

Sarawak Women for Women Society
P. O. Box 551, 93712 Kuching
Sarawak, Malaysia.

SWWS Newsletter

December 2000

Welcome to our December 2000 newsletter. Wow, how the year has flown by with incredible speed—*suddenly* it was time for my second issue as editor! This year, we have seen many new members join SWWS, excellent happenings like the 'Keep Safe' Pilot training session and a huge effort with our fundraising film premiere. Our volunteer services are well used by the public. **Let's keep up the good work!** Merry Christmas and Selamat Hari Raya to those celebrating, and a very happy New Year to all! See you at our activities next year.

Welcome to these **NEW MEMBERS..**

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| *Uyun Davidson | *Tan Gek Eng |
| *Wee Bee Eng | *Theresa Jita |
| *Marcella Chang | *Sim Teck Geok |
| *Sylvia Tan Bong Siew | *Grace Au |
| *Irene Kwang | *Lim Meo Ping |
| *Lim Cheng Hoon. | |

Thank you for your support and we hope to meet you at our activities if we haven't already.

WHAT'S COMING UP?

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING late Jan/early Feb. You will be notified soon.

- ✓ Come meet your fellow members!
- ✓ Come make suggestions for activities!
- ✓ Come discuss our general direction and purpose for us, women!
- ✓ Come volunteer / revoluteer for CPL or OSCC!

In the pipeline as possible projects for 2001 are a Sexual Harassment road show (proposed by Biro Wanita), another Legal Literacy seminar (maybe in Kapit) and the Keep Safe launch.

TALKS

Dates will be set after our members contact list is sorted out. *Please help us do this!*

- Stephen Yap, USA-based psychologist and nurse will be in town-- topic open to request / interactive session sharing his expert knowledge. Get back to me with suggestions or just bring your ears and questions along on the night.
- Kamar Ainiah, KL lawyer and president of BUDI (Bersatu utk Demokrasi & Insaniah)- talk on women and their role in democracy. Do bring interested friends along to our talks.

KEEP SAFE PROJECT PROGRESS

By Aminah Ismail, Keep Safe Coordinator.

We finished the Bahasa Malaysia version of the video after more than half a year. With the support of the Education Department, the pilot training session was then held just before school finished on 26 October 2000. Twelve teachers and four school principals from Sekolah Rendah Merpati Jepang, St. Theresa, Combine and Ong Tiang Swee were in attendance.

The Keep Safe programme for children aged 7-8 years was well received by the participants. This is a good start to our training sessions. Feedback on students' reaction to the programme will be collected and used to improve on the video content, etc. (There will be a nation wide launch in year 2001 - if funding available! All who attended agreed that the programme is timely! My thanks goes to Angie, Margaret, Alvaena and our 'teacher' for the role-play, Mariana!

Talking about SYARIAH LAW AND MUSLIM WOMEN

By Uyun Davidson, CPL volunteer.

Did you know that Muslim women can divorce her husband if she can prove that she has not received maintenance from her husband for more than 3 months? This was one of the interesting lessons learnt during a talk held on 17th August at the center, presented by Nur Naquiyah Ong, a Unimas lecturer and former lawyer. Approximately 15 participants attended the talk and we were introduced to various topics ranging from the framework of Syarian Law in Malaysia to the many requirements a Muslim man must fulfill before he is allowed to practice polygamy. We were also made aware how the law differs among the States in Malaysia, and how Sarawak is still in the initial stages of formalizing the law. The talk also included a Q&A session, which proved popular among the participants that kept our presenter busy indeed.

COUNSELLING MESSAGES

By Anne Samuel, Asst. Treasurer.

This was taken by Anthony Yeo at our center on 7th August and was very well attended. We ran out of chairs! (~40 people)- Ed.

Anthony gave useful messages about

- Using probing questions instead of leading statements to explore e.g. What if..., Why do you feel..., How do you think...,
- Extracting the key issue and staying on track
- Floating the idea about what the other person might be feeling e.g. "I wonder if your husband might say that he started smoking again due to your constant nagging.."
- Summarizing options to close the session or maybe offering an opinion e.g. "Since you're not sure, I don't think you should make a decision now.."

FUNDRAISING EVENTS

By Lynn Teo, Chairperson Fundraising SubComm.

1. FILM PREMIERE

WE DID IT!!!!!!! ☺ Our fundraising film premiere 'CHARLIE'S ANGELS' was shown on Wednesday, 15.11.2000 at the Riverside Cineplex. We raised \$21,170 (including a \$200 cash donation) against our target of \$25,860. 587 tickets out of the 700 seats available were sold and 473 seats (63%) were filled on the night. We also invited some children from the Salvation Army and the Cheshire Home to the movie as we had unsold seats. After deducting expenses i.e. paying for cinema rental and the thank you banner, we actually raised \$16,890 for SWWS. This will help allay our running expenditure of \$1,200 - \$1,500 per month, consisting mainly office rental, salary, utilities, postage and printing.

A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL for the effort and co-operation put in, especially to new members who had just joined and suddenly found themselves selling tickets as well!! Special thanks goes to fellow members of the fund-raising team: Anne Samuel, Yap Chiew Phin, Diana Carol and Aminah Ismail, and the Executive Committee who took on responsibility as group leaders for the ticket sales. A big thank you and hug goes to Chua Siew Siew, CPL volunteer and our Editor, for her all-out efforts, especially the last 2 weeks prior to the premiere to enable us to achieve that impressive 81% sales. My utmost gratitude for all the words of encouragement and moral support to keep us going and my sincere apologies if I have offended you in any way whilst getting the mission accomplished. ****whew! - big sigh of relief****

(As Chairperson, Lynn Teo put in a mammoth effort. Without her superb organizing skills, the end result would have been much less successful. *Awesome task well done, Lynn!* My 'all-out' efforts meant roping in supportive non-members to sell. Thank you: Dona Wee, Ib Larsen, Trish Ames, Nikki Lugun. Ed.)

2. "CAR BOOT SALE"

This was organized by the Women's Staff Club of Dewan Bandaraya Kuching Utara on Saturday, 2.9.2000. Rosty Donald, our President, wrote a letter to all members and elicited new and used household items: crockery, glasses, rattan baskets, blankets, clothing and shoes. Greta Lim donated several beautiful pieces of lace tablecloth and linen and Yap Chiew Phin donated 2 big trays of Nonya kueh! Others who chipped in were Rosty, Margaret, Aminah, Diana, Lillian, Mei Lee, Sylvia, Georgina, Cecilia and Mary Su. Thank you all! A special appreciation goes to Anne Samuel who headed the stall, assisted by Alvaena, Aminah, Diana and yours truly. My other half was so 'touched' by our 'sacrifice' out there in the baking hot sun that he put up a big umbrella to provide some shade and even stayed around to pitch in for the 'Jualan Murah'!! It was hard work, but the camaraderie generated and sales collection of \$719 made it all worthwhile and fulfilling.

CRISIS PHONE LINE ACTION

By Mariana Yusuf, CPL Coordinator.

Call type break down 3/8/2000-7/12/2000

Marital - 19 cases

Boyfriend - 26 cases

Girlfriend - 5 cases

In-laws- 2 cases

Parents - 7 cases

Inquiries - 14 cases

Crank - 5 cases (not always logged. ed)

Examination fever - 3 cases

Sex - 2 cases

Silent - 5 cases (not always logged. ed)

We are now having more Malay-speaking callers. Male callers are increasing too. There have been certain nights when we have not had any volunteers at the Phonenumber due to personal problems. We need more volunteers. We hope some old volunteers will return to the Phonenumber for us to continue this public service.

The new volunteers for the year have finished their training. They have started their 'observation' with the old volunteers. They are doing a very good job. To the new volunteers, "Welcome to the group".

DROP-IN-CENTRE NEWS

By Alvaena Valentine, Centre Coordinator.

Talks by Anthony Yeo and Nur Naquiyah Ong were held at our center. A video clip was also filmed here for "Hari Wanita at Kapit" which was organized by Biro Wanita. 5 women called our center, 2 Filipino ladies came seeking assistance and leaflets were sent to Sri Aman on request. I wish to remind all our members to renew their membership. Thank you.

ONE STOP CRISIS CENTER (OSCC) UPDATE

By Ita Ling, OSCC Coordinator.

On 13- 14 October, OSCC Kuching organized training for agencies involved in OSCC i.e. the Police, Welfare Department, Legal Aid Bureau, SGH A& E Dept, and para-counsellors from SWWS. YB Hajah Sukinam Domo officiated the opening, Dr Tan Poh Tin chaired the Protem committee, and funding was from Biro Wanita.

Speakers were from each of the local agencies. Also, an advisor for the Women's Crisis Center Penang came all the way to Kuching to address participants. (see later interesting piece on WCC website. Ed.)

Interesting and practical topics included:

- Role of Women's Groups and the wider community
- Legal matters: What is needed for a good prosecution; Who is entitled to Legal Aid?
- Working as a Team

The training was well attended. Participants found the 2 days helpful and requested for more to continue to improve OSCC services.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT FORUM

By Margaret Bedus, Vice-President.

We organized a "Sexual Harassment at the Workplace" forum on 15 October 2000 in Kuching. This was officiated by YB Datin Paduka Hajah Sharifah Mordiah Tuanku Fauzi.

The 72 participants came from various organizations. Speakers were from AWAM, Legal Aid Bureau, UNIMAS and the Labour Department. Angie was the organizing chairperson, whilst Gill was chairperson during the forum.

Topics included:

- Myths & Facts of sexual harassment
- Sexual Harassment and the Law
- Issues for Managers
- Local Scenario

WOMEN AGENDA FOR CHANGE WORKSHOP

By Aminah Ismail, Keep Safe Coordinator.

The Women Agenda for Change came to Sarawak on 3 November 2000 as a one-day workshop organized by Women's Development Collective. Rosty and Alvaena assisted in organizing this which was attended by various Women's Groups in Kuching.

The WAC was launched in May 1999, then endorsed by 76 organizations from all over the country. The number has now increased to 88 with SWWS among them. WAC's vision is of a just and democratic society in Malaysia, within the context of gender equality and development of resources in ways that continually benefit all. Gender equality must go hand in hand with the elimination of other inequities, discrimination and repression in society.

WAC continues to lobby the government to advance the status of Malaysian women through the provision of services, the

amendment / development of new laws and policies to protect women

ONLINE HELP FOR WOMEN & CHILDREN IN CRISES

Contributed by Gill Raja, Education member.

Malaysian women and children who are facing crises in their lives, be it domestic violence, rape and child sexual abuse, can now turn to the Women's Crisis Center's website for help. There is useful information on what to do, where to seek help and related laws to assist abused women and children.

The Website aims to better understanding of WCC's extensive work and activities on abused women and children. A special section 'Violence Against Women' has information on sexual violence to enable readers to understand and act on issues of domestic violence, rape, child sexual abuse and sexual harassment.

More and more people are now accessing the Internet, WCC believes they are able to serve the public better by going online.

Check it out! <http://www.wccpenang.org>

YOUR IDEAS

Are there interesting happenings that you would like to share with other SWWS members or organize for SWWS members? We would be glad to have your assistance. Or do you have any suggestions for future SWWS activities? We would like you to contribute some ideas. Please send suggestions or recommendations to me on chua_siew_siew@hotmail.com or to any committee member.