



Sisters in Islam

ANNUAL REVIEW 2011

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 2011

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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As with every year, 2011 was wrought with challenges that tested our resilience and ability to stay focused on our mission to achieve gender equality and justice within the Islamic framework. Hearteningly, however, the year also marked a few significant triumphs for SIS, which gave us the encouragement to face our challenges head-on and stay the course.

SIS was most honoured to receive the Casa Asia Award 2011, which is granted to those who have worked for, among others, the dignity and human rights of the people in Asia-Pacific. For SIS, this is an international recognition of our solid commitment in promoting Muslim women's rights in Malaysia, spanning more than two decades.

Earlier in the year, we already had a huge boost in morale when the Appeals Court ruled in our favour and upheld the lower court's decision to lift the Home Ministry ban on our book, *Muslim Women and the Challenge of Islamic Extremism*.

Although the Ministry is appealing the case, we are undeterred and confident the Court will defend the cherished freedom of expression which is guaranteed in the supreme law of the land, the Federal Constitution.

More good news came when Dewan Pemuda Masjid Malaysia (Malaysian Assembly of Mosque Youth or 'MAMY') decided not to pursue their appeal against a 2010 High Court decision which struck off their application to bar us from using 'Sisters in Islam' as our name.

Internationally, in another milestone, the Musawah Global Movement Project Director attended all three CEDAW sessions in Geneva and submitted its first Musawah Thematic Report on Article 16 for Kuwait and Oman, which was much welcome as a progressive Muslim input. As the Secretariat prepared for the shift to Egypt, targeted for 2012, we were heartened by requests from all over the world to conduct training so as to build a pool of



activists and leaders with the knowledge and courage to speak out and engage publicly on such hot-button issues.

At home, SIS's fight for Muslim children's right to identity bore fruit when the Terengganu state government allowed children born less than six months after their parents' marriage to carry their fathers' name in accordance with the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1957. Prior to this, these children would be likely to grow up with the stigma of not bearing their father's name.

Our Telenisa hotline service, which has helped close to 7,000 clients since its inception eight years ago, continues to serve not only our target clientele – local Muslim women – but also local Muslim men who are concerned about the problems faced by their womenfolk, non-Muslims who find themselves in a bind because of overlapping civil and Shari'ah jurisdictions, and even foreign spouses of local Muslims in similar predicaments.

“Throughout its 21 years of life, Sisters in Islam (SIS) has opened a public space for debate in Malaysia and given voice to Malaysian women regarding their rights under Islamic law or Shari’ah.”

– CASA ASIA DIRECTOR-GENERAL
JUAN JOSÉ HERRERA DE LA MUELA,
in his citation for SIS

Our advocacy for a just and inclusive Muslim Family Law began in earnest with a road show of community workshops around the country to garner grassroots support towards building an audience for the National Symposium planned at the end of the campaign.

Internally, to ensure SIS's continued relevance, we revisited our long-term strategic goals. Our annual Evaluation and Planning Meeting came up with two important goals – to provide efficient operational support to SIS, with the smooth running of the office as a priority, and to improve staff capacity and reduce staff turnover. The latter in particular is crucial to SIS's overall operations to ensure continuity in the crucial work that we do. A perk we introduced to staff was a maternity leave of 90 days.

SIS also underwent a structural change during the year. Effective April, Public Education projects came under the Advocacy, Legal Service and Public Education Unit, while Communications joined the Research and Publications Unit.

We bade farewell to two key staff who resigned during the year, Dr Hamidah Marican, the Executive Director from 2009 until February this year, and Rashidah Hashim, Manager for the Operations & Finance Unit since 2004. We managed to recruit able staff to fill the vacancies and have deep faith in their ability to contribute to SIS's growth.

For every challenge we faced this year, we are grateful for the many advances made as well, which will motivate us to enter 2012 with renewed vigour. We thank all the individuals and organisations that have served us faithfully over the years, through trials and tribulations, especially to our very own Board of Directors who are our backbone, SIS members, staff and my colleagues in the office. May Allah continue to guide us all to Truth.

Ratna Osman
Executive Director
Sisters in Islam



SIS Executive Director Ratna Osman (fifth from right) and Musawah Director Zainah Anwar (fourth from left) receiving the Casa Asia Award 2011 from Madam Teresa de la Vega, former Deputy Prime Minister of Spain (fifth from left), with the Director-General of Casa Asia, Juan Jose de la Muela (fourth from right), Ambassador of Spain to Malaysia, Madam Maria Bassols (third from right) and Malaysian Ambassador to Spain, Dato' Ilankovan (far left).

ADVOCACY, LEGAL SERVICE AND PUBLIC EDUCATION (ALPE)

The Advocacy, Legal Service and Public Education Unit (ALPE) leads SIS's initiatives in advocating women's rights through public education, law reform, policymaking, as well as providing gender-sensitive legal services on Shari'ah matters.

A. LEGAL SERVICES

TELENISA - LEGAL CLINIC

SIS's hotline, Telenisa, available through telephone, email, as well as face-to-face consultation with our Legal Officer. This service is given free.

2011 Telenisa enquiries: 437 clients; 673 cases.

Telephone	Email	Face-to-face
167	239	31

Muslim women comprise the clientele predominantly, but there were also men and non-Muslim clients who sought advice for their relatives and friends, as well as international clients who needed clarification on legal matters pertaining to Muslims in Malaysia. To ensure that our service are up to mark, clients are given evaluation forms to rate our services in terms of promptness, politeness, competencies, relevance and privacy. In general, 63% of our clients thought we did well in all areas, particularly in politeness, relevance and privacy.

For 2012, ALPE plans to improve documentation and statistical analysis of Telenisa, build relations with and create a more extensive database of Shari'ah lawyers in all states, and promote Telenisa by getting a new column with a Malay news media as well as through improved and effective use of social media.

CHAMBERING STUDENTS

Chambering students are first required to serve 14 weeks under the Bar Council's Legal Aid Centre. Those chosen to serve their legal aid work at SIS will then be stationed with Telenisa. We hope to develop their capacity through knowledge-building on Muslim laws in Malaysia and, specifically, increase their awareness of Muslim women's rights and human rights in general towards creating a generation of lawyers who are empathetic and supportive of women clients. In this regard, SIS appeared to have succeeded as reflected in:

- An increase in the number of chambering students from the Kuala Lumpur Legal Aid Council, whose placement in SIS is by personal choice rather than an agreed institutional arrangement.
- Feedback from chambering students that they are more confident in handling clients and more

alert to the lived realities and challenges faced by Muslim women in Malaysia after they went through SIS's Shari'ah Advanced Training.

LEGAL LITERACY & MATERIALS

The unit produced two Malay brochures, *Harta Sepencarian* (Matrimonial Property) and *Hadhanah & Nafkah Anak* (Child Custody & Maintenance), that will be published online as well. They proved to be popular with women participants at our events and workshops. Two more brochures will be published by early 2012, on *Mut'ah* (Compensation) and *Jenis-Jenis Perceraian* (Types of Divorce).

WORKSHOP

A workshop on women's rights in Islamic laws was held on 21 May in Kuala Lumpur to provide Telenisa clients with a platform to meet up and share their experiences, discuss how they can help each other

overcome their problems, as well as increase their understanding on maintenance, divorce, polygamy, shared matrimonial property, etc. This was the first such training and participants responded to the workshop positively with requests for advance training.

B. ADVOCACY

MUSLIM FAMILY LAW CAMPAIGN

SIS began advocating reform of Malaysia's Islamic Family Law in 1994 and started working on a model Muslim Family Law in 2006.

In 2011, the unit started planning in earnest the direction of the campaign, including the objectives, strategies, updates on the road shows, which would culminate with a National Symposium.

Phase 1 of the campaign consisted of a road show of community workshops around the country. A total of 16 were held across six states: Kelantan (1), Melaka (1), Negeri Sembilan (1), Perak (5), Penang (3) and Sabah (5).

Thus in the following year SIS plans to expand and strengthen coalition building initiatives and get more support in raising awareness among community women leaders, policy-makers and the general public on the necessity for a Muslim Family Law that is based on the principles of justice and equality.

ADVOCACY & NETWORKING

- International
 - As a leading advocate on gender rights vis-a-vis Islam, SIS contributed to the section on registration of marriage, conversion and child marriage in the NGO shadow report for the Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which was coordinated by fellow Joint Action Group Against Gender Violence (JAG) member Women's Aid Organisation.
- National
 - The JAG Evaluation and Planning meeting on 24-25 Feb in Penang agreed to work on: improving living conditions for women in the workforce, both at home and at work; Muslim family law reform; conversion issues; child marriage; and women's political participation.
 - JAG joined other civil societies in rallying for free and fair elections through the coalition Bersih 2.0, which held a successful massive rally in Kuala Lumpur on 9 July despite the many challenges it faced from the authorities.
 - Child support is one of the crucial needs of Muslim mothers, especially the many who are single or abandoned by their husbands. Following a successful meeting with the

Family Support Director of the Shari'ah Judiciary Department to propose a federal-level child support agency for all women, regardless of religion, we had another meeting with the Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, which resolved to form a technical committee of relevant stakeholders identified by the Ministry.

- Fiesta Feminista is a JAG platform for building a just and democratic world from a feminist perspective. In 2011, it was celebrated in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, from 25-27 Nov, during which SIS contributed a workshop on Gender and Islam. The 100 participants were an intentionally diverse group, ranging from students, Orang Asal, transgenders



SIS was conducting a workshop on Gender and Islam at the Fiesta Feminista 2011 in Sabah. SIS member, Shanon Shah (standing and holding a mic) was the resource person.

and single mothers, including people from Sarawak and the peninsula. A field trip to an Orang Asal village on 24 Nov was held to familiarise participants with indigenous issues. On 28 Nov, they joined the global 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence by holding a street event highlighting the cause.

- On 30 Nov, SIS participated in a multi-stakeholder roundtable meeting on equality, organised by women and migrant rights NGO Tenaganita, to provide feedback and recommendations to the EU-funded report "Discrimination and Inequality in Malaysia".

C. PUBLIC EDUCATION

SIS undertakes public education through six platforms that target different audiences and objectives:

1. Large Group Training Awareness is aimed at reaching grassroots women to engage with them as primary stakeholders.
2. Study sessions are a platform for closed network discussions on local and international issues relating to human rights.
3. Workshops are held to build the capacity of promising individual allies.
4. Screenings and discussions are for the general public.

5. Campaigns.
6. Study tours are another opportunity for capacity building in an external environment, bringing in participants from diverse backgrounds.

In 2011, SIS held two LGTAs, in Kota Baru (Kelantan) and Seremban (Negeri Sembilan), which attracted 200 new participants.

Four study sessions explored these topics: reproductive rights; marriage and domestic violence among youths in Malaysia; Malaysian women's participation in Islam.

To engage young people to the cause and encourage alternative forms of expression through the arts, SIS held a workshop for 30 selected youths, titled "Ayuh Bercermin" (Let's Reflect). Film was used as a medium to get them to critically analyse contemporary issues, in particular Islamic concepts of justice and equality in daily life.

Going further, SIS took 11 promising youths on a study tour to Jakarta and Jepara in Indonesia,

on 25 Oct-1 Nov, to experience the lived realities there as well as to exchange ideas on creating a tolerant, inclusive society. They visited progressive Muslim NGOs, a religious school, the State Islamic University, the Jakarta Arts Institute and traditional ulamas.

Recognising that artists make powerful statements of social justice, SIS held a workshop for artists, independent filmmakers, writers and musicians, to gauge their position and passion on contemporary human rights issues with a view to getting them on board in future campaigns.

Lastly, given that sexuality rights are increasingly openly raised and discussed, a Sexuality Workshop was held for SIS staff to ensure their own understanding of the issue so that they will have a firm and confident position moving forward. Bearing similar objectives, the Coalition of Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies, of which SIS is a member, held a forum theatre for our close allies on "Justice Beyond Gender".



The participants were listening to a briefing by Abduh Aziz (red shirt) during a visit to the Jakarta Arts Institute, Jakarta.

COMMUNICATIONS, RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS (CRP)

A foundation built over the years on a strong body of work, complemented with a wealth of expertise to draw upon, has made SIS a local and international reference for Muslim women's rights and progressive Islam in Malaysia. The continuation and strengthening of this legacy is where the Communications, Research and Publications (CRP) Unit comes in.

A. COMMUNICATIONS

The unit undertakes media advocacy towards:

- Promoting an understanding of Islam that recognises the principles of justice, equality, freedom and dignity within a democratic nation state;
- Creating public awareness on gender equality and non-discrimination for women in Islam;

- Publicising and affirming SIS's views in the media; and
- Supporting and working closely with organisations that have overlapping objectives, such as Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG), Islamic Renaissance Front and, internationally, Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML).

Thus, in 2011, SIS issued press statements and letters to the editor:

- Questioning the government's delay in revising the discriminatory amendments to the Islamic Family Law.
- Asserting a child's right to a name, identity and family, in view of the 'ruling' by the National Fatwa Council that a Muslim child born less than six months after the parents' marriage would be illegitimate and could not bear their father's name.

- Asserting the courts' position as the rightful venue for all divorces.
- Challenging the perennial preoccupation with Hudud, and stressing instead Islam's message of equality and justice.
- In sympathy of the passing of Aleesha Farhana, a 25-year-old who failed to change her name and sex officially after she had a male-to-female sex change operation.
- Deploring the police banning of an annual programme by sexuality rights group, Seksualiti Merdeka.
- In sympathy of the passing of PAS Member of Parliament Dr Lo' Lo' Mohd Ghazali.
- Castigating the attacks by both state and non-state actors against electoral reform coalition Bersih 2.0.

- Congratulating the launch of Global Movement of Moderates (GMM) by the prime minister.
- Criticising the suspension of law professor of International Islamic University of Malaysia Dr Aziz Bari and the threat to charge him with sedition for his criticism of the monarchy's exercise of its constitutional powers in the Selangor Islamic Religious Department (JAIS) raid on the Damansara Utama Methodist Church.

SIS also endorsed or co-signed statements:

- Deploring the continued vilification of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgenders (LGBT), as manifested in:
 - the Terengganu Education Department establishing the Besut Boot Camp to straighten out 66 schoolboys with "effeminate tendencies".

→ the threat by the Islamic Development Department of Malaysia to take action on LGBT activist Azwan Ismail for his YouTube testimonial that was part of a video campaign to stop suicides by LGBT teenagers and adults.

- Defending and protecting women's rights, as occasioned by:

→ the limited reforms in the amendments to the Domestic Violence Act.

→ the lopsided Employment Act amendments on sexual harassment.

Internationally, SIS endorsed WLUMI's statement of concern on Libya's lifting of a curb on polygamy.

As in previous years, the media sought after SIS for interviews and comments on such issues.

This underscores yet again how important an ally the media is; hence, the unit organised a workshop for journalists on 18 May, especially to complement our campaign to reject the current Islamic Family Law and promote the SIS-proposed Muslim Family Law (MFL). The workshop drew not only new journalists but also senior journalists and editors who were interested in supporting SIS's work.

As successful as we were on this front, however, it remained difficult to make in-roads into the Malay-speaking traditional media. In addition, editorial limitations such as agenda setting as well as space constraints in the print media also restricted our

reach. Further, SIS's opponents have over the years used increasingly aggressive intimidation tactics, such as making police reports and vilifying us in the media.

The Unit thus held a Communications Group meeting to review the current Strategic Plan and lay down an overall communications strategy for SIS, based on the strategic plan, and consolidate inputs from the media workshop and the MFL campaign meeting held during the year.

Believing in the power of arts and popular communication as an awareness-raising and educational tool, SIS also co-produced a skit called "Salam 1Jabatan", parodying a host of current issues related to freedom of expression, electoral reform and SIS, with the Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ) at the Art For Grabs & KL Alternative Bookfest on 18 June. We also held a film fest in conjunction with the Human Rights week with the same NGO from 5 to 11 December in the capital city.

B. RESEARCH

Initiated in 2004, the research project on the Impact of Polygamy on the Family in Malaysia aimed to, among others, have an understanding of the dynamics of polygamous families and to provide data for advocacy.

Many internal meeting were held throughout the year between research staff, authors and editors to work towards producing:



An officer (Fared Ayam) at 1Jabatan has suggested a radical name change for Sisters in Islam.

- Nine articles for a special issue on polygamy in the esteemed academic journal database, Institute for Scientific Information.
- A book based on the findings of the survey and qualitative studies of the research project; tentatively titled *Muslim Polygamy in Malaysia: Lived Realities and Impact*.
- Monographs using the case studies and life histories of men, women and children.
- A booklet titled *Gender Justice and Polygamy: Discourses and Reality*.

With the extensive data gathering completed, the polygamy team was able to present the findings at the Law and Religion Conference held by the Asian Law Centre and Centre for Islamic Law and Society of University of Melbourne, on 13 July.

The research staff also provided input to two SIS documentaries in the making on polygamy and briefed a researcher from Japan, Sinichi Sigetomi, on the project.

C. PUBLICATIONS

The delayed annual reviews for 2008 and 2009 were completed during the year under review, as well as the 2010 review.

Ongoing projects were our biannual magazine, *Baraza*, with issue No. V focusing on Musawah, and

issues VI and VII on Islam and Feminism. We were also translating into Malay our informative English booklets: *Are Muslim Men Allowed to Beat Their Wives*, *Hadith on Women in Marriages*, and *Women as Judges*.

SIS books were distributed to major bookstores such as Kinokuniya, MPH, Popular and Borders. We also supplied them directly to the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia, Silverfish Book, Universiti Malaya and Select Books in Singapore.

Our books were promoted at various events, including KL Alternative Bookfest, University of Monash NGO Fair, Plan of Action for Malaysia Fest and George Town Literary Festival in Penang.

WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

A new website was up and running by 15 August. A Bahasa Malaysia version is being planned to reach out to grassroots stakeholders, whose language is Malay.

Followers on SIS Facebook page and Twitter have increased from time to time, indicating more support for SIS's work.

Social Media	Followers
Facebook	4,036
Twitter	997

AUDIO-VISUAL

The Unit had two video projects during the year:

- The recording of a skit we co-produced with CIJ for the Art For Grabs & KL Alternative Bookfest.
- A brief organisational video, *Sisters in Islam - a Voice for Change*, presented at the Casa Asia Award ceremony in Barcelona, Spain.

Following the huge response to our organisational video, which is available on Youtube, we plan to produce at least one quarterly advocacy video.

RESOURCE CENTRE

With 5,500 reading materials, mostly books, our resource centre is a treasure trove for researchers, scholars, students, lawyers and activists who are interested in the issue of Islam and women. On average, the centre stocks 20 new reading materials per month – some purchased by SIS, with the rest received from various organisations locally and internationally.



Executive Director, Ratna was explaining SIS work and activities to a group of students from Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin Terengganu (UniSZA).

MUSAWAH

Musawah (“Equality” in Arabic) is the global movement for equality and justice in the Muslim family, with a Secretariat based at SIS. Four years on since its inception by SIS and an international planning committee of activists and scholars, it now unites NGOs, activists, scholars, practitioners, policy makers and grassroots women and men from around the world for the cause.

In 2011, Musawah:

- Attended the 48th, 49th and 50th Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) sessions in Geneva and submitted Musawah’s first ever Thematic Report on Article 16 for Kuwait and Oman.
- Helped the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to conceptualise its 2nd Regional Conference on the Advancement of Women’s Rights in the Asia Pacific Region.
- Participated in the Indian Muslim Women’s

Struggles for Equality, Justice and Empowerment workshop organised by Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, in Shimla, in May.

- Held a Qiwamah and Wilayah Research Design Meeting, in Jakarta, Indonesia in July.
- Held a capacity building workshop on curriculum design in Jakarta in July.



Jana Rumminger (far left), Dr Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Marwa Sharafeldin and Kamala Chandrakirana (right) at the Musawah Curriculum Development workshop in Jakarta.

- Held a Conceptual Workshop on Developing an Egalitarian Understanding of Qiwanah and Wilayah in Amman, Jordan in November.

A. KNOWLEDGE BUILDING

RESEARCH PROJECT: QIWAMAH (AUTHORITY) AND WILAYAH (GUARDIANSHIP)

The curriculum design meeting took place in Jakarta, Indonesia on July 17-19 with the objective of building a core of Musawah Advocates able to share knowledge about the interactions between the Qur'an, fiqh, and the rights framework. Twelve participants who attended the previous SIS Short Course on Understanding Islam from a Rights Perspective as participants, resource persons and

facilitators developed a new module that integrated Musawah knowledge building and capacity building.

The research design meeting on July 20-22 reformulated the overall objective for the project. It now aims to produce new feminist knowledge and perspectives on the idea and realities of Qiwanah and Wilayah towards empowering Musawah Advocates. It was decided that the Life Stories documentation project, piloted by Alimat, the coalition of NGOs in Indonesia, and the inclusive methodology used should be replicated in at least five countries from five regions to build the lived realities component of the Qiwanah and Wilayah research.

A conceptual workshop on developing an egalitarian understanding of Qiwanah and Wilayah was held in Amman, Jordan, on Nov 24-26, involving 35 participants from nine countries, consisting of writers, the legal and human rights mapping team,

scholars and Musawah Advocates. The meeting saw some ground-breaking papers presented, including the aforementioned Life Stories project.

B. OUTREACH

Musawah received a large number of requests for training, academic incorporation of Musawah's work and inquiries by other human rights activists who are interested in engaging with Musawah.

This year we made new inroads in South Asia.

Musawah's session on Feminism and Islam in March and July, organised by Partners in Law and Development, India, was geared towards strengthening applications of CEDAW in South Asia.

We also introduced Musawah at the Indian Muslim Women's Struggles for Equality, Justice and Empowerment workshop, organised by the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies One, on May 21–23 in Shimla.

YOUNG WOMEN'S CAUCUS

The Young Women's Caucus held their first meeting of the year in Kuala Lumpur from Feb 19 to 20 prior to the Musawah Strategic Direction meeting. Nine representatives from different countries discussed, among others, the goals and role of the caucus, issues, strategies and administrative matters. The second and third meetings were held on July 5 in Kuala Lumpur and Nov 26 in Amman and discussed

the various audio and video advocacy projects aimed at strengthening access to knowledge.

C. COMMUNICATIONS

To reflect Musawah's growing strength and confidence around the world, its logo and tagline were revamped, with the latter incorporating regional requirements and verbalised in the three Musawah languages (English, Arabic, French).

To keep Advocates and supporters informed, three issues of *Musawah Vision*, Musawah's quarterly newsletter, were produced during the year, in English, French and Arabic, and circulated to 600 online subscribers.

A major publication for advocacy, *CEDAW and Muslim Family Laws: In Search of Common Ground*, was released in January and will be translated into Arabic. This document examined the justifications given by the State parties for not implementing CEDAW with regard to laws and practices that discriminate against Muslim women. We also analysed CEDAW documents covering 42 Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) countries and India and Singapore, which have significant Muslim minorities.

We completed the Arabic translation of *Wanted: Equality and Justice in the Muslim Family*, a set of theoretical papers that provide support towards Musawah's declaration that equality is both necessary and possible.

D. INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY

1. Convention on the Elimination on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
Musawah attended all three CEDAW sessions this year and submitted its first Musawah Thematic Report on Article 16 for Kuwait and Oman at the 50th CEDAW session. Musawah:

- Launched, presented and distributed the CEDAW and Muslim Family Laws report at the 48th CEDAW session in January and February;
- Engaged the NGOs from CEDAW reporting countries;
- Continued to engage and lobby the CEDAW Committee;
- Submitted its first shadow report on Article



Participants and resource persons in action during Musawah Strategic Direction meeting in Kuala Lumpur.

16 for Muslim majority OIC countries that have not submitted any shadow report (Oman and Kuwait at the 50th session); and

- Continued to network and share the message of Musawah to the Geneva-based international human rights community.

The CEDAW and Muslim Family Laws report was much welcomed by the CEDAW Committee. The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) used it for its seminars on reproductive health and rights; Asia Pacific Forum on Women Law and Development (APWLD), for its feminist training in Malaysia; and Partners in Law and Development, for its CEDAW training for South Asia.

2. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Following an invitation by the OHCHR Asia Pacific, Musawah helped to conceptualise its 2nd Regional Conference on the Advancement of Women's Rights in the Asia Pacific Region on addressing discrimination against women in the context of religion and culture, in Jakarta, Indonesia, in July.

Musawah also conducted a one-day workshop on the Musawah Framework and on Islamic Legal Theory for 25 participants comprising commissioners from national and regional women's and children's and human rights commissions, and UN officials from regional offices, and Jakarta-based Advocates.

At the OHCHR's expert seminar for Asia Pacific on prohibition of incitement to national, racial or religious hatred in accordance with international human rights law in Bangkok, Thailand, on July 6-7, we highlighted the usefulness of the Musawah framework for a more constructive engagement with OIC countries and Islamist activists.

E. INSTITUTIONAL BUILDING

The Musawah International Advisory Group met from Feb 25 to 26 in Kuala Lumpur to discuss consolidation of the structure of the movement and other governance matters, including the transition of the Secretariat to Egypt and preparations for the 2nd Global Meeting planned for Cairo in 2013.

A working group was convened to draft the Musawah Strategic Direction document to ensure all activities are aligned to the objectives and all allies are on the same page.

To help the Secretariat make programmatic decisions and monitor the implementation of the programmes, a Steering Committee was formed, consisting of an elected Chair, the convenors of the five working groups and the Secretariat Director. The Committee held its first meeting on July 22 in Jakarta, prior to the Secretariat meeting.

FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

The unit ensures the smooth running of the office in managing the organisation's finances, including organising fundraising activities, and administrative and human resource needs. It also provides administrative and informational support to the Board of Directors and organises the annual Evaluation and Planning Meeting.

In 2011, one of the biggest challenges of the unit was managing staff turnover. Although there were eight resignations, we found replacements for them within the year. Most crucially, Manager for the Legal Unit, Ratna Osman assumed the post of Executive Director following the resignation of her predecessor Dr Hamidah Marican. Our long-time serving Manager of the Operations Unit, Rashidah Hashim also resigned, and the post was later filled.

A. ADMINISTRATION & HUMAN RESOURCES

A few posts fell vacant, including those of Programme Manager (CRP), Programme Assistant (ALPE) and Finance & Operations (Administrative). Nonetheless, we were able to recruit eight new staff during the year.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND WELLNESS PROGRAMMES

Reflecting SIS's commitment to the objective of reducing staff turnover, the management introduced a new benefit – extending maternity leave to 90 days from 60 days, a move that was also a nod to women's rights.



Staff and members were listening attentively to Shanon Shah during the Evaluation and Planning (E&P) meeting.

The unit continued holding the ever-useful *Nasi Bungkus* Lunch discussions, akin to a brown bag seminar, as well as the popular weekly yoga and English classes.

As always, SIS staff were also provided with opportunities to broaden their experiences and knowledge through seminars, conferences and training events, within and outside the country.

VISITS

The unit hosted visits from all professions and interests, from ambassadors and embassy officials to students, academics, media organisations, NGOs and religious officials. International visitors came from the US, Germany, Thailand, Taiwan, India, Iran, Afghanistan and International Islamic University.

MEETING AND WORKSHOPS FOR STAFF, MEMBERS

The unit organised many internal meetings and dinners as throughout the year. Some of the highlights were our Buka Puasa open house and Appreciation Evening for SIS founding members and Board of Directors, as well as *doa kesyukuran* (prayers to give thanks), *doa selamat* (prayers for well-being) and *tahlil* (prayers for the departed) for members and former members, staff and friends.

B. GOVERNANCE

As in previous years, SIS's Board of Directors carried out routine as well as crisis governance, and continued to take the lead in strategic planning. In 2011, restructuring of the organisation, purchase of a property for SIS's office, fund-raising, and recruiting new staff occupied much of their time. The Annual General Meeting was held on April 19 in Petaling Jaya.

C. FINANCE & FUNDRAISING

INCOME, FUNDERS AND DONORS

For the financial year ending 31 December 2011, foreign grants received by SIS amounted to RM1,162,030, while funds received from local



SIS member, Vivienne Lee Abdullah was invited as one of the speakers at the Novo Nordisk Headquarters in Denmark.

foundations and donors came to RM610,687.

Several grants reached the end of their terms in 2011. SIS continued to focus on securing new funds for 2012 and beyond.

EXPENSES

SIS's total expenses in 2011 amounted to RM2,271,762.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Contributors

All SIS staff

Editorial Content

Chuah Siew Eng

Layout and Design

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Funders

Friends of Sisters in Islam

THE SIS ORGANISATION IN 2011

Board of Directors

**Zainah Anwar, Prof Norani Othman, Datuk
(Puan Sri) Jamilah Ibrahim, Datin Paduka Marina
Mahathir, and Datin Rose Ismail**

Executive Director

Ratna Osman [effective August 2011]

Managers

Hairun Nisa Abu Bakar (Operations)

Rozana Mohd. Isa (Project Coordinator, Musawah
Secretariat)

Suriani Kempe (Advocacy, Legal Service & Public
Education)

Vivienne Lee Abdullah (Part-time, Research)

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