



CRISIS, CHANGE, OPPORTUNITY

Annual Report 2020

aware 

2020 seemed stacked against women: The deadly coronavirus outbreak brought on a “she-cession”, with female-dominated industries hit hardest by economic turmoil. Violence proliferated in homes across Singapore. Anxiety shot through the roof. Already-straining social systems were driven to breaking point.

But at AWARE, the disappearance of “normal” became an occasion for growth as well. We upended long-held practices for the better, making processes more versatile and convenient. We explored new formats that told our story to entirely new audiences. We celebrated as new bars were set for women’s participation in national politics. And most importantly, our community rallied together, coming out tougher and more determined than ever to eradicate gender inequality. Thank you for helping us pull through.

Visit aware.org.sg/report2020/home for the full online 2020 Annual Report.

Illustration by [Hafizah Jainal](#)

A Message From Our President

It was a year we had been looking forward to, as we would be celebrating our 35th anniversary. We had a big birthday concert planned for April. But everything changed when the coronavirus swept around the world, and 2020 turned out to be a very strange year that posed both challenges and opportunities for AWARE.

Like everyone else, we had at short notice to shift our services and programmes, as well as our backend operations, online when the circuit breaker began. Apart from the stresses of having to adjust quickly to working remotely, the staff had to deal with increased demand for our services because, for far too many women, working from home meant increased domestic stress, abuse and violence. It was a hectic period, but our staff managed heroically.

We worried about the impact the pandemic and the attendant economic uncertainties would have on our fundraising efforts. But there were many generous people who, knowing that women would be particularly vulnerable during a pandemic, rallied to our cause. What had threatened to be a bleak year for fundraising turned out to be our best year ever.

As the second half of 2020 unfolded, the gloom of COVID-19 gave way to some good news on the gender equality front. The General Election, or GE2020, in July saw a record 27 women elected to Parliament. Women now make up 29% of parliamentarians. The gender gap is still there, especially in the Cabinet, but it is narrowing.

Then in September, Law and Home Affairs Minister K Shanmugam announced a review of the state of gender equality in Singapore, declaring the importance of gender equality being made a fundamental value, with children being taught that girls and boys should be treated with equal respect.

This surprise embrace by Singapore's policymakers of AWARE's vision, 35 years after we began our mission, was a shot in the collective arm of activists. We rejigged our upcoming research and advocacy calendar to make space for work on our own gender equality report, which we intend to release ahead of the Government's White Paper in 2021.

We wrapped up the strange year of 2020 with the AWAREHouse Party, the virtual version of our annual fundraiser. Our online 35th birthday bash turned out to be a bigger success than we had dared to anticipate, and this set the scene for our finale for the year: the launch of *Saga*, the 12-episode podcast documentary about the AWARE Saga of 2009.

As we entered the new year, *Saga* continued to get rave reviews for its thoughtful, moving, entertaining and slickly produced account of the 2009 takeover of AWARE by a group of conservative women, and the counter-campaign that brought the organisation back into firmly feminist hands.

The success of *Saga* saw us starting 2021 on a very positive note. Then came yet another shot in the arm—the announcement by the Institute of Policy Studies that AWARE Executive Director Corinna Lim would be its 8th S R Nathan Fellow, giving three lectures on gender equality over the course of the year.

And so we now look forward to our 36th anniversary and to the prospect of some real progress on our quest for true gender equality—a society where women and men are valued as individuals, free to make informed and responsible choices about their lives.

- *Margaret Thomas, President, AWARE*

ADVOCACY SUCCESSES

Gender was top of mind during the exciting 2020 General Election, which resulted in more female Parliamentary participation than ever. We took that opportunity, and a few more, to advocate for a range of reforms to advance women's place in society.

Women in politics and GE2020

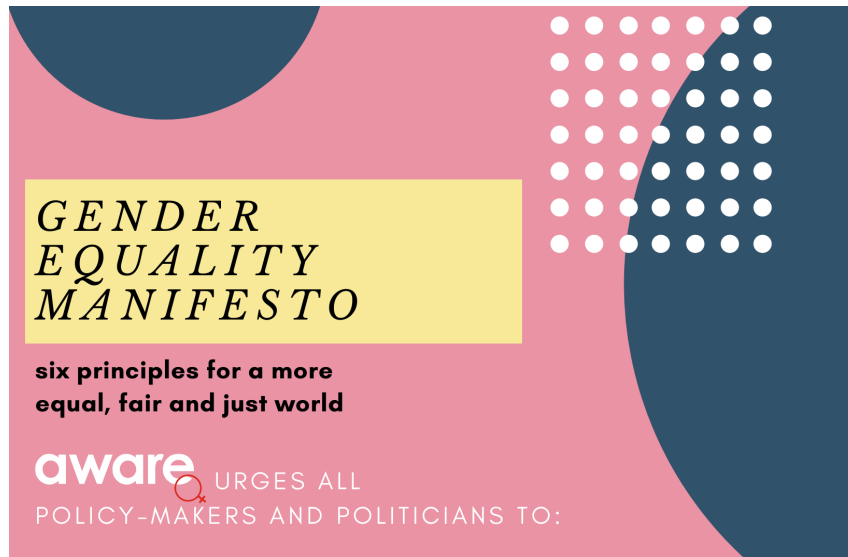


Women in Politics, a panel discussion on 18 March 2020 with (L-R) MP Sylvia Lim, NMP Anthea Ong and MP Tin Pei Ling

i) Women in politics: two panels

On 18 March, a few months before the 2020 General Election, AWARE held [an exciting and insightful discussion](#) with three Parliamentarians: Nominated Member of Parliament Anthea Ong, Member of Parliament Sylvia Lim and Member of Parliament Tin Pei Ling, with Anita Kapoor as the moderator. The event took place at The Projector and was attended by 80 audience members. The panellists spoke at length about their reasons for joining politics, their difficulties balancing work with caregiving and the discomforts of public scrutiny. They were also full of encouragement for young women interested in entering politics.

Due to the popularity of the event, a second session was held online (on 27 November) as part of AWAREFest. This time, the speakers were MP Carrie Tan, MP He Ting Ru, NMP Hazel Poa and Red Dot United candidate Liyana Dhamirah.



ii) Gender Equality Manifesto

With GE2020 in full swing in late June, we also published a [Gender Equality Manifesto](#): a collection of six overall principles for a more equal, fair and just world. AWARE's manifesto served as a complement to those released at the same time by competing political parties in Singapore. It urged policy-makers to: eradicate discrimination, ensure decent work for all, end violence against women, better support low-income households to meet basic needs, treat parents equally regardless of marital and citizenship status, and financially compensate and equally distribute unpaid care work within families. The manifesto's influence in Parliament remains to be seen, but it did net 53,739 impressions across AWARE's social media platforms.

Budget 2020

For our 10th annual submission to the national Budget, we submitted a policy wishlist centred on better support for family caregivers. It was the first time we had worked together with 50 members of the public to co-create policy recommendations for submission, reflecting a strong interest and desire from the community for caregiving issues to be put on the national agenda. Some of the recommendations in the wishlist were eventually picked up by Parliamentarians who included them in their speeches and/or Budget cuts.

We continued to work with Nominated Members of Parliament to raise gender-related advocacy points during the Budget debates. In 2020, topics included migrant domestic workers, residency for transnational spouses, the gender pay gap, workplace harassment and campus sexual violence.

The 2020 Budget included enhancements to the Silver Support Scheme: Payout levels and household monthly income per person criteria were increased from January 2021. In our

2017, 2018 and 2019 Budget recommendations, we had called for Silver Support to be made more inclusive and effective by increasing the level of payout to match average monthly basic expenditure of households, and to remove “housing type” as an eligibility criteria for HDB flat dwellers. We are encouraged by these changes.

International submissions

We also contributed to global advocacy for women’s human rights, submitting reports on how COVID-19 had affected women and domestic violence rates in Singapore to the World Bank and the [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights](#). In addition, we joined a coalition of 11 civil society organisations to submit a joint report to the United Nations, as Singapore prepares for its third [Universal Periodic Review](#) (UPR) scheduled for 2021. That report touched on the suppression of civil and political rights, the persistence of discrimination, the inadequate national response to climate change and other issues.

Gender in Singapore advertising



Teaming up with marketing consultancy R3 Worldwide, we embarked on a project to examine gender portrayal in Singapore advertising by analysing 200 television ads broadcast in Singapore between 2018 and 2020. With an eye to persuading local advertisers to think more critically about their depictions of gender, we awarded top marks to ads by Vaseline, Singtel, Apple, Dove and a select few other brands. Our findings on gender representation, gender roles, stereotypes and beauty standards were covered in [Marketing Magazine](#), [The Drum](#), [Campaign Asia-Pacific](#), a [TODAY](#) letter and an in-depth commentary in [Rice Media](#).

Toxic masculinity



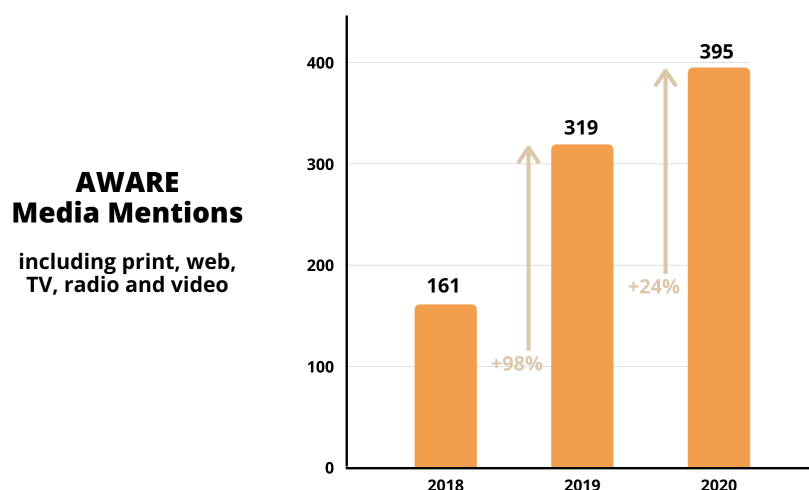
On 21 July, AWARE held a virtual panel discussion entitled [Good boys, softbois, sammyboys, boys will be boys: learning and unlearning toxic masculinity](#). Moderated by Shailey Hingorani, the panel featured the speakers Keeshan “Shan” Menon, Kristian-Marc James and Tan Wah Kiat, and saw almost 200 attendees.

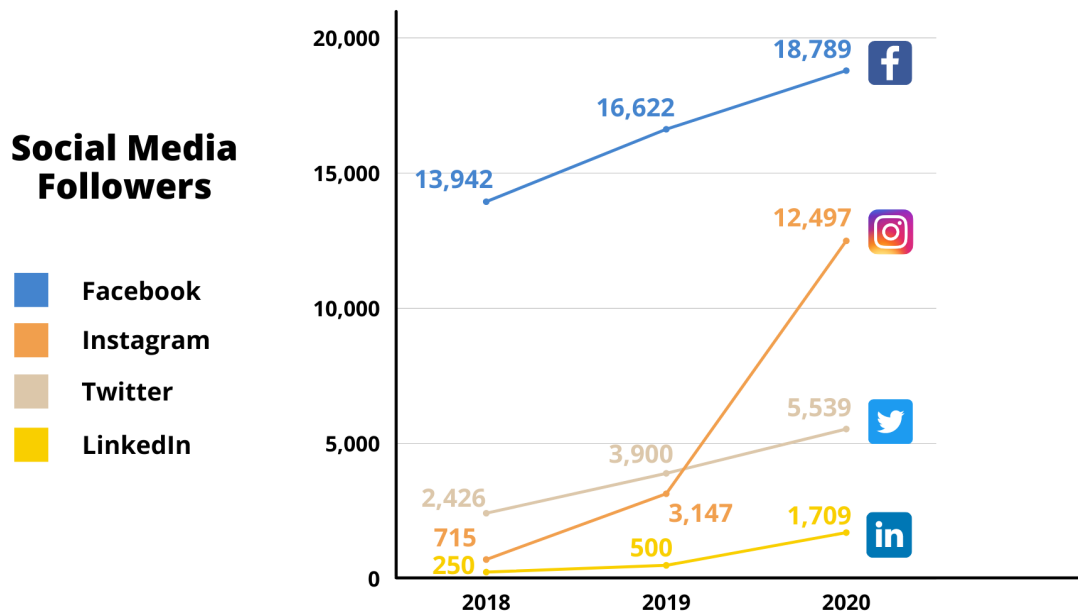
The discussion covered the complexities of being a man today and navigating different types of masculinities. It shed light on how toxic masculinity (stereotypically “male” attitudes or behaviours that have negative impacts on members of society) manifests in one’s personal life, workplace and other spaces—and how we can try to combat it.

Audience members loved the session, telling us later that “the panel was well-informed... it wasn’t too jargon-y and was ‘layperson’ enough for people who are new to the discussion to relate”, and “it opened my eyes to how toxic masculinity affects us as a culture and how ingrained it is in our society.”

AWARE in the media

AWARE’s media coverage and social media continued to grow in 2020. Our media mentions, including articles, videos and podcast appearances, increased 24% from 2019.





Communities across our Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram platforms also grew significantly. In fact, our Instagram page almost quadrupled in numbers from 2019, and we saw a 580% increase in LinkedIn followers from 2019. Our content, as a result, increased in reach (with over 10.6 million total reach across four platforms) and engagement, allowing us to spark important conversations about a diverse range of issues.

ADVOCACY: WOMEN AT WORK

In 2020, a large portion of AWARE’s research and advocacy centred on access to decent work for women in Singapore: both citizens and those who migrated for work.

Migrant domestic workers providing eldercare

In November 2020, we launched our latest research report, [“Neither Family Nor Employee: the caregiver burden of migrant domestic workers in Singapore”](#). This report built upon the findings of AWARE’s 2019 research report, “Make Care Count”, which explored the impact of providing eldercare on the retirement adequacy of female family caregivers. In the 2020 report, we focused on the challenges faced by migrant domestic workers (MDWs) providing eldercare.

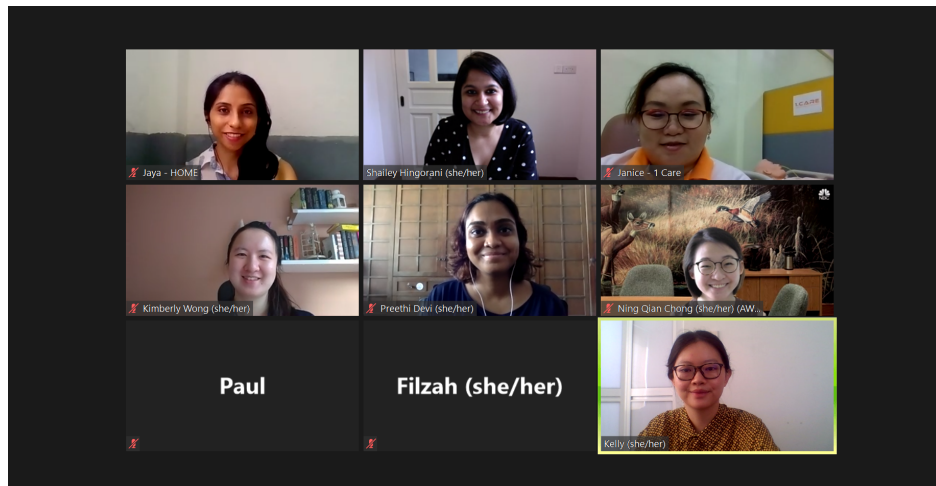
For this research, we partnered with the Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics (HOME) and drew on their years of experience providing support services to MDWs. We interviewed 25 MDWs in their native languages, as well as four employment agencies (EAs), seven employers of MDWs and five private eldercare training providers. We also consulted

with academics who have studied the distribution of caregiving responsibilities in Singapore, and all other major MDW support organisations.



Our research found that three factors contributed to MDWs' caregiver burden: inaccurate matching to eldercare jobs, overwork and a lack of caregiving-specific informational and emotional support. We proposed recommendations to provide better legislative protection, job matching and specialised support for MDWs, bringing our ideas to policymakers from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Manpower and the Agency for Integrated Care, and also the Indonesian Embassy of Singapore.

"Neither Family Nor Employee" was launched with a virtual press conference featuring three panellists: AWARE's Shailey Hingorani, HOME Case Manager Jaya Anil Kumar and Janice Tan, Director and Senior Registered Nurse Trainer from 1.CARE Employment Agency.



A press conference to launch the report “Neither Family Nor Employee” was held on 11 November 2020

As the first local study on this subject that brought together multiple stakeholder perspectives, the report’s findings were widely covered by all major news outlets. This generated much public and media attention, with at least four *Straits Times* Forum letters published in response to our findings, and robust engagement on multiple social media platforms.

- [Time to see and value caregiving as a profession, 14 November 2020](#)
- [Maids cannot be trained to be superhumans, 14 November 2020](#)
- [Maids may be most viable option for caregiving given constraints, 19 November 2020](#)
- [Employers must help maids with caregiving tasks, 19 November 2020](#)

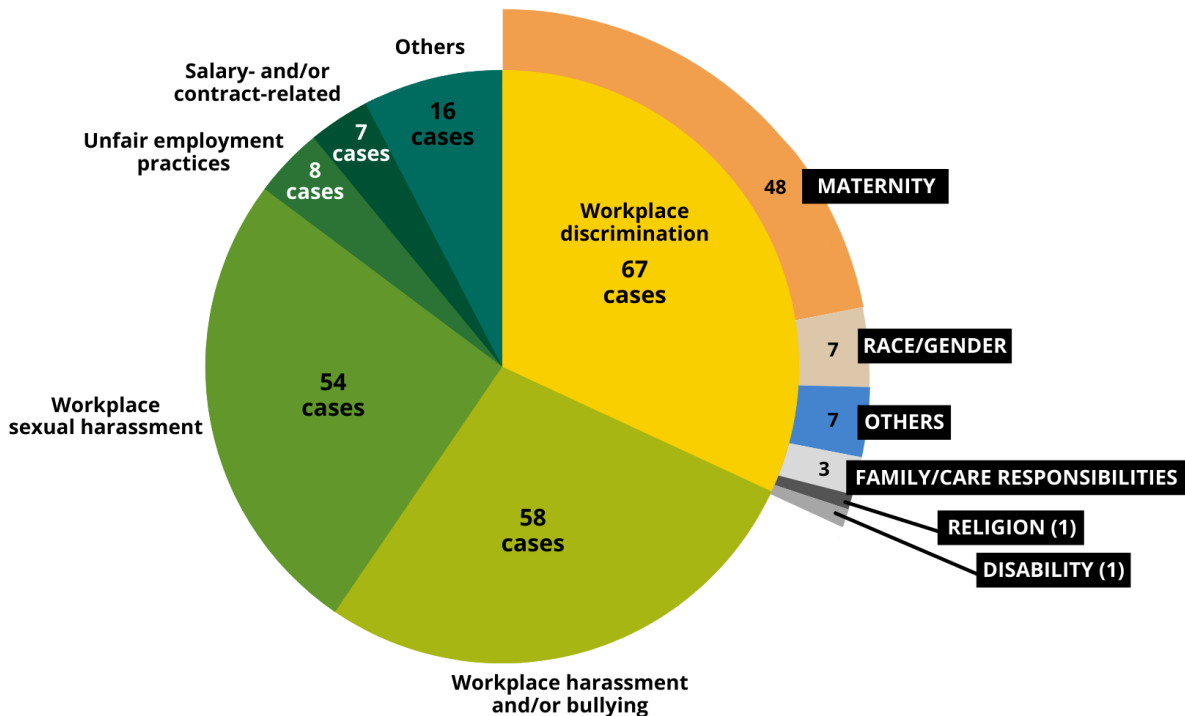
Prior to the launch, we also contributed to national conversation about the transfer procedures for MDWs during COVID-19. We published Forum letters in March and May 2020, and received a response from the Ministry of Manpower (MOM).

Workplace harassment, discrimination and bullying

i) Workplace Harassment and Discrimination Advisory

Our Workplace Harassment and Discrimination Advisory (WHDA) saw its first full year of operations in 2020. WHDA provides bespoke, confidential emotional support and practical advice to workers (union and non-union) facing discriminatory or harassing behaviours. The service attended to a total of 210 cases in 2020.

WHDA cases by issue



WHDA client testimonial: “I first spoke to WHDA in April 2020 regarding my friend’s workplace sexual harassment situation. A month later, my friend’s harassment recurred and I called WHDA again, this time to seek advice on how my friend could safely report the harassment case internally to her superior. WHDA gave **detailed guidelines** for my friend’s circumstances. The advisor offered to talk to my friend even after her working hours and during lunchtime, to accommodate my friend’s schedule. The advisor was a **very empathetic listener** who heard me out patiently. I could feel her genuine concern over the phone. She was able to think quickly on her feet and give concrete advice on multiple options my friend could pursue. I was impressed because these were based on complex circumstances involving the relationship dynamics between the victim and the other stakeholders. She also gave me personal words of encouragement as a friend supporting the victim. On top of being thorough, she was **calm, reassuring and professional.**”

ii) Bad Company: panel on workplace bullying



To further explore the topic of workplace bullying, we held a virtual panel event on 27 August entitled [“Bad Company: Understanding Singapore’s workplace bullying problem”](#). The speakers were Catalyse’s Caroline Callow, WHDA’s Mamta Melwani, Mercer partner Godelieve van Dooren and Asiyah Arif, counsel at Providence Law Asia. A total of 101 attendees tuned into the Zoom session, and during an introductory poll, revealed that 61% perceived that they had been bullied at work.

After the event, 96% of those surveyed said that the event helped them identify behaviours that constitute workplace bullying, while 82% said that they were likely to report instances of workplace bullying in the future, given what they had learned. “Despite being an important topic, there’s not much discussion on [workplace bullying] in public forums,” wrote an attendee. “The questions posed to the panelists helped participants like myself understand the issue more holistically.”

iii) Advocacy on discrimination, including maternity discrimination

The high rates of maternity-related cases seen by WHDA in 2020 led the team to prioritise maternity discrimination as an advocacy issue. To that end, we launched a [new FAQ page](#) answering more than a dozen questions about workplace pregnancy discrimination: what it looks like, why it’s wrong and what recourse options are available to victims. We also published a commentary entitled [“If mums are amazing, why do some workplaces discriminate against pregnant women?”](#) on *Channel NewsAsia* in May 2020.

Outside of maternity discrimination, we also spoke up about other forms of discrimination at work. We wrote the following letters:

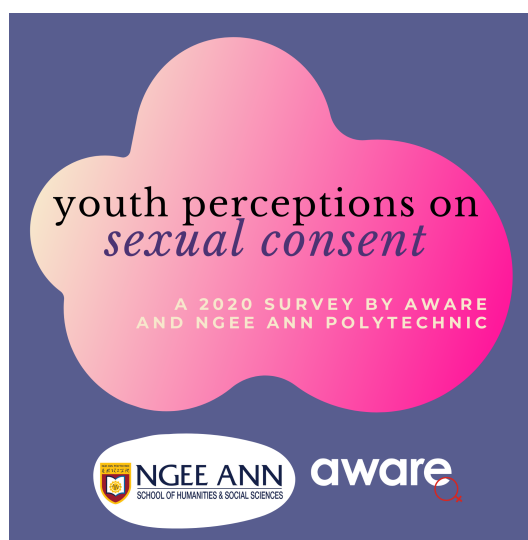
- [Limited protection against ageism at workplace, *The Straits Times*, February 20, 2020](#)
- [New law needed to tackle discrimination, wrongful dismissal, *The Straits Times*, September 29, 2020](#)
- [Workplace discrimination: Laws needed to hold errant employers to account, TODAY, December 7, 2020](#)

And we published a popular set of social media infographics on religious wear discrimination, entitled [“Debunking common myths about the hijab in the workplace”](#).

ADVOCACY: WOMEN AND GIRLS AT HOME

2020 saw an intense spotlight placed on the well-being of women and children at home—a subject that much of AWARE’s advocacy touched on, in a plethora of ways.

Comprehensive sexuality education



i) New research

AWARE advanced national conversations around consent through two surveys we conducted in collaboration with external partners. [One survey, on 539 youth in Singapore](#), found that while respondents generally understood consent in hypothetical scenarios, when it came to real-life situations, things were not so straightforward. Of the respondents who indicated prior engagement in sexual activity, only slightly more than half stated that they had discussed sexual consent with their most recent partner. The results backed up our belief that consent—how to ask for it, communicate it, and respect when it isn’t given—should be properly covered in Singapore’s sex education curriculum, so that young people are equipped with the confidence and skills to navigate sexual interactions.

The need to introduce consent education at school is keenly felt by parents, according to the results of [our second survey](#), this time conducted on adults and in collaboration with Blackbox. This survey found that only half of parents in Singapore felt comfortable talking to their children about sex education, and many lacked the tools to do so. That lack of practical tools and skills is reflected in the demand for our Birds & Bees parents workshop.

ii) Birds & Bees



Birds & Bees is a workshop that helps parents start non-judgmental conversations with their children about sex and relationships, through case studies, role-play and facilitated discussions. It acknowledges that most parents need help stepping into the shoes of “sexuality education provider”—a role that, nevertheless, they must take on. In 2020, its second full year of operations, Birds & Bees enlisted two new workshop facilitators and transitioned into a new, online format. Fifty parents attended this new version, consisting of three parts instead of just one.

After taking Birds & Bees, 92% of parents said they felt more confident about talking to their child(ren) about sex and relationships, while 98% believed that all young people should have access to comprehensive sexuality education.

Said Dr Tan E-Ching, Medical Director at Hallmark Health: “I attended the Birds and Bees in November 2020 and was blown away by how relevant and informative this programme is. The instructors are excellent in the way they teach and facilitate the group. The content is spot-on and much needed in this day and age when parents are grappling with a myriad of issues... I would highly recommend this excellent programme to all parents, and hope that this course can be made widely available.”

In late 2019, we secured a grant from the Health Promotion Board to launch a follow-up programme to Birds & Bees. Entitled Walk the Talk!, it will involve both parents and children participating together in the classes. Although the plan was to launch the programme in 2020, COVID-19 made that challenging. With the relaxation of safe-distancing measures in 2021, we look forward to launching the programme and enhancing parent-child communication on consent and relationships.

Migrant spouses in Singapore

We amplified AWARE’s advocacy on the rights of migrant spouses through a range of activities in 2020. In June, we published an analysis of calls made by migrant spouses to our Women’s Helpline, to highlight their vulnerability to family violence and the unique

challenges they face in divorce processes. The report was launched at a virtual event we organised on family violence, [Hostile Homes: Domestic Violence, the Virus and the Vulnerable](#). It drew more than 200 participants.



Public attention on the plight of migrant spouses intensified after we wrote a [Straits Times Forum letter](#) in August about transnational couples who risk being separated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the next three weeks, 10 more couples reached out to us to share similar experiences. The letter prompted a public response by the government, stating that the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority takes travel restrictions into account when assessing visit pass extensions.



Finally, we worked with illustrator @jshawnette to produce a series of comics called [Minor Inconveniences](#). The comics depict the everyday dilemmas and inconveniences that transnational families navigate in Singapore, amalgamated from interviews we conducted with 35 members of transnational families. The series was published on the International Day of Migrants (18 December) and garnered close to 50,000 impressions in total on social media, signaling public empathy and support for these families.

Support, Housing and Enablement (S.H.E.) Project

The S.H.E. project is a shelter for low-income single mothers and their families. It is also AWARE's first longitudinal qualitative research project aiming to identify the barriers to home ownership for these women, and examine whether housing stability has an impact on other aspects of their lives (such as personal growth, work, finances and interpersonal relationships).

One of the shelter apartments ended its lease in July 2020. The four families who had been residing there successfully obtained either public or private rental apartments. By the end of 2020, six families, with a total of eight children between them, remained at S.H.E., living in three rented apartments.

With their newfound housing stability, residents have achieved success in various aspects of their lives:

- **Advocacy:** Residents participated in a total of seven pieces of media (articles, essays and radio interviews), raising awareness on issues faced by single parents in Singapore.
- **Employment:** Two residents saw career progressions through promotions and increased salaries.
- **Children's education:** An N-level student completed her exams and will soon be taking her O-levels. Another child, a primary-schooler previously living at a crisis shelter, learned to take on more responsibilities after moving into S.H.E.
- **Housing:** Six households have to date successfully transitioned out of S.H.E. into their own rental flats or private rental rooms.

After the COVID-19 outbreak, S.H.E. residents expressed great relief that they were not living in their previous housing arrangements while facing the pandemic. One mentioned that living with her ex-partner, with his toxicity and abuse, would have driven her to madness. Another imagined the fighting, financial issues and overcrowding she would have had to deal with living with her mother and sister.

That said, 2020 was a particularly hard year for the residents at S.H.E. with the uncertainties of the pandemic and accompanying anxieties. We were grateful to end the year with one of our residents safely delivering a new baby.

"How do I feel about moving out of S.H.E.? Sad... this has been an incredible experience for my family. I think I mellowed out a lot. I have healed quite a great deal here. Looking at the things that I've gained here... it's the friends that I made."

- Former S.H.E. resident

Sharul Channa's *Am I Old?*



In our mission to advocate for support for female family caregivers, we never expected to become pioneers in virtual theatre—but thanks to an innovative collaboration with local comedian Sharul Channa, that is precisely what happened in early 2020. Originally conceived as an in-person one-woman comedic monologue in the vein of 2019's *Crazy Poor Sita*, Sharul's new show, *Am I Old?*, was forced to pivot to Zoom thanks to the COVID-19 outbreak in March. Eight virtual editions of the show followed—in English, Hindi and Tamil—attracting more than 600 audience members by the end of June. *Am I Old?* was performed and written by Sharul, based on AWARE's 2019 eldercare research report "Make Care Count". Every performance was followed by panel discussions with family caregivers, AWARE representatives, academics and other experts in the caregiving space.



Sharul Channa played the 68-year-old caregiver Savitri in Am I Old?

Audiences and critics alike gave rave reviews to *Am I Old?*'s mix of entertainment and edification, wit and pathos. Noting the show's groundbreaking Zoom format, [The Straits Times](#) observed that "the intimacy of the closeup view of Savitri [Sharul's caregiver

protagonist] creates an atmosphere of a confidential tete a tete for two... that the monologue had hit home for many was reflected in the number of people who stayed after the show for Aware's panel discussion about the gendered nature of caregiving and the burdens it places on women". Meanwhile, [Bakchormeeboy](#) enthused: "With *Am I Old?*, Sharul has fully capitalised on her ability to tackle the intensely personal with both heart and humour, having created a show that swells with the fruit of love, pride and determination."

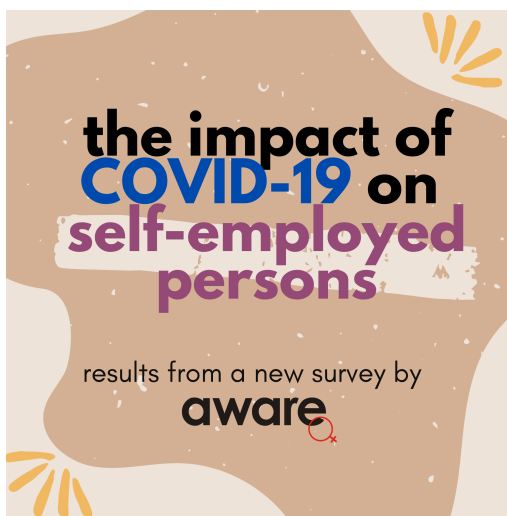
OUR COVID-19 RESPONSE

The COVID-19 pandemic meant that much of what we had envisioned for 2020 had to be shelved, and a new vision generated at lightning speed. This section looks at how AWARE's advocacy and services rose to that challenge, amid uncertainty and a fluctuating work situation.

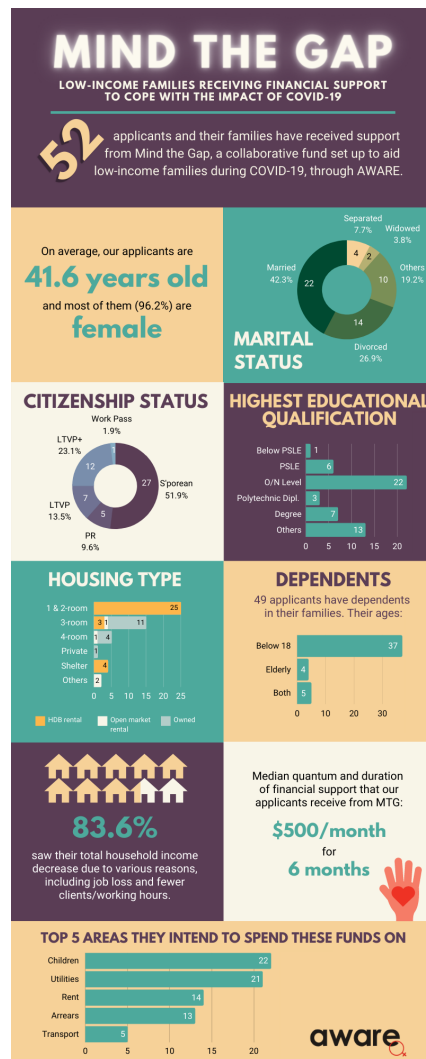
Pandemic-centred research

i) COVID-19 surveys

Early in the COVID-19 circuit breaker period, AWARE's research team got to work conducting a series of surveys with more than 80 women from marginalised communities: migrant spouses, low-income self-employed persons, family caregivers (with partners from Singapore Alliance for Women in Ageing) and migrant domestic workers (with partner HOME). These surveys yielded quick, useful snapshots of how the pandemic had affected these communities—and allowed AWARE to provide timely data and relevant recommendations to the government, e.g. reducing the barriers for low-income self-employed persons to apply for the Self-Employment Persons Income Relief Scheme.



ii) Mind the Gap fund

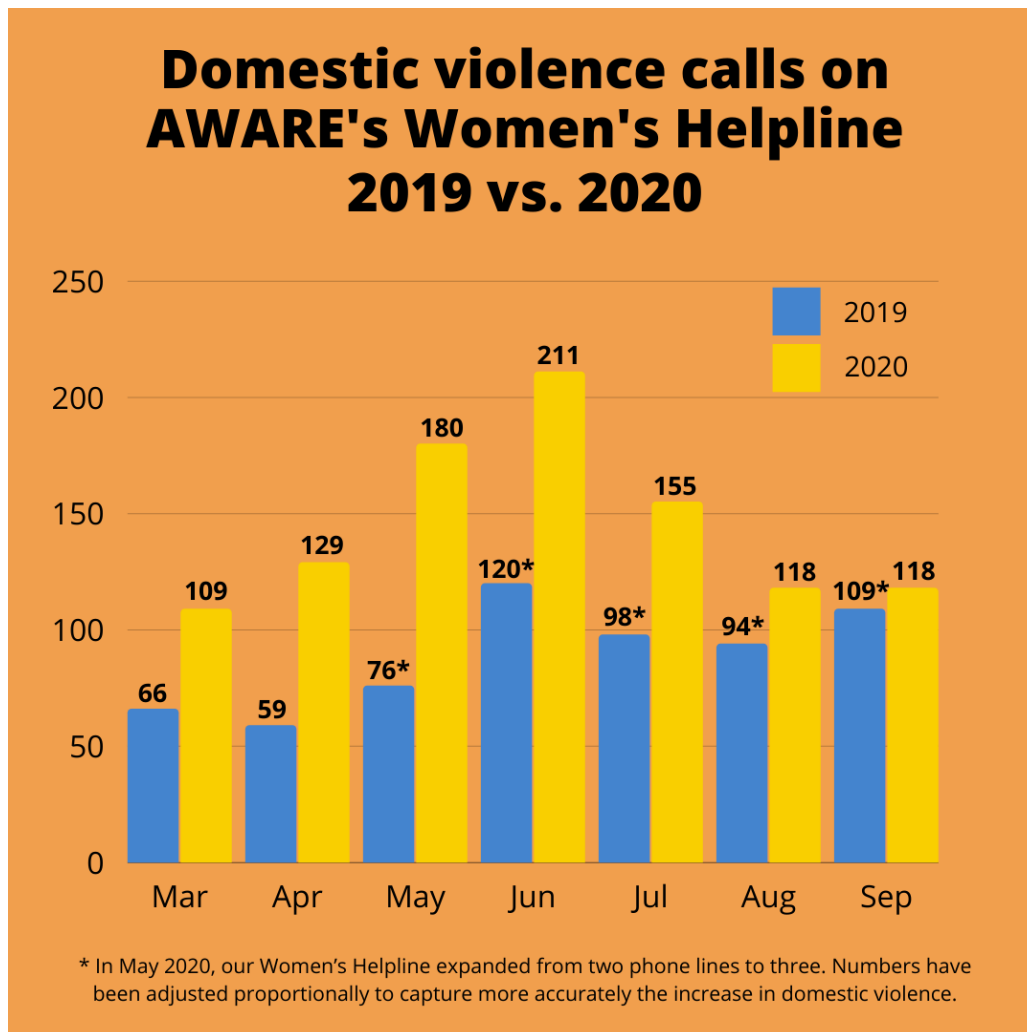


On a different tack, AWARE banded together with seven other organisations, such as A Good Space and Beyond Social Services, to launch the Mind the Gap (MTG) fund. The fund sought to help low-income families who had limited access to financial assistance from the government in the wake of the COVID-19 recession. With a successful [Give.Asia campaign](#), MTG raised \$1.12 million, which was disbursed to more than 700 families in all. Through the fund, AWARE supported 56 families by providing up to \$500 monthly for six months.

Besides overseeing this disbursement, our researchers also collected data from these families for a longitudinal study on their economic recovery in this crisis. Based on the insights gleaned by supporting these families, we published a [Straits Times Forum letter](#) highlighting structural gaps in the social assistance system, contributing to ongoing conversations about crisis support for low-income families. Further analysis will be published in 2021.

Spike in domestic violence

The COVID-19 pandemic brought a widespread spike in domestic violence around the world, demanding urgent attention and action. Singapore was no different: During our local circuit breaker, and even as the country began to open up, domestic violence calls to our Women's Helpline surged.



AWARE took action in a number of ways.

i) Expanded Helpline services

COVID-19 forced our CARE team to work remotely, switch to virtual service provision and add an extra eight operating hours (via an additional phone line) to the Women's Helpline. In May 2020, the team also launched [a new online chat service](#), recognising that some women in dire need of support were in fact unable to make a phone call to the available hotlines. Over the rest of the year, 180 clients engaged with the Women's Care Centre over the chat.



ii) Public outreach and education

To engage the public on the issue of domestic violence, we created two educational videos funded in part by Temasek Trust's oscar@sg fund. The first presented basic steps that bystanders could take to support domestic violence victims; the second debunked four common myths about domestic violence.

- <https://youtu.be/6OxfUnCIYjk>
- <https://youtu.be/sH9tYsu6Z0M>

We also partnered with advertising agency Forsman & Bodenfors to reach new demographics via an innovative campaign called "ShopForHelp", whereby information about AWARE's Helpline was disguised as an [e-commerce promotion on Love, Bonito](#). In the last quarter of 2020, after ShopForHelp launched, 18% of all scheduled chat sessions were referred to AWARE via ShopForHelp.

iii) Talk series on domestic violence and divorce

The image is a promotional poster for a talk series. It features a dark blue background with large, abstract, light brown shapes. In the top left corner, there is a logo for 'I.R.B. LAW LLP' and the 'aware' logo. The main text on the left side reads: 'Talk Series with IRB Law: Domestic Violence & Divorce'. On the right side, there are three entries for the talk series, each with a date and time in red text, followed by the topic in white text: 'Wednesday, 17 June, 8-9.30pm' with the topic 'Domestic Violence and your Legal Rights'; 'Friday, 19 June, 8-9.30pm' with the topic 'Understanding Civil Divorce, its Processes and Impact on Custody, Maintenance and Assets'; and 'Monday, 22 June, 8-9.30pm' with the topic 'Understanding Syariah Divorce, its Processes and Impact on Custody, Maintenance and Assets'.

With increasing reports and attention on domestic violence, we hosted [a series of online talks in collaboration with IRB Law](#), a Singapore-based law firm, on 17, 19 and 22 June. The sessions covered domestic violence and pertinent legal rights, civil divorce and Syariah divorce. With almost 300 participants attending the sessions in all, the IRB Law series was a hit. While many attendees were individuals seeking advice for their personal situations, a number were social workers wanting to learn more about domestic violence and divorce legal procedures. The speakers (Muntaz Zainuddin, Nur Izyan, Ameera Bajrai, Nureliza Syahidain, Norhakim Shah, Amalina Saparin and Abdul Aziz) answered questions about custody, grounds for divorce, court order variations and more.

One attendee praised the “willingness of the speakers to engage and help participants gain deeper insight”. Another commented: “The speakers were well-informed and were able to share advice and points from their personal experiences with cases.”

CARE: Creating Access to Resources and Empowerment

AWARE's CARE services provide support to individual women facing gender-based discrimination, violence, harassment, sexual assault and a range of other issues. We work closely with external partners in the social development sector in Singapore, and advocate for gender- and trauma-informed practices among key stakeholders. AWARE's CARE team comprises the Women's Care Centre (WCC) and the Sexual Assault Care Centre (SACC).

CARE is committed to nurturing a spirit of volunteerism and community participation in Singapore. In 2020—a year when productive social engagement became more complicated than ever—we were able to engage a cadre of 89 dedicated volunteers (including helpline, lawyers and counsellors) and provide a total of 9,565.9 hours of support to women in need in Singapore. This is collectively equivalent to approximately 1,196 days of meaningful community work, all undertaken by CARE volunteers in 2020.

Below are some other ways in which CARE adapted and responded to the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic while providing seamless, high-quality services to those most in need.



Volunteers Jane (L) and Suit Fong (R) with CARE's Laura Meehan at our Helpline Appreciation Lunch 2020

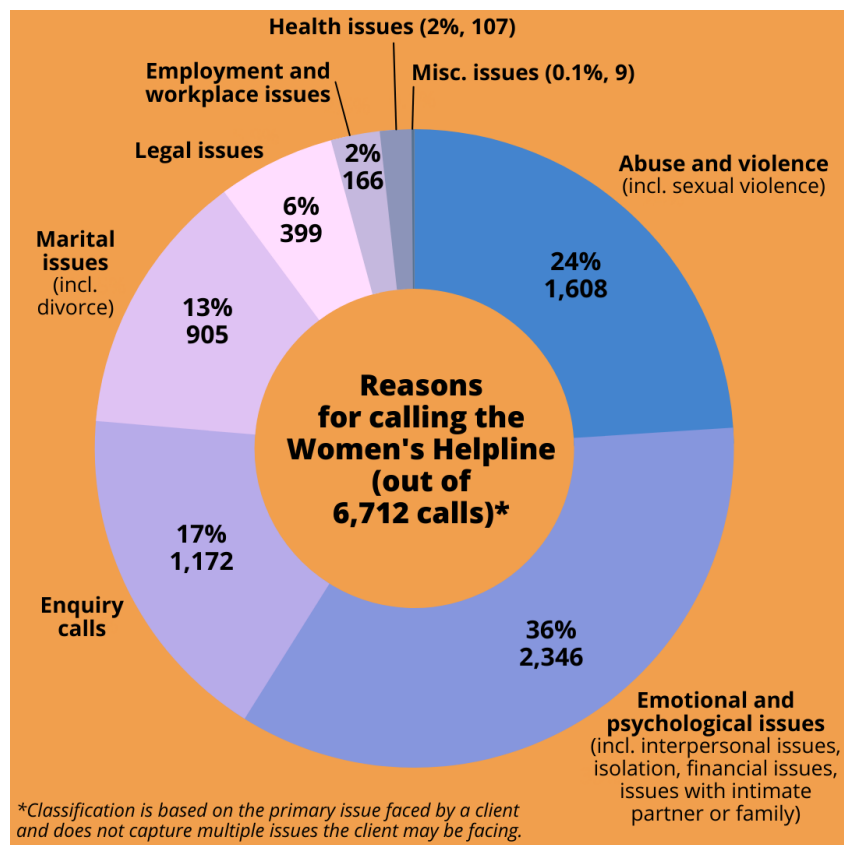
Women's Care Centre

In 2020, more than 4,900 women in distress were supported by WCC through its two channels: First Response and Direct Services.

First response: highlights

The First Response channel includes the Women’s Helpline, Helpline email and online chat service. It is the first point of contact for women reaching out to CARE. First Response is run with the help of staff, consultants and volunteers, who bring a diverse range of cross-sectoral expertise to the table: from social work, psychology and medicine, to public administration, law, computer science and business administration. In 2020, we conducted our first-ever online recruitment and training for 16 Helpline volunteers, who attended classes via Zoom throughout September and October. Other highlights of the service:

- Overall, 6,712 calls, including emails and chats, were supported. Of this total, 66% of calls led to further resources and services provided.
- At the Women’s Helpline, we saw a 40% increase in calls (not including emails and chats) received from 2019 to 2020 (4,343 to 6,092).
- In terms of impact, 78% of callers surveyed felt emotionally supported and better able to understand their options.



The possible repercussions of an economic slowdown, unemployment and the distress of staying at home for longer periods of time were reflected in a comparison between 2019 and 2020. We saw:

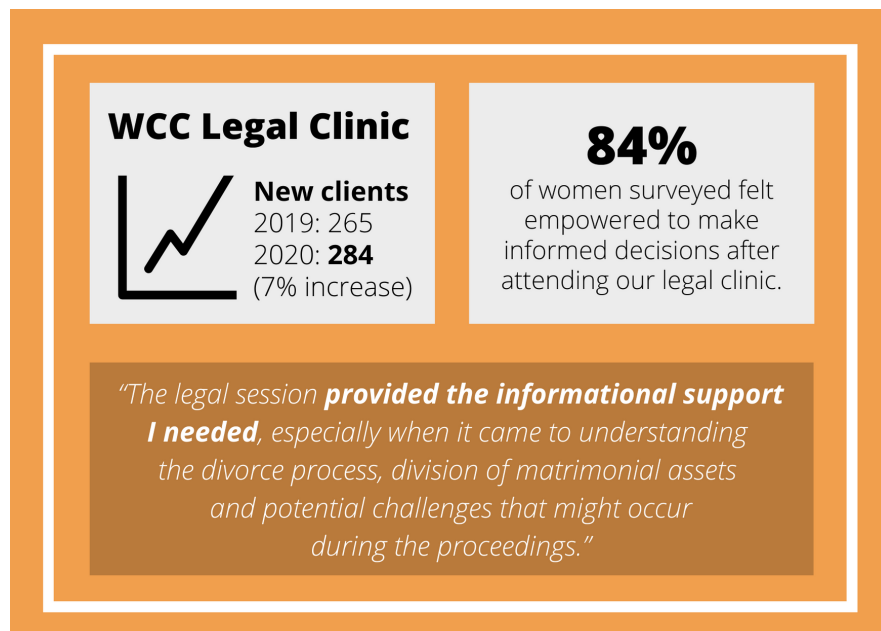
- 79% increase in calls related to abuse and violence (including sexual violence)
- 137% increase in calls related to family violence in May 2019 as compared to May 2020
- 87% increase in calls related to employment issues (job loss, work stress and such)
- 106% increase in calls related to emotional/psychological issues

Direct services: highlights

The Direct Services channel includes the legal clinic, counselling and support group services and forms the second stage of specific service provision for those who require further support, guidance or information.

i) Legal clinic

WCC's legal clinic provides legal consultations to women on family issues, intimate partner violence, marital issues (such as divorce, separation, maintenance and custody) and employment issues. In 2020, we shifted from providing face-to-face consultations to providing our services remotely over Skype and Zoom. Importantly, this was the first year that WCC partnered with a Syariah law firm to provide improved access to Syariah legal support for women in need. This initiative was based on client needs assessed in previous years. It garnered much appreciation and support from our clients in 2020.



ii) Counselling

WCC's counselling service provides non-judgmental, gender-focused support to women through sessions conducted by dedicated and professional counsellors. These sessions are a safe space for women to discuss their issues and learn about their options.

In 2020, we also shifted from our usual face-to-face counselling sessions to providing our services over Skype and Zoom sessions. We efficiently implemented key operational changes to digitise our operations and meet related challenges. This experience pushed us to explore digitising other operational processes for the future, while concurrently sustaining a high client service standard.



iii) Support groups

Our support groups foster women's empowerment through the sharing of similar experiences in a safe and caring environment. In 2020, we held two divorce support groups over Zoom.



Sexual Assault Care Centre

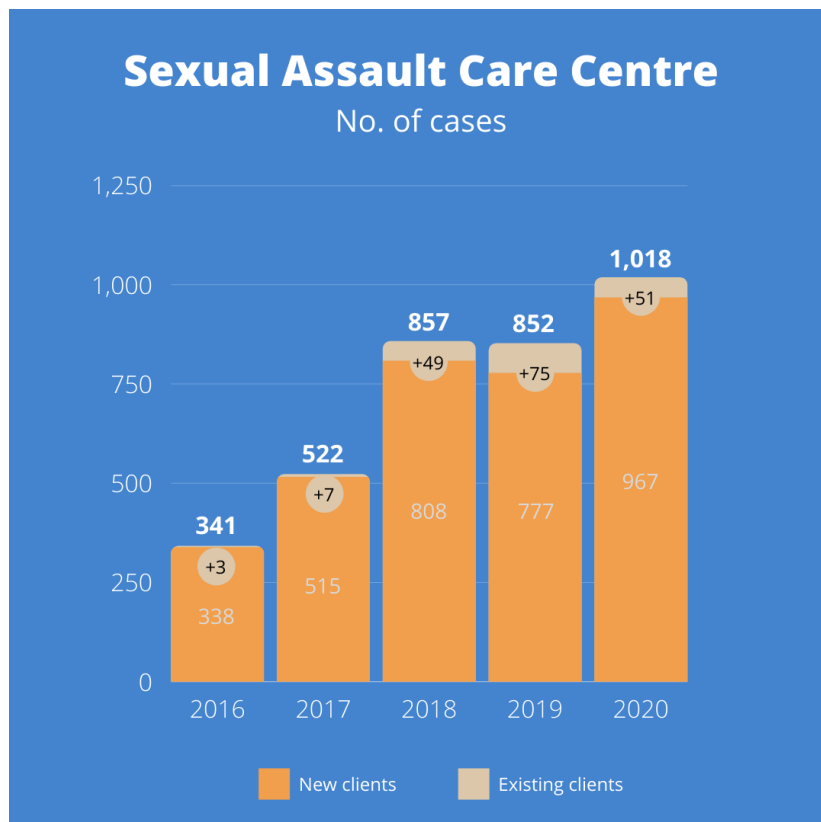
Sexual Assault Care Centre continues to be Singapore's only dedicated support centre for survivors of sexual assault. We offer gender- and trauma-informed support, and help

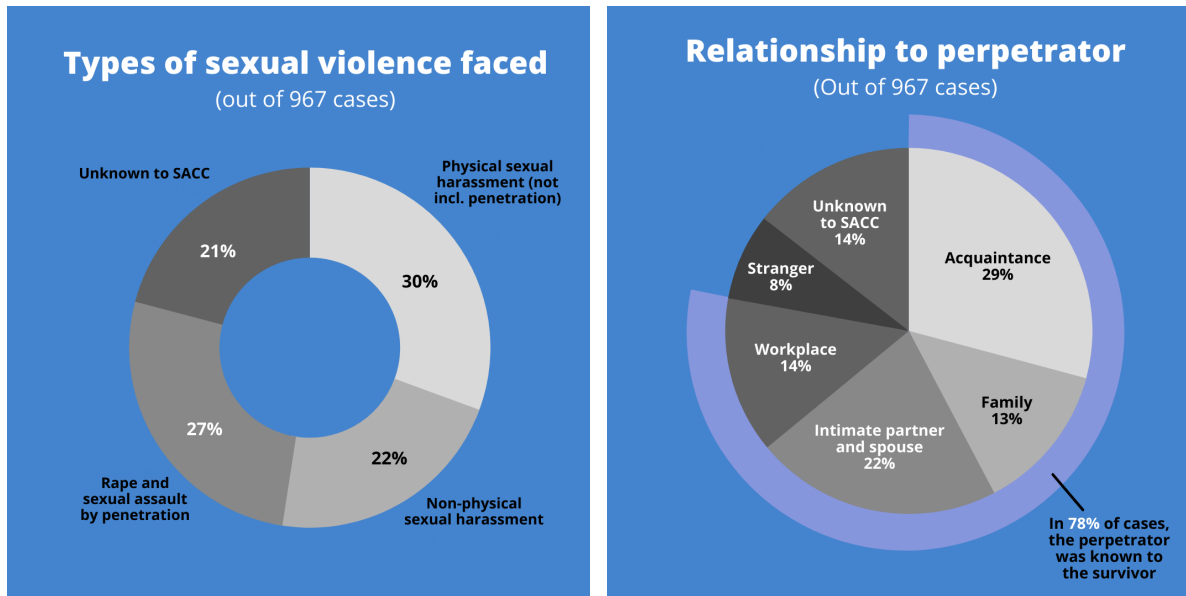
survivors make informed decisions about next steps, through our first response channels, legal, befriending, counselling and case management services.

During COVID-19, SACC devoted a large amount of time, human resources and funding to ensuring that clients received a similar quality of support remotely as they would have in person. As safety measures changed, we invested in technology, staff, consultancies and volunteers, as well as careful monitoring of programme development. At the same time, demand for our services drastically increased in 2020, forcing our team to make internal processes more efficient.

Our efforts paid off: Despite the constraints, we saw a record of 967 new cases in 2020, a full 24% increase from 777 cases in 2019. The total number of cases supported also crossed 1,000 for the first time in SACC's history.

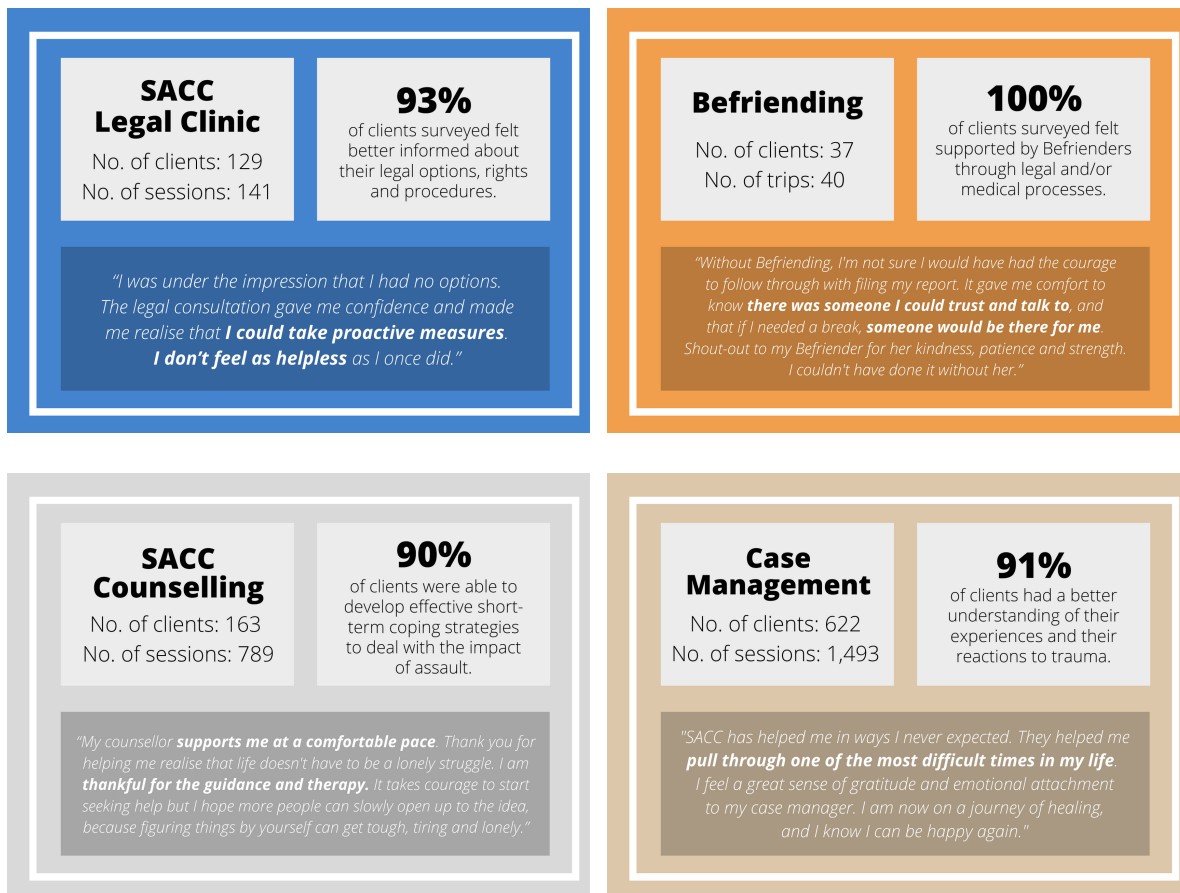
Key insights





- The proportion of workplace-related cases fell in 2020 (14% compared to 17% in 2019). This might be because of COVID-19 safety measures limiting interactions at the workplace across Singapore. It might also be that due to COVID-related job insecurity, fewer survivors chose to seek support or take action in cases of workplace sexual violence.
- Cases related to intimate partner and spousal assault came in at the highest level ever recorded at SACC. This trend could be correlated to the Criminal Law Reform Act 2019, which criminalised marital rape and came into effect in 2020. This correlates as well with the general increase in domestic violence observed during the pandemic, people tended to have more contact with their spouses or intimate partners as they worked and stayed at home.
- We continued to see a large proportion of clients seeking support for physical forms of sexual assault. It is possible that some survivors only perceive physical assaults to be “serious” enough to warrant support, even though all forms of sexual violence warrant support.
- The period of time between the incident of sexual assault and when the survivor reached out for support continues to vary greatly (from within 72 hours to after 10 years). This is consistent with our understanding that there is no typical time after which a survivor seeks support—they can only do so when they are ready.

Impact of SACC services



Community and stakeholder engagement

i) Improved access to justice

SACC carried on our case advocacy work to improve survivors' experiences within the criminal justice system, by working with the Attorney General Chambers, the Serious Sexual Crimes Branch and the Law Society of Singapore (LSS). For the second time, we continued our collaboration with LSS for the event "Balancing Accused's Rights with Complainant's Rights in Sexual Assault Trials". The event was attended by close to 300 defence lawyers, who gave very positive feedback.

ii) Improved access to support

AimForZero

At SACC, we seek to improve sexual assault survivors' access to support through community engagement in the form of dialogues, training, knowledge-building sessions and a robust network of referrals. We continued these efforts through our two-year Aim For Zero (AFZ) campaign, which promotes zero tolerance towards sexual violence.

We launched a new community engagement initiative under AFZ: the Sexual Assault First Responder Fellowship, which builds the capacity of individuals and helps them venture further into the social services sector. The SACC Fellows took over (from volunteers) the management of the SACC Helpline, WhatsApp service and emails, thereby providing more dedicated, enhanced support to a large number of people in need through our first response channels.

Also under AFZ, our Sexual Assault First Responder Trainings (SAFRT) stayed wildly popular. Despite shifting these trainings online, attendance remained on par with the in-person sessions of previous years (with 400 participants in 2020), and the feedback we received remained positive. Around 96% of participants surveyed indicated that they felt more confident to be first responders to survivors of sexual assault.

At the end of 2020, we also reached out to participants to better understand the impact of the training. Among those surveyed, 40% of them had given support to a sexual assault survivor after the training, and 93% said that the training had helped with that experience. This is a positive step in the right direction—a supportive and non-judgmental first response encourages sexual assault survivors to seek further support, and makes them feel less isolated.

The AFZ team also focused on building ongoing meaningful relationships with key organisations in 2020. We worked with the group [Students for a Safer NUS](#), offering guidance on policy processes and decision-making to make campuses safer for students and sexual assault survivors. Through this engagement, we provided first response training and insights on seeking peer support. Our engagement with groups like SaferNUS was enhanced through collaborations with institutional support channels and university bodies in Singapore, including the NUS Victim Care Unit. This work can help to bring about community- and institutional-level change toward more support for survivors of sexual violence.

Said one of our collaborators: "In working towards zero sexual violence, it's reassuring to know that AWARE and SACC are constantly engaging with survivors, supporters, organisations and institutions, and taking daily steps to build a safer, better world for everyone. In this work, there is no power struggle, there is only shared responsibility, and I truly appreciate how my interactions with you all have embodied that!"

Over the course of the two-year AFZ campaign, our social media posts about sexual violence reached nearly 2 million users across our various platforms.

Catalyse: Set to RISE

Catalyse, AWARE's corporate training arm, partners with organisations to build Respectful, Inclusive, Safe and Empathic (RISE) cultures, where people can truly maximise their potential.

Like most businesses, Catalyse was impacted by COVID-19: Contracts were cancelled, projects were halted, and many multinational clients went quiet.

Overnight, we were forced to innovate the way we do business. With a lot of hard work, resilience, upskilling and a great sense of humour, in 2020, Catalyse accomplished:

- **Online delivery:** For the first time in our history, we designed and delivered 59 online workshops in a single year.
- **Reach:** Around 4,000 company employees either underwent training in a Catalyse workshop, and/or benefitted from new workplace policies thanks to Catalyse's advisory services.
- **New products:** We introduced three new products—"Investigation Workshop", "Workplace Response to Family Domestic Violence" and "Building Trust through Empathic Communication".
- **New branding:** We launched a new logo and brand-new marketing materials
- **Global impact:** We closed and delivered workshops for EMEA and North American clients.

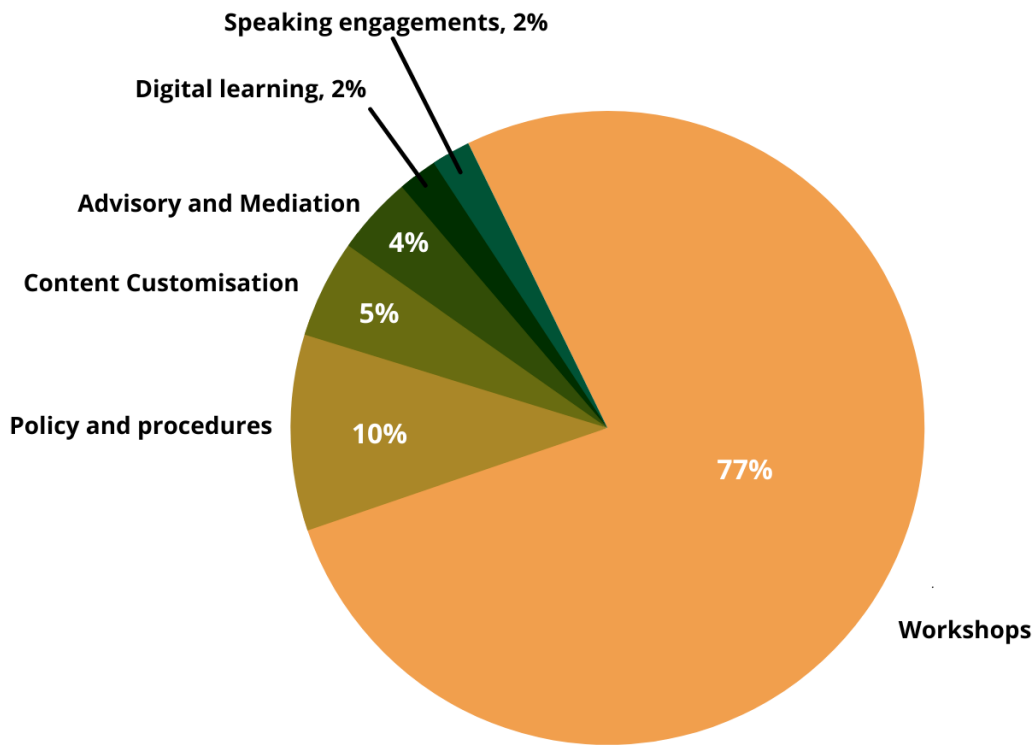


Catalyse Executive Advisor Corinna Lim spent an inspiring International Women's Day with R3, an enterprise software pioneer in digital industry transformation.

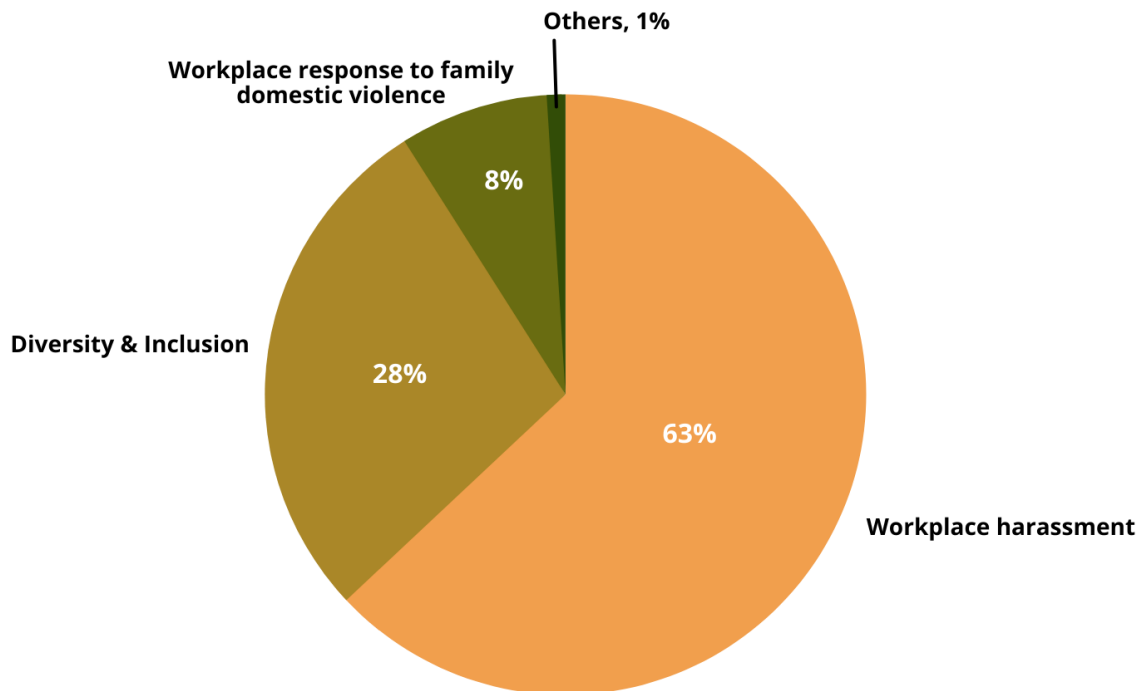
Products

Catalyse provides a wide range of interventions and solutions, such as workshops, policy and procedures advisory, content customisation, mediation services, digital learning and professional speaking engagements.

Catalyse: Services by Product Type



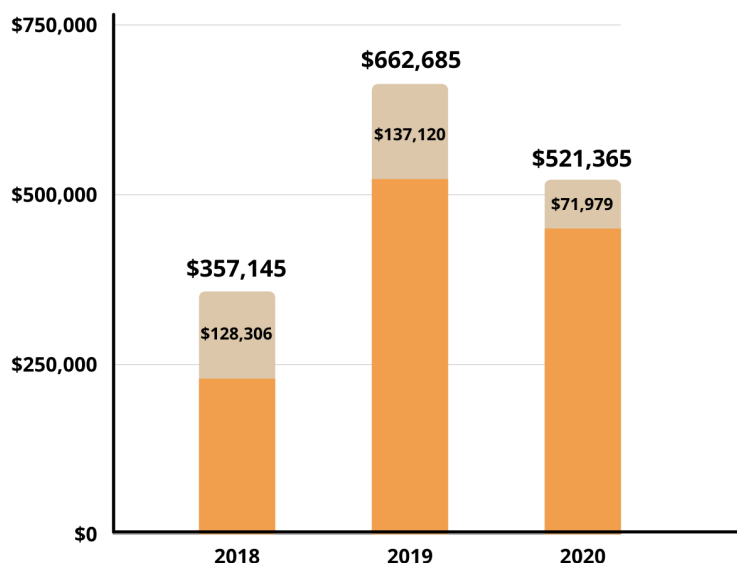
Catalyse: Services by Theme



Programmes to support the prevention of workplace harassment were once again a stronghold of Catalyse’s offerings, contributing to more than half of total revenue. Diversity & Inclusion work grew in importance in 2020, approaching almost 30% of total revenue. This growth also signified a much higher interest in the topic from organisations in the Asia-Pacific region. For the first time, we received requests for a “Workplace Response to Family Domestic Violence” to address the spike in family domestic violence cases during COVID-19.

Catalyse: Revenue and Profit

Profit



The Catalyse team demonstrated inspiring resilience and delivered a profit of \$71,979 to AWARE to support its services.

Testimonials

Catalyse Client Testimonial

"This has by far been **the most engaging and enlightening anti-harassment training I've attended**—and I've been to a lot of these throughout my HR career! The content was wonderful, relevant and not dry. I received lots of good feedback from the team during and after the presentation. Thanks so much for the **level of quality** you delivered!"

- A global game developer and publisher, Los Angeles-based

Catalyse Client Testimonial

"The facilitator/trainer was **one of the best I've encountered so far**. She was open, sensitive and clearly the right person to be conducting a D&I workshop. I really appreciated the open questions, her informed perspectives and her ability to very naturally create **a space in which everyone felt comfortable to participate**. Thank you!"

- An arts and culture organisation, Singapore-based

Catalyse Client Testimonial

*"The workshop facilitated by Catalyse was among the **top-rated sessions** in my leadership offsite. The workshop offered new approaches and languages to deepen the trust level in the organisation. We are looking to gradually scale this learning so more people can benefit from this framework. **Highly recommended to any organisation** that is looking to build a high-performing team while cultivating an inclusive culture."*

- A global travel tech company, San Francisco-based

Celebrating AWARE's History: 35th Birthday

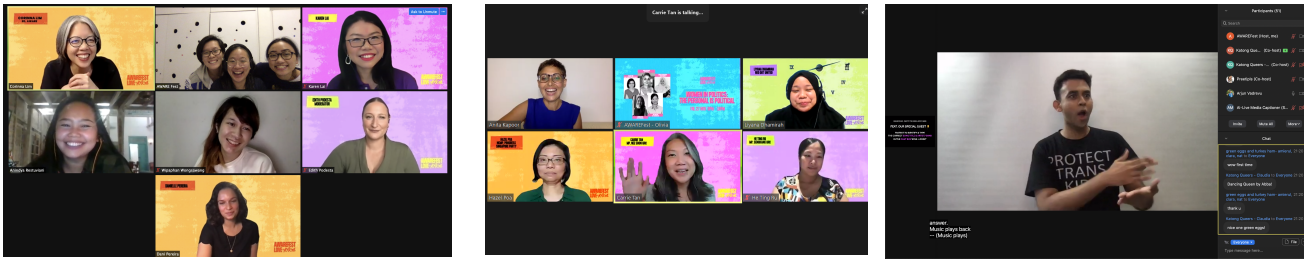
AWAREFest

To celebrate the 35th anniversary of AWARE's founding in 1985, a total of 605 participants attended a five-day virtual festival, [AWAREFest](#), from 25 November to 29 November 2020. The festival featured online panels, workshops and interactive discussions centred on the fight for gender equality in Singapore. Its inaugural theme was "Love + Rage", which channelled both the rich history of the local women's movement, and the singular mood of this present time.



Programme highlights included:

- **The Great Debate:** Two teams (featuring activists and thinkers Kokila Annamalai, Faeza Sirajudin, Remy Choo, Tim Min Jie, Becca D'Bus and Rosemarie Somaiah) debated the motion "Is love or rage a better fuel for justice?"
- **Women in Politics: The Personal is Political:** Four women (He Ting Ru, Carrie Tan, Liyana Dhamirah and Hazel Poa) who ran for office in GE2020 spoke about their diverse experiences.
- **Intersectionality Quiz Night: Injustice to the Power of Six:** This fun, fast-paced trivia challenge hosted by popular comedian and influencer Preetipls covered the intersection of gender and issues such as income inequality, sexual orientation and disability.
- **#MeToo in Asia: One Continent, Many Movements:** An international panel of activists (Wipaphan Wongsawang, Karen Lai, Anindya Restuviani and Danielle Pereira) shared insights from the fight against sexual violence around the region.



(L-R) AWAREFest events included the panels **#MeToo in Asia** and **Women in Politics: The Personal is Political**, and a fun **Intersectionality Quiz Night**

We built into AWAREFest a few moments to reflect back on the highs of AWARE’s 35-year journey. One such moment was a video called “The Herstory of AWARE”, which we played during our AWAREHouse Party on Saturday, 28 November. The [video](#) featured five individuals whose lives had been touched, directly or indirectly, by the policy changes brought about by AWARE’s advocacy over the years.

The AWAREHouse Party also featured a [video montage of birthday wishes](#) from a number of important supporters, including Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong, Ambassador-at-Large Dr Tommy Koh, Minister for Law and for Home Affairs K. Shanmugam, Banyan Tree Hospitality Group co-founders Claire Chiang and Ho Kwon Ping, social scientist Noeleen Heyzer and sexual assault survivor Monica Baey.

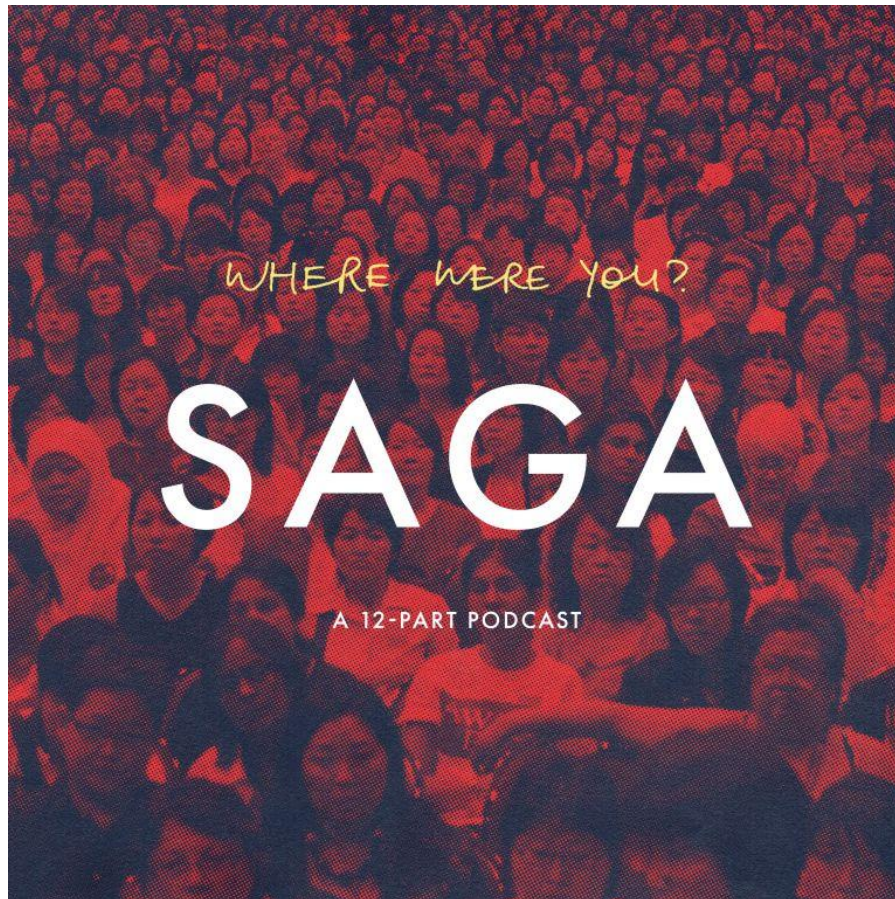
One more way to look back on AWARE’s achievements came in the form of “[Becoming AWARE: 35 years of women’s activism](#)”, an article-cum-data visualisation by Singaporean editorial studio Kontinentalist. The piece charts our advocacy efforts, public campaigns, community training, support services and much more.



All in all, AWAREFest was an innovative way to bring together our community in a year characterised by isolation. “It was very well-organised!” raved one attendee. “Each session has been very thought-provoking and I don’t know where else I would be able to experience

this.” Another called AWAREFest “a great overview of the feminist movement in Singapore” and “a great way to ease in people who are interested in getting involved in the movement”.

Saga: A podcast about the AWARE Saga



Another major project of 2020 honoured a landmark point in AWARE’s history. On 9 December 2020, we launched *Saga*, a limited-series narrative podcast about the 2009 takeover known as the AWARE Saga. *Saga* was the first podcast produced by AWARE, and the first-ever long-form narrative podcast produced in Singapore. It was hosted by acclaimed former journalist Bharati Jagdish and written and produced by Jasmine Ng and Kelly Leow, with an original score by the band .gif. All 12 episodes, as well as bonus episodes and special features, were made available on [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcasts](#), [Google Podcasts](#) and a special [microsite](#).

Saga was produced over the course of two years in 2019 and 2020. A total of 50 individuals were interviewed, including former AWARE presidents Constance Singam, Kanwaljit Soin, Dana Lam and Tan Joo Hymn, celebrities Pam Oei and Irene Ang, and thought-leaders such as Tommy Koh, Teo You Yenn, Gillian Koh, Imran Taib, Siew Kum Hong and Tong Yee.

Driven by [strong word-of-mouth](#), *Saga* was an immediate success, breaking into the top 15 of the Apple Podcasts Singapore chart and the top 35 of the Spotify Singapore chart just four weeks after its launch (eventually peaking within the top 20 for Spotify). For weeks, it ranked

within the top 5 podcasts of its category (Society & Culture) across all platforms. With more than [80 five-star ratings](#), and more than 60,000 streams and downloads as of February 2021, *Saga* outperformed popular local podcasts and international hits alike in Singapore.

Accompanied by positive media coverage (e.g. from [The Straits Times](#) and [The New Paper](#)), a wave of rave reviews for *Saga* poured in. Here is a sample.

Saga Listener Review

*"What is the podcast equivalent of a page-turner? Whatever it is called, Saga is it! You will love the storytelling, the cliffhangers and **the jaw-dropping gumption of the protagonists.** Please don't miss this."*

Tan Pin Pin
Filmmaker

Saga Listener Review

*"Storytelling done right. **One of the stories of the year for me**—that it was produced by local talents and featured a Singapore group doing indispensable work created an extra-magical connection. What makes this a particularly gratifying listen is the honesty and openness of the individuals who participated in the storytelling. Their character and conviction is admirable, and inspires us to step boldly forward into 2021 with heart and courage."*

Kah Gay
Ethos Books

Saga Listener Review

*"It's honestly a revelation for me in terms of what's possible in this serialised audio format... **It's a potted exploration of SG's troubled heart**, exploring not just sexism & feminism but also class, homophobia, sex education, freedom of speech, democracy."*

Ng Yi-Sheng
Writer

Saga Listener Review

*"This podcast is significant for its ability to braid a multiplicity of voices into a gripping narrative that distills what happened, how it happened, and why it happened. **A necessary educational resource** on a significant event in Singaporean civil society history."*

Loo Zihan
via Apple Podcasts

Saga Listener Review

*"Don't miss it. It's a riveting story, masterfully told, and in many ways an illuminating account of **what animates contemporary civil society** in global-city Singapore."*

Kenneth Paul Tan
Academic and writer

Saga Listener Review

*"I started then I couldn't stop. I was up 'til wee hours binge-listening. Gripping storytelling with gorgeous sound design just captivated me completely in the drama that unfolded. **My earphones ran out of battery** and I had to continue the next day and I loved every moment. I am enriched."*

Engieeeeeeeeaster
via Apple Podcasts

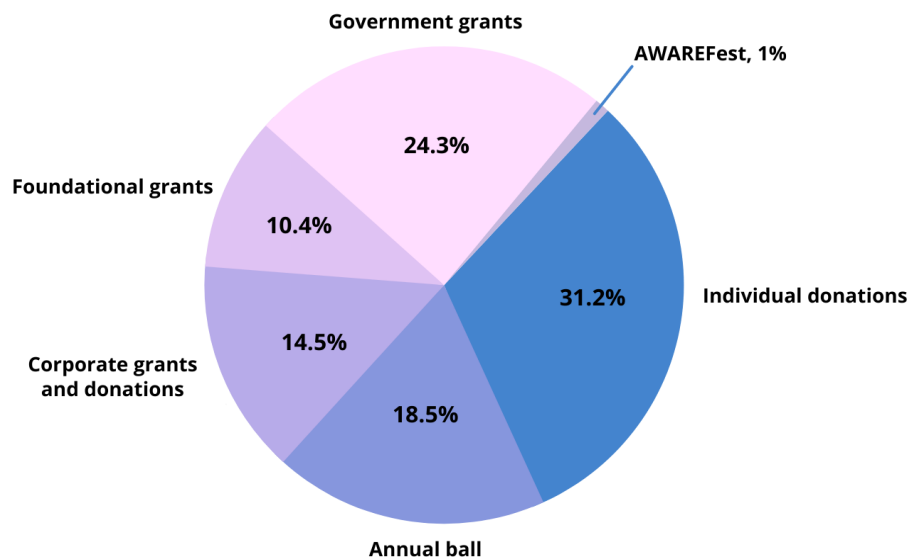
Fundraising and Constituency

Fundraising

2020 was a record year for AWARE's fundraising. Thanks to a strong base of regular and new supporters, AWARE raised \$2.9 million to continue our growth as the leading women's rights organisation in Singapore.

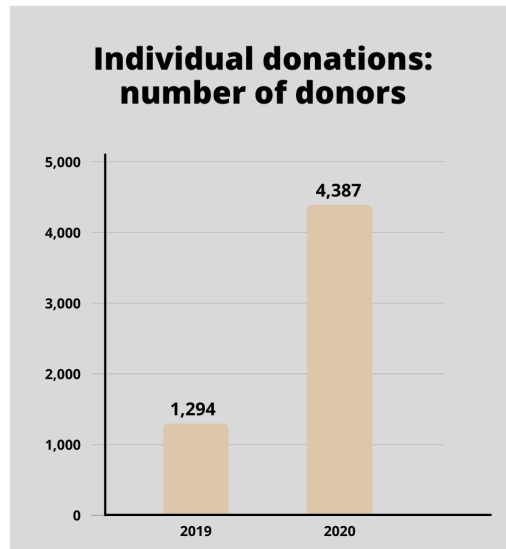
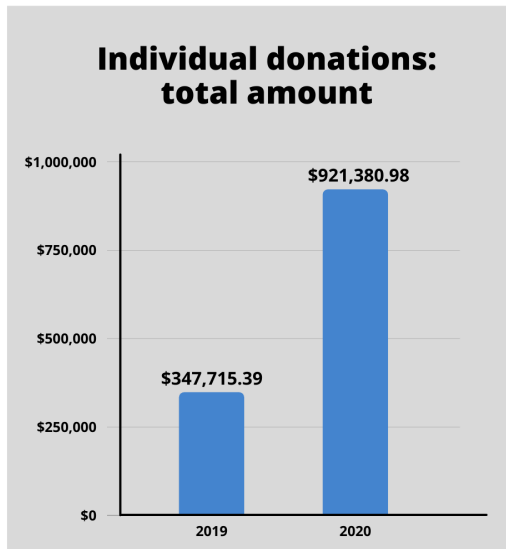
We raised 3.8% more in 2020 than in 2019, thanks to significant contributions from corporate and individual donors, as well as the one-time Bicentennial Community Fund. This means that we are able to fill the major \$700,000 funding gap left when the government's Care & Share grant comes to an end in 2021.

Funding sources in 2020 (total amount: \$2.9 million)



Individual gifts

We saw a 165% increase in the sum of individual donations across all platforms, and a 239% increase in the number of individual donations from 2019 to 2020. This was largely due to the overwhelming support we received for our Vulnerable Women's Fund, and a greater number of peer-to-peer fundraisers.



i) Vulnerable Women's Fund

During the COVID-19 pandemic, AWARE received the highest number of Helpline calls in our history, especially those pertaining to family violence. In response, we launched the [Vulnerable Women's Fund](#) (VWF) to ensure that we could continue to provide and expand our services throughout the circuit-breaker period, to aid these women in need.

VWF turned out to be AWARE's most successful donation campaign ever, raising \$531,432.59 (through 2,126 donations) for the Women's Helpline, Sexual Assault Care Centre, S.H.E. Project and our research and advocacy work.



ii) Peer-to-Peer Fundraising

In 2020, we saw an increase in the number of peer-to-peer (P2P) fundraisers. Putting their various skills and interests to use, our supporters raised funds and awareness by encouraging their peers to donate, typically through [Giving.sg](#) and [Give.Asia](#).

These were some of our more successful P2P fundraisers.

A) [Hiking the circumference of Singapore for AWARE](#)



Jared Hui hiked the circumference of Singapore to raise \$4,133 for AWARE. “The entire hike was tiring,” said Jared, “yet it was an accomplishing, fun and rewarding experience.”

B) [Project Phetchabun](#)



Project Phetchabun raised over \$11,000 through bake sales and barre classes. “We highly encourage others who want to support the good work of AWARE to start their own fundraising campaign, and put their skills to use in a fruitful way,” said Dawn Chueh, one of Project Phetchabun’s organisers.

C) [Project Love by CanYouFeelMyJoy](#)



Photographer and former AWARE intern **Natalie Ng** sold postcards and her photography services, donating profits to residents of the S.H.E. Shelter. “I’m very glad that I was able to share these meaningful actions,” she said. “I’m so glad I was able to use my break to do something good!”

D) [Give your solidarity payment to break cycles of inequality #wegiveinsolidarity](#)



“With the global directive to ‘stay at home’, the pandemic brought into stark contrast what it means to have a home that is truly safe and life-sustaining,” said **Sharon Shum**, who organised this campaign on Give.Asia. “AWARE does valuable work helping those whose homes may not necessarily be places of love and protection, breaking the stigma surrounding domestic violence and returning power to women who have been wounded.”

OutRAGEous AWAREHouse Party



On 28 November, we held our first ever virtual annual fundraiser, the AWAREHouse Party. More than 300 attendees from all over the island (and around the world!) dressed up in “outRAGEous” party wear and tuned in over Zoom. The AWAREHouse Party raised over \$500,000 in support of AWARE’s NextGen campaign, dedicated to nurturing a new cohort of change-makers and ensuring that women and girls continue to receive essential assistance and support.

Partners for the AWAREHouse Party included Bar @ Lorong 13, Grand Hyatt Singapore, Martell, Playground Studio, PPURPOSE, Shooting Gallery Asia, World Scientific, Kah Motor, KOP Limited, MUFG Investor Services and Tan Ean Kiam Foundation.



AWAREHouse Party hosts (L-R) Pam Oei, Becca D’Bus and Corinna Lim in full costumed glory



House of Rojak won the best-dressed group category at AWAREHouse Party



House Wet & Wild put up a good showing for best-dressed of the night



We worked with the agency PPURPOSE to create a virtual extravaganza for the AWAREhouse Party



Guest Carolyn Oei took home the best-dressed individual title for 2020

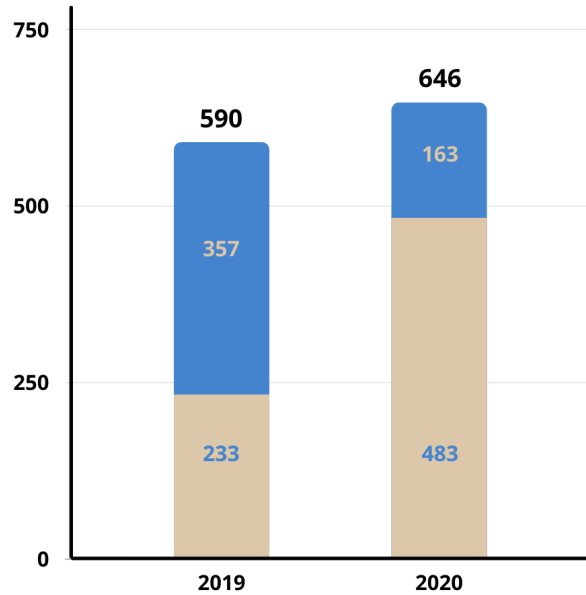


AWARE founding member Zaibun Siraj and her husband, Paul Drayson, partying at home

AWARE members and supporters

AWARE membership increased by 9.5% in 2020 to 646, with the number of renewed members increasing by a full 107%.

AWARE Membership



"Being a member and volunteer at AWARE is a humbling privilege. Pushing for gender equality is everyone's responsibility, and some of us are in better positions and have stronger means to extend ourselves to support this cause. I believe in AWARE's work and the impact they create in Singapore."

Shyn Yee Ho-Strangas | AWARE member



"Over the years I have been consistently impressed and amazed by the team at AWARE. They create so much impact in society, both in supporting people who are going through difficult times and in advocating for changes in the law for a healthier Singapore. They keep getting better, doing work that has depth and breadth, and they do it with love, intentionality and passion."

Douglas Lee-OLoughlin | AWARE member

Annual General Meeting

AWARE held our first-ever virtual Annual General Meeting on 30 May 2020. We were thrilled to be joined by 101 AWARE members, a larger turnout than usual due to the convenience of Zoom.

As 2020 was an election year for the AWARE Board, we also held a virtual “Meet the Candidates” session on 13 May, where 10 candidates introduced themselves to the wider membership and took questions.

Founding member, former journalist and incumbent Margaret Thomas was unopposed running for her second term as President of AWARE. The eight other positions on the Board were successfully contested by Asiyah Arif, Aarathi Arumugam, Wynthia Goh, Elisa Kang, Jean Low, Jasmine Ng, Penelope Shone and Zheng Huifen.



We look to our Board for vision, progressive ideas and empathetic leadership. This new line-up, including three first-timers, has thus far brought energy, talent and diverse life experience to the table. AWARE has already benefited from their committed volunteering for years—but we are especially excited to see what the Board achieves together as a team.

Our amazing allies

2020 was a year that brought out the resilience and extreme dedication of our volunteers and interns. The urgent need for our care services shot up, as the pressures of lockdown took its toll on Singapore society. But our volunteer helpers, befrienders and legal counsellors rose to the challenge, pouring in extra time and effort. Our advocacy and research volunteers and interns helped us to create deeper awareness and concrete change for women. We are also supported by our strategic volunteers, who advised us and nurtured our strengths. We give our deepest thanks and gratitude to them all.



“In 2020, I saw the impact of COVID on domestic abuse and mental health. Both issues necessitated emotional support. My multi-year experience as a Helpliner helped me to cope with the surge in calls, to provide the appropriate empathy, guidance and support.”

Aasya M H Dadabhoy | Helpline Volunteer



"Helen Dyer said, 'Volunteerism is the voice of the people put into action. These actions shape and mold the present into a future of which we can all be proud.' I am grateful for the opportunity to play a small part in molding a future of which we can be proud."

Cherry Thin | Helpline Volunteer

Our donors

We give a special thank you to the donors who supported us in a very crucial year, with additional gratitude to our corporate partners and donors.



“Gender equality is one of the cornerstones of our culture here at MUFG. AWARE does tremendous work in Singapore to support women rights and push equality. We feel it’s our duty as a large multinational organisation to support local organisations to be successful.”

Paddy Kirwan | Managing Director, Head of Client Operations, Asia Pacific, MUFG Investor Services

\$50,000 and above

Bicentennial Community Fund
Caesar Sengupta
MUFG Fund Services (Singapore) Pte. Ltd.
Tote Board
Uses Private Limited

\$10,000-\$49,999

BinjaiTree
BHP Billiton Marketing Asia Pte Ltd
Chew How Teck Foundation
David and Catharine Zemans
Hong Leong Foundation
Jian Hao Loh
Madeleine Lee
Nicholas Hanley
Quilt AI Pte Ltd
Sajni Gill
Sriram Narayanan
Tan Ean Kiam Foundation
The Community Foundation of Singapore
Tolaram Group
Lian Tsui Yee
U.S. Embassy Singapore

\$5,000-\$9,999

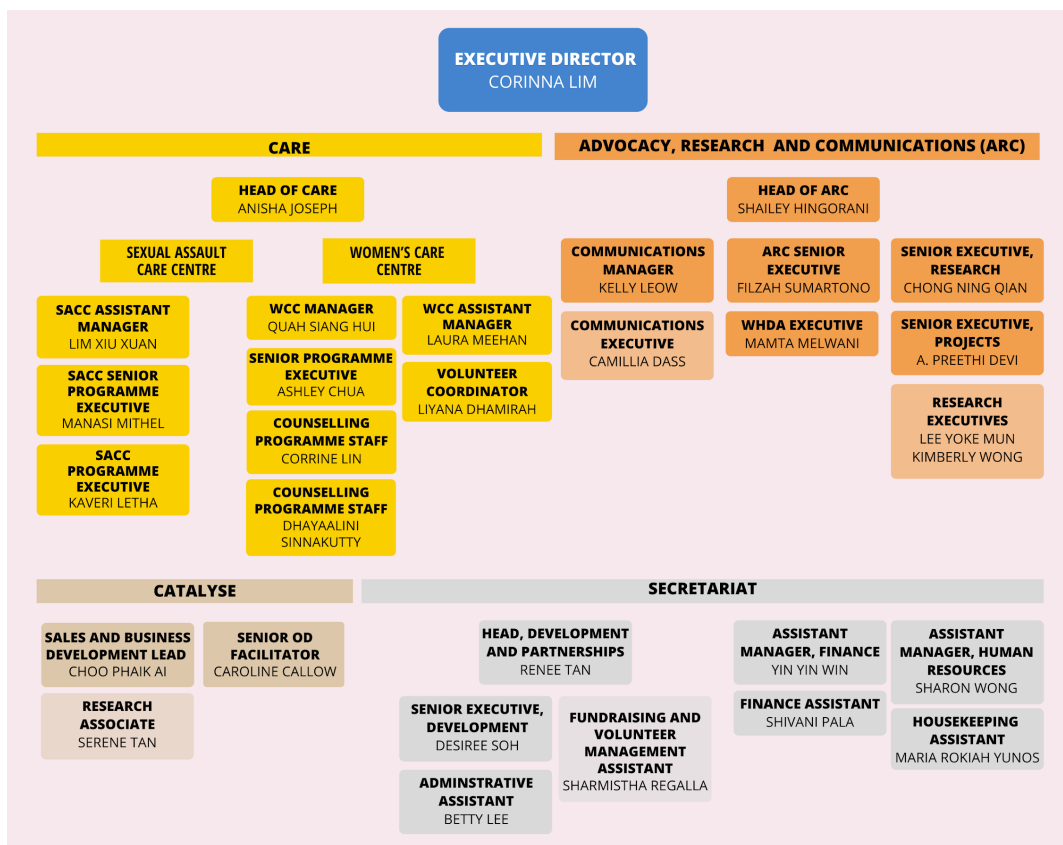
Alexander Bossong
Chan Boon Kheng
Credit Suisse AG
Dymon Asia Capital
Elisa Kang
Holywell Foundation Limited
Tan Hui Yee
Kah Motor Co Sdn Bhd
Marquard & Bahls AG
Sunita Sue Leng
Ng Kok Hoe
Pik Wan Chong
Shyn Yee Ho-Strangas
Tan Chin Tuan Foundation
Twitter Asia Pacific Pte. Ltd.
Wood Mackenzie Asia Pacific Pte. Ltd.
Li Yirong

Staff and Board



Staff strength

In 2020, AWARE continued to grow in strength and capacity to meet the growing demand for its services. Staff strength grew from 22.5 to 27 FTE (Full-Time Equivalent). As of 31 December 2020, the staff strength was distributed as follows:



In 2020, AWARE also engaged approximately 38 paid consultants and trainees on retainer, project or short-term bases.

Senior management



Corinna Lim, Executive Director

Corinna is AWARE's first Executive Director. She has championed the rights of women for close to 30 years, advocating on issues such as gender-equal workplaces, gender violence and greater support for single parents, older women and family caregivers. Prior to joining AWARE, Corinna practised law; she also founded and served as the CEO of an IT company.



Anisha Joseph, Head of CARE Services

A social worker by qualification, Anisha Joseph studied Criminology and Justice at Tata Institute of Social Sciences, India and worked with the NGO Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative on prison reform. Anisha also studied "Mental Disability Law in practice" at Central European University and worked with prisoners with mental illness for her master's thesis. She has a B.Sc (Hons) Physics, and worked in Human Resources for corporations and NGOs before joining the social sector full time.



Shailey Hingorani, Head of Advocacy, Research and Communications

Shailey Hingorani is AWARE's Head of Advocacy, Research and Communications. Previously, she worked on women's rights and child rights with the Open Society Foundations, Harvard's FXB Center for Health and Human Rights, the Indian Mission to the United Nations, Save the Children and the Bloomberg Initiative. Shailey received a Master's in Public Administration from Harvard University. She also holds M.A. and M.Phil. degrees in political science and a B.A. in Journalism.



Renee Tan, Head of Development and Partnerships

Renee Tan is a seasoned business development and marketing specialist with more than 15 years of experience in sponsorship, fundraising, partnership development and marketing. Renee was instrumental in helping companies such as the Singapore International Film Festival, Pangdemonium Theatre Company and Singapore Repertory Theatre create successful sales and marketing campaigns, cultivate corporate prospects and grow sponsorship revenue. She is passionate about women's rights and gender equality.

Corporate governance

Role of the Board

AWARE's Board is committed to maintaining high standards of corporate governance and accountability to its stakeholders. Our stakeholders include the regulators, the clients we serve, our supporters (donors, members and volunteers), our partners, staff and the community at large.

The Board decides on the major strategic directions of AWARE, allocates financial resources, provides legal and financial oversight, reviews the performance of management, and ensures that the organisation serves its mission in accordance with its values. The Board meets every month to carry out its functions.

No Board members are remunerated for their Board services.

Read more 2020 Board Information [here](#). Find a list of AWARE's Board committees [here](#).

Our Board



Margaret Thomas, President

Margaret Thomas held senior editing positions at *The Business Times*, *The Singapore Monitor* and *TODAY*, and was in the founding team of *AsiaOne*, over her nearly three decades in the media. In 1984/85, Margaret was a founder member of AWARE. Over the last three decades, she has served on many of its committees, and has been a member of its board since 2009. In 2003 she was a founder member of Transient Workers Count Too (TWC2).



Penelope Shone, 1st Vice-President

Penny Shone was born in New Zealand. She has been a resident of Singapore since 1985, and an AWARE member for 20 years. Her



Jean Low, 2nd Vice-President

Jean Low is currently CEO of 1880, a private club focused on building community. Previously, she was Director of Finance at

career has unfolded in both the public and private sectors. Most recently, she led international public affairs and communications for General Electric across 150 countries. Prior to that, she was a managing director at Citigroup for 12 years, leading the company's public affairs, communications and citizenship strategies across Asia Pacific. This included the supervision of 20,000 volunteers and \$18 million in annual grants to NGOs.



Elisa Kang, Secretary

Elisa Kang spent 13 years in wealth management advising clients on asset allocation, family office and impact investments, before pursuing a Master's in Counselling at Monash University in 2014. From 2016-18, Elisa worked as a part-time counsellor at Singapore Management University. She began her involvement in gender justice in 2007, volunteering in a microfinance consultancy in India and an NGO fighting violence against women and the trafficking of women across the border in Nepal. Elisa has been involved with AWARE since 2016: as a trainer with Catalyse, a counsellor, a volunteer Helpliner and a project manager for the Women's Helpline expansion. She is also a full-time caregiver and family manager.

United World College of South East Asia, CFO at Mapletree Greater China Commercial Trust and Head of Risk Management at Mapletree Investments. She is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

An AWARE member since 2009 and board member since 2016, she cares deeply about education, social justice and gender equality.



Aarathi Arumugam, Treasurer

Aarathi Arumugam is an entrepreneur who is passionate about connecting communities through causes close to her heart. Her career trajectory has taken her along different paths, from corporations to volunteer organisations to start-ups—experiences that she considers her personal MBA. Since becoming a member in 2009, Aarathi has volunteered with AWARE as a trainer, educating and raising awareness about workplace sexual harassment and comprehensive sexuality education. In 2019, she also conceptualised and executed a series of events called Kitchen Movements, to raise awareness and funds for Daughters of Tomorrow.



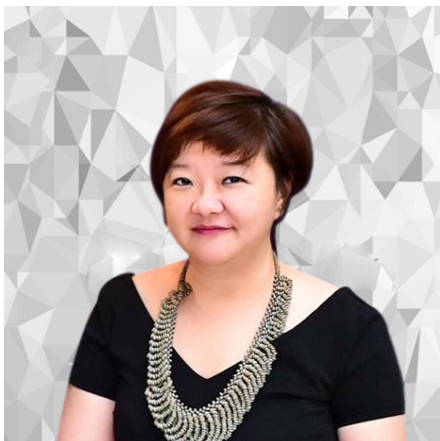
Zheng Huifen, Assistant Treasurer

Zheng Huifen has been an AWARE member since 2009 and is now a life member. She has volunteered with AWARE in various capacities, including the legal clinic, Helpline training in Mandarin and updates to AWARE's Constitution. Apart from AWARE, Huifen was a committee member of the Humanist Society (Singapore) between 2012 and 2017. At HSS, she helped to create a safe space for people identifying as atheist, agnostic, freethinking or secular. A corporate lawyer with a technology and payments focus, Huifen is also a founding member of the pro bono arm of the Association of Corporate Counsel in Singapore.



Asiyah Arif, Board Member

Asiyah Arif is a specialist dispute resolution lawyer who acts for clients in sensitive high-value commercial disputes and advises on employment matters. Asiyah led AWARE's SHOut! Campaign to lobby for greater protection against workplace sexual harassment, and its We Can! Campaign to change social attitudes towards violence against women. Asiyah is committed to elevating the voices and stories of minority women in Singapore, and uplifting women from all backgrounds and walks of life.



Jasmine Ng, Board Member

Jasmine Ng is a filmmaker and educator who has executive-produced and directed award-winning shorts, feature films and



Wynthia Goh, Board Member

Wynthia Goh is Head of NEXT Digital at NCS. Previously, she was Head of Omnichannel at NTUC Enterprise, and before that led regional

international broadcast work. She is President of SAMPP, the Singapore Association for Motion Picture Professionals. Jasmine has also conceptualised many cross-disciplinary works for social causes, including civic awareness projects such as IPS PRISM for the Institute of Policy Studies, and the *BOTH SIDES, NOW* installation project, which explored death and dying with the support of Lien Foundation.

digital teams for Nokia, eBay, Avaya, SAP and Aviva, with roles in product management, business development, venture investment, digital strategy and marketing. Wynthia has a Master's in Public Policy from the State University of New York and is a Fulbright Scholar. An AWARE member since 2009, Wynthia is also on the Women in Fintech subcommittee of the Singapore Fintech Association.

Finance, Governance and Policies

AWARE has been accorded IPC (Institution of a Public Character) status from 01/09/2020 to 31/08/2022. AWARE has a constitution as its governing instrument.

Financial report

AWARE ended 2020 with a surplus of \$1,322,633 (2019: \$934,983). It had an income of \$4,083,248 (2019: \$3,638,409) and expenses of \$2,760,615 (2019: \$2,703,426).

AWARE's total funds at the end of 2020 were \$6,248,022 (2019: \$4,925,389).

The charity has disclosed its restricted funds in the Financial Statements (see note 12 on page 25).

See the [2020 Audited Financial Statements](#) for full information.

Statutory information and governance compliance

AWARE consistently works towards improving its transparency, governance, HR, IT and risk-management practices. To this end, in 2020, we implemented the following processes:

1. Work from home arrangements, adopting IT to deliver services, carry out research, hold events and programmes and enable staff to connect and collaborate
2. Third-party audit of AWARE's governance processes
3. Online reimbursement claims, third-party payments and consultant payments system

AWARE is compliant with the Code of Governance (2017). Refer to our [Statutory Information](#) and [Governance Evaluation Checklist](#).

Policies

i) Financial policies

AWARE's financial policies require competitive quotations for fair pricing. Annual budgets are approved by the board before adoption. Payments are regulated by a payment process and in accordance with the mandate for payment.

ii) Conflict of interest

AWARE has established a Conflict of Interest policy at the board and staff levels to assist in identifying and managing potential areas of conflict.

All board members and staff undertake to declare any situation of conflict that may arise. They abstain from decision-making in such instances, so as to allow a fair and transparent decision-making process. They are also required to make a negative affirmation annually.

iii) Reserves

AWARE aims to maintain a reserve that is equivalent to at least 12 months of its operating expenses to ensure continuity of its services and programmes.

The reserves are held in cash in either current or fixed deposit accounts, in accordance with guidelines on minimising risk and maintaining liquidity. These operational guidelines have been established and approved by the board.

Every six months, the board reviews the amount of reserves that are required to ensure that they are adequate.

If the reserves fall below the threshold of 12 months operating expenses, board approval will be required to utilise the remaining reserves. Management will inform the Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer at least three months before the cashflow is expected to breach the threshold.

iv) Loans

AWARE does not:

- a) grant any loans, donations, grants or financial assistance;
 - b) receive any loans for any purpose or tenure;
- without the prior written approval of the board.

v) Other policies

In addition to the above, AWARE has a range of documented policies and procedures, including the following:

1. Board Roles Policy and Code of Conduct for Board Members
2. Employees' Handbook
3. Consultants Code of Conduct
4. Financial Policy and Procedures
5. Social Media Guide
6. Volunteering Guide
7. Whistleblowing Policy
8. Data Protection Policy