Annual Report 2016
Persatuan Kesedaran Komuniti Selangor (EMPOWER)

EMPOWER's Vision

A society where there is equality and a thriving democracy that respects diversity.

Masyarakat yang mempunyai kesaksamaan dan demokrasi yang subur yang menghormati kepelbagaian.

EMPOWER's Mission

As EMPOWER, we advance women's political equality towards justice and democracy centred on feminist and human rights principles. We work with women and youth of diverse communities to build their leadership potential and transform cultures and mindsets towards dismantling power structures that reinforce inequalities. Through advocacy, capacity building, research and resource development, we identify strategic connections between issues, actors and movements from local to international levels.

Sebagai EMPOWER, kami memperjuangkan kesaksamaan politik wanita ke arah keadilan dan demokrasi yang berpusatkan prinsip feminis dan hak asasi manusia. Kami bekerja dengan wanita dan golongan muda daripada pelbagai komuniti untuk membina keupayaan kepimpinan mereka dan mengubah budaya dan pemikiran ke arah memusnahkan struktur kuasa yang meneguhkan ketidaksaksamaan. Melalui advokasi, pembinaan keupayaan, kajian dan pembangunan sumber, kami mengenal pasti hubungan strategik antara isu, orang yang terlibat dan gerakan daripada tahap tempatan kepada antarabangsa.

Value Statement of EMPOWER

Every woman is a leader. Enabling her power to decide leads to an inclusive, democratic and diverse society.

Setiap wanita ialah pemimpin. Dengan memberdaya wanita mempunyai kuasa untuk membuat keputusan, akan wujud sebuah masyarakat yang inklusif, demokratik dan pelbagai.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I would like to introduce Murni, a 45 year old woman from Kampung Tering, Negeri Sembilan. She is of Temuan descent and has lived in this village all her life. Our partnership with Murni started in 2013 when she first joined EMPOWER's Orang Asli Women's Leadership Training Workshop. A very soft-spoken, shy and self-effacing woman who went on to organize an engagement with the Anti – Corruption Agency in February 2016. She coordinated the tri-state activity to raise issues affecting the Orang Asli community.

During this interaction, she questioned the national director of the Department of Orang Asli Development from Putrajaya about Orang Asli children's access to culturally appropriate education that reinforces their indigenous identity in a safe and protected enviroment. Despite, the evasive response from the official, Murni had made an official accountable for an issue affecting her community. Murni's courage to speak to power reveals the transformation process that she has undergone over time.

We have been focused on developing leaders with a women's human rights framework, community organizing skills and the ability to solve problems in consultative manner with their groups of influence. The leadership module has been adapted for various target groups since its inception in 2009. The gaps of in gender inequality that exist denote that the lack of government commitment to provide women with a level playing field and ensuring the results of substantive equality. EMPOWER's efforts to expand women's rights to include meaningful participation in democracy and creating safe spaces for women online from violence and harassment has been challenging to say the least.

We experienced severe government backlash for demanding for good governance and accountability this year when our office was raided and our operations came under state scrutiny, this time for receiving foreign funding which is legal and acceptable under our Constitution. This is indicative of the closing of space in this country for working in areas where the state is uncomfortable with dissenting voices. An EXCO member and two staff members faced police intimidation and harsh questioning in this heightened atmosphere of fear and intimidation. Despite that, staff returned to carry on the work with the support of members and encouragement of other CSOs in the country. This is indicative of their commitment to carrying on organization's vision in staying true to the cause.

Looking forward, we have taken stock of the risk factors involved in the work that we do and are improving our preparedness with the increasingly volatile political atmosphere prior to the impending elections.We have started reworking our institutional structure and branding in order to counter the state narrative which vilifies human rights organizations through bad press. In addition to this, we will explore ways to consolidate the programmes to better reflect the work that we do to contribute to an inclusive society that respects diversity and equality for a thriving democracy to exist in Malaysia.

Please support us in this exciting journey towards achieving our vision.

Janarthani Arumugam

President

HIGHLIGHTS IN 2016

January	February	March
30 Jan - 2 Feb: Internet Rights are Human Rights (IRHR) Workshop	18: IRHR Talk with Help University students 27: UPR Writing Workshop 24: Meeting with CSOs on the upcoming Communications and Multimedia Act (CMA) amendments and the formation of Net Merdeka coalition	19: Strategic Campaigning Training 22: Majlis Sambutan Hari Wanita Sedunia 2016 Peringkat Negeri Selangor 24: #NewsNotPorn tweetchat 29-1 April: RightsCon San Francisco
April	**May**	**June**
7-10: Orang Asli women capacity building training	3: #NetMerdeka Google Hangout on CMA amendments 16: National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP) Consultation 19: JAG meeting with the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development on DV Act amendments - online VAW introduced by EMPOWER as part of JAG's proposals 20: Launch of COMANGO 2013 BM report and mid-term report 25-31: APC IMPACT Secure Online Communications (SOC) Regional Training 27-29: OA TOT in Negeri Sembilan	4: 1st Net Merdeka Focal Point Workshop 10-20: UN Human Rights Council, 32nd Session 23: UPR Monitoring Training for Health Groups 27: UPR Monitoring Training for NGOs in Sabah and Sarawak 27: CEDAW Training at WAO 28: Inequality in Education Workshop with college students (Taylor's)
July	**August**	**September**
1: UPR Monitoring Training for PWD Groups 12-16: Land-Mapping with JOAS - Sg.Tuang, Pahang 14-17: IRHR Workshop with WHRDs - Internet Rights are Women's Rights 17-21: Land-Mapping with JOAS - Tanjung Rambai, Selangor 22: UPR Training for children's rights & PWD groups 24-26: Pre-APrIGF WHRD Workshop 27-29: Asia Pacific Region Internet Governance Forum (APrIGF) 31: UPR Monitoring Training	1-5: ASEAN Peoples' Forum 2: COMANGO Mid-Term Consultation 9: SOC Workshop 11: UPR Monitoring Training with ESCR Groups 17: JAG Meeting on Mass Mobilisation in EMPOWER 22: JAG Meeting with YB Dato' Sri Azalina Othman 24-27: UPR Info Workshop on Implementation of UPR Recommendations 26-27: Women and Electoral Reform Conference, Penang	5: Meeting with SUHAKAM 8: JAG Meeting with the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development on a proposed Gender Equality Bill 10-11: Net Merdeka Workshop - Pulau Pinang 24-25: EMPOWER & COMANGO @ Art for Grabs 27-30: Cyber policy training programme
October	**November**	**December**
1-5: Workshop on Gender Mainstreaming in Internet and Development in the Asia-Pacific Region and Asia-Pacific Regional Internet & Development Dialogue Conference, Bangkok 4-6: EGM on Enhancing Capacity Development to Promote Women's Empowerment, Bangkok 15-16: COMANGO @ Art for Grabs Johor 24: Tolak RUU 355 Protest at Parliament 25: Internet Safety Talk for WAO's clients	5-6: EMPOWER Evaluation and Planning Meeting 15-16: Roadmap to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030, Putrajaya 17-19: EngageMedia Planning for SEA DigiRights Camp 19: Bersih 5 rally 23: #BebasMaria Women's March 23-28: IMPACT Capacity Building workshop 25-10 Dec: 16 Days of Activism & InternetKita	5: Public Lecture on FOAA by Maina Kiai, UN Special Rapporteur 5-8: Internet Governance Forum, Mexico 7: ACSC/APF 2017 meeting at KOMAS 21: EPU SDG Steering Comm meeting

MEDIA STATEMENTS IN 2016

- Government must not violate our freedom of expression and privacy online (12 January)
- Stop Censoring Information (26 February)
- Political Participation: Parity, Inclusiveness, Diversity (8 March)
- JAG Joint Statement: Consultation before Amendments: Keep the Internet Free (12 May)
- Wanita berhak turut serta secara bebas dalam sistem demokrasi Malaysia (7 June)
- Idamkan Pingat Emas Olimpik? Janakuasa Atlet Wanita (19 August)
- EMPOWER Menyokong Anak Muda dalam Penggerakkan Mobilisasi Besar-besaran #TangkapMO1 (19 August)
- JAG Joint Statement: Death Threats Against Human Rights Defenders Must Be Addressed (23 September)
- JAG Joint Statement: Prosecute Those Who Make Death Threats against Human Rights Defenders and Their Families (18 October)
- Joint Media Statement: Accusations of Foreign Intervention Unfounded (21 December)

All statements are available at http://empowermalaysia.org/work/public-advocacy/

2016 OVERVIEW

2016 brought with it new dimensions in EMPOWER's work on women's political equality: what does this mean in terms of political participation and civil liberties, and in real terms for women? The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) defines four key dimensions of change necessary to advancing women's human rights: internal attitudes, societal norms, laws and policies, and material resources. EMPOWER has begun to re-examine its work along these dimensions, noting the changes we have contributed to bringing about.

Our efforts to consolidate our work on women's rights and empowerment was rudely interrupted on 28th November 2016. The Malaysian police raided EMPOWER's office, allegedly over "foreign funding." In December, an Executive Committee member and the Finance Officer were questioned by the police. This was an unfortunate ending to an otherwise successful year for EMPOWER.

EMPOWER did significant work in 2016 in terms of changing internal attitudes among participants of its workshops and trainings. One of the most significant changes witnessed was the development and strengthening in self-belief among women leaders EMPOWER has worked with. A change in internal attitudes can also be seen in participants of the internet rights and digital security trainings, though again, a permanent change will only bear fruit with further support.

EMPOWER has also been part of advocacies toward law and policy reform, as an active participant in State-CSO engagements and as a monitor of law and policy development. A number of laws are due for amendments, however in cases such as the Communication and Multimedia Act, EMPOWER is actively campaigning *against* repressive amendments. Changes in societal norms also remain a question mark, and a point of further exciting work: EMPOWER has begun to much more actively engage with the public on human rights issues beyond media statements.

Underpinning all of these is the recognition that this is a long-term process, and that the challenge will be to find funders willing to support a process that will only achieve its larger objective after years of work. While EMPOWER has been developing material resources in the form of research work, for example, their real worth can only be realised in their use as advocacy material with the State and the public.

EMPOWER is also in transition: much like the women who come to our workshops hoping for something new and something more, the organisation knows the end goal it wants but the road to get there is yet to end. The reworking of its value statement and its re-branding exercise are not "new things" per se, but a commitment towards changes that need to happen to enable us to work more effectively, and with much more clarity and a stronger purpose as a feminist, women's rights organisation.

1. BUILDING LEADERSHIP FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

In 2016, EMPOWER continued its work in building women's leadership in political participation and civil society spaces, increasing the engagement of women – particularly women who face multiple intersecting forms of discrimination – in issues that matter to them.

EMPOWER strengthened its long-term commitment to Orang Asli women's political participation. A capacity building training was held in April with women community mobilisers from Negeri Sembilan and Perak. The training focused on enhancing their understanding on the importance of women's participation in decision-making and leadership; deepening their understanding of gender and sex and the root causes of their problems as women and young women using the problem tree analysis. The training also emphasised a critical range of skills that these women had to work on—community organizing and mobilizing, communication skills, and strategic campaign planning. A separate strategic campaigning training had been held earlier in March with the aim of mainstreaming women's human rights perspectives into political campaigns through women leaders who could analyse communal needs and develop community-based solutions. Following these workshops, two training of trainers were held in Negeri Sembilan and Perak respectively. A number of long-term participants of EMPOWER's Women's Political Participation programme were facilitators at these trainings, drawing on skills learned from past workshops with EMPOWER.

EMPOWER collaborated with Jaringan Orang Asal Se-Malaysia (JOAS) to conduct land-mapping activities in three villages namely Kampung Gebok, Kampung Tering (both located in Negeri Sembilan) and Kampung Sungai Tuang (Pahang). These were aimed to strengthen and increase indigenous women's participation and representation at local decision-making levels. As a result of the analysis developed through the capacity-building workshops and the advocacy of groups such as JOAS and JKOASM, participants felt that they needed more skills on community mapping. It is a powerful tool for asserting ownership of land and its resources among indigenous peoples, especially among indigenous women.

In spite of the prominence of activists like Tijah Yok Chopil, Fatimah Batin and Jannie Lasimbang, women's voices are marginalized in their land struggles. This was also the opinion of the capacity-building workshop participants who revealed that community mapping trainings at their respective villages excluded women. Mapping is considered labor-intensive and requires the handling of sophisticated technological tools such as the Global Positioning System which is presumed to be challenging for women. Despite their keen interest, they were overlooked and deprived of the valuable training that helps communities, specifically women, identify and protect their natural resources. The exclusion of important voices such as women and children is very detrimental to the protection of collective community lands and resources.

Once opportunities were available and accessible to them, it was clear that the Orang Asli women are truly vested in preserving, protecting and promoting their traditional and indigenous resources.

Women applied themselves to learning about and using new technology—Global Positioning System and the Geographic Information System (GIS)—as well as using cameras and audio recorders to document the process of mapping. Such documentation was important as it is admissible in courts as evidence in land contestation. The immense knowledge possessed by the women about the resources within the domestic sphere of the village was crucial; without the women's participation and their perspectives, the community risks being deprived of traditional knowledge and wisdom which is primarily the domain of indigenous women.

EMPOWER expanded its efforts in increasing the visibility of women as active actors in civil society spaces, particularly in engagements with the State. The organisation is currently part of Malaysia's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Steering Committee, a joint government and civil society body, as a representative of JAG and COMANGO. The inclusion of women's groups into the Steering Committee and the Working Groups of Malaysia's national SDG processes is a significant step towards making sure that gender equality and women's participation are mainstreamed into policy development.

EMPOWER introduced the concept of ICT-related gender-based violence ("gender-based violence that is committed, abetted or aggravated, in part or fully, by the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs)", also known as online violence against women or online VAW) into discussions between the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality and the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development on proposed amendments to the Domestic Violence Act. A meeting was held with the Ministry of Women in May.

There is a need for long-term work on ICT-related GBV and further engagements with both civil society organsiations (CSOs) and the State on how to best address this aspect of gender-based violence. For women, offline and online spaces are inextricably linked: VAW that begins offline can continue online (e.g. an abusive former spouse stalking a woman's social media accounts), and online VAW always has offline repercussions (e.g. emotional harm, economic loss). There are already sufficient laws in Malaysia to manage online harassment (e.g. section 233 of the Communications and Multimedia Act on "improper use of network facilities or network service, etc"). However, these are not being applied to cases of ICT-related GBV.

2. TRANSFORMING CULTURES AND MINDSETS

Communicating ideas and values in both physical and virtual spaces have been a significant component of EMPOWER's work in 2016.

The concept that internet rights are human rights – ie., that the rights we hold offline also apply online – is fairly new in Malaysia. Along with strengthening civil society capacity to understand the interrelatedness of the internet and human rights, and the impact of these issues on their work, EMPOWER also sought to break the general perception that information and communication technologies (ICTs) are the domain of "techies", specifically male techies. The Feminist Principles of the Internet (FPI) are part of the framework that underpins EMPOWER's work in the area of internet rights.

EMPOWER held two workshops on internet rights and secure online communications in 2016, as well as several digital security workshops for different groups including with the clients of Women's Aid Organisation. Building the capacity of marginalised women and women human rights defenders to adopt digital security practices is part of the larger work of empowering them to have more control over resources and opportunities. In this case, specifically over their use of ICTs and exercise their right to privacy. EMPOWER, as part of Net Merdeka, were also trainers and facilitators in focal point workshops for the coalition in the three states of Selangor, Penang and Sabah.

EMPOWER conducted two pieces of research as part of its international collaboration with the Association for Progressive Communications through the project entitled APC IMPACT. The researches brought to surface the critical issues faced by women in relation to *online freedoms* of information (FOI), and of assembly and association (FoAA) in Malaysia. These reports will be used in future advocacies around internet rights in Malaysia with the State and other civil society actors, breaking down the perceived separation of offline and online spaces in terms of human rights. EMPOWER is particularly hopeful that the research into FOI online can be used to strengthen the implementation of existing FOI enactments in Selangor and Penang.

As a co-secretariat of COMANGO, EMPOWER conducted engagements with the general public online and in two arts-related events to debunk anti-COMANGO myths. The face-to-face engagements at Art for Grabs were particularly successful, with many curious visitors coming to COMANGO's booth to ask questions and take their photos with COMANGO's posters. A dual-language version of the 2013 stakeholder report was also published in 2016 to ensure that members of the public can compare anti-COMANGO claims with the actual content of the report in Bahasa Malaysia.

Further engagements with the public continued through the #InternetKita campaign, as part of the global Take Back the Tech campaign and 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence. In 2016, EMPOWER collaborated with the Centre of Independent Journalism (CIJ), Women's Aid Organisation (WAO), and Malaysian Centre for Constitutionalism and Human Rights (MCCHR). Two public forums were held, and posters and videos were disseminated featuring women and their relationship with technology. #InternetKita sought to reclaim women's historical contribution to technology and counter the growing gender-based violence through the use of ICTs.

As part of the Net Merdeka coalition, EMPOWER sought to bring the issue of the upcoming amendments to the Communication and Multimedia Act (CMA) into public discourse, again emphasising the idea that human rights offline also apply online. Two public tweetchats, #NewsNotPorn and #BiarlahBlog, were particularly successful at reaching internet users who would

otherwise not know the probable content of the amendments. #BiarlahBlog had an estimated reach of 32,823 Twitter accounts. It was the number #1 trending Twitter topic in Malaysia for the duration of the session and continued to be in the Top 10 trending list the following day. With the Malaysian government refusing to divulge the text of the amendments before tabling them in Parliament, public pressure is key in ensuring that they remain accountable to the Malaysian citizenry.

3. STRATEGIC ADVOCACIES

EMPOWER continued to engage at national, regional, and international levels to push gender equality and human rights. The organisation stepped up its work on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), training groups working on different issues on the UPR process and a monitoring framework was developed for EMPOWER's UPR Monitoring Project. Many of these groups were not part of previous civil society-led UPR processes, and their perspectives will strengthen future stakeholder submissions when Malaysia's human rights record and situation on the ground is reviewed.

The organisation also consolidated its relationship with the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality, taking part in its work on law reforms and the upcoming CEDAW review for Malaysia. EMPOWER is currently part of the NGO CEDAW Shadow Report Working Committee, and is leading the thematic group working on women's participation in political and public life.

EMPOWER also strengthened its role in mainstreaming gender as an integral component of internet rights at regional and international levels. EMPOWER collaborated with other civil society organisations in:

- The 32nd session of the Human Rights Council in June, where EMPOWER was a panellist in a side event organised by FORUM-Asia, SUARAM and World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT). The side event discussed Malaysia's implementation of UPR recommendations and the state of human rights in the country, including on internet rights. EMPOWER also participated in a roundtable discussion with the Special Rapporteurs
- Asia-Pacific region Internet Governance Forum (APrIGF) in July, where EMPOWER worked with APC to organise a pre-event workshop for women human rights defenders, and took part as speakers in three sessions. One of the sessions was a collaboration with the Foundation for Alternative Media Philippines (FMA), on "Gender and Access".
- ASEAN People's Forum 2016 (APF) in August in Timor Leste, where EMPOWER, CIJ and APC jointly organised several activities including a workshop on "The Internet We Want" with panellists from several ASEAN countries.
- The Internet Governance Forum in December in Mexico, where EMPOWER was a panellist on "Workshop on Solutions for Countering Online Abuse Against Women" and "Assemblies and Associations Online: Coping with Challenges".

Finally, EMPOWER forged a strategic partnership with Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Land and Development (APWLD) and attended its Partner's Meeting in November in Chiang Mai, where EMPOWER underwent a capacity-building workshop in order to monitor and report on Malaysia's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) implementation. This meeting proved instrumental in helping to advance EMPOWER's advocacy for women's rights and human rights through the SDG process nationally, regionally and internationally.

These collaborations are crucial in building not only EMPOWER's internal capacity, but also linkages that could bring resources and much-needed opportunities for skills-building among civil society actors in Malaysia. Women are often marginalised in these spaces, which desperately need diverse voices and viewpoints. In turn, EMPOWER brings its rich experience in women's human rights work on the ground.

4. GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS
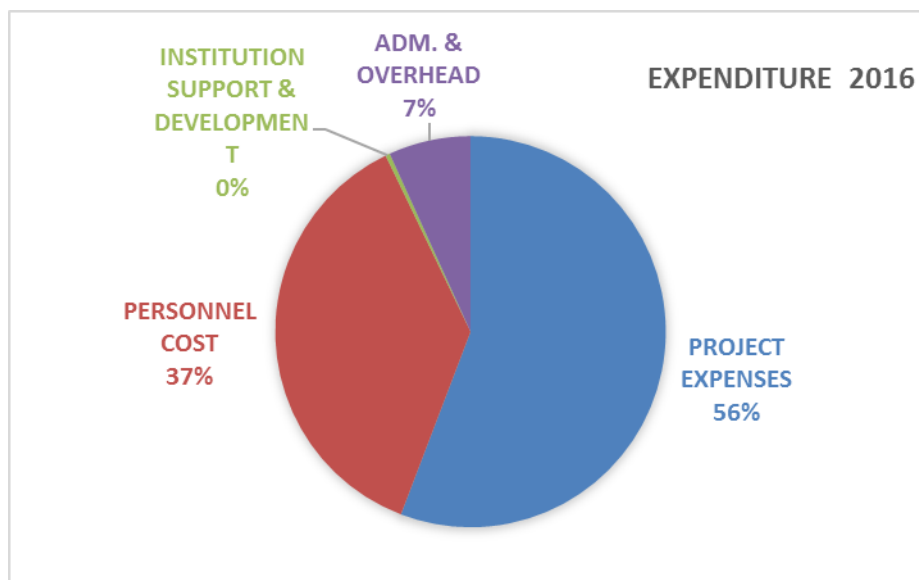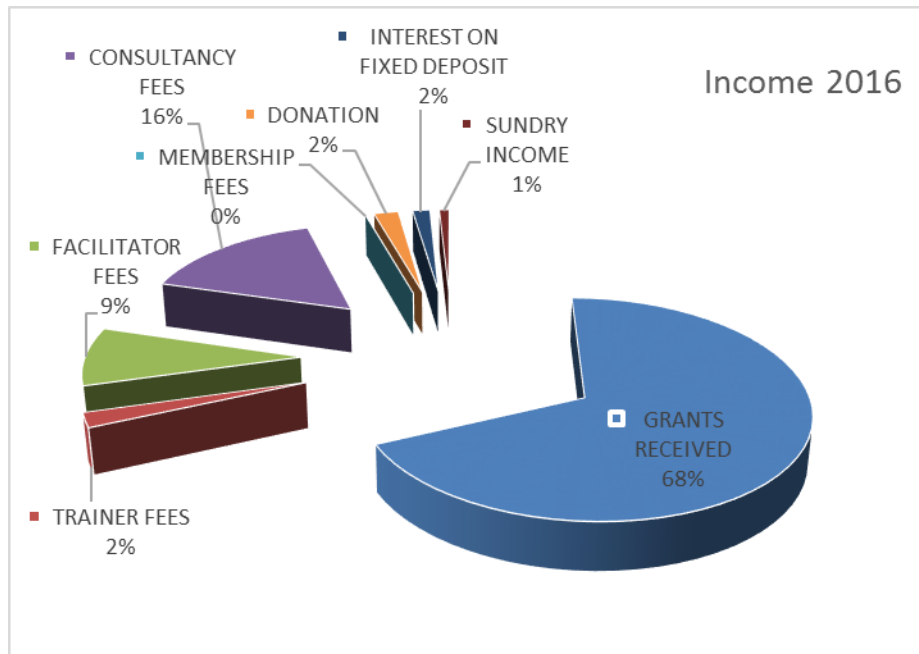
The **executive committee** members for 2016 were:

President:	Janarthani Arumugam
Vice-President:	Lau Shu Shi
Treasurer:	Normawati Ghazali
Secretary:	Pook Li Yoon
Committee Members:	Arutselvi d/o Amalanathan
	Mohani Niza
	Melanie Yong
Internal Auditors:	Charles Tan
	Wasanthee Shanthi Sinnasamy

The **staff** members for 2016 were:

Executive Director:	Angela M. Kuga Thas
Programme Manager:	Yasmin S. Masidi
Programme Officers:	Rusni Tajari (Women's Political Participation)
	Serene Lim (APC IMPACT)
	Norsyamimie Rahman (APC IMPACT)
	Rizal Rozhan (UPR Monitoring)
Admin and Finance:	Leong Mee Nan @ Mei Yun (Finance)
	Siti Nor bt Yatim Mustafa (Administration)
Interns:	Jane Khor
	Tan Jin Chi

5. FINANCIAL REPORT

EMPOWER's total income for 2016 was MYR982,523, largely from grants (MYR671,506). The organisation's total expenditure was MYR964,658, with MYR541,988 going to project costs and MYR354,131 going to personnel costs.

Income 2016

- CONSULTANCY FEES 16%
- INTEREST ON FIXED DEPOSIT 2%
- DONATION 2%
- SUNDRY INCOME 1%
- MEMBERSHIP FEES 0%
- FACILITATOR FEES 9%
- TRAINER FEES 2%
- GRANTS RECEIVED 68%

EXPENDITURE 2016

- INSTITUTION SUPPORT & DEVELOPMENT 0%
- ADM. & OVERHEAD 7%
- PERSONNEL COST 37%
- PROJECT EXPENSES 56%

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank all our funders and project partners in 2016: Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, Association for Progressive Communications, Bytes for All Pakistan, Commonwealth Foundation, Digital Empowerment Foundation India, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, and Open Society Foundations.

We would also like to especially thank the Centre for Independent Journalism, Jaringan Orang Asal SeMalaysia, Jaringan Kampung Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia, the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality, Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM) which also acts as the co-secretariat to COMANGO, the Coalition of Malaysian NGOs in the UPR Process (COMANGO), and the Net Merdeka coalition; as well as the CSOs from around Southeast Asia who came together for the APF 2016 in Timor Leste.

We extend our gratutidue to YB Elizabeth Wong, Selangor State EXCO Member for Tourism, Consumer Affairs and the Environment for supporting the pilot project to train Orang Asli women leaders under the auspices of the Badan Bertindak Tanah Orang Asli Selangor (BBTOAS).

In addition to this, we acknowledge the contribution of the Member of Parliament for Petaling Jaya Selatan, YB Hee Loy Sian for his contribution to the publishing of our Freedom of Assembly and Association Online in Malaysia Report 2016.

Finally, we acknowledge and thank our interns in 2016, Jane Khor and Tan Jin Chi, for their commitment, enthusiasm and hard work in supporting our programmes and activities.

Without your presence and continued support, none of our work would be possible.