

**PROVISION FOR POST PROJECT EVALUATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS
DEMOCRACY FUND
Contract NO.PD:C0110/10**

Acknowledgements

The evaluators would like to thank everyone who took the time to provide their expertise and insight on the issues of gender equality and the Muslim Family Law in Malaysia.

Table of Contents

SIS would have received the level of funding needed to undertake this programme from another donor.

(iii) Conclusions

The project addressed an important issue that was needed within the context especially for Muslim women who find their rights more restricted than other Malaysians due to its dual legal system. **The grantee was the right organization to support for a project that addressed Islam and women’s rights.** SIS was knowledgeable and experienced in the sector and appears to be the only women-led organization working on this issue.

The project attempted to effect change from the bottom up, but more activities at that level were needed to generate the desired outcomes. One-off workshops are not enough to create the type of momentum and broad based support needed to create a surge in public voice for law reform. In addition, the **advocacy elements were underdeveloped.**

The legal awareness training was useful for single women, particularly single mothers, and contained information that helped them fight for their legal rights in divorces and custody battles. But to be useful for advocacy purposes it should include information on how citizens can petition their representatives and hold them accountable.

There was logic to the sequencing of the activities in the project design, but the **project itself was implemented as a series of activities** and would have benefited from being delivered as more integrated and cohesive programme, with adequate follow up, needs based trainings and the use of other developmental approaches.

The project might have had more significant results than were visible to the evaluators, but it was **impossible to know as the results beyond outputs were not tracked.**

Recommendations
For similar projects in the future, the evaluator recommends **continued support for gender rights** for donor programmes in similar contexts.

Engagement are implemented in a **community development manner** that provides sufficient levels of engagement with participants and policy makers for the duration of the project.



II. Introduction and development context

(i) *The project and evaluation objectives*

Extent of project reach beyond outputs, since the anticipated outcome was a surge in public voice for reform13(f)1n2QBT1 0 0 1 7ETBT1 0 0 1 106.82 74242.09m[i]5(n pub3(m)-ht)6(h

III. Project strategy

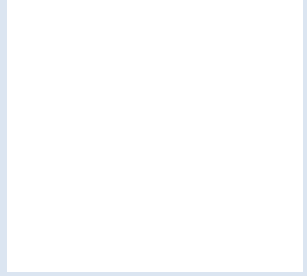
(i) Project approach and strategy

With this project SIS intended to build a surge of public voices to advocate for the reform of the Muslim Family Law which had several discriminatory provisions added in 2005. Although corrective amendments were

(ii) Logical framework

Increased awareness of rights among women at the grassroots levels

4 two-day workshops



IV. Evaluation findings

(i) Relevance

The project objectives were directly relevant to

national convention, intended in the design to be held in Year 1, to the end of Year 2. This was as a result of UNDEF questions about the timing for some activities, such as the national convention, which it expected to be the culmination of the project instead of being held towards its start. UNDEF also asked about the holding of a training of trainers (TOT) at the end of a project instead of at the start when the persons' trained in the TOT could then be used to deliver the project's trainings. However, the TOT was still held after the national convention and at the very end of the project.

From the interviews with SIS, it appears they intended to use the national convention as an advocacy tool for the second half of the project and build on the momentum that event would create. They intended to use the resolution endorsed by the convention as a means for the grassroots women to advocate for the reform of the MFL with lawmakers. SIS also intended for the TOT participant

The SIS implemented the project along these lines, and as such



was well organized, visiting different institutions and speaking with some prominent intellectuals. But he also said there was a lack of follow up after the study tour except for when they were invited by SIS to attend talks by visiting scholars from Indonesia. He wished that the SIS could have initiated discussion groups among students on university campuses as a follow-up, which to him was the most important aspect of the activity. This particular youth has his own blog with 3,000 followers and wrote articles about the trip that were published on a free speech public website, Projek Dialog, which is supported by the international NGO Article 19. Apart from articles written during and after the trip by some of the participants, there did not appear to be a sustained effort to write about the trip or the issues by the participants or by the project to follow up with them to continue the discussion or to bring them into an advocacy network. Like some of the women workshop participants, some of the study tour participants have remained in contact with each other through social media groups formed on Facebook or Whatsapp.

Some of the Indonesian contacts were also brought to Malaysia to serve as resource persons during the women's workshops under the project. According to the SIS, this was done frequently in the past as they felt the Indonesians embodied the aspect of tolerance and intellectual dialogue.

court as a result of defending the SIS publically, as well as some members from a conservative political party who were “kicked out” for the same reason.

The forum was to serve to showcase the problems with the MFL but also was intended to be used as an advocacy tool with the government and policy makers, and their absence completely undercut this purpose. However, their absence also gave the attending women a renewed sense of purpose and determination, especially since they had prepared for two days before the convention to ensure a professional presentation.

The participants drafted a public letter to the officials who did not attend, telling them they had done a disservice to the Muslim women of Malaysia and how it reflected a government that did not take their issues seriously (text box). The letter was well written and heartfelt which ended with an agenda for action⁵ but it was unclear how widely publicized this letter was. It seemed to be a good advocacy tool that the groups could have used effectively to generate public support for the affected women and to build public pressure on policy makers to

development tool intended to achieve a specific outcome and instead ends up being used as a donor funded check list of institutional activities.

SIS appeared to have been understaffed during the project and used the same persons for most of its activities. No full time project manager was foreseen to be hired or seconded in the design whose only job would have been to ensure the implementation of the project and the follow up to its activities which would have provided the programmatic glue for this project between the different events held. Instead the budget foresaw two half-time SIS staff persons and some administration time. This was insufficient for an efficient implementation of a development project for this magnitude, especially when the grantee did all of the activities itself and all with face to face methods. This limited the amount of time and effort that could be spent on each component, which is evident in the level of results. The grantee appears to have operated on smaller amounts of funding before the UNDEF grant that seemed to be provided

topic was also used as the basis for the speeches in the public forum. SIS also wanted to use GAHWI in this same manner to advance the MFL reform agenda since some doors were closed to it because of its outspokenness, especially after the fatwa. However, SIS is still the driver for the GAHWI efforts, and for it to have become an efficient and effective means to achieve the project's intended outcomes, the effort would have needed to have started at the very beginning of the project, rather than towards the end in a convention or TOT workshop. Had the SIS intention for these activities been clearer in its design, it is likely that UNDEF would not have requested that the national convention be pushed back to the end of the project and perhaps more results would have been visible by the end of the project.

SIS reporting was professional although it lacked disaggregated and results-level data. SIS did have disaggregated data available when asked, and provided annexes to its reporting that included workshop reports, workshop agendas, information on problems encountered and meetings held. SIS was also able to immediately provide the breakdown of its expenditures by the programmatic line items used in the project document's budget. SIS did require a two month no-cost time extension for the grant, saying the GAWHI members wanted to hold the TOT after Christmas, and that they also wanted the time to follow up with the openings found with the state government in Sarawak. However, because the convention was anticipated to have been the second milestone event, upon which the second tranche of funding was to be released, SIS had trouble expending the required 70 percent of funding from its first tranche when the convention was pushed back. This level of expenditure is required in order to receive the next tranche of funding. SIS was supposed to receive its last tranche of funding of USD 22,500 based on the holding of the revised milestone (TOT) but in January 2016 UNDEF decided that there was not enough time left for SIS to expend the remaining amount and withheld payment of the last tranche. Thus, the total amount received by SIS from UNDEF for this project was USD 180,000.

The funding that was spent was done largely along the anticipated lines in the project budget (Figure 1). The project staff salaries accounted for 25 percent of the project's budget. The national convention used up almost 30 percent of the project funding, foETBT.wedrcce(6TJr)-3(t)-4(he)3()-

in the project document.⁷ But the level of effort expended for the advocacy and public voice elements of the project needed to have been strengthened considerably for the project to have been able to make a significant contribution towards its objective of a surge in public voice demanding for law reform.

There was little to no UNDEF branding visible



project. At the same time, it needs to be asked what would have happened if the project had not been implemented. Given the context, it seems likely that the space to discuss Muslim's women's rights would have closed further without the SIS activities to help keep it open. It also seems likely that the project:

Provided a safe space for women to discuss their problems during the different activities and events. This allowed for women to hear what others had gone through and to find strength through collective voice. Some said that they did not feel so alone after meeting with the other women and hearing their issues. This also ***increased the***

similar circumstances in their neighborhoods or at work. However, continuing work after the project is needed for these seeds to grow and become a movement.

SIS did report a significant increase in the number of likes on its social media pages

IV. Conclusions

Based on the evaluation findings, the team concludes:

(i) The project addressed an important issue. Support for women's rights issues is important and needed within the context, especially for Muslim women who find their rights more restricted than other Malaysians due to its dual legal system. The country is moving towards more restrictive rights for these women and it is important to keep the space open for discussion and to advocate for their basic gender rights. This conclusion follows the findings on relevance, effectiveness and impact.

(ii) The grantee was the right organization to support for a project that addressed Islam and women's rights. SIS was knowledgeable and experienced in the sector and appears to be the only women-led organization working on this issue in the country. There are other voices for reform in the country, but these are primarily male or secular. Even if being on the front lines gave it a reputation for being too outspoken, SIS actions helped keep the space open for Muslim women and for their rights issues to be able to be discussed. This conclusion follows the findings on relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

(iii) The project attempted to effect change from the bottom up, but more activities at that level were needed to generate the desired outcomes. One-off workshops were not enough to create the type of momentum and broad based support needed to develop the objective of a surge in public voice demanding law reform. The TOT component was also not leveraged to expand the trainings and to reach more persons. This conclusion follows the findings on relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

(iv) The advocacy elements in the project were underdeveloped and needed to have been more aggressive **to achieve the project purpose**

especially by one labeled as a deviant by some religious authorities but who support the cause and want to help. The TOT could also be used to train members of partner NGOs in every state at the start of a project to deliver the project workshops in their areas. This would increase project reach and effectiveness. Harness the power of celebrities and use those that support the effort to provide public service announcements with your advocacy message, with religious clerics to provide the religious message, and secular notables to give the secular argument that all Malaysian women's rights should be respected and equal. Continue to leverage the social media and build an online site for persons to find information on the MFL, join the network, lobby their policy maker, register complaints and endorse legal reform. This recommendation follows conclusions (iii), (iv), (v), and (vi).

(iv)

VIII. ANNEXES

Annex 1: Evaluation questions:

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related sub-questions
Relevance	To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to context and needs at the beneficiary, local, and national levels?	Were the objectives of the project in line with the needs and priorities for democratic development, given the context? Should another project strategy have been preferred rather than the one implemented to better reflect those needs, priorities, and context? Why? Were risks appropriately identified by the projects? How appropriate are/were the strategies developed to deal with identified risks? Was the project overly risk-averse?
Effectiveness	To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to achieve objectives and goals?	To what extent have the project's objectives been reached? To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the project document? If not, why not? Were the project activities adequate to make progress towards the project objectives? What has the project achieved? Where it failed to meet the outputs identified in the project document, why was this?
Efficiency	To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts?	Was there a reasonable relationship between project inputs and project outputs? Did institutional arrangements promote cost-effectiveness and accountability? Was the budget designed, and then implemented, in a way that enabled the project to meet its objectives?

Annex 3: Persons Interviewed

29 May 2016	
Arrival international consultant	
30 May 2016	
Rozana Isa	Executive Director, Sisters in Islam
Rosezaini Mansor	Finance and Operations Manager, Sisters in Islam
Azareena Abdul Aziz	Senior Programme Officer, Sisters in Islam
Syarifatul Adibah	Senior Programme Officer, Sisters in Islam
Adila Aziz	Programme Officer, Sisters in Islam
Meera Samanther	Associations of Women's Lawyers (JAG)
Goh Siu Lin	Associations of Women's Lawyers (JAG)
31 May 2016	
Aidila Razak	Journalist, Malaysiakini
Mohammad Jimadie Shah bin Othman	Editor, Malaysiakini
Omnas Sreenivas Ong	Honorary Secretary-General, National Council of Women's Organisation
Suriani Kempe	Programme Manager, UNDP, Milestone Verifier
Saira Shameem	Programme Adviser, UNFPA, Milestone Verifier
Tengku Aira Tengku Razif	UNFPA, Milestone Verifier
Megat Abdul Al-Hanis	Columnist for Projek Dialog
1 June 2016	
Norazun	Member, Association of Single Mothers for Kuala Lumpur and Selangor (by phone)
Juwairiah Kamaruddin	Member, Association of Single Mothers for Kuala Lumpur and Selangor (by phone)

Intan Khairani binti Jemain

