

JYN

Sarawak Women for Women Society
P. O. Box 551, 93712 Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia
Tel/ Fax: 082 416 053 Email: sarswws@po.jaring.my

SWWS Newsletter

July 2000

Welcome to our July 2000 newsletter. Hoping you had a good break over Gawai and are feeling energetic and enthusiastic to carry on with/ join us in our many activities. We have been working with Sarawak AIDS Network and Sarawak AIDS Concern in educational programmes for HIV/AIDS. We had a very successful legal literacy seminar in Limbang in May, the same follows in Sri Aman later this month. The phone line and OSCC continue to run well with your support and the Keep Safe project is ticking along nicely. We also welcome several new members this newsletter and hope you enjoy being part of our society.

NEW MEMBERS

*Chin Nyuk Chin *Anita Nesarajah
*Shouneez Edries *Norzaidahwati Zaidin
*Rhoda Yap

We have always been a very "hands-on" society with most members being volunteers as well. Maybe the time has come to increase our public profile/ level of awareness (and thus available funds pool!) and get more new members who show they support what we are doing with annual membership subscriptions. Members but, non-volunteers would of course receive three updates per year in newsletter form in March, July and November. Help in any further way would be most welcome. Membership is just RM5 per year. So, ALL members.. hand out some forms! Incidentally, all CPL members need to become SWWS members, please.

WOMEN AND AIDS

Taking the message to urban poor communities

Angie, Maria, Patricia and Alvaena helped facilitate a session on HIV for the Women's Development Project on May 7th 2000 jointly planned by the Family Planning Association, Sarawak AIDS Concern (SAC) and SWWS. Women (and some of their husbands) from four targeted low income areas came to learn more about HIV and how it can affect their families.

Participants gained knowledge on AIDS and the plight of women at risk of becoming infected. Kampong committees are planning to disseminate more awareness helped by the Family Life Education (FLE) Project.

Taking the message to Religious Leaders
"Don't Shun HIV Positive People" and "HIV is not just a Health but a Development Problem" were recent headlines locally by Tan Sri Datuk Amar Dr George Chan.. *How do we Care - HIV/AIDS and Religion* was a Sarawak AIDS Network project. Kwan and Gili were in the organising sub-committee. Bev proof read and Aminah responded to a last minute call to assist as a facilitator.

The workshop was attended by 120 people of 6 different faiths - Ba'hai, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Islam and Sikh - and was addressed by two people who are HIV+. The main message of the day was for people to leave judgement to their God and show compassion and understanding to the people affected by the disease. A booklet has been printed which refers to the Holy texts from the six faiths. SWWS members are asked to encourage their own religious communities to distribute the pamphlet

and educate people to show their compassion. Kwan and Gill can link you into members of your faith who attended the workshop.

Taking the Message to Youth

HIV awareness and protection requires knowledge on sex education in the context of how youth can handle relationships with the opposite sex. FLE Unit has launched a training module which helps prompt discussion with a BM version due soon. Can we find a group of members willing to reactivate training sessions for school pupils and factory workers? David and Bev, on the SAN Educational sub-committee have info for anyone wanting to develop HIV awareness within schools / youth groups.
-Gill Raja

KEEP SAFE- AN UPDATE

(Keep Safe is our project aimed at educating parents and teachers on teaching children how to handle potentially unsafe situations and not become the unfortunate victims of molestation, violence, abduction or worse. ed.)

BTP will take the video shooting which should take place sometime early July. We hope there will be no further delays on the project! Hopefully we will all get to see this Bahasa Malaysia version soon.
- Aminah Ismail

TRAINING THE TRAINERS—LEGAL LITERACY SEMINAR

On 27-28 May, Margaret, Angie, Alvaena and I went to Limbang for the above. More than forty women from different NGOs attended the seminar which exposed them to legal aspects that concerning women including Civil, Shariah and Customary Law. There were requests for more suggestions for para-counselling training, gender sensitisation, tackling social issues amongst youth, violence against women

and also the introductory session on SWWS. We are doing this again in Sri Aman in July.

Thought: All these women are far from the main cities and lack in information—maybe SWWS should start thinking on more outreach work?

A big thank you

- for the assistance given by the Majlis Adat-Istiadat Sarawak and the Legal Aid Bureau.
- for funding by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Germany (our request was forwarded by NCWO)
- to SID Limbang chapter for organisational assistance, as organising from a distance would have been difficult.

-Aminah Ismail

GENDER, ADOLESCENTS AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH WORKSHOP

Held on 25 July by the Sarawak AIDS network (SAN). This was refreshing, as there was a pleasant mixture of adults and adolescents in one. I must congratulate the organisers for handling the tricky situations well. It was a long one day seminar covering a wide variety of things—materials covered were very good but somehow the lack of cohesiveness lessened the impact. I was left asking myself whether we were looking at gender sensitisation or at adolescents and social issues—how and why they get into social problems, their jargon for sexual terms, etc.

Adolescents certainly need to have mutual respect for each other. I think that respecting oneself should come first—perhaps SWWS can do a similar workshop with SALL for the young girls/ women.

-Aminah Ismail

CRISIS PHONE LINE

The crisis phone line has been running since 1st January 1988. The service is free, we respect confidentiality and our stance is non-religious and apolitical. The volunteers come from all races and walks of life. Our objectives include providing a listening ear and moral support, to assist women in resolving their problems, to encourage women to make their own decisions and to provide information on how to seek assistance for the relevant agencies or authorities.

From January to June this year, we have had 180 calls. Most of the calls were related to marital/relationship difficulties and abuse.

All CPL volunteers have to be members of SWWS. Training sessions this year have been conducted by Ita Ling, our OSCC Co-ordinator and by Gill Raja, an experienced social worker. So far, the current 9 trainees are enjoying the sessions whilst gaining a lot of knowledge in them.
-Mariana Yusuf

ONE STOP CRISIS CENTRE (OSCC)

This is located at the A & E Dept, Sarawak General Hospital, Kuching. As its name says, it aims to act as a centralised inter-agency support system; to protect survivors (usually of domestic violence/rape) from further trauma of being passed from agency to agency. OSCC provides medical, police and social welfare department services. WE provide the para-counselling services by being with the woman on request and assisting her in lodging the police report, finding shelter, explore various ways to resolve the crisis and we continue to be in touch with her for as long as necessary. To date, this year, we have had 17 cases.

DROP-IN-CENTRE

This is located at Lot 1610, 2nd Floor, Block 10, KILD Batu Lintang, Jalan Rock, Kuching. We provide information and help by supporting women in low paid jobs and young women from rural areas who have moved to town. Our services currently include providing information on SOCSO, EPF, salary & working conditions, labour law job entitlements, rental & tenant rights, job opportunities, vocational & learning centres and locations of places of worship/organisations and social facilities in Kuching. Our centre is currently very under utilised!

STOP SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Thanks to all who signed the Sexual Harassment petition from Penang Women's Crises Centre. Sexual harassment is defined as unwanted, repeated and/ or unwelcome attention of a sexual nature which can take the form of verbal, non-verbal, psychological or physical attention. It is a common form of violation of a person's body and dignity but rarely exposed due to negative reactions when people complain. The Code of Practice on Prevention and Eradication of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace which provides for employees implementing complaint and investigation procedures has only been adopted by 50 employers nationwide since March 2000. The petition asked for effective laws be passed against sexual harassment and that employers adopt and implement the Code of Practice. Angie Garet has submitted a proposal paper to Biro Wanita to fund our sexual harassment seminar. We will need people to help us in organising and running of it.

FUNDRAISING

At the AGM in February 2000, we were informed that SWWS is running low on funds. We will not be able to run current or add new activities nor keep the full-time Centre Co-ordinator, Alvaena Valentine much longer. Thus, a Fundraising Sub-Committee was formed in March of Anne Samuel, Lynn Teo, Aminah Ismail, Yap Chiew Phin and Diana Carol. Ideas to date include dinner cum show, film premieres, raffles, seasonal greeting cards, car sun shades and calendars. We have had difficulty finding printer/ cardboard makers to get quotes for our car sun shades, so if you have any such contacts, please contact Alvaena.

We have decided on a charity film premiere in Oct/ Nov 2000 and we will need your help to chip in and sell the 700 tickets. We will be contacting you soon!
-Lynn Teo

As this is my first newsletter, we have described our services in detail and we should be writing more in the "update" style in successive newsletters. Do feel free to call me via SWWS or chua_siew_siew@hotmail.com. Thank you.

PROPOSED UPCOMING EVENTS

- Anthony Yeo, counsellor at Counselling Care Centre, Singapore will be in town from 7th-10th August. Kwan is liaising to get two evenings with him to train our para-counsellors.
- Nur Naquiyah Ong, Unimas lecturer and former lawyer, has agreed to give a talk on Shariah law and Muslim women. She would like this to run more on a Q & A basis. Come along to our DIC at 7 pm on 17th August.
- Aminah Ismail, SWWS member, gender workshop excerpts to educate those of us who were interested in but were unable to attend the FLE/ SAC session—September
- Ann Teo, practising lawyer—talk on civil/ family law especially on divorce—October
- Fundraising film premiere in Oct/ Nov.
We will need your help to sell tickets!
Check with Alvaena on 082-416053 for further updates closer to the time/ look on the white board at the DIC.

If undelivered,
send to:
The Editor
SWWS
P. O. Box 551
93712 Kuching
Sarawak, Malaysia.

A SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear members,

A year has nearly gone by since the AGM when your present Committee was elected. Happily, we have had quite a few activities and programmes implemented this year. Sadly, we have areas of organizational weaknesses, too.

We are targeting TWO areas to improve:

1. to fine-tune the communication process between and within our members
2. to strengthen and widen our membership base.

This means we need to update our membership list. A copy of ALL names is attached. All other details are omitted to protect privacy. We have included a lot of 'expired' memberships by virtue of non-payment of fees and 'Inactive' members.

We wish to be able to inform you of coming events at all of which we warmly welcome your presence.

PLEASE help us by contacting Alvaena, to update your current contacts i.e. Telephone: office / home / hand phone, Fax, Email address, Postal address and your preferred method of communication.

If possible, we encourage Email / Fax / Post as these are more reliable means of communication. Our busy members are often difficult to reach by phone. This gets frustrating for the designated caller and is neither cost nor time efficient for us. For the odd last minute occasion though, it is still handy to have your telephone numbers.

At the forthcoming AGM in January 2001, we will propose

- a waiver or amnesty on outstanding fees so that we can start afresh from year 2001.

- fees paid up for 2000 will be 'rolled' over and considered payment for year 2001.

Please note that membership fees are due in advance i.e. in January each year.

I welcome suggestions for ways to better our society. Contact me or any of the committee to include these in the AGM agenda.

I look forward to your cooperation.

My best wishes and greetings of the season,
ROSTY DONALD

TO UPDATE

Please contact Alvaena

By

Email: sarswws@po.jaring.my

Or

Monday – Friday 9 am–12.30 pm
2– 4.30 pm

416 053 which if busy / unanswered,
use 016 867 5640

Or

VISIT US at 1610, L2, Rock Road.

Please try and do this in **January** so we can contact everyone from early February on!

SWWS Committee 2000/01

President: Rosty Donald

rosty@tm.net.my

Vice-President: Margaret Bedus

albe@pc.jaring.my

Secretary: Patricia Nayoi 411799 (O)

nayoi@hotmail.com

Treasurer: Vera Tan 480780 (O)

veratan@tm.net.my

Committee Members

Ita Ling 611825 (O)

Mariana Yusuf maria88ana@hotmail.com

Lyn Teo 235333(O)

Aminah Ismail amisma@freeanwar.com

Yap Chiew Pin 0198870428

Anne Samuel
Diana Carol 671244