



WAO ANNUAL REPORT 2005

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WAO ANNUAL REPORT 2005

Collated and written by Ivy Josiah, Executive Director, on behalf of the Hon. Secretary, WAO Executive Committee 2003/2005.

Reports written by:

Annie Varghese

Thillai Mohandas

Shoba Aiyar

Vizla Kumaresan

Daljeen Kaur

Edited by:

Chin Oy Sim

1.0 WAO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2005-2007

The following members of the Executive Committee (EXCO) were elected for a two-year term (2005-2007) at the 22nd Annual General Meeting held on Saturday, 7 May 2005 at 10.00 a.m. at WAO Centre, Petaling Jaya.

President:	Meera Samanther
Vice - President:	Shanthi Dairiam
Secretary:	Mok Chuang Lian
Assistant Secretary:	Rozana Isa
Treasurer:	Yeow Ai Lin
Assistant Treasurer:	Sharon Hariharan
Committee members:	Vivienne Lee Iskandar Musfiza Mustapa Watshlah G Naidu (<i>resigned June '05</i>)
Co opted member:	Carol Chin (<i>w.e.f. August '05</i>)

The EXCO held 9 committee meetings in 2005.

2.0 WAO COMMITTEES, GROUPS AND COALITIONS IN 2005

- 1) Staff Committee
Meera Samanther
Mok Chuang Lian
Yeow Ai Lin
Ivy Josiah
- 2) Convention on the Elimination of All
Forms of Discrimination Against
Women (CEDAW) Core Committee
Ivy Josiah
Tashia Peterson
Shanthi Dairiam (International Women's
Rights Action Watch (IWRAP) Asia Pacific)
Nik Noriani Nik Badli Shah (Sisters In Islam,
SIS)
Zarizana Abdul Aziz (Women's Centre for
Change, Penang, WCC)
- 3) Legal Aid Centre (LAC)
Representatives
Meera Samanther
Shoba Aiyar

- | | |
|--|---|
| 4) United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Programme Coordinator | Shoba Aiyar |
| 5) Fundraising Group | Vivienne Lee Iskandar
Yeow Ai Lin
Meera Samanther
Ivy Josiah
Annie Varghese
Karen Tan
Grace Lim |
| 6) Anak Angkat Coordinator | Shoba Aiyar |
| 7) Volunteer Coordinators | Musfiza Mustapa
Thillai Mohandas |
| 8) Website Design & Content | Jac sm Kee |
| 9) National Council of Women's Organisations (NCWO) Representatives | Shanthi Dairiam
Shoba Aiyar |
| 10) Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) Representatives | Ivy Josiah
Meera Samanther
Vizla Kumaresan
Tashia Peterson
Jana Rumminger |
| 11) Malaysian Coalition for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse (MCPCSA) Representative | Daljeen Kaur |
| 12) Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) Representative | Ivy Josiah |
| 13) <i>Article 11</i> Representatives | Ivy Josiah
Meera Samanther
Vizla Kumaresan |
| 14) Member in the National Advisory Council (formerly known as NACIWID) | Ivy Josiah |

3.0 TRUSTEES

Toh Puan Datin Dr. Aishah Ong

Rashidah Abdullah

Noor Farida Ariffin

Puan Sri Chong Eu Ngoh

4.0 MEMBERSHIP

In 2005 WAO had 113 listed members and approximately 97 active volunteers.

5.0 STAFF

Refuge

Shoba Aiyar	Social Work Manager (<i>w.e.f. Nov. '05</i>)
Normah Mohd. Nor	Night Social Worker
Jessie Ang	Social Worker
Nazlina Abd. Ghani	Social Worker
Saralah Devi Mahendran	Social Worker
Wong Su Zane	Social Worker (<i>w.e.f. May '05</i>)

Child Care Centre (CCC)

Mary Selina Santhanasamy	Social Worker
Daljeen Kaur	Child Social Worker
Engammah Anumiah (Vijaya)	Child Minder
Juartini Parman	Child Minder (<i>resigned Feb. '05</i>)
Hanif Nuk'awanah Nuhyi	Child Minder (<i>w.e.f. Mar. '05</i>)
Amuthavally	Child Minder
Kalai	Child Minder (<i>w.e.f. Feb. '06</i>)

Executive Staff

Ivy N. Josiah	Executive Director
Annie Varghese	Projects & Administrative Manager
Sharmini Kanesamoorthy	Finance & Administrative Manager

Programme Officer

Vizla Kumaresan Programme Officer (*w.e.f. June '05*)

Administrative staff

Thillai Mohandas Administrative Assistant

Puspawati Ismail Accounts & Administrative Assistant

Project Contract Staff

Tashia Peterson Researcher & Writer (*resigned 30 Nov. '05*)

Karen-Ann Tan Projects Assistant (*Aug. – Dec. '05*)

6.0 WAO AFFILIATIONS

WAO is an affiliate member of:

- National Council of Women's Organisations (NCWO)
- Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC)
- Malaysian Coalition for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse (MCPCSA)

7.0 WAO SERVICES

Refuge	122 women and 55 children
Face-to-Face Counselling at WAO	115 women
Face-to-Face Counselling at UNHCR	122 women
Telephone Counselling	1,215 calls
Child Care Centre	26 children

7.1 Refuge Services

It was an exciting and educational year for social workers as we had to deal with emerging issues such as trafficking and the status of refugees. We had a drop in domestic violence (DV) cases compared to the previous years but the numbers of trafficked women and migrant domestic workers (MDW) increased. Most cases were referred to us by another non-governmental organisation (NGO) or the police.

Some of the trafficked women were Cambodian nationals. Initially we had communication problems and had to rely on the embassy staff to ascertain or relay information. Towards the end, communication became easier as trust was built and the women became familiar with some words.

With the MDWs, it was a challenging process of negotiating with the police, the agent and sometimes, the employers. Most times it ended on a favourable note as the women were able to recover their salaries or compensation and to return to their countries of origin.

The number of DV cases decreased from 70 in 2004 to 58 in 2005. The general consensus is that the number declined as women become more and more knowledgeable about their rights and have support from their family or friends to help them through their violent relationships. This is backed by the information we ascertained through telephone counselling. Even though the number of telephone calls received has also decreased, we feel women are more aware of what to do because they have read articles, heard us on the radio or have consulted our website. Many have called or come to see us to reaffirm the decisions and actions they have already arrived at themselves. Furthermore, most of the clients are working and thus have the financial means to fend for themselves as compared to, for example, ten years ago.

The task of assisting DV victims to obtain Interim Protection Orders (IPOs) was made easier in 2005 as most police and welfare officers have become more aware of this protocol. Our working relationship with the above two agencies has been very cordial and this makes the process of helping the client easier and faster. We encountered very few women who decided to return to their husbands as they either could not afford to live on their own or wanted to give their spouses another chance. Those who did not go back managed to rent rooms or houses, or stayed with their relatives. WAO provided these women with loans from the Tun Tan Siew Sin Memorial Fund to start their new lives and gave them donated household items.

Besides helping clients by telephone, e-mail and in face-to-face sessions, the social workers were kept busy answering queries and giving interviews to university and college students, concerned citizens and media representatives on the issues of domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment and MDWs. In addition, social workers accompanied ex-residents to courts (civil, criminal or Syariah) to give them moral support. These experiences are trying and quite draining for both clients and social workers as court proceedings are long and often get postponed.

As social work is both demanding and challenging, many opinions are often solicited in order to manage a case well. Our social work meetings and staff meetings have lent support to the social workers to handle their cases in a professional manner. Time and again the social workers chip in to help each other out and this has helped reduce the burnout effect. The cycle of violence theory held true as this year two children of former residents came for shelter because of abuse.

The year ended with a "bang". The husband of an ex-resident banged into our front gate with his lorry and brought down both the gates, which were beyond repair. He further threw a flower pot onto the new van and shattered the back glass window. Luckily, the women were all safe in the house. The police are investigating this case.

This incident has left a scar but it has not deterred us from continuing our work with more determination.

7.1.1 Programmes for Women

Group Work

Refuge residents came together to participate in group activities organised for them by the social workers, interns and some chambering students. Tracey Slattery, an intern from Australia, conducted 4 group work exercises around issues of gender and violence, portrayal of self, enhancing self-esteem, and grief and loss. Another intern, Stephanie Wirth from Germany, conducted weekly yoga and relaxation exercises which were very popular and a real stress reliever for most of the women. She also conducted self-defence classes, and grooming, personal development and fine dining sessions. The fine dining session made the women feel really good about themselves and instilled the notion of eating together as a family. Sonic, a volunteer, presented a few sessions on hair craft and the use of make-up.

- Scrap Book project: Saralah, our social worker, began a scrap book project whereby women began putting together an album of memories whilst at the Refuge.
- House meetings: Disputes were often redressed through house meetings held by the night social worker, Normah, every fortnight or when required.
- Children's programme: Jessie and the interns conducted the children's programme in the mornings, which consisted of remedial school work, singing and fun activities while the mothers had their sessions with the social workers or used the time to do some errands.

"Supermom" Baking Course by Rotary Club of Petaling Jaya

The Rotary Club of Petaling Jaya took the initiative to start a project for single mothers to equip them with skills, with the belief that empowering them with basic competencies to start and sustain their own home-based businesses would lead to them becoming financially independent. The Rotary Club offered a free course in baking at the Malaysian Baking Institute in Petaling Jaya.

While 11 of our ex-residents applied to be participants, only 6 of the mothers chose to begin and continue with this programme. The first part of the course, focusing on baking skills, ran from November until 7 December 2005 and the second part of the course, on business skills, began on 12 December and ended on 18 January 2006.

Besides equipping the women with these skills, the Rotary Club identified the need to support the mothers by introducing them to various cake houses and bakery factories to gain employment. Rotary Club members will assist the mothers with formulating business plans if they choose to work from home.

7.2 Child Care Centre

The Child Care Centre (CCC) opened in 1990 and by the end of 2005, a total of 113 mothers and their 247 children have used the services of the Centre. In 2005, 12 new children entered the Centre, bringing the total number of children who stayed at the Centre to 26.

▪ Children in the Centre at the beginning of the year	14
▪ Intake of new children during the year	12
▪ Children who left during the year	15
▪ Children at the Centre at the end of 2005	11

Out of the 15 children who left, 9 children went on to live with their mothers, 5 children went to live in other children's homes and 1 went to live with a temporary foster family.

A breakdown (by level of schooling) of the children who stayed in the Centre in 2005 follows:

▪ 3 – 6 year olds	attending Kindergarten	10 children
▪ 7 – 12 year olds	attending Primary School	8 children
▪ 13 – 14 year olds	attending Secondary School	1 child

7 children did not attend kindergarten or school for various reasons. Out of this figure, 3 children were admitted to the Centre at the end of the year and will begin their schooling in 2006, 2 children were at the Centre only temporarily, 1 child was too young to attend and another was unable to attend school because he is a refugee. Refugee children are not permitted to study in Malaysia's national schools and there was therefore difficulty in placing the child in school. He could, however, attend a private school but fees for such schools are high.

Many outings were organised by volunteers, staff and other organisations throughout 2005. Some of these activities, such as the cooking and picture frame making workshops, taught children new skills. Other activities included cultural events like theatre performances and concerts, sporting activities like Sports Day which included futsal, netball and telematches, educational activities like trips to Petrosains, KLCC Fun Zone and the Froggin' activity, and activities purely for entertainment like movie screenings, Hollywood on Ice, Disney on Ice and picnics organised by the staff.

The CCC staff was kept busy attending to the children's school needs. A tuition teacher and volunteers assisted the children in their studies. We firmly believe that education is of paramount importance in a child's life and that doing well in school ensures they have a better and brighter future. Success in education has also been shown to affect self-esteem.

Tracey Slattery, the Australian intern, spent 2 days a week at the CCC. Tracey had a lot of experience in child care and contributed in improving our services to the children. She

introduced 2 ideas in recognition that the CCC children are special and experience attachment issues, namely, ensuring that each child has a photo of his or her mother and creating a scrap book for each child. Children were encouraged to record their experiences, outings and special events in their scrapbooks, which were shared with their mothers. As the mothers only saw their children once a week, the scrapbooks provided a way for the mothers to visually experience part of their children's lives.

There were ample opportunities for children to discuss their feelings and thoughts. Group discussions, activities and projects were popular with the children and this was a great way for them to share while having fun. In addition, programmes on special topics such as bullying were conducted.

Our work is assisted by volunteers. Drama activities begun by Joanna Basseby in 2004 were carried out in 2005 by Farah. The regular group of volunteers, comprising Carol, Sharon, Shireen, Suresh, Kesu, Ina, Vive, Mary, Chandra, Anne, Param, Kala and Sharm took the children swimming while the Saturday group, comprising Pat, Rachel, Carol, Wahome, William, Kelvin and Ng organised games and arts and crafts activities. Special thanks go to Urmela Singh, Lau Le Na, Impaljit Jassal, Kelly Chan and Mrs Rajendran for providing tuition.

A children's library with books on hygiene, manners, aggression and safety was also created.

Mothers spent their days off and holidays with the children and sometimes joined us during outings. Former residents also kept in touch by telephone, through visits or by joining us for trips.

At the end of the year, Amutha, our childminder, left to pursue other interests. We wish her the best in all her endeavours.

7.3 Face-to-face Counselling at the UNHCR

This service began in 2003 with WAO hosting 2 Kurdish families from Iran, who were eventually resettled in New Zealand. After studying our services, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) approached us as an implementing partner to counsel the sexual and gender-based violence survivors in the asylee and refugee communities at their premises in Bukit Petaling.

The sessions began with 1 social worker providing counselling once a week to about 3 clients. In 2004, 2 social workers provided counselling and conducted support group sessions for the survivors.

In 2005, 3 social workers took turns to provide individual counselling once a week, not only to gain experience but to reduce the incidence of burnout from the intensive counselling sessions. Sometimes there were up to five clients per day, with each session lasting between 30 to 60 minutes.

In addition, we conducted 8 support group sessions for about 10 Tdeem women from Myanmar. Suzanne and Shoba conducted these fortnightly sessions, each lasting for about two hours, from August to October 2005. The sessions were conducted with the help of translators and covered areas such as exploring new friendships, identifying

emotions and life experiences, sharing about relationships of different family members, feelings when someone hurts them, the impact assessment of that hurt, changing negative feelings into positive energies, exploring strengths and abilities, and charting new lives.

Last year, 132 counselling sessions were conducted, in which 122 women participated. 5 women needed more than one counselling session. A breakdown of the survivors, who were refugees or asylum seekers, follows:

<u>Nationality</u>	<u>Sessions</u>	<u>Problems encountered</u>
Myanmar	121	Rape by military in their country Rape by strangers in our country Sexual harassment by local police Homesick or worried about their children/parents Domestic violence Survival problems in Malaysia
Liberia	2	Raped by military Medical and financial difficulties Homesick and in need of peace
Acheh	3	Gang rape, domestic violence, depression
Cambodia	1	Domestic violence, health problems
Nigeria	1	Domestic violence
Iran	2	Domestic violence, gang rape
Somalia	1	Rape, health problems
Thailand	1	Domestic violence

In addition to the counselling sessions at UNHCR's premises, 2 refugee women were brought to our shelter for counselling on other days. 4 women stayed at WAO's Refuge for between two weeks to a month.

8.0 WAO CENTRE

The WAO 3rd Centre, as it is commonly known, was launched in late 2004 and was fully operational in 2005. Funding from the Austrian German Swiss Association for rental of the Centre's premises was assured for one more year. The Centre was used for face-to-face counselling sessions as well as briefings for students, researchers, embassies, media, funders, volunteers and members. The space was also used for meetings with other NGOs, EXCO meetings, staff and internal advocacy meetings.

In 2005, we began an Executive Directors' (ED) network, comprising EDs and Presidents of NGOs who were invited to meet at the WAO Centre to discuss our respective work, management skills and simply to update each other. 3 meetings were held, and at one meeting a senior lawyer specialising in labour law briefed us on the Employment Act.

The Centre's Resource Room is slowly being built up with books, paper cuttings, research papers and other reference materials.

9.0 ANAK ANGKAT SPONSORSHIP PROGRAMME

It was a fruitful and wonderful year for the children of our ex-residents. We had a record breaking figure of 45 children being recipients of the programme's benefits. The RM 60 per month received for each child was used for the child's schooling and transport expenses.

We would like to thank the following for their generosity:

Robert Gan	Dorothy Gan	Indra Kulasegaran
V. Kanesan (2)	Juliana Solomon	Dr. Tuen Kam Sim
Madeline Yap	Koid Teng Beng	Annapoorni Chandrasekhar
Kathleen Chin (2)	V. Ravindran	Tracy Wong
Cho Foong Kuan	Linear Channel	Peter Lee
Dan Taylor	Florence Ng	Halliburton (10)
Puan Sri Jamilah	Ester Tan	Anna Maria (2)
Tan Han Kwan	Chin Kean Wai	Putri Noor Shariza Noordin
Vivienne Lee	Sarah Foo	Phoon Choon Ha
Choong Phek Yee	Saw Thiam Hin	Koh Meng See

Throughout the year, we were in contact with the families and whenever possible they would drop by to share the joys and sorrows of their lives. Many times the women felt isolated or shy to talk about their issues until we facilitated the sharing. They felt relieved and reassured that they had not erred too much about an issue they worried about. As single mothers they faced hardship both financially and emotionally as worry about their children's needs and future was foremost on their minds.

Out of these concerns, we have started an **outreach programme** wherein, we have started going on home visits, having families over for tea sessions, and organising a Youth Camp for the children.

For the **Youth Camp**, 25 teenagers comprising 16 boys and 9 girls went to Port Dickson for 4 days. The programmes centred on career development, job interviews, keeping safe in a dating relationship and team building. There was also a visit to a Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) power station and a police station. The feedback from the participants showed that they benefited from the sessions, especially from sessions on team building and preparing for the working world.

10.0 LEGAL AID CLINIC

WAO has a long working relationship with the Legal Aid Centre Kuala Lumpur (LAC KL). In 2003 LAC KL extended its legal aid clinic programme by placing a chambering student at WAO. The clinic proved to be beneficial and WAO became a regular placement area for chambering students. Upon its request, this cooperation was extended to LAC Selangor in 2005 when it merged with LAC KL to carry out training programmes.

2 chambering students are therefore now placed at the Refuge, one on a Monday and the other on a Friday, each for a 14-week period.

10.1 Programme and Objectives of the Clinic

- 1) To have the pupils assist the social workers in educating the telephone counselling or shelter clients on their legal rights
- 2) To accompany women to the courts and police stations to explain the procedures and what actions are to be followed. This is to allay any fears the women may have in those situations
- 3) To assist in research, monitoring and advocacy work on law and policies that discriminate against women and around issues of violence against women (VAW)
- 4) To take part in projects run by WAO from time to time, especially in public education events
- 5) To monitor the family courts in matters that discriminate against women
- 6) To do research for press releases on issues related to women in the media

10.2 The Implementing Process

The Clinic's 3 elements are:

- 1) Training Three days of training at LAC KL and at All Women's Action Society (AWAM)
- 2) Practicum Attending to telephone calls, women at the shelter, ex-residents or new face-to-face clients on their legal rights and available choices. In addition, the pupils accompany the social workers or go on their own with the clients to the police station or court. The pupils also take part in programmes designed for the empowerment of women and children
- 3) Review Conducted by LAC and WAO coordinators

There was active interaction between the social workers and pupils in helping each woman. However, this may not have been consistent when the social workers were too busy and pupils occasionally had to jump in to assist a woman. There were lean days when little happened and the pupils just read or caught up with documenting their work.

The first month is always a learning process during which the pupil adjusts and begins to feel at ease with the clients while developing her interviewing skills. Sometimes, they are thrown into the deep end when the centre's social workers are busy with clients. However, the pupils do take the initiative to consult the social workers on family law

issues not familiar to them or to check if they had given the right advice. This brings up the need for supervising lawyers who have experience in family and criminal law.

Many of the pupils worked in corporate firms that dealt with conveyance matters and thus did not have any court experience. We briefed them on what to do and observe when they either accompany a woman to court or monitor cases heard at the Family Court in Kuala Lumpur.

In 2005, there were 7 pupils who helped about 102 women through our telephone counselling and Refuge services.

In 2006, WAO plans to continue with its objectives and programme as outlined above and will call for regular meetings with LAC coordinators. WAO will propose to LAC to review its means test for assessing eligibility for free legal aid in accordance with the increasing cost of living in urban centres.

11.0 INTERNS AND SCHOLARS AT WAO

WAO hosted 11 interns in 2005 from Malaysia, America, Australia, France, Russia and Germany. They came to WAO to learn and gain in-depth experience regarding domestic violence and women's rights. They were an integral part of our WAO team and handled everything from phone calls, organising children's and women's programmes, researching and writing, producing the WAO newsletters, accompanying the women to courts, police stations and hospitals, and volunteering at our public education booths. The interns' contribution to WAO's work is invaluable and our work culture and environment became more dynamic with their presence.

In response to the increasing numbers of interns coming to WAO, we developed a handbook that outlines what they should expect while living in Malaysia and how they can contribute to WAO.

For 2006, we are considering being more selective in accepting interns in WAO by narrowing down their skills and areas of studies.

11.1 2005 Interns

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| 1) Annierose Von Burg, University of Oregon, America | Mar - May 2005 |
| 2) Chris Geevarughese, Help College, Malaysia | Apr - May 2005 |
| 3) Rebecca Barns, America | Apr 2005 (1 week) |
| 4) Tracey Slattery, Edith Cowan University, Australia | May - Aug 2005 |
| 5) Karen Tan, RIMT University, Australia | June - July 2005 |
| 6) Julie Sion, University of Paul Cezanne, France | July - Sep 2005 |
| 7) Jenni Lestela, Saint Petersburg State University, Russia | July - Aug 2005 |

- 8) Kristina Bogansky, University of Applied Science, Germany Sep 2005 - Feb 2006
- 9) Stephanie Wirth, University of Applied Science, Germany Sep 2005 - Feb 2006
- 10) Jasmeen Chowdhury, University of Western Sydney, Australia Oct 2005 - Feb 2006
- 11) Shakira Hasan, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia Dec 2005 - Mar 2006

11.2 Visiting Scholar Programme

WAO had to bid farewell to Jana Rumminger, a Henry Luce scholar, who left for Singapore in July 2005. Jana, who was from Northeastern University, Boston and is a lawyer by profession, began her work with WAO in September 2004 and assisted in finalising the CEDAW Shadow Report in 2005 and work related to JAG advocacy.

Jana still remains active within the JAG e-group and works part-time for Sisters In Islam conducting research on issues of Islamic family law.

12.0 VOLUNTEERS AND MEMBERS

At WAO we make a distinction between volunteers and members. While volunteers are involved in various activities, not all of them are members. Members are eligible to attend and vote at AGMs to form the EXCO.

12.1 Volunteer Development

In 2005, we conducted 8 volunteer orientations on an average of one every two months. Most of the new volunteers were aware of WAO from its website, through word of mouth, from the media and through our public awareness campaigns. The majority of volunteers comprised college students due to the numerous public education talks held in various colleges.

The number of volunteers increased from 50 to 95. Throughout the year, volunteers conducted English lessons, computer lessons and dance classes. The quarterly newsletters were prepared with the assistance of a few volunteers.

A half-day "Gotong Royong" project was organised in July last year involving the staff and 13 volunteers who managed to clean up the WAO Centre, Refuge and Child Care Centre.

Another project that took off was the Telephone Counselling Training, in which 4 volunteers were given intensive training on alternate Saturdays for a period of 4 months. These trained volunteers spent their Saturdays assisting social workers respond to calls requesting telephone counselling.

At the CCC, volunteers gave tuition to the children, took them for outings like swimming or a visit to the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) to study the life cycle of

frogs. There was an active group of volunteers led by Vizla and Karen who visited the CCC every Friday to conduct activities and to spend valuable time with the children.

During the “16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence” programme, a large number of volunteers came in full force to assist us at the Berjaya Times Square mall and at the booth in Ipoh.

A “Year-End Volunteer” meeting was organised in December, involving active volunteers, to address the problems they faced in volunteering with WAO. Among the suggestions received were that WAO should:

- Organise regular activities for volunteers to participate in
- Stipulate the number of hours per week or month that volunteers must contribute in order to qualify as a WAO volunteer
- Develop a consistent mode of communication with the volunteers, either through e-mail or by telephone

WAO would like to record its thanks to the volunteers who have consistently contributed their time and energy at the CCC for many years.

12.2 Members’ Meeting

In 2005, Annie established an e-group among members and, to our surprise, many responded favourably to the idea of volunteering and donating as and when the need arises. On 19 November, we organised a members’ meeting at the WAO Centre, during which 22 members turned up for an update on WAO work and to meet other members. The discussions ranged from pioneer members sharing why they had become members of WAO to the cycle of violence theory.

12.3 Creative Changers

A new volunteer project called Creative Changers was launched in June 2005, coordinated by Jac sm Kee. The project was aimed at creating space for building feminist knowledge and effecting change through creative expressions. The publicity flyer for this project was announced on the WAO website and to e-groups and was also disseminated to various other mailing lists (e.g. writers for rights) and websites (e.g. www.hati.org).

The group’s first meeting on 18 June was attended by 22 people. Among the topics discussed were the participants’ expectations, strategies to develop the project further, exchange of skills and interests, and administrative and logistical issues. The group also had a general discussion on women’s rights in Malaysia. An e-group (creativechangers@yahoo.com) that currently has 33 members was created to facilitate discussion among project group members.

12.3.1 Discussion Meetings

Subsequent to this meeting, the group met 10 times throughout the year to discuss various topics. Some of the topics discussed were:

- What is a feminist and what is feminism?
- Construction of the female subject
- Empowerment and disempowerment
- Intimacy and relationships
- The power of labels
- Intersexed identities
- Female as “victim”
- Freud’s basic ideas – the Unconscious, Id, Ego and Superego
- Castration complex for men
- Oedipus complex in boys and girls and how it can be seen as a metaphor for conflict resolution
- Phallus as a symbol of power
- Racial bigotry
- Difference and identity

After the discussions, some form of creative output was produced as a way to express the issue at hand, e.g. through sketching, composing poetry or prose, and transforming face masks into message banners.

12.3.2 Weblog

On 5 August 2005, a weblog (<http://creatvechangers.livejournal.com>) was launched on which outputs created from the project could be posted, as well as to enable further sharing and discussion. The weblog is now managed by Zubaidah, one of the Creative Changers.

13.0 ADVOCACY

In carrying out our advocacy, WAO focuses on the implementation of CEDAW, reform of the Domestic Violence Act (DVA), rights of women in the family, women in migration issues and freedom of religion and faiths. However, through the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) coalition we also advocate on other issues, namely laws pertaining to rape, sexual harassment, Islamic family law, workers’ rights and laws that discriminate against women.

On 7 March, WAO was involved in a Joint Action Group Against Violence Against Women (JAG-VAW) press conference commemorating International Women’s Day (IWD) and JAG-VAW’s 20th anniversary and its campaign to eliminate violence against women. The event gave us an opportunity to recall and document the herstory of JAG-VAW.

13.1 Herstory of JAG-VAW

Why violence against women?

When JAG-VAW took on the issue of violence against women, it was in response to the number of such cases being reported in the media. The women activists then believed that this issue could potentially unify women across classes, geographic locations, cultures and religions.

At the international level, the United Nations designated 1976-1985 as the “Decade for Women”. As a result of the focussed attention, two significant events occurred:

- 1) CEDAW entered into force in 1981. The Convention reaffirms the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and emphasises the eradication of all forms of discrimination against women.
- 2) The Third UN World Conference on Women took place in Nairobi in 1985 and The Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000 called for greater commitment from governments towards eliminating discrimination against women, in particular through capacity building of the national machinery for women.

These international developments took off as a result of a growing momentum created by the international women’s movement to undertake a global campaign to eliminate violence against women. In Malaysia, a workshop-cum-exhibition on violence against women organised on 23-24 March 1985 to commemorate International Women’s Day witnessed the attendance of more than 1,000 women, men and youth. Four main issues were highlighted: physical violence (rape, domestic violence and sexual harassment), portrayal of women in the media, prostitution, and the law.

The pioneers of this initiative, which formed a coalition known as JAG-VAW, were:

- Association of Women Lawyers (AWL)
- Malaysian Trade Union Congress (MTUC) - Women’s Committee
- Selangor and Federal Territory Consumers’ Association (SCA) - Women and Media Section
- University Women’s Association (UWA)
- Women’s Aid Organisation (WAO).¹

The 1985 IWD event gave rise to three important developments in the history of the Malaysian women’s movement and the violence against women campaign:

- 1) It was the 1985 IWD event that broke the silence shrouding the occurrence of violence against women. Crimes against women were named and they became a national concern.
- 2) Submission of the Memorandum on All Laws that Discriminate Against Women to the then Ministry of Justice by NCWO in 1986 (the “1986 Memorandum”).

¹ WAO was the first NGO set up directly in response to violence against women. It was launched as a refuge for battered women in 1982 through financial assistance from a former Minister of Finance, Tan Siew Sin.

- 3) The birth of women's organisations such as AWAM (formed in 1985 and registered in 1988), Sabah Women Action Resource Group (SAWO) (formed in 1986), the Women's Development Collective (registered in 1988), Women's Crisis Centre (now Women's Centre for Change) (registered in 1986) and Sarawak Women for Women Society (registered in 1986).

Since 1985, JAG-VAW became more focussed and concerted in its efforts to champion key issues on violence against women. These are: rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment, Islamic family laws and other laws that discriminate against women.

Given the growth of our work beyond violence against women, we proposed a name change to Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG), which we began using at the end of 2005.

Today, JAG's members are:

- All Women's Action Society (AWAM)
- Sisters in Islam (SIS)
- Women's Aid Organisation (WAO)
- Women's Centre for Change (WCC) Penang
- Women's Development Collective (WDC)
- Malaysian Trade Union Congress (MTUC) - Women's Committee

13.2 JAG's 20 Years of Achievements

JAG's work is based on our belief that women's rights are an integral and inseparable part of human rights - a fundamental aspect of any democratic framework. The JAG campaign asserts that for equality and democracy to exist in Malaysia, we must be inclusive of the opinions of citizens, in particular those of women. Since the handing over of the 1986 Memorandum, we have made our mark in several key areas:

1988	Amendments of laws relating to rape.
1989	14,000 people signed a postcard signature campaign relating to the domestic violence Bill. For the first time, the Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991-1995) included a chapter on "Women and Development". The chapter mentions the review of the status of women in Malaysia.
1990	SIS published booklets on "Are Women and Men Equal Before Allah?" and "Are Muslim Men Allowed to Beat Their Wives?"
1994	Enactment of the DVA. Publication of national research on domestic violence by WAO.
1995	As a result of public protest against the slow implementation of the DVA, the Government immediately reviewed the procedures.
1996	SIS began a campaign to reform the Islamic Family Laws that discriminate against Muslim women.

- 1999 The Ministry of National Unity and Social Development took responsibility for the implementation of the Malaysian National Plan for Action.
- 2000 AWAM conducted nationwide research that gave an overview of rape in Malaysia.
- 2001 WDC and AWAM embarked on research on Sexual Harassment and the Sexual Harassment Code of Practice.
- JAG-VAW submitted the Draft Sexual Harassment Bill to the Ministry of Human Resources. 14,000 people signed the petition to advocate for a Sexual Harassment Act in Malaysia.
- Amendment to Article 8(2) of the Federal Constitution to include “gender”, hence prohibiting any form of discrimination on the basis of gender.
- 2004 JAG-VAW’s Memorandum on Equality for Malaysian Women was submitted to the Prime Minister, YAB Dato Seri Abdullah Badawi.
- JAG-VAW presented its legal reforms on the Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code to the Select Committee, which was set up to review these two Codes.

13.3 Advocacy by JAG-VAW

For the first time JAG-VAW met over a 2-day period on 25 and 26 May in Penang to evaluate its work. Each organisation was asked to review the following topics:

- Clarity of Messages by JAG-VAW
- Impact of JAG-VAW on policy makers and the public
- Structure and working method
- Working relationship between JAG-VAW members
- Evaluation of its own advocacy work in JAG-VAW

In essence we agreed that we have been very successful as a coalition. Trust and friendships have been built over the years. We have been respectful about each other’s work and have complemented the advocacy initiatives. The IWD - JAG press conference in March which documented our collective work reflects the success of our coalition.

The evaluation clarified the modes of communication and the need to share the workload.

13.3.1 Beatrice Fernandez Case

Beatrice Fernandez v. Sistem Penerbangan Malaysia & Anor became a public interest case that was rejected by the Court of Appeal and the Federal Court. Beatrice was challenging the 1988 Collective Agreement that required flight stewardesses to resign if they became pregnant. She herself had to resign when she became pregnant. However, the High Court and Court of Appeal dismissed the case and the Federal Court refused to grant leave to appeal. Beatrice’s plight came to a head when the court began assessing

costs with a possibility that Malaysia Airline System (MAS) might execute a final court order requiring Beatrice to pay MAS tens of thousands of ringgit in costs.

JAG-VAW members rallied around Beatrice to organise a press conference and went on further to submit a *Memorandum on Gender Discrimination against MAS Flight Stewardesses* to the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Human Resources on 10 June 2005. This advocacy effort was led by WDC and AWAM. WAO contributed to the writing of this Memorandum which demanded the following:

1) Remove restrictions on maternity

- a) To eliminate the restriction on the number of children a stewardess may have while working for MAS.
- b) To remove the restriction to allow stewardesses to have children only after 5 years of employment.

2) Full maternity benefits

- a) To entitle flight stewardesses to full maternity benefits, which should include full pay, medical leave and compassionate leave during the pregnancy period until confinement. The maternity conditions must be in compliance with section 37(c) of the Employment Act of 1955 (Act 265), which guarantees a woman the right to full pay and benefits for up to 5 surviving children, if not better.
- b) To offer ground employment for flight stewardesses during the last seven months of pregnancy instead of requiring that they take unpaid leave.

3) Retirement age

- a) To increase the retirement age for ALL flight stewardesses from 40 years of age to 55 years of age as currently practised for men in similar job positions.
- b) To allow stewardesses to continue to fly until retirement at 55 years of age, and to offer ground employment only for health reasons and not based solely on age.

4) Courts

- a) To ensure that the Industrial Court will not take cognisance of Collective Agreements that contain discriminatory provisions, as doing so contravenes Article 8(2) of the Federal Constitution.
- b) To ensure that the courts, including the Industrial Court, recognise and hear cases of gender discrimination so as to create an environment in which applicants feel secure in seeking justice.
- c) To ensure that all courts will waive costs in public interest cases that challenge discriminatory practices or policies which contravene Article 8(2) of the Federal Constitution.

In addition, JAG-VAW demanded that the Government act to ensure that the Courts fulfil their duty of upholding the terms of the Federal Constitution, especially Article 8(2)² on

² Article 8(2) states: "Except as expressly authorised by this Constitution there shall be no discrimination against citizens on the ground only of religion, race, descent, place of birth or gender..."

equality, and supporting public interest litigants who challenge gender discrimination in the workplace.

13.3.2 Follow-up Meeting with the Parliamentary Select Committee for Amendments to the Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code, 1 August 2005

The Parliamentary Select Committee for Amendments to the Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code (the “Parliamentary Select Committee”) invited JAG-VAW to share our preliminary recommendations and to discuss our earlier recommendations in 2004. Below is an excerpt from JAG-VAW’s presentation on 1 August.

The Joint Action Group against Violence Against Women (JAG-VAW) submitted two memoranda to the Parliamentary Select Committee for Amendments to the Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code in 2004. The first was the Memorandum on Amendments to Laws Related to Rape, which was presented in August 2004. The second memorandum included comments and recommendations on the Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill 2004 and Penal Code (Amendment) Act 2003, Law Reform (Marriage and Divorce) Act, domestic violence and marital rape legislation, and was presented to the Parliamentary Select Committee in October 2004.

The Parliamentary Select Committee’s recent indication³ that it will recommend an extension of the definition of rape to not only include object rape but to also cover various elements of aggravated rape (e.g. gang-rape, rape that occurs in the commission of a robbery, rape that is committed by an assailant who knows he is HIV-positive, rape where the victim is threatened with weapons and rape where a person in a position of authority or trust commits the crime on a subordinate), is a positive move and very much welcomed. However, the proposed recommendation for the removal of the minimum 5-year jail sentence appears to be a reversal to the pre-1989 review of the laws on rape. This is a concern, as the mandatory jail sentence of 5 years was meant to reflect the gravity and heinous nature of the crime and to counter the low sentences being meted out by the courts at that time.

JAG-VAW would like to take this opportunity to reiterate its proposals, which include other critical amendments to the laws related to rape in the Penal Code, Evidence Act 1950 and Criminal Procedure Code that are vital to ensuring a just and fair criminal system in dealing with rape cases.

13.4 Implementation of CEDAW

In 2005 WAO continued its work in writing for the CEDAW Shadow Report, a project that was coordinated by NCWO.

³ New Straits Times, “Stiffer aggravated rape penalty”, Thursday, 23 June 2005.

13.4.1 Drafting and Editing the Shadow Report

In January, work on revising the Shadow Report based on feedback from participants of the August 2004 Consultation⁴ was ongoing. Chapters that were still being revised were those on health, trafficking and prostitution, law, marriage and family and violence against women.

At a March meeting with the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (MWFCD) and JAG-VAW, we shared our plans for the Shadow Report and JAG-VAW's intent to be present at the review was also communicated to the Ministry.

The Shadow Report was completed in July 2005. By this time, it had become clear that Malaysia was scheduled to report to the CEDAW Committee at the 35th CEDAW session in 2006. Readers were identified and changes to the Shadow Report were made based on their comments.

13.4.2 Global Consultation on the Ratification and Use of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW

In August 2005, IRAW Asia Pacific organised a Global Consultation on the Ratification and Use of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW. It was attended by the organisations and writers involved in the preparation of the Shadow Report, including WAO. The Consultation provided a broad overview of CEDAW and its principles and a basic introduction to the CEDAW Optional Protocol, including its importance, benefits, potentials and procedures. The Consultation also facilitated discussions on strategies and opportunities for the ratification and use of the Optional Protocol.

13.4.3 CEDAW Session, May 2006

As Malaysia is scheduled to report to CEDAW Committee in New York in May 2006, representatives from the organisations that contributed to the Shadow Report will attend the session. The NGOs will have 5 minutes to highlight to the Committee the urgent matters that need to be addressed in the reporting country. The NGOs will also have the opportunity to lobby the Committee members to highlight certain issues in the Concluding Comments that the Committee will give to the reporting country. WAO is committed to being part of this process as we have secured funds from the British Human Rights fund to attend the CEDAW session. Ivy, Meera and Vizla will be part of the NGO group attending the May CEDAW session in 2006.

Upon return, WAO will advocate on getting the government to follow up with the Concluding Comments that the Committee will issue. WAO will be translating the Concluding Comments for distribution. The WAO website will be updated to feature information on CEDAW, the Shadow Report and updates on advocacy and the review process.

⁴ NGO Consultation to create greater awareness of CEDAW, the reporting process and to discuss and seek validation of issues raised in the draft shadow report, 21-22 August 2004.

13.4.4 Distribution and Promotion of the Shadow Report

Plans for the distribution and promotion of the Shadow Report, as part of an advocacy campaign for law and policy reforms, are being developed with the NCWO. Ideas include:

- 1) Submission of priority issues identified in each of the chapters to the respective ministries. This could be in the form of a booklet and involve meeting representatives of the ministries to discuss concerns and recommendations.
- 2) Working with the media to regularly feature selected issues, drawing information from the Shadow Report and obtaining feedback from the government and public to initiate dialogue on the issues.

13.5 Reform of the DVA

WAO took the lead on the issue of DVA reform and continued to lobby the MWFCDC to implement the proposals made in 2003 in the National Steering Committee on Violence Against Women's Report on the DVA.

WAO persisted in writing to the MWFCDC to follow up on the commitment the MWFCDC had made in 2004 to form a Committee to study and implement the proposals.

WAO raised the issue of the ministry's inaction at the IWD/JAG-VAW Press Conference held on 7 March. Another opportunity arose when JAG-VAW submitted reform proposals related to the DVA, Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code to the Parliamentary Select Committee. The Committee was receptive and requested the MWFCDC to respond to JAG-VAW's proposals.

Finally, on 6 and 7 October 2005, WAO was invited by MWFCDC to a meeting in Kajang. The MWFCDC team, led by their legal advisor Encik Razif, took an approach whereby every article of the DVA was studied and reforms were proposed. WAO pointed out that the problems with the DVA remained largely in the Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Code, regulations and protocols and that these problematic areas had been documented in a Memorandum prepared by his Ministry in 2003. However, Encik Razif did not want to revisit the Memorandum but insisted on starting from scratch using a table prepared by MWFCDC.

Following this meeting, WAO submitted a document, using the MWFCDC format, to include all the amendments that were needed in the respective legislations and regulations.

13.5.1 Meetings with the Royal Malaysia Police

The members of the Royal Malaysia Police (the "Police") are important actors in the efforts to make the DVA work for women. WAO initiated a meeting with the Deputy Inspector General of Police, Datuk Seri Musa, which took place at the Police Headquarters in Bukit Aman in April.

At the meeting, WAO presented the problems encountered by women at police stations, reform of the DVA and ideas for cooperation between WAO and the Police.

At a follow-up meeting at Bukit Aman in June with ACP Hassan bin Jagar (KPP of D9 (the Sexual Unit)), P/DSP Nor Azilah Jonit (Head of D9), ASP Choo Lily (ASP Special Investigations, D9) and Chief Inspector Nor Riza Maishah (Head of the Child Protection Unit), WAO went on to concretise the ideas for cooperation that had been presented in April.

The first idea involved a pilot project where a WAO social worker would spend one day a week at a specific police station to provide counselling services for women reporting crimes of violence against them. Social workers had identified Brickfields IPD (“Ibupejabat Polis Daerah”) for this project as a high number of cases had been referred to WAO from this station. It was also suggested that Thursday be the chosen day as many stations had “Hari Pelanggan” or Customer’s Day on Thursday, during which members of the public could approach Investigating Officers or Heads of Stations for information. Unfortunately, the police officers in Bukit Aman were not very keen on this project.

Another project that was discussed and agreed on was the distribution of posters to every police station to inform the public of the kinds of services the police can offer women when they report domestic violence incidents. The posters are being designed by the advertising company, Arc World Wide. The project is pending as we are waiting for funding.

Following the June meeting, the D9 unit was given training modules used by WAO to substantiate the materials that the Police use for gender training.

13.6 Article 11⁵

WAO continued to act as the secretariat for *Article 11*, a loose coalition of Malaysian NGOs formed in May 2004 for advocacy and to raise public awareness to uphold the fundamental rights of all Malaysians regardless of religion, race, descent, place of birth or gender. The groups came together around the issues of the Shamala case (see section 13.6.4 below) whereby her husband had converted to Islam and had also converted their two children without her knowledge.

Sisters in Islam also acts as secretariat to *Article 11*.

Article 11 comprises:

- All Women’s Action Society (AWAM)
- Bar Council Malaysia
- Catholic Lawyers Society
- Interfaith Spiritual Fellowship
- Malaysian Civil Liberties Society, Protem Committee (MCLS)
- Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism & Sikhism (MCCBCHS)
- National Human Rights Society (HAKAM)
- Pure Life Society
- Sisters In Islam (SIS)

⁵ Article 11(1) of the Federal Constitution states: “Every person has the right to profess and practice his religion and, subject to Clause (4), to propagate it.”

- Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM)
- Vivekananda Youth Movement, Seremban
- Women's Aid Organisation (WAO)
- Women's Development Collective (WDC)

In 2005 WAO took a stand with respect to 3 cases, namely the Sky Kingdom, Lina Joy and Moorthy cases.

13.6.1 The Sky Kingdom Case

On 3 August WAO issued a press release, endorsed by JAG-VAW and some members of the *Article 11* coalition, protesting against the series of actions undertaken by the Trengganu authorities and members of the public against the followers of the Sky Kingdom that culminated in the senseless demolition of the Sky Kingdom's premises on 31 July.

The arrest of Sky Kingdom followers, including women and children, was conducted with no regard to the rights of an individual to liberty and security, and to profess his or her religion and belief. The statement reiterated that freedom of religion is a fundamental right that must necessarily recognise the freedom to change one's religion or belief. If there is concern that people are losing their faith in any religion, the response cannot be persecution and violence but compassion and education.

The statement urged that, in the spirit of our democratic and pluralistic society, the government must:

- Protect the right to life, liberty and security for all Malaysians, regardless of faith and belief, however unorthodox they may be;
- Actively investigate and prosecute participants of the rampaging mob who attacked the Sky Kingdom premises on 18 July 2005 destroying personal property and left followers fearing their security and safety;
- Cease from resorting to labels of deviancy or otherwise in describing the religious practices of individuals;
- Meaningfully interpret and articulate an individual's right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, respect the personal choices that these entail and review existing policy and laws pertaining to the same;
- Cease the threat of the use of detention without trial laws for all, including followers of unorthodox beliefs;
- Consider the necessity of establishing a consultative inter-faith commission with regards to matters pertaining to the meaning, interpretation and articulation of the freedom of thought, conscience and religion; and
- Respect the diversity of Malaysian society and culture and the myriad differences this gives rise to and recognise that these differences are the fabric of Malaysian society.

An *Article 11* meeting was held on 8 August at the WAO Centre during which Haris Ibrahim, the lawyer for the Sky Kingdom followers, provided a briefing. The decision was made that groups would hold a watching brief for Kamariah Ali, one of the followers being charged for apostasy. Ramdas Tikamdas of HAKAM and the Bar Council led the watching brief team and Meera Samanther held a watching brief for the women's groups.

13.6.2 The Moorthy Case

In December, the Moorthy case took centre stage. This man who had scaled Mount Everest had apparently converted to Islam without the knowledge of his family and upon his death, Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM) officials claimed his body for a Muslim burial. The religious department went to the Syariah Court *ex parte* and obtained an order giving it the right to perform the last rites. The Syariah Court held that Moorthy was a Muslim and should be buried as such. It dismissed the widow's application to claim the body.

However, Kaliammal, his widow, sought redress in the civil courts for her right to bury her husband following Hindu rites as she claimed he lived his life as a Hindu. On 28 December, the Appellate and Special Powers division of the High Court ruled that it had no jurisdiction over the Syariah Court decision although it affected Kaliammal's rights. Moorthy was buried that day according to Muslim rites.

In protest against this decision, MCCBCHS organised a month-long vigil at the High Court in KL, in which WAO took part.

13.6.3 The Lina Joy Case

In December, Lina Joy's lawyers approached WAO and Sisters in Islam to request an affidavit for their client. Lina had converted to Christianity in 1998 and is now at the last stages of a series of court appeals with an appeal to the Federal Court.

WAO coordinated the JAG-VAW members' efforts to provide a letter of opinion. JAG-VAW members who signed this letter reiterated that the Lina Joy case "raises important matters of public interest in that its issues are intertwined with several fundamental rights of women, including the right to profess the religion of her choice, the right to marry, the ability to exercise her reproductive rights and the right to choose her country of domicile. The denial of these rights also constitutes a violation of Lina Joy's rights to equality and non-discrimination".

13.6.4 Status of the Shamala Case

Shamala and Dr. Jeyaganesh were married in accordance with Hindu rites in November 1998. When her husband converted to Islam in 2002, Shamala applied to the civil court for custody of their two children, aged two and four. In April 2003 Shamala was initially granted custody and her husband allowed access but her husband applied to the Syariah Court and obtained an *ex parte* Hadanah (custody) Order in May 2003. Then, using his visitation rights granted by the civil courts, her husband took the children away and used the Syariah court's order to keep the children. He converted the children to Islam without Shamala's knowledge or permission. In April 2004 the High Court dismissed Shamala's application to have the conversion of her children nullified, on the

grounds that it had no jurisdiction to hear her case. In July 2004 both parents were given joint custody by the High Court but actual custody, care and control was given to Shamala with a caveat that such custody will be revoked if she influences her children's present beliefs. Shamala is appealing to the Court of Appeal to nullify the children's conversions. Each parent is applying for sole custody.

WAO, SIS, AWAM and WCC have appointed Haris Ibrahim to hold a watching brief on behalf of the organisations. The Court of Appeal has fixed this matter for hearing on 17 July 2006.

13.7 Workshops, Seminars, Conferences and Trainings

Throughout the year several WAO staff had the opportunity to participate in various workshops, seminars, conferences and trainings both in Malaysia and abroad.

Conferences and Seminars Attended in 2005

No.	Title Of Conference / Seminar	Organised By	Attended By	Talk / Speech By
1	Beijing +10: Jurang Perbezaan dan Cabaran (Gaps and Challenges), at Pan Pacific Hotel, KL	MWFCD	Ivy Josiah	nil
2	National Conference on Violence and Health in Countries of the Asia Pacific Region, in Putrajaya	MWFCD	Tashia Peterson	nil
3	National Conference Towards the Formation of An Interfaith Commission, at Equatorial Hotel, Bangi	Steering Committee of the Initiative Towards the Formation of An Interfaith Commission	Jana Rumminger	nil
4	Study Workshop & Asia Pacific NGO Consultation : "Holding the State Accountable for VAW by Non-State Actors", in Bangkok, Thailand	Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)	Ivy Josiah	Facilitator
5	UNHCR Roundtable Meeting on Migration , KL	UNHCR	Ivy Josiah	nil
6	The Foundation for Nation Building Conference, at Sunway Pyramid Convention Centre	Federation of Family Planning Associations	Jessie Ang	nil
7	Globalisation & Feminisation of Migration, in Korea	Women Migrants Human Rights Centre	Vizla Kumaresan	Presentation by Vizla
8	Conference on International Criminal Courts , KL	Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)	Vizla Kumaresan	nil

No.	Title Of Conference / Seminar	Organised By	Attended By	Talk / Speech By
9	Conference to Establish Collaboration between Organisation from Different Countries Working with Trafficking Issues, Bangkok, Thailand	Acting for Women in Distressing Situations (AFESIP) Thailand	Wong Su Zane	Nil
10	Regional Thematic Meeting on Violence Against Women, Bangladesh	IWRAW Asia Pacific	Ivy Josiah, Vizla Kumaresan	Presentation by Ivy and Vizla
11	Global Consultation on OP-CEDAW, KL	IWRAW Asia Pacific	Ivy Josiah	nil
12	Seminar on Rights to Expedious and Fair Trial, KL	SUHAKAM	Vizla Kumaresan, Jana Rumminger	nil
13	National Seminar on Urban Poor & Poverty Alleviation: Towards the Ninth Malaysia Plan, KL	Asian Strategic and Leadership Institute (ASLI)	Ivy Josiah, Shoba Aiyar	Presentation by Ivy
14	Seminar on Compensating Malaysian Women for Their Multiple Roles in Society, KL	UN Development Programme (UNDP)	Vizla Kumaresan	nil
15	National Seminar on Dissemination of ICPD, at Summit Hotel, Subang Jaya	Federation of Family Planning Associations	Vizla Kumaresan	nil
16	Meeting on a Human Rights Perspective of MDGs and Beyond, SUHAKAM Office, KL	SUHAKAM and UNDP	Ivy Josiah	nil

Trainings Attended in 2005

No.	Title of Training	Organised By	Attended By	Trainer(s)
1	Gender, Good Governance and Leadership Training in Pearl International Hotel	WDC	Vizla Kumaresan	From WDC
2	Pilot Training Workshop in Inquests Into Custodial Deaths	Bar Council Human Rights Committee	Ivy Josiah	From Bar Council and Sri Lanka
3	Family Law - Para Legal Training	WAO	Social workers, Thillai Mohandas	Parames
4	Training on the Child Act	WAO	Social workers, Vizla Kumaresan	Vijayakumari from Welfare Department

14.0 WAO WEBSITE (www.wao.org.my)

WAO's website, launched in December 2000, continued to be updated approximately once a month. The materials available on the website includes press statements, memoranda, letters to the editor, articles reproduced from WAO's Talking Points column

in the Sunday Mail, and information about public education campaigns and activities and fundraising events. Older materials are archived on the website.

The website has been a useful resource for students, funders, journalists, new volunteers, researchers and the general public who want to know more about WAO's work and services, the status of women in the country and current issues related to women's rights.

14.1 Hosting Details

Web hosting company: Integricity.com (formerly known as Nerraw.net)
Domain hosting company: MYINC Sdn. Bhd.

In June 2005, Integricity.com decided to host WAO's website without charge, in support of our work. It also increased the amount of hosting space for the website from 100MB to 500MB.

14.2 Sections within the Website

1) Home/Index (Main page)

- Dynamic page
- Summaries of articles updates, headers and small 100x100 pixel graphics

2) About Us

- Static page
- Basic information about WAO (History, Mission & Vision, Objectives)

3) Research & Advocacy

- Dynamic page (as and when there are updates in this area)
- Findings from WAO's research & advocacy work on the Domestic Violence Act, the abuse of foreign domestic workers and CEDAW
- In 2003, the Single Mother's Needs Assessment Survey findings were added to this section

4) Violence Against Women

- Static page
- Information on violence against women: domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, child sexual abuse, in both Malay and English

5) Services

- Static page
- Information on WAO's services: telephone and face-to-face counselling, Refuge services and the CCC

- In 2003 information about WAO's new service, the Sexual Assault Helpline, was added. The number of the Sexual Assault Helpline is also on the website's main page.

6) News

- Dynamic page
- First news item on Index/Home page
- Links to other new articles, announcements, press statements etc.
- WAO's fortnightly Talking Points column in the Sunday Mail is reprinted in this section

7) Links

- Dynamic page
- Links to other organisations, websites and online communities on women's issues

8) Support us

- Dynamic page (as and when the funding details change)
- How WAO is funded, who our funders are and how users can help support WAO

9) Archive

- Due to feedback about the difficulty in finding the archive page on the website to access previous news and information, a link to this section has been set on the main page

14.3 Website Traffic

Counter: Advanced Web Statistics 6.4 (build 1.814); Awstats (from WAO's hosting service administration panel)

14.3.1 Number of Visitors and Hits

The total number of unique visitors to the website in 2005 was 77478, with a total number of hits for the year at almost 1 million. The highest amount of traffic that the website received last year was in the month of March. The table below provides a breakdown of the numbers of visits and hits each month.

A "unique visitor" is a person who visits the website more than once within a specific period of time. "Hits", on the other hand, refers to the number of times an item is retrieved from a server from a website. The number of visitors is a more accurate indicator of web traffic. Visits from robots or spiders such as Googlebot are not included in the statistics. As such, the numbers here represent fairly accurately the actual number of people who have visited the website.

The average number of unique visitors per month increased by 731, from 5726 in 2004 to 6457 in 2005. The number of hits per month also increased from an average of almost 70 thousand hits in 2004 to more than 80 thousand in 2005.

Number of Visitors, Visits and Hits

Month	Unique Visitors	Visits	Hits
Jan 2005	6008	8265	77003
Feb 2005	6119	8456	81320
Mar 2005	7633	10251	101348
Apr 2005	6517	8676	82187
May 2005	7337	10491	80636
Jun 2005	5933	8057	69906
Jul 2005	4789	7046	75562
Aug 2005	5332	8306	86525
Sep 2005	6739	9495	97879
Oct 2005	7492	10263	90788
Nov 2005	7246	9498	73956
Dec 2005	6333	8096	64947
Total	77478	106900	982057

14.3.2 Geographical Location of Visitors

The majority of visitors to the website last year were from the United States, Australia and Malaysia. This is tracked through the internet protocol (IP) address of the visitors who access the site. An IP address is the address that is assigned to each computer that is on a network, such as the internet, and allows the tracking of the visitors' geographical locations. The geographical location for 10132 hits is unknown as those visitors' IP addresses were unavailable.

It is interesting to note that the largest number of visitors in 2004 were from Malaysia whereas this location only ranked third in 2005.

Countries (top 25)	Pages	Hits
United States	79048	290980
Australia	71061	331940
Malaysia	39978	179395
European Union	4821	18153
Sweden	4186	5653
Great Britain	4012	18943

Countries (top 25)	Pages	Hits
Unknown	3753	10132
Canada	3619	16478
Singapore	3496	15038
China	2847	11513
Netherlands	2569	8949
Germany	1796	4940
Indonesia	1792	8228
Japan	1728	4355
Macau	1625	1673
Hong Kong	1354	5225
Spain	1165	2972
South Africa	892	2610
India	810	3865
Mexico	743	1436
Thailand	706	1931
United Arab Emirates	693	2184
Norway	537	1943
France	522	2831
South Korea	512	1429
Others	6497	29261

14.4 Articles Posted on the Website in 2005

DATE POSTED	ITEM
24-Dec-2005	Joint Press Statement: JAG Calls for New Muslim Family Law & Public Hearings
30-Nov-2005	16 Days of Activism on Gender Violence
30-Nov-2005	Talking Points: Pop Quiz on the F-Word
30-Nov-2005	Talking Points: Safe At Home
14-Oct-2005	Publication: "Why Reform the Domestic Violence Act (DVA) 1994?"
14-Oct-2005	Event: Food from the Heart
14-Oct-2005	Event: Racing with a Difference
15-Sept-2005	Letter: Reform the Domestic Violence Act
15-Sept-2005	Talking Points: Another Look at Lipstick, Blusher & Paint
15-Aug-2005	Letter: Reform the Royal Malaysia Police to Stop Abuse of Power
15-Aug-2005	Event: Merdeka Millenium Endurance Race - Call for Pledges
15-Aug-2005	Statement: Polygamy & Violence

DATE POSTED	ITEM
15-Aug-2005	Joint Letter: Freedom of Religion & the Sky Kingdom Followers
15-Aug-2005	Talking Points - What's Wrong with Pornography?
28-June-2005	Event: Fundraising Drive through Art on Pewter Tankards
28-June-2005	Talking Points - Our Own Enemy
13-June-2005	JAG-VAW Memorandum: Gender Equality for Female Flight Stewardesses
13-June-2005	Event: Climbing Mount Kinabalu to End VAW
13-June-2005	Talking Points - Political Correct-ion
25-May-2005	Press Statement: Royal Commission's Report on Police
25-May-2005	Project: Creative Changers @ WAO
25-May-2005	Talking Points - Gendering Cyber Space
30-Apr-2005	Letter to the Editor - Malaysians Against Moral Policing
31-Mar-2005	Joint Press Statement - Malaysians Against Moral Policing
31-Mar-2005	Resources - Malaysians Against Moral Policing
31-Mar-2005	Joint Press Statement - Employment Discrimination Case against MAS
31-Mar-2005	Talking Points - 10 Years After Beijing
31-Mar-2005	Opinion - Amnesty for Whom?
25-Jan-2005	Joint Press Statement - Tsunami Disaster - Gendered Aid is also Important
25-Jan-2005	Joint Press Statement - JAWI Raid
25-Jan-2005	Talking Points - 'Kay Poh' Boys & Tell-tale Girls
25-Jan-2005	Talking Points - Sobering New Year

14.5 Other Websites

Below are some of the websites that provide a link to WAO's website or list WAO as a useful resource:

- <http://www.charitymalaysia.org/women.htm> - Charity Malaysia
- http://www.sigj.org/Resource/vaw_org.htm - Sisterhood Is Global Institute
- <http://www.unifem-eseasia.org/VAWCamp/VAWdirectory.htm> - UNIFEM East and South East Asia, Asia Pacific Campaign on Elimination of Violence Against Women
- <http://www.seri.com.my/spi/orglist.htm> - The Sustainable Penang Initiative - Directory of Environmental & Social Groups in Penang and Malaysia
- <http://www.founder.net.my/ngo.htm> - Foundernet
- <http://www.hakam.org/links.htm> - National Human Rights Society (HAKAM)
- <http://www.malaysia.net/aliran/ngos.html> - ALIRAN, list of NGOs
- <http://www.mom4mom.com> - Mom4mom.com, an online Community website for single mothers
- <http://www.arrow.org.my/docs/frame3.html> - ARROW
- http://www.3r.com.my/link_content.html - 3R
- http://www.muslimtents.com/sistersinislam/m_mal_links.htm - Sisters In Islam
- <http://www.newwomen.net/> - Newwomen Portal(NCWO)
- <http://www.big.or.jp/~aochan/malaysiasite/syoukaisita.html> - Big.org (Japanese site)
- <http://www.sabah.org.my/bm/ngo/index.html> - Sabah

- <http://www.mycen.com.my/central3.html> - TV Smith's Malaysia Central
- <http://www.aviva.org/asiagrop.htm> - Asian Groups
- http://dmoz.org/Society/People/Women/Issues/Domestic_Violence/ - Dmoz Open Directory Project
- <http://center.com.my/org.html> - Malaysia Centre
- http://www.mesra.net/links/Government/Non_Government_Organisation_NGO/ - Mesra.net, Malaysian Directories & Information
- <http://www.isiswomen.org/womenet/index.html> - Isis International, Manila
- <http://www.wluml.org/english/linkseng.htm> - Women Living Under Muslim Laws
- <http://www.teennet.com.my/gaya.html> - Teen net
- <http://www.onlinewomeninpolitics.org/malaysia/malaydoc.htm> - Online Women in Politics
- <http://ashagill.com/links.php> - Asha Gill's personal website
- <http://www.sinchew-i.com/info/index.phtml> - Sin Chew newspaper's website

14.6 Website Development

In May we decided that the website needed to be revamped to give it a new look. Our webmaster Jac sm Kee was assigned to develop a Content Management System (CMS). The first step was to elicit feedback from staff and volunteers. The response through questionnaires was good as staff shared their expectations and the kinds of changes that could be made.

Among the changes suggested by the staff were:

- Publicise on-going fundraising activities
- Make the website more user friendly
- Enable the public to donate online
- Enable the public to apply online to volunteer
- Enable the public to apply online to become members

Thillai, our Administrative Assistant, was identified as a second person who could manage the website and thus act as Jac's backup. Both Jac and Thillai attended a web management training conducted by CMS Mambo in August.

The Administrative Assistant acts as the liaison person between the webmaster and staff, and is responsible for the weekly collection and transmission of materials for uploading.

15.0 PUBLIC EDUCATION

WAO received many invitations to conduct talks, set up information booths and organise special events to raise awareness on the issue of violence against women. The staff, especially the social workers, assisted in conducting the talks and media interviews in all languages and covering a range of issues.

Interns and volunteers also helped by setting up and staffing booths during the special events.

15.1 Talks and Training Sessions

WAO gave 16 talks and conducted 17 trainings in 2005, which included talks for the corporate sector and at clubs, colleges, seminars and conferences. The training sessions were for volunteers, staff, college students and the police.

15.2 Television, Radio, Press

We had 15 television interviews with, for example, NTV7, TV3, RTM and ASTRO. We were aired over the radio 6 times, on Radio 4, Radio 6, THR, Ifm and 98.8.

WAO was featured approximately 16 times in the newspapers (English, Bahasa Malaysia and Chinese dailies). There were 3 magazine interviews, namely in Marie Claire, Glam and Cita Bella.

16.0 SPECIAL EVENTS

16.1 International Women's Day (8 March)

2 events were held to commemorate IWD.

16.1.1 JAG-VAW Press Conference and Celebration

IWD 2005 marked the 20th anniversary of JAG-VAW as the group was established in 1985 when women's groups organised a workshop cum exhibition on VAW to commemorate IWD 1985. It was THE day that violence against women was named and made prominent as a national concern.

On 7 March, JAG-VAW held a press conference to highlight the herstory of law reform led by JAG-VAW and to call for the government to act on numerous memoranda. The event was held at AWAM's premises and we ended the press conference with a lunch celebrating our collaboration.

16.1.2 Futsal Competition Organised with 3R

For the fourth year running, WAO worked with 3R (3R - Respect, Relax, Respond is a television programme specially for women) to celebrate International Women's Day. This year's event centred around a Futsal competition which saw teams from JAG-VAW's member groups participating in a one-day Futsal competition at the Sports Planet at Sunway Pyramid on 16 March. The NGO teams were eliminated from the competition in the first round!

We set up public education booths and interacted with young women who came to watch the competition or cheer the teams. The prize-giving ceremony had Dina from the Malaysian Idol television programme performing to an appreciative crowd.

16.2 Hari Wanita, 25 August: Nokia & The Body Shop's "Donate A Phone, Protect A Life" Campaign

2005 marked the eleventh year that WAO has worked with The Body Shop to commemorate Hari Wanita by running the annual "Stop VAW" campaign. This year, through The Body Shop's efforts, Nokia Malaysia came on board to raise awareness on violence against women and to raise funds for WAO's services.

"Donate a phone, protect a life" was an initiative whereby the public was encouraged to donate their old handphones. In keeping with The Body Shop's business ethic of cultivating a culture of recycling, the public was encouraged to also bring in their old batteries and phone chargers. Nokia donated RM 10 to WAO for each phone that was collected, and it recycled all the old phones and accessories.

Collection bins were set up in 43 stores. In September, the total number of phones was counted and Nokia contributed RM 20,000 to WAO.

The Body Shop also raised funds, as it has done for WAO for the past ten years, by encouraging their customers to purchase the "Stop Violence in the Home Mint Lip Care Stick" at RM 17.90. RM 10 from each sale of this product was given to WAO. This campaign was launched on 23 August at Mega Mall with the participation of guest celebrity Asha Gill who spoke about the need for everyone to be involved in combating violence against women.

WAO arranged for two survivors to speak about their experiences in freeing themselves from their violent partners. By retelling their stories, we hoped that others too would come forward to seek help and advice.

The WAO-The Body Shop's "Stop VAW" 2005 brochures focused on ways to keep safe, including the use of the handphone as an emergency line.

16.3 La Senza & Marie Claire's "End Violence Against Women" Campaign

For the second year running, FJ Benjamin worked with WAO to highlight VAW through a magazine feature. A centrespread photo shoot was done featuring prominent local celebrities, members of the media as well as NGO activists who were interviewed on their perspectives on violence against women. Glam, Marie Claire and Citta Bella each featured the six-page spread.

La Senza came up with an innovative idea of custom-made pink coloured band-aids, sold in a set of 3 for RM 5 per pack at their stores nationwide. The words on the band-aids are "shelter, hope, recovery, healing, support".

16.4 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence (25 November-10 December)

Building on the success in 2004 of moving out of the Klang Valley to Johor, Trengganu and Penang, WAO and its "16 Days" partners (Malaysian AIDS Council, SIS and Amnesty International) decided to extend this public education campaign to Ipoh and Seremban. The campaign was further supported by KataGender, a loose coalition of artists and activists using art as a tool to create an alternative discourse on the issues of gender and sexuality.

The launch at Berjaya Times Square was a success with Dina (from the Malaysian Idol television programme) and Norrye who rendered a few songs from their albums to show their support for the campaign. WAO received good press coverage during the event.

Our theme of *“Get the knowledge, Get the power, Keep the promise”* sought:

- To urge the government to keep its promise to deliver law and policy reform;
- To urge women to keep the promise to themselves to keep safe and reject violent men in their lives; and
- To urge men not to use violence to control women.

The usual activities of sandwich boards, street theatre, leaflet distribution and discussions were carried out at Berjaya Times Square and Subang Parade in the Klang Valley, Jaya Jusco in Seremban and Kinta City Mall in Ipoh.

17.0 FUNDRAISING

17.1 Donation of a Van

On 3 June, a 12-seater van was donated to WAO by The Rotary Club of Pantai Valley (Malaysia) and The Rotary Club of Tyan Chung, Taiwan. Michael Foong, the President of The Rotary Club of Pantai Valley, presented the keys to a Toyota High Ace van with colourful flowers painted on the doors. DG Dato' Perumal District Governor 3300 was present to officially hand over the keys to WAO.

17.2 Mt. Kinabalu Climb – “For Women Who Climb Mountains Everyday”

A 9-member team climbed Mt. Kinabalu on 3 August with the aim of raising public awareness of violence against women while raising funds for WAO.

The climb was initiated by Stephanie Robinson and Ng Yan Mei, 2 students from Benenden School in England. The idea was mooted when Stephanie and Yan Mei won the Venture Challenge Award awarded by the Benenden School Parents Association (BSPA) in England. With the sponsorship money, they decided to work on bringing awareness of violence against women and decided upon WAO as the beneficiary of their project. Their project was also highlighted via local TV on TV2's "Hello on Two" programme and in the newspapers in Kota Kinabalu.

It was sheer coincidence that Yan Mei's grandfather, Tun Tan Siew Sin was the patron of WAO and a key person in laying the foundation for the organisation. Joined by their friend Natasha Tan and 6 other close friends, the team of 9 scaled all 4095.2 metres of Mt. Kinabalu and reached the summit on the morning of 4 August.

With support from various other individuals, corporations and private concerns, they raised a total of RM 15,000 from the climb.

17.3 Merdeka Millennium Endurance Race (MMER)

The MMER was held from 26-27 August at the Sepang International Circuit. Among the teams competing were G-1 Symphony and X1-R Redbull, both of which had pledged to raise funds for WAO as their beneficiary charity. Individuals and companies were asked to make pledges to support the number of track runs made by the teams.

The G1-Symphony team unveiled their 2 race cars for the MMER, a brand new Porsche GT3 and a Nissan Skyline R34 GT-R special II Nurburgring, one of only 1000 such cars made. The X-1R Redbull team was special as it was an all-women team comprising Phillipa Yong, Deana Yusoff and Kazumi Mikami.

Total proceeds from this charity event amounted to RM 21,000, with the bulk of it stemming from Nationwide Express Sdn. Bhd. and Symphony House Sdn. Bhd.

17.4 Norrye's Album, "Puteri Indera Kayangan"

Norrye's first album, "*Puteri Indera Kayangan*", was launched on 24 August. The 19-year old singer from Kedah donated part of the proceeds from the sale of her album to WAO. The album is a mixture of rock, hip hop and fusions of gamelan music as Norrye is trained in classical Malay dance.

17.5 Art for Charity by Royal Selangor Pewter

To mark its 120th anniversary, Royal Selangor Pewter commissioned 3 of Malaysia's best-loved artists, Harris Ribut, Yusof Gajah, and Sandra Knuyt, to create works of art on its classic and iconic tankards. Harris Ribut is best known for capturing Malaysian life with joy and movement expressed in his paintings of voluptuous women, whereas Yusof Gajah is widely known for his quirky and colourful elephant themed paintings. Sandra Knuyt is a Flemish pop artist noted for her works of intense colour and bold forms of women's faces in different moods.

The artists completed 30 tankards among them, each hallmarked with a distinctive style and character. The pieces were unveiled in the Royal Selangor Pewter Gallery on 22 June. The completed tankards were placed for viewing and purchase by the public at the Royal Selangor Visitor's Centre as well as in Royal Selangor stores in Suria KLCC, Mid Valley Megamall, 1 Utama, Lot 10, Bangsar Shopping Centre, Kuala Lumpur International Airport, Plaza Gurney and on Lebu Light in Penang.

The tankards were given to WAO to sell to raise funds for its work

17.6 Community Support

During 2005, WAO received donations, both in cash and in kind, from various organisations, corporations and individuals.

WAO thanks the Welfare Department for its annual grant and also extends special thanks to the British Human Rights Fund for its grant to conduct our work on CEDAW.

In addition, WAO would like to thank the volunteers who have helped at our fundraising events and the anonymous donors who have donated spontaneously and generously throughout the years.

We look forward to their continued support in the future and we apologise for any inadvertent omissions in the following list of donors who have been donating to WAO on a regular basis for at least the past five years.

- 1) Body Shop
- 2) Skrine & Co.
- 3) Pan Malaysian Pools
- 4) Emerald Club
- 5) Linear Channel
- 6) Gardenia Bakeries KL Sdn. Bhd.
- 7) Federal Flour Mills Bhd.
- 8) Golden Donuts Sdn. Bhd.
- 9) Exxon Mobil
- 10) Metafour CBSM
- 11) Low, Sunita & Osaman
- 12) Another Chance Charity Shop
- 13) Japan Club
- 14) Beh Pang Keat
- 15) DDM Siripala
- 16) Brian Lariche and friends
- 17) Malaysian Assurance Alliance Bhd.
- 18) OCBC
- 19) HSBC
- 20) Nageswaran Kanagasabai
- 21) Hugh Fernandez Roberts
- 22) La Senza and FJ Benjamin
- 23) Burger King
- 24) Austrian German Swiss Charity Christmas Bazaar

18.0 WAO EVALUATION

This external evaluation began in June 2005. WAO's EXCO appointed Angela Kuga Thas to conduct the evaluation. The Evaluation Objectives were:

- 1) What WAO has achieved in relation to WAO's vision, mission and objectives
- 2) WAO's work on VAW and in particular domestic violence on the national agenda
- 3) WAO's organizational structure, including governance, accountability, sustainability and expansion into the three centres
- 4) WAO's services and programmes i.e. shelter, telephone counselling services, public education and law and policy reform

In conducting the evaluation, it was found that all four evaluation objectives are very closely inter-related, and hence, a number of issues and areas were found to overlap.

The first findings were completed by September. On 10 and 11 September, WAO staff, volunteers and members of the EXCO spent 2 days at a retreat to reflect on the findings and whether the recommendations can be put into place. A further meeting with EXCO members was held on 28 December to discuss the Evaluation Report and the retreat's recommendations and actions.

Below are excerpts from the final Evaluation Report:

The evaluation aimed to cull perceptions, no matter how unique and different they were from the rest, with the view that it could help WAO improve on its overall management and programme. This evaluation is not designed to look for consensus or agreement on "what are the issues" etc., but to unearth what may be hidden in part or in full.

The aim of this internal evaluation is not to provide a definitive assessment or pronounce an authoritative judgment, but rather to stimulate reflection, which should feed into WAO's strategic planning. It does not argue for specific solutions to any particular challenge but seeks to help stakeholders identify what needs to be brought to the table during the organisation's strategic planning process. This is the framework and spirit in which the evaluation was conducted and in which this report should be read. This report does not take into account the developments that have taken place within WAO since the completion of the evaluation.

INTERVIEWS

A total of 61 interviews were conducted with a broad range of stakeholders identified with the assistance of WAO. Interviews were either conducted face-to-face and in circumstances when this was not possible, through the telephone.

Internal - includes staff, contract staff, Executive Committee members, interns, residents, volunteers and members and those who formerly held any of these positions. Interviews conducted were 40 in total, out of which nine were conducted through the telephone.

External - consists of respondents from government, legal firms, private sector, media and NGOs.

Government - includes the police, hospital personnel and the Attorney-General's Chambers. Total number of people interviewed three, out of which two were conducted through the telephone. Efforts to obtain an interview with officials from the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development or from the Department of Women's Development were not fruitful.

Private Sector - conducted one interview through the telephone. Efforts to conduct at least one other interview with another company did not materialize as the potential respondent was usually in meetings and could not be reached. Efforts to get this respondent to return calls too proved unfruitful.

Legal Firm - conducted two interviews in total.

Media - conducted five interviews in total, four of which were through the telephone.

Activist/NGO - ten interviews were conducted, out of which five were through the telephone.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to prepare for the conduct of the in-depth interviews, and to supplement information obtained through the in-depth interviews, a literature review was conducted of all existing annual reports and annual reviews⁶ of WAO, as well as its draft policies, guidelines and procedures. In addition, also reviewed were the “Assessment of WAO’s Shelter Programme” and “The Empowerment of Women with Specific Reference to a Programme for Battered Women” by Shanthi Dairiam, “WAO’s Roots” by Rashidah Abdullah, and the “Assessment of Centre Activities” by Nalini Tharumalingam. Newspaper clippings on WAO and statements to the Press from the years 1986 to 2005 were also perused. Other sources of information included WAO’s staff retreat file⁷ and documents, and its file on Diary of Events, 2001–2005.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation Objective 1: What WAO has achieved in relation to WAO’s vision, mission and objectives.

- **Revisit the vision, mission and objectives of WAO** and carefully review their articulation in order to ensure that WAO actually has the right expertise and adequate resources in doing what it says it sets out to do. WAO may do best in focusing its efforts to eliminating domestic violence, but recognize that in order to do so, work also needs to be done to address gender inequality, unequal power dynamics and women’s subordination. Prioritising the eradication of domestic violence above and before the eradication of discrimination and VAW would give a different slant to the vision, mission and objectives of WAO, and may make achieving these more manageable, though not without its challenges since the private sphere has been proven to be one of the most contentious in terms of perpetuating gender inequality, unequal power dynamics and the inequitable distribution of household resources.
- **Develop a medium-term strategic plan.** A medium-term strategic plan will help ensure that all of WAO’s programme areas are working in tandem with each other—social services, advocacy and external liaison. The fact that WAO has evolved into a spokes organization on women’s rights and issues of discrimination is indeed laudable, and it is a much recognized leading role. However, this can sometimes lead the organization into entering different areas of work, while at the same time raising expectations of those

⁶ It was in 1989 that a decision was made to rename the annual reports of WAO as annual reviews.

⁷ The file contained mainly feedback forms on the retreat itself, rather than on content of the discussions. Having access to the full staff retreat reports would have probably provided more comprehensive information, particularly on the extent of strategic planning within WAO.

who do not understand how WAO works. To expand social services to cover all women if they are in need of services is good if resources allow it. The implications of the expanded social services for advocacy efforts, however, will need to be examined more closely.

- **Develop a strategic communication plan.** Communication is the steering wheel of any organization. Without a clear strategic communication plan, an organization could end up lost in trying to achieve its vision and mission. A strategic communication plan would ensure that WAO does not unconsciously lose precious spaces for awareness-raising and advocacy.
- **Recapture WAO's history and passion.** As people come and go, how WAO started, the struggles it faced, the factors that triggered women's passion and commitment which can only be appreciated through stories and personal accounts are now lost. While there is definitely a wide recognition that volunteers have not been as active as they used to be, one internal respondent pointed out at the same time that this may strongly be linked to the lack of attention paid in identifying the evolving role of volunteers (internal respondent, 10 August 2005). Understanding what motivates these people to become volunteers (or members, for that matter) is critical if WAO is going to be able to identify more specific roles for volunteers to play. A lot of this motivation can still be rooted to the "need to do charity" with "a worthwhile organization", and may explain why commitment is not as substantive in relation to issues. Key question would be, "Do people feel a passion for the issue?" or "Do they join because they think that they've reached a stage in life (usually after retirement) that it's time for them to help?" Even if the motivation is the latter, a suitable programme can still be designed to help them internalize the principles and values that WAO professes to uphold.
- **Consider initiating a buddy system for volunteers,** where older volunteers and ex-volunteers become buddies for new volunteers. Even if this programme cannot be initiated face-to-face with all of the pioneer and longer-term volunteers, a programme can still be developed utilizing the insights and stories of these volunteers.
- **Strategically Recruit Male Members.** Men's involvement should not be limited to a professional role—as lawyers, police, technical assistance, etc. Recruiting more male members could, however, render WAO as no longer a women's organization. To what extent is WAO's characteristic and identity as a women's organization linked to its membership base and/or its clientele, may be a question that WAO has to seriously consider before aggressively recruiting male members. One way of avoiding this is that men could become affiliated members rather than have full membership, but which could lead to perceptions of gender inequality if this step is not explained from the perspective of a positive special measure though outwardly may seem discriminatory. There are also issues of security around the location of the WAO Refuge and child care centre.

Evaluation Objective 2: WAO's work on violence against women (VAW) and in particular domestic violence on the national agenda.

- **Extend outreach.** WAO needs to ensure that all women know about the DVA and how they can use it when necessary. Despite over 20 years of work since its establishment, not many women know of WAO. If possible, other NGOs that work with women need to also be educated around the mechanics of the DVA so that the constituencies they work with can also be well-informed. This can help extend WAO's outreach further at the national level. Putting domestic violence or VAW on the national agenda, means bringing the consciousness, awareness and interrogative capacity of WAO's two constituencies - women and children clients, and members - on issues surrounding VAW, subordination, gender inequality etc. up to a higher level as well.
- **Focus on optimizing strengths of WAO and pooling energies and resources.** WAO, today, is in a position of better being able to seek opportunities for collaboration, whether with other NGOs, private sector or the government. The organization needs to strategically focus on how energies and resources can be pulled towards common goals. The [Executive Directors'] network has been hailed as a good idea and has a great potential to lead to good things. However, other synergies need to be sought that can improve capacities in better serving the needs and rights of women. This might include finding a way of centralizing counselling calls among NGOs who provide such services and who share the same principles and values. It could mean extending what WAO does best by becoming a trainer-of-trainers and encouraging the setup of nationwide shelters that may or may not be run by WAO directly, but which would operate on the same feminist values and principles of human rights.

Evaluation Objective 3: WAO's organizational structure including governance, accountability, sustainability and expansion into the three centres.

- **Consider the proposed new organizational chart of WAO in Figure 2** which not only provides clear lines of accountability and responsibility, from who is supervised to who is supervising, but also clearly depicts areas of decision-making that go hand-in-hand with the areas of responsibility. The structure suggested indicates potential growth for each staff—within their current position (because of potential cross-collaboration work) and upward and beyond. If possible, areas of decision-making should be clearly outlined within each staff's job descriptions to further facilitate clarity of how and when decisions can be made without needing to consult the Executive Director or members of EXCO. Delegation not only of responsibility but decision-making needs to be implemented for staff positions to function optimally.
- **Organise a special retreat for staff, interns and volunteers that focuses on team building and communication.** There is a need for WAO to consider a different kind of retreat for staff, interns, volunteers and possibly even its wider membership, one that gives them a clean break

from organizational matters, but brings everyone together as a group of people who are interrelated.

- **Consider instituting a proper orientation programme for both new and longer-term serving staff**, one that helps them understand each other's roles better such as the proposed "shadowing orientation programme" by one internal respondent. Such an orientation should also aim to improve the knowledge base and use of WAO's organizational documents and mechanisms.
- **Maintain a minimum reserve of operational costs for at least six months**, and **consider exploring options in investing** these funds the way the Malaysian AIDS Council does.
- **Determine the role of WAO's reserves** to include compensation to staff if WAO were forced to close operations.
- **Consider hidden costs.** This includes simpler decisions around upgrading of equipment and ensuring that staff have access to the equipment they need in order to be more time-efficient and therefore, more effective. If time lags occur because of frequent communication problems or computers problems, this adds to the hidden costs of WAO and can impact the positive energy levels within WAO.

Evaluation Objective 4: WAO's services and programmes i.e. shelter, telephone counselling services, public education and law and policy reform.

- This recommendation is closely related to the need to **revisit the vision, mission and objectives of WAO** as articulated under Evaluation Objective 1 above. The broadened vision and mission statements of WAO could have contributed to the growing lack of clarity of what WAO does. Internally, many have not recognized that the mere set up of WAO in itself was a strong advocacy position at the time, and a number cling to the historical but very literal roots of WAO as "a shelter for women and children". Hence, the tendency to emphasise social services as the backbone (and core work) of WAO. Advocacy work that was initiated by volunteers on the DVA is not perceived as the "core business" of WAO, yet volunteers at the time were very much and still are considered part of WAO. The tendency to see social services as the backbone of WAO could also have been contributed by the fact that WAO's broadened vision and mission are currently largely served by the expansion of WAO's social services (e.g. the inclusion of foreign migrant women workers). Other areas of WAO's broader programme and advocacy in particular, have not been specifically realigned.
- **Increase spaces for developing intellectualism within WAO**, among members and staff, between staff working on advocacy with those working on social services.

- **Ascertain personality profiles of all staff and how they learn.** As with most NGOs and other types of agencies, WAO values and appreciates the committed and hardworking staff it has. This is understandable as good staff are usually hard to come by when work is grounded in women's rights and social justice issues. Understanding staff at a deeper level could help WAO reduce the potential for internal work-related conflicts, but more importantly, help to tailor opportunities that would increase their knowledge and skills base. Knowing the learning styles of individuals can be critical as these are often parroted in how they implement their work. Throwing this staff into the "deep end within WAO" may not be terribly effective and could create additional stress for the individual as well as cost the organization because it lengthens the learning curve. This however does not mean that jobs should be designed to fit staff personalities.
- **Enable possibilities of team-building that would work within WAO as and when the need arises.** This is one of the reasons why a clear organizational structure for WAO is important. Based on the proposed Figure 2 WAO could have teams within the "core programme areas" of advocacy and social services, advocacy and projects, advocacy and communications or all four—advocacy, projects, communication and social services. With a clearer organizational structure, even new staff are able to see whose knowledge and skills they can tap other than the managers or Executive Director. When the advocacy programme is not able to get inputs from others and feedback to others as well, the programme becomes increasingly non-aligned and not as well-paced vis-à-vis the others. This is where an overall three to five-year strategic plan for WAO's programme that clearly integrates what each programme area is required to do in order to achieve identified objectives can be of much help—WAO needs this blueprint or it runs the risk too of operating and using hard-to-come-by resources at a non-optimal level.
- **Institutionalise standards for social work.** This can be done by ensuring that the post of Deputy Executive Director does not solely focus on administrative and operational issues, but also has a specific portfolio. As the Executive Director may have the specific portfolio of advocacy, the Deputy Executive Director could have the specific portfolio of social work. This would then be a critical qualification requirement for the position of Deputy Executive Director. This will ensure that social workers' needs for supervision, mentoring and debriefing are constantly framed within a gender equality and human rights framework. While there might be a strong inclination to facilitate supervision from outside, it renders WAO dependent on that expertise from outside and leaves little room for developing that capacity and institutionalizing appropriate techniques to ensure quality of standards for WAO's social services.
- **Consider separating the counselling services from social work.** This would probably be a very helpful measure as it would also allow room for WAO to collaborate with other NGOs in the area of counselling and optimize the use of available resources even further. The clear separation of counselling from social work will also allow room for improvement of these services to the women clients, allowing social workers in specific

strengths to bring in higher quality standards where they can. Separating counselling from social work could also provide space for social workers to run additional programmes in collaboration with other NGOs for the women and children—both residents and ex-residents. This does not mean that social workers must choose to only specialize in counselling or social work or individual/group work, etc. It means that they can specialize in certain areas but they need to also rotate so that they do not lose newly acquired knowledge and skills.

- **Determine the formula which tells management that so many social workers are able to only service so many calls a day dependent on their time availability** (i.e. actually manning calls). Because all staff are required to also counsel over the telephone, and because staff are sometimes expected to do this even without proper training but only armed with guidelines that are premised more around providing the right information to the client, some staff may be inclined to ask the caller to call back when social workers are available. This could actually affect WAO's outreach potential as there is no guarantee that a woman in distress will call back or even have the opportunity to call back again.
- **Develop follow-up programmes for former clients**, and consider optimizing resources and energies in collaboration with other NGOs working in the area of VAW.
- **Consider all programmatic and legal support implications in extending WAO's services to others that fall outside the conventional domestic front of "the battered wife"**. To what extent is WAO willing to take up concrete advocacy efforts beyond VAW is a key question because the "elimination of discrimination" as contained in its current mission, would demand that the organization does just that. The inability for the advocacy programme of WAO to fully provide support from this aspect can lead to outsiders feeling confused as to what WAO actually wants to do. WAO must be clear as to how broadening the mission of WAO impacts on its social services and advocacy, as well as other areas of WAO's programme and activities. It must be clear so that mixed messages are not sent out to their allies and supporters.
- **Consider doing advocacy work with strategic target groups**, for example, media, religious leaders, etc.

19.0 WAO RETREAT

On 10 and 11 September, WAO staff, volunteers and members of EXCO went away to Port Dickinson for a retreat. The objectives of this Retreat were:

- To evaluate our services and programmes in line with our vision, mission and objectives
- To address challenges facing WAO in the area of staff and volunteer development

- To work on team building
- To have fun

The programme was devised in such a way to include consideration of some of the findings and recommendations outlined in the Evaluation Report. We spent time reiterating the strengths and successes of WAO but at the same time discussing areas for improvements. Communication was a hotly debated topic as our expansion to three centres has caused distance from each other. All staff members promised to check e-mails regularly and inform each other about developments in our respective areas of work by e-mail, telephone or at staff meetings.

As recommended by the Evaluation Report, we revisited our organisational chart using the proposed figure 2 in the Report. The new chart clearly outlines the lines of communication, accountability, responsibilities and areas of work (see Evaluation, Retreat, and Strategic Planning Report).

It was at the Retreat that we made an important decision that Social Work includes both the Refuge and CCC services and that the social work manager should oversee both the centres. Social work meetings will be re-structured in order to inculcate feminist values and a human rights framework, including making a distinction between social work and counselling. During the Retreat it was agreed that it is important for WAO to formulate a Strategic Plan spanning 3-5 years. The need to expand WAO's public face to include the managers and key EXCO members was accepted as part of this plan.

Glossary of Abbreviations

AWAM	All Women's Action Society
CCC	Child Care Centre
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
DV	domestic violence
DVA	Domestic Violence Act
EXCO	WAO's Executive Committee
IWD	International Women's Day
IWRAW	International Women's Rights Action Watch
JAG	Joint Action Group for Gender Equality
JAG-VAW	Joint Action Group Against Violence Against Women
HAKAM	National Human Rights Society
LAC	Legal Aid Centre
MCCBCHS	Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism & Sikhism
MDW	migrant domestic worker
MWFCD	Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development
NCWO	National Council of Women's Organisations
NGO	non-governmental organisation
SIS	Sisters In Islam
SUHAKAM	Human Rights Commission of Malaysia
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VAW	violence against women
WCC	Women's Centre for Change, Penang
WDC	Women's Development Collective