

# President's Report & Overview

2020-2021

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How fast time flies! I was elected over zoom and indeed the year zoomed past!!

I was reflecting on what to say in the President's report. I think SCWO had to pivot and learn very fast. And I am very appreciative of our staff with Selina holding the fort, Denise managing the secretariat and Lorraine helming Star Shelter and other programs. I read the reports that were uploaded and what I am sharing does not do justice to the actual time and effort that have gone into some of the events and initiatives that have been rolled out these last 12 months.

2020/2021 have seen significant changes at SCWO. On 15th March 2021, we were granted Charity status and on behalf of the board, we are proud to share with you that SCWO has been successfully registered as an Institution of Public Character (IPC). This was approved on 3 May 2021 and this status will be valid till 2 May 2023. This is in line with SCWO's plans to continue to create synergy and better financial planning by reducing the costs of operations and compliance. SCWO- Star Shelter and SCWO- Service Fund are now not separate legal entities of SCWO. They are an integral part of SCWO and we will continue with the current programmes and initiatives of Star Shelter and service fund under SCWO's name.

A definite highlight was in October when SCWO was named as one of the 3 NGOs to lead in the ground-breaking conversations on Singapore Women's Development together with our fellow members organisations – NTUC Women and PA- Women's Integration Network. During this reporting year, SCWO held three engagement sessions for the Conversation on Singapore Women's Development. This series of engagement sessions aimed at identifying and tackling issues concerning women in Singapore. Joined by women leaders from our diverse member organisations, we discussed key issues affecting women in homes, workplaces, schools and the community. I understand that with the participation of other female organisations, we have reached 4,000 participants and over more than 100 conversations. We are hoping to submit a white paper report and we have reached out to you, our member organisations as well for your input.

In November 2020, SCWO launched A.C.T. Against Violence, a catch-all website on all forms of violence against women. The site was launched at the annual In Her Stride event with Minister of State in the Ministry of Social and Family Development and the Ministry of Education, Ms Sun Xueling kicking off the event with a few words. Also in attendance was Ms Bandana Rana, Vice Chair of UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), who shared about how the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted many families – especially women and what communities can do to support these families. Our website can be enhanced and we would be happy to receive your feedback as well. To further raise awareness on violence against women, island wide, SCWO ran a campaign in March this year where the website was featured on the Estate panels for Jurong-Clementi, Bishan-Toa Payoh and Tampines Town Councils where the outreach numbers were 1.4 million people

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Our young and agile executives in the secretariat rose to the challenges and we quickly adapted to new ways of working and reaching out to our target audience. We were successfully able to hold meetings, workshops, networking and dialogue sessions and other events online or via hybrid means. Maintenance Support Central and Women's Register were some of the programmes that adapted to holding their usual outreach talks and workshops online to great success.

In March 2021, SCWO celebrated its 40th Anniversary with a hybrid (virtual-physical) event. We were very happy that we were able to celebrate this very special day with Members, Friends and Supporters who joined us virtually. The physical event was a private dinner that took place at Shang Palace Restaurant at the Shangri-La Hotel. Present were Past Presidents of SCWO and the SCWO Board. We were also honoured to have our special guests, Minister for Manpower Mrs Josephine Teo and Minister of State Ms Sun Xueling celebrate this special day with us. I believe what made it more meaningful was that we were able to bless more than 150 girls/ women staying at the shelters with dinner as well that evening with kind donations from member organisations and supporters.

The 7th annual induction ceremony for the Singapore Women's Hall of Fame was held on 8 March 2021 at the Istana. It was the first time the induction ceremony was a standalone event instead of being part of SCWO's annual gala dinner. It is expected that the induction ceremony will continue to be held at the Istana every 8 March.

Seven women were inducted into the Hall of Fame by President Halimah Yacob. SWHF's first children's book, *Awesome Women of Singapore*, was also launched at this event.

BoardAgender is also celebrating a milestone anniversary this year of 10 years. To celebrate the 10th Anniversary of BoardAgender, a panel discussion was organised in conjunction with the 30% Club. The title of the discussion was "Board Diversity - Beyond Lip Service". The panel was held on 1 June 2021. The topics covered during the discussion were male ally ship, changing cultures/mind-sets, getting to the bottom line, external pressure – quotas and mandates, and diversity – going beyond gender. This event was well covered on social media as well as in the press.

We have also launched a mentorship programme which will run for 6 months, from 28 June 2021 to 8 December 2021. The mentorship programme was launched in April on BoardAgender's website, inviting board ready women to participate as mentees in the programme. Ten mentees were selected from a total of over 60 applications, to be matched with seasoned board director mentors.

The Star Shelter's occupancy capacity was reduced by more than half of its original capacity due to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak and the strict physical distancing measures that were implemented with it. The Star Shelter team has been working tirelessly to ensure the health and safety of the residents, volunteers and staff against the virus while continuing to provide its much-needed service to vulnerable women and families in Singapore. Star Shelter

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also works closely with the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) to remain up to speed on the latest advisories and implements all the guidelines outlined by the ministry. Shelter Expansion Safety measures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic have reduced the capacity of Star Shelter from 30 to 12. Star Shelter has acquired part funding from MSF for the shelter expansion to increase the capacity to 28, all while keeping to 1m distancing of the beds

As the national coordinating body of women's organisations in Singapore, SCWO is represented on various government and inter-ministry committees, regional and international bodies. In the past year, SCWO has been looking into and raising awareness on the pressing issues related to ageing and violence against women. The SCWO Ageing Taskforce, spearheaded by SCWO, and alongside NTUC-WAF, PA WIN, PPIS, SWA, WEWAM, and WINGS, aims to bring to light the gender related phenomenon of ageing and to engage the community to help support the ageing women, especially during the Covid-19 outbreak. With seniors experiencing increased loneliness which can also take a toll on their mental health, the taskforce partnered with NTUC Health Nursing Homes to launch a befriender programme, "Adopt a Grandparent" to help seniors to overcome loneliness and have someone to speak to.

Also, in preparation of the upcoming Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) cycle, SCWO organised an Introduction to CEDAW in conjunction with the SCWO Presidents' Forum to provide members with an overview of CEDAW to enable them to have a better understanding of CEDAW.

As for the Singapore Alliance of Women in Ageing (SAWA), an alliance between SCWO, AWARE, PPIS and Tsao Foundation that focuses on promoting the independence, care, participation, dignity and self-fulfilment of older women, SAWA has been actively looking into ways to improve the status of caregivers of older persons. SAWA made a submission to the 2021 National Budget and organised a closed-door discussion with Women Members of Parliament to share and discuss recommendations to further support caregivers. SAWA also organised a community discussion with caregivers in May this year to better understand the challenges faced by caregivers, and to give them an opportunity to share what policy changes they would like to see.

In this term of office, SCWO welcomed 2 new member organizations - bringing our total number to 63 organisations, of which, 54 are ordinary members and 9 are associate members. With 2021 dedicated as the Year of Celebrating SG Women, SCWO will continue to create platforms and dialogues to engage and encourage members to provide their inputs on various crucial issues in Singapore. The board at SCWO will seek to work together and collaborate with members to co-create solutions and continue making impactful contributions for our common purpose of promoting and improving the status of women in Singapore.

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On a hopeful note, we welcomed 3 lovely bundles of joy this year – Board Members, Lynn and Lay Peng and staff Denise gave birth in January and March this year. This year, we will also say goodbye to Selina – our fearless General Manager at SCWO who has given so much to SCWO will be retiring and this is her last AGM. She has always had a heart for SCWO and has given nothing short of her best. Truth be told, I miss her already. With SCWO becoming an IPC, we are reviewing the organisational structure and Angel Chan is our CEO who has just joined us a month ago.

If you have a cup of coffee or a drink by your lap top, please let us raise a toast to our fearless Selina and wish her the very best in her next chapter of her life. For one who gives her best, she deserves the best that life can give.

**Ms Junie Foo**  
**President – SCWO**  
**2020-2022**