



Singapore Council of
Women's Organisations

Annual Report 2004-2005

13th SCWO Board

President's Report



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President	Tisa Ng
1st Vice President	Wee Wan Joo
2nd Vice President	Susie Kong
3rd Vice President	Sakina Kagda
Honorary General Secretary	Sue Wong
Asst. Honorary General Secretary	Alex Hope
Honorary Treasurer	Ramesh Ramachandra
Asst. Honorary Treasurer	Geri Wong
Member	Brenda Goh
Member	Ling-Saw Wei-Ying
Member	Braema Mathiapparanam
Member	Arfat Selvam
Member	Jennie Yeo
Immediate Past President	Jennifer Lee

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It gives me great pleasure to report on the work of the 13th Board of the SCWO in the past year, from June 2004 to June 2005. Building on the good work done by the previous Board, this year has been characterised by continuity and consolidation. In particular, we have focussed on deepening our engagement with member organisations, and enhancing our on-going dialogue with the National Machinery for the advancement of women, the Women's Desk of the Ministry of Community Development Youth and Sports.

1 Major Events

2005 is a very special year for us, marking two important milestones. They have therefore taken the lion's share of our attention for a major part of the period under review.

1.1 25th Anniversary of the SCWO

1.1.1 International Women's Day

We celebrated our quarter-century on International Women's Day 2005 at a Gala Dinner, with President S R Nathan and SCWO Patron Mrs Nathan as Guests of Honour. 45 member organisations were represented. We are most grateful for their active participation. We also were honoured by the presence of 6 Past Presidents at the head table, which allowed us to acknowledge the contributions made by previous SCWO Boards and volunteers. A highlight of the evening was the roll call of member organisations, which resulted in a most impressive line-up of women leaders.

Funds were raised to support five worthy projects/programmes: to enhance counselling capabilities at AWARE, to provide skills training for foreign workers at UNIFEM; and to support education and awareness raising on the rights of woman according to the precepts of Islam by the YWMA. Two other beneficiaries were the STAR Shelter and the Singapore Women's Everest Team 2008.

The Board wishes to acknowledge its appreciation for all the support received from member organisations, and for the efforts of the Organising Committee, chaired by IPP Jennifer Lee, in the planning and execution of this gala event.

1.1.2 Commemorative Publication – *HERSTORY*

A generously illustrated book entitled *HerStory* was published in March 2005 to review the status and condition of women in Singapore. SCWO Past President Constance Singam provided a historic perspective, SCWO Volunteer Debbie Chia completed the review with a speculative look into the future. Essays by over 30 women spanning 5 decades in age were in four central sections, which trace the progression of a woman's life from infancy to age. They cover topics ranging from mothering and careers to finance and sexuality.

The editorial purpose was to be as inclusive as possible, in order to reflect the diversity of views and interests represented in the SCWO network. Contributors included members of **AWARE, AWWA, FLAG, IWF, NS, NTUC/WPC, SAFV, SAPES, SNA, TSAO Foundation, UNIFEM, UWAS, YMWA, and ZONTA.**

HerStory is a significant addition to local publications on women's issues, and is available from the SCWO and in all major bookstores.

We are grateful to all contributors; to the designers: Raindance; to the publisher: World Scientific Publications; to our sponsors; and to all those who made the publication possible.

1.1.3 Updating the SCWO Logo

With increasing engagement with stakeholders and external partners, the SCWO logo is often used together with many other well-designed insignia. To enhance its presence and to strengthen brand recognition of the acronym, the SCWO logo was updated and simplified.

Key aspects of the old logo were retained: the female symbol and the laurel leaf - symbolising the organisation's commitment to women and its dedication to excellence. A strong horizontal stroke extending along the entire length signifies the SCWO's mission to bring together, support, and provide a platform for member organisations.

1.2 10 Year Review of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA)

The BPFA, adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, is considered one of the most important documents for the advancement of women. It calls upon "Governments, the international community and civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector...to take strategic action" on:

1. The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women
2. Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to education and training
3. Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to health care and related services
4. Violence against women
5. The effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation
6. Inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources
7. Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels
8. Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women
9. Lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of the human rights of women
10. Stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media
11. Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment
12. Persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl child"

1.2.1 At National Level

Leadership (7) and economic empowerment (1) were two major thrusts of our programmatic activity. To level the playing field and advance towards gender equality, we adopted strategic engagement of men. We continued to be engaged on the issue of abuse (4, 9) both at the STAR shelter and in collaboration with members and external parties.

Reference will be made to these areas of focus in the report on activities in Para 3.

1.2.2 At Regional Level

We participated in the Asia Pacific NGO Forum convened in Bangkok, 1–3 Jul 2004, to revisit the 12 critical areas of concern, track gains accomplished and identify remaining gaps. Attended by some 700 NGO representatives, the Forum reaffirmed commitment to the BPFA amidst crises caused by neo-liberal globalisation, militarisms and extremisms. The official outcome of the Forum was "The Purple Book", intended for reference in further advocacy for the advancement of women.

The SCWO was present as NGO partner to the Official Delegation at the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the BPFA and its Regional and Global Outcomes. The meeting was convened by UNESCAP in Bangkok, 7-10

September 2004.

In the period leading up to March 2005, we contributed to numerous surveys and fact-finding exercises of regional networks, including those of the Asia Pacific Women's Watch and the ASEAN Confederation of Women's Organisations. This allowed us to ensure that a Singapore's perspective was reflected.

1.2.3 At International Level

The SCWO was witness to the re-affirmation of the BPFA at the 49th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women from 28th February 2005. This was one of the most important gatherings to address outstanding issues on the advancement of women. Many countries sent high-level official delegations. Official proceedings were augmented by a plethora of NGO forums and networking opportunities. Global networks of women's organisations accredited to the UN were present in force, as were representatives of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

2 On-Going Programmes and Services (pl refer to reports under Agenda 7)

2.1 IT Hub

We would like to thank the dedicated IT Hub Committee for sustaining a full and friendly programme of training and empowerment in IT capabilities, with a special vote of thanks the Chair, Esther Pung.

2.2 STAR Shelter

We welcomed a new Management Committee, and have pleasure in placing on record our appreciation for the tireless care and attention of its Chair, 1st VP Wee Wan Joo.

2.3 New2U

In addition to generating much appreciated revenue, New2U was an effective way of engaging members of the public who otherwise have very little contact with the SCWO. We would like to place on record our appreciation to all the volunteers who have made this possible, and especially co-ordinators Angela Stevens and Robyn Castles.

2.4 Hani's Café

The welcoming ambience and delicious food at the Café attracted visitors to the Centre who might not otherwise know about the SCWO. It was also most helpful in catering for events held in the Centre.

3 Activities

3.1 Events and Programmes

The monthly series of "Conversations with Uncommon Women" continued to be a great success. The distinguished roster of speakers inspired their audiences and helped to make new friends for the SCWO. (BPFA 7)

In June 2004, we hosted a closed-door discussion on issues of age and income security with MPs and Senior Officials in conjunction with the **Tsao Foundation**. (BPFA 1)

In July 2004, the STAR Shelter and **AWARE** collaborated in a 'Stop Violence in the Home' campaign initiated by the Body Shop, to raise awareness of family violence in Singapore and to raise funds. The programme continued through to the end of the year, and raised about \$28,000 for each partner organization. (BPFA 4 & 9)

In October 2004, a closed-door discussion on the government's report to CEDAW was organised at the request of and in conjunction with the Women's Desk of MYCS. The report is available on line and from the SCWO.

Also in October 2004, we organised a public seminar on Work Life Harmony for dual income families in conjunction with MCYS and the Centre for Fathering. This was one of the SCWO's strategic collaborations with men, to encourage equal partnership between men and women in all spheres. We are grateful to Nancy Frohman of **PrimeTime** for her leadership in organising the Seminar. (BPFA 7 & 1)

In November 2004, in association with **UNIFEM** Singapore and the Asia Europe Foundation, a forum on Gender and Political Representation was organized to discuss the need for diversity and equitable representation in national leadership. (BPFA 7)

In December 2004, we hosted a discussion on HIV/AIDS with **UNIFEM** and Action for Aids, which highlighted the vulnerability of married women in general, and 'foreign brides' in particular. (BPFA 9)

In March 2005, MYCS set up six workgroups on women: Leadership and Mentoring, Micro-Enterprise and Social Enterprise, Work Life Balance, Women and Health, Reskilling (IT/Financial Literacy) Volunteerism and Philanthropy. The work groups draw heavily on leaders within the SCWO network, including several Board members. The SCWO also provided a briefing on Women and Volunteerism for the sixth group, and conducted a survey of volunteerism amongst member organisations. We are grateful for all responses received.

In April 2005, we organised a Seminar entitled 'Dear Dad', in conjunction with the Swedish Embassy and MCYS. An all male panel and guest Chair, addressed a largely male audience on the role of men in parenting and professional child-care. This was followed by the opening of 'Dear Child' (29 April to 22 May), an exhibition of photographs of men and children by Swedish photographer Ulla Lemberg, to pay tribute to 'the sons of the women's movement'. Mrs Yu Foo Yee Shoon, officially opened the exhibition.

3.2 External Partners

The Women and Sports Group (**WSG**) of the Singapore Sports Council has continued to be very supportive of the SCWO, and to provide special assistance for our sporting activities. We were happy to continue this excellent relationship. The SCWO is represented on the WSG by 1st VP Wee Wan Joo.

The Consumers' Association of Singapore (**CASE**) has identified 'beauty' services as a possible source of concern, and has sought our collaboration in forthcoming educational programmes.

3.3 International Liaison

As a member of the ASEAN Confederation of Women's Organisation and the International Council Of Women's Organisations, we continued to support meetings and activities of these networks. We attended the ACWO General Assembly 8-11 July 2004 in Bangkok, where the Singapore delegation included 4 members of the Queenstown CC WEC (**PA WIN Council**) and Rosie Nakoda (**UWAS**) presented an excellent paper on *Women on Economy, Poverty, Empowerment and Education*. The SCWO was also represented at the first ICW Asia Pacific Regional Seminar 2-4 November, in Auckland.

As NGO partner to National Machinery for the Advancement of Women, the SCWO was represented at meetings of the APEC Women Leaders Network in Chile 28 Sep-1 Oct 2004, and the Asean Committee on Women in Myanmar 28 Nov-2 Dec 2004.

We also collaborated on hosting an ACW ITC workshop for 50 delegates 24-27 Aug, 2004. The support of the IT Hub Committee in this programme is much appreciated.

In addition to the official networks, we have accepted the invitation of McMaster University to collaborate on a 3rd International Conference on "The Impact of Global Issues on Women and Children" in Dhaka, 12-16 Feb 2006. Our immediate commitment is limited to circulating information to interested parties in Singapore. The information has already been posted on the website and included in a regular e-blast to members.

In the course of the year, we received visitors from neighbouring countries and well as specialists from farther a field. The list of visitors is at Annex.

3.4 Fellowship

In August 2004, Presidents of 40 member organisations attended the first Presidents' Lunch in the period under review. They received updates of SCWO activities and services, and storage facilities for members were developed as an outcome of discussion.

Bowling Clinics commenced in May 2004 and in September, a record 116 participants formed 29 teams to compete in the SCWO Bowling Tournament. The champion team was from Joo Chiat WEC. Congratulations! Thanks to 2nd VP Susie Kong for leading the organisation of this popular event for a second year running.

In December 2004, we gathered for a Year End Party, complete with Santa hats and elves in attendance, courtesy of SCWO staff. Also in December, we conducted a Donation Draw, which yielded \$20,000.

In April 2005, a second Presidents' Lunch was hosted, at which the results of our web surveys were shared, and we received an update of the Tsunami relief operations from the Singapore International Foundation.

4 Membership

In the year under review, we received notice of withdrawal from St. Margaret's Ex-Students Association, and welcomed the following new members:

1. Federation of Business and Professional Women (Ordinary Member)
2. Network of Women in the Shell Group of Companies (Associate Member)
3. Tsao Foundation (Friend of SCWO)
4. Radin Mas Women & Aging Centre (Friend of SCWO)

5 SCWO Centre

An average of around 45 events or activities are held in the SCWO's training rooms each month, representing about 30% occupancy. As a convenient and easily accessible venue there is potential to make the building a bustling hub of activities for women and women's organisations.

We accepted an invitation from the URA to participate in the Community Art Project, in which students from the Fine Arts Department of our neighbours at NAFA proposed several mural designs for our wall facing Waterloo Street. The winning design was executed and launched on 23 Oct 2004.

Working with another neighbour, we have undertaken a review of materials contained in the FA Chua Library, guided by an expert from the National Library and assisted by volunteers from Raffles Girls' School.

To make good general wear and tear, and to improve the appearance of the rear of the building, which abuts on to a public courtyard at NAFA, renovation works began in May, with completion by July.

6 Staffing

In the year under review, we received the resignation of Operations Executive Ms Joan Goh, and recruited Ms Lim Ee Wan in the portfolio.

General Manager Ms Selina Gan, tendered her resignation in April. We were sorry to lose her. We remain deeply appreciative of the good work that she has done during her tenure, and in particular the way in which she has made the SCWO a warm and welcoming place. The response to our advertisement for the post was most encouraging. 65 applications were received. The Search Committee interviewed 14 candidates and selected Ms Michelle Chan, who will join the SCWO as General Manager on 1st July 2005.

In the interim, Hon Secy Susie Wong has been holding the fort, visiting the office every day to oversee smooth running of the SCWO's administration and daily operations, organising Board Meetings and the Annual General Meeting. We are truly indebted to her.

7 In The Coming Year

7.1 On-Going Activities

The months ahead promise to be as busy as ever:

- Conversations With Uncommon Women will continue to be a staple in our calendar of activities
- Continuing the collaboration with member organisations, AWARE and the TSAO Foundation will share the findings of their research on Women and Economic Security with SCWO members and discuss the implications in July 2005.
- A second Work/Life Seminar for dual income families is scheduled October 2005, to continue our engagement of men, working in partnership. This will again be organised in conjunction with MCYS
- In December 2005, we will organise a get-together to celebrate the friendship and support in the SCWO network.

7.2 New Initiatives

Work has already commenced on the following:

- Corporate Social Responsibility/Consumer Task Force
Headed by Alex Hope, this is a new initiative to raise awareness of the potential impact of informed choices in spending by women. The scope of work includes research into corporate HR practices and customer service and attitudes, public outreach and education, and honouring exemplary organisations.
- Youth Outreach
Headed by Saw Wei Ying and Sue Wong, the aim is to address SCWO renewal in engaging younger women and to raise awareness about women's issues amongst our youth. Focus group discussions are underway. Further investigation is planned to identify effective channels and activities to engage the target population.
- Wall of Fame
Headed by Jennie Yeo, we plan to install an exhibit in the SCWO Centre to honour pioneering women who have made a difference to the status and condition of women in Singapore. This will contribute towards improving awareness of the path that we have travelled and of obstacles overcome, to empower present and future generations to continue on the journey.

8 Thank you

I would like to thank the leadership of member organisations for their support, participation and engagement in the course of the year, and for having included me so often in their celebrations and activities. Sincere thanks also to Board members for their many contributions in guiding the work of SCWO, organising events and supporting staff efforts. A big 'thank you' also goes to the staff for all their hard work.

Finally, congratulations to 2nd VP Susie Kong on being elected President of Commonwealth Nurses Federation.