



WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE

KANITA MATTERS

PUSAT PENYELIDIKAN PEMBANGUNAN WANITA



Prof. Datin Dr. Rashidah Shuib

MESSAGE FROM DIRECTOR

On 27 August 2008, Universiti Sains Malaysia was bestowed the status of the APEX university in Malaysia after it presented to the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE), a clear strategic intent, envisioning higher education within the framework of sustainable development and sustainability. It has been entrusted with a huge task; to transform higher education. The agenda for change that USM has to shoulder is the national agenda. Like an atomic nucleus, USM is expected "to show the way", to "trigger changes" which are expected to spin off more catalytic changes in higher education. "We lead" which is the USM's motto fits like a glove with this move to create change (s), albeit with a difference.

Where does the Women's Development Research Centre (KANITA) figure in this transformational process? Does this Centre matter in USM, to USM? Taking the language of the Vice Chancellor in his 2009 message, KANITA has to seek answers in relation to seven key concepts in order to transform: *the future, uniqueness, sustainability, humanity, universality, changes and sacrifices.*

Transformation is not a new word to KANITA. The Centre has undergone this transformational process; from being a research project in 1978 into a research centre pioneering in women's and gender studies in Malaysia in 19th September 2002. Similar to the metamorphosis of the larva into a butterfly, KANITA has not only evolved to become what it is, but more importantly, its research work and its link to activism in the community on women's and gender issues have contributed to changes which are expected to lead to further transformations. Within the con-

text of APEX university it envisions itself as the Centre of Excellence to be respected nationally and globally for the kinds of research generated, the quality of graduate students produced, the standard of publications achieved as well as the knowledge advanced in women's and gender studies.

Working within the framework of gender equality and justice, the types of research must be based on the lived realities of women and men, no matter how controversial, in order to produce evidence which should inform policy decisions. Similarly, KANITA's graduates must be those who are gender-sensitive. They are not only knowledgeable but are also imbued with a conscience and values which seek justice.

Publications should not only be aimed at high-impact journals in order to gain academic recognition. They should be disseminated to a wider audience as well in a language which might not be perceived as "academic". Advocacy which is not seen as a role of an academic institution is integral to KANITA's work. In short, KANITA is guided by very clear values which are linked to societal transformation.

KANITA therefore matters to this APEX university. It resolves to contribute to the university's overall transformational process. In the words of the Vice-Chancellor, "Failure is NOT an option".

Rashidah Shuib
Professor and Director
Women's Development Research Centre (KANITA)



Entrance of KANITA

What is KANITA?

KANITA was the name given to a UNESCO-funded project cluster on women, children and poverty, in 1978, under the School of Social Sciences. It is an acronym from the Malay words, *wanita* (women) and *kanak-kanak* (children). Today, it refers to the Women's Development Research Centre, responsible for charting the earliest history of feminism and feminist advocacy at the Universiti Sains Malaysia, Pulau Pinang.

History of KANITA

How did KANITA start?

The Women's Development Research Centre evolved from a project into a research unit. It achieved its current status as an autonomous research centre within the university on 17 April 2001. Throughout its development the Centre retains the name of the initial project, KANITA.

The endorsement by the University Senate of KANITA's position demonstrates USM's commitment to leading the exploration of new thinking and knowledge that considers gender as an important analytical framework for theory and research.

Academic associates from various disciplines make up KANITA's governing body headed by the Director. These Board members are committed towards championing gender

equality, equity and justice in the society, both theoretically and in practice.

KANITA's vision and mission

KANITA envisions itself as the Centre of Excellence in conducting and advancing research rele-

vant to women's lives, in particular, using the gender analytical framework. Its mission is to advance gender equality and equity through research and collaborations with various stakeholders. It aims to impact on policy and strives to institutionalize gender as a factor of inquiry and approach.



A group photo with Tan Sri Rafidah Aziz, VC Prof. Tan Sri Dato' Dzulkifli, and Dato' Dr. Wazir Jahan Karim



"If you can't handle controversy and you get depressed because people are attacking you, then you can't do this kind of work. You must expect to be attacked, to be criticised."

- Zainah Anwar

"Equality is Necessary, Equality is Possible."

- Musawah

"I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is; I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat."

- Rebecca Weist



Dato' Dr. Wazir Jahan Karim

Among the pioneers of KANITA

KANITA was initiated in Universiti Sains Malaysia at a time when Women Studies was not yet instituted as an important field in the Social Sciences. Dato' Dr. Wazir Jahan Karim was the pioneer Director of the Women's Development Research Centre the first ever research and advocacy centre on women's development to be set up in a university in Malaysia. She is an economic anthropologist. Dato' Dr. Wazir Jahan Karim obtained her Master's in Economic Anthropology and Doctorate in Anthropology at the London School of Economics and Political Sciences, University of London. She has conducted extensive research on indigenous minorities in Peninsular Malaysia and women in politics, culture and religion, more specifically *Adat*, Islam and issues of social and economic transformation. She has authored and edited several books on minorities, Islam and women.



"New knowledge is power but power is only powerful if it empowers others to seek new knowledge"

Dato' Dr. Wazir Jahan Karim



Assoc. Prof. Rashila Ramli and Prof. Datin Dr. Rashidah



Key speakers



Assoc. Prof. Rashila Ramli and Dato' Dr. Wazir



Some of the SAMA participants

6th SAMA Conference, "Thinking Gender : Issues of Diversity, Interconnectivity and Empowerment"

On 28-29th November 2009 KANITA hosted the 6th Annual General Meeting and conference of The Southeast Asia Association for Gender Studies, Malaysia Branch (SAMA). The theme was "Thinking gender : Issues of Diversity, Interconnectivity and Empowerment."

Established in 1991 as a non-profit, non-governmental organisation, SAMA aims at bridging the gap between the worlds of academia, policy makers and civil society activists. The idea of SAMA was mooted in 1989, during a sub-regional seminar, organised jointly by KANITA and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

Since its establishment SAMA has seen prominent scholars in gender/women's issues, as its presidents, namely, Dato' Dr. Wazir Jahan Karim (Universiti Sains Malaysia, 1991-1993), Dr. Jamilah Arifin (University Malaya, 1994-1996), Dr. Rokiah Talib (University Malaya, 1997-1999), Dr. Sharifah Zaleha Syed Hassan (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2000-2002) and Dr. Rashila Ramli (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2002-2008).

At the recent meeting in November, Universiti Sains Malaysia was chosen to lead SAMA once again. With Prof. Datin Dr. Rashidah Shuib, the Director of KANITA as the new president, SAMA has returned to its birthplace.



Dr. Cecilia Ng (KANITA's Visiting Professor)



Assoc. Prof. Siti Hawa

Micro-Pinj

Prof. Sukor heads the Microcredit USM Scheme or **Micro-Pinj** ("Pinj" is shortened from the Malay word "pinjaman" which means "credit") launched in October 2008 by Vice Chancellor, to help low-income staff (permanent or contract), who are categorized as grade 17 and below, whose take-home pay is less than RM 2000. **Micro-Pinj** is a "Borrower-Friendly" project and it has the potential of becoming an "applied research" at KANITA.

Objectives

- To scale up existing supplementary sources of household income
- To create self employment to household members to generate supplementary household income
- To increase household income and savings
- To generate productive assets
- To fulfill basic needs such as housing, education, health and nutrition
- To fulfill religious needs
- To provide banking for the poor community in campus

Data Bank

KANITA envisions the development of a comprehensive "Gender Information and Knowledge System (GIKS)", an integrated data bank that stores data, particularly empirically derived data, images of women and publications/resources consisting of articles, reports and proceedings. The collection of records or data will be arranged for ease and speed of search and retrieval in the computer system.

Projek Kelestarian KANITA

Selaras dengan tuntutan pihak Universiti untuk membangukan konsep Pembangunan Lestari di dalam Kampus, Pusat Penyelidikan Pembangunan Wanita turut menyahut seruan tersebut. Sehubungan itu, pihak KANITA memulakan Projek Kitar Semula dengan menyediakan tiga jenis tong kitar semula yang dibuat sendiri dan ditempatkan di bangunan KANITA. Tong-tong tersebut dibahagikan kepada tiga warna seperti berikut:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Tong Warna Jingga | - Plastik dan Aluminium, |
| Tong Warna Biru | - Kertas |
| Tong Warna Coklat | - Kaca |



Gender - socially learned behavior and expectations associated with the two sexes. It also refers to the socially differentiated roles and characteristics attributed by a given culture to women and men.

Gender Roles - these concern the activities ascribed to men and women on the basis of perceived gender differences. While men are mainly identified with productive roles, women have a triple role: a productive role; a reproductive (or domestic) role; and a community managing role. Gender roles and responsibilities vary between cultures and can change over time.

Gender Issues and Concerns - issues, concerns and problems arising from the different roles by women and men, as well as those that arise from a questioning of the relationship between them.

Sex - refers to the *biological and physiological* characteristics that *define* men and women.

“Male” and **“female”** - sex categories, while **“masculine”** and **“feminine”** are gender categories.

Source: <http://www.nscb.gov.ph/glossary/gender.asp>



Activities in KANITA

Journal Club

The Journal Club in essence provides a forum for graduate students and staff to critically discuss academic developments within their fields of interest. The topics could be directly related to their research projects, theses research, or of more general interest within Kanita's thrust areas.

Name of Presenter: Shariza Kamarudin

Date: 27th of February

Presentation Topic Area: She presented 3 articles on Polygamy

1. *A Comparison Of Family Functioning, Life And Marital Satisfaction, And Mental Health Of Women In Polygamous And Monogamous Marriages* by Alean Al-Krenawi & John R. Graham
2. *Success And Failure Among Polygamous Families: The Experience Of Wives, Husbands, And Children* by Vered Slonim-Nevo & Al-Krenawi
3. *Women Of Polygamous Marriages In Primary Health Care Centers* by Al-Krenawi

Name of Presenter: Hamoon Khelghat-Doost

Date: 25th of March

Presentation Topic Area: *Gender, Palestinian Women and Terrorism: Women's liberation or Oppression?* by Anat Berko & Edna Erez

KANITA's Seminars

Name of Presenter: Prof. Janet Carsten, University of Edinburgh

Date: 4th of March 2009

Title: Scenes from the Social Life of Blood in Penang: A Preliminary View

Name of Presenter: Anja K. Franck, Dept. of Human and Economic Geography, Gothenburg University, Sweden

Date: 25th of March 2009

Title: The effectiveness of using power through trade to pursue social justice: Core Labor Standards and women's employment realities in Malaysia



Anja K. Franck



A group photo with Anja after the presentation

For upcoming events in KANITA, please visit KANITA's website: <http://www.usm.my/kanita/>

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NVivo Workshop

Computer Lab, School of Humanities, USM



From 16 - 17 March KANITA organised a workshop on NVIVO8, a tool that will assist Researchers in the analysis of qualitative data. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Noriah Ishak from the Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) conducted the workshop held in the Computer Lab, School of Humanities, USM.



Assoc. Prof. Dr. Noriah Ishak

The software's unrivalled features work with Word documents, pdf documents, audio and visual material, and a wide range of innovative tools to allow for in-depth and flexible analyses.

About 20 people attended the two-days workshop.

Perkara: **Kursus Komunikasi**

Tarikh: **23 Februari 2009**

Penceramah : **Dr. Azman Azwan Azmawati and Prof. Datin Dr. Rashidah Shuib**

KANITA turut mengadakan satu kursus komunikasi yang melibatkan semua ahli KANITA. Kursus komunikasi ini bertujuan meningkatkan kesedaran dan kemahiran berkomunikasi dalam kalangan warga KANITA.

Perkara: **Taklimat Kembara Bersama Pustakawan**

Tarikh: **19 Mac 2009 (Khamis)**

Penceramah : **Pustakawan Perpustakaan Universiti Sains Malaysia dan diketuai oleh Pn. Aini Yusof**

Ceramah ini memberi pendedahan dan pengetahuan kepada warga KANITA secara lebih terperinci mengenai E-Library dan Endnotes.

"Whatever women do they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good. Luckily, this is not difficult."

Charlotte Whitton

"What would men be without women? Scarce, sir, mighty scarce."

Mark Twain

KANITA's Family Day



Happy faces at KANITA's 1st Family Day

KANITA recognizes equal and equitable relationships as the fundamental building block of all human civilizations. On **SATURDAY, March 14, 2009**, Kanita members brought along their families and friends to the Water Sports Centre, at Tanjung Bungah. Having fun was the order of the day which started at 10 a.m. Several ice breaking activities and games provided opportunities for the KANITA family to get to know each other better. The highlight of the day was the BBQ session. All involved expressed their hope for another joyful event next year.



The International Marriage Symbol



The banner for IWD celebration



Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir with Prof. Datin Dr. Rashidah



The invited guests

KANITA: 'Sharing The Caring for a Sustainable Future' – International Women's Day 2009'

On 10 March KANITA celebrated International Women's Day (IWD) at Balai Persiban Agung, School of Arts, USM. Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir, former president of the Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) officiated the event.

A slide show carrying KANITA's own theme for the celebration, 'Sharing the Caring for a Sustainable Tomorrow', started the programme, followed by a speech from KANITA's Director, Professor Datin Dr. Rashidah Shuib. Guests were informed of Musawah ("equality" in Arabic), a global movement for gender equality in the Muslim family, through a multimedia show.

Other items on the program leading up to Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir's speech were three songs presented by the choir group from the School of Arts led by Dr. Abdul Razak Abdul Aziz. One of the songs, "The Riddle", was accompanied by movements choreographed by Aida Redza, a dancer based in Malaysia and Denmark. Poet laurette of 1991, Professor Muhammad Haji Salleh recited a poem, "Welcome Home, Juita", that was dedicated to his first child, a daughter, when she was born. Pianist Dr. Yumi Yoshioka from the School of Arts presented works by Indonesian woman composer Tritsutji Kamal and French woman composer, Lili Boulanger.

In her speech, Datin Paduka Marina stressed on the importance of equality and justice between women and men to achieve a better tomorrow. During the question and answer session, chaired by Visiting Professor Cecilia Ng, a member from the floor shared her frustrations on the plight of single mothers. KANITA *Ribut* (a group consisting of graduate students, research officers and research assistants from KANITA) ended the event with two witty numbers sung to the tune of 'Hijau' (originally sung by Zainal) and 'Bila Larut Malam' (originally sung by Saloma).



Performance presented by students from School of Arts

International Women's Day 2009

KANITA's Theme : 'Sharing the Caring' Focusing on...

- the contribution of women in their caring roles
 - women's roles in paid and unpaid work
 - the need for men to be partners in caring roles
- the need for women to be equal partners with men in achieving sustainable development, peace, security and full respect for human rights.



Prof. Lu Wei Qun who started her studies at KANITA in early May 2005 returned to Penang from China where she is presently a professor in the Social Research Department, Guizhou University, to receive her doctoral degree in Gender Studies at USM's 39th Convocation Ceremony on 25th March 2009. Her thesis topic is Contraceptive choice among married women in Guizhou Province: Socio-cultural and relationship factors.

(This interview was conducted by KANITA MATTERS [KM]) two days before the convocation ceremony).

KM: Why did you choose KANITA to do your Ph.D?

Prof. Lu: I came in February 2005. There were a number of reasons why I chose KANITA. First of all, I had a friend who studied at USM. She urged me to pursue my PhD here. She told me about USM's beautiful and conducive environment. Secondly, I had always been interested to do gender research. Furthermore, I came to know of Prof. Datin Dr. Rashidah Shuib's expertise in reproductive health, which is in line with my interest and research direction. Earlier, another friend had encouraged me to do my PhD in USA which is too far away from my home country. After taking into account all aspects, including the fees, I decided to send in my application to KANITA.

KM: How did you like USM and KANITA after spending three years here?

Prof. Lu: My first impression of USM was that it has a marvelous natural environment of trees and gardens. I was impressed with its cleanness. As for KANITA, it provided quite good facilities for students, e.g. Internet access, a room with air-conditioning and so on. At that time, I was the only person occupying the room on KANITA's ground floor. Now, I see that there are more research officers, research assistants, post graduate students and lecturers. I fitted in very well with the excellent study environment in KANITA. The lecturers and administrative staff were very kind and supportive whenever I needed help or information, be it academic or personal. They treated me nice. I felt so welcome as an international student here. When I returned to Guizhou University I missed KANITA's friendly environment.

KM: How do you see KANITA's future? What are your expectations for KANITA?

Prof. Lu: In my opinion, KANITA, led by Prof. Datin Dr. Rashidah Shuib, has been actively involved in organizing various activities to enhance the visibility of KANITA. I expect KANITA to be involved in collaborative research or to have a student-exchange programme in order to strengthen the relationship between KANITA and Guizhou University. I am a lecturer in Guizhou University and thus I look forward to the possibility of future collaborations in this regards. Besides, I hope KANITA will expand its international networks and establish stronger ties, particularly with South China.

KM: What was your sweetest memory at KANITA and USM?

Prof. Lu: During the three years in KANITA, I came to the study room early in the morning and I always left late, at about 11 p.m. or midnight. I felt a strong sense of security in USM. As for the sweetest memory at KANITA, I remember spending a week at Prof. Datin Dr. Rashidah's home in Kelantan at her invitation. She was supposed to be on leave. Instead, she was helping me with my thesis. This experience has influenced and changed the way I deal with my advisees nowadays. I have become more patient and understanding towards my advisees. I was able to put myself in their shoes and see from their eyes. I am grateful to Prof. Datin Dr. Rashidah for her endless effort in supervising me.

KM: What did you learn most from KANITA?

Prof. Lu: In terms of my research, I employed qualitative and quantitative approaches. Prof. Datin Dr. Rashidah has deepened my understanding in doing qualitative research. Certainly, my English has improved greatly due to the English-speaking environment in KANITA.

Research

Current projects in KANITA:

- A country level study of women’s wellbeing and domestic violence against women (RU)
- Empowering women through micro-credit: a gender analysis of empowerment (RU)
- A study of enforcement and justice agencies within the legal framework of domestic in Malaysia (RU)
- Single women and single mothers: a study of the construction of gender roles and identity (RU)
- Developing a theoretical model of collective action for empowerment in Malaysian women’s organization (RU)
- Theorising the welfarist state: health systems in transition (RU)
- Gender mainstreaming and corporate social responsibility in Malaysia (FRGS)
- Developing a local-based theoretical understanding of domestic violence (FRGS)
- The nature of relationship between domestic maids and employers (FRGS)
- Marriage and divorce in Malaysia : Factoring in culture and religion (ARI)
- State boundaries, cultural politics and gender negotiations in commercially arranged international marriages in Singapore and Malaysia (ARI)
- A study on the impact of polygamy on the quality of life among Muslims in Malaysia (in collaboration with Sisters in Islam)

Types of Research Grants

RU- University Research Grants

FRGS- Fundamental Research Grant Scheme

ARI-Asian Research Institute, National University of Singapore

***"One is not born, but rather becomes,
a woman"***



Simone De Beauvoir

Celebrating 30 Years of KANITA

KANITA is organizing series of film viewing and discussion about empowerment of women in conjunction with 30th celebration of KANITA. Below are the details been shown :

A) **Film: *PROVOKED*, (16th January 2009, 8.45 am – 12 noon)**

Guest Speaker : **Cik Zainab Wahidin**, School of Social Science and **Dr. Prema Devaraj**, Women’s Centre for Change (WCC)

Based on a real life incident, "*Provoked*" is the story of Kiranjit Ahluwalia and chronicles her struggles both in the private sphere of her home and in the public arena of the British criminal justice system. But ultimately the truth prevails and Kiranjit’s is freed by the judicial system.

B) **Film : *Berbagi Suami*, (6th February 2009, 8.45 am– 12 noon)**

Guest Speaker : **Encik Zakaria Basheer bin Ahmad Basheer**

Berbagi suami is a three-in-one movie featuring the plight of women in polygamous marriages—with unexpected twists.

Musawah – a global movement for gender equality and justice in the muslim family

More than 250 men and women from 48 Muslim countries participated in the Musawah International Conference hosted by a Malaysia-based non-governmental organisation, Sisters in Islam, from 13-17 February 2009 in Kuala Lumpur. Musawah (*Equality* in the Arabic language) brought together scholars, activists, policy makers and practitioners to share and discuss a holistic approach for gender equality and justice in the Muslim family. KANITA was represented by Professor Datin Dr. Rashidah Shuib, Dr. Noraida Endut and Shariza Kamarudin. For more information, please visit Musawah’s website: www.musawah.org

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