

## The Study on Consultation Services of Sisters in Islam

Indriaty Ismail<sup>1</sup> and Siti Hilmiyah Mohd Rafi'i Dzulkipli<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>National University of Malaysia (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia)

**Abstract.** This study focused to the implementation of the Sisters in Islam (SIS)'s consultation service on the issues of women in Malaysia throughout the year 2008. Its objective is to determine successfulness of its implementation, contribution to society, the structure of administration and the achievement from the service provided. The methodologies used are the documentation study and the field interviews in which the documentation study consist of the research on the sources from the SIS's resource centre, various libraries, websites, newspapers, journals and magazines. Whilst, the field data collections are inclusive of the interviews with the SIS activist, law experts, psychologists, religious figures, academicians and the public. The observation method is in the form of direct involvement in the activities organised by SIS. The conclusion founds that the SIS's implementation of its counselling service which is religious oriented is well receptive amongst the general public especially the Muslim women.

**Keywords:** Sisters in Islam, consultation services, counselling, legal services, advocacy.

### 1. Introduction

This article is an observation study on the implementation of the consultation service administration in Sisters in Islam (SIS) which, in particular is the legal services of the Sisters in Islam (Legal Services and Advocacy). Basically the service implementation is done either through its Legal Clinic, Legal Literacy and the Court Watch. Further, this article is to convey the analysis of the consultation services done via its Legal Clinic throughout the year 2008.

### 2. Consultation Services of SIS (CSS)

Generally, The CSS are the activities of SIS in the form of services to advice its clients which is done through various ways whether it is in a general form, partnership, community or through the policy makers approach in which they directly connect to the government and the national policy makers for the purpose of amending the Islamic family laws and the non-Islamic family laws and empowering women according to the human rights and the women's rights (Sisters in Islam 2008).

Particularly, the CSS is a combination of the networks which is also known as the Legal Aid Clinic (LAC) (Sisters in Islam 2008). The SIS administration has categorised the LAC under the administration of the Advocacy, Legal Services and the Amendment of the Laws Department, together with the other four services of the SIS (Zainah Anwar & Shanon Shah Mohd Sidik 2006). The organisation structure of the Advocacy, Legal Services and the Amendment of the Laws Department could be viewed as in the diagram below (Sisters in Islam 2009a):

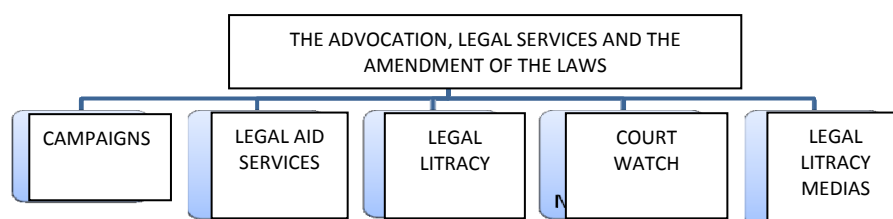


Fig. 1: The Advocacy, Legal Services and the Amendment of the Laws

LAC is also known as the Legal Aid Counselling Clinic in which the SIS will help its clients who come to their office to outlay their respective problems and unable to wait for answer in the Legal Literacy column in the Friday *Utusan Malaysia* newspaper. With this LAC services, the SIS is always ready to provide legal aids in all aspects i.e. marriage, divorce, polygamy, wife's financial aid and the financial rights of a wife and children. The advertisement to those having problems or want to solve their problems in the above matters could be visualized in the SIS website (Zainah Anwar & Shanon Shah Mohd Sidik 2006, Sisters in Islam 2009a).

### 3. The Implementation of the SIS Consultation Services (CSS) in the Year 2008

This section is a comprehensive report of the research findings of the implementation of the CSS throughout the year 2008. The data was compiled from the written articles, readings of books and journals and the available audio CDs. Starting from the year 2008; the CSS which is done for free at the operation centre of SIS cooperates with other women organisations and the Legal Aid Department of the BAR Council of Malaysia. This initiative is further developed to other states in Malaysia. In July 2008, The Mobile Legal Aid service was launched in Kuala Lumpur (Sisters in Islam 2009b).

An interview with Nazreen Nizam (2009) and with reference to the SIS pamphlet printed in April 2009, the total clients in the year 2008 stated in the statistic file of SIS reaches 3,000 people, whereas in the year 2006, it was around 1,768 people (Sisters in Islam 2009b). The complete clients' data are as follows:

Table 1: CSS Cases Statistics 2008

No	Type of Cases	Total	Percentage
1	Marriage: registration / marriage representative (wali) procedure / judge as representative (wali hakim) / re-marriage (rujuk)	465	37
2	Polygamy	68	6
3	Divorces	113	9
4	Responsibilities (Nafkah): wife/ hadhanah period /Care-taking of children.	332	27
5	Children: Out of marriage child and foster child	15	2
6	Violence towards women: domestic violence / sexual / sexual harassment	47	4
7	Court's Procedure: Unsatisfied reports over Syariah court's decision / reports regarding appointment with lawyers / rules regarding switching legal aids (lawyers) / undue influence (action by force)	27	2
8	Distribution of Legacies (Faraid): Real Estates / Deeds / Hibah	42	3
9	Syarie Crimes: Out of Marriage - Close Intimacy/ Gambling /Drinking /Adulteries/ Not fasting	9	1
10	Miscellaneous	124	10
	<b>Total</b>	1144	100

The diagram below illustrates the total of clients over cases:

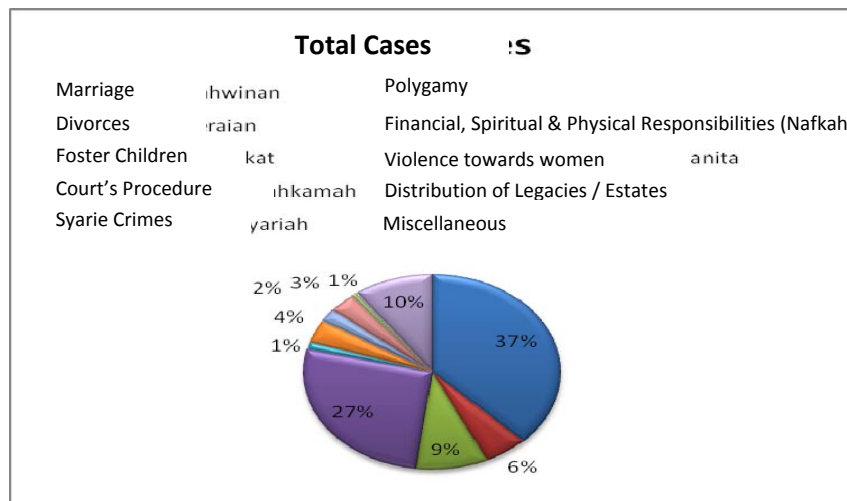


Fig. 2: Statistical Datas of CSS Clients 2008 (Sisters in Islam 2009c)

Referring to the above diagram, the total cases handled by the CSS in the year 2008 was 1144 cases: distribution of estates - 42 cases i.e. 3%, polygamy 68 cases i.e. 6%, divorces 113 cases i.e. 9%, responsibility towards wife (nafkah) 332 cases i.e. 27%, child or foster child 15 cases i.e. 1%, violence towards women 47 cases i.e. 4%, court's procedures 27 cases i.e. 2%, syarie crimes 9 cases i.e. 1% and miscellaneous 124 cases i.e. 10% (N. Nizam 2009). Whilst, these data differs from those published in the SIS's website. The total of cases handled in the website: <http://www.sistersinislam.org.my>, *Law and You* column 2008, was only 65 cases: Child care and responsibilities 8 cases, distribution of estates 5 cases, polygamy 4 cases, divorce 19 cases, marriage 10 cases, responsibility towards wives 9 cases, divorce filed by wives (taklik) 8 cases and miscellaneous 2 cases (Sisters in Islam 2009c).

#### 4. The Findings of The CSS Study

The research findings on this aspect are as follows (Sisters in Islam 2009d):

- Waiting period / time

Analised data as at 3 November 2008, 71% of clients responded that they were really satisfied with the queue system / a prompt waiting period. 29% of the clients were really more than satisfied and none were unsatisfied.

- Appointment time

All the respondents states that the staff of SIS were very punctual and timely with the appointment except one respondent claimed that a SIS lawyer were late.

- Excellent Service

90% responded as the staff of SIS were very good and etiquette, whilst the other 10% just responded as they were giving a good service.

- Efficiency

61% responded as the SIS officers were great, 37% said that their service were just normal and the other 2% did not respond.

- Relevancy

66% said the information they received were very relevant. 32% were very sure that the information given were very relevant. 2% said just stated relevant dan none said not relevant at all.

- Expectation

49% said outcome of the consultation were beyond their expectation, 44% said just out of their expectation, 7% said as what they expect. None said the consultation defeat the purpose.

- Privacy

66% said they were very sure that their personal information would be very well kept by the SIS staff, 39% of the clients said their privacy were very well kept, and 5% said their privacy were well kept.

The following diagram shows the feedbacks of the clients on the CSS 2008:

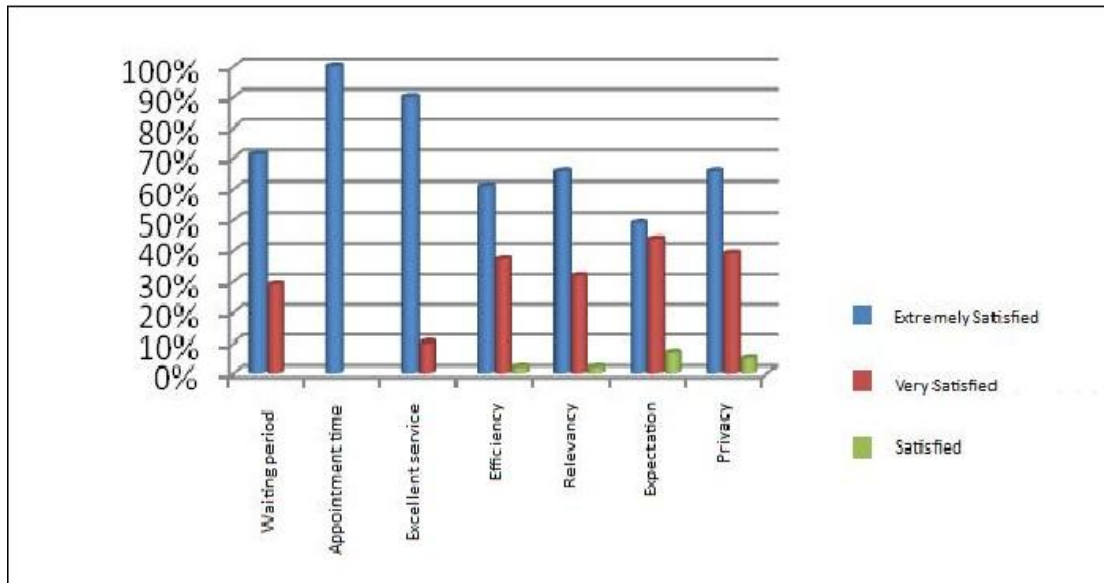


Fig. 3: Clients' Response on the CSS 2008 (Sisters in Islam 2009d)

## 5. Conclusion

The implementation of the Sisters in Islam's consultation service particularly in the family and women's rights issues throughout the year 2008 pointed to an excellent service outcome. Clients' response were very satisfied and extremely satisfied in all the seven factors focused in the study, i.e. the waiting period, appointment time, excellent service, efficiency, relevancy, expectations and privacy. Generally, the SIS consultation service is the best effort and contribution from a feminist group fighting for Islamic women's rights in Malaysia.

## 6. References

- [1] N. Nizam. Sister in Islam's Lawyer. Interviewed on July 3rd. 2009.
- [2] Sisters in Islam. Sisters in Islam. <http://www.sistersinislam.org.my>. Feb 2th. 2008.
- [3] Sisters in Islam. Pengenalan Sisters in Islam (Introduction to Sisters in Islam). Selangor: SIS Documentation Centre. 2009a.
- [4] Sisters in Islam. Sisters in Islam. Selangor: SIS Documentation Centre. 2009b.
- [5] Sisters in Islam. Case Statistic for Year 2000-2008. Selangor: SIS Documentation Centre. 2009c.
- [6] Sisters in Islam. SIS Legal Clinic - Client Response form. Selangor: SIS Documentation Centre. 2009d.
- [7] Z. Anwar, S. S. Mohd Sidik. Sisters in Islam Empowering Voices for Change. Annual Review 2006. Kuala Lumpur: Micom Sdn. Bhd. 2006.