

JAG wins UN Award, set to march on promoting gender equality

The United Nations has awarded the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG), a coalition of nine Malaysian non-governmental organisations promoting gender equality, with the United Nations Award 2013 for 'Millennium Development Goal' Three: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women.

Representing JAG to receive the award was Maria Chin Abdullah from Persatuan Kesedaran Komuniti Selangor (EMPOWER) who said "In our 28 year herstory this is the first time JAG has been given an award, we are proud that JAG's work has been given recognition, and we are certain that this milestone will motivate us further moving forward"

The award was presented in conjunction with the Commemoration of the UN Day 2013 at Parkroyal, Kuala Lumpur. The UN Awards in Malaysia was established in 1998 under the Resident Coordinator System to acknowledge the work of individuals or organisations that are seen as upholding the ideals of the United Nations in an exemplary manner. This year, the United Nations is presenting eight awards to recognise contribution towards achieving a particular MDG.

Commenting on the win, Loh Cheng Kooi, Executive Director of the Women's Centre for Change (WCC) Penang said, "JAG has come a long way since its establishment two decades ago and has now emerged as one of the strongest NGO coalitions in Malaysia committed to promoting gender equality. The strength of our collaboration lies in our diversity and cooperative spirit, which has enabled us to adopt multiple strategies to achieve gender equality"

Added Ivy Josiah from Women's Aid Organisation "Collectively, as a part of a larger civil society movement, JAG believes that rights are indivisible. We have raised the debate on civil, political and cultural rights including religious freedoms".

Established in 1985 as the Joint Action Group on Violence Against Women, JAG was re-named as the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality in 2006 to reflect its expanded advocacy. Some of JAG's notable achievements include the intensive lobbying for the amendments to the rape laws in 1989, the passing of the Domestic Violence Act in 1994 and the inclusion of "gender" under Article 8(2) of the Federal Constitution in 2001. In the 2000s, JAG continued to campaign for a review of the Islamic family laws, an enactment of a sexual harassment law and amendments to the DVA and rape laws. Internationally, JAG has participated actively in the United Nations' Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process.

In 2007, JAG held a demonstration against an MP well known for his sexist remarks resulting in his public apology. In 2008, JAG turned up at the parliament with “Kotakan Kata” (Deliver Your Promises) campaign to remind Members of Parliament of their election promises.. JAG innovative campaign recently includes an annual “Aiyoh Wat Lah!” awards for misogynistic and sexist remarks by any leader.

Presently, JAG comprises Women’s Aid Organisation (WAO), Women’s Centre for Change, Penang (WCC), All Women’s Action Society (AWAM), Sisters in Islam (SIS), Persatuan Kesedaran Komuniti Selangor (EMPOWER), Perak Women for Women Society (PWW,) Sabah Women’s Action Resource Group (SAWO), Tenaganita and Persatuan Sahabat Wanita Selangor (PSWS).

Issued by the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality which comprises:

Women’s Aid Organisation (WAO)

All Women’s Action Society (AWAM)

Perak Women for Women Society (PWW)

Persatuan Kesedaran Komuniti Selangor (EMPOWER)

Persatuan Sahabat Wanita Selangor (PSWS)

Sabah Women’s Action Resource Group (SAWO)

Sisters in Islam (SIS)

Women’s Centre for Change, Penang (WCC)

Tenaganita