



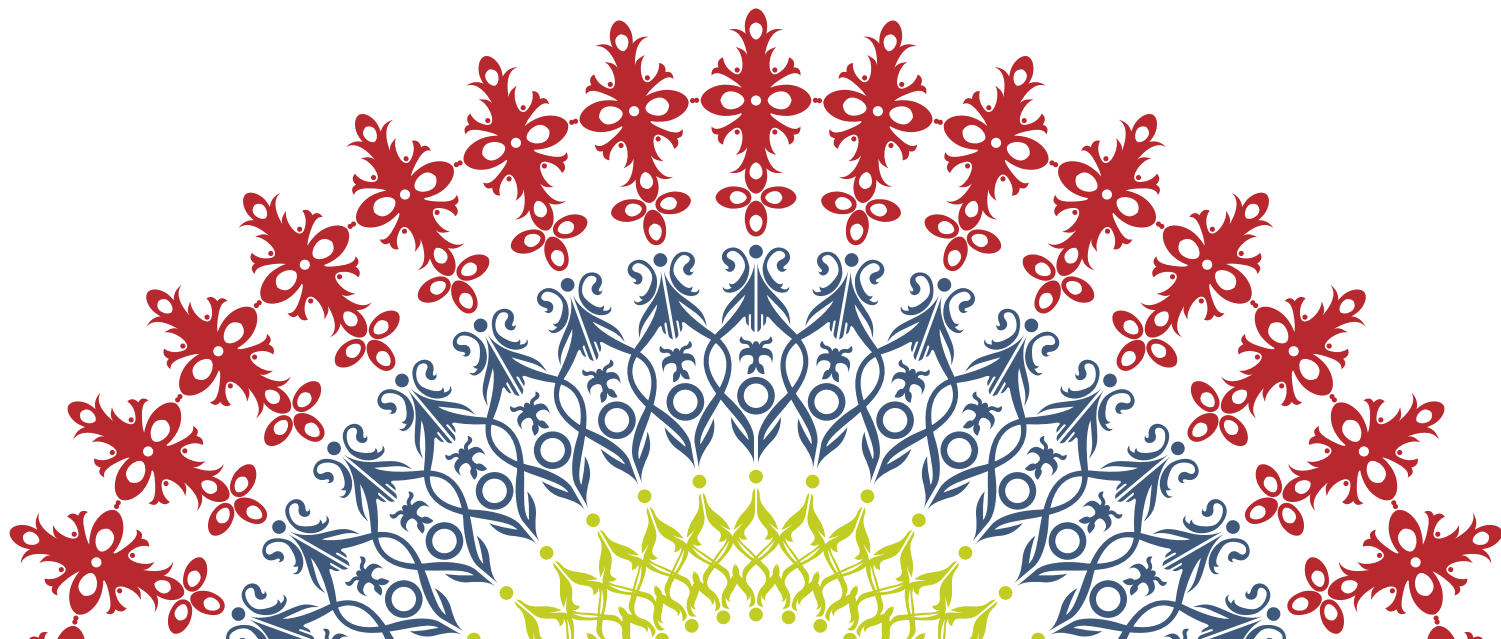
# SISTERS IN ISLAM

•••••

## ANNUAL REVIEW 2012



• 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 2012



Message from the Executive Director **2**

Advocacy, Legal Services and Public Education **5**

Communications, Research and Publications **21**

Musawah **29**

Operations **37**

Acknowledgements **42**

---

## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Another year has passed, and we are fortunate to have this opportunity once again to share with you some of our experiences over the past twelve months. Besides being a chronicle of significant developments and achievements, the Annual Review is our chance to tell the SIS story, as it continues to unfold in yearly installments.

As it happened, 2012 was indeed a year of stories.

As host to the Musawah Secretariat, SIS is closely involved in Musawah's biggest knowledge building initiative, the *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah* research project. The aim of the initiative, spanning 12 countries, is to rethink the idea and realities of *qiwamah* (commonly understood as male authority over women) and *wilayah* (commonly understood as male guardianship of women and children). The academic research and intellectual framework underpinning the endeavour will be complemented by the collecting of women's and men's life stories in relation to the two concepts. The stories, which come under a component known as the Global Life Stories Project, should yield many insights that will inform the academic research.

Those familiar with our past work know that this approach is classic SIS – the combination of intellectual rigour with the more organic, human-element kind of data. Our polygamy research was similarly designed. We choose this method simply because we believe it is the best way to explore that infinitely fascinating, often problematic, always relevant space

where the texts, ideas and theories come face to face with the lived realities of ordinary human beings.

This meeting point is where we have planted ourselves and situated much of our work. As Muslims, we believe firmly in the sanctity of the Qur'anic text, and yet we know that often, human interpretations of the text and the lived realities of ordinary Muslims do not meet, so much as collide. And in the collision, what gets lost is compassion.

Where is the compassion? Malaysians found themselves asking this question repeatedly in 2012. Should we deny a child the right to identity and lineage, on the presumption of illegitimacy? Should we insist that a person is Muslim by mechanism of law, when all his life he has professed the Hindu faith? Should a person who is a woman in every sense except the physiological, be held accountable under a law that forbids men to dress as women? Should we allow child marriages, such as that between a 19-year old youth and a 12-year old girl? These were all actual cases in 2012, and those who argue that we should do all of the above often base their argument on the claim that "the text tells us to".

So to counter-argue, we too must read the texts, carefully. But to really help people, we must also listen to their stories. This applies whether we are assisting a Telenisa client on the phone, or whether we are painstakingly carrying out the many interviews in our polygamy research, over the course of many years, with a view to influencing policymaking. Furthermore, in sharing the knowledge gained, we ourselves must employ the techniques of storytelling – in documentaries and videos, for example – to communicate effectively with audiences ranging from our core target groups to media practitioners and prospective funders.

As advocates for change, our job is challenging, and it is often on the ground that the work requires the highest levels of energy and patience. For this reason, I am immensely proud of our staff's determination and ability to implement their programmes this year despite the multiplying constraints. Where they encountered a lack of resources, they became more resourceful, and when circumstances threatened to work against them, they worked together. When personal reserves of strength ran low, I would like to think the individuals were able

to tap into the organisation's collective energy, courage, resolve, wisdom, humour – and yes, faith, always faith. So as colleagues at SIS, we have much to offer each other. But that, of course, is not the point. What's most important is what SIS can offer the world in terms of upholding the principles of gender equality, justice, freedom and dignity in Islam. And to continue to be of service, we must keep finding ways to sustain ourselves.

As an NGO, we are all too familiar with the challenge of fundraising, but the urgency of the matter became more apparent than ever in 2012. There is still much to do, and as we look to the future, we hope others will come forward to support us in our mission. *Insha'Allah*, we will continue to be of service for as long as we are needed. May our story continue for many chapters to come!

**Ratna Osman**  
Executive Director

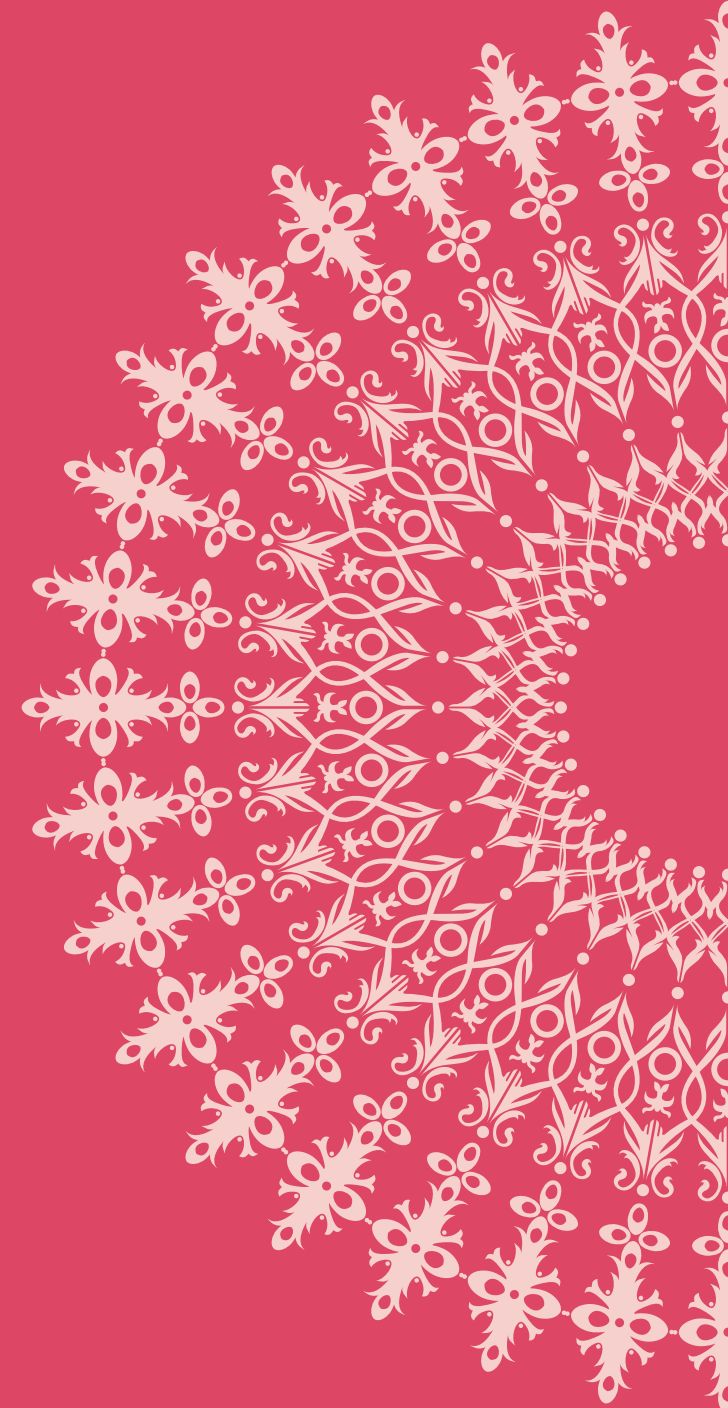
“I am writing to thank you and your team for the wonderful workshop offered to those in need. Thank you for providing us a platform where we can seek information, especially the free legal advice.

“I was told never to join SIS in any way since day one, but it was the small purple booklet published by SIS (regarding marriage) which gave me strength that it’s ok being a Muslim woman and we are given rights and protected in a marriage. Though many religious organisations have failed me with unfriendly treatment, I am glad that there are still many who are willing to help.

“I hope I will be able to help other Muslim women in future. Please give my big thanks to your team too, they did a wonderful job. God bless the sisters :)”

- from a workshop participant, SIS’ Telenisa Workshop 2012 (see page 13)

# ADVOCACY, LEGAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC EDUCATION



With a focus on the legal perspective, the **Advocacy, Legal Services and Public Education (ALPE)** 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. Our advocacy work encompasses both long-term initiatives, such as the Muslim Family Law Campaign, as well as initiatives undertaken in response to issues as and when they arise.
- **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 the dissemination of material legal issues. We also host and train law students.
- **Public education.** Scholars, journalists, professionals, artists, activists, government officials, religious leaders, citizens – we are all stakeholders in advocating justice and equality for women in Islam. Our objective in public education is to create platforms for SIS to meaningfully engage with stakeholders, and for stakeholders to engage with each other, through public forums, workshops, study sessions and other events and activities.

## ADVOCACY

### The Muslim Family Law Campaign

SIS has long maintained that many of the problems affecting Muslim women and families in Malaysia stem from injustices inherent in the current Islamic Family Law (IFL). Over the years, SIS has moved from pushing for specific laws to be amended, to calling for more comprehensive reform. In 2007, SIS completed the drafting of a model Muslim Family Law (MFL) based on the principles of justice and equality, and began a campaign to build support for law reform. Why *Muslim* Family Law? Whereas "Islamic Family Law" misleadingly suggests that such laws are divine and cannot be challenged, "Muslim Family Law" reminds us that the laws, although derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah, are not divine as they are made by Muslims who necessarily rely on human interpretation.

In 2010, SIS formulated a three-year strategy to raise public awareness of the MFL. Phase 1 was launched in 2011 with a nationwide roadshow consisting of MFL workshops. In 2012 the roadshow was extended to enable SIS to continue building grassroots support, particularly in states not covered in 2011.

Each workshop runs 4-5 hours in length. The three key objectives are to (1) help women understand their rights under current laws; (2) increase their understanding of the need to question current laws and share with them possibilities and alternatives suggested by Muslim family laws in other countries; and (3) empower participants by building confidence in their ability to make a difference, and share strategies on how this might be done.



SIS participating in Wanita Suara Perubahan: at Parliament lobbying MPs for gender equality (left) and at the rally on 18 March (right).



In October this year, three MFL workshops were conducted in Kedah, with an average attendance of 35 people per workshop. Participants were very enthusiastic and receptive.

The workshops have enabled SIS to identify issues that women would support through SIS' campaign for law reform; these include issues related to uniformity of laws across states, court procedures, enforcement of maintenance orders for mother and child, children born out of wedlock, *perintah kembali taat* (an order compelling a wife to return to her husband) and polygamy. With the workshops we also expanded our network of grassroots women who believe in the need for reform, and identified participants for the MFL

National Convention to be held in June 2013. Five workshops scheduled for Sarawak in July were cancelled at the last minute due to problems encountered by SIS' local contacts, highlighting the need for better planning and selection of local partners. The MFL campaign was short-staffed for the first eight months of the year, but regained momentum under the leadership of an MFL Coordinator engaged in October. The stage is set for Phase 2, in which we will hold targeted meetings with grassroots women, with key allies, religious leaders and legislators in the lead-up to the MFL National Convention.

### Other advocacy initiatives

Besides the MFL Campaign, SIS' other advocacy initiatives in 2012

addressed child marriage, hudud, book banning, the rights of the transgender community and children born out of wedlock, to name a few issues. As in previous years, we also strengthened our advocacy work through networking with allies to promote women's rights issues to a wider audience. SIS is an active member of the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG), a group of women's rights organisations established in 1985.

**Wanita Suara Perubahan.** Initiated by JAG in the lead-up to International Women's Day 2012, Wanita Suara Perubahan was a coalition of civil society organisations and political parties that came together to highlight the power of women voters and women's demand for a clean



government and better quality of life. Besides attending working group meetings, SIS participated in events leading up to the main rally on 18 March. Wanita Suara Perubahan's manifesto outlined six specific demands: (1) a government free of corruption, (2) a decent living wage, (3) a better quality of life, (4) an end to gender-based violence, (5) a repeal of the Peaceful Assembly Act, and (6) free and fair elections. On International Women's Day (8 March), members held a public gathering in Brickfields, spoke with the Press and mailed copies of the manifesto, together with white gloves symbolising the call for a clean government, to state assemblypersons. On 13 March, Wanita Suara Perubahan visited Parliament to distribute manifestos and gloves to Members of Parliament. On 18 March, a rally was held at Padang Astaka in Petaling Jaya.

**Bersih 3.0 Rally.** The Bersih 3.0 rally on 28 April was organised by the Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (Bersih) as a follow-up to previous rallies in 2011 and 2007. JAG participated as the largest civil society group and endorsed Bersih (the Malay word for "clean"). Four SIS staff members and two Directors attended the rally.

**The ban on SIS' book.** The legal case surrounding the banning of our book *Muslim Women and the Challenge*

*of Islamic Extremism* four years ago remained at the centre of our efforts to advocate against book banning in 2012. SIS had challenged the ban shortly after it was imposed by the Home Ministry in 2008. In 2010, the High Court lifted the ban, ruling that the book was not a threat to public order as had been alleged. The Government promptly appealed the High Court's decision and the case was set for mention on 25 June this year. Two weeks before the hearing, SIS launched an anti-book banning awareness campaign in collaboration with ZI Publications. Social media channels were set up and an infographic video completed. *The Malaysian Insider* published an article by ALPE's Suri Kempe ("Eight Reasons Why Books Should not Be Banned"). On 27 July, the Court of Appeal described the ban as "an outrageous defiance of logic" and ruled to uphold the lower court's decision to lift the ban. In our Press statement, we again urged the Government to respond to longstanding demands for the repeal of the Printing Presses and Publications Act (PPPA) 1984, which grants wide discretionary powers to the Minister of Home Affairs.

**The Islamic Behemoth.** In early 2012, JAG started more earnest discussions about the challenges of working in a country where ethnicity and religion are increasingly politicised. Our concern centred on the influence of

a phenomenon that we have named the Islamic Behemoth (IB). This was in recognition of the growing influence of a body of actors – state and non-state – who in the course of pushing for Islam to be returned to what they perceive as its rightful status as "law of the land", also insist that there is only one version of the faith that is possible. In this, there is no room for anyone who questions what is upheld as religious orthodoxy. Those who do, women's groups included, have been demonised, censured or threatened with punitive action, and in some cases, violence. Workshops were held to analyse and understand the growth of the Islamic Behemoth. The first workshop (9-10 June) looked at key Islamist players at the federal and state levels (e.g. JAKIM and the Shari'ah Department within the Attorney General's Chambers) and non-state actors (e.g. NGOs, companies and individuals). The second workshop (14-15 July) studied the impact of the IB in court judgments. A final workshop opened up the discussion to JAG's allies.

**"Illegitimate" children and the right to identity.** Controversy still surrounds the National Registration Department's refusal to record the name of a Muslim child's father in the child's birth certificate if the baby is born within six months of the parents' marriage. The NRD's policy is in keeping with the

National Fatwa Council's stand that an "illegitimate" child (*anak tak sah taraf*, which includes children born out of wedlock and children born within six months of the parents' marriage) cannot bear his or her father's name. In 2012 SIS continued to advocate against the NRD's policy, which violates the dignity of the child, as well as his or her right to an identity and lineage (along with attendant rights under Islam, including inheritance rights). Other issues include the father's responsibilities, and the question of whether the National Fatwa Council's decision is indeed an official ruling. To raise awareness of these issues, SIS wrote a Letter to the Editor and organised a Public Forum on 25 February. SIS is also drafting a memorandum outlining the religious, constitutional and human rights arguments for policy change. In a Press statement issued in 2011, ("Respect a Child's Right to a Name, an Identity

and Family"), SIS had maintained that "the practice of registering Muslim children's surnames as "binti/bin Abdullah" when they are born within six months of the date of marriage leads to serious and unjust repercussions on the children's emotional wellbeing and their future. The Muslim child is being punished and labelled 'illegitimate' for what is assumed to be the parents' sin of conceiving the child before marriage. The biological father is denied the duty to exercise all parental responsibilities and to confer all rights the child is entitled to...."

**Selangor state initiative for gender mainstreaming (GM) and gender responsive budgeting (GRB).** In January, SIS attended its second meeting with the Selangor state government to assist it in its effort to develop a comprehensive blueprint and action plan to incorporate GM and GRB in its

operations. The initiative falls under the Majlis Permuafakatan Wanita Selangor (MPWS).

**Watching briefs.** In addition to holding watching briefs for the three cases below in 2012, SIS also hosted a workshop (13 February) on watching brief submissions by JAG and the Association of Women Lawyers (AWL).

- **The Zaina Abidin Hamid case and the definition of a Muslim.** SIS was one of eight organisations which held watching briefs for this case, heard on 1 November. Zaina Abidin Hamid @ S. Maniam and three of his children sought a court decision to declare Section 2 of the Administration of the Religion of Islam (State of Selangor) Enactment 2003 as unlawful (under the Enactment, children of Muslim parents are automatically deemed to be Muslim as well). Zaina Abidin's

**"The best interests of the child must be the primary concern in making all laws, policies and decisions that affect them. This principle is upheld by Islamic teachings, universal human rights and Malaysia's law-making process."**

from a Press statement issued by SIS in 2011, "Respect a Child's Right to a Name, an Identity and Family."

father had converted to Islam for purposes of marriage, but had continued to practice Hinduism. Zaina Abdin himself was raised to be a Hindu and brought up his three children as Hindus. Since 2002, Zaina Abdin, whose identity card states that he is Muslim, has been seeking to have the National Registration Department (NRD) strike it off. The case was first filed in the High Court that year. It then went to the Court of Appeal and subsequently the Federal Court, which in February 2012 remitted the case to the High Court after deciding that the facts of the case – namely, the religion of the appellants – were in dispute. They profess to be practicing Hindus, but lawyers for the Selangor government argue they are Muslims “by mechanism of law” (under the Selangor Enactment). One key question pertains to whether the definition of a Muslim in the Selangor Islamic Enactment 2003 is inconsistent with Article 11 of the Federal Constitution that guarantees the freedom to profess a religion. Parents’ right to determine the faith of an underage child is another issue. *(Note: in early 2013 the case was dismissed by the High Court, and Zaina Abdin’s lawyers filed an appeal.)*

- **The transgender case in Seremban.** Eight organisations, including SIS, held watching briefs for this case, which began on 30 August. An application was made by four Muslim men to the High Court to review Section 66 of the Negeri Sembilan Shari’ah Criminal Offences Enactment which bars Muslim men from dressing or posing as women. This was the first time anyone had sought to challenge the ban in a secular court. Judge Datuk Siti Mariah Ahmad dismissed the application. She did not dispute that the applicants were born male, and that they are male to female transsexuals, following the evidence of a psychiatrist. Nevertheless, she ruled that because the litigants are Muslim and were born male, they cannot be exempted from Section 66 as it is part of Islamic teachings. She also stated that Part II of the Federal Constitution, which guarantees fundamental liberties including freedom of expression, is exempted by Section 66.
- **Judicial Review of Seksualiti Merdeka (SM) ban.** SIS was part of the JAG watching brief for Seksualiti Merdeka’s leave application for a judicial review hearing to challenge a ban imposed on its events. The application was heard on 21 February. The Attorney General

made two objections; first, that there was no decision that could be reviewed as the decision to ban was made to facilitate investigations, and second, that the application was academic as the decision to ban only related to the 2011 SM Festival. The applicant’s submission was that even a ban to facilitate investigations may be reviewed. SM’s lawyer, Honey Tan, refuted the fact that it was clear the decision to ban related only to SM2011, and that issue of fact could only be clarified by the first respondent at the later stage. More importantly, it was not shown at all that the police had the power to ban any activity of any persons or groups. On 1 March, the Court dismissed the leave application on technical grounds that only SM2011 was banned, and that SM could be held in the future (so the application was moot).

**Capital FM Legal Hour.** In 2012 SIS was invited by the Association of Women Lawyers (AWL) to talk about Muslim women’s rights during AWL’s Legal Hour on Capital FM 88.9. SIS participated in a total of four shows, covering topics such as marriage, and wills and inheritance.

**JAG evaluation and planning.** As an active member of JAG, SIS is closely involved in the Group’s evaluation and

planning process. At the JAG evaluation and planning meeting held on 13-14 January, focus areas identified included linking women’s issues to larger issues such as the Tenth Malaysia Plan, corruption and poverty; a push for clear protocols for rape case procedures; women in the workforce; Islamic Family Law/Muslim Family Law; child marriage; and political participation.

**Universal Periodic Review (UPR).** The human rights records of United Nations member states are reviewed every four and a half years by the UN Human Rights Council in a process known as the Universal Period Review (UPR). Malaysia’s 2nd UPR will take place in October 2013. In 2012 SIS participated in the UPR Consultation Workshop organised by the Coalition of Malaysian NGOs (COMANGO) in July and the UPR Consultative Meeting with Malaysian NGOs in September.

**CEDAW NGO Shadow Report.** Like other states parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Malaysian Government – which acceded to CEDAW in 1995 – is required to periodically submit reports to the CEDAW Committee. NGOs can submit a Shadow Report assessing the Government’s progress in implementing CEDAW. In 2012 Malaysian NGOs completed their second Shadow Report,



The Aiyoh...What Lah?! Awards 2012 Organising Committee with Jo Kukathas (aka Ribena Berry).

**Aiyoh...What Lah?! Awards.** In 2012 SIS and other members of the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) organised the inaugural Aiyoh...What Lah?! Awards, a spoof awards ceremony to highlight sexism, misogyny, homophobia and transphobia. Any public statement, act, or policy that had been reported in the media the previous year was eligible for nomination. The Awards, held on 23 June in Kuala Lumpur, were hosted by popular character Ribena Berry aka actor and playwright Jo Kukathas. An analogy between unwanted buildings and old women won the Foot in Mouth category, while the Least Helpful to the Sisterhood award went to a statement by The Obedient Wives

Club that wives who didn’t satisfy their husbands were the cause of illicit sex.” The Policy Fail award went to Terengganu’s state-run boot camp to “cure” teenage boys of effeminate behaviour. Alongside the dubious categories, there was also a “Right on Track” award to recognise public statements or actions deemed particularly helpful in fighting discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, and sexuality; it went to a 2011 High Court ruling that CEDAW (the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) was binding on the Malaysian government and that using pregnancy as a reason not to employ a person was a form of gender discrimination.

known as the Alternative Report, which was coordinated and edited by the Women’s Aid Organisation (WAO). SIS was one of the many organisations that participated in the collection of information, data and case studies for the report, launched on 16 September.

**Arising issues.** Our advocacy work in 2012 touched on many key issues that arose in the course of the year.

- **Statutory rape.** In 2012 the Government proposed a bill to impose mandatory sentencing in cases involving statutory rape, effectively removing judicial discretion. The bill is seen as a knee-jerk reaction to the public outcry surrounding two statutory rape cases in which the offenders were let off on a bond of good behaviour as they were deemed to have “bright futures”. SIS and other NGOs have drafted a petition asking the Government to withdraw the bill, and are currently coordinating a meeting in Parliament with de facto law minister Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz to explain our position and hand over the petition.
- **Hudud.** In September 2011, former Perlis mufti Associate Professor Dr Mohd Asri Zainul Abidin made a statement in which he said hudud law was not suitable for

implementation in Malaysia at the time, as the situation was not conducive. This issue remained in the public domain in 2012, primarily due to the approaching 2013 General Election.

- **Child marriage.** In conjunction with the inaugural International Day of the Girl Child on 11 October, SIS launched a small social media initiative and ran articles and videos relating to child marriage. In a report in the *Star*, SIS Executive Director Ratna Osman said, “We are against child marriage and feel strongly that it should be abolished. We want the legal age for both male and female to be 18, and the absolute minimum for Muslim girls to be 16, but with strict conditions: the *wali* has consented to the marriage, the minor has sufficient maturity to understand the nature and responsibilities of the marriage and has not been compelled against his/her will and that the marriage will not conflict with the best interest of all involved. The judge must also consult the respective experts to verify the conditions cited are complied with.” In another *Star* article, ALPE Programme Manager Suri Kempe noted, “We are not allowed to drive until we are 17, to vote until we are 21. So how can girls get married, have sex and bear children at 16?

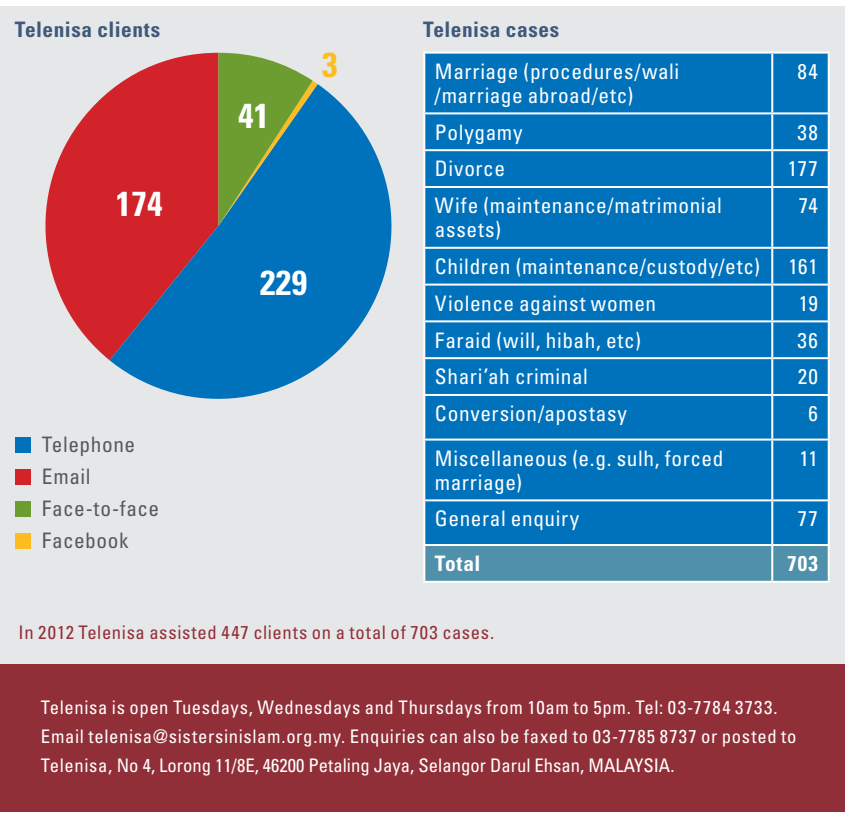
Or 15? What do they know about the responsibilities or implications of being married, let alone sex and getting pregnant. And then there are the health risks... Why would we expose our children to such risks if the effects are so devastating?”

- **Attacks on CSOs/NGOs.** In 2012, the Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ), sociopolitical blog *Loyar Buruk* and human rights organisation SUARAM were accused of plotting to destabilise the Government because they receive foreign funding. SIS continues to stand by and support these civil society organisations (CSOs) and NGOs.

## LEGAL SERVICES

### Telenisa

The objectives of Telenisa, SIS’ legal clinic, are to provide clients with free legal advice, improve on the quality of legal information for women, and better study the needs of society (particularly those of Muslim women) in relation to issues concerning Islam and the Shari’ah courts. While the majority of clients are Muslim women, Telenisa has also responded to male clients and non-Muslim clients seeking advice for friends and relatives, as well as international clients needing



clarification on Islamic legal matters in the Malaysian context.

In 2012 Telenisa assisted 447 clients on a total of 703 cases. Legal counselling is available via four methods: face-to-face meetings, telephone, email and Facebook. A Legal Officer provides the client with legal advice, while a chambering student documents the case. The Legal Unit’s mini library contains law books, archives of

newspaper articles on related cases and other resource materials.

Public awareness of women’s legal rights is still low, particularly among women, and Telenisa continues to be much needed. Awareness of Telenisa itself should therefore be promoted. At the same time, SIS must overcome several challenges in order to cater to an increase in demand. Backlogs from the previous year were cleared in 2012, but to continue responding

effectively to legal queries, which vary in complexity, staff must be equipped with the requisite knowledge of Islamic Family Law. Answer templates enable chambering students to assist with responding to the more straightforward queries; these templates must be updated regularly. Plans for 2013 include improving documentation and statistical analysis of Telenisa using SPSS software, continuing to republish Telenisa articles previously featured in *Utusan Malaysia* on Facebook and Twitter, and improving the visibility of Telenisa services. Creating a directory of services offered by other Islamic agencies will also enable referrals to be made more easily, in particular on issues that fall outside Telenisa’s scope.

### Telenisa workshop

This workshop, entitled “*Ketahui Hak Wanita Dalam Perundangan Islam*” (“Knowing Women’s Rights under Islamic Law”), was conducted in Petaling Jaya (31 March-1 April) and attended by 52 Telenisa clients and new Gabungan Hak Wanita Islam (GAHWI) women. Its four objectives were to (1) empower women by raising their awareness of women’s legal rights; (2) increase the understanding of women’s rights in Islam especially in matters related to maintenance, divorce, polygamy and shared matrimonial property; (3) provide a platform



where women could meet and share experiences; and (4) discuss methods and strategies through which women could support each other. The workshop was a success, thanks to skilled resource persons, vocal participants – some of whom were identified as potential resource persons for the Life Stories Project – and a supportive team that ensured the event went smoothly. A standardised training module is currently being developed.

## Students

**Chambering students.** Law graduates in Malaysia are required to undertake a nine-month pupillage, which must include a period of legal aid service. In 2012, SIS received 22 chambering students. 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.

The programme includes training conducted by the Kuala Lumpur Bar-Legal Aid Centre (covering human rights, and civil and Shari’ah laws); a workshop organised by SIS, All Women’s Action Society (AWAM) and Women’s Aid Organisation (WAO); and

Shari’ah Advanced Training, a one-day course developed by SIS to better equip students to handle court procedures and the more complex aspects of Shari’ah cases.

At SIS, chambering students are stationed with Telenisa, and their main duties are to draft reply emails (which are checked by a Legal Officer or Programme Officer); take notes and document face-to-face legal advice sessions with clients; and handle Telenisa phone queries. Students also help with newspaper cuttings, data entry and preparation for workshops. For 2013, SIS will continue to develop a follow-up system through which we can sustain our relationships with ex-chambering students.

**Attachment students** are law students (still pursuing their degree courses) who visit SIS for a quick introduction to the organisation. In 2012, SIS received students from University of Malaya and International Islamic University Malaysia.

## Legal literacy materials

In addition to increasing the public’s knowledge of legal matters, the legal literacy materials we produce help us enhance our community outreach to Muslims and non-Muslims. Visual and easy to understand, the materials are

routinely distributed at SIS events and used as workshop tools.

In 2012 SIS continued to expand its *Ketahui Hak Anda* (Know Your Rights) series of brochures and leaflets in Malay, with design and illustration work begun on two leaflets, *Mut’ah* (Financial Compensation), and *Jenis-Jenis Perceraian* (Types of Divorce). Plans for 2013 include producing a brochure on domestic violence.

# PUBLIC EDUCATION

## Public forums

Public forums are organised to raise awareness of, and explore arguments for and against, topics that are relevant to the public interest.

**Ada Apa Pada Nama** (What’s in a Name?). Held on 25 February, this forum addressed the issue of “illegitimate” children and their right to an identity. Panelists included Perlis Mufti Dr Juanda Jaya, Chief Justice of the Terengganu Shari’ah Court Dato’ Ismail Yahya and noted lawyer Nizam Bashir. There were suggestions to draw on aspects of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and to conduct research on the social implications of the issue. This forum received

substantial media coverage, feedback from the authorities and good response from the public.

**Antara Islam dan Melayu: Pengembangan Islam di Indonesia dan Malaysia - Apa Kaitannya Dengan Cambodia?** (The Spread of Islam in Indonesia and Malaysia – and the Link to Cambodia). Held on 1 December, this forum focused on the early history of Islam in the Malay Archipelago. Led by well-known Indonesian historian, academic and author Dr Hj Agus Sunyoto, participants explored the diverse societies, cultures and practices that influenced Islam’s development in Malaysia and Indonesia. Despite the many similarities, Islam developed differently in the two countries, resulting in differences in how the religion is interpreted and practiced today.



(L-R) Dato’ Ismail Yahya, Prof Datin Rashidah Shuib and Dr Juanda Jaya at the *Ada Apa Pada Nama* public forum.

## Echo workshops

Echo workshops are conducted to upgrade advocates’ capabilities by sharing experiences gained in the course of applying advocacy skills and strategies. In 2012, one echo workshop titled *Kepimpinan Bersama Wanita Islam* (Leadership With Muslim Women) was held 6-7 October.

## Workshops

**Ketahui Hak Wanita Dalam Perundangan Islam** (Knowing Women’s Rights under Islamic Law). This Telenisa workshop was conducted 31 March-1 April and was attended by 52 Telenisa clients and new Gabungan Hak Wanita Islam (GAHWI) women. A standardised training module is currently being developed.

**Muslim Legal Tradition and the Challenge of Inequality** by Ziba Mir-Hosseini. This workshop (26-27 June) was conducted in collaboration with the Life Stories Project.

**Ketahui Hak Wanita Dalam Perundangan Islam** (Knowing Women’s Rights under Islamic Law). Participants for this workshop held on 21 October comprised members of WIBAWA Women, a group which began as a Facebook support group for women and men going through divorce, and for those in troubled relationships.

**Shari’ah and Gender.** This workshop for youths, held 14-16 December, was a very energetic one. Topics discussed included issues related to gender, sexuality, human rights and the shari’ah.



(L-R) Ratna Osman, Pak Agus Sunyoto, Norhayati Kaprawi and Shanon Shah at the *Antara Islam dan Melayu* public forum.



A participant posing a question during the Muslim Legal Tradition and the Challenge of Inequality workshop by Ziba Mir-Hosseini.

#### Shari'ah, Gender and Human Rights.

The aim of this media workshop (8 December) was to update media practitioners on the current situation in Malaysia with regard to women, religion and censorship issues, in order that they might better articulate the complexities of the issues. The workshop also introduced journalists to the shortcomings of the current Islamic Family Law and the possibilities of reform through SIS' Muslim Family Law Campaign. On hand to share their insights were seasoned journalists Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir and Jacqueline Ann Surin, and documentary filmmaker Norhayati Kaprawi. The session on Islamic law and how it

relates to the reality of life in Malaysia was particularly useful for non-Muslim journalists, who said the knowledge gained would inform their future work. The workshop also enabled SIS to build relationships with journalists. In 2013 SIS will continue to conduct workshops, including Large Group Training Awareness (LGTA) workshops. New activities planned include the Muslim Family Law National Convention, an Advanced Sexuality Workshop for staff, an Advanced Artists and Activists Workshop and an Advanced Shari'ah and Gender Workshop for youths.

#### Screening and discussion

These sessions offer participants a chance to view documentaries and films and to engage in, understand and appreciate diversity of opinion. In 2012, we screened two of our polygamy documentaries, *From Machang to Kajang* and *An-Nisa*, at two study sessions on 6 June and 22 November respectively.

#### Study sessions

Study sessions provide a platform for participants to discuss local and international issues.

#### Closed-door session with Irshad Manji.

At this session (17 May), Canadian author and activist Irshad Manji shared snippets of her background and how she came to be where she is today. The ensuing discussion touched on the role of public approval vis-à-vis the work and the cause, when to use religious explanations within activism, representational politics, faith versus dogma, the importance of taking care of the self when advocating a larger cause and positioning one's argument. On 24 May the Home Ministry announced that it had banned Irshad's book *Allah, Liberty and Love*.

#### Gender, Sex, Money and Marital Relations in Muslim Polygamous Marriages and Families.

Prof Norani Othman's presentation of the key findings of SIS' research project on polygamy generated heated discussion among the audience of about 50 at this session (6 June). Women continue to be viewed as service providers, and so instead of solving the problems that emerge in a marriage, men simply take another wife. Several participants were keen to arrange for the presentation to be made in other states, as well as a screening of our two polygamy documentaries.

#### The Meaning of Marriage and Family Life Among Members of Muslim Polygamous Families.

At this S2UC

session (22 November), Prof Norani Othman provided insights on the structure of the polygamous family in Malaysia.

#### The Practice of Female Circumcision in Malaysia.

At this Seek to Understand Conversation (S2UC) session (12 December), Associate Prof Dr Maznah Dahlui, Head of the Department of Social and Preventive Medicine at Universiti Malaya, shared her research findings on the practice of female circumcision (FC) in Malaysia. The milestone study aims to determine the extent and characteristics of FC; examine the profile of practitioners, types and methods of FC performed; and identify the knowledge and beliefs among practitioners. The findings will help to establish related female genital mutilation (FGM) policies in Malaysia and provide guidance in monitoring and evaluating the practice. This was one of our best-attended study sessions, with attendees comprising journalists, parents, activists, students, international Musawah members and the general public. The discussion focused on the complexity on the ground for medical practitioners as well as Muslim parents who are expected to circumcise their daughters. A couple who attended the session were in the midst of considering circumcising their baby girl, and the information they received at the forum empowered

them to go against the practice. Asma Lamrabet's final point – that FC was not practiced in Mecca and Medina – was what convinced them they were making the right decision.

## THE LIFE STORIES PROJECT (MALAYSIA)

The Life Stories Project in Malaysia is part of a larger, global project spearheaded by Musawah under its Knowledge Building Initiative on *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah*. The Global Life Stories Project involves 12 countries.

The objectives of the Malaysian Life Stories Project are to (1) create an understanding of the concepts of *qiwamah* and *wilayah* and their application in Muslim family life in Malaysia; (2) document the lived realities of women negotiating *qiwamah* and *wilayah* in Malaysia; (3) contribute towards national advocacy projects; (4) contribute towards capacity building for SIS and our partners; (5) empower resource persons, create alliances and foster movement building; and (6) fulfill the objectives of the Global Life Stories Project as stated in the terms of reference set by Musawah.

Given the global nature of the project, there is potential for much learning

from experiences across the globe. The Life Stories Project has been designed to build on, complement and feed into SIS’ ongoing national advocacy work. The case studies, for example, will be useful for our Muslim Family Law initiatives, while the feminist research methodology framing this project (which emphasises reciprocity and empowerment) will provide a model for future knowledge building initiatives by SIS.

Activities

Activities for the Life Stories Project in Malaysia are structured under four categories.

A. Documentation and knowledge building

- **Preparation for the documentation process** (May-August). A Research

Plan for the project was prepared, along with a legal map of *qiwamah* and *wilayah* in Malaysia. We also identified the team members and potential resource persons. Several participatory meetings were held to shape the project and identify criteria for the resource persons. These were submitted to Musawah and used as guiding documents for the project. We also prepared materials needed for the documentation process (an information sheet on the project and on *qiwamah* and *wilayah*, a consent form, a confidentiality form, illustrations and other research tools). A funding proposal was submitted to Musawah for a Seed Grant in June, and we received US\$3,000 for preliminary project activities.

- **Interviews** (beginning September).

The interview process involved documenting the lived realities of selected resource persons. By end-2012 we had collected five interviews. The process will continue until January 2013, by which point we hope to have conducted in-depth interviews with 10-12 resource persons. The interview is not just an information-gathering exercise; it is also an important coalition-building process as well as an empowering process for both interviewer and interviewee.

- **Outputs.** As a first step in the development of outputs, we met with a prospective filmmaker, illustrator and writer to discuss costings and the formats of the outputs, which will include a film, a brochure and a book of short stories. We also held discussions with Digital Storytelling

Asia concerning the coordination of a Digital Storytelling workshop in Malaysia.

B. Participation in Global Life Stories activities

- **Musawah newsletter and Life Stories online forum.** A SIS article summarising Life Stories activities to date was published in the movement’s newsletter, *Musawah Vision*, in October. We also shared our experience in setting up a reading circle with the Life Stories online forum. Other country teams have expressed interest in starting their own reading circles.
- **Global Reading Circle.** The Global Coordinator for the Life Stories Project organises a monthly reading circle to foster exchange among the Life Stories teams from the 12 countries. The Malaysian coordinator participated in the monthly online meetings.

C. Capacity building

- **Life Stories Methods Workshop.** At this workshop (4-5 June) organised for the Life Stories team and all SIS staff, we shared the training from the Musawah Methodology Workshop in April 2012 in Bali, adapting the material to suit our local context. Topics covered included the ethics of research and informed consent, the Life Stories feminist methodology,

interviewing and note-taking skills, and the emotional wellbeing of resource persons (interviewees) and interviewers. The workshop received very good reviews.

- **Reading Circle (Malaysia).** The wide range of material selected for these sessions have included papers on *qiwamah* and *wilayah* commissioned by Musawah, academic publications and newspaper articles. Beyond a discussion of the reading material, the Reading Circles have also provided a space for sharing and reflection among SIS staff and members. In the October session, for example, we discussed personal life stories of transformation in our own understanding of Islam and Islamic law since joining SIS, and how our personal experiences are useful insights in our outreach and advocacy work. Five Reading Circles were held in 2012:
  - a. Rethinking *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah* (30 May)
  - b. Contextualising Feminist Engagements in Malaysia (19 July)
  - c. Islamic Law, Women’s Rights, and Popular Legal Consciousness in Malaysia, Part 1 (27 September)
  - d. Islamic Law, Women’s Rights, and Popular Legal Consciousness in Malaysia, Part 2 (24 October)
  - e. Equality in the Muslim Marriage (21 November)

D. Public forum

- **Seminar: Muslim Legal Tradition and the Challenge of Inequality by Ziba Mir-Hosseini.** This seminar (26-27 June) was an extension of the Musawah workshop in Bali. The 60 participants included SIS staff and members, academics and NGOs.
- **Panel forum: Equality in the Muslim Marriage: Challenges and Possibilities.** At this forum which took place on 7 December, panelists Dr Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Dr Maznah Mohamad and Ratna Osman discussed shari’ah concepts such as *qiwamah* and *wilayah* and their implications on Muslim marriages. The forum was well attended thanks to the use of social media to promote the event. The diverse group of 77 participants included many first-timers to SIS events.

The Life Stories Project (Malaysia): Activities

A Documentation and knowledge building	B Participation in Global Life Stories activities	C Capacity building	D Public forum
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Preparation for the documentation process</li><li>• Interviews</li><li>• Outputs</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Musawah newsletter and Life Stories online forum</li><li>• Global Reading Circle</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Methods Workshop</li><li>• Reading Circle (Malaysia)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Seminar</li><li>• Panel forum</li></ul>



**The Life Stories Project (Malaysia): Structuring the teams**

We envision that the knowledge building team will consist of several different groupings working together with different levels of participation.

THE CORE TEAM	SUPPORTING TEAM MEMBERS	PARTNER ORGANISATIONS	SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS
<p>This team will conduct the interviews. The team will consist of the Coordinator, members of the Advocacy, Legal Services and Public Education (ALPE) unit, and two members of the research team on The Impact of Polygamy on the Family Institution in Malaysia.</p>	<p>Supporting team members will include SIS and Musawah staff, all of whom participated in the Methods Workshop. They also participated in the Reading Circles and study sessions, and will continue to do so. Counselors from Women’s Aid Organisation (WAO) will also provide support to the core team.</p>	<p>Over the years, SIS has established many strong working relationships with numerous organisations. We will include these partner organisations in our capacity-building activities, and conduct consultation sessions to introduce the project to them and solicit their input. We also selected our resource persons from within our circle of partner organisations to ensure that resource persons are within an existing support network.</p>	<p>Supporting organisations include academic and regional institutions such as Universiti Malaya’s Gender Studies Programmes, the Women’s Development Research Centre (KANITA) and the Asia-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW). We will also work with illustrators, filmmakers and writers to shape the outputs of the project, and we will tap our panel of legal experts and academics who are well-versed in Islamic law.</p>

COMMUNICATIONS,  
RESEARCH AND  
PUBLICATIONS





The **Communications, Research and Publications (CRP)** unit focuses on three areas:

- **Communications.** SIS recognises the media as a unique ally with the power to significantly amplify our voice and increase the impact of the work that we do. Media relations work includes issuing Press statements, writing articles, conducting workshops for media practitioners and media monitoring. Our website, identity and branding, Resource Centre and alternative media initiatives are also important components of our communications programme.
- **Research.** The CRP unit undertakes research with the objective of collecting data on SIS issues and supporting SIS advocacy work. The groundbreaking study on the Impact of Polygamy on the Family Institution in Malaysia is our biggest research project to date.
- **Publications** are produced with the aim of (1) promoting progressive views and alternative interpretations within Islam that uphold principles of justice, equality and freedom, particularly with regard to women's rights; (2) enriching resources available to academicians, researchers, students and women's and human rights activists; and (3) documenting and evaluating SIS activities.

# COMMUNICATIONS

Beyond looking to media practitioners to help disseminate our views, we count on them to enrich and inform the debate with their insights.

The CRP unit this year continued to undertake media advocacy initiatives with regard to issues and situational developments in the context of Islam and women's rights in Malaysia. Our objectives are to (1) promote an understanding of Islam that recognises the principles of justice, equality, freedom and dignity within a democratic nation state; (2) create public awareness of gender equality and non-discrimination for women in Islam; (3) publicise and affirm SIS' views in the media; and (4) support and work closely with like-minded organisations.

**Press statements.** In 2012, SIS issued numerous Press statements on various issues. As a member of the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG), we also endorsed or co-signed JAG Press statements.

**Articles written by SIS members and staff** also helped to ensure our views remained visible in the public sphere. These included: My personal journey to Sisters in Islam (Ratna Osman), Ombak Hairan dalam? (Rozana Isa), Dignity is under-rated (Vivienne Lee), Eight reasons why books should not be banned (Suri Kempe), When the Pied Pipers of Hudud Call (Zainah Anwar), Confused Over Right to Choose (Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir), Isu Rampas Mayat: Apakah Penyelesaiannya? (Norhayati Kaprawi) and Wanita, Kerjaya dan Rumahtangga (Azrine Razak).

## 5 FEB

**"12-year jail sentence not the way to address the issue of unwanted babies."** JAG is appalled at the jail sentence meted out to a teenager found guilty of throwing her baby out of a second floor window.

## 7 FEB

**"Withdraw the fight against the right of pregnant women to work."** JAG opposes the Attorney-General's Chambers appeal against a High Court ruling prohibiting dismissals on the grounds of pregnancy.

## 13 FEB

**"Sisters in Islam against the unjust deportation of Hamza Kashgari."** SIS opposes the Malaysian government's deportation of Saudi blogger Hamza Kashgari despite the absence of an extradition treaty between the two countries and the probability that Hamza may face the death penalty in Saudi Arabia for alleged blasphemy. *"Sadly, despite having set up the Global Movement of Moderates recently in an attempt to promote Malaysia as a moderate Muslim country, the Malaysian government has failed to match its rhetoric with its actions. Nor indeed did it heed or advocate God's Mercy and Forgiveness as found in the Qur'an."*

## 24 FEB

**JAG press release concerning posters depicting Ambiga Sreenevasan.** JAG condemns the lurid posters attempting to tarnish the characters of human rights defenders Ambiga Sreenevasan and A. Samad Said. *"To employ terms that identify diverse sexual orientations and gender identities as an insult perpetuates a culture of stigmatisation, persecution and hatred."*

## 6 MAR

**"Lynas – a ticking time bomb?"** JAG supports the Himpunan Hijau 2.0 protest calling for the cancellation of the controversial Lynas rare earth plant.

*"Man-made disasters affect women acutely because they intensify existing inequalities in terms of mobility and access to resources. As caregivers, many women bear the burden of supporting the victims of maldevelopment: children born with severe deformities, adults who develop cancer and other illnesses."*

## 23 MAR

**"Women must be able to retire at the same age as men."** JAG is deeply disappointed by the recent Court of Appeal decision to dismiss an appeal by eight women who were forcibly retired by their employer, Guppy Plastic Industries, after they reached the age of 50.

## 10 APR

**JAG statement on the PM taking over the Women's Ministry.** JAG is dismayed to learn that Dato' Sri Najib Abdul Razak has taken over the portfolio of the outgoing Minister of Women, Family and Community Development, Dato' Sri Sharizat Abdul Jalil. *"This undermines the government's purported commitment towards ensuring that women occupy 30% of decision-making positions. It makes a mockery of all the time, effort and resources that have been poured into making this a reality."*

## 19 APR

**"Kedah's new fatwa ruling equates man's word to God."** JAG is shocked by amendments in Kedah that now bar a fatwa from being challenged, appealed, reviewed, denied or questioned in any civil court or syariah court. *"There must be a public sphere for engagement and debate for Malaysians who disagree with those Islamic scholars and preachers who already dominate the public space in perpetuating an intolerant, exclusive and elitist Islam. Therefore, JAG calls on the Prime Minister and the Cabinet to take a strong stand and stop this headlong descent into a theocratic dictatorship engineered by those in religious authority both in Government and in the Opposition circle."*

PRESS STATEMENTS 2012

21 Press statements were issued in 2012, a number of them in collaboration with other organisations under the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG)

20 APR

**JAG open letter to the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM).** JAG is disappointed at comments made by SUHAKAM Chairperson Tan Sri Hasmy Agam, who reportedly said “our friends in the LGBT community are demanding more than what they deserve.” He also reportedly said “we will try our best and follow as far as we can but if anything in UDHR [Universal Declaration of Human Rights] is un-Islamic, then we will not implement it.” *“This statement...perpetuates a false divide between Muslim and non-Muslim Malaysians and in effect denies the fundamental premise of the UDHR – that everyone is born free and equal in dignity and rights.”*

14 MAY

**“Malaysia’s questionable process of law reform.”** JAG notes that the hasty withdrawal of the bill to amend the Election Offences Act highlights flaws in the country’s system of lawmaking. *“Genuine public consultation must occur at an early stage to ensure that the views of citizens and experts are taken into account.”*

23 JUN

**Government appeal on KL High Court decision on SIS book.** SIS issues this statement ahead of the 25 June court hearing of the Government’s appeal against the High Court’s lifting of the ban on our book. *“These essays attempt to discuss issues that are related to the rights of Muslim women. The ability to maintain these rights are inexorably intertwined with freedom of expression. We must be able to openly discuss, without fear, critical issues that are related to Muslim women, in particular when they impact our everyday lives.”*

29 JUN

**JAG statement on attacks against Ambiga Sreenivasan.** JAG is alarmed at the escalating level of attacks towards senior lawyer and human rights activist Dato’ Ambiga Sreenivasan. Most recently, Sri Gading MP Datuk Mohamad Aziz had asked in Parliament whether Dato’ Ambiga should be “considered a traitor to the nation and should be sentenced to be hanged.” *“Such a remark, by a legislator no less, is shockingly offensive and violent to the extreme. It violates basic standards of decency expected of parliamentarians and shows a deep lack of understanding of the democratic process.”*

27 JUL

**A good day for freedom of expression.** SIS lauds the Court of Appeal’s judgement upholding an earlier High Court decision to reverse the 2008 ban on our publication. The High Court had described the ban as irrational, unreasonable and disproportionate, while the Court of Appeal said it was an “outrageous defiance of logic”.

29 JUN

**Gender stereotyping of women: stop controlling women’s appearance and behaviour.”** JAG is alarmed at the discriminatory treatment of women, the most recent involving news anchor Ras Adiba Mohd Radzi and Ampang MP Zuraida Kamaruddin. Ras Adiba had reportedly been suspended by NTV7 for cropping her hair in support of Makna’s (National Cancer Council of Malaysia) Jom Botak cancer awareness campaign. She had also received anonymous calls which referred to a fatwa prohibiting women from shaving their heads. Zuraida had been accused of behaviour unbecoming of a woman when she posed a question to the Prime Minister concerning the neglect of numerous initiatives for women. *“The disturbing message is that women who do not look or behave according to a narrow prescribed definition of ‘femininity’ will face sanction.”*

10 AUG

**“JAG urges Judiciary to clarify judgement.”** On the Court of Appeal’s decision to overturn a High Court decision sentencing national bowler Noor Afizal Azizan to five years in jail for statutory rape, JAG is troubled that the perpetrator’s potential for “a bright future” was used as one of the grounds for his release on probation of good conduct. *“On the surface, the judgement appears to hint at the application of a double standard by implying that anyone with the right ‘credentials’ can commit a crime, and get away with a rap on the knuckles. Does it mean that an individual who is perceived to have no future would get a heavier sentence?”*

30 AUG

**“Consider the needs and perspectives of our young.”** JAG is concerned that “consensual sex” between a young adult and a child can result in a binding over sentence for the perpetrator. *“That the act was ‘consensual’ often merely points to the fact that no physical violence took place. It is imperative that we ask ourselves whether a child aged 12 or 13 is able to effectively ‘consent’ to a sexual relationship. We also need to be aware of the consequences to a child’s emotional and physical well-being when she enters into a sexual relationship, consensual or otherwise.”*

24 SEP

**“Not a routine investigation.”** JAG strongly condemns the Government’s selective harassment of human rights group Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM).

2 OCT

**“JAG urges Prime Minister to take his role as the Minister of Women, Family and Community Development seriously.”** JAG is appalled by Prime Minister Dato’ Sri Najib Razak’s dismissal of the need for women’s rights groups in Malaysia on the premise that equality was given “from the start”. *“For those of us who have to deal with the problems women face on the ground, the Prime Minister’s claim does not inspire any confidence in his leadership of the country and the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development.”*

18 OCT

**“More Consultation on Rape Laws.”** “JAG views with concern the Government’s move to introduce a bill which no longer allows judges to impose a bond of good behaviour in statutory rape sentencing. This hurried move, without proper consultation, is not the way forward.”

23 NOV

**Shari’ah Court fails to protect and safeguard Muslim girls.** Following reports that the Shari’ah Court had approved the marriage application involving a 12-year old girl and a 19-year old youth, SIS expresses shock that child marriages still take place in Malaysia because of a loophole in the Islamic Family Law and a continuing belief that Muslim girls can be married off once they reach puberty. “No marriage of a child can be deemed acceptable; it simply legalises statutory rape.”

9 NOV

**Freedom of religion.** SIS deplores the vehement attacks against MP Nurul Izzah Anwar on her position on freedom of religion.

*“Faith in any religion is contingent upon free will, and this would be meaningless if induced by force. Islam itself means submission to the will of God – not the will of men.”*

SIS, 9 November

**Media coverage.** SIS continues to receive a fair amount of coverage, positive and negative. We received many enquiries and requests for interviews and comments on issues concerning Muslim women and Islamic laws, among others. Online English-language media, through online news portals such as *The Malaysian Insider (TMI)*, *Free Malaysia Today* and *Malaysian Mirror* remain key allies. TMI also has a Malay-language section that reports on SIS and runs our statements and letters. International media such as the *Wall Street Journal* and the *International Herald Tribune* continue to seek our views. *The Top 10 of Malaysia* magazine included Zainah Anwar and Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir in its list of the ten most inspiring women in Malaysia.

**Media workshop.** A media workshop *Shari’ah, Gender and Human Rights* was conducted on 8 December for approximately 30 journalists and editors from print and broadcast media. The objectives were to (1) improve media practitioners’ ability to engage with and present complex issues concerning women’s human rights in Islam; (2) strengthen mainstream support for gender equality and the work carried out by SIS through the media; and (3) draw on relationships with individuals within the media industry for the Muslim Family Law campaign.

**Monitoring and tracking.** Instituting daily and weekly updates of media coverage of SIS and other issues of interest helped keep staff and members up-to-date on our media advocacy in 2012. This system will be fine-tuned to enable more consistent monitoring, and also to encourage feedback from staff and members as to whether our media advocacy has made an impact on community-level discourse and how people are discussing the issues on the ground. For 2013, the CRP unit will focus on (1) creating a centralised digital archive of Press statements and articles; (2) relationship-building with editors and journalists, local and international, at all levels; (3) ensuring Press statements are issued in a timely manner; (4) building a pool of translators who can articulate our views in Malay, and make inroads into the Malay-language media; (5) creating a communications policy and strategy document; and (6) seeking opportunities with allies who are holding media campaigns and public events.

**Website**

The SIS website provides the public with easy access to our Press statements, columns and other publications, as well as information on our services and upcoming events. In October this year we began working on a revamp of the website. The uploading

of content will start in January 2013 and the new website is expected to be launched in February. Future plans include introducing a Malay-language version, and detailed measuring of statistics about visits to enable us to further improve the website.

**Identity and branding**

In 2012 we began work on rebranding our logo. The current logo, designed by renowned artist and SIS founding member Sharifah Zuriah Aljeffri, has been in use since SIS began in 1993. The logo features the word *rahim*; besides being the Malay for womb, the word also means compassion, which reflects the nature of SIS’ work. After almost two decades, we feel the time has come to rebrand the SIS identity. The first assessment for the new logo was made at the 12th SIS Evaluation and Planning meeting.

**Resource Centre**

The SIS Resource Centre houses a wide range of reading material on progressive understandings of Islam, including publications not easily available locally and those perceived as contradicting prevailing Islamic values in Malaysia. In 2012 SIS staff completed the cataloguing of all books, totalling 1,046. The Resource Centre now contains 6,000 items comprising

books, periodicals, bulletins, reports and pamphlets. On average, the Centre receives 20 new items per month.

Future plans include extending the cataloguing process to cover journals and audio-visual material. While the Centre continues to be regularly used by SIS staff and members, it is currently underutilised by the public; there is thus a need to increase awareness of the Resource Centre among academicians, students and other members of the public.

**Alternative media**

**Social media.** Facebook and Twitter have become important advocacy tools for SIS. By the end of 2012, SIS’ Facebook Fan Page had 5,686 likes, while our Twitter followers numbered 7,067.

**Fundraising video.** In 2012, SIS began work on a fundraising video, to be used as a tool to explain and promote SIS’ work to future funders and donors. Through interviews, the video will feature the stories of three grassroots women and how SIS works to resolve their plight. There will be a 10-minute “long” version, as well as three 3-minute videos more suitable for online and social media. The videos will be completed in March 2013.

There are also plans to produce two short advocacy videos in 2013. Simple and easy-to-understand, the videos will be made available via the SIS website, Facebook and YouTube.

**RESEARCH**

**The Impact of Polygamy on the Family Institution in Malaysia**

Initiated in 2004, this major research project aims to (1) study the impact of polygamy and how it affects the quality of family life; (2) understand the dynamics of polygamous families; and (3) provide qualitative and quantitative data for advocating policy and law reform, influencing public opinion and critiquing official discourse of polygamy.

In 2012 we focused on two objectives: (1) continuing to analyse data, contribute to journals, and write chapters for *Muslim Polygamy in Malaysia: Lived Realities and Impact*, the academic publication that will comprehensively present the research findings; and (2) planning for the International Symposium that will take place in 2013.

**Project Management** activities in 2012 included ongoing analysis of the survey findings, writing, work on two documentaries and a blog,

and preparing for the International Symposium.

- **Transcribing of interviews.** The transcribing of the remaining in-depth interviews (IDIs) was completed in March.
- **Data analysis.** A meeting on 11 June focused on SPSS and data analysis.
- **Writing.** Intensive work on the manuscript for the academic publication, as well as on journal articles, was undertaken 4-25 April.
- **Documentaries.** Two documentaries on polygamy were completed in 2012: *From Machang to Kajang* and *An-Nisa’*.
- **Polygamy blog.** The first meeting for this blog was held on 13 April, and work began in May.
- **Polygamy repository.** A repository for materials related to polygamy was established in February. Staff can now access soft copies at SIS Central Storage.
- **Polygamy media monitoring.** On 3 August a training session was conducted on how to monitor media reports on polygamy.
- **Study on the impact of polygamy on**

**children.** On 25 June a meeting was held to study the impact of polygamy on children, and a chapter on children's problems may be included in the academic publication for the project.

- **International Symposium.** On 11 July, 3 August and 13 September, Working Committee meetings were held for the upcoming International Symposium in 2013.

**Workshops.** Since the start of the project, polygamy workshops have been regularly held to discuss the progress of the research, methodology issues, and more recently, the book manuscript. In 2012 workshops were conducted on 10 February, 30 March, 31 May, 3 August and 19 October.

**Presentation.** On 19 May SIS presented the documentary *An-Nisa'* at the Hear Us Out programme at Taylor's College. This was followed by a discussion on polygamy.

**Publication outputs.** In addition to the book (tentatively titled *Muslim Polygamy in Malaysia: Lived Realities and Impact*) that will comprehensively present the various findings of the survey and qualitative studies, we are also creating a **life stories booklet**, based on Telenisa cases involving women in polygamous marriages.

The booklet will connect the project's research findings to the lived reality of grassroots women and public lobbying.

In 2013, we will continue to (1) use the quantitative and qualitative data on the impact of polygamy on families in lobbying for amendments to the current Islamic Family Law; and (2) use the life stories from the project as a basis for the blog, booklets, skit, scriptwriting, etc. in our ongoing effort to challenge conservative discourses on polygamy.

SIS is often asked to comment on the issue of polygamy. In an article in [freemalaysiatoday.com](http://freemalaysiatoday.com) ("Polygamy and the Muslim Woman" 8 December) SIS Executive Director Ratna Osman drew on the research findings: "If dissatisfaction is the daily experience of wives, then how can it be said that a husband is being 'just'? And furthermore, with more wives, financial contribution from a husband decreases. So the question is, how do these men get permission to take a second wife (or a third, and a fourth), when they cannot provide financial support?"

## PUBLICATIONS

The Publications unit aims to (1) promote progressive views and alternative interpretations within Islam that uphold principles of justice, equality and freedom, particularly with

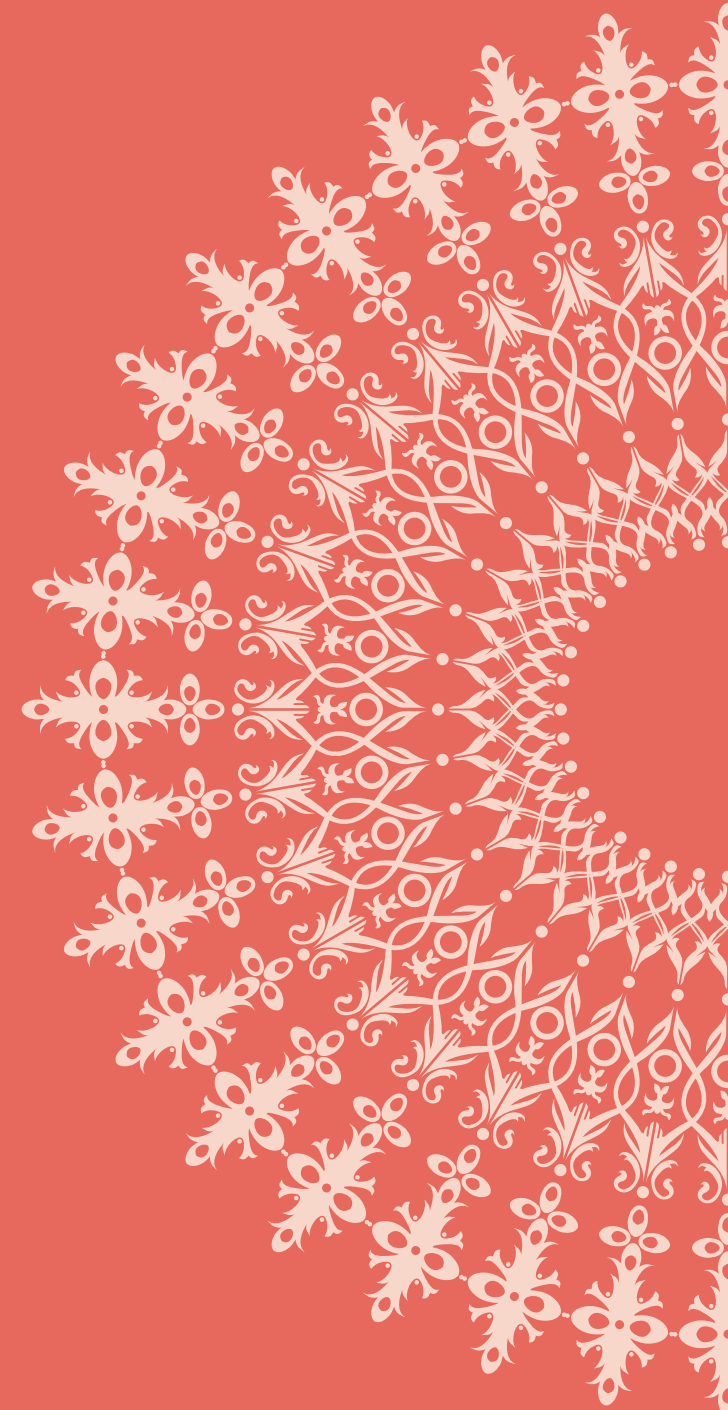
regard to women's rights; (2) enrich the pool of references for academicians, researchers, students and women's and human rights activists; (3) evaluate and document SIS activities with the publication of the Annual Review; (4) ensure effective and timely distribution of publications.

In 2012 the Publications unit worked on the following projects: (1) *SIS Annual Review 2011*; (2) the SIS newsletter *Baraza!* issues V (Musawah) and VII (Islam and Feminism, Part 2); and (3) a Malay-language booklet on domestic violence.

To promote SIS publications, we set up booths at the Kuala Lumpur Alternative Bookfest (KLAB 2012) (23-24 June), the Sunway University Education Expo (6-7 October) and the Bersih 2.0 Concert (13 October).

This year the Publications unit was also closely involved in the developments surrounding the SIS publication *Muslim Women and the Challenge of Islamic Extremism*, which the Home Ministry banned in 2008. The High Court lifted the ban in 2010. On 27 July this year, the Court of Appeal similarly ruled in SIS' favour when it dismissed the Government's appeal challenging the lifting of the ban.

# MUSAWAH





**Musawah**, the global movement for equality and justice in the Muslim family, was initiated in 2007 by SIS and an international planning committee of activists and scholars. Officially launched in February 2009 in Kuala Lumpur, Musawah (“Equality” in Arabic) 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 currently based at SIS. Visit [www.musawah.org](http://www.musawah.org) for more information.



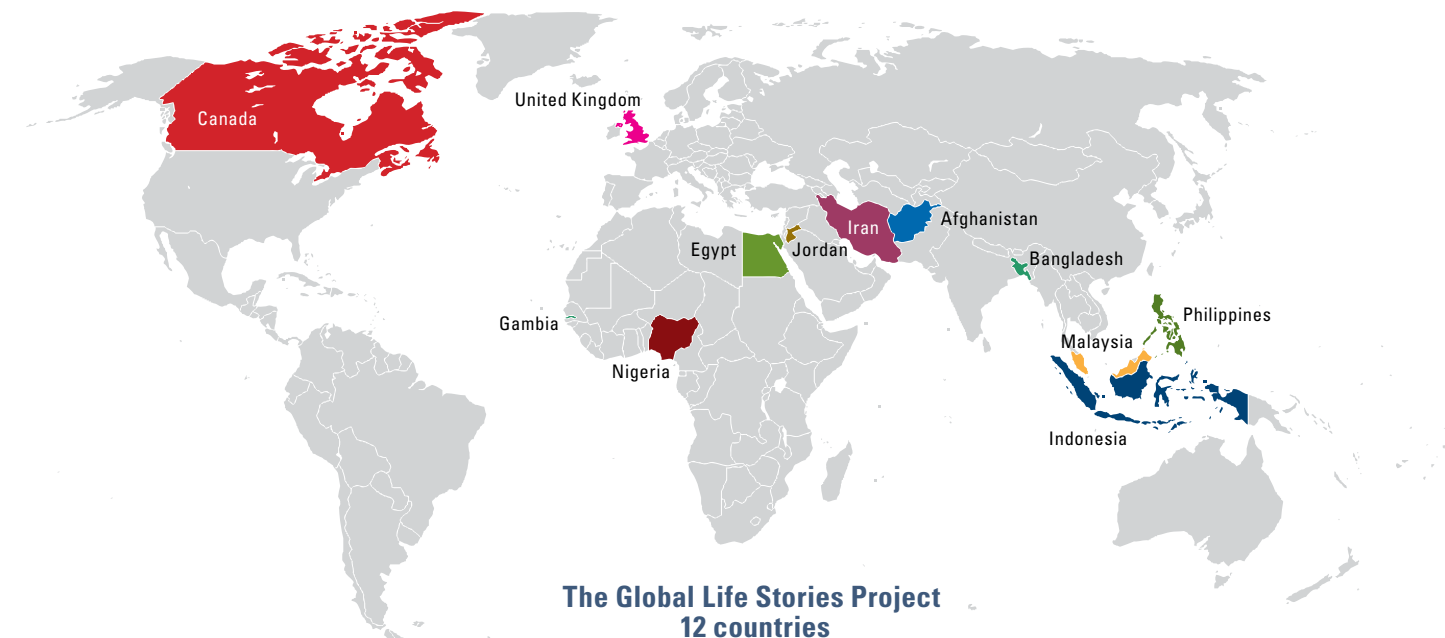
## KNOWLEDGE BUILDING

### Knowledge Building Initiative on *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah*

The *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah* research initiative aims to produce new feminist knowledge and rethink the idea and realities of *qiwamah* (commonly understood as male authority over women) and *wilayah* (commonly understood as male guardianship of women and children) in ways that can empower Musawah Advocates to ensure that laws and practices promote equality and justice in the family.

The Initiative comprises the following elements: (1) commissioning background research on *qiwamah* and *wilayah* within historical and present-day Muslim legal traditions; (2) conducting participatory research to collect women’s and men’s life stories in relation to *qiwamah* and *wilayah* through the Global Life Stories Project; and (3) opening spaces for scholars and activists to discuss and forge new understandings of *qiwamah* and *wilayah*.

The Global Life Stories Project brings together Musawah Advocates in 12 countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Canada, Egypt, Gambia, Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Malaysia, Nigeria, the Philippines, and the United Kingdom) to document life stories in order to better understand how *qiwamah* and *wilayah* impact the lived realities of women and men. This is a feminist and participatory movement building initiative as well as a knowledge building process. The 12 country teams have been working to better understand the concepts; map the local and national laws and policies that relate to *qiwamah* and *wilayah*;



identify resource persons who can be interviewed from among their networks; conduct interviews; share information with the resource persons who gave the interviews; write up the interviews; and collectively analyse the results. A common research methodology has been shared among the teams, but each team is tailoring its project to local contexts and needs. Some of the activities and outputs will be geared towards facilitating and contributing to specific advocacy and legal reform agendas in their national contexts.

Under the 2012-2014 plan for the *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah* Initiative, proposed activities include:

1. developing a Viewpoint Document on *qiwamah* and *wilayah*;
2. the Global Life Stories Project, which comprises:
  - a. 12 national teams conducting interviews and analysis throughout 2012
  - b. establishing an e-learning circle and developing tools such as FAQs
  - c. a Mid-Term Review Workshop in December 2012
  - d. a possible Indonesian and/

or Global Digital Storytelling Workshop

- e. developing Life Stories Project outputs in 2013 and 2014
- f. a Final Workshop in 2014 or 2015;
3. developing outputs, which include:
  - a. the Viewpoint Document
  - b. a compilation of commissioned papers and an article on the Life Stories methodology
  - c. Life Stories Project outputs (publications featuring stories, legal mapping and socioeconomic data from each country; tools developed in the process; and digital stories)

- d. Q&A booklets on aspects of *qiwamah* and *wilayah*
- e. one-pagers for use in local contexts for capacity building, advocacy and conversation starters
- f. Film/multimedia on women's experiences dealing with the impact of male authority or the absence of a male provider/protector.

Activities undertaken in 2012 included (1) coordination of commissioned research papers; (2) outreach related to the Global Life Stories Project (November 2011-March 2012); (3) the Global Life Stories Project Methodology Workshop in Bali, Indonesia (7-11

April); (4) national-level work and Secretariat support for the Global Life Stories Project (beginning April), and the development of FAQs; (5) the first stages in the development of the Viewpoint Document; and (6) a Mid-Term Review Workshop in Kuala Lumpur (10-14 December). Some key challenges related to the Initiative's immense scale and breadth were resolved in 2012. The Secretariat and certain International Advisory Group (IAG) members concentrated on structure, human resources, and decision-making, while the Knowledge Building Working Group began regular talks focusing on the project. Human resource challenges were overcome with the hiring of key personnel, namely

the Coordinator of the Global Life Stories Project.

## CAPACITY BUILDING

The objective of capacity building is to build a core of Advocates able to (1) share knowledge about the dynamic interactions among the Qur'an, *fiqh* and the rights framework; and (2) advance rights-based arguments grounded in lived realities and an understanding of Islam that upholds equality and justice. In 2012 three categories of training were identified: (1) beginners' training at the national or regional level based on requests from Advocates; (2) a

seven-day Short Course organised by the Secretariat once a year through an open call to Advocates; and (3) Musawah capacity building training to expand the pool of resource persons and facilitators. Participants will be selected from among graduates of earlier training courses or those with advanced knowledge of Islam and women's rights.

Under the 2012-2014 plan for capacity building, the following were proposed for 2012 and 2013: Regional Level Training for South Asia, National Level Training for Afghanistan and a Capacity Building Workshop for Resource Persons and Facilitators. There have also been requests for national/regional-level training to be held for the Horn of Africa, Sudan, Kenya, Mali, Bahrain, Egypt, South Asia and Central Asia.

Logistically, because these training programmes are very resource intensive, fundraising will have to be done by both the Secretariat and Advocates who request for training. There is also an urgent need to build a pool of human resources, in particular those who can serve the Secretariat in coordination as well as curriculum development, and those who can contribute as Resource Persons and Facilitators for the various regions and language requirements.

The capacity building work that took place in 2012 was focused on building the capacity of Musawah Advocates from the 12 countries involved in the Global Life Stories Project so that they could effectively undertake the research and documentation of the lived reality experiences of *qiwamah* and *wilayah*. The first capacity building workshop in Bali, Indonesia (April) focused on the methodology for implementing the Global Life Stories Project. This was followed by a Mid-Term Review Workshop (December), where the platform was given to the Musawah Advocates to share their progress and challenges in implementing the project, as well as discuss the frameworks and methods for the analysis of the collected life stories.

## OUTREACH

The objective of outreach is to build a critical mass of organisations, groups and individuals that support, use, and promote the Musawah Framework for Action and that are empowered to engage in the public discourse on Islam and women's rights.

One initiative undertaken in 2012 involved outreach to South Asia. Other activities focused on responding to requests and queries from various parties, including those interested

in forming Affinity Groups; requests for interviews from researchers and students; academia interest in Musawah; requests for training; and interest in testing the Key Messages Toolkit.

In responding to such requests, we try to establish linkages between national and regional interests, and to identify common issues both thematically and regionally. Through outreach, we identify trends and developments, as well as entry points, individuals and organisations to introduce the Musawah Framework for Action. Challenges include dealing with local contexts and dynamics; determining whether outreach is best driven by Programme Officers or by Advocates; supporting the buildup of Affinity Groups, whether regionally or thematically; and fundraising.

## INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY

Experts, officials, and activists engaged with human rights and women's rights treaty obligations and mechanisms are increasingly familiar with the Musawah Framework for Action and the possibilities for reform towards equality and justice in Muslim families. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against



Participants of the Global Life Stories Project Methodology Workshop in Bali.



Women (CEDAW) is one example; NGOs engaged with the CEDAW process have used the arguments and analyses put forward by Musawah to support their demands for equality and justice in family and marriage.

Identified priorities for international advocacy include: (1) continued engagement with the CEDAW Committee and NGOs from key member countries of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in the CEDAW process; (2) submission of the first Thematic Report on Article 16 on marriage and family relations; (3) strengthening ties and formalising our working relationship with International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAP AP); (4) conducting an assessment of the impact of Musawah work to date; and (5) fundraising. Under the 2012-2014 work plan for international advocacy, the following were proposed:

1. Engagement with the CEDAW process, in particular at the 54th to 57th CEDAW sessions through thematic reports, fact sheets, input into General Recommendations, lunch briefings (several key OIC countries will be reporting at these sessions); updating our report, *CEDAW and Muslim Family Laws: In Search of Common Ground*; and measuring the impact of Musawah

work on the CEDAW process, both at the CEDAW Committee level and with NGOs preparing shadow reports.

2. Engagement with the UN Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice, and the OIC Permanent Commission on Human Rights.
3. Possible development of two training modules: (1) a module incorporating the Musawah Framework and CEDAW research findings into IWRAP AP training module; and (2) a module incorporating an international advocacy component into the Musawah Short Course.

There has been growing recognition and respect for our work and message, especially by the CEDAW Committee and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). We are regularly invited to provide training and give briefings. Our report, *CEDAW and Muslim Family Laws: In Search of Common Ground*, is used as a resource and has been translated into Arabic. We have been able to build partnerships and positive rapport with key players such as IWRAP AP, OHCHR and the CEDAW Committee. We have also been able to attract the talent needed to strengthen the work of the International Advocacy Working Group.



The electronic version of Musawah's *Strategic Direction* was launched in 2012.

## COMMUNICATIONS

The overall objectives of the Musawah Communications unit are to (1) support Musawah areas of work through communications; (2) support and contribute effectively to movement building and (3) help raise the global visibility of Musawah.

To support knowledge building, the Communications unit publicised the Qiwanah and Wilayah Initiative electronically and through online collaborations. Issues 8, 9 and 10 of the Musawah newsletter *Musawah Vision* were also disseminated electronically.

To support outreach efforts, Musawah's *Strategic Direction* and the Musawah Visionaries Programme were launched electronically, and the Musawah Introductory PowerPoint was shared with message multipliers. Under the Musawah Visionaries Programme, students, journalists and allies report to Musawah on changes in their local contexts; their updates are then published in *Musawah Vision*.

To assist efforts in international advocacy, several documents were made available electronically, including *CEDAW and Muslim Family Laws: In Search of Common Ground* (in English and Arabic), and Musawah Factsheets on Jordan and Indonesia.



The *Toolkit for Advocates* will be disseminated electronically to help Advocates draw on the movement's key messages for their work.

An article for the digital commons website openDemocracy.net helped to popularise the Musawah Framework for Action.

Specific objectives below were met with various communications tools and programmes:

1. Provide portals and platforms that enable Advocates to dialogue with each other, and track user behaviour patterns and effectiveness of strategies: The new website, launched in March, features more robust security and integrated web analytics, which show that new visitors make up approximately

70% of total visits. Our knowledge resources are also more accessible to the public, with *Wanted: Equality and Justice in the Muslim Family* being the most downloaded publication. Besides the website, Musawah also has an active social media presence that indicates that we are increasingly reaching the silent majority on various issues.

2. Develop and circulate resources that provide Advocates with messages and languages that support their national level advocacy: Musawah's *Strategic Direction* is now disseminated electronically. *Wanted* was translated into three languages and disseminated in print and online versions. The Framework for Action is being translated into Urdu, thanks to one Advocate's own initiative. The Musawah newsletter *Musawah Vision* now goes out to a mailing list of 684 recipients. The Key Messages Toolkit will be disseminated electronically.
3. Actively engage Advocates to generate and disseminate Musawah knowledge, by developing communications capacities, matching formats with audiences and supporting the building of linkages.
4. Identify global trends in family laws and areas for pro-active Musawah work.

Musawah has grown increasingly visible, with more and more instances of prominent personalities referring to the movement at high-profile events.

Future plans include the second phase of web development which will incorporate e-commerce features to facilitate donations and further social media integration; an online digital life stories tapestry/map in line with the *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah* Initiative; repackaging and repurposing Musawah resources (e.g. offering the SIS/ Musawah Short Course in electronic format); launching diverse social media campaigns; continuing to evaluate Advocates' needs and capacities in order to strengthen their advocacy efforts; and continuing to identify global trends in family laws and areas for pro-active Musawah work.

## SECRETARIAT AND RESOURCE MOBILISATION

### Secretariat transition

Musawah's rotating Secretariat ensures that as a global movement, Musawah grows in diverse cultural and political contexts. The rotating structure also offers leadership opportunities to more Advocates. Since Musawah was launched in 2009, the

Secretariat has been based at SIS' office in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia. The transition of the Secretariat from SIS to Cairo, Egypt will take place starting in 2014.

We will also register Musawah as a separate entity, either as a private limited company registered with the Companies Commission Malaysia, or as an international society registered with the Registrar of Societies.

### Resource mobilisation

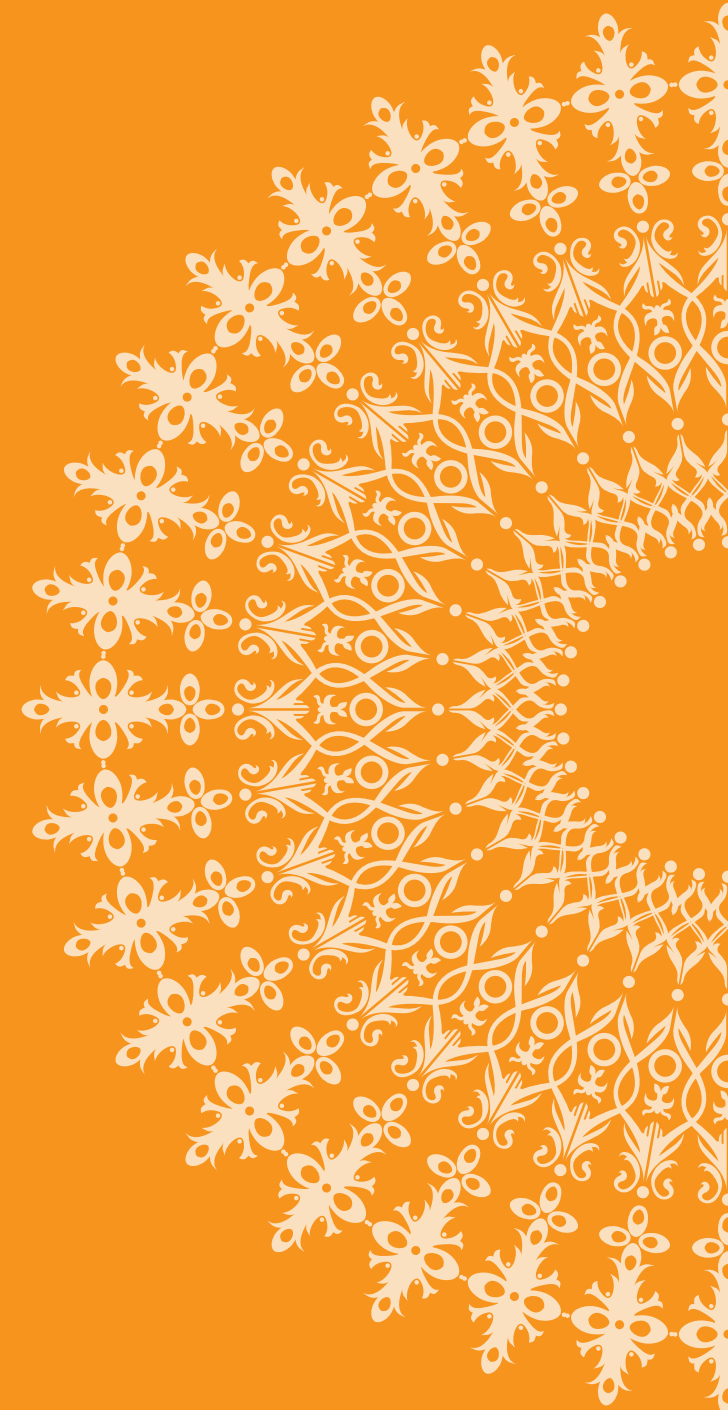
Resource mobilisation remains a key priority for Musawah. Under the 2012-2014 plan for resource mobilisation, one of our top priorities was to engage a consultant who would help us (1) draw up a document detailing Musawah's resource mobilisation principles and strategy; (2) research and complete a database of potential donors for Musawah comprising both the corporate sector and individual donors; (3) draw up a range of options for raising funds through membership, service-delivery/user-fees, merchandise, etc. and (4) write a funding application that includes resources to pay for a full-time Resource Mobilisation Officer (RMO) for Musawah.

In 2012, after seeking expert fundraisers' inputs on strategies, qualities and job scopes of the RMO and

the consultant, we made a final decision on the selection of consultant; Usha Menon, a non-profit (NPO) management and fundraising expert with experience and expertise in fundraising and training for NPOs in Asia and the Pacific, was contracted to (1) develop a three-year Resource Mobilisation Strategy and (2) recommend goals, related tactics and staffing needs.

Moving forward in taking up the recommendations of the consultant, Musawah has to include plans for hiring of an RMO, forming a Resource Mobilisation Working Group and further developing the Resource Mobilisation Strategy. A key recommendation was setting a target of raising an average of US\$1 million annually for the next three years. To achieve this, Musawah has to (1) set up a committee of 6-8 well-connected and committed members; (2) craft the case for support and apply effective donor communications and messaging; (3) target high-level individual gifts; (4) develop a flagship event to raise funds and (5) develop comprehensive donor communications and a recognition plan to engage and motivate private supporters.

# OPERATIONS





# ADMINISTRATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES

## Staffing the organisation

At the end of 2012, the organisation comprised 5 Board members, 14 permanent staff, and 5 part-time/contract staff. Five interns assisted us in 2012.

### Staff strength by unit



SIS has 14 permanent staff and 5 part-time/contract staff.

## Activities

In 2012 the Operations unit was responsible for managing a wide range of SIS events, as well as coordinating opportunities for SIS staff to engage in activities beyond the organisation.

**SIS initiatives.** As in previous years, the Operations unit this year worked closely with SIS’ other units to coordinate many of the events and activities described in this Review. The requirements varied tremendously, depending on the initiative. Activities took place at SIS as well as at other venues, with

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.

## Extending the organisation

At the end of 2012, there were 28 members, 2 associate members, 18 Friends of SIS and 16 volunteers.



SIS members are accepted based on demanding membership criteria; new members must 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 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 our newsletter and are invited to study sessions and other activities.

the scale ranging from one-to-one encounters to events involving large numbers of participants.

**Other activities.** Besides supporting the specific initiatives spearheaded by the other units, the Operations unit also coordinated organisation-wide events and get-togethers. In 2012, these included a garage sale (8 April); SIS Buka Puasa (14 August); and SIS Hari Raya Pot Luck Lunch (30 August). SIS was also invited by filmmaker Namewee to a screening of his movie *Hantu Gangster* on 3 September.

**Visits, networking and meetings.** In 2012 these included:

- **Visits to SIS.** SIS welcomed academics, students, journalists and NGO representatives from around the world who visited SIS to find out more about our work, conduct interviews with SIS staff and strengthen ties. Notable visitors included Shaista Gohir, Chair of Muslim Women’s Network, Canada’s Special Envoy for Commonwealth Renewal Senator Hugh Segal, UNDP Gender Team

Director Winnie Byanyima and Dr Ahmad Farouk Musa of the Islamic Renaissance Front.

- **Networking.** Throughout the year we took the opportunity to expand our network at the numerous events to which we were invited, including national day celebrations hosted by embassies, lunches, open houses and other social events.
- **E&P and other meetings.** At the Evaluation and Planning Meeting (E&P) held every fourth quarter, all units in the organisation come together to review and plan on a yearly basis. The E&P provides an opportunity for staff to reflect on where SIS has been, where it should be headed and how best to get there. This year SIS held its 12th E&P on 3-4 November. In 2012 the Operations unit also organised four board meetings and the Annual General Meeting. Numerous meetings with current and prospective funders were arranged throughout the year. SIS staff also participated in many meetings with other organisations.

**Participation in external events.** In line with our “masterbrand” value of constant pursuit of knowledge, members and staff attended numerous talks, public forums, conferences, workshops and training sessions.

Besides attending as participants, we were frequently involved as paper presenters, panel speakers and trainers.

**New premises.** In November, we moved to our new premises located at No. 4, Lorong 11/8E, Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia.

Staff development and wellness programmes

Staff in all units regularly undergo training programmes to help build capacity and improve skills. In 2012 two capacity-building sessions were conducted (17-18 January and 15 February). Within the Operations unit, training sessions included training related to the new payroll system and the Quickbooks accounting system installed this year, sessions by the Employees Provident Fund and a fundraising workshop at Women’s Aid Organisation (WAO).

In keeping with our commitment to staff wellbeing, we organised events throughout the year aimed at creating an optimal work environment. Yoga classes were held Mondays and Thursdays. Nasi Bungkus Lunches (informal discussions held during lunch hour) saw staff and members sharing experiences from study trips as well as fundraising, the latter in a three-part

series covering fundraising techniques for website, social media and face-to-face fundraising. Other events included a session for staff on Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) by life coach Anne Munro-Kua, a writing class conducted by Zainah Anwar and a session entitled “Reconnecting Ourselves” by holistic therapist Hafsa Hasan.

Thanksgiving, memorial and other prayers held for SIS members, staff and friends included *majlis yasin, tahlil dan doa selamat* (23 March), *tahlil arwah* and *tahlil kesyukuran*.

GOVERNANCE

SIS’ Board of Directors met four times in 2012; the Annual General Meeting was held on 16 June. The Board carried out routine governance as well as governance on crisis issues, per the Board’s Terms of Reference. Policies concerning staff work conditions, entitlements, financial guidelines and office procedures are reviewed regularly.

FINANCE AND FUNDRAISING

The objectives of the Operations unit with regard to finance and fundraising are to (1) ensure the sustainability of the organisation; (2) ensure the continued

flow of grants annually to enhance SIS’ financial stability; (3) practise accountability to the SIS Board, SIS members, funders and donors; and (4) optimise the use of resources.

In 2012 we continued to pursue as many new ways as we could think of to supplement our traditional and ongoing fundraising efforts. SIS collaborated with award-winning theatre company Instant Café Theatre to organise a fundraising performance of *Nadirah* (6 November). Written by Alfian Sa’at and directed by Jo Kukathas, the play touches on the issue of inter-faith marriages. A fundraising video is currently being developed, and numerous meetings with current and prospective fundraisers were arranged. Fundraising techniques were also shared with all SIS staff over a series of Nasi Bungkus Lunches.

For the financial year ending 31 December 2012, revenue totalled RM2,781,021, while expenses totalled RM2,549,171. Restricted funds from international donors were the most significant form of revenue.

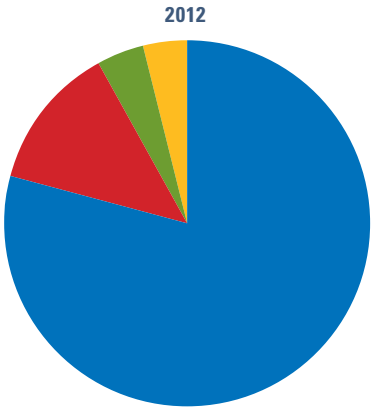
Income and expenditure

	2012 RM	2011 RM
Total revenue	2,781,021	1,917,049
Total expenses	2,549,171	2,271,762

Sources of revenue

	2012 RM	2011 RM
Restricted funds - international donors	2,208,770	1,162,030
Restricted funds - local donors	350,000	350,000
Unrestricted funds - donations	116,296	271,081
Unrestricted funds - other income	105,955	133,938
Total	2,781,021	1,917,049

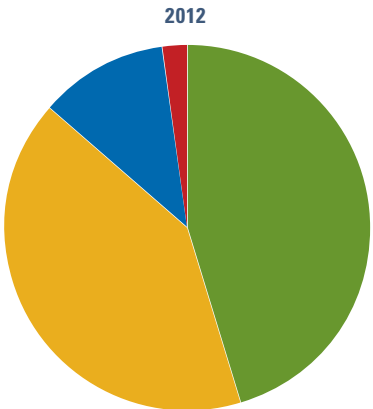
- Restricted funds - international donors
- Restricted funds - local donors
- Unrestricted funds - donations
- Unrestricted funds - other income



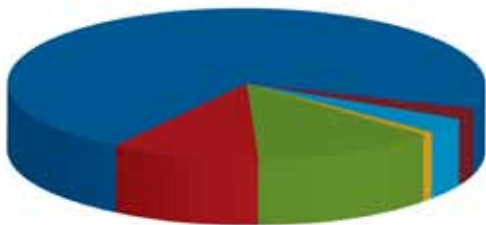
Operating expenses

	2012 RM	2011 RM
Administration and finance	287,295	205,461
Institution building and network	54,882	43,658
Personnel	1,157,488	1,003,219
Programmes	1,049,506	1,019,424
Total	2,549,171	2,271,762

- Administration and finance
- Institution building and network
- Personnel
- Programmes



Programmes



- Musawah
- National advocacy
- Public education
- Publication and Resource Centre
- Campaign programmes
- Legal programmes

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 with 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 No 4, Lorong 11/8E, 46200 Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan, MALAYSIA or email us at sistersinislam@pd.jaring.my. Our volunteer and FOSIS forms are also available on our website www.sistersinislam.org.my.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Contributors
- All SIS staff
- Editorial content and design
- Salt Media Group Sdn Bhd
- Funders
- Friends of Sisters in Islam

THE SIS ORGANISATION IN 2012

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

Executive Director  
**Ratna Osman**

Managers  
**Hairun Nisa Abu Bakar** (Operations), **Rozana Mohd Isa** (Programme Coordinator, Musawah Secretariat), **Suriani Kempe** (Advocacy, Legal Services & Public Education), **Zainah Anwar** (Part-time Project Director, Musawah Secretariat)

Senior Programme Officer  
**Azareena Abd Aziz** (Advocacy, Legal Services & Public Education; effective May 2012), **Hartini Abdullah** (Finance), **Syarifatul Adibah Mohammad Jodi** (Communications, Research & Publications)

Officers  
**Gnei Meghana Bahar** (Communications, Musawah Secretariat), **Kartina** (Advocacy, Legal Services & Public Education), **Nooradila Abd Aziz** (Musawah Secretariat), **Noor Akmal Zulkifli** (Communications, Research & Publications; until Jul 2012), **Noorulhuda Mohd Noor** (Communications, Research & Publications), **Nur Azrine Abd Razak** (Advocacy, Legal Services & Public Education), **Nur Liyana bt Mohamed Akbar** (Finance & Operations)

Programme Assistants  
**Hernani Jaapar** (Finance & Operations), **Norhaslinda Abu Hassan** (Communications, Research & Publications)



**A good day for freedom of expression.**  
On 27 July the Court of Appeal upheld an earlier court decision to lift the ban on SIS’ book, *Muslim Women and the Challenge of Islamic Extremism*. (L-R) Masjaliza Hamzah, Zainah Anwar, lawyer K. Shanmuga, Suriani Kempe (partly hidden), Prof Norani Othman and Syarifatul Adibah Mohammad Jodi. (see pages 8 and 28) (Photo courtesy of Malaysiakini)

**SIS Forum (Malaysia)**

(266561W)

No 4, Lorong 11/8E, 46200 Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan, MALAYSIA.  
Tel: +603 7960 3357, +603 7960 5121, +603 7960 6733 • Fax: +603 7960 8737  
Email: [sistersinislam@pd.jaring.my](mailto:sistersinislam@pd.jaring.my)

**[www.sistersinislam.org.my](http://www.sistersinislam.org.my)**