

THE NIEW JOURNAL

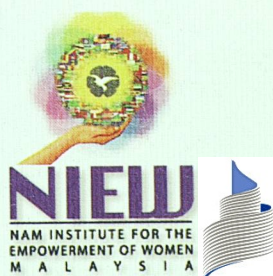
THE VOICE OF THE NAM WOMAN

VOLUME 2 / DECEMBER 2010

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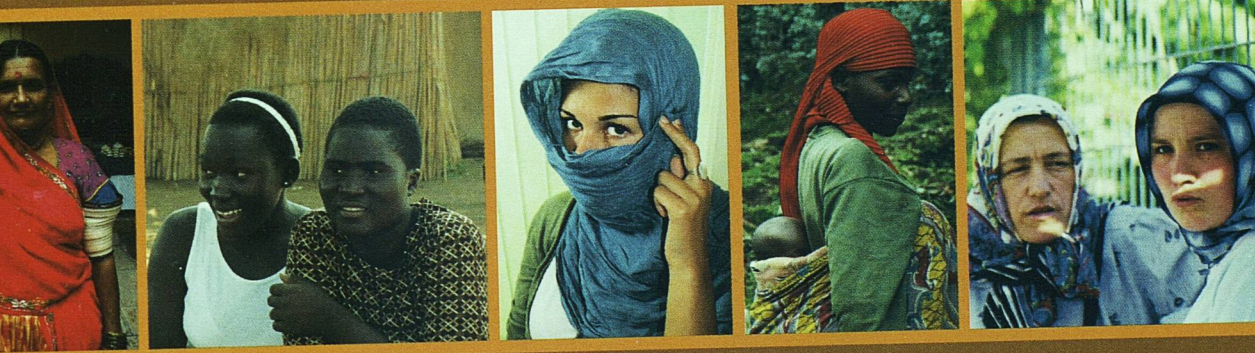


Ministry of Women,
Family and Community Development



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TUN DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD

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FOREWORD

Dato' Sri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil

Minister of Women, Family and Community Development

Violence against women is a significant obstacle to development in NAM countries. It is a prevalent human rights abuse and public health issue that affects the economic opportunities, health, rights and welfare of women globally. Domestic violence, in particular, continues to be a frighteningly common phenomenon in many countries and too often, accepted as “normal” within many societies.

According to the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, “Violence against women and girls continues unabated in every continent, country and culture. It takes a devastating toll on women’s lives, on their families, and on society as a whole. Most societies prohibit such violence - yet the reality is that too often, it is covered up or tacitly condoned.”

NAM member countries are signatories to the Putrajaya + 5 Declaration 2010, which upholds the elimination of violence against women as one of the nine major areas of concern that need to be addressed. While in many individual countries,

laws, policies, mechanisms and programmes have been implemented to prevent and address violence against women, there is much more that we can learn from each other, and as a collective.

Recognising this, NIEW has chosen to dedicate the second volume of its journal, “NIEW: The Voice of the NAM Woman,” to domestic violence. I congratulate NIEW for having successfully brought together scholars from various NAM countries to contribute to this publication. In this volume, readers will be exposed to a collection of articles that focus on research which examines the causes and consequences of domestic violence, as well as evidence-based methods of prevention and treatment.

The information contained within these pages is intended for a wide audience, and it is my hope that it will be used to advance the shared aspirations of the Non-Aligned Movement for a better future for the NAM Woman.

Thank you.

Dato' Sri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil





FOREWORD

Y. Bhg. Dato' Dr Noorul Ainur Mohd Nur

Secretary-General

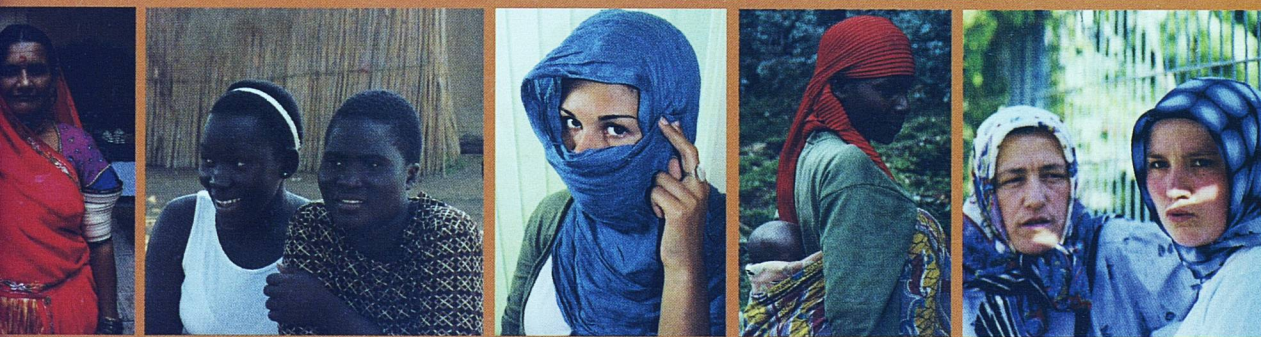
Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development

This second issue of the NIEW Journal presents the realities of violence against women. The World Health Organization reported that 10 percent to 52 percent of women had been physically assaulted by an intimate partner at some time or another in their lives. We must synergise our programmes and legislations to reduce these grim statistics. It is this kind of cooperation and sharing of ideas and research findings that form the basis of this journal. This volume has successfully brought together experts from various NAM countries to deliberate on domestic violence.

While there are similarities in the ways in which we define domestic violence, the character of each case will vary in degree. While any woman can suffer from violence, the responses of victims will differ. There exist many differences between women in professional situations and women in domestic settings; women in urban areas and women in rural areas; and women in disaster areas and women

in economically stable areas. As shown in the papers in this volume, women from different regions have different experiences with domestic violence and the ways in which each country handles the situation also vary according to its norms and laws. By sharing their stories, we can come to an understanding of the realities of lives entrenched in distinct localities. By focusing on the specificities of location and position, we would be in a better position to assess the strategies which have worked well for the victims and those that have failed to help reduce violence.

Parallel to the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development has taken steps to address this issue because violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of equality, development, and peace. By gathering scholars who have carried out research on domestic violence in NAM countries, we can expand the ways in which we think of domestic violence and discover new paths for ending the vicious cycle. For women to achieve their full potential, we need to nurture an environment without violence.





FOREWORD

Y. Bhg. Datuk (Dr.) Rafiah Salim

Director

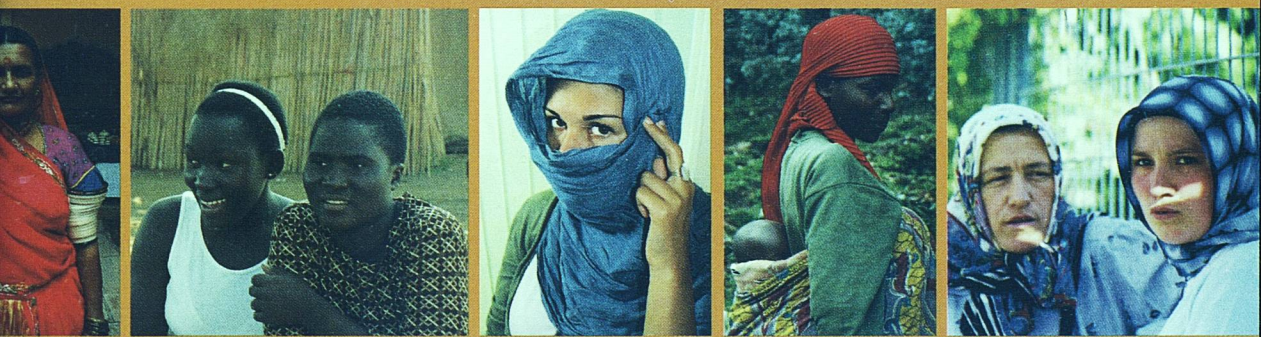
NAM Institute for the Empowerment of Women

Violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. It violates and nullifies the enjoyment of women's human rights and their fundamental freedom. It is therefore pertinent, that in this second volume of NIEW, we focus on domestic violence, its causes, consequences and the ways in which we can learn from best practices of different NAM countries.

The main objective of the NAM Institute for the Empowerment of Women (NIEW) is to be the catalyst in providing visionary and leadership roles including setting priorities and broad policy directions for NIEW and its regional offices when they are set up together with NAM countries to promote and enhance the advancement of women. In order to achieve this, we have drawn up several strategies so that collaboration between NAM countries is explored and strengthened. In our five-year strategic plan, we have outlined our direction in getting a footing in NAM

countries through more interaction and cooperation with international bodies and universities. The NIEW journal is one such effort of collaboration between a local university and other universities in the NAM region.

It is my hope that scholarly dialogues such as the one provided in the NIEW journal will be a platform for us to combat violence against women. Women and children are human capital whose potential will remain buried and untapped should we continue to tolerate violence in the home. If they can live in an environment that is happy and free from violence, the world as a whole will reap a fresh combination of human intelligence – citizens and leaders who are better prepared to deal with the challenges of the future.



ELIMINATING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Ruzy Suliza Hashim

Centre for Gender Research, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

All of us – men and women, soldiers and peacekeepers, citizens and leaders – have a responsibility to help end violence against women. (UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon)

CONTEXTUALISING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

This volume focuses specifically on the issues related to domestic violence and the implications which we can draw upon in our future programmes and policies. Although in recent years our awareness of the problem of domestic violence has increased, there is no abatement to the statistics involving women and children who make up the majority of victims of violent acts. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly some thirty years ago and the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth International Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, have shown the seriousness in which we should combat prejudices and violence against women. But the rising statistics, and in some instances, the degree of injury, highlight the

difficulty of eliminating domestic violence. The United Nations Children's Fund (2000: 1) reports that "women worldwide continue to suffer, with estimates varying from 20 to 50 percent from country to country."

As recently as August 2010, the General Assembly at the United Nations passed Resolution 63/155 on the "intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women", where the General Assembly reaffirmed the obligation of all States to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and recognized that violence against women was rooted in unequal power relations between men and women and that all forms of violence against women constituted a major impediment to the ability of women to make use of their capabilities. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it, at its sixty-fifth session, a report with information provided by States on their follow-up activities to implement the resolution." This resolution, while it is timely, perhaps indicates the anxiety over escalating figures of domestic violence worldwide.

The *Time Magazine* of 5th August 2010, put on its front cover a horrific image of Aisha, an Afghan woman now in hiding due to the nature and worldwide publicity of her injury. This was her story as reported in the magazine:

The Taliban pounded on the door just before midnight, demanding that Aisha, 18, be punished for running away from her husband's house. They dragged her to a mountain clearing near her village in the southern Afghan province of Uruzgan, ignoring her protests that her in-laws had been abusive, that she had no choice but to escape. Shivering in the cold air and blinded by the flashlights trained on her by her husband's family, she faced her spouse and accuser. Her in-laws treated her like a slave, Aisha pleaded. They beat her. If she hadn't run away, she would have died. Her judge, a local Taliban commander, was unmoved. Later, he would tell Aisha's uncle that she had to be made an example of lest other girls in the village try to do the same thing. The commander gave his verdict, and men moved in to deliver the punishment. Aisha's brother-in-law held her down while her husband pulled out a knife. First he sliced off her ears. Then he started on her nose. Aisha passed out from the pain but awoke soon after, choking on her own blood. The men had left her on the mountainside to die. (<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2007238,00.html#ixzz11xQyGLhh>; accessed 2 October 2010).

The decision to showcase the extent of Aisha's injury carried a political message about the need for continued presence of the US forces in Afghanistan. That debate, however, does not fall within the scope of this essay. The issue here is the horrific injury inflicted on the defenseless woman. Her image, disturbing as it is, highlights violence perpetrated by people whom she had lived with and loved. It was a serious breach of trust and a gross violation of the right of another human being to dignity.

News about the violence that women have to endure within the "safety" of their homes can be found anywhere. A research carried out by the Washington-based International Center for Research on Women in collaboration with independent Indian researchers found similar instances of violence against women being prevalent across regions, communities and classes. In India, a woman's risk of being beaten, kicked or hit rises with her level of education. This is certainly a worrying trend. Kumud Sharma of the Centre for Women's Development Studies in New Delhi tracked down the correlation between education and domestic violence to patriarchal attitudes. She argues that:

"Educated women are aware of their rights," she said. "They are no longer willing to follow commands blindly. When they ask questions, it causes conflicts, which, in turn, leads to violence. In many Indian states, working women are asked to hand over their paycheck to the husband and have no control over their finances. So, if they stop doing so or start asserting their right, there is bound to be friction."

(<http://www.womensenews.org/story/domestic-violence/031106/india-domestic-violence-rises-education>; accessed 20 September 2010)

This is not to say that domestic violence has a "third-world" face or the countenance of a developing nation. As indicated in the Unicef's domestic violence report, "Statistics are grim no matter where in the world one looks" (Innocenti Research Centre, 2000: 4). Just as a comparison, in Canada, 29% of a nationally representative sample of 12,300 women reported being physically assaulted by a current or former partner since the age of 16 (Innocenti Research Centre, 2000: 5). In America, Kristin A. Kelly (2003: 1) provided an equally depressing statistics that "in 1998, the FBI reported that of the 3,419 women murdered in that year, 32 percent had been killed by a man with whom they were, or had been, intimate." Hence, it is not a problem that can be readily identified as race-based, religion-based, or class-based. It is a problem that transcends all these parameters.

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