

# STOP SEXUAL HARASSMENT CAMPAIGN



WCC, as part of the Joint Action Group Against Violence Against Women (JAG), led a 'Stop Sexual Harassment' Petition Campaign which saw strong support from the public. The six week campaign took the form of a nationwide petition. 12,000 individuals and 64 organisations from women, consumer, trade union, community professional and civil rights representing thousands more individuals signed and endorsed the petition.

On 30 June 2000, the petitions and a memorandum on 'Stop Sexual Harassment' were handed to the Minister of Human Resources, YB Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn in a ceremony which was widely covered by the English, Malay, Chinese, Indian dailies and TV stations. WCC President (1999-2000) and chairperson of JAG, Zarizana Abdul Aziz, in her speech, urged the Minister to study our memorandum and heed the public call for the legislation to ensure a harassment-free workplace for every working person.

The JAG memorandum states that while the Code of Practice on the Prevention and Eradication of Sexual Harassment has been successful in creating awareness on the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace, it is limited in its application, does not provide proper procedures and its adoption by employers is wholly voluntary. As a result, sexual harassment complaints have continued to be ignored or not been properly handled by the employers. It is time to consider legislation as the next step in our goal to create a harassment-free workplace.

The Minister assured everyone present that he will study the memorandum and seek ways to work together with women's groups and concerned organisations to find ways to eradicate sexual harassment in the workplace.

In the meantime, JAG announced that it would study legal responses to sexual harassment in other countries and propose a draft bill in due course.

On 31st March 2001, JAG presented the draft Sexual Harassment Bill to the Deputy Minister of Human Resources, YB Dr Abdul Latiff Ahmad. Since then the Bill has drawn widespread attention and JAG has had numerous meetings with the Director-General of Labour, Director-General of Industrial relations, the Women and Family Development Ministry and other agencies to discuss legislation against sexual harassment and the proposed bill.

In May 2002, WCC is organising an international round-table discussion in Kuala Lumpur. Legal experts from the region and the International Labour Organisation have been invited to share the experiences of their countries and organisations in combating sexual harassment and propose the best practice model for Malaysia.