

European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights

INTERIM NARRATIVE REPORT

1. Name of beneficiary of grant and of legal representative:
Beneficiary of Grant: Friedrich Naumann Foundation
Legal Representative: Mr. Ulrich Wacker
2. Name and title of the person responsible for the project:
Mr. Rainer Heufers, Project Director Malaysia
Friedrich Naumann Foundation, East and South East Asia Regional Office
3. Title of the project:
Community Centres for the Empowerment of Indian Women in Malaysia
4. Reference number of the project: B7-701/2002/RX/258
5. Start date of the reporting period: 1st May 2003
End date of the reporting period: 30th April 2005
6. Target country(ies) or region: Malaysia
7. Target beneficiaries &/or target groups¹ (if different) (including numbers of men and women):

The main target group of the project is Indian women, because

- they are most affected by discrimination, related intolerance and violence;
- they will benefit most from the promotion of inter-cultural and inter-racial interactions by the Community Centres; and
- they have the capacity to facilitate overall change in the community.

The project aims at reaching about one woman of each of the families, i.e. an average of 300 – 400 women per Centre. The 10 Community Centres will therefore reach about 3,000 to 4,000 Indian women in impoverished areas of urban and suburban West Malaysia.

The Centres also address:

- Indian men's participation in the activities of the Community Centres, because male participation and acceptance of changed roles are considered essential for women's empowerment. The Centres will seek a minimum of 20% male participation.

¹ The target groups are the people who will ultimately benefit from the project activities. The beneficiaries are the people who will participate directly in the project. Many times these will be the same people, but not always. For example, in a programme to raise the awareness of judges and politicians about the rights of indigenous peoples, the beneficiaries of the activities will be the judges and politicians, but the target groups will be the indigenous peoples about whose rights the beneficiaries are being made more aware.

- Involvement of families and the community as a whole. This increases their awareness for gender equality as a prerequisite for the sustainable development of their community.
- Involvement of Malays, Chinese and other members of the local community, who are invited to performances and other community building programmes in order to enhance mutual understanding and tolerance.

8. Country (ies) in which the activities take place: Malaysia

A. Compliance with the Grant Agreement

1. Has the project been carried out as foreseen in the terms of reference of the agreement so far? If not, please explain how and why the original proposal has been modified, including the dates that any addenda were requested and approved.

The project has been carried out as foreseen in the terms of reference of the agreement so far.

The project especially addresses the promotion of gender equality, the discrimination, marginalization and social exclusion of the impoverished Indian minority in urban and suburban Malaysia. It specifically aims at the empowerment of Indian women to express and defend their rights and gain greater self-esteem and control over their own lives and personal and social relationships. This empowerment is being carried out by means of the following:

- Carrying out regular activities in the established Community Centres, with a focus on skills improvement and income generating workshops, promoting households and small businesses. In addition other areas such as group therapy session, marriage counselling, confidence building and conflict management skills, gender sensitivity, understanding legal provisions, health-related activities, as well as community building programs are other areas that the Centres continue to address. Each month between 6 to 8 activities are carried out by each of the Centres with at least 2 addressing income generating or employment improvement skills.
- Individual legal and psychological counselling sessions are being carried out at the Community Centres, making the participants aware of their legal rights in various domains as well as dealing with their psychological problems on a one-to-one basis. Motivational group therapy sessions are also provided to different groups being women and youth in particular.
- The Centre personnel are themselves women and dealing with the responsibility of managing and running the Centres empowers them personally. In addition, they act as role models for other women in the Community.
- Male participation is encouraged by planning and carrying out activities in the Community Centres that are not just relevant for women but for men as well. Legal issues such as the importance of having legal certificates, claiming employment and welfare benefits have been crucial aspects that the Centres have been dealing with. In addition activities focusing on gender sensitivity issues, equal roles and responsibilities within a household are being carried out.

- Similarly, participation of other races in the activities of the Centres is also encouraged. For instance, a cultural and social gathering that combined the celebration of the end of the Malay fasting period, Eid Il Fitri, with the Indian Festival of Lights, Deepavali, brought together various groups in the communities.

Local authorities, relevant government organizations and political party leaders, as well as other NGOs have been actively involved in the various stages like conduct of surveys, launching of the Centres, external evaluation. The EC Delegation to Malaysia, particularly the Head of the Delegation H.E. Thierry Rommel, and Programme Manager Ms Cristiana Famea, have provided their continuous support and have been very involved with the project from its inception. In addition, all groups are regularly informed of the progress of the project. Besides their valuable advise, this also aims at lobbying for legislative reforms in areas of domestic violence, the sexual harassment code of practice or its incorporation into the Industrial Labour Act, and other related legislations.

The budgetary constraints are taken into account while planning and carrying out any project-related activity. In addition, FNF is actively monitoring the progress and closely steers the direction of the activities of the project through formal and informal processes. Internal and external monitoring mechanisms are put in place, and these include formal approval processes by FNF to conduct activities at the centres, field visits by ERA, the implementing partner organization, establishment of a core group, who are senior respected members of the community from various walks of life such as retired government officials, local politicians, school teachers and religious leaders, within the community to provide advice and at the same time a check on the performances of the Community Centres, as well as the more elaborate evaluation workshops conducted by external experts and stakeholders.

An external monitoring team assessed the project positively at the end of the first project year in May 2004. The previous Task Manager of the European Commission visited the project late January 2005 and in his report of February 2005 has identified the project as a possible success story, provided it is able to achieve sustainability.

Since the later part of the year 2004 up to now, the project implementers have started to focus on addressing the sustainability aspect of the project as well as a more objective measurement of results achieved. A sustainability paper outlining our strategy on financial continuity as well as policy impact aspects of the project was prepared and submitted to the EC Delegation in 2005. The two implementing partners, ERA Consumer Malaysia and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, have in agreement set quantitative targets for Centres operation such as a specific increase of income, number of job placements, activities conducted and number of people served and cases handled, as well as self help groups established and publicity received on the issues. Please refer to the Sustainability paper and Strategic Targets paper for details.

2. Has the provisional budget of the project been respected so far? If not, please explain any changes that have occurred

The provisional budget of the project has generally been respected. Some small adjustments were necessary and these were requested in amendments which have been approved by the EC in May and December 2004 accordingly.

The appreciation of the EURO between 2003 and 2004 has resulted in an exchange rate gain, mostly under the Human Resource budget line. We have used this gain to conduct more seminars in order to influence policy changes as these have the highest impact. Therefore this has resulted in the amount under budget line 1.3.3.4 being higher than planned, but the overall Human Resource budget remains within the contracted amount. For further details on the activities conducted please refer to Annex I for list of activities conducted and also Section C5. Reports from the policy seminars are also included as part of publications produced and provides more details of the seminars in addition to what is outlined under activities list.

B. Project Objectives

The main objective of the proposed project is the empowerment of women of the Indian community in Malaysia. The project specifically addresses discrimination and violence against Indian women. In addition the project seeks to improve legislative provisions on women's rights in Malaysia through organizing campaigns, seminars and other activities targeted at decision and policy makers, government officials and NGOs. The project generally seeks to:

- build confidence among Indian women and to build awareness of gender issues in the urban and suburban Indian communities.
- Provide income generating training workshops to raise the socio-economic status of Indian women
- improve legislative provisions on women's rights in Malaysia through organizing campaigns, seminars and other activities.

So far the various activities of the Community Centres have focused on helping the Indian women develop a sense of self and individual confidence, and to work together as a collective group to achieve a more extensive impact than each could have had alone.

Seminars and activities targeting Indian women as well as Indian men have been organised, focusing on the legal rights, health awareness, business, entrepreneurial and other issues. This approach has proven to be successful at preventing negative reactions of men and the community at large to the empowerment of women. In addition it will also strengthen the role of the community in re-establishing a social support structure within the community. This is already apparent in the form of volunteers who assist with varying degree of support from distributing pamphlets and brochures, to conducting seminars and workshops, as well as local businesses providing sponsorship to conduct activities.

In addition, as a result of working with the people in the communities a major problem of lack of legal identification documents by the people was identified during the first year of the project's operation. Since then we have dedicated time and resources to also address this issue, as without legal status it would be almost impossible for these Indian minority to gain access to any of the benefits that the Malaysian Government currently or in the future will provide to any of its citizens. These people are by birth Malaysians, but due to

their lack of knowledge and awareness could face the grave situation of being denied rights of any normal citizen.

The project aims at co-operating and establishing communication channels with the relevant Malaysian Ministries, other NGOs, and local authorities. The Indian minority in Malaysia still lacks support from the government in many areas resulting in social disadvantages. The impoverished Indian community are still vulnerable to discriminatory practises, social and economic exclusion. The Indian communities are still being overlooked by the government, as there is no system in place to address and respond to their plight.

Through various policy seminars, the project has been able to get some attention from Dato Seri S. Samy Vellu, President of the (mostly Tamil) Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC). At a seminar in December 2004, he pledged to provide support for the operation of the Community Centres in the future. In addition since then the MIC party is seeking a budget of RM 8.3 Million from the Government to upgrade at least 13 Tamil schools in the country.

The Deputy Minister of the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry Datuk G. Palanivel, who has attended various events of the project and been kept abreast of results and operations through reports and memorandum, has in March 2005 announced a budget of RM145 Million for Women development programmes aimed at empowering women economically and in decision making.

C. Project Activities

1. Please list all the activities since the beginning of the project to date

Please see Annex I and II

2. What problems have arisen and how have these been addressed?

The Grant agreement and the provisional budget have been complied with. However minor administrative adjustments have been made after requesting for the changes from the EU, which resulted in an approved addendum to the contract on May 5, 2004 and 15 December 2004. The changes pertained to:

- 2 staff for each Community Centres instead of 1; and an additional Project Secretary at ERA.
- Provision for Consumables and Other Services for FNF Bangkok and Other local offices (ERA Consumers, Malaysia) under budget point number 4.3 and 4.4
- Renting of apartment and houses instead of buying cabin containers for setting up of the Community Centres.
- Re-allocation of budget for 'Resource Person' to cover for related Community Centres Activities expenses.
- Request a re-allocation of 3 budget items: ERA Seminar/Expert Workshops/External Evaluation to cover for related Administrative supplies and consumables expenses.

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- An increase in the number of trips per year by FNF Project staff for closer monitoring of the project's development.
- Increase in the staff training budget.

Other problems that arose include:

Some Centres had to be closed down and relocated as they were not well used by people in the vicinity. Despite careful selection process and consultations with people in the communities, including local leaders, once some Centres were established there was reluctance and lack of utilization. After careful assessment it was decided that these Centres should be closed down and relocated to areas where more people could benefit from having the Centres in the communities.

The other problem relates to staff turnover due to very demanding responsibilities and workload, which affects the continuity of the operation at the Community Centres level. As a result some tasks have had to be centralised at ERA head office, such as producing of newsletters and other publicity materials.

During the initial stage local authorities in some of the areas were not very forthcoming with their support. Some questioned the Centres being focused on the Indian women, because they did not fully understand the concept of the project. In few cases there were objections by the men in the community.

It was made clear to them that although the primary target group is Indian women, all races were encouraged to participate, and that in fact at least 20 per cent male participation is sought. It was pointed out to them that the community as a whole and the family unit, rather than just Indian women, stand to benefit from any resulting change that will be brought about by the empowerment of women at the grass root level in Malaysia.

In fact by this stage of the project's operation, not only do government officials have no reluctance in working with us but are in fact sees the project as being a very desirable initiative. Authorities have become familiar with the way our Centres operate and have in fact been impressed and appreciative of our efforts.

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3. Please list all materials and publications (and no. of copies) produced during the project to date and include one copy of each item in the report.
Please state how your publications are being distributed and to whom.

Publications produced by Community Centres:

Publications	No. of copies	How publications are distributed?	To whom are the Publications distributed?	Purpose of distribution?
Directory containing list of NGOs	Softcopy	Through Community Centres	Community members	Informational. May be used by and shared amongst the CC Personnel. Possibly exchange with other NGOs or government organisations in future.
Directory containing list of other relevant organisations	Softcopy	Through Community Centres	Community members	Informational. May be used by the CC Personnel, referrals for people in the community
Information Leaflets	25 000 copies	through door to door distribution, community Centres or other group activities	To the community	Informing the community about the existence, purpose and whereabouts of the Community Centres
Seminar hand-outs	between 15-30 copies, for each activity organised	group activities organised by Community Centres	Attendees of seminars comprising mainly community members and local government officials	Information about a particular seminar
Weekly reports	Softcopy	Via email	Community Centres and ERA and FNF team	Progress and updates of activities within the centres, ERA and FNF

Publications produced by ERA Consumers:

Publications	No. of copies	How publications are distributed?	To whom are the Publications distributed?	Purpose of distribution?
Seminar hand-outs	between 80 – 150 copies for each workshop / seminar	at national level seminars / group activities organised by Community Centres	Attendees of seminars comprising government officials, NGOs and corporate sectors	Information about a particular seminar
Weekly reports	Softcopy	Via email	Community Centres and ERA and FNF team	Progress and updates of activities within the Centres, ERA and FNF

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Brochures	10,000 copies	At community centres, ERA and FNF office, at all project related events and programs, during meetings, in press kits	Various – community members, government officials, media and corporate sector	Informational; general information with objectives of the project, its target and implementation, as well as information about the funding and implementing organisations
Publicity kit prepared for media – official launch	10-30 for each event	Distributed to attendees of the official launch	Attendees of the official launch – newspaper reporters, TV stations	Informational; multiplier effect through the media
Multimedia presentation for the official launch	Softcopy	Electronically	Attendees of the official launch – EU Ambassador, local politicians, community members, corporate sectors, lawyers, other NGOs	Informational; to inform the attendees of the project details and status of the project.
ERA Newsflash	Electronically distributed	Electronically	a database of about 10,000 recipients which are made up of the corporate sector, NGO's, government agencies, embassies etc	Awareness building amongst political facilitators and decision makers
Internal evaluation report	Softcopy	Email	Stakeholders	Monitoring progress of project, identifying problems and deviations from plans and determining courses of action to resolve the issues.
Reports from the Consultation Sessions	Softcopy and as needed	Via email	From ERA to FNF; government officials at local and national level.	Informational – Additional information on the community consultations apart from the secondary data
Community Centres Newsletter (AVAL)	2000 copies per quarter	Through community centres	Local authorities, Government agencies, other NGOs, corporate sectors and amongst the centres	Communication tool to showcase the operation of the centres, providing information regarding activities in the CCs, and other information of interest to the target group.
Quarterly reports of the Community Centres	Soft copies and 20 hard copies for each Centre per quarter	Via e-mail and postage	Local authorities, Government agencies, other NGOs, corporate sectors and amongst the centres	Details of centre activities as an informational document, statistics that feed into other reports
Memorandum on Domestic Violence	5 copies	By hand	Deputy Minister and Parliamentary Secretary for the Ministry of Women, Family and Community	Proceedings on the situation and problems faced by women who are victims of violence, particularly highlighting the need for a more sensitive police and health care staff in dealing

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			Development, the EC Delegation and task Manager in Brussels.	with the victims, and other recommendation for the Government's action.
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Publications produced by FNF Bangkok:

Publications	No. of copies	How publications are distributed?	To whom are the Publications distributed?	Purpose of distribution?
FNF Malaysia website	n/a	Regularly inform FNF contacts in Malaysia and the region about the project	Government officials, politicians, local authorities, NGOs and academia mainly in Malaysia and the region	Awareness building amongst political facilitators and decision makers.
Survey Terms of Reference	Softcopy	Email	FNF, ERA project team members, Project Adviser	Predetermined criteria and guidelines in order to select suitable location for establishing Community Centres.
Sustainability Paper	Softcopy	Email	FNF, ERA project team members, Project Adviser, EU Delegation and Commission. Also intended for publication on website.	Intended strategies and plan to achieve project sustainability
Participatory Approach to Social Impact Assessment (PASIA) Terms of Reference	Softcopy	Email	FNF, ERA project team members, Project Adviser, EU Delegation and Commission. Also intended for publication on website.	Guideline and framework for survey study to evaluate situation of Indian Malaysians with current existing policies and legislations as opposed to impact of any intended laws and legislative changes suggestions the project will recommend.
Strategic Targets	Softcopy	Email	FNF, ERA project team members, Project Adviser, EU Delegation and Commission. Also intended for publication on website.	Management Tool for performance evaluation and impact assessment

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Publications produced by External Project Advisor:

Publications	No. of copies	How publications are distributed?	To whom are the Publications distributed?	Purpose of distribution?
Survey Report	Softcopy	Via email	Stakeholders	Findings from research conducted and recommendations to select location of community centres
Proceedings of the External Evaluation	Soft copy	Mail and by-hand	Government agencies, local authorities, other NGOs, corporate sectors	Monitoring progress of project, identifying problems and deviations from plans and determining courses of action to resolve the issues. Sharing of grassroots perspective with policy and decision makers and other NGOs
Report from the Expert Consultation Sessions	Soft copy	Mail and by-hand	Government agencies, local authorities, other NGOs, corporate sectors, Community Centres	Sharing of grassroots perspective with policy and decision makers and other NGOs. Analysis and discussions will feed into drafting of memorandum to government Ministry, with aim of influencing changes in relevant legislations.
Proceedings from Violence against Women workshop	400 copies	Mail and by-hand	Government agencies, local authorities, other NGOs, corporate sectors, Community Centres	Proceedings and recommendations derived from workshop to present situation of violence against women as well as feed into recommendation for laws and policies changes to be submitted to the Government.

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4. Please give a plan of activities for the financial period between this interim report and the next one.

Year 3	What	Where	Who
Month 1	Counselling services/ Training programmes Activities	10 Centres	10 Centres
	Evaluation workshop and expert consultation for end of year 2.	Kuala Lumpur	ERA/FNF/10 CCs
Month 2	Counselling services/ Training programmes Activities	10 Centres	10 Centres
	Policy workshops for recommendation to the drafting process of the 9 th Malaysia Economic and Development Plan.	Kuala Lumpur	ERA / FNF / 10 Centres
	Showcasing achievements of Project to EU Member State representatives in Malaysia	Kuala Lumpur	ERA / FNF / EC Delegation
	Radio programmes as part of an educational campaign	West Malaysia	ERA / 10 Centres
Month 3 (Jul 05)	Counselling services/ Training programmes Activities	10 Centres	10 Centres
	Submission of recommendation as input for the Government's Drafting process	Bangkok/KL	ERA/FNF
	Policy workshop: Indian Women Business Skill	Kuala Lumpur	ERA/FNF
	Radio programmes as part of an educational campaign	West Malaysia	ERA / 10 Centres
Month 4 (Aug 05)	Counselling services/ Training programmes Activities	10 Centres	10 Centres
	Policy Seminar on Poverty Eradication: Roles of Government, NGOs and public	Kuala Lumpur	ERA/FNF
	Sourcing Corporate sponsorship	West Malaysia	ERA/FNF
Month 5 (Sep 05)	Counselling services/ Training programmes Activities	10 Centres	10 Centres
	Policy Workshop: Women Business Cooperative	Kuala Lumpur	ERA/FNF/10 CCs

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Year 2	What	Where	Who
Month 6 (Oct 05)	Counselling services/ Training programmes Activities	10 Centres	10 Centres
	10 Community Centres Evaluation sessions	10 Centres	ERA/FNF/10CCs
Month 7 (Nov 05)	Counselling services/ Training programmes Activities	10 Centres	10 Centres
	Ongoing sourcing of Sponsorships	Kuala Lumpur	ERA/FNF
	Radio programmes as part of an educational campaign	West Malaysia	ERA / 10 Centres
Month 8 (Dec 05)	Counselling services/ Training programmes Activities	10 Centres	10 Centres
	Radio programmes as part of an educational campaign	West Malaysia	ERA / 10 Centres
Month 9 (Jan 06)	Counselling services/ Training programmes Activities	10 Centres	10 Centres
	Preparation for Regional Conference	KL/Bangkok	ERA / FNF
	Continuous sourcing of sponsorship and Government lobbying	West Malaysia	ERA / FNF
Month 10 (Feb 06)	Counselling services/ Training programmes Activities	10 Centres	10 Centres
	Regional Conference	Kuala Lumpur	ERA/FNF
Month 11 (Mar 06)	Counselling services/ Training programmes Activities	10 Centres	10 Centres
	Continuous sourcing of sponsorship and Government lobbying	Kuala Lumpur	ERA/FNF
	Preparation of conference reports and publication	KL/Bangkok	ERA/FNF
Month 12 (Apr 06)	Counselling services/ Training programmes Activities	10 Centres	10 Centres
	Continuous sourcing of sponsorship and Government lobbying	Kuala Lumpur	ERA/ FNF/10 CCs
	Handover of Centres to local partner	Kuala Lumpur	ERA/FNF

* Planned budget attached. Please see Annex III

5. Please outline any changes to the foreseen activities or timetable, explaining the reasons for these

According to the initial proposed budget an average of 2 national policy seminars per year were planned. However, during the initial year of operation, more time has been dedicated to the setting up of a working team, identifying and selecting sites for establishing the community centres, including terms of reference for the survey to select the sites, and getting the Centres operational.

For this reason, more seminars were conducted in the second year and a similar pace will be maintained in the final year of the project's operation. The appreciation of the EURO between receiving the first and second tranche of the payment has contributed to the possibility of conducting more policy level seminars, and we have capitalised on this factor in order to increase the impact on legislations and government lobbying.

As an overview, a total of 8 policy seminars have been conducted between October 2004 up to April 2005. These have included 5 Legal Workshops that specifically aimed at raising the Indian communities' awareness of legal rights, particularly the crucial issue of the importance of legal documentation which was found to be lacking amongst a large portion of the people in the communities. Other workshops have dealt with issues such as suicide prevention and eliminating violence against women. More details can be found under the Activities section and individual reports from each of the policy seminars are also attached.

In addition a survey research will be conducted for the purpose of a Participatory Approach to Social Impact Assessment (PASIA). The survey will look at aspects such as the household composition of those in the lower middle class and below segment, including the number of dependents, household and personal income and co-relation with expenses; ownership of legal documents among the household members e.g. birth and marriage certificates, Identification Cards; education situation of the family members with special focus on the female segment; and a profiling of single mothers – covering those who are widowed, separated, second wife, divorced and husband in prison. The aim is that with such profiling we will be able to determine how they support their family, what kind of support they currently receive, if any, and from whom, at the same time determining what additional support is required on both short and long term basis. The findings of the survey will be a concrete one that clearly shows the government the predicament of the Indian Malaysian women, and where the Government's help is needed.

D. Results, Impact, Multiplier effect, and Evaluation

1. What results have been achieved during the reporting period (based on the results anticipated in the terms of reference)? Please quantify these results, where possible.

Results achieved:

- Estimated impact on target groups and/or situation addressed
 - How the proposal has improved the situation of the target group?

The activities being carried out at the Community Centres comprise of business skills development and awareness programs on issues like domestic violence, violence against women, and address these issues on a one-to-one basis in form of psychological counselling. Also, by means of legal counselling and other legal awareness programs, the participants are made aware of their rights and thus are empowered due to the increased information. In addition activities that foster better understanding between family members, community networking and gender sensitivity have also been organised.

By October 2004 all 10 Centres had been set up and running (some closed down and were replaced in other locations by January to March 2005), providing services to people in the communities. In the initial stage of set up the Centres organised an average of 3 activities per month, and increasing gradually to now running 8 activities per month. Each group activity draws about 20 to 30 people, mainly women. A total of 257 group activities and/or seminars have been organised at the Centres, with 33 being in the first project year and the numbers picking up substantially in the second year, particularly in the last half. More than 6,000 participants have attended these group activities.

Seminars on legal rights and social security benefits and entitlements have been organised for the communities. Twenty nine group activities specific to these issues have been organised at the Centres level, with more than 550 people benefiting. Self defense classes have also been provided in areas where there is likelihood of women being subject to attack.

Women are also provided with confidence building skills through public speaking opportunities, interaction with authority in a non-threatening environment, including how to deal with the police and how to make a police report, how to obtain birth, marriage certificates and Identification Cards, amongst others. A total of 1205 cases have sought assistance from all 10 Centres regarding certificates such as birth and marriage and identification cards.

Participants have a better knowledge of their rights, are more aware of the dangers and how to prevent life threatening diseases, learn the skills to deal with conflicts and cope with stress, as well as obtain the skills that will enable them to earn more income, or make them more employable. Thirty group activities have tried to address the issues and social problems faced by single mothers such as motivational therapy, time management and child care. These have had about 650 women participating in total. In addition 44 sessions with 850 participants have addressed issues such as violence in the homes and sexual harassment, self defense, interacting with police and other authorities.

More focus is now given to income generation activities, with follow up on marketing the products the women learn to make, how to go about setting up their own small business, how to identify demand, calculate profit and loss etc. At least 2 of the 8 activities conducted in a month by a Centre is on either practical business skill or planning and marketing of products, employment improvement or other similar income generating ideas. Fifty six group activities have been conducted with a total of more than 1,000 participants.

In addition, individual psychological and legal counselling sessions have also been provided to people in the community since late April 2004. These are specifically targeted to the female in the communities. The legal counselling sessions are more directed to the women; while the psychological counselling is also for men, if they approach the Centres together with their wives. The types of cases range from employment and financial burden, seeking social welfare and legal certificates, domestic violence, property rights and education related issues.

All the Centres have been active and dynamic providing discussions and debates on different subjects including domestic violence, human rights and minorities' rights on a weekly basis. The Centres also provide a channel for people in the communities to meet and talk, exchange views and discuss common problems. They are frequented mainly by women but also by some men and children, in some cases by entire families fostering a social structure that was very much lacking.

- How the proposal has improved the managerial and technical capacities of the target group?

All 10 Community Centres are managed by women from the community. This in itself provides leadership and managerial training for women of the local community.

The staff of the Community Centres were carefully selected and have been given appropriate guidance and support in the running of the Centres. A formal training program was organised for the staff. The initial session focused on familiarizing the staff with the aims and objectives of the project and the sorts of activities intended to be implemented to achieve the objectives. Various aspects on the administering of the Community Centres such as planning and budgeting for activities, reporting and presentations, community liaison and basic counselling technique were discussed. In addition a separate session focused on understanding of issues such as gender equality, legal rights, and violence against women with a particular focus on Indian women. On the job training is also provided by means of interactive discussions through emails, telephones and e-groups amongst the Centres personnel, ERA and FNF Project team members. ERA holds monthly meetings with Centre personnel, at which Centre personnel can raise questions, learn from the experience of other Centres, and seek input and guidance from ERA. The Project Manager together with the Lead Psychological Counsellor travels regularly to visit the 10 Centres to provide further support and monitoring. In addition a second phase of formal training was conducted in September 2004 and again in January 2005 when new staff for the second batch was inducted. The training focused on equipping the staff with broader skills, knowledge and technique to provide basic counselling on welfare issues, in addition to the administrative skills needed to operate the Centres.

Activities and seminars conducted for the communities are on such topics as understanding legal provisions, looking into such issues as their rights as a citizen, social security and benefits; gender equality as well as business capabilities skills. These will equip target group with a better knowledge of their rights, and at the same time provide them with skills that will enable them to be more employable, leading to improvement in economic status and independence.

For instance, skill development workshops on making flower bouquets and garlands, or other handicrafts are organised for the people in the community. These are then followed up with training on business skills, such as profit and loss calculations, or seminar on seeking business operating licenses, which will then make it possible for the women in the communities to put the acquired skills to use.

- How the proposal will bring about changes to the situation which it addresses?

Women play a crucial role in uniting and uplifting the family unit, particularly her role in bringing up the child as this has an impact on the direction of the future generation. However, women are also facing various burdens, particularly when it comes to financial instability. This can be a result of women who are single parent that lack employable skills, or in other cases the husbands are present within the household but not able to contribute financially yet unwilling to let the wives work for fear of losing face.

The work of the Community Centres tries to address the issue from two angles – equipping the women with skills for either small businesses, or upgrading their employable skills and job matching facility; and at the same time providing information to both genders on the evolved role of women in today's world. The aim is to make men also realise that both husbands and wives can have a more equal role, and we are slowly working towards that by way of building confidence for the women, and a trusting relationship within the family unit. Various activities on marriage counseling, communication and conflict resolution within the family as well as family budgeting exercises have been organised, and have in fact been well received by both men and women.

As mentioned in an earlier point, the awareness and confidence building programs as well as counselling programs are being carried out at the Centres, which will lead to an increased awareness within the group. Also, male participation in the activities increases their awareness of the situation and the problems faced by women.

About half of the 95 core group members for the 10 Centres are male, while 50 of the 125 volunteers are also male. These volunteers and core group members assist with various aspects of the running of the Community centres, provide input as well as help monitor the functioning of the centres.

The Centres are also maintaining a list of relevant organizations and other NGOs which are being used by the needy community members to direct their issues to the right authorities, thus serving informational purpose.

The project has also been able to address the issue of discrimination and exclusion of the Indian minority from the other ethnic groups. As a result of group activities on interaction with police and other officials, which often have police authorities present as either speaker or participant, Indian Malaysian women in these communities are now more comfortable to approach authorities, who are mostly of Malay ethnic group. Moreover, in recent months the project implementers have been approached by Malay and Chinese groups for funding of similar activities. Although we are not able to provide them with financial funding, we are exploring ways in which they can benefit from the efforts of the project. This clearly indicates that the various groups have looked beyond the ethnic divide and are willing to work together.

A key issue that the project has identified since the operation of the Centres and dealing with the people is their lack of identification documents such birth or marriage certificates or Identification Cards. This result in further problems faced by the people as without identifications they are not able to access social services or obtain proper education. The project begun highlighting the scale and magnitude of this problem towards the end of the first year and has continued through various means to bring this issue to the attention of the public and government. The media has started to pay attention to this issue. Within the first few months of our focus on the issue, an article dedicated to this particular topic was featured in the Malaysiakini, an influential online-newspaper. Since then the mainstream media such as News Strait Times and the Star papers have also reported stories on this situation. Efforts at the Centres level are also being put into tackling the problem for the individuals affected.

- Publications, training, and other outputs

A number of publications have been produced to carry out the objectives of the project as mentioned in the proposal. Please see point C.3 above for the details. In addition, pictures of various events and activities are taken and exchanged between Centres so that they are also aware of the activities of the other Centres.

Radio programmes have been used as an educational tool to provide knowledge to people in the communities. This has been a very effective way of communicating with the people, as is evident from the rise in number of calls and contacts to the Centres after any programme is on-air.

The national policy seminars have already produced an obvious result in addition to the main intended purpose of influencing Government legislations and policy. The women have built their confidence and knowledge level, and have expressed their appreciation for the benefits they have received and feel their self-esteem has risen making them more confident to tackle their problems. Many have lived most of their lives totally unaware of their basic rights, but are now starting to take effort to correct their situation. Couples who did not register their marriages and the birth of their children have begun the process of obtaining these crucial documentation. In a number of cases we have seen couples who have been married for more than 20 or 25 years, whose children are grown adults with no form of identification.

- Multiplier effects

Volunteers have been recruited and trained at the Community Centres already set up. These volunteers as well as the women who have attended the various programs organised are sharing their knowledge with others in the community. For instance, those that have attended certain skill development program assist with the next session and in the future their skills will be utilise to train others in the community.

In addition, there is a core group established in each community which is involved in advising and monitoring the work of the Community Centres. The members of these core groups are senior, respected members of the community and having them involved with the project is a good way to publicize the work of the Centres. Currently there are 125 volunteers in the 10 Centres and a total of 95 core group members. There is a further plan to organise 'train-the-trainers' programme for the core group members and volunteer. Once the project funding, this group of people will be equipped with skills to carry on the work.

Continuous efforts towards encouraging self-help groups are being maintained. Women at some Community Centres have organised tailoring classes amongst themselves; while others have begun the process by having more interaction with each other and support in the forms of sharing information and advice on issues such as dealing with family conflicts, children's education, etc. Single mothers are also getting together to form small groups whereby they can rotate baby-sitting responsibilities.

- Sustainability

The sustainability of the project is based on the preparedness of Malaysian agencies to maintain the project's initiative for the general improvement of the living conditions of the Indian minority in general and for the empowerment of Indian women in particular. It also depends on their commitment to provide continuous financial and institutional support to the Community Centres after the three-year external funding period.

- Financial sustainability

Malaysian Government and key politicians are interested in the work and approach of the project and have a very positive sentiment towards the project and its achievements. However they are still to be convinced about providing institutional support or taking over the Centres entirely. For this reason, in the final year of the project's operation more attention will shift towards obtaining funding and sponsorships from the corporate sector. The aim is to secure another two years of corporate funding for the Community Centres, while continuing efforts to convince the Government. During these two years operations of the Centres will continue under the supervision and guidance of ERA Consumer Malaysia.

The strategy adopted to acquire corporate support for the project generally differentiates between large national corporations and local small and medium-sized companies. Large companies are discouraged to give support in kind, like donations of materials and equipment. Instead, they are expected to provide substantial financial contributions as part of their corporate responsibility schemes.

Small and medium-sized companies located in the communities are actively encouraged to donate to the Centres. Many already provide water, food and local transport to the Centres' activities. In addition, Indian lawyers, entrepreneurs and wealthy businessmen will be asked for their individual support.

Continuous communication with government agencies, NGOs as well as the corporate sector through various channels is being maintained. The corporate sector has also been involved and is taking interest in the project. These efforts have paid off to an extent in the form of sponsorships. The official launch of the 5 community centres in February 2004 was fully sponsored by a few major companies from the corporate sector. During the Deepavali celebrations in November 2004, the large commercial bank MayBank donated hundreds of Saree (Indian dresses) for Indian women through the Community Centres. Small businesses in the local communities have also made contributions to some of the activities organised by the Centres. These sponsorships and contributions cover a part of the costs of running the Community Centres and is an indication of interest and willingness to support the cause, which is a very positive sign.

o Institutional sustainability

The project by now already maintains close contact with several state-level agencies under the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development. Meetings have been held with the Deputy Minister and Parliamentary Secretary of Women, Family and Community Development to update and provide information about our project. A memorandum highlighting the issues of domestic violence prevalent within the communities was also submitted to the Ministry in June 2004.

We have also done extensive lobbying with Deputy Minister Dato' Palanivel (who holds special responsibility for the Indian community and maybe the possible future leader of Malaysian Indian Congress) and the Parliamentary Secretary YB Chew Mei Fun. The Deputy Minister himself and several leading officials of the Ministry have participated in several of the project's activities and have been thoroughly informed about the progress of the project.

Dato Veerasingam, Deputy Minister of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs, has also been very interested in the work of the project. In addition, Dato Seri S. Samy Vellu, President of the (mostly Tamil) Malaysian Indian Congress, and Dato Seri Dr. Kaveas, President of the People's Progressive Party (combination of Ceylonese, Sikhs and Muslim Indians), have expressed their strong support and pledged individual financial support for the Community Centres.

The support of the above mentioned leaders and personalities is important to encourage local administrative support. The Selangor Department of Welfare has expressed its strong support; the Perak Department of Welfare has committed funds and awaits the approval of the member-in-charge of the state Executive Council, i.e. the State Minister. Initial contact has been made with the Negeri Sembilan Department of Welfare.

Sustainability of a project such as this does to a certain extent depend on the involvement of the government. Steps have already been taken to also engage officials at the local level with the work of the Centres. These officials have been coming for

talks either as speakers or participants, and therefore this has enabled them to better comprehend the intricacies of the project. In addition, they take part in the participatory appraisals and other evaluation-related activities.

The involvement of government officials in the various stages will mean the problems faced by the community can be brought to their attention, and particularly the results achieved and the difference brought about by the work of the Community Centres will highlight the need for such centres. The ground work is already being carried out by involving relevant ministries, NGOs and other institutions in the informational and evaluation process on a regular basis.

There is a further plan to include more government participation to ensure the project's sustainability, including by means of impacting Government policies and or legislations.

○ Sustainability at the policy level

The sustainability at the policy level is among the most significant tasks of the project's activities.

The project has the advantage of having access to ground situation and direct contact with those affected by poverty and marginalisation. We aim to utilise this access as an asset to present findings and requests which come directly from the people to impact legislative changes. This will be done by identifying and discussing the relevant Malaysian laws and regulations as well as the legislative process that impacts and or contribute to the betterment of the Malaysian Indians, particularly the women.

Some of the areas that will be looked at are those concerning domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape and gender discrimination. One memorandum was submitted to the government in June 2004, with reference to the political parties' manifestos during the 11th General Elections held in March 2004, particularly how women issues were not given much focus by either the ruling or opposition parties. It highlights the needs for changes in aspects of the legislation that will contribute to affording women more equal status. Some of these include legislations such as the Domestic Violence Act, protective orders, claiming social security benefits of spouse, legal marriage age, child support, bigamy or polygamy issues amongst others. The memorandum also pinpoints the disparity in economic status amongst the three races, particularly the marginalization of the Indian minority.

In October 2004, a policy seminar on the issue of Violence against Women was conducted, with representation from senior Government members and influential NGOs in the women's field as well as representatives from international bodies such as the UN and UNIFEM. Results from the consultation session have been compiled and distributed to various groups, while recommendations derived from the meeting are being put together in the form of suggested policies and laws amendment to be presented to relevant Ministries such as the Women, Family and Community Development, and the Health Ministry.

Various other such policy seminars have been organised, but of particular note would be five legal workshops in various states, aiming to tackle the prevalent issue of lack

of proper identification by a large number of Indian Malaysians. The workshops also look at issues such as women's role in community development, the challenges but also the achievements women who are head of households have attained. Issues pertaining to violence against women are also raised, and overall support from the community is encouraged.

The drafting process of the 9th Malaysia Plan falls during the final project year, and we hope to capitalise on the timing to submit some recommendations that will help improve the situation of the minority Indian Malaysian. Development planning in Malaysia has a three-tiered cascading planning horizon, covering the long-, medium- and short-term planning horizons. This long-term vision is further elaborated in Outline Perspective Plans, which are prepared to set the broad thrusts and strategies in the national development agenda over a long term. Currently, the Third Outline Perspective Plan (OPP 3) for 2001-2010 incorporates – among other aims - eradicating poverty irrespective of race and restructuring society for a "balanced development". It aims specifically at increasing the income and quality of life of those in the lowest 30 per cent income category.

The next tier is medium-term planning, where 5-year development plans are formulated to operationalise the Outline Perspective Plans. They set out the macroeconomic growth targets as well as the size and allocation of the public sector development programme. Currently, the 8th Malaysia Plan, covering the period 2001-2005, is in operation. It does not specifically mention the necessity to overcome the marginalization and social exclusion of the impoverished Indian minority in urban and suburban Malaysia. There is also no request for the empowerment of Indian women. It is here, where ERA Consumer and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation hopes to put the Indian Malaysian minority group on the national agenda by using the findings from the operation of the Community Centres to present the situation of the Indian Malaysian women and community.

The government's planning process involves regular and on-going consultations with both the private sector and civil society. Such consultations also provide feedbacks on the impact of policies and programmes on various segments of society. Currently, the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) in the Prime Minister's Office is coordinating efforts for drafting the 9th Malaysia Plan. Workshops will be conducted to gain grass roots perspective and an assessment of current policies with comparison to any new proposal will be analysed and findings submitted to the drafting Committee. Of course, it is not guaranteed that any recommendations received by the Committee will be incorporated into the Plan, however if successful this strategy could have a very positive impact on the sustainability of the Project at the policy level.

Mr. Marimuthu Nadason who is the President of ERA Consumer Malaysia, is also President of the Federation of Malaysian Consumers Association, meets with economic policy makers on a regular basis, and will be able to channel feedback and input received from the Community Centres to relevant people in the Government.

In addition, the media is being utilized to further generate interest in the project and the issue amongst the general public, corporate world and decision makers.

2. What is your assessment of the results of the project so far? Include observations on the extent to which foreseen goals are being met and whether the project has had any unforeseen positive or negative results (see Indicators in Logframe)

The following are the indicators of the foreseen goals:

- A good response was received from the community during community consultations and soft launches of the Centres. A total of 114 people attended the Official Launch of the 5 Community Centres in February 2004, which included senior government officials, NGOs and corporate sectors as well as the media. The launch at each Centre was attended by key local politicians or district officials as well as community leaders. Seminars at the state and national level have also been well attended, with participants commending the efforts and approach of the project.
- Established Community Centres are being fully utilised by women, men, Indian families and the whole community. A total of more than 6,000 people have used the facilities, sought assistance and advice from, attended the programs and/or consulted with the legal and psychological counsellors at the Centres. Of these close to 4,000 are first time visitors/beneficiaries to the Centres, making up the targeted 3,000 – 4,000 women the project aimed to reach out to.
- Empowerment and confidence building activities have been conducted. A total of 257 activities have been organised at the Centres level up to the end of April 2005. Of these 30 are directly aimed at confidence building and personal development; 28 deals with conflict management and equal roles within the family as well as gender sensitivity issues; 44 have addressed the issue of violence, its prevention and elimination; 29 are on topics related to understanding legal provisions and rights, social security and importance of legal identifications; 20 addressing consumer rights specifically; 56 are business and skills development workshops aimed at increasing the likelihood of income generation for the target group; 17 dedicated to issues and problems faced by youth; the remaining 33 have addressed various health related issues.
- Indian women and the Indian community are actively involved in the design and conduct of the Centres' activities. They provide input and feedback through formal evaluations after attending activities organised by the Centres as well as actively makes suggestions and contributes ideas as to what they would like to see the Centres offer. In addition, they also volunteer their services and offer sponsorships in kind. Group activities are now designed with requests from the people in mind, such as inclusion of education related or other issues dealing with youth problems like crime prevention, dangers of drugs and alcohol abuse.
- Regular activities at the community level as well as various national level policy seminars and Expert Consultation Workshop have been organised. The Expert Workshop in April 2004 focused on the issue of Domestic Violence against women, while a seminar in October 2004 looked at the broader Violence against Women issue. The workshops provided a forum that brought together government officials, NGOs and people from the Community to discuss and explore avenues to push for an

enhanced legislation on women's rights. At the same time, it provided an opportunity to showcase the operation of the Community Centres. Legal workshops dealing with the problems faced by not just the women, but the community, have been organised at both the Centres and State levels. Five workshops were conducted at the State levels, each drawing more than a hundred participants, while 29 group seminars were conducted at the Centres, with a total of more than 500 participants.

- Women have organised self-help groups with the support of the Community Centres. The groups are sharing their skills through the running of such classes as tailoring and flower bouquet arrangements amongst others. However as the groups develop and form a bond, they will also provide an opportunity and a forum for the women to discuss and share ideas on issues ranging from smaller domestic disputes and conflicts, to the more serious matters of domestic violence and other grave concerns. At least 1 group exist at each community, where women get together to either share and learn trade skills, talk about issues affecting their life, or help each other manage time by rotating duties for child care.
- The project has been able to produce a number of success stories such as obtaining identification documents for people, some as old as 25 years; women being placed in employment in areas such as sales, industrial and factory work; women who have started earning extra income through such means as tailoring, selling garlands, tissue boxes or small scale catering; disabled people have been assisted in getting government aid; old people with no relative have been able to obtain pension or placed in homes for the aged; youth who were involved in criminal activities have been taken off the streets and put back in school under care of the State; a number of women with suicidal intentions have been counselled with at least 1 who was on the brink of attempting suicide now living their lives with a more positive attitude; and many other such stories.

In addition to the above, some other results to be noted are:

- Better than expected participation of the male population in the initial phase of the Community Centres activities. This is mainly due to the topic of the activity that promotes male participation. The approach we have taken is use seminars that were of relevance to both men and women in the initial stage, such as social security, consumer rights and health related topics. Once people attended and realised the benefits of the seminars and training, any resistance or scepticism that men might have had towards the Centres were removed. Of course, more work needs to be done to involve a larger percentage of the male population to be aware of and support the cause for a more equal sphere for the women. As a long term measure of eliminating and preventing violence against women it is essential to seek more involvement of men in order to raise their awareness and sensitise them to gender issues. More than 500 men or boys have attended programmes or sought help from the Centres, making up the intended 20 per cent male participation the project seeks to achieve.
- Sponsorships for events by big corporations as well as small businesses in the communities
- The visibility of the Centres has been reached due to proper dissemination of information and publicity rendered at various stages.

- People from other ethnic groups in the community are encouraged to participate and have attended and joined some of the activities organised by the Centres. The joint Indian festival of Lights and celebration of the end of the Muslim fasting period in November and December 2004 was a good case in point. In addition, the other ethnic groups are also represented in the core group members and some have also volunteered their assistance with the work of the Centres.

People in the community are approaching the centres, not just when there are activities organised, but for assistance when they have problems. The Centres have acted as a channel for those in need with those that want to offer their support. For instance, various donations such as wheel chair for a disabled, sewing machine for a woman with economic burden, or donations of provisions and clothing from individuals, businesses and corporations have taken place through the Centres.

People are approaching the Community Centres to seek assistance on migration law, inter-religion marriages, or even by foreign wives of local residents with grievances. Although some of the assistance required is not within the scope or purpose of the Centre, it clearly indicates that people in the community look on the Centre as being a place they can turn to in times of need. Cases that are relevant and within the capabilities and objectives of the Centres are handled and dealt with by the Centre personnel, other cases are referred on to appropriate agencies.

As another example, the Indian communities living in the rubber or palm oil plantations that have become aware of the existence of the centres have also approached the centres and expressed an interest to receive the benefits provided by the Community Centres. The Centres have responded accordingly by organising relevant group activities for a large group of estate workers. This clearly indicates that the Centres are being regarded as a place the people in the community can turn to, which is a very positive sign.

3. What has been the impact on both the target group and the target country(ies) so far?

On target group:

- Women in the community are becoming more aware of the existence of the Community Centres and its aims, and have also become more opened about sharing their problems and seeking assistance from the centres. Since the start of the first Centres set up until April 2005 when all 10 Centres have been established a total of 3,816 new visitors have come through the 10 Centres, while a total of 2,897 women and men have been counselled on matters related to welfare, marriage counselling, single mothers issues, obtaining legal certificates and education.
- It is evident that with the existence of these Centres, women now have a place to turn to, which they otherwise did not have. They are now more forthcoming and approach the centres when faced with problems. It is usually the norm within Indian culture that family matters should not be discussed with outsiders, particularly when it involves the misgivings of the male members of the family. However, the Centres have begun to see

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a change in this particular area. In fact in many instances, the Centres are used by the entire family, whereby the mothers are attending workshops and children are using the space to work on assignments and group study.

- The income generating programs are of value to the participants, and many have come forward to propose and request other similar programs. Women in Kapar and Ampang are making knitted tissue boxes and selling through private sales to individuals as well as placing them for sales at car accessories shop in the locality.
- Some are using the skills learnt through Centre activities such as making flower garlands or Indian henna drawing to earn income by selling the garlands at festivities at temples or doing house calls for henna writing for parties and weddings. Some have also started to earn money by selling cakes and cookies or packing fruits and nuts for sales.
- Through job placement efforts of the Community Centres a number of women have been able to find work ranging from clerical, factory work to cleaning and other small jobs in the community.
- Some of the participants who have attended the skill workshop are now exploring the possibility of seeking business licences to run small kiosk business. At Slim River, the Centre personnel have helped 3 people apply for business licences and have also assisted them with the process of leasing space for operating their business.
- People without birth and marriage certificates have now realised the necessity of these legal documentation and have either applied and received the documents or have begun the process. There are instances where a couple have been married for 20 to 25 years, without legal documentation, whereby their children have been living without identity. A woman with 5 children, the eldest being 25 years old and the youngest around 14 years old, all had no identification. Today all 5 have obtained their birth certificates and received their Identity Cards.
- With the rare exception of extreme disgruntled abusive husbands, men in the communities accept and appreciate the work of the Centres and the benefits they provide to the family. Initially there were some opposition from men and husbands towards the Centres, however, gradually the men started to participate in the group activities organised by the Centres. This indicates an acceptance that will be a contributing factor in the success of changed roles of women.
- Community Centre personnel are women recruited from the local community. This will not only provide the locals with an employment opportunity but also a chance to lead and manage the Centre, a case of empowerment. Empowerment of staff who are women from within the community provides as a very visual example for other women in the community.
- The Centres are being run with the assistance of other community members who are involved either as volunteers or core group members. These volunteers and core group members consist of both men and women, and are people well known and respected

within the community. The cooperation and assistance of such people is a good indication of the approval and appreciation of the work being done by the Centres.

- Several cases pertaining to birth registration, national registration identity cards, and marriage registrations were identified in the communities. The lack of proper identification leads to other problems such as restrained access to welfare aid, education, health care, as well as employment issues. Of concern, however, is the inherent fear that people without identifications have of the police and authorities. Some fear to approach the authorities and as a result never apply for the identifications, yet others who have applied still fear going to the government offices to collect the cards in the fear that they may be caught on the way or at the government office for living without an identity.

To date, 29 seminars have been organised at the Centres level on issues of legal rights and documentation. There have also been sessions conducted on bridging the gap between the public and police or other authorities, with police officers or government officials invited as speakers and facilitators. In these seminars it is emphasised to the participants how instrumental having proper identification is. As a result the Centres have already seen a number of people approach them to seek advice on the procedure to obtain the right identification, or registering a marriage. A total of 1,205 people have been provided assistance and advice on seeking documentation.

In addition 5 legal workshops have been organised in March and April 2005 at the state level to address the issue of ignorance as a majority of people coming to the Centres were not even aware of the need to legally register their marriages, or the process of obtaining birth certificates or Identity Cards. As the consequences of lack of identification cards are of grave nature and have far reaching impact on a large number of Malaysian Indians, FNF and ERA hopes to work with the Government to grant some amnesty period for the people born in Malaysia that still lack proper identifications.

On target country:

The project is recognized as being the first of its kind to be targeting the women of the Indian minority and to address the issues of discrimination, marginalization and social exclusion of the Indian minority at the grass root level.

The Expert Consultation workshops provided an opportunity to bring together various NGOs, government agencies and officials as well as the Community Centre personnel. The workshop re-confirmed the views shared amongst the experts that violence against women needs to be looked at as a human right issue rather than simply one of internal family conflict. The discussion pinpointed the importance of involvement of men for the success of the program and highlighted a number of legislations that should be amended to give women more protective rights. A number of NGOs came forward to offer support for the project in both the forms of technical assistance for the Centres operations, as well as collaborating with ERA and FNF in working towards recommending reforms and changes in legislations to the government.

The project has also seen the results achieved through the work of the Centres bridge gap between the Chinese, Malays and Indians. NGO groups working with Malays or Chinese

have approached the implementing partners and expressed an interest to work together and/or have referred the other ethnic groups to the services provided by our Centres.

Government officials from the Ministries have been involved with the program in its various stages, and have to an extent become familiar with the project and its aims. The Deputy Minister of Women, Family and Community Development, Datuk G. Palanivel acknowledged that the Centres had the potential to uplift the status of women, of empowering them and of promoting the importance of closer and more equal roles and mutual respect within society. In March of 2005 Datuk Palanivel announced that his Ministry will spend RM145 Million on women's development programme this year. The programmes specifically targets the training and counselling of women and single mothers, very much in the same direction that the projects efforts have been focused.

The President of the *Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC)*, Datuk S. Samy Vellu, has pledged his support for the Centres and the plight of the communities. Since his attendance at a workshop organised in December 2004 aiming at getting support of the entire Indian community for the less privileged within the Community, the President of MIC has sought extra government funding aimed at upgrading of the Tamil school. This is an important step that will have long term impact on the better prospects of the new generation Malaysian Indian, as a proper education will be a critical key to open many doors for this group of people.

4. How and by whom have activities been monitored/ evaluated? Please summarise the results of the feedback received, including from the beneficiaries.

The activities are being monitored and evaluated both internally and externally, at the community as well as national level.

At the community level

- Evaluation from participants and community people who have either attended group activities or individual counselling sessions.
- Core group who comprise of respected people from the community have been identified to help monitor the performance of the Community Centres. This is achieved by their input and feedback. In addition the participants from the activities organised may usually be more open about providing their feedback to a third party, particularly when that third party are people from the community, with whom they are familiar. These feedbacks are provided to ERA via informal communication of either phone calls, or direct discussion during ERA's or FNF's visit to the communities.
- The ERA team pay visits, at times unannounced, to the Community Centres and join in on some of the group activities organised by the Community Centres.
- The Community Centres submit a monthly plan of activities prior to ERA and FNF, which provide room for input and monitoring of the activities by the project team.

At the end of the month a brief report for each activity conducted is submitted together with financial summary of costs.

- Community Centres prepare and submit quarterly reports to ERA and FNF, who will further analyse the reports to identify problematic areas as well as cases of success which may then be shared amongst the different Centres for future actions.
- Internal evaluation sessions have been conducted at 7 of the 10 Centres in 2 phases during October 2004 and February 2005. Three Centres were established between January and March of 2005, and will have their first evaluation sessions during the third project year. Beneficiaries provided direct input to the project team on all aspects of the Centres services from group activities, to the counselling. Detailed results are provided in the Centres evaluation reports, but generally participants have been happy with and consider the information and skills gained to be practical and useful. They have also suggested ideas for areas where they would like to see the Centres address such as more work with the youth and encouraging education. These have been taken up accordingly.

At the broader/national level:

An internal mid year evaluation was conducted to monitor for any major deviations from planned activities and timeline. ERA and FNF project team discussed and closely dissected the various issues at hand, and took the opportunity to address problematic areas. Although it was an internal evaluation done by the Project team itself, it provided a good opportunity for the team members to step back and look at the implementation from a broader perspective. This made it possible to detect problems that might have been overlooked in the day to day operation of the project. Every 4-6 months the management team of both implementing partners meet for an intensive planning session for the next quarter, at which time major directions and strategies for the last few months are also critically analysed.

External project evaluation workshops were conducted at the end of each year. The workshops brought together staff and beneficiaries from the community and Centres with an external audience from the relevant Malaysian Ministries, related government agencies and NGOs. At the workshop the staff shared their experiences while beneficiaries shared their stories. The evaluation workshop studied the progress of the project activities and provided inputs and practical recommendations that will help us make necessary adjustments and identify problematic areas that need immediate attention.

It looked at issues related to:

- Current activities that have been conducted so far
- Problems faced by personnel at the Community Centres
- The effectiveness of the activities in reaching the target group and in enlarging the scope of their outreach.
- Provided recommendations for future activities and medium term strategies

The evaluation confirmed our approach in the Centres as a means to providing an avenue for self-help and support rather than an aid body. At the end of the first year a need for

further training of Centre Personnel emerged to be one of the key issues from the evaluation. This was followed up with 2 more formal training sessions, focused mainly on equipping the staff with basic strategies to cope with problems brought to them by people in distress, and how to deal with pressure from various sources.

In the second year evaluation more focus has been given to the types of activities that have been conducted, categorising them into 3 main areas, ie. social, economic and legal aspects. Within the social framework, education has also been reconfirmed as an instrumental area that is seen to have a longer term positive impact on the situation of the people facing hardship, so that the circle does not repeat itself for the next generation.

In addition since April 2005 FNF together with ERA Consumer has set Strategic Targets for the operation of the Centres. The targets take into consideration such factors as financial income, skills and employment prospects, organised self-help groups, media coverage of situation, amongst others as a tool for evaluating the performance and impact of the project. For more details please refer to the document Strategic Targets for Centres' operations.

5. How is your organisation ensuring that the results obtained / the lessons learned from the project, are being made public?

Our organization has ensured that the results obtained / the lessons learned from the project, are being made public by means of following:

- Quarterly Newsletters published by the Community Centres that carries information on the objectives of the project, summaries of activities that have been conducted as well as feedback from participants.
- ERA Newsflash which are event-driven. ERA publishes a Newsflash at the end of each relevant event that provides an overview of the results obtained and lessons learned.
- The newly created FNF Malaysia website has a section dedicated to the work of the project and the Community Centres, featuring articles as well as the latest status and updates on the EU funded Community Centres for the Empowerment of Indian Women in Malaysia project. The website is regularly promoted at all FNF Malaysia organised events where audience range from key Government authorities including policy makers, politicians, academia, civil service society and the general public.
- Activities organised by and services offered at the Community Centres are regularly announced in the local media, particularly the Tamil newspapers and radio programmes.
- Centre personnel advertise the services offered at the Centres through door to door action as well as at local temples and schools. People that frequented the Centres also shared information by word of mouth with other people.

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- Evaluation of the activities of the Centre is done by the participants. Highlights of the feedback are published in the Community Centre Newsletter, Quarterly Reports or local Tamil newspapers.
- Exchange of information amongst the different Centres; lessons learned and good practices are shared with other Community Centres so as to avoid mistakes and duplication.
- The Community Centres publish quarterly reports summarizing the activities and providing statistics of the Centres. These reports are sent to relevant Malaysian ministries, NGOs, the EU and other relevant institutions. This will provide an opportunity to bring the grassroots perspective and problems faced by people in the Indian communities to the attention of relevant Ministry and government officials in Malaysia.
- External evaluation and expert consultation workshops with representatives from NGOs, Government agencies and the media have been conducted at the end of both years. The workshops provided an opportunity for interaction with other NGO's and government agencies, to bring the grassroots perspective of the Community Centres and the first hand knowledge about the situation of the Indian Women into the national dialogue. A compilation of the proceedings and findings from the external evaluation and expert consultation from the first year was summarised and submitted to the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry, other NGOs and Government agencies.
- One memorandum based on facts derived from cases from the Centres activities and proceedings from ERA national seminar was submitted to the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry in June 2004. A more elaborate one addressing Domestic Violence, Rape and Sexual Harassment is being prepared and will be submitted in the next few months.
- Press clippings and articles from the newspapers, internet and other medium relevant to the project are collected by all the parties involved in the project and are sent to the relevant target group as the case may be.
- Press conferences held at many of the national level seminars have resulted in media reports on the situation and problems faced by Indian women in Malaysia. For instance the issue of lack of marriage and birth certificates as well as Identity Cards was reported in the News Strait Times, Malaysia's premier newspaper on 20th March 2005, and again by the Star, the other major English language paper in early April 2005. The celebration of the Deepavali Indian festival in November 2004 at one of the Centres, which had May Bank, a major financial institution supporting the event, was covered by major newspapers in all languages—English, Malay, Chinese and Tamil.
- From May 2005 onwards, there will also be Radio Campaigns aimed at raising legal rights awareness for women, and at the same time highlighting the situations of the Indian Malaysians and the work of the project.

6. The success of the project depended on various assumptions (see logframe). Have these influenced the results?

The success of the project depends on various assumptions as mentioned in the logframe.

- The first assumption is that women are worst hit by urban poverty, racial discrimination and related intolerance and that woman can take transformative action and are catalysts of change. It is also assumed that programmes of the Community Centres can improve the situation of Indian women and their community. This assumption is still true and valid at the time of reporting as is clear from the media clippings and articles collected during the period. Women are still subject to various forms of violence including rape and domestic violence. The News Strait Times, for instance, reported cases of child rape and incest being on the rise in January 2005.

As mentioned in D.1 above, the activities being carried out at the Community Centres comprise of awareness programs on issues like domestic violence, violence against women, and address these issues on a one-to-one basis in form of psychological counselling. Also, by means of legal counselling and other legal awareness programs, the participants are made aware of their rights and thus are empowered due to the increased information.

Many cases of single mothers with financial problems have been brought to the Centres. They have either been given advice and referred to the relevant aid and Government Welfare agencies, and/or attended the skills training seminars organised by the Centres. In some cases the women are also referred to potential employers. Although not specific to only Indian Malaysians, the following census from the News Strait Times in June 2004 reflects the hardship single mothers face: about 80 per cent earn less than RM1,000 (approx. EUR 200) per month, with almost 40 per cent earning RM 500 (approx EUR 100) or less per month.

The women have begun to actively seek assistance, shown an interest in participating and committing to working together to further share the skills and knowledge learnt with others in the community. Thus this assumption is still valid and has not altered the aim or relevance of the project and the result it seeks to achieve.

- The second assumption is that the Federal elections take place during the project period. This assumption holds true and reconfirms the plight of the Indian minority as a study of the political parties election manifesto in March 2004 showed that the issue of impoverished Indian had at the time not been explicitly addressed by any of the parties. However, the Malaysian Indian Congress party, particularly through its leader Datuk Samy S. Vellu, has been involved and is very interested in the efforts of the project, and is keen to explore option that will help address the dire situation of the Indian Malaysian minority.

The Federal Constitution prioritizes the interests of Malays, while Indian communities still experience social exclusion. Indians claim the highest rate of suicide of any community. Violent crime remains high within the poor Indian communities. Indians have the lowest share of the nation's corporate wealth: 1.5%, compared to 19.4% for the Malays and 38.5% for the Chinese. Statistics from the News Strait Times in October 2004 shows that drug addiction is proportionately high amongst Indian communities, with close to 12% of all addicts being of Indian ethnicity; and that life span of Indians is lowest compared to the Chinese and Malays, while statistics released by the Ministry of Health shows that Indians are also more prone to suicide. This shows that the minority Indians need more support to cope with their predicament and burdens, illustrating that problems faced by the Indian community are yet to be addressed by decision and policy makers.

- Relevant ministries are generally interested in monitoring the development of the Community Centres as a model for follow-up measures. The first part of this assumption remains true in that Government officials, including at the Ministry and State levels are interested in and recognise the importance of the work of the project. The ministries have been regularly informed of the activities and progress of the Centres and are also invited to all the events, and have been actively participating by sending their representatives to these events. Government at Federal and State levels have expressed an appreciation of the efforts and approach of the project, and acknowledges the successes achieved through the project's implementation.

E. Partners and other Co-operation

Friedrich Naumann Foundation: Implementing and co-funding partner

The Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF) jointly implements this project together with ERA Consumer Malaysia. All major tasks and activities are mutually discussed and jointly decided by both partners. We are in frequent contact via phone and mail and have regular meetings in Malaysia to adjust the micromanagement of the project to current prerequisites and actual conditions. Our long-standing cooperation and the friendly relationship allow us to engage in a critical dialogue to overcome occasional challenges and obstacles.

Being a foreign organization, however, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation leaves it mostly to ERA Consumer to liaise and cooperate with national authorities, target groups and the beneficiaries. Our chief responsibilities lie in safeguarding the fulfillment of all contractual obligations between FNF and the European Commission. For that purpose, we pass on the expertise of FNF with regard to all stages of project cycle management to our partner organization in Malaysia. In the meantime, we also conduct the compilation of all financial and accounting documents according to the rules and regulations of the European Commission.

In addition, since FNF has been operating in Malaysia for about 30 years, we also maintain a broad network of contacts to the government of Malaysia as well as to other non-governmental organisations. FNF is known for its work with the consumer movement and with political parties on a range of governance issues in Malaysia. Its positive reputation with key policymakers and many authorities on the federal and state level in Malaysia has positively affected the advancement of the project. The Deputy Minister of Women, Family and Community Development, a key figure for this project, has, for example, been cooperating with FNF since the 1970s.

The cooperation with the delegation of the European Commission in Malaysia has been excellent right from the start of the project. The Head of the Delegation has been extremely supportive on many occasions. He attended the opening ceremonies of the Community Centres and some of the national functions. He has also visited some of Centres and met several Centre personnel. The Programme Manager, who was later made the Task Manager for this project, has also attended several project functions and has given us advice and support. A more critical point has to be made with regard to the tranche payment, which was delayed by five months after the approval of the financial report in November 2004. The delay occurred for some technical reasons on the side of the European Commission. Without the temporary financial assistance of the FNF in the amount of 280,000 Euro, the project would have collapsed during this period of time.

As part of Interim Report on the EU funded project:

"Community Centres for the Empowerment of Indian Women in Malaysia"

Prepared by: Rainer Heufers
Friedrich Naumann Foundation
Implementing and co-funding partner

E. Partners and other Co-operation

ERA Consumers Malaysia: Implementing Partner

The relationship between the formal partners is not of donor – donee but more so like a partnership. This is due to the fact that there has been a long standing prior relationship and rapport that has been established prior to this project

Although the partners are geographically separated, the planning, implementation and the monitoring of activities are done jointly and in consultation with each other. There has been an established communication line (through telephone and emails) as well as progress documents such as weekly reports.

Partners also visit each other on a needs basis to clarify certain actions or outputs of the project. The visits also enable partners to address any miscommunication or lack of communication, limitations of the partners to discuss perceptions, difference in opinions and ground realities.

The relationship between partners has been put on a stronger footing with the 6 half yearly internal evaluations which provides the space for the partners to sit together and discuss any grievances or differences. The 6 half yearly internal evaluation also allows for partners to brainstorm and draw up plans to make the outputs of the project more focused and enhanced with the necessary indicators.

The second year of the partnership saw a more cohesive and synergetic understanding of the partnership and lesser amount of differences about the project as it matures.

As part of Interim Report on the EU funded project:

"Community Centres for the Empowerment of Indian Women in Malaysia"

Prepared by: Indrani Thuraisingham
ERA Consumers Malaysia
Implementing partner

F. Other

1. How is the visibility of the EU contribution being ensured in the project?

The visibility of the EU contribution is being ensured in the project on a regular basis based on the visibility guidelines provided by the EU in this regard:

- All the pamphlets, publications and reports generated by the project carry the EU logo, the co-funding phrase as well as the disclaimer that is required to be published according to EU visibility guidelines.
- The press kits released are in accordance with the EU visibility guidelines.
- On all the events, the EU logo and co-funding aspect is publicized. The Head of the EC Delegation in Malaysia and the Programme Manager in charge of the project are invited to participate in all these events and speak on behalf of the EU.
- The banners, multimedia presentations, brochures, information leaflets, seminar handouts, reports, proceedings of the events, all carry the EU logo and the publication of the co-funding phrase.
- At the entrance of each Community Centre there is a signboard that proclaims that the corresponding Centre is co-funded by the EU. This signboard also carries the EU logo.
- Issues on the project have been featured in the Tamil newspapers at least 3 times a week. In addition various reports by the media on issues faced by Indian women in Malaysia have frequently been highlighted in the mainstream media such as News Strait Times and Star newspaper, as well as online news Malaysiakini.
- Radio talks mainly in Malay and Tamil on the operation of the Centres clearly states the project being co-financed by the EU.
- The FNF Malaysia website has a section on the Community Centres, which feature the EU logo, co-funding phrase, with brief description of the EU, a disclaimer as well as link to the EuropeAid Co-operation Office website as specified in the visibility guideline.

As we are all aware, the media can be a very powerful tool and we intend to use it to the best advantage in order to achieve the objectives of the project, ensure the visibility of the EU as the funding organisation of the project, as well as securing the sustainability of the project after the 3 year funding period. In the third and final year it is intended to use more of radio campaigns to draw attention to the work of the Community Centres, and at the same time use such radio talk programmes as an educational tool for the target group.

2. Has the grant so far helped secure new sources of funding for the project? Please give details.

The publicity associated with the launch of the project, its activities and operations has helped raise awareness and generated attention to the issue of domestic violence against women. Continuous communication with government agencies, NGOs as well as the corporate sector through various channels is being maintained. In addition, the media is being utilized to further generate interest in the project and the issue.

These efforts have paid off to an extent in the form of sponsorships. The official launch of the 5 Community Centres in February 2004 was fully sponsored by a few major companies from the corporate sector. MayBank, a large local bank provided a total of RM 20,000 (approx EUR 4,000) worth of Sarees (Indian dress) to the Indian women in the communities during the Indian Lights festival in December 2004.

Some corporations have expressed interest in contributing in the form of providing expertise in relevant areas that could be of use to the Community Centres. Small businesses in the local communities have also made contributions to some of the activities organised by the Centres in the form of food, drinks and transport for the participants. Many of the resource persons offer their service either on a pro-bona basis or at a substantially reduced fee. These sponsorships and contributions cover a part of the costs of running the Community Centres and is an indication of interest and willingness to support the cause and objectives of the project, and recognition of the importance of the work of the Community Centres, which is a very positive sign.

It is further planned to engage corporations in the Community Centres' activities to show the need for sustainability to these companies. Campaigns to integrate the involvements of corporation will be pursued. A quarterly report will be sent out to all corporations and international donors to attract further funding.

We hope to maintain relationship with corporate sponsors, approaching other large corporations for funding, as well as key successful entrepreneurs with Indian background for their contribution. We are hopeful that some sort of partnership will be achieved by the end of the project period.

In addition during the final project year, the project's achievements will be presented to all EU member states with presence in Malaysia. The aim is that through their embassies we will be able to establish further contacts with the Chambers of Commerce and their corporate sectors. This event is being organised with the endorsement of the EC Delegation in Malaysia.

3. Please add any further information that would help the Commission to make a balanced assessment of the project to date

At an external evaluation workshop held early May 2005, we witnessed a great positive change in the confidence level of the women from the Communities. When we first visited and met with the women in the Communities, or even during the Consultations that were conducted in various communities, the women were nervous and shy, many outrightly saying they needed the permission from the man of the house before they can speak to any of us. Two years later, the very same women are coming out and sharing what they were always restricted by norm and culture to be taboo discussion with anyone, let alone a room filled with 100 strangers.

Women who were restrained by the very ideology of men needing to maintain the prestige of being the breadwinner of the family, who were forced to live in poverty simply because their husbands might lose face if women were earning while the men were sitting at home or at the local shop drinking alcohol, unable to provide for their family, these very same women are now able to break free from such misconceptions and have begun to use the skills learnt to earn some income, small as they might be.

Of course this may only be a small percentage of the total Indian Malaysian women population, but it certainly is a huge step on the journey of change. It clearly shows that the people are not only willing, but have begun to take that first step on the journey to the aim of a society with more balanced and equal relationship between men and women.

4. Do you have any objection to this report being published on the EIDHR website? If so, please state your objections here
None.

Name of the person responsible for the project: Mr. Rainer Heufers	
Signature:	Location: Bangkok

Date foreseen for report:	13 June 2005	Date report submitted:
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