

## ★ International Women's Day ★



There was a carnival-like atmosphere at Queensbay Seafront on 19 March as over 800 people from all walks of life came together to join the "Walk to Stop Sexual Crimes" in conjunction with the 100th year of International Women's Day.

The event was jointly organised by the Penang State Committee for Women, Family and Community Development, Kempen Rakyat and Penang Sports Council. WCC, as a key coalition partner of Kempen Rakyat, successfully organised the Walk.

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The walk was flagged off by YB Lydia Ong Kok Fooi, Chairperson of the Penang State Committee for Women, Family and Community Development, YB Chong Eng, Chairperson of Kempen Rakyat together with the 22 NGOs who are coalition members of Kempen Rakyat.



# WCC 26th Annual General Meeting



On 27 March, 23 members of WCC attended the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting held at SERI (Socio-Economic & Environment Research Institute). WCC's President, Lalitha Menon, started the meeting by thanking the members, volunteers, staff, sponsors and all individuals who have given their time, energy and commitment towards the growth of WCC.

2010 was a special year for WCC as we marked our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. WCC has transformed into an organisation with a reputable standing in our services, outreach programmes and efforts to lobby for legal reforms.

Lalitha highlighted WCC's special milestone - the purchase of a three-storey building at the price of RM1.5 million. An Extraordinary General Meeting was held for WCC's members to endorse this important purchase.

The 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner in October to celebrate and raise funds turned out to be a huge success with good food, great entertainment and a fantastic crowd. An impressive sum of RM400,000 was raised as a start for the WCC Building Fund.

Next, WCC Service Coordinator, Annie Yeap and PPW Coordinator, Lau Swee Li presented on the services rendered from both centres respectively.

Compared to the previous year, this year WCC service team was able to handle an increase of 16% (514 clients) with an astonishing increase of 73% (435 clients) in PPW in face-to-face counselling.



For telephone counselling, WCC attended to 1,221 clients while it was 908 in PPW. The increase in the number of cases handled in PPW indicated that women living on the mainland are in dire need of such services.

Also, WCC participated in the national research by Universiti Sains Malaysia Kubang Kerian on the health impact of women suffering from violence. The survey indicated that the severity of the physical and

mental abuses were so high that 58% of these women attempted suicide.

Our support for rape survivors in hospitals continued. We have commenced to give victim support in the courts by accompanying the rape survivor and her family members by explaining the court processes so that they have better access to justice.

On the outreach front, Programme Director, Prema Devaraj, said that WCC went to 13 primary schools benefiting 1,641 children through our child sexual abuse (CSA) programme.

WCC was also active in conducting training on CSA for NGOs and volunteers interested to give talks to the public through the Kempen Rakyat Pulau Pinang initiative, which aims to raise awareness and educate the public on sexual crimes against children.

For teenagers, WCC went to nearly 20 schools and tertiary institutions to conduct sessions dealing with teenage issues like relationships, gender violence and sexual assault. Our sessions benefitted over 1,650 youths.

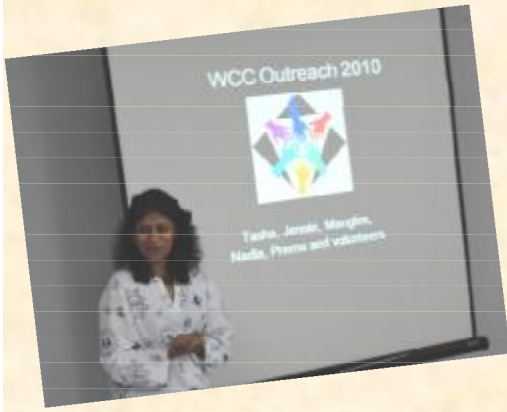


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 \* A successful team is a group of many hands but of one mind \*  
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 \* -Bill Bethel- \*  
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## WCC MEMBERSHIP

A friendly reminder to pay your WCC membership fee. It is only RM12 per year or RM200 for life membership. Please issue your cheque payable to: Women's Centre for Change.

# WCC Welcomes



The outreach team also reached out to the public to give talks ranging from domestic violence to children's personal safety. We also organised workshops to benefit specific groups such as the Malay and Indian women on their rights, trained single mothers to budget wisely and conducted support groups for ex-clients and lower income women to enhance their self-worth and esteem.

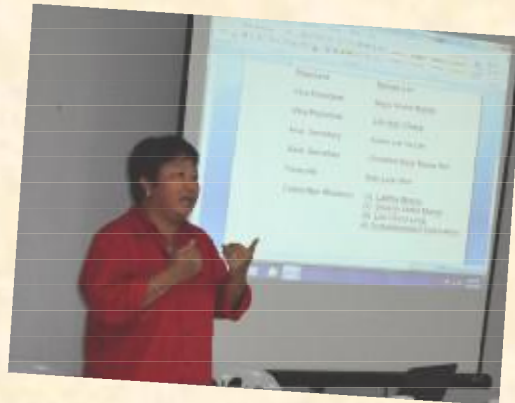
In our advocacy work, WCC was actively involved, as part of Penang Forum, in organising two major meetings for Penangites; one to review the progress status of Penang after 2008 and an election for civil society nominees for local councilors in November.

WCC was also involved in the training on gender mainstreaming with Good Governance and Gender Equality Society (3Gs). The work of 3Gs is in line with one of our key missions to promote gender equality and social justice.

While WCC celebrated our silver anniversary, the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) also commemorated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary by turning up at Parliament and issuing a status report: *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly* to remind parliamentarians that after 25 years, despite several positive developments, there were still broken promises to Malaysian women.

WCC Executive Director, Loh Cheng Kooi, then presented WCC's proposed and actual budget. Due to the purchase of the new building and the bank loan that we took, there were some challenges to simplify the proposed budget for the coming year.

The meeting then proceeded with the election of the new General Committee. Mariam Lim, our new President, ended the meeting by thanking the members for the trust and faith placed on her to lead the organisation. She looked forward to working together with the staff and the Committee for WCC's growth.



## General Committee 2011

**President**

Mariam Lim

**Vice President**

Hajar Abdul Rahim

Lim Kah Cheng

**Secretary**

Karen Lai Yu Lee

**Assistant Secretary**

Christine Khor Meow Wei

**Treasurer**

Poh Lerk Shih

**Committee Members**

Lalitha Menon

Shakila Abdul Manan

Sudandarambal Saminathan

Lim Chooi Leng

## Thank you to...



**Bakti** (Association of Wives of Ministers and Deputy Ministers) for generously donating RM10,000 to WCC. This money was donated by Pertubuhan Bunga Tanjung, which was dissolved in 2008 when the new Penang state government took over. A total of nearly RM393,000 was donated to 35 NGOs and the cheques were presented by Bakti's president, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, to the NGOs' representatives on 27 January.

**Datin Annie Chin and Chok Leng Leng** for their hard work in selling tickets for Lilian Too Feng Sui Extravaganza in Penang held on 23 January. Part of the ticket proceeds were given to three charity NGOs. WCC was delighted to receive a cheque of RM10,000.

**Rentokil** for undertaking free white ants treatment for WCC's premises.

Real generosity towards the future lies in giving all to the present -Albert Camus-

# STOP SEXUAL CRIMES:



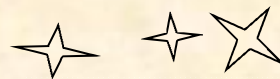
Walkers marched eagerly in raincoats and umbrellas for 1 km along the seafrent, chanting slogans "Stop Sexual Crimes, Keep our Children Safe; Kanak Kanak, Ada Hak".



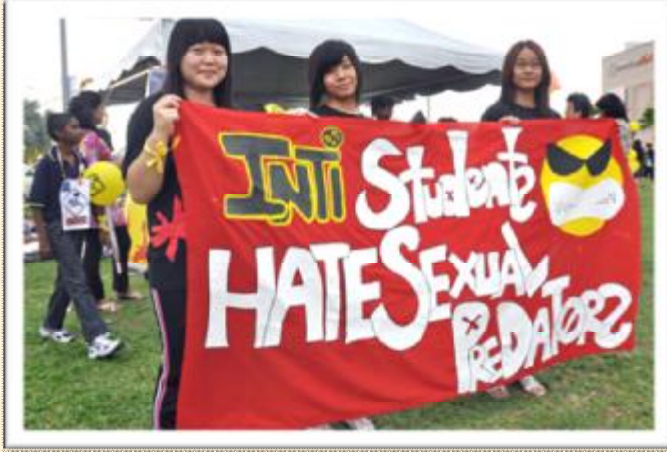
Walkers carried banners and placards with powerful messages to show their concerns towards the rising numbers of sexual crimes against children in this country. Some brought their pots, pans and whistles to make music. They were accompanied by 20 Kompang players from Persatuan Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia and Indian drummers from Siva Tappu.



Booths were also set up by NGOs to display and promote their activities and services. Some booths such as Asia Community Services (ACS) and Childline entertained the crowd with interactive games, batik drawing and sand art. There was also a Children's Corner, where children and parents created their own placards before the walk.



# Join the Walk!



Amongst the biggest groups of participants were the enthusiastic students of INTI College who came with painted faces and striking banners. Other groups included corporate groups, NGOs and Children's Homes.



After the walk, participants were entertained to two-hour of an exciting Kempen Rakyat concert with children's dances, songs, drama and hip hop. It began to drizzle during the walk, but when the concert started it turned into heavy rain. However, it did not dampen the people's mood as they rushed to the NGO's booths for shelter and continued to watch the interesting concert from there. The whole event ended at 9pm with the giving away of prizes for the placard and outfit competitions and with the grand finale song, "We are the World" by the YWCA Kindergarten children.



# WCC REACHING OUT...



## *Talk on Domestic Violence*

Three lectures on Violence Against Women (VAW) and Domestic Violence (DV) were carried out in February and March. A total of 170 medical students and student nurses attended these lectures.

For the first time, KDU College, under its Nursing & Allied Health Programmes, invited WCC to give a lecture on domestic violence to their student nurses on 21 February. The students were very responsive and there was a hot debate among the male and female students about women's role at home. One male student felt that domestic violence happened because women did not serve the family well and this opinion received strong objections from the female students; they commented that men should not treat women like maids and that it is always a choice made by men who hit their wives. There were interesting discussions throughout the lectures.



The next lecture was held at the Penang Medical College on 23 March. The medical students had a good discussion on gender issue. On 29 March a lecture was held at Lam Wah Ee Nursing College. The students were able to practise their questioning skills when handling a DV patient during the role-play session. There were lots of laughter and the exercise helped them to put into practice what they had learnt during the two-hour lecture.

## *Ceramah Keganasan Rumahtangga*

Persatuan Malaysian Public Service Society (MPSS) telah mengadakan satu program motivasi yang bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kesedaran diri para wanita dan gaya hidup mereka. Program tersebut telah diadakan pada 5 Mac di Dewan Serbaguna JKR Sungai Rampai, Bukit Mertajam. Jennie Antonisamy, Pegawai Projek dari Pusat Perkhidmatan Wanita (PPW), Seberang Perai telah dijemput untuk menyampaikan ceramah yang bertajuk Keganasan Rumahtangga. Seramai 85 peserta wanita menghadiri ceramah ini untuk mengetahui lebih lanjut tentang isu keganasan rumahtangga. Peserta juga berpeluang untuk berbincang dan menyuarakan pendapat mereka secara terbuka terhadap cabaran yang dihadapi oleh wanita yang mengalami keganasan dalam rumahtangga mereka.



## *Interview on Child Abuse Protection*

On 22 March, WCC was interviewed as part of a World Health Organisation (WHO) project on assessing child maltreatment prevention readiness in Malaysia. Prema spent over an hour with Dr Choo Wan Yuen from the Dept of Social and Preventive Medicine, University of Malaya, discussing the various facets of child protection in Malaysia. The interview covered many areas of child protection, current support systems, groups working on child protection and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). In addition to describing WCC's work on child sexual abuse prevention, Prema also highlighted the impact of poverty on children, the lack of a systematic plan of action for child protection, the lack of a decent budget for programmes pertaining not just to child protection and prevention of child maltreatment but also to general areas of concern regarding health, education and standard of living.

## *SUHAKAM Training*

The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) organised a 3-day human rights training in March for 36 lecturers from teachers training institutes from the northern states of Kedah, Perlis and Penang. The training is to enlighten these lecturers on human rights issues, especially on CRC (Convention on the Rights of the Child). WCC Executive Director, Loh Cheng Kooi, was invited to give a session on Rights of Women on 25 March. Besides speaking on the rights of the women to live in a safe, violence free environment, Cheng Kooi also took the opportunity to introduce WCC's work to these lecturers.

## Talk on Volunteerism

In conjunction with the International Women's Day, the Women's Right's Awareness Association (WRAA) organised a sister camp entitled "我的精彩我做主" on 20 March at Summit Hotel Bukit Mertajam. The camp attracted over two hundred women, mainly from the mainland. Five speakers from different walks of life: a school principal, business woman, model, politician and social worker, shared their personal experiences on their work and life.

Annie Yeap represented WCC to talk about volunteerism-what attracts someone to volunteer themselves, the areas one can volunteer with WCC and in the process, what they can learn. At the end of the day, over 20 women signed up to be volunteers with WRAA. Overall, the audience felt that the sister camp was good and they had learnt a lot through the experiences of the different speakers. They want to participate in future camps.

## Practicum Supervision on Social Work

The School of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia, under the social work programme, organised a half day seminar on "Practicum Supervision in The Field of Social Work" on 27 January at its school. Professor Cynthia L. Garthwait from the University of Montana, USA, gave a talk on the importance of supervision on trainee students in this field. Over 50 participants from different agencies attended. In the seminar, Professor Cynthia explained the importance and benefits of supervision for students. Annie attended the seminar.

## Lions Club Community Service

Since year 2000, the Lions Club of Georgetown Island has been sponsoring thousands of copies of WCC's cartoon booklet *Saya dan Suara Kecil Saya* in Bahasa Malaysia and Mandarin. This booklet about children's personal safety has been widely distributed to primary school students during the *Bijak Itu Selamat* (BIS) outreach programme.

At its Club's 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary function on 26 February, in recognition of this joint collaboration with WCC, the Club's President, Daniel Chuah, expressed that the Club will continue to sponsor the booklets for WCC's BIS programme. The event was witnessed by District Governor Hudson Hah, District 308 B2 Malaysia. Annie attended the function.



## Internship



"Pengalaman latihan praktikal selama 25 hari di WCC merupakan satu pengalaman yang cukup bermakna bagi saya. Saya diberi peluang untuk membantu mengendalikan kes klien secara berse-muka di mana pengalaman ini amat membantu saya dalam bidang kerja sosial kelak. Saya ingin mengucapkan ribuan terima kasih kepada pihak WCC kerana sudi memberi tunjuk ajar dan berkongsi pengalaman selama saya berada di situ." - Nur Husnina Samsudin -



"Saya merasakan Program Bijak Itu Selamat (BIS) yang dianjurkan oleh WCC sememangnya perlu dilakukan untuk memberi pendidikan kepada kanak-kanak mengenai keselamatan diri mereka, menjauhkan diri dari pemangsa dan maklumkan kepada orang yang boleh dipercayai seperti ibu, saudara mara lain atau guru sekiranya perkara seperti penderaan seksual berlaku pada diri mereka. Saya ditugaskan untuk menemu bual guru-guru yang terlibat dengan program ini.

Tugasan ini memberi kesedaran pada saya bahawa seorang pekerja sosial juga memainkan peranan penting sebagai seorang pendidik bagi membawa kesedaran kepada masyarakat. Saya ingin mengakhiri dengan ucapan ribuan terima kasih kepada WCC kerana memberi saya peluang untuk membuat pratikum dengan organisasi ini." - Ainie Haslinda

# CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE PROGRAMME

## With primary schools...

The year started off with the outreach team going to SRK Convent Green Lane on 8 & 9 February to run the Bijak Itu Selamat (BIS) programme. The team covered about 164 students of 12 years old. Surprisingly, we found that some of the young students understood terms like rape and sex. When we explored further, we learnt that the students learnt about such terms through the media, internet and from their parents.

On the mainland, PPW conducted the BIS programme on 6 March at S.J.K.(T) Kulim. Madam Shanti, the school counselor, invited Jennie to conduct the programme for 55 boys and 58 girls who are Standard 6 students in Tamil. Jennie conducted the programme in two different sessions. The students responded enthusiastically, especially during the questioning session.

At the end of the programme, booklets 'Nina and Her Secret' and 'Saya dan Suara Kecil Saya', that explains the differences between good and bad touches, were distributed to them. PPW volunteer, Pravina, was there to observe and help throughout the programme. The positive responses have encouraged PPW to run more related programmes in the future.



## Kempen Rakyat Pulau Pinang initiative...



Upon an invitation from the Girl Guides Association of Penang, Prema, Mangles and Tasha, delivered the child sexual abuse talk (CSA) to three different groups totalling 106 primary school girls from eight schools in Seberang Perai Utara.

The team ran the *Bijak Itu Selamat* (BIS) programme on 26 February in conjunction with 'Thinking Day' celebration at SK Hashim Awang in Kepala Batas. Our interns, Linda and Nina, assisted us in interviewing the school counselors on their perceptions towards our BIS programme. Although most of them never heard of the programme, they showed their eagerness to participate in the training. We would like to thank Puan Lam Chee Chun, the District Commissioner from the Girl Guides Association of Penang, for making all the arrangements as part of Kempen Rakyat Pulau Pinang initiative.

As Kempen Rakyat picked up steam, there were more invitations for talks. On 11 March, Prema gave a short training on the CSA talk. Those who attended included Susan Siew, Cindy Ruble, Lim Kah Cheng, Hariszuan, Poh Lerk Shih, Ho Wei Lyn and WCC staff, Mangles and Tasha. The contents of the slides were discussed and difficult sections were simplified.

OSRAM invited Kempen Rakyat to talk about CSA to their staff on three separate occasions — 22, 25 and 29 March. The team took turns to deliver these three talks. Thank you to Rosalind Yagambaram for coordinating the talks. A total of 115 people attended these talks. In addition, on the 26 March, Kah Cheng spoke at the Women's Welfare Council to 40 participants.



# WORKING WITH IPG WORKING WITH YOUTH

## IPG Penang

Since 2008 WCC has collaborated with Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Pulau Pinang (IPG) to train their final year trainee teachers on *Bijak Itu Selamat* programme so that they can continue carrying out the programme themselves.

On 18 January, we gave an introduction on prevention of child sexual abuse to the trainees. We then trained 12 students who volunteered to carry out the programme during their practical training on 26 January.

WCC staff helped contact the school counselors in 10 primary schools to allow the trainee teachers to conduct the programme.

In mid-March, the trainee teachers, namely Mohd Zulfikri Lukman and Syed Nurhafiz, conducted the BIS programme in SK Kg Jawa and SK Seri Indah respectively. Another two trainees, Nuruldina Talhis and Nur Izyani Kamaluddin, conducted theirs at SK Sungai Ara and SK Tanjung Bungah.

Mangles and Tasha observed their presentations and noted that all the trainees were well prepared as their presentations were effective. They had two disclosures; one from a student and another from a teacher.

The affected student began by asking whether it is wrong if both parties liked the touches. Upon further exploration, she expressed that her boyfriend had molested her. The teacher spoke about his experience being touched by his senior when he was studying in a boarding school. It traumatised him and as a result, he changed school. Thumbs up to these trainees who reached out to more than 84 students.

## IPG Tunku Bainun

On 10 February, Prema, Tasha and Nadia conducted a workshop on *Gender and Relationships* to 66 students of IPG Tunku Bainun Bukit Mertajam. The workshop aimed to teach the students about gender and how it creates the differences between men and women.

From the evaluation conducted, 93% of the students really enjoyed the workshop. Some of the things they learned include how gender inequality affects men and women in many ways and why it is important for women to know their rights. At the end of the programme, the students asked WCC to conduct more sessions on gender and women's issues. We are looking forward to go back to IPG Tunku Bainun.

## ICT: Being Savvy Being Safe

The outreach team trialed their new programme, "ICT: Being Savvy Being Safe" which focuses on cyber violence. This 90-minute programme looks at the safety issues when using the handphones or Facebook. Tasha, Mangles, Nadia and Prema worked on this programme which included case studies and video clips to ensure that the participants are engaged and responsive.

A session was given to 40 students from 20 schools at a programme organised by Family Health Development Penang at Berjaya Georgetown Hotel on 24 March.

On 26 March, SMJK (C) Union invited WCC to conduct a similar workshop in Mandarin. Eighty students between 13 and 14 years old attended the session. WCC volunteers, Tang Kae Shih and Ng Lee Yng, helped the students to identify positive characteristics of a friend they made through the handphone or Facebook. Both of them emphasized on what the students should do and who to contact if they are being sexually assaulted and if someone they know should face such a problem.



## Circle of Friendship

In the process of equipping secondary school female students with knowledge on how to identify the differences between an acquaintance, good, and close friends, the outreach team was invited by SMK Simpang Ampat to run the "Circle of Friendship" programme for their Form 1 students.

Jennie and Tasha conducted this one-hour programme in Malay on 8 February while Kae Shih with WCC's intern, Kimberly, conducted the programme in Mandarin on 21 February. This programme aims to help the students to understand the importance of trust at every level of a friendship. The programme benefitted 168 students.

## National Symposium on Adolescent Health (NSOAH)

The 7<sup>th</sup> National Symposium on Adolescent Health (NSOAH) entitled "Teen, Sex and Drugs" was held at Grand Seasons Hotel in Kuala Lumpur on 25-27 March. NSOAH was co-organised by the Malaysian Medical Association, Malaysian Association for Adolescent Health, Malaysian Pediatric Association, Ministry of Health and the National Population and Family Development Board.

On the first day of the symposium, Mangles and Tasha presented the "ICT: Being Savvy Being Safe" programme to approximately 30 people at a workshop session. The programme was divided into three aspects; hand phone safety, internet safety and accessing help. The session was lively and the WCC staff was kept on their toes by the many questions raised. At the end of the workshop, WCC's *Respect* book and other materials on teenage relationship were snapped up in minutes.

The following day, Prema presented her paper at Symposium 2; Media, Sex and Teens entitled "Challenging Masculinities: Reducing Gender Based Violence". Prema explained that research and work with young men from various parts of the world showed that the ideas of masculinity were the most compelling factors towards risk taking behavior, violence, unsafe sexual practices and misogyny.

Hence to get young men to think differently about women, they had to first think differently about themselves. She concluded that to reduce gender based violence, there is a need to work with boys and men to challenge and break the traditional, patriarchal masculinities which reinforce gender inequality and maintain the power differential between men and women. WCC's input gave many in the audience food for thought. There were many questions from the floor. For some it was simply unthinkable whereas for others, it was an approach they were willing to consider and use.



*"It was my first experience to attend a national symposium to share my working experience with youth and adolescents. For me, it was truly an event that I will never forget. I was worried and I had butterflies in my stomach when the time of presentation came nearer. However, I was glad that I was able to control my nervousness and delivered my presentation calmly and confidently. I personally feel that it was worth the effort flying in to Kuala Lumpur to find out that many people acknowledge and support WCC's work on youth and adolescents."*

## JAG Evaluation

The Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) held its evaluation and planning meeting at Flamingo Hotel, Penang on 24 and 25 February. JAG welcomed two new members: Perak Women for Women (PWW) and Sabah Women's Action-Resource Group (SAWO) and all in 23 members participated. The meeting began with each organisation sharing their varied work for 2011, followed by the evaluation of how JAG actions have impacted our work in 2010. We then identified movement building as an important area – for e.g. to decentralise the organising of the Feminista Fiesta, a JAG joint effort, to other states outside of Klang valley. SAWO expressed interest in organising this national event in 2012 with the help from Sabah local groups as this will develop more interest in women's issues in Sabah.

Given the socio-economic-political development in the country, JAG realised that there is a need to be involved in broader issues affecting women – female headed household, lack of childcare facilities, women in the economy, etc. JAG then identified poverty as an important issue affecting women today and agreed that an initial document of how poverty is affecting women needs to be carried out.



Worthy cause: Women's Centre for Change (WCC) (right) unveiling the association's 25th anniversary T-shirts during the Nationwide Awareness Programme to Reduce Stigma Associated with Mental Illness at the Caring Society Complex, Penang.

## Promo Gang : World Mental Health Day

The Promo Gang continued to actively promote WCC's services in Penang. We set up a stall at the World Mental Health Day, organised by D'Home Mental Health Association on the 26 February. Over 500 people attended the one-day programme. As usual, our colourful stall attracted many people. Most of the participants are not familiar with WCC but are very interested in our publications and merchandise. Special thanks to our volunteers Kimberly, Irene, Kala and Wei Lyn, for helping out during the event.

## LOVE @ USM

On 25 January WCC was invited to join the L.O.V.E (Lifting Others through Volunteer Engagement) festival. The aim of this festival was to promote volunteerism amongst the students of Universiti Sains Malaysia. This festival was organised by student group, AIESEC and Right to Livelihood College. WCC, along with 15 other NGOs, had a booth to promote our activities and services and recruit new volunteers.

WCC's booth was decorated with posters and our vibrant brochures attracted many students to visit our booth. At the end of the day, we managed to recruit over 40 new volunteers. Special thanks to Yap Chee Hui, Intan Farhana Fauzi, Tan Kim and Faiz, for helping out during the festival. We hope to participate in this event again next year.



# Gender Responsive Budgeting Workshop

A Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) Workshop was organised by Good Governance & Gender Equality (3Gs) on 21-23 February. This workshop was a follow-up activity from the 3Gs Conference: *Gender Mainstreaming: Justice for All* held last August.

Kanita and 3Gs co-organised this GRB workshop which had an overall aim to integrate and institutionalise GRB in the various institutions and agencies in Penang as part of the gender mainstreaming efforts of the state. The three objectives were:

- 1) To increase the understanding of participants on GRB;
- 2) To familiarise participants with the tools and methodologies to implement GRB in Penang;
- 3) To increase participants' capacity to monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of allocating resources in their respective institutions.

The three day intensive workshop was attended by stakeholders from various sectors in society, including government officials, Members of Parliament, councilors, academicians and members of civil society. The two key resource persons were Dr. Marina Durano and Ms. Kristina Birke.

The programme began with the importance of gender mainstreaming in the context of Penang. Three papers were presented: Gender Issues on Health and Safety in Penang, Women's Participation in Decision-making in Penang and Cash Transfer Programmes in Penang: Access by and Benefits to Women.

This was followed by approaches to GRB, tools and methodologies for GRB, data requirement for gender budgeting analysis and case studies on public expenditure, tracking, indicators and statistics. Group work was also held in between these sessions to ensure that participants were able to apply some of the concepts they were learning for the first time.

WCC was represented at the workshop by Prema who helped facilitate some sessions during this workshop. She also presented a paper on Cash Transfers in Penang, as part of a team effort, including Steven Sim and Ooi Ai Lyn.

The paper looked at how some forms of cash transfers (ie monetary welfare aid) were carried out in Penang using state government funds namely the Senior Citizens Appreciation Programme, the Next of Kin programme and the Eradication of Hard Core Poverty programme. Existing gender disaggregated data, budget allocations, distribution of funds, access to funds by women, benefits of funds to women and the importance of gender disaggregated data for proper analysis and evaluation of such cash transfers were discussed.

## KANITA's IWD Celebration

USM Women's Development Research Centre (KANITA) celebrated International Women's Day jointly with WABA (World Alliance Breastfeeding Association) on 17 March with the theme *Humanising Women's Work in the New Economic Model: Reflecting on Decades of Women and Work in Malaysia*.

A video depicting the theme was shown followed by a colourful display of past UN themes on IWD by KANITA staff. The next item on the agenda was a forum conducted by women from different backgrounds which included a past actress, a homemaker, and a bank union staff who spoke about their experiences and challenges working outside and in the homes. Cheng Kooi attended the event.



## Launch of Women's Section of Indian Association

In conjunction with the 100<sup>th</sup> year of International Women's Day Celebrations, the Indian Association (IA) launched their Women's Section on 27 March. Datin Devaraj and Prema attended the function. Prema gave a talk on "Women Creating Safe Spaces" which focused on how women, working together with other women and men, could create 'safe spaces' for the community. The talk touched on the many 'unsafe' spaces in society which included not only violence against women but the many other injustices in society.

Prema encouraged the women in the IA to look beyond keeping the immediate family safe and to get involved in the broader issues of social justice which affect everyone. She gave examples on how they could be involved and discussed the challenges of being involved. She shared the WCC formation and how she was first introduced to WCC by her mother.

The audience laughed as she related the 'first case of domestic violence' she was involved in which left her in tears by the roadside, needing hot Milo from her parents at 3 am in the morning! Prema encouraged the IA women not to give up when faced with difficult moments in their work but to believe that it is possible to create a safer world for all. About 30 people attended the talk and lunch was served afterwards.

## Child's Knowledge

How can you really do this?  
you're someone I'm suppose to trust  
but when you look at me  
your eyes are filled with lust

I am still just a child  
why can't you just understand?  
I don't want to do this  
please let go of my hand

Your hands reaching out to me  
touching me in my private place  
you're hurting me with your actions  
with terror, I slap your face

Then you threaten to kill me  
if I don't do as you say  
somehow, knowing you do that  
after you hurt me today

My parents have always trusted you  
you've always been in our lives  
you claim if I told anyone  
they'd accuse me of telling lies

I may be still a child  
still I've been told this isn't right  
you're nothing but a child molester  
now get out of my eyesight

No matter what your name is  
how important you think you are  
when you abuse a child sexually  
where you belong is behind bars

I am going to the police  
tell them how you threaten me  
admitting what happened,  
I need protecting  
somehow, I'll make sure they believe

by Angela Hutcherson-Jenkins

## How Could You Treat Me Like This?

*"He tore off my clothes and stripped me naked... he started to hit me with his strong hands and leg till I peed on the carpet...and he stopped. I thought it was over but he took me upstairs, again hit me and kicked me with his leg... till I peed again...I couldn't tell how long he was beating me...it seemed like hours and hours...and he stopped.*

*I then wore my T-shirt and tracksuit and went downstairs. I was expecting him to beat me again but luckily it didn't happen. I went to the kitchen; wore my slippers, opened the back door and without turning back, ran to the junction of the road and got help from a neighbour...my neighbour helped me escape. I went to my parent's house.*

*I was so scared and traumatised although this was not the first time he has beaten me. But this time, he was so abusive that I couldn't take it anymore. I told myself this is it... I am going to divorce this monster!"*

*However, as predicted by my family members, my husband came begging, crying and asked for a final chance. He promised to change and will hurt me no more. I followed him home thinking that "tak apalah mungkin dia akan berubah kali ini". (Never mind, maybe this time he will change).*

*But I was wrong. The night I followed him home, he hit me again...He didn't allow me to sleep the whole night. He forced me to have sex with him and sodomised me terribly. I asked "How could you treat me like this?" but he just doesn't bother. I really felt so humiliated...and so degraded. I am educated, come from a well-to-do family, and I don't deserve to be treated like this!*

This client came to WCC with her family members to seek help. She then lodged a police report, did a medical check-up at the hospital and got an Interim Protection Order. She is in the process of filing for a divorce.



# Press Highlights...

Children's Homes

NST 3/2/11

## 4 ways to prevent sexual abuse

THE recent allegation of sexual abuse in a children's home in Penang as highlighted in the press, has brought to the fore a problem in some children's homes which is not often spoken about.

While recognising the efforts taken by individuals, as well as state authorities, in setting up and managing children's homes across the country, the Women's Centre for Change, Penang (WCC), remains deeply concerned over incidences and allegations of sexual abuse in children's homes.

We offer the following suggestions which may help manage and reduce the risk of sexual abuse to children in these homes.

- Screening of staff and volunteers. Sexual offenders in homes are often the children's caregivers who work with or spend a lot of time with

them. To help minimise the risk to the child, it is crucial that adequate screening or vetting of potential staff/volunteers be carried out before they are hired.

The management board of these homes should also ensure that there is constant supervision and monitoring of staff and volunteers in their interaction with children.

- Empowerment of children in homes.

Children are often powerless against a sexual offender, who is usually in a position of authority over the child. Their lack of knowledge of and confidence over their rights, their fear of being blamed and their lack of access to help mean that children can be easily exploited and manipulated by the offender.

If we are to protect children, it is imperative that children be taught

about the differences between good and bad touch or contact and about not keeping secrets.

They must also be encouraged and empowered to seek help immediately should abuse take place.

For this to happen, children's homes need to operate within a framework in which children's rights and empowerment are central. This includes creating avenues where children are encouraged and taught how to raise and discuss problems they face by having weekly children's meetings with a trusted staff member or board member.

Keeping children docile or subservient only serves to allow abuse to continue once it starts.

- Working with young offenders. Many of the children who live in children's homes come from difficult backgrounds where they have been

victims of physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse.

Sometimes, a child who has been sexually abused in the past becomes an offender and sexually abuses a younger child or other children in the home.

It would serve state and privately-funded children's homes to have trained staff who can identify and work with such children through intervention or therapeutic programmes, to help the child heal from such trauma and to ensure that a cycle of abuse is not perpetuated.

- Reporting the abuse.

Very often, a lack of awareness, disbelief or inaction by caregivers and board members in a children's home means that a sexual offender continues to have access to children, enabling the abuse to continue, often over many years, with devastat-

ing long-term impact on the children.

Staff and management of children's homes must not only be vigilant over the possible occurrence of sexual abuse in their homes but respond immediately and appropriately when it happens.

Child protection, including risk management and reduction, are not jobs done by a single agency. Sexual offenders live and operate among us in a variety of ways. There is a dire need for all of us to be constantly vigilant.

Children depend on us for their safety and wellbeing. We simply cannot let them down.

PREMA DEVARAJ  
Programme Director  
Women's Centre for Change  
Penang

## 20 years' jail for rape of kindy girl

NST  
30/3/2011

By Phuah Ken Lin  
news@nst.com.my

GEORGE TOWN: A kindergarten director was sentenced to 20 years' jail by the Sessions Court yesterday for raping a 4-year-old girl.

Judge Sitarun Nisa Abdul Aziz also ordered Ewe Peng Lip, 48, to be given 10 strokes of the rotan for the offence.

Ewe was alleged to have raped the girl, a pupil of Tadika Mutiara Kecil Kindergarten, at No. 1, Cangkat Dumbur, Bukit Dumbur, here, between 8.10am and noon sometime between January and April in 2008.

Earlier, Ewe's counsel, Datuk C.V. Prabhakaran, who appeared with Moke Yee Yow, pleaded for a light sentence as his client was not involved in any wrongdoing since 2008.

He added that Ewe, who was married with three children, had no previous convictions.

Deputy public prosecutor Tan Guat Cheng, in pressing for a deterrent sentence, said the court should not tolerate statutory rape as the young victim had been traumatised.

"Being at the kindergarten daily to assist his wife, Ewe took advantage of the situation to commit the offence," she said.

Prabhakaran later applied for a stay of execution pending appeal and asked the RM10,000 bail to be extended.

Tan proposed the bail be increased

from RM10,000 to RM20,000.

Sitarun Nisa allowed the stay of execution and ordered the bail to be increased to RM20,000 with one surety. Ewe posted bail.

Meanwhile, there was a commotion outside the court after Ewe was sentenced. His family members tried to prevent photographers from snapping pictures of Ewe being led out of the court.

A woman, believed to be Ewe's sister, hit a cameraman with her handbag and the two engaged in a war of words before calm was restored.

Ewe's wife was seen trying to cover her face with her cardigan while he was being whisked away.

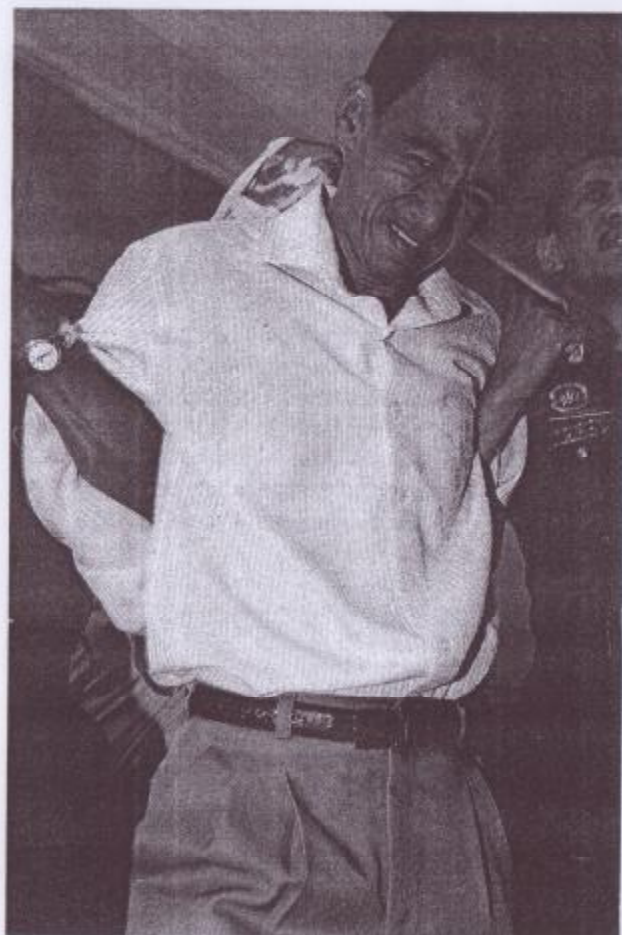
Both women also jostled with several photographers while hurling verbal abuses against them.

The case was first highlighted by the *New Straits Times* in December last year after the girl's grandparents sought the paper's help to highlight how investigations into the case were progressing.

The grandparents yesterday expressed relief that the case was finally over.

"Nothing can change what happened to our granddaughter but we are glad justice has been served," the girl's grandfather said after calling up the NST office here to thank the paper for highlighting the case in December.

"The culprit has been found guilty and we can now move on and try to



Kindergarten director Ewe Peng Lip being led out of the court after he was sentenced to 20 years' jail for raping a 4-year-old girl in 2008. — NST picture by Asman Ibrahim

put the past behind us."

He also thanked the Women's Centre For Change (WCC) in Penang for helping the family get the case publicised.

WCC director Loh Cheng Kool said the guilty verdict would hopefully end a traumatic period for the victim's family.

She said the stiff sentence would hopefully send a message to sexual predators that such crimes would not be tolerated by society.

Loh also called on authorities like the Welfare Services Department to play a bigger role in helping sexual crime victims get professional counselling to cope with their ordeal.

# Journeying for change

She leads a determined little outfit in the north of Peninsular Malaysia in the fight to reduce violence and discrimination against women and children.

By LOH CHENG KOOI

**M**Y life as a student activist in the United Kingdom in the late 1970s had the greatest impact on my life. Being exposed to the Malaysian student movement and the women's movement there enabled me to develop a strong sense of social justice and gender equality. These lay the foundations for my journey through life. When I returned to Malaysia in the early 1980s, I became involved with the Women's Aid Organisation (WAO). The 80s was an exciting period for the women's movement in Malaysia as it sowed the seeds for the formation of women's organisations. As my commitment to feminism grew, I went back to the Netherlands to pursue my Masters in Women's Studies to deepen my theoretical knowledge on women's issues. I subsequently took up a job with a regional women workers organisation in Hong Kong and travelled extensively in Asia working with workers and women's groups.

In the 1990s, I came home to Penang with my family: my husband, a two-year-old daughter plus a son on the way. In 1997, I was offered the post of executive director in the Women's Centre for Change (then called Women's Crisis Centre). It was a challenge for me since my previous work experience had been largely at the regional level. Accepting the job turned out to be one of the best decisions I have ever made. It is in WCC that I learnt about great friendships; working with an amazing range of women; from home-makers to lawyers, for the sole purpose of reducing violence and discrimination against women and children. Amazingly I have been with WCC for the past 13 years, the longest

I have stayed in any job! The challenges and the unfinished work keeps me and the dedicated staff and volunteers going. Every year we ask: what more can WCC do to improve women and children's lives?

Today WCC is well known for our counselling services for domestic violence clients. Our child sexual abuse prevention package *Bijak Itu Selamatkan* (Be Smart, Be Safe) has travelled to five states educating thousands of children on differentiating good and bad touches and saying "No" to sexual abuse. Hundreds of teachers have been trained with this package. Similarly, for secondary students WCC has produced a program entitled *Respek* (Respect) focusing on the prevention of gender violence and exploitative relationships. It is through both WCC and Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) that I learnt about meaning of passion and activism – women activists who have dedicated their lives to the women's cause. Through campaigns and joint efforts, I learnt that a small group of committed people are capable of achieving big things.

It is through the sheer determination of women's groups who have relentlessly highlighted and campaigned for women's issues over the last two decades that women's issues are now part and parcel of our lives.

Since 1994, domestic violence is a criminal offence. Sexist remarks by politicians and leaders are no longer acceptable and discrimination on the grounds of gender is a thing of the past as guaranteed by in our Constitution. Women themselves are taking steps to change their lives if they experience violence. These are the positives that Malaysian women have gained.

Yet the challenges are still many. Violence against women and children continues to rise



WCC executive director Loh Cheng Kooi

alarmingly. Despite existing laws, enforcement is still lacking. There are still police officers who are not aware of the Domestic Violence Act, rape victims receive little support and their access to justice is minimal; the One Stop Crisis Centres for abused victims in hospitals are often poorly equipped and not properly staffed. Women who are sexually harassed at the workplace do not have proper redress.

At the national level, the UN Women's

Convention (Cedaw) has not been incorporated into our legal system to ensure that substantive equality is implemented. Women's interests would seem to be of low priority in the Government's agenda.

As a small NGO, WCC's mission is to reduce violence and empower women and children so that they can have access to social justice and enjoy their full potential as human beings. We shall continue to counsel and shelter abused women, educate children and youths and advocate for changes to reduce violence and improve the lives of these communities.

New programmes that WCC has initiated such as a Rape Survivors Support Network in collaboration with the Penang Hospital provide new avenues for work. We also support rape survivors when they go for the rape trials because not only have they been traumatised by the rape but the court process itself can be an extremely distressing ordeal.

In 2010, WCC took a giant step to purchase a three-storey building due to our expanding work and growing staff. The building costs RM1.5mil and renovations will cost another RM800,000. We have initiated a WCC Building Fund to raise money for both the building and the renovations. Our plans include having more counselling rooms, conducting training to equip disadvantaged women with skills and knowledge and build quality service for our clientele. As a tax exempt, non-profit body, we appeal to the public and corporations to donate generously so as to enable WCC to continue our dedicated service for women and children.

■ Loh Cheng Kooi is the executive director of the Women's Centre for Change Penang

## NUR Alert for All Missing Children

The Women's Centre for Change, Penang (WCC) welcomes the efforts taken by various parties to ensure the implementation of an early alert system for missing children, NUR (National Urgent Response) Alert. While valuing this effort, WCC is concerned that the intended NUR Alert would only be focusing on missing children aged 12 and below. We are unclear as to how this decision was arrived at.

Based on 2008 police statistics, 86% (6 out of 7) of missing children below 12 years of age were found, whereas only 56% (655 out of 1174) of missing children below 18 years were found. Similarly the numbers in 2009 showed a recovery rate of 90% (45 out of 50) for missing children below 12 years but only 47% (497 out of 1048) of missing children below 18 years were found.

The statistics indicate three things i) the number of older children (between 12-18 years) who go missing is much higher than younger children (less than 12 years) ii) the recovery rate for older children is much less than for younger children iii) on average, about half of the older missing children i.e., the teenagers, remain missing.

It is extremely worrying to know that in Malaysia, several hundred children remain missing yearly. For the parents and family of a missing child, the situation is extremely distressing. Their lives change at that instant of knowing their child is missing. One can only imagine the pain and anguish of the families who never recover their missing child. It does not matter whether the child is below 12 or not. Such a loss can never be rectified.

While WCC understands the difficulty and effort it takes to find missing children, especially the older ones, we call upon the authorities involved in the planning and implementation of NUR Alert to consider that a wider service be made applicable to all missing children, and not just to those below the age of 12 years.

Keeping our children safe is a commitment which requires community effort and cooperation. Finding our children when they go missing, irrespective of their age or circumstance, is equally important.

Prema Devaraj  
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12 January 2011

\*\* This article was published in Malaysiakini on 12 January 2011\*\*