



# Annual Report

# 2012

**All Women's Action Society**



## **AWAM's people**

### **OFFICE BEARERS [MARCH 2012 – MARCH 2014]**

President: Ho Yock Lin  
Deputy President: Sofia Lim Siu Ching  
Secretary: Judith Loh Foong Lin  
Treasurer: Tan Beng Hui  
Ordinary Council Members: Thency Gunasekaran  
Susie Cheng Yoke Chang  
Thaera Yousef (Resigned 13<sup>th</sup> July 2012)

### **MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

President: Ho Yock Lin  
Deputy President: Sofia Lim Siu Ching  
Secretary: Judith Loh Foong Lin

### **STAFF**

Programmes Manager: Betty Yeoh Siew Peng,  
Finance & Admin Manager: Bernie Chow Mei Mei (Resigned 30<sup>th</sup> June 2012)  
Senior Finance & Admin Officer: Emily O. Mathius (Commenced 16<sup>th</sup> May 2012)  
Senior Programme Officer: Lee Wei San  
Programme Officer: Smita Sharma  
Assistant Programme Officer: Milan Sadhwani (Commenced 16<sup>th</sup> April 2012)

### **INTERNS**

Arne Carstens (Completed 5<sup>th</sup> December 2012)  
Hew Li-Sha (Commenced 15<sup>th</sup> October 2012)

### **CONSULTANTS**

Project Consultant for PER Programme: Lim Chin Chin (Up to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012)  
Bookkeeper: Loke Siew Fung

### **WORKING COLLECTIVE**

Betty Yeoh Siew Peng  
Bernie Chow Mei Mei (Resigned 30<sup>th</sup> June 2012)  
Emily O. Mathius (Commenced 16<sup>th</sup> May 2012)  
Ho Yock Lin  
Judith Loh Foong Lin  
Lee Wei San  
Lim Chin Chin  
Milan Sadhwani (Commenced 16<sup>th</sup> April 2012)  
Smita Sharma  
Sofia Lim Siu Ching  
Susie Cheng Yoke Chang  
Tan Beng Hui  
Thaera Yousef (Resigned 13<sup>th</sup> July 2012)  
Thency Gunasekaran

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## Summary

The 2012 report is a detailed account of AWAM's work, in capturing and recording our activities, achievements, and challenges, rooted in our vision to create a just, democratic and equitable society where all persons, in particular women, are treated with respect and are free from all forms of violence and discrimination. The full version of the report will also be made available on our website at <http://www.awam.org.my/communications/publications/>.

AWAM's work is anchored on two main thematic programmes, **Gender Based Violence (GBV)** and the **Politicisation of Ethnicity and Religion (PER)**. We focus on these programmes because of the impact they have on society in general, and women in particular.

AWAM continues to make valuable contributions in the area of **Public Education and Training** under the acronym PET. This is used as a way of raising public awareness on the topics listed below, and through this, we hope to slowly reshape the way people understand these issues. In 2012, our training covered topics on gender-based violence, sexual harassment, women's rights and CEDAW, gender sensitization, safety issues, and women's leadership.

We were invited by banks, corporations, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, Universities, Colleges, Schools, Religious Institutions, the Bar Council, and Clubs to run trainings for employees and students. In 2011 we trained 1270 people, in 2012 we trained almost 5800 people, nearly 500 per cent more.

Under the Women's Learning Partnership (WLP), AWAM's trainers as well as activist trainers from other women's organisation underwent a National Training of Trainers' Programme.

There is a growing awareness among corporations, institutions and the Government for safety at work places. AWAM is at the forefront pushing for the Sexual Harassment Bill at the work place.

Current and emerging issues affecting Malaysians, particularly women, is the area of politicisation of ethnicity and religion. This area of AWAM's work began in 2009 with the first phase focusing on building solidarity and developing space for dialogue and greater understanding.

In 2012, we coined the acronym PER, **Politicisation of Ethnicity and Religion**. This was done to recognise that it is not religion and ethnicity per se that is the problem, but how these are used and politicised, leading to an increasingly divided Malaysian society. We focus on women because our own work has been impacted by such politicisation.

The focus of 2012 was to raise awareness as to how PER impacts society particularly women. Five study sessions and four informal sessions called "Chai and Chat" were held in 2012. The work in PER is cutting edge but we have taken it on

because we believe that it is essential for the long-term well-being, not only of AWAM but also society.

AWAM's core work over the years has been stopping Violence Against Women. This program has been renamed **Gender Based Violence**, acronym GBV. In 2012, AWAM continued to provide input to the policies of Selangor State Women's Affair Department. The input is on women's safety and gender and looking at establishing an anti-Sexual Harassment Bill.

At the Federal level, AWAM acted as resource trainers for workshops on women's safety and gender issues. On the proposed Bill against Sexual Harassment by the Joint Action Group (JAG), AWAM was consulted on and was resource for the Ministry of Women, family and Community Development.

Over the years AWAM has built rapport with service providers and in 2012, we continued to provide gender sensitization trainings to hospitals and to police.

2012 was a year where **Advocacy and Networking** gained much ground in engagements with various state agencies, civil society organisations and the public. AWAM was on the steering committee of "Wanita Suara Perubahan", a coalition of organisations working to promote women's rights in a March 8 rally, calling for 10,000 women to rise and make their voices heard. This event is covered in this report.

AWAM together with the Joint Action Group (JAG) have in the past, been cautious in engaging with the Government, though in the last two years, the state and federal government have been proactively seeking out JAG's views on the way forward in addressing issues on violence against women. AWAM has been strategic in our engagement and our role continues as a trainer on gender issues like sexual harassment, domestic violence and the empowerment of women and AWAM will continue to input on ways to bring a more equitable participation for women in the public and private realm.

AWAM continued to strengthen its reputation as a widely respected organisation by the media, though its on-going engagement with printed media, radio and television talk shows. We also developed a brand new website and were more strategic in our use of social media platforms like Facebook page and Twitter. These platforms have helped to profile AWAM and the issues we speak on. We also recognise the arrival of the digital age with its strengths and challenges amongst members who are not so technologically inclined. This 2012 report details our engagement with the media and our social media platforms.

Under **Organisational Development (OD)** we have the areas of Fundraising, Membership Development together with reports on AWAM's Evaluation and Planning of 2012 and our annual retreat at a beautiful hideout in Janda Baik.

Under our **Services**, we continue to provide counselling and legal information via face to face meetings, as well as over the phone and through our emails (for legal information). AWAM is assisted by our Legal Aid chambering pupils, para-

counsellors and counsellors who are interning for their masters. Details of the type of cases and number of cases in 2012 can be found in this report.

AWAM is in its 28th year of operations and we are assisted by 6 staff together with committed active volunteers, Management and the executive committee which meets once a month to discuss policy and strategic matters. This year at our evaluation and planning, we had the support and expertise of Saira Shameem, Programme Advisor at United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Malaysia, to help us revise our mission and vision, our goals, to critique and reflect on our work, to understand the challenges we face at the work place, in relationships, in communication and in accepting our own inadequacies. Through this exercise we now have a new organisational structure called AWAM's Tree. This Tree captures the life of AWAM, which is rooted in the lives of women in our society. We see it as a tree which is life giving, dynamic and guided by our vision and mission together with our seven core values. Read more about it in our report.

2012 was also a challenging time for the organisation. AWAM had the additional responsibility to manage some personal attacks made against the organisation. With the full support of staff and the management, a response team was set up to address these attacks. This exercise has been a learning curve for the organisation and has made each one of us more aware of issues of violence against women. Internally grievance processes and disclosure terms were discussed at length and will be put in force soon. Within the organisation, the human dynamics also needed attention. We focus on our work and we often forget about the health of our committed staff and volunteers. At our retreat this year, we invited a body therapist to help us become more aware of our own bodies and how to release our stored negative energies. It was a great bonding trip.

This report is about all of us who have contributed our time, ourselves for this belief that our work will bring about greater awareness and change for a better Malaysia, for all of society, and especially for women. AWAM will continue to be a positive force for the lives of women and society and we thank our members, funders, advocates for their support.

We acknowledge with gratitude all our staff and volunteers of 2012.

Thank you.



## Gender Based Violence (GBV)

### GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (GBV) COMMITTEE

Staff Coordinator: Betty Yeoh Siew Peng  
Volunteer Coordinator: Robin Saunders  
Members: Bhajan Kaur  
Liena Chin Oay Pay  
Milan Sadhwani  
Suaran Kaur  
Soh Yoke Wah  
Tai Li Yen

#### Overview

Gender-based violence (GBV) reflects and reinforces inequities between men and women and compromises the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims. It covers a wide range of human rights violations, including sexual abuse of children, rape, domestic violence, sexual assault and harassment, trafficking of women and girls and harmful traditional practices.

Violence against women (VAW) is the abuse of women which jeopardises women's lives, bodies, psychological integrity and freedom. Set against the background of the understanding of GBV and VAW, the work this committee encompasses the elimination of inequities between men and women which may compromise the autonomy of its victims. For AWAM, the survivors (or victims) are mostly women.

We work with other agencies and providers, to try to bridge the inequalities that may compromise the dignity and autonomy of survivors. The committee also works towards providing resources to AWAM in the work towards prevention of violence against women, elimination of discrimination and achieving gender equality.

#### Work done in 2012

2012 has been a quiet year for the GBV committee. Nevertheless, we did the best to meet the goal of bridging the inequalities in society as well as to build capacity of our own members.

#### **State level (Selangor & Penang)**

Recognizing that the inequalities have to be addressed at its root-cause, AWAM provides input to the State (Selangor) Government's Women's Affairs Department. AWAM is represented in the Selangor Women's Council and through this council provides input on the State policies and activities with regards to women and gender equality.

One of the proposals to the Selangor State government is to have a stand-alone Anti Sexual Harassment Bill. AWAM also submitted two proposals to the State government for income-generation



3Gs Training in Penang

programmes specifically for single mothers. Such income-generation programmes will support and empower single mothers to having a better livelihood for themselves. AWAM conducted workshops on Leadership for Women to participants of the Democratic Action Party (DAP) Penang and the Good Governance and Gender Equality Society, 3Gs. The workshops are to build capacity of young women in politics for leadership and participation in politics.

### ***Federal Level***

At the Federal government level, AWAM was invited for consultation on a Cabinet paper on Sexual Harassment stand-alone bill. We were also involved in the consultative meetings on the amended Domestic Violence Act (DVA) that included mental abuse. The consultation was to look into defining “mental abuse” and training for the DVA enforcement officers, that is, the state welfare officers.

AWAM provided input on the need to have gender-sensitizing training for welfare officers. AWAM also acted as resource person for workshops on Women’s Safety that was organised by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development. At these workshops, apart from giving information on safety for women, AWAM also addresses the position of women in society and the violence they faced. Such workshops create awareness on the gender inequities of women.



### ***Sexual Harassment Out (SHout) –***

*A nationwide campaign against sexual harassment*

AWAM is coordinator of the Sexual Harassment Out (SHout) campaign which was launched in 2010. Since the campaign’s launched, AWAM had conducted trainings on sexual harassment for members of the coalition and also discussed on legal reforms related to sexual harassment.

### ***Developing knowledge among AWAM membership***

At GBV meetings, we recognised the different levels of members understanding of the issue of gender-based violence. There was a suggestion to level and provide knowledge for members to understanding the issues. Several topics were suggested but were not able to take off for members. There was also a working group tasked with constructing a manual on gender-based violence. The group had drawn up with a framework for the manual and work will continue into 2013.

### ***Who do we work with?***

#### ***State Service Providers***

AWAM had in the past years been building rapport with public service providers (hospitals – one stop crisis centres; police and welfare departments). We have provided gender-sensitization sessions to the General Hospital Kuala Lumpur during their training to emergency response personnel from all state general hospitals. In addition, AWAM also gave talks to General Hospitals in Selangor, namely, Hospital Selayang and Hospital Sungai Buloh on roles of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in management of victims of violence.



Additionally, AWAM works with a network of government and non-governmental organisations to improve on the management of survivors of violence at hospitals' one-stop crises centres (OSCC). This informal network comprise of the academia (UM, USM Kota Bahru & Penang), hospital (UMMC, state clinic) representatives and various NGOs (YWCA, WAO) representatives.

In 2012, the Police Headquarters in Bukit Aman organised a dialogue with NGOs. The NGOs present at the first meeting, including AWAM, managed to institutionalise these meetings. Now regular meetings with the Police to highlight issues such as non-action by Police on cases and update on statistics from Police are among the agenda discussed. AWAM was also invited to provide input on types of campaigns to be carried out to address 'street violence' at the National Key Results meeting where the police were the key initiators of this project.

### ***Non-Governmental Organisations***

Changing mind-sets is important to eliminate gender inequities. AWAM works with other organisations to prevent and eliminate discrimination of women. We work with the Gabungan Bertindak Malaysia (Platform of Action Malaysia) to provide gender perspectives on their policies, plans and programmes. AWAM also supports Jaringan Rakyat Bertindak (People's Action Network) on the issue of discrimination of women workers. We addressed this at the May Day Rally organised by JERIT and also supported the Guppy Estate discrimination case against women workers.

### **Challenges and the way forward**

This committee needs to review the scope of work that they do. Many of the work carried out overlaps with other sections/committees. The tasks of the committee is challenging as it continuously has to be updated on the status of inequities of women and the committee lacks the human resources to do this monitoring. As a conclusion, it is encouraging to see the emergence of young feminists/activists who show interest in playing lead roles to bring this committee to greater heights.

## **Services**

### **Overview**

When AWAM was registered in 1988, its initial activities focussed more on advocacy and lobbying for legal reform. While legal reform is crucial, we know that it takes time. In the meantime, women faced with violence were seeking help to stop the violence they faced. AWAM decided to provide support for those facing violence as the right to life and bodily integrity is a basic human right.

Among our membership, we had two members who were social workers with the University Hospital, Kuala Lumpur. Another member returned from a visit to the Sexual Assault Centre of Ottawa, Canada armed with a manual on counselling. The



Chambering pupils at a Legal Aid Clinic training jointly organised by the KLLAC with 3 JAG organisations, AWAM, SIS and WAO.

three started to train AWAM's own members in the area of counselling. The first batch of para-counsellors was trained and in 1997, AWAM's Telenita Helpline was launched by then Minister of National Unity, Dato (now Tan Sri) Napsiah Omar. It was a significant milestone in AWAM's track record and we began to provide support to survivors of violence.

### **What services do we provide?**

AWAM provides free counselling and legal information. All counselling provided by AWAM are confidential and pro-bono. We attend to telephone counselling and face to face counselling. In 2012 we included legal information via email.

AWAM practises rights-based, feminist counselling using the various counselling therapy available to support the clients. The belief in the client as a unique person and is able to resolve her/his crisis empowers the client to eventually make informed decision for her/his own life.

Apart from counselling, AWAM also provides free legal information service. Legal information services are made available to those who seek assistance in legal matters. The legal information clinics were initially the result of clients' complaints that they found lawyers at legal aid centres judgemental and not sensitive to the violence they experienced.

The legal information clinic is collaboration between three non-governmental organisations partners of the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) and the Kuala Lumpur and Selangor Legal Aid Centres (KLLAC and SLAC). The JAG organisations are AWAM, Women's Aid Organisation (WAO) and Sisters in Islam (SIS). The KLLAC and SLAC work together with the three NGOs to provide training for their respective chambering pupils who will provide the human resource for these legal information clinics. AWAM, WAO and SIS provide conduct the training, covering issues such as violence against women, gender sensitization, feminists' perspective in law and basic counselling skills.

The Legal Aid Centres also conduct other training programmes for the chambering pupils, covering issues such as family law, Syariah law and the Domestic Violence Act. These trainings prepare the young lawyers doing their chambering to provide legal information service in our respective clinics. Pupils also learn feminist legal theory and practice. This provides young lawyers with feminist's perspectives on the current laws in Malaysia.

In 2012, two of the pupils serving AWAM had written a guidebook for fellow pupils on applying the Domestic Violence Act for cases of Domestic Violence. Pupils also assisted in the compilation of laws related violence against women to be submitted to Women's Learning Partnership, USA, for their e-resource centre on Corpus of Law.

### **Who receives our services?**

AWAM's services are open to women and men in crisis. AWAM does not limit our services to women only. We also assist men when they come seeking for our services. Beyond counselling, AWAM provides social services, such as, accompanying the client to police stations, one stop crises centres at government

hospitals and the Welfare Department. We do not discriminate based on sex, ethnicity or religious beliefs and income brackets. All our clients deserve justice to the violations they've faced.

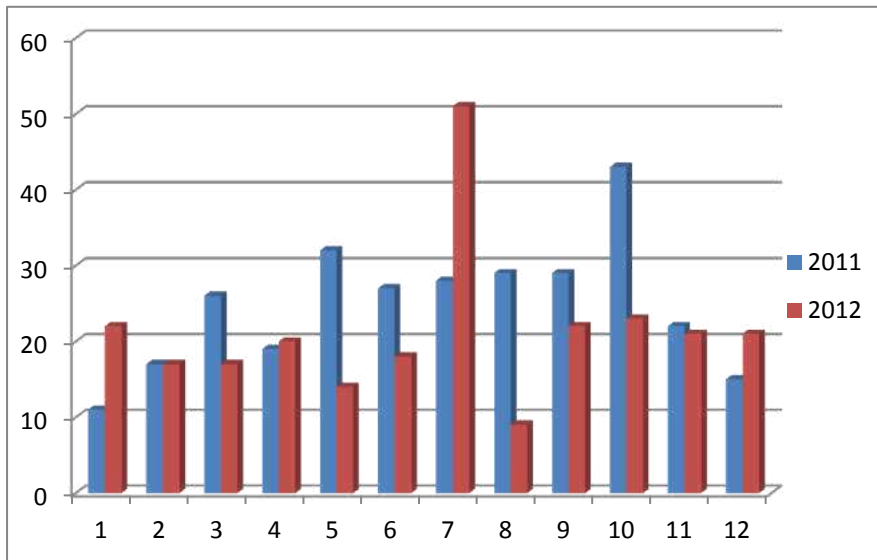


Chart: Number of Legal Cases in 2011 and 2012

In terms of legal information, AWAM provided legal information to 255 clients in 2012 compared to 298 cases in 2011 (See Table 2 below).

**Table 2: Legal Cases**

Yr/Mth	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2011	11	17	26	19	32	27	28	29	29	43	22	15	298
2012	22	17	17	20	14	18	51	9	22	23	21	21	255

Source: AWAM 2012

In 2012, AWAM received 152 first time counselling cases compared to 154 cases in 2011. (See Table 1 below).

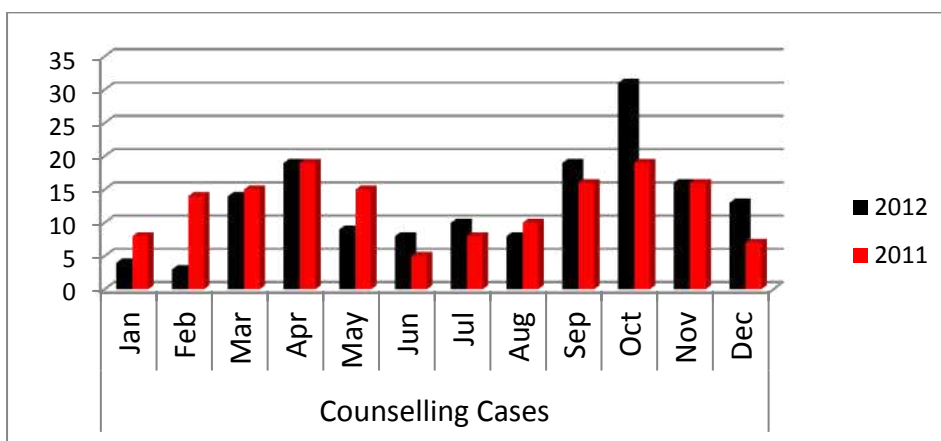


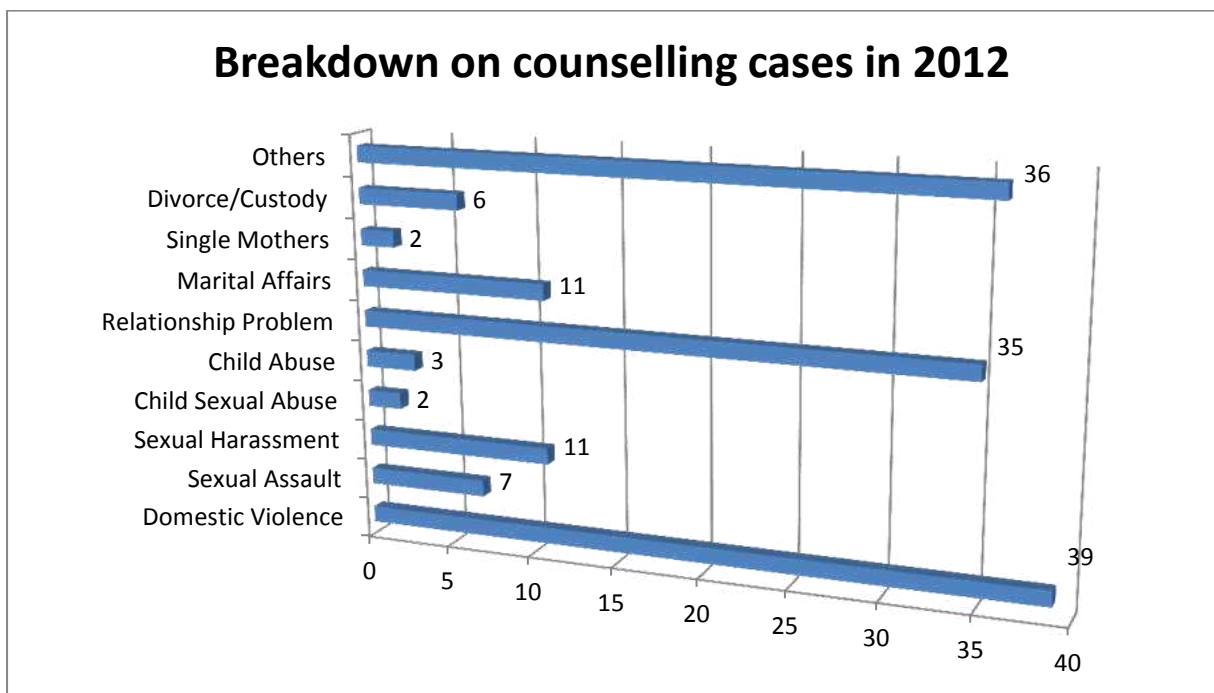
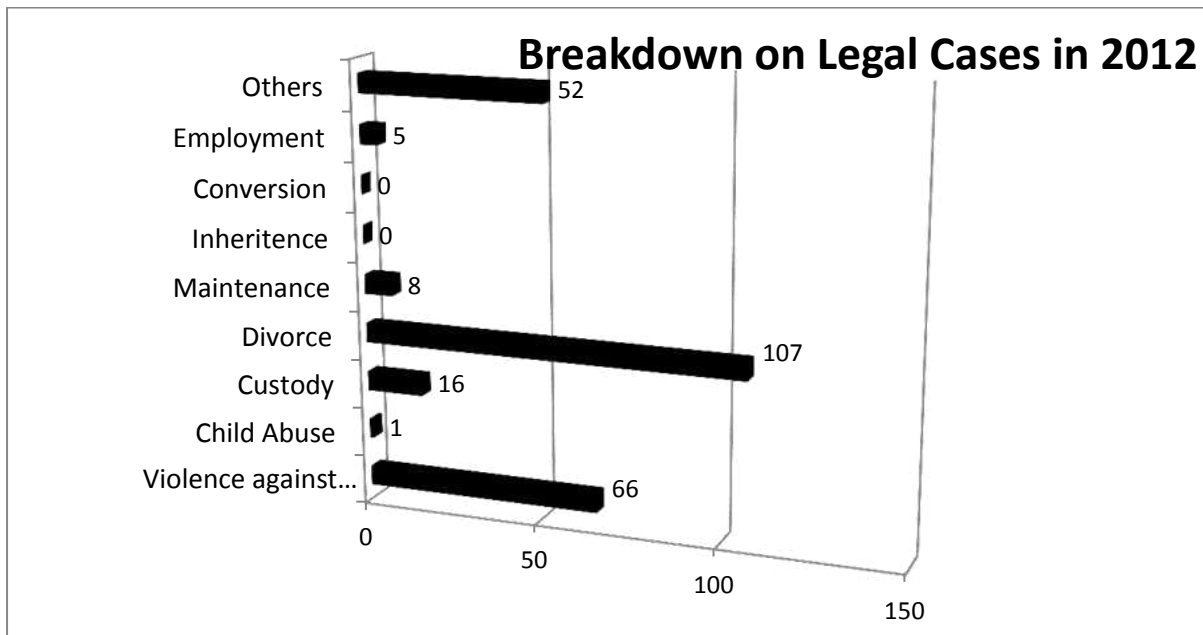
Chart: Number of Counselling Cases in 2011 and 2012

**Table 1 Counselling Cases**

Yr/Mth	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2011	4	3	14	19	9	8	10	8	19	31	16	13	154
2012	8	14	15	19	15	5	8	10	16	19	16	7	152

Source: AWAM 2012

The breakdown of types of cases addressed by AWAM in terms of counselling and legal information in 2012 can be found below.

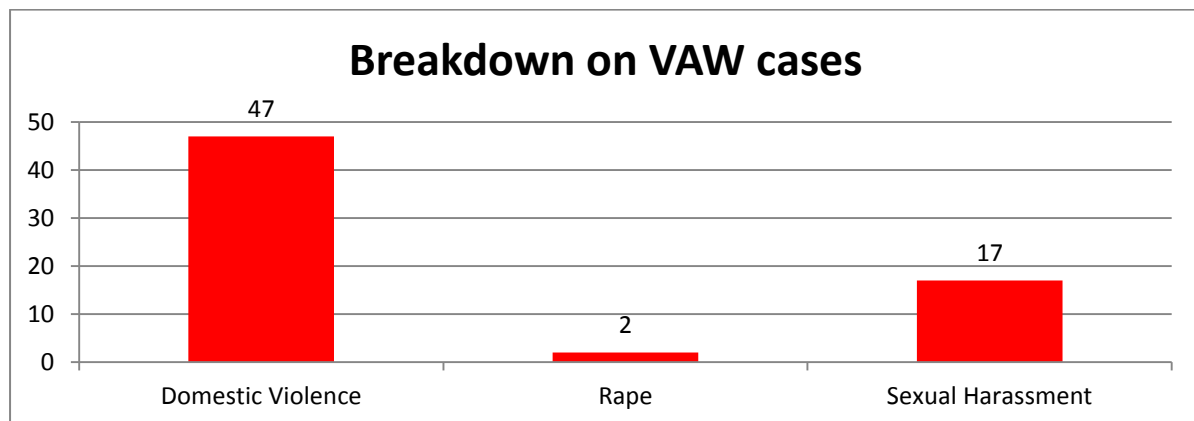


#### How do services help?

The services provided by AWAM are not just welfare services but are aimed at empowering our clients to take control of their lives. The clients receive immediate assistance when they call or visit AWAM, requiring counselling or legal information. Clients are also provided with emotional and physical support for court cases. Our pupils and/or staff, accompany clients who need such support to court on request.

Our Services have indirectly empowered clients through counselling and legal information. Clients become empowered and stronger through the understanding of their rights and are able to make informed decisions.

Below are testimonials from three clients, how they gained courage to face the challenges in their lives with AWAM's support. Not only do services make a difference in the lives of our clients, it has also provided insight on the realities of life of survivors of violence to our pupils and para-counsellors (some of them are currently pursuing a Masters in counselling). These pupils and para-counsellors, over time also become advocates for change. Some have taken on the role of facilitators to spread the awareness on gender-based violence and the rights of women.



### Client's Stories, Their Testimonials

LL:

"Grieving for my beloved husband was extremely painful and miserable. It was a chapter that came too early in my married life! AWAM's counselling services helped me cope with my grief and I would recommend people who are emotionally stressed to seek help at AWAM. BRAVO AWAM"

KH:

"I have been to many welfare agencies but none of them were as helpful as AWAM. Patiently giving me attention and care, they never once looked down on me, and for that I am appreciative"

AY:

"I wish to thank AWAM for their guidance and support in helping me through the difficulties I faced in gaining custody of my child. It is my hope that women will seek out AWAM when they are in need. We are not weak – but with support, we can be stronger."

### **Testimonials from AWAM Volunteers**

Robin Saunders, Intern Counsellor

"For me, AWAM is about growth, development and change - I think this captures the essence of the experience for AWAM clients too. Personally, I've appreciated the warm welcome by AWAM volunteers and staff."

Hui Ling, Yih Lin and Hidayah, Chambering pupils

"As chambering pupils at AWAM for the duration of 13 weeks, we gain eye-opening exposure to real-life situations and clients. Every session is a learning experience.....We aim to be the light at the end of the tunnel for those in need and are thankful for such a wonderful opportunity to work in this team."

Ho Wai Ling, Member

"My journey at AWAM started with hunting for a cause that would fit my personality, interests and strengths. Through this experience at AWAM, I learned how to overcome barriers, worked with and learnt from a diverse pool of people, and developed useful life skills in the process.."

*Source: extracted from AWAM's Race To Be Heard souvenir program)*

### **Challenges and the way forward**

Services have moved from being just a provision of support to advocating for change. Data collected have been used to lobby for law reforms. The cases are also used in meetings with Police or other government agencies to improve the mechanism of redress for the clients. AWAM has been doing gender sensitization sessions with hospitals and have had trainings and dialogues with Police. It can be noted however not all changes have taken place even with the trainings and dialogues. Cases from our services, such as sexual harassment cases have been presented at meetings to support the call for an independent anti-sexual harassment bill.

The latest move is to have a compilation of clients' positive experiences to encourage other survivors of violence to move forward in their lives. Services through counselling and legal information have become tools for advocacy in



addition to providing the much needed support to individuals faced with trauma in their lives.

Each year, AWAM trains our own corps of para-counsellors. The training of these para-counsellors has catapulted some to become actively involved in other advocacy work AWAM carries out. AWAM is challenged with the lack of financial support to have a full-time social worker.

While we strive to provide professionalism in the provision of our counselling and legal information services, we lack a full time social worker to enhance the follow up actions on the cases. Financial constraints had also prevented outreach to people who do not have access to legal aid and counselling support. AWAM may be making a little change in a person through our services. The little change matters most to the client in her/his most critical time.

We urge corporate sectors to donate generously or fund us in our services work to enable continued support to individuals who need the services.

# The Politicisation of Ethnicity and Religion (PER)

## POLITICISATION OF ETHNICITY AND RELIGION (PER) COMMITTEE

Project Consultant:	Lim Chin Chin (Up to 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2012)
Staff Coordinator:	Lee Wei San
Member Coordinator:	Thency Gunasekaran
	Cecilia Ng
	Ho Wai Ling
	Ho Yock Lin
	Judith Loh Foong Lin
	Masjaliza Hamzah
	Tan Beng Hui
	Tashia Peterson
	Wong Pui Yan

### Overview

AWAM comprises women from all walks of life, and of different ethnicities and religions. We believe that all women, regardless of their ethnicity or religion, have equal rights. We therefore work to reach out and address the needs of *all* women regardless of their background. AWAM's vision is to create a just, democratic and equal society, one where every person, in particular women, are treated with respect and are free from all forms of violence and discrimination.

Today, various political parties and social organisations continue to use ethnicity and religion to champion their individual agendas. While there is some awareness of the need to move beyond ethnic and religious lines, Malaysia remains, at various levels, segregated along such lines. This raises questions about our future as a nation. What is the nation we see for ourselves and for generations to come? Is it one that is fractured by communities pitted against each other by, among others, differences based on ethnicity and religion? Or one where we are united in our aspirations for a better Malaysia – one that is free from violence, discrimination, hatred and intolerance of difference?

AWAM's Politicisation of Ethnicity and Religion work in 2012 was a progression of its existing focus on Ethnicity and Religion which started in 2009. The first phase of our Ethnicity and Religion work from 2009 – 2011, focused on building solidarity and developing space for dialogue, as the topic of race and religion has been made such a 'sensitive' issue that the space for rational and meaningful discussion is extremely limited.

In the second phase of our work (2012 – 2014), we are focussing our energies on the how the politicisation of ethnicity and religion impacts society and women in particular. We also want to create an alternative discourse on the issue, with AWAM's 'feminist' lens.

### PER objectives for 2012 - 2014

AWAM's objectives in working on this thematic area are as follows:

- (1) To understand how ethnicity and religion is politicised in Malaysia and the impact of such politicisation on society in general, and women in particular;

- (2) To raise awareness and create spaces for constructive dialogue on the impact of such politicisation; and
- (3) To develop feminist responses to address the politicisation of ethnicity and religion and link it to AWAM's vision and mission.

## PER's 2012 Calendar

### February 11| “Let’s Talk...about Ethnicity and Religion” Workshop

On 11th February, we met with 22 members and friends to brainstorm and plan AWAM's work on ethnicity and religion. To develop this thematic area, we thought of study sessions and chai and chats that would build up more knowledge on the issues. We also want to engage with communities and use alternative means to reach audiences such as through films. And finally, working jointly with other organisations on this area will continue to be of great importance. Thanks to all who participated, and we look forward to your continued involvement!

### May 19 – 20 | Call2Action workshop, in collaboration with Saya Anak Bangsa Malaysia (SABM)



AWAM organised a Call2Action workshop together with our friends from SABM in May. The workshop provided an overview to the social contexts in Malaysia and gave us a space to reflect our very own position in it.

Twenty of us came together in the SABM house for several sessions over two days. Starting with an approach to the notion of our social contract, our constitution, we went on to identify how much of a “failed state” Malaysia has become.

The SABM facilitators also laid out political power structures and gave a detailed overview on the history of our diversity and the roots of increasing polarisation within our community. We spent some time connecting the fresh knowledge to the PER programme, brainstorming ideas to translate these learned into action.

### June 19 | PER Study Session 1: Political Economy of Malaysia's Development and Affirmative Action

*With Lee Hwok Aun, Senior Lecturer, Department of Development Studies, Universiti Malaya*

Our first PER study session was attended by 25 interested members and friends. We invited Lee Hwok Aun from UM's Department of Development Studies to provide an overview of Malaysia's economic development as it relates to the New Economic Policy (NEP) and affirmative action policies because of their relevance to the issue of the politicisation of ethnicity in Malaysia.

### June 21 | Chai and Chat on Study Session 1

The study session was followed up by a ‘Chai and Chats’ to share what we picked up from the study session. Fourteen participants collectively unpacked our understanding of affirmative action in Malaysia and identified the impact of affirmative action in economic policies on women. We discussed inter-ethnic

relations, the concepts of special position and special rights, the impact of policies on employment and educational opportunities, the framework for the implementation of affirmative action, and whether affirmative action should indeed be based on ethnicity. It was a good space to think about and articulate our thoughts and questions on the links between political economy and identity politics in Malaysia.

### **July 17 | PER Study Session 2: Policies, Politics and Social Justice: The NEP in Malaysia**

*With Terence Gomez, Professor, Faculty of Economics and Administration, Universiti Malaya*

The political landscape of Malaysia: a huge topic, one highly relevant to our work. For this study session, held on July 17 at AWAM, we were lucky to have UM Professor and distinguished political economist Terence Gomez. Twenty five members and friends of AWAM came and learnt about social inequalities and specifically about the realities of inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic inequalities.

Professor Gomez spoke at length about the NEP, the political landscape that influenced macro policies over time, and the outcomes and repercussions of these policies. Among other things, he noted that the NEP's initial focus was quality public education to lift rural Malays out of poverty. However, under the Mahathir administration, this focus shifted towards access to tertiary education, public employment, and business opportunities.

Terence argued for affirmative action policies that are measurable and time bound and that provide real support to those most in need. Asserting that affirmative action is principally a good thing, he cautioned against abuse and the implications of such abuse, namely the lack of social cohesion and greater identification on the basis of ethnicity rather than nationality. The crux of affirmative action remains to create an inclusive environment and to ensure the equitable distribution of resources.

### **July 21 | Chai and Chat on Study Session 2**



As usual, a Chai and Chat followed this month's study session, providing a space to discuss what we learned. Ten members attended. Together, we revisited an earlier timeline identifying political and economic markers in Malaysian history that came out of February's PER Workshop. This time we wondered: what consequences do historical events have for us?

To build a bridge from large contexts to the individual level, our facilitators Chin Chin and Yock Lin came up with an exercise where participants were asked to select a character profile each and, in pairs, imagine how political and economic policies related to ethnicity and religion affected their characters. It turned out to be an interesting way of reviewing the impact of the government's policies on women from different backgrounds and helped us imagine the connection between policies and lived realities.

## **August 11 | PER Study Session 3: The Politics of Malayness and Muslim Identity**

*With Fuad Rahmat, Islamic Renaissance Front (IRF)*

If you want to talk about PER-related issues in Malaysia, there's one topic you won't be able to avoid: Islam and its connection to Malay identity. Not always an easy thing to talk about, to be sure. We were very fortunate to have Ahmad Fuad Rahmat of the Islamic Renaissance Front (IRF) speak on the subject of Malay and Muslim identity at this study session.

Twenty-odd AWAMies listened as Fuad talked about how the discourse on Malay-Muslim identity emerged in Malaysian politics and where it is heading. Different phases of Islamic revivalism were identified as well as their roots in Malaysia's history since independence. He also highlighted how the increasing influence of Islamic organisations made the state react with measures of institutionalisation and control. According to Fuad, the characteristics, demands, and increasing vocalness of Islamist non-state actors can be seen as a response to the changing political landscape.

While the state has its version of official Islam, the myriad groups and organisations from the grassroots tell us that there are differing voices when it comes to the Islamist movement and to how religion is perceived on the ground. However, it is still too early to tell how these differing groups and voices would impact the future of political Islam in Malaysia.

## **August 14 | Chai and Chats on Study Session 3**

To provide a space for people to revisit the contents of the most recent study session, Wei San and Tashia facilitated another 'Chai and Chats' at the AWAM Centre. We reflected upon Fuad's talk and discussed the main issues and trends that we could deduce from it. Democratic Spaces, Identity and Pluralism and Islamic Revivalism were the areas under which we grouped the information. We then broke into two groups to identify the impact on different groups in society characterised by social factors like gender, class, ethnicity, and status.

## **September 4 | Public Talk: Women's Leadership in a Plural Society – Going beyond ethnicity and religion**

*With Maznah Mohamad*



In a plural society like Malaysia, accustomed to a multi-ethnic and multi-religious coalition for government, how effective is and can women's leadership be? What constitutes good and bad "women leaders"? Why do some women shun politics while others cannot survive outside of it? These were several questions that we discussed at the thought-provoking public talk by Maznah Mohamad in KLSCAH on 4 September 2012.



In her presentation, Maznah challenged the audience to think outside the framework of ethnicity and religion. She talked about the need for substantive leadership and the elements that make a leader substantive. She explored women's leaderships in various historical contexts before focusing on women leaders in Malaysia. She talked about the need to strengthen the public sphere to address the issue of a "rentier state", i.e. a state where benefits are distributed not through meritocracy but through, among others, connection to ruling elites as well as the 'right' ethnicity and gender.

In the context of Malaysia, she discussed the various types of women leaders Malaysia has seen recently and talked about the different types of strength each had and how they measured in terms of being a 'substantive' leader.

In conclusion, she noted that women leaders are subject to various pressures, and that while ethnicity and religion play a part, there are other equally important considerations. More than 70 people attended this talk organised by AWAM. Maznah is an Associate Professor with the Department of Malay Studies and Southeast Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore, and was previously with USM in Penang.

#### **October 11 | PER Study Session 4: Muslim women and the headscarf**

*With Masjaliza Hamzah and Ratna Osman, Sisters in Islam (SIS)*

Tudung, veil, hijab, kerudung, rusari, jilbab, niqab, selendang, foulard – All of these terms represent not only the different styles of what is commonly referred to as a headscarf, but also indicate different cultures and societies in which the wearing of the headscarf is practised. October's study session saw Masjaliza Hamzah (CIJ/AWAM) and Ratna Osman (SIS) and discussing the significance behind the practice of wearing this religious headgear, by drawing on personal, social, and political encounters.

The presenters referred to relevant Islamic texts relating to the term hijab and encouraged participants to explore the meaning of the Muslim headscarf beyond the common binary perceptions of oppression vs piety. One of the many interesting facts was that the term hijab in the Qur'an does not refer specifically to the covering of women's hair. It refers instead to concepts of, among others, modesty, social status, and security. Ratna and Mas also took participants on a trajectory of the practice of wearing the headscarf from thousands of years ago to the modern manifestation of tudung wearing in Malaysia.

#### **October 13 | Chai and Chat on Study Session 4**



This month's Chai and Chat, the usual follow up to our study sessions, we watched and discussed the film "Aku Siapa" by Yati Kaprawi. It was rather informative as it portrayed the voices of Muslim women on the ground and their thoughts on the practice of wearing the 'tudung' in Malaysia. We had a lively discussion about the concept of modesty and its link to women's behaviour and dress, the diversity of expression within the faith (Islam), and the linking or de-linking between Malay and Muslim identities in Malaysia.



## November 10 | **PER Study Session 5: Regulating Sexualities and Genders in Malaysia: What's God got to do with it?**

*With Tan Beng Hui, AWAM*

AWAM had its last and very successful PER Study Session this month! Nearly thirty people turned up to attend this study session, where beng hui gave a short talk on the state's rigid regulation of sex and gender. In Malaysia, the state imposes a heteronormative system which assumes that heterosexuality is the norm, resulting in a discourse that is prejudiced, inflexible, and punitive.

We started the session by clarifying terminologies. The participants discussed the differences between the two terms: 'Sexual Marginal' and 'LGBT'. beng hui preferred to use the term 'sexual marginal' as the very term itself expresses the important concern that people are marginalised on the basis of their sexuality.



The 'LGBT' acronym on the other hand, she felt to be too fluid and not as successful in building necessary bridges between people. beng hui then went on to explain how sexual and gender pluralities were more tolerated in the past. The obvious intolerance we see nowadays is largely because of state-led Islamisation. Participants were made to question exactly how divine or special these 'sharia' moral laws were. An interesting point here is that a lot of what is available in sharia law is similarly present in secular law, making the two quite indistinguishable with regard to some issues, including specifically where sexuality is concerned.

AWAM strongly opposes discrimination against sexual minorities and LGBTQs. As a feminist organisation, we believe in equality for all and an end to all forms of gender-based violence and state persecution.

### **Our plans for 2013**

For 2013, PER has plans to develop a PER training manual. We will also be revitalising Big Group Meetings with members to discuss issues relating to PER and will engage the public through a public talk. AWAM has just started issuing statements on the issue of PER as well.

### **Join us!**

AWAM's PER work is carried out by a committee of dedicated members and staff. We meet monthly to create, brainstorm and 'buat kerja'.

What you can do:

- taking notes at meetings or events;
- look for articles on the issue and/or write summaries of articles;
- media monitoring of PER issues;
- write statements in response to the politicisation of ethnicity and religion;
- attend workshops / conferences etc on the issue and tell us about it;
- take photos or videos for us at our events;

- feed us!
- and much more...

If meetings are not your thing and you prefer to help with one off events, please do still contact us and we'll figure something out together. Contact: Wei San at 03-7877 4221 or [advocacy-programs@awam.org.my](mailto:advocacy-programs@awam.org.my).

## Public Education and Training

### PUBLIC EDUCATION & TRAINING (PET)

Staff Coordinator: Betty Yeoh Siew Peng

Trainers:  
Ho Wai Ling  
Ho Yock Lin  
Jamilah Mohammad  
Joyce Hue  
Lee Wei San  
Lui Siow Foong  
Smita Sharma  
Kuek Yen Sim

### Overview

Public Education and Training (PET) committee is a strong supporting component of AWAM's structure. This Committee supports AWAM's two core programmes of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Politicisation of Religion (PER). The members of the committee act as resource persons in providing training as well as formulation of training manuals. In addition, it also takes on the additional role of advocates and reaches out to various levels of society. The trainers and facilitators help towards achieving AWAM's vision of a violence free community where women live without discrimination and enjoy gender equality. The committee members are keen to build the capacity of others as much as building their own knowledge and skills. Members of this committee, both experienced and new, have over the years, enabled AWAM to become a training provider on many core issues such as Rights of Women and non-discrimination, Gender-Based Violence, Gender Sensitization, Leadership and Advocacy skills. AWAM has reached out to the community on the ground as well and provided training for the public sectors. More importantly, it is reaching out to young Malaysians to shape and influence their mind-set towards a violence-free, non-discriminating, gender equal society.

### Who do we train or provide training to?

AWAM had been providing training to various institutions and levels of society. We have classified the various institutions according to five clusters:

- (i) Educational institutions,
- (ii) Non-Government Organisations,
- (iii) Government Agencies,
- (iv) Corporate and
- (v) Global Training.

In 2012, the number of training conducted was 36 in total. The breakdown of training for various public and private institutions can be noted in Table 1. The full list of training provided is attached.



Para-counselling Training in session at AWAM

AWAM reaches out to all levels of society in the effort to put across the core issues that impact on women in particular and affects society in general. In conducting our

training, we have also advocated for change and lobbied for the support from the people we trained.

In May, AWAM with the support of WLP organised a **Pre-Institute Workshop** for 10 AWAM trainers. The trainers were introduced to the concept of facilitation, using WLP's Horizontal, Inclusive and Participatory methodology. This was followed by a **National Training of Trainers (NTOT)**, which AWAM organised. Women activists and trainers from women NGOs from all over Malaysia attended the NTOT. The Pre-Institute was facilitated by WLP global trainers Sindi Medar-Gould and Monica Benemoh. The NTOT also had additional global trainers Samah Helmy, who was joined by AWAM's staff trainer Betty Yeoh. Betty is also part of WLP's global training team, and joined the Indonesian partner of WLP's Pre-Institute and NTOT in June. Haslinah Yacob also attended to assist in rapporteuring the Indonesian workshop as well as play the role of co-facilitator. The Indonesian participants were glad that their global trainer was conversant with Bahasa Indonesia. They also found they were able to understand the topics easily because of the methodology applied.

AWAM also conducted training on **para-counselling** and also conducted sessions for the pupils in preparation for their legal aid information service for the NGOs including AWAM. In May, AWAM participated in the STAR Health Exhibition. Exhibition booth activities are indirect public education as our members shared information on AWAM and the issues we deal with. At this exhibition, we even managed to recruit some members. Another form of public education is briefing groups who visit AWAM. In November, a group of 25 service providers from Afghanistan visited AWAM. They were briefed on the organisation, the work AWAM does and how we support survivors of violence.

### What topics/issues do we cover?



A training session for management and crew on board Star Cruise Libra, Penang

AWAM's focus since conception was Violence against Women (VAW). Today, AWAM has advanced the issue of violence to incorporate Gender-Based Violence (GBV). Malaysia ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1995. Since then, AWAM had advocated the three principles of CEDAW which are Non-Discrimination, Substantive Equality and State Obligation. The trainings that we conduct embrace these principles and the topics covered are also used to advocate change in the participants we train.

Currently, AWAM provides training in the area of women's rights based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and CEDAW, gender-based violence with special focus on sexual harassment, domestic violence and rape. We also train in the area of gender sensitization and leadership for women. These topics are relevant in providing better understanding to the various level of society. In 2012, AWAM's public education and training saw the organisation providing training especially in the

area of gender-based violence, sexual harassment, women's rights and CEDAW, and gender sensitization. Table 2 shows the types of training conducted.

### **How does such training help?**

It is our belief that when a society is aware and understand the root causes of violence, they will prevent or eliminate gender-based violence and discrimination towards women. Women who are aware of their rights will empower themselves and make informed decision. The youth who are the leaders of tomorrow, will make a substantive change when they are able to contribute towards a gender equal society. It is our aim that with training as a vehicle of change, we can reach the various levels of society to make AWAM's vision a reality. In 2012, we were able to reach out to over 5000 individuals from various section of society. *Table 3, (Appendix 3)* provides the statistics of who we reached out to.

In addition to the advocacy work, public education and training had also generated income to support AWAM's work. This income is through the contributions of organisations and institutions which are able to support AWAM financially when we conduct trainings for them. We fervently hope that requests for training would increase in the future as we continue to share knowledge, skills and information to society; we hope society will contribute financially to our organisation.

### **The way forward**

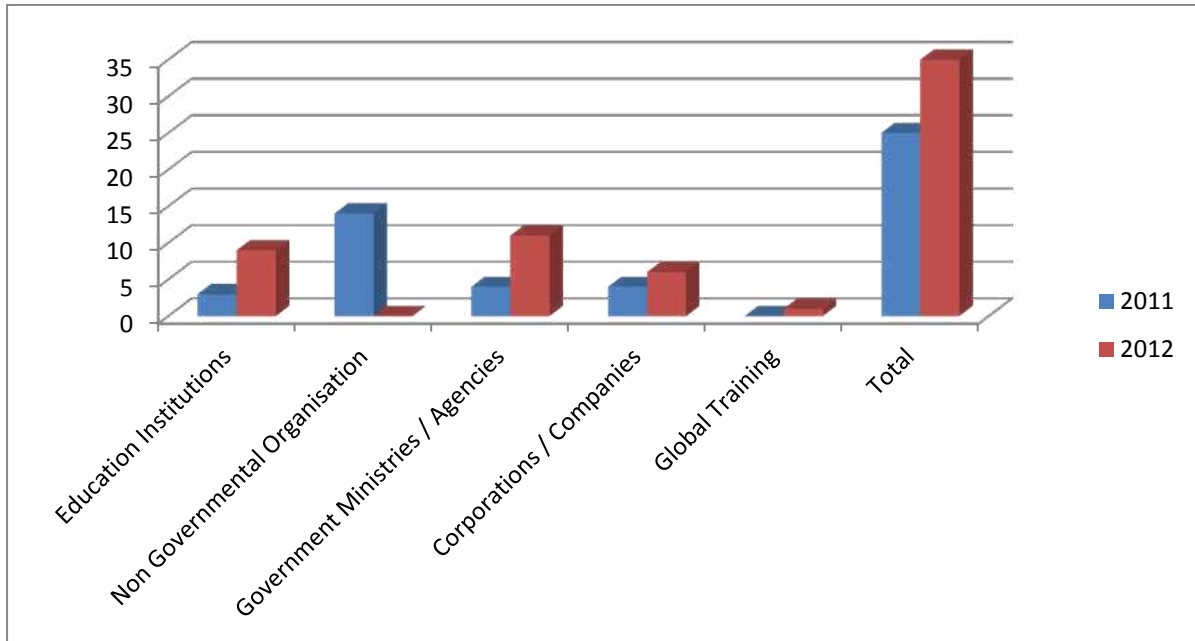


The Public Education and Training committee continues to support AWAM in advocacy work and in building a core group of trainers and facilitators. AWAM had the good fortune of committed members who are professionals, from the Academia and also seasoned feminists/activists to support our work. They provide a foundation of knowledge on the various core issues such as Gender-Based Violence, Gender Equality and Politicisation of Ethnicity and Religion.

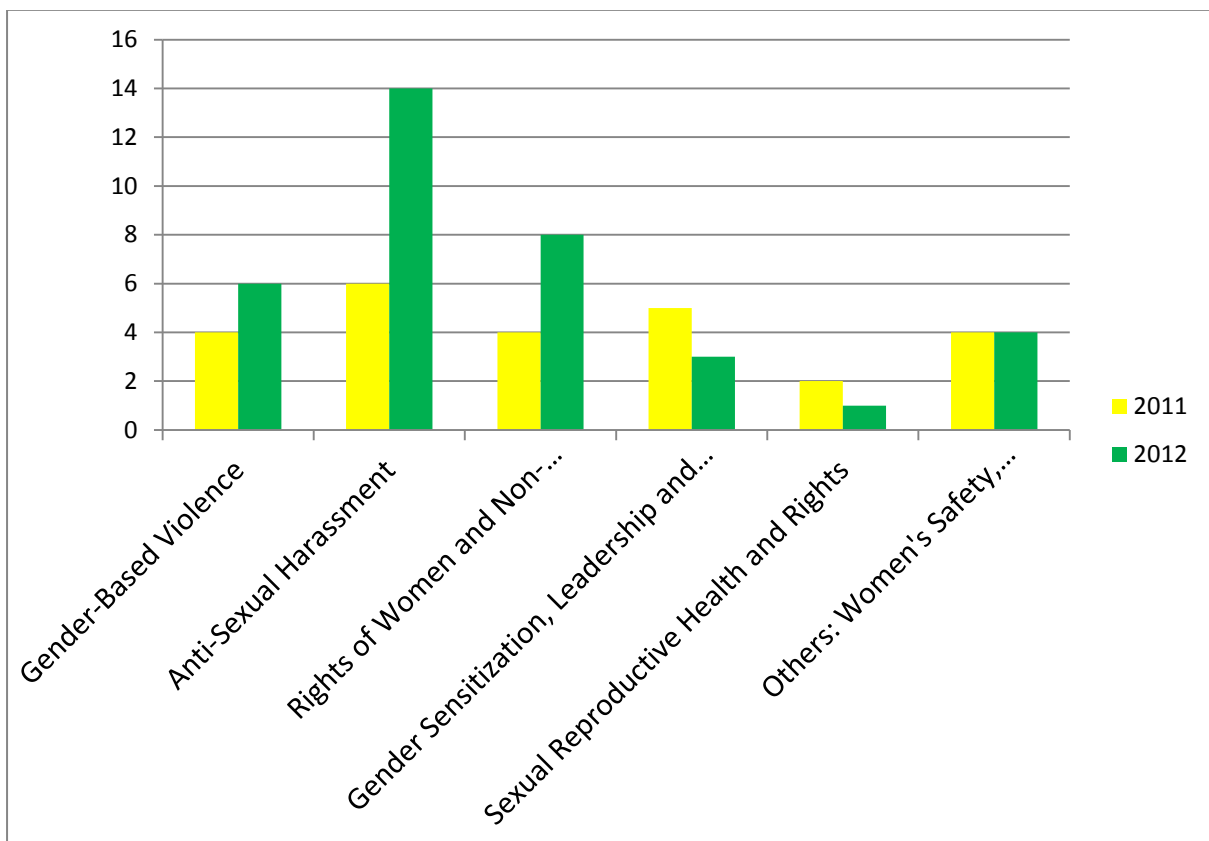
New members are recruited yearly and are trained in-house via our training of trainer's programme, to equip them with necessary skills and knowledge to train others. AWAM however still faces the challenge of seeking funds to carry out more training programmes to reach out to even more people within our community. In 2012, we received support for specific training programmes, such as CEDAW and Leadership for Institutions of Higher Learning, from the United Nations, Gender Theme Group.

AWAM looks forward in 2013 for major financial support in order to have a comprehensive programme that will enable AWAM to implement specific trainings and monitoring mechanisms that can provide concrete outcomes such as Sexual Harassment Free Workplaces or Institutions.

Corporations and institutions with corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes are encouraged to work with AWAM to achieve programmes that can benefit their employees/members. Members of the public who are interested in the issues that AWAM focuses on are most welcome to join us in the Public Education and Training committee.



Refer to Table 1: Institutions for which AWAM provided training



Refer to Table 2: Topics / Issues trained



Year	Education Institutions	Non – Governmental Organisations	Government Ministries / Agencies	Corporations / Companies	Global	Total
2011	3	14	4	4	0	25
2012	5	10	13	6	1	35

Year	Gender Based Violence	Anti-Sexual Harassment	Rights of Women and Non Discrimination (CEDAW)	Gender Sensitization Leadership and Political Advocacy	Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights	Others: Women's Safety, Laws related to women	Total
2011	4	6	4	5	2	4	25
2012	6	13	8	3	1	4	35

Year	Education	NGOs	Government Agencies	Corporate/ Companies	Global	Total
2011	228	575	305	162	0	1270
2012	835	460	1870	2566	27	5758

## Advocacy and Networking

### Overview

In 2012, AWAM continued to engage in advocacy and networking strategies with various state agencies, civil society organisations and the public, to meet its vision of a just society where all persons, particularly women, are free from all forms of violence and discrimination.

The section below sets out our work as follows:

- I. WORKING WITH OTHER CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS
  - a. International Women's Day: Wanita Suara Perubahan
  - b. Aiyoh...Wat Lah?! Awards 2012
  - c. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) – NGO Alternative Report
- II. WORKING WITH VARIOUS ARMS OF THE GOVERNMENT
  - a. Workshop on sexual harassment with the Ministry of Women Family and Community Development
  - b. Meeting the Police
  - c. Majlis Permuafakatan Wanita Selangor (Women's Council of Selangor)
  - d. NGO Petition on Statutory Rape – Meeting the de facto Law Minister
- III. SOLIDARITY ACTIONS
  - a. Bersih Judicial Review: a victory for civil liberties in Malaysia
  - b. Our Courts Have Failed Our Women Workers: The Guppy Case
  - c. In Court: Against the discrimination and abuse of transgender persons
- IV. REGIONAL ADVOCACY
  - a. ASEAN Workshop on Violence Against Women

### I. WORKING WITH OTHER CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

#### a. International Women's Day: Wanita Suara Perubahan



8 March: Rally at Brickfields, and posting of white gloves to ADUNS.

ADUN (state assembly persons) in the country.

We followed this action up by visiting Parliament on **13 March** to hand out gloves and fliers to MPs and lobby them with our demands.

13 March: AWAMmies at Parliament

At last year's International Women's Day, AWAM joined *Wanita Suara Perubahan*, a coalition of organisations working to promote women's rights, to draw attention to a March 18 rally.

On **8 March**, we held a brief rally with members of women's NGOs at the Jln Tun Sambanthan roundabout in Brickfields before heading over to the Brickfields Post Office to mail packages of white gloves and fliers on our rally and 6 demands to each





15 March: AWAMmies at LRTs



AWAMmies making placards

AWAMies could also be found on the LRTs to announce our event and hand out fliers, and at the office making placards in preparation for March 18!



18 March: Participants at the Wanita Suara Perubahan rally.

Wanita Suara Perubahan was a coalition that eventually grew to 40 NGOs and 6 political parties. The coalition held a march and rally on Sunday, 18 March 2012 in Petaling Jaya. Approximately 5000 women and men came together in a sea of purple with white gloves. The marchers met at two locations, Tasik Taman Jaya and Masjid Bulat SS14, at 2pm for the start of the march.





18 March: AWAMmies at the Wanita Suara Perubahan rally.

Chanting “Hidup! Hidup! Hidup! Wanita!” and singing folk songs like “Gelang Si Paku Gelang” with lyrics changed to suit the theme of our rally, the jubilant crowd made its way towards Padang Astaka. The 2 groups of marchers converged safely at 3.30pm with the guidance of marshals from Unit Amal. Marchers were welcomed with drums, followed by speeches by women from the organising committee, an Indigenous woman and a woman politician.

Our six demands for a clean government were reiterated:

1. *A government free of corruption*
2. *A decent living wage*
3. *A better quality of life*
4. *An end to gender based violence*
5. *Repeal of the peaceful assembly act*
6. *Free and fair elections*

The programme ended with collective singing and a dance performance led by the women’s rights groups. The crowd dispersed after 5pm, tired but hopeful that their voices and the 6 demands were heard by the government. Women voters are encouraged to use these demands to lobby your political representatives in the lead-up to the elections.

### **Challenges:**

Women political leaders were invited to join the event and coalition as we needed their support with outreach. However, only political leaders from the opposition parties joined the rally, which led to the event being seen and described as an “opposition” led event against the ruling government. This also meant that mainstream media did not cover our event as it was seen as opposition motivated. Therefore, the 6 demands by grassroots women and women’s NGOs did not get much coverage in the media, despite the fact that this was the largest women led rally in Malaysia focusing on women’s human rights.

## b. Aiyoh...Wat Lah?! Awards 2012



16 June: The Aiyoh team at the Annexe Gallery

AWAM and our sister [JAG](#) organisations put on the Aiyoh...Wat Lah?! Awards 2012 show on Saturday, June 23 2012 at The Annexe Gallery. These awards highlighted public examples of sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia to encourage higher standards of public discourse and behaviour in relation to gender and sexuality.

The show, which was hosted by the "irrepressible" Ribena Berry, went really well, and a bunch of audience members told us that the awards were a fantastic idea. We're definitely doing this again in 2013! If you'd like to nominate relevant public acts or statements for the 2013 awards, write to AWAM with details (or a news report) so we can add your suggestion to our long list. Thanks!

"Winners" by category:

Category	Criteria	Winning Act or Statement
<b>Foot in Mouth</b>	a public statement that manifests notions of misogyny, sexism, homophobia, or transphobia even if the speaker did not intend to come across as misogynistic, sexist, homophobic, or transphobic	<i>Unwanted buildings are like an "old woman".</i> (22 February 2011)
<b>Insulting Intelligence</b>	a public statement that displays misogyny, sexism, homophobia, or transphobia and is illogical, irrational, or blatantly false	<i>Extramarital affairs are caused by "wives who neglect their responsibilities to their husbands."</i> (7 April 2011)
<b>Cannot Ignore</b>	a seriously offensive act or statement by a public figure or institution that is particularly damaging to the cause of gender equality and that requires a severe response	<i>Forcing two women to perform nude squats for 'illegally' entering the country.</i> (June 2011)
<b>Least Helpful to the Sisterhood</b>	an act or statement by a female public figure which displays misogyny, sexism, homophobia, or transphobia; in particular displays an attitude of extreme conservatism towards women's position in society or promotes inequality between the genders	<i>Wives who don't satisfy their husbands are the cause of illicit sex.</i> (28 November 2011)
<b>Ad Nauseam</b>	a public act or statement that displays misogyny, sexism, homophobia, or transphobia and is repeated over a period of time	<i>Repeated references to prostitutes in a negative way.</i> (November 2011)
<b>Policy Fail</b>	a state or federal policy that is misogynistic, sexist, homophobic, or transphobic in its content and/or consequences	<i>State-run boot camp targeting teenage boys who display effeminate behaviour.</i> (21 April 2011)

<b>Right on Track</b>	a public statement or action that is helpful in fighting misogyny, sexism, homophobia, or transphobia	<i>Decision that CEDAW is binding on the Malaysian government and that using pregnancy as a reason not to employ a person is a form of gender discrimination. (12 July 2011)</i>
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Wondering who made these statements? Find out at our [AiyohWatLah website](#). Videos, podcasts and other materials from the show can be found there as well.

**Challenges:** Not much coverage by mainstream media, but alternative media did pick this event up.

### c. **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) – NGO Alternative Report**

Malaysia, along with over 90% of the world (187 of 193 countries), has voluntarily ratified an international bill of rights for women called the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

This means that our government has agreed to ensure the realisation of women’s equality in all fields, such as education, employment, health and other fields. As part of its obligations under CEDAW, Malaysia must submit periodic status reports to the UN Committee which monitors CEDAW. Sadly, Malaysia has yet to submit its report which was due in 2008.

Women’s groups decided to write an alternative report in response to the government’s tardiness in submitting its government report. AWAM contributed to the 2012 NGO CEDAW Alternative Report coordinated by the Women’s Aid Organisation (WAO), which was launched on 6 September 2012. The NGO CEDAW Alternative Report can be accessed [here](#). A youtube video of the launch [here](#). This is an extremely important report as it provides a baseline of the status of women in Malaysia, and provides women’s groups an advocacy base with which to lobby our government to improve laws, policies and programmes which impact on women’s realisation of their full potential and rights.

**Challenges:** Malaysia has yet to submit its state report to CEDAW.

## II. **WORKING WITH VARIOUS ARMS OF THE GOVERNMENT**

### a. **Workshop on sexual harassment with the Ministry of Women Family and Community Development**

The Ministry of Women Family and Community Development organised a “*Bengkel Penggubalan Akta Gangguan Seksual*” (*Workshop on Formulation of Sexual Harassment Act*) on 21 February to consult with various stake holders on the formulation of a Sexual Harassment Bill. AWAM presented gaps in existing laws to address sexual harassment and a review of laws in 14 countries with relevant legislation. The MWFCD chairing the meeting concluded that most participants are in favour of a stand-alone SH Act, and would submit the outcome of consultation to the cabinet committee.



**Challenges:** As of end 2012, there has been no information from the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development as to the status of the Sexual Harassment bill.

**b. Meeting the Police**

A dialogue between civil society organisations and Bukit Aman was held on 12 April. This is the third in a row of meetings with the police, with the previous two held in April and November 2011. The dialogue focused on issues such as access to police data and statistics, the definition of psychological violence in DVA cases, providing interpretation services to PDRM for women migrant workers, and conducting trainings on DVA at police officer trainings. Other organisations present were the Association of Women Lawyers (AWL), Women's Aid Organisation, P.S. The Children, Sisters In Islam, SUARAM, and Tenaganita. AWAM was represented by Betty, Smita, and Wei San.

**c. Majlis Permuafakatan Wanita Selangor (Women's Council of Selangor)**

In the first half of 2012, AWAM worked with the Selangor State government to develop programmes for the empowerment of women, through the Majlis Permuafakatan Wanita Selangor. This council is a 'think tank' made of different stakeholders interested in / working on women's issues and provides advice to the Selangor state government. AWAM sat in the "Hak, Keselamatan dan Undang-Undang" Committee and provided input to the state on laws, policies and programmes relating to sexual harassment.

**Challenges: AWAM's proposal for laws, policies and programmes regarding sexual harassment was not adopted.**

**d. NGO Petition on Statutory Rape – Meeting the de facto Law Minister**



6 November: NGOs meeting with de facto Law Minister, Nazri Aziz.

11 civil society advocates representing a group of 39 women's rights, children's rights, and human rights organisations, including AWAM, met with the de facto Law Minister, Nazri Aziz on 6 November. We presented a petition calling on the government not to remove judicial powers of discretion in statutory rape sentencing, but to instead implement several measures to more comprehensively and effectively address the causes and consequences of the sexual exploitation of teenagers.

The two key recommendations were, (i) to implement sentencing guidelines and to encourage judges to seek expert advice when determining sentencing for issues as potentially complex as statutory rape, and (ii) regular training of judges and lawyers on issues of gender-based violence to enable them to make more informed and just decisions. A press conference was held after the meeting. Li-Sha and Smita attended on behalf of AWAM.

**Challenges:** The meeting with the de facto minister was not useful as he was not particularly interested in what the NGOs had to say on the matter, and was himself not clear as to the content and status of the proposed changes to the law.

### III. SOLIDARITY ACTIONS

In 2012, AWAM’s staff and chambering pupils observed several few public interest cases, to support as well as monitor decisions of the court that deal with issues of democracy, labour rights, freedom of expression and assembly, and non-discrimination against transgender persons.



24 July: AWAMmies witnessed a court appeal by the Bersih 2.0 steering committee.

#### a. Bersih Judicial Review: a victory for civil liberties in Malaysia

The Bersih 2.0 rally took place more than a year ago, but related legal suits are still ongoing. Just last month, the High Court quashed an order by the Home Minister in 2011 declaring that Bersih 2.0 was an illegal organisation and a threat to public order and security. The judge repealed the ban on the basis that the order issued was “irrational” given that the government had continued to engage with Bersih 2.0 and allowed the rally to proceed on 9 July 2011. This engagement continued in 2012 with the Bersih 3.0 rally in April this year.

AWAM is part of a larger collective of organisations supporting the work of Bersih towards free and fair elections. We believe that women’s engagement in this process is essential. As citizens, our voices and votes count towards the building of our nation, and the call for free and fair elections and for accountability from our government must be heard.

Cherrie and Kalash, AWAM’s LAC chambering pupils, attended the delivery of the High Court’s judgment together with Wei San.

#### b. Our Courts Have Failed Our Women Workers: The Guppy Case

Back in 2001, women workers were forced to retire after the employer, Guppy Plastic Industries, enforced a new employee handbook rule stipulating a retirement age of 50 for female employees and 55 for male employees. However 90% of the workers were re-hired on an annual contract basis, meaning they were no longer entitled to job benefits.



13 August: Women workers and supporters at the Federal Court.

Their forced retirement led eight of the women workers to bring their case before the Industrial Court in 2008 on the point that the difference between the retirement ages for men and women was discriminatory. The workers won the case in the Industrial Court, but the decision was later overturned by the High Court and the revision affirmed by the Court of Appeal in March this year.

Sadly, the workers' leave application to appeal against the decision of the Court of Appeal was dismissed by the Federal Court. Guppy's legal representatives argued that Parliament has addressed the issue by passing the recent law on the Minimum Age of Retirement and this was accepted by the court. Although this fact was a small victory for those who champion workers' rights, the plight of the eight Guppy employees was not addressed. Indeed, the legal process had failed these women.

Resebalingam and Nuurunnajah, AWAM's chambering pupils, were at the Federal Court with the ex-employees of Guppy when this decision was released.



11 October: Attorney Aston Paiva talking to journalists after the hearing

### **c. In Court: Against the discrimination and abuse of transgender persons**

In parts of Malaysia, Syariah State Law forbid “men” to appear “as women” in public and thus criminalises male-to-female transgendered persons who want to express their personal identity through their dressing. On October 11, the High Court of Seremban issued a judgement after four applicants sought a review of this law. The applicants claimed that this law is not in coherence with the Federal Constitution, which upholds the freedom of expression as a fundamental right.

Judge YA Datuk Siti Mariah Ahmad of the High Court of Seremban dismissed the application with no order as to costs. She also noted that because no Muslim can be exempted from Syariah legal provisions and because all four applicants are Muslims, the Syariah law applies to them. She further recommended that the Islamic Religious Department work with PT Foundation to give counselling to transgendered persons and that the latter group be “lebih berhemat”.

Concerns about the judgement were raised, especially since a civil court cannot take Syariah law as a basis of any kind for a civil judgement. It remains to be seen if the applicants will pursue this case further, as many of them have reported feeling intimidated by the Islamic Religious Department officials, but AWAM will continue to support the struggle of transgendered persons in Malaysia.

The New York Times carried a relevant article, “Seeking the Right to be Female in Malaysia” (5/10/12), which you can read at this [link](#).

#### IV. REGIONAL ADVOCACY

##### a. ASEAN Workshop on Violence Against Women



17 – 19 November: Wei San, ASP Ong from D-11, and Cik Azizah from MWFCDC at the ASEAN VAW workshop.

Twenty one delegates from 9 of the 10 ASEAN countries attended a regional Training Workshop on Violence Against Women (VAW) in Manila. This workshop was organised by the Philippine Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Wei San attended the workshop as an NGO representative, together with a police representative from D-11 and a representative from the Ministry of Women, Welfare and Community Development.

At the workshop, delegates from ASEAN shared challenges, best practices and recommendations to strengthen the capacity of communities, practitioners and policy makers in addressing VAW. Among best practices gleaned was that of Singapore, where counselling is mandatory for perpetrators of violence.

Common challenges across ASEAN countries include a lack of centralised data collection, commitment in terms of prioritising VAW, including allocation of monies, and capacity of frontline workers. In addition, there was poor enforcement and implementation of existing laws and policies as well as negative perceptions and responses towards VAW issues across all levels. In short, a lot more needs to be done by ASEAN countries to promote and protect women's right to live free from all forms of violence.



## Media, Website and Social Media

### MEDIA TEAM

Staff Coordinator: Smita Sharma  
Members: Ho Yock Lin  
Lee Wei San  
Sofia Lim Siu Ching  
Thency Gunasekaran

### Overview

- a) Press Statements and Appearances in the Media
- b) JAG Press Statements
- c) Website
- d) Social Media

#### a) Press Statements and Appearances in the Media

Over the year, AWAM has responded to statements in the press, either by request, or through our own initiative in order to make clear our stance on certain issues. We have found that it is a great way to showcase how much the work at AWAM is needed by responding to current affairs with a feminist perspective. This perspective needs to become part of our daily dialogue and this will only happen when we profile AWAM and its work as much as possible.

2012 was particularly busy, especially in the month of August when there was a string of statutory rape cases being highlighted in the media. June 2012 also saw an increase in robbery and theft cases that were targeted at women. Below is a table of our press statements, as well as mentions in the media and appearances on television and radio.

Besides press statements, the hosting of public events, such as the annual AWAM Treasure Hunt, or AWAM's collaboration with The Pixel Project on the Paint it Purple bake sale, helps to raise our public profile. During these times, we have an increase in activity on all our various platforms such as the website and our social media. These events are also a great way to remind everyone about the issues that we strive to eradicate in the course of AWAM's work.

A good example of this was the Paint it Purple bake sale; while it did not bring in a lot of money, what it certainly did was raise awareness on the prevalence of domestic violence as well as the causes and signs of it. A total of two newspapers carried a feature story on the subject and we were also invited on Bella ntv7 to speak about this issue.

Details of AWAM's press statements and public appearances are set out below:

February	BFM	Wei San and Betty went live on BFM to talk about women's rights, CEDAW and their relevance to boys and girls (podcast available online at <a href="http://www.bfm.com.my">www.bfm.com.my</a> )
March	TV2	Programme officers Smita and Wei San were interviewed for a TV2 show on gender equality and the issues faces by transgender persons. The interviews are to be aired in May. Smita was also invited to Capital FM for a talk about Intimate Partner Violence in relation to the Chris Brown-Rihanna

		incident. Her fellow guest was Zarina, an old friend of AWAM and MAN.V
April	Marie Claire (women's magazine)	<u>In response to: Rising number of snatch thefts</u> "Although statistics on petty crimes show a downward trend, public perception continues to be that such crimes as snatch thefts are on the rise and increasingly violent. These crimes also target women, who are largely perceived to be easy targets. One of the effects is that women feel unsafe in public spaces. Media often plays up this idea that a criminal could be lurking at any corner, ready to snatch your bag. So women constantly look behind their shoulders, wary. Crime does not merely affect the victim; it always has some impact, not least psychological, on the larger society. That's one reason we need to work together to tackle all forms of violence. AWAM has been working for more than 25 years to eliminate crimes against women because we are determined that every woman should enjoy the right to go about their daily lives and access public spaces without fear of violence."
June	New Strait Times	<u>In response to: Whether there is a need for a sexual offenders registry</u> AWAM is of the view that more can and should be done to prevent sexual offences and other violent crimes. A consideration of the effectiveness of our current laws is certainly due, and the implementation of a registry and the central registration of offenders will help to ensure that sexual offenders do not gain positions in which they are in charge of persons vulnerable to abuse, e.g., children and patients. However, this registry should not be readily accessible by the public as that would constitute a violation of an offender's fundamental human right to privacy and data protection. A public registry would also render those listed perpetually guilty (even if they have served out punishments commensurate to their crimes) and susceptible to harm and discrimination. A better model is the British one, where police keep tabs on the registry and allow members of the public with valid concerns to approach them with enquiries about specific persons. There must be a clear explanation of who can and cannot make enquiries and what the enquiry process looks like.  As the Registration of Criminal and Undesirable Persons Act does not seem to be in use at the moment (we note that there are no cases or articles that refer to this act), it may be best to review the legislation and replace it with a more effective one. Specific legislation on sexual offences (including sexual harassment) that covers such a mechanism would probably be more effective in curtailing sexual offences than this current law.  For the law to be more effective in deterring sexual violence, AWAM also recommends minimum sentencing for sexual offences and swift and consistent punishment for convictions. And while harsher and swifter punishments for sexual offences do send out the message that these are serious crimes, they do not by themselves solve the problem. We need greater societal awareness of the causes and consequences of sexual violence. The problem is inherently linked to the unequal position of women in society, to gender-based discrimination, and to the propagation of a culture which objectifies and sexualises women while simultaneously encouraging silence and shame around women's sexuality. Until we address the root causes of sexual violence, we can never fully prevent its occurrence.
June	Not picked up	<u>In response to: Rising number of robberies in car parks targeting women</u> The current public focus on kidnappings and violent crimes involving women in car parks is something that crops up every now and again, but the underlying problem of unsafe public spaces is something many women in the country, and in Klang Valley in particular, face on a regular basis. AWAM has been working to address this issue by lobbying over two decades for



		<p>better laws and policies to prevent violence and discrimination against women, notably through the Citizens Against Rape campaign which we first launched in 1987 and then again in 2003.</p> <p>Although some car parks are well lit and guarded, many are not. There are varying levels of safety precautions taken by different car park operators, and some inspire more confidence than others. There are several issues at play here:</p> <p>Most, if not all, car parks insist that parking is at the user's own risk. Thus, the burden of responsibility for the safety of a car park is not placed on its operator, but on the vigilance and luck of the user. While everyone should try to be aware of their surroundings and to do their part in preventing violence by speaking up against it when it happens, the operator must provide a safe environment and the government is obliged to ensure this. AWAM calls for the government and local authorities to enact and enforce mandatory regulations on security measures that all owners and operators of public spaces must comply with. The security measures taken should not depend on what operators are willing to provide but on what people ought to be able to expect.</p> <p>Such security measures for car parks in particular include the installation of CCTV systems and of good lighting, frequent patrols by trained security guards, and the availability of staff who can serve to escort lone users to their vehicles.</p> <p>We believe that public discourse on this topic should shift from focusing solely on what women can do to protect themselves to what women, and indeed all persons, ought to be able to expect from the state and from those who own and operate public spaces (like car parks) and, indeed, from each other. Empowerment involves understanding one's rights, as a citizen and as a human being. This awareness of rights is still largely missing.</p> <p>Organisations like AWAM try to raise such awareness through public campaigns and trainings. But it is not merely our responsibility to do so. Families and schools are primary places to instil rights awareness in younger Malaysians, and we encourage parents and teachers to educate themselves and their charges on what we can expect as citizens and persons with human rights.</p> <p>Those who have questions or who would like to help advocate for the creation and implementation of better laws and policies to prevent violent crimes against women and to make our public spaces safer for all should get in touch with AWAM by calling 03 7877 4221 or emailing <a href="mailto:awam@awam.org.my">awam@awam.org.my</a>.</p>
July	New Strait Times	<p><u>In response to: How are NGOS funded while maintaining distance from government agencies</u></p> <p>As a feminist organisation, AWAM advocates for gender equality and the fulfilment of women's rights in the country. This work is necessarily political. However, that does not make us partisan (i.e., involved in "party politics"). AWAM is an independent organisation that believes in engaging critically with all political actors, especially those in government, to hold them accountable to the rakyat.</p> <p>It is unfortunate that whenever civil society actors are critical of the establishment, they get branded as "pro-opposition". Political advocacy is not necessarily for one political party or another; it can be issue-based or principle-based as well. AWAM works specifically on issues related to women's rights and gender-based violence and discrimination. At the same time, we support efforts that promote democracy and human rights. We</p>

		<p>certainly do not shy away from political issues, and we are appalled by attempts to shut down spaces for dissent and deliberation—both key democratic practices. In particular, we note recent cases of harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders. We see these as part of an unhealthy trend in Malaysia which reflects a low level of civility and an endorsement of the use of violence against those who think differently.</p> <p>AWAM has set policies to guide our fundraising decisions. We try hard to diversify our source of funding so that we are not dependent on any one group to fund the work that we do. Monies received by AWAM are almost entirely used for specific programmes and activities. These programmes and activities are drawn up by AWAM based on our vision and mission; they therefore reflect our organisational goals and not the agenda of any one funder.</p> <p>As a non-partisan organisation, we are particularly careful about accepting funds from the government or any political party. At the same time, we believe that the state has an obligation to support civil society organisations, particularly those that provide counselling or refuge services to women.</p>
July	Bella ntv7	<p>Milan and Wei San were interviewed live on NTV7's Bella Confidential at 11am, on the topic of sexual harassment (SH) in the workplace. Nazlina from WAO and a psychologist from Pantai Hospital made up the rest of the interviewees. AWAM talked about what constitutes SH, forms of SH and what laws were in place for SH, what victims can do as well as what employers can do to address SH in the workplace. We also received and responded to telephone calls from the public about scenarios of sexual harassment, thus clarifying popular misconceptions and applying concepts we discussed earlier to real life scenarios. AWAM also provided its telenita line to the public, as an avenue to seek legal information and counselling for cases of SH.</p>
August	New Strait Times	<p><u>In response to: Pre-nuptial Agreements</u>  Women should not have to rely on prenuptial agreements to safeguard their rights within a marriage. Our laws should ensure justice and protection for all persons, in both their public lives (e.g., at work and in public spaces) as well as in their private engagements (e.g., at home and within the family or domestic partnership). The turn to prenuptial agreements might suggest that our laws do not work as they should; our lawmakers should take heed of this. Not every woman is in the position to insist upon a prenuptial agreement and few have the knowledge and resources to ensure that theirs is a good and watertight one.</p>
August	New Strait Times	<p><u>In response to: The directive by police to clothe women detained in anti-vice raids in robes.</u>  AWAM believes that everyone is entitled to dignity and respect. We laud the move to provide robes for women detained at anti-vice raids, and we hope to see the implementation and enforcement of strict policies and processes to prevent abuse of detainees' rights and intrusion of their privacy. We also echo Suhakam's call for the media to stop sensationalising reports on such anti-vice raids.</p>
August	The Star	<p><u>In response to: Sentencing decisions of recent statutory rape cases.</u>  While the courts have discretionary powers in sentencing for statutory rape cases, decisions should take into account and respond to the specific merits of each case based upon established and clearly articulated legal principles. AWAM is alarmed at the sentencing decision issued in the case of Chuah Guan Jiu, and particularly at the reference, once again, to the offender's "bright future". This seems to have become a standard excuse for lenient sentencing in cases of statutory rape. Furthermore, AWAM notes with added</p>

		<p>concern reports that the offender had led the victim to his home under false pretences. We hope that the decision to hand him such a light sentence is based on solid reasons, and we look forward to reading the court's written judgement on the matter. Finally, we would like to reiterate the point made by the High Court in its judgement on the case involving Noor Afizal Azizan: sentencing decisions in such cases should be determined according to the specifics of the case in question.</p>
August	The Malaysian Insider	<p><u>In response to: Statutory rape cases</u>  Rape is a heinous crime and is a violation of a person's body, mind and psyche. Where this happens to a girl below the age of 16, it is defined as statutory rape because we recognise that there is a greater need to protect children from such acts. Where sentencing is concerned, it is important that our judges do not downplay the seriousness of rape. The Court of Appeal's decision to replace the minimum sentence of 5-year jail term on Noor Afizal Azizan with RM25,000 as a good behaviour bond on the basis of his promising future is extremely alarming. We would ask, what about the future of the survivor? Our criminal justice system has failed our daughters and granddaughters when it trivialises an act of violence through the sentence that is meted out. Such an act by our courts fosters disrespect for the rights and dignity of women. It has a dehumanizing effect which normalises sexual violence and justifies the use (or abuse) of power instead of addressing the needs of our daughters and granddaughters for respect, love and most of all, justice.</p>
September	FMT (Not picked up)	<p><u>In response to: The Education Ministry's endorsement of gay guidelines</u>  It is extremely troubling that the Education Ministry should support discriminatory and divisive moves such as these seminars and guidelines. What will it achieve except to encourage intolerance and paranoia while mocking the very concept of pluralism that we claim to value so much in Malaysia? Parents are encouraged to take "corrective measures"--one shudders to think what these are.</p> <p>One also wonders on what basis exactly the Education Ministry saw fit to endorse these guidelines, which appear to be pulled out of thin air and fail to draw upon any research and scholarship on gender expression and sexual orientation. These moves are not just homophobic; they're asinine. The Education Ministry should put an immediate stop to them and focus on the tough and necessary work of educating our young to be engaged and discerning citizens, accepting of difference and critical of shoddy reasoning.</p>
September	The Star	<p><u>In response to: Introducing and Using Victim Impact Statements In Court</u>  AWAM supports measures to provide survivors of violence avenues to voice their needs and perspectives on the violence they have faced.</p> <p>Courts must be required to ensure that survivors have been advised of the chance to present victim impact statements. They should have the right to present their victim impact statements in writing or orally, and in a language that they are most comfortable using.</p> <p>We believe that survivors have a right to be heard, and that victim impact statements can help ensure perceived fairness in court decisions. At the same time, the courts must be careful to ensure that victim impact statements are considered as part of all other evidence and testimony gathered and do not by themselves determine sentencing. Justice must be restorative, not retributive.</p>
October	International Herald	<p><u>In response to: Provision of Prescribing Mandatory Jail Sentences for Convicted Rapists</u></p>

	Tribune	<p>While we note the government's concern over recent court decisions in sentencing for statutory rape, AWAM considers the move to introduce a provision prescribing mandatory jail sentences for those convicted of statutory rape hasty and ill-considered. Discretionary powers should remain available to judges in such sentencing precisely so that they can take into account the specific merits of a case—the difference in age and influence, the degrees of consent and exploitation, possible mitigating or aggravating factors at play—to ensure that punishment is just. In some cases, this might mean community service or a binding over for good behaviour. In others, far more severe custodial sentences might be in order.</p> <p>In place of mandatory minimums, AWAM recommends implementing clear and strict guidelines to assist courts in issuing judgments including specifying which cases deserve light sentencing and which require minimum custodial sentences. The government should also provide regular trainings for judges and lawyers on gender sensitisation and on the nature of consent and rape.</p> <p>AWAM believes that statutory rape cases can only be dealt with adequately when we have good laws as well as policies and programmes that support the implementation of such laws and an independent judiciary capable of applying the law in a fair and consistent manner.</p>
October	<a href="#">New York Times</a>	<p><u>In response to: Provision of Mandatory Sentencing for Convicted Rapists</u> The move to introduce mandatory prison sentences for those convicted of statutory rape was hasty and ill-considered. Clear and strict sentencing guidelines should be introduced and the government should provide regular training for judges and lawyers on gender sensitization and on the nature of consent and rape.</p>
November	New Straits Times	<p><u>In response to: Overturning Session Court's decision on jailing of rapist</u> AWAM is pleased to read this judgement, which goes some way to restoring public confidence in our judiciary. The judge is right to note the factor of manipulation in this case. Coercion and exploitation need not be overt or manifest in physical struggle. Furthermore, AWAM supports the order that the perpetrator undergo rehabilitative counselling. Justice serves the public interest best when it goes beyond retribution and ensures rehabilitation. We also hope to see these recent cases spur greater interest among parents, teachers, community leaders, and the government to ensuring that our children receive comprehensive, rights-based sex education.</p>
December	The Star	<p><u>In response to: Setting up of NGO to support men accused of GBV</u> AWAM believes that every person has the right to due process and to the protection of their physical and mental well-being. This includes persons accused of perpetrating acts of gender-based violence, such as rape and domestic violence. In line with this belief, AWAM supports moves to increase access to legal aid and counselling for such persons. However, we question the particular motivations and assumptions behind the setting up of Man Aid Force. The idea that women are given to making false allegations of rape and abuse, for instance, is patently unfounded and sexist. We know of no reliable study which suggests that such false allegations are a significant problem. On the other hand, we know through numerous reports as well as through the work that AWAM has done over almost three decades of campaigning for better laws and policies to prevent gender-based violence that rape, sexual harassment, and domestic violence are serious issues that impact women, families, workplaces, and communities at large.</p> <p>If the founders of Man Aid Force seek justice for innocent men, we encourage them to review the legal processes and suggest necessary reforms. At the same time, we call on them to work with established</p>

		women's rights groups towards a larger societal vision: a Malaysia where every person, regardless of gender, is able to live in safety and with dignity. Now that is a goal worth championing.
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### **AWAM's engagement with the Chinese press**

AWAM has also been contacted by various Chinese newspapers and tv or radio stations in 2012 regarding various matters on women's safety, issues and rights. Newspapers such as Sin Chew Jit Poh, Oriental Press and Nanyang Siang Pau have been interested in knowing AWAM's stance on several current matters.

#### **b) JAG Press Statements**

##### **JOINT ACTION GROUP FOR GENDER EQUALITY (JAG) MEMBERS**

All Women's Action Society (AWAM)

Perak Women for Women Society (PWWS)

Persatuan Kesedaran Komuniti Selangor (EMPOWER)

Persatuan Sahabat Wanita Selangor (PSWS)

Sabah Women's Action Resource Group (SAWO)

Sisters in Islam (SIS)

Women's Aid Organisation (WAO)

Women's Centre for Change (WCC)

Tenaganita

AWAM is part of a coalition of non-governmental organisations that works towards gender equality called JAG. In 2012, JAG released fifteen statements to various members of the press, out of which AWAM drafted four. A comprehensive list of the statements issued by JAG is set out below:

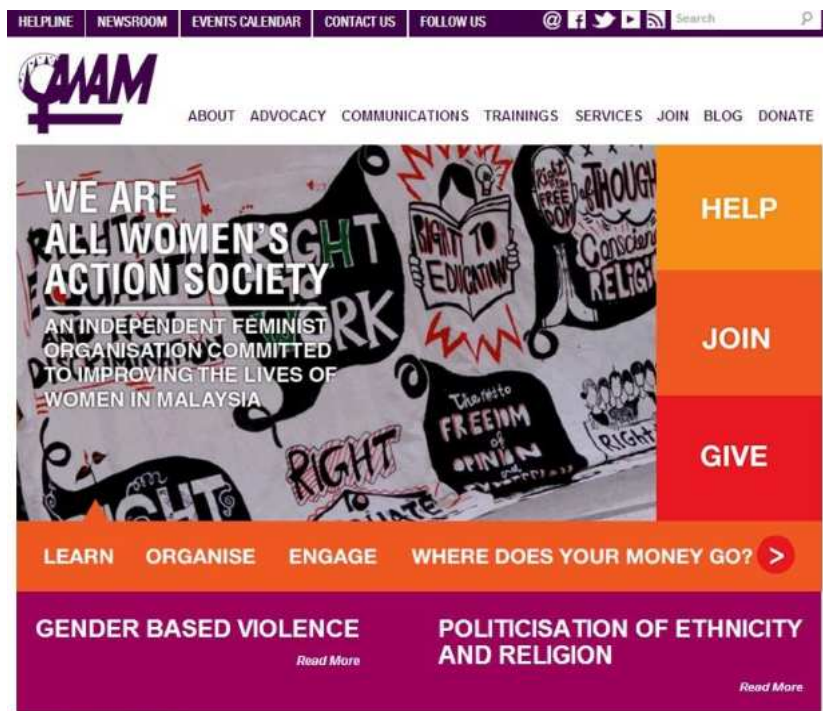
- 1) 12-year Jail Sentence Not the Way to Address the Issue of Unwanted Babies [Feb 5]
- 2) Right of Pregnant Women to Work [Feb 7]
- 3) Anti-Ambiga posters [Feb 24]
- 4) Lynas – a ticking time bomb? [March 6]
- 5) Guppy: Women must be able to retire at the same age as men [March 23]
- 6) On Najib's role as Women's Minister [April 10]
- 7) Kedah's New Fatwa Ruling Equates Man's Word to God [April 19]
- 8) Malaysia's questionable process of law reform [May 14]
- 9) Gender stereotyping of women: Stop controlling women's appearance and behaviour [June 29]
- 10) On attacks against Ambiga [June 29]
- 11) Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) urges Judiciary to Clarify the Noor Afizal Azizan judgement [August 10]
- 12) Consider needs and perspectives of our young [August 30]
- 13) Not a routine investigation (SUARAM) [September 24]
- 14) On PM's 'no need for women's groups' [October 2]
- 15) More consultation in rape laws [October 18]

The statements can be downloaded [here](#).



**c) AWAM's website**

AWAM's new website was launched late November 2012. While the website was being updated, we used our Facebook page to post updates on our work.



The website was updated to give off a more modern and dynamic feel and to provide a platform for AWAM to share its work to its members and the general public.

This website is the online profile of AWAM and many of our members, volunteers and associates find out about AWAM through our website. Thus, it is a very important tool in our work and sometimes determines who will walk through our doors.

The website is broken down into different areas such as:

- a) **About** – AWAM's story, Vision, Mission & Values, Organisational Structure, Work Programme and Budget and Funding
- b) **Advocacy**– Current Campaigns, Past Campaigns, Coalition & Partners, Joint Action Group and Endorsements
- c) **Communications** – AWAM in the Media, Press Statements, Media Enquiries, Publications and a section on how to contribute to Writing for AWAM
- d) **Trainings** – Calendar of Trainings, Training Subjects, Training Enquiries, Internal Trainings and how to Become A Trainer
- e) **Services** – Overcoming Violence, Supporting Survivors, Useful Resources, Telenita Statistics and how to Become a Paracounsellor
- f) **Join** – How to become a Member, Volunteer or Intern, Job Opportunities, Visiting & Research and a section on AWAM online

There is also a section where our supporters can find out how they can donate to help support our work. As the website was launched late in the year, we have not provided a detailed breakdown of unique visitors to our website, however it is generally noted that many people come to our website looking for ways to overcome



violence as well as to look for any form of resource or support survivors could reach out to.

The maintenance of the website is carried out by programme officers in AWAM. Our strategy for the next few months would be to appoint one programme officer to be in charge of not only the website, but develop strategies to fully utilise our various social media platforms to attract more people into the organisation and raise awareness on the issues we work on.

#### d) Social media

For the year 2012, we posted a total of 81 posts to our Facebook page, and had an increase on average of 1,000 likes the past year. A majority of our fans come from the 18-24 age brackets and are based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Our social media platform is the best way to immediately engage with our supporters and provide them with instant updates on our work, events and various programmes. Further strategies are needed to strengthen our influence on social media platforms.



## Organisational Development

### ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (OD) COMMITTEE

Staff Coordinator: Bernie Chow Mei Mei and Emily O. Mathius  
Volunteer Coordinator: Judith Loh Foong Lin  
Members: Betty Yeoh Siew Peng  
Lee Wei San  
Milan Sadhwani  
Tan Beng Hui

#### Overview

OD oversees the overall wellbeing of AWAM in areas of the implementation of programs, building staff capacities, membership development, and to ensure that funds are raised to sustain the organisation.

A great part of 2012 was spent in addressing the health of the organisation, which led to a detailed evaluation and planning and bringing on-board Saira Shameem, Programme Advisor from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Malaysia, to assess how the organisation can function with synergy and to provide guidance in moving forward to working efficiently.

Below are the areas that OD helped to coordinate:

- Fundraising
- Membership Development
- Retreat
- Evaluation and Planning

## Fundraising

### FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

Arne Carstens  
Bernie Chow Mei Mei  
Emily O. Mathius  
Ho Wai Ling  
Judith Loh Foong Lin  
Madelynn Tan  
Susie Cheng Yoke Chang

In 2012, net funds raised was RM108,832 (compared to 2011 of RM99,174). Details of AWAM's fund raising activities are as follows:

Date	Event	Amount Raised
1 July 2012	Treasure Hunt	RM102,749
27 October 2012	Pixel Project Cup Cake Sale	RM2,768
2 December 2012	SIROM, "Walk the talk"	RM3,315
	<b>Total:-</b>	<b>RM 108,832</b>

## AWAM's Treasure Hunt, "Race To Be Heard"



AWAM's Treasure Hunt, "Race To Be Heard" was the main fund raising event for 2012. To attract more participants, the treasure hunt was widely publicised.

A press conference was held in Kluang Station in 1 Utama, fully sponsored by the owners of the restaurant. Celebrities and news media were invited. A full page article on the press conference was given by The Star while China Press had a quarter page on the event.

We also approached the radio and TV stations and were featured in Mix fm, Lite fm, Hitz fm, and NTV7 talk show "Bella". It was also advertised in the Treasure Hunters of Malaysia website, a new approach for us.

By exhausting almost all the possible channels for publicity, about 280 participants in 60 teams turned up for the event. Our main sponsor was UPS which not only sent seven teams for the hunt but also sent their managing director to grace the event with his presence. Other sponsors also contributed either in cash donations or in kind or by sending their staff to help in preparations of the hunt.

Although the amount raised in the treasure hunt was higher than in previous year (2011), it was less than our original target of RM200, 000 needed to fund AWAM's planned activities for 2012.

Nonetheless, AWAM managed to raise some additional funds through its corporate training on sexual harassment and domestic violence against women. Thus, support by AWAM members and volunteers are greatly needed to explore more options and be more creative in our fund raising efforts to sustain our work to help those who face violence and discrimination on the basis of their gender and to build a more just and equal society for all.

## Soroptimist International Region of Malaysia (SIROM) “Walk the Talk from Perlis to Sabah”



AWAM was also a beneficiary of Soroptimist International Region of Malaysia (SIROM)’s “Walk the Talk from Perlis to Sabah” event with the theme, “Stop Violence Against Women”.

Soroptimist “Walk the Talk” event

## Paint It Purple

This year, The Pixel Project picked AWAM as its joint-beneficiary in its ‘Paint It Purple Cup Cake’ sale by Bisou Cake Shop in honour of ‘Domestic Violence Awareness Month’.

A Fundraising Event was organised to launch the Paint It Purple Campaign. This was followed up by a cupcake bake sale that took place just outside the new wing of One Utama. People walking into the mall were greeted by Paint It Purple volunteers and were offered a chance to support the fight against domestic violence by buying cupcakes, kindly donated by Bijou Café.



## Other sources of funding

In 2012, AWAM also raised funds through its training programmes. These were in the form of donations, contributions and/or fees for the expertise we provided, such as in the WLP training. AWAM was also successful in raising funds for its PER related work.

## Membership Development



In 2012 AWAM held three orientations for new members. We continue to attract new members through our talks, our exhibitions, our programs on Para-counseling, through our website and our press statements.

One of the challenges we faced as an organisation in 2012 is getting members to sign up and stay active in our various

committees and projects. In order to overcome this challenge, we came up with a few strategies on how to attract and include members in our ongoing work and to anticipate areas of work that needs external assistance.

- 1) Invigorate membership drive through public booths  
In 2013, AWAM plans to take part in setting up public booths to attract more members and to have a space where we can showcase and speak about our work to the general public.
- 2) Utilise trainings as membership drives  
Trainings are another ideal way to reach out to the general public, especially those who have indicated interest in our work already by requesting for a training.
- 3) Budgeting for 'social' events  
Another way to increase membership would be to hold social meetings, outside of our regular committee meetings to enhance the bonds between AWAM members and utilise the personal touch to get people to stay in the organisation.

Below is a testimonial from on our members who came into AWAM through our annual para-counselling training. Based on this, it is obvious that one of the things an AWAM members looks for when they join such an organisation is to meet like-minded people and form bonds with them.

#### ***AWAM member testimonial***

*"My name is Michele Theseira and I became a member of AWAM when I signed up for its Para-Counselor Training Programme which began August 8<sup>th</sup> 2012. The reason I decided to participate in the course was to see how I could give back to society in whatever way, as well as to learn from all the other participants/trainees. I basically went in with an open mind and left with a much broader one, with more knowledge on women's issues and rights, and a lot more.*

*The entire para-counselor training programme was organised into nine sessions, and conducted by AWAM course facilitators. What I enjoyed most about each session was that it was interactive and I believe everyone was able to voice their opinions and share from each other's experiences and knowledge. While the objective of the training was I believe mainly to grow the number of para-counselors, I'm not sure if this objective was met as I for one, have not been able to give of my time in that area.*

*Still, it was only after attending the nine weeks of training and being in the company of like-minded women from varied backgrounds and ethnicities who want to empower other women, that I have become more 'involved' in the many causes women are fighting for. I believe that I have taken my first step and intend to spread awareness on women's rights and rally against violence, especially violence against women and children.*

*Since becoming an AWAM member, I have been regularly put in touch with other members via emails where we can share our views and comments on topics that are raised. Monthly newsletters are also disseminated online, providing information on upcoming events, talks and discussions as well as giving feedback and post-release*



*info on recent events that had taken place.*

*With that, I managed to attend and participate in various talks and discussions – one on Female Circumcision by Sisters of Islam on Dec 12<sup>th</sup> 2012; a Yes means Yes dialogue on rape hosted by AWAM at UndiM'sia Chat premises on Feb 16<sup>th</sup> 2013; and the more recent International Women's Day gathering on March 8<sup>th</sup> 2013 at the Annexe Gallery, Central Market, KL.*

*All the above mentioned talks, discussions and gatherings have been invaluable to me in many ways. I believe that in listening to others, much can be learnt. Besides receiving information, the mind becomes more open, I feel more empowered as a woman, and I would like to believe I have developed more empathy and compassion as I listen to sharing of others being discriminated and most times mistreated just because they're women. AWAM has broadened my view about life and enabled me to find my voice as a woman. I believe that all women should take the opportunity to volunteer and get involved to really understand the plight of other women, to give and receive strength as we empower and support each other in this journey of ours as women."*

### **AWAM Open House**

AWAM threw open the doors of our Centre April 14 to bring together old, new, and yet-to-be members for a day of sharing and fun. We held 3 events that day: a meeting of active members to orient them on AWAM's work, an orientation for new members, and a "Members Meet Members" (3M) Nite.

There were lots of new faces around, and we had lively discussions about AWAM's themes and issues related to gender equality. So much to discuss at future thematic group meetings! Not to mention the games (a combination of Charades, Taboo, and Pictionary) and of course a delicious dinner. Members will agree that AWAM can be relied upon in that last regard pretty well.

### **The AWAM Retreat**



August 25 – 26:  
AWAmmies at Janda  
Baik

The ugly truth  
about NGO  
work: it is  
anything but  
relaxing.

Campaigns have to be planned, trainings conducted, media statements written and reports filed, and the never-ending deluge can make one forget that after all it's also about the community or collective as we like to call it.



Hence our annual retreat, where staff and active members of AWAM take a step back and try to replenish our energies, to rebuild our collective, and to bond together with our fellow co-workers.

This year's retreat saw around 20 people enjoy a weekend together in the gorgeous Enderong estate in the hills of Pahang. Those who have been working on AWAM activities got a chance to interact with each other outside the office environment. There were sharing sessions, fun and games, and also a body-therapy session during which our facilitator taught us to better tune in to our bodies' needs.

All in all, the retreat helped rejuvenate us—spiritually, mentally, and physically—and remind us what fun it can be to work with our fellow AWAMies. Thanks to everyone who made it for the retreat, and we're looking forward to next year's already!

### **Evaluation and Planning**

AWAM held its Evaluation and Planning meetings over two weekends, 24 – 25 November 2012, and 26 – 27 January 2013. Both meetings were facilitated by UNFPA Programme Advisor and AWAM external resource person, Saira Shameem.

The Evaluation and Planning meetings took place within the context of a larger restructuring process that AWAM's Working Collective had initiated in 2012. Members who are actively involved in one or more of AWAM's working committees participated in the weekend-long meeting along with staff and AWAM's office bearers. We had 18 participants at the November 2012 meeting and 13 participants at the January 2013 meeting.

At the meetings, we:

- evaluated the progress and lessons learnt from programmatic activities of 2012;
- fine-tuned AWAM's vision and mission (on right);
- revisited and affirmed our organisational structure (see the 'Tree' below);
- reviewed communications processes within the organisation in order to streamline and improve processes of decision-making and accountability within the various organisational levels;
- focused on member development strategies in order to grow and nurture AWAM's members; and
- developed our plans for 2013.

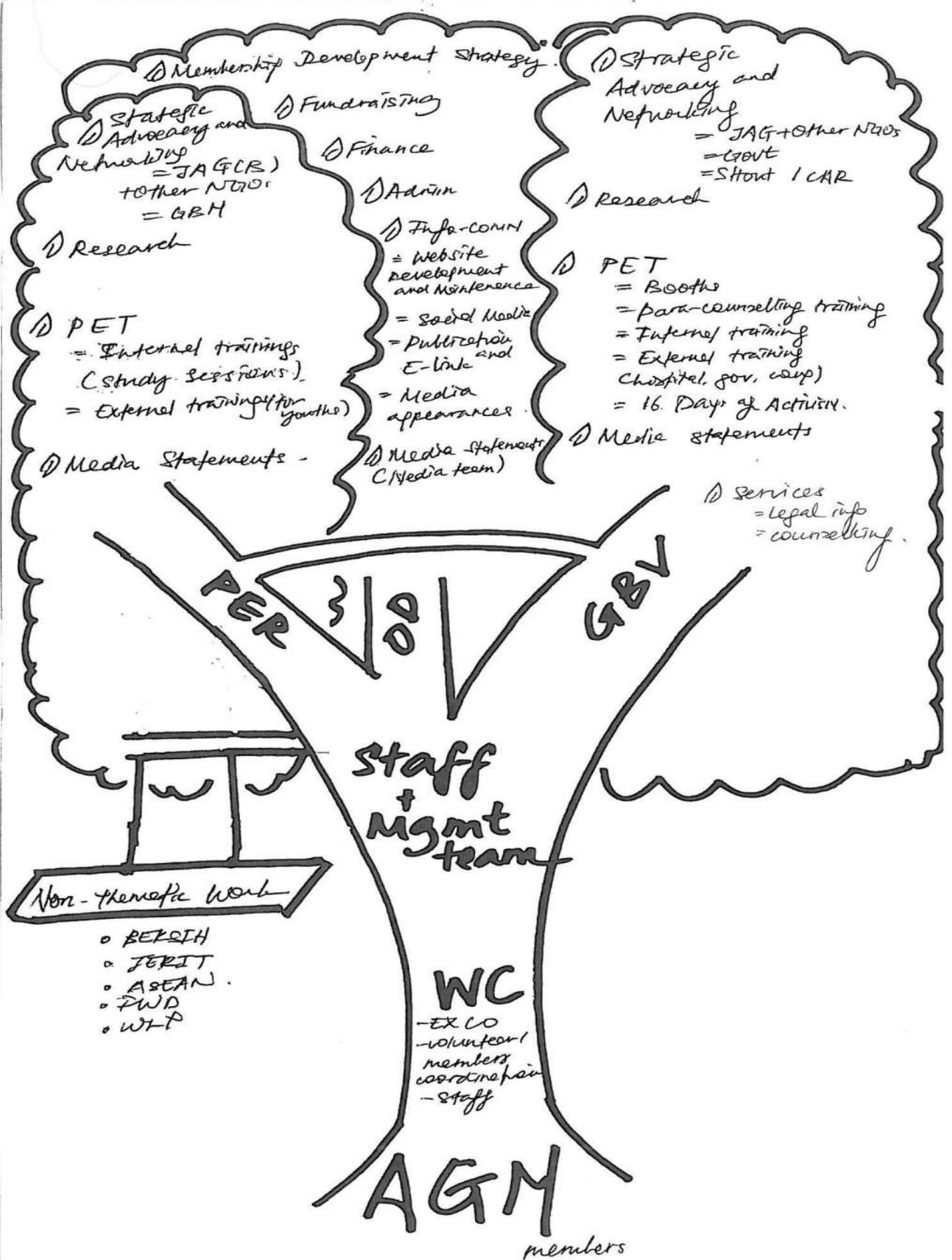
### **Vision**

To create a just, democratic and equitable society where all persons, in particular women, are treated with respect and are free from all forms of violence and discrimination.

### **Mission**

Based on feminist principles, we seek to achieve our vision by building a movement that informs, connects and mobilises towards:

- securing women's rights,
- bringing about gender equality,
- building capacities for women's empowerment and social transformation; and
- supporting women in crisis.



The AWAM Tree, developed at the January Evaluation and Planning Meeting.

### **Explanatory Note on the AWAM Tree**

- a. The tree represents both governance and programmatic work structure.
- b. AWAM's Members support the structure of the organisation and makes decisions at the Annual AGM. The Working Collective consist of active members and are the trunk of the tree as a decision-making body that ensures programmes are carried out according to decisions made at the AGM. The programmes are carried out by staff and active members. The management team look after human resource matters.
- c. There are three main branches of work – OD, PER and GBV.
- d. The two thematic areas of AWAM are PER and GBV.
- e. Within each of these two thematic areas, are the sorts of activities that AWAM carries out to meet the thematic focusses: Strategic Advocacy and Networking, PET, Research and Media Statements. Research refers to Content development within the thematic areas. Services falls within GBV. There is a link between the PER and GBV work that AWAM does.
- f. Membership Development Strategy, Admin, Finance, Fundraising, Information and Communication Strategies (Publications, Social Media, Media Statements etc.) falls under Organisational Development (OD).
- g. Non-thematic work sit on a "swing". It is important to remember that the amount of non-thematic work cannot be too heavy or the main branches of work will be affected.

Reports of the Evaluation and Planning meetings, as well as an action plan for 2013 are available at the office.

## Management

In any given non-governmental organisation, there would usually be an Office Manager or an Executive Director that helms the office. The responsibilities would include the day-to-day management of the organisation, supervision of activities and programs and ensuring that office resources, financial and human, are well taken care for.

In the past year, the role was not filled by such a person. The Management team comprising of members Yock Lin, Judith and Siu Ching stepped in and bore the responsibilities. Working closely together with the staff in the office, the team provided additional support and assistance in the different areas within the organisation. Human resource issues like assessments, grievances, hiring-firing were manageable while aspects of teamwork and communication needed more attention.

In 2012, Management had the additional responsibility to manage the attacks made against the organisation. These attacks were made at the personal level as well at the public space and did some damage to AWAM's public profile. A response team was set up, comprising of members of the Working Collective and staff. The response team issued statements to rebut and defend, monitored the social media, organised members meeting, strategised with JAG and met up with lawyers. Ironically, these attacks brought gains to AWAM. Externally, members' support remains strong, funders who have been made aware of this issue chose to remain with us, members of the public and JAG supported the efforts made. Internally, grievances processes and disclosure terms were discussed at length and will be put in force soon.

In order to strengthen the working relations and to enhance the staff capacity, the office engaged the expertise of Saira Shameem (Sham), Programme Adviser at UNFPA Malaysia, to assess how the organisation can function with synergy and to provide guidance in moving forward to working efficiently. Management worked closely with Sham and prioritised building staff capacities, membership development strategies, determining collective and hierarchical structures, and enhancing communication among staff and the members, to name a few. All of the key strategies were implemented in 2012 and continues throughout the following year. Management is at the forefront to manage and create the balance of the use of power that is not authoritative but a power that empowers the dignity of the human person. It is always a challenge for all of us but one that we in AWAM believe in.

## AWAM Interns and Volunteers in 2012

### ARNE CARSTENS



#### **Internship Period: February 2012 - December 2012**

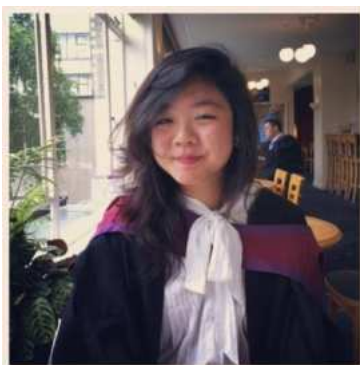
“Ten months is a long time. So long in fact that even now, a week from my last day at AWAM, it’s hard for me to realise how soon this will come to an end. From the start I have felt comfortable and welcomed here, so that I never spent any thoughts on when I’ll be leaving. But as it gets inevitable, it makes me sad having to leave behind what has become so much a part of my life.

As I look back I realise how much working at AWAM and revolving in its orbit has taught me. I have learned a great deal about Women’s Issues and Feminism and received an insight into the NGO and political scene of Malaysia.

I have experienced AWAM as a space full of commitment and energy, everybody here seems very invested in the cause and willing to put in effort that goes beyond a normal job or the usual work as a volunteer. The commitment coupled with the collective nature of the organisation seems to be its greatest feature...

Through meeting a variety of activists I feel like I have developed a quite good understanding of how politics in this country works and I hope that through my work maybe I have been able to contribute a tiny part towards a more equal and just society. Of course, this journey would not have been the same without all you people in and around AWAM that I have met in days here. I really am thankful, especially to my dear colleagues for a making this an awesome time!”

### HEW LI-SHA



#### **Internship Period: October 2012 - March 2013**

“I decided to spend my gap year at AWAM as I had always wanted to be actively part of the women’s movement. I grew up being very interested in feminism. In fact, most of my final year at university had been spent researching and writing on sex, gender and the law. Joining AWAM was also an opportunity for me to find like-minded friends, equally passionate about feminism and related issues.

AWAM is a feminist organisation that prides in its core values as a collective. Being part of a collective means that I am not merely the intern photocopying materials or sorting out logistics, but I am equally recognised as a fellow feminist.

I enjoy having the chance to speak in public about feminist related issues. I have helped give a few talks at the Legal Aid training and at Taylor’s College on Feminism. My ideal hope is for AWAM to eventually be able to provide a more progressive space for young activists and feminists.



Working at a non-government organisation is tough work. However, this has been a great platform and a wonderful learning curve for me before I embark on my legal career.”

### **PAULINE LIM WEN JUN**



#### **Volunteering period: December 2012 – January 2013**

“I decided to volunteer at AWAM over my summer break as I saw it as a perfect opportunity to learn more about feminism, and the on-ground situation in Malaysia. As a first year law student, I also wanted to understand the rights-based discourse around family law.

My month of volunteering has been a great experience. I had the opportunity to help coordinate the CEDAW workshop for tertiary educated students, which involved dealing with logistics and workshop materials. This was the first time I had ever heard of CEDAW, which encouraged me to research on international efforts to combat gender-biasness. Contrasting my findings with

Malaysia, I was also made aware of the large gap in effort, and subsequently progress, in our addressing of sexism.

I managed to compile a timeline of all gender-biased statements made in Malaysia over the past year (2012). This was especially useful for me as it allowed me to catch up on the latest news in Malaysia while I was away. It was also an opportunity for me to hone my research skills. While doing so, I also discovered ‘Aiyo Wat Lah’ awards, which struck me as an ingenious way of reprimanding callous politicians.

In addition, I updated the statuses of the 255 legal cases under AWAM for the year 2012. After which, I wrote an overarching summary on those cases, with a special focus on sexual harassment. The report looked at status quo, identified existing problems and recommended appropriate reforms. These measures centered on the enactment of a Sexual Harassment Act, which would hopefully address the lack of non-pecuniary damages and be more stringent on implementation. Researching on this topic showed me how negligent Malaysia is as a member of CEDAW, and spurs me to advocate legal change.

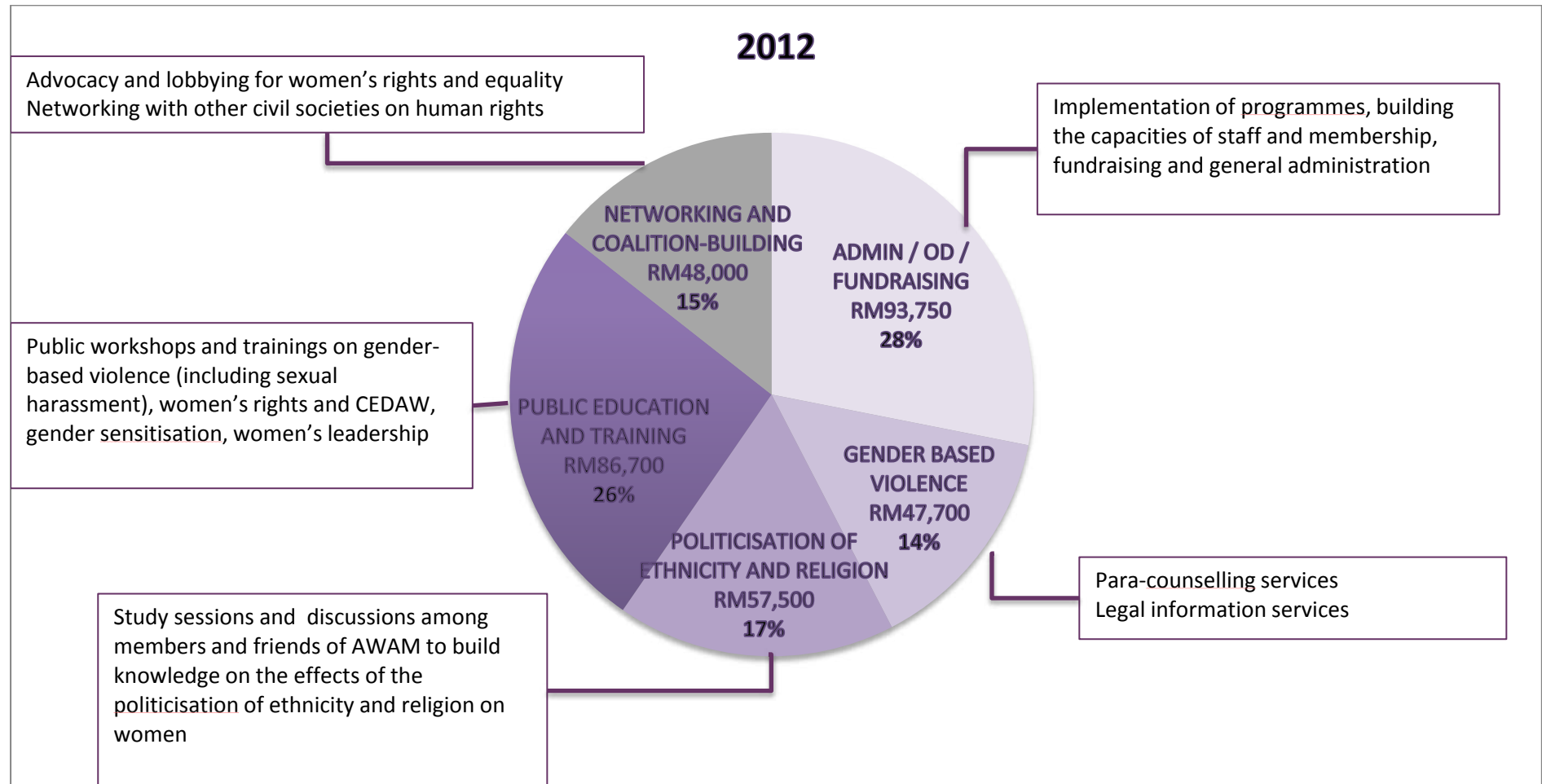
I attended the International Symposium of Polygamy organised by Sisters in Islam, where I had the opportunity to listen to esteemed academics present their papers on polygamy. Having close to no knowledge on the topic previously, I discovered the loopholes in the current arguments supporting polygamy. Writing a brief report allowed me to review the presentations twice, which also deepened my newfound comprehension on polygamy. On top of that, I had the opportunity to write a short review on AWAM’s current membership recruitment strategies. I also included several additions to said list, targeting a more youthful audience. Finally, I helped coordinate a press conference on rape. It was interesting to see the Malaysian media responding so well to the press conference, despite the late hour.

All in all, I find that I have learnt a great deal from this experience. I feel I am now better acquainted with what it means to be a feminist, and acknowledge that there is still a long learning curve involved to properly understand and construct coherent

arguments around the topic. I also feel more in-touch with the current situation in Malaysia, and am more emboldened to advocate change to social attitudes. Additionally, I feel that my brief stint at AWAM has been beneficial in giving me a glimpse into life in the working world.

I was blessed with amazing mentors during my stay here. The staff of AWAM patiently taught me the ropes, and I am very grateful. In a nutshell, I am thankful for all the knowledge and experience gained in the past one month, and hope to work with AWAM again in the future.”

## APPENDIX 1: Where did the money go in 2012?



## APPENDIX 2: Where did the money come from in 2012?

