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# Sisters in Islam

ANNUAL REVIEW **2010**

EMPOWERING  
*Voices for*  
Change



## VISION

**Societal vision:** To be a progressive and democratic society that upholds freedom of expression, gender equality and social justice for all.

**Organisational vision:** To be recognised as the national and global leader for gender equality and justice in Islam.

## MISSION

To promote the principles of gender equality, justice, freedom and dignity in Islam and empower women to be advocates for change.



# ANNUAL REVIEW 2010

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## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

With this Review, we once again look back on the year that was. We do this, of course, to record, report, and reflect on key developments of the year. Let me share with you a few broad themes.

Perhaps more than other years, 2010 was about looking forward. This year, we acknowledged a need to revisit our long-term goals. We held our annual Evaluation and Planning Meeting, but we also decided to think further ahead. As a result, for the first time in our history, we now have a five-year Strategic Plan, put together by the staff, the Board and SIS members.

Also in 2010, Musawah formulated a three-year Outreach Strategy Plan and a regional Work Plan for Asia leading up to 2013. And we began work on a three-year strategy for our Muslim Family Law campaign.

So it's safe to say that in 2010, we made our best attempt yet to bring our vision of the future into the sharpest possible focus.

You may wonder about all the mahjong paper, whiteboard markers, PowerPoint slides and hours that went into these plans, and whether it was all worth it. It was! We have already started taking action steps to realise these plans, and we find that greater clarity leads to better results.

Besides, in our line of work we must plan our future, or others will do it for us. And some of these "others" have made it clear they would just as soon not accord us *any* future at all.

We got a taste of this early in 2010, when our Press statement concerning the caning of three Muslim women prompted a series of attacks on SIS. The Selangor Islamic Religious Council and other parties lodged police reports. The Selangor Religious Affairs Department issued a Friday *khutbah* urging congregations to take action against SIS. A group called the Malaysian Assembly of Mosque Youth (MAMY) sought to prevent SIS from using "Sisters in Islam" as our name and identity.

It was a challenging start, but 2010 also brought with it many high points.

SIS celebrated a significant victory when the High Court lifted the ban on *Muslim Women and the Challenge of Islamic Extremism*. We actually got our book unbanned!

In 2010 we also completed the collection, analysis and presentation of data for our polygamy research project.

Geographical borders may be an anachronism in the Internet age, but in 2010 we still got a thrill out of seeing SIS reach new lands, near and far. Our two Mobile Legal Clinics (MLCs) in Kelantan marked the first time

we took our MLCs outside the Klang Valley. We were also delighted to learn that the Musawah language had influenced advocacy work in several countries, and that Focal Points had begun to play a stronger role. Musawah's efforts in international advocacy met with unprecedented success, particularly at the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Equally exciting is the fact that early preparations have begun for the 2nd Musawah Global Meeting in Cairo.

In 2010 our Public Education and Communications (PEC) unit continued to engage the media as a crucial ally. PEC also executed a full programme of Public Education, including a Screening and Discussion session for *Mencari Kartika*, a documentary by Norhayati Kaprawi, former SIS PEC Programme Manager turned filmmaker!

SIS also stepped up efforts to connect with the younger generation. We introduced MyConsti to raise youth legal awareness, and the GenY Forum to create a space for dialogue about marriage as a partnership of equals.

Throughout the year our Operations unit remained the backbone of our organisation and diligently managed the funds. Our funders must also be acknowledged; without the funds, we simply would not have been able to carry out our work of empowering voices for change.

It was also a year of celebration. In August we celebrated the founding members of SIS. We also celebrated when Board Member Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir was named as United Nations in Malaysia's Person of the Year 2010. And we are proud to be part of the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG), which celebrated its 25th year in 2010.

We are honoured to have been a recipient of the *Nut Graph's* 2010 Merdeka Awards, and to have been recognised by the Putra Brand Awards as a community service organisation that has evolved into a strong homegrown brand.

On a personal note, I would like to thank my colleagues and friends at SIS, for a very productive year with many "firsts". May Allah continue to bless us with the strength and perseverance for continuity of our work.

**Dr Hamidah Marican**

Executive Director  
Sisters in Islam



# MUSAWAH

Members of Musawah International Advisory Group. L-R:Cassandra Balchin (UK), Asma'u Joda (Nigeria) and Kamala Chandrakirana (Indonesia).

Musawah (“Equality” in Arabic) is the global movement for equality and justice in the Muslim family. Initiated in 2007 by SIS and an international planning committee of activists and scholars, Musawah brings together NGOs, activists, scholars, practitioners, policy makers and grassroots women and men from around the world. Musawah’s key areas of work focus on knowledge building, international advocacy and outreach to build the movement to advance equality and justice in the Muslim family. The Musawah Secretariat is based at SIS. Visit [www.musawah.org](http://www.musawah.org) for more information.

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In 2010, Musawah:

- Held its first International Advisory Group (IAG) meeting, established the roles of the IAG and the movement’s Working Group structure and commenced planning for the 2nd Global Meeting to be held in Cairo in 2013.
- Completed Phase I and began Phase II (of III) of its research project on *qiwamah* and *wilayah*.
- Organised (with Egypt-based Network for Women’s Rights Organisations) a seminar and a three-day training course in Cairo entitled Muslim Family Law: A Women’s Rights Perspective
- Formulated an Outreach Strategy for 2010-2013 based on input generated at the Musawah Outreach Strategy Meeting in Jogjakarta, Indonesia, the first major gathering since the 1st Global Meeting in 2009.
- Established a 2010-2013 Work Plan for the Asia region at the Musawah Asia Strategy Meeting in Jogjakarta, Indonesia.
- Strengthened its presence in various regions as a result of the efforts of regional Focal Points helping to build the movement on the ground.
- Made significant progress in international advocacy with various organisations and platforms such as the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) and International Council on Human Rights Policy (ICHRP).
- Created a Musawah Key Messages Toolkit outlining the movement’s key messages.



## STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION

### Musawah's 1st International Advisory Group (IAG) Meeting

In 2010 Musawah's new IAG met for the first time (24-26 February, London). Key decisions were made with regard to Musawah's organisational structure:

- The **roles** of the IAG are: strategic vision; long-term planning; providing information and guidance to the Secretariat; public representation of Musawah; and participating in planning the Global Meetings every three years.
- A new **working group** structure will support the key areas of work, i.e. knowledge building, outreach, international advocacy, and communications.
- The **Secretariat** will remain with SIS until 2013, at which point it will move to Cairo, Egypt under the stewardship of the Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance (CEWLA), helmed by Azza Soliman. CEWLA will also organise the 2nd Musawah Global Meeting, which will take place in early 2013.

## KNOWLEDGE BUILDING

### Research Project: Qiwamah and Wilayah

January saw the team heading to Cairo for a **project meeting** (6-7, 11 January) to plan Musawah's research on *qiwamah* (male authority over women) and *wilayah* (guardianship).

By August the project had entered Phase II (of III). The **research proposal** was finalised by the Knowledge

Building Working Group together with Ziba Mir-Hosseini, who is leading the research. The proposal was submitted for funding and paper writers were contacted. The key research areas are as follows:

- hermeneutical and political challenges for the reconstruction of *qiwamah* in an egalitarian way.
- *qiwamah* and *wilayah* as legal postulates in modern family laws, and how they are currently reflected in the family codes in Muslim countries.
- the scope in international human rights standards for supporting reform towards equality between spouses in Muslim family law.
- exegesis and review of Arabic interpretations of verse 4:34.
- notions of male authority in the Qur'an: *qiwamah* and *wilayah*.
- ways in which jurists selectively rely on *hadith* and other literature to derive a patriarchal reading of the Qur'anic concept of *qiwamah* and *wilayah*.
- notions of *qiwamah* and *wilayah* in classical *fiqh*.
- the historical practice of *qiwamah* and *wilayah*.
- new interpretations of *qiwamah* and *wilayah* in European *fiqh* discourse.

Besides the conceptual papers above, the research will also include the lived realities of women from the socio-economic political perspective. Their personal stories and experience will also be documented for research as well as advocacy purposes.

**Muslim Family Law:  
Women's Rights Perspective**

"قانون الأحوال الشخصية للمسلمين  
من منظور حقوق المرأة"

CAIRO

القاهرة

COOPERATION  
ARAB REPUBLIC  
EGYPT

FEDERAL REPUBLIC  
GERMANY

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

12 Jan

Zainah Anwar (extreme right) presenting on Musawah at a seminar held at the American University in Cairo. L-R: Ziba Mir-Hosseini (Iran/UK) and Marwa Sharafeldin (Egypt), Muhammad Khalid Masud (Pakistan).

## Seminar and Training Course on Islam from a Women's Rights Perspective

While in Cairo for the *qiwamah and wilayah* research project meeting in January, the team was also involved in two events organised by the Network for Women's Rights Organisations (NWRO), led by Marwa Sharafeldin. Khalid Masud, Zainah Anwar and Ziba Mir-Hosseini served as resource persons for these events, both of which focused on the theme of **Islam from a Women's Rights Perspective: Issues in Muslim Family Laws**. The events were:

- An **evening seminar** (12 January), held at the American University in Cairo. Over 200 people attended the event.
- A **three-day training course** (13-15 January) conducted for NGOs within the NWRO network. This course was a condensed version of SIS' two-week Short Course on Understanding Islam from a Rights Perspective, with a day each spent on the Qur'an, *hadith* and *fiqh*. Azza Soliman, Marwa Sharafeldin and Hadil El-Khouly facilitated the training, with Khalid Masud and Ziba Mir-Hosseini as resource persons.

## OUTREACH

### Musawah Focal Points

Focal Points help to extend Musawah's reach and manifest its vision at the regional level. In 2010, Focal Points played stronger roles in building the movement on the ground, particularly in Egypt (CEWLA), Sudan (the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa or SIHA), and Nigeria (Musawah Nigeria). Alimat was confirmed as the Focal Point for Southeast Asia in August.

Focal Point collaboration also took place, notably Bahrain-Egypt, Sudan-Nigeria and UK-Canada.

### Young Women's Caucus

In 2010 the 30-member Musawah Young Women's Caucus formed an E-group as a platform for knowledge building, solidarity and joint action. The E-group will promote open discussions on issues related to young women and justice and equality in Muslim contexts, as well as ways in which the YWC can actively support Musawah aims (for example by contributing to the Musawah communications strategy and to the research on *qiwamah*).

### Musawah Outreach Strategy Meeting

The objective of this meeting (3-6 August, Jogjakarta) was to formulate an Outreach Strategy for Musawah that would consist of a strategic vision and plan of action. The 29 participants from 17 countries comprised Musawah Advocates at the national level, Musawah Focal Points at the regional level and the Musawah Young Women's Caucus. A work plan running up to the Musawah Global Meeting 2013 is now in place.



"OUTREACH STRATEGY MEETING"  
Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 3 August 2010

Outlining strategies to grow the movement at the Musawah Outreach Strategy Meeting, Jogjakarta.

## Musawah Asia Strategy Meeting

This meeting (8-9 August, Jogjakarta) enabled participants from Asia to update each other on the status and current contexts of family law reform in their respective countries, as well as share experiences of working on reform. A regional Work Plan for Asia leading up to the Musawah Global Meeting 2013 was also formulated, and the role of Alimat as the Focal Point for Southeast Asia was confirmed.

## Other Developments

Other outreach developments in 2010 included:

- **Outreach in China.** In November 2010, SIS member Rosey Ma attended a meeting in Lanzhou, in the Gansu Province, China. She had the opportunity to initiate outreach to various groups, some of whom expressed interest in working with SIS and Musawah, and to conduct research on polygamy in China.
- **Elsewhere in the world.** This year Musawah provided conceptual and theoretical support to Muslim Indian groups in their family law reform campaign, and to the SIHA network for their work on customary laws. The Musawah Framework is also influencing the language of the local family law campaign in Mauritania and the CEDAW shadow reports of Egypt.

## INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY

### Musawah at the 45th CEDAW Session, January 2010

At the 45th session of CEDAW in Geneva, Musawah Project Director Zainah Anwar held meetings with the CEDAW Committee, the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR) and the International Council on Human Rights Policy (ICHRP).

Besides introducing Musawah and identifying opportunities for intervention by Musawah in relation to CEDAW and international advocacy, the objective was also to support the NGOs from Egypt, whose government was reporting in this session. Musawah was well-received, with one CEDAW Committee member immediately adopting the Musawah language during interventions with Egypt and United Arab Emirates States parties constructive dialogue sessions.

### Musawah at the 47th CEDAW Session, October 2010

The Musawah team conducted three briefing sessions in Geneva on the Musawah Framework for Action and Islam and Women's Rights and the possibilities for reform for the CEDAW Committee members, OHCHR staff and international human rights NGOs. The team also shared the findings of its research on CEDAW and Muslim Family Laws on how governments use Islam and Shari'ah to enter reservations to CEDAW and justify their inability to promote equal rights, implement existing rights-based family laws or reform family laws that discriminate against Muslim women. The team also introduced the Musawah Framework to NGOs presenting their shadow reports in Geneva.

## Research on CEDAW and Muslim Family Laws: In Search of Common Ground

Musawah undertook a major research project, examining States parties' justification for their failure to implement CEDAW with regard to family laws and practices that discriminate against Muslim women. The research reviewed documents for 44 Muslim majority and minority countries that reported to the CEDAW Committee from 2005-2010.

The research project analysed the approaches of the CEDAW Committee, States parties and NGOs in addressing family laws in Muslim contexts. There were three main goals of the project:

1. To better understand States parties' justifications for their inability to promote equal rights, implement existing rights-based family laws, and/or reform family laws that discriminate against Muslim women, and the CEDAW Committee's responses to such justifications;
2. To demystify religious-based objections and constructs based on Islamic teachings, human rights, constitutional guarantees of equality and social realities in a dynamic and evolving process; and
3. To offer a vision and an understanding of the Islamic legal tradition in a holistic framework that can enable the CEDAW Committee, States parties to the Convention and NGOs to explore alternative approaches to the direct and indirect use of Islam and Shari'ah to justify reservations and non-compliance with the Convention with regard to family laws in Muslim contexts.

A full report of the research project will be published in January 2011 and will be translated into Arabic.

## OHCHR's Thematic Report on Discrimination Against Women, in Law and Practice

In preparation for the Human Rights Council's session in September 2010, the OHCHR sought to compile a Thematic Report on discrimination against women, in law and practice. Musawah submitted an article, arguing that international human rights bodies should engage with rights groups working within a religious framework, in order to better counter the position that discriminatory laws are based on divine and immutable religious and cultural precepts.

### *How can a movement like Musawah help?*

*"It will raise the knowledge, it will give us the solidarity. I can't be wrong if all these women are with me [and we] are all together... This is right, what I am doing is right."*

– Zaynab Mohamed Hamed El-Sawi  
(Sudan)

## COMMUNICATIONS

### Newsletter and Publications

Thus far, three issues of *Musawah Vision* have been produced in English, French and Arabic. The newsletter is circulated to the 250 participants of the Musawah Global Meeting as well as approximately 50 new contacts. The fourth issue is currently in production.

*Musawah Framework for Action* and *Wanted: Equality and Justice in the Muslim Family* are now in their second print runs. *Wanted* is now also available in French and an Arabic translation is being edited.

### Musawah Key Messages and Toolkit

In 2010, Musawah Key Messages were finalised, and Musawah Communications Coordinator Cassandra Balchin began developing the Toolkit for the Musawah Key Messages. The draft Toolkit was presented at the Musawah Outreach Strategy Meeting.

### Musawah Website

The website is being redesigned and redeveloped in response to the needs of the users, mainly the Musawah Advocates. A User Needs Assessment was carried out; three web developers were shortlisted, and one was selected.

***“The development with the CEDAW Committee and OHCHR will be something to watch out for because this will provide a new dimension towards how the CEDAW Committee will engage with the governments on issues relating to Muslim family law. This will have a significant impact on the discourse of family law and will hopefully pave the way for a more constructive engagement for the activists when holding their governments accountable to their obligations under CEDAW. The idea of giving the tools and know-how to the CEDAW Committee and the activists to break down the arguments long held by the governments is a very powerful one.”***

– Rozana Isa,  
Musawah Project Coordinator

## SIS PROFILE

### **Hadil El-Khouly, Programme Officer, Musawah.**

Hadil, who hails from Egypt, joined Musawah in December 2008.

#### **What kind of a year has it been?**

A very exciting one, especially in terms of our outreach. This year was about direct engagement with our Advocates; getting them involved, discovering new Advocates in new countries, building the movement and setting our strategic direction together.

#### **What were you most proud of?**

The interest and keenness of new Advocates, especially the young people.

#### **On being an international staff member of SIS:**

“When I present the work of SIS to people outside Malaysia, I’m always very proud and amazed at how many find the work absolutely important, urgent and groundbreaking. I’m also able to speak more to people who are critical of SIS, given that they see me as “neutral” – this helps us clarify misconceptions and engage in healthy dialogue.

#### **On youth:**

The members of the Young Women’s Caucus are the ones who will take Musawah to the ground and make sure it is public-based and has a youth constituency. In Musawah there is a lot of recognition and encouragement of the role of youth in building the movement and taking it further.

*What is the one change you would make if you could, in family law and practice?*

*“Get the minimum age of marriage introduced immediately.”*

– Asma’u Joda (Nigeria)

*“For women to be able to call their own divorces without obstruction and without the social baggage and hang-ups that come with that.”*

– Tasneem Chopra (Australia)

*“To have a family law in the first place.”*

– Hatoon El-Fassi (Saudi Arabia)

*“Guardianship... I mean equal parental responsibility.”*

– Halima Jouini (Tunisia)





# ADVOCACY, LEGAL SERVICES AND REFORM

The Mobile Legal Clinic held at Lembaga Hasil Dalam Negeri, Kuala Lumpur.

With a focus on the legal perspective, the **Advocacy, Legal Services and Reform (ALSR)** unit leads SIS initiatives in three areas:

- **Advocacy:** SIS advocates women’s rights on behalf of individuals as well as groups. Efforts to help women reclaim their rights and challenge injustices are undertaken in various spheres: in the courts, in the media, in policymaking and in public discourse.
  - **Legal Services:** Telenisa, the legal clinic run by SIS, provides gender- sensitive legal services on family matters and Shari’ah law. **Mobile Legal Clinics** periodically extend these services to low-income areas. Legal literacy is promoted through **newspaper columns** and by hosting and training **students and interns**.
  - **Reform:** SIS first began advocating reform of Malaysia’s Islamic Family Law in 1994. In 2005, SIS began work on a model Muslim Family Law based on the principles of justice and equality.
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In 2010, the ALSR unit:

- Formulated a three-year Campaign Strategy to build support for SIS’ model Muslim Family Law.
- Responded to attacks against SIS in various forms, including police reports lodged by the Selangor Islamic Religious Council (MAIS) and other parties, the Selangor Religious Affairs Department (JAIS’) Friday *khutbah* urging congregations to take action against SIS, and the Malaysian Assembly of Mosque Youth (MAMY’s) lawsuit seeking to stop SIS from using “Sisters in Islam” as its name and identity.
- Implemented two new programmes to reach new audiences; MyConsti focused on youth legal awareness, while Forum GenY raised awareness among young couples of marriage as a shared responsibility.
- Issued numerous Press statements on issues such as the caning of three Muslim women for engaging in illicit sex, the Bung Mokhtar case, corporal punishment for drinking alcohol and child marriage.
- Continued to provide free legal services via Telenisa and Mobile Legal Clinics, two of which were held outside the Klang Valley for the first time.
- Revived Courtwatch, a programme in which court proceedings are monitored to ensure that court procedures and officials are fair and gender-sensitive.
- Welcomed 23 chambering students who underwent SIS’ 14-week Legal Aid Service under the Kuala Lumpur Legal Aid Centre and the Selangor Bar.

## ADVOCACY

In 2010 SIS was involved in advocacy work related to the following:

- i. The Muslim Family Law Campaign
- ii. MAMY's suit against SIS
- iii. Police reports lodged against SIS
- iv. Other advocacy initiatives

### The Muslim Family Law (MFL) Campaign

In 2009 SIS had highlighted weaknesses of the 2005 Islamic Family Law (IFL) Act and had campaigned to push for some of the unjust laws to be amended. Although well-strategised, SIS' campaign could not be fully carried out due to uncertainties, namely the fact that as at end 2009, the Conference of Rulers and the Attorney General's Chambers were still discussing amendments to the IFL and other bills.

More importantly, SIS realised that amendments alone would not be sufficient to rectify the injustices inherent in the Act as a whole, and that it was necessary for SIS to rethink its advocacy strategy and push for more comprehensive reform.

In 2010, SIS decided to resume the Muslim Family Law Campaign that it had initiated in 2007. (That campaign had centred on introducing and building support for a model Muslim Family Law (MFL) which SIS had drafted based on the principles of justice and equality.) SIS began formulating a new three-year Strategy and Campaign (2011-2013) to build support for the model MFL leading up to the 2nd Musawah Global Meeting in 2013. The first briefing to ALSR and PEC units was conducted by Zainah Anwar in September.

## FAMILY LAW: ISLAMIC OR MUSLIM?

In most contexts "Islamic" and "Muslim" are assumed to be interchangeable. As far as SIS is concerned, however, when applied to laws, the two terms are quite different. When SIS drafted its model family law, it made a conscious decision to call it Muslim Family Law. According to ALSR Programme Manager Ratna Osman, "We consciously want it to be called Muslim Family Law to show that these are laws made by Muslims in accordance with certain interpretations. These laws may have their source in the Qur'an and Sunnah, but because there is human intervention in the interpretation, they are not divine and can be changed. When a law is known as Islamic law, it gives the impression that it is what Islam wants, that it is from God and can neither be challenged nor changed. We want Muslims to understand the difference between what is divine and what is not; because the current Islamic Family Law has human intervention, it is therefore not divine and can be changed."

## Police Reports Lodged Against SIS

In 2010 several police reports were made against SIS arising from SIS' Press statement issued on 17 February expressing shock and concern over the caning of three Muslim women for engaging in illicit sex. Below is a brief chronology of events that followed:

### **25 Feb:**

Majlis Agama Islam Selangor (MAIS) or the Selangor Islamic Religious Council lodged a police report against *The Star* Managing Editor P. Gunasegaran and SIS for questioning the Shari'ah whipping. The report by MAIS was one of six reports lodged against Gunasegaran and SIS.

### **2 Mar:**

Petaling Jaya police sought a statement from SIS Executive Director Dr Hamidah Marican in connection with its investigation under Section 298 (A) of the Penal Code for "causing, etc., disharmony, disunity, or feelings of enmity, hatred or ill-will, or prejudicing, etc., the maintenance of harmony or unity, on grounds of religion".

### **12 Mar:**

Jabatan Agama Islam Selangor (JAIS) or the Selangor Religious Affairs Department issued a Friday *khutbah* (which was read in mosques in Selangor) accusing SIS and Gunasegaran of insulting Islam. The *khutbah* urged congregations to take action against SIS and Gunasegaran.

### **22 Mar:**

Dr Hamidah gave her statement at the Petaling Jaya Police Station, accompanied by SIS lawyers.

### **9 Apr:**

SIS filed a police report against JAIS for the Friday *khutbah* that was deemed to be an incitement to violence.

## MAMY vs SIS

On 22 March, a group known as Dewan Pemuda Masjid Malaysia (the Malaysian Assembly of Mosque Youth, or MAMY) sought a court order to stop SIS from using "Sisters in Islam" as its name and identity, on the grounds that SIS had breached the Company Act 1965 by using an unregistered company name, and that the word "Islam" was controlled and limited by the Registrar of Companies. MAMY also alleged that SIS made statements that contravened the basic teachings, principles and laws of Islam, and that use of "Sisters in Islam" caused harm and confusion among Muslims in Malaysia and internationally.

SIS applied to strike out the suit, maintaining that MAMY did not have the requisite legal standing, that the originating summons did not reveal any reasonable cause of action and that the allegations, besides being frivolous and scandalous, were an abuse of the court process.

On 29 October High Court Justice Zabariah Yusof allowed SIS' application to strike out the originating summons filed by MAMY.

## Other Advocacy Work

In 2010 SIS was also involved in the following:

- **CEDAW NGO Report.** This NGO Shadow Report is the 2nd CEDAW shadow report and is due to be completed in 2011. In 2010 SIS submitted information on registration of marriage, conversion and child marriage to WAO, who will write the Report.
- **JAG Sexuality Group.** As part of this group, whose objective is to promote non-discrimination on the basis of sexuality, SIS' activities in 2010 included (1) *Project Sentuh*, an art-installation project with 3R International Women's Day; (2) holding a Watching Brief for Sec 498 of the Penal Code (Daphne Iking's case which centres on the controversial law that makes it a crime for a person to "entice away" another man's wife); and (3) documenting cases of discrimination and violations against transsexuals (with the PT Foundation).
- **Bung Mokhtar's case.** In 2010, MP Bung Mokhtar Radin pleaded guilty to committing polygamy without the Court's consent; the Shari'ah High Court later set aside the jail sentence. SIS, with other members of JAG, held a Press conference, issued Press statements, demonstrated outside the Lower Shari'ah Court (18 May) and attended the Shari'ah High Court hearing (11 August).
- **Fiesta Feminista.** Several SIS staff are on the Organising Committee for this conference, which is scheduled to take place June/July 2011 in Penang.
- **Tenaganita Equality Forum.** SIS and Empower were invited by Tenaganita to contribute to this forum on equality. The first forum was held on 4 September.
- **PT Foundation.** Activities with PT included (1) a Talk on Islamic Family Law and Introduction to SIS (2 July); (2) a presentation on CEDAW (28 August); and (3) a workshop on Sexuality and Shari'ah as part of the Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR) campaign (9 November).
- **ASEAN AICHR and ACWC initiatives.** As part of the ASEAN Women's Caucus, SIS attended meetings and training sessions in relation to issues in the ASEAN region that are connected with the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC).
- **ASEAN Progressive Muslim Movement (APMM).** At the first meeting (19 June, Jakarta) of Focal Points (Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines), network members were updated on developments affecting women in the context of the politicisation of Islam in ASEAN countries. The APMM focus, issues and work plan were established, and basic principles and implementation mechanisms were agreed upon.
- **Presentation to Parliament.** In this presentation at the Opposition party office in Parliament on 12 July, SIS and WAO were called upon to present the Islamic and civil law perspectives on the issue of child marriage.

## LEGAL SERVICES

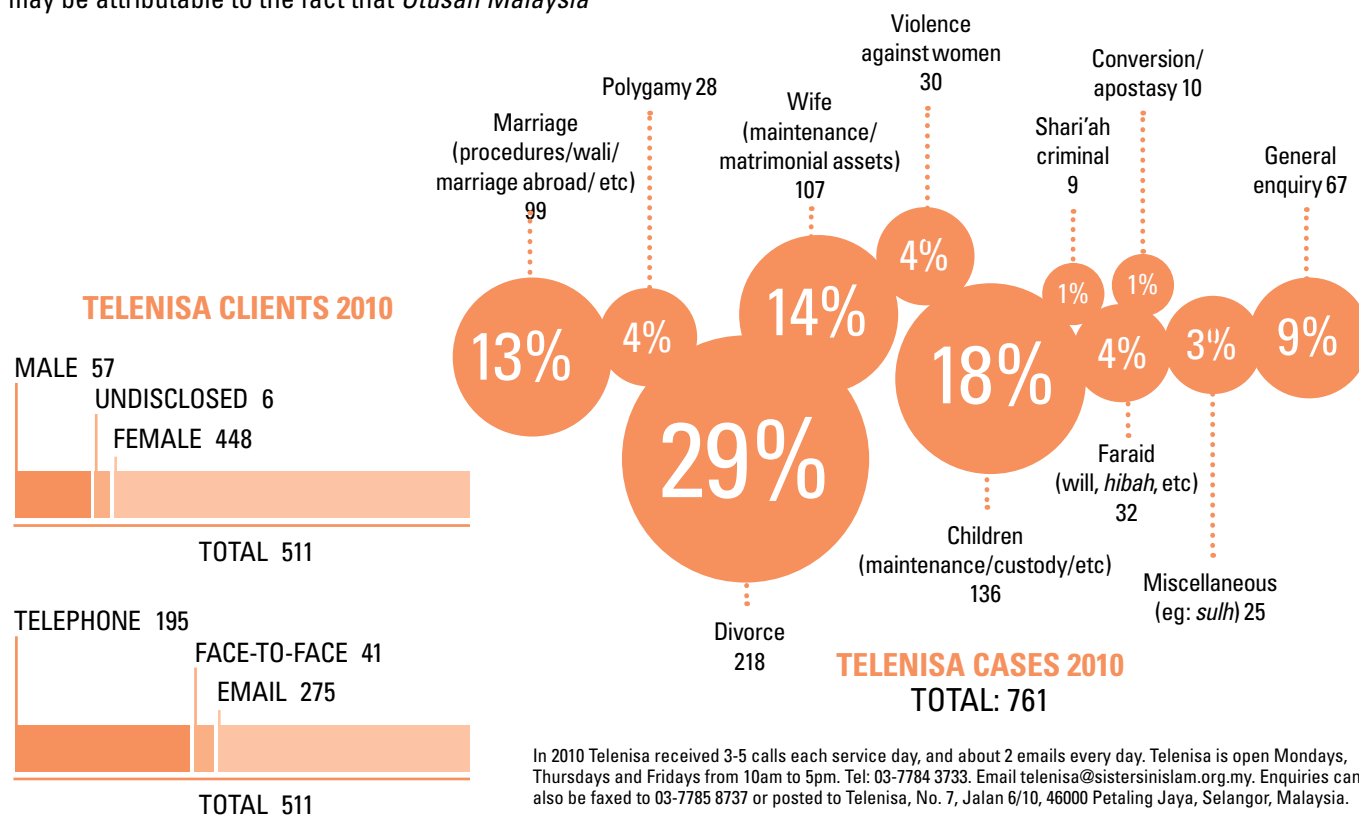
### Telenisa

The objectives of Telenisa, SIS' legal clinic, are threefold: (1) to provide clients with free legal advice; (2) to improve the quality of legal information available for women; and (3) to better study the needs of society—and Muslim women in particular—on growing issues in Islam and Shari'ah courts. A Legal Officer advises the client; a chambering student is also present to record the case.

In 2010 Telenisa assisted 511 clients on a total of 761 cases. This decline in the number of cases compared to 2009 is possibly due to lack of awareness, which in turn may be attributable to the fact that *Utusan Malaysia*

(a Malay-language daily) no longer features SIS articles in their Friday edition.

To further enhance its services in 2011, Telenisa will work on (1) sourcing for more Shari'ah lawyers willing to give pro bono advice; (2) raising public awareness of Telenisa's services; (3) providing better programmes and exposure for the chambering students who assist on cases; and (4) identifying chambering students interested in continuing as volunteers.



## Mobile Legal Clinics

To reach low-income communities with no access to or awareness of Telenisa, SIS conducts half-day Mobile Legal Clinics (MLCs) in various locations (usually the constituency of a Member of Parliament or Assemblyperson). These MLCs are a collaborative effort involving SIS, AWAM, WAO and the KL Legal Aid Centre.

In 2010 five MLCs were conducted—three in the Klang Valley and two in Kelantan. The Kelantan events (Machang and Kuala Krai) marked the first time that SIS had taken the MLC to communities outside the Klang Valley; they afforded SIS the opportunity to get to know other women's groups in that region.

For 2011, the ALSR unit hopes to (1) extend the MLCs to involve not only MPs' constituencies but also women's associations and resident associations; (2) conduct a joint programme with the PEC unit's Large Group Training Awareness (LGTA) outside Klang Valley; and (3) revamp the MLC module to include the campaign for a model Muslim Family Law.

## Courtwatch

In 2007 SIS had initiated a project called Courtwatch in response to the numerous complaints it had been receiving regarding Shari'ah court procedures. Complaints included unnecessary delays in proceedings, lack of enforcement of court judgments and awards, prejudiced judges and uncooperative court officers.

Under Courtwatch, SIS research assistants (RA) attended and monitored proceedings using a set of Courtwatch forms. Data was subsequently tabulated and analysed.

In October 2010 SIS resumed the Courtwatch programme in Kota Bharu and Machang, Kelantan. As with the 2007 project, the **objectives** are to (1) monitor and document

the practice of the Shari'ah Court in Kelantan so as to support SIS advocacy work on court practices; (2) determine if the judges, lawyers and the court officers are fair, just and follow court procedures in making their judgments; and (3) observe if the courts display sensitivity and non-biasness towards women.

Also in 2010, the ALSR unit revamped the Courtwatch forms to enable RAs to better meet objectives, and began using the SPSS statistical package to collate data from Courtwatch 2007.

Future plans include (1) enlisting more RAs; (2) getting help with data collation and tabulation; (3) focusing on cases under the two women Shari'ah judges in Malaysia; and (4) creating a more comprehensive and holistic training module for RAs.

## Promoting Legal Literacy

In 2010, SIS continued to promote legal literacy in Malaysia using two approaches; (1) producing and distributing its own publications; and (2) enlisting the help of mainstream media.

SIS' *Ketahui Hak Anda* series of brochures and leaflets in Malay is being expanded to cover new topics.

From 2002 until April this year SIS benefitted from the support of Malay-language daily *Utusan Malaysia*, which had featured SIS's weekly column in its Friday section, *Ruangan Soal-Jawab Undang-Undang dan Keluarga*. *Utusan Malaysia* stopped running SIS' articles this year. In all, 268 articles were featured.

Plans for 2011 include (1) securing new space in Malay-language media to continue to build our presence among Malay-speaking audiences; (2) conducting a second Writing Workshop (after the one in 2009) to identify future writers and help them hone their skills; and (3) exploring radio talk shows as a potentially significant new avenue.



Participants paying attention to the trainer in one of the MyConsti sessions.

## MyConsti

This new initiative, created in 2010, focuses on youth legal awareness in Malaysia. Its **objectives** are to (1) encourage the youth of Malaysia to understand and to speak up for their basic rights under the Federal Constitution; (2) create youth leaders; (3) encourage youths to be proactive; and (4) create a networking platform for youths.

A two-day **youth legal awareness workshop** (6 – 7 March, Petaling Jaya) was conducted, with the 24 participants comprising university and college students, young activists, interns from the *New Straits Times* and the Bar Council MyConsti team.

Participants explored topics such as the Constitution’s historical background; the impact of the Constitution on citizens; the concept of government and human rights; gender equality and the Shari’ah system; and discrimination, apathy, exploitation and mistrust.



## Forum Gen Y

Forum Gen Y: Marriage – A Shared Responsibility (*Perkahwinan – Tanggungjawab Bersama*) is another new initiative, created to increase awareness among young couples of their responsibilities in a marriage. The emphasis is on discussing the lived realities in today’s marriage, where most husbands and wives have careers.

The first **forum**, held on 12 June in Petaling Jaya, was attended by 55 participants.

The forum was divided into two sessions. In the first session, moderated by Prof Rashidah Shuib, three panelists with different marital backgrounds shared their views on marriage and how they dealt with their responsibilities. In the second session, Prof Norani Othman discussed the topic of *Marriage and Families – Realities, Challenges and Experiences in Modern Society*.



## TRAINING

### Women's Rights and Shari'ah Training

The Women's Rights & Shari'ah Training was held 9-10 October in Kuala Lumpur. The goal was to equip SIS staff and members with a working knowledge of Islam to enable them to effectively engage in discourse, advocacy and issue management. This year, key areas covered included identifying conceptual and technical notions of human rights, discussing issues of moral policing and sexuality, freedom of religion, the *hijab/tudung* and Muslim family law.

### Feminist Legal Theory & Practice Workshop (FLTP)

This Workshop, held 9 - 13 December in Melaka, was the first regional FLTP workshop conducted in Malaysia. FLTP is a conceptual framework bringing together training on feminist legal theory, women's human rights and feminist litigation strategies. It provides an opportunity for women and human rights activists to explore how taking a feminist perspective to the law can transform women's situations. The framework presents feminism as its core and human rights as its foundation.

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## STUDENTS AND INTERNS

### Chambering Students

In 2010, SIS received a total of 23 chambering students in four batches. SIS' 14-week chambering student programme **aims** to help students: (1) strengthen theoretical foundations; (2) relate theory to practice; (3) develop soft skills (such as listening with empathy); and (4) gain a holistic appreciation of a client's circumstances beyond the legal context.

Chambering students' **main duties** are to (1) draft reply emails (which are checked by Legal Officers); (2) take notes during face-to-face consultations with clients and write reports; and (3) handle Telenisa phone queries.

Students also benefit from a structured training programme designed specifically to meet their needs. Modules are reviewed on an ongoing basis; new plans for 2011 include the setting up of a **committee** of NGO trainers to review the current training programme, and to develop a **handbook** for students.

SIS' chambering student programme has been fine-tuned over the years, and interest among students continues to grow, with the Selangor Legal Aid Centre reporting this year that several students had requested specifically to be assigned to SIS (despite the Selangor LAC not usually allowing students to indicate a preference). After completing their pupillage, many students continue to be involved with SIS as volunteers; a follow-up system will be implemented to encourage such ongoing relationships.

### Attachment Students

Attachment students are law students (still pursuing their degree courses) who come to SIS for a quick introduction to the organisation. This year SIS received visits from mixed groups of students from INTI College, Taylor's College, and HELP University College.

### **Nur Azrine Abdul Razak, Programme Officer, ALSR.**

Nur Azrine joined SIS in February 2008.

#### **On the job interview:**

I had to bring my husband and baby along as we could not get a babysitter. I was interviewed by Zainah (Anwar), Rashidah (Hashim), and Norhayati (Kaprawi). Instead of just looking at my certificates, they asked me my views on various issues.

#### **How did others react when you joined SIS?**

My friends said to me, “Why do you want to join SIS, *nanti you murtad* (you may become an apostate). They are liberal thinkers.”

#### **What have you learned?**

When you attend a Mobile Legal Clinic, you really see the problems people face; the law books may spell out their rights, but in reality, it is difficult for these people to claim them.

#### **What was Islam to you before SIS?**

Before I joined SIS, Islam for me was more about punishment. The *ustazah* would say such and such a thing was not allowed, and you would be expected to follow without questioning anything. If you started questioning, it was considered a sin. But I believe if you don't understand, you *should* ask questions!

#### **What will you teach your sons?**

I have two young sons, and I want to raise them to have a gender perspective, and a sense of shared responsibilities in my family and when they get married.

#### **Second thoughts about joining SIS?**

I attended that Hizbut Tahrir talk in 2009 (in which the global Islamist group claimed that SIS was a deviant group whose work was not based on true Islamic teachings). They talked about having SIS members and staff undergo rehabilitation. At that time I was pregnant with my second son, and I remember thinking, “I don't want to have to deliver my baby at a rehab centre!” But I managed to overcome the fear with support from SIS' management and because I believe SIS' work is based on sources from Al-Qur'an.



# RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

The SIS booth at the International Women's Day campaign held at the One Utama Shopping Mall park.

The **Research and Publications (R&P)** unit undertakes **research** with the objective of collecting data on SIS issues and to support SIS advocacy work.

**Publications** are produced with the aim of:

- Promoting progressive views and alternative interpretations within Islam that uphold principles of justice, equality and freedom, particularly with regard to women's rights.
  - Enriching resources available to academicians, researchers, students and women's and human rights activists.
  - Documenting and evaluating SIS activities.
- 

In 2010, the Research and Publications unit:

- Completed quantitative and qualitative data collection for the research project on polygamy, shared findings in two public presentations, prepared material for possible publication in the *Journal of Marriage and Family* and began planning a comprehensive publication of the research project's findings.
- Presented findings of the research project on the Shari'ah Criminal Offences Act and Moral Policing.
- Produced newsletters (*Baraza!* Issues V and VI) and modified three SIS booklets to include simplified language and illustrations.
- Undertook ongoing activities including distribution and promotion; a new system was developed to facilitate stock-checking.
- Celebrated SIS' success following a lengthy legal battle to challenge the banning of SIS' book by the Home Ministry.

## RESEARCH

SIS continued to work on two major ongoing research projects, each addressing an issue with significant implications for the everyday lives of Malaysians:

- The Impact of Polygamy on the Family in Malaysia
- The Shari'ah Criminal Offences Act and Moral Policing

### The Impact of Polygamy on the Family in Malaysia

The objectives of this research project are to (1) study the impact of polygamy and how it affects the quality of family life; (2) understand the dynamics of polygamous families; (3) provide qualitative and quantitative data for advocating policy and law reform, influencing public opinion and critiquing official discourse of polygamy. This groundbreaking study, initiated in 2004, covers four zones in Peninsular Malaysia.

#### The Project in 2010

The project's quantitative and qualitative data collection was completed in 2010. A total of 1,235 questionnaires were verified and validated; 150 questionnaires were from respondents who are related polygamous family members (co-siblings, co-wives etc). The breakdown according to geographical zones is as follows: North: 186, Central: 219, East: 672, South: 158.

## Project Management

In 2010 team members undertook various project management activities:

- (1) Five full-time workers and five part-timers continued processing data from questionnaires.
- (2) Data from two zones (Central and East) were analysed and presented at the 7th International Malaysian Studies Conference (MSC7) at Universiti Sains Malaysia (16-18 March). SIS staff co-authored papers on various aspects of polygamy, including Legal; Finance; Giliran and Sexuality; and Discourse Analysis.
- (3) Data from all four zones were analysed and presented at the Public Forum at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) (15 July).
- (4) Ong Ju Lin produced a 20-minute documentary on polygamy that was shown at the UKM Public Forum. SIS subsequently explored the possibility of expanding the documentary to a 60-minute documentary.
- (5) Masjaliza Hamzah presented a seminar paper in December at Delaware University, USA.

Two Polygamy Coordinating Committee meetings were held (5 April and 12 August) to discuss various issues, including preparations for the public presentations, the writing of articles for the *Journal of Marriage and Family* and the possibility of a book retreat to lay the groundwork for the publication of the project's research findings.



The polygamy research team members, together with Prof Dato' Dr Abdul Rahman Embong and Prof Dr Tham Siew Yean, Principal Fellows at the Institute of Malaysian and International Studies (IKMAS) at UKM after the Public Forum.

## Workshops

In 2010 eight workshops were organised. Key issues discussed were:

- Abstracts and paper presenters for MSC7.
- The UKM IKMAS Public Forum (15 July).
- The preparation and writing of articles and chapters for academic publications.
- The documentary on polygamous families (the possibility of a second documentary was also discussed later).
- NVivo software training for the polygamy team, staff and selected researchers.
- The possibility of organising a book writing retreat. This retreat subsequently took place in Langkawi (29 October-2 November) and was followed by a post-retreat discussion.

## Presentations

Presentations are usually held for the research team, SIS members, staff and selected activists and academics for critical input. In 2010, with the project data gathering completed, the polygamy team was able to present findings at two public events:

- 7th International Malaysian Studies Conference (16-17 March). A total of six papers were presented in two panels.
- The UKM IKMAS Public Forum (15 July).

Topics presented at these events included:

- Introduction, Methodological and Theoretical Issues and Challenges
- A Study of Nafkah, Family Expenditure, Financial Impact and Its Management



UNIVERSITI  
KERANGSAAN  
MALAYSIA  
National University of Malaysia

INSTITUT KAJIAN MALAYSIA DAN ANTARABANGSA (IKMAS)  
UNIVERSITI KERANGSAAN MALAYSIA

Dengan sukacitanya menjemput saudara/i ke

**FORUM AWAM**  
**"INSTITUSI KELUARGA DAN POLIGAMI DI MALAYSIA"**

dirasmikan oleh  
YBhg. Prof. Tan Sri Dato' Dr. Sharifah Hapsah Syed Hasan Shahabudin  
Naib Canselor Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

pada  
• 15 Julai 2010 (Khamis) • 8.30am – 1.00pm • Puri Pujangga, UKM

Persambahan Video bertajuk "Liki-liku Kehidupan Berpoligami"

Kesan Poligami Terhadap Nafkah Zahir & Kewangan Keluarga

Nafkah Batin, Persoalan Giliran, Seks & Seksualiti

Hubungan Kekeluargaan dan Modal Sosial Keluarga Poligami

Kesan Poligami Terhadap Emosi Keluarga

Puri Pujangga, UKM

"I still not even know he still married another woman. He just come home one day and said he had married another as though he was telling me he had been given a big gift."

He Muslim countries such as Iran, Syria, Jordan, Morocco & Egypt, they are accepted the ruling that a husband who has agreed in his marriage contract not to take another wife during the marriage, is bound by that stipulation.

Untuk maklumat lanjut sila hubungi 03-8921 3205 (IKMAS,UKM) atau 03-7785 6121 (SIS Forum)

- The Discursive de/construction of Agency and Sexuality in Polygamous Marriages
- The Dynamic Family and Social Capital & Social Relationship: Network Support System
- Unraveling Giliran, Sex, Sexuality, Piety and Turn-taking
- Emotional Impact on Family in Polygamous Marriage
- A Review of Substantive and Procedural Legal Issues Pertaining to Cases of Polygamy in Malaysia
- Concluding Findings From the Polygamy Research

### **Focus Discussion Groups (FDG) and In-Depth Interviews (IDI)**

The Focus Discussion Groups and In-Depth Interviews contribute qualitative data to the project. In 2010 the remaining FDGs and IDIs were conducted. NVIVO software is being used to analyse the data; in 2010 a training session was held for project members (29-30 April).

As at end 2010, the total number of IDIs stood at 65 (21 in Kelantan, 18 in Terengganu, 7 in Perlis, 4 in Johor, 9 Melaka and 6 in the Klang Valley).

### **Zone Activities**

In 2010 the training of enumerators was no longer required; data collection was completed in May.

### **Future Plans**

SIS will continue to identify opportunities to use the research data to support its advocacy work with regard to the Muslim Family Law Campaign, and to exchange research insights with key strategic partners including those in Musawah.

Other plans for 2011 will focus on presenting research data in published form. Proposed publication outputs include:

- A special issue on polygamy, comprising seven articles, in the *Journal of Marriage and Family*.
- A book, tentatively titled *Muslim Polygamy in Malaysia: Lived Realities and Impact*, which will comprehensively present the research findings.
- One or two monographs utilising the case studies and life histories of the men, women and children interviewed, and booklets for use by the ALSR and PEC units.

### **The Shari'ah Criminal Offences Act and Moral Policing**

This research project—on the impact of the Shari'ah Criminal Offences Act (SCOA) as the basis for moral policing in Malaysia—is part of a book project led by the Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR). SIS is committed to contributing one chapter on Malaysia, and to this end has been conducting research since 2006.

In December, Principal Researcher Julian Lee presented a draft chapter at the 2nd Congress of the Asian Association of Women's Studies in Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang.

Although this project is not expected to extend beyond 2010, the SCOA and the issue of moral policing will continue to hold wide-reaching implications for citizens. SIS will therefore look into the possible need for continuing the research and initiating a campaign.



## PUBLICATIONS

In 2010 the R&P unit worked on the following publications:

- *SIS Annual Review* (2008 and 2009). The 2009 Annual Review saw some changes made to the content and design, with the aim of making the publication more accessible to readers.
- *Baraza!* newsletter, issues V and VI.
- Three booklets (in Bahasa Malaysia). The language used in three booklets – *Are Muslim Men Allowed to Beat Their Wives?*, *Hadith on Women in Marriage* and *Women as Judges* – will be simplified and illustrations will be included.

Ongoing publication activities included **distribution**, **promotion** and **inventory**. A new system for easier stock-checking was developed and is now in use. SIS books were promoted at various events, including booths at the International Women's Day with 3R (March), the UKM IKMAS Public Forum (July) and the Monash University Legal Fair (October).

For 2011, possible areas of focus include (1) the publishing of data and findings from the polygamy research project (see above); (2) continuing efforts to engage JAKIM and the Home Ministry on the issue of vague guidelines for banning books; (3) meeting with the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) on the issue of freedom of information and expression.

The R&P unit continues to operate in the context of the local publishing landscape with its ongoing challenges as well as some positive developments. Challenges include (1) a general public that is not keen on reading, especially academic-type books; (2) a lack of progressive books in stores; and (3) Islamic authorities who are unwilling to loosen their grip on religious interpretation.

On the positive side, legal challenges in recent years to the Home Ministry's control of publications and import of foreign books (notably involving the banning of *March 8*, and the use of the word "Allah" by Catholic weekly *Herald*) may make it easier in the future to seek fair review of Ministry decisions.

### Campaign Against Book Banning

The banning of SIS' publication *Muslim Women and the Challenge of Islamic Extremism* in July 2008 and SIS' subsequent decision to challenge the ban resulted in a legal battle which lasted from late 2008 through 2009.

The struggle finally paid off on 25 January this year when the High Court lifted the ban, with Justice Mohamad Ariff Md Yusof ruling that the book was not a threat to public order. In February the Home Ministry appealed the court's decision, but there has been no follow-up from the Ministry thus far.

***"Can this disrupt public order? I think not. Only seven pages out of [the] 215-page book are said to have offended the guidelines by Jakim, and those came from only two of 10 articles published in the book. I fail to find objective evidence to support the facts (to ban the book)."***

– Justice Mohamad Ariff Md Yusof, lifting the ban on SIS' publication. (As reported in the *Star* on 25 January 2010)

### **Syarifatul Adibah Mohammad Jodi, Senior Programme Officer, R&P.**

Adibah joined SIS in 2003.

#### **On early impressions:**

I first heard of SIS during my uni days. The *ustazahs* would paint SIS in a bad light, but I wanted to explore SIS. It was a little difficult to adjust at first, but when I saw SIS engaging with all parties, I began to accept it more.

#### **On reactions from others:**

My immediate family has no problem with me working at SIS. Some of the *makciks* (aunties) do have a problem. I have had people unfriend me (on Facebook) when they found out I work at SIS! Maybe it's a blessing in disguise. *I tak kisah dah sekarang.* (Now I couldn't be bothered.)

#### **On challenges in 2010:**

At the UKM Public Forum I had to do my own analysis of the polygamy research project, write a paper and present it. It was my first experience writing an academic paper.

#### **On activism:**

In 2007 I took a break to help run a centre for special children. But I realised activism was my line, and I rejoined SIS in 2008. The satisfaction you get from activism is special, when you are able to create awareness in a person to the point that they take action. You deal with the country's problems, with policy, sometimes even with the police! I think it is my fate to be involved in activism.

#### **On the younger generation:**

There is growing conservatism and fundamentalism. A person may be Western-educated, but not necessarily open to ideas. My hope is that the younger generation will be humble, and learn from the older generation.

#### **On other challenges:**

Weak politicians. If ministers flip-flop, the law *pula macam mana?* (What happens to the law then?) I also worry about the inclination towards conservatism, fundamentalism and terrorism in the name of Islam.

#### **On fatigue (and persevering):**

*Isu tak pernah surut* (there is no end to the issues that crop up). *Tapi kerja kita kena jalan jugalah.* (But the work still has to get done).

***“The three-day conference that gathered more than 160 papers was divided into five concurrent sessions with an average of three to four papers per session being presented... From my observation, [the] two panels on polygamous marriages [had] the largest attendance with participants overflowing. The researchers in these two panels also broke new ground in their research as commented by some senior scholars.”***

– Dr. Chin Yee Whah,  
Associate Professor of Economic  
Sociology, School of Social Sciences,  
Universiti Sains Malaysia, commenting  
on MSC7 (pssm-pssm.blogspot.com)

# PUBLIC EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATIONS



Muslim grassroots women's participation in  
Large Group Training Awareness in Penang.

Scholars, journalists, professionals, artists, activists, government officials, religious leaders, citizens – we are all stakeholders in advocating justice and equality for women in Islam. The objective of the **Public Education and Communications (PEC)** unit is not just to provide useful and timely information to all segments of the general public. It is also to create platforms for SIS to meaningfully engage with stakeholders, and for stakeholders to engage with each other.

Four key areas of focus are:

- Public education, including activities such as study visits, study sessions, meetings and workshops.
  - Media relations.
  - Website.
  - Resource Centre.
- 

In 2010, the PEC unit:

- Planned and executed a Public Education programme consisting of two Large Group Training Awareness sessions, four workshops, one forum, two screening and discussion sessions, six study sessions and one training of trainers session.
- Conducted a two-day workshop for journalists to build journalists' knowledge and reporting skills on women and Islam.
- Undertook media advocacy through Press statements and Press conferences as well as close engagement with the media on an ongoing basis.
- Began work on a new website, expected to go live in early 2011.
- Operated the SIS Resource Centre and acquired new publications in line with the objective of building the Centre's collection as a relevant and rich source of progressive material on Islam and women.

## PUBLIC EDUCATION

### Large Group Training Awareness

The aim of conducting Large Group Training Awareness (LGTA) sessions is to engage with grassroots Muslim women and raise their awareness of the rights of Muslim women. Participants are exposed to concepts of gender and family law, and encouraged to share their knowledge with others and support law reform. LGTA sessions were conducted twice in 2010, in the Central region (28 March), and the Northern region (24 April).

### Workshops

Workshops are designed to build participants' capacity as well as provide a space for networking. Some of the groups involved in workshops in 2010 comprised journalists, youths and artists. The objective is not only to impart skills, but also to encourage participants to share insights and to empower them to be more confident in expressing what they believe in. The following workshops were held in 2010:

- Artists and Activists – Towards a Just Society (21-23 May).
- Muslim Youth in Conversation (3-4 July).
- Rights and Position of Women in Islam for Journalists (24-25 July).
- Activists and Academicians - Isu Wanita Menurut Perspektif Al-Qur'an (30 November).
- Capacity Building for Gabungan Hak Wanita Islam (GAHWI) - Kepimpinan Wanita Islam di Malaysia (18-19 December).



Participants at a workshop held in May, titled Artists and Activists – Towards a Just Society.



A Q&A session with senior journalists and SIS trainers at the Rights and Position of Women in Islam for Journalists workshop in July.

### Forums

Forums are held as a means to engage youths, and draw them into discussion and exploratory sessions through which the lived realities of youths can be better understood. Action steps can then be formulated. Many participants have said the forums offered them a space to speak up about issues of concern, including religion. In 2010 one forum was held entitled *Malaysian Youth: Changes and Challenge* (17 July).

## Screening and Discussion

These sessions provide a platform for all to view documentaries and films and to engage in, understand and appreciate diversity of opinion. The two sessions in 2010 benefitted from the participation of multi-faith and multi-ethnic audiences, and proved to be a good arena for discussing contentious issues related to Islam:

- *The Imam and the Pastor* (22 January). A film on how Nigerian duo Imam Muhammad Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye worked together to bring harmony to their country.
- *Mencari Kartika* (26 May). A documentary by former SIS PEC Programme Manager Norhayati Kaprawi which examines faith, the Islamisation of Malaysia and other issues through the prism of the Kartika case.

## Study Sessions

Study sessions provide a platform for participants to discuss local or international issues. In 2010 the following study sessions were held:

- Shari'ah and Historical Fiqh – Dr Nik Noriani (11 February).
- Shari'ah Criminal Offences Act – Beng Hui (30 June).
- Violence against Women, Culture and State Responsibility – Zarizana Aziz (14 July).
- Children of Abraham – Prof Clive Kessler (8 September).
- UN International Fact Finding Mission to Investigate the Attacks on the Flotilla of Ships Carrying Humanitarian Assistance to Gaza – Shanthi Dairiam (5 October).
- Islamic Law in Public Legal Consciousness: Survey Results from Malaysia – Tamir Moustafa (16 December).



A working group session held during the TOT for SIS members and staff in November.

## Training

In 2010 a Training of Trainers (TOT) session was conducted with SIS Members and Staff (27-29 November). This session, conducted every two years, aims to identify people with the relevant skills and interest who can expand SIS' pool of trainers.

## COMMUNICATIONS

### Media Relations

SIS' objectives with regard to media relations are two-fold. The first objective is to **equip journalists with knowledge and reporting skills on women and Islam**. This year, a workshop on Rights and Position of Women in Islam for Journalists was held (24-25 July). The programme aimed to, among other things, expose journalists to progressive thinking, and educate them on how Shari'ah law is formulated in Malaysia, its impact on women, and comparisons with other countries.

The second objective is to engage in effective **media advocacy**, which involves (1) promoting an understanding of Islam that recognises the principles of justice, equality, freedom and dignity within a democratic nation state; (2) creating public awareness on gender equality and non-discrimination for women in Islam; (3) publicising and affirming SIS' views in the media; and (4) utilising available media opportunities to support like-minded organisations.

In 2010 SIS received regular coverage in the media (more than 85 times throughout the year), especially in the English-language media. SIS remains known as a resource for journalists seeking views on women and Islam, and we continue to receive many enquiries and interview requests.

Also in 2010, Citymedia offered a free 30-second ad slot in taxi screens, for which a Telenisa ad was completed.

Internally, instituting a weekly update of SIS media work and issues of interest in the media helped keep staff and members up-to-date with regard to media advocacy. This system will help us determine how people on the ground are discussing the issues of interest, and whether our media advocacy has made an impact on community-level discourse.

Priority areas for the future include:

- Reconvening the Communications Team and formulating a media policy/strategy document.
- Building relationships with editors and initiating a dialogue on women's perspectives of the Qur'an.
- Finding opportunities with allies who are executing media campaigns and other initiatives to build contacts and disseminate our views where relevant.
- Establishing a pool of translators who can help translate English-language statements into Malay.
- Improving tracking of media enquiries.
- Improving tracking of appearances in the media, and creating a centralised digital archive of Press statements, releases and articles.
- Creating a work procedures document or checklist.

## Press Statements in 2010

Sixteen Press statements were issued in 2010, a number of them in collaboration with other organisations:

17  
FEB

Condemnation of the caning of three Muslim women under Shari'ah law

18  
FEB

Call for the abolition of whipping, with the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG)

15  
MAR

Response to a *khutbah jumaat* issued by the Selangor Religious Affairs Department (JAIS) condemning SIS

1  
APR

On the commuting of Kartika's caning sentence to community service

3  
JUN

Condemnation of the Israeli attack on humanitarian boats and a call for an end to the Gaza Siege

6  
JUL

On the government removal of reservations to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), with JAG

4  
AUG

On the relaxation of conditions for child marriage in Malacca by the Malacca Islamic Religious Council

5  
AUG

Call for a National Child Support Agency

12  
AUG

On the undermining of gender equality and justice in the court decision on Bung Moktar's polygamy case, with JAG

8  
OCT

Condemnation of the sentencing of corporal punishment for drinking alcohol

29  
OCT

On the High Court striking off Dewan Pemuda Masjid Malaysia's originating summons against SIS

29  
OCT

Congratulations to Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir on being named as United Nations in Malaysia's Person of the Year 2010

9  
NOV

Call to drop Section 498 from Penal Code ("One Day, One Struggle" campaign), with Women's Aid Organisation (WAO)

20  
NOV

Concern over the Federal Court's lack of courage in the Shamala Sathiyaseelan case, with JAG

6  
DEC

Call to end child marriage in Malaysia

30  
DEC

Call to stand up against hatred and threats against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, with JAG



## Website

The SIS website provides audiences with easy access to SIS' press statements, notices and columns.

Work on a new website design was started towards the end of 2009. Articles continue to be copy-edited, and further layout changes may be made where necessary. The website may also be moved to a more secure host. Four staff members will undergo training in updating and maintaining the new website.

## Resource Centre

The SIS Resource Centre is generally recognised as a resource for reading material on progressive understandings of Islam.

The Resource Centre contains 4,500 items, mostly books. On average, 18 new publications are added each month; some are bought by SIS, others are received from various organisations.

Ongoing tasks include buying, receiving and cataloguing of new books, and maintaining the Resource Centre space. Plans for the coming year may include: (1) hiring a part-time librarian; (2) implementing a universally known library system (such as the Applied Library System 3.0) and instituting computerised recording and monitoring of reading materials—incoming and outgoing; (3) enhancing library security to reduce the incidence of lost books.

## PRESS STATEMENT ON THE BUNG MOKTAR DECISION

*Press statements are an important tool to communicate SIS' research findings as well as SIS' position on various issues. This Press statement was issued on 12 August in response to the decision made by the Shah Alam Shari'ah High Court to set aside Kinabatangan MP Bung Moktar Radin's jail sentence for committing polygamy without the Shari'ah Court's consent, and instead fine him RM1,000. An excerpt:*

*"This decision reinforces the perception that polygamy should not be taken seriously as a problem that affects many Muslim women in the country. This runs contrary to realities on the ground: a Sisters in Islam study on polygamous families in Peninsular Malaysia discovered that 44 per cent of first wives in the study had to take on extra work after their husbands marry a second wife due to a decrease in the husbands' contribution, and 53 per cent cited an increase in domestic violence. Furthermore, the study showed that only 28 per cent of first wives were satisfied with their husbands' method of alternating nights between them, and 47 per cent of second wives were satisfied with the arrangement."*

***"We continue to receive enquiries and interview requests from the media on issues concerning Muslim women. This is largely due to the fact that SIS has a strong body of work and expertise to draw on, and we are recognised as experts on women's human rights and Islam."***

– Yasmin Masidi,  
Senior Programme Officer, PEC

### **Azareena Abdul Aziz, Programme Officer, PEC.**

Azareena joined SIS in 2008. Prior to that, she was a senior marketing executive.

#### **What brought you to SIS?**

At the time, as a senior marketing executive, my hours were flexible, so I was able to help out during SIS events. Then I became interested! And I have always been seen as a rebel anyway, always asking why as a Muslim woman I can't do this or that or the other.

#### **On the challenges of working in PEC:**

The work in PEC is very challenging. You must have passion and knowledge. The issues that SIS deals with are not simple issues! In the unit, we have to liaise with the trainers and resource persons, create the modules, ensure participation and field calls every day from the media. We need to have the content at our fingertips and be able to talk any time.

#### **On collaborating with allies:**

We liaise with a lot of resource persons, not just for content, but also to build rapport. We can't do it alone, we need collaborators. But it can get complicated; an ulama may be progressive on certain issues but not others, and you would have to know how to manage that.

#### **On the numerous attacks against SIS:**

As staff, of course we worry, but once you have decided to work for SIS, you should accept the challenges. *Kalau tak berani dilambung ombak, jangan berumah di tepi pantai!* (Don't build your house by the beach if you are afraid of being pounded by waves!)

#### **On youth:**

In SIS we have very good contacts with scholars and various other groups, but we still lack contact with youth. It's more difficult to get older people to change. With youth, we still have time to educate and give them awareness. In Malaysia, they are full of fire and spirit, but they need to be given proper space and opportunity.

#### **On the growing conservatism among youths:**

My parents are more progressive than my cousins! It's scary. The young generation just *terima bulat-bulat* (accept without question) and do not tolerate others' opinions. There is no discourse, no discussion, no compassion. It's dangerous. If this is the situation now, what will happen in 20 years? The youth are our future!

#### **On our education system:**

Our youth lack information even in the Internet era, because everything goes back to our system of education. The mindset is to follow the *ustaz* or *ustazah*, without questioning them. In Indonesia, the situation is very different. A teacher would be quite troubled if the students didn't argue with him or her.



# OPERATIONS

A visit from LLM students from York University, Canada, in November.

The objectives of the **Operations** unit are to:

- Provide efficient operational support to SIS, with the smooth running of the office as a priority.
  - Optimise staff capacity and maintain a work environment that allows SIS to attract and retain the best staff.
  - Manage SIS finances and fundraising with a view to ensuring sustainability of the organisation and its programmes.
- 

In 2010, the Operations unit:

- Provided operational and logistical support for all SIS activities and events.
  - Managed the organisation's finances to ensure financial sustainability and compliance with funders' requirements.
  - Planned and organised fundraising activities, notably the Defend the Defender fundraising dinner in December.
  - Managed the administrative and human resource needs of the organisation, including introducing an orientation programme for new staff.
- Provided administrative and informational support to the Board to enable it to undertake effective governance.
  - Organised the annual Evaluation and Planning Meeting.
  - Organised and coordinated the multi-staged process which led to the formulation of SIS' Strategic Plan 2010-2015.

## OPERATIONAL AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT FOR SIS PROGRAMMES

The 2010 calendar of events was a busy one for the Operations unit. In addition to organising the many meetings, dinners and other events associated with the initiatives mentioned in this Review, the Operations unit also organised the following:

- SIS Buka Puasa and Appreciation Evening (26 August) for founders and board members
- SIS Hari Raya Open House (24 September)
- Numerous gatherings held throughout the year for SIS members, staff and friends including *doa kesyukuran*, *doa selamat* and *tahlil*

### Administration and Human Resources



#### Staffing the organisation (2010)

As at end-2010, SIS comprised:

In 2010 eight new staff joined SIS. In the same period nine employees resigned. By end-2010 some key posts had fallen vacant, including the posts of Executive Director, R&P Programme Manager and PEC Programme Manager (following the resignations of Dr Hamidah Marican, Masjaliza Hamzah and Mas Elati Samani respectively).

Operations Manager Rashidah Hashim will be leaving SIS in early 2011. Although staff of the affected units have done a remarkable job of maintaining the smooth

running of day-to-day operations despite the changes in personnel, it is clear that in order for SIS to achieve its vision, SIS must intensify its search for suitable candidates to fill the key positions.

### Staff Development and Wellness Programmes

Staff development and wellness remain a priority, and in 2010 the Operations unit continued to organise programmes to reflect SIS' ongoing commitment to maintaining optimal work conditions for staff.

Activities such as the **Nasi Bungkus Lunch** discussions (held during lunch hour), **yoga classes** (held on Fridays), and **English classes** (held on Wednesdays) remain popular.

With regard to professional development, SIS staff were also provided with ample opportunity to attend seminars, conferences and training events (within and outside SIS) to develop their skills and build their network of contacts. 2010 also saw the introduction of an **orientation programme for new staff**. A buddy system will ensure that new employees are paired with existing staff who can help them adjust.

### Visits

The Operations unit is responsible for ensuring that the many visits to SIS made by local and international visitors go smoothly and meet objectives. Visitors in 2010 included ambassadors and embassy officials, students, academics, media organisations, NGOs and religious officials. International visitors came from Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, South Korea, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, Spain, Sweden, the UK, the US and Yemen.

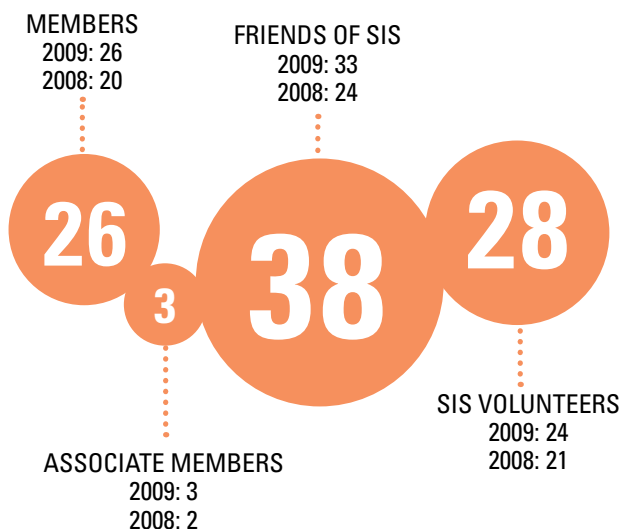
## Meetings and Workshops for Members

- Meeting of Minds (4 February) for SIS Members and staff
- Annual General Meeting (21 April), SIS Members
- Extraordinary General Meeting (23 October)
- Training of Trainers (27 November)

## Tenth Evaluation and Planning Meeting

SIS' Evaluation and Planning Meeting (E&P) held in the final quarter of every year allows staff to review and plan on a yearly basis. The E&P has served the organisation well, and will continue to anchor the yearly planning cycle. In 2010 SIS held its 10th E&P (23-24 October).

### Extending the Organisation (2010)



**SIS members** are accepted based on demanding membership criteria: new members have to be recommended, and each member is expected to make a significant contribution to the organisation and its activities.

**Associate members** are gender-sensitive men who play an important role in support of SIS work.

**Friends of SIS (FOSIS)** are for people who are supportive of SIS work and want to be part of SIS, but do not fulfil the criteria for SIS membership or do not have time to be members. It includes Muslims and non-Muslims, men and women. They receive the newsletter and are invited to study sessions and other activities.

## GOVERNANCE

As with previous years, SIS' Board of Directors carried out routine governance as well as governance on crisis issues, as per the Board's Terms of Reference (TOR). Board members met six times in 2010; the Annual General Meeting was held on 21 April.

One of the Board's principal duties is to lead strategic planning; in this regard, the most significant governance issue in 2010 was the drafting of the **Strategic Plan** by Board members, staff, and SIS members (see below).

In 2010, the Board also clarified its TOR, and introduced a new Board document to operationalise the Board's TOR.

Looking ahead, the Board's focus will be on exploring strategies in two areas: (1) ways in which members and staff can help to strengthen the governance role of the Board; and (2) ways in which younger SIS members can be nurtured and encouraged to become leaders and Board members.

## FINANCE AND FUNDRAISING

The Operations unit is accountable to the SIS Board, members, funders and donors. Each year, the objectives of finance and fundraising are to (1) ensure the sustainability of the organisation; (2) ensure efficient use of resources to achieve SIS objectives and commitments to funders and donors; (3) maintain regular donors who support SIS work, as well as identify potential donors; and (4) ensure fundraising projects continue for the sustainability of the organisation.

### Income, Funders and Donors

For the financial year ending 31 December 2010, foreign grants received by SIS amounted to RM2,730,633, a 13.1 per cent increase compared to foreign grants received in 2009. Funds received from Malaysian citizens, corporations and foundations in 2010 amounted to RM570,942, a 47.1 per cent decrease compared to local funds received in 2009.

Several grants reached the end of their terms in 2010. SIS continued to focus on securing new funds for 2011 and beyond. In December SIS organised a fundraising event, Defend the Defender, in collaboration with The Body Shop. The objective was to raise funds to help cover SIS' legal costs.

### Expenses

SIS' total expenses in 2010 amounted to RM2,405,024, a decrease of 29.3 per cent compared to expenses in 2009. There was a 36.6 per cent decrease in programme funding (in 2009 SIS organised the Musawah Global Meeting in Kuala Lumpur; this remains the biggest conference that SIS has organised thus far).

## HIGHLIGHTS (FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING 31 DEC 2010)

CORPORATIONS	RM77,500
INDIVIDUALS	RM160,109
OTHER FUNDERS	RM88,198
FOUNDATIONS	RM2,975,768



### INCOME

TOTAL RM3,308,210

Some income also came from publications (RM6,635). Funders are organisations or foundations that finance a part or all of a project's cost as a grant, while donors are individuals, foundations or organisations that give funds as charitable contributions.

INSTITUTION BUILDING AND NETWORKING	RM64,680
--	----------

ADMIN	RM444,048
PROGRAMMES	RM1,896,296



### EXPENSES

TOTAL RM2,405,024

INTERNATIONAL FUNDERS	RM2,730,633
LOCAL FUNDERS	RM570,942



### FUNDERS

TOTAL RM3,301,575

### **Hartini Abdullah, Senior Finance Officer, Operations.**

Hartini joined SIS in 2003.

#### **On being an activist (maybe):**

I love what SIS does, I mean the issues. But as to whether or not I am an activist, I'm not sure. If it's about marching (and rallying), maybe I am not an activist. But if activism is also about speaking out and standing your ground, then yes.

#### **Operationally, how is an NGO different from a company?**

In terms of accounting or finance reporting, it's almost the same as any private company. We are not profit-oriented, but we worry about the same things, such as keeping costs low. Our project funds must be used as per funders' requirements. Sometimes, if funds are closely tied to projects, it can be difficult for an NGO to save money for its own organisational sustainability.

#### **What are you most proud of?**

When I first joined SIS there were only five full-time staff members, and we kept accounting records manually. Slowly we enhanced our record system with accounting software. I also learned a lot about procedures from [Operations Manager] Rashidah Hashim. I have been working here for almost eight years, and I am happy to see SIS grow. This is my first job, and SIS is like my second home.

#### **On attacks against SIS:**

Personally, I didn't feel afraid at all. The good thing about SIS is that any time any issue arises, the management will brief staff, and there is a discussion.

#### **On personal highlights of 2010:**

I got married in December. I met my husband during the Musawah Global Meeting in 2009. I was sourcing for merchandise suppliers, and he happened to be one of them. For the merchandise I didn't choose him, because his prices were too high! But for my life I did choose him. He is supportive of SIS.



## The Strategic Plan 2010 – 2015

In 2010, SIS decided that the time had come to reaffirm—and in some areas, define anew—its long-term goals and objectives. The annual Evaluation and Planning Meeting would remain as the focus of year-by-year planning, but in order for SIS to effectively meet future challenges and achieve its vision, a separate roadmap with a longer planning horizon would be required. Over a period of several months beginning in January, SIS members and staff formulated the Strategic Plan 2010 – 2015. This Plan, the first in SIS' history, now serves as the basis for organisational decision-making and programme development. The key components are the Vision, Mission, Long-Term Objectives and Goals.



SIS staff and members at a planning session in May.

### VISION

#### SOCIETAL VISION

To be a progressive and democratic society that upholds freedom of expression, gender equality and social justice for all.

#### ORGANISATIONAL VISION

To be recognised as the national and global leader for gender equality and justice in Islam.

### MISSION

To promote the principles of gender equality, justice, freedom and dignity in Islam and empower women to be advocates for change.

### GOALS

**A** Enhancing public acceptance of gender equality, justice and freedom of expression in Islam to critical mass levels.

**B** Increasing the public acceptance and support of SIS work.

**C** Reforming laws and policies that discriminate against women in the name of Islam.

**D** Ensuring long-term sustainability and effectiveness of SIS.

**7** areas that impact the lived realities of Muslim women were also identified for SIS to incorporate into its existing work:

1. Shari'ah
2. Divorce and Marriage
3. Domestic Violence
4. Polygamy
5. Inheritance
6. Islamic Family Law
7. Other Issues (including gender discrimination, the politicisation of religion, and racial polarisation).

### **Rashidah Abdullah, founding member, Board Member.**

Rashidah was one of the eight women who founded SIS in 1987.

#### **What kind of a year has it been?**

A difficult one, externally and internally. I was very proud of the solidarity shown by staff and members, for the organisation and for one another. We pulled together and we got stronger.

#### **On key achievements of the year:**

The Strategic Plan was a challenging process, but it was so important as members and staff had the chance to give direction to the organisation, through a participatory and collective approach. To me, this was also the most important governance issue, as one of the Board's Terms of Reference is the responsibility to lead strategic planning thinking and processes.

#### **What issues are you passionate about?**

Domestic violence was where I started my activism, in Australia and then in Malaysia in 1981. Reducing violence is critical to women's empowerment, and is a key indicator of gender equality. Reproductive rights—contraception, sexuality, abortion, rights to control one's own body—are also important. I am very happy SIS will be addressing reproductive rights in 2011, as many Muslim women suffer difficulties in this area. For me the concern, or anger, or passion comes from seeing women suffer when they have a right to choose a better life for themselves.

#### **Why did you become a part of SIS?**

My reasons were personal at first, and had to do with my need to resolve being a feminist and being a Muslim. There was no global Muslim women's movement to turn to then in 1989. I had felt the subordination of women in some practices was contradictory to my beliefs in gender equality. I also felt some disappointment in the lack of spiritual passion as Islam was practised. I had hoped for a more lively and dynamic engagement with one's religion.

#### **On the youth of Malaysia:**

There are more challenges for young people now. There is more emphasis on money and things. What can young people believe in and work for besides getting rich, or chatting on social networks about the mundane aspects of life? NGOs offer young people hope for a different meaning in life and engaged work.

#### **What organisational challenges do NGOs face?**

Activists sometimes focus more on the cause rather than the organisation. NGOs must be careful not to replicate the society they are trying to change. A few years ago we introduced our tagline "Empowering Voices for Change"—we believe women speaking out will bring about the change that we need in Malaysia. So as an NGO with such a tagline, we would want to have the kind of organisation that encourages staff and members to speak out. We need to base our organisation on those principles and processes that we say are important for society.

## GETTING INVOLVED

SIS is a constant hive of activity. We strive to provide a bright and cheerful volunteer environment, and welcome those who share our vision and commitment to make this world a better place, in big and small ways. Volunteers help to accompany SIS clients to court, monitor court proceedings, assist at SIS campaigns and outreach activities, and catalogue books and newspaper clippings.

If you have the right experience or a willing spirit, we welcome your help in research, writing, editing, filing, cataloguing, fundraising, legal advice, website management and public outreach events. If you just want to show your support for SIS and its work, become a Friend of SIS (FOSIS) for just RM50 a year.

Call our Operations Manager at 03-7785 6121, drop by our office at 7, Jalan 6/10, off Jalan Gasing, Petaling Jaya, or email us at [sistersinislam@pd.jaring.my](mailto:sistersinislam@pd.jaring.my).

Our volunteer and FOSIS forms are also available on our website ([www.sistersinislam.org.my](http://www.sistersinislam.org.my)).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### Contributors

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Nets Printwork Sdn Bhd

Funders  
Friends of Sisters in Islam

## THE SIS ORGANISATION IN 2010

### Board of Directors

**Zainah Anwar, Prof. Norani Othman, Puan Sri Jamilah Ibrahim, Rashidah Abdullah** (until Dec 2010) and **Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir**

### Executive Director

**Dr. Hamidah Marican**

### Managers

**Rashidah Hashim** (Operations Manager), **Mas Elati Samani** (Programme Manager, Public Education & Communications; until May 2010), **Masjaliza Hamzah** (Programme Manager, Research & Publications; until Jan 2010), **Ratna Osman** (Programme Manager, Advocacy, Legal Services & Reform), **Rozana Mohd. Isa** (Project Coordinator, Musawah, effective Apr 2010)

### Officers

**Hartini Abdullah** (Senior Accounts Officer), **Syarifatul Adibah Mohammad Jodi** (Senior Programme Officer, Research & Publications), **Yasmin Masidi** (Senior Programme Officer, Public Education & Communications, effective Aug 2010), **Nazreen Nizam** (Legal Officer, ALSR), **Azida Khalid** (Admin Officer, effective Feb 2010), **Azareena Abd. Aziz** (Programme Officer, Public Education & Communications), **Sufiah Mansurdin** (Programme Officer, ALSR, until Nov 2010), **Gnei Meghana Bahar** (Programme Officer, Communication, Musawah; effective May 2010), **Hadil El-Khouly** (Programme Officer, Outreach, Musawah; effective May 2010), **Nur Azrine Abd. Razak** (Junior Programme Officer, ALSR)

### Programme Assistants

**Noorulhuda Mohd. Noor** (Programme Assistant, Public Education & Communications), **Nur Syuhada Sible** (Programme Assistant, Research & Publications, until Aug 2010), **Erzalina Shahabu Ramali** (Accounts Assistant, until Sep 2010)

### Project / Part Time Staff

**Zainah Anwar** (Project Director, Musawah), **Norizan Othman** (Programme Assistant, Musawah), **Vivienne Lee Abdullah** (Research Coordinator, effective Aug 2010)

***“Since its incorporation 17 years ago, SIS has not been informed of any harm against the public interest at the national or international levels caused by its work as alleged by MAMY. We believe the court’s decision today clearly indicates that any dispute or differences of opinion should be addressed in a civil and rational dialogue, instead of through intimidation by resorting to police reports or filing suits.***

***SIS maintains that our work has always been based on a strong belief in Islam as a source of justice and equality. If Malaysia truly wants to take the global leadership in promoting moderation in Islam, then the first steps must be taken at home to protect the democratic space for debate and differences of opinion.”***

– Excerpts from SIS’ Press statement issued in October 2010 following the High Court’s decision to strike off the application by MAMY for a court order to stop SIS from using its pen-name, “Sisters in Islam” (see page 17).