

## WAO SERVICES



WAO offers three basic services: a refuge centre, telephone counselling and face-to-face counselling. 1990 saw a slight drop in the number of women seeking shelter and face-to-face counselling at our centre. Of the 75 women (90 in 1989) who sought refuge at the centre in 1990, almost 84 percent of them came because of domestic violence. 109 women (114 in 1989) came for face-to-face counselling. 53 percent of them were victims of battery while 30 percent sought legal advice for other types of marital problems. As for telephone calls, 35 percent had called for advice and counselling on marital problems, especially on battery and spouse's infidelity.

### THE SHELTER

WAO provided refuge for 75 women: 68 women in marital and domestic strife and seven women in other crises. The Centre also housed 107 children who had come with their mothers.

Breakdown by ethnicity and problem type:

Problem \ Ethnicity	Indian	Chinese	Malay	Others	Foreigners	Total
Marital/ Domestic	38	17	6	3	4	68
Others	5	2	-	-	-	7
Total	43 (52) 57.3%	19 (13) 25.3%	6 (17) 8.0%	3 (3) 4.0%	5 (0) 5.3%	75 (90)

(1989 figures in brackets)

### 1. The Battered Women

During 1990, 68 women sought shelter due to domestic problems with their spouses or partners. Most of them had suffered physical violence. Of these women, 19 had stayed in the Centre previously; one in 1985, one in 1986, one in 1988, then in 1989 and six in 1990. For most of these "old" residents, this was their second visit to the shelter for two it was their third visit and for one her fourth visit. The women went back to their husbands for many reasons. Often, it was because of financial hardship and fear of making it on their own. Often, too, their husbands had promised to change. But the high number of repeat cases shows that the violent situation they were in had not changed.

### Length of Stay

The 68 women stayed for an average of 23 days ranging from two days to 135 days.

## Age

The average age of the women was 32-years-old ranging from 21 to 50-years-old.

Age group	No	%
21 - 25 years	9	13.2
26 - 30 years	22	32.4
31 - 35 years	21	30.9
36 - 40 years	9	13.2
41 - 45 years	6	8.8
46 - 50 years	1	1.5

## Marriage

Out of the 68 women living with spouses or partners, 49 or 72 per cent had registered marriages. The 19 others had either gone through a customary marriage or were cohabiting. Five of the women had been married before. The average age at marriage (or commencement of living together) was 22.8 years and the average length of marriage was 9.0 years ranging from less than one year to 27 years. Contrary to misconceptions, these women did not leave their homes at the first incidence of violence. Many of them had stayed on, trying to work out their marriage and hoping that their husbands would change.

## Religion

The religious background of the women was as follows:-

Religion	No	%
Hinduism	29	42.6
Christianity	17	25.0
Buddhism	9	13.2
Islam	8	11.8
Sikhism	1	1.5
Others	3	4.4
Unknown	1	1.4

## Education

76.5 percent of the women had some education with the majority having up to secondary school education.

Level of Education	No	%
None	13	19.1
Primary School	15	22.1
Up to Form III	17	25.0
Up to Form V	13	19.1
Up to Form VI	4	5.9
College/University	3	4.4
Not Available	3	4.4

## Residence

Most of the women were from the Selangor and Wilayah Persekutuan area with 39 (57.3%) from Selangor and 16 (23.53%) from Wilayah. Two women were from Penang, eight from Negeri Sembilan and the rest from Melaka, Perak and Kedah.

## Employment

Only nineteen or about 28 per cent of the women were wage earners prior to coming to the Centre.

Type of Occupation	No
Unskilled	5
Skilled	2
Clerical	6
Professional	1
Self-employed	4

Salary	No
MR 200 – MR 399	5
MR 400 – MR 599	4
MR 600 – MR 799	4
MR 800 – MR 999	1
MR 1,000 and above	4
Not available	1

## Children

The average number of children per woman was 2.6. However, the average number of children the brought to the Centre was 1.5. About a third of the women had to leave their children behind, probably the children were old enough to be left behind until the mother decided what to do or because the mother was not sure of what would be the consequence of taking the child(ren) with her.

No of Children	Mother
None	5 (7.3%)
One	14 (20.6%)
Two	16 (23.5%)
Three	15 (21.1%)
Five	8 (11.8%)
Six	3 (4.4%)
Eight	1 (1.5%)

## Spouses/Partners

The average age of the husbands was 35.2 years ranging from 25 to 50 years. Eight or 11.8 per cent of the husbands were unemployed. Some of the characteristics are presented below:

Age group	No	%
21 – 35 years	1	1.5
26 – 30 years	17	25.0
31 – 40 years	11	16.2
41 – 45 years	9	13.2
46 – 50 years	6	8.8
Not Available	3	4.4

Ethnicity	No	%
Indian	44	64.7
Chinese	16	23.5
Malay	8	11.8

Type of Occupation	No	%
Unemployed	8	11.8
Unskilled	12	17.6
Skilled	17	25.0
Clerical	3	4.4
Professional	10	14.7
Self-employed	11	16.2
Others	5	7.3
Not Available	2	2.9

Salary	No	%
None	8	11.8
MR 200 - MR 399	6	8.8
MR 400 - MR 599	10	14.7
MR 600 - MR 799	4	5.9
MR 800 - MR 999	3	4.4
MR 1,000 and above	16	23.5
Not known	8	11.8
Not available	2	2.9

### Source of Awareness, Referral and Contact

The following table indicates the source of information on WAO and its services. It is noted that word-of-mouth, through friends and ex-residents, seem to be the single biggest source of information on WAO. Institutions like religious organisations and the mass media are also a major source of information.

Source	No	%
Friends and relatives	11	16.2
Religious Institutions	7	10.3
Press	5	7.3
Charitable organisations	4	5.9
Hospital	4	5.9
Legal Aid	4	5.9
Welfare	4	5.9
TV	3	4.4
Doctor	3	4.4
Radio	2	1.5
Self (came before)	12	17.6
Others	9	13.2

Contact	No	%
By Telephone	54	79.4
In Person	14	20.6



Referred by	No	%
Self	29	42.6
Friends, relatives, ex-residents	11	16.2
Department of Welfare Services	10	14.7
Religious institutions	6	8.8
Legal Aid	4	5.9
Doctor	3	4.4
Hospital	2	1.5
Police	2	1.5

## Problems

The women come to the Centre with a multitude of problems which can all be considered related to physical and mental battering by their partners. Almost 84 percent of the women were physically battered and 70.6 percent suffered psychologically because of mental abuse.

Type of Problems	No	%
Violence	57	83.3
Mental stress	48	70.6
Financial	21	30.9
Infidelity	12	17.6
In-laws	5	7.3
Homeless	4	5.9
Sexual	4	5.9
Others	6	8.8

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## Outcome

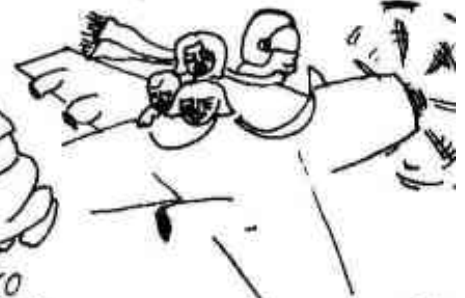
During their stay at the refuge centre, the women discuss their problems with our social worker volunteers and other women at the centre. We only provide them with options and possible solutions; the final decision is theirs. During 1990 almost half the women went back to their husbands (compared to about a third in 1989). 19 percent went to live with their parents, close relatives or friends, while 29.4 percent found jobs and lived independently.



BACK TO HUSBAND - 47.1%



BACK TO RELATIVES/PARENTS/FRIENDS - 19.1%



INDEPENDENT - 29.4%

Outcome	No	%
Went back to husband	32	47.1 (34.7)
Went to live with parents, relatives, friends	13	19.1 (20.8)
Found job and living independently	14	20.6 (27.8)
Filed for divorce and living independently	6	8.8 (11.1)
Left without informing	3	4.4 (2.8)
(Others)	-	- (2.8)

(1989 figures in brackets)

The Centre tries to follow-up on the cases but this is not always possible as some do not leave their addresses and/or contact numbers with us. Some keep in touch through telephone, and we find out about some through their friends. But the formation of the ex-residents support group this year has helped us to keep in better touch with them.

Sometimes the women themselves came back to the Centre because they were not satisfied with their initial decision to return to their husbands. In 1990 almost half of them again reconciled with their partners, but three filed for divorce, three decided to live independently and four went to live with relatives or friends.

## 2. The Destitute Women

Seven (two Chinese and five Indian) other women stayed at the Centre because of various crises in their lives. One was a widow trying to learn some skills who eventually went back to her in-laws; another was staying temporarily at the shelter as her husband was in jail - she eventually found a job and left; one girl was molested by her father and later went to stay with relatives; one was in between jobs; two were unwed pregnant women (one went to live with relatives, the other found a job and is living independently); one ex-resident was ill treated by an employer and came to the shelter for refuge until she found another job. Although these women are not our primary target group, we have provided shelter, food, counselling and assistance to these women in need. They stayed for an average of 32.6 days, ranging from two days to 99 days. Their average age was 24.8, ranging from 18 to 34.

## THE TELEPHONE SERVICE



WAO logged 1,512 calls for our telephone service, an increase of 109 calls over last year. This service provides counselling and advice on a wide range of problems: battering, marital, family, women's rights, and boyfriend/girlfriend problems. A substantial number of our calls are also enquiries on WAO services, reports on cases of battery and referrals to other social support agencies.

Type of Call	No	%
Enquiries	402	26
Counselling	280	19
Advice	295	20
Shelter	140	9
Face-to-face counselling appointments	123	8
Calls re: visits/interviews	25	2
Employment offers	9	1
Donations	13	1
Others	225	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,512</b>	<b>100</b>



**Breakdown by ethnicity**

Ethnicity	No	%
Chinese	605	40
Indians	605	40
Malays	212	14
Others	90	6
Base (n) :	1,512	100

It is interesting to note that while Chinese women make up only 25 percent of those seeking shelter, they make up 40 percent of the callers. They dominate the calls for advice, counselling and face-to-face counselling. Most of the calls for shelter and enquiries came from Indians. Malays form between 8% to 15% of the key types of calls.

Counselling			Advice			Shelter		
Ethnicity	No	%	Ethnicity	No	%	Ethnicity	No	%
Chinese	146	52	Chinese	174	59	Indians	80	57
Indians	84	31	Indians	68	23	Chinese	32	23
Malays	34	12	Malays	44	15	Malays	18	13
Others	16	6	Others	9	3	Others	10	7
Base (n)	280	100	Base (n)	295	100	Base (n)	140	100

## FACE-TO-FACE COUNSELLING



A total of 109 cases were handled by our staff for face-to-face counselling in 1990. In comparison to last year, there has been a slight drop in women seeking counselling.

Below are the two tables showing the breakdown of women who came for face-to-face counselling, the problems they face and the advice they sought.

Ethnicity	No	%
Chinese	63	57.80
Indians	31	28.44
Malays	9	8.26
Others	6	5.50
Total	109	100.00

Problems faced	No	%
Battery	58	53.2
Legal Advice	33	30.3
Others	18	16.5
Total	109	100.0