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

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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’ Telunisa 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 on 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, 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.

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 manifests 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) and the largest civil society group and endorsed 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 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 21 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 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 21 Publications. Social media channels were set up and an infographic video completed.

In early 2012, JAG started more earnest discussions with the National Registration Department. A final workshop (14-15 July) studied the impact of the Federal and state level laws (e.g. JAKIM and the Shariah 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 alliance.”

Illegal” 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 “illegal” 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 “bin/binti 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 ‘illegal’ 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 Abdin 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 Abdin 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 Abdin’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.”
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and Zaina Abdin’s lawyers filed an appeal which in February 2012 remitted the case to the High Court to 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 2002, Zaina Abdin, whose identity card states that he is Muslim, has continued to practice Hinduism. Zaina Abdin himself was raised a Hindu and brought up his three children as Hindus. Since 2002, Zaina Abdin, whose identity card states that he is Muslim, has continued to practice Hinduism.

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.

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Capital FM Legal Hour. In 2012 SIS was invited by the Asian 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, 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 Kathakas. An analogy between unwanted buildings and old women won the Foot in Mouth award, while the Least Helpful Teenage Boys of the Year 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 to not 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 the facto law minister Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz to explain our position and hand over the petition.

- **Hudud.** In September 2011, former Perlis multi-associate Professor Dr Mohd Asri Zainul Abidin made a statement in which he said hudud law was not suitable for the Malaysian context. He said, “We are against hudud because the effects are so devastating?”

- **Children’s rights.** In 2012, the Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ), sociopolitical blog Loyar Burok 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 Shariah 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 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 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 (GAHII) 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 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.
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 facilitators who visited SIS for a quick introduction to the organisation. 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); 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. As 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 Telesina 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 course) 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 Jenia-Jenia 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 Mufri Dr Juanda Jaya, Chief Justice of the Terengganu Shar’ah Court Dato’ Ismail Yahya and noted lawyer Nizam Bashir. There were suggestions to draw on the names of the children in question. Yahya and noted lawyer Nizam Bashir. There were suggestions to draw on the names of the children in question. Yahya and noted lawyer Nizam Bashir. There were suggestions to draw on the names of the children in question. Yahya and noted lawyer Nizam Bashir. There were suggestions to draw on the names of the children in question. Yahya and noted lawyer Nizam Bashir. There were suggestions to draw on the names of the children in question.

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.

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

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Muslim Legal Tradition and the Challenge of Inequality by Ziba Mir-Hosseini. This workshop (28-27 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 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.
Advocacy, Legal Services and Public Education

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

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 and Marital Relations in Muslim Polygamous Families, an Advanced Shari’ah and Gender workshop and an Advanced Shari’ah and Gender Workshop for youths.

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.

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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 Jen-Nika, 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 Dahul, 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, 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. Those 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.

B. Participation in Global Life Stories
  • 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 shar’i concepts such as qiwamah and wilayah and their implications on Muslim marriages. The forum was extended thanks to the use of social media to promote the event. The diverse group of 77 participants included many first-timers to SIS events.
We envision that the knowledge building team will consist of several different groupings working together with different levels of participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE CORE TEAM</th>
<th>SUPPORTING TEAM MEMBERS</th>
<th>PARTNER ORGANISATIONS</th>
<th>SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS</th>
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<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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 this outputs of the project, and we will tap our panel of legal experts and academics who are well-versed in Islamic law.</td>
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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 Oman), Ombak Hairan dalam? (Rosana Isla), Dignity is under-rated (Vivienne Lee), Eight reasons why books are under-rated (Vivienne Lee), These included: My personal journey to Sisters in Islam (Ratna Oman), Ombak Hairan dalam? (Rosana Isla), Dignity is under-rated (Vivienne Lee), Eight reasons why books are under-rated (Vivienne Lee), 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 Oman), Ombak Hairan dalam? (Rosana Isla), Dignity is under-rated (Vivienne Lee), Eight reasons why books are under-rated (Vivienne Lee), 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 Oman), Ombak Hairan dalam? (Rosana Isla), Dignity is under-rated (Vivienne Lee), Eight reasons why books are under-rated (Vivienne Lee), 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 Oman), Ombak Hairan dalam? (Rosana Isla), Dignity is under-rated (Vivienne Lee), Eight reasons why books are under-rated (Vivienne Lee).
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24 SEP
“JAG argues judiciary to clarify judgement.” On the Court of Appeal’s decision to overturn an earlier High Court decision sentencing national bowler Noor Afizal Azizan to five years in jail for statutory rape, JAG is troubled as it is 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 with freedom of expression. We must be able to openly discuss, without fear, critical issues that offend the fundamental premise of the UDHR – that everyone is born free and equal in dignity and rights.”

23 SEP
Shari’ah Court fails to protect and safeguard Muslim girls. JAG strongly condemns the Government’s move to reverse a High Court decision sentencing aishah Sauraiy 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 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 believes the Government’s move to introduce new rape codes that will legalise statutory rape, which allows judges to impose a bond of good behaviour as an alternative to a fine or a binding over sentence for the perpetrator. “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.”

9 NOV
Freedom of religion. JAG applauds the shaharuddin attack on MPs Nural Izral Amrak on his posting on freedom of religion.

5 NOV
“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.” JAG, 5 November

23 NOV
Press statements 2012

24 AUG
10 AUG
9 AUG
Press statements 2012

23 JUN
Government appeal on KL High Court decision on SIS bill. 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 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.”

21 APR
20 APR
JAG goes open letter to the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM). JAG is disappointed at comments made by SUHAKAM Chairperson Tan Sri Hazlina Hussain, 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 on 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.”

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 Rais Adiba Mohd Radzi and Ampang MP Zuraida Kamaruddin. Rais Adiba had reportedly been suspended by NETV for cropping her hair in support of Makin’s (National Cancer Council of Malaysia) Jom Botak cancer awareness campaign. She had also received anonymous calls which referred to a 19-year-old child who had been sent to the knuckles. Zuraida had been accused of behaving 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.”

23 JUN
A government essay on the 20 August Supreme Court decision on SIS book. JAG 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 on 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 Marriage Act, and the Government’s move to reverse the 25 June court decision freezing the 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.”

JAG statement on attacks against Ambiga Sreenevasan. JAG is alarmed at the escalating level of attacks toward its senior lawyer and human rights activist Datuk’ Ambiga Sreenevasan. 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.

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 Rais Adiba Mohd Radzi and Ampang MP Zuraida Kamaruddin. Rais Adiba had reportedly been suspended by NETV for cropping her hair in support of Makin’s (National Cancer Council of Malaysia) Jom Botak cancer awareness campaign. She had also received anonymous calls which referred to a 19-year-old child who had been sent to the knuckles. Zuraida had been accused of behaving 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.”

27 JUL
A good day for freedom of expression. SIS lauds the Court of Appeal’s judgement to overturn an earlier High Court decision reversing 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.”

2 APR
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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 Sharifah, Gender and Human Rights was conducted on 8 December for approximately 20 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 allies 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, 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 academics, 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 5,866 likes, while our Twitter followers numbered 7,067.

Fundingraise 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 activists and how SIS works to resolve their plight. There will be a 30-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
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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 (“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.
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 network; 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
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)

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 grassroot 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 for more information.
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 South Asia, National Level Training for Africa, and a Mid-Term Review Workshop in Kuala Lumpur (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; outreach 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 treaties, 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...
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 of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in the CEDAW process; (3) possible development of two training modules: (1) a module incorporating the Musawah Framework and CEDAW research findings into IRAW 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 IRAW 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.

3. Possible development of two training

modules: (1) a module incorporating the Musawah Framework and CEDAW research findings into IRAW 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 IRAW 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.

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 Qiwamah 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.

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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 proactive 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.
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Staff Strength</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SIS</td>
<td>14 permanent staff and 5 part-time/contract staff.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 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 Hari Raya Pot Luck Lunch (30 August). SIS was also invited by filmmaker Namee 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 Shamsa 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 came 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 dalam (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 (16 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>2012 RM</th>
<th>2011 RM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restricted funds - international donors</td>
<td>2,300,776</td>
<td>1,962,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted funds - local donors</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>350,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted funds - donations</td>
<td>116,230</td>
<td>271,081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted funds - other income</td>
<td>105,955</td>
<td>132,836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2,781,021</td>
<td>1,917,049</td>
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</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>2012 RM</th>
<th>2011 RM</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration and finance</td>
<td>367,301</td>
<td>305,441</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institution building and network</td>
<td>54,882</td>
<td>43,585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>1,157,488</td>
<td>1,003,219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmes</td>
<td>1,049,505</td>
<td>1,018,424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2,549,171</td>
<td>2,271,762</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Administration and finance
Institution building and network
Personnel
Programmes

Programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>2012 RM</th>
<th>2011 RM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Musawah</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>National advocacy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Public education</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Musawah
National advocacy
Public education

2012
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, 48200 Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan, MALAYSIA or email us at sistersinslam@pd.jaring.my. Our volunteer and FOSIS forms are also available on our website www.sistersinslam.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 Zaikilli (Communications, Research & Publications; until Jul 2012), Noorshulhuda Mshd 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 ruled in 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)
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