



*WCC wishes all our friends and supporters
a meaningful year in 2019!*

Change is Possible

IMPACT OF WCC'S WORK IN 2018

CHANGED WOMEN & CHILDREN'S LIVES



Counselled
552
new clients

Main cases handled
175 domestic violence
146 marital problems
53 sexual assault

EMPOWERED VICTIMS' LIVES

Gave counselling and emotional support in
80 cases of domestic violence and
76 cases of sexual assault
from One Stop Crisis Centres in
government hospitals



FIGHTING FOR JUSTICE

Supported **48** court cases
of domestic violence and sexual assault
comprehensively for victims
and their families



EDUCATED CHILDREN & TEENS



Taught **8,219** children
in **125** primary schools
about "good touch and bad touch"
to prevent sexual abuse

Taught **2,311** teenagers
in **26** secondary schools
on cybersafety and healthy,
non-exploitative relationships



CONDUCTED 5 TRAINING WORKSHOPS NATIONWIDE

For **417** school counsellors and trainee teachers
in Penang, Kedah, Johor and Kelantan to enable them to teach
children on sexual abuse prevention and cybersafety

2018 Highlights

Successfully organised our first Fun “Run with Shades”

in support of domestic violence survivors. Over 2,000 runners participated and raised over RM120,000 for WCC’s work.



Celebrated the successful one year anniversary of WCC’s Value Shop with the dedication of volunteers and shoppers which made it happen!

Impact of WCC’s court support: A Sessions Court Judge ordered a young man, sentenced for raping a 13 year old girl, to pay RM5,000 compensation and apologise to the child. He was bound over on a two year bond for good behaviour. The compensation sets an important precedent for sexual assault cases.



WCC met up with the Institutional Reforms Committee and submitted three recommendations regarding 1) victim support in the criminal justice system, 2) sex education in all schools and 3) better enforcement of maintenance orders for women and children.

A record number of 131 trainee teachers and teachers conducted WCC’s *OK Tak OK* child sexual abuse prevention programme in their respective schools for over 5,000 children out of the total 8,219 children WCC reached.



Empowering Children and Youth Bijak Itu Selamat in Kedah



WCC was delighted to work together with Pertubuhan Kesedaran Wanita Kedah (PKWK) and Pejabat Pendidikan Daerah Pendang, where on 30 October 2018, WCC staff Aloyah Bakar and Sara Ayuni conducted our *Bijak Itu Selamat* (BIS) programme for 52 primary and secondary school counselling teachers at Kem Kenari Nature Park in Yan, Kedah.

Against the beautiful backdrop of paddy fields and Gunung Jerai in the distance, participants enthusiastically learnt about child sexual abuse prevention. The teachers spoke about their personal experiences in handling child sexual abuse cases. They highlighted that they really needed support in terms of information and training to improve their skills in managing the cases.

Representatives from the police, the welfare department and the Klinik Kesihatan Daerah were also invited. They were able to explain and help the teachers to understand the respective roles of the agencies in handling such sexual abuse cases in the local context of Yan District.

CHANGING MINDS

OK Tak OK



There is an ancient proverb that says, "A child is like a piece of paper on which every passerby leaves a mark." It clearly shows our vital role, as adults, in caring for the wellbeing of our children.

The last quarter of 2018 was an exceptionally busy period for the Outreach Team, comprising our staff Aloyah Bakar, Yeap Yen Ying, Sara Ayuni, Ooi Say Tee, Ooi Bee See and Nisham Kour, together with our dedicated volunteers, S.Kanapathy, Nurul Isma June Abdullah and Wong Soon Lan.

As a part of our work to teach children to be safe, our Outreach Team conducted our *OK Tak OK* talks for an amazing number of 1,600 primary school students in 26 schools in Penang and Kedah from September till November 2018.

One of the participating students told us that she likes to read our "Nina and Her Secret" booklet because she can relate to the main character of the story, Nina, who faces difficulties in differentiating between a good secret and a bad secret.

After our *OK Tak OK* session, a child shared what she learnt:

“Keeping a good secret will make other people enjoy the surprise but keeping a bad secret will make us feel sad and stressed out.”

Cybersafety



After the launch of our *Cybersafety* programme in August 2018, we received more than 30 invitations from secondary schools around Penang.

From October to November 2018, our Outreach Team managed to reach out to 13 schools benefiting 1,066 students.

Working with savvy teenagers got our adrenaline levels pumping fast as they were full of energy and eager to share their experiences with online communications. They even shared with us about trending #hashtags, fun and cool acronyms (such as YOLO, BBNU) and their dance routine in TikTok! We were impressed by their talent and confidence levels.

With the *Cybersafety* programme, we shared about the difference between friends they know in real life and online friends so that they would be aware and think twice before they post anything online. We explored and discussed with them four videos on Online Danger – ChatApps, Sexting, Cyberstalking and Cyberbullying. Further discussion on the videos helped them to realise the importance of being safe rather than sorry. Some students asked if they should stop using social media or the internet, due to the potential dangers involved. We explained that while the virtual world offers a wealth of knowledge and opportunities, it is up to us to use it wisely and responsibly and to always prioritise our safety and privacy.

Finding My Voice

WCC staff S.Mangleswary and Yeap Yen Ying conducted the *Finding My Voice* programmes, on 7 October at the Children's Protection Society and 14 October at Seri Cahaya, respectively.

A total of 18 participants (9 per programme) comprising girls between 12 to 15 years old attended the programmes. Participants greatly enjoyed the interactive session. It is our hope that this session will help to empower them by improving their communication and negotiation skills.



RESPEK

On 29 November 2018, the Outreach Team conducted a session on *Respek* for 59 teenage boys from KDU Penang. The programme was an exciting experience for both them and us as facilitators, especially when it came to topics related to sex and healthy relationships, and when we challenged various aspects of toxic masculinity. The participants were also very vocal about their views during the debate session.

Teenage Relationships : Anbu Magal Workshop & White Lily Project



WCC was invited to conduct a 1.5 hour Tamil language session on "Relationships & Me" during a workshop held by the Inspiring Bharathiyar Association (INBHA) on 17 November 2018. INBHA is an NGO that strives to raise awareness on

the importance of education, especially among the Indian community. They had held a three day workshop, Anbu Magal (meaning "Beloved Daughter") for 78 young girls aged 12 to 15. WCC staff Nisham Kour and Nur Faizah Abdul Hassan led the programme.

Participants watched a video in which the antagonist exploited the female character. The video was used as a basis for further discussion on recognising potential risks for teenage girls in relationships, including the consequences of having an early sexual relationship, and how to protect themselves. The facilitators then explored each participant's personal values which would lead them to achieve their respective goals. This was to encourage the participants to believe in their uniqueness and ability to fulfil their aim.

Overall, the programme received very positive feedback and thumbs up from the participants.

On 7 December 2018, WCC again joined hands with Vivekhem by participating in their White Lily Project. The recent project was held in SMK Bukit Mertajam. WCC staff S.Mangleswary and Nisham Kour conducted a half day programme on "Relationships & Me" with 23 girls.

The programme was about building healthy relationships and self-esteem among teenage girls. The first half of the programme covered the social problems encountered by the girls, while the second half was about building self-esteem and confidence.

Positive feedback from participants:

It is very useful; I learnt something new; I promise to myself that I will change into a new person and achieve my goal.

Beneficial, exciting, motivating.

Empowering The Community Penang Goes Orange 2018 : Kafe S.H. (Stop Sexual Harassment)



Gangguan seksual di tempat kerja sering dipandang remeh dan kurang mendapat perhatian untuk tindakan selanjutnya. WCC, dengan kerjasama Majlis Bandaraya Pulau Pinang (MBPP) telah menganjurkan sebuah program santai bertajuk *Kafe S.H. (Stop Sexual Harassment)* bagi meningkatkan lagi kesedaran mengenai gangguan seksual dan cara menanganinya. Peserta terdiri daripada 42 orang kakitangan wanita dan lelaki (dengan pembahagian gender yang seimbang) daripada pelbagai jabatan MBPP.

Program ini telah dijalankan sempena kempen Penang Goes Orange (PGO) pada 30 November 2018 di Pusat Belia Lebuh Acheh. Gabungan kreativiti staf WCC daripada bahagian Advokasi, Komunikasi dan Outreach telah menghasilkan kandungan program ini yang berlandaskan konsep 'World Café' dan merupakan produk Outreach baru yang bakal diperkenalkan kepada organisasi atau komuniti lain.



Empat orang fasilitator dari WCC, iaitu staf kami Karen Lai, Nabillah Hijazu, S. Hastiny dan S.Mangleswary telah mengendalikan empat buah “kafe” dan apa yang telah “disajikan” adalah aktiviti interaktif untuk mempelajari aspek-aspek yang berlainan dalam isu gangguan seksual seperti jenis gangguan seksual, mitos dan realiti, undang-undang dan tindakan yang dikenakan serta impak kepada mangsa.

Peserta berpindah dalam kumpulan dari kafe ke kafe sambil mengumpulkan risalah dan butiran yang mengandungi maklumat berguna mengenai topik tertentu pada setiap perhentian. Selepas itu, para peserta diminta untuk bekerjasama dalam kumpulan masing-masing untuk menyusun satu carta aliran langkah-langkah yang perlu diambil dalam mengumpulkan bukti gangguan seksual dan berkongsi pembelajaran utama mereka.

Ada peserta yang menyifatkan bahawa banyak perkara baru berkenaan gangguan seksual yang telah dipelajari. “WCC patut jalankan program ini dengan lebih meluas ke sektor kerajaan yang lain dan sektor swasta,” kata salah seorang peserta. WCC sangat berpuas hati dengan respons positif para peserta yang menunjukkan bahawa mereka lebih memahami dan cakna berkenaan gangguan seksual pada akhir program tersebut. Format program yang santai dan interaktif juga membantu peserta memahami topik yang berat dan serius ini secara selesa dan bermakna.

Bicara Wanita: Gangguan Seksual



On 24 November 2018, our volunteer Puan Nur Hasanah Ahmad Akhir represented WCC as one of the panelists for *Bicara Wanita: Gangguan Seksual “Hey, Stop It!”*. This public talk, held at Udini Square, was one of the programmes in “Orange Gig Penang” organised by Penggerak Komuniti Muda (PEKA) and Lokalhouz in conjunction with the “Penang Goes Orange” campaign.

Together on the stage with Hasanah were Puan Nur Zarina Zakaria (MBPP Councillor), Prof Madya Dr. Azrina Husin (USM Sociologist) and Cik Ain Shiefa (PEKA). Puan Zarina shared a common scenario where people do not even realise they are sexually harassed by someone verbally (during a meeting) and in text messages through a WhatsApp group. MBPP has a code of ethics to deal with this issue. Dr. Azrina explained the definition of sexual harassment and the myths and realities surrounding it. Hasanah shared about WCC’s experience of handling sexual harassment cases and the culture of objectifying women as the root causes of sexual harassment.

Talk on Gender and Sexual Harassment



WCC was invited to give a 1.5 hour talk on *Gender and Sexual Harassment* to a group of 20 civil engineering students from UITM Permatang Pauh on 14 November 2018.

The theme was Women’s Safety, in conjunction with Women’s Safety Day. WCC volunteer Nur Hasanah Ahmad Akhir delivered the talk, and was supported by the presence of WCC staff Aloyah Bakar and Nisham Kour.

The talk opened with the viewing of a video on the construction of gender roles. The video illustrated how gender roles are formed and what society expects from men and women, which in turn creates patriarchal structures of power and control. The speaker then explained how this patriarchal system contributes to harassment in terms of an imbalance of power and control, especially at workplaces. Different types of sexual harassment and their effects on the victim were highlighted.

Last but not least, the speaker shared information on how and where to reach out for help should anyone experience sexual harassment.

Talks : Understanding Child Sexual Abuse

On 28 October 2018, WCC, in collaboration with Soka Gakkai Malaysia, delivered a parenting talk on “Understanding Child Sexual Abuse” for 40 parents, while 55 children participated in an *OK Tak OK* talk also delivered by WCC. Both sessions were conducted at Soka Gakkai’s premises. The parents highlighted the challenges they faced in educating their children in the new era of technology. The children, as usual, asked difficult questions to the facilitators!

Networking with Medical Personnel OSCC Interagency Meeting

Interagency meetings coordinated by the One Stop Crisis Centre (OSCC) in Penang Hospital and Penang Health Department are held twice yearly, to discuss issues arising when assisting victims of domestic and sexual violence and to improve coordination among all agencies involved.

The Penang State Health Department organised the second meeting which took place on 13 December 2018. It was attended by representatives from government hospitals, government health clinics, the police and the welfare department. WCC was represented by staff S.Mangleswary and Ooi Say Tee.

During the meeting, WCC raised concerns on the procedure on how a violated victim who suffers trauma can access help. After the discussion, it was agreed that the medical personnel attending to the victim should refer the victim for psychiatric assessment as part of the procedure.

Attendees also discussed the effective use of WhatsApp as a communication channel for major hospitals in Penang (Penang General Hospital, Hospital Balik Pulau and Hospital Seberang Jaya) to refer clients to WCC. Other hospitals were encouraged to adopt the same practice as well.

Northern Region OSCC Training

Twice a year, the Northern Region One Stop Crisis Centre (OSCC) holds training workshops to develop the capacity of OSCC nurses when handling victims of gender-based violence. On 21 December 2018, WCC staff S.Mangleswary and

Ooi Say Tee trained 24 such participants at the Penang General Hospital at a one day workshop accordingly.

The workshop kicked off with a lighthearted sing-along about Malaysian breakfast, which helped to break the ice and create a warm and relaxed atmosphere for the workshop. After that, participants learnt about the gender division of labour through an exercise where they were asked to map out 24 hours of a man’s and a woman’s daily life under different circumstances (married with children, working outside the home and not working outside the home). Participants were astonished at the vast differences in domestic responsibilities assigned to men and women (even though both may be working outside the home), and at the detrimental impact of the multiple burdens women bear as a result of gender norms and stereotypes.

Next, participants learnt to challenge myths surrounding domestic violence through a thought provoking quiz. This generated much discussion and exchanging of experiences in handling various types of domestic violence cases. One of the participants shared that although she was lucky not to have personally experienced domestic violence, through the training, she was better able to understand the difficult emotions victims go through, and to assist them more sensitively.

Finally, case studies and role plays were used to build the participants’ empathy towards the victim. The training also focused on ways to create a more comfortable environment for the victim, including things that participants, as nurses, could say and do to help the victim feel protected and supported.



CHANGING LIVES

Story One: Farah & Farihah – Justice for Shattered Childhoods

When sisters Farah* and Farihah* were 10 and 8 respectively, their parents separated and their mother remarried. Both girls were left under the care of their paternal grandparents, hoping for a better life.

The nightmare began when Farah's uncle started raping her. Her ordeal continued for two years until she was 12 years old. To make matters worse, she discovered that her younger sister Farihah was being raped by their uncle's son. The two sisters managed to run away to their mother's house. There, they stayed with their mother and stepfather, and resumed schooling. They were happy for a period of time, enjoying life in a complete family circle.

Their happiness was short-lived. Farah's stepfather started raping her almost every day while her mother was away at work and her sister went to school in the evenings. He threatened to hurt her mother and rape Farihah if she disclosed the incidents to anyone.

In order to protect her loved ones, Farah sacrificed herself. She told her stepfather that she would obey and do anything he wanted as long as he stayed away from her sister and did not physically abuse her mother. What Farah did not realise was that her stepfather had been raping Farihah every morning when their mother sent Farah to school. Both sisters endured this ordeal in silence for two years. Neither of them realised what was happening to the other.

Finally, Farihah could not take it anymore and went to a clinic on the pretext of having a cold. When she disclosed that she was being raped by her stepfather, the doctor immediately contacted her mother. Farihah's mother was

shocked and devastated. She then questioned Farah as to whether she, too, had been violated. Farah disclosed that she had also been raped by her stepfather for the past two years. The mother immediately lodged a police report.

Farah and Farihah's stepfather was arrested and remanded. Together with their mother and other siblings, Farah and Farihah moved to Penang to start a new life. The perpetrator was charged in court for both rapes. His family members threatened the girls' mother, pushing her to withdraw the report.

A kind lady brought Farah, Farihah and their mother to WCC when they were at a loss as to what to do next. WCC's social worker counselled and supported them emotionally, and also followed up with all the relevant government agencies involved in their case.

When the case was fixed for trial, WCC's advocacy officer arranged for a pre-trial briefing session for Farah and Farihah with the Deputy Public Prosecutor (DPP). The DPP explained about the court process to alleviate their anxiety about giving evidence in court.

On the day of the trial, WCC's social worker and advocacy officer accompanied Farah, Farihah and their mother to court. It was a great relief when their stepfather pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 20 years in jail.

“Terima kasih banyak-banyak WCC. Kak takkan lupa setiap usaha dari WCC untuk membantu kami. Tanpa bantuan dari WCC kami tak tahu kami mampu untuk kuat seperti ini atau tidak. Family sendiri pun tak support macam ini.”

- Victims' mother

Note: *not their real names.

Story Two: Maria – Finding Myself Again

Maria* was married for almost 20 years. During the earlier part of their marriage, her husband had been caring and responsive. Together, they had four children and shared the responsibilities in bringing them up. Maria's husband had also helped her start her own business while holding down his job in the private sector.

When her husband eventually lost his job and was unemployed for a year, he started to become detached and less responsive. New career opportunities took him to another state where he then started an extramarital affair. Upon confrontation, he promised Maria to change for the better. However, he continued his relationship with the other woman and even cohabited with her. He started body shaming Maria, claiming that her weight gain was the reason he did not want her.

Heartbroken, Maria requested for a divorce. It was not an easy process as her husband did not agree with the terms of the divorce and refused to attend court or negotiate through their lawyers. Maria had to take on the full responsibility of running the household and covering her children's expenses while paying for two housing loans. Her daughter was later diagnosed with a kidney malfunction which required several rounds of expensive treatment. Her husband did not offer any help when informed of his daughter's condition.

Maria felt lonely and stressed as she was left to carry the burden of providing and caring for her children all by herself. She started getting very emotional, crying often and feeling that all hope was lost. This affected her relationship with her children; instead of focusing on them, she often resorted to anger and self-isolation.

Maria decided to call WCC for emotional support. The social worker who attended to Maria helped her to explore her coping mechanisms and encouraged her to start journaling again – an activity she used to enjoy. Maria started to feel better as she learned to identify her feelings and cope with them. She started connecting with her children again and spending valuable time with them.

Maria expressed:

“WCC has helped me to find the old me. I used to be very cheerful and creative but over time, I had forgotten that about myself. Now, I use my creativity to heal myself and to connect to my children just like in those days.”

Story Three: Minah – Breaking Free From Violence

Minah* and her husband had been together for 17 years, with three children aged 9 to 15. Their first few years together were wonderful; he was a responsible husband who worked and contributed to the family, and a great father.

When Minah's husband started using methamphetamine, their world collapsed. He stopped working and regularly stole their household money to satisfy his habit. Minah had to resort to hiding the money and retrieving it while he was asleep in order to provide for the family's needs.

Minah suffered severe domestic violence in the family. Her husband beat her with a chair, banged her head against a wall and even strangled her in front of their children. He once spent five hours straight belittling her, telling her that everything was her fault.

Minah avoided conflict by shutting down and becoming unresponsive to her husband. As a religious person, she decided that divorce was out of the question. She did not dare to walk away when he started arguing, for fear that it would anger him and escalate the physical violence.

The turning point came when Minah's 9-year-old daughter witnessed her father kicking and punching her mother. The child cried hysterically, saying “Mommy, I can't live without you,” and “Daddy, please don't hit Mommy anymore. You

promise me, you promise me," but he ignored her cries.

At that moment, Minah realised how much fear and trauma the violence had created in her children. She knew then that she had to leave this violent man.

Shortly after the incident, Minah came to WCC for help. Reluctantly, she managed to express for the first time how much anger she felt towards her husband. She had never allowed herself to feel like this before. All the memories of abuse came flooding back to her. She had to restrain herself from reacting with pent-up rage against him.

All this while, Minah had hesitated to leave her husband because she thought that a "complete" family was important for the children. With WCC's support, she grew to realise that a healthy relationship between both parents was more important in determining her children's happiness and wellbeing.

WCC's social worker worked with Minah on her plans to start her new life with her three children. Minah decided to go back to her parents who were willing to take her and the children in. Being a resourceful person, Minah managed to find a job in order to support her family. WCC's social worker also helped to apply for a monthly Food Bank supply to ease their struggle.

Story Four: Amy – Moving On From Self-Blame

Amy*, the daughter of a single mother, had just graduated and landed her first job as a medical assistant away from home. She was eager to learn and felt privileged to be working under one of her senior colleagues. They soon bonded and became good friends.

Amy's colleague was usually friendly and loved to flirt around jokingly with her and other female colleagues. So, when he tried to kiss and hug her, she was startled but he brushed it off as a joke as usual. One night, he started to send her inappropriate texts and obscene voice messages. Her fear kicked in when he boasted about how good he was at 'secretly taking videos'. She then decided to report this harassment to the police. After Amy made the police report, the perpetrator was fired from his job.

Amy sought help from WCC. She told WCC's social worker that she felt immense guilt over what had happened, and that she was not sure whether to proceed with the case. Not only was her employer blaming her for the incident, but she was also blaming herself and doubting whether she had done the right thing. Like in many other cases, especially when the perpetrator is a friend, Amy, as the victim, felt responsible for causing the perpetrator to lose his job and get into trouble with the law.

WCC's social worker managed to make Amy aware of victim blaming. Amy grew to understand that it was the harasser, not her, who was responsible for the current situation. Supporting her through the court process, WCC gave Amy the assurance that she had taken the right step.

SPECIAL THANK YOU!



Flex volunteers did an amazing job of refurbishing WCC's counselling room and reception area!

Terima Kasih!

Seminar on “Support for Survivors of Sexual Crimes” in Sabah



On 15 November 2018, WCC partnered with the Sabah Women’s Action Resource Group (SAWO) and the Sabah Law Society (SLS) to organise a seminar on improving support and access to justice for victims of sexual crimes.

The seminar, which we believe was the first of its kind to be held in Sabah, was conducted at the Kota Kinabalu High Court complex. Its objectives were to enhance participants’ understanding of the issues and challenges faced by victims of sexual crimes throughout the criminal justice process, to strengthen the roles of agencies in supporting them and to identify effective practices to ensure that justice is served in such cases.



It was attended by nearly 60 representatives from key agencies handling sexual crime cases, such as the judiciary (including from the native and syariah courts, prosecution, police, welfare department, hospitals, Legal Aid Department (JBG), Sabah State Education Department, Sabah Women Affairs Department (JHEWA), Sabah Law Society (SLS), local community-based groups, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The Chief Judge of Sabah and Sarawak (CJSS), YAA Datuk Seri Panglima David Wong Dak Wah,

ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE

officialiated the seminar. The seminar comprised five sessions, including sharing on laws and supporting structures by Puan Baizura Kamal from the Attorney General’s Chambers and Puan Elsie Primus from the Kota Kinabalu High Court. WCC (represented by our Vice President, Lalitha Menon) and SAWO spoke on our experiences on handling victims of sexual crimes in Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah respectively.

To generate more understanding between the agencies, representatives from the key agencies such as the police, hospitals, welfare department, prosecution and court shared their roles and challenges in handling sexual crime cases. Participants also worked in groups to discuss a couple of case studies involving child sexual crime victims and child marriages in order to deepen their analysis of the issues involved.

Overall, the seminar was a successful effort and was very well received by the participants. The CJSS has voiced his open support for our work in this area, requesting the organisers to hold a similar seminar in Sarawak. The seminar also received good coverage by the local media in Sabah.

“The judiciary must administer the law on sexual crimes with sensitivity and understanding.”
- YAA Datuk Seri Panglima David Wong Dak Wah, Chief Judge of Sabah and Sarawak



Legal Companion Training



On 31 October 2018, WCC at the invitation of the National Legal Aid Department (Jabatan Bantuan Guaman, JBG) conducted a training session in Putrajaya on issues related to the evidence of child sexual abuse witnesses.

The session was part of a two-day course organized by JBG aimed at exposing participants to procedures on handling sexual crime cases (with a focus on child victims) and the role of legal companions.

Amendments to the Legal Aid Act in 2017 introduced the service of legal companions to help child sexual crime victims with legal processes. Legal companions act as guides to provide advice to the child sexual crime victims and accompany them in court proceedings.

WCC's session was conducted in an informative and interactive manner (including through a role play) by our Advocacy Officer, S. Hastiny with the support of our Programme Director Karen Lai. A total of 31 lawyers attended the training. During our session, we also took the opportunity to share more information about WCC's work with participants.

“The talk given by the WCC was really beneficial for practising lawyers like myself because I learned a lot about how to be a good legal companion in court. I really encourage my colleagues out there to get these valuable insights from WCC to enhance their views regarding this latest legal practice.”

– A participant

Forum UUM “Involvement of Women in Nation Leadership”



Pada 30 Oktober 2018, Pegawai Advokasi WCC, Nadila Daud, telah menjadi seorang panelis jemputan bagi forum anjuran mahasiswa fakulti undang-undang Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) bagi sesi forum bertajuk *“Look at My Potential: Involvement Of Women In Nation Leadership”*.

Forum ini merupakan sesi penutup bagi Persidangan Mahasiswa Undang-Undang (PEMUDA VI) 2018 yang membawa tema *“Women's Rights: Combating Discrimination against Them.”* Seramai 200 orang pelajar telah menyertai forum yang berlangsung di UUM ini.

Panelis lain termasuk Cik Herinza Syadza (All Women's Action Society - AWAM) dan Encik Joshua Teh Honguan (United Nations High Commission For Refugee - UNHCR), yang turut dijemput untuk memberikan pandangan mereka dari perspektif feminis dan undang-undang yang mendiskriminasi wanita.

Antara soalan yang ditanya kepada Nadila semasa sesi forum adalah, mengapakah wanita takut untuk menceburi politik? Beliau menerangkan bahawa wanita bukan semestinya takut untuk berpolitik tetapi peluang mereka untuk menceburi bidang ini dicantas dan ditutup kerana ianya tidak dianggap normal untuk wanita berada di dalam bidang ini yang didominasi oleh kaum lelaki. Walau bagaimanapun, ada banyak wanita yang tidak berputus asa dan meneruskan perjuangan mereka walaupun menghadapi dugaan yang sangat mencabar, termasuk ugutan dan kekurangan sokongan dari pelbagai aspek.

Pada keseluruhannya, forum ini merupakan pendedahan yang baik kepada isu-isu gender dan kepimpinan wanita dalam pembuatan keputusan.

Presentation on Access to Justice for Sexual Crime Victims



On 28 November 2018, WCC Programme Director Karen Lai delivered a presentation entitled *"From Victim to Survivor: Access to Justice as a Dimension of Empowerment in Sexual Assaults"* at the Centre for Research on Women & Gender (KANITA) International Gender Studies Conference (KICGS). WCC's staff, Nabillah Hijazu, also attended as supporting staff. The conference was held at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM).

The presentation was part of a plenary session on Socio-Political Aspects of Empowerment. Dr Chua Hang Kuen of USM moderated the session. There were three other presenters: Mr Chua Choon Hwa from the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, gender expert Dr Tan Beng Hui and Dr Rusalina Idrus from Universiti Malaya.

In her presentation, Karen emphasised how access to justice for victims of sexual assault is a fundamental aspect of their socio-political empowerment in terms of the effective realisation of their human rights, including civil and political rights to be treated as equals in the law and legal system. She also shared about WCC's work in supporting victims through the journey into survivorhood.

The conference was attended by around 40 participants from the academia (including international participants) and NGOs. WCC hopes that this presentation will spark off further interest among scholars, particularly looking into improving data collection on the relevant issues, the institutionalisation of an effective victim support system, and broader, more inclusive discourse on the impact of sexual violence among different groups of women, especially those from marginalised communities.

"To fully realise their human rights, women must enjoy equal, secure and effective access to justice. Women's human rights are part of WCC's core values."
- Karen Lai



WARRIOR FOR CHANGE



Hastiny Subramaniam is one of WCC's two Advocacy Officers. She regularly accompanies our sexual assault and domestic violence clients to court to provide legal support during trials. She shares her thoughts on the significance of WCC's work to eliminate violence against women and children, and her hopes for the future in this area.

Previously, as law students in university, we were not exposed to concerns about violence against women and children. Despite it being such an important issue, it was not included in our subjects such as criminal law, where the focus was more on crimes such as murder and drug trafficking.

I'm thankful that working with WCC has given me the exposure and understanding I need to make a difference. For instance, I learnt about the challenges involved in implementing protections under domestic violence legislation, which mainly affects women and children.

Training and inter-agency dialogues with relevant stakeholders, especially at the decision-making level, is crucial to ensure that the agencies responsible in helping victims access justice do not work in silos.

So far, every case I have handled has been memorable for me. Every time I handle a new client for court support, I learn new things, and every case is a fresh challenge because our clients come from such diverse backgrounds.

I usually handle cases in the mainland (Seberang Perai), and I use public transportation to get to the courts to attend trials. There is a temple that I pass by on my way. I always make sure to stop and pray: that the trial would not be postponed (causing further delay and difficulties to the victim and her family), and that our client, the victim, would be confident when she gives evidence. It's my own personal way of showing support to our clients.



My hope is that women and child victims will not be afraid of the system; that they will be brave to claim their rights, and not turn the blame on themselves for causing the crime.

Ultimately, I hope to see a better criminal justice system which ensures that victims' rights are protected.



NO MORE FUN IN THE PLAYGROUND

Every child loves to go to the playground. Playgrounds are a wonderland for children, allowing them to explore and have fun as they run around and play.

Seven year old Fauziah* was no exception. She loved to play in the playground in front of her house with her dear friend Sara*, who was slightly older. One day, as both girls were playing at the playground, Sara came closer to Fauziah and whispered, "I heard that Abu* has found a secret place and it's much more fun to play there. Want to go and find out? It's just over there. Let's go!" Together, they went into the bushes at the back of the playground to find this secret fun place.

In the midst of the search, Sara and Fauziah got separated and it was then that Fauziah came across a hut made of cloth and wood. She noticed that Abu and his two friends, Ahmad* and Ali* (all of whom were between 12 to 14 years old), were inside the hut. It did not look like a fun place at all to Fauziah. She wondered why Abu and his friends were in this strange place.

Suddenly, Abu pulled Fauziah into the hut and started to force himself on her. Fauziah struggled to free herself as all three boys took turns to rape her. She kept screaming and begging them to stop but to no avail.

Sara must have heard Fauziah's cries as she barged into the hut and being older in age, started attacking Abu as she pulled and slapped him repeatedly. Fauziah took the opportunity to quickly escape and ran all the way home.

Once home, Fauziah found her mother busy preparing for Fauziah's sister's upcoming wedding celebration. Fauziah did not know how to disclose what had happened to her amidst the atmosphere of joy and celebration. She felt so dirty that all she could think of at that time was to take a shower as soon as possible.

The coming days saw Fauziah isolating herself but her restless mind kept going back to the horrendous incident. She wanted to tell her mother about the incident, but did not know how to. It was agonising for her. Finally, once the wedding ceremony was over and Fauziah's mother had more time, she offered to give Fauziah a bath. Fauziah then told her mother about what had happened in the hut and that her private parts were still painful as a result.

Fauziah's mother was heartbroken. The news that her beloved youngest child had been so ruthlessly violated completely shattered her. Fauziah's sister, who was furious, confronted the perpetrators who at first admitted to the rape but then twisted their story when asked by their own family members. Fauziah's sister then lodged a police report.

As Abu's father was an influential person in the village, most of the villagers disregarded Fauziah and her family's predicament. Instead, the villagers started gossiping and the perpetrators' relatives started verbally abusing Fauziah and her family in public. Fauziah could no longer go to the playground and had to change school.

When Fauziah first met with WCC's social worker, the social worker emphasised that, "It is not your fault". Victim blaming is very common in society and even as young child, Fauziah did not escape it. Fauziah's mother pleaded for society to understand and have awareness of child sexual abuse; "It is not my daughter's fault! The rapists should be held accountable for this and they should be taught a lesson by their parents."

After numerous trial dates in court, only Ali pleaded guilty and was charged as he was above 12 years old. He was sentenced to 2 years of behaviour monitoring by the Social Welfare Department. On the other hand, Abu and Ahmad were released from their charges as they were both under 12 years old**. This was despite Abu being the gang leader who initiated the rape. The real slap to the face was Abu's parents throwing a party in the village to celebrate their victory – a victory won at the expense of another's dignity and great suffering.

"We feel angry, but we also understand the limitations in the law. We hope that lawmakers can amend the law to suit current social circumstances. I hope no more children and their families have to go through what we have gone through." – Fauziah's family

Editor's Note : The perpetrators' family and relatives have stopped harassing Fauziah's family after being warned by the court. Fauziah has undergone play therapy sessions by WCC to help her heal, and the family is saving money to move out of the village.

*** A child who is 12 years and below cannot be charged as he is deemed not to understand the nature and consequence of what he has done.*



*Note: *not their real names.*

INTERN TO CREATE CHANGE



Noémie Calvet

Noémie Calvet: When I first arrived at WCC, I felt lost and out of place since I came from France and was leaving home for the first time. But very quickly, the WCC staff were able to put me at ease and make me feel like part of the team.

This internship was my first working experience. I have always been interested in women's rights and gender equality, so I was very excited about interning at WCC. I was pleasantly surprised to see how passionate every single staff is about their job. I learned a lot during these four months and I did a variety of tasks. I discovered the three key areas of WCC work: service, advocacy and outreach.

During the first two months of my internship, I went to different schools with WCC staff to conduct talks. I helped the outreach officers and observed the sessions, which turned out to be very rewarding. During an Ok Tak Ok training session at a primary school, a group of girls asked me for autographs. It was both an amusing and touching situation for me. I realised during this internship that education is essential to change mindsets. Helping abused women and children does not really make sense without educating children to make a difference and move towards a brighter future.

In addition to that, I was part of the team working towards the drafting of a policy against sexual harassment for the Penang State Health Department. I did some research on the issue and wrote summaries to facilitate the work of other team members. I expanded my knowledge on sexual harassment and learned a lot about Malaysian laws.

I also worked alongside the team responsible for redesigning the WCC website. I appreciated being involved in this process and learned much from the various meetings. I now know what the different stages of this work are and how important the design of a website is for any organisation.

Interning at WCC was a beautiful and meaningful experience. I am very thankful that I was able to be a part of this family during these four months. I will never forget my time here and will truly miss everyone.

Noémie Calvet interned from 17 September 2018 to 11 January 2019 and majored in Political Science at Sciences Po Toulouse, France.



JAG Statement on BFM Sexual Harassment Case Take Action to Protect and Support Survivors of Sexual Harassment

The Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) is very disturbed by the email recently circulated concerning radio station BFM 89.9. We are concerned by the email's description of alleged sexual assault and harassment, and of alleged poor response from NGOs.

We note the statement released by BFM 89.9 yesterday that mentions steps being taken, which includes setting up an independent investigation. Notwithstanding the investigation, any criminal actions should be referred to the police - with the consent of the alleged survivors.

Steps must also be taken to support and protect the alleged survivors. This includes safeguarding confidentiality, temporary change of work arrangements for the alleged accused persons and alleged complainants, access to counselling, and clear information on the status investigation process. Steps must also be taken to foster a work environment where complaints can be raised and properly dealt with without fear.

Every organisation has a responsibility to maintain a conducive and safe working environment for all their employees. Additionally, listeners of BFM 89.9 – a media organisation which is seen to carry a progressive message – have a legitimate interest to be satisfied that the complaints are handled fairly and that the organisation is a safe working space.

We also urge all whistleblowers to protect survivors' identities and confidentiality when speaking up about sexual harassment and sexual assault.

To all the survivors of gender-based violence, do not hesitate to contact the following organisations for free and confidential support:

We must not tolerate gender-based violence in any form.

ENDORSED BY:

- | | |
|---|--|
| • All Women's Action Society (AWAM) | • Sabah Women's Action Resource Group (SAWO) |
| • Association of Women Lawyers (AWL) | • Sisters in Islam (SIS) |
| • Foreign Spouses Support Group (FSSG) | • Tenaganita |
| • Justice For Sisters | • Women's Aid Organisation (WAO) |
| • Perak Women for Women (PWW) | • Women's Centre for Change (WCC) |
| • Persatuan Kesedaran Komuniti Selangor (EMPOWER) | |

Note: BFM subsequently served termination letters to two of their employees for misconduct in respect of the allegations of sexual harassment.



May 2019 bring us fresh and exciting opportunities for growth and change.

We wish to inform all of you that from 2019 onwards, Newslink will be issued on a six-monthly (and no longer a quarterly) basis.

We look forward to sharing more of our work updates with you in the new year.

newslink

CHANGE IS POSSIBLE

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