

# EMPOWERING WOMEN IN MALAYSIA:

The Mission Continues....



*History of the National Council of  
Women's Organisations, Malaysia  
1960 – 2000*

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MAJLIS KEBANGSAAN PERTUBUHAN-PERTUBUHAN WANITA MALAYSIA  
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS MALAYSIA (NCWO)  
(AFFILIATE MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN)  
(MEMBER OF ASEAN CONFEDERATION OF WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS)

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SHAHBUDIN

Timbalan Yang DiPertua  
(Deputy President)

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YG. BHG. DATIN SERI UTAMA PUAN  
SERI HAJAH HAZIZAH HAJI TUMIN

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(Vice President East Coast Zone)

PUAN VIJAYA P. NAIR

Naib Yang DiPertua Zon Malaysia Timur  
(Vice President East Malaysia Zone)

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Setiausaha Agung Kehormat  
(Hon. Secretary General)

YG. BHG. DATIN HAJAH NURSIHAH  
SULAIMAN

Bendahari Kehormat  
(Hon. Treasurer)

YG. BHG. DATUK MOHAIYANI  
SHAMSUDIN

Pen. Setiausaha Agung Kehormat  
(Hon. Assistant Secretary)

PUAN WAN ROKIAH ISMAIL

PUAN SENG HOON KIEW

Pen. Bendahari Kehormat  
(Hon. Assistant Treasurer)

## MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT NCWO

Since its inception in 1960, the National Council of Women's Organisations (NCWO) has had three very illustrious women as its President, Tan Sri Kamsiah Ibrahim, Tun Fatimah bt. Hj. Hashim and Tan Sri Zaleha Ismail. Under their leadership, the NCWO grew from strength to strength in membership, commitment to causes and results. This book is testimony to their exemplary leadership in motivating others to strive with consummate passion for equality and development for all women. It is with great humility that I, as the fourth President, take the honour of penning a message for this notable book that records the first forty years of the NCWO's historic milestones.

NCWO's journey will never end and we will continue to record its achievements for women as time goes by. However, the journey must begin somewhere and it is with utmost sincerity that we record our gratitude to the many women who together with NCWO Pro Tem Committee gathered on Hari Wanita, that historic day in 1962, to celebrate a day for remembering all women in Malaya. Later, this led to the formation of the NCWO in 1963. Little steps that may have seemed at that time, but they caused enough ripples to enable an enormous wave forward for women in Malaysia.

In producing this book, the NCWO enriches the store knowledge about women's progress in Malaysia and aptly illustrates their role in national development as well as on the international scene. Policy makers will benefit from the wealth of knowledge and experience about the importance of mainstreaming gender in national development plans and budgeting, as well as the winning formula of strategically engaging civil society in decision-making and implementation of development plans.

To go forward we have to learn from history as well as possess vision. The NCWO has ably combined facts and creativity in faithfully documenting its remarkable work in a very simple and captivating manner. The book is the collective memory of the contributions of many individuals who paved the way for women in this country and one, in particular, stands out significantly – Mrs F.R Bhupalan. NCWO records its gratitude to Mrs. Bhupalan who unfailingly gave of her time and energy to assist the two fine authors, Puan Adibah Amin and Cik Farida Jayamalar Ibrahim. Their single-mindedness in the pursuit of this endeavour of painstaking research into historical data ensures the success of this record, "Empowering Of Women In Malaysia – The Mission Continues: History of NCWO from 1960 – 2000."

May the single-mindedness of NCWO leaders in all their pioneering endeavours serve as a shining example for others to carry on with a strong spirit of voluntarism so essential in the work of the NCWO.

Yg. Bhg. Dato' Dr. Sharifah Hapsah Dato' Syed Hasan Shahabudin  
President, NCWO

About This Book

Acknowledgements

The National Council of Women's Organisations (NCWO) is a voluntary organisation of women who are committed to the advancement of women and children in Malaysia. It is a national organisation that works for the betterment of the community through various social and economic activities.

The NCWO has been instrumental in the development of various social and economic activities for women and children in Malaysia. It has been successful in its efforts to improve the lives of women and children through its various programmes and projects.

The NCWO is grateful to the very kindly and generous donors who have supported its various programmes and projects. Their contributions have been instrumental in the success of the NCWO's efforts to improve the lives of women and children in Malaysia.

The NCWO is also grateful to the various government and non-governmental organisations that have supported its efforts. Their support has been instrumental in the success of the NCWO's various programmes and projects.

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**Dedicated to  
Past, Present and Future  
Leaders and Members  
Of The  
National Council of Women's Organisations**

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## Acknowledgements

The National Council of Women's Organisations (NCWO) wishes  
to place on record its sincere appreciation

to

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)

for very kindly underwriting the production of

*"Empowering Women in Malaysia :*

*The Mission Continues...."*

*The NCWO would also like to thank the following individuals:*

Adibah Amin and Farida Jivamala Ibrahim	Writers
Felix Abisheganaden	Editor
Rasammah Naomi Bhupalan	: Editorial Insights
Angela Pereira	: Secretarial Services

## *About This Book*

“Empowering Women in Malaysia: The Mission Continues....” It is history with a sustained vision. It is about raising the status of women; about developments which many people have either forgotten or vaguely recall; about the important, supportive and, indeed, at times, leadership roles which Malaysian women have played in the overall progress and well-being of the Nation.

Two prominent women journalists, Adibah Amin and Farida Jivamala Ibrahim, have painstakingly sifted through piles of local historical records covering a period of 40 years (1960 - 2000) to assemble a fascinating collection of eventful episodes. These clearly categorise the role of Malaysian women in its true, positive perspective.

Even more....

These talented writers have correctly highlighted Malaysian women as leaders in a wide spectrum of professions, in both the public and private sectors previously regarded as “male only” preserves.

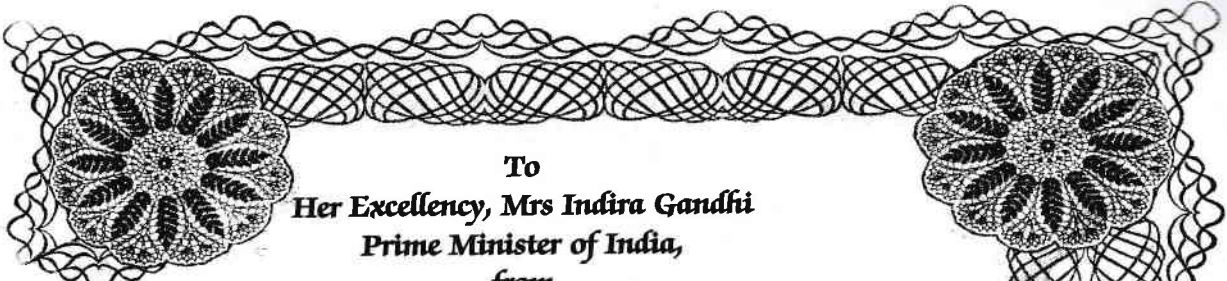
Being a Council for women’s organisations, the NCWO owes its immense influence, energy and motivation to the unstinting, active support it has received from each of its 100 affiliates.

Through diligence, hard work, motherly patience and a policy of non-confrontational dialogue with the Government to achieve its legitimate claims, the NCWO and its affiliates have clearly demonstrated the meaningful power of unified action.

In addition to the many material benefits that the NCWO has won for them, Malaysian women have come a long way in their roller coaster journey for justice, equality, respect and understanding. It is these same values that have distinguished Malaysia as a beacon for democracy in a troubled region.

“Empowering Women in Malaysia: The Mission Continues....” is an absorbing account of the upward march of women in the country. It is history with a sustained vision.

Felix Abisheganaden  
*Editor*



To  
**Her Excellency, Mrs Indira Gandhi**  
**Prime Minister of India,**  
from  
**The National Council of Women's Organisations,**  
**Malaysia**

We, the Women of Malaysia, are deeply honoured by Your Excellency's presence at this Public Rally which the National Council of Women's Organisations, Malaysia, has had the special privilege to convene.

We, the Women of Malaysia, take the greatest pride in welcoming Your Excellency, not only as the leader of her world's largest democracy, but also as a daughter of the ancient country of India, whose historical and cultural ties with Malaysia have been long and abiding.

Your Excellency's life has been a great inspiration to countless men and women from all parts of the world and from all walks of life. The dedication with which Your Excellency has served India from a tender age and the remarkable leadership you continue to give your Country have had tremendous influence throughout the world.

The high moral and spiritual precepts, which were the guiding principles of the Father of the Indian nation, Mahatma Gandhi and which your illustrious father, the late Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru and Your Excellency have followed closely, have been a major contribution to the world, which though torn by strife and dissension is still a world where men and women yearn for a lasting peace, to be able to live their lives according to the great and eternal truth of the Almighty that "All Men Are Brothers".

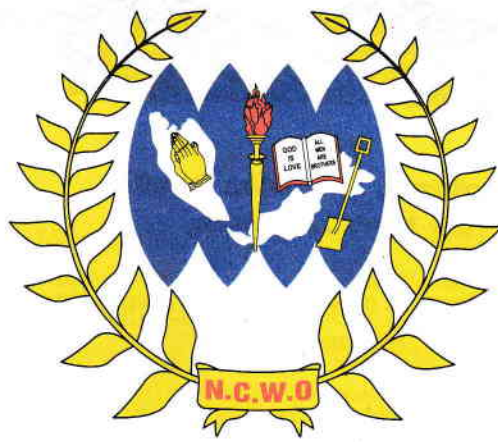
We sincerely pray that the Almighty from whom we all must draw great strength and guidance, will bless Your Excellency, so that through your work the millions in India and other parts of the world may be able to live richer, more abundant and happier lives, free from fear, prejudice and hate. As you continue your dedicated service may His light so shine upon Your Excellency and give you that peace, joy and strength which only the Almighty can bestow.

*Tan Sri Fatimah*  
(TAN SRI FATIMAH BTE HJ. HASHIM, P.M.N., M.P.)  
PRESIDENT

*R. N. Bhupalan Rajendram*  
(MRS. F. R. BHUPALAN)  
HON. SECRETARY GENERAL

Kuala Lumpur,  
30th May, 1968.





The NCWO Emblem was selected after an open competition was held. The entry selected was from the Women Teachers' Union, and was designed and executed by Mrs A.N. Nadarajah.

4 Segments - the 4 segments or sections of the globe or world.

Olive Leaves - peace which surrounds our country and the world. Peace, for which we, as women, must work.

Map of Malaysia - The Map of Malaysia in the background to identify NCWO as the National Council with international affiliation.

On each of the 4 Segments making up the globe on which the map is given, are:-

- (i) Hands which are raised in prayer to God Almighty. These same hands rear and carry the babies and young, therefore they mould the youth of our nation.
- (ii) Torch of Enlightenment lit and carried by women who must bring this to their families and society.
- (iii) Book of knowledge and Life on which is imprinted:-
  - (a) Tuhan Yang Pengasih - God is Love
  - (b) Semua Manusia Bersaudara - All Men Are Brothers

These must be guiding principles for our work, for our country and our people.
- (iv) The Shovel - denotes the dignity of labour. Hard Work with our hands must also be recognised and respected.

The colours used for the Emblem are the colours of the Malaysia's flag. The background is White and denotes Purity.

Logo NCWO telah dipilih selepas diadakan satu pertandingan terbuka. Pilihan yang telah menang dihantar oleh Kesatuan Guru-Guru Wanita, dimana corak logo telah di reka oleh Puan A.N. Nadarajah.

Logo itu menunjukkan 4 pembahagian yang melambangkan 4 bahagian dunia ini. Daun-daun pokok Zaiton melambangkan keamanan negara kita dan juga dunia. Keamanan yang harus dikekalkan melalui usaha-usaha kita sebagai wanita. Peta Malaysia yang digambarkan di bahagian belakang melambangkan NCWO sebagai Persatuan Kebangsaan dengan hubungan-hubungan antarabangsa.

Dalam tiap-tiap daripada 4 pembahagian yang melambangkan dunia terdapat:-

- (i) Tangan-tangan yang terangkat kepada Tuhan Maha Berkuasa. Tangan-tangan ini juga memelihara dan mendukung bayi-bayi, jadi inilah tangan-tangan yang membentuk belia negara kita.
- (ii) Satu obor berapi dibawa oleh wanita yang harus menerangkan keluarga dan masyarakat daripada kegelapan.
- (iii) Buku Pengetahuan dan Kehidupan yang tertulis atasnya
  - (a) Tuhan Yang Pengasih
  - (b) Semua Manusia Bersaudara.

Ini perinsip-perinsip yang harus diingati dalam menjalankan pekerjaan kita dan oleh negara dan rakyat kita.

- (iv) Cangkul - melambangkan kebesaran tenaga manusia. Kita haruslah mengenal dan menghormati kerja-kerja kuat yang dapat dilakukan oleh tenaga kita.

Warna-warna yang digunakan dalam Logo ini melambangkan bendera Malaysia. Latar belakang berwarna putih melambangkan kebersihan.