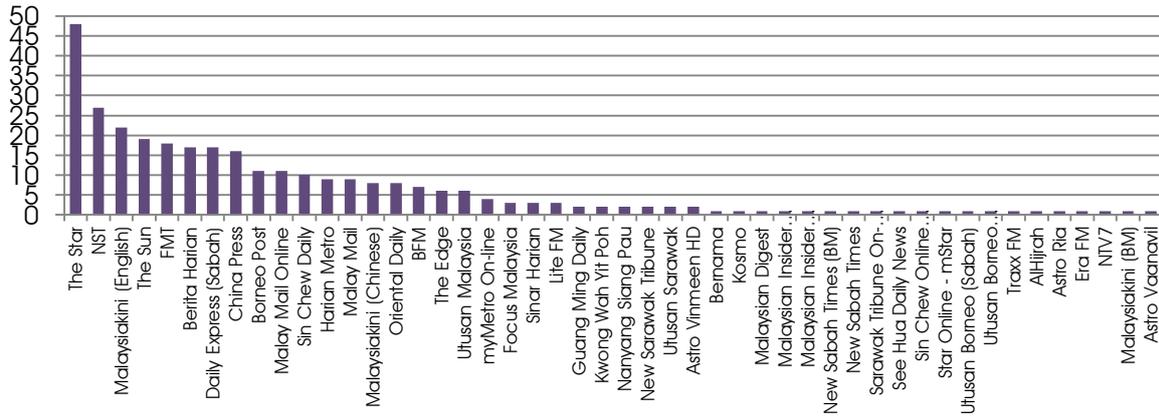
**Media mentions, by language**



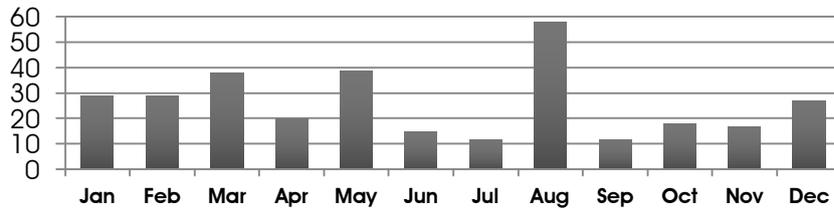
**Media mentions, by medium**



### Media mentions, by news organisation



### Media mentions, by month



### Social media

1,234,562 reach/impressions were achieved in 2016. WAO's Instagram account had around 700 followers by end-2016.

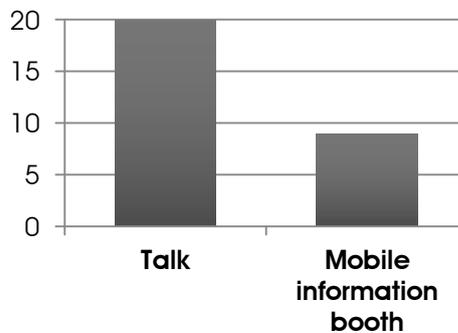
#### WAO's 2016 social media statistics

Metric (Facebook / Twitter)	Facebook	Twitter
Likes / Followers (end 2016)	16,263	3,523
Reach / Impressions	958,490	276,072
Engagement	15,695	6,043

### In-Person Engagement

In 2016, WAO conducted **29** talks and mobile information booths.

#### In person engagement events, by engagement type

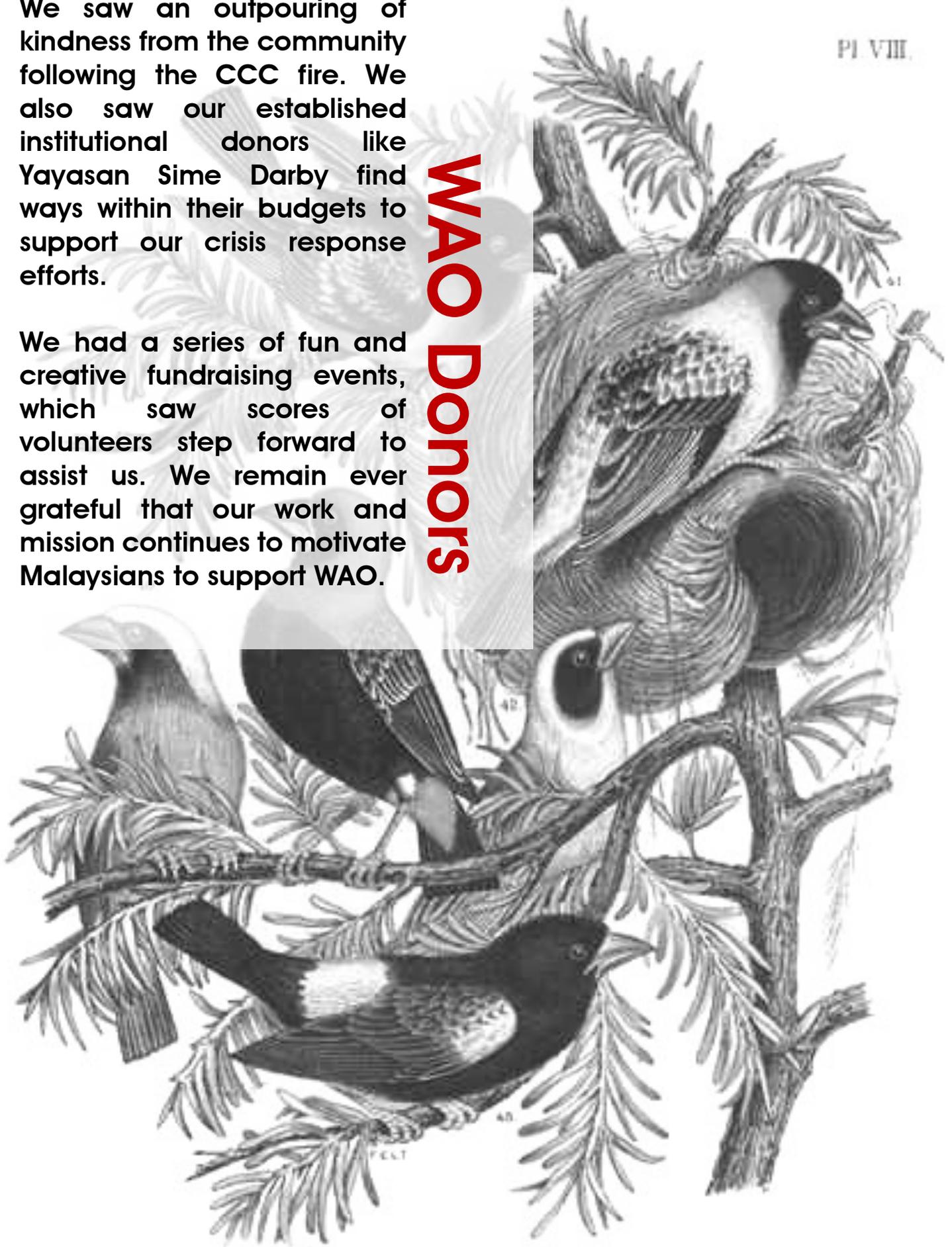


We saw an outpouring of kindness from the community following the CCC fire. We also saw our established institutional donors like Yayasan Sime Darby find ways within their budgets to support our crisis response efforts.

We had a series of fun and creative fundraising events, which saw scores of volunteers step forward to assist us. We remain ever grateful that our work and mission continues to motivate Malaysians to support WAO.

## WAO Donors

PL VIII.



2016 was a year affected by slow economy but thanks to steadfast donors and new supporters, WAO successfully raised RM2,078,537 and also managed to initiate new projects.

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## Special Mentions

We would like to thank two individuals in particular - Dato' Zaha Rina Zahari from Sage 3 Capital and Christopher Leong from Chooi & Company. Dato' Zaha Rina led a fundraising effort which is the "Aku Cinta Pada Mu" An Evening with Sheila Majid Charity Concert at the Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre (klpac) in April. The event which was to commemorate Sheila's 30th Anniversary in the music industry raised over RM250,000 for WAO in just one night only.

As for Christopher, he and his firm continued a yearly tradition of WAO's and hosted their first fundraising dinner, A Night to Remember - WAO's Fundraiser at Bobo KL in October. Dinner guests also got to enjoy a special performance by Sean Ghazi and Ida Mariana. WAO received over RM53,000 from this event.

Special mention goes to REHDA Youth for championing the redevelopment of the Child Care Centre. REHDA Youth together with a dedicated team of consultants have been meeting up consistently in 2016 in preparation for the major renovation. WAO is very excited to be invited to these meetings and to be part of this wonderful project.

A big thank you to our loyal supporters - Another Chance Charity Shop, Association of British Women in Malaysia (ABWM), Australian High Commission, Bison Stores Sdn Bhd, Boh Plantations Sdn Bhd, HSBC Malaysia, Klinik Haiwan Genting Kelang, Kuok Foundation Berhad, Selangor Properties Berhad, Thongs Holdings Sdn Bhd, West Metric Sdn Bhd and Yayasan Sime Darby. Their commitment to the cause has enabled us to continue working towards our objectives.

We want to acknowledge the wonderful support and services of WAO Fundraising Officer, Vivian Yap. She has been a steadfast, skilled and committed fundraiser for WAO since 2011. With the support of our EXCO and our dedicated fundraising volunteers, WAO managed to overcome the challenge of a slow economy to raise sufficient income to meet our operation needs. She leaves the WAO Team early next year.

Thank you Vivian!

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## Yayasan Sime Darby

2016 was the year Yayasan Sime Darby (YSD) and WAO renewed their strategic partnership. YSD had, for many years, made it possible for the organisation to do its best, providing quality services to women and children survivors of domestic violence.

We would like to thank the team at YSD for the trust and confidence and for always expressing the need to engage with us and the community.

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## New Giving, Continued Giving

Our appreciation also goes to new funders – Yayasan Hasanah, AIA Berhad, BeGood, ECM Libra Foundation, Chinese Embassy in Malaysia, Hats in The City Project, Tan Sri Tan Foundation and White Café Sdn Bhd.

WAO also has the support of many wonderful individual donors and they are great reminders of how one person can truly make a difference.

To go through a year troubled by an economic slowdown was definitely a huge concern for us. Looking back, we realised that most people continued giving despite a challenging year. There are too many individuals to be mentioned here but we truly thank them for standing by us.

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## The CCC Fire Response

On Sunday 13 November 2016, our Child Care Centre was severely damaged by fire. A lightning strike hit the building in a freak event and caused extensive damage. All staff and our 13 child residents were quickly evacuated and none were injured. However, they lost most of their belongings and the house is no longer liveable.

We are really grateful to our neighbour, Mr Rajini Kumar and family who not only helped us by welcoming the children into his home as a temporary measure but also reached out to the community for further aid. We were very fortunate to be within a community that is warm and generous. After hearing our plight, many individuals immediately came forward to offer assistance either by providing necessities like food and clothes or giving financial help.

We are deeply appreciative of the support.

We were also very relieved and pleased when a team of volunteers from Perbadanan Insurans Deposit Malaysia (PIDM) offered to put together our Annual Gathering in December with assistance from Perspective Strategies and sponsorship from Nippon Paint (Malaysia). The event was held at DiB (Deaf in Business) Coffees of Hawaii, a restaurant established as a social enterprise that is being run by hearing impaired staff members. It was definitely an enjoyable afternoon of catching up for the women and hours of fun for the children.

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## Child Sponsorship (Anak Angkat)

WAO believes we must invest in children. Unfortunately, many children grow up in abusive homes and left in distress. WAO has, since 1985, set up the Anak Angkat programme to help former residents and their children. The mothers who now have become

female headed households do not earn enough to support their own family. The programme helps alleviate the financial burden of the mothers and ensure their children get proper education.

We want to thank these sponsors for their generosity and commitment.

- Ann Brockett
- Billy Akunna
- Chee Lip Jinn
- Chew May Ann
- Chin Kean Wai
- Darina Yusof
- Dato Astaman bin Abdul Aziz
- Dr Jayalakshmi Pailoor
- Dr Resha A Malik
- Dr Samantha Veronica
- Teh Poh Suan
- Dr Saradha Devi Narayanan
- Fong Ju Li
- Fong Siew Pin
- Gowri Shanmuganathan
- Indra Kulasegaran
- Indramalar Satkunasingam
- Iskandar A Hashim/Christa
- Iskander Ismail
- Joanne Tan Swee Mi
- Juliana Ramli
- Kessy Cordelia Theseira
- Kiranjit Kaur
- Kon Cze Yan
- Lavanya Selvaratnam
- Leon Koay Li Onn
- Lim Hui Ru
- Linda Lim Mooi Eng
- Linda Yap Yen Ling
- Liong Kok Kit
- Low Siau Yeen
- Marina Mahathir
- Michelle Tan Chwee Gek
- Nancy Tan
- Nurfarihan Abu Bakar
- Paul James Sapwell
- Prashanthini Sunderan
- Rachael Tan
- Samantha Yew Mun Yee
- Shamala a/pNarayanan Nair
- Sheela Vasuthevan
- Shirin binti Ismail
- Soo Chee Kwan
- Soroptomist International Club of Damansara
- Subashini Selvaratnam

- Subbalakshmi Sankararaman
- Tan Yang Wah
- Tashia Peterson
- TDST Sdn Bhd
- Thean Keat Khoo
- Toh Yung Fei
- United Overseas Bank (M) Sdn Bhd
- Usha Narayanan
- Victor Tan Hock Kim
- Vincent Quah Soon Chooi
- YM Tunku Abang Faisal Amir



In our 33 years of empowering survivors, WAO has been strongly supported by scores of volunteers who have contributed in so many ways.

Team WAO calls on all members of the community to step forward and support survivors in moving forward.

We are delighted to receive strong support from groups and individuals, all of whom are committed to joining WAO move our country and communities towards a future where violence and discrimination against women and girls is eliminated.

**Team WAO**





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## WAO Interns

Being a small organisation, WAO's work is greatly enhanced by contributions of interns. WAO would like to extend our sincere gratitude to all the interns who have been with us in 2016:

### **At the WAO refuge**

Olla Ahmad  
Isabelle Mckitterick  
Revathi Rathakrishnan  
Breavina Munusamy  
Shahnaz Salleh

### **At the Child Care Centre**

Revathi Rathakrishnan  
Travis Lye Aik Wei

### **At the 3<sup>RD</sup> CENTRE**

Himin Ng  
Anastasia Agnes Fouqueau  
Edda Hanafi  
Catherine Paul  
Travis Lye Aik Wei  
Amanda Jeysing  
Sekheena Deslorieux  
Chelsea Saelee  
Mellissa Chong  
Hannah Jambunathan  
Christy Tan

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## WAO Volunteers

Volunteers have been the backbone of WAO, extending the reach of our work in so many areas. Volunteers are part of our movement of women and men working to end violence against women in Malaysia.

In 2016, around 75 dedicated volunteers supported our work. Here is just a *highlight* of that work.

### ***Have You Cott-On?***

Student Volunteers from IACT organised a fundraising drive for WAO. The hardworking students gave no small amount of their time collecting old clothing to cut and sew into amazing accessories that they then sold at a WAO booth on their campus.

### ***Mobile information booth***

Just some of the WAO Volunteers who helped further the message that domestic violence cannot be tolerated at booths set up at various public locations and events throughout the Klang Valley.

### ***Painting WAO's Transitional Home***

Giving our new Transitional Home a makeover. Hard day's work from our WAO volunteers.

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## Crisis Support Officers

The Crisis Support Officers ["CSO"] (formerly referred to as para-counsellors) are a group of volunteers trained to respond to the WAO Hotline and TINA WhatsApp/SMS service, attending to queries by women in crisis.

It has been over two years since the recruitment of the CSO via social media (March 2015). The trainings that were facilitated by the WAO staff were 30 hours in duration covering areas such as listening skills, risk assessment and knowledge on violence against women including practicums. From a pool of 30 trained participants, currently we have about 10 active and regular members in our CSO pool who commit to a minimum 3 hours of volunteering per week. The CSO have assisted in XXX number of calls thus far. Active listening and providing information with a non-judgemental attitude is the core value and services of the CSO.

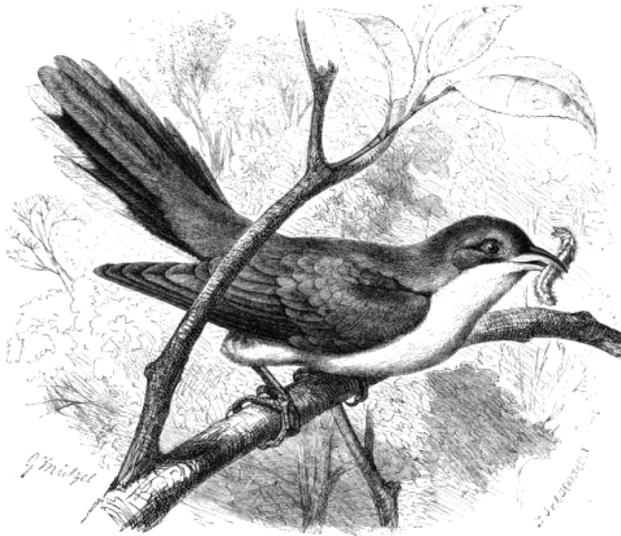
As the pioneer batch, the CSO will be the trainers for the next CSO induction. Each stage of the training program and practicum i.e. recruitment, programme outline, training and buddy system shadowing will be coordinated by the core CSO team.

As envisioned from the outset, the CSO programme will be an independent unit staffed wholly by the volunteers whereby all hotline calls will be attended, assessed and forwarded

(record, react and refer forward) accordingly so as to assist the social workers to focus their undivided attention solely on case management. Like the icing on the cake, a number of the CSO have been absorbed in the staff pool of Women's Aid Organisation.

The incredible collective testimony of the CSO is that through their role, the CSO have impacted and changed women's lives and made a difference by responding quickly, calmly and with respect to caller's choice.

At the same time they feel empowered and more empathetic not to mention the added support to the social workers in terms of manpower has enriched everyone in the service of women.



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## Who's who in WAO

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### **Trustees**

Toh Puan Dato' Seri Hj Dr. Aishah Ong

Puan Sri Chong Hon Nyuen

Dato' Noor Faridah Ariffin

Rashidah Abdullah

### **Membership**

178 members

### **WAO Executive Committee 2015 - 2017**

The following members of the Executive Committee (EXCO) were elected for a two-year term (2015 – 2017) at the 33rd Annual General Meeting held on 17 April 2016 at the WAO Centre, Petaling Jaya. The EXCO held 11 meetings in 2016.

<b>President</b>	Carol Chin
<b>Vice President</b>	Tashia Peterson
<b>Secretary</b>	Puveshini Rao
<b>Assistant Secretary</b>	Chin Oy Sim
<b>Treasurer</b>	Mok Chuang Lian

<b>Assistant Treasurer</b>	Meera Samanther
<b>Committee Members</b>	Yeow Ai Lin Shoba Aiyar (resigned w.e.f. 9 November 2016) Shanthi Dairiam
<b>Staff in attendance</b>	Sumitra Visvanathan (Executive Director) Divvyananthini Manoharan (Finance Officer) Staff as Required

## STAFF

### Management

Sumitra Visvanathan	Executive Director
Yu Ren Chung	Advocacy Manager
Wong Su Zane	Services Manager (resigned w.e.f. 30 April 2016)
Jessica Low	Services Manager (Consultant, w.e.f. 11 July 2016)

### Refuge

Amy Hor Choi Fun	Night Supervisor
Jessie Ang Hoon Ai	Social Worker
Nazlina Abdul Ghani	Social Worker (resigned w.e.f. 1 September 2016)
Vaneezha Muniandy	Social Worker
Erica Koh Pei Wey	Social Worker (w.e.f. 18 October 2016)
Yogasri a/p Sivanyanam	Acting Services Manager (resigned w.e.f. 12 November 2016)
Ann Nicole Nunis	Social Worker (w.e.f. 11 July 2016)
Ng Yi Ran	Social Worker (w.e.f. 11 July 2016)
Sally Wangsawijaya	Case Supervisor (resigned w.e.f. 17 April 2016)

### Crisis Counselors

Loheswary Arumugam	Contract Crisis Counselor Supervisor (w.e.f. 4 October 2016)
Joann Toh Suan Ee	Contract Crisis Counselor (w.e.f. 4 October 2016)
Sumitra Valaitham	Contract Crisis Counselor (w.e.f. 4 October 2016)

### **Child Care Centre (CCC)**

Firkah Jenal	Child Care Social Worker (resigned w.e.f. 29 October 2016)
Kaanchana Suppayah	Child Care Manager (w.e.f. 1 December 2016)
Saraswati Balakrisnan	Child Minder
Paruwathi Pathathan	Child Minder
Sasikala Ganesan	Child Minder (resigned w.e.f. 30 June 2016)
Tinawaysandi Masang	Child Minder (w.e.f. 22 February 2016)
Pushpa Rani Rajah	Child Minder (w.e.f. 3 October 2016)

### **Administrative Staff**

Shuba Vashani Perimbanayagam	Admin & HR Officer
Divvyananthini Manoharan	Finance Officer
Malathy Surentheran	Finance & Admin Assistant (end w.e.f. 22 November 2016)

### **Fundraising**

Vivian Yap Wui Woon	Projects Executive
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### **WAO Committees, Groups and Coalitions in 2016**

#### **Staff and Finance Committee**

Carol Chin  
Tashia Peterson  
Puveshini Rao  
Mok Chuang Lian  
Meera Samanther  
Yeow Ai Lin (co-opted)

#### **Staff in attendance :**

Sumitra Visvanathan (Executive Director)  
Divvyananthini Manoharan (Finance Officer)

<b>Legal Aid Centre (LAC) Representatives</b>	Meera Samanther Nazlina Abdul Ghani (resigned w.e.f. 1 September 2016) Ann Nunis (w.e.f. October 2016)
<b>Coordinator for United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Programme</b>	Wong Su Zane (resigned w.e.f. 30 April 2016) Ann Nunis (w.e.f. October 2016)
<b>Coordinator for International Catholic Migration Commission's Programme</b>	Wong Su Zane (resigned w.e.f. 30 April 2016) Ann Nunis (w.e.f. October 2016)
<b>Anak Angkat Coordinator</b>	Yogasri Sivanyanam (resigned w.e.f. 12 November 2016) Kaanchana Suppayah (w.e.f. 1 December 2017) Vivian Yap
<b>Volunteer Coordinator</b>	Kristine Yap (resigned w.e.f. 30 March 2016) Kelvin Ang (w.e.f. April 2016)
<b>Social Media</b>	Kristine Yap (resigned w.e.f. 30 March 2016) Tan Heang Lee (w.e.f. May 2016)
<b>Internship Coordinator</b>	Shuba Vashani Perimbanayagam
<b>Membership Coordinator</b>	Shuba Vashani Perimbanayagam
<b>National Council of Women's Organisations (NCWO) Representatives</b>	Shanthi Dairiam Nazlina Abdul Ghani (resigned w.e.f. 1 September 2016) Sumitra Visvanathan (w.e.f. October 2016)
<b>Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) Representatives</b>	Sumitra Visvanathan Meera Samanther Shanthi Dairiam Yu Ren Chung Mok Chuang Lian Tashia Peterson Natasha Dandavati Tan Heang Lee Kelvin Ang Lainey Lau (resigned w.e.f. 4 June 2016)

<b>Migration Working Group Representatives</b>	Yu Ren Chung Sumitra Visvanathan Lainey Lau (resigned w.e.f. 4 June 2016) Yogasri Sivanyanam (resigned w.e.f. 12 November 2016)
<b>Reproductive Rights Advocacy Alliance Malaysia (RRAAM)</b>	Jessie Ang
<b>Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies</b>	Meera Samanther Kristine Yap (resigned w.e.f. 30 March 2016) Tan Heang Lee (w.e.f. May 2016)
<b>Southeast Asia Women's Caucus on ASEAN</b>	Wathshlah G. Naidu Yu Ren Chung Sally Wangsawijaya (resigned w.e.f. 17 April 2016) Sumitra Visvanathan
<b>Bersih 2.0</b>	Yu Ren Chung Meera Samanther Sally Wangsawijaya (resigned w.e.f. 17 April 2016) Sumitra Visvanathan Ivy Josiah
<b>Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)</b>	Sumitra Visvanathan Ivy Josiah
<b>Asian Shelter Network</b>	Sumitra Visvanathan Ivy Josiah Wong Su Zane (resigned w.e.f. 30 April 2016)
<b>Coalition of Malaysian NGO's in the UPR Process (COMANGO)</b>	Yu Ren Chung Sumitra Visvanathan Lainey Lau (resigned w.e.f. 4 June 2016)



## About WAO's Services

In our service, we focus on critical interventions that limit the adverse consequences of domestic violence:

Our **refuge** is a crisis shelter that provides a temporary home to 250-300 women and children each year, and offers comprehensive support services. In 2016, we sheltered 118 women and 133 children. The availability of our refuge for these individuals ensured that they did not have to choose between homelessness and violence. The refuge is managed by our social workers.

The **child care centre** is a transitional home for children of survivors. On the survivor's request, we care her children in the short-term, giving the survivor the time and support to viably re-establish a safe and independent life in the community of her choice. In 2016, we sheltered, counselled, and ensured access to education for 171 children while their mothers worked towards creating sustainable and independent lives for them.

**Case management** provides for individual case advocacy, which includes engagement with the police, facilitating legal representation, access to health and other public services for almost 3,000 individuals each year.

**WAO counselling** is multi-platform and is conducted by our social workers. It comprises individual sessions (face-to-face), the WAO Hotline, SMS text-based helpline (TINA, or "Think I Need Aid"), and emailed enquiries. Our hotline received more than 1,636 calls in 2016. In total, our counselling provided crisis intervention, safety planning, and onward referrals for 2,748 survivors.

**Empowerment programmes** offer follow-up support to all former refuge residents and their children, in order to empower survivors to break the cycle of domestic violence and maintain their independence. Our support programmes benefited many women and children in 2016. These programmes are run and coordinated by our social workers.



**Women's Aid Organisation**

**Women's Aid Organisation (WAO)**

**Call the WAO Hotline at +603 7956 3488 or  
SMS/WhatsApp TINA at +6018 988 8058  
if you or someone you know is experiencing  
abuse.**

**P.O. Box 493, Jalan Sultan  
46760 Petaling Jaya, Selangor  
Malaysia**

**Tel: +603 7957 5636/ 7957 0636**

**Fax: +603 7956 3237**

**Email: [womensaidorg@gmail.com](mailto:womensaidorg@gmail.com)**

**Website: [www.wao.org.my](http://www.wao.org.my)**