

WAO'S SERVICES

WAO offers counselling, information and a safe place to stay for distressed women. The three basic services provided are shelter and refuge services, telephone counselling and face-to-face counselling. Most of the women who utilized these services are victims of



domestic violence. Over 80 per cent of the women who came for shelter during 1989 were battered women and similarly over 80 per cent of those who came for face-to-face counselling were battered women. As for telephone calls, approximately one-third were related to domestic violence; some calls made by the battered women themselves, some by their friends, relatives or other agencies.

Although WAO provides its services mainly to battered women, the services have been extended to women and men requiring counselling on a variety of problems related to the family.

A. The Shelter

This service provided a safe place for 90 women: 72 battered women and 18 destitute women. It also housed the 114 children who came with their mothers. The service provides counselling, information and plays a supportive role for the women.

1. The Battered Women (72)

1.1 Profile Patterns

The 72 women who came to the Centre were leaving relationships which lasted many years. They were not very young women and they did not rush off at the first sign of trouble. 77% of the women were above 26 years of age and 61% of them were married for more than 6 years.

Table 1: Age of women

N = 72	%
20 years and below	2.78
21 - 25	20.83
26 - 30	23.61
31 - 35	20.83
36 - 40	15.28
41 - 45	9.72
46 - 50	6.94

Table 2: Years married

N = 72	%
5 and less	36.11
6 – 10	27.78
11 – 15	15.28
16 – 20	11.11
21 – 25	5.56
26	1.39
Unknown	4.17

Table 3: Ethnicity

N = 72	%
Indian	56.94
Chinese	18.06
Malay	16.67
Others	1.39
Foreigners	6.94

Table 4: Religion

N = 72	%
Hindu	45.83
Muslim	23.61
Christian	15.28
Buddhist	9.72
Sikh	1.39
None	2.78
Unknown	1.39

Table 5: Type of occupation of the woman and the man

N = 72	Woman	Man
Unemployed	83.33	11.11
Unskilled	4.17	16.67
Skilled	2.78	27.78
Clerical	1.39	9.72
Professional	1.39	6.94
Self-employed	6.94	20.83
Other	—	6.94

Table 6

N = 72	Woman %	Man %
None	83.83	11.10
Less than \$200	1.39	2.78
\$200 – \$399	4.17	4.17
\$400 – \$599	4.17	11.11
\$600 – \$799	2.78	9.72
\$800 – \$999	0.00	4.17
\$1,000 and above	2.78	23.61
Unknown	1.39	33.33

As tables 3–6 attest, the women came from all social classes, religions, backgrounds and ethnicity. Table 5 shows that 83.33% of the women were unemployed and would be dependent on their husbands for the household expenses.

Based on Table 3 and 5 slightly more than half were from the lower socio economic class and were Indians.

In interpreting this data it reflects that women from middle class and other races may have a wider range of alternative help. They are likely to have their own savings or have relatives who are more likely to help them. There has been an increase in the percentage of Malay women seeking shelter. As in 1988 the figure was 10.14% and this year, 16.67%. This could be due to the wide publicity of the domestic violence issue in the Malay media. But the percentage of Chinese women dropped from 24.63% in 1988 to 18.06% in 1989. This could be due to the poor publicity in the Chinese media. Publicity in various languages should be a serious consideration in public education programmes.

Table 7: Problems that led the women to the shelter

N = 7	%
Violent husband	75.00
Psychological	40.28
Financial	29.17
In-laws	18.06
Homelessness	13.89
Other woman 15/21/90.	11.11
Pregnancy	5.56
Illness	4.17
Parents	4.17
Others	22.22

Note: Percentages will not add up to 100 as each woman gave multiple reasons.

As seen in Table 7 most came to the Centre because of violent husbands. All the problems listed in Table 7 are problems arising from marriage such as financial, in-laws, mistresses and such, which the women were probably tolerating for a number of years. The uppermost reason (75%) these women have cited for coming to the Centre was the violent husband.

1.2 Responsibility of children

In all the cases, the women brought at least one of their children, mostly their very young child. Women feel responsible for the children of the marriage especially young ones and decide to bring them along. The older children were usually left with their husbands or the couple's parents.

1.3 Stay at the Centre

The women have stayed at the Centre from one day to about four months. During their stay the women decide on the course they would take (as Table 8 shows).

Table 8: Outcome

N = 72	%
Went back to husband	34.72
Went back to parents/relatives/friends	20.83
Went to live independently	27.78
Filed for divorce and living independently	11.11
Still at the Centre	1.39
Left without informing	2.78
Hospitalised	1.39

1.4 Leaving the Centre

Sixty percent of the women decided to leave their husbands. Thirty five percent of the women chose to return to their husbands. WAO records show that those women choosing to return to their husbands, do return to the Centre a number of times over the years. Also Table 9 suggests 12% have come before.

1.5 Source of Awareness, Referral and Contact

Table 9: Source of information regarding WAO

N = 72	%		
Friends/Relatives	22.22	Welfare	5.56
Press	19.44	Legal Aid	4.17
TV	9.72	Police	1.39
Hospital	9.72	Others	1.39
Doctor	6.94	Self (came before)	12.50
Religious Organisations	6.94		

Compared to the last two years, this year (1989) indicates a higher percentage (29%) of women who came to know of WAO through the media; in 1987, it was 25% and in 1988, 21%. The constant media coverage in 1989 was probably due to the perseverance of women's groups including WAO. In several studies on domestic violence, it has been noted that the police is usually the first agency a battered woman approaches.

2. The Destitute Women (18)

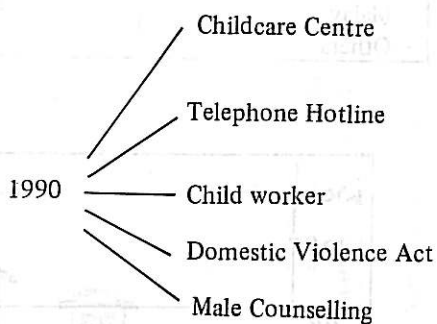
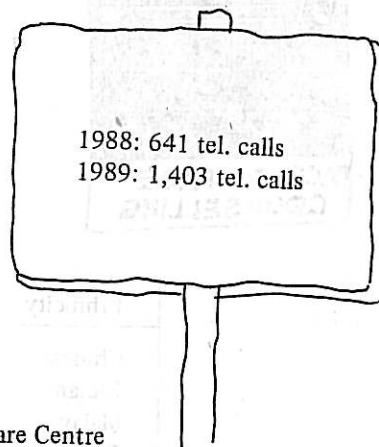
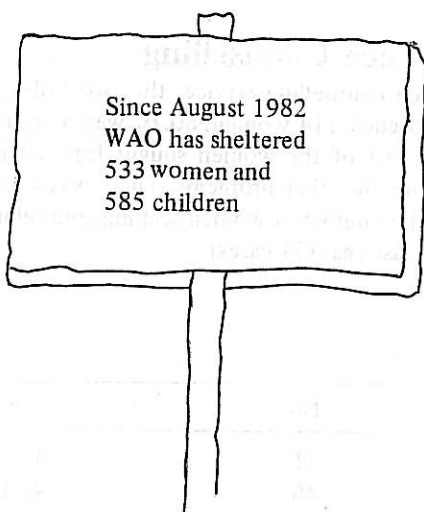
This year 18 destitute women sought WAO's shelter service. Last year it was 14. They have stayed from 3 to 128 days. Half of them were below 25 years of age and the other half were from 26 – 45 years old. Most of them were in a crisis situation as they were made homeless by circumstances as in 9 of the cases (see table 10). There were 2 survivors of sexual assault and 1 incest case. As table 11 suggests most of them (88.89%) sought only temporary shelter after which they returned home or chose to live independently.

Table 10: Problems of other cases

N = 18	%
Crisis Situation:	
Destitute and homeless widow	1
Temporary shelter for ex-resident	3
Destitute (husband in jail)	1
Homeless as husband in drug rehabilitation	1
Unwed mothers	2
Homeless	1
Pregnant and homeless	1
Others:	
Sexual assault and pregnancy	2
Incest	2
Family violence	3
Retarded runaway	1

Table 11: Outcome

N = 18	%
Went back to parents/relatives/friends	61.11
Went to live independently	27.78
Hospitalised	5.56
Still at the Centre	5.56
Others	5.56



B. The Telephone Service

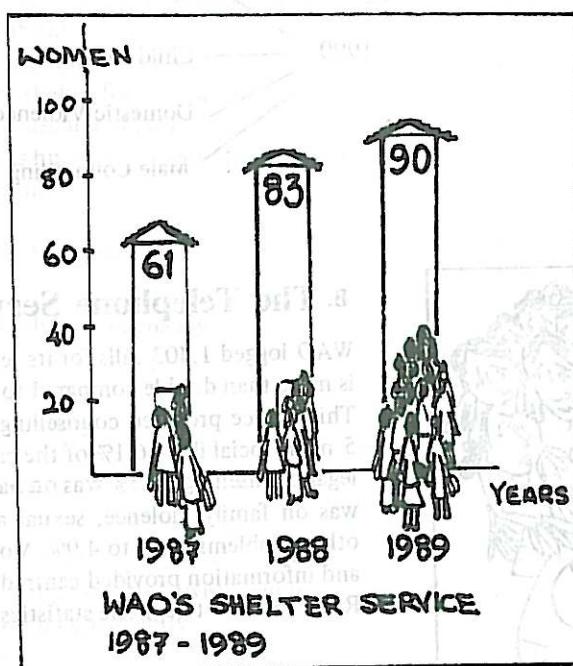
WAO logged 1,403 calls for its telephone service. This is more than double compared to last year (641 calls). This service provided counselling and information on 5 main social ills: 46.1% of the calls were on marital/legal counselling 33.5% was on battered women, 3.2% was on family violence, sexual abuse was 0.4% and other problems came to 4.9%. Most of the counselling and information provided centred around the family. Refer to 1989 telephone statistics.



c. Face-to-Face Counselling

In face-to-face counselling service, the two full-time workers counselled 114 women. 80.7% were battered women. The rest of the women sought legal advice and counselling on other problems. There was a 31% increase on the number of women seeking counselling compared to last year (71 cases).

Ethnicity	No.	%
Chinese	51	44.73
Indian	48	42.12
Malay	10	8.77
Others	5	4.38



1989 Telephone Statistics

	I	C	M	O	U	TOTAL	F	M	TOTAL	(%)
1.* Marital/Legal Counselling for themselves	138	358	46	23	14	579	555	24	579	(41.3)
Marital/Legal Counselling on behalf of friends and relatives	22	32	4	-	2	60	48	12	60	(4.3)
Marital/Legal Counselling for agencies calling on behalf of their clients	2	2	2	1	3	7	3	4	7	(0.5)
2.* Battered Women Counselling for themselves	93	114	63	6	3	279	279	-	279	(19.9)
Battered Women Counselling on behalf of friends and relatives	82	43	23	4	3	155	103	52	155	(11.0)
Battered Women Counselling for agencies calling on behalf of their clients	10	9	15	-	3	37	19	18	37	(2.6)
3.* Family Violence Counselling	4	9	1	-	1	15	15	-	15	(1.1)
Family Violence Counselling on behalf of friends and relatives	11	10	1	-	-	22	16	6	22	(1.6)
Family Violence Counselling for agencies calling on behalf of their clients	2	1	3	-	1	7	6	1	7	(0.5)
4.* Residents/Ex-residents	51	16	23	1	7	98	56	42	98	(7.0)
Enquiries to volunteer services	10	13	7	2	1	33	31	2	33	(2.4)
6. Public Enquiries	2	2	1	-	-	5	5	-	5	(0.3)
7. Job Offers/Employment	9	5	-	-	1	15	11	4	15	(1.1)
8. Sexual Abuse Counselling on behalf of friend and relative	1	3	2	-	-	6	3	3	6	(0.4)
9.* Other Counselling Problems	19	35	10	1	4	69	59	10	69	(4.9)
10. Anak Angkat	1	2	1	-	1	5	3	2	5	(0.3)
11. Donations	2	3	1	1	4	11	10	1	11	(0.8)
TOTAL	459 (32.7%)	657 (46.8)	203 (14.5)	39 (2.8)	45 (3.2)	1,403	1,222 (87.1)	181 (12.9)	1,403	(100.0)

* Marital/Legal Counselling: This involved adultery, husband desertion, financial difficulties, sexual problems, marriage problems, divorce procedures, and taking of a second wife (for Muslims).

* Battered Women Counselling: This involved wife battering.

* Family Violence Counselling: This involved beating of maids, beating of daughter by father, harassment of old women by their sons and harassment by a male landlord.

* Residents/Ex-Residents: This involved harassment calls from residents and ex-residents from their male spouses and goodwill calls from ex-residents.

* Other Counselling Problems: This involved information and counselling on adoption of illegitimate children, destitute women and children, parent having problems with their children, teenage stress, abortion and harassment by employer. In one case the mother called regarding her daughter allegedly experimenting with lesbianism.

Key: I - Indian C - Chinese M - Malay O - Others U - Unknown F - Female M - Male