



# KANITA MATTERS

PUSAT PENYELIDIKAN PEMBANGUNAN WANITA (KANITA)

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## Community Engagement and Women Entrepreneurship Activities in Penang

As a core responsibility of higher education alongside research and teaching, community engagement provides a key opportunity for universities to address socio-economic challenges. With that objective in mind, a community engagement project was conducted with a community of women micro-entrepreneurs in five Malay villages in Penang.

Like in any developing country, micro enterprise has developed as a response to growing poverty. It is primarily seen as a way to generate extra income to supplement household income particularly for women in a marginal category. For these women, microenterprises provide flexibility in terms of balancing their home and work responsibilities. While a large number of women start micro-enterprises, only a small number of these women are successful at generating a sustainable living from their businesses.

Based on Pingle's study (2005), the performance of micro-enterprise can be divided into three categories: successful, stagnant and survival. Successful entrepreneurs are those who have access to resources and skills for success, are business savvy, and whose businesses can expand beyond self-employment. Stagnant entrepreneurs are those who produce the same number of products with no business expansion, while the survival entrepreneurs are those who are inexperienced in business and have no access to other employment options.

In our project, we identified 21 home-based women micro-entrepreneurs from the five villages. Using Pringle's (2005) categorization (see Table 1), we found that almost 75 percent of them were survivalist, 14.1 percent could be considered successful and 9.4 percent stagnant. It is clear that

the main motivation for entrepreneurship for these women was often for survival and not for business opportunity.

Majority of the respondents were between the ages of 46-55, the oldest being between 76-80 years. All of them were involved in food processing. More than half of respondents were married while 43 percent of them were single mothers. All of the respondents have received formal education, with the majority having attained primary education, 33 percent secondary education, and less than 10 percent graduated from higher education. Most of the women entrepreneurs have been running their businesses for less than five years whereas only 39 percent have run their businesses for more than 30 years. There were nine different types of small businesses identified, of which, 69.9 percent were traditional food making businesses such as the making of spinach crisp, banana crisp, and the rest of the businesses were in making cookies, nutmeg juice, fruit pickles, dried jelly, chilli sauce, cupcakes, salted fish and handcraft. Table 1 shows the type, number, and percentage of small businesses surveyed.

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Entrepreneurship Day with Single Mothers at Anjung Budi, USM dated 14 May 2013

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**Table 1: Type of Businesses and Estimated Income among Women Micro-Entrepreneurs in Study Village (N = 21)**

	Type of Businesses	No of entrepreneurs	Estimated Income	(%)
Successful (14.1%)	Modern Cookies	1	RM3000 – 5000 and above	4.7
	Cordial drink	1	RM1000 and above	4.7
	Pickle (fruits pickle), <i>Asam laksa</i> and soup paste	1	RM500 and above	4.7
Stagnant (9.4%)	Dried Jelly	1	RM100 – RM300	4.7
	Chillie Sauce	1	RM100 – RM350	4.7
Survivalist (75.5%)	Traditional <i>kuih</i> (mini <i>currypuff</i> , rolled <i>popiah</i> , frozen <i>currypuff</i> , <i>maruku</i> , spinach crisp, banana crisp,	13	RM30 – RM150	61.9
	Handcraft (from recycled newspaper)	1	RM300 – RM500	4.7
	Cupcakes and Cakes	1	RM50 – RM100	4.7
	Salted fish	1	RM20 - RM50	4.7
	Total	21		100

The micro-entrepreneurs said that they worked in various sectors before embarking into business. They were civil servants (33.3 percent), factory workers (4.8 percent), technical coordinators (4.7 percent), secretaries (4.7 percent), canteen helpers (4.7 percent) and others (19 percent), while 28.6 percent of them were housewives. The study indicates that the Malay women micro-entrepreneurs in the villages are very entrepreneurial in nature; however, this does not translate into a level of motivation and creativity that can bring their businesses to a higher level. The study shows that there are differences in characteristics between micro-entrepreneurs in informal businesses and their counterparts in the formal business sector (i.e. with own business license). Generally, those in informal business do not seem to possess a burning desire or “competitive attitude”, which is considered to be one of the important characteristics in generating inspiration and motivation for business expansion.

In order to make a difference in the community of micro-entrepreneurs in Penang, several capacity building projects were conducted with the aim to empower them with business skills and marketing strategies. The women were taught the cheapest and

easiest way of creating business cards and also to develop their own business blogs. Assistance was also given to register their businesses in order to widen their access to financial credit or other assistance from government agencies. A workshop on “Product Marketing” was also organized to impart skills for creating attractive packaging and promotion of their products.

### Conclusion

Micro-enterprise is an important means for the women in these five villages to build and improve their economic sustainability particularly for the poorest and the most vulnerable among them. For those involved, micro enterprise is not just a means of income generation but also a tool of survival. Financial constraints and the lack of strong business structures seem to be the main obstacles for these micro-entrepreneurs to expand their businesses. The study also revealed that success in generating sustainable livelihood through micro enterprise is largely dependent on the entrepreneurs’ effort in establishing networks with institutions, associations and local agencies within or outside their communities.

(Continued from page 2)

The local government agencies have played an active role in providing assistance in terms of motivation, technical assistance, marketing and most importantly in funding machines and equipment which are too costly for these entrepreneurs to purchase on their own. The study suggests that knowledge in technical know-how, marketing strategy, communication skills and financial skills is a crucial element in empowering these micro entrepreneurs to maneuver their businesses venture.

*(Prepared by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nor Hafizah Selamat, Deputy Director, KANITA)*

## GLOSSARY

'**Community engagement**' is therefore a planned process with the specific purpose of working with identified groups of people, whether they are connected by geographic location, special interest, or affiliation or identify to address issues affecting their well-being.<sup>1</sup> The linking of the term 'community' to 'engagement' serves to broaden the scope, shifting the focus from the individual to the collective, with the associated implications for inclusiveness to ensure consideration is made of the diversity that exists within any community.

Community engagement can take many forms and covers a broad range of activities. Some examples of community engagement undertaken by government practitioners include:

- Informing the community of policy directions of the government.
- Consulting the community as part of a process to develop government policy, or build community awareness and understanding.
- Involving the community through a range of mechanisms to ensure that issues and concerns are understood and considered as part of the decision-making process.
- Collaborating with the community by developing partnerships to formulate options and provide recommendations.
- Empowering the community to make decisions and to implement and manage change.

*(References: 1. Queensland Department of Emergency Services (2001) Charter for community engagement, Community Engagement Unit, Strategic and Executive Services, Queensland Department of Emergency Services 2. The State of Victoria, 1996 - 2013, [Accessed on 12 June 2013])*

### **Women Entrepreneurs**

Lavoie (1985) for example; defined female entrepreneur as the female head of a business who takes the initiative of launching a new venture; accepts the associated risks, financial, administrative and social responsibilities, and who is effectively in charge of the daily management of the business. Buttner and Moore (1997) identified women entrepreneurs in their study as those having initiated the business, being the owner of at least fifty percent of the business and playing a major managerial role in the business. Chu (2000) defined women entrepreneurs as female owner-managers who may acquire business ownership through their own creation, inheritance, or jointly established with or without family members, being directors in the establishment and must be actively involved in the business.

*(Source: Quoted in Mohd Hassan Mohd Osman & Zarina Salleh (2007). Goal orientations and typology of women entrepreneurs. Jurnal Kemanusiaan, Vol. 10:24-37, [Accessed on 12 June 2013])*

*(Prepared by Siti Waringin Oon, Senior Social Research Officer, KANITA)*

## SPECIAL HIGHLIGHTS



Datuk Paduka Marina Mahathir, a notable writer, blogger and social activist of Malaysia gave a keynote address at the Asian University of Women (AUW) in Chittagong, Bangladesh on the 18th of May, 2013. Marina Mahathir is a member of AUW's International Council of Advisors. She was also the keynote speaker at KANITA's International Women's Day celebration in the year 2008. With Marina's permission we reproduce excerpts of her commencement address at AUW for our readers.

Assalamualaikum...

...Thank you for inviting me to address all of you today. I am more than honoured and beyond proud to be here on this special day...

...Let me tell you a little bit about why I am so excited about AUW...

At AUW, I see...[students who]...are you keen to learn about everything, but your experience here...has opened your eyes to the diversity that exists in the world, between people of different cultures, religions and creeds... [You] have also not shied away from learning about difficult subjects, whether they are about disabled people, or the difficulties of women in the garment industry, or the terrible exploitation that sex workers face or the use of rape as a weapon of war...I simply hope that you will never forget what you learnt there and will continue to fight for justice for those who have no means to fight for themselves, those who cannot speak for themselves, wherever you may be. You are, if not their future, then their children's future...

...How do we change the environment for women? As I said before, I saw that future at AUW. Why do I say this? Firstly, the very basis of change in any society I believe is through educating girls and women... Educating girls and women has a ripple effect that extends beyond just the individual; when we educate one girl, we will also be educating those around her, her family, her friends and later on her children. It therefore stands to reason that the benefits of educating girls is not only worthwhile in and of itself, it also is enormously economical for the society she lives in.

Secondly, at AUW we believe we are educating not just anyone, but also leaders, and God knows we need female leadership in order to change the world for women...There are so many girls and women who hold themselves back from even thinking that they can be leaders of their countries because for centuries, we have been led to believe that only men can lead our countries and communities.

Well, for us to change that thinking, we must break the barriers in our own minds that we cannot lead... Having allocations, usually 30%, not even the 50% to match the gender distribution in our populations, forces people to look for female candidates with the right qualifications. ...We need our societies to accept that the women who succeed in political office, or in business, or in academia or in the sciences and the arts, are as normal as men who succeed in those same fields. **We need to normalize gender equality.** [emphasis added]

To do this, we need the numbers. Women need to be visible in great numbers in these positions because people need to get used to seeing them in public positions...We need to get used to seeing women in these positions all the time, not just sometimes...So I expect, with 134 new graduates we are unleashing onto the world today, we will begin to raise that visibility.

...One of the most important things you are learning [in AUW] is critical thinking. Believe me when I say that it is a rare privilege here in Asia to be learning this. In most of our schools and universities, we are taught to conform, to simply accept what is told to us, to do as we are told. We rarely think that there might be another side to a story. But there often is. And that other story is often a woman's.

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Because you have learnt to think critically, you become very dangerous. Many people will not like you because you will ask too many awkward questions about everything. But do not back down. Thinking critically means simply that you are demanding the accountability that those who claim to lead us should have. And all good leaders are transparent and accountable...

My beautiful graduands, as I look at all of you today, I am filled with much hope. Despite the horrendous conditions that many people of the world live in today, especially if they are women, I believe the world is changing, even if it seems slow. The sheer force of numbers of women coming out of educational institutions like AUW and other universities is bound to create a different scenario especially in the workplace...

...And as women, we have the knowledge and the creativity to do all these, if we only remember that the way we see the world is no less valid and important as the way men see the world. We might see it differently but that does not mean our way is wrong or invalid...

...[But] [t]here is no point in having this knowledge if you do not then know how to share it. And this is where 'women's ways of knowing' come into play. When I shared my knowledge, I used a method which women are particularly adept at; I used real life stories. While facts and figures are important, it was the stories about real people leading very real lives that persuaded people most... [Our stories but always be ground] in reality, in real women's lives that are often messy, sad, sometimes tragic but also often uplifting, inspiring and ultimately triumphant.

And finally...I have learnt that to do things well, you need democracy...By democracy I mean that we have to listen and respect all the voices that have a stake in whatever we do. We have to treat everyone equally, regardless of their station in life. Our words and actions should be founded on justice, on the principle that every human being matters and has an equal right to all the opportunities, hopes and dreams that every other human being has...

...My prayers are always with you.



Datuk Paduka Marina Mahathir

The above picture was taken from: <http://www.asian-university.org/newsAndEvents/2013Commencement.htm> [Accessed on 20 June 2013]

## HIGHLIGHTS

### KANITA Inaugural Postgraduate International Conference on Gender Studies (KPICGS)

Dates: 31 October - 1 November 2012

Venue: Auditorium Ishak Pateh Akhir, SAINS@USM, Penang

The KANITA Inaugural Postgraduate International Conference on Gender Studies (KPICGS), held on 31st October 2012 till 1st November 2012 by Women's Development Research Center (KANITA), Universiti Sains Malaysia. The venue of the conference was Auditorium Ishak Pateh Akhir, SAINS@USM, Penang, Malaysia. It was an effort that spanned across borders. The inaugural international postgraduate conference organised by KANITA was an attempt to create a platform which allowed students from all fields to come together on a common ground that was to present and discuss research on women and men in their real world; capturing their lived realities.



Some of the international postgraduate students presenting their papers during the parallel sessions

The conference has brought young scholars from all over the world together, providing a platform for them to deliberate on 'Researching the lived realities of women and gender relations'. We have received a total of 82 submissions of which 58 were finally accepted. Submitted papers were from Philippines, Singapore, Sweden, Italy, Nigeria, New Zealand, Vietnam, India, Iran, Thailand, Norway, Indonesia and Malaysia,

However, since it was a postgraduate seminar where most participants were postgraduate students, and due to limited funding and visa problems, and other unavoidable circumstances, a number of authors unfortunately had to withdraw at the very last minute.

The presentations were further divided into more substantive sub-themes in various panel sessions. Altogether, the remarkable papers looked at very pressing issues today ranging from media, empowerment, health, violence, leadership, work, family and education, all in connection with women and gender issue.

*(Prepared by Reihaneh Attaran, Ph.D Candidate, KANITA)*

### International Women's Day

Date: 8 March 2013

Venue: Dewan Pembangunan Siswa 2, Kompleks Cahaya Siswa, USM

Women's Development Research Centre (KANITA) organised a celebration of International Women's Day under the theme, "Women's Agenda in The University: A Reflection Across Time". This is an annual event for KANITA to highlight the challenges and achievements of women. The response was very encouraging as about 150 attendees from University Sains Malaysia, government departments and various non-governmental organisations filled the hall.



Assoc. Prof. Dr. Noraida Endut, Director of KANITA presenting a token of appreciation to Prof. Dato' Dr. Omar Osman, Vice-Chancellor of USM

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From left: Ms. Nazurah Mohd Noh, Ms. Nurul Nur Farhana Yahya, Assos. Prof. Dr. Intan Osman, Prof. Roshada Hashim and Prof. Dato' Dr. See Ching Mey

Among the activities were a short drama highlighting women's issues, and a forum moderated by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Intan Osman. The forum panelists presented their experiences, challenges and strategies to be successful in their career and life. They were women of different ages and positions from USM, namely; Prof. Dato' Dr. See Ching Mey, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Industrial and Community Network Division, Prof. Roshada Hashim, former Dean of Institute of Postgraduate Studies, Ms Nurul Nur Farhana Yahya, Assistant Registrar at PiPPa, and Ms. Nazurah Mohd Noh; a final year student of Social Work programme at the School of Social Sciences.

*(Prepared by Siti Waringin Oon, Senior Social Research Officer, KANITA)*

## Entrepreneurship Day for Single Mothers

Date : 14 May 2013

Venue : Anjung Budi and KANITA, USM

Entrepreneurship Day is one of the programs that have been planned for Single Mothers under Entrepreneurial Assessment Project of KANITA funded by the Division of Industrial & Community Network (BJIM). This one-day programme was held for all the single mother respondents of this project.

The programme was conducted to encourage and sharpen single mothers' entrepreneurial skills. It also aimed to promote the business by single mothers in order to earn additional income. Some of the activities conducted included workshops on "Management book-keeping records" and "Takaful Entrepreneur". These workshops were targeted to enhance the skills on money management and entrepreneurial opportunities of single mothers who participated in this programme. The speakers for these workshops were:

1. Mr. Azman Azmarul Sa'adi from Bakaprep Sdn. Bhd.
2. (Dr) Mohd Anuar Nordin from MAA Takaful, Sungai Petani, Kedah

A total of 16 single mothers participated in this programme where various types of health products, food, beverages, clothing, and cakes were sold. Among those who visited the booths was Ms. Rosida Mohamed Rose, who is the USM Branch Manager of Bank Muamalat. This programme was jointly organised by BJIM, KANITA and USM branch of Bank Muamalat.

This one-day programme ended with the announcement of the Best Booths which were won by Ms. Norajiah, followed by Ms. Noraihan and third place went to Ms. Fadzilah.

*(Prepared by Hasniza Mohd. Hassan, Executive Officer, KANITA)*



Mr. Azman Azmarul Sa'adi (left)



(Dr) Mohd Anuar Nordin



One of the booth set up by the participant

## Work Malaysia Study (WMS) Field Trip to USM/ Penang

Dates: 23 - 26 May 2013

Venue: KANITA, USM

Every year, different cohorts of students from the University of Lethbridge undertake a 6 week Work Malaysia Study Programme (WMS) in Kuala Lumpur in various agencies and companies with the objective of understanding and appreciating Malaysia work culture and management. The students are usually 3<sup>rd</sup> year undergraduates majoring in International Management from the Faculty of Management, University of Lethbridge (U of L), Alberta, Canada taking a course of MGT4640 Cross Cultural Study in Malaysia, May-June 2013.



Welcoming session during the visit to KANITA

The six week course provides students with visits to cultural sites, group study tours, weekly seminars on aspects of Malaysian culture, a better understanding of the corporate and organizational work environment, gender relations, and the opportunity to live in Kuala Lumpur while interning at selected organisations. Students will be getting academic credit towards completing their bachelor's degree after successfully undergone the WMS programme in Malaysia but do not get paid during the said internship.



Group photograph of the visit to KANITA

The programme, based in Kuala Lumpur, started 14 years ago from beginning of May to June with different cohorts. The International Management Director, Ms. Andrea Amelinckx (J.D.) has been visiting USM to assess her exchange students as she manages the yearly WMS student cohorts. A feature of the Work Malaysia Study programme is to conduct the field trip outside of Kuala Lumpur. KANITA hosted the first WMS field trip to USM and Penang in May 2012. This year again, KANITA with the cooperation of International Office, USM has organised the visit among the 18 WMS International students comprising Canadians, South Koreans and PRC and Ms. Andrea Amelinckx from May 23- 26 as one of the activities of the MOU between USM (KANITA) and the University of Lethbridge signed in 2010. This year's WMS field trip exposed students to KANITA's programmes and that of Penang Women's Development Corporation (PWDC), a women's organization in Penang and also KANITA's counterpart as well as giving them the cultural treat of trishaw ride along Penang Heritage sites, an oriental and Malaysian dinner by the coastal sea and a free and easy stay in Batu Feringghi.

At KANITA after the welcoming remark, the Deputy Director briefed the students on academic programmes followed by a talk by Prof. Dr. Rashidah Shuib on "Why Gender Matters?" and a Sharing of Experience on WMS by Ms Andrea Amelinckx, the Chair of International Management, Director of International Programs and Advisor of WMS, University of Lethbridge. In the afternoon, the students, their advisor, and KANITA's International Collaboration Coordinator visited PWDC and were briefed on the organisation's objectives, programmes and activities one of which is the first pilot project in Malaysia, Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB). At night, the group had a sumptuous dinner by the coastal sea of Bayan Bay and a night stay at Krystal Suite. The trishaw ride to various heritage sites in Georgetown was an enjoyable treat to most of the guests and later on they checked in at Bayu Emas Apartment, Batu Feringghi for 2 nights and 3 days. The group left for Kuala Lumpur in the evening of 26 June. This was the feedback of the visit from the Director, Ms Amelinckx, "thank you for the photos and thank you again for such a wonderful field trip for the students, they all really enjoyed it"

*(Prepared by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Intan Osman, Lecturer, KANITA and Coordinator of the International Collaborative Programme)*

## CONFERENCES/ WORKSHOPS/ OTHERS

### “2013 Korea-ASEAN Cooperation Project: Curriculum Development Workshop on ‘Gender and Development’ in ASEAN Universities”

Dates: 29 January - 1 February 2013

Venue: Holiday Inn Atrium, Singapore

The four-day workshop was organised by Korean Women’s Development Institute (KWDI), a think-tank for gender equality policy in Korea. It was funded by ASEAN Secretariat and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. It composed of lectures and seminars to discuss major topics of Gender and Development which were aimed at bringing together and share specific gender issues and link it to the development perspectives. In addition, ASEAN Secretariat and government representatives from countries including Malaysia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Philippines and Thailand had been provided with an opportunity to exchange ideas on better ways to reflect the GAD perspectives in related policies.

A total of 39 participants from ASEAN member states comprising ASEAN university professor/lecturers and scholars, ASEAN Secretariat, Members of ASEAN Committee on Women and KWDI staff were selected and funded to participate in the workshop. And Women’s Development Research Centre (KANITA) was represented by Prof. Dr. Rashidah Shuib who served as a resource specialist presenting a seminar on Gender and Health: Critical Matter (s) in Development and a discussant, while Associate Prof. Dr. Intan Osman and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Azman Azwan Azmawati, Deputy Dean, School of Communication and who is also a board member of KANITA served as participants. On the last day of the workshop, participants were taken on a field trip to Asian Civilisations Museum, Asia Research Institute and National University of Singapore campus tour.

As part of the workshop’s resolution, the KWDI’s secretariat conveyed their appreciation for the enthusiastic participation and contribution from every participant and facilitator and for the truly meaningful and rewarding gathering. They were hoping that what had been shared and discussed during the workshop would be useful in our studies and activities and to see concrete results and changes in our classrooms of gender and development studies.

*(Prepared by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Intan Osman, Lecturer, KANITA)*

### The 3rd Women Deliver Conference

Dates: 28 -30 May 2013

Venue: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The 3rd Women Deliver Conference which was held at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre late May 2013, saw a gathering of about five thousand participants to discuss, debate and share issues on matters such as women’s health, maternal and newborn health, unmet need for contraception, safe and legal abortion, human rights, HIV/AIDS and youth; looking more like the unfinished agenda of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) 1994. The language was heavy on “investment”; calling for states and funders to invest in women’s and girls’ health. One plenary illustrates the business call, “Investing in women’s reproductive health equals investing in economic and social progress for everyone”. The conference had three overall themes: “Investing in girls and women”, Reducing unmet need for contraception, and Looking to 2015 and beyond”. After all the hype and the success of the Cairo conference in placing women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights at the centre of the Cairo’s debate, concerns were raised at previous conferences that many countries would never meet the targets set in the MDGs, and that financial and political commitment were lacking. Women Deliver raised the question as to why more than 222 million women still could not access contraceptives; a high price to pay for unmet need. Among the participants were big names such as the Melinda and Bill’s Gate Foundation, the World Bank, UNFPA, WHO, and several big pharmaceutical companies. The conference’s keynote speech was delivered by Malaysia’s Prime Minister, Dato Sri Najib Tun Abdul Razak. The conference was attended by Prof. Dr. Rashidah Shuib and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Noraida Endut.

*(Prepared by Prof. Dr. Rashidah Shuib, Lecturer, KANITA)*

## KANITA IN-HOUSE ACTIVITIES

### Seminar Series: 'I Came, I Worked, I Survived'. Migrants Workers in Penang

Date: 27 March 2013

Venue: Rafidah Aziz Conference Room, KANITA, USM

Presenter: Ms. Lai Wan Teng, KANITA, presently pursuing her PhD in University of Bonn, Germany



Ms. Lai Wan Teng

KANITA's lecturer, Ms. Lai Wan Teng, shared some of her doctoral research findings about migrant workers in Penang, Malaysia. Her research entitled 'I Came, I Worked, I Survived', focused on survival strategies of migrant workers and their struggles living in a foreign country. Based on her 12 months of fieldwork living with a group of Indonesian factory workers, she highlighted that the use of various networks among migrant workers is significant in coping with day-to-day challenges. Most of the migrants in Malaysia are from Indonesia, Myanmar, Vietnam, Philippines, Bangladesh and Nepal, brought in by agents to work in factories, construction sites and service industry. The research found a highly dependent relationship between migrant workers and their employers, implying a modern day system of exploitation.

*(Prepared by Mazidah Musa, Research Assistant, KANITA)*

### Seminar Series: Exploring socio-economic, cultural and psychological elements that affect the well-being of cancer patients and their family members in Northern Peninsular Malaysia



Assoc. Prof. Dr.  
Suriati Ghazali

Date: 9 May 2013

Venue: Rafidah Aziz Conference Room, KANITA, USM

Presenter: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Suriati Ghazali, School of Humanities, USM

The above seminar was presented by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Suriati Ghazali who is also one of KANITA's board members. This research, funded by Majlis Kanser Nasional(MAKNA), focused on the experiences and difficulties faced by low-income cancer patients and their family members. In addition, the research explored their knowledge on cancer treatment as well as the strategies they employed in fighting and surviving the illness. The research showed that poverty and inaccessibility to medical facilities contributed to the poor well-being of the cancer patients. In addition, some cultural norms, perception and psychological factors also affected the acceptability and adoption of treatment methods.

*(Prepared by Mazidah Musa, Research Assistant, KANITA)*

### Writing Retreat and Family Day

Dates: 16 -19 May 2013

Venue: Sand Beach Resort, Langkawi

KANITA has successfully hosted a Writing Retreat and Family Day in Langkawi Island from 16-19th of May, 2013. The retreat was attended by academic staff members and facilitated by Prof. Chee Heng Leng as the co-ordinator for "Special Issue" publication for *Kajian Malaysia*. The main objective of the two-day retreat was to assist the academic staff members to make progress with their abstract writing and to ensure that the proposed abstracts are in line with the theme of 'Gender and Power', a theme that has been agreed upon for the publication. Several research topics have been identified for this "Special Issue" which includes entrepreneurship (micro-entrepreneurial businesses, home-stay), micro-finance, domestic violence, Tamil beauty culture, and international marriage.

As a token of appreciation for the hard work and dedication of all staff, the staff's family members were also invited to join the Family Day in Langkawi. The Family Day was also organised to symbolise KANITA's recognition on the importance of work-life balance as well as providing a platform for the staff members to get to know each other and having fun together in the beautiful surroundings of Langkawi Island.

*(Prepared by Siti Shahrizatil Husna Shahrudin, IT Officer, KANITA)*

## IN PERSON WITH DR. HIRUT BEKELE HAILE

*Dr. Hirut Bekele Haile has a PhD in Social Sciences from Wageningen University, Netherlands, and M.A. degree in Regional and Local Development and B.A degree in Management and Public Administration from Addis Ababa University. Her PhD research is entitled, "Targeting women in microfinance programmes: transforming or reinforcing gender Inequalities, Evidence from Ethiopia". She has been working as a Lecturer at the Women's Development Research Centre (KANITA), Universiti Sains Malaysia after completing a two-year Post-doctoral fellowship with KANITA on July 2012. Before joining KANITA, Dr. Hirut worked in Ethiopia for more than 10 years as a Gender Advisor and Consultant with various international organisations engaged in poverty reduction. She also worked with a governmental agency involved in handicraft and small industry development.*



**KM: Can you tell us how did you come to know KANITA and how did you applied for the Post-doctoral fellow?**

**HBH:** My first encounter with USM was in 2008 while I browsed on the internet for international conferences and saw a call for paper by USM for the International Conference on Social Sciences and Humanity. Then, I had the opportunity to attend the conference and found out about KANITA's research on micro-credit and women's empowerment, which was very similar to my PhD research. At that time, I was living in Perak with my husband (who was doing his PhD) and writing my dissertation.

In December 2009, while preparing for my dissertation defense in the Netherlands, I sent a copy of my dissertation book (not published) to KANITA since I was aware that it was involved in similar research on microcredit and women's empowerment. Later on, I found out that my dissertation was received by a surprise by the then KANITA Director Professor Rashidah Shuib. She had no idea about me, and why I sent my dissertation to KANITA. In 2010, I came back to live in Malaysia accompanying my husband who started working for a university in Malaysia. Then, I started searching for Post-doctoral fellowship and again end up at USM's website where it announced Post-doctoral vacancies for its different schools and centres, including KANITA. I sent my job application to KANITA, adding to the surprise. This was how I joined KANITA as a Post-doctoral Fellow and worked for two years, and then took a lecturer position for one year.

**KM: How do you perceive / what was your role as Post-doctoral Fellow and lecturer n KANITA?**

**HBH:** As you may know, a Post-doctoral fellow is a person who conducts a scholarly research, in the field of his/her specialization after completing doctoral studies. My role as a post-doc in KANITA was not very different from this. In KANITA, I was

involved in microcredit related researches and in other academic matters such as seminars, conferences and assisting postgraduate students. One of my major tasks at KANITA was conducting a desk research, with some supplementary interviews, to document the historical role of USM in the introduction and development of micro-credit in Malaysia. This was a joint publication with two KANITA's Professors. This was an exciting work because studying the history of micro-credit in Malaysia was closely associated with the expansion of the renowned Grameen Bank type micro-credit institutions/programs at the global level. USM made Malaysia the first known international replicator of the Grameen Bank outside Bangladesh, through its action-oriented research on micro-credit, known as Projek Ikhtiar, which later on instituted as Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM). My other research related task involves writing articles and book chapters from KANITA's qualitative data set on micro-credit and women's empowerment. Although I had difficulties of understanding the full data set since it was in Bahasa Malaysia, the local language, I was able to co-write some articles/book chapter for publication with the help of other staff. I have been coordinating the implementation of USM's Mikro-Pinj and researching its impact on the lives of its borrowers/households and on staff job productivity. Moreover, as a researcher I was involved in writing of articles for publications with other scholar and produced a journal article and a book chapter in the area of women/gender in microfinance and food insecurity in Ethiopia. Furthermore, I had the opportunity to present my research works in several international conferences in Asia and Europe.

**KM: How did you start getting involved with issues related to gender and women?**

**HBH:** I think my interest in women's issues date back in 1990 when I was working for Handicraft and Small Industry Agency (HASIDA) in a province called Sidamo, in Ethiopia. One of my tasks at

(Continued from page 11)

HASIDA was to facilitate access to credit and training by the members of handicrafts cooperatives involved in sewing and weaving. While doing this I thought of helping poor women, especially those working as prostitutes, to engage in economic activities to earn a living. This intention, however, was not part of my official task but my personal commitment. I started communicating my ideas informally with like minded individuals and I even remember having a meeting with them. Starting from that time I became more sensitive to women's problems and developed interest and commitment to work on their cause. Finally, I searched for a job related to women and joined the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) as a Women's Programme Coordinator by the end of 1992. I was stationed in a very remote, rural, poor and drought prone district in Northern Ethiopia. I was able to observe and understand the lived realities of the poor and marginalised people, particularly of women and girls. My grassroots experiences increased my commitment to work for women's causes. Since then, I have been involved in gender/women's related works, and my educational researches also focused on dealing with the same issues.

**KM: What do you think KANITA's postgraduate student should have more and why?**

**HBH:** KANITA provides MA and PhD degree by research mode. This entails postgraduate students must be able to understand research designs, methodology and tools to conduct a scientific research. In addition, students need to be aware that researching women and gender relations in society require knowledge of gender theories and gender analysis frameworks and tools. This means, KANITA's postgraduate students must be able to theorize and analyze their research from a gender perspective. It is profoundly useful to consider gender as an important variable in social science research since gender division is observed in many areas of lives, in every society, and as it is a crosscutting issue across the social sciences

discipline. However, it is unfortunate that many social science researches are gender "blind" and unable to provide gender disaggregated data.

**KM: Since you have been involved with micro-credit during your postdoctoral in KANITA, how do you foresee the future of microcredit in KANITA?**

**HBH:** It is important to note that USM played a vital role in the introduction and development of micro-credit institutions in Malaysia and also in the Asia Pacific region in 1980s and 1990s, through the then Centre for Policy Research (now Centre for Policy Research and International Studies). And more recently, KANITA has taken the baton of micro-credit in USM by implementing an in-house micro-credit action-oriented research, conducting research in microfinance and women's empowerment, training PhD students and assisting various state agencies in initiating micro-credit projects. I think KANITA should continue researching on micro-credit and women's empowerment since little is known about the impact of micro-credit projects on women's lives in Malaysia. It is also important for KANITA to do research beyond micro-credit, and explore the problems and challenges experienced by female micro-enterprise operators.

**KM: What is your last say to KANITA?**

**HBH:** I would like to extend my profound and sincere thanks to KANITA and USM management for giving me the opportunity to work with the centre of excellence of this prestigious university. During my stay with KANITA, I have learned and benefited a lot from the academic staff, visiting professors, post-docs and the board members of KANITA in the areas of scholarly research and journal article publications. I also would like to thank the administrative staff of KANITA and USM for providing me fast and efficient administrative support.

*(Prepared by Siti Waringin Oon, Senior Social Research Officer, KANITA)*

## KANITA FAMILY NEWS



KANITA took the opportunity to congratulate Assoc. Prof. Dr. Noraida Endut for her appointment as the Director of Women's Development Research Centre (KANITA), beginning 1st. January 2013.



KANITA would like to welcome and congratulate Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hafizah Selamat on Board as our new Deputy Director of KANITA beginning 1st. January 2013. Dr. Hafizah specialized in Social Anthropology, received her Masters and PhD from the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, UK.



KANITA would like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt gratitude to Prof. Dr. Rashidah Shuib who stepped down as KANITA Director on 1st January 2013. She has served as KANITA Director since 15 March 2005. She is currently a Professor at the Women's Health Development Unit, School of Medical Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia. She has graciously agreed to contribute 30% of her time to the Centre. KANITA thanks her for all her contributions and may she be well and healthy always.



Congratulations to KANITA's Administrative Officer, Hasniza Mohamad Hassan and her husband, Ismadi Baharom on the birth of their daughter, Nur Imanina Qisyah on 31 December 2012.

(Prepared by Norshilawati Mohd Shibi, Executive Secretary, KANITA)

### KANITA

#### VISION

Transforming society towards gender equality and social justice

#### MISSION

As a Centre of Excellence, KANITA is committed towards research, transfer of knowledge, advocacy and community engagement, utilising and promoting a gender and social equality framework. It strives to impact on the academe, the state, women and the society at large.

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### UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

#### VISION

Transforming Higher Education for a Sustainable Tomorrow

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USM is a pioneering, transdisciplinary research intensive university that empowers future talent and enables the bottom billions to transform their socio-economic well-being.

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Siti Shahrizatil Husna Shahrudin

Siti Waringin Oon

#### Layout

Siti Shahrizatil Husna Shahrudin

#### Photographer

Abdul Ghaffur Abdul Aziz

**Scientific Name:** Delonix Regia (Bojer ex Hook.) Raf.

**Family:** Fabaceae

**Common name:** Flame of the Forest, Semarak Api

**Usage:** The wood is of little value, although it is durable and resistant to water, and has been used for making fence posts. The seeds of D. regia are used as beads, and there has been some research on the use of the gum obtained from the dried seeds as a binder in the manufacture of tablets, such as paracetamol. The inner portion of the seed is eaten in Thailand. The bark is believed to be antipyretic, used in subsiding fever symptoms.

(References: <http://rmbn.nus.edu.sg/dna/organisms/details/407> and <http://www.kew.org/plants-fungi/Delonix-regia.htm>, [Accessed on 19 June 2013])

(Prepared by: Abdul Ghaffur Abdul Aziz, Admin Assistant, KANITA)

