

Service Report

by Jenny Lim, Annie Yeap, Shariza Kamarudin and Michal Thomas

2006

2006 has been yet another action packed year for the service subcommittee. Not only did we maintain and match our counselling services to an increased workload but we were able to fulfill our service outreach obligations of talks and workshops for the community, managing even a slot or two on the local radio. Our three key highlights apart from our core work include our single mothers' support group, our outreach to the Muslim community and our work with men. The services were as follows:

- 1. Face-to-Face Counselling
- 2. Telephone Counselling
- 3. Online Counselling
- 4. Shelter
- 5. Service Outreach
- 6. Single Mothers' Support Group
- 7. Working with Men

1. FACE-TO-FACE COUNSELLING

There was a slight increase of 5 percent in the number of new cases handled and a significant increase of 61 percent in the follow-up cases. The total counselling sessions were 527 sessions marking an increase of 25

percent this year compared to 2005 which recorded only 423 sessions. The large increase in the number of counselling sessions was due to the increased number of follow-up sessions with our shelter clients and also an increase in marital counseling.

WCC saw a total of 325 clients (287 new clients and 38 old clients) and conducted 527 counselling sessions (see Table 1). Out of the total number of new cases, 67 of them came back for follow-up sessions with the social workers. Another 38 clients were from previous years. 96 percent of our clients were women and 4 percent were men. The ethnic distribution of our clients was Chinese 48 percent, Indian 37 percent, Malay 12 percent and others 3 percent.

Sixteen referrals were from government agencies (hospital, health clinic, welfare department, police stations and legal aid bureau) and 14 referrals were from non government sources (political parties, private lawyers firms and other NGOs).

From table 2, the largest group who sought help was on domestic violence problems (40 percent). Most of them faced physical and emotional abuse and about 9 percent reported sexual abuse by their husbands. Less than half of these women lodged police reports. Out of this, only 13 percent of them applied for Interim

Table 1: Total number of clients and counselling sessions for face-to-face counselling

Year 2006	Number of clients	Counselling sessions
■ New cases	287	287
■ Follow-up sessions*	67	173
■ Old cases (follow-up)	38	67
Total	325**	527

* Follow-up: Out of the 287 new cases, 67 clients came back for follow-up sessions.

** Total clients = new clients + old clients = 287 + 38 = 325

Table 2: Types of New Cases

Year 2006		
Types of cases	No. of clients	%
Domestic Violence	116	40
Marital problem	62	22
Information seeking	45	16
Legal advice	22	8
Relationship problem	16	6
Sexual harassment	10	3
Incest/ Child Sexual Abuse	7	2
Rape	2	1
Others	7	2
Total	287	100

Protection Orders. Some women did not want to lodge reports and would rather find alternatives like living separately or filing for divorce. They were reluctant to make a police report as it will “make the issue more serious”. Out of 116 domestic violence clients, 28 percent were homemakers, 62 percent were working women and 10 percent were unemployed.

The second largest group was on marital problems (22 percent). Nearly half of these cases were related to extra marital affairs and 31 percent cited communication breakdown with their spouses. The remaining were due to spouses’ behavioral problems, maintenance issues, etc. Many of these women expressed great sadness and could not believe the situation they found themselves in. Besides requiring emotional support, many women sought advice on divorce proceedings. Although some of them did not want to divorce, they were unable to tolerate their husbands’ infidelities and would rather file for divorce.

16 percent of the women who came to WCC needed information on their rights and other referrals. 6% of our clients had relationship problems with their boy or girl friends or their parents-in-law. Most of these

problems were due to poor communication.

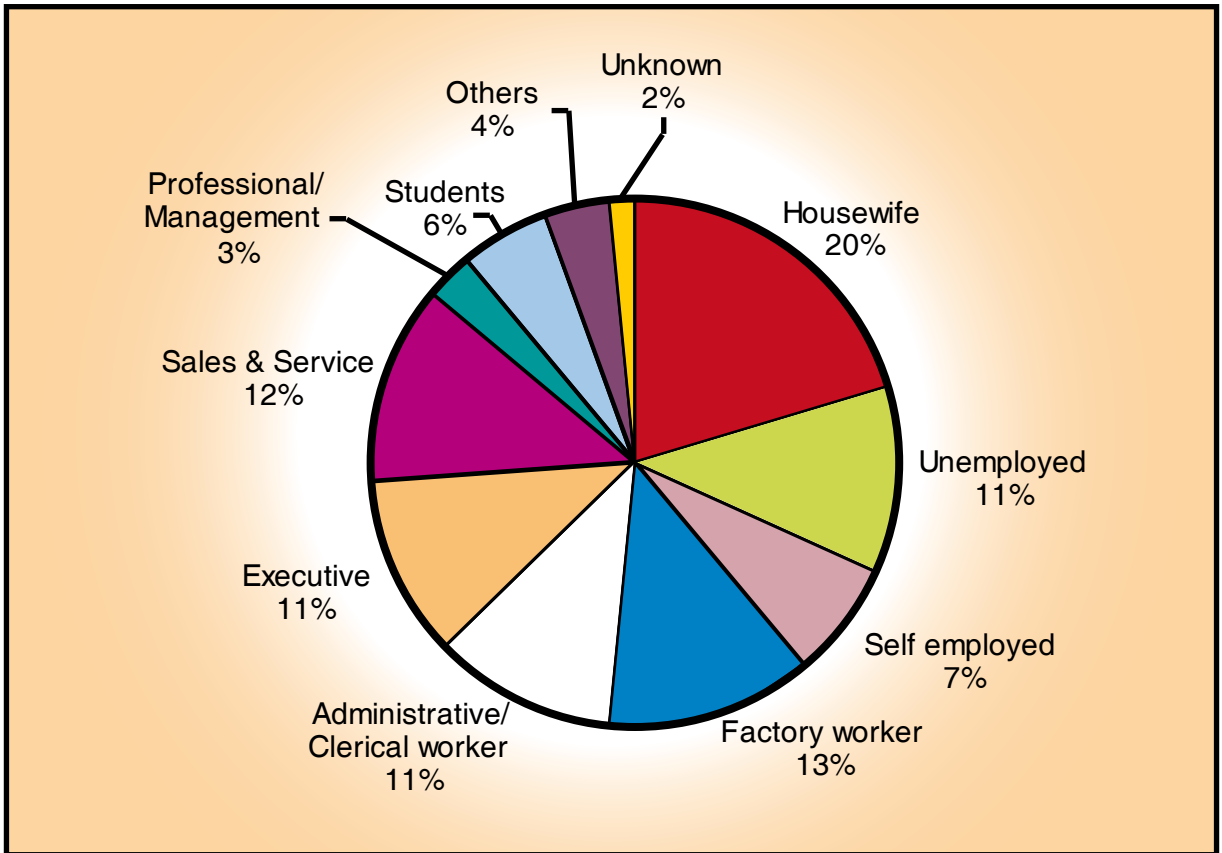
In terms of socio-economic background, 20 percent of our clients were housewives. Most of the other clients had jobs in factories, offices or in sales. Only 3 percent were in the professional or managerial level. In terms of income earned, 33 percent of our clients (housewives or unemployed) had no income. About 43 percent of our clients earned less than RM1,500 and 19 percent earned more than RM1,500. The majority of our clients had secondary education and more than 22 percent had higher education.

2. TELEPHONE COUNSELLING

In 2006 WCC received a total of 1,001 telephone calls - 586 new calls and 415 follow-up calls. The number of calls has increased by 16 percent compared to 2005 which recorded only 862 calls.

The highest number of callers sought help on family problems (29 percent). Most of them enquired about their rights on divorce matters, children custody, maintenance issues, etc. The second highest number of calls were on marital problems (23 percent), most

Socio-economic Background of our Clients



of these were about extra marital affairs. 20 percent of the callers sought help on domestic violence and these women wanted to know how to deal with domestic violence and wanted to put a stop to it.

About 52 percent of the calls were from married women in their 30s. The majority of the calls – 74 percent came from Penang Island, followed by mainland calls – 26 percent. Out of the total number of calls, 14 percent were from men, most of whom were husbands of the wives who came to WCC for help.

3. ONLINE COUNSELLING

The number of emails seeking help increased from 16 in 2005 to 39 this year. Out of this, 21 percent sought advice on divorce matters, another 21 percent wanted contact numbers of referral agencies, 13 percent

were on domestic violence and 10 percent related to relationship problems. 8 percent of them said that they faced extra marital problems. Another 8 percent faced sexual harassment in the workplace. 5 percent were single mothers seeking emotional support from us. 5 percent complained about date rape and there was one complaint about child sexual abuse. The rest of the enquiries were about financial aid.

4. SHELTER

In 2006, the number of shelter clients increased to 17 women and 21 children compared with 2005 which had 10 women and 8 children. The breakdown in ethnicity were 65 percent Indians, 18 percent Malays, 12 percent Chinese and 5 percent others. Two of these clients were foreign wives. There has been an increase

in the number of Indian women seeking shelter over the years. Most of them were from the lower income group without much support from their families.

Most of the shelter clients were not able to get support from their family members. The family members either lived too far away or their family relationship was strained. Some of them were afraid that their husbands might harass their families if they move back.

It is worthwhile to note that when staying at WCC's shelter, some clients became very close to each other and supported one another. They shared their similar experiences and maintained contact with each other after they left the shelter.

5. SERVICE OUTREACH

For the service outreach, WCC organized two workshops and held several talks for the community.

Workshop on Muslim Women's rights

Following the good response from our previous workshop in Kedah last year, WCC organised another joint workshop with Persatuan Kesedaran Wanita Kedah. The workshop on Muslim Women's Rights was held in May in Alor Setar for 32 Muslim women service providers from grassroot organizations. The workshop was handled by the WCC staff Shariza, Prema, Adilah and volunteers Noraida, Yuslinov and Datin Mahmuda. The workshop touched on the Syariah Laws and its development in Malaysia, Muslim women's rights under Islamic Family Law and the reality of women experiences under the law. Participants also dealt with actual case studies to strengthen their knowledge on these matters and shared their experiences.

Workshop on Manage Your Finances

Apart from developing programmes for our single mothers support group, we found that single mothers face numerous challenges in their lives. One of the main issues faced is the lack of income to support and

To All WCC Angels,

What relationship do I have with all of you? The man I married and stayed with and served him for the past 8 years kicked me off from his house just within minutes. I don't even know any of WCC angels but they gave me a place to stay, food, love, attention and support.

Why? Why did they accept me? Before I left, they gave lunch because they are concern. They gave kitchen utensils for me. Why? The man I served gave me only curse when I left home. Why this people so concern about someone whom they don't even know? Why? Because they are God sent.

I really wish that I will be able to come back to WCC one day by being a successful person. May that day come soon. Please bless me again. I truly believe in God, that he will give us something better, if he thinks that what we are receiving currently does not deserve us. Although there is some pain at the beginning I wish that WCC Angels be showered with lots of love and happiness forever. The experience which I had while staying in WCC shelter, I shall treasure till the end of my life.

Thank you WCC Angels.

*31 year old domestic violence client,
with children aged 3 and 5 years old.*

raise their children. As this was a critical issue and impacts negatively on the quality of their lives and their children's, WCC approached the Majlis Pembangunan Wanita dan Keluarga Parlimen Bukit Bendera to have a joint workshop on "Manage Your Finances" to about 50 single mothers on 17 September 2006. The workshop was carried out by a volunteer Ms Jenny Ooi from Thang Hsiang Mitra Welfare Centre. She has many years of experience in helping couples and single mothers plan their budget. A very lively interactive workshop was conducted and participants felt that it was a good session as they learned to budget and manage their money more effectively. Participants requested for more sessions to increase their knowledge on financial planning.



interesting to note that, most of the male students believe that when women say no to sex they actually mean yes.

For the first time, through our intern Lim Chooi Ling, a UKM Masters student and also a nurse tutor at the Penang Adventist Hospital, WCC held two talks on basic counselling skills and domestic

violence for their nurse tutors and 50 student nurses. It was eye opening for them as this was their first exposure to domestic violence.

Jabatan Kesihatan Negeri Pulau Pinang organised a seminar "NGO's Role in Violence Prevention and How to Handle Violence Cases" in September. Annie spoke on WCC's role in preventing Violence Against Women to the well attended seminar which comprised over 200 medical personnel, doctors and nurses from different departments and districts.

Talks on Violence Against Women

Working with Hospitals

WCC continued our regular talks at the Penang Medical College and Lam Wah Ee Hospital on violence against women issues. WCC staff, Annie Yeap and Shariza conducted two talks at Lam Wah Ee hospital and a total of 61 student nurses attended the sessions. Another four talks were carried out by Annie at Penang Medical Centre. A total of 94 students attended the talks. During the discussion on the rape myths, it was

Working with others

WCC has been working with other NGOs for many years. A few organizations like the Amnesty International, the Penang Baptist Seminary and Universiti Sains Malaysia approached WCC to give talk on issues related to violence against women. WCC reached out to more than 100 women in these talks.

WCC staff, Shariza went on air twice at the Mutiara FM (formerly known as Radio Malaysia Pulau Pinang) in March and September. Shariza spoke on domestic violence and the impact on women and children and also the services provided by WCC. It was a useful session as the public could call in to seek advice and give their opinions. This was a good experience for our staff and also created awareness for the public on these issues. The radio also



started promoting WCC through their information slots.

This year, WCC also made a determined effort to reach out to the Malay community. Shariza visited all the five Islamic Religious Department in Pulau Pinang and mainland to meet with the counsellors. They were briefed on WCC services and were given pamphlets to be distributed among the people in the department and their clients.



these single mothers reflect on how they survived their past experiences. In the 3rd session, the participants shared their experiences, while the 4th session enabled them to experience their personal struggle in their relationship with their spouse. In the 5th session, single mothers shared what they had gained and lost after they left the abusive relationship. In the

last session, the facilitator taught them some relaxation techniques and how to care for themselves. They felt happy to be able to help and support each other.

Members of the support group requested that the sessions continue and that more single mothers to join the group. WCC actively recruited and encouraged new single mothers to join the group. In August, the group of single mothers organised a social gathering in the Youth Park. They also brought their children with them.

6. SINGLE MOTHERS' SUPPORT GROUP

WCC initiated a Single Mothers' Support Group for our former domestic violence clients aimed at helping them to be independent and regain their self worth. WCC first conducted a questionnaire survey with single mothers who had experienced domestic violence to identify their needs. WCC invited Ms. Ng Sze Mei, a consultant who is currently a Satir Model advocate to conduct a two-day training for WCC staff and facilitators from other women's service centres.

A total of six support group sessions were conducted for our single mothers in 2006. Although 11 single mothers signed up, only six of them managed to complete all the sessions.

The women came from different ethnic groups and most of them were in their 30s and 40s.

The six sessions were conducted from 12 March till 25 June. The first session began with warming up activities to enable participants to get to know each other. There was also a discussion on expectations of the support group. The second session focused on the "The Journey of Single Mothers" which helped



In October, these single mothers planned activities ranging from pot luck meals, parenting talks, handicraft skills to visiting each other. In November, a WCC volunteer, Ms Lee Saw Bee taught the single mothers and other volunteers to make ear-rings and bracelets from beads. It was a fun session for all present and they enjoyed creating their own handiwork products.

7. WORKING WITH MEN

As part of our work on domestic violence, WCC project officer, Michael Thomas went for a 5-day study tour to Singapore, visiting six family service centres and also the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports. During his visit, he learned how these centres counsel abusive men and the methods they used to conduct programmes for youth. Thomas was able to gain new ideas and identify resources to help in counselling abusive clients in WCC.

In 2006, there were 11 male clients who voluntarily came to seek counselling at WCC. They sought help for various problems related to marriage and relationship. Out of this, seven of them were counselled on their abusiveness to their wives. The counselling focused on making them take responsibility for their violent behavior. Our male social worker, Thomas, also counselled them on the effects of violence on their family and gave them non violent alternatives to their anger and behaviors.

Besides face-to-face counselling, WCC's hotline handled 86 telephone-counselling sessions for men.

These included calls to husbands regarding their violent behavior as well as calls related to marital problems. While most men were willing to come to WCC for further counselling, some were reluctant.

To further promote our counselling service for men, a Hotline Card was designed. About a thousand cards were distributed to 54 police stations in Penang. Two male clients walked in for counselling by picking up the Hotline Card in the police stations. More cards were also distributed to community centres and churches to promote this service.

Given that not many violent husbands voluntarily seek help from WCC, WCC approached the Penang Prison Department to initiate a discussion on the possibility of a joint WCC and Prison Department programme for inmates convicted for a domestic violence offence. The director requested WCC to submit a module to their KL headquarters for approval. WCC also conducted four group sessions with six men from the Agape Church at Farlim, Air Itam to pilot the module and to enhance WCC's staff facilitating skills.

