Explaining The Institutional Capacity Of State Feminism In A Non-Western Setting: A Case Study of the Malaysian Women’s Policy Agency

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

1. ADB: Asian Development Bank
2. Asia-Pacific Corp-MfDR: Asia-Pacific Community of Practice on Managing for Development Results
3. ADS: Administrative and Diplomatic Service
4. AGC: Attorney-general Chamber
5. AGD: Accountant’s General Department
6. AIM: Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia
7. ASEAN: Association of South East Asian Nation
8. AWAM: All Women’s Action Society
9. BN: Barisan Nasional
10. BRO: Budget Review Officer
11. CEDAW: Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
12. CSW: Commission on the Status of Women
13. DPD: Department of People with Disabilities
14. DVA: Domestic Violence Act
15. EPU: Economic Planning Unit
16. ETP: Economic Transformation Programme
17. GFP: Gender Focal Point
18. GTP: Government Transformation Programme
19. GRB: Gender Responsive Budgeting
20. HAWA: Department of Women Affairs
21. ICU: Implementation and Coordination Unit
22. ICT: Information and Communication Technologies
23. I-Kit: Single mother Incubator
24. I-Kuenita: Women Entrepreneurship Incubator
25. INTAN: The National Institute of Public Administration
26. ISA: Internal Security Act
27. ISM: Social Institute of Malaysia
28. JAG: Joint Action Group
29. JAG-VAW: Joint Action Group against Violence Women
30. KANITA: Centre for Research on Women and Gender
31. LGBT: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
32. MAO: Malay Administrative Officers
33. MARA: Council of Trust for Indigenous People
34. MCA: Malaysian Chinese Association
35. MCS: Malayan Civil Services
36. MIC: Malaysian Indian Congress
37. MKRA: Ministerial Key Results Areas
38. MOA: Ministry of Agriculture
39. MOE: Ministry of Education
40. MOF: Ministry of Finance
41. MOH: Ministry of Health
42. MOHR: Ministry of Human Resources
43. MRRD: Ministry of Rural and Regional Development
44. MWFCD: Ministry of Women Affairs and Family Development
45. NACIWID: National Advisory Council for the Integration of Women in Development
46. NAD: National Audit Department
47. NAM: Non Aligned Movement
48. NAWEM: National Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Malaysia
49. NBOS: National Blue Ocean Strategy
50. NCWO: National Council of Women Organisation
51. NF: National Front (the ruling coalition)
52. NGO: Non-governmental organisation
53. NIEW: NAM Institute for the Empowerment of Women
54. NKEA: National Key Economic Areas
55. NKRA: National Key Results Areas
56. NPFDB: National Population and Family Development Board
57. NPM: New Public Management
58. UN: United Nation
59. UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
60. OBB: Outcome Based Budgeting
61. OIC: Organisation of the Islamic Conference
62. OPAAW: OIC Plan for Action Plan for the Advancement of Women
63. OSA: Official Secrets Act
64. OSCC: One Stop Crisis Centre
65. PAC: Public Accounts Committee
66. PBB: United Traditional Bumiputera Party
67. PBS: United Sabah Party
68. PBRS: United Sabah People's Party
69. PEMANDU: Performance Management & Delivery Unit
70. PIPA: Public Integrity Inauguration Plan
71. PNI: Islamic Values Application
72. PPPU: Public Private Partnership Unit
73. PSC: Public Service Commission
74. PSD: Public Service Department
75. PWDC: Penang Women Development Council
76. SENADA: Muslim Women Defense and Empowerment Secretariat
77. SIRIM: Standards and Industrial Research Institute of Malaysia
78. SME Corp: Small and Medium Enterprise Corporation Malaysia.
79. SUPP: Sarawak United Peoples' Party
80. SWD: Social Welfare Department
81. TQM: Total Quality Management
82. UMNO: United Malays National Organisation
83. UPKO: The United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation
84. UUCA: University and University Colleges Act
85. WAO: Women’s Aid Organisation
86. WCC: Women’s Centre for Change
87. WDD: Women Development Department
88. WFDC: Women and Family Development Council
89. WPA: Women Policy Agency
This thesis explores the capacity of a state feminist institution in a non-Western setting in implementing gender empowerment initiatives. This study adopts a cross-cutting approach using state feminism and a feminist institutional analytical lens especially the idea of formal and informal rules, to develop a dynamic analysis of the factors that shape the capacity of a state feminist institution in a post-colonial context. This research uses a holistic single case study to analyse the institutional capacity of the Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development in Malaysia by examining four key determinants: 1) institutional structure, 2) resources, 3) relationship/network and 4) the WPA’s policies implementation (as shaped by the institutional structure, resources, and relationship) to assess the Ministry’s capacity.

This research highlights the variance of capacity level of the Women’s Policy Agency in Malaysia has in the implementation of gender empowerment initiatives within its institutional environment. The WPA demonstrates competency in specific areas of gender empowerment programmes especially economic empowerment but is often constrained in their ability to navigate through a gendered state institution which is highly centralised and strongly hierarchical. Masculinised political culture and institutional socio-religious perspective on gender roles also play a part in weakening the Ministry’s capacity in pushing for gender empowerment initiatives that challenge the conservative outlook of gender roles in society.

This study explores the strengths and constraints of state feminism in Malaysia using feminist institutionalism analytical tools of formal and informal rules as the dynamic interaction between the formal and informal rules in a diverse, developing and semi-democratic context characterise the WPA’s capacity within its institutional setting. This thesis provides important insights on the conditions that shape the WPA’s capacity and alternative understanding of state feminism in a non-Western context, and thereby, provides guidance for gender policy advocates and future practices.
DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this of any other university of other institute of learning.
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DEDICATION

For my parents who are always there for me
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A friend described the journey to obtain a doctorate degree as a long and dark road in a tunnel, that only towards the end of the journey, you will see flickers of light that will keep your hope alive to walk through to the end.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The UN Decade for Women (1975–1985) has been the catalyst for state engagement in improving women’s standards in society. Since then, states have made efforts to have their own official women’s policy machinery in order to improve women’s status in society. However, forms of state women’s policy machinery vary in terms of features, functions and effectiveness. Thus, there has been a growing body of literature on gender empowerment initiatives by the state, especially since the Beijing Platform of Action in 1995, which emphasised the importance of state official mechanisms catering to the improvement of women’s standards. Scholars have recognised the need to engage in studies on gender empowerment initiatives by various actors, ranging from women’s movements to the state, which have led to the emergence of expanding literature on state feminism.

State feminism concentrates on studying institutional arrangements within the state set to address gender issues. Stetson and Mazur (1995) define state feminism as “[the] activities of government structures that are formally charged with furthering women’s status and rights” (p.1). Thus, this thesis studies the women’s policy agency (WPA) as an extension of the state’s arm, in particular, the agency’s capacity in implementing gender empowerment initiatives. This thesis centres on the research of the capacity of the WPA in Malaysia, a diverse, post-colonial Southeast Asian state with a highly developing economy. This thesis therefore expands the coverage of the existing state feminism literatures.

The role of the state in gender empowerment initiatives through WPAs has received great attention. However, previous scholarly work on state feminism has concentrated on the specific settings of Western democratic states and developed economies (Stetson and Mazur, 1995; McBride and Mazur, 2010). Thus, this study, firstly, undertakes to enrich the existing literature on state feminism through its deep and thorough analysis of the capacity of a WPA in a non-Western, post-colonial and economically
developing context. Additionally this study draws on insights from feminist institutionalism to identify important elements that are essential to non-Western state feminism’s capacity to implement gender empowerment initiatives, thus enhancing the theoretical and empirical understandings of state feminism as a growing field of literature.

This thesis then assesses the Malaysian WPA by analysing the critical factors that shape the agency’s capacity to implement gender empowerment initiatives, with particular reference to the influence of the customary formal and informal rules in each factor. It also serves as a breakthrough study in the institutional study of gender politics in Malaysia and thus will serve as a foundation for future research on similar subject matters.

BACKGROUND

Malaysia, a multi-cultural and economically developing country is located in the South-East Asian region. Despite its diverse composition of population, it is recognised as a Muslim majority country as Islam is the official religion of the country in the Federal Constitution and 60% of its population is Muslim. Therefore, Islamic discourse influence on state institution and decision-making process is highly prevalent especially in discussing gender matters. In the course of its economic development plans in the post-colonial period, the Malaysian women have experience rapid transmission from being house makers to be part of the important component of the Malaysian labour market especially since the introduction of New Economic Policy which accentuated ethnic-based preferences rather than gender in the nation’s initiative to narrow socio-economic gap resulted from British colonial policies which has institutionalised divisive racial relationship1.

1 The British colonisation period brought the influx of ethnic Chinese and Indian employed for agriculture and mining industries patronised by the British. This has altered the existing racial composition of the existing Malay states. In exchange, the British endowed the Malays with special administrative and political privilege and asserted Malay dominance in government. This led to imbalance socio-economic situation between major ethnicities which resulted propagated into racial tension in 1960s. To address this socio-economic inequality, the NEP was introduced to improve the
This has enabled women from the majority ethnic groups to gain access to professional labour force through government policies that provide support for access to higher education levels.

Furthermore, according to the gender-disaggregated statistics published by the Ministry Women, Family, and Community Development, in 2008, more than 60% of undergraduate students in Malaysian public universities are females, therefore, with high access to tertiary level education, women are becoming more prominent in the public sphere of Malaysian society. However, women still face structural challenges in gaining equal access to development as men as they are bound by conservative gender rules in the society which shapes the institutional perspective on gender issue as well as inadequate infrastructure and assistance to support Malaysian women to achieve their full potential.

The Malaysian government recognised the importance of mainstreaming gender agendas by including a chapter on Women in Development (WID) in the 6MP (1991-1995) which summarise the issues and concerns regarding WID that were still outstanding and identified those concerns that restricted the full integration of women in development. These concerns were as follow: (i) gender differentials in education; (ii) social norms and prejudices regarding the role and status of women in society and in the labour market; (iii) domestic violence; (iv) sex stereotyping of women’s roles, leading to limited prospects for them to access new opportunities for income earning; (v) lack of access to management training, credit, and market information; (vi) lack of support services to enable women to combine care giving and workplace responsibilities, leading to their withdrawal from the labour market at particular stages (Amina Ahmad, 1998).

To address this issue, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs was established in 2001 which later went through process of renaming due to its expanding nature and scope. The current name of the ministry is Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development. There are 5 departments under the ministry namely:

a) Department of Women’s Development  
b) Department of Social Services  
c) National Population and Family Development Board  
d) Social Institute of Malaysia  
e) NAM Institute for the Empowerment of Women (NIEW)

The ministry’s establishment is a form of state feminism as its main vision is “to be a focal point in achieving gender equality, family development and a caring society as the basis for the formation of a developed nation of distinction”. The WPA also accentuated its mission “to integrate women and community into the mainstream of national development process and to strengthen the family institution towards improving social well-being”

The main approaches of the Ministry to achieve its aims are: 1) Helping to formulate legislations, rules and regulations through the Ministry or with other ministries, 2) the ministry would strive for advocacy programmes with the cooperation of NGO and the private sector, 3) to develop and execute the Ministry’s own initiatives as well as working in tandem with other agencies. Therefore, the National Women Policy which was legislated in 1989 and the National Women Policy 2009 is the national policy under the jurisdiction of the Ministry.

Prior to the establishment of the WPA as a full ministry in Malaysia, it existed in various forms within the state institution. It first existed as advisory body to government agencies and provide input on gender issues in national-policy making process (NCWO 50th Anniversary, 2014). Later, the women’s

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2 Refer to the Ministry’s Annual Reports (2008, 2013)  
movement that act as advisory body, the NCWO expanded its activity through the establishment of the Women’s Advisory Council (NACIWID) in 1966 which was positioned under the direct purview of the Prime Minister at that time. NACIWID consist of the NCWO, representatives from government agencies’ and organisations that are related to women’s matters and act as the advocator for the inclusion of women in state’s development agendas.

The WPA in Malaysia further evolved to be a Women’s Bureau in 1993, situated within the state’s locus of power, the Prime Minister’s Department before it was upgraded to a full federal ministry in 2001\textsuperscript{4}.

However, gender scholars in Malaysia propose that the establishment of the Ministry is a political strategy as the Ministry’s set-up also coincided with the Malaysian political turmoil in 1998\textsuperscript{5}. It saw the rise of resistance towards the ruling party due to several factors: the economic crisis that hit Asia which result in rising unemployment and cost of living and the dismissal of the former Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim. This political development lead to the opposition parties gaining support and the ruling party almost lose their two third’s majority in the parliament.

Therefore, the ruling party needed to secure their votes and female voters were deemed as more likely to vote for the ruling party due to stability factors. Thus, the ministry was established after the ruling party almost lost its dominance in the parliament and the Ministerial post was awarded to the UMNO’s Women’s Wing Chief, Shahrizat Jalil. She enjoyed the position from 2001 until 2012 with brief absence in 2008. She resigned from her post in 2012, prior to the General Election due to pressure of the allegation of her family’s involvement in financial scandal which also coincided with the end of her tenure as Senator at the Upper House\textsuperscript{6}. In her absence as the Minister

\textsuperscript{4} Refer to Figure 4: The WPA Evolution Process

\textsuperscript{5} For further reading on how gender activists used the political crisis to amplify gender issues to political actors, refer to Feminism and the Women’s Movement in Malaysia: An Unsung (R)evolution by Tan Beng Hui, Cecilia Ang and Maznah Mohamad

\textsuperscript{6} Shahrizat resigned from her post as the MWFCDS’s minister due to pressure of the allegation of her family’s involvement in financial scandal (which she was cleared of any involvement later on) which also coincided with the end of her tenure as Senator at the Upper House. She, however, retained her
for the MWFCD, she was appointed, both times as the Special Adviser to the Prime Minister\(^7\) which heightened the speculation that the main motivation behind the Ministry’s establishment is to reward individual’s political loyalty to the leaders.

Despite the ministry’s active involvement within the state institution as the advocator of gender agendas, it is still highly subjected to the central locus of power especially the Prime Minister Department’s guidelines and directions. This has undermines the WPA’s importance in the government organisation’s vertical relationship despite its status as a Federal government’s ministry. The position of the WPA within the state institution is also overshadowed by more prominent government agencies that are located within the locus of power such as PEMANDU and EPU\(^8\).

This study recognises that the ministry’s mission and vision were clearly specified in its institutional establishment. The establishment of the Ministry in 2001 was intended not only to serve as an upgrade to the previous Department of Women’s Affairs (HAWA) under the Prime Minister’s Department but also to be in line with the UNDP recommendation to ensure development processes are inclusive of both men and women. The Ministry’s website states that the establishment of the MWFCD as a full ministry illustrated the government’s dedication towards women’s agenda in the country, since the main purpose of the ministry’s establishment was to “mainstream women in nation-building and to strengthen the family institution by integrating gender into all aspects of planning and development” (UN Guidelines on Women Empowerment, 2012)\(^9\). It also plays an important role

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\(^7\) In her brief absence as the MWFCD’s minister, she was appointed as the Special Adviser to the Prime Minister for Women and Social Development Affairs which carries ministerial status. Refer to The Star Online, *Shahrizat Made Special Adviser* (Retrieved from http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2012/05/31/NFC-scandal-Shahrizat-cleared-of-involvement/. Accessed on 10 November 2014).

\(^8\) Further discussion on Chapter Four of this thesis

in synchronising gender issue debates among different players in the society, such as NGOs, various government agencies, the private sector and communities, and in assessing current and future legislations and regulations that concern women.

The vision, mission and objectives of the Ministry are described in its annual reports, on its official website and in various reports for international organisations. According to its website, the MWFCD seeks to be at the “forefront to achieve gender equality and family and community development as a caring and prosperous basis of a fairly developed country” and its mission is to “integrate the perspectives of women and society into the mainstream of national development and to strengthen the family institution towards improving social welfare” (MWFCD website). Apart from the specific vision and mission, the MWFCD’s clear and vivid goal is to “develop a prosperous society through the sharing of responsibility for the strategic development and delivery of social services efficiently and effectively” (MWFCD website). Its objectives, as cited in its official publications (such as its website, annual reports and official magazines), are:

1. “To increase the participation and active role of women, families and communities as contributors and beneficiaries of [developing] countries

2. [To preserve] the rights of women, families and communities fairly and impartially without discrimination

3. [To extend] equal opportunities to women and society [socially, economically and politically]

4. [To] strengthen the family institution

5. To ensure [the maintenance of a] delivery and support system”

Source: MWFCD website as accessed in June 2014
The roles of the MWFCD also include increasing opportunities for women to upgrade their socio-economic status and providing education and training opportunities. To support its planning functions, the Ministry undertakes research and development in gender, population, family development and reproductive health. It also acts as the secretariat for the National Advisory Council for the Integration of Women in Development (NACIWID) and serves as the official national contact for networking with international agencies that deal with women’s issues, as well as the secretariat for regional and international agencies pertaining to women’s programmes (UN report, 2002).

This research shows that the Malaysian WPA has a clear and explicit mission, vision and objectives to drive gender empowerment initiatives, corresponding with the government’s commitment to gender empowerment. Malaysia has also agreed to commit to the initiatives of the Platform for Action as set forth in the UN Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing (1995), which can be outlined as follows:

1. Enhance the national machinery for women’s advancement.
2. Increase women’s participation in decision-making processes.
3. Safeguard women’s rights to health, education and social well-being.
4. Remove legal obstacles and gender-discriminatory practices.

The Malaysian Government has also ratified the UN CEDAW, which defines the following:

“…discrimination against women shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the
political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field” (CEDAW, Article 1).

Thus, the government’s commitment to the CEDAW is illustrated through the MWFCD’s mission, vision and objectives as stated in its official publications and often reiterated by Malaysian representatives to the UN (Yok, 2008, Mohamad, 2011, Norliza Abdul Rahim, 2012).

RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The focus of this thesis is an analysis of the WPA’s capacity as a form of state feminism in the implementation of gender empowerment initiatives. The analysis of how states respond and adapt to feminist demands led to the focus of this study on the elements that constitute the state’s capacity in the implementation of these strategies. However, the application of existing state feminist literature is limited to specific settings predominantly Western and liberal democratic contexts.

As this study aims to gain an understanding of the capacity of the WPA in Malaysia in implementing gender empowerment initiatives, with a view to offering guidance on the way forward, the following objectives have been identified as of paramount importance in helping to achieve the aforementioned aim:

• Clarification of what defines non-Western state feminism and WPA in Malaysia.

• Exploration of the institutional context in which the Malaysian WPA operates.

• Critical assessment of the WPA’s capacity in delivering gender equality initiatives in Malaysia.

• Analysis of the implementation of gender-related policies by the WPA.
• **Recommendations** to the WPA on enhancing its capacity in the institutional context to ensure the successful implementation of gender equality initiatives.

The approach strives to answer this research question: what are the factors that shape the Malaysian WPA’s capacity to implement gender empowerment initiatives in Malaysia? This question triggers further sub-questions of the research to address what factors shape the capacity of the WPA? This subset of questions that are considered in order to answer the main research question of this thesis:

1. How does the agency’s institutional structure shape the capacity of the WPA in Malaysia?
2. How do the resources of the agency shape the capacity of the WPA in Malaysia?
3. How do the relationships and networking of the agency affect the capacity of the WPA in Malaysia?
4. How does the WPA’s capacity shape the WPA’s mission and vision in Malaysia?

**STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS**

Following the introduction of the thesis context in this chapter, Chapter Two builds upon the debates surrounding the role of the state in the improvement of women’s status in society, as well as the relationships between various actors, especially those involved in women’s movements. The theoretical debates span from the WPA institutional context to gender policy analysis, which becomes the theoretical framework for this research. This chapter also addresses the contribution of the existing state feminism literature and highlights the research gaps of this literature in its application to contexts that are dissimilar to non-Western, semi-democratic, developing settings, such as Malaysia.
Chapter Three describes the research methodology of this study. It elaborates on the selection of case studies, the data collection methods employed and the data analysis process. This chapter concludes with an acknowledgment of the limitations of this study and also the observations made during the fieldwork period.

This study also identifies four key discussants that shape the WPA’s capacity in Malaysia, which are discussed and explored in subsequent chapters. Pursuant to this, Chapter Four seeks to answer the first of the subset of research questions: how does the agency’s institutional structure shape the capacity of the WPA in Malaysia? It begins with the analysis of the WPA’s institutional structure by identifying two important strengths of the WPA’s institutional stability and its strong bureaucratic foundation. This generates further understanding of the WPA’s formal and informal institutional foundations and the context of its operation through analysis of the state characteristics, the political system and the bureaucratic features in the WPA’s context.

Chapter Five continues the discussion by addressing the second of the subset of questions: how do the resources of the agency shape the WPA’s capacity in Malaysia? This chapter deals with the access and utilisation of resources by the WPA. It unfolds and delves into the level of access and authority of the WPA towards resources provided by the state and examines the manners in which these resources are utilised by the WPA.

While institutional structure and resources are important features in analysing the WPA’s capacity, another crucial feature is the involvement and participation of other actors in gender empowerment initiatives. Chapter Six hence continues the discussion by focusing on the third of the subset of research questions: how do the relationships and networking of the agency affect the capacity of the WPA in Malaysia? This chapter captures the WPA’s relationships with other actors and explores the formal engagements that the WPA has with other actors, as well as the informal rules surrounding the
WPA’s networking environment that influence the WPA’s formal engagements.

From the earlier discussions, Chapter Seven proceeds to examine the fourth of the subset of questions: how does the WPA’s capacity shape the WPA’s mission and vision in Malaysia? This chapter identifies how the three factors of institutional structure, resources and networking influence the WPA’s capacity to implement gender empowerment initiatives. The first part of this chapter discusses the WPA’s capacity as identified in Chapter Four, Five and Six shapes the WPA’s mission and vision. The second part proceeds to examine four types of gender empowerment initiatives and analyses the WPA’s capacity in regard to their implementation. These initiatives form the basis of the policy analysis case study in this research and assist in identifying how the WPA’s capacity shapes its mission and vision in the examined policy areas.

Chapter Eight draws a conclusion to this research. In the first part, it summarises the analyses described in the previous chapters. In the second part, it discusses the research findings from the analyses and the contribution of new knowledge. This chapter concludes with recommendations for potential future research to enrich the debates on state feminism and feminist institutionalism. This chapter begins by highlighting the main research findings of this study.
RESEARCH FINDINGS

The first main finding reveals that the WPA in Malaysia has institutional stability and a strong bureaucratic foundation. Both of these factors provide a solid institutional structure which contributes to the WPA’s capacity for actions. The second main finding illustrates that the WPA in Malaysia has easy access to resources but limited authority regarding their usage, despite its position as a full ministry. The WPA’s capacity in Malaysia is also found to be restrained due to the thinly spread allocation and utilisation of resources across its departments and agencies, in addition to the over-concentration of resources in specific areas of work.

In terms of the WPA’s relationships and network, the third main finding indicates that the WPA in Malaysia possesses firmly structured relationships and a wide network at both the domestic and international levels. However, the WPA also practises selective engagement. It filters the category of women’s organisations that it chooses to be associated with and it has a preferential ally because of its historical relations with the National Council of Women’s Organisations (NCWO). Thus, the WPA has limited engagements, as it seldom engages actively with critical women’s movement.

Within the domestic institutional framework, as a full ministry, the WPA has structured official engagements with other actors, particularly with other government agencies and organisations. At the international level, the WPA not only engages with international organisations such as UNDP and ADB but also forms strategic partnership with other countries through bilateral and multilateral MOUs. Apart from the above, the WPA also engages with other international actors through its membership of international organisations such as the ASEAN and the OIC.

The fourth and final main finding of this research reveals that the WPA’s capacity varies in its mission and vision. While it’s strong institutional structure enables the ministry to have a consolidated mission through its
synergised mandate, it also faces constraints in the form of the absence of common consensus on important gender concepts, thus reinforcing the institutional viewpoint within the WPA environment that confines women to traditional and conservative gender roles in the society. The resource allocation of the WPA also focuses mainly on a few selected areas, especially the economic development sphere; hence, this has channelled the mission and vision of the WPA towards entrepreneurship programmes.

LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH

Single Case Study Design

As this research uses a single case study design, the findings may not be generalisable to other settings. However, given the resource constraints and the capacity of the researcher to conduct multiple case analyses and comparative study, the decision to opt for a holistic single case study provides in-depth information on state feminism in Malaysia, given the lack of previous studies on state feminism in the region. It also enables the study to provide the knowledge base for subsequent research on state feminism in similar contexts. The qualitative methodology adopted by this research also makes this research unique as it explores the setting from the participants' perspectives. On the other hand, this increases the possibility for the research findings to be inaccessible for application on other settings in comparison to quantitative research methodology.

Scope of Research

This study focuses on a single WPA, which is the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (MWFCD). Hence, while taking into account the importance of other gender actors that are involved in gender
empowerment initiatives in Malaysia, this research mainly focuses on analysing the ministry’s capacity as the state’s agency that handles gender agendas through its gender empowerment initiatives. Thus, the analysis of this research does not delve further into other crucial actors’ perspectives, such as other departments and agencies under the MWFC in that do not focus on gender empowerment agendas, external government agencies, women’s movements and international agencies. However, it takes into account the roles and contributions of the actors mentioned in shaping the WPA’s capacity from the MWFC’s perspectives.

This research also focuses on the capacity of the Malaysian WPA through the analysis of four key determinants; institutional set-up, resources, network/relationship and the mission and vision of the WPA as shaped by the previous three factors. This study does not seek to measure the effectiveness of the WPA functions. It studies whether the WPA in a non-Western setting has the appropriate capability to execute gender empowerment initiatives and what are the factors within its institutional context that influence and shape its capacity. These factors are then further analysed using the feminist institutionalist analytical tools of formal and informal rules to determine the interaction between different types of formal and informal rules influence on the WPA’s functions.

SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH

This research makes a series of significant, original contributions to a range of academic literatures, namely state feminism, feminist institutionalism and regional gender politics. First, this study develops an analytical approach to expand the coverage of the state feminism literature, which conventionally has been focused on Western, liberal democratic, post-developed settings. For a non-Western state feminist environment, this research identifies the importance of enhancing the analysis of state feminism beyond the measurement of effectiveness by examining the
essential factors that shape the WPA’s capacity in the implementation of gender empowerment initiatives. This enables state feminism theoretical framework to travel beyond its Western centric outlook. This study provides new perspective and understanding of non-Western state feminism through the examination of non-Western state feminist organisation’s capacity in executing gender related agendas.

Second, this study updates the current state feminism theoretical framework by utilising feminist institutionalism tools, specifically the acknowledgement of both formal and informal rules, in explaining the state feminism case of the WPA in Malaysia. This thesis synthesises both state feminism theoretical frameworks and feminist institutionalism tools and updates the prevailing literatures of state feminism and feminist institutionalism, as previous works in both fields are discussed in silo. An appreciation of the insights and tools of feminist institutionalism helps to provide a dynamic understanding of state capacity in the implementation of gender empowerment initiatives in non-Western and non-liberal democratic settings by providing tools to examine the impacts of the state’s gendered on the WPA’s capacity.

This thesis recognises both formal and informal rules interactions within the state setting shapes the state’s values and perspectives on gender issues and their impacts on the Malaysian WPA’s capacity. Apart from this, the analytical update of state feminism using feminist institutionalism tools also enhance the coverage of feminist institutionalism from the predominantly democratic Western and economically developed setting to a semi-democratic, conservative and diverse Southern Hemisphere context. This study demonstrates the usefulness of using Feminist Institutionalism analytical tools (borrowed from new institutionalism especially historical institutionalism) of formal and informal rules to understand the capacity of state feminism in non-Western context.
Third, as regional literatures on gender politics are scarce, this study reinforces the regional literatures by fostering debates and discussions on the role of the state in implementing gender empowerment initiatives through its gender machineries. The existing regional literatures on gender politics are more focused on the role of women’s movements in gender empowerment processes. This thesis fills in the scarcity of gender politics literatures within the region of Southeast Asia, specifically Malaysia. Local gender politics scholars have mainly concentrated on the roles of women’s movements (Weiss & Hassan, 2003; Lai Suat Yan, 2003; Martinez, 2003; Blackburn, 2004; Ng et al., 2006) and political parties (Mohamad, 2002; Ting, 2007) in promoting gender empowerment initiatives.

Thus, this research builds upon the lack of discussion and debates on the Malaysian state’s capacity through its WPA in the implementation of gender empowerment initiatives in Malaysia and within the Southeast Asian region. The expansion of political gender debates beyond the existing scope of women’s movements and political parties enables further comprehension of the state’s role and capacity to improve women’s status in society. Furthermore, as Malaysia has been continuously sliding down the Global Gender Gap Index (from 72 in 2006 to 100 in 2013, according to a UN report), there is a pressing need to research the Malaysian WPA’s capacity to implement gender empowerment initiatives in Malaysia.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the theoretical frameworks employed by this research by first examining the relationship between feminist research and the state and how feminists view the state and vice versa. It discusses state responses to feminist demands, which have led in some settings to institutional change from the traditional patriarchal state structure to a more inclusive and gender-sensitive state orientation and the development of state feminist institutions. This chapter explores the current model of state feminism, which is mainly based on the specific settings of Western, post-industrialised and liberal democratic contexts.

As the research on state feminism to date has tended to focus on specific Western, liberal settings, this chapter then goes on to identify the limitations of the current theoretical and empirical framework by examining state feminist relations in non-Western, non-liberal settings. The main differences between Western state feminism and non-Western state feminism and the need for better analytical tools to examine state feminist relations are identified. The final part of this chapter introduces feminist institutionalism as a related theoretical framework that can be used to explore non-Western state feminism; this part also defines how these two theoretical frameworks can be used simultaneously in cross-cutting research to enable in-depth understanding of non-Western state feminism, as required by this study.

FEMINISM AND THE STATE

Traditionally, feminism perceived state institutions as replicating the power relations of male superiority by imposing their dominance over women (Connell, 1990; Stetson & Mazur, 1995). However, in the last few decades,
there has been development in the analysis of the relationship between feminists and the state, as feminists have begun to recognise the importance of the state as a powerful institution that may be utilised to promote and advance feminist groups’ goals. State intervention is seen as useful in eliminating barriers towards marginalised groups (including women) to improve access and opportunities for everyone, regardless of background and gender, to achieve their best potential in society (Stetson & Mazur, 1995, 2013).

The relationship between the state and feminists often depends on the perspectives the two groups use to define each other. Scholars define the state as an association of different institutions that “have their own histories, contradictions, relations and connections internally and externally” (Watson, 1990, p.7). Feminism scholars such as Rhode (1994) view state institutions as gendered and emphasise the need to identify the factors (including the actors and institutional structures) that are able to reform the gendered nature of state institutions. This differs from the traditional perspective of the state, which defines the state as a gender-neutral entity. Feminist political scientists critique this perspective of the state, as it does not represent an integrated view of the state due to its negligence of the gendered attributes of the state and their effects on state behaviours and relationships with other actors in the political system (Kenney, 1996; Kenny, 2007; Mackay, Kenny & Chappell, 2010).

On the other hand, it is more difficult to define feminism, as the dimensions of feminism vary greatly according to various perspectives. However, it is possible to identify feminism by looking at the purposes of the actions taken. This research defines feminism as the commitment to achieve equality between genders, although even this might be contested due to different definitions of equality across various cultural and regional backgrounds; this will be further discussed in this chapter. State feminism scholars define feminism as the commitment to gender issues and the
utilisation of methods that put forward women’s agendas and outlooks as an under-represented group in society (Rhode, 1994; Stetson & Mazur, 1995). Therefore, it is also common for feminists to claim to speak on behalf of other marginalised groups, especially those who are discriminated against due to their gender and sexual orientation, such as transgender and homosexual groups.

Feminism has its fair share of critiques towards the state. The state has always been viewed sceptically by feminists as an agent for males to continue their dominance over females (Stetson & Mazur, 1995). The discussion of capitalist states often centres on the market conditions, which depend on labour force reproduction. The state continues to sustain the traditional gender role of women’s subordination to enable employers to maximise their profits. A focus on class in a capitalist state may not be viewed as the cause of gender inequality in the society, but it helps in strengthening male domination through its isolation of state involvement in the private spheres of life, as it is only concerned with the effectiveness and efficiency of private-sector productivity for the benefit of employers’ higher profit margins.

A more vigorous feminist perspective is that the state acts as a patriarchal institution that “reflects and institutionalizes male dominance” because it is in control of powerful positions; therefore, decisions made by the state mainly reflect males’ interests and concerns (Rhode, 1994, p.1184). Feminists further critique that the patriarchal state structure continues to internalise female subordination in state policies. They argue that even policies designed to assist women eventually strengthen women’s dependency, as women are made to depend on the state as a substitute to their traditional dependency on men, instead of empowering themselves (Hartmann, 1979; Eisenstein, 1981).

Despite feminists’ cynical view of the state, a recent trend has emerged in which feminists have begun to regard the state as a powerful
potential partner to engage with in order to achieve feminist goals. The stronger recognition of the state’s role and influence by gender actors is due to the capability of the state to advance women’s movements’ interests, which will enable women’s voices to be included in decision-making processes and will lead to the institutionalisation of feminist demands in the state structure. The state also should be recognised as a powerful gender actor as it has legislative power and the formal authority to implement them through other actors within the state institution or informally through the state’s expressions and behaviours (Martin, 2004).

As the state’s role in championing feminist agendas is being acknowledged by crucial gender actors as one of the most powerful entities within political systems to fulfil their demands, as often the state has the capacity to do so, this has led to the emergence of state feminism literature, which focuses on the state’s responses to feminist demands by extending the state structure to support or achieve those demands. Mazur (1999) defines state feminism as a field that “examines whether state structures and actors can promote feminist notions through focusing on women’s role in the state as policy makers, the gendered nature of state agencies that influence women’s [and men’s] roles and the activities of women’s policy machineries in a wide variety of government agencies and branches” (p.487). Thus, an important component of state feminism is the national machineries that function for the advancement of women or an agency that deals with women’s policy issues or matters concerning gender equality (Stetson and Mazur, 1995; Lovenduski et.al, 2005).

Therefore, feminist groups are opting to draw closer and engage with the state. In turn, in response to the initiatives by women’s movements, states have established special units in order to satisfy women’s movements’ demands through the creation of politics and programmes that aim to improve the social and economic status of often-marginalised groups (including women) to narrow the gaps in society. As the state aims to
improve women’s status, the state often takes the position that women are among the disadvantaged groups in the society; therefore, in some instances, state feminism exists in the form of state machineries that aim to eliminate discrimination for all marginalised groups, not only focusing on women (Squires, 2006). Scholars have also identified that state feminism as the extension of the state’s realm of responsibilities in improving women’s status exists in various organisational forms, which include ministries, agencies and commissions (Stetson and Mazur, 1995; Rai, 2003; Lovenduski et al., 2005)

**Dimensions of State Feminism**

This research observes that there are three main dimensions of state feminism identified based on Research Network on Gender and the State (RNGS) extensive comparative analysis on state feminism (Stetson & Mazur, 1995; McBride & Mazur, 2010) that need to be analysed in order to understand the discussions on state feminism and the relationships among these elements, especially between the state and women’s movements. The first dimension of state feminism is society’s view of the state, as this plays a role in determining the scope of influence that the state has in fulfilling feminist demands (Stetson & Mazur, 1995). Stetson and Mazur (1995, McBride & Mazur, 2010) further explain that a state-centric society allows the state to play a stronger role in narrowing the gender gap in the society, usually by enhancing women’s socio-economic status, as the state has great authority and power in a state-centric culture.

Thus, in a state-centric society in comparison with a less-state-centric culture, gender empowerment efforts are applied through a top-down approach, as the state has higher authority to impose rules and legislations that should be followed by other actors who possess less legitimacy and power. Furthermore, the realm of responsibilities of such a state is wider and covers areas that overlap with the concerns of women’s movements. However, this also means that the importance of feminist agendas depends on the level of importance as perceived by the state. Kano (2011) indicates
that a state will be more motivated to pursue state feminism if it is needed by the state to achieve its objectives; the state will be less enthusiastic if state feminism challenges the state’s status quo.

A society’s conception of the state’s role influences the roles of WPAs in that particular setting. A state-centric society that imposes more obligations and authority on the state in comparison with a less- or non-state-centric society might be able to provide more resources to mobilise WPAs, which may assist the WPAs in achieving their goals. Meanwhile, a less- or non-state-centric society may not have the same ability to ensure WPAs achieve their objectives, thus depending on other sectors (especially the third sector) to take more responsibility for gender empowerment initiatives, as the state might not have the necessary authority and resources to make changes in regard to gender issues (Stetson & Mazur, 1995).

Stetson and Mazur (1995) finds that in a less-state-centric society where more responsibilities fall on the private sphere, the state’s role in advancing women’s rights is not viewed as vital in comparison to in a state-centric culture. Therefore, the state is viewed as administrators that assist and encourage other sectors (such as private and civil society) to push forward feminist agendas. By contrast, a state-centric society raises the concerns of a forceful government that may hinder the private and third sectors of the society from promoting gender empowerment plans to the government. In a less-state-centric society, the main criticism is that the state may be powerless in imposing gender empowerment policies and regulations. This might not be favourable for feminist actors to advance their interests in policy-making processes, therefore making them dependent on the willingness of the private sphere of the society (which often operates on the basis of profits) to take up their demands (Rhode, 1994; Stetson & Mazur, 1995).

The second key concern of the RNGS study on state feminism is the institutional arrangements established by states to promote the improvement
of women’s status in society. These arrangements exist in various forms, such as ministries, agencies and commissions (Stetson & Mazur, 1995; Rai, 2003; Lovenduski et al., 2005). These function as a bridge between the state and women’s movements in order to promote women’s interests at the national level. State feminism simultaneously explores other aspects of women’s inclusion in society by the state, such as women’s political representation. This includes either descriptive representation by making women more likely to be elected and appointed in public offices or substantive representation, which incorporates women’s concerns into the policy process (especially in legislative bodies) of a liberal democratic setting (Lovenduski et al., 2005).

The third dimension of state feminism, as discussed by the state feminism literature, is the relationship between the state and women’s movements. According to Alvarez (1990), women’s movements are defined by their “autonomy”, which means they are independent and free standing from other political and social organisations. Therefore, Alvarez does not consider women’s wings in political parties as women’s movements, as they form part of political organisations and have vested political interests. She further states that women’s movements and WPAs have distinct features that distinguish the two entities from one another. WPAs are characterised by their formal involvement in politics and are part of the state, while women’s movements can be interpreted as a group of people who share a collective identity that originates from their similarities in term of interests, goals, identities and experiences (Rupp, 1997).

In addition, despite often sharing the same goal and objective as WPAs, which is the improvement of women’s status in society, women’s movements are not considered to be part of the state, as they often operate from outside of the state sphere. Women’s movements exercise their influence on WPAs but do not share the state’s capacity like WPAs do. Women’s movements maintain their periphery from the state to preserve
their ability to be critical of the state’s behaviour. Nevertheless, they play an important role in influencing, shaping and even opposing policies that affect women and women’s status in society and are considered as a crucial element in ensuring the success of WPAs (Stetson & Mazur, 1995; Friedman, 2000; Curtin, 2008). A study conducted by Friedman (2000) found that the absence of strong support from the third sector lead to inefficient WPAs, which demonstrates the importance of women’s movements in ensuring the effective implementation of state feminism.

*Figure 1: Relationships among the state, women’s policy machinery and women’s movements*

![Diagram of relationships among state, women's policy machinery, and women's movements]

**Source: Author’s analysis**

Figure 1 summarises the relationships among the three main elements of state feminism as observed by this study. We can summarise that in a liberal democratic setting, women’s movements are able to impose their demands on the state, and hence the straight line denotes the direct relationships between women’s movements and the state. The dashed line, however, illustrates that the state may respond directly or indirectly to the

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10 Author’s analysis mainly based on the RNGS literature of state feminism (Stetson & Mazur, 1995 and McBride & Mazur, 2010).
demands of women’s movements through various channels, such as meetings and public statements in regard to the issues raised by women’s movements. The main channel for state interaction with women’s movements nonetheless is through its official arm that has been established specifically to address gender issues, namely the WPA. As mentioned earlier, it is worth noting that in many circumstances, WPAs are not only tasked with addressing gender issues but also with addressing wider discrimination and the social welfare agendas of the state, which include other marginalised groups of society.

This is shown in some instances in which WPAs evolved to encompass a wider scope of social responsibilities, for example the Equalities Office (under the Minister for Women and Equalities) in the United Kingdom or the Department for the Coordination of Equality Policy in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, as all these government agencies are concerned with eliminating barriers for under-represented groups (which often include women), it is justified for this study to expand the definition of WPAs to include government agencies that are concerned with social welfare agendas, as they are tasked with eliminating inequalities in society, including gender inequality.

One of the main issues in discussing state feminism is to determine what we consider as state feminism. Feminism alone entails a very complex, diverse and multi-faceted body of theories. There have been many types of feminism, including radical, social and cultural feminism (Beasley, 1999). Furthermore, taking into account the various historical backgrounds of different parts of the world, there are many disparate interpretations of feminism. This has led to the emergence of various narratives of feminism according to the societies’ historical and socio-cultural backgrounds. Thus, as feminist theories are often criticised as being Western centric and carrying Western values (Weedon, 2002), there is a need to explore how the idea of feminism infused by the state is perceived in non-Western contexts.
Therefore to understand state feminism, there is a need to understand how state defines and perceive feminist ideology which translates into the question of to what extent should the state respond to feminist demands, and how should the state consolidate the various demands by women and the positions of women’s movements that oppose the gender equality initiatives championed by WPAs due to ideological differences influenced by socio-cultural backgrounds? Such positions will undermine the authority and position of a WPA that assumes that it advocates all women’s interests and disregard intersectionality of women’s identities especially in a diverse setting.

**State’s Response to Feminist Demands**

Historically, the 20th century saw women’s movements starting to demand the elimination of gender discrimination, especially to ensure that women can be equally represented in the decision-making process of the political system. There was a growing demand for women’s interests to be integrated into policy-making process comprehensively, instead of focusing only on conventional areas that were deemed as women’s interests, such as education, reproductive health and equal working opportunities. The women’s movements asserted that the representation of women in legislature and assemblies should be increased, which challenged the traditional setting of the political system. The pressure for women’s representation was to ensure the voices of women were better represented in the course of policy making.

In the 20th century, states were also being confronted with demands for greater women’s participation and representation in international organisations such as the UN, the CEDAW and the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, among others. As discussed earlier, there were also national demands, which included adapting to the changing voters’ landscape and political parties opening their doors to increased female
participation in the parties. The intention was to increase women’s voices inside political parties and to demand the better inclusion of women (Threlfall, 1998; Caul, 1999). Thus, state institutions began to embrace women’s movements’ demands by establishing dedicated agencies that typically promoted the policy agendas advanced by the women’s movements.

Nevertheless, the existence of WPAs has created access for women's movements to states' resources, networks and expertise that were previously unattainable. For this reason, WPAs have in a way altered the interaction between women’s movements and states, as they have eased the path for the two entities to interact in order to achieve similar goals. Consequently, the methods used by women’s movements to fulfil their agendas have also changed, focusing more on engagement with the state. The RNGS (1995, 2010) constructed a typology to categorise state’s responses to women’s movements: 1) dual response refers to full acceptance of the state of individual women, groups and/or constituencies that represent gender interests into the process and changes to policy to coincide with women’s movements' goals, 2) co-optation is used to explain situations in which the state accepts individual women, groups and/or constituencies into the process but does not give policy satisfaction, 3) pre-emption refers to the state giving policy satisfaction but not allowing individual woman, groups or constituencies into the process, and 4) no response, in which the state does not make procedural or substantive responses to women's movements’ demands (Squires, 2000). The RNGS study measures the level of women's movements’ engagement with the state by the manners in which the state responds to women’s movements’ demands.
The state’s response to women’s movements’ demands also reflects its stance on feminist agendas. In order to analyse state feminism, there is a need to distinguish the types of WPAs by their effectiveness in bringing forward women’s movements’ agendas into decision-making processes. Thus, the RNGS further categorises four types of WPAs to measure their level of effectiveness in this regard. The first category is *insider*, which demonstrates the success of the WPA in incorporating women’s movements’ goals into its own positions on the issues and being able to include gender perspectives in the dominant frame of the public debate on the issues. The second category is *marginal*, in which the WPA is triumphant in upholding women’s movements’ goals but fails in gendering the public policy debate. The third category is *non-feminist*, where the WPA does not support women’s movements’ goals but manages to gender or degender policy debates using other methods. The final category is *symbolic*, where the WPA does not advocate women’s movements’ goals or gender the policy definitions on the issues (Lovenduski, 2005).

Lovenduski (2005) summarises the five feminist agendas that are presented to states today: 1) anti-discrimination, 2) anti-violence, 3) reproduction rights, 4) childcare and 5) political equality. The importance of recognising the main agendas presented to states by women’s movements is that they often determine the scope of WPAs’ responsibilities and the areas that are to be under the guardianship and custody of WPAs (Htun & Weldon, 2010). Usually, these areas were not previously under any other government’s agency custody or were stationed under an agency that

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**Figure 2: Women’s Movements’ Impact / State Response**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women involved in policy process</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dual response</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-optation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-emption</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
oversees other issues that may undermine the gender dimension of these issues. Htun and Weldon (2010) developed a gender policy matrix as shown in Table 1 below that categorises the gender policies as pushed by women’s movements onto the state into two types:

1. Policies that aim to improve women’s position in society through the improvement of their social status or economic status
2. Policies that challenge or do not challenge the conventional beliefs and norms of society

It is crucial to recognise the consequences of different types of policies implementation by the state as the execution of status and class-based gender policies are influenced by different factors (Annesley, Engeli & Gains, 2015).
Table 1: Typology of Sex Equality Policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do these policies empower women as a status group or address social inequalities?</th>
<th>Do these policies challenge religious doctrine or codified cultural traditions?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender status policies</td>
<td>Yes (Doctrinal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Abortion legality</td>
<td>• Gender quotas in politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Contraception legality</td>
<td>• Violence against women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Family law</td>
<td>• Constitutional equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class-based policies</td>
<td>• Abortion funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Contraception funding</td>
<td>• Federal funds for child care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Htun and Weldon (2010)

Due to different circumstances and motivations for establishment, existing WPAs vary in many ways, such as in scope, size, resources, stability and location (Lovenduski, 2005), which influence their capacity in functioning within the state structure. However, state feminism scholars agree that the existence of WPAs has undoubtedly enabled women’s movements to influence public policy from inside the state structure, instead of previously solely working from outside the system (Stetson & Mazur, 2013).

On the other hand, there is scepticism regarding the motives and determination of the state to pursue feminist agendas, as it is seen as a scheme for the state to reduce the power of women’s movements (Alvarez, 1990; Kano, 2011). This is due to the pessimism of certain women’s movement groups regarding the state’s sincerity in addressing gender issues due to their volatile previous relationships. It also may result in bargaining.
situations whereby the state’s aim is to reduce the pressure exerted by women’s movements by offering them consolation in the form of the creation of state machinery dedicated to gender issues.

The policy environment also influences the state’s responses to women’s movements. An extensive study conducted by the RNGS identified three types of policy environments that influence the effectiveness of WPAs. The policy environment is important because it is able to encourage or discourage gendering process as proposed by women’s movements; ideally, these goals should be carried forward by the WPAs. The first and ideal policy environment is an open setting. In an open policy environment, the broad participation of various interest groups and individuals is welcomed, similar to the requirement for democracy to flourish. The environment is also more flexible and less hierarchal, resulting in a more equal setting. The second policy environment is classified as moderately open/closed. In this setting, there is some degree of organisation; however, opportunities and constraints are influenced by the power relationships that exist. The final type is closed, which means the environment is highly bound by rules and regulations. Participation in the system is also limited, which allows only certain levels and types of interest groups and individuals to participate in the political system. In contrast with an open policy environment, there is a major force that has the authority to make decisions and is in control of the whole environment (Lovenduski, 2005).

Limitations of State Feminism

Despite the advantages of state feminism in increasing the opportunities and access for women’s movements to enhance their voices and influences in gendering the public policy-making process, this study identifies the limitations of state feminism analytically and empirically. Although the previous literature has concentrated on the role of women’s
movements as a key dimension of state feminism (Stetson & Mazur, 1995; Friedman, 2000; Curtin, 2008), such movements are not sufficient in ensuring the success of state feminism, as the WPAs’ power positions also play a crucial role in ensuring the success of state feminism. Thus the current state feminism literature does not capture the effects of institutional changes such as change in leadership towards state feminism. In some cases, the momentum for state feminism scales down after a period of time due to political changes in the country. In a study on state feminism by Curtin (2008), she found that as liberal democratic systems perpetuate leadership changes according to voters’ demands, they also result in the replacement of feminist leaders once they fail to attract voters’ interests. This leads to state institutions reverting to “old values” once a feminist leader is absent from the powerful position, in turn leading to the scaling down of the importance of state feminism as part of the state’s institutions.

A similar case was observed by Sawer (2007) in her study of Australian state feminism. She found that the momentum of state feminism declined sharply due to changes in political leadership. The changes in the political environment resulted in the WPA being perceived hostilely by the non-feminist male political actors, and the existing dialogues on women-related issues became less enthusiastic. In such circumstances, Curtin (2008) argues that even though state feminism continues to exist in institutions, its impacts on policies are not consistent, thus it may be perceived as ineffective in later stages of its formation. This raises an important question on how the momentum of state feminism should be maintained throughout its existence and whether it is possible to ensure the state’s continuous commitment to addressing gender issues through state feminism.

Another limitation of the current state feminism scholarship is the lack of focus on the institutional structure of the WPA. Scheidegger (2014) proposes that there is a need to understand the governance aspect of the
WPA’s institutional setting to enable a more comprehensive outlook on the WPA as often, WPAs are constrained due to their scope of responsibility within the state’s bureaucratic context. Outshoorn in her works as part of the RNGS pioneer study (1995) examines the challenges faced by the Dutch WPA due to its restricted coordinating role, thus limiting its authority in working on gender issues. Outshoorn observes that a number of gender issues that can be part of the WPA’s responsibilities and concerns may already belong to other departments, so the WPA’s ability to initiate programmes and policies related to the issues may be confined. A similar observation was made by Stetson (1995) in her study of the Women’s Bureau in the United States, as the Women’s Bureau also lacks executive power. The Women’s Bureau mainly serves as an advisor to other governmental departments responsible for gender-related matters, such as the Secretary of Labor. However, Stetson notes that the Women’s Bureau has been proactive in raising awareness on women-related issues through publications and campaigns.

Although its initial motive of establishment was to promote gender equality in society, state feminism has faced backlashes and has received criticisms for being gender biased. In some circumstances, it is viewed as discriminatory against men, as the emphasis is put on women-related issues and it jeopardises the current status quo regarding men’s powerful position in society (Sawer, 2007). Interestingly, state feminism also incites discomfort among some groups in society, as it is seen as an agent of change by pushing the gender equality agenda (such as equal representation), which might disrupt the existing power balance in society.

This study also finds that the state feminism literature is empirically limited, as it has mostly concentrated on developed, Western, post-industrialised, liberal democratic settings (Stetson & Mazur, 1995; Lovenduski et al., 2005; Outshoorn & Kantola, 2007; Valiente, 2007). In most case studies, the findings have been restricted to similar conditions, despite
the variance of contexts and environments studied. There have been attempts to explore state feminism outside Western contexts (Wang, 2005; Kano, 2011); however, comparisons have not been made between these studies and studies in Western contexts, as they often stand as individual studies and lack intensity and in-depth analysis in comparison with the Western state feminism literature. Nevertheless, the studies in the Western literature on state feminism have found that almost all forms of state feminism have arisen from women’s movements’ demands for the greater participation of women in decision-making processes to achieve gender equality in society.

Despite that, non-western state feminism studies have identified three motivations for states to establish special-purpose bodies, often referred to as WPAs, to promote women’s interests apart from pressure from feminist movements. Firstly, the international political scene has leverage in influencing a state’s motivation to establish a WPA, as states often receive pressure from international actors. The establishment of WPAs is seen as a contemporary political trend, which encourages nation states to join the bandwagon of setting up their own WPAs (Kano, 2011). Moreover, pressure or encouragement from international organisations such as the UN through the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) ensures that member countries are committed to ensuring that their national agendas include plans to end discrimination against women. Therefore, signatory member countries show their commitments to their pledges by establishing a form of government agency that specialises in moving forward with feminist agendas and, in more-advanced cases, ensuring the mainstreaming of gender into policies and decision-making processes (Murase, 2006; Kano, 2011).

Secondly, besides pressure from the international scene, the domestic political environment also shapes a state’s motivation to establish a WPA, as
politicians aiming to garner votes from female voters may pledge their commitments to women’s issues and the enhancement of women’s status in society, depending on the political climate (Kano, 2011). Threlfall (1998) further exemplifies in her study that the women’s wings of political parties put far greater emphasis on gender issues, as they manage to introduce gender perspectives through their political parties. Thirdly, the establishment of a WPA or the rise of state feminism may also occur due to pressing national issues, such as the national demographic crisis in the case of Japan (Kano, 2011) and the process of nationalisation in Turkey (White, 2003), in which the state needs women’s participation. Hence, the state tries to appease and entice women to encourage them to act in ways in line with the state’s interest.

Despite this, there is a need to explore the compatibility of state feminism’s theoretical frameworks beyond the current settings to enrich the state feminism literature (Stetson & Mazur 2013, pp.657-658). This study discusses the diverse outlooks on state feminism by exploring the literature on state feminism in non-Western settings and how state institutions are gendered in post-colonial, conservative, and economically developing societies. It then proceeds by examining the challenges of the current state feminism theoretical frameworks that limit their transferability outside the Western, post-industrialised, liberal democratic contexts. It also analyses the ways to address the state feminism literature’s insufficiencies to enable it to be generalised beyond its existing settings by incorporating feminist institutionalism analytical tools to capture the gendered nature of the institutional setting in which the WPA operates in.

Arguably, the liberal democratic setting in Western countries has allowed the proliferation of interest groups (including women’s movements) that push for gender agendas to be included in the state’s policies. This explains the advanced position of state feminism in the Northern Hemisphere, which provides opportunities for researchers to study state feminist
institutions. In addition, researchers have access to adequate information due to the lower restrictions imposed on the state’s information in comparison with the restrictions in less-democratic settings in other parts of the world. The restricted access to research data and inadequate local knowledge perhaps explain the lack of interest for academic research to explore state feminism outside its Western logocentric approach. However, it has to be acknowledged that state feminism exists in various settings and cultures and requires immediate attention from academic scholars.

Valiente (2007) argues that incorporating diverse perspectives of state feminism will overcome the shortcoming of “the post-industrialised literature” in understanding state feminism. She further identifies three limitations in the post-industrialised contexts, which are: “unsatisfactory definitions of state feminism, incomplete analyses of the factors that influence the policy effectiveness of women’s agencies, and incorrect assumptions for the study of the relationship between gender equality offices and women’s movements” (p.531). It is discussed here that the current state feminism literature has not extensively studied the institutional aspects of state feminism, despite WPAs’ locations within state institutions. Thus, institutional perspectives on the capacity of WPAs in implementing gender empowerment initiatives are also crucial to providing in-depth analysis of state feminism outside Western-centric studies.

As mentioned by Valiente (2007), one of the assumptions of Western state feminism is the need for the existence of revolutionist feminist movements in order to exert strong pressure on the state to adopt feminist-friendly policies. Western state feminism studies have emphasised the bottom-up approach, which sees women’s movements on the ground mobilise themselves and push for governments to improve the policy-making systems and structures and be more gender inclusive (Stetson & Mazur, 1995, 2010). Women’s movements see protests, campaigns and lobbying as powerful methods to force governments to include feminist demands in
states' agendas. While this works in Western, liberal democratic countries, it is not replicable in other less-democratic contexts with strong state control.

Mazumdar (1977) argues that this is due to developing countries’ environments, where women are seen to be lacking in their feminist ideologies and are conditioned to be subservient and loyal to their local establishments, including state power. Therefore, the bottom-up approach in discussing state feminism is inadequate to explain state feminism in non-Western settings due to a number of factors. One of the factors is the type of government in charge. In many developing countries, states often claim that they practise democracy as part of their political systems when, in actual fact, they apply different versions of democracy than those practiced in the Western, liberal democratic context (Won, 2007; Kano, 2011). This is because the state holds strong power in determining the government’s actions and controls a wide range of activities in private spheres. This may hamper women’s movements in promoting their agendas to the state if the agendas are not congruent with the state’s objectives or go against the state’s interests.

Furthermore, the current literature on state feminism assumes that the bottom-up approach is utilised in discussing how women’s movements influence and exert pressure from the base of the state, which presupposes the existence of a strong base of women’s movements at the grassroots level that are fully equipped with appropriate resources to exert such pressure (cf. Stetson & Mazur, 1995; McBride & Mazur, 2010). This may not be applicable to settings in which women’s movement have limited sphere of operations due to limitations imposed by the state as well as lack of resources to function.

Despite the above, Htun (2003) and Charrad (1997) state that women’s movements do not necessarily have the initiative to form themselves into groups and to mobilise to pressure the state to be more gender inclusive. In the cases studied by Htun (2003), “a lot of force behind
the change of gender equality [...] came from middle-class male lawyers” (p.15). In the case of Tunisia, Charrad (1997) found that the reforms to the Tunisian Code of Personal Status that guarantee women’s recognition were initiated by “the leaders of urban, reformist faction [...] in the absence of feminist grassroots movements” (p.214). These studies outside the conventional Western paradigm illustrate the importance of other actors (especially those in the third sector) in analysing state feminism, which the current literature on state feminism overlooks due to their different experiences.

Consequently, the limited experience of feminism scholars in identifying the narratives of state feminism establishment from outside Western contexts has limited the theoretical frameworks of state feminism literatures to the role of women’s movements while disregard the other actors that play important roles in pushing forward gender issues to the state especially in non-Western settings such as the international organisations (i.e. the UNDP). This is perhaps due to the fact that the bottom-up approach by women’s movements in the experience of Western state feminism has successfully managed to pressure states through various channels (such as protests and campaigns) to be more gender inclusive.

Furthermore, the role of the state as a powerful institution is also very important in understanding non-Western state feminism, as the images of state in newly independent and developing countries are often strong; they are viewed as powerful entities for granting women their due rights in the absence of strong pressure from women’s movements on the ground. A number of studies on state feminism in Latin America have found that the creation of WPAs weakens the influence of women’s movements on the state, such as in the case of Chile (Waylen, 1996b; Baldez, 2001; Franceschet, 2003). Baldez (2001) puts forward that the establishment of El Servicio Nacional de la Mujer (SERNAM) was used by the state to maintain its status quo, as “the government not only failed to promote gender equality, but
adopted policies that weakened the ability of the women’s movements to establish an institutional foothold in the government” (p.3).

This suggests that women’s movements might be set aside by other more-powerful actors such as the state, thus they are less suitable to be used in the analysis of a state’s performance in its gender empowerment initiatives. This also means that an alternative explanation for a state’s motivations to establish state feminism is required, as a strong central state may also demobilise women’s movements instead of empowering them, even though the state adopts some degree of state feminism in its structure.

In another study, Charrad (1997) discovered that personal motivation is also a possible factor for strong state leadership to adopt and champion gender issues and had little relation with the influence of women’s movements asserting their demands on the state. This finding is in line with Valiente’s (2007) suggestion that the model to study state feminism should encompass a wide range of gender actors’ participation in society instead of categorising them into certain entities, which may neglect the contribution of other crucial gender actors that do not belong to either the state or women’s movements but have profound impacts on the study of state feminism.
STATE FEMINISM IN NON-WESTERN CONTEXTS

As previous academic work on state feminism has concentrated on case studies based in specific geographical and ideological spheres, this study observes the factors that are critical in understanding state feminism outside the Northern Hemisphere context. It is argued here that the Western experience and narrative are not necessarily applicable for studying state feminism in the Southern Hemisphere, even though they may have similar variables (such as economic status and liberal democratic ruling). For example, Japan has experienced parallel economic and technological advancement alongside gender inequality in a democratic political system (Murase, 2006; Kano, 2011). Therefore, it is worth exploring the implementation of state feminism in the imbalance between socio-economic conditions and gender empowerment initiatives.

Economic development has allowed women to participate in the labour market in societies that traditionally limited women’s participation to their families and households. Thus, the entrance of women into the labour market has increased women’s presence in society, and this situation has demanded that more attention be paid to their needs. Once women participate in the labour market, they significantly contribute to the state by sharing economic responsibilities for tasks that were typically held by men in the past. Moreover, with better access to education, women are more aware of their rights. Furthermore, research conducted by the World Bank found that there was a positive correlation between women’s education level and economic development (World Bank, 2003). As women have better access to education, they are more empowered with options to advance their careers into non-traditional sectors in modern societies, as women’s employment was previously limited to non-professional and labour-based sectors (such as textile or domestic industries).

However, this does not translate into a gender-friendly society, as shown in the case of Japan. This shows that economic factors (i.e.
industrialised society) do not result in a gender-equal society as intended by the proponents of state feminism. This insight leads to the key question that this thesis seeks to address in asking what the factors are that influence state feminism’s operations, as well as whether the model of measuring state feminism effectiveness in post-industrialised societies is adequate in understanding state feminism with different variants in the Southern Hemisphere. This research further discuss the factors that are under-represented in the current literature of state feminism but exist in the political setting of non-Western settings.

**Elements of Non-Western State Feminism**

As this study critiques the state feminism literature mainly due to its concentration on specific settings, this section analyses the elements that were absent or under-represented in previous studies of state feminism but exist in settings outside the Western Hemisphere and are crucial in examining non-Western state feminist institutions. In order to further understand state feminism outside the Western context, it is important to define how this study categorises Western and non-Western settings to identify which aspects of state feminism are specific to Western contexts and are not necessarily applicable to studying state feminism outside the setting.

Even though the discussion is geographically broad in nature, it is important to point out that for the purpose of this study, there are two criteria used to distinguish Western and non-Western contexts: 1) origin, which encompasses historical background, geographical location and civilisation, and 2) type of ruling, which means the political system in place. Therefore, this study categorises Western settings as Eurocentric societies, which include countries that are geographically remote from Europe but possess European origins, such as the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The “Western liberal democracy” setting refers to advanced
industrial societies with Eurocentric perspectives that have been experiencing stable and mature democratic political systems. Therefore, countries or contexts that do not fulfil these two criteria are categorised as non-Western contexts in this research.

This thesis identifies several elements that are underrepresented or absent from the Western, post-industrialised setting and how it influences the discussions on state feminism in non-Western setting.

**Colonial Legacy**

The stark contrast between Western and non-Western settings relates to the settings' historical contexts, as a number of non-Western countries are newly independent countries. Therefore, the long colonisation period provided these societies with important historical traits as to how they are structured and governed. The colonial legacy, which rarely exists in the Western liberal democratic context, undoubtedly plays an important role in shaping the social, economic and political aspects in the creation of these newly independent states. Furthermore, the new ruling types imposed by colonisers altered the existing patterns of these societies' landscapes (Siddiquee, 2013) and simultaneously altered the gender relations and structures of the societies (Waylen, 1996a). Waylen (1996a) points out that “colonial policies favoured an individualization of property rights and it was generally men who gained land titles, while women lost their rights to customary land” (p.57). Thus, colonisation placed women at the bottom of the societal hierarchy by giving them access to the labour market but simultaneously limiting their empowerment by not giving them power and control over their rights.

The colonial governments' actions and policies are also embedded in the post-independent state institutions of newly independent countries. Institutional behaviour and decisions are limited by the institutional setting
and the decisions made in the past, as “institutional development depends not only on satisfying current environmental and political conditions but also on an institution’s origin, history, and internal dynamics” (March & Olson, 1998, p.955). Therefore, colonisation has great impacts on the implementation of state feminism, as it imbues gender relations in the society and shapes institutional perspectives on gender through quondam rules and policies. Hence, it is crucial to investigate further the impacts of colonial legacy on the establishment of non-Western institutional WPAs.

Blackburn (2004) mentions in her study of Indonesia that the colonial leaders were cautious of women’s movements’ engagements with nationalist groups and therefore obstructed them from reaching the mass public living in the rural areas, in an attempt to stay in power. Hence, the women’s movement sphere of influence was limited to certain groups of society, mainly the educated women living in the urban areas, and this is reflected in the current demographic of the members of the Indonesian women’s movement. This also results in a division of interest on women’s issues, as the level of awareness on gender issues remains relatively low among women in rural areas.

On the other hand, colonisation could also have constructive effects on women’s movement mobilisation. In many cases, nationalist women’s movements have assisted in mobilising against the colonial power or in organising women in nation-building initiatives that comply with the state’s interests in post-independent periods (Waylen, 1996a; White, 2003; Blackburn, 2004; Kano, 2011). Women’s movements play a great role in fighting for independence, which contributes positively to the women’s movements’ relationships with post-independent state structures. This is

11 For further reading on the discussions on colonialism impacts on gender, refer to Gender in Third World Politics by Georgina Waylen pp.46-69. Although the discussions mainly concentrated on British colonialism in Africa and India, it touches on the process in which colonisation alters gender structures through the introduction of new laws and policies as well as the struggle for independence which give women space to mobilise as a group against the colonial power.
because the relationships are built to develop networks to achieve the same goal, which is to gain independence from the colonial powers.

Various women’s movements see independence as their common goal during pre-independence eras (thus working together despite their ideological, religious and socio-cultural differences) and view themselves as important contributors to the establishment of a newly independent state (Karam, 1998; Blackburn, 2004). In the case of Indonesia, the pre-independence networking between women’s movements and independence groups resulted in a progressive relationship between them. Therefore, the post-independent state institutions viewed their relationships with the women’s movements as valuable and were willing to negotiate with the women’s movements and implement women-friendly initiatives to improve women’s status in the society, such as by offering better access to education. Despite this, the post-independent period saw the women’s movements become divided, as the common objective of gaining independence ceased to exist and the differences in ideologies among the women’s movements started to surface (Blackburn, 2004).

**Nationalisation**

As a number of non-Western countries are newly independent countries, the nationalisation process is often used as a means to group nations together and is used as a common identity and goal to unite the countries. In certain circumstances, women’s movements are used by the state to impose a nationalisation agenda on women in the society. The state’s motivation in promoting gender issues may stem from the state’s interests and their view on women as a valuable tool to achieve its planned objectives (White, 2003; Murase, 2006; Kano, 2011). Kano (2011) suggests that the state’s enthusiasm to implement and promote gender empowerment initiatives is due to a national crisis in which the state needs women’s cooperation to overcome the crisis. Thus, the state’s engagement with
gender actors (such as women’s movements) and its commitment in establishing WPAs may not be as effective, as it places the state’s interests prior to women’s interests. Therefore, only women’s interests that are deemed to be compatible with and supportive of the state’s interests are highly considered and given priorities (Howell, 1998; Wang, 2005; Kano, 2011).

White (2003) discovered that the nationalists’ emphasis on women’s roles as mothers and housekeepers in the midst of the Westernisation and modernisation of the country embedded and nurtured modern and Western-based Turkish values in their family sphere. Thus, the state recognised the importance of engaging with women’s movements to instil and proliferate the state’s ideology in order to achieve its national aim and to influence the public to adopt the state’s mission, despite women being viewed by the state in their traditional gender role.

Accordingly, the state’s cooperation with women’s groups through opening access for women to be more active and visible in the public sphere did not alter its perspective on traditional gender roles. The state’s gender empowerment initiatives were often constrained by its socio-cultural stance in defining the appropriate conducts and places for women and their appropriateness with national interests (White, 2003; Murase, 2006; Kano, 2011). White (2003) further states that in the example of the Turkish government, it utilised a top-down approach in its attempt to alter the traditional gender relations by emulating the Western style in order to modernise the country, despite paradoxically engaging women in their traditional gender roles as mothers and housekeepers. Therefore, despite its efforts by changing religious law and adopting secular codes that were deemed more equal, the notion of women’s roles in the society remained unchanged.
Types of Government

Another aspect that is worth considering in examining the applicability of state feminism in the non-Western context is the different types of government that exist in the world. A dominant state has a high influence in shaping the implementation of state feminism in the country. Howell (1998) names two factors that shape state feminism in a state-centric society (such as a socialist country). In her study on China’s state feminism, she points out that due to the state’s strong control over the society, it has been difficult to establish an effective women’s movement outside the government’s realm. Therefore, with a weak civil society (the third sector), the state is not pressured by external forces to improve or change their behaviours towards gender issues, due to the “continuing pressure to subordinate gender interests to the policy priorities of Marxist-Leninist parties; and second, the absence of a sphere of radical and reformist women’s organisations which are autonomous of the ruling parties” (Howell, 1998, p.169).

Howell’s (1998) and Wang’s (2005) studies found that the Chinese government’s motivation to emancipate women is intrinsic and is contributed by the strong influence of China’s only political party, as women’s organisations are established under the official party’s structure. Moreover, the classless political ideology of the party entails equal treatment for all. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) showed their commitment to gender issues by creating an official medium for women to enhance their economic and political status, as well as by focusing on policies that affect women directly, such as the issue of bigamy and legislation to grant women equal rights to citizenship and land (Wang, 2005).

Some criteria of successful state feminism have been put forward by Stetson and Mazur (1995): strong feminist movements, a state-centric society and coordinated efforts between government agencies. However, even if these are fulfilled, it may still not be possible to achieve “the highest level of state feminism” due to other factors (Baldez, 2011). She argues that apart from the abovementioned conditions, the government’s structure also
plays an important role in determining the effectiveness of state feminism. She puts forward that a single-party government or a multi-party coalition have different results on state feminism’s implementation. She notes that there when there is greater competition among the political parties, it might be more difficult for feminist policies to be implemented, as they have to go through more gatekeepers with different intentions and aims before being passed successfully.

Negative Perception

Another element of non-Western state feminism is the negative perception due to the notion of feminist agendas being obstructive elements from the West. This negative connotation of feminist agendas lends itself towards adverse state perceptions of feminist agendas and backlash towards the implementation of gender issues by the state. Despite this seemingly oversimplified accusation, studies in non-Western contexts have identified this issue as an obstacle that feminists in the Southern Hemisphere have to overcome (White, 2003; Murase, 2006; Kano, 2011).

Women’s identities are frequently seen in conformity with their traditional roles in society; thus, feminist agendas often pose challenges to women’s conservative identities, leading to the perception that feminist initiatives are an effort to deconstruct the society’s structure and cause volatility in the society (White, 2003; Blackburn, 2004; Murase, 2006; Wang, 2010; Kano, 2011). Htun and Weldon (2010) point out that a government is more likely to adopt non-doctrinal policies that do not question the traditional and conservative values held by the society in comparison with doctrinal policies that are more susceptible towards resistance from powerful religious and conservative groups in the society. This may explain the lack of debates on sensitive gender issues in conservative societies, which hampers the progress of gender empowerment initiatives.
Furthermore, feminism scholars suggest that there exist hierarchical relations that result in the domination of certain groups over other groups, hence feminism must focus beyond the gender subordination of males and females and include all types of gender subordination and injustices (Golden, 1994; Badgett, 1995). Therefore, the issue of the unjust treatment and discrimination received by marginalised groups due to their gender and sexual orientation (such as LGBT and transgender) have also become part of the feminist agenda, which results in a lack of support for feminist agendas in conservative societies (Won, 2007). This is important because the notion of identity itself is influenced by many other factors apart from gender, such as race, ethnicity, class and sexual orientation. All these elements (including gender) constitute one’s identity, which may strongly manipulate and be manipulated by the power relations in a society.

Blackburn (2004) identifies that the incompatibility of feminist agendas with conservative values (such as religious teachings) result in the confrontation between feminist organisations that attempt to pressure the government to adopt liberal gender policies with religious groups that oppose the implementation of those policies, as they are seen as disruptive to the society’s stability and harmony. Furthermore, in a study by McKinsey & Company (2012), it was found that the existing strong patriarchal culture has not changed radically in Asian environments, as there are imbedded beliefs that women cannot achieve all-round success, as career and family responsibilities are viewed as contradictory to one another.

Due to this negative perception, it is uncommon for women’s movements and state feminism in non-Western contexts to associate themselves with feminist agendas due to the unfavourable image of feminism as destructive to society’s elements, particularly marriage and family (Mazumdar, 1977). Thus, women’s movements do not necessarily entail feminist agendas, as there are women’s movements that cannot be classified
as feminist organisations due to ideological differences in regard to gender
issues (Beckwith, 2000; Ferree, 2006).

Women’s movements that support the preservation of women’s
traditional status in society and uphold conservative gender relations values
should not be categorised as feminist groups. There are also women’s
movements that are classified as feminist based on issues on which they
may agree with feminist organisations while disagreeing on other issues.
This may influence the implementation of state feminism in non-Western
settings, as the concept of feminism itself is viewed negatively, resulting in
the segregation of women’s issues and feminist agendas by both women’s
movements and WPAs (Won, 2007). Thus, despite economic transformation
and efforts to emulate Western styles of modernisation, a state may still view
feminist ideas through their own socio-cultural lens (Htun & Weldon, 2011).
Kano (2011) cites that state feminism also faces being regarded as an
extension of foreign ideologies that are not suitable to local cultures and
customs.

Political Environment

Valiente (2007) proposes that there are a number of elements that
should be taken into consideration in discussing non-Western state feminism,
including the political climate of the country, as political instability undermines
WPAs’ capability to function effectively. Political instability entails that there
are frequent changes at the WPA or national level, which may hamper any
development and progress made by WPAs. Furthermore, political instability
often compels the government in power to focus its attention on retaining
political power rather than on actually implementing gender empowerment
initiatives, which are seen as less urgent.

Another important element of the political environment is political
legacies, which include the establishment of gendered institutions. Baldez
(2011) explains that the gendered pattern of institutions weakens WPAs “in terms of their budget and their ability to implement policies”, with men’s political participation highly favoured compared to that of women (p.5). WPAs are also often put under budget constraints, as they are perceived as less crucial by the state in comparison with more-established organisations within the state infrastructure, so WPAs often experience difficulty in trying to achieve their objectives (Baldez, 2001; Htun; 2001; Rai, 2003; Won, 2007).

**Challenges of Non-Western State Feminism Analysis.**

The state feminism literature thrives on the strong comparative analytical frameworks of Western, post-industrialised, liberal democratic case studies. However, there are insufficient in-depth studies on state feminism in non-Western contexts, despite the growing interest in gender politics in Southern Hemisphere countries. Consequently, the current state feminism literature is not specific and thorough enough in exploring the state’s role in advancing feminist interests. Although numerous state feminism studies in non-Western contexts have examined the relationship between the state and gender actors, the authors rarely discuss the institutional context in which the WPA operates in that influence state feminism’s capacity in executing gender empowerment initiatives (Charrad, 1997; Howell, 1998; White, 2003; Kano, 2011).

Such studies have been very diverse in term of their focus, ranging from a historical perspective of women’s movements’ relations with the state to gender structures in the society, and have not necessarily been specific regarding the state’s role in eliminating gender discrimination through gender empowerment initiatives. This discourages the application of comparative analysis to build robust methodological frameworks that can be applied in the study of non-Western state feminism. Many of the studies on non-Western state feminism have been conducted on individual countries (Karam, 1998;
Htun, 2003; White, 2003; Murase, 2006; Wang, 2010; Kano, 2011), but they have not delved into developing theoretical frameworks to enable comparative analysis with non-Western state feminism, as has been conducted for Western state feminism (Stetson & Mazur, 1995; McBride & Mazur, 2013; Lovenduski et al., 2005; Outshoorn, 2007).

However, the oversimplification of categorisation may lead to bias and stereotypes, and lumping all non-Western, liberal democratic contexts into one category will overlook the many differences that exist between these countries. Although they share similar traits and characteristics, they are also very diverse in term of historical backgrounds and religious and ideological affiliations, as well as geographical locations. Despite this, state feminism in non-Western settings exists in different forms and thrives on distinct factors in comparison to its counterparts in Western contexts. This study recognises the limitations of state feminism theoretical framework in explaining state feminism outside Western, post-industrialised liberal democracies. It is important to recognise that state feminism occur in different political system that operate on different values. It also does not provide framework to explain the influence of different types of institutional developments especially in post-colonial countries such as Malaysia.

Therefore, it is unjustified to measure the successes and failures of state feminism in non-Western contexts based on the existing state feminism theoretical frameworks, as they have been studied in different circumstances. There is a crucial gap in the literature and a need for the current state feminism theoretical frameworks and empirical studies to be enhanced and expanded to accommodate various versions of state feminism. Certain controversial areas (i.e. reproduction rights, abortion and family law) are often subjected to societal values and norms (Htun & Weldon, 2010, 2011). Thus, overlooking the differences in societal values may distort the real discussion of the implementation of state feminism in non-Western societies.
Furthermore, although the current state feminism literature delves into assessing the effectiveness of state feminism and the factors that contribute to a successful model of state feminism, it does not explore further the elements that determine WPAs' capacity to function within state structures. As non-Western state feminism operates in different contexts and requires alternative explanations, there is a need for us to adopt other theoretical perspectives that enable us to capture the elements that play crucial roles within the establishment and operation of state feminism in non-Western settings that state feminism scholars have overlooked due to their limited experiences. In addition, there is a need to develop expanded analytical methods as the first step to comparative studies of non-Western state feminism.

Therefore, in order to address the inadequacies of the current literature on state feminism, this study recognises that there is a crucial need to observe and analyse WPAs from a wider institutional perspective to capture the elements that are interplay in state institution that shapes the capacity of the WPA as an important element of state feminism. It is argued here that by employing an institutional lens in understanding the institutions of state feminism, it is possible to position a WPA within its wider state institutional setting and to enable the transferability of state feminism frameworks to non-Western contexts, such as Malaysia as it develops of more comprehensive approach of state feminism’s analysis outside its current focus of Western, post-industrialised setting.
FEMINIST INSTITUTIONALISM AND THE STUDY OF STATE FEMINISM

This research recognises the insufficiency of the state feminism literature in explaining state feminism outside its current realm of Western, post-developed, liberal democratic settings. Therefore, there is a need for cross-cutting approaches to be utilised in explaining and understanding state feminism in developing and semi-democratic contexts, such as Malaysia. This study recognises the importance of understanding the state institution as it is considered as a strong gender actor in a state-centric society. Thus, this study identifies feminist institutionalism approach which analyse the gendered nature of social and political institutions and the methods that these institutions employ to promote gendered outcomes of public policy (Lovenduski, 2011). McBride and Mazur (2010) discuss utilising new institutionalist approaches to study state feminism as it allows the understanding of the influence of state’s architectural design on state feminism. This research however, expands the discussion of state feminism by identifying feminist institutionalism analytical tools especially the discussion of formal and informal rules in understanding the capacity of state feminism. This allows this study to capture elements within state institution that affects state feminism outside its current Western and post-industrialised settings.

Feminist institutionalism approach mainly borrows the perspective of new institutionalism which benefits from the revived attention in institutions scholarship, and seeks to steer the focus of political study from political actors towards the importance of institutions in shaping the outcomes of political decisions. New institutionalism moves away from the classical approach of behaviourism, which focuses on the micro-level analysis of actors’ actions in determining policy outcomes. The renewed interest in the role of institutions concerns the ways in which institutions’ behaviours are shaped by various factors, such as predecessors’ legacies and the roles of
formal and informal rules within the institutions, encompassing the norms, cultures and values embedded in the institutions (Chappell & Waylen, 2013).

Thus, new institutionalism provides opportunities for feminist political science scholars to analyse institutions through a gender lens and to identify the gender bias that exists within institutions. Stetson and Mazur (2013) argue that institutionalism scholars often study institutions by employing a gender-neutral perspective. Thus, as gender elements are often overlooked by new institutionalism scholars, feminist political science scholars enrich the discussions on institutions by introducing gender elements in explaining the complex processes inside institutions and the dynamics of institutional behaviours (Kenney, 1996, Mackay, Kenny & Chappell, 2010). Lovenduski (2010) argues that new institutionalism benefits feminism scholars due to its recognition of the elements that constitute an institution, which include “norms, values and ideas, incentive systems and its ability to explain the persistence of social structures” (p.ix).

In order to understand feminist institutionalism further, it is important to understand how the adoption of gender lens enrich the study of institutions. Hall (1986) defines institutions as the “formal rules, compliance procedures and standard operating practices that structure relationships between individuals in various units of the polity and the economy” (pp.19-20). Guy Peters (1999) proposes four features of institutions: first, institutions consist of formal and informal structures, such as government agencies and the organisations’ links and networks. Second, institutions must also be stable, as stability is needed to ensure that organisations function over time with consistency, resulting in high predictability of the institutions’ behaviours. In addition, institutions must also have the ability to affect and influence individual actors’ behaviours through the dynamic interaction of formal and informal rules and norms, as institutions must be able to restrain or promote certain types of behaviours in accordance with the institutions’ requirements. Fourth, institutions should be able to represent uniformity among their
members, including commonly held values and norms; this induces or restrains members’ behaviours to be in accordance with the institutions’ prerequisites and principles. Thus, institutionalism provides meso-level analysis to examine the elements that shape and determine political behaviours and outcomes, which enables in-depth studies of the role of the state and the relevant actors in advancing gender agendas.

However, institutions are not gender neutral, due to the “mobilisation of masculine bias” (Burton, 1991, as cited in Krook & Mackay, 2010), and feminist political scientists have acknowledged the limitations of the new institutionalism approach as it often neglects the fact that institutions are gender-biased (Kenny & Mackay, 2009). Recognising the importance of engaging the gender perspective in exploring institutional roles in shaping gender relations in society, feminist institutionalism explores and investigates the gender dimensions of institutions and the impacts on the perceived gender roles in society (Krook & Mackay, 2010). Chappell (2010) further sums up the importance and contributions of feminist institutionalism in understanding the effects of institutional dimensions on gender relations in policy-making processes and on the actors behind institutions’ decisions:

“...it could contribute to an understanding of the policies, laws and norms that are the outcomes of these institutions and that fundamentally shape gender relations within society. Finally, it could assist in explaining the relationship between these institutions and social actors. Understanding this particular relationship is especially important for those interested in identifying the opportunities available to feminist activists pursuing a gender equality agenda through the state” (p.183).

Feminist institutionalism seeks to understand gendered power relations and how they perpetuate the gendered nature of institutions. There is a need to analyse the processes that occur within institutions and the interactions between the components that contributed to the institutions’
gendered establishment and identify the mechanisms to change institutional gendered setting. Feminist political scholars have identified the need to expand gender study beyond an exclusive focus on women and feminist movements and engage critical actors such as the state to further understand how to achieve gender equality in society, as well as to apprehend the gendered disposition of the incentives and deterrents imposed by institutional structures on political actors (Kenny & Mackay, 2009, Krook & Mackay, 2010). Thus, new institutionalism has captured the attention of feminism scholars, as it provides tools to analyse the gendered nature of institutions and the engagement of feminist actors and institutions in particular the state modifies institutional gendered characteristics (Mazur & McBride, 2010) and this leads to the formation of feminist institutionalism approach. The three main strands of new institutionalism are as follows: 1) historical institutionalism, 2) sociological institutionalism and 3) rational choice institutionalism. These strands of new institutionalism becomes the basis of feminist institutionalism approaches as they provides analytical tools for feminist institutionalism to analyse the ways institutional structures and behaviours are gendered.

Feminist sociological institutionalism (FSI) focuses on the role of symbols, norms, values and cultural aspects in shaping an institution’s gender perspectives, and vice versa. However, despite its usefulness for feminism scholars, social institutionalism is viewed as inadequate in tackling the core questions of gender concerns, such as the strategic actions of gender actors, the power relations within institutions and institutional change processes (Mackay et al., 2009, p.254), as the analysis of social institutionalism fails to account for the conflicts that occur within institutions' establishment to enable political actors to achieve their predetermined goals.

By contrast, the main argument of feminist rational choice institutionalism is that gender aspects play a vital role in determining political actors’ behaviours; the differences in cost–benefit analysis between male
and female actors should be recognised, as they place disparate weighing on calculative factors. This results in differences in behaviour and decisions, even in similar circumstances (Krook & Mackay, 2010). Through the adoption of rational choice institutionalism, feminism scholars are able to identify the institutional constraints and motivations that affect political actors’ calculations in choosing their strategies for moving their agendas forward (Driscoll & Krook, 2009). Despite this, feminist rational choice institutionalism is unable to explain how actors are constrained by the challenges that oblige them to act not in their best interests as proposed by rational choice institutionalism.

However, historical institutionalism (HI) stresses the historical legacies of institutional features and how these legacies act to structure the choices and decisions actors make in institutional settings. HI describes the features of institutional development as path dependent, with change occurring following critical junctures, to help to explain the various endogenous and exogenous changes in institutions (Hall & Taylor, 1996; Skocpol & Pierson, 2002; Waylen, 2009). Feminist institutionalism views this as an opportunity to analyse gender bias in institutions, as previous establishments of institutions reflected different priorities due to historical domination by men.

It also enables feminist institutionalists to examine the time dimension of institutional behaviour through a path-dependency tool (Chappell, 2002; Krook & Mackay, 2010), as institutional initial behaviours and decisions influence current practices and affect men and women in society differently. This is because “the role of actors within a political system can be understood only by investigating, over time, the nature of the institutions within that system” (Chappell, 2002, p.8). In addition, feminist HI recognises that institutional settings are able to pose structural constraints for political actors in achieving their gender goals. The notion of a critical juncture utilised by HI in explaining institutional capability to adapt to changes is used by
feminist HI to analyse how institutions adapt and respond to feminist demands (Waylen, 2009).

Moreover, feminist institutionalism tends to adopt HI perspectives due to their capability to explain the processes that institutions face that influence their behaviour (Lovenduski, 2011; Waylen, 2011), such as institutional adaptation to changes by undergoing through various processes (e.g. layering, conversion, displacement and drift) (Krook & Mackay, 2009, p.186). This is relevant to this study, which focuses on a WPA in Malaysia that was recently established and how it is positioned within the existing state structure. The layering process, which refers to new institutional elements being added to older ones, explains the position and relationship of the WPA within its institutional context.

The importance of understanding institutional changes is that many state feminist agencies (such as WPAs) are comparatively new compared to older and more-established institutional elements within the state. Thus, the establishment of a WPA is seen as part of the state’s response to the changes in society that demand the greater inclusion of women’s agendas in decision-making processes. A feminist HI approach also enables scholars to examine a new organisation’s behaviour within the state structure, including whether it is constrained by its predecessors (path-dependence effects) or whether it has the option to create its future outcomes without being tightly restrained by the rules, procedures and other elements that had been previously established.

Although institutions have always been perceived as stable, institutions are not change-proof, as changes are inevitable and there are always events and evolutions in society’s cultural values and norms that may alter institutional behaviour and structures. Hence, these changes alter institutional guidelines regarding behaviour, as what is currently considered as appropriate may not be suitable in future settings due to the changes that occur. Although institutions may have been established with patriarchal traits
(Kenny, 2007), the reshaping of gender norms in institutions is possible due to the increasingly important role of change agents (Chappell, 2010).

As political feminism has expanded discussions on the importance of analysing institutions using a gender lens, the powerful institution of the state has a particular interest in expanding the reach of feminist institutionalism, as it has great impacts on political decision making. A component of the state that has great influence is a WPA as a means for the state to advance feminists’ interests in the country. As discussed in the previous section of this chapter, the WPA is part of the state machinery that is specifically dedicated to championing gender issues and can be considered as an agent of change that tries to reshape gender norms and values from inside the state structure.

Feminist institutionalism seeks to understand the gendered power structures within institutions and how they influence decision-making processes. Therefore, there is a need to analyse the processes within institutions and the interactions between the components that constitute the institutions; this study focuses on state institutions. Borrowing from new institutionalism, which acknowledges the role of formal and informal rules in shaping political actors’ behaviours (Levitsky & Slater, 2011), feminist institutionalists argue that formal and informal rules and norms are not free from gender bias and, more often than not, dictate the gender dimensions of institutions (Waylen, 2013).

While formal rules are easily recognised because they are communicated through various official channels, informal rules are more intangible. Helmke and Levitsky (2004) define informal institutions as involving “socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created communicated and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels” (p.727). In addition, informal rules are more difficult to recognise in comparison with formal rules but have the same impacts in influencing institutional behaviours and at times override the implementation of formal rules (Levitsky & Slater, 2011; Waylen, 2013). Therefore, it is crucial to
examine the dynamic interactions of formal and informal rules, especially in regard to gender issues, to understand further how institutions (especially dedicated agencies) respond and adapt to these rules.

New institutionalism also delves into the concept of power and studies how power is exercised, amplified or used as the main tool of existing power holders to implement rules, procedures and norms that will allow them to maintain their positions at the top of the power hierarchy in institutions. The feminist perspective of new institutionalism through feminist institutionalism approach has helped scholars to understand and determine the ways in which political power is used and manifested, in maintaining conservative gendered institutional setting or provides understanding on how institution change their conservative behaviours and perspectives towards gender. Thus, feminist institutionalism provides scholars with more capacity to analyse the gendered nature of institutional behaviours, as it is more encompassing in its approach due its comprehensive definition of institutions and its recognition of various factors such as the time dimension in understanding institutional behaviour (Chappell, 2002; Lovenduski, 2011).

The feminist institutionalism literature, however, has been limited to specific Western, Eurocentric settings, as it suffers the same setback as state feminism: there have been limited opportunities for feminism scholars to venture outside the Western, developed and liberal democratic setting. Therefore, this study aims to enrich the feminist institutionalism literature by examining the implementation of state feminism in Malaysia. This is done by using feminist institutionalism's conceptual tools (especially the dynamic relations of formal and informal rules) to analyse the capacity of the Malaysian WPA in implementing gender agendas in a semi-democratic and economically developing setting. The cross-cutting approach of using state feminism’s theoretical frameworks and feminist institutionalism’s analytical tools also contributes to constructing more robust and expansive analytical
methods, especially in an effort to develop comparative studies of non-Western state feminism.

UNDERSTANDING CRITICAL GENDER CONCEPTS

This section examines the important terminologies used in this study such as gender, gender equality, and gender empowerment to set out further discussions in the subsequent chapters especially Chapter Seven.

Gender has always been a contested term for feminist scholars as often it acquires categorical distinction of category between ‘gender’ and ‘women’. However, ‘gender’ has more complex definitions in comparison to ‘women’ as it covers more than just the binary biological differentiation of sex categories of men and women. The usage of the term gender denotes socialisation process as Acker (1992) defines gender as “the patterning of difference and domination through distinctions between women and men that is integral to many societal processes” (p.566). This study discuss gender in line with Waylen’s (1996a) proposition that that the usage of gender as analytical category enables feminist studies to capture other elements that are involved such as “the social relations between men and women” (p.6). The research employs the term gender to stress the differences of state institution’s behaviour and perspective towards men and women in which the WPA in Malaysia operates in.

Gender equality is a concept that often being associated with the discussion on gender as gender is socially constructed, it shapes how society defines the roles and acceptable behaviours of men and women. This results in gender gap for access to political, social, and economic power as men maintain their dominance while women are often lack behind as they do not have appropriate access to these powers (Grown, Gupta & Kes, 2005). Therefore, gender equality refers to long-term goal that men and women
have equal access to political, social and economic power and the barriers towards this disparity between sexes are eliminated.

The third term this study employs is “gender empowerment initiatives”, which empowerment is defined as “[the] process of enhancing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes” (World Bank, 2007). Empowerment processes can be assessed from various purviews, including that of the state (World Bank, 2007). The focal point of this research focusses on the capacity of the state in narrowing gender gap in the society. As women often face greater gender-based disadvantages in society globally, this study employs the term gender empowerment initiatives synonymously with women empowerment. Grown et.al (2005) proposes that gender equality and women empowerment are related but dissimilar as empowerment relates to the capability of women to be in charge of their own future.

Moreover, this research takes the position that the term “gender empowerment initiatives” is often used to refer to the long-term action plans adopted to achieve gender equality in a society. Hence, adopting the term “gender empowerment” allows the research to conduct thorough analysis on the WPA’s capacity in implementing its gender related agendas as it focusses on the process of achieving gender equality by the state. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the term “gender empowerment” rather than “gender equality” better reflects the policies and plans of the WPA in Malaysia, despite the two terms often being used interchangeably in the WPA’s official documents and publications. Hence, in the absence of a definition of gender equality that fits the Malaysian context, it is more productive for this research to focus on “gender empowerment” initiatives, which seek to narrow the gender gaps in the society in the efforts to achieve a gender equal society.

Therefore, this research limits its analysis to gender empowerment initiatives and does not seek to discuss the concept of gender equality in
Malaysian society as the main focus of this study. This enables this study to focus on the main subject: which is the capacity of the WPA as an agent of state feminism in its gender empowerment initiatives.

**STUDYING STATE FEMINISM IN MALAYSIA UTILISING FEMINIST INSTITUTIONALISM ANALYTICAL TOOLS**

This study examines four main determinants that are crucial in analysing the capacity of WPAs in non-Western contexts and of the Malaysian WPA that is specifically the focus of this research, which is the MWFCD (see Chapters Four to Seven). These factors are identified by examining state feminism and feminist institutionalism literatures to enable this research examine how the institutional setting in which the WPA operates in, shapes its capacity to function.

The first key determinant to examine is the institutional structure established for the Malaysian WPA. According to a UN report (2010), an institution’s structure has been identified as an important element to be studied, as it “reflects the value attached to (its) their mandate” (p.20). Furthermore, the way the WPA is established serves as the foundation of the agency, in which many other areas (such as resources, networks and mandates) are dependent on the institutional structure of the WPA (UN, 2010). The institutional structure of a WPA is also often related to the measurement of the WPA’s effectiveness (Mackay & Meier, 2011). By understanding the institutional design of the WPA in Malaysia, this thesis is able to gauge the capacity of the WPA based on its type, location and structure and how the institutional design of the WPA is influenced by certain factors that are absent in the Western democratic setting, such as strong state authority and the British colonial legacy.

The second key aspect to examine to understand the institutional capacity of the Malaysian WPA is the resources at its disposal. Resources
are often the most critical part of any agency’s efforts to implement gender empowerment initiatives. Rai (2003) and McBride and Mazur (2012) identify resources as a crucial part of WPA operations, as resources indicate the strength of political will of other actors in implementing gender empowerment initiatives. Annesley and Gains (2010) observe that access to resources is crucial for actors to be able to push forward gender agendas. The absence of adequate resources will also reduce a WPA’s capacity to employ its plans for gender empowerment. Thus, in addressing this question, this thesis reveals the types of resources available to the Malaysian WPA, the access to and authority it has over its resources, and the ways in which the WPA utilises its resources. The structure of resources allocation and distribution is often formalised but at times, relies on informal rules such as political resources of influential individuals within the Agency.

The third factor in explaining the capacity of the Malaysian WPA is the relationships and networking of the agency, as the existing state feminism literature focuses on the relationship between women’s movements and WPAs to push forward gender issues in the policy-making arena (Stetson & Mazur, 1995; Rai, 2003; McBride & Mazur, 2012). This emphasises the importance of other actors within the institutional context of a WPA’s operation for it to be able to function. However, this study specifically recognises the importance of other actors within a strong state society (such as Malaysia) that limit the participation of women’s movements; these actors include other governmental agencies and international organisations. Furthermore, a study by Annesley and Gains (2010) found a link between networks and the exchange of resources between actors in the UK institutional setting. This highlights the importance of exploring what kinds of networks and relationships the WPA in Malaysia has with other actors and how they influence the WPA’s capacity to implement gender empowerment initiatives.
The fourth feature to examine to understand the capacity of the Malaysian WPA is how the mission and vision of the WPA are shaped by its institutional capacity. Scholars have identified the importance of a clear and explicit mission and vision for agencies that advance gender agendas in the policy-making arena (Rai, 2003; McBride & Mazur 2010). Thus, it is crucial to understand how the Malaysian WPA’s capacity in terms of its institutional structure and its resources for networking and developing relationships with other actors shape the WPA’s mission and vision by addressing this question through policy analysis of the WPA.

This research aims to analyse the Malaysian WPA by taking a feminist institutionalist approach to capture the dynamic interactions of formal and informal rules surrounding the operation of the WPA. It also allows for further exploration of state feminism in non-Western contexts, as the feminist institutionalism lens provides transferable analytical tools, especially through the examination of both the formal and informal rules to capture and understand the factors that contribute to a WPA’s capacity, particularly in Malaysia as the setting of this study. This thesis argues that there is a crucial need to understand various forms of state feminism that exist across the globe through a cross-cutting analysis of state feminism theoretical framework and feminist institutionalist analytical approach as it provide transferrable insights as it is able to capture the various elements such as different values and institutional development that influence the implementation of state feminism beyond Western liberal countries and into the capacity of state feminist institutions in executing gender empowerment initiatives in an economically developing and semi-democratic country, and operates on different value system such as Asian values as in the case of Malaysia.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

Following the previous chapter, which extensively discussed the debates and literature surrounding the state’s role in promoting gender-related agendas, this chapter addresses the research’s methodological options and the research processes employed by this study. While Chapter One established the background of the case study setting, Chapter Two ascertained the scope of previous literature and theoretical frameworks surrounding the study of the state’s gender machinery and identified the research gap to be examined by this research. Therefore, Chapter Three is dedicated to the research methodology and framework used to structure the research project in identifying and obtaining the necessary information.

There are many research process models that can be followed. Burnham et al. (2008), for example, describe a linear model of the research process as follows:

1. Theory specification and the development of hypotheses
2. Data specification
3. Data collection
4. Data analysis
5. Publication

Even though in reality the research process might not go through the linear process described, the model gives guidelines on the research process that a researcher has to go through in order to achieve well-built research. This chapter elaborates on this study’s research methodologies, the theoretical framework, the data collection methods and the sources of information used to ensure the reliability and credibility of this research. This chapter concludes with the challenges and limitations of the research project, as well as the key concepts that are used throughout the study.
RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This research revolves around the state’s capacity in the implementation of gender empowerment initiatives through its dedicated organisation. This study concentrates on a specific agency in a single setting: a WPA in Malaysia, namely the MWFCD, which is located within the state’s institutional setting as a full ministerial agency. In the absence of rich literature on state feminism in non-Western contexts, this thesis seeks to demonstrate that the WPA’s capacity regarding non-Western state feminism varies. This thesis also offers a new perspective on the existing state feminism model by embedding the feminist institutionalism analytical tool especially the formal and informal rules in its analysis. Therefore, this study applies a holistic single case study approach, which enables in-depth and comprehensive analysis of the Malaysian institution’s capacity in gender empowerment initiatives.

A case study is defined as:

“…an empirical inquiry that: 1) investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when 2) the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009, p.18).

In addition, Yin (2003) suggests that a case study design is appropriate when the researcher does not have the ability to manipulate the behaviour of the participants in the research and if the researcher aims to include the contextual settings of the phenomenon being studied. Edwards and Talbot also proposed that the case study is useful in providing detailed accounts on the subject of study or in exploratory research as it is able to provide in-depth knowledge on the matter (1999). Thus, a case study approach enables the researcher to capture the intensity and dynamics of an organisation’s
operation in a specific setting, such as the WPA in Malaysia. It also allows the researcher to acquire a deeper understanding of the organisation’s capacity within the specific socio-cultural and political context and to produce output of theoretical relevance, thus adding to the established literature. In the case of the present research, this refers to the literature on the state’s women’s machinery and feminist institutionalism and the applicability of the existing theoretical frameworks to other areas across the globe.

However, case study research is often criticised for not being scientific enough as a research method. It is dissimilar to experimental research, in which the environment is controlled and therefore the variables can be isolated and controlled, which can lead to the identification of strong causal relationships. Despite this, case study research has been used because it allows a greater and more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Contrasting with purely quantitative methods, which focus more on statistics and numbers, case study research permits a researcher to delve further and to understand the phenomenon being studied from the actors’ perspectives, as it is able to include the actors’ perspectives in the observation, reconstruction and analysis of the phenomenon (Tellis, 1997).

Yin (1984, 2009) outlines three main criticisms of case study research. The first criticism of case study research is that due to its flexibility, it lacks the rigour needed by academic research. Yin mentions that the carelessness of case study researchers in following systematic research procedures or allowing researchers’ bias to enter into their research leads to sloppy research. This may not easily occur in other types of research methods due to the clear methodological guidance available. This, however, can be overcome by designing research protocols that govern researchers’ conduct during the research process. Another concern is the ability of case study research findings in providing scientific generalisation, which is highly valued in academic research. The small sampling (at times, only one specific case) does not lend credibility for the findings to be generalised to other settings.
Despite that, case study research often enables a profound understanding of the phenomenon being studied and is especially useful as an explanatory research in areas that have not been thoroughly examined. The third main criticism of case study research is the thickness of the research, which may be too dense and contain too much information. Therefore, it is very important to manage and organise data systematically to avoid the research being overloaded with information, which may dilute the main research focus.

However, despite the limitations of case study research, this research’s adoption of the case study design is justified considering the following factors:

1. It is the best method to capture in-depth the Malaysian WPA’s perspective through elite interviews and document analysis.
2. It allows the development of a foundation for subsequent analyses of state feminism within Southeast Asia region.
3. It enables a comprehensive analysis of state feminism theory using feminist institutionalism tools (formal and informal rules).

In addition, a case study is a practical method for this research in consideration of the resources accessible to the researcher within the limited timeframe and the researcher’s proficiency and knowledge. It also allows the researcher to explore the phenomenon in its natural setting instead of focusing on building normative model of decision-making process. In consideration to the above matters, this research finds that case study method is the best to be applied for the purpose of this study.

Case Study Design

Yin (2009, p.46) characterises four types of case study designs. Single case and multiple case designs can each be divided into holistic
(single unit of analysis) and embedded (multiple units of analysis) designs. Therefore, it can be said that the main two types of case study designs reflect the trade-off between an in-depth case study design and a multiple case design that allows generalisation through comparative analysis.

A holistic single study is “shaped by a thoroughly qualitative approach that relies on narrative, phenomenological descriptions” (Scholz & Tietje, 2002, p.2), while the operation of a single embedded case study design is described as follows:

“The ability to look at subunits that are situated within a larger case is powerful when you consider that data can be analyzed within the subunits separately (within case analysis), between the different subunits (between case analysis), or across all of the subunits (cross-case analysis)” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p.550).

In the present research, a single holistic case study method is adopted instead of a single embedded case study design, as it enables the study to answer the research question effectively within the limitations of time, expertise and skills of the researcher. A single embedded case study design may not be practical for this research, as it requires additional resources that are unavailable to the researcher within the stipulated timeframe. In addition, as limited research has been specifically done on state feminism in Southeast Asia, this study serves as a snapshot analysis of the state’s role in gender empowerment initiatives in the region. This study serves as a foundation for future research opportunities on the subject matter as embedded case study design is more suitable as a continuation of this research with more knowledge and information on the subject matter to proceed with a more rigorous study on the WPA in Malaysia.

Through the adoption of a holistic single case study as the research design, this research has defined the framework used in this study. Firstly, it looks into the factors that shape the capacity of the WPA in Malaysia in
implementing gender empowerment initiatives. The capacity of the WPA is assessed through four key determinants, its institutional structure, access to available resources (budget, information and expertise), networks and the clarity of the mandate of the organisation based on existing literature, as discussed in Chapter Two. In analysing these key determinants, this study also takes into consideration the roles of the formal and informal rules existing within the identified factors in shaping the WPA’s capacity. This allows the analysis of the interaction between the formal and informal rules. This study thus captures elements that might be absent in the existing literature on state feminism, which focuses on Western and developed countries.
Case Study Selection

This research focuses on the capacity of a WPA in Malaysia, namely the MWFCD. The specific setting of Malaysia has been chosen as a case study for this project due to several factors:

1. It provides a different context for the study of state feminism, as the existing literature is more focused on case studies in Western countries and literatures in non-Western state feminism is scarce and concentrated in Latin America setting.

2. It has a dedicated agency that aims to promote gender equality: the MWFCD. Therefore, empirical findings on state feminism can be deduced through the research.

3. Despite the existence of a dedicated WPA, Malaysia has continuously slipped down the Global Gender Gap Index, from rank 72 in 2006 to rank 100 in 2013. Thus, there is a need to explore the WPA’s capacity to carry out gender empowerment initiatives to understand the reasons of Malaysia’s descending performance.

4. It is a multicultural society in which gender often intersects with ethnic and religious identities in policy-making processes.

5. It is a practical choice because the researcher is well-informed on Malaysia’s context and local customs.

Firstly, regional studies on gender politics in the Southeast Asian region are still scarce and leave gaps to be explored (Ng et al., 2006). Thus, this research enhances the understanding on empirical works of state feminism and expands feminist institutionalism tools that were previously limited to Western liberal democratic settings. Malaysia is a unique case study, as it consists of a highly diverse and multicultural society where ethnic and religious identities are formally intertwined (Article 153, Federal
Constitution). Consequently, as ethnicity and religious identity are entwined, with the Malay Muslim ethnic group given “special privileges” in national policies, this sets an interesting context for government machinery dedicated to dealing with gender, as ethnic religious politics often dominate political and policy debates. This study also provides insights into the influence of religious institutions on formal state institutions in regard to gender empowerment initiatives.

Secondly, Malaysia has been categorised by the World Bank (World Bank website, 2013) as having upper middle income, coming third in the region behind Singapore and Brunei in terms of GDP per capita (IMF World Economic Outlook database). In the past few decades, there has been a shift in the traditionally patriarchal society, in which Malaysian women have experienced rapid transmission from being house makers to career women. This has been due to Malaysia’s progressive economic development and the high access to educational opportunities, as women’s participation in the labour market has been highly encouraged in order to improve economic conditions. Malaysian women’s presence in the public sphere has become more visible and this pushes the state to recognise and include the changing social landscape in their decision-making processes.

**Theory Specifications and Hypotheses**

For the purpose of this research, two main theoretical frameworks are employed to guide the research question and assist in the forming of hypotheses. This research seeks to address specifically the state’s arm for dealing with gender equality initiatives in Malaysia, and the most appropriate theoretical framework that focuses on the state’s role in such initiatives is state feminism.
Stetson and Mazur (1995) define state feminism as a state structure that promotes gender equality, analyses the achievement of the state in accomplishing the goal of gender equality and studies the most effective method for the state to promote gender equality. State feminism research is very specific, as it analyses the state’s arm for promoting women rights and not merely the female members who are part of the state’s institutions, such as female legislators or female ministers in the cabinet. Therefore, state feminism frameworks are the best way to analyse the capacities and functions of the WPA in Malaysia in addressing gender issues and promoting gender empowerment initiatives.

While this study employs the state feminism model of empirical works, it also engages with feminist institutionalism’s analytical tools to analyse the institutional context of the WPA’s operation within the state structure. Feminist institutionalism borrows ideas and tools from new institutionalism and has overlapping interests with feminism, as both are interested in the role of formal and informal institutions in shaping political actors’ preferences and behaviours, discussing institutional change and continuity, and analysing the methods used by institutions to preserve stability and to respond to changes that occur endogenously and exogenously.

Feminist institutionalism enables scholars to explore the mechanisms of gender relations’ operations in an institutional setting, which allows this study to analyse the Malaysian WPA’s capacity in its wider location context: the state structure. Regarding the relations between institutional structures and agencies, “the inclusion of a feminist perspective contributes to the development of frameworks for understanding a dynamic relationship between gendered institutional architects, gendered institutionalised subjects and gendered institutional environments where agency is understood to involve strategic, creative and intuitive action as well as calculating self-interest” (Mackay, Kenny & Chappell, 2010,p.18) . By employing feminist institutionalist analytical lens, this research is able to place the WPA within
Malaysia’s state institution by understanding how the gendered nature of state institution in Malaysia influence the capacity of the WPA in the implementation of gender empowerment initiatives.

The aforementioned theoretical frameworks are used to structure the research, based on the main research question:

- What are the key determinants that shape the Malaysian WPA’s capacity to implement gender empowerment initiatives in Malaysia?

The main research question is funnelled down to the main sub-question:

- How do these key determinants influence the Malaysian WPA’s capacity in implementing gender empowerment initiatives in Malaysia?

The main sub-question generates the following sub-questions which are addressed in the finding chapters (Chapter 4-7) as mentioned in Chapter 1.

1. How does the agency’s institutional structure shape the capacity of the WPA in Malaysia?
2. How do the resources of the agency shape the capacity of the WPA in Malaysia?
3. How do the relationships and networking of the agency affect the capacity of the WPA in Malaysia?
4. How does the WPA’s capacity shape the WPA’s mission and vision in Malaysia?

Hence, in order to answer these questions, state feminism’s theoretical frameworks are used to analyse how the WPA came into existence and to explore how the key determinants shapes the agency’s operation. Moreover, feminist institutionalism’s tools allow this study to investigate further elements that interrelate within state feminism’s theoretical frameworks. This is particularly constructive because the combination of these two framework types allows the research to explore and explain in
detail the factors that shape the capacity of the WPA in implementing gender empowerment initiatives, as well as the manners in which those factors influence this capacity.

**DATA COLLECTION**

Case studies often require multiple data collection methods, as these different sources of information converge and corroborate to establish strong validity and reliability. Yin (2009) identifies various data collection methods, which include direct and indirect observation, structured and unstructured interviews, and the analysis of documents, such as written, printed or electronic information regarding the organisation or phenomenon being studied. Although case study research allows flexibility in using both qualitative and quantitative methods, this study adopts a qualitative method: a holistic single case study, due to its ability to encapsulate the experience of the WPA within its natural setting from the participants’ perspectives.

However, quantitative data (such as statistics) is used to complement the qualitative data obtained, as it is significant as a measurement tool of gender relations in Malaysia (e.g. women’s participation in politics, economics and education). Statistical data such as the WPA’s annual budget and human resources are also used to analyse the key determinants of the WPA’s capacity. The statistical data is obtained from both governmental and international organisations’ reports, such as the UNDP Human Development Report, the Gender Gap Index Report and reports from the Department of Statistics, the MWFCD, the MOF and the Economic Planning Unit under the Prime Minister’s Department.

Aside from the above, this study also utilises a number of literature sources, which include pertinent books, journals, reports, conference proceedings and governmental publications. Examples of these include: the World Economic Forum (WEF) Gender Gap Report, the *Asian Journal of Women’s Studies* and proceedings of the International Conference on
Mechanisms and Legislation to Promote and Protect Gender Equality held in Malaysia. This study also employs empirical work, which involves in-depth elite interviews, policy tracing, content analysis and archival research. Examples of these include interviews with relevant government officials involved with gender equality initiatives, government officials who provide the overall context of Malaysian bureaucracy context, political activist, and representatives from women’s organisations.

These different research methods were utilised by applying various research strategies over numerous phases of this study, which spanned a certain period of time to ensure the validity of the research. While some of the phases occurred independently, some phases overlapped with one another, especially the data collection and data analysis phases.

**Phase One**

**Method: Contextual Document Analysis**

The first phase of this research revolved around contextual document analysis to build up the research framework. In this phase, the research focus was initially vague, requiring more information for the research framework to be developed. Thus, this study began with contextual document analysis to enable the researcher to build up the research question and to adopt the most appropriate theoretical framework for the purpose of this study. A literature review was undertaken to enable the researcher to become familiar with state feminism theory and previous works on new institutionalism, especially feminist institutionalism.

Document analysis and archival analysis are important research tools, as they are able to present objective and historical sources of data for research (Burnham, Lutz, Grant, & Layton-Henry 2008). Furthermore, these documents can be used to complement and substantiate other sources of data (such as interviews) and can “specify events and issues in greater detail” compared to other sources of information (Burns, 2000, p.467). However, as with other sources of data, one limitation of document and archival materials
is that they are not free from the bias of the documents’ producers. Another concern is that documents are partial in the sense that they may only describe to researchers “what should be done, not whether it is actually done…” (Robson et al., 2001, p.71). This indicates the importance of the process of triangulation, which will be discussed further below, in which this research used other research methods to obtain the information needed.

The review provided insights into the appropriateness of state feminism’s theoretical frameworks and feminist institutionalism’s tools in analysing the role of the state in implementing gender empowerment initiatives. Further examination of the gender literature in Malaysia also found that there were deficiencies in the debates on gender politics, which allowed this study to take place. Further readings and research focused on Malaysian gender politics, enabling improved understanding of the environment in which the Malaysian WPA operates. Phase one also served as pre-fieldwork preparation for the upcoming phases, in which the researcher identified rich information regarding the organisation studied and possible interviewees for the next phases. This phase was used to form the contextual background and determined the direction of the fieldwork. In this phase also, the researcher prepared contingencies plans for the fieldwork period.

**Phase Two**

Methods: Observations, Interviews, Document and Social Media Analysis

While still continuing with the contextual document analysis initiated in Phase One, the researcher relocated to Kuala Lumpur from January to April 2013 to move forward with the next phase of the study. Proximity to the case study location enabled contextualisation of the literature and the results obtained from the subsequent case study analysis. In Phase Two, the fieldwork focused mainly on observations and interviews by adopting a phenomenological strategy, as emergent themes had been identified as a result of Phase One of this study.
This enabled the researcher to uncover various angles of gender politics in Malaysia, as well as examined her existing bias as a participant within the institutional setting. This was because it allowed the researcher to see the issues related to her research from the perspectives of others and to expand her existing perspective through the holistic approach of this research strategy.

This phase involved unstructured interviews in which participants were not specifically selected but conversations often turned into opportunities for the researcher, as people were more than willing to share their opinions nearing general election time. This was particularly useful for the researcher to form better views of the political setting and institutional context in which the WPA operates. The researcher made the participants aware of her research purpose upfront and assured them of their anonymity. The assurance of anonymity is exceptionally important in Malaysia especially when it involves civil service officers.

Observations were utilised in the same manner. During this phase of research, Malaysia was in the midst of a general election, so the researcher was able to observe various elements that would have been subtle in normal periods, such as social cleavages, the strong state element and the fusion of the state administration and political parties. The 13th General Election in 2013 was observed as the strongest contested general election in Malaysian history, which saw the dominant party almost lose their premiership to the opposition parties (Welsh, 2013). Thus, the researcher made sure to step back from her political position and view the phenomenon as it was, through various perspectives. To ensure unbiased opinions, the researcher communicated with participants from various political ideologies and read materials from all sides, mainly mainstream newspapers (for example The Star and The New Straits Times), online news portals (mainly Malaysiakini and The Malaysian Insider) as well as social media feed (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram). The online news portals become very important in this
research as they provide alternative to the mainstream newspapers that are often highly regulated by the Printing Presses and Publications Act (1984).

Phase Three

Method: Elite interviews, observation, document analysis, speech analysis, news and social media analysis

This process was then followed by elite interviews to assess the capacity of the WPA through the perceptions of relevant actors. As this study is concerned with the WPA capacity, the elite interviewees mainly consisted of officers from the WPA itself. Elite interviews were one of the main sources of information for this research as it enables the researcher to capture the perspective of the WPA from “insiders” in comparison to other methods which explains the WPA’s capacity from external viewpoint. Elite interviews differ from other type of interviews because the interviewees often have more knowledge, skills and in-depth understanding of the issue compared to the interviewer, as they are usually experts in the subject (Leech, 2002a, cited in Burnham et al., 2008). This representation of new knowledge and information from experts within the organisation allows the researcher to form better comprehension on the organisation’s operation and the factors that influence its behaviours and decisions. These questions were related to specific themes but change in accordance to the flow of the interview sessions as there are instances in which the interviewer is enlightened by new information obtained from interviewee.

The purposes of the interviews were:

a) To identify the main actors involved in gender equality initiatives in Malaysia
b) To explore the Malaysian WPA’s initiatives to improve gender empowerment
c) To investigate the challenges faced by the WPA in Malaysia in implementing its initiatives
d) To scrutinise the capacity (access to resources such as information, budget, human resources and networks with other institutions) of the WPA in Malaysia

e) To analyse the factors (the formal and informal rules) that influence the capacity of the WPA

Interviewees were first identified through the WPA website, and emails requesting the interviews were sent prior to the commencement of the fieldwork. However, since the response rates to the emails were very low and slow, the researcher resorted to phone calls and requests for insiders’ help to gain faster access to interviewees. Once the researcher managed to gain access to the interviewees within the ministry, it resulted in a snowballing effect in which she was introduced to other interviewees within the WPA by the interviewees she first managed to interview.

In fact, in one day, she managed to interview five people due to the snowball effect as the officers she interviewed contacted other relevant officers in charge of matters mentioned during the interview. As the initial contact through emails received low response rate, the researcher took the opportunity of using “insiders” help to gain access to high ranking officers within the Ministry. The combination of physical proximity, officers’ availability and individual connection played important role in conducting elite interviews for this research. In total, the researcher interviewed 11 government officers from the MWFCD and the agencies under it that are related to gender, namely the Women’s Development Department and NIEW (see Appendix 2, p.ii). As the ministry covers a wide range of societal issues, this study only interviewed officers from departments and agencies under the ministry that are relevant to the focus of this thesis, which is to examine the capacity of the WPA in implementing gender empowerment initiatives.

This process was carried out as in-depth semi-structured interviews. The researcher prepared open-ended questions but did not necessarily
follow the sequence of the question list. This enabled the interview sessions to flow more freely and allowed the exchange of information in a more comfortable and less restrictive manner. This is particularly useful in elite interviews because the interviewees possess more knowledge, expertise and experience than the researcher. Semi-structured interview allows new information to be introduced to the researcher and enabling the interviewees to express themselves through their own perspectives and experience (Grix, 2004). In the present study, this enabled the researcher to capture the intricate, ambiguous and detailed courses that were taking place within the socio-political context of the WPA’s operations. The findings of the semi-structured elite interviews were then analysed thematically and categorised utilising the analytical tools for formal and informal rules, as discussed in Chapter Two. The findings are discussed in detail in the subsequent analytical chapters: Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven.

Despite the researcher gaining access to relevant interviewees, it is worth noting that during the fieldwork, the ministry was going through an internal transfer and transformation process. This influenced the outcomes of the interviews, as some officers were relatively new to the ministry, while other interviewees were preparing to leave the ministry. In addition, as mentioned earlier, due to the timing of the fieldwork, officers were directly or indirectly involved with the preparation of the general election due to the strong relationship between the political party and the bureaucratic administration.

Thus, access to officers was limited due to time constraints and their unavailability to be interviewed. On another note, despite assurance of their confidentiality and anonymity, the interviewees were more comfortable in sharing written and recorded materials rather than their own opinions and voices. This was due to the strongly hierarchical nature of Malaysia’s bureaucratic system, as well as the existence of restrictive laws (such as the Official Secrets Act). This hindered the interviewees in fully expressing
themselves and limited the researcher’s access to internal documents. This is a phenomenon commonly observed by researchers doing case study research in Malaysia especially when it involves matters concerning the state (Spiegel, 2010; Ashcroft, 2011).

Each interview lasted for approximately an hour or more, except for one interview, which only lasted approximately 15 minutes due to time constraints. On one occasion, the interviewees invited their colleagues to join in the discussion and provide insights on the WPA’s operations. Prior to the interviews, the interviewees were emailed a list of questions, but these questions were often overlooked. The researcher took the opportunity to allow the interviews to be more flexible in nature, so the interviewees were able to express themselves more freely. The interview participants were presented with the parameters of the research via the participant information sheet, together with the consent forms.

At all times, the participants were assured of their absolute anonymity, except for their position within the ministry or one of its agencies, and the confidentiality of the information obtained. In all the interviews, the participants requested to be off record, so voice recorders were not used even though assurances of anonymity had been given. This was perhaps due to the restrictive nature of the state as mentioned earlier, in which statements deemed to be against the government’s official stance may have been deemed controversial and may have caused harm to the participants’ careers. Therefore, interview materials were transcribed by hand by the researcher during the session that included the interviewer’s observation on other aspects such as body language and intonation of the interviewees to enable interview materials be understood within the intended contexts.

During this period of fieldwork, the researcher also employs other methods such as document analysis to triangulate the information gathered during the interview process. The researcher utilises the access to the Ministry’s library to examine the Ministry’s publications, reports and
documents. In addition, materials related to Malaysia as a case study were more widely available in the forms of newspapers, pamphlets and materials at events and functions. Secondary sources were also used, such as literature on Southeast Asia, which is mainly published in Malaysia and Singapore and is not readily available in the UK. These materials are useful for the researcher to check the information gathered during data collection phase. It is also used to verify the researcher's newly formed knowledge through unstructured interviews and observations. Document analysis is used as it is considered as primary sources which ‘reflect a position of an actor’ (Vromen, 2010) thus enables this research to delve into examining the capacity of the MWFCFD from its perspective.

The researcher also perform social media analysis by examining the relevant social media sites (such as the WPA, the NGOs and other agencies) to obtain information. As social media becomes a more powerful communication tool as it improves connectivity by enabling organisations and individuals to build relationship with large audience in short time period and the WPA, most of its departments and many of the prominent personalities within or related to the WPA have social media presences, mainly on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. As social media play important role in conveying information from the perspective of relevant individuals and organisations, the utilisation of social media helped the researcher to identify the trends and patterns of the behaviours and activities of the gender actors that are relevant to the WPA’s gender empowerment initiatives.

Phase Four

Method: Coding, Content Analysis and Policy Analysis of Case Study Area

In the post fieldwork period, the data collected was analysed with three methods namely coding, content analysis and policy analysis of case study area. Through the coding process, the researcher sorted the interview data into four main themes which are; institutional set-up, resources, network
and relationship and the mission and vision of the WPA. Other data (document, statistical data, speeches and others) collected during the fieldwork period was later categorised using similar themes. After the researcher categorised the data according to the themes (as identified in Chapter Two), she developed a matrix using the themes as the basis and placed the subset findings into the categories of formal and informal rules and how it influenced the ministry by strengthening or weakening its capacity in implementing gender empowerment initiatives.

This enables the researcher to recognise: 1) the factors of the key determinants that shape the WPA’s capacity, 2) the formal and informal rules that exist within the WPA’s operational context, and 3) the interaction between the formal and informal rules and how they shape the capacity of the WPA. As interviews and documents are in Malay language, the researcher translated the data and materials into English as seen appropriate and fit into the context of the study.

This research further drew on Htun and Weldon’s (2010) gender policy matrix for policy analysis in Chapter Seven. This study identified four policy areas to be analysed using the interview materials and policy documents that were available to the researcher. The gender policy matrix enabled the categorisation of the analysed policy areas and assisted in comparative analysis across the categories of gender-related policy. Thus, the conceptual definition of the matrix categories was first studied, which allowed textual analysis of the policy documents and the relevant concepts within the policy documents to be captured by this study. The interviewees were often more willing to share verified recorded and written materials; the ministry’s library provided further access to the ministry’s policy documents, some of which were not readily available online or to the public. Further data analysis was supported by official documents such as the MWFCD Annual Reports, the UNDP official documents, statistical data from the MOF, the MWFCD workshop materials, Parliament Hansard and official speeches.
Validity and Reliability (Triangulation)

This research adopts a triangulation technique to ensure the reliability and validity of the research to overcome the limitations of elite interview; as interview only provides “the informant’s picture of the world as he sees it” and how the interviewee choose to convey the knowledge to the interviewer (Dean & Whyte, 2012, p.108). Denscombe (2010) describes triangulation as “the practice of viewing things from more than one perspective” (p.347). Thus, triangulation refers to different sources of information being combined and checked against each other in an effort to check the reliability and validity of the information. Different sources of information can also complement one another, as one source does not provide the whole picture of an issue. Triangulation techniques “would support the principle in case study research that the phenomena be viewed and explored from multiple perspectives” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p.556). This study employs a data triangulation technique that allows corroboration of the findings by analysing data from several informants (Denscombe, 2010).

Furthermore, using diverse data collection methods provides a more complete picture of the phenomenon studied. For this reason, this study utilises various sources to triangulate the data collected. Information gathered from elite interviews with personnel from relevant government agencies (especially the officers from the MWFCD, the Prime Minister’s Department, and the Economic Planning Unit), are then triangulated using document analysis with materials obtained from other sources such as official documents (e.g. government circulars, letters, annual publications and parliament Hansards). The data is also triangulated using social media analysis by using information obtained from social media accounts (such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram) of relevant political personalities (i.e. former minister of the MWFCD, Shahrizat Jalil and current minister of the MWFCD, Rohani Abdul Karim), official government agencies’ and relevant
non-governmental organisations’ social media accounts. Triangulation process also occur at several phases, allowing information to evolve or be verified using different sources of knowledge (Grix, 2004).

Thus, triangulation is also used to produce new knowledge that is contextually placed and to bring together various data sources to develop conclusions on the capacity of the Malaysian WPA in implementing gender empowerment initiatives. This is accomplished by comparing insights from actors within and outside of the WPA, through document analysis of the official websites, official documents and publications of the WPA and other relevant government agencies such as the EPU and the PEMANDU. This study also assesses reports from other sectors (such as civil society organisations, especially women’s movements such as the JAG-VAW and international organisations such as the UNDP and the ADB), speech analysis of gender and political actors within Malaysian political context as well as social media analysis on gender actors’ social media sites such as these led to enhanced understandings of what factors shape the WPA’s capacity and the utilisation of its capability in gender empowerment initiatives in Malaysia.

These information obtained by the researcher later, are arranged in this thesis through blocks building model. The main finding of the thesis followed by evidences from various sources follow suit the discussions.

\[\text{Refer to Table 4, p. 160 for the full list of the MWFC’s agencies Twitter feed. For the non-governmental organisations’ social media accounts, this study refer to the example of the social media accounts of the National Women and Family Development Council (https://www.facebook.com/mpwkkeb) and AWAM (https://www.facebook.com/AWAMMalaysia),}\]
LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

Access to Information

One of the potential problems is access to the elites. As this research focuses mainly on a government agency, gatekeepers may prevent the researcher from accessing the relevant information sources. Accessing government officers for elite interviews faced some challenges due to:

1) Limited time: In addition to the researcher’s restricted timeframe for the fieldwork, the interviewees were also often engaged in many other work commitments, thus it was quite difficult to arrange interview sessions. In addition, the fieldwork was conducted during a general election period, which involved civil servants directly and indirectly. It should also be pointed out that the organisation was going through an internal restructuring process. There were two parts to the internal restructuring process: the first was administrative, as Malaysia’s bureaucracy practises an open-service system that rotates policy-making positions across governmental agencies; the second was political, as the position of the minister of the Malaysian WPA was vacant and was only filled once the new cabinet line-up had been announced. This occurred after the fieldwork period, thus this research did not capture in detail the organisational restructuring process.

2) Reluctance: As the Malaysian state was viewed as a sacred institution, certain essential information was deemed highly sensitive or as having the potential to jeopardise the state’s credibility and was thus withheld by the interviewees. Furthermore, the semi-democratic setting (in which the government had strong control over information) was a hindrance to the researcher in retrieving the necessary information, as there are many laws
regulating the organisation as well as individual conduct, such as the Official Secrets Act, the Internal Security Act, and the University and University Colleges Act. While some of the acts were repealed during the course of this research, they undoubtedly influenced societal behaviour and perceptions of freedom of expression and opinion at both organisational and individual levels.

3) Culture: The strong hierarchical relationships and cautious culture in the bureaucratic setup limited the researcher’s access. Thus, the researcher’s personal network had to be utilised to gain access to insiders, which led to a snowballing effect in securing interviews. However, this means that there were lost opportunities to reach potential interviewees that had been identified in the early phase of the research project.
CHAPTER FOUR: INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE

INTRODUCTION

The WPA’s behaviour is a product of a larger institutional set-up as it is formed as part of Malaysia’s state institutional structure. This study therefore analyses institutional structure as the first key determinant in its study of the WPA’s capacity to implement gender empowerment initiatives in the country. Mackay and Meier (2003) suggested that exploring the relationship between institutions and gender will assist in developing a more gender inclusive institution. Institutional structure also serves as the crucial substance of the WPA’s establishment in which other key determinants examined by this research (resources and networks) are strongly related to the agency’s institutional structure. The UN report on the WPA in the Asia and Pacific region identifies that institutional structure of the WPA “reflects the value attached to their (WPAs) mandate” (Strengthening National Mechanisms for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: Regional Study-Asia Pacific, 2010, p. 20). This study analyses the institutional structure of the WPA in Malaysia and how it shapes the capacity to execute gender empowerment programmes. This research also identifies factors in the institutional design of the Malaysian WPA – such as colonial legacy and strong state authority – which are largely absent in the current literature on state feminism and feminist institutionalism literature.

This chapter addresses the institutional set up of the WPA in Malaysia to identify the features of its establishment and to ascertain which empower or weaken its capacity in a non-Western, economically developing and quasi-democratic setting. This study establishes that the WPA has a solid institutional formation based on two main premises: 1) institutional stability, and 2) a strong bureaucratic foundation. This chapter is organised into three main sections. The first section discusses the WPA’s institutional stability and indicates that this is due to three main factors: the location of the WPA within
the federal government structure, the strong state authority which has prevented political instability in a highly diverse society, and the dominant party system in Malaysia’s political system which has ensured a stable administrative institution (the ruling party coalition has an effective power sharing formula) in a multi-cultural society such as Malaysia.

The second section of this chapter analyses the WPA’s solid bureaucratic foundation. It identifies three factors which each play an important role: 1) the British colonial legacy, 2) the competent administrative knowledge of the WPA officers, and 3) the fusion between politics and administration as manifest in the operation of the WPA. Both sections identify factors which enhance or dilute the capacity of the WPA by using feminist institutionalism analytical tools (especially the formal and informal rules). This enable the study to understand the relationship and the interaction between the formal and informal rules in empowering or weakening the WPA’s capacity in the implementation of gender empowerment initiatives. The third section summarises the chapter’s findings and places them within the wider scholarship of state feminism and feminist institutionalism.

SOLID INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE

Institutional Stability

McBride and Mazur (2011) registered political stability as an important factor to be considered especially in transferring state feminism theoretical frameworks beyond its current Western-centric setting, as institutional stability prevents gender machineries such as the WPA from being neglected in the process of institutional rearrangement. This study finds that the stability of the state institution in Malaysia over a period of time has allowed

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the WPA to flourish through positive phases of transition, from being an advisory council to its current status as full ministry in 2001. Three factors which play important roles in the WPA’s institutional stability are identified in this research as: 1) the location of the WPA, 2) the strong state authority, and 3) the dominant party system practised in Malaysia’s political setting.

**Location of the WPA**

The WPA in Malaysia operates as a full ministry beginning from 2001 with its own full minister forming part of the Malaysian cabinet line-up, known as the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (MWFCD). This study identifies that the WPA’s location as a full ministry at federal level influences its institutional capacity in implementing gender empowerment initiatives. Prior to the creation of this Ministry, the WPA in Malaysia existed as a dedicated department under the Prime Minister’s Department, the Department of Women Affairs (HAWA). The department, together with the National Population and National Development Board (NPNDB) were later absorbed into the MWFCD after its formation. The organisational structure of the Ministry is headed by a full minister and is assisted by a deputy minister, who is not part of the cabinet member line-up. As a full ministry, it is bestowed with its own mandates as the state’s official arm in championing societal agendas including gender empowerment as illustrated by the following five agencies under its purview.

1. Department for Women Development (WDD)
2. Social Welfare Department (SWD)
3. National Population and Family Development Board (NPFDB)

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15 Refer also to the MWFCD Annual Reports used by this research (2008, 2012, 2013)
4. Social Institute of Malaysia (ISM)

5. The NAM Institute for the Empowerment of Women (NIEW)

(See Appendix 9)

Despite its ministerial status, three of the departments and agencies listed existed prior to the formation of the Ministry and were later absorbed into the Ministry as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: The WPA’s Agencies/Departments Establishment Years**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Agency/Department</th>
<th>Year of Establishment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>SWD</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>NPFDB</td>
<td>1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>WDD</td>
<td>1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>ISM</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>NIEW</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s analysis based on the MWFCD’s individual agencies’ websites

The Ministry serves as a medium by which to synergise the government agencies, holding relevant agencies and departments together although often without the full authority to determine the paths to be taken by these agencies and departments. Interviews with senior officials from the Ministry and agency under it revealed that customarily, an agency under the Ministry possessing a high level of expertise would execute its own programmes and initiatives without assistance from the Ministry. This is due to the Ministry’s relatively new establishment with more experienced agencies under its jurisdiction.

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16 I have analysed the websites of all agencies under the MWFCD. Please refer to Appendix 9 on page 387 for the list of individual agencies’ websites.

17 Based on Interviews 14 and 19 from the MWFCD officers from different units. These are further analysed through the individual agencies’ sections in the MWFCD Annual Reports (2008 and 2013)
“They (at NPFDB) know more than I do. So I do not intend to disturb their turfs because they have been doing it for so long… of course we will help them if we need to, but more often, they will walk on their own because they can” (Interview 20)

“NIEW, as a statutory body, we have more freedom to structure our programmes, but we still have to follow the rules, guidelines set by the Ministry… Although we are part of the Ministry, they don’t really bother us [they let us do our jobs without much interference]. We work hand-in-hand with the Ministry to ensure we achieve our vision” (Interview 14)

Full ministerial establishment allows the WPA to be headed and represented by a cabinet minister in both the legislature and executive branches. Resembling the two-house system of the British parliamentary structure, a Malaysian cabinet member is automatically a member of either the Lower or Upper House. This amplifies the chances for gender agendas to be heard, and provides the opportunity and capacity for the WPA to be represented and involved in public policy decisions. A ministerial status which grants the WPA a full cabinet minister to head the agency has helped the WPA to gain recognition and obtain greater cooperation from other ministries in implementing gender empowerment policies and plans18. This is due to the proximity of the head of the WPA to the locus of power, which enhances its capacity to keep gender empowerment on the agenda at the highest level of government administration. In an interview with a high ranking officer from the Ministry, it was mentioned that having a cabinet

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18 Refer also to Women in Malaysia, the MWFC retrieved from http://www.unicef.org/malaysia/sowc_6066.html and UNDP project document prepared for the MWFC and selected ministries of the: government of Malaysia titled Capacity Building on Gender Mainstreaming. (July 2004-December 2005)
member from the Ministry who is equal in standing to other ministers is invaluable in gaining access to other ministries:

“I think it makes our job to mainstream gender easier because we can rely on the minister to convey our plans and programmes to the cabinet and get their approval faster… because minister communicate with other ministers, they are on the same level, it is easier for them to communicate with people on the same level than subordinates… they can see the bigger picture [which] we cannot” (Interview 3).

Although a cabinet position may reinforce the status of the WPA within Malaysian government organisations and strengthen the call for gender empowerment initiatives at the position of power, the Ministry is nonetheless subject to the political will and enthusiasm of other players in the decision-making process (Chapter Six examines this further, analysing the dimension of the WPA’s relationships and networks). An example is the formation of the Cabinet Committee on Gender Equality in 2004 as promoted by the then minister of the MWFCD, Shahrizat Jalil. Her foreword to the Measuring and Monitoring Gender Equality: Malaysia’s Gender Gap Index Report (2007) stated that “This Cabinet Committee is the highest level of institutional mechanism and provides policy direction as well as monitors the implementation of strategies and programmes for women and family development…”(p.11). Apart from the brief remarks on the resolution of the committee in the MWFCD annual reports, there was a scarcity of vital information on the Cabinet Committee such as the structure of its membership, the frequency of its meetings (minutes of meetings at high level are usually considered as confidential in Malaysia) and also other documented outputs. This raises the question of the committee’s continuous existence.

Other than the published fact that it was led by the Prime Minister (at that time), efforts to retrieve more information on the committee have been
futile except for a published shadow report for CEDAW (2012) which mentioned that the committee has been downgraded. However, this report could not be verified by the officials of the Ministry due to lack of confirmed facts. This indicates that despite the existence of formal structure at the highest level of government in the WPA’s institutional establishment to support the WPA’s gender empowerment agendas, it is still dependent on the informal contexts of the institutional set up, often translated in the form of political willingness and commitment of powerful actors at the administrative leadership level to support the initiative.

As Malaysia practices federalism, it has both federal and state governments in which the federal government holds more and a wider field of power as compared to the state governments’ authorities (Refer to the Ninth Schedule of Malaysian Constitution). State governments are often constrained in terms of independent resources and have to rely on federal government in matters such as human resources and financial grants (Chin, 2011, Siddique, 2013). The WPA’s location is in the view of it being under the purview of the federal government. Nonetheless, the departments (not including ISM and NIEW) have branches in almost every state and act as the implementation arms of the MWFC at the ground level. According to an officer from the WDD, these state level branches are the “hands of the MWFC” because they are the ones that execute the policies made by the Ministry at headquarter level. They also act as the bridges between the Ministry and the people with the exception of the two states in East Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak)

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19 I failed to obtain more information on the existence of the cabinet committee during my interview sessions with the officers in the MWFC. The interviewees did not have additional knowledge in regards to the cabinet committee. In addition, cabinet meetings are often held in closed doors and considered as highly private and confidential.

20 This is based on the author’s analysis of individual agencies’ websites. List of the website addresses is attached as Appendix 9.
With its location at the federal level, the WPA has greater access to resources (further discussed in Chapter Five) as well as a closer relationship with the locus of power (examined in Chapter Six). This study observes that as the federal government is controlled by the ruling party, there are no significant political conflicts between the WPA (as one of the federal level government ministries) and the ruling political party\textsuperscript{21}. The same advantages

\textsuperscript{21}The tension between the Federal government (the ruling political party) and the state governments (opposition parties at federal level) in Malaysia’s political settings are well-documented by scholars. However, they do not capture the gender dimensions of this tension between the federal and state governments. Further reading, refer to \textit{Malaysia: Centralized Federalism in an Electoral One-Party State} by Wong Chin Huat and James Chin (2011) and \textit{50 Years of Malaysia: Federalism Revisited} ed. by Harding and Chin (2014)
could not be expected if the WPA was located at the level of state government.

For example, in 2008 and 2013 general elections, the opposition parties gained momentum and split the National Front’s two-thirds majority in the parliament and in 2013 won several states in Malaysia (namely, Selangor, Penang and Kelantan). Under the ruling of the opposition parties, the states of Selangor and Penang in particular, have pushed for gender empowerment initiatives in their respective states, but were hampered by lack of support from the federal government. An active opposition party member who has been involved in gender empowerment initiatives by the state government in Penang expressed that:

“...we were denied our rights for budget allocation by the federal government. They refused to lend us support... our requests were often met with a delayed response from the Ministry (the MWFC) or complete silence. We have to resort to other alternatives, such as cooperation with other NGOs, or other institutions that are friendly (or neutral) towards opposition parties. However, at least we have started, and we believe we are more committed towards gender empowerment than those in power (at federal level)…” (Interview 1)

Due to constraints in the relationship between federal level administrations and the states under opposition parties, it is an advantage for the WPA to be formed at federal government level. This allows the WPA to have greater access to resources, observe a more intimate relationship with the central power, as well as minimising the risk of being involved in political
games between political parties (as it is already under the administration of the ruling political party)\textsuperscript{24}.

This study finds that the formal institutional structure of the WPA in terms of its location as a full ministry at federal level has enhanced its capacity to implement gender empowerment initiatives, as the institutional set-up at federal level government enables the Ministry to be represented in both the legislature and executive branches of government through its minister. The WPA’s status as a federal ministry grants it better access to resources and networks compared to state level agencies; it is also able to influence policymaking at the top level through its leadership at ministerial level. This study identifies the main drawback of this structure is the informal power relations within the Ministry as the Ministry is relatively a new establishment in comparison to some agencies under its purview. This means it has at times found it difficult to cope with the steep learning curve it has had to confront and at times is highly dependent on the knowledge and expertise of the agencies under its jurisdiction in the formulation and execution of gender policies which undermines its formal status as a ministry.

\textit{Strong State Authority}

The second contributing factor to the WPA’s institutional stability is the strong state authority which exists in Malaysia over a highly diverse society. This authority has prevented political turmoil and instability, allowing the WPA to undergo a positive transformation process in the absence of frequent institutional rearrangements which tend to be the hallmark of political chaos. The research also finds that the state apparatus has shaped the WPA’s top-down approach, playing as it does a more dominant role in decision-making process than other actors in the society, especially the civil society. The

\textsuperscript{24} I compare the location of the WPA and the gender empowerment agencies located in the state governments ruled by the opposition parties such as Penang and Selangor.
strong state authority in Malaysia is formalised through the enactment and implementation of various laws and regulations.

Malaysia’s political system is often classified by scholars as an example of ‘quasi-democracy’ (Turner, 2000; Haque, 2007; Pepinsky, 2007) due to the strong state influence in managing both the public and private spheres of society. This was especially so during the term of office of its fourth prime minister, Mahathir Mohamed, in which Malaysia experienced a period of high economic growth. Slater (2012) stated that the authoritarian stability in Malaysia (and Singapore) is contributed to by the strong state machinery which was initially established in the colonial period to curb local resistance aiming for independence and communist ideology.

“Government’s policing powers were initially expanded to cope with the combined threat of communal and leftist unrest, but have long been more than adequate for countering any perceived threats to the regimes as they define them” (Slater, 2012, p.24)

Apart from the above, when Malaysia achieved its independence from the British in 1957, the state took over the responsibility of nation-building especially in pushing for economic development. This led to state-funded development but with the government controlling some of the important sectors such as finance and construction. The state thereby possesses strong authority over a wide range of matters and is keen to project a good image in the eyes of the public as in the case of many other post-colonial states such as Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea (Slater, 2012; Khor, 2013; Larrson, 2013).

Strong state authority implies institutional stability and rapid economic growth (Slater, 2012), where in the case of Malaysia, state involvement in economic activities results in resistance to economic downturn and continues to keep economic and political chaos at bay. The strong state authority in
Malaysia can also be seen in terms of the influence it has on the daily life of its citizens. For instance, in important areas such as education, it is compulsory for Malaysian students to undergo Malaysian national subjects (comprising the Malay language, Malaysian studies, Islamic studies for Muslims and moral studies for non-Muslims). The National Service programme is also compulsory for selected Malaysians upon completion of their secondary school education.

Another feature of the strong state authority in Malaysia is its top-down approach. The state has the dominant upper hand in determining the setup of the WPA, because, as mentioned above, of the limited intervention from other sections of the society, especially civil society. Siddique (2013) states that “despite a strong democratic tradition, Malaysia lacks vibrant and democratic local institutions” as it is very much state-centric at the federal level, as highlighted previously. With the enactment of laws and regulations which are an essential part of state policing initiatives aimed at preserving harmony and stability in a diverse society, involvement from other sections of the society is limited and restricted. This also signifies that the state is highly empowered and that civil society has limited space and voice to intervene in its initiatives.

Table 3 below lists the laws that are used by the state to gain control over society’s conducts and behaviours and promote the state’s strong authority.
Table 3: List of laws promoting state strong authority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Acts/Law</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Internal Security Act (1960)</td>
<td>Prevention of subversion and suppression of organised violence against the person and property through preventive detention (Act 82)(^{25})</td>
<td>Repealed and replaced with Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>Official Secrets Act (1972)</td>
<td>Protection of classified official documents (Act 88)</td>
<td>In place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sedition Act (1948)</td>
<td>Prevention of subversive communication that may disrupt national stability (Act 15)</td>
<td>In place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Societies Act (1966)</td>
<td>Requires civil society organisations and political parties to register with The Registry of Societies of Malaysia under the Ministry of Home Affairs (Act 335)</td>
<td>In place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Printing Presses and Publications Act (1984)</td>
<td>To regulate matters related to printing presses (including production, importation, publishing and distribution) by the Ministry of Home Affairs (Act 301)</td>
<td>In place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Universities and University Colleges Act (1971)</td>
<td>To regulate establishment, administration and maintenance related matters of universities and university colleges (Act 30)</td>
<td>Amended and now allows students to participate in politics, although political parties are still not allowed on campus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Malaysian Acts (AGC)\(^{26}\)

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\(^{25}\) ISA allows detention without trial up to two years and is subjected to Ministry of Home Affairs approval

\(^{26}\) Author’s analysis of the existing restrictive laws that often used to curb resistance towards the ruling government. The main source of the table is the Malaysian Acts retrieved from the Attorney General’s Chamber of Malaysia’s website at http://www.agc.gov.my/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1406:laws-of-malaysia&catid=442:lom&Itemid=259&lang=en
Figure 3: State and the position of the women’s movement

Figure 3 above illustrates the position and relationship between the state, the WPA as an agency of the state, and the women’s movement. While the relationship between the market and the state are less governed by restrictive laws (indicated by the straight line in both directions), women’s groups as part of civil society are more constrained by the laws and regulations enforced by the state (illustrated by the dashed arrows). This underlines the top-down approach of the WPA, with the state being at the top of the hierarchy of power (NGO Shadow Report, 2005, 2008). Furthermore, reform to formalised rules (such as biased or gender-blind legal laws) may also be seen as an attempt to cause instability in society and thus disrupt the existing stable status quo (Yan, 2003; Stivens, 2006; Ting, 2007). Chapter Six further discusses the relationship between the women’s movement and the WPA.

With the strong state authority that is able to confine civil society’s movements and spaces to discuss gender-related issues, the WPA possesses an almost absolute upper hand in deciding the gender issues.

Source: Author’s analysis

27 The figure is a graphic illustration based on the author’s understanding on how restrictive laws govern the relationship between the state, the WPA and women’s movement in Malaysia
which are to be debated\textsuperscript{28}. This state of affairs may hinder healthy debate and discourse on issues considered controversial by the state, such as reproductive health, sexual behaviour and the reform of the legal system that are gender blind, in the name of prevention of social disorder. In consideration of the strong state authority in regulating civil spaces, civil society, including the women’s movement and opposition political parties, are required to navigate limited avenues to be involved with state apparatus (including the WPA). Nevertheless, as part of their contribution to this research, WPA officials stated that the Ministry often engaged with civil society to obtain feedback and input from women’s organisations; however, any final decision is solely in the sanction of the Ministry.

“Of course we do engage with the women organisations. We invite them and have roundtable discussions with them because we need them… but yes, the final decision is in our hands because we have to make sure we follow the rules and regulations of this country; we have to make sure we don’t cross the boundaries” (Interview 3)

“We have to listen to them (the NGOs) because they have more experience on the ground…but we also have to safeguard the interests of the whole society (the sanctity of Islamic teachings and Asian values)\textsuperscript{29}” (Interview 19)

Women organisations also reported that their engagement with the state (through the publication of shadow reports for CEDAW implementation) are at times positive\textsuperscript{30}. At others, they are constrained by the state’s manipulation of the existing rules and regulations (as listed in Table 3, p.119).

\textsuperscript{28} Based on Interview 3 and 19. Refer also to NGO Shadow Report Group (2005).

\textsuperscript{29} The interviewee speaks in the context that certain women’s movement/human rights groups propose gender agendas which are seen as contradictory to Islamic and Asian values held by the state, such as seeking to legalise LGBT, and the demand for unrestricted sexual rights.

\textsuperscript{30} Refer to NGO Shadow Report (2005), p.15.
to limit the ability of women’s movements to voice their demands especially on issues which do not concur with the nation’s Islamic and Asian values. These include matters relating to sexual orientation (LGBT) and sexual rights (for example in the issue of marital rape).31 

This study finds that the WPA institutional set-up is highly determined by the state. The strong state authority has enabled the WPA in Malaysia to undergo a positive evolution process, beginning as an advisory council in 1963 and achieving full ministerial status in 2001, as shown in the figure below.

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In the absence of strong resistance from other sections of society, the state has been able to carry out its development plans; these have included gender empowerment initiatives through the creation of women’s policy machinery. The WPA has been able to undergo positive evolutionary process with minimal disruptions.

Source: Author’s analysis based on MWFCD, NACIWID and WDD websites

Refer to Appendix 9 for the list of the MWFCD’s individual agencies’ websites
This study discovers that there is positive correlation between institutional stability contributed to by a strong state authority and the WPA institutional establishment. Strong state authority has enabled the WPA to transform from an advisory council to a full ministry, and to secure its base without going through major institutional change. However, this study also observes that this authority, through its formal rules of governance, has also contributed to the top-down approach of the WPA, and that this imposes serious limitations on the ability of the women's movement to discuss power changes or to influence policymaking decisions. Although the WPA makes arrangements and commitments to engage with civil society, especially women's groups, the participation of the women's movement in decision-making is limited, as the final decision, despite being within the Ministry's remit, is the extension of the state's arm of women policy machinery. The restriction of freedom of expression and the confinement of civil society movements may deter healthy discussion on vital gender issues and affect the quality of inputs from actors other than the WPA.

**Dominant Party System**

The dominant party system has been the main feature of Malaysia's political arrangement and it has added to the WPA's institutional stability. Since Malaysia's independence from British colonial rule in 1957, it has been under the rule of the same political party coalition, the dominance of which is contributed by the informal rules within the institutional setting. The dominant party system in Malaysia contributes to a strong party culture which induces the norms of the WPA. The indication is that the survival of the WPA within its current setting is highly dependent on the political will of influential ruling party leaders.

Reilly (2007) suggested that despite the existence of a multitude of registered political parties which participate in the general elections in Malaysia, the electoral system has been orchestrated to benefit the ruling
party coalition and to ensure their continuous position in power. Ufen (2009) further classified it as an electoral authoritarian regime, as despite the periodic elections which are held, it is devoid of the principles of fairness and freedom which are the hallmarks of a democratic regime. In addition, the process is systematically influenced and there is an apparent lack of impartiality and open competition.

Despite being categorised as a semi-democratic country, the dominant party system in place has contributed to institutional stability in a highly diverse society. The ruling party coalition, the National Front, consists of multiple political parties, led by United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) which represents the Malay Muslim majority. The National Front platform has provided the ethnically diverse Malaysia with political stability and harmonious ethnic relations due to UMNO’s power sharing formula with other component parties which represent other ethnic groups in Malaysia such as the Indians and Chinese\(^{33}\). The long-standing of a dominant party system is also partly due to strong networks which exist between politicians and bureaucrats, enabling them to synchronise bureaucratic actions with the needs and aspirations of the political parties (Haque, 2007; Pepinsky, 2007; Chin, 2011; Siddique, 2013). The fusion between political and state actors is discussed further in the next section of this chapter.

In the Malaysian scenario, there is a strong political party influence on the state apparatus, and this includes the WPA. In particular, UMNO, as the main political party in the ruling coalition, plays a significant role in influencing the state institutional structure, holding as it does the highest level of national leadership, unchallenged since post-independence period. The dynamic relationship between a strong state and a dominant political party has thus generated a stable institutional setting, making it a strong regime that is able

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\(^{33}\) For more reading on Malaysia’s consociational politics, please refer to Arend Lijphart “Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration” (1977) p.150-153
“to surmount social crises and concentrate power for redistributive ends” (Kuhonta, 2011, p.34).

Figure 5: Location of the dominant political party system, the state and other actors in Malaysia

Source: Author’s analysis

Figure 5 illustrates the position of the ruling political party coalition in respect to the state and other actors in the Malaysian political system. As the ruling party has a stronger influence on the state and its apparatus, the above chart also shows how the political system institutionalises the state. Due to the restrictive laws in place, as previously discussed, the opposition political parties and civil society are not considered part of the state apparatus, over which the ruling party has significant control. It is thus able to influence the existing formal rules to be in its favour and to maintain the status quo. As summarised by Ufen:

“The control of enormous financial means, the bureaucracy, the judiciary, and the media apparatus allow for the framing of political conflicts and the suppression of independent associations. The institutional hindrances of electoral authoritarianism were too high to allow for the translating of social issues into party political and parliamentary conflict.” (Ufen, 2012, p.15).

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34 Based on author’s analysis of the existing literatures on Malaysia’s political system.
This study observes that the WPA was not critical of the sexist behaviour by members of the ruling political party in parliament\textsuperscript{35}. The public silence of the WPA is related to the ruling political party’s culture which emphasises values such as subordination towards leaders and loyalty (Case, 2001; Pepinsky, 2007). Rather, it is contingent on pressure exerted by Malaysia’s women’s movements and opposition parties\textsuperscript{36} to take strong and concrete action (Lee, 2011), such as amending the Parliament Standing Order which prohibits sexist remarks being uttered in parliament (Refer to Appendix 1).

Another aspect affecting the WPA is the dualist political system adopted by Malaysia. Although CEDAW, which forms the backbone and main guideline for the establishment of the WPA, has been ratified in 1995, the parliamentary branch is yet to pass an incorporating statute (Neo, 2013). This is due to the power to ratify treaties lies in the hand of the executive, the legislative branch of the state is empowered to oversee the domestic implementation of a ratified treaty as the current system requires more than ratification of international protocols such as CEDAW to execute related acts. This contribute to the limitation of the WPA’s capacity. As the ruling party dominates the legislature, the stance of the ruling political party would also determine whether the gender agenda is high on the state’s list or concessions are made to other agendas deemed more important.

The political culture of UMNO as the main political party in the ruling coalition revolves around clientelism and patronage, well-documented in Malaysian political literature (Singleton & Turner, 2000; Chin, 2011; Kuhonta, 2011). The culture of accommodating supporters is likely to have pushed the

\textsuperscript{35} There has been no official statements by the WPA’s minister and officials in regards to parliament members’ sexist remarks. Refer also to CEDAW & Malaysia Shadow Report (2012, p.16) that discuss on sexist behaviours of members of parliament but receive no attention from mainstream gender actors.

\textsuperscript{36} The National Front (NF) is led by UMNO and has lost its two-thirds majority once, in 1969. Since 2008 however, Malaysia’s political setting has seen the rise of a coalition of prominent opposition parties, which has denied the NF its comfortable majority in parliament. This development sees a strengthening of the voice of the opposition parties and increases the pressure on the NF.
gender agenda down the priority list in the policymaking process. The position of UMNO’s women’s wing also reflects the party’s stance on gender issues. This wing has labelled itself the backbone of UMNO and on several occasions has either called for its contribution to be recognised and for its hard work to be rewarded. However, the women who comprise this wing are often regarded as supporters of UMNO rather than main actors within the political party\(^{37}\). They regular demand that UMNO’s women to be given appropriate positions in the party as a reward to their loyalty and contribution to the party. This signifies and emphasises the supporting roles of the women’s wing in a highly male-dominated political party, instead of trying to project a more proactive and equal image of women’s wing to their male counterparts in UMNO.

“The UMNO women’s wing is prepared to move together with the government in the efforts to ensure that all its policies and agendas are successfully executed. As the backbone of the ruling party, the UMNO women’s wing will ensure that the government’s visions are achieved” (translated) (UMNO Women Wing Chief (Shahrizat Jalil) speech, UMNO General Assembly, 2012)

“Women’s roles have to be empowered continuously at all levels…Malaysian women participation in the labour market is low at 47% in comparison to other ASEAN countries…we (UMNO women) believe apart from our strong networking (and) loyalty (to party’s leadership), our dedication also ensure our position as the backbone of UMNO” (translated), (Noraini Ahmad, UMNO Women Wing Exco speech, UMNO General Assembly, 2013)

\(^{37}\) This is based on speeches analysis of the women’s wing delegate in the UMNO General Assembly in 2012 and 2013.
During the interview sessions, the officials from the ministry express their sentiments that the ministry’s survival will depend on the ‘masters’ or the leaders at the top.

“*We are the ones who formulate and execute the policies and plans… yes. But we have to follow what the top says because we are only the ones who follow orders (referring to the sign-off phrase in official government letters and memos). If they say move or merge with another department or ministry, we have to follow because they can see the bigger picture. It is for the benefit of the organisation*” (Interview 3).

“I don’t know whether this ministry is relevant. I think one day it might be dissolved because people don’t (really) understand [its] importance…. ” (Interview 17).

An interviewee from the women’s group also agreed that the WPA depends on the will and agenda of the actors involved:

“We still have not seen a strong commitment from the government to gender issues. Yes, there have been positive improvements, in that they engage with us more nowadays but nobody knows until when… the ministry could be gone one day because there is no guarantee from anybody that there will definitely be a specific body for women. Or they might continue jumbling everything up like they do now” (Interview 9).

This study finds that despite the success of the WPA in pushing forward the amendment to the Constitution to include the word ‘gender’ in Article 8 (2) (which prohibits discrimination on various grounds including religion, race, descent, place of birth and other enacted and revised laws
related to gender, such as the Domestic Violence Act 1994), there is no mention of gender machinery in any form of formalised rules\textsuperscript{38}. The existence of the WPA resides with political actors from the ruling party. Although it is an advantage for the WPA to be more adaptable to changes in the environment it is operating in, it also suggests that the continuity of the WPA in its current form of a ministry is left in the hands of influential politicians.

This study observes that the dominant party system in Malaysia contributes to a stable institutional setting by exerting a significant influence on the state’s apparatus. In this way, it can ensure that state policies fulfil its political agenda. It also avoids political instability and maintains the political status quo by utilising state machinery and enforcing restrictive laws and regulations. However, this informal setup of a dominant party system also leaves the survival of the WPA highly dependent on political will and agenda of political players. Although the WPA has experienced a positive evolutionary process, there is an absence of formalised institutional commitment in regards to its continuity, as the state machinery for existence of an agenda committed exclusively to gender depends on the strategies of Malaysia’s political leaders.

Thus, the existing informal rules (such as clientelism and patronage) together with the formalised rules within the state institution have allowed the ruling political party to continue its supremacy in Malaysia. This political setting has resulted in a dominant party system which has control and influence over the WPA. Despite the institutional stability of the WPA therefore, in the absence of formalised guarantee from the state and political actors that its existence is time- and change-proof, its status within the institutional setup is vulnerable.

Strong Bureaucratic Foundation

Malaysia’s strong bureaucratic foundation contributes greatly to the solid institutional structure of the WPA, a foundation which is supported by a number of factors. First is the colonial legacy of Malaysia’s bureaucracy which the country inherited from the British colonial period. In examining this colonial legacy, this study analyses two important traits of British administration which are responsible for the creation of a number of path-dependent effects on Malaysia's bureaucracy institutions. These include: 1) the centralisation of power, and 2) the rule of elite generalists through the open service system in a closed setting approach. Both have been embedded into Malaysia’s administrative situation and shape the behaviours and decisions of the state institutional setting the WPA operates as path-dependent effects.

Second, this research analyses the administrative infrastructure of Malaysia’s bureaucratic system which helps provide the WPA with a strong organisational foundation. This study notes that the competency of this administrative infrastructure is related to three factors: 1) existing administrative knowledge, 2) a proper framework which manages WPA conducts which includes an extensive check and balance mechanism, and 3) firm administrative reform initiatives to improve the service delivery of every government agency including the WPA. These three factors have positive impacts on the WPA’s capacity to implement gender empowerment initiatives.

However, this study also discovers that the strong bureaucratic foundation also creates obstacles for the WPA’s capacity as it has to conform to formal institutional frameworks that are gender blind. This study also identifies informal rules play a crucial role in influencing the WPA’s bureaucratic foundation. Despite Malaysia’s bureaucracy setup being built upon the principles of political neutrality and hierarchical loyalty (Haque, 2007), it has been heavily influenced by a fusion of politics and
administration; this is in spite of the existing formal rules which are designed to ensure bureaucratic neutrality.

**Colonial Legacy**

Malaysia is a former British colony and gained independence in 1957. As with many other post-colonial nations, it has adopted and adapted the bureaucratic structure of its former colonial rulers. The period of colonial administration highly influenced and shaped Malaysia’s modern state institution’s arrangements, also manifested in the fusion of colonial-based administration with local elements, such as the notions of autocratic-paternalistic rule and kingship-based authority (Haque, 2007). The British colonial period brought an era of modernisation as well as an alteration of the existing local ruling institutions in Malaysia by introducing new aspects to the administration, either by replacing the existing system, by introducing new forms of administration or by adding layers to the prevailing local administrative institutions. The British administration, for example, introduced new organisational tools in the system such as the District and Land Office, the Malay Administrative Service and the Malayan Civil Service together with a number of established agencies which were the predecessors of current existing ministries (i.e. the Social Welfare Department) (Chin, 2011; Siddique, 2013).

Post-colonial Malaysia finds itself with a well-developed administrative institution blended with local elements which emphasise values such as unconditional loyalty and obedience to a higher authority. For instance, the government’s formal sign-off for its letters and documents is “Saya yang menurut perintah”, literally translated as ‘I, who follow the order (of the higher rank officers)”\(^\text{39}\). This shows that the fusion of the modern state apparatus with local customs have prevalent effects on the current state machinery establishment despite the Malaysian civil service sector having gone through robust reform initiatives aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness

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\(^{39}\) The observation of this formality is made as an insider of the bureaucratic system and through various formal interchanges with Malaysia’s bureaucrats.
of its service delivery system. This study has observed two main aspects of the Malaysian WPA which can be traced back to the British colonial legacy. They are: 1) the centralisation of power in the prime minister’s department, and 2) the open service system which leads to the dominance of the elite generalists’ bureaucrats at the apex of the administrative hierarchy. These two traits of colonial legacy have shaped the Malaysian bureaucratic principles on which the WPA is established to a considerable degree.

Centralisation of Power under the Prime Minister’s Department

One of the main attributes which the formation of the Malaysian bureaucracy inherited from the British colonial period is the concentration of power at the centre, under the Prime Minister’s Department (PMD). In the Malaysian state machinery, this department is led by the prime minister and the deputy prime minister. It comprises of eight full dedicated ministers, exhibiting its importance and the vastness despite its departmental status in comparison with the average of one full minister at other ministries40. It is also the biggest and the most authoritative department as it houses various powerful units and government agencies (Chin, 2011; Siddique, 2013). The modern Malaysian bureaucratic establishment is also shaped on the basis of the Weberian model of bureaucracy which emphasises hierarchical loyalty and centralisation of power. This model was mainly used by the colonial powers to govern and manage their colonies such as in India and Singapore (Haque, 2007; Siddique, 2013).

The centralisation of power under the Prime Minister’s Department (which houses some of the most powerful government agencies, such as the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) and Implementation and Coordination Unit, or ICU) is evidence of the immense responsibility of the department to “plan,

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formulate and coordinate all matters pertaining to the implementation of national policies in order to achieve the stated goals of the government" (Siddiquee, 2013). As the highest administrative organisation in Malaysia’s bureaucratic hierarchical position, it thus wields a strong degree of influence and power over other ministries and government agencies, including the WPA. This study finds that despite its full ministerial status therefore, the WPA is still obliged to report to various agencies related to The Prime Minister’s Department. In fact, the WPA was once based under the locus of administrative power in Malaysia, that is, The Prime Minister’s Department before being transferred to another ministry and subsequently being upgraded to a full ministry. This raises the question of whether the authority of the WPA always be limited if it continues to reside under the jurisdiction of this department due to the latter’s powerful position and authority within Malaysia’s administrative organisation. On a day-to-day basis, the Ministry is still subject to the department’s direction and guidance.

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41 Refer to Interview 8, MWFCRD annual reports (2008, 2009, 2011, and 2012). This study also observes that all UN project documents and project proposals have to go through and receive approvals from the central agencies (EPU).
This study identifies the crucial important actors that are related to the WPA operation within the Prime Minister’s Department. Among the most influential agencies which are closely related to the establishment of the MWFCID are the Public Service Department (PSD), the National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN), the Economic Planning Unit (EPU), the Implementation and Coordination Unit (ICU) and the recently established Performance Management & Delivery Unit (PEMANDU). The PSD, for example, is the government agency serving and managing all human resource management areas concerning civil servants, including appointments, career development, promotions, postings and transfers, pensions and other related matters. As all WPA personnel are part of the civil service, their employment matters are managed and administered by the PSD at the central level.

INTAN plays an immense role in providing training for all civil servants in Malaysia. It acts as an institution which synergises civil servants from various ministries and agencies in planning, implementing and executing national development policies. Furthermore, INTAN is responsible for providing training to the Administrative and Diplomatic Service (ADS) officers who hold decision-making positions in government ministries and agencies, including the MWFCID. The crucial role of ADS officers in the MWFCID will be further discussed in this section. The EPU is an extremely powerful and influential unit as it acts as the principal agency manoeuvring Malaysia’s national economic development plans. It is fully involved, from the initial stages of planning and coordination of these plans, and later in monitoring their progress regardless of timespan (whether short-, medium- or long-term). It is this agency which dictates the annual development plans budget allocation of the MWFCID; all agencies and departments under it are illustrated in Figure 6 (p.138).

43 Based on the analysis of the MWFCID Annual Reports (2011,2012)
The ICU is responsible for the monitoring and coordination of the implementation of national-level development projects. In 2005, the cabinet decided that “ICU will lead in implementing outcome monitoring programmes which emphasize... the output and impact of projects carried out by government agencies at each level i.e. Federal, State and Statutory Bodies” (ICU website). The ICU thus plays a substantial role in coordinating and integrating development projects across all levels of government, as well as ensuring the success of the projects according to their targets. The other crucial player in the prime minister's department in relation to the WPA is PEMANDU. This unit was established in 2009, as part of the current prime minister initiative, the government transformation programme (GTP). The formal mandate of this unit is to:

“Oversee the implementation assess the progress, facilitate as well as support the delivery and drive the progress of the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) and Economic Transformation Programme (ETP). While the responsibility for end-to-end delivery of National Key Results Areas (NKRAs) and Ministerial Key Results Areas (MKRAs) outcomes ultimately rests with the respective ministries, and the success of the National Key Economic Areas (NKEAs) rests with the private sector, PEMANDU has been mandated to catalyse bold changes in public and private sector delivery, support the ministries in the delivery planning process and provide an independent view of performance and progress to the PM and ministers” (PEMANDU’s website).

As the Prime Minister's Department serves as the centre of administration in Malaysia's bureaucracy, the chief secretary of the department serves as the “chief of secretary of the government cum advisor to the prime minister, secretary to the cabinet and the head of the civil service” (Siddique, 2013). Holding multiple roles in the bureaucracy, the chief
general secretary is expected to streamline all ministries and government agencies’ directions towards the consented government development plans and policies. This research observes that the MWFCD is placed under the direction of the strong centralised power, including the head of civil services located in the Prime Minister’s Department. This entails a strong hierarchical relationship between the Prime Minister’s Department and other ministries and government agencies. This study finds that this arrangement reduces the WPA’s capacity in which it acts mainly as an implementing arm of the government, with plans and policies moulded by the locus of power, mainly from the PM’s Department.

44 Based on information obtained from the Prime Minister’s Office website, http://www.pmo.gov.my/ksn/home.php?frontpage/content/2032/2035
The above figure illustrates the formal structure of Malaysia’s bureaucracy, indicating the WPA’s position in it. Although formally established as a ministry, its capacity has been somewhat undermined at times by the institutionalisation of an elite and a powerful department located at the locus of power, which not only has more authority to manoeuvre the direction of the WPA but also to constrain its authority in determining its own set up. The existence of the WPA rests in the hand of political actors at the top level of leadership. Thus, the WPA is still subjected to the need to obtain approval for its planned policies and financial matters from various powerful units, agencies and ministries. This limits the WPA’s spheres of authority to determine the policies and activities it should undertake. The centralisation of power at the PM’s Department is also apparent from the number of changes made to the machinery since its establishment, wherein it has been

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45 Based on Interview 7, 8 and 19, the MWFCD organisational chart and annual reports (2008, 2011, and 2012).
transferred, renamed and expanded according to the will of both political actors and bureaucrats.

*Figure 7: Process flow of programme approval for the WPA*

As can be seen from Figure 7, interviews with officers from the MWFCD and the EPU reveal that all funding for development plans from individual ministries and government agencies must be reviewed by the EPU for approval, as it has an overall view of the national development plans and is able to streamline national resources in the most effective way:

“We will go through proposals from other ministries and ensure that the (individual) ministry’s programmes are beneficial for the nation and is in line with the RMP (five years national development plans). Although we might seem that the upper hand…but there is also the lobbying power (hierarchical power relations) of the senior officers (of other ministries/agencies) to ensure that we approve their programmes…” (Interview 7)

“It is not a one-way street. Sometimes we propose, sometimes we receive the ‘revelation’ (order from higher office). When we

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*Refer to footnote on page 144*
propose, we prepare the fieldwork, then we present it to the PM’s Office\textsuperscript{47}. Once we receive their approval, we can proceed.” (Interview 16)

“Sometimes it is difficult to convince them [mainly the EPU and MOF, as they control expenses and budget allocations for ministries and government agencies] that, for example, we need to hire foreign consultants; it cost a lot and they are quite expensive. We also often need to travel abroad, or organise programmes with high-ranking women leaders. It is not easy to convince the ‘money people’ that we don’t just spend money; there are returns but sometimes the return is quite intangible”. (Interview 14)

The interview sessions further demonstrates the position of the WPA within the bureaucratic setting. The ministry has to follow the paths regulated by the Prime Minister’s Department, making it subject to various rules, guidelines, and directions predetermined by the units and agencies under the Prime Minister’s Department’s jurisdiction. An advantage of the strong centralised power is that this study finds that the WPA set up is also highly synchronised with the national development agendas\textsuperscript{48}. This is observed in the creation of special departments and units in the WPA’s organisational structure in line with the directives from the Prime Minister or units and agencies under the PM’s Department. This enable the WPA as a newly established organisation to be mainstreamed in the national development agenda.

\textsuperscript{47} Development projects are submitted to the EPU to be approved and MOF handle the applications for other budgetary matters.

\textsuperscript{48} This is further discussed in Chapter Six of this thesis, p. 210-212
NIEW, for instance, was established in July 2006 after Malaysia’s prime minister at the time, Abdullah Badawi, was given the mandate to establish this institute by NAM member countries.

“Although NIEW was [newly] established to enable diplomatic relationships during Pak Lah’s [affectionate name used for Abdullah Ahmad Badawi] time working for the NAM, we (NIEW) have reasons to share our success stories of gender empowerment…” (Interview 14)

The organisational chart of the ministry also shows the units under its purview which have been established pursuant to directives issued by the prime minister’s department. Under Badawi’s leadership, he promoted the concept of “Islam Hadhari” which was subsequently translated into the MWFCFD’s organisational structure. The “Muslim Women Defence and Empowerment Secretariat” or SENADA was set up and absorbed into the ministry in 2009, with its main functions being as follows:

1. To ensure no form of discrimination towards Muslim women by playing a role in advocating and influencing legislation and rules pertaining to Muslim women;

2. To mitigate any negative implication of legislation and roles on women’s rights, development and welfare;

3. To empower Muslim women through initiatives and programmes, including the development of human capital and their capacity especially in terms of issues regarding their rights, access and opportunity for themselves and family development.

(Source: MWFCFD’s website)

According to the MWFCD Annual Report 2008, the Islamic Development Department\textsuperscript{50} (IDD) appointed an Islamic Affairs Officer in the Human Resources Management department of the MWFCD to execute and synchronise initiatives corresponding to the “Islam Hadhari” ideology and how it applies in the public service sector. Among these were the Islamic Values Application (PNI), the Public Integrity Inauguration Plan (PIPA) and 10 Concepts of the Islamic Hadhari Approach\textsuperscript{51}. The continuity of these initiatives was however dependent on the leadership in power at that point in time. In the following example, the plans currently imposed on the WPA by the Prime Minister’s Department are based on the integration of new units, the replacement of several initiatives pertaining to Islam Hadhari, and the implementation of the GTP as endorsed by the current prime minister.

\textsuperscript{50} IDD is a department under the Prime Minister’s Department, in charge of matters related to Islamic affairs at the federal level
\textsuperscript{51} Refer to the MWFCD Annual Report (2008).
Among the researcher’s intended interviewees were officials from SENADA. However, efforts to contact officers from this unit as part of the research fieldwork were unsuccessful. In interviews with the ministry’s officers from other departments revealed that a few years after its establishment SENADA was no longer functioning actively, and in fact had been officially removed from the ministry’s organisation chart just after the ministry went through leadership transformation in October 2013.

“SENADA [emerged from] Pak Lah’s (affectionate name for Abdullah Badawi) time with his “Islam Hadhari”. Now it is Najib’s time. I think SENADA has already been a cold unit for a long time. It is not doing anything because Pak Lah is no longer

Source: Ministry’s website (accessed 21 April 2013)
here. I think [the ministry] just do not know what to do with them [the unit and the staffs of the unit].” (Interview 18)

“Once you [SENADA] lose your champion [the leader of the initiative due to change of leadership], you are like a lost kitten and cease to become functional in the organisation” (Interview 17)

In the case of SENADA, the WPA created and removed units within its structure according to direction given by the Prime Minister’s Department. However, the fluidity of the units under the WPA is quite vague, given that SENADA ceased to be relevant after the resignation of Malaysia’s fifth prime minister in 2009, and that in the same year, the sixth Prime Minister, Najib Razak, introduced new initiatives revolving around national transformation programmes⁵². However, SENADA was only dissolved formally at the end of 2013⁵³, an indication that no clear guidelines exist for the WPA in terms of the action it should take in respect of units which no longer suit the policies and plans made by political elites at the locus of administrative power.

Malaysia’s current Prime Minister, Najib Razak has introduced two new initiatives as part of his efforts to improve the quality of life in the country in 2009 by: 1) encouraging the economic development process through the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP), and 2) attempting to improve the productivity of government agencies through the Government Transformation Programme (GTP). A new agency, the Performance Management and Delivery Unit (PEMANDU) was established, with the sole aim of driving these efforts to enhance economic and social development through a number of initiatives. PEMANDU has introduced several national initiatives.

⁵² Refer to Prime Minister’s Office website, http://www.pmo.gov.my/home.php which provides information on all current initiatives under the current Prime Minister, Najib Razak.
⁵³ Refer to Figure 8
key areas to be given attention by the respective ministries including the MWFCD.

As PEMANDU is situated under the purview of the Prime Minister's Department, a new unit was formed in 2009 in MWFCD to streamline the Ministry's programmes with the key areas identified by PEMANDU54. The newly established unit is named the National Key Result Areas (NKRA) Unit and is fully dedicated to deal with NKRA initiatives under the Ministry's jurisdiction. The Unit is placed directly under the directions of the Ministry's Secretary General signifying the importance of the Unit (see Figure 9).

54 This is based on author’s analysis of PEMANDU’s website, http://www.pemandu.gov.my/gtp/
This research has observed that the addition or removal of the WPA units tends to be executed in accordance with macro level national planning emanating from the locus of power. As in the Malaysian bureaucratic organisations, the central power is the prime minister’s department, encompassing the agencies and units under its jurisdiction. Although the MWFCRD has its own sphere of influence and authority, it is subject to approval by the prime minister’s department due to the centralisation of the power structure, whereby influential units are located under one department in order to regulate the conduct and behaviour of other ministries, government agencies and bodies. This arrangement limits the capacity of the WPA as a full ministry, as it subjects it to a higher authority in terms of its institutional setup. It does however enable any WPA plans and programmes to be mainstreamed into national development plans at the federal level and
means that the Ministry is not isolated from other organisations in the administration system.

Open Service System in a Closed Setting

The open service system is a bureaucratic feature of Malaysian administration inherited from the British colonial period as they developed Malaysia’s bureaucratic system. Historically, the British created an administrative class for Malay elites, which continue to dominate senior positions in the government services and to wield high levels of influence (Chin, 2011). As they are in decision-making positions, not only is this influence felt in the public service sector, but they also act as advisors to ministers on policy formulation and implementation, as well as having formidable power in navigating Malaysia’s development plan (Chin, 2011, Siddiquee, 2013). They are thus considered the elite of the civil service institution55.

Although the administrative structure has been revamped and reformed to be more in keeping with the post-independent period, the key feature remains of the existence of ADS officers as the elite of government service in professional and management levels. They receive special treatment (i.e. a higher salary and allowance, rank, and exclusive compulsory training) and continue to have a high level of influence in the policy- and decision-making processes (Berman, 2011). At times this brings them into conflict with other groups of civil servants at professional and management levels. A feature of the open service which is practiced in the bureaucratic set up that the ADS operates in is evident in the officers’ ability to rotate around

55 The elites in Malaysia’s civil service categorised as the Administrative and Diplomatic Services (ADS) emerged from the British colonial period administration. Previously, they were known as Malay Administrative Officers (MAO) and were the focal point of the Malayan civil service (MCS) which managed British rulings in the Federated Malay States from 1910 until independence (PSD website).
various ministries, government agencies and departments which implies fluidity of movement. This provides them with less opportunity to gain the specific technical knowledge and skills to perform their tasks as administrators in specific ministries. Therefore, they are generalist administrators who are not necessarily well-equipped with gender knowledge required by the WPA.

Interviews with other groups of public service officers elicited less than constructive views with regard to the elite position of ADS officers in the civil service.

“They can only talk but they do not know how to do their jobs [most of the time]… they can be [quite] condescending because they are the ones who manage [the technical groups]… we have to wait for sometimes 8 to 10 years to be promoted, but they can reach 52 [referring to civil service ranking] in four years; it is quite unfair actually” (Interview 6)

“We are not ADS officers… we are just technical people. ADS (officers) are quite high and mighty. They don’t really care about us [other professional and management groups in the civil services]. They only care about their own kind. Most of the time; all they know is what is on paper [and have a lack of concrete understanding on technical matters]” (Interview 4)

An interview with an ADS officer confirmed the sentiment felt by other groups in the civil service.

“People [in other groups in civil service] do not really like us. I kind of understand, but they have to know that we are given special training [referring to a six-month compulsory rigorous course for ADS officers]
and I think we deserve to be recognised because it is not easy to be [an ADS]” (Interview 11)

However, the same individual later acknowledged that the open service practice may provide obstacles in certain areas of administration which deals with specific issues and agendas and require specialisation and technical knowledge including gender issues.

“But the open service [system] sometimes stops people from becoming experts in our areas. For example, if I master issue A, and then, I am being transferred to other places, then, the new person has to study all over again and the cycle will not end” (Interview 11)

An understanding of the concept of open service system practiced by Malaysia’s bureaucracy enables better insight into the setup of the WPA establishment. As the top level administration of civil service institution is dominated by ADS officers, the WPA as a ministry is also helmed by ADS officers56. It is predominantly because the ministry is considered as general in nature and therefore requires less specific and less specialised technical skills compared to other ministries (such as the Ministry of Works, Ministry of Health). The WPA is thus dominated by ADS officers not only in critical areas of policymaking and formulation (as observed in other ministries and government agencies) but at other level positions. In addition, the ADS officers appointed to the WPA are especially apparent in those departments and units which are considered the brain of the ministry, and the departments and agencies under them, such as the departments of Women, and Family and Community Policy57.

57 In addition to the above analysis, this information is also based on Interview 17 and 18
As a consequence, the MWFC is helmed by bureaucrats rather than femocrats. The officers in the WPA operate according to open service practice in a closed system, which enables them to move around ministries and other government agencies through an internal transfer process. The ministry therefore rarely appoints individuals from outside the system to positions within the WPA. Apart from the special appointment of former NIEW Director, Rafiah Salim, other high ranking officers within the WPA are internally appointed within the civil service system. Salim was appointed from outside the civil service to lead a newly established NIEW due to her needed expertise and wide network base. NIEW, as a statutory body under the ministry, has more flexibility in hiring its own employees than ministerial departments. Furthermore, as NIEW was established to enhance Malaysia’s reputation as the chair of NAM, it needed an individual experience in managing both local and international issues and networks.

Despite their administrative knowledge, the officers are also generalists with little in-depth knowledge of the ministry agenda, particularly in terms of gender issues. During the fieldwork of this research, the ministry was in the middle of the transformation cycle which involved officers being transferred out of or into the ministry. Therefore, there were at the time insufficient local experts appointed by the ministry in specific fields, especially those related to gender empowerment issues. In the pursuit for information and data during the fieldwork period, the researcher was not directed to the appropriate officers, as several of these officers were either newly transferred from or newly appointed to the ministry. The research showed, therefore, that open service practice in a closed system has created a need in the ministry for experts in the field of gender.

In interviews with ministerial officers, they admitted to an absence of adequate knowledge of gender-related issues; they were faced with a steep

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58 Further discussion in Chapter Six, p. 243-244
59 Based on interviews 3, 16, and 17.
learning curve in order to acquire practical knowledge and skills relevant to
the ministry’s operation

“Previously I worked with Health Ministry, so I am used to looking at
health-related materials, and I work with health practitioners [doctors
and nurses]. Now, I am working in a totally different area… at first it
was overwhelming because I have so many things to learn and it was
not easy. I have to learn and go through CEDAW, the Beijing
Declaration and all these acts related to women but I managed.”
(Interview 16)

“I am very new here, so I do not know much… it has only been three
months because I have just finished my masters… I am still learning
as this is my first job.” (Interview 2)

“I think I am the only one who asked to be transferred to this ministry. I
don’t think others want to work here. I want to work here because it is
my passion, my interest as I studied gender before. Unfortunately, not
many have similar interests to me… Yes, we do not have gender
experts because we have to rotate every few years.” (Interview 3)

“I am here because I got promoted to higher grade [within the civil
service]. It is normal that we transfer to different places when we get
promoted. I basically do not mind anywhere [any ministry or
government agency] as long as the location and position is right”
(Interview 16)
“The only reason I asked to be transferred here is because of my family. I asked for a transfer not because of the ministry, but because of the location this position offers me…. Otherwise, I think I am better at the previous ministry… it is more interesting. Here, there is no black and white, too many grey areas [referring to clashes of religious and cultural values with international convention norms on gender]” (Interview 17)

“I am so happy that I finally get to be out of this ministry after a number of times [previous applications to transfer were not approved]. It has been too long. This ministry is too female oriented sometimes and too much of male bashing as if we [as men] are responsible for everything [on negative issues such as domestic violence and marital rape]” (Interview 18)

This study concludes that the WPA employs adequate and knowledgeable officers but who can be classified as bureaucrats rather than femocrats. These elite bureaucrats receive specialised trainings on administrative matters and are able to transfer around other ministries and government agencies. This leads to their acquisition of strong administrative background. However, they do not have in-depth knowledge and skills in the ministry’s specific areas of authority. This is also reflected in the levels of enthusiasm of bureaucrats within the WPA who are not necessarily feminists or hold high levels of interest in and understanding of gender issues. Instead, many see their appointment within the ministry as practical and an opportunity for career enhancement.

As members of a generalist elites within the bureaucratic structure, WPA officers need informed input to assist with policymaking and future
planning. The ministry therefore needs to maintain a good relationship with women’s groups which have more exposure to and greater experience of women issues on the ground, creating a dependency on outside agencies such as international organisations, the women’s movement within Malaysia, and academia. Further discussion on the administrative knowledge of Malaysia’s bureaucrats is presented in the later part of this section while the relationships between WPA and other actors is analysed in Chapter Six.

**Competent Administrative Infrastructure**

The contribution of the British to the provision of a strong foundation on which the administrative infrastructure is based must be acknowledged. This study recognises that the WPA appears inflexible and constrained in terms of its behaviours and authority influenced by its position and location within the state institution shaped by the colonial administrative traits. Nevertheless, in its post-colonial era, Malaysia has employed firm initiatives to improve its civil service structure in order to increase the levels of efficiency and effectiveness of its service delivery to the public. This study links these three elements: 1) existing administrative knowledge, 2) proper frameworks which govern WPA behaviours, and 3) firm initiatives in regard to reform administrative infrastructure of the WPA.

**Existing Administrative Knowledge**

This study suggests that the WPA in Malaysia possesses administrative knowledge which contributes to its strong bureaucratic foundation, despite being a relatively new ministry within the state’s institution. The agencies and departments under the WPA consist of a mixture of pre- and post-MWFCD establishment (some, such as the WDD, were established prior to the creation of the MWFCD, or even before independence in 1957, such as the SWD), others, such as the ISM and the
NIEW, were formed after the establishment of the MWFCD as a full ministry\(^{60}\). The study discovers that the MWFCD and all the agencies and departments under its purview have existing administrative knowledge. These administrative knowledge is transferred to the MWFCD through various sources, especially the personnel in the WPA.

The WPA workforce is made up of insiders in the bureaucratic system, who have undergone a generic, selective recruitment process and rigorous training which has strengthened their administrative skills (Berman, 2010). They thus have a sound bureaucratic knowledge which has helped the WPA to establish itself as a solid organisation among government ministries and organisations that have established longer than the Ministry. This study has observed that the competency of the administrative infrastructure is clear, despite the absence of a dedicated minister\(^{61}\). The former minister, Shahrizat Jalil resigned from her position in 2012 and the Prime Minister took over her post as the acting minister from 2012 to 2013. According to interviews conducted with the WPA officers, during this challenging period, bureaucrats in the Ministry, especially the Secretary General of the MWFCD, play crucial role as the administrative head of the WPA. Her tasks also involve providing leadership to the WPA as the Prime Minister is not fully involved with the ministry due to his busy schedule.

“…we must understand that [the Prime Minister] is extremely busy, not only running the whole country; he also has other portfolios to handle [finance and defence]. But [the Secretary General of the MWFCD] is very capable, that is why the PM trusts her decisions for the ministry.” (Interview 4)

“…Our Secretary-General is very capable and experienced; we trust her decisions and her direction for the whole ministry… she is very

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\(^{60}\) Based on the MWFCD’S individual agencies’ websites. Refer to Appendix 9.

\(^{61}\) Based on interviews with the MWFCD officers (Interview 3 and 4) as well as the analysis of the ministry’s high-ranking official’ resumes.
clear about what is expected from us, from the department…” (Interview 3)

As an example, the former Secretary General of the WPA during the critical period of the WPA restructuring phase, Noorul Ainur has served various government agencies and ministries (such as INTAN and the Ministry of Finance) prior to her appointment in the MWFCD. This is apart from her attachments with international companies such as Goldman Sachs and international organisations such as UNDP (Noorul Ainur, KSU Vision presentation, 2012). From interviews with the officers in the WPA, it was apparent that her previous experience in other organisations had equipped her with competent administrative knowledge that is especially needed during the critical restructuring phase of the MWFCD.

It can be thus construed that the WPA benefits from the existing administrative knowledge possessed by the personnel of the ministry. The implication is that knowledgeable, experienced and highly skilled personnel are greatly valued by the WPA establishment. Despite it being a newly established ministry, the WPA has access to administrative experts who already have the experience to manoeuvre the directions and behaviours of the WPA within the state administration context.

**Formal Frameworks Governing WPA Behaviours**

The second element in the establishment of the WPA which contributes towards a competent administrative structure is the subsistence of proper frameworks to govern WPA behaviour. The Ministry is located within federal government jurisdiction, and these formal frameworks thus accord with federal government requirements. They also serve to ensure that a proper checks and balance mechanism exists for the WPA as a ministry, and that a high quality of public service is delivered by the WPA to

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its clients, including other government organisations, the private sector, civil society and the public\textsuperscript{63}.

Other government organisations exist within the state institution which are responsible for ensuring the proper management and allocation of resources, as well as high quality administration standards. These include the Accountant’s General Department (AGD), the National Audit Department (NAD) and the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) The PAC, however, in contrast, is located under the purview of the legislature and not the executive branch as the former two\textsuperscript{64}. The National Audit Report for example, is being published by the NAD, in which, these reports will identify the weaknesses and strengths of all levels government related bodies. Additionally, government ministries and agencies are also encouraged to attain high quality management standard such as MS ISO 9000.

Internally, the WPA has its own individual mechanism and infrastructure aimed at ensuring the proper management of resources and high quality of public services. Referring to its organisational chart (see Figure 8 and 9) and annual reports, the ministry has in-house units to ensure compliance with the framework which governs WPA behaviour within its bureaucratic context. For instance, the Internal Audit Unit of the MWFCD is set up in accordance with the Treasury Circular No 2 1979 and No 9 2004 (MWFCD Annual Report 2008) to improvise and ensure the compliance of the ministry’s financial management throughout its annual audit plans.

The ministry’s management unit, on the other hand, states as one of its objectives the intention to ensure that the ministry has prepared the correct agendas and outlines in order to achieve good quality management through its TQM initiatives (MWFCD Annual Report, 2009). In this respect, the MWFCD has proved itself competent, as it successfully achieved the MS 9001:2008 certificate from SIRIM Berhad for the Process of Policy

\textsuperscript{64} Refer to the PAC website, http://www.parlimen.gov.my/pac
Legislation and Support Services. The MWFCD has also attained four stars in the NAD Accountability Index rating\(^6\) (MWFCD Annual Report, 2009).

**Firm Initiatives for Administrative Reform**

This study has highlighted colonial legacy being one of the important aspects of Malaysia’s strong bureaucratic foundation earlier in this chapter. The centralisation of power and the open service practice inherited from the British colonial period plays crucial roles in shaping the modern administration structure in Malaysia. Notwithstanding that, Malaysia is able to move ahead beyond mere adaptation of the British administration setting to ensure its compatibility and relevance with the current Malaysia’s socio-economic settings as a highly developing economy as well as to enhance Malaysia’s public service efficiency and effectiveness (Haque, 2007, Siddiquee, 2013). A series of administrative reforms has been introduced into Malaysia’s public service which further lends to the strong bureaucratic foundation of the WPA. Haque (2007) in his analysis of public service in Southeast Asia summarises it as

“This development administration model tried to move away from the rigid colonial bureaucratic model, and emphasized the adoption and implementation of state-led economic plans and programs through a new set of development-oriented public agencies and employees in order to achieve development goals…” (p.1303)

Malaysia bureaucracy has introduced institutional reforms designed to combat the negative perception of public services associated with excessive red tape in bureaucracy by embracing the new public management (NPM) method, often associated with higher level of efficiency due to its result-based outcomes instead of the traditional and rigid process-driven administration (Haque, 2007; Siddique, 2013).

\(^6\) In its response to reported non-compliance and weak governance of government organisations, the NAD developed Accountability Index as a controlling measure of government organisations’ performance (NAD website).
The vigorous pursuit of effective and efficient administration by the Malaysian government is demonstrated by its willingness to undergo administrative reforms process which contributes to the strong bureaucratic foundation of the WPA. This study analyses an initiative of Malaysian bureaucratic reform which falls under the responsibility of the Management Unit of the MWFCD, namely the introduction of total quality management (TQM)\(^{66}\). One of the elements of TQM is the introduction of the Clients’ Charter by individual ministries and government agencies, including the MWFCD\(^{67}\). A further analysis of the WPA website finds that it keeps track of the achievements of the ministry in fulfilling its client charter (see Appendix 5). According to Siddique (2013), a thorough excellence awards system was developed in order to motivate ministries and government agencies to institutionalise the culture of excellence in the civil service.

In 1996, the public service decided to adopt ISO 9001, whereby the Malaysian government organisations obtained their ISO 9000 certification from SIRIM. SIRIM is a government-owned company under the purview of the MOF\(^{68}\). Common (cited in Siddique, 2013) asserted that Malaysia also became the first country to implement ISO certifications for its entire government machinery, efforts which require firm initiatives for administrative reform, as ISO certification provides a “comprehensive system of checks, control and inspection at every stage of the work process so as to ensure consistency in the quality of goods and services produced” (Sarji, 1996).

In addition, technological advancements have motivated the Malaysian government to emphasise the concept of “e-government” in an effort to modernise and enhance public service delivery by increasing accessibility and to deliver high quality interaction between the government

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\(^{66}\) Refer to the MWFCD Annual Report (2008)

\(^{67}\) Refer to the ministry’s Client Charter, retrieved from http://www.kpwkm.gov.my/en/piagam-pelanggan

\(^{68}\) Refer to SIRIM’s Corporate Profile retrieved from http://www.sirim.my/document/corporate%20profile/SIRIM%20Corporate%20Profile.pdf
to the private sector and the public\textsuperscript{69}. This study discovers that the WPA has benefited from this initiative as the ministry has its own Information Management Unit (see Figure 9), responsible for managing ICT-related issues. This also enables the ministry to embark on various initiatives and to embrace the latest available technology in delivering its missions in-house, without high dependency on external parties (such as other government organisations or the private sector).

The MWFCD has been among ministries at the forefront of embracing technology to delivering its mission and improve relationships with relevant actors in the society\textsuperscript{70}. For example, the ministry has established NUR Line\textsuperscript{71} which acts as a single contact point for its clients to all agencies and departments under the ministry as well as functioning as the contact point for matters related to welfare and society such as domestic violence, child abuse, counselling and reproductive health (MWFCD Annual Report 2008, \textit{NUR Line pamphlet}). Furthermore, according to an interview with an officer, the secretary general of the ministry strongly emphasised the dissemination of knowledge and information which consequently has shaped the ministry’s active utilisation of social media regarding the ministry’s activities and issues related to the ministry’s authority.

“The keyword is knowledge, and we are using full advantage of technology to make sure information (related to the ministry or ministry’s mandates) are being communicated to the public” (Interview 3)

This study finds that the ministry participates actively on social media platforms which assist it in reaching its target audience and improving


\textsuperscript{70} Based on the MWFCD Annual Reports (2008, 2011 and 2012) and interview 16

\textsuperscript{71} \textit{NUR} Line (translated as the line of light) is a helpline for social matters under the authority of the MWFCD. It was launched in 2007 and can be reached via phone, email, and social media (Facebook), text message and web chat.
communication channels between itself and the public\textsuperscript{72}. For instance, it is exemplified by the heavy presence of the ministry’s related personalities and departments on Twitter, which are regularly updated as shown in Table 4 below.

\textit{Table 4: The MWFCD’s presence on Twitter}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Twitter feed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Social Welfare Department (SWD)</td>
<td>@JKMHQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>NKRA Unit MWFCD</td>
<td>@NKRA_KPWKM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Corporate Communication Unit</td>
<td>@ukk_kpwkm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Human Resource Management Department</td>
<td>@psm_kpwkm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Director General, SWD</td>
<td>@NoraniJKM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Deputy Secretary General, MWFCD</td>
<td>@tksudasar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Counsellors Board</td>
<td>@ULKKPWKM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>National Population and Family Planning Board (NPFPB)</td>
<td>@LPPKN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Former Secretary General, MWFCD</td>
<td>@NoorulAinur\textsuperscript{73}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Minister of MWFCD</td>
<td>@hjhrohanikarim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>NIEW</td>
<td>@NAMNIEWS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Social Institute of Malaysia</td>
<td>@ISM_HQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Women Development Department</td>
<td>@JPWanita</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Twitter feed as accessed on December 2013

As discussed earlier in this chapter, although Malaysia’s bureaucratic system continues to be influenced by institutional structures inherited from the colonial administration, the government has introduced firm initiatives for

\textsuperscript{72} Based on social media analysis mainly Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. I finds that the ministry is most active on Twitter with its high ranking personnel and the ministry’s units and departments have their own Twitter handles as illustrated in Table 4.

\textsuperscript{73} Noorul Ainur has transferred to the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) in July 2014.
administrative reforms. This study finds that the WPA is still very much subjected to the civil service reform initiatives imposed by the top level. As the centralisation of power is a prominent feature of Malaysia’s bureaucracy, this enhances the role of the WPA as “follower” rather than “initiator”. Nonetheless, the WPA benefits from the civil service reform initiatives as the GTP illustrates the strong will of political leaders to upgrade and enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the public sector service delivery system and process.

As the WPA is also involved and takes part in the administrative reform initiatives imposed, being a fairly new ministry can be advantageous as it has fewer institutional legacies to deal with in reforming in its service delivery system compared to a longer established organisation. It is also able to respond speedily to administrative reform and is likely to be able to adapt to changes faster.

“*I think we are doing well despite this being a new ministry. Although we might be lacking in terms of experience (compared to other ministries), it gives us advantages that we are able to adapt to changes easier because we have less baggage to deal with*” (Interview 3)

Despite the firm administrative reforms by the government, elements remain which may hinder their complete success. Furthermore, it is undermined by the fact that despite being a fairly new ministry, the MWFCM was previously led by the same minister for almost eight years, with only a short vacancy gap. This long period of service has left strong leadership legacies which may cause resistance to change among the ministry’s civil servants.

“*It is [going to be] quite difficult for Rohani (the new minister) because some of them [civil servants within the ministry] are very loyal to the previous minister. It is difficult for them to adjust to new changes…I think [some of] they purposely making things difficult for her…the best
thing she should do is to replace the old timers, transfer them somewhere else and get fresh blood in…” (Interview 30)

This study thus observes that the administrative reforms manage to enhance the service delivery process to WPA stakeholders, enhancing WPA capacity. However, it remains true that the WPA is weakened by the fact that the entire bureaucratic administration in Malaysia is still defined by the strong centralisation of power within its operational context and that it accentuates the strong hierarchical power relations within the civil service. The reforms may thus not have a prominent, positive effect on the work culture of Malaysia’s civil service, including the WPA.

Fusion between Politics and Administration

Literature on Malaysia’s public service often describes it as being far from politically neutral despite the bureaucratic neutrality principle practised during the colonial period (Siddique, 2006, 2013; Haque, 2007; Chin, 2011). One factor which compromises the political neutrality of bureaucratic institutions in Malaysia is that state power here is strong, due to the dominant party system in place which is also highly influenced by ethnic and religious sentiment. Haque (2007) argues that although Malaysia has experienced political stability in its post-independence period, “… distinct racial or ethnic identities of major political parties became reinforced to the extent that the neutrality of bureaucracy and its accountability to all ethnic groups became questionable” (p.1312).

The patronage of elite bureaucrats has been in place historically since the pre-independence period. That these bureaucrats shared similar socio-economic and ethnic conditions with the political leaders led to the formation of strong bonds between the two groups (Haque, 2007; Chin, 2011). The common idea of dominant ethnic supremacy (which in the case of Malaysia is the Malay Muslims) combined with conservative religious understanding
blended with local customs leads to the institutionalisation of a cosy relationship between the administrators and political leaders of the ruling party in which high ranking administrators are seen as “the bureaucratic extension of the ruling party” (Husain & Brahim, 2004; Pepinsky, 2007; Chin, 2011; Siddiquee, 2013). The close relationship between the civil service institutions and the ruling party is further observed through the loyalty of civil servants towards the ruling party during the last general election. As political topics were being widely discussed and debated, the researcher was able to identify the political sentiments of the public service officers.

This study finds there to be a special relationship between civil servants and the ruling party74, as the latter is seen as the champion and protector of the rights of the majority ethnic group in Malaysia, preserving the conservative religious and moral values of the Malay Muslims75. Interviews with government officers reflected their proximity (either consensually or non-consensually) to the ruling party:

“I seriously do not understand the reasons government officers support the opposition. That is like biting the hand that feeds you. If you don’t like the government [referring to the ruling party], then work in the private sector.” (Interview 25a)

“Don’t they realise that without UMNO, who else will champion the rights of the Malays? Without UMNO, even the civil service will be filled by the Chinese… is it not enough that they [the Chinese] conquered the private sector? (Interview 25b)

“If we leave policymaking in the hands of the non-Malays, our country will be destroyed. Who will protect our next generation? Who will protect our religion and our values? … Do you want to see a morally

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74 Based on researcher’s observation during fieldwork period and interview 5, 6, 11, and 29a, b, and c.
75 For additional reading on the interplay of race in the Malaysian civil service, refer to Lim, “Ethnic Representation in the Malaysian Bureaucracy: The Development and Effects of Malay Domination” (2007)
corrupt country? Do you want to beg in your own country?” (Interview 25c)

“The current government [referring to the ruling party] has done their job well. They ensure that our position as the Malays is protected. They secure us this job (civil service position), they give us a reasonable salary…why would you be ungrateful?” (Interview 7)

“The opposition leaders are up for destroying this country. They are traitors to this country… we know because defectors (from the opposition parties) who have repented come and brief us [in government departments]. They want to protect us [our ethnic and religious values]… if we let the opposition win, they will destroy this country and corrupt it with liberal ideologies.” (Interview 11)

As the mandate of the WPA in Malaysia encompasses a wide range of groups in society, the ministry is also responsible for social welfare matters, especially through the SWD76. From the preceding discussions, this study establishes that the line between the government machinery and the political party apparatus appears blurred; they are often interpreted as a similar entity, resulting in an overlapped understanding of the two, blurring the boundaries between the Ministry’s roles and functions and the political agenda of the ruling party. At times, especially during campaign periods close to general elections, distinctions between the Ministry’s programmes and the political party agenda can become vague.

As the timing of the fieldwork of this research was close to Malaysia’s thirteenth general election, extensive political campaigning was in place, wherein the hazy boundaries between political administration and bureaucracy institution became distinct. In addition to this, state machineries

76 Refer to the Ministry’s Annual Reports (2008, 2011, and 2012). Further discussions is in Chapter 5, p. 171
were also being used as political campaigning tools by the ruling party (Welsh, 2013). The Ministry is obligated to follow directives from the executive leaders at the central locus of power who also hold political leadership of the ruling party due to the centralisation of power at the Prime Minister’s Department as previously examined by this chapter.

One of the subjects raised during the interview sessions with officers from the ministry concerned the standard of its political neutrality, in which there were issues regarding its proximity to the ruling party.

“There is too much hanky-panky going on in the ministry. We hold the purse strings [as the ministry that holds the responsibility to disburse welfare assistance]; sometimes, we get call from somebody [individuals with titles and political connections] and we have to fulfil their wishes.” (Interview 17)

“This ministry is full of blue [referring to the colour of the ruling coalition’s flag]… I think it is not a choice. If you want to survive [climb up the career ladder], you have no choice but to follow their directions [that is, of the invisible, powerful political interference].” (Interview 18)

In other interviews with the ministry personnel, an officer sings the praises of the current political administration of the country while another refrains from making criticisms by emphasising the neutrality principle of the bureaucracy.

“Our beloved Prime Minister is very committed to gender agendas. You can see that the government is really serious about gender empowerment. We have a plan for 30% female decision-makers. We are putting out grants for entrepreneurial women to start small businesses. As you can see, the government is really proactive about women issues.” (Interview 16)
“We work for the government of the day. We do not belong to any political party (during work). But now the ruling party is Barisan (short-term for the current ruling coalition), so it is not a matter whether we support them or not – they are the one in charge. We are impartial in carrying out our duties regardless of political ideologies.” (Interview 3)

An interview with an active opposition party member who has been involved in gender empowerment initiatives implemented by states under opposition control illustrated a different opinion. Furthermore, she suggested that political influence impacts on the decisions made by the Ministry. States under the opposition parties can encounter difficulties in accessing resources at federal level as federal government is controlled by the ruling party and state government’s authority is more limited in comparison with federal government as discussed previously.

“…we were denied our rightful allocated budget by the government…our requests are often met with delayed responses from the ministry or complete silence.” (Interview 1).

As a ministry, the MWFCD has not escaped allegations of mismanagement, especially in regards to its allocation of funding and grants. In 2012, the National Audit Report revealed an unsystematic grants imbursement process followed by the MWFCD whereby funds were dispersed prior to contracts being signed by the involved parties, as well as the Ministry has not collected the balance of unused grants it gave to the NGOs (National Audit Report, 2012). Consequently, in 2013 the newly appointed minister, Rohani Abdul Karim emphasised the need to improve the ministry’s internal system, and that a special committee will be established to analyse future general audit reports (Rohani Abdul Karim in MStar, October 2, 2013).

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77 The same issue was raised by members of parliament from the opposition parties during parliamentary session. Refer to parliament Hansard, November 2012 (pp.33-35)
Another form of fusion between administration and politics in Malaysia is demonstrated by appointments to important positions in the WPA based on political positions\textsuperscript{78}. For instance, the ministerial position for the MWFCD has generally been filled by the UMNO Women’s Chief\textsuperscript{79}, Shahrizat Jalil. This study observes that there was an informal arrangement for Shahrizat to fill in ministerial position that is related to women issues. Shahrizat has been the longstanding minister for the WPA since 2001 until 2012 and was only briefly replaced by a minister from other component parties in 2008 until 2009 While the position as a minister to the WPA is not filled by the UMNO Women’s Chief in 2008 and 2013, a special position known as the Special Advisor on Women Affairs which carries ministerial status was created in the Prime Minister’s Department\textsuperscript{80}. The position was dissolved in 2009 as Shahrizat returned to her post as the MWFCD’s minister. The position was recreated in 2013 and Shahrizat holds the post presently\textsuperscript{81}. This has created two organisations within the government institution that focus on gender. The Special Advisor on Women Affairs portfolio concentrates on women entrepreneurships which overlaps with one of the WDD’s core programmes of women economic development programmes.

CONCLUSION

This study finds that the existence of formal rules and institutions which enforce the state’s strong authority in society has a positive impact on the establishment of the WPA, as a quasi-democratic state often translates into a strong capability to maintain political stability. At the same time

\textsuperscript{78} Based on author’s analysis of the Ministry’s leadership pattern from 2001 to 2013. Further discussion in Chapter Six, p. 209-249.

\textsuperscript{79} UMNO is the dominant party in the 13 National Front component parties. Further discussions will be in Chapter Six, p.209-249.


\textsuperscript{81} Further discussion is in Chapter Five, p. 171-208, and Chapter Six, p. 209-249.
however, this means that the state is zealous in squashing ideologies which do not correspond to its aspiration to reduce the possibility of political instability, which is especially relevant in a highly diverse society such as Malaysia. Nevertheless, strong, formalised state authority enhances the WPA’s institutional capacity to implement gender empowerment initiatives. Institutional stability, contributed to by Malaysia’s strong state authority, provides the WPA with legitimacy and autonomy to function within the state’s institutional setup without being interrupted by frequent institutional rearrangements due to political uncertainties.

However, this study also discovers that the institutional stability related to the strong state authority and dominant party system has led to a deferring of debate on controversial gender issues, such as freedom for reproductive rights, sexual orientation and sexual rights, which have instead been deemed insignificant in the context of the advancement of political agendas and incompatible with the state's conservative values. Furthermore, as the appointment of personnel outside of the civil service is an extremely rare occurrence, it restricts and limits the participation of other gender actors especially from critical women groups and gender experts as they are only able to influence the policy decision-making from outside the institutional establishment as external actors.

This study identifies the role of informal institutions in understanding the WPA’s institutional capacity, as the formal establishment of Malaysia’s administrative context is also influenced by the existing informal rules in place which have enabled the country to be ruled by the same political coalition since its post-independence period. Despite the formal principle of political neutrality and impartiality held by public administrators, in reality, Malaysia’s post-independent bureaucratic environment is one of a fusion of administrative and political power. This is closely related to the country’s strong state authority and dominant party system in place which in turn is related to the institutional stability of Malaysia’s state institutions.
The result is a blurred boundary between administrative and political power. Indeed, both are often confused as there is an overlapping of the definition and functions of the government machinery and the ruling political coalition apparatus. In addition, the politicisation of the civil service in Malaysia weakens the WPA’s capacity as the establishment of the latter is heavily dependent on the political will and agenda of the ruling party. Despite continuous reassurances from the state regarding its commitment towards gender empowerment initiatives to comply with its international obligations (i.e. CEDAW ratifications) and despite rising domestic pressure from opposition parties and critically the women’s movement, no formal rules have been established to guarantee the continuity of the WPA’s existence in its current form as a full ministry. In light of the above, the possibility exists for the WPA to be merged or downgraded from its current position as a full ministry, or even dissolved. Previous instances have demonstrated the reshuffling, redesigning and restructuring of the WPA to conform to the requirements of top level politicians and bureaucrats.

On the other hand, Malaysia’s bureaucratic system is advanced and well-structured due to the transfer of knowledge and infrastructure which occurred during the British colonial period. Despite this, it also has a negative influence upon the Malaysian administrative institution as the behaviour and decisions made by the state continue to refer to its past knowledge trajectory. This is in line with observations made by other scholars that the administration of post-colonial countries is often highly influenced by the structure established during their colonial period (McCourt, 2005; Haque, 2007; Siddique, 2013). This study finds that this holds true for Malaysia, and that as part of the state’s institution, the WPA is locked in path-dependent effects in its establishment structure. The features of British bureaucracy (such as the centralisation of power and the continuity of rule by elite generalists) continue to be practiced by the modern Malaysian administration. The centralisation of power adopted from the colonial era bureaucracy which was employed by the British to manage its colonies is used by modern
political elites holding executive power to minimise challenges to the status quo.

In the analysis of the institutional capacity of the WPA, this research observes that the WPA institutional establishment is highly subjected to the bureaucratic institution it operates in. The dynamic interplays between the formal and informal rules within the state’s institutional setting influence the WPA’s institutional capacity in implementing gender empowerment initiatives in Malaysia as often, the interaction of both formal and informal arrangements in the state’s institution undermines the WPA’s institutional capacity. For example, although the WPA has been formally established as a ministry, it has to acquiesce with an agency that has formalised higher authority and power, especially the PM's department. The informal rules which see political power intervention in state’s administration also limit the WPA’s capacity as it is subjected to a political agenda which is not necessarily in line with the purpose of its establishment.

In Chapter Five, this research discusses the authority and access to resources that the WPA has in relation to the centralisation of power at the PM's Department. This study then proceeds by examining the relationship between the WPA and other gender actors in Chapter Six.
CHAPTER FIVE: RESOURCE CONTROL AND UTILISATION

INTRODUCTION

The state feminism literature identifies resources as an essential factor to be examined in measuring the effectiveness of a WPA. In a comparative study by McBride and Mazur (2012), they found that “the structure, powers, administrative resources, and leadership have a significant impact on what agencies are able to accomplish within a political system” (p.246). In a framework developed by Rai (2003), she lists resources as one of the main elements of state feminism, as they often reflect the political will of leaders in pursuing gender empowerment agendas. This study analyses the role of resources in shaping the capacity of the WPA in Malaysia in implementing gender empowerment initiatives, as resources reflect the strength of political will and also suggest the interrelationships between the WPA and the level of support it receives from other actors in the institutional setting.

This study’s analysis of the WPA’s resource allocation and utilisation is based on the premise that Malaysia is a post-colonial and highly developing economy. This chapter identifies that the institutional setting of the WPA is an economically developing setting that focuses strongly on national economic development as the most critical national interest in determining resource allocation in the state institutional setting. This is reflected through the positioning of relevant actors as gatekeepers to the resources. They are authorised to decide by what means the resources should be utilised and to manoeuvre the WPA’s programmes in order to achieve the macroeconomic objectives determined at the locus of power. This exploration enriches the state feminism and feminist institutionalism literatures, as it investigates the dimensions of resource allocation and utilisation of a developing country that has not been frequently studied in previous literature. This differs from post-industrialised economic contexts, as
the macroeconomic objectives focus on other areas of the society’s socio-economic development.

This chapter ascertains the interaction of formal and informal rules in determining the access to and authority over the WPA’s resources, as well as the utilisation of the resources. This promotes comprehensive understanding of the ways in which resources shape the WPA’s capacity in executing gender empowerment initiatives. Highly secured access to and authority over its resources and the efficient and effective management of resources would enhance the WPA’s capacity to function in accordance with its purposes of establishment, while insufficient resources and incompetent management of resources would hinder the WPA in achieving its objectives.

**ACCESS TO AND AUTHORITY OVER RESOURCES**

In a study related to the gendered disposition of executive power, Annesley and Gains (2010) identified two types of resources that are pertinent for femocrats to champion gender issues, namely political resources and organisational resources. Political resources are defined as where “authority and legitimacy are held by ministers and the Prime Minister”, while organisational resources include “policy, budgetary and managerial information and expertise…” (Annesley & Gains, 2010, p.916). This section examines the resources that the MWFCF has access to by using the two categories of resources mentioned by Annesley and Gains (2010) and identifying the political and organisational resources that the MWFCF has access to and authority over.

It also analyses the formal and informal arrangements that enhance and restrict the MWFCF’s access to and authority over these resources. In the previous chapter, the thesis examined the establishment of the WPA and elaborated on the evolution process the WPA went through prior to its establishment as a full ministerial organisation in the Malaysian
administration setting. This chapter continues the discussion of the MWFCF’s institutional establishment. The WPA has benefitted from its ministerial position at the federal level by securing access to resources available within the state structure or those provided by external actors, such as international organisations like the UNDP and ADB.

**Political Resources**

Political resources are defined by Dahl as “whatever can be used among a specific collection of people to influence the decisions of a government, particularly the government of a state” (1998, p.639). He further describes that political resources can be in various forms, such as “money, wealth, social standing, honor, reputation, legal status, knowledge, cognitive ability, information, coercive capacities, organizations, means of communication and ‘connection’” (Dahl, 1998, p.639). Using Dahl’s definition of political resources, the WPA in Malaysia as an organisation secured access to political resources through the strong and influential leadership of its former minister. In view of the dominant party system, as highlighted in the previous chapter (Chapter Four), it is worth noting that the MWFCF was formerly helmed by Shahrizat Jalil, who is the Chief of the UMNO’s Women’s Wing and the Chief of the National Front’s Women Wing. Her leadership and multiple high-ranking roles in the political party indirectly benefitted the MWFCF and amplified its political resources. She also possessed the authority and legitimacy to synergise both political party and government machinery to increase the capacity of the MWFCF.

In the interview sessions, the MWFCF officers emphasised that the influential leadership of the former minister had helped the MWFCF to gain

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82 As discussed in Chapter Four regarding the fusion between politics and administrative setting, her positions in the political party and executive branch of government often overlap based on news coverage analysis. Retrieved from the ministry’s website, http://kpwkm.bernama.com/newslistBM.php?page=33 and UMNO Women’s Wing website, http://www.umno-online.my/category/06ketua_wanita/page/19/
recognition from other actors in the institutional setting. The ministry had also secured access to political resources due to her personal proximity to the locus of power: “She also has great influence because she is personally close to the Prime Minister” (Interview 16). Notwithstanding her resignation in 2012, she maintains her commitment to the ministry by always following up on its current situation:

“Although Datuk [(title equivalent to British Dame and Sir)] is no longer with us [formally], she always get updates from us, sometimes she just gives a call and asks how are things… and she helps us when needed…” (Interview 3).

This signifies that access to political resources for the WPA in Malaysia is also closely related to the individual leadership of the ministry, despite having secured access to such resources through several channels. This poses the question of continuity of access to political resources once the individual leaves the organisation.

Subsequent to Malaysia’s 13th General Election in May 2013, a new political leader, Rohani Abdul Karim, took over the position of minister of the MWFCF. Changes in the political landscape in Malaysia also altered the composition of the cabinet. More new cabinet ministers from East Malaysia were appointed in comparison with the previous cabinet line-up, which had been dominated by UMNO ministers from West Malaysia. The new minister of the MWFCF hails from the National Front component party in Sarawak, East Malaysia. Despite her excellent reputation in her previous positions as Deputy Minister for Domestic Trade, Co-operatives and Consumerism and Deputy Minister for Agriculture and Agro-based Industries, her appointment as the minister of the MWFCF was her first full ministerial position in her political career.

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83 I also noted that despite Shahrizat’s resignation as the Minister of the MWFCF in 2012 and Najib Razak as the Prime Minister took over prior to the 13th General Election, she still appeared in the ministry’s events such as the launching of PERWANI initiative alongside the Prime Minister.
It has been observed that the new leadership of the WPA may face obstacles in securing similar access to political resources due to the former minister’s institutional legacies and prominent role in the political party. An officer mentioned that

“It is not easy for [the new minister] to break down the legacies left by Shahrizat… she comes from Sarawak’s political party. People here [(West Malaysians)] are not familiar with her…the people [in the ministry] will take time to warm up to her. They were used to Shahrizat’s style for a long time” (Interview 29).

Moreover, although highly credible and capable of performing the duties of her position, it may not be easy for the current minister to gain the same level of access to political resources as her predecessor could. Some political distance exists owing to the fact that the current minister hails from a smaller component party of the ruling coalition, the PBB, as compared to the UMNO, which is regarded as the leader of the ruling coalition. This can be seen from remarks made by ministers from the UMNO regarding the controversial appointment of the MWFCD’s previous minister, Shahrizat Jalil, as the Prime Minister’s Special Advisor on Women’s Affairs in 2013, despite the existence of a dedicated ministry for women’s affairs.

In a statement made by the Minister of Tourism, he mentioned that “Rohani [(the current minister of the MWFCD)] is from Sarawak. Probably her focus of work does not cover many of the Peninsula aspects… the ministry is used to the management done by those from the Peninsula” (The Malay Mail, 2013).

84 Shahrizat had been in the MWFCD for 11 years. The close relationship of the minister with the ministry’s community is highly noted in interviews 3 and 16. This study also obtained information from newspaper report, “Shahrizat sayu tinggalkan KPWKM [Shahrizat melancholic on leaving the MWFCD],” (2012), retrieved from http://ww1.utusan.com.my/utusan/info.asp?y=2012&dt=0407&pub=Utusan_Malaysia&sec=Dalam_Negeri&pg=dn_01.htm

85 This is based on the analysis of Malaysia’s political setting which is hegemonised by UMNO as discussed in Chapter Four. Refer to Table 17 for the breakdown of Malaysia’s cabinet line-up based on political parties.

86 Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu, which can be translated as “the United Traditional Bumiputera Party”.

Therefore, both the statement of her colleague and the sudden appointment of a former minister to a special position close to the Prime Minister reflect the change in the WPA’s access to political resources, even though, officially, it should remain the same regardless of the individual holding the position. An officer experienced in Malaysian institutions mentioned that

“It is going to be difficult for her [(Rohani as the new minister)] because Shahrizat is a very influential political player. One is from UMNO, another one from PBB. Who do you think has more power?” (Interview 30).

As the Malaysian constitution was created following the precedent of the British Westminster model, the executive leadership is also part of the legislature branch. Since the minister of the MWFC holds an executive leadership position, she/he is also a member of the legislature branch either by appointment as senator in the Malaysian Senate (equivalent to the British House of Lords) or elected by the people through elections as a member of the House of Representatives (equivalent to the British House of Commons). Therefore, the WPA has great access to resources through its access to both branches of government87.

The WPA’s access to political resources also depends on the informal rules of the institution, which depend on the political influence exerted by the minister over other actors in the political system, despite the existing formal institutions that guarantee the WPA’s access to political resources through its minister. Institutionally, access to political resources for the ministry is obtained through its position as a full ministry headed by a minister who is one of the cabinet members. This gives the ministry the authority to execute its programmes and manage its own resources.

Administrative Resources

The second form of resources necessary to champion gender issues is administrative or organisational resources. McBride and Mazur (2010) identify administrative resources as matters that answer questions on whether the agency has “staff, administrative divisions, field offices, a separate budget, subsidies for women’s groups and research resources”, as well as “What is the level of these resources? How many staff members, divisions, field offices? How large are budgets for subsidies and research?” (p.51). In a cross-national state feminism study that involved post-industrialised Western countries, McBride and Mazur (2010) identified five patterns of administrative resources, which are: “1) Large number of resources with high level of support, 2) large number of resources with inconsistent pattern of level of staff, budget or complexity, 3) one agency in the country is well-endowed but most of the rest of the country’s agencies had fewer resources, 4) moderate numbers of resources with mixed level and 5) least administrative support” (pp.65-66).

This study explores Malaysia’s WPA’s administrative resources according to the typology identified by McBride and Mazur (2010). First, this study examines one crucial aspect that is classified as important in analysing administrative resources, which is staff or personnel. The MWFCD has its own dedicated staff for the ministry and the agencies under its purview. The previous chapter discussed Malaysia’s bureaucratic setting extensively, in which the MWFC is helmed largely by the ADS officers. They operate in an open-service system that allows the ADS officers to move around ministries and government agencies, including the MWFC. Apart from the ADS officers, the workforce in the MWFC also comprises, among others, support staff and other specific professional positions that are particular to the MWFC, such as counsellors at the WDD and the SWD.
According to the ministry’s annual reports (2008, 2012) analysed by this study, the ministry as a whole (including the agencies and departments under the MWFCD) has four different categories or personnel to execute the MWFCD’s operations efficiently.

*Table 5: The MWFCD staff categories*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Highest management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Administrative and professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Support 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Support 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MWFCD annual reports (2008, 2012)

Table 5 shows the MWFCD staff categories, illustrating the diverse groups of dedicated personnel that support the MWFCD's operations. These groups range from the “highest management” staff (who are responsible for the organisation’s decision-making processes) to the “support 2” staff (who ensure the efficiency and maintenance of the WPA’s physical infrastructure).

This research further examined the breakdowns of the WPA’s staff according to the agencies and departments that belonged to the MWFCD in 2008 and 2012 to identify the trends and patterns of personnel allocation in the MWFCD.
Table 6: The WPA’s administrative staff in 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>MWFCD</th>
<th>WDD</th>
<th>ISM</th>
<th>NIEW</th>
<th>SWD</th>
<th>DPD</th>
<th>NPFDB</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High-level management</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative and professional</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support 1</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3,759</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>812</td>
<td>5,057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support 2</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,448</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>2,212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total positions</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5,716</td>
<td>667</td>
<td>1,230</td>
<td>8,203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total staff</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4,915</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>987</td>
<td>7,006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total vacant positions</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>1,197</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: The WPA’s administrative staff in 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>MWFCD</th>
<th>WDD</th>
<th>ISM</th>
<th>NIEW</th>
<th>SWD</th>
<th>NPFDB</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High-level management</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative and professional</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>549</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support 1</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4,250</td>
<td>817</td>
<td>5,361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support 2</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,566</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1,896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total positions</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>6,368</td>
<td>1,203</td>
<td>8,217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total staff</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6,057</td>
<td>1,024</td>
<td>7,549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total vacant positions</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>721</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Tables 6 and 7 display the number of the WPA’s staff in 2008 and 2010. It demonstrates that the ministry, including all the departments and agencies under it, had close to 8,000 staff in total. There were insignificant changes in the number of personnel between 2008 and 2010, suggesting that there was a stable pattern of employment in the WPA. Over the two-year period, there was only a slight increase in the total staff capacity, with 664 additional staff hired and 547 positions remaining vacant. The highest number of staff increment was found in the SWD, with 490 positions being filled. The smallest number of employees was observed in the NIEW. It made up only 0.4% of the MWFCD’s total employees. The high increment in staff number in the SWD was related to the absorption of staff from the DPD by the SWD (MWFCD, 2012).

The WPA, however, lacks the authority to employ civil servants on its own due to the centralisation of the hiring process\textsuperscript{88}. In many circumstances,  

\textsuperscript{88} Refer to the MWFCD Annual Reports (2008, 2011, and 2012) and interview 2.
it relies on approval from the Public Service Department (PSD) and the Public Service Commission (PSC): both are located under the Prime Minister’s Department. Eligible candidates have to undergo a stringent selection and interview process prior to being shortlisted and considered fit to be hired in the government service. As an alternative, through its individual departments and agencies, the ministry can develop budget plans to employ staff on a temporary or contract basis to ease its human resource issues. Vacant posts in the ministry are occasionally advertised as contract positions, and it may not be reflected as full-time positions hired by the ministry. “When we are trying to fill unoccupied positions, if we do not have the budget to employ full-time staff, we try to hire contract or temporary staff according to our immediate needs” (Interview 2). The ministry admitted that it needed additional workforce, especially at the grassroots level, as it has to have a micro presence to provide services to local communities (Interview 2). Nevertheless, it has to apportion the authority of determining the number of human resources to the more powerful government agencies; as the PSD and the PSC play the most crucial roles in civil servants' recruitment process.

This study finds that the WPA in Malaysia has substantial access to employee recruiting and management as an important component of administrative support. The human resources that the WPA has access to comprise several categories that cater to the wide-ranging needs of the ministry. Furthermore, the ministry has a dedicated Human Resource Management Division (see Figure 9) to manage all aspects of the MWFCD's employees, such as appointment, position, confirmation, transfer, retirement, promotion, training and recognition of all personnel under the MWFCD's purview (MWFCD, 2008, 2012). However, this study reveals that the ministry's scope of authority for decision making on employment matters is shared with external agencies, especially the PSD and the PSC, which act as the main gatekeepers for human resource matters in the institutional context in which the WPA operates.
The second aspect of administrative resources observed by this research is the administrative divisions of the WPA. Referring to the previous chapter, which discussed the WPA’s institutional establishment in Malaysia, this study finds that the establishment of the MWFCD at the federal level granted it access to administrative resources provided by the federal government as the central locus of power in the Malaysian political setting. According to the WPA’s organisational chart (see Figure 9), the ministry consists of various administrative divisions and units. The ministry itself is divided into two main parts: operational and strategic groups. The main task of the operational group is to ensure the MWFCD operates smoothly on a day-to-day basis, while the strategic group functions to ensure the MWFCD’s mission and vision (including implementing its gender empowerment agenda) are achieved (MWFCD, 2008, 2012).

The WPA in Malaysia has well-endowed administrative divisions consisting of the ICT Management Division, the Administrative Management Division, the Finance Division, the Development Division and the Human Resource Management Division. The WPA’s Legal Advisor Unit comprises legal officers appointed to the ministry by the Attorney General’s Office, Corporate Communication Unit and Internal Audit Unit. Each of these administrative divisions performs specific tasks and is required to liaise with the relevant federal ministries and government agencies responsible for related subject matters. For instance, the Human Resource Management Division liaises closely with the PSD, while the legal officers in the Legal Advisor Unit refer certain matters to their main office at the Attorney General’s Chamber. This corroborates with the study’s earlier analysis that the WPA has to share authority over its divisions with other external agencies, as they are subjected to directives from higher offices or, in certain circumstances, to the authority of the main agency.

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89 Refer to the Ministry’s organisational chart and annual reports (2011,2012)
The individual agencies and departments under the MWFCD’s jurisdiction (the WDD, the SWD, the NPFDB, the NIEW and the SIM) have their own organisational divisions to handle administrative matters\textsuperscript{90}. This signifies the decentralisation of bureaucratic power of the ministry and offers more flexibility and autonomy for its agencies and departments. Therefore, each agency and department has both operational and strategic divisions in line with its parent organisation to ensure smooth operation and to place less administrative burden on the main organisation through micro management.

\textsuperscript{90} Based on the analysis of the ministry’s individual agencies and departments directories available on their websites.
### Administrative divisions of agencies and departments under the WPA’s provision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Agency/Department</th>
<th>Administrative Divisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Women’s Development Department</td>
<td>1. Management Services Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Social Welfare Department</td>
<td>1. Management Services Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>National Population and Family Development Board</td>
<td>1. Human Resource Management Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Management and Finance Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Corporate Planning Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Information Technology Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>NIEW</td>
<td>1. Management Services Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Asset Management Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Finance Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Information Technology Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Public Relations Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6. Library and Documentation Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Social Institute of Malaysia</td>
<td>1. Administration and Human Resource Management Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Finance Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Library and Documentation Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Domestic and Maintenance Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Information Technology Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6. Asset Management Department</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Author’s analysis based on individual agencies’ organisational charts
Table 8 above illustrates the administrative units established by the departments and agencies under the MWFCD. Although the administrative divisions vary in terms of name, size and unit according to the requirements of the individual organisation, each agency and department has committed and dedicated administrative units that enhance the WPA’s resources’ capacity to function effectively at all levels. The parent organisation’s approach to allowing micromanagement at the level of agencies and departments prevents it from being overloaded with bureaucratic responsibilities and allows it to focus on its main mission.

The next aspect of administrative resources examined by this research is the existence of the WPA’s field offices. Field offices provide support for the WPA to provide its services on the ground and to reach its stakeholders and clients. In this respect, the ministry functions as a decision-making body, while the agencies and departments under its authority execute the plans and policies made at the ministerial level. An officer from the WDD stated that “We are the arms and legs of the ministry… we execute what they plan. [The ministry] is the brain of the organisation…” (Interview 2). In analysing the presence of the WPA’s field offices, this study probes into the regional offices of the agencies and departments under the MWFCD. This study finds that all departments and agencies under the MWFCD except for two (the NIEW and the ISM) have field offices at the state level to assist with the implementation of the MWFCD policies and programmes. However, the field offices of these agencies vary in terms of size and location depending on the needs of the individual organisations. For example, the presence of field offices of the NPFDB is often required at reproductive clinics and at family centres established by the NPFDB, and the SWD often has a presence at the district level to distribute social welfare assistance.

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91 Based on interview 16 and the MWFCD’s annual reports (2008, 2011, and 2012)
92 Based on the analysis of the MWFCD’s agencies’ directories of their state offices. Retrieved from the agencies’ websites (Refer Appendix 9)
The SWD, the WDD and the NPFDB have state-level offices. The SWD also has district-level offices, as the department is concerned with social welfare issues that affect a wide range of society and thus needs a micro presence on the ground. The WDD has a presence in all 11 states of Malaysia and one in each federal territory, except in East Malaysia (WDD). The East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak have been granted special autonomy on local matters, which include women’s development issues that fall under the authority of the WDD. Under the state’s government authority, the Women’s Development Bureaus of both Sabah and Sarawak work closely with the ministry and the WDD at the federal level. One interviewed officer explained the relationship between the WDD at the federal level with the Women’s Development Bureaus in Sabah and Sarawak as follows: “we have a presence in all states except Sabah and Sarawak because they have their own organisations [(in charge of women’s affairs)]… but we work together with them because we complement and support each other” (Interview 2).

The third aspect of administrative resources is the subsistence of a separate budget for the WPA, which reflects the dedicated financial resources available to the WPA to fund itself and to execute policies and programmes under its jurisdiction. The WPA as a full ministry receives an annual budget from the federal government after the budget has been tabled and passed by parliament\textsuperscript{93}. The allocated budget is then distributed to the agencies’ departments under their purview. The Finance Division at the ministry level is responsible for estimating, requesting and proposing the annual budget for the WPA, as well as for administering all financial-related matters of the ministry and all agencies and departments under the MWFCD\textsuperscript{94}. The Finance Division of the MWFCD has a periodical budget analysis meeting with the Budget Review Officer (BRO) from the Ministry of Finance (MOF) to prepare the annual budget estimation and to propose any

\textsuperscript{93} Refer to the MWFCD’s annual reports (2008, 2011, and 2012).
\textsuperscript{94} Refer to Finance Unit section in the MWFCD’s annual reports (2008, 2011, and 2012).
additional budget requests for the current year. Once the ministry receives its budget allocation, it is dispersed accordingly to the agencies and departments under its authority.

*Figure 10: Budget allocation for the WPA in 2008*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MWFCD</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's Development Department</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Welfare Department</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Institute of Malaysia</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Population and Family Development Board</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s analysis based on the MWFCD 2008 annual report

Figure 10 shows the breakdown of the WPA’s annual budget allocation according to its departments and agencies in 2008. In 2008, the ministry spent RM 713,124,262\(^{95}\) ($218,830,316), where 15% of the whole expenditure was for the ministry, 4.8% was for the Women’s Development Department, 69% was for the Social Welfare Department, 1.6% was for the Social Institute of Malaysia and 7% was for the National Population and Family Development Board. This demonstrates that the WPA as a ministry receives a separate and independent budget, which it later disperses to its agencies and departments. However, the ministry also has to go through gatekeepers in the form of external agencies such as the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) and the MOF to attain access in the form of formal approval and

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\(^{95}\) This study employs a current average exchange rate of 1 USD = 3.25880 MYR.
consensus from these external agencies, despite having a separate and independent budget\textsuperscript{86}.

In the examination of the ministry’s annual budget, this study discovered that the MWFCD also has its own budget to improve its performance and service delivery. The Human Resource Management Division of the MWFCD has allocated a budget for training that specifically aims to increase the level of competency of the ministry’s personnel in dealing with the ministry’s areas of services (MWFCD, 2008, 2012). The ministry has also benefitted from the centralisation of human resource management for civil servants, as it is granted with quotas for government scholarships for public service personnel to pursue their postgraduate studies at both local and international universities (MWFCD, 2008, 2012).

The ministry has also managed to acquire its own office building located in Putrajaya, the centre for government administration in Malaysia. This allows for close physical proximity to other important government agencies located in the same area. The ministry’s assets include both tangible and intangible infrastructures, such as learning institutions, reproductive clinics, shelter homes and upgraded electronic databases, as per its priorities (MWFCD, 2008, 2012). The ministry has the capacity to disburse these resources to its agencies and departments according to its strategic calculations.

The ministry also took the initiative to reduce its dependency on external organisations in areas in which it is not proficient. For example, the WPA established its Development Division to be more involved in the technical aspects of its physical infrastructure construction, for which traditionally it relied heavily on the Public Works Department (MWFCD, 2008). Through the formation of its own division to manage its development projects, the WPA increased its authority in determining the outcomes of the development projects, as it is now more involved in determining technical

\textsuperscript{86} Refer to discussion on centralisation of power in Chapter Four, p.133-146.
aspects such as the concepts of the projects, the appointment of contractors and the financial management of the projects.

The final aspect of administrative resources is the ability of the WPA to grant subsidies to women’s groups and research resources. The WPA, through its WDD and SWD, provides grants and subsidies to civil society (including women’s groups) to carry out programmes related to the WPA’s areas of jurisdiction, especially at the grassroots level. These grants are disbursed by the ministry to selected NGOs to execute programmes related to women, family and community development agendas. In one interview, an MWFCD officer stated that the participation of the NGOs is important because the ministry often has limited resources in terms of workforce and time to execute programmes at large scales: “[The MWFCD] gives these grants to encourage participation and involvement from the NGOs in taking care of the society’s well-being. Sometimes, we do not have enough resources, like expertise, manpower and time; therefore, the NGOs are our partners in providing services to the society while at the same time complementing the existing services provided by the ministry” (Interview 3).

This study finds that the submission for financial grants is open all year round for the NGOs to apply through the ministry’s departments’ and agencies’ websites. These grants are accessible to all NGOs that are working in the relevant fields as listed by the ministry, including women’s development areas (i.e. skills training, law literacy programmes, marriage preparation and reproductive health programmes).

This study also discovers that the ministry has collaborative projects with research institutes at local tertiary institutions, such as KANITA (Women’s Development Centre), which demonstrates its ability to contribute to research resources. In 2011, the MWFCD funded a research project conducted by KANITA on comparative studies of domestic violence in NAM countries (MWFCD, 2012). According to an interview with an officer from the

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97 Based on interview 3 and the WDD website.
MWFCD, the ministry (through its WDD) funded RM 4 million ($1,219,440) to an initiative by the National University of Malaysia (UKM) to establish a Women’s Leadership Chair (Interview 2). However, the ability of the MWFCD in providing subsidies to women’s groups and research resources is limited, as the sphere of activities is determined by the state and limited funds are available (Interview 2).

As a developing country, Malaysia aims to achieve high economic development within a specified timeframe, which translates into long-term national development plans, such as the various plans produced by the EPU. As Malaysia has adopted a macroeconomic development plan to achieve its national goal of an economically developed country by 2020, central agencies often play immense roles in coordinating the allocation of national resources to be geared towards economic development programmes. As this involves policy alignment and resource mobilisation, central agencies play the role of gatekeepers of the national resources. This affects the WPA’s access to resources, as the ministry has to adhere to the requirements set by the central agencies prior to gaining access, signifying substantial access to resources but reduced autonomy in its resource utilisation.
Figure 11 illustrates the hierarchical relationship in the Malaysian bureaucratic setting and the role of central agencies technocrats (such as the EPU and the ICU) as gatekeepers of resources for the WPA. The main role of central agencies’ technocrats is to ensure that the policies and programmes conducted by government organisations including the WPA are aligned with the national development plans. The multi-layered central agencies located under the Prime Minister’s Department act as the core strategic centres that coordinate development plans. The core strategic centres produce guiding policy and resource alignment tools for Malaysia’s national development strategies, such as five-year and ten-year development plans. By acting as gatekeepers, the central agencies’ technocrats are able to ensure that government ministries and agencies are synchronised in achieving the macroeconomic vision.

Source: Author’s analysis

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98 Refer to Interview 7, 8, and 16. This is also based on the examination of the MWFCD annual reports (2008, 2009, 2011, and 2012). This study also observes that all UN project documents and project proposals have to go through and receive approvals from the central agencies (EPU).

For example, in order for the ministry to fund a development project, it has to be discussed with and approved by the EPU and the ICU prior to gaining the resources needed to execute the project. In certain circumstances, planned projects and programmes have to be postponed to give way to projects that are deemed more critical by the central locus of power. In 2008, the ministry experienced a reduction in its five-year development allocation by the EPU, so the ministry had to restructure its plans (MWFCD, 2008) and adapt itself to the MOF’s new financial plan. Furthermore, all development projects by the MWFCD are monitored and observed by the ICU, which is located under the Prime Minister’s Department and is responsible for monitoring government agencies’ development programmes and plans.

The ministry also has to share its authority over resources with the funders of its programmes (Interview 4; UN Project Document, 2007). Due to the nature of the ministry, which deals intensively with grants, welfare assistance and social development initiatives, besides requiring approval from the central agencies technocrats (such as the EPU and the MOF) on its plans and programmes, the WPA also requires approval from the project funders from the international organisations that form partnerships with the ministry in implementing social development programmes, such as gender empowerment initiatives with the UNDP and the ADB.

This section has highlighted the WPA’s access to and authority over its resources. As a ministry at the federal level, the WPA has secured formal access to resources and, to a certain extent, the authority to manage its resources independently and disburse the resources to the agencies and departments under its purview. For example, the MWFCD has the authority to determine the number of personnel dedicated to the ministry and its departments and agencies. It also has the autonomy to decide on the allocation of the annual budget that the ministry receives from the federal government to its agencies and departments. With its access and authority
as a federal-level ministry, the MWFCD has the capability to plan, manage and execute its strategies and programmes to achieve its purpose of establishment.

However, this study also discovers that other formal arrangements limit the WPA’s access to resources, as the ministry has to go through various powerful gatekeepers at the central locus of power to attain access to administrative resources. This illustrates that the WPA foregoes certain degrees of autonomy and authority to ensure its access to administrative resources and requires approval and consensus from external organisations such as the EPU, the ICU and the MOF, as well as non-governmental institutions such as the UNDP and the ADB. These organisations have the resources needed by the ministry, so the ministry is continuously subjected to monitoring by these organisations. The informal rules (such as the social standing of the WPA’s former minister, Shahrizat Jalil) within the political environment benefit the WPA. As Malaysia is dominated by a political party within the ruling coalition, factors such as the former minister’s political links, high-ranking political position, and dual leadership roles as a minister and women’s wing leader in both the dominant political party and the ruling coalition gave the WPA leverage in gaining political resources.

**RESOURCE ALLOCATION AND UTILISATION**

The second aspect of resources analysed by this research is the WPA’s utilisation of resources. The ministry consists of five different departments and agencies under its authority, which illustrates the vast size of the ministry. The resources that the WPA has secured access to and authority over are divided among six organisations (including the parent organisation). This study examines the ways in which resources are allocated and utilised by the ministry to ensure the six organisations are able to function accordingly. This section analyses the distribution of
administrative resources and the breakdown of their distribution among the agencies under the ministry.

The WPA in Malaysia covers an extensive range of social areas, which include gender issues, as reflected by its name, the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (MWFCD). It also has vast domestic stakeholders\(^{100}\), as illustrated by one of its officers: “We cover everyone, from cradle to grave” (Interview 5). Due to its wide range of clients, it is vital for the WPA to have a strong presence at the grassroots level, which means that the WPA has to apportion its resources not only at the headquarter level but also to the field offices of its departments and agencies at state and district levels. Two government agencies (the SWD and the WDD) and a statutory body (the NPFDB) have local offices in the majority of the states in Malaysia. The SWD is also present at the district level. Hence, since the WPA operates at the federal level, it requires both macro and micro resource management, which places strains on the WPA’s limited resources.

Malaysian Federal government has more authority in comparison to state government as stipulated in the Ninth Schedule of the Federal Constitution\(^{101}\). This is reflected in the wide size of governmental organisations at federal level which consists of 29 ministries\(^{102}\) and main departments (the Prime Minister’s Department and the Civil Service Department) that cover the responsibilities of the federal government including the MWFCD. According to the Eighth and Ninth Malaysian Plan (2001-2010) budgetary allocation (Appendix 6,p.vii), the highest recipient of the budget was the Ministry of Education with 14.2% followed by the Ministry of Road Works at 11.4% and Ministry of Defence, 11%. The MWFCD

\(^{100}\) Based on the ministry’s website, it covers seven groups of stakeholders, namely: women, family, people with disabilities, elderly, destitute, victims of natural disasters, and welfare-based voluntary organisations

\(^{101}\) Refer to Appendix Five. For additional reading, go to Siddiquee, “Public Management and Governance in Malaysia: Trends and Transformations”, (2013)

\(^{102}\) In 2013, the number of ministries and main departments of the Malaysian Federal government is 24 as cabinets were reshuffled and ministries were merged such as the Ministry of Higher Education was merged with the Ministry of Education.
received 0.2% of the overall federal budget allocation. Another four federal ministries (and departments) that received the same percentage of budget allocation as the MWFCD are the Department of Civil Service, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Information, and the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage. The Ninth Malaysian Plan (2006-2010) saw the MWFCD’s budgetary allocation increased marginally by 0.1% to 0.3%. However, the biggest rise in allocation is in the PMD budget from 4.3% in the Eight Malaysian Plan (2001-2005) to 13.5% in the Ninth Malaysian Plan.

This study finds that the MWFCD constantly at the lowest range of the federal government budgetary allocation which stretches the WPA’s resources over its wide mandate and vast size while a significant increase of resources was allocated to the central locus of power, the PM’s Department 103 The strengthening of the PM’s Department in term of allocation of resources is related to the expansion of the department with the creation of a new agency to drive economic transformation programmes such as the PEMANDU as well as to cover its increasing authority on various spheres104 including the Malaysian Parliament and the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia. Table 9 and 10 below shows the three highest and lowest recipients of federal government budget.

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103 Based on the analysis of federal ministries budget allocation as shown in Table 9 and 10.
104 There are currently 52 departments and agencies under the PMD with four central agencies, 37 departments/agencies, seven Commissions and four statutory bodies (PMD website, 2013).
Table 9: The top three highest recipients of federal government budget in percentage (The 8th and 9th Malaysia Plans)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministries/Agencies</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Ministries/Agencies</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ministry of Education</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>1. PM’s Department</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ministry of Roadwork</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>2. Ministry of Education</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ministry of Defence</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3. Ministry of Roadwork</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s analysis based on statistics by the EPU, 2010\(^{105}\)

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Table 10: The top three lowest recipients of federal government budget in percentage (the 8th and 9th Malaysia Plans)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ministry of Domestic Trade, Co-operatives and Consumerism</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1. Ministry of Domestic Trade, Co-operatives and Consumerism</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ministry of Culture, Arts &amp; Heritage/ Ministry of Information/ Ministry of International Trade &amp; Industry/ Department of Civil Service/ MWFCD</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>2. Department of Civil Service</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ministry of Foreign Affairs/ Ministry of Plantation Industries and Commodities/ Ministry of Tourism</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>3. Ministry of Culture, Arts &amp; Heritage/ Ministry of Information/ Ministry of Foreign Affairs / MWFCD</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s analysis based on statistics by the EPU, 2010\(^{106}\)

However, according to an officer at the core of Malaysian government organisations, the PMD, the budgetary allocation for the MWFCD is not reflective of the government’s efforts in the implementation of gender empowerment initiatives as there are programmes that fall under other

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federal ministries and government agencies such as the Ministry of Agriculture & Agro-based Industry.

“I think it is unfair to only look at the figures in examining the budget provided for the ministry (the MWFCD). That is because there are other allocations for women that fall under other ministries’ jurisdictions such as the Ministry of Agriculture. These programmes help women in low-income groups to improve their living standard so should be considered as part of (the) government’s efforts to empower women. In developing nation context, we should focus on our economy first” (Interview 7).

This study further analyses the financial aspects of the ministry’s administrative resources, as the ministry’s individual budget is one of the most essential administrative resources for the organisation. The annual financial budget allocated to government agencies including the WPA in Malaysia is divided into two sections: the operating and development expenditures.
Table 11: The MWFCD annual budgets (2010–2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Operating Expenditure (USD)</th>
<th>Development Expenditure (USD)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>328,449,391</td>
<td>51,664,368</td>
<td>380,034,308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>318,220,146</td>
<td>40,990,166</td>
<td>359,109,494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>551,615,745</td>
<td>48,139,486</td>
<td>599,593,277</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on figures provided by the MOF\textsuperscript{107}

Based on the annual financial budgets shown in Table 11, the ministry divided the budgets according to the needs of each agency, including the parent organisation. The Finance Division of the MWFCD is responsible for coordinating all financial matters, including liaising with the MOF regarding the budgetary matters of its ministry\textsuperscript{108}. While the development expenditure is concerned with the infrastructure projects of the ministry, the operational expenditure deals with all other matters not covered by the development expenditure section (MWFCD, 2008, 2012). This explains the large sum allocated annually to the MWFCD for its operational expenditure.

According to the ministry’s 2008 annual report, in 2008 the ministry was given a separate budget of RM 118,325,010 (approximately $36,091,917) by the federal government for development purposes. The amount received was not only meant for the agencies under the MWFCD but also for the external agencies that execute MWFCD projects, such as the PWD under the Public Works Ministry. In 2008, the MWFCD spent the majority of its development allocation (52.67% of its total development budget) on the PWD as the main contractor for its infrastructure projects, such as the NPFDB clinics, shelter homes for children and the elderly for the

\textsuperscript{107} Refer to the Ministry of Finance’s website, retrieved from (http://www.treasury.gov.my)
\textsuperscript{108} Refer to the MWFCD’s annual reports (2008, 2011, and 2012)
SWD, and shelter homes for domestic violence victims as part of the WDD projects (MWFCD, 2008).

The research’s examination of the ministry's operational expenditure in 2010 and 2012 as stated in its annual reports finds that the ministry's resources were being stretched in order to cover its vast size and were overly concentrated in one area, namely social welfare.

Table 12: The MWFCD operational expenditure in 2010 and 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Allocation (USD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MWFCD</td>
<td>129,471,327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Development Department</td>
<td>9,715,740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Institute of Malaysia</td>
<td>2,993,839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Welfare Department</td>
<td>427,936,247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIEW</td>
<td>1,680,513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Population and Family Board</td>
<td>15,923,876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>587,702,820</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on the MWFCD 2010 and 2012 annual reports

Table 12 shows that regarding the MWFCD’s operational expenditure in 2010, the Social Welfare Department used 73% of the operational expenditure, followed by the ministry itself at 22%, the National Population

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109 Based on the analysis made from the MWFCD’s budget allocations as stated in its annual reports (2010 and 2012).
and Family Development Board at 2.7%, the Women’s Development Department at 1.7%, the Social Institute of Malaysia at 0.5% and the NIEW at 0.003%. This uneven distribution shows that the WPA’s resources in Malaysia were being stretched to cover its wide range of mandates, in which certain departments and agencies had a small percentage share of the resources. The pattern is similarly observed in 2012, in which agencies under the MWFCD that are directly involved with gender empowerment agendas (such as the NIEW and the WDD) continued to receive lower proportions of the ministry’s annual budget, with the NIEW being the smallest recipient at 0.3% and the WDD receiving 1.4%. The SWD increased its consumption of the WPA’s resources to 87%.

Due to the limited allocation of resources to areas other than social welfare, such as gender empowerment programmes, the department in charge of women’s agendas, the WDD, had to postpone organising certain programmes that it had planned due to the limited budget, despite the ministry receiving an increase in the annual budget (Refer to Table 12, p.200).

“Some programmes we have to cancel or postpone because we don’t have the budget. But I-Keunita [(an entrepreneurial training programme for single mothers)] is a compulsory programme… it is not easy but we have to accept that this is a big ministry… we have to accommodate the needs of other departments too” (Interview 2).

“Sometimes it is difficult because we have to entertain high-level guests from other [NAM] countries [with a limited budget], so we cannot just do things simply. We have to take care of our [national] pride and reputation as well. But we find our ways around” (Interview 14).
In some other cases, agencies under the MWFCD resort to smart partnerships with other international organisations (e.g. the UNDP and the ADB) and civil society to find complementary resources that it lacks, particularly finance and expertise\textsuperscript{110}.

“We formed a partnership with the UNDP, for example, and they fund the projects with the approval from the EPU. It's a win-win situation; we learn a lot from them as well” (Interview 3).

“We collaborate with other women’s agencies of NAM countries… we try to include private sectors as well in our women’s CEO training programmes…” (Interview 14).

The department receiving the most resources is the department with the highest priority and is the biggest department in the ministry, as it operates at the micro level and has the highest number of general stakeholders compared to all other agencies under the MWFCD\textsuperscript{111}. The Social Welfare Department covers all levels of society from children, the elderly, people with disabilities and natural disaster victims to family and society at the local, state and national levels. Being the biggest department in the MWFCD, it requires the most dedicated financial resources. Therefore, it is the biggest consumer of WPA resources.

As initially shown that the MWFCD’s budget expenditure are stretched to cover the wide range of its mandates, this study further finds that it over-concentrates its resources on a particular agency. The same pattern was observed in the deployment of the MWFCD’s staff (including those of the agencies under its purview) in 2010 and 2011.

\textsuperscript{110} Refer to Interview 3 and 14. Further analysis also was done by examining UNDP Country Evaluation (2009)

\textsuperscript{111} Based on Table 12 and parliament Hansard, November 2012 (pp.25-37)
Table 13: WPA personnel by agency in 2010 and 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Number of employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MWFCD</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Development Department</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Institute of Malaysia</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIEW</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Welfare Department</td>
<td>6,057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Population and Family Development Board</td>
<td>1,024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7,670</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MWFCD 2010 and 2011 annual reports

Table 13 shows the spread of the MWFCD staff across agencies in 2010 and 2011. It can be seen that the highest number of workforce members was in the Social Welfare Department at 80% of the ministry’s total workforce, in comparison to 0.4% in the NIEW, which had the lowest percentage of staff in the MWFCD. Despite receiving the highest amount of resources, the Social Welfare Department is still under-resourced in many ways, as the number of social workers in Malaysia is still below the recommended ratio. The current ratio in Malaysia is 1:101, with the recommended ratio being 1:35 (ASEAN Country Report, 2011). Nevertheless, the imbalance in resource allocation for agencies under the MWFCD has put constraints on other agencies to carry out their functions within the allocated
resources especially the agencies that specifically deal with women issues, the WDD and the NIEW\textsuperscript{112}.

The MWFCD has two main groups of personnel (see Figure 9) in its operation: 1) the operational group, which is concerned with the smooth management of the ministry, and 2) the strategic group, which functions as the decision-making organ of the ministry. The detailed organisational chart shows that both groups have various subsections specialising in specific matters. For example, the Secretary of Development Policy for Women, Family and Community comprises two main sections. The Policy Section (Community Development) consists of the Planning and Research Unit and the Community Development Unit. The Policy Section (Women and Family Development) houses three units: the Planning and Research Unit, the Women’s Development Unit and the Family Development Unit. In reference to the MWFCD directory, this study finds that the average number of officers who deal with the wide areas of women, family and community in each unit is three personnel, while some units have one officer, assisted by supporting staff\textsuperscript{113} (MWFCD website).

In an interview with officers from the WDD, which is the main department under the MWFCD that deals with gender empowerment agendas, they acknowledged that there are insufficient resources for the department to function. For example, they cited a lack of human resources, especially at the field offices, some of which only have one officer in charge of the whole state.

“It is not easy. As you can see, there are not many of us, especially at the state level. In some offices, there is only one person in charge of everything, so they have to run here and there. That is why some people say we don’t do work, because they cannot contact us, but the

\textsuperscript{112} Refer to Interview 2, 14, 17 and 18
\textsuperscript{113} This is based on the analysis done using the MWFCD’s directory and the MWFCD Annual Reports (2008 and 2012).
truth is, we are quite over-burdened with lots of tasks… we cannot cut ourselves into two or three to be at all places at the same time” (Interview 2).

“As you can see, we are a small team here (at the NIEW). We do our best to achieve our mission. Although it is tough because you need to do the works of two or three people at once but it also gives you opportunities to learn many things in such a short time” (Interview 14).

“Too few people, too many things to do.” (Interview 17).

“There are (too) many female officers this ministry. Imagine two or three people on maternity leave simultaneously and their workloads are transferred to other officers. I wish we can have a more balanced ratio (female and male) of officers or increase our staff” (Interview 18).

During the fieldwork period, the problems faced included contacting the relevant officers, as often there were not many officers in charge of the areas concerned and if they were away from their desks (for work or personal matters), there were no replacement officers during that time. This illustrates the shortage of human resources the ministry was experiencing across its wide mandates with various divisions and agencies under its purview. The shortage of human resources limits the capacity of the WPA but the WPA often relies on other actors especially women’s movement to fill in the gap in the absence of adequate officials. This is further discussed in the next chapter on the relationship between the WPA and other actors in the political system.
CONCLUSION

This study classifies two aspects of resources that are critical for the WPA in Malaysia: first, the access to and authority over its resources and, second, its utilisation of resources. In accordance with the typology proposed by McBride and Mazur (2012), this study identifies that the WPA in Malaysia is categorised thus: “an agency in the country [that] is well-endowed but most of the rest of the country’s agencies had fewer resources” (pp.65-66). This chapter examines the factors that contribute to the imbalance of resources in the WPA’s operations. This research employs feminist institutionalism’s analytical tools for formal and informal rules in understanding the WPA’s resource capacity in implementing gender empowerment initiatives in the post-colonial, economically developing context of Malaysia.

This study finds that the MWFCD has secured constant access to both political and administrative resources due to its influential leadership and its position at the federal level. The MWFCD is granted access to administrative resources based on McBride and Mazur’s (2012) five elements of administrative resources, which are: staff, administrative divisions, field offices, separate budgets and subsidies for women’s groups, and research. However, this study also identifies that the WPA in Malaysia has limited authority over its resources: in certain circumstances and areas, the authority over resources is shared with external actors, such as Malaysia’s central agencies technocrats (which are often located in the Prime Minister’s Department) and international organisations (which often act as funders of the MWFCD’s programmes). This is also contributed to the centralisation of power at the Prime Minister’s Department, which is related to its institutional establishment, as discussed in Chapter Four.

This study discovers that the WPA’s resource capacity in implementing gender empowerment agendas is weakened by the limited resources of the WPA being stretched to cover its extensive mandates. The WPA’s budget allocation from the federal government shows that it is
continually being marginalised in comparison to other powerful departments and ministries as it is continuously at the bottom level of the federal budget recipients. The breakdown of the WPA’s resource utilisation additionally demonstrates an over-concentration of the WPA’s scarce resources in a specific area. This study finds that the resources of the WPA tend to flow into societal matters due to the vast size of the agency involved in social welfare areas. This leads to the imbalance of the WPA’s resource allocation and utilisation over other areas of its mandates, particularly the focus of this research: gender empowerment initiatives. As a developing nation that has a national vision to be a developed country within a specified timeframe, Malaysia has the national priorities of improved social welfare and an enhanced economic position. Consequently, this contributes to the greater resource allocation to social welfare areas under the SWD. The SWD also needs to be present at all levels to ensure its smooth operation, thus making it the biggest consumer of the WPA’s resources.

The existing formal rules that structure the allocation of the WPA’s resources determines that the SWD logically receives the biggest allocation due to its wide social responsibilities and extensive domestic stakeholders in comparison to gender empowerment agendas that specifically concentrate on women’s issues, which may alienate the WPA’s stakeholders that do not fulfil the criteria. Furthermore, resources for women’s development are also available in other forms of assistance, such as children’s assistance and surrogate parents’ assistance, which are considered women-friendly forms of welfare assistance and are categorised as social welfare expenses by the SWD (MWFCD, 2010; SWD website). Thus, the informal arrangement of resource allocation is assisted by the institution’s formal setting with its centralised power, as resource allocation and utilisation have to be aligned with the national development plans set by the central technocrat agencies. This undermines the WPA’s resource capacity in implementing gender empowerment initiatives, as it has to channel its resources to the prioritised area. This study also finds that the inclusion of social welfare in the WPA’s
mandate results in the extensive coverage of societal affairs by the WPA, limiting the WPA’s resources for other matters, including gender empowerment agendas.

As resource authority and utilisation are also closely related to the exchange of resources between actors, the next chapter examines the relationships between the WPA and other gender actors in the political system. The capacity of the WPA depends on two important aspects: the level of available resources and the support the WPA receives. The support depends on the WPA’s relationships with other actors in the institutional setting. The capacity of the WPA also depends on the effectiveness of the resource exchange between players in the political system. Therefore, this chapter is interlinked with the next chapter in the analysis of the relationships between the WPA and other relevant actors.
CHAPTER SIX: THE WPA’S RELATIONSHIPS/NETWORK

INTRODUCTION

The WPA’s access to and authority over resources are highly related to the organisation’s relationships and network with the gatekeepers of the resources and other actors in the political system. An analysis of the gendered disposition of core executives in the UK by Annesley and Gains (2010) demonstrated that the relationships among actors within the institutional setting determine the level of access, authority and utilisation of resources. Thus, a gender-biased network provides obstacles for feminist actors within the state to gain access to the necessary resources to achieve their objectives. The vast literature on state feminism discusses in depth the roles of and relationships between WPAs and women’s movements. The relationship between the state and women’s movements has been used as a criterion to measure the effectiveness in various cross-national studies (Stetson & Mazur, 1995; Rai, 2003; McBride & Mazur, 2012).

In the discussion of the relationship between a specific WPA and women’s movements, Stetson and Mazur (1995) found that the WPA’s establishment “provided access to women’s groups that also sought to affect feminist policy formulation and implementation” (p.19). Rai regarded “links with civil society groups supportive of the advancement of women’s rights and enhancement of women’s status” (p.26) as one of the crucial elements to be found in a successful WPA. McBride and Mazur (2012) acknowledge the “importance of strong and autonomous women groups prepared to work with state actors in explaining the ability of agencies to make and implement feminist policies that go beyond symbolic gestures” (p.102). Thus, women’s movements are considered as catalysts and crucial actors in pushing forward gender agendas in the policy-making arena.

This study considers the different context of Malaysia in analysing the relationship between the state and the relevant gender actors, including
women’s movements. As discussed in Chapter Four, the Malaysian state has a strong representation and authority, which limit the space for civil society (including women’s groups) to participate in and influence the decision-making process. This signifies the state’s greater mandate in pushing gender empowerment agendas in comparison to other actors, which causes the gender empowerment initiatives to be shaped in accordance with the state’s perspectives. This research examines the relationships and network between the WPA and other gender actors and the way they strengthen or weaken the WPA’s capacity as the national machinery to implement gender empowerment initiatives.

This research categorises four types of relationships and networks that are important in analysing the Malaysian WPA’s relationships and network, namely: 1) intra-agencies, 2) intra-ministerial/government agencies, 3) women’s movements and 4) international participation. This chapter distinguishes the formal and informal relationships within the WPA’s institutional context to enable the analysis of the interplay between the two relationship types in strengthening or undermining the capacity of the WPA and how they influence one another.

FORMALISED ENGAGEMENT

The WPA in Malaysia has an advantageous position due to its status as a full ministry. The ministerial status of the WPA has secured its access to resources and enabled it to be recognised as the main gender actor representing the state at both national and international levels. The recognition of the WPA as the state’s machinery responsible for gender empowerment matters has led to formalised engagements with different groups within the institutional setting and outside the state structure. This study categorises the groups that the WPA has formal structured engagements with into three types: 1) nationwide government organisations
(including the WPA’s agencies and departments), 2) local women’s organisations and 3) international actors (including foreign governments and international organisations, including the ASEAN, the UNDP and the ADB).

This study examines the formal engagements that the WPA has with government organisations both within the WPA itself and with external government organisations. The study analyses the various initiatives conducted by the WPA, its agencies and with external government agencies. As some areas of its initiatives overlap or fall under the jurisdictions of other ministries and government agencies, cooperation from these parties is required to implement gender empowerment agendas championed by the MWFCD as the official national machinery for gender-related matters.

The Prime Minister’s Department has introduced various administrative reform initiatives in an attempt to unite the efforts of its machineries, reduce bureaucracy and improve its service delivery to the public.\(^{114}\) The cooperation and streamlining of the ministries and government agencies’ programmes are expected to enhance the effectiveness of government services and reduce operational costs. The introduction of the National Blue Ocean Strategy (NBOS) brought together ministries and agencies of the Malaysian Government in “collaborating to formulate and execute creative blue ocean strategy initiatives” (NBOS website) to achieve developed nation status by 2020, a development ideology generated by former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad during his premiership. The NBOS initiative was introduced by current Prime Minister Najib Razak in 2009 to promote smart strategic partnerships among government ministries and bodies (including the MWFCD) as part of his Government Transformation Programme (GTP) (PEMANDU website).

This study categorises the NBOS as a formal engagement framework that supports the WPA’s relationships and network with other government

\(^{114}\) Information regarding current administrative reforms can be found on relevant government agencies’ websites such as the EPU, the PEMANDU, and the MAMPU.
agencies The Prime Minister’s Department as the central locus of power has played a crucial role in pushing forward the NBOS initiative by introducing eight NBOS strategies that synergise government ministries’ programmes and efforts\textsuperscript{115}. This study identifies the areas that involve the MWFCD’s participation.

\textsuperscript{115} Based on the MWFCD unpublished document shared with the researcher during fieldwork period.
Table 14: The MWFCD involvement in the NBOS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>NBOS strategy</th>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Ministries/agencies involved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>NBOS Strategy 6</td>
<td>1. Malaysia Family First Programme</td>
<td>• MWFCD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Malaysia Youth Empowerment and Support (MYES)</td>
<td>• MWFCD/MOE/EPU/MOF/MO HR/UKAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. My Kampung (Village), My Future</td>
<td>• MOA/MRRD/MWFCD/UKAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>NBOS Strategy 7</td>
<td>1. Malaysia Family Care</td>
<td>• MOH/MWFCD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Malaysia Women’s Initiative for Self-Empowerment / Malaysia Support for Housewives</td>
<td>• MWFCD/MOHR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>NBOS Strategy 8</td>
<td>1. Malaysia Komuniti Perwani / Malaysia Women’s Initiative for Self-Empowerment / Malaysia Support for Housewives</td>
<td>• MWFCD/MOF/MOHR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s analysis based on the MWFCD document
Table 14 above shows the NBOS initiatives that involve the MWFCD and the related ministries and government agencies partnered with the MWFCD. As the NBOS is an initiative from the Prime Minister’s Department in its efforts to enhance the quality of government service delivery, it requires full commitment from all participating ministries and agencies due to its top-down approach. The study further observes that the top-down approach ensures commitment and participation from all levels of government agencies as required\textsuperscript{116}.

The fieldwork for this research coincided with the preparation for launching NBOS Strategy 8, \textit{Malaysia Komuniti Perwani}. The initiative is aimed at improving women’s welfare and acting as a channel between women and the authorities to provide feedback on infrastructure and public amenities (The Star, 2013). The launching of the programme involved not only the MWFCD but also other ministries and agencies, as they were requested to ensure that their organisations were represented during the launching\textsuperscript{117}. “We will send invitations to other ministries and government agencies; they then nominate the staff to attend our programmes. As it is a coordinated effort, attendance is made compulsory for those representatives. You are also, of course, most welcome to join” (Interview 3).

NBOS strategies are formal structured engagements that provide a platform for the WPA and other actors from external governmental agencies to discuss and decide the best options available in the decision-making process. The commitment of the participating actors involved in this initiative was reflected in the frequency of meetings and progress reports that were submitted to the initiator of the NBOS, the Prime Minister’s Department\textsuperscript{118}:

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{116} Based on interview 3 and 9.
\item \textsuperscript{117} Compulsory attendance letter for the \textit{PERWANI} community launching event was sent to all government agencies. This reflect the sanctioning power of the central locus of power which is not necessarily possessed by the WPA.
\item \textsuperscript{118} Based on Interview 4 and 9. This study also refers to the 11\textsuperscript{th} Malaysia Plan (2011-2016) that incorporates NBOS strategy into national development programme.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
“We will have weekly meetings and have to report our progress with the Prime Minister’s Office and other involved ministries” (Interview 19).

“NBOS is good because we can reduce cost and avoid overlapping in ministries’ functions and responsibilities. However, it also takes a lot of time to synergise different departments and agencies under one mission. Sometimes our interests’ overlap, sometimes they conflict, but we have to discuss and find the middle ground” (Interview 2).

Another form of structured formal inter-ministerial and governmental agency engagement is the GTP, which aspires to ascertain critical areas that need government attention. Through this programme, the government’s organisations are able to focus their resources on critical areas, and this requires great involvement from various actors in the society who are stakeholders in Malaysia’s national development. Through various workshops and much research, seven key areas were identified and designated as national key results areas (NKRAs)\(^{119}\). There is another part of the GTP, known as the ministerial key results areas (MKRAs), which “comprise key functional areas within the scope of each ministry and are closely aligned with the overall GTP goal of improving public service delivery in accordance with the Malaysia People First, Performance Now agenda” (GTP Annual Report, 2010, p.180).

Through the GTP initiative, the MWFCD works together with the relevant ministries and government agencies to achieve not only the targets set for the NKRAs but also to ensure the ministry achieves its targets for individual MKRAs. Furthermore, there is a unit established within the

\(^{119}\) Detailed information on NKRA can be retrieved from PEMANDU website, http://www.pemandu.gov.my/gtp/What_Are_NKRAs%5E-%E2%80%93-NKRAs_Overview.aspx
MWFCD that is dedicated to ensuring the targets for the NKRA$s under the authority of the MWFCD are achieved\textsuperscript{120}. The unit also acts as a catalyst between the MWFCD and other relevant ministries that are involved in the same NKRA$s. In the circumstance that a specific ministry is assigned a particular NKRA, that ministry is assumed to be the lead ministry.

\begin{itemize}
\item Refer to the MWFCD’s organisational chart, Figure 9. More information on the ministry’s NKRA can be retrieved from the ministry’s website, http://www.kpwkm.gov.my/en/nkra/latarbelakang.
\end{itemize}
Table 15: NKRA lead ministries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>NKRA</th>
<th>Lead ministry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Addressing the Rising Cost of Living</td>
<td>Office of the Deputy Prime Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Reducing Crime</td>
<td>Ministry of Home Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Assuring Quality Education</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Fighting Corruption</td>
<td>Office of the Minister in Charge of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Raising Living Standards of Low-Income Households</td>
<td>Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Improving Rural Development</td>
<td>Ministry of Rural and Regional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Improving Urban Public Transport</td>
<td>Ministry of Transport</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: GTP 2012 Annual Report

Table 15 shows the division of NKRA tasks according to their ministries, which shows that the MWFCD is the lead ministry for raising the living standards of low-income households. It is also involved in the NKRA to reduce crime, led by the Ministry of Home Affairs. The key groups targeted in the latter NKRA include women, hence various round-table discussions were held especially on the issue of domestic violence, which correlate with the efforts to reduce crime percentages in Malaysia (GTP, 2012).

“We often have meetings and discussions with the AG [(Attorney General)] and police force to discuss domestic violence and marital rape because the AG is the expert on legal aspects, the police are the
enforcers on the ground and we are responsible for women issues. We cannot function solo” (Interview 19).

The structured formal engagements the WPA has with other government ministries and agencies ensure that the WPA does not function in isolation, especially in areas in which it does not have enough resources. Furthermore, it also increases the awareness of gender empowerment agendas among other ministries and government agencies, which enhances the WPA’s voice in the policy-making arena.

This study also examines the formal engagements that the WPA has with international actors (foreign governments and international organisations such as the UNDP, the ADB, the OIC and the NAM) and regional organisations (such as the ASEAN). This is illustrated through the formation of a specific unit for managing the WPA’s public relations at the international level. The unit is staffed by 13 personnel and divided into three main sections, namely: 1) Multilateral Section, 2) Bilateral Section and 3) Regional and ASEAN Section. Apart from coordinating international relations at the multilateral, regional and bilateral levels to ensure the commitments of the Government of Malaysia are fulfilled, the main responsibility of this unit is to ensure that the standards and policies of the government regarding socio-cultural issues are being represented and taken into account at the international level (MWFCD, 2008, 2011, and 2012).

This research finds that the MWFCD plays an active role in promoting gender empowerment agendas at the international level. The MWFCD is frequently involved in events that bring together gender experts from various countries, mainly countries that share similar socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, to propel gender agendas. For example, the MWFCD has organised expert group meetings on the participation of women at the

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121 Refer to Figure 9.
122 Based on examination of the Ministry’s directory.
decision-making level for the OIC\textsuperscript{124} member states, which resulted in the creation of a draft action plan to enhance women's status among the OIC countries, known as the OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW). The MWFCD participated in the 54\textsuperscript{th} Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference organised by the Malaysian Parliament and was also involved in organising workshops dedicated to women's issues during the conferences “The Role of Parliamentarians in the Elimination of Violence against Women, with a Particular Reference to Domestic Violence” and “Mechanisms to Ensure Adequate Recognition of Women’s Issues in Budgetary Processes” (MWFCD, 2012).

At the regional level, the MWFCD is actively involved in Southeast Asia’s main regional organisation, the ASEAN for issues that involve its stakeholders\textsuperscript{125}. As a ministry, it is a member of the Working Group Committee to enact and frame reference terms and guidelines for the establishment of the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children. Apart from the above, it is also active in managing bilateral relations regarding issues involving its jurisdictions, such as signing MOU agreements with foreign governments to enhance further cooperation on gender empowerment initiatives, as well as encouraging bilateral cooperation and discussions on matters related to gender areas (MWFCD, 2008, 2011, and 2012).

The MWFCD’s active participation in the international scene is also demonstrated by the establishment of the NIEW. This agency under the MWFCD was specially formed mainly to provide training and capacity developments for women from NAM\textsuperscript{126} countries, as well as to execute

\textsuperscript{124} OIC stands for Organisation of the Islamic Conference, which has 57 member states consisting of Muslim-majority states across four continents.

\textsuperscript{125} Apart from the MWFCD annual reports, this is also based on The 4th ASEAN & Japan High Level Officials Meeting (2006) and the minute of ASEAN Regional Conference of Senior Officials on Strengthening the Protection and Empowerment of Women Migrant Workers (2014).

\textsuperscript{126} NAM refers to the Non-Aligned Movement, which consists of 115 developing and mostly newly independent countries. It was formally formed in 1961 and mainly concentrates on the development issues of member countries.
programmes to promote Malaysian female leadership at the highest management levels. The institute also executes programmes that involve research and development on issues regarding women’s empowerment, that build networks with international organisations and that construct the databases for NAM members to develop networks among gender empowerment champions in the respective member countries. The formation of the NIEW itself served to enhance Malaysia’s reputation as an advocate of gender development agendas at the international level. Malaysia’s reputation as a moderate Islamic and highly developing country has become a role model for other developing countries to follow, as it is viewed by other international actors as an alternative for the Western model of state feminism.

“The NIEW was established so people can see our achievements [as a nation]. We are often seen as the model in women’s development, especially by Middle Eastern countries and other Muslim countries. They see us as a majority Muslim country, but at the same time, our women are very advanced. Our women occupy top positions, have high-level educations and have more freedom in their lives compared to women from these countries. They want to learn from us and follow our examples” (Interview 9).

This study discovers that the MWFCD acts as a bridge, acting as the state’s official representation to link the state’s institutions with international organisations, such as the UNDP and the ADB, in its efforts to implement gender empowerment initiatives. The MWFCD’s annual reports and

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127 Based on NIEW publications that can be retrieved from http://www.niew.gov.my/publication-details.html?id=50
128 Interview 9 and the MWFCD presentation for The 13th ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW) Meeting (2014)
129 Based on the MWFCD annual reports, UNDP official project documents and the ADB Workshop Report “Promoting Women’s Empowerment through Gender Responsive Budgeting and Planning in Public Sector Management in Malaysia” (2012).
documents show that, in many cases, the international organisations play crucial roles as main or sub-funders for women’s development projects in Malaysia (MWFCD 2008, 2011; UN Document 1). The organisations often liaise with the WPA (as the official representative of the state in regard to women’s agendas) through cooperative projects such as the workshop on “Promoting Women’s Empowerment through Gender-Responsive Budgeting and Planning in Public-Sector Management in Malaysia”. This was organised by the MWFCD with the support of the ADB and the Asia-Pacific Community of Practice on Managing for Development Results (APcOP-MfDR) and brought together 36 senior government officials from the public sector, such as from the MWFCD, the MOF, the EPU, the MOH and the MOE, with international gender experts and representatives from academia and development partners (Workshop Report, 2012).

Collaborative projects between the MWFCD and the UNDP in particular demonstrate the structured formal engagement of the WPA with international organisations that share the financial costs and provide other forms of resources (such as expertise and knowledge) on gender empowerment programmes with the MWFCD. For instance, the UNDP and the MWFCD collaborated in the capacity building on a gender-mainstreaming project, in which the UNDP shared the financial cost with the Government of Malaysia; the UNDP provided the relevant frameworks for the MWFCD to execute the project and continued to supervise and monitor the progress of the project (UNDP Project Document, 2003).

One interview with a senior officer in the MWFCD illustrated the relationships and network that the MWFCD has with international organisations:

“We work together with international organisations as well, such as the UNDP and others. They support us in many ways, financially and knowledge-wise. In fact, I just came back from Washington for a meeting with the UN… It is important for us because they have the
knowledge, the expertise and the framework, although we will not take what is not suitable for our society” (Interview 16).

This study further examines the relationship of the WPA with another significant group, the women’s movements in Malaysia. The state feminism literature identifies the crucial roles that women’s movements play in measuring the effectiveness of state feminist institutions (Stetson & Mazur, 1995; Rai, 2003; McBride & Mazur, 2012). As discussed in Chapter Four, Malaysia provides a different context in the analysis of the relationship between women’s movements and the WPA due to its strong state authority, which imposes limitations on civil society’s participation in policy-making processes. Nonetheless, women’s movements have had substantial roots in Malaysia since the pre-independence days. They took part in liberalising the country from the colonial powers (Ng et al., 2006) and have since played important roles in putting pressure on state institutions to listen to the concerns raised by women’s groups130.

This study finds that, as a ministry, the MWFCU has built a strong rapport with women’s movements through the umbrella body for women’s organisations in Malaysia, known as the NCWO. The organisation was established in 1963, prior to the creation of the ministry in 2001. The close relationship between the NCWO and the MWFCU is reflected in the ministry’s official documentations that discuss the NCWO’s involvement in gender initiatives conducted by the ministry and other government agencies (MWFCU annual reports).

Ng et al. (2006) explain that the close relationship of the NCWO with the Malaysian Government “historically started since NCWO’s leadership structure mirrored the ‘ethnic elite accommodation’ model of the ruling party” (p.20). This situation also explains the proximity of the NCWO with the ruling

130 Refer to the NCWO publication, "NCWO: 50 Years Remembered", (2013)
UMNO, since most of the pioneers in the NCWO and the prominent women in UMNO shared a common educational background as elites in the post-independence period. This situation, which relates to the selective engagement of the WPA with women’s movements, will be further discussed in the next section of this chapter.

The NCWO also plays an immense role in ensuring women’s agendas are being voiced and discussed in the policy-making arena. Among the achievements of the NCWO is the fact it works together with the ruling party and mobilises various women’s organisations to push for legislative reforms on various issues involving women, such as equal pay, equal access to public service jobs and marital rights (NCWO website). As the NCWO acts as an umbrella body for women’s organisations, the MWFCD is able to reach all members of the NCWO through one channel:

“The NCWO is our closest partner, our ally. Because we have been working together for so long, we understand what they have, and they know what we want. Furthermore, we can reach all members of the NCWO, which makes our job easier, and it is easier to reach our stakeholders” (Interview 3).

Although the NCWO is recognised as the main partner of the MWFCD, other women’s organisations are also responsible for voicing women’s views at the decision-making level. However, as civil society movements and women’s organisations are constrained by various acts and laws, they may not be able to be as critical and assertive as women’s movements in democratic and developed economic settings can be. Regardless of the constraints, there are instances where women’s movements have been able to overcome the barriers imposed by the state in uniting to raise domestic violence issues, notwithstanding the differences in ideologies among the

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Refer also to the NCWO publication on its former leader, Fatimah Hashim, “Fatimah: Sumber Inspirasi [Fatimah: Source of Inspiration],” (Azizah Mokhzani, 1990).
women’s movements. In respect of this, five women’s organisations, including the NCWO, established the Joint Action Group (JAG) and mobilised other NGOs to embark on the campaign against domestic violence. Consequent to their efforts, the predecessor to the current WDD, the Women’s Affairs Department (HAWA) (which at that time was placed under the Prime Minister’s Department), was brought into action to deal with domestic violence issues. The drive finally bore fruit when the Domestic Violence Act (DVA) came into operation in June 1996\textsuperscript{132}.

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**Dependency on Other Actors’ Goodwill**

This research discovers that the MWFC\textsuperscript{D}'s relationship with other government agencies in implementing gender empowerment is shaped by the state’s prescribed perspectives on the acceptable norms and values of gender roles between men and women. Although the gender empowerment initiatives are the main responsibilities of the MWFC\textsuperscript{D}, it is viewed as less important by other ministries and government agencies' and gender empowerment initiatives are often seen as extra workloads to other actors within the government institutions. Other actors view gender agendas as less important than their existing tasks, which illustrates the biasness of the state structure which perpetuates marginalisation of women issues in policy-making arena. This study finds that other government agencies and ministries are reluctant to pursue gender empowerment agendas actively despite being persuaded by a full-fledged ministry.

While the WPA has structured formal engagement mechanisms with various actors within the WPA and with external agencies outside the WPA, the MWFC\textsuperscript{D} officers acknowledged that despite having the authority to address gender-related issues, the MWFC\textsuperscript{D} has to recognise the jurisdictions of other ministries and government agencies over these

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\textsuperscript{132} Further discussion in Chapter Seven, p.254-264
matters\textsuperscript{133}. For example, in the case of the inclusion of marital rape under the DVA, inputs and consensus were required from other relevant ministries and government agencies, such as the Police Department, the Attorney General’s Chamber and the Department of Islamic Development under the Prime Minister’s Department. The officer interviewed mentioned the difficulty of all parties involved in the round-table discussions achieving consensus on the acceptable definition of marital rape and also the proposal to include marital rape in the DVA\textsuperscript{134}, as it involved the consideration of not only the religious and cultural aspects but also the legal procedures in regard to marital rape prosecution (Interview 19).

One of the resources that other ministries and government agencies are required to provide is dedicated time to initiatives proposed by the MWFCD to them. An example given by the interviewees is the MWFCD’s Gender Focal Point (GFP) initiative, which is part of the agenda to mainstream gender into decision-making processes across the public sector\textsuperscript{135}. The GFP initiative was intended to appoint specific top-level management individuals in related government ministries and agencies to act as the key people to mainstream gender into their respective ministries and agencies and to act as a bridge between other ministries/agencies and the MWFCD (MWFCD, 2008).

Notwithstanding the initial highly publicised initiative in 2004, the GFP initiative waned over the years. Officers in the MWFCD expressed their frustration but at the same time understood the dilemmas faced by their top-ranking colleagues (grades 54 and above\textsuperscript{136}) in the different government organisations who had been appointed to take on the GFP as an additional workload to their existing responsibilities.

\textsuperscript{133} Interview 3, 16 and 19
\textsuperscript{134} Marital rape is currently addressed in the Malaysian Penal Code.
\textsuperscript{135} NGO Shadow Report (2012) also addressed on the establishment of GFP and the problems faced to implement GFP initiative effectively (p.65)
\textsuperscript{136} For more details on the tiers of government officers in Malaysia, please refer to Appendix 4
“Can you imagine, on top of having to take care of the roads [(referring for example to the Ministry of Works)], you will have to take care of gender issues. It is like putting more work on top of the already overloaded work, and they don’t seem very relevant to each other” (Interview 18).

This study finds that the strong hierarchical structure of governmental organisations’ relationship accentuates the state’s gendered disposition. Despite the dominance of female personnel in the professional and management level group, the top management of the civil service is highly male dominated as shown in Figure 12.
Figure 12: Public sector personnel by service group and sex, 2012

Public-Sector Personnel by Service Group and Sex, 2012

Source: Author’s analysis based on The Statistics on Women, Family and Community (2013)

Figure 12 shows the percentage of public-sector personnel by service group and sex. This figure demonstrates that the female gender dominates the professional and management group of the public sector. Women comprise 61.5% of the 296,400 professional and management staff. While men comprise 72.3% of the 2,178 top management personnel, the ratio of women to men is almost equal in the support group. Women’s dominance at the middle level of the public sector may provide a false sense of gender representation in the sector, hence affecting gender-mainstreaming initiatives by the WPA.

“It can be difficult to sell gender-mainstreaming agendas because [the officers] are already women. So, they say that they already bring along women’s perspectives into their jobs. That is already gender mainstreaming – why should they do something redundant and add more jobs [to their already high workloads]?” (Interview 3).
This study finds that despite the significant number of women that have secured positions in the civil service, the gender empowerment initiatives tend to lose their momentum in the absence of feminist actors. As the officers themselves are female, it is assumed that they will naturally apply their feminist perspectives to carry out their tasks within their areas of authority, hence giving less importance to the MWFCD initiatives to mainstream gender and to ensure more gender-inclusive decision making. The dominance of men in civil service top management level also translates into the lack of commitment from other governmental ministries and agencies. The failure of gender mainstreaming initiatives can also be attributed to the lack of interest of the dominantly male top management officials. This hinder them from becoming involved in gender matters as they are notably absent from training programmes and round-table discussions that aim to increase awareness of gender issues so that it can be disseminated to their subordinates. The MWFCD endeavours to employ a top-down approach in which “[by] catching the ‘big fish’, you will get cooperation from the ‘smaller fish’” (Interview 17). This is highly strategic considering the strong hierarchy of Malaysian bureaucratic system. However, this poses a constraint when gender agendas are squeezed among the heavy workloads and tight schedules of the top management, of which some actors may not be conscious of or do not have interest in.

The combination of conflicting and lack of interests from other important actors within government organisations in managing gender initiatives in their workloads, also results in the reluctance of other government agencies to prioritise gender agendas championed by the MWFCD. As the WPA operates in a strongly hierarchical and power-centralised environment, as analysed in Chapters Four and Five, it requires leadership with strong networks to ensure buy-in and commitment from other

137 Interview 3, 16 and 17
actors within the government institution. Since the WPA lacks the authority to impose its agendas on other government ministries and agencies, it must ensure that directions regarding gender empowerment initiatives emanate from the locus of power (especially the Prime Minister’s Department) to secure commitment from other actors.

This study discovers that there are existing formal frameworks for inter-governmental agencies’ cooperation, which contributes positively to the WPA’s network capacity. However, this research also identifies that the WPA often has a strong dependency on the goodwill of other actors especially other government ministries and agencies in a highly masculine state institution as men dominates the highest level of positions in the state. It has to be acknowledged that other actors external to the WPA setting have different sets of priorities, which, at times, drive the MWFCD’s gender empowerment initiatives further down these actors' task lists. This is because the WPA appears to undertake the role of coordinator rather than advocate in gender-related issues due to inadequate authority and expertise in the specified areas, as the issues involving women and gender often fall under the jurisdictions of other government ministries and agencies as well. This weakens the WPA's capacity in terms of its engagements with other actors in implementing gender empowerment programmes.
SELECTIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH WOMEN’S MOVEMENTS

In the earlier part of this chapter, this thesis discussed the WPA’s structured formal engagement with women’s movements. The state feminism literature identifies women’s movements to be a crucial factor in analysing a WPA’s functions (Rai, 2003; McBride & Mazur, 2012). In discussing the adaptability of state feminism’s frameworks across the globe, McBride and Mazur (2011) identify “meaningful links with developed and strong civil society groups” (p.19) as a factor that contributes to a successful WPA. Nonetheless, as Malaysia has strong state authority with a dominant party system, as highlighted in Chapter Four, this also affects the engagement of the WPA with women’s movements, as the state imposes various constraints on civil society’s movements. The close relationships between the ruling party and selected NGOs shape the relationships between the WPA and women’s groups in Malaysia.

Women’s movements in Malaysia have emerged in various forms. They can be subunits of religious or ethnic organisations that represent the different interests and voices of women, which reflect the diverse nature of Malaysian society. The NCWO is highly useful in uniting the many voices of women under one main channel and uniting the women’s movements and the state, namely via the MWFCD. As discussed earlier, the NCWO was established by women who were part of the elite groups and shared similar backgrounds with the ruling party members during the post-independence period. This built up strong informal relationships, which were later formalised through the NCWO’s inclusion in various MWFCD initiatives. Additionally, the NCWO has earned recognition from the ministry as an important ally in the government’s initiatives to empower women (The Star, 2013). A further

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139 This can be seen from the women’s organisations under the NCWO as the main umbrella body for women’s organisations in Malaysia. Retrieved from http://www.ncwomalaysia.com/index.php/members/list-of-affiliates
140 This is based on Interview 3 and 16. This study also analyses official statements by the NCWO leadership in regards to their engagement with the MWFCD and ruling political party at p.231-232 of this thesis
illustration of the NCWO’s proximity to the ruling government was evident when the political leader of UMNO, which is the dominant party of the ruling coalition, also held the leadership position in the NCWO, for example, Zaleha Ismail, who was the Minister of National Unity and Community Development, held the NCWO’s presidency from 1989 until 2000.

The political inclination of the NCWO is apparent from the speeches and open support from its leaders for the ruling party. The NCWO Deputy President, Faridah Khalid stated that “The current government is the best: they are aware of people’s needs, establish various schemes and funding for women… to reduce the burden of earning the living” (translated) (Berita Harian, 16 February, 2013). Despite its claim to be non-partisan, there is a lack of representation from the women’s wings of the opposition parties in the NCWO. It is worth mentioning that during the initial years after the NCWO’s establishment, representatives from the opposition parties withdrew themselves from the organisation as a protest against its strong inclination towards the ruling party, which still holds the premiership of the current government (Yan, 2003).

This research finds that the informal relationship between the NCWO and the MWFCID has been formalised, and the NCWO is acknowledged as the main partner to the MWFCID from civil society “NCWO is our closest partner…” (Interview 16); “…we work together mainly with the NCWO – they understand [the ministry] the best…” (Interview 3). Although the NCWO has been selected as a representative of women’s movements, its main modus operandi (as identified by Malaysian gender scholars) is that it “opts to work for reform for women from within the establishment” (Yan, 2003, p.60). This has indeed benefitted the NCWO, as it is able to gain access to resources

141 The ministry has been dissolved and the departments under the ministry were absorbed into the MWFCID in 2001.
142 Refer also to NCWO publication on its former leader, Zaleha Ismail, “Tan Sri Zaleha Ismail: Inspirasi & Perjuangan [Tan Sri Zaleha Ismail: Inspiration & Resistance], (Rokiah Talib & Nik Sofiah Karim, 2005).
143 Refer to news statement made by the NCWO’s leadership in the pre-13th General Election period.
within the government to further its gender initiatives. However, this inevitably restricts the NCWO from acting critically, as it is subjected to the government’s approval for its programmes, hence losing its autonomy to a strong state in a semi-democratic setting.

Although the NCWO is recognised as the main partner of the MWFCD, the latter does engage with various women’s groups. The WDD, mainly through its Capacity Development Unit, is in charge of allocating and disbursing financial aids or grants to women’s groups and to the National Women and Family Development Council, an independent body that was established under the ministry to carry out the ministry’s programmes on the ground. Any type of women’s group can submit an open application for funding through the ministry’s web portal, but it has to be in line with the key areas as listed in the portal144.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Key areas</th>
<th>Specialisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1   | Women’s development          | • Skill training and enhancement  
• Women’s capacity development  
• Legal literacy  
• Emotion management  
• *Nur Bahagia* (managing violence against women)  
• Gender awareness  
• HIV/AIDS awareness programmes |
| 2   | Family development           | • Family  
• Parenting  
• Fatherhood  
• Marriage preparation  
• Marriage development  
• Young adulthood development  
• Reproductive health  
• HIV/AIDS circumvention |
| 3   | Community development        | • Child protection and recovery  
• Legal literacy on Social Acts  
• Disability protection and recovery  
• Senior citizens’ protection and recovery  
• Natural disaster victims' protection and recovery  
• Destitute people’s and beggars’ recovery and capacity enhancement  
• Research and training in social welfare and development  
• Community capacity enhancement programmes and welfare volunteering organisations  
• Support programmes for HIV/AIDS patients  
• Retirement preparation |

Source: WDD website as accessed in September 2013
Table 16 shows the key areas covered by the WPA for subsidies and grants. Apart from focusing on selected areas, the WPA offers funding to NGOs on the condition that they observe the key areas as listed by the WPA, do not go against the Malaysian constitution and do not touch upon sensitive issues that may cause social disruption in the society (WDD website). This study establishes that despite the WPA’s structured formal engagement with women’s movements, the relationships appear to be inclined towards the state’s requirements while limiting the voices of the women’s movements in gender empowerment agendas. Furthermore, to gain access to the resources provided by the state, the women’s movements must conform to the framework set by the state, as well as refrain from giving views on critical issues deemed inappropriate and sensitive by the state.

The WPA acts as a gatekeeper for access to the state’s resources. It also plays a great role by providing funds and services to keep women’s movements functioning. However, the women’s organisations may face dilemmas wherein they must often choose the most realistic way to continue functioning, which is to follow the guidelines offered by the MWFCD and to abstain from controversial issues that may jeopardise their relationship with the state (Yan, 2003). This may result in further disengagement of a women’s movement from the government and may impede the movement’s ability to influence the government’s decision-making process from within.

This study identifies that the WPA practises selective engagement with women’s movements, preferring those that are not critical towards the government and that shape their spheres of activities through various guidelines and frameworks in return for access to the state’s resources. Consequently, some women’s movements choose to engage with the WPA from outside the establishment, which gives them greater independence to voice their opinions, despite having lesser or no access to the state’s resources.

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145 Refer to Interview 3, the WDD website and the MWFCD annual reports (2008, 2012)
resources\textsuperscript{146}. Among the women’s movements that are more critical towards the exercises and initiatives on gender empowerment by the government and the MWFCFD are Sisters in Islam, EMPOWER, the All Women’s Action Society (AWAM), the Women’s Aid Organisation (WAO) and the Women’s Centre for Change (WCC). These bodies formed a JAG and compose CEDAW shadow reports, as the ministry’s only CEDAW report so far was published in 2004\textsuperscript{147}.

The viewpoints of the critical women’s movements can be seen through their various efforts in producing reports and press statements when the ministry fails to meet the deadlines to produce and publish reports (CEDAW, 2005, 2012). Despite acknowledging these movements’ critical voices and their contributions in pushing for gender empowerment initiatives, the officers interviewed stated that the government is reluctant to accept and embrace the critical women’s movements, as they challenge the socio-cultural and religious values of the country.

“We do invite them; we have them in our round-table discussions. But in the end, we make the decisions. Sometimes they are too liberal and it is not good. We have to be in line with our constitution, our religious values” (Interview 16).

“We acknowledge their expertise, but we don’t engage with them directly. Sometimes, if we call them for talks, it will not be under the ministry’s invitation directly or it will not be under their capacity as a member of that particular NGO” (Interview 3).

Therefore, this research identifies that the formal established relationships are at times undermined by the informal rules that limit the authority of the WPA to influence other actors in pushing forward gender empowerment initiatives. These informal rules and barriers also act as

\textsuperscript{146} This study analyses CEDAW shadow reports produced by the critical women’s movements.

\textsuperscript{147} Refer to the MWFCFD’s Report to the UN Committee for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (First and Second Report), (2004)
restrictions to the critical women’s movements in penetrating and accessing the central locus of the decision-making arena. Thus, while the more-agreeable women’s organisations are allowed to participate in the government’s policy-making process, the critical women’s movements continue to engage with the MWFCD from outside the decision-making environment.

Apart from the above, this study observes that the WPA still lacks the authority to impose gender empowerment initiatives and to break the silo, even though formal frameworks are in place to ensure cooperation across government departments and agencies. This is because the WPA is dependent on the central locus of power, especially the Prime Minister’s Department, to promote cooperative collaboration and to maintain the momentum of gender empowerment initiatives. However, the informal rules diminish the determination of other players to participate in these initiatives. It is also observed that due to the lack of understanding of gender-mainstreaming initiatives as proposed by the MWFCD, many of these agendas become weaker and require reviving from time to time to ensure they remain within the institutional setting. This is further analysed in Chapter Seven of this thesis.

**WELL-CONNECTED LEADERSHIP**

This study analyses the WPA leadership’s relationships and networks and the impacts on the WPA’s network and relationships with actors both inside and outside the state structure. In her analysis of the Austrian political representation, Kopl (2005) stressed the importance of personal networks in the decision-making process, as “political decision-making is synchronized not only by structural links but also by personal links… leaders of interest associations are usually MPs or even members of the cabinet” (p.21). Annesley and Gains (2010) highlighted the importance of informal networks
in their study of the gendered nature of the core executive in the UK, as gendered informal networks may influence access to resources and decision-making processes for feminist actors within the state institution.

Therefore, this study finds it important to explore the WPA leadership’s personal networks, which often consist of informal networks involving with other actors. Historically, the relationships between the state and women’s movements prior to the creation of the WPA as a full ministry “was muted and was not as transparent as most negotiations were ‘whispered’ in government corridors and through private conversations among the elite on both sides” (Ng et al., 2006, p.66). This research analysed the historical context of the relationships between the state and women’s movements to understand whether the trend of employing informal networks and negotiations to further enhance gender issues persisted after the WPA’s establishment as a full ministry.

This research shows that after the establishment of the WPA as a full ministry, it did not encounter significant changes in its leadership for eight years\textsuperscript{148}. However, the ministry experienced leadership changes after the 13\textsuperscript{th} General Election in 2013. As mentioned in Chapter Four, the ministry is headed by a full minister who forms part of the cabinet line-up. The personal connections of a WPA leader within her/his political networks are vital in forwarding gender empowerment agendas in a dominant party setting. Thus, the role of the highest level leader is crucial in the analysis of the WPA’s relationships with other actors. Chapter Four mentioned the advantages of having an influential leader at the ministerial level. Since the WPA is among the most recently established ministries within the government, the former WPA minister, Shahrizat Jalil, played an immense role in making sure the WPA gained recognition from other ministries and government agencies.

This study recognises the importance of influential and well-connected leadership members in promoting the MWFC’s gender agendas to other

\textsuperscript{148} As explored in Chapter Four, p.166-167.
players and ensuring that the WPA obtains cooperation from other actors, especially those within state institutions. The MWFCM was under the leadership of Shahrizat Jalil for an extensive period of time. She helmed the ministry almost single-handedly after the ministry’s establishment in 2001, with short intervals of absence. This study finds that during her leadership of the MWFCM, Shahrizat’s personal networks and political influences were substantially advantageous to the WPA’s capacity in the context of Malaysia’s strongly hierarchical bureaucratic background (Abdullah, 1994). Her personal networks involving similar-ranking positions are highly regarded and influential in changing institutional behaviours and strategies in decision-making processes.

This is illustrated by one officer’s remarks on Shahrizat’s positive contribution to the ministry due to her personal proximity to the locus of power:

“...our [former] minister, Datuk Shahrizat, always played an active role in the cabinet meetings... she also had great influence because she was personally close to the Prime Minister [(at the time of the interview, the Prime Minister was Najib Razak)] as well...” (Interview 16).

Despite Shahrizat’s resignation as the MWFCM minister in 2012 and her appointment as the Prime Minister’s Special Advisor on Women’s Affairs in 2013, she has maintained her commitment towards the WPA by always keeping pace with the latest development of the MWFCM: “…sometimes she just gives us a call and asks how things are. She will give advice on how to do things, and we are grateful for that” (Interview 3).

Furthermore, as the setting adopts a top-down approach, as discussed in Chapter Four, approvals and consensus received from the

149 She was absent from the MWFCM’s ministerial post in 2008 and later resigned from the post in 2012
150 Interview 3 and 16
highest level of decision makers of government organisations are highly related to cooperation from officers at the lower levels. Hence, the personal networks of the WPA leaders are important to ensure cooperation from other ministries and government agencies:

“Usually if the orders come from the top, it will be smoother… because ministers communicate with other ministers. They are on the same level, so it is easier for them to communicate with similar-ranking people than [to communicate] with their subordinates [(lower-ranking officers of different organisations)]” (Interview 2).

“We are just the small fish… we follow the ‘revelations’ from above” (Interview 17).

This research finds that the WPA leaders’ multiple roles in various sectors are highly related to their establishment of wide personal networks and strong influence. Shahrizat Jalil held various positions within the political party, within the ruling coalition and within NGOs in Malaysia, such as the National Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Malaysia (NAWEM). Her role as the Chief of the Women’s Wing of UMNO tied in with her vice-presidency of the UMNO Supreme Council, which is the highest decision-making body within UMNO, the dominant party within the ruling coalition151. Thus, in addition to carrying out her work within the political party, she also performed her tasks in the ministry within the dominant party setting. Her high post within the administrative organisation and her strong political influence gave her an advantageous position to lobby for gender empowerment agendas due to her wide-ranging and influential network.

This study also analyses Shahrizat’s network within the ruling coalition. During her tenure as the minister of the MWFCD (2001–2008, 2009–2012),

151 Refer to the UMNO’s organisational chart
Shahrizat was not only the Chief of the Women’s Wing of UMNO (the dominant party in the ruling coalition) but also for the National Front (the ruling coalition). She still holds both positions at present, although she resigned as the MWFCD’s minister in 2012. Hence, her wide-ranging and highly influential network is not limited to her political party; it also encompasses the ruling coalition, which comprises 13 political parties from both East and West Malaysia. This is due to the nature of the political party system in Malaysia, which is mainly dominated by the largest party of the ruling coalition, UMNO. Therefore, the political leaders from UMNO are more influential in the decision-making arena compared to political leaders from other component parties, who may not have similar levels of influence. This is especially relevant for the political component parties from East Malaysia, as they are more familiar with local issues, while the federal government administration is overwhelmed by politicians from West Malaysia.
Table 17: Cabinet line-up of political parties in 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>National Front component party</th>
<th>Location base</th>
<th>No. of ministers</th>
<th>No. of cabinet portfolios</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>UMNO</td>
<td>West Malaysia</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>MCA</td>
<td>West Malaysia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>MIC</td>
<td>West Malaysia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>PBB</td>
<td>East Malaysia (Sarawak)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>PBRS</td>
<td>East Malaysia (Sabah)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>PBS</td>
<td>East Malaysia (Sarawak)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>UPKO</td>
<td>East Malaysia (Sabah)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>SUPP</td>
<td>East Malaysia (Sarawak)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Independent (appointed as senators)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 (all under the Prime Minister’s Department)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s analysis based on cabinet line-up\textsuperscript{152}

Table 17 shows the cabinet line-up of political parties in 2013. From the table, it can be deduced that UMNO is the dominant party in the National Front coalition. Since they are very dominant within Malaysia’s political setting, politicians from UMNO have greater influence in decision-making processes because they are the prime movers of the National Front coalition.

Shahrizat’s wide-ranging and influential network within the political setting in women-related areas is apparent through her appointment twice as

the Special Advisor to the Prime Minister for Women’s Affairs. Her appointments were both made in periods of her absence from the MWFCD’s ministerial post. In 2008, Shahrizat was appointed to the post under Abdullah Badawi’s premiership, as she had lost her parliamentary seat during the 2008 General Election. In 2013, she was again appointed as the Special Advisor under the leadership of the current Prime Minister, Najib Razak, as she had resigned from her senatorship and ministerial position.\footnote{Refer to Chapter 5, p.173-176.}

This study also finds that in addition to her vast and influential network, Shahrizat also held the position of Chairperson for the Women and Family Development Council (until 2013), a body founded by the MWFCND to serve its stakeholders through their parliamentary constituencies. Shahrizat is acknowledged as the founder who triggered the idea for the establishment of the council in 2001 and continued to have a strong influence on the council despite her resignation as the MWFCD’s minister in 2012.\footnote{Based on the council’s Facebook page, retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/mpwkkeb} She continued to be actively present in the council’s activities prior to the appointment of the current minister of the MWFCD (WFDC Facebook page). Initially, the council’s membership was open to all female EXCO members of state governments in Malaysia.

However, further analysis indicates that the council is closely linked with the UMNO Women’s Wing and that the roles of the two bodies overlap. Consequently, the majority of the council members consist of UMNO Women’s Wing branch leaderships at their parliamentary constituencies, and the heads of both bodies are the same individuals (WFDC letter; UMNO Women website) This also highlights the fusion between administration and politics, as discussed in Chapter Four, in regard to the WPA’s institutional structure.

This study also examines the wide and influential networks of the administrative leaders of the WPA and the agencies directly involved in
gender empowerment agendas, namely the WDD and the NIEW. They play significant roles in assisting the WPA in establishing closer working relationships and gaining support and cooperation from other actors. In the case of the NIEW, a newly established agency under the MWFC, its former director, Rafiah Salim, was specifically appointed from outside the civil service due to her outstanding credibility. At the time, appointment from outside the civil service was not common practice for government organisations. Rafiah not only has vast knowledge and experience but also a wide and influential network with actors from various sectors at both local and international levels. One interviewed NIEW officer mentioned the following:

“...we are very lucky indeed to have Tan Sri [(Rafiah’s official title)] on board. She is very knowledgeable and experienced… she knows so many people that help us, especially being a new organisation… sometimes, we discuss our ideas with her and she already knows who to contact [in order to ensure smooth execution of the initiatives]” (Interview 14).

Apart from being Malaysia’s first female Vice-Chancellor for the University of Malaya, Rafiah has also held various high positions. For example, her career spans from serving as the Assistant Secretary General for Human Resources for the UN in New York to being the Assistant Governor with the Malaysian Central Bank, which is one of the highest and most powerful posts in the Malaysian Government’s organisations. Due to her stature, involvement and experience in international organisations, government institutions, the private sector and academia, Rafiah has established a wide-ranging network across different sectors, which helped the NIEW, as a new organisation, to establish its name:

155 Her professional background is obtained from Bloomberg Business, retrieved from http://www.bloomberg.com/research/stocks/people/person.asp?personId=58046415&ticker=MGR C:MK
“Tan Sri is very resourceful… she has lots of knowledge, she knows many people. I am very lucky to be personally working under her… I have learnt a lot from her. She is my role model; she knows a lot of things and a lot of people. Working with her has taught me many things and made me a better person” (Interview 14).

The former Secretary General of the MWFCD, Noorul Ainur, also has exposure to both local and international scenes, which enabled her to build networks with relevant actors within the state institutions and with external actors. She has served as the World Bank’s Senior Advisor in New York, was engaged as Goldman Sachs’ Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Oxford and has done a number of stints within government organisations, such as the National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN) and the MOF (MWFCD presentation)156. Her solid background has also earned her close proximity to the locus of power:

“Our Secretary General is very capable and experienced. We trust her decisions and directions for the whole ministry… she is on good terms with the Prime Minister, so she can convey what we need [to the higher level] easily [during the absence of a full minister following Shahrizat’s resignation in 2012]” (Interview 16).

CONCLUSION

This study finds that the WPA is helmed by influential, experienced and widely connected leadership staff. The leaders of the WPA and its agencies have access to networks both at the national and international levels, facilitating the execution of its gender agendas. The former topmost officer of the WPA had a vast political network, thanks to her multiple high-

156 Based on the MWFCD’s internal presentation in knowledge sharing session.
ranking positions in politics. This study also observes that through these various channels, the leader was able to establish, for example, the WFDC as a means to reach out to her political supporters and also to make contact with important and influential political stakeholders, although this was done selectively and exclusively.

The findings not only imply that political positions can help leaders to gain access to other actors and build networks but also imply that expertise, experience and good interpersonal relations at the leadership level can help the WPA (including its departments and agencies) to develop informal networks and relationships with other actors and also gain support from them. A well-connected leadership enables the WPA to mainstream gender agendas, as well as implement gender empowerment initiatives. In this context, throughout their careers and working experiences, the high-ranking leaders of the WPA have already established networks across many sectors, which can be gauged from the high level of cooperation they get from external actors. In the absence of well-connected leaders within a strongly hierarchical bureaucratic environment with a dominant party, such as that of Malaysia, it will be more difficult for junior-level actors within the WPA to reach high-level actors.

Although formal network channels and cross-departmental links can be established to break the silo, as discussed in an early section of this chapter, personal influence is important as well, since decisions and negotiations are sometimes made behind closed doors. Furthermore, as the WPA is helmed by a minister, who is also a political player, there are times when decisions and negotiations not only involve administrative policies but also involve political tactical moves and strategies. In this context, despite the presence of a dedicated minister at the WPA who exclusively deals with women’s issues, the specific appointment of Shahrizat Jalil as the PM’s Special Advisor for Women’s Affairs during her absence as the MWFC’s
minister is highly related to her strong influence on the political party’s biggest unit, the Women’s Wing of UMNO.

As a new organisation, the Malaysian WPA and some of its newly established agencies do not have enough knowledge and experience to compete for resources with the more-established organisations in the state structure, and thus require well-connected and experienced leaders. Furthermore, it is necessary for the WPA to enter into negotiations and discussions with other actors that are either the gatekeepers to the resources needed by the WPA or competitors of the WPA for the scarce resources available for government organisations. In relation to this, having a well-connected leadership is advantageous to the WPA, as it enhances recognition of the organisation among other actors and increases their willingness to cooperate with and participate in the WPA’s agendas. Regardless of the experienced and well-connected leadership, these networks are often informal arrangements conducted in an informal manner, founded on connections established by an individual rather than the organisation. Notwithstanding the existence of formal arrangements, as discussed in an earlier section of this chapter, the WPA’s ability to sustain momentum on its gender initiatives also depends largely on the goodwill of other actors. This is because the WPA lacks of enforcement power and normally acts as a coordinator that synergises gender-mainstreaming efforts across governmental departments, ministries and agencies.

Consequently, the top-level leaders of the WPA and its agencies can utilise their interpersonal relationships to manoeuvre and negotiate the goodwill of other actors. The Malaysian setting emphasises the importance of interpersonal relationships in decision-making processes; scholars of organisational behaviours have found that Malaysia generally emphasises maintaining harmonious relationships through the spirit of collectivism and hierarchical rapport in organisations (Abdullah, 1994; Jogulu & Ferkins, 2012). Hence, this indicates that the capacity and capability of the WPA to
influence the decision-making process and to execute its plans depend not only on its formal network arrangements as discussed previously but also on the extent of its informal network. Therefore, this signifies that the WPA relies on the wide range of informal networks built by individual leaders instead of the networks established by the organisation to function effectively. This can be a drawback to the WPA, as the established informal networks may be interrupted once a particular individual leaves the organisation. Quite recently, in the middle of 2013, there were changes in the organisational structure of the WPA, which saw a new minister being appointed to fill a position that had been temporarily assumed by the Prime Minister following the resignation of the MWFC’s former minister, Shahrizat Jalil, in 2012. The NIEW also recently appointed a new director to replace Rafiah Salim, and the WDD has a newly appointed director who, contrasting with her predecessor, was appointed from within the civil service.

Unlike the WDD and other departments under the MWFC, which have traditionally been helmed by senior-level civil servants, who operate within an open-service system under the ADS scheme, the NIEW and the NFPDB as statutory bodies have more flexibility in the appointment of their highest management. This flexibility has led to the selection of experts from outside the scheme to head the bodies, as demonstrated in the appointment of Rafiah Salim from outside the civil service as the director of the NIEW, although the practice has not been continued since her retirement. Rafiah’s vast experience across the public, private and academic sectors immensely benefitted the NIEW as a young organisation. The changes in leadership may possibly lead to the loss of the vast informal networks established by the former leaders of the WPA, especially if the networks reside outside the organisational setting.

It is quite early for this study to evaluate the effects of the recent changes of leadership on the WPA. Nonetheless, informal networks are not easily replicated, as they involve personal relationships and individual
rapport. This may further impair the transferability of personal informal networks to the WPA. Furthermore, the new role of Shahrizat Jalil, an influential political leader, as the PM’s Special Advisor for Women’s Affairs (which carries ministerial status), is seen as competition for the WPA when bidding for scarce resources in championing women’s issues, especially as her political networks and proximity to the locus of power were previously assets to the WPA and have now transferred to her new office.

Thus, apart from the efforts to formalise the networks through the creation of GFP databases across government agencies and the NAM countries (for the NIEW), there are no other apparent means to carry out the transferability of networks, except when conducted with the goodwill of previous individual leaders. In the case of the Administration and Diplomatic Scheme, the informal networks among the officers within this scheme may be transferred through the relationships built during training sessions or working stints with officers from other government departments. This situation enabled the researcher to gain access to the MWFCD’s officers during the fieldwork period. Interviews with the MWFCD’s officers were granted to the researcher due to the assistance of the researcher’s contacts within the scheme, who had happened to undergo the same six-month compulsory training courses with several of the MWFCD’s officers. Hence, an advantage of the open-service system as practised by the Malaysian bureaucracy is that it allows the MWFCD network to expand, especially within the state institutional setting.

A similar principle, however, may not apply to political networks possessed by the political leaders of the MWFCD. This is due to the nature of the political party system in Malaysia, which is mainly dominated by the largest party of the ruling coalition, UMNO. Therefore, the political leaders from UMNO are more influential in the decision-making arena as compared to the political leaders from other component parties, who may not have similar levels of influence. As discussed earlier in this chapter, political
networks cannot be easily replicated or transferred, as in the case of administrative networks. Hence, well-connected leadership in the WPA may be temporary and individual based. This is because interpersonal networks, especially political networks, are difficult to reproduce and transfer in Malaysia’s political setting. The lack of existing mechanisms to ensure the leaders’ networks are transferable to the organisation increases the organisation’s dependency on individuals’ networks.

These relationships are passed down through various working processes. Subordinates are mentored and taught by their superiors while performing their daily work and executing the plans of the WPA. Thus, they are not only able to expand their knowledge and experience but also their networks with relevant actors. Well-connected leaders assist the WPA in carrying out its tasks to achieve its purpose of establishment. However, this advantage may fade once leaders leave the organisation and take their established networks with them. Hence, there might be a need to ensure that good networks possessed by the WPA do not depend strongly on individual capacity, ensuring the networks remain within the organisation when influential individuals leave.
CHAPTER SEVEN: HOW THE WPA’S CAPACITY SHAPES ITS OPERATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Seven analyses the ways in which the key determinants of the WPA’s capacity (institutional establishment, resources and relationships), as discussed extensively in Chapters Four, Five and Six, shape the WPA’s execution of its policies. McBride and Mazur (2010) assert that the definition of a WPA is not only limited to a formal body that has been established by the state but also refers to a body that must fulfil the task of pushing forward gender agendas in which this chapter focusses on the capacity of the MWFC in its implementation of gender empowerment initiatives in two categories of policy areas: 1) Status-based policies and 2) Class-based policies (Htun & Weldon, 2010).

McBride and Mazur (2010) classify the various categories of WPA roles, ranging from “studying problems related to their remits and making recommendations, proposing and adopting policy, to enforcing and implementing laws, and to administrative oversight” (p.29). The capacity of the WPA determines how the WPA constructs its gender empowerment policies and achieves it within the state institutional context. Based on the above, this chapter is divided into two sections: 1) the exploration and discussion of the WPA’s capacity in shaping its mission through its selection of appropriate policy programmes to implement and 2) using the feminist institutionalism analytical tools of formal and informal rules, this chapter analyses the ways in which the WPA’s capacity (institutional structure, resources, and relationship and network) influences the WPA’s policies implementation as the existing literature on state feminist institutions recognises the importance of studying WPAs’ missions, as they provide explanations of WPAs’ functions. Rai (2003) identifies “clarity of mandate and
functional responsibility” as an important element to be examined in studying WPAs (p.26)

POLICY ANALYSIS

This study analyses examples of the WPA’s mission through the implementation of its gender empowerment policies and programmes to further comprehend its capacity in carrying out gender empowerment agendas. This study, as defined in the analysis in Chapter Four (institutional establishment) and Chapter Six (relationships/networks), identifies that the policy environment in which the WPA operates is moderately closed, as proposed by Lovenduski (2005). This is due to the strong state authority and the high centralisation of power at the Prime Minister’s Department. The state’s strong authority also influences the WPA’s selective engagement with women’s movements. Therefore, in this type of policy environment, the “opportunities and constraints are influenced by the power relationships that exist” (Chapter Two, p.26), as the debates on gender issues are highly regulated by the state institutions through the WPA.

Based on the context in which the Malaysian WPA operates (a moderately closed environment), this study adopts Htun and Weldon’s (2010) categorisation of gender policies. Htun and Weldon (2010) discuss the two dimensions of gender policies: whether the policies are class-based or status-based and whether the policies are doctrinal or non-doctrinal. Class-based policies focus mainly on the improvement of women’s living standards, while status-based policies emphasise women’s well-being in society. Doctrinal policies refer to policies that challenge the existing beliefs, patterns and systems of society. Htun and Weldon (2010) specifically classify doctrinal policy as where “the policy contradicts the explicit doctrine, codified tradition, or sacred discourse of the dominant religion or cultural group” (p.210). Non-doctrinal policies are policies that are not considered controversial in relation to the society’s religious and socio-cultural values.
Thus, doctrinal and non-doctrinal policies are not universal in nature, as they are dependent on local interpretations of customs and practices.

Based on the typology built by Htun and Weldon (2010)\textsuperscript{157}, this study identifies four policies to be compared and examined. The four policy areas are: 1) violence against women, 2) marital rape, 3) entrepreneurship programmes and 4) gender-responsive budgeting (GRB). These four policy areas are chosen to enable further comprehension on the weaknesses and strengths of each policy according to the typology framework.

\textsuperscript{157} Refer to Table 1
This section examines the gender empowerment policies according to the four elements of the WPA that have been identified and elaborated in previous chapters, namely: 1) the institutional setup, 2) the resources of the WPA, 3) the WPA’s relationships and network with other relevant actors and 4) the ways in which these three key determinants shape the capacity of the WPA to carry out its mission. In addition, this section extends its discussion to the formal and informal rules that have been identified and how they interact with one another to either strengthen or weaken the WPA’s capacity as an agency that advances gender empowerment agendas.

**Status-Based Policies**

For the purpose of this study, two status-based policies have been identified and analysed, which are: 1) violence against women and 2) marital rape. Despite both being categorised as status-based policies in this study, the policy for violence against women is considered non-doctrinal, while the policy for marital rape is viewed as doctrinal. This comparison will enable this research to distinguish the important elements that influence the capacity of the WPA in the implementation of both policies.

### Table 18: Typology of sex equality policies by WPA in Malaysia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes (Doctrinal)</th>
<th>No (Non-doctrinal)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender status</td>
<td>Marital rape</td>
<td>Violence against women GRB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>policies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class-based</td>
<td></td>
<td>Entrepreneurship programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>policies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author's analysis based on data analysis
Violence against Women (VAW)

Violence against women is one policy area in which the women's movements in Malaysia have managed to break through, despite the constraints faced by civil society and these movements (Chapter Four). In 1994, the DVA was finally passed by the legislative body. The act finally came into force in 1996 following protests by the women's movements, who demanded to see its implementation after two years of being passed by parliament. Although the act was enacted prior to the establishment of the WPA as a ministry, it has since been placed under the ministry's jurisdiction. Subsequently, the WPA continues to monitor and review the act to increase its effectiveness to curb violence against women.

The ministry's former deputy minister said that, despite the act's gender-neutral nature, the DVA mainly targets women, as 90% of domestic violence victims comprise women, which justifies the placement of the policy under the MWFCD (Heng, 2012). Furthermore, the Malaysian Government indicates its seriousness in improving the implementation of the DVA and in gaining recognition from international actors for its efforts to improve the status of women in the society. It stated that:

“The Government of Malaysia is committed to eradicating violence against women. Violence against women is a priority for the government, and we have no tolerance towards it. We continue to undertake a holistic approach to this matter, including removing impunity and prosecuting those who commit violence, as well as protecting and rehabilitating victims. Various initiatives have been taken in line with Malaysia's commitment to empower women, safeguard their rights and protect their dignity. In addressing this issue, the DVA 1994 was reviewed and the Penal Code was amended to
provide greater deterrence to domestic and sexual-related offences” (Mohamed, 2011).

The Domestic Violence Act (Act 521, 1994) defines domestic violence as:
“wilfully or knowingly placing, or attempting to place, the victim in fear of physical injury; causing physical injury to the victim by such act which is known or ought to have been known would result in physical injury; compelling the victim by force or threat to engage in any conduct or act, sexual or otherwise, from which the victim has a right to abstain; confining or detaining the victim against the victim’s will; or causing mischief or destruction or damage to property with intent to cause or knowing that it is likely to cause distress or annoyance to the victim”

Notwithstanding the introduction of the act to curb violence against women, its scope is still limited in nature, as the definition of violence itself mainly focuses on physical injuries and destruction.

Pursuant to the evolvement of the WPA into a full ministry with more institutional capacity, the WPA took the initiative to propose amendments to the act as follows:

a) “To expand the definition of domestic violence by including emotional injury, mental and psychological abuse, and non-consensual usage of intoxicating substances;
b) To improve the existing Interim Protection Order (IPO);
c) To expand indemnity to victims by including emotional injury, mental and psychological abuse, and delusions due to non-consensual intoxicating substances in line with the extension of the domestic violence definition;
d) To categorise domestic violence as a seizable offence.”

Source: The MWFCDO website
In 2011, the ministry was successful in securing these amendments to the act (JAG press statement, 2011).

Apart from proposing amendments to the DVA, this study reveals that the ministry also provides physical infrastructures to assist victims of domestic violence in the form of a helpline, shelter homes, legal support and counselling services (MWFCD annual reports; UNIFEM, 2009). Therefore, the MWFCD, mainly the Policy Unit and the SWD, works with other ministries and government agencies in an effort to curb domestic violence. One initiative that has been highly successful in Malaysia is the One-Stop Crisis Centre (OSCC). The OSCC is a service established at main regional hospitals to provide holistic support to victims, ranging from medical treatment and legal protection to counselling and shelters (OSCC website). It is a team of four government agencies and women’s NGOs. Hence, these actors play a vital role in ensuring the victims receive adequate support, assistance and protection.

The method to assist domestic violence victims through the OSCC initiative is well-regarded and is viewed as one of the most effective and efficient measures, as it is “considered to be extremely successful in combining clinical therapeutic response with secondary preventive measures” (UN report, 2011, p.47). This demonstrates the good network among government agencies, namely the Police Department, the Legal Aid Department (located under the Prime Minister’s Department), the Ministry of Health and the WPA (mainly through its SWD), as well as the women’s NGOs. This integrated and coordinated approach is able to synergise and provide services and support to victims of domestic violence, as illustrated in Figure 13 below.
The figure illustrates the firm’s institutional setup and the functions of each unit and department. This study discovers that the MWFC’s resources are also allocated to funding and managing shelter homes operated by the ministry itself or as financial grants provided for shelter homes operated by women’s organisations. Apart from the above, the ministry also has a dedicated phone line named *Talian Nur* (the Light Line), which enables
access to relevant authorities in regard to domestic violence cases, abuse and various social issues under the ministry’s purview.

In its analysis of the ministry’s activities through its published annual reports and documents (MWFCD, 2008, 2013; MWFCD document 1), this study finds that the ministry also focuses on promoting awareness and legal literacy among women by organising seminars regarding women’s legal rights in marriage from the aspects of civil and shari’a\textsuperscript{158} law and the DVA itself. Furthermore, the Guidance and Counselling Unit in the WDD offers support for victims of violence that includes not only abuse, domestic violence, rape, molestation and incest but also sexual harassment, drug trafficking and human trafficking, among others. Another important actor under the ministry that deals with domestic violence issues is the SWD, which also acts as the main guardian of the DVA 1994 [Act 521].

As highlighted earlier, the main proponent that pushed for the enactment of the DVA through the strong wall of bureaucrats and partisan politics was women’s groups. The women’s movements initiated discussions on agenda related to violence against women in the 1980s. It started off with a number of women’s groups that formed an entity known today as the Joint Action Group against Violence against Women (JAG-VAW). In the early days of its establishment, the JAG-VAW also managed to establish cooperation with the NCWO. As discussed in Chapter Six, the NCWO has a strong relationship with the state institutions, is the umbrella body for more than a hundred women’s organisations and has been successful in mobilising the public to support their agendas. According to Ng et al. (2009), the bill as proposed by the women’s movements was at first deemed unsuitable because it challenged the existing legal system, in which the Muslims’ family affairs are subjected to the jurisdiction of the shari’a courts in the dual legal

\textsuperscript{158} Malaysia practises a dual legal system in which civil and shari’a law co-exist. “The country is governed according to civil law, but Islamic courts based in individual states control marriage, divorce, family, gender, and sexual matters pertaining to all Muslims. These Islamic courts are run by religious judges (kadis), who both interpret and implement Islamic laws” (Ong, 1999, p.356)
system practised by Malaysia. However, they note that the women’s movements were successful “in uniting Muslims and non-Muslims under one banner... the law transcended the jurisdiction of Syariah laws over Muslim family matters where domestic violence was concerned, something that was unprecedented in Malaysia” (p.55), as they managed to push forward the DVA as part of the Penal Code for criminal offences, which covers both Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

In this case, this study observes that the women’s movements successfully transformed a doctrinal issue into a non-doctrinal issue, which became applicable to all citizens of Malaysia regardless of their religious, ethnic and class backgrounds. Furthermore, in light of the success in framing the policy as a status-based, non-doctrinal policy, the WPA was able to make use of its institutional position to mobilise its resources and utilise its network and relationships with other actors to further pursue improvements in the implementation of the DVA.

However, this study finds that despite the formal rules that govern the implementation of the DVA, there are also certain formal and informal rules that may hamper the capacity of the act. First, the restrictive coverage of domestic violence only applies to people with legally recognised relationships, such as legally registered spouses and family members. Hence, individuals in a relationship that is not legally recognised in Malaysia may not be covered by the act. Second, the definition of domestic violence itself is very broad. Loopholes in terms of legal interpretations of the act are addressed through judicial discretion (Ng et al., 2009; UN Women Report, 2011; CEDAW, 2012). This further makes the implementation of the act dependent on the entity that has the power to interpret the law, such as policy and judicial institutions. In addition to this, initiatives to curb domestic violence that involve actors (such as other government agencies and women’s movements) often lack clear leadership and mandates of power due to overlapping areas of authority.
Marital Rape

Although the WPA in Malaysia recorded success in pushing through the DVA, marital rape remains a separate issue to be addressed. This research categorises marital rape as a doctrinal, status-based policy, which allows comparison of the state’s reactions to doctrinal and non-doctrinal status-based policies. Despite being part of domestic violence, marital rape’s definition is very narrow and indistinctive. In Malaysia, a marital rape provision is allocated under the Penal Code, Section 375 A, which allows a spouse to be charged under the Penal Code if the spouse causes hurt or fear of death to his wife in order to have sexual intercourse with her.

This study finds that the vague definitions of vital gender concepts make it difficult for agendas against marital rape to gain similar support to that received by agendas against domestic violence. In an interview with one MWFC officer, she stated the following:

“It is difficult to pursue the marital rape issue. How do you tell others what is marital rape? Unless the husband endangers the wife… isn’t it a wife’s duty to fulfil a husband’s sexual needs? If not, she is considered as sinful in Islam… if it is not the wife, how does the husband fulfil his needs? Men are men… they are created with different sexual needs than women. That is why it is difficult to discuss this. It is delicate. Otherwise, every time a wife feels tired, she will accuse her husband of marital rape” (Interview 17).

This illustrates the dilemmas faced by WPA officers in pursuing gender agendas that are deemed contradictory to local religious and socio-cultural norms. Simultaneous with the efforts of the women’s movements to push for a more distinct definition of marital rape under the DVA, the ministry is finding it even more difficult to do so, as the other actors deem it
unnecessary and maintain that the current act is adequate for handling marital rape issues.

“They don’t like it because it will be more technically messed up. Anyway, they say that we already have enough laws to handle marital rape. If we widen the definition, then, they say, we might have women coming and reporting their husbands every time they don’t want to have sexual intercourse” (Interview 19).

In Malaysia, as the definition of marital rape is a highly contentious issue and seen as unfair negotiation between men and women, it is more difficult and takes a longer time to gain buy-in from relevant actors, especially those from a male-dominated authority, such as the police force.

Apart from the above, marital rape is considered an issue that challenges the male position in society. The society (through the state institutions) views that both married partners are obligated to fulfil their duties and are entitled to their rights regarding sexual needs. Therefore, including non-consensual sexual intercourse as part of the marital rape definition is viewed as denying a spouse’s rights (especially the husband in the case of marital rape) with their legally recognised partner.

“Wives have the duty to fulfil their husbands’ needs. Husbands also have rights, not only wives have rights. If we say it is marital rape when wives do not want to entertain the husbands’ requests but the husbands want it, who is defending the husbands’ right now? This women’s ministry?” (Interview 18).

Religious scholars and the highest-ranking WPA leaders have also made statements that oppose or refuse debates on the term “marital rape”. High-ranking conservative religious scholars have refused to recognise a
wife’s right to decline a husband’s request for sexual intercourse. One high-ranking religious officer further stated that women who refuse their husbands’ sexual needs are deemed disobedient, so the husband can be released from his duty to provide financial maintenance to the wife (Harussani, 2004). The former WPA minister was quoted as saying “we need to be careful... in an issue like this, which involves Syariah law” (quoted in Ahmad, 2004). This reflects the reluctance and avoidance of the ministry to directly address and stimulate discussions on controversial issues such as marital rape, as they are deemed to be against religious doctrines and can trigger chaotic responses from the conservative groups (including political parties) that seek to maintain traditional gender roles in the society.

This study finds that there is greater resistance towards the successful implementation of a legal reform on marital rape. Despite the pressure from the women’s movement and human rights commissions in Malaysia, the marital rape issue does not receive proper recognition from the state, as it challenges the society’s values. The lack of political will to pursue the inclusion of non-consensual intercourse between married partners into the detailed classification of marital rape can be attributed to the WPA’s lack of capacity and capability to influence other actors to reach consensus on the matter. Furthermore, due to scarce resources, the WPA is focusing its efforts on gender issues that have a higher success probability (such as entrepreneurship programmes); this is discussed later in this section.

**VAW vs. Marital Rape**

This study reveals that notwithstanding the success of the women’s movements in framing domestic violence as a non-doctrinal issue through the enactment of the DVA, they have not been able to replicate similar success for marital rape. Debates and discussions on marital rape often centre on marriage and family, thus marital rape is often seen as an element
that may disintegrate these institutions in a society that adheres to conservative gender roles. Furthermore, patriarchal interpretations of religious texts also prevent the marital rape issue from being seriously pursued by the WPA and other relevant actors. It is informally considered as challenging religious and socio-cultural values and principles, wherein spouses have conjugal sexual rights in marriage to prevent sexual relations outside of wedlock.

Through the examples of the two policies, namely domestic violence and marital rape, this study recognises that there are several factors that contribute to the differences in the WPA’s capacity and capability in influencing the said policies. In the case of domestic violence, the women’s movements managed to gain support from various actors, although initially the notion of addressing the issue was not warmly welcomed by actors within the government agencies. However, as the women’s movements managed to frame domestic violence issues within the non-doctrinal window, there has been greater institutional setup and mobilisation of resources that are being utilised to address domestic violence issues. Furthermore, the government has also made a commitment to pursuing domestic violence issues through various government bodies and agencies, such as the Police Force Department and the Ministry of Health, where the WPA takes up the role of a coordinator. Marital rape issues, however, have not achieved the same level of success. The capacity and capability of the WPA to pursue the subject of marital rape is constrained by the religious and socio-cultural values embedded in the state institutions.

Despite the debates on the interpretation of marital rape within the Islamic context of Malaysia, great resistance still persists, as it is deemed an issue that may break up marriage and family institutions and may challenge the gender roles in the society. The study, therefore, observes that there is a lack of institutional support, resources and willing actors to pursue the marital rape issue. There is also an absence of a clearly defined description of the
term “marital rape”, which creates loopholes in the execution of any law related to marital rape.
Class-Based Policies

*Entrepreneurship Programmes*

As a developing country, Malaysia is focusing most of its resources on elevating its economic status to achieve developed country status by 2020. Therefore, as the state’s arm, the WPA also focuses on class-based policies that aim to improve the economic status of women, as extensively discussed in the previous section of this chapter (Chapter Seven, p.250). As illustrated in Table 16 (p.233), the WPA apparently concentrates on programmes that address economic inequalities among men and women, which it aims to resolve through its entrepreneurship programmes. The entrepreneurship programmes conducted by the WPA are targeted at women from low-income and vulnerable groups (such as single mothers) to improve their economic standards. In addition, the New Economic Policy focuses on narrowing the economic inequality between ethnic groups in Malaysia and on empowering the Malays and native groups regardless of gender (Ahmad, 1998; Ariffin, 1999).

One of the main programmes arranged by the WPA’s institutional establishment is centred on the economic development of women. Financial independence is seen as the main foundation of women’s empowerment in Malaysia, as observed in a statement by the MWFCD’s current minister, Rohani Abdul Karim: “I believe that women must be financially independent, as when women have financial independence, they will have a voice in family and society” (WDD website). It is therefore a crucial element in pushing for women’s empowerment in Malaysia, as financial independence will encourage women’s voices and contributions be recognised and acknowledged. It will also break the dependence chain in the society, as women will be able to find their own sources of income; traditionally, Malay women are dependent on their spouses to provide for them.
In the study’s analysis of the MWFCD’s 2013 annual plan, the majority of the programmes conducted are related to entrepreneurship programmes. Seven out of the planned programmes are centred on women as entrepreneurs: 1) a collaboration with the Ministry of Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism (MDTCC) and the Franchise Association of Malaysia to promote women’s franchises, 2) an economic revitalisation programme for women, 3) I-KiT, 4) I-Keunita, 5) the Young Women’s Economic Empowerment Programme (Women@Mesra Shop), 6) the Pre-entrepreneur Women’s Mindset Shift Programme and 7) Special Project: Female Taxis (Be a Cabby).

In this aspect, the WPA has a dedicated agency focusing on enhancing women’s economic status, namely the WDD. “We focus on mainly low-income (under $281) and vulnerable groups, especially single mothers…” (Interview 2). Additionally, the WDD has two units (the Women’s Development Planning Unit and the Capacity Development Unit) that are responsible for the economic empowerment initiatives. Another unit under the MWFCD that was specifically established to conform to the ruling government’s policy on the GTP is the NKRA Unit (Chapter Six). This study finds that the WPA in Malaysia plays a crucial role in the state institutions in achieving the national economic development vision, as analysed in Chapter Five (Resources). The ministry is one of the main actors that have been tasked with one of the seven identified crucial areas, which is improving the low-income households’ living standards (MWFCD website).

This demonstrates that the entrepreneurship programmes under the MWFCD are not only in accordance with the national development plans but also have a strong institutional basis and support from the locus of power, especially as the NKRA initiative is directed by the Prime Minister. One of the programmes generated from the GTP is related to female entrepreneurs and is placed under the purview of the MWFCD. By the end of 2012, a total of 4,300 women entrepreneurs had been developed, which exceeded the initial
target of 4,000 (WDD, 2013). To further promote this programme, reports are published twice a year to disseminate information on female entrepreneurs and to identify the income-generation trends to facilitate analysis for future improvement. In the 2015 budget, the Prime Minister also announced that approximately $15,351,550 will be devoted exclusively to women’s entrepreneurship development programmes (2015 Budget Plan).

This study finds that in addition to the solid institutional establishment and support, the willpower of the actors involved in executing the entrepreneurship programmes is more visible compared to that in other areas under the WPA’s authority, such as violence against women and work–life balance. One such entrepreneurship programme is I-Kit, which is a programme specifically designed for low-income single mothers. “I-KiT is our core programme to help single mothers from low-income groups to enhance their skills and to enable them to start their own small businesses and have steady sources of income” (Interview 2).

The i-Kit programme is a core project under the Ninth Malaysia Development Plan that aims to reduce poverty levels and increase single mothers’ quality of life. The Tenth Malaysia Development Plan also mentions that this programme aims to “improve the support infrastructure for women in difficulties, such as widows, single mothers and low-income households” (the Tenth Malaysia Development Plan). Apart from that, the National Women’s Policy and Action Plan on Women’s Empowerment specifically states that “efforts to reduce economic inequality between genders need to be improved”. Pursuant to the above, mutual agreements have been established between the agencies and the WDD to prioritise applicants who graduated from the WDD entrepreneurship programmes.

“Our participants are given priority funding from our partners (e.g. SME Corp, AIM). It is not only because they are committed to especially helping single mothers but also because our participants
have a higher repayment rate… we have a good reputation as well among our partners” (Interview 3).

The WPA through its WDD not only provides support through entrepreneurship programmes but also monitors the participants’ development, measures their achievements and guides them in applications to start up their businesses (WDD, 2013).

This study discovers that women’s movements’ involvement in entrepreneurship programmes is highly welcomed by the state. Women's groups also play important roles in the programmes, as the WPA provides financial grants for women’s groups to carry out such programmes related to skill enhancement and training. The current minister of the MWFC, Rohani Abdul Karim, suggests that the relevant NGO can conduct training programmes to assist women in generating their own income, as “through this training and exposure, the women’s groups are able to start their own small business. They also need financial management training to ensure they manage their own financial matters effectively” (Karim, 2013). The ministry's website also provides links to the relevant NGOs that provide programmes and training to support female entrepreneurs, in collaboration with the MWFC.

Another important actor in the ministry’s entrepreneurship programmes is the NCWO, which acts as the umbrella body for women's organisations in Malaysia. The NCWO’s deputy chairperson, Faridah Khalid, stated that one of the entrepreneurship initiatives under the MWFC, Azam (literally translated as “Determination”) is in concordance with the NCWO’s establishment objective in 1963, which is to improve the economic standards of Malaysian women (UKM News, 2011). The MWFC’s minister also mentioned that the NCWO is an important ally for the ministry to carry out its
programmes and urged other women’s organisations to work together with the NCWO (Khalid, 2014).

Furthermore, as entrepreneurship is not deemed a controversial issue, unlike marital rape, the NCWO is willing to step forward and be an important partner with the MWFCD in implementing entrepreneurship programmes. This is summarised by Ng et al. (2006) as follows: “The NCWO, however, was careful not to push for legislation [that is] considered contentious, such as reform of Syariah laws. The NCWO’s distinctive stance, of which its leaders remain proud until today, is that it has always taken a ‘non-confrontational’ approach in advancing women’s rights” (p.21). Therefore, as entrepreneurship programmes are non-doctrinal in nature, the NCWO also plays a visible role in women’s entrepreneurship initiatives, such as building an entrepreneurship development model aiming to enhance women’s socio-economic status, working together with the National University of Malaysia and the MWFCD (UKM News, 2011).

This study finds that, unlike the previous cases of status-based policies, which are subject to immense resistance before being debated at the policy-making level, all actors involved responded warmly to the entrepreneurship programmes. They are endorsed and treated as priority matters by the top-level leadership, who not only show commitment to pursuing women’s economic development but have also included it in the national development blueprints. The entrepreneurship programmes have received solid institutional support, as there are dedicated agencies focusing on women’s economic development, not only at the ministerial level but also at the highest level of leadership, namely the Prime Minister’s Department through the MWFCD’s NKRA Unit. Furthermore, the Prime Minister has also embedded the alleviation of poverty into the GTP.

The implementation of the entrepreneurship programmes has generated good networking between the MWFCD and other actors within state institutions and women’s groups. Since the programmes complement
the comprehensive national development plans, all relevant actors join efforts to achieve the same objective. Working cooperatively towards the same goal reduces the competition for resources and allows the actors to exchange resources, which is advantageous to all organisations involved. In this context, the MWFCD has not only been able to negotiate informally with other organisations that are involved with entrepreneurship programmes in Malaysia but has also been able to gain support from other actors to prioritise applicants among the female entrepreneurs who are under the WPA’s sponsorship to gain financial assistance to start their own businesses. Furthermore, these female entrepreneurs are diligent in paying their loans, which is beneficial to the WPA, micro-credit agencies, the beneficiaries of the loans and all other parties involved.

The resources dedicated to the entrepreneurship programmes are quite extensive, especially in terms of human resources, energy and expertise. As the entrepreneurship programmes are often implemented in collaboration with other agencies, the logistics are sometimes apportioned to other actors, such as micro-credit agencies (e.g. SME Corp), other ministries (e.g. the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development) and other agencies under the MWFCD (e.g. the SWD and the NKRA Unit). Thus, the fluidity of entrepreneurship programmes reduces the constraints on the WPA’s resources, which at times have been over-concentrated in the social welfare area (Chapter Five, p.161-162). The non-controversial nature of women’s entrepreneurship programmes provides for greater cooperation from the involved actors, as they are seen as beneficial for all. Entrepreneurship programmes are acceptable in the society, as women’s labour force participation in Malaysia is “socially and culturally acceptable as long as it does not interfere with women’s primary roles as wives and mothers” (The World Bank, 2012, p.76).

As entrepreneurship programmes by the MWFCD are perceived and framed as non-doctrinal and in line with the nation’s aim of becoming a
developed nation by 2020, their implementation encounters almost no resistance from other actors and is well-received by the society at large. This relates to the high level of resources from various actors being utilised to achieve the goal. The foregoing discussions indicate that a non-doctrinal, class-based policy that accords with the national vision to elevate economic standards, particularly to improve the economic status of women, has enhanced the WPA’s capacity and capability to execute these programmes.
GRB Pilot Project

The GRB pilot project is spearheaded by the MWFCD in its efforts to mainstream gender agendas within government institutions and policy making. The GRP pilot project was placed under the MWFCD’s jurisdiction when the ministry was set up in 2001. The pilot project involves five different ministries in collaboration with the UNDP. This initiative is in line with the National Women’s Policy 1989, which outlines the strategies to ensure there are gender-mainstreaming agendas in government institutions and policy making and to include women in the national development process. Thus, as the MWFCD is responsible for gender issues and social matters, this pilot project was assigned to the ministry for implementation together with other identified ministries.

This research’s analysis of the GRB pilot project finds that the GRB initiative in Malaysia was championed by actors from within the state institutions well before the establishment in 2001 of a full ministry dedicated to handling gender matters. Prior to 2001, policies and guidelines that endorsed the GRB initiative as part of Malaysia’s gender-mainstreaming agendas could be found in various official documents, such as the National Women’s Policy 1989 and the Eighth Malaysia National Development Plan. However, only after the establishment of a full ministry was the GRB initiative formally structured and spearheaded by the MWFCD. Although the GRB initiative in Malaysia is mainly administered by “insider” actors, “outside” actors have also played considerable roles in ensuring the advancement of the GRB initiative. For instance, Malaysia also receives substantial support from international organisations such as the UNDP, the ADB and the Commonwealth. The UNDP and the ADB have provided both technical expertise and financial assistance to ensure the GRB initiative is given adequate attention to move forward (Rahim, 2012; ADB, 2013). Nonetheless, the state has played a more significant role due to its strong authority in
Malaysia and the centralisation of power at the Prime Minister’s Department, which typifies a top-down approach in the decision-making process.

Although the initiative began in 2003, it is still at the pilot stage, in which the MWFCFCD has tried to develop its own GRB approach and format that are relevant and sustainable to local contexts and needs and are able to be used at all levels of administration. Furthermore, the pilot project also acts as a buffer zone that provides the officers involved with sufficient time to equip themselves with the necessary skills to develop an effective gender budget statement (MWFCFCD, 2006). Five ministries were chosen to be part of the GRB pilot project, namely, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education (the ministry merged with the Ministry of Education in 2013), the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Human Resources and the Ministry of Rural Development (later renamed as the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development). In the ministry’s publication of the GRB guidelines, it mentions that the five ministries were chosen as they “span the economics and social sectors and have relatively large budgets. Another reason for choosing them was their focus on low-income people” (Gender Budget in Malaysia, 2005, p.6).

In the pilot GRB project, the involved ministries have to select one or two projects from both the development and administration budgets to test the viability of the Malaysian GRB approach, developed by the WPA in collaboration with the UNDP and other involved ministries. According to the ministry’s publications on gender budgeting, there has only been a slight revision of the existing procedures and formats in preparing the GRB statement, as the Malaysian Government’s standard budget format provides for most of the components in the gender budget, such as motivations, objectives, activity details, indicators and targets (p.7 of the Gender Budgeting publication and p.6-7 and 21 of the Manual).

This study observes that the framework of the GRB pilot project has successfully fitted into the National Development Plan to achieve developed
economy status by 2020. It is accorded the appropriate priority, as determined by the leadership at the locus of power. This aspect is prominent in the GRB Manual (2005) published by the ministry, which states that gender-responsive budgeting fits in well with the government’s approach. It will enable Malaysia to utilise its human resources fully, employ financial resources more efficiently and assist the government sector in improving their budget analysis (p.5). This may well explain the government’s motivation behind adopting and adapting the GRB pilot project, which is seen as a tool that will enable greater economic participation from Malaysian citizens regardless of their gender.

This study finds that the capacity of the GRB as a tool for gender mainstreaming in Malaysia is limited, notwithstanding its successful assimilation with the government’s overall vision and national plans in gender mainstreaming. This is noticed through the selection of the pilot ministries to test the implementation of the GRB before extending it to the other government organisations. As mentioned earlier, these ministries were selected due to their areas of focus on social areas and socio-economic conditions. The main focus of the GRB is also confined to enhancing economic standards and to narrowing the economic gap between the genders, which will contribute towards reducing the poverty level in Malaysia. The MWFCD has played a central role in implementing the GRB pilot project. However, it lacks the authority to advance the initiative, as it is subjected to other initiatives imposed by higher-level authorities, such as agencies located in the Prime Minister’s Department and the MOF. The highly hierarchical state institutional setting in positioned the MWFCD at the lower end of the social order within the institution despite being granted the status as a full ministry in the federal government. The strong hierarchical setting perpetuate male-dominance which the state continuously gives lesser recognition on gender mainstreaming initiatives in comparison with economic development which focusses more on reducing socio-economic gap between ethnicities as
illustrated by the implementation of New Economic Policy\textsuperscript{159}. This can be seen in the absence of strong sanctioning power given to the MWFC in order to push other actors within the state institution for full GRB implementation.

This also means that the prospect of an ongoing initiative may be side-lined once a new initiative is embraced. For instance, in light of the GTP, Outcome-Based Budgeting (OBB), a method that can improve budget management, was simultaneously introduced. Thus, the time and expertise of human resources were spent on learning the OBB and adapting it to their budget systems as the central locus of power distribute more resources and power to the implementation of OBB. Accordingly, the GRB initiative has not been given sufficient attention beyond its pilot project implementation by other actors, as OBB is deemed to be more crucial than the GRB initiative. Although the MWFC acts as the custodian of the GRB initiative, it lacks the authority to press other relevant actors to implement the GRB initiative. While official directives such as the Treasury circulars have been issued to encourage the adaptation of the GRB initiative, its implementation by the relevant actors is still very dependent on their goodwill to adopt and adapt the GRB format in their budget systems. In a meeting report with the ADB and the Asia-Pacific Corp-MfDR, the participants of the GRB pilot project also highlighted the lack of formal interaction mechanisms to ensure the information and resources needed can be interchanged effectively (2013).

Also, the initiatives to integrate GRB into OBB have faced challenges in terms of resource constraints in many forms including human resources as well as dedicated leadership to focus on the GRB implementation (Interview 4; MWFC, 2013). This study finds that instead of setting aside the GRB initiative, it could have been integrated into the OBB framework instead of separate implementation at parallel levels as it consume resources that is already thinly spread amongst the MWFC departments “Now we have OBB,

\textsuperscript{159} Refer to footnote on page 18-19.
so sometimes, it is a bit difficult because people have to learn to do so many things at the same time. But we are trying to revive the GRB initiative. It is there, it just needs a champion to breathe oxygen into it, a champion to bring it back into the budget process” (Interview 4).

In the analysis of the main actors involved in the GRB pilot project, this research discovers that two main international actors, namely the UNDP and the ADB, play great roles in encouraging and pushing for the implementation of the GRB initiative in Malaysia. This is observed through the various programmes sponsored by the UNDP and the ADB to encourage the GRB initiative’s implementation. Despite the lukewarm response from domestic actors such as ministries and government agencies, these two bodies have strived to ensure that the notion of the GRB initiative lives beyond the pilot project period. The UNDP and the ADB have conducted training workshops on the implementation of the GRB initiative together with the MWFCD and state governments to raise awareness and to further strengthen the technical knowledge among public-sector employees (GRB Manual, 2005; Report on GRB Implementation, 2010; ADB GRB Workshop Report, 2013). Apart from the above, the ADB has notably organised workshops and training to synchronise the GRB initiative with the OBB practice currently adopted by the Malaysian Government (ADB GRB Workshop Report, 2013). This is to ensure that despite the implementation of the new budget system, the GRB can be absorbed into the OBB practice, which ensures the continuity of the gender-mainstreaming agendas.

This study notes that the high number of female civil servants provides the mirage of women-friendly policy making process and is seen as the drive for government organisations to adopt gender perspectives in their decision making process. This study finds however that although women surpassed men in civil service employment, this does not modify the state’s behaviour and perspective on GRB initiative as one of WPA’s main gender empowerment initiative in the absence of critical feminist actors within the
civil service. This study finds that the level of awareness on the GRB pilot project among civil servants is quite low. According to the interviews with the ministry’s officers, as a considerable number of the officers concerned are female, they are of the view that their gender alone causes the budget process to be gender sensitive: “as you know, many civil servants are women. Therefore, for them, since they are women, their work already reflects women’s perspectives, hence there is no necessity to have a formal framework such as the GRB, and they only see it as unnecessary additional workload” (Interview 3).

Table 19: Number of Malaysian civil servants according to gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>410,199</td>
<td>260,759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>497,678</td>
<td>577,235</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s analysis based on the data provided by The Public Service Department in Statistics on Women, Family and Community (MWFCD, 2013).

Table 19 shows the current number of civil servants in Malaysia based on gender. In comparison to in 1995, women have made a significant increase in public sector employment in this decade. This perhaps explains the concern made by the MWFCD officer in interview 3 that female civil servants consider their perspectives as women in preparing budget processes is sufficient to be deliberated as gender sensitive and thus reduce the attention paid to the importance of implementing GRB.

The low level of political goodwill from important actors within government organisations hampers the capacity of the WPA to move forward with the GRB initiative beyond the pilot project phase. On the other hand, this study finds that the strong political will from actors within government organisations is correlated with the successful implementation of the GRB
initiative, as illustrated in the case of Penang, a northern state of Malaysia under the ruling of the opposition party. Penang became the first state in Malaysia to implement the GRB project fully, with the assistance of international actors such as the UNDP (technical support) and foreign governments such as the Government of Japan (financial grants) (Penang Women’s Development Council (PWDC), 2010). In contrast with the GRB initiative at the federal level, which comes from within the government organisations, the GRB initiative in Penang is driven by women’s movements and is endorsed by the state government (PWDC leaflet; Report on GRB Implementation, 2010).

Based on the foregoing discussions, this research observes that the GRB initiative at the federal level remains at the pilot stage, despite being defined and structured in accordance with the national development plans. Besides the above, even though the GRB project has the necessary infrastructure and has a framework that was developed to advance its implementation, the ministries and government agencies still lack a detailed understanding of the important concepts.

This limits the capacity of the WPA to shape the GRB initiative in the gender-mainstreaming efforts as a whole. Notwithstanding the fact that the GRB initiative is viewed as a non-doctrinal, status-based policy that seeks to reform women’s position in the society without challenging the religious and local norms, there is little drive and political will from important actors to push forward its implementation in Malaysia. One of the reasons is because the WPA is acting as an advocator rather than an implementer of the GRB initiative. Due to the limited authority of the WPA, other actors see the adoption of the GRB initiative as an additional workload, which reduces their willingness to implement the GRB initiative in their respective ministries and agencies.

In light of Malaysia’s enthusiasm to adopt the GRB initiative in 2005, this study recognises the important roles of international actors as the agent
of change that are able to assert influence to modify state’s institutional behaviour towards gender issues by providing support in ensuring that the GRB initiative continues to be part of the WPA’s agendas. With the assistance of international actors, persistent efforts in the forms of training and workshops have been conducted to raise awareness and to increase the technical knowledge and skills in the implementation of the GRB initiative among civil servants. However, these international actors can only act as supporters for the GRB initiative as they do not have the legitimacy to urge an independent state to adopt and implement the GRB initiative as part of its annual budget process.

Meanwhile, in the case of the WPA in Malaysia, although it has a formal institutional framework and a strong network and relationships with both international and local actors, it lacks the authority and resources in terms of manpower to fully press forward the GRB initiative. Unlike the issue of domestic violence, which sees the compelling involvement of women’s movements, the GRB initiative is not actively pursued by the women’s movements in Malaysia at the federal level. In view of this, the WPA requires greater institutional capacity to implement the GRB initiative formally instead of depending on the political will of other actors to adopt the GRB initiative and push it beyond its pilot project stage.

This study finds that the GRB pilot project in Malaysia has benefitted the WPA in several ways. First, as the owner of this project, the position of the WPA as a full-fledged ministry has given it access to other relevant actors (such as the UNDP) to mobilise the GRB pilot project and has enabled it to consolidate the GRB project without difficulty into the gender-mainstreaming initiatives in Malaysia. Second, the GRB initiative has been deemed by the central locus of power as a beneficial tool for the country’s economic development, especially as it is in line with and is able to be implemented concurrently with the National Development Plan. Thus, the WPA has obtained better cooperation from the selected pilot ministries, the
MOF and the Prime Minister’s Department to ensure the implementation of the project.

This study also notes that the GRB pilot project is not subjected to negative connotations, as it is considered to be of a non-controversial nature. Unlike the issue of marital rape, as discussed earlier, the debates on the GRB initiative are often non-doctrinal. The GRB initiative in Malaysia often focuses on economic empowerment and reducing the economic gap between the genders, especially among low-income groups. Furthermore, the GRB pilot project seeks to steer clear of issues that are deemed challenging to existing socio-religious cultural norms (GRB Manual, 2012). Therefore, this study classifies the GRB pilot project as a status-based, non-doctrinal policy, as it aims to mainstream women’s agendas into decision-making processes.

Despite the existing formal rules and frameworks that have enabled the GRB pilot project to take off in Malaysia, there are constraints in terms of both formal and informal rules, which strongly weaken the capacity of the WPA in the full implementation of GRB as it fails to alter the state’s perspectives and behaviours on gender issues. This although the pilot project was initiated in 2003, it still has not moved beyond the pilot project stage. This research observes that the implementation of the GRB initiative also depends on the contextual and structural climate. In the existence of a strong state authority which leads to political stability in lieu of political freedom, this has made gender-mainstreaming agendas (especially the GRB initiative) remain stagnant over the years. As there have been no significant structural changes to transform institutional gendered setting that are more supportive for gender mainstreaming policies including the GRB initiative to take place more efficiently.

Third, the effective implementation of the GRB pilot project has also been hindered by the absence of a local electoral system in Malaysia. In this highly centralised and federal-centric setting, the momentum for the GRB
initiative typically depends on the political will and directions from the decision makers in the locus of power. In the absence of appropriate attention and direction from the top leadership, initiatives such as the GRB pilot project tend to fade into the background, despite having dedicated ministries to lead such initiatives. This is because despite the MWFCID is recognised as a full-fledged ministry, it still lacks the authority to compel other identified actors to fulfil their commitments towards the GRB pilot project. Despite the existence of formal rules and setting that gives the MWFCID legitimacy to push for GRB implementation at ministerial level, it lacks the power to the pressure to ensure other actors’ commitments.

CAPACITY (INSTITUTIONAL ESTABLISHMENT, RESOURCES, NETWORK) INFLUENCE ON POLICIES EXECUTION

This study finds that the key determinants of the WPA’s capacity (institutional establishment, resources and network/relationships) influence the ministry’s execution of its policies in three ways: 1) it has a consolidated mission through its synergised mandate, 2) there is no consensus on the definitions of vital gender concepts and 3) there is emphasis on a selected few areas.

CONSOLIDATED MISSION THROUGH ITS SYNERGISED MANDATE

There are five main agencies residing under the MWFCID, namely the WDD, the SWD, the ISM, the NPFDB and the NIEW, as highlighted in Chapter Four. Overall, the ministry is entrusted with five main national policies in accordance with the National Development Plan, which are:

1. National Women’s Policy
2. National Social Welfare Policy
3. National Child Protection Policy

4. National Social Policy

5. National Policy for the Elderly

Source: MWFCD website

These five national policies under the MWFCD’s purview reflect the assemblage of all the agencies and departments under the MWFCD. Despite its relatively over-concentrated and scarce resources, as examined in Chapter Five, the ministry has a relatively wide mandate to cover many groups of the society, from women, people with disabilities, and the poor and destitute to children, families and the elderly. One interviewed officer mentioned that “…we cover everyone under the sun, from cradle to grave…” (Interview 17) to express the wide coverage of the ministry. Apart from the above, under the National Action Plan, the MWFCD is focusing on 13 fundamental areas in its efforts to enhance women’s participation in the society across various sectors (National Women’s Policy Document, 2009). These areas are: 1) women and the economy; 2) poverty among women; 3) women and the law; 4) violence against women; 5) women and health; 6) women in education and training; 7) women in science and technology; 8) women and the media; 9) women and the environment; 10) women and sports; 11) women and religion, culture, arts and heritage; 12) women in decision-making positions and politics; and 13) women’s development mechanisms, machinery and institutions.

The MWFCD created a Policy Unit, which is responsible for planning, enacting and observing the implementation of related national policies and action plans, as well as outlining strategic plans to ensure that gender, family and community perspectives are integrated into national development plans and programmes (MWFCD, 2008, 2011, 2013). This important unit solidifies and synergises the mission, vision, objectives and functions of the WPA across the departments and agencies under the ministry. It also acts as a
strategic unit that is responsible for ensuring that the MWFCD’s programmes and action plans cover all groups of the MWFCD’s stakeholders. It was described in one interview as the brain of the MWFCD:

“…we have to make sure every programme and plan of the ministry [including all agencies and departments under it] is in line with our national policies and action plans” (Interview 16).

An officer from another department regarded the Policy Unit as the most important unit in the ministry because it has the bigger picture of what is expected from the agencies and departments under the ministry: “they are the brain, we are the limbs that carry out the programmes” (Interview 3).

Therefore, due to the existence of a dedicated unit that synchronises and synergises all policies under the MWFCD, this study ascertains that the ministry does have a consolidated mission through a synergised mandate contributed by the WPA’s solid institutional structure. This study discovers that the ministry has explicit and defined roles and responsibilities through its mission and vision, including each agency and department under its purview. This consolidated mission is a result of a synergised mandate that enables the MWFCD to collaborate across all the agencies, departments and units under its domain. This research further finds that the consolidated mission of the WPA is related to the solid institutional structure of the WPA, especially due to its strong bureaucratic foundation through the centralisation of power in the Prime Minister’s Department, as examined in Chapter Four. This has allowed for the Prime Minister’s Department to impose, manage and coordinate the structure of administrative institutions from a macro perspective. Therefore, the ministry covers a wide range of stakeholders in the society and has specific areas to focus on, as decided by the higher-level leadership, particularly those in the Prime Minister’s Department.
The consolidated mission of the WPA contributes to increasing the capacity of the WPA because it allows the WPA to utilise the units under its authority for gender-related policies, as the ministry covers a wide range of societal groups. The capacity of the ministry in implementing gender empowerment agendas is enhanced, as it is able to include gender perspectives in policy making, especially related to women, when dealing with various components of the society and when planning and executing its policies and programmes.

ABSENCE OF CONSENSUS ON VITAL GENDER CONCEPTS’ DEFINITIONS

Chapter Four extensively discussed the Malaysian civil service’s adoption of the British model of an open-service system. Officers in government organisations are required to be transferred from one government organisation to another after a stipulated time period. This results in a lack of gender experts serving the WPA, leading to vague interpretations of vital gender concepts in the MWFCD’s areas of jurisdiction. Officers in the MWFCD have limited time to be fully immersed in gender issues while managing their administrative work, as illustrated in one interview with an officer:

“I am previously from Ministry [X]. This is all very new to me and it is a very steep learning curve because I have to read all of these [(pointing to CEDAW-related documents)] and understand it quickly” (Interview 16).

The current system induces the administration of the WPA by generalist bureaucrats who have high-level organisational skills but who are not experts in the gender knowledge needed by the WPA. This is in contrast
with the case of state feminism in Australia, which is led by femocrats who have significant gender knowledge and who are passionate about gender issues (Sawer, 1996). Another officer of the MWFCD expressed his joy at being able to transfer from the WPA to another ministry after a few years of trying: “I am glad that I am finally going to leave this ministry. I don’t really feel satisfied here because I do not really understand what I am doing here as a man” (Interview 18). Thus, the WPA in Malaysia is mainly dominated by bureaucrats who are not necessarily experts on gender issues and who may not share similar passions and interests regarding gender matters with their femocrat counterparts.

This study finds that the CEDAW shadow report published by the joint efforts of various critical women’s groups in 2005 highlighted the vagueness and contradiction of the vital concepts regarding gender issues, which exposes the situation to a variety of conflicting interpretations that may weaken the capacity of the WPA in implementing gender empowerment initiatives. One main example cited in the report mentioned that despite the success of the MWFCD’s persistence for constitutional reform to prohibit gender discrimination, which is in Article 8 (2) (among other forms of discrimination, including on the grounds of race or religion), there is an indistinct definition of discrimination in the constitution. As a result, it is essentially up to other state apparatuses and legal institutions to interpret and define gender discrimination, which may differ or vary according to the individual or organisation dealing with this issue. Another example of vague definitions of gender concepts analysed by this research is the series of lenient prosecutions of rapists who had sexual intercourse with minors, due to legal jurisdictions that ruled the acts as consensual, despite the existing law categorising sexual intercourse with a minor as statutory rape (The Star, 2013).

In the interview sessions, the officers of the MWFCD admitted that different interpretations of important concepts regarding gender issues do
arise within the ministry itself; “This ministry sometimes gives us a headache because everything is in grey areas. There is no right or wrong: sometimes, [when you receive an order from the above], this person says A but means B; another person says A, but means C. Which one do we have to follow?” (Interview 17 and 18). The vague definitions of important concepts also suggest that it will be more difficult for the ministry to implement successful gender empowerment initiatives, as these vital concepts are too flexible and can be interpreted from many angles. “Sometimes, even I do not understand what these really mean [(referring to jargon such as ‘gender empowerment’, ‘gender equality’, ‘gender equity’ and ‘gender balance’)]. I just follow what has been instructed” (Interview 19).

The Ministry’s officers further expressed their frustration over the lack of clarity regarding vital gender concepts, as, at times, it hinders productive discussions on gender empowerment agendas with their counterparts from other organisations. An example was given regarding sexual harassment:

“I think it is difficult to identify sexual harassment. When we are in meetings with the AG, with the police, they often ask how we define sexual harassment. How do we provide evidence? Let us say, in a crowded LRT [(a form of underground public transportation)], someone touches you. How do you identify the perpetrator? It is difficult isn’t it? ... The line is also very vague… how do we discuss this with the law enforcers?” (Interview 19).

The lack of clear definitions of vital gender concepts makes it difficult for the officers to clearly identify their areas of authority and also the best approach to adopt when discussing pressing gender issues with their counterparts, especially those from other government organisations. In the interviews, the officers also cited the different schools of thought on gender in the ministry:
“There are two schools of thought in this ministry when we talk about gender issues. One is very pro-women and anti-men. They see men as the source of women’s problems. They want women to be equal and free. While the other believes that women and men are complementary to each other. Women have their roles, men have their roles. As a result, different approaches are taken for the same cause” (Interview 17).

“There are those who are more conservative and believe that men and women have different roles; they believe in gender equity, not equality. But there are also groups that are more liberal and Westernised; they believe that men and women are the same. I am more [prone] towards the gender equity concept because it is more suitable to our religion and cultural values” (Interview 18).

The different conceptions of vital gender concepts may also result in differences in understanding the ministry's mandates, despite staff being provided with a consolidated mission that synergises its mandates. The preceding discussions indicate that the different understandings and interpretations of the important gender concepts among the MWFCD’s personnel and also the dilution of certain areas of concern may impede the MWFCD’s capacity and capability in pushing for gender empowerment agendas. In the absence of common consensus on the definitions of vital gender concepts, the WPA continues to emphasise traditional gender roles in its policy implementation, which at times weakens the WPA’s capacity in gender empowerment initiatives. This feature is reflected through Malaysia’s reservation on Articles 7(b), 9 and 16, which is explained through religious and socio-cultural lenses. According to one officer, the main reason for the

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160 Malaysia, however, withdrew its reservations on Articles 9(1), 16(b), 16(d), 16(e) and 16(h) in 1998.
indisposition to implement these articles is because they “are not suitable to our religious and cultural values as a Muslim and Asian country” (Interview 7).

A UN report on women’s machineries in the Asia-Pacific region acknowledged that a majority of the national women’s machineries in the region acquiesce to the traditional gender role of women as “mothers and care-givers, rather than as individuals, who are entitled to certain inviolable rights” (2010, p.62). This seems to correspond with the mission of the WPA, which focuses on women’s issues that do not contravene their role and image in the society as perceived by the local religious and socio-cultural values. The same report also classified the distinct functions of the WPA in Malaysia as: 1) “promoting work–life balance which includes the effective sharing of responsibilities in the family, in the political and economic spheres, as well as in the social and cultural spheres” and 2) “informing about data and knowledge management on women” (2010, p.26). Furthermore, the WPA in Malaysia does not challenge the traditional gender roles, which see women in specific feminine roles and avoid defining women as individuals. This is illustrated in the prescribed mission of the WPA, which emphasises women as nurturers and care-givers in the society (WDD unpublished report, 2013, p.7).

Through the analysis of the WPA’s resource allocation, as discussed in Chapter Five and further examined in the policy analysis in a later section of this chapter, prioritisation of the WPA’s function is done to ensure the harmonisation of women’s agendas with the society’s traditional gender roles, with the WPA’s resources being mainly allocated to policy areas that are non-doctrinal in nature. Fewer resources are allocated to controversial gender issues that require similar attention from the WPA. This hinders the WPA in appropriately and adequately addressing controversial gender issues (such as women’s reproductive rights) that are perceived as inconsistent with the local religious and socio-cultural dogma.
The centralisation of power in the Prime Minister’s Department also shapes the WPA’s mission, as it is subjected to approvals from the powerful and influential units and departments under the Prime Minister’s Department. For example, an officer from the WPA mentioned that the special position of Islam in Malaysia has a bearing on many aspects of gender empowerment issues. Prior to making policies and the ratification of international conventions, the Islamic Development Department (JAKIM) is consulted to ensure that these do not go against Islamic teachings as understood in the local contexts and do not contradict with Malaysian constitution and law.

“We have vast consultations with various relevant agencies, such as JAKIM and the Home Affairs Ministry, before making any decision regarding international conventions because we have to safeguard our interests, which are sometimes viewed by the CEDAW Committee from different angles” (Interview 19).

One aspect that engenders traditional gender roles in the WPA’s mission may originate from the view that some areas of gender empowerment agendas as purported by international conventions go against the local interpretation of Islamic teachings. During the interview sessions, one male officer stressed that “gender equality is against Islamic teachings. We are complementary to each other... we have different roles and it is a man's job to be a leader. Men are superior to women because we are the head of the family, and we have more responsibility to our family than women do” (Interview 18). One particular officer from the WPA believed that some areas conflicted with her understanding of Islam. She argued: “is there such thing as marital rape in Islam? It is a sin, isn't it, if you refuse your husband? Then, how can we include marital rape as an offence when it is a wife’s duty in marriage?” (Interview 17). Another cited the example of the rights to marriage, since it is widely recognised that for Muslims in Malaysia, the male guardian holds the right to marry off his immediate female family members:
“we have to hold reservation for the CEDAW ([Article 16(a)]) because if we agree, that will go against the Islamic teachings where the wali\(^{161}\) has to marry off the woman. If we agree to this, it will create chaos for the whole family institution in Malaysia because it is against our societal values” (Interview 19)

The MWFC indicates the importance of traditional gender roles in its mandates and functions, as stipulated by the central locus of power, as the ministry is tasked with areas of authority that are consistent with the traditional gender role of females as the care-givers and nurturers of society. An officer in charge of family and social development mentioned that one of the issues faced by his department and related agencies is late marriages among Malaysian women, which lead to lower birth rates:

“\textit{One of the problems we now have is young women… getting married late or not at all… as a result, they have few children. Now, ten children support the mother and father. In the future, one or two children will support the mother and father. It will put more burdens on the children because we will have smaller social security nets}” (Interview 20).

Another officer stated that the ministry puts a lot of thought and consideration into the policies and programmes it carries out and into the ratification of international conventions to ensure that they will not cause disruption to the society’s social fabric, which is based on the existing gender roles embedded in the society. “We have to think about what kind of young women we are moulding for the future. We don’t want to create a lost generation of women” (Interview 16).

This study finds that there is vague understanding on the definitions of crucial gender concepts within the WPA, which leads to the absence of

\(^{161}\) Someone who possesses or has been granted by Islamic law the authority to perform a marriage contract and has to fulfil certain conditions, including being an immediate male blood relative, starting from the biological father of the woman.
consensus on the definitions of these concepts, despite the formalised consolidated mission enabling the WPA to synergise its mandates. Although there are many vital concepts of gender being included within the WPA’s publications, there are few discussions and elaborations on the related concepts, leaving their interpretation largely to the implementers, which comprise other state apparatuses (such as individual civil servants, government organisations and the courts). This study identifies that the WPA’s institutional structure (which puts the WPA’s position below the Prime Minister’s Department) and the positioning of generalist bureaucrats in the WPA who have little gender knowledge and passion lead to the emphasis on traditional gender roles in the mission and vision of the WPA. The WPA also has a strong attachment to the local religious and socio-cultural context of Malaysia, and this explains the lack of debates and discussions on issues that are deemed controversial and unsuitable by the state, such as reproductive and sexual rights and political participation, as they may cause social volatility.

EMPHASIS ON A FEW SELECTED AREAS

The resources of the WPA are thinly spread to cover its wide mandates and due to the concentration of its resources on social welfare, as analysed in depth in Chapter Five. This is in spite of the WPA’s stated aim of covering a wide range of gender issues, such as reproductive health, legal reform and social welfare (MWFCD, 2013). This has shaped the WPA’s mission related to gender empowerment initiatives, as it selectively focuses its scarce resources on gender areas to be aligned with the National Development Plan, which guides Malaysia towards becoming an economically developed nation by 2020 and includes specific targets for women. “…the government also recognises that specific strategies must necessarily be formulated to effectively incorporate women in the progress of
development. Towards this end, concerted efforts will be made to progressively reduce existing constraints and facilitate assimilation of women into the mainstream social and economic activity” (Sixth Malaysia Plan, 1995). The Tenth Malaysia Plan (2010–2015) also comprises a section dedicated to women’s economic development, which relates to empowering women through economic participation (Tenth Malaysia Plan, p.180). This illustrates the state’s views on women as important players to be included in order to achieve its development goal by 2020. Therefore, as the national machinery for gender agendas, the MWFCRD must also focus its resources on women’s economic empowerment through programmes such as entrepreneurship projects.

The WDD is the department under the MWFCRD that is solely dedicated to dealing with women’s issues and mainly focuses on enhancing women’s economic level. “Our department mainly deals with increasing the economic participation of low-income women, rural women and single mothers. Our target groups are mostly low-income women who make less than RM 915 ($281)... our aim is to increase their income level by at least 5% of their original income” (Interview 2). The officers expressed that resources are limited at times. Nevertheless, economic enhancement programmes (such as I-Kit for single mothers) are deemed compulsory and have to be executed regardless of resource constraints. “Sometimes we may cut some programmes due to budget constraints, but I-Kit must go on, although it might be on a smaller scale” (Interview 2). This indicates that economic enhancement is the highest priority on the list of the WDD.
Table 20: WDD programmes based on themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Programme names</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Economic empowerment</td>
<td>1. Single mother Incubator (I-Kit)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Women’s Entrepreneurship Incubator (I-Keunita)</td>
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<td>3. Small Office Programme (Soho)</td>
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<td>4. Entering the Corporate World</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Women’s Entrepreneurship Seminar</td>
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<td>6. Azam (Determination) Grant</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7. Pre-Entrepreneur Mind Transformation (U-BOLEH)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8. Work Skill and Career Guidance: Women’s Development Initiative (I-Kew)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9. Women Entrepreneurs Symposium</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10. Minority Women’s Development Programme</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>1. Go Green Seminar</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Agronita (Women and Agriculture)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>1. High-Impact Leadership: Women of Today</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Empowered Single Mums Workshop</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Knowledge Enhancement</td>
<td>1. Law Literacy Seminar</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Violence Against Women Seminar</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. “Save Yourself” Workshop (Sedia)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Stress Management: Smart Woman, Prosperous Woman</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Home Managers</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6. The Journey of Knowledge</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: Author’s analysis based on an unpublished report by the WDD (2013)

Table 20 shows that the WDD programmes are mainly related to women’s economic empowerment. One officer stated that “while the WDD
focuses on women in low-income groups, the NIEW focuses on women at a higher level, such as increasing the number of women in decision-making positions and on boards” (Interview 2). Another officer stated that “economic development comes first because it affects one’s survival and quality of life... so we focus on the most important area first, the income” (Interview 3). Furthermore, as economic enhancement corroborate with the National Development Plan, it is easier to push forward gender agendas that are in line with the national policy framework as a whole.

This study discovers that although the WPA has a consolidated policy orientation, its mission through its policies mostly concentrates on a few selected areas that are deemed non-controversial and are in line with the government’s development agendas. This study further finds that the WPA’s capacity shapes its mission in various forms. The solid institutional structure of the WPA leads to its formalised consolidated mission. However, it also affects the mission in negative ways. The strong bureaucratic foundation of the WPA, which is built upon the open-service model, results in a lack of gender experts in the WPA. Notwithstanding that, the strong influence and power of the Prime Minister’s Department shapes the WPA’s mission, as the locus of power dictates the WPA’s institutional and ideological autonomy in implementing gender empowerment initiatives.

This study also observes that the WPA’s diluted capacity results in the absence of formally and explicitly agreed definitions and a lack of theoretical frameworks on important gender concepts, which shape the WPA’s reluctance to actively address controversial and doctrinal gender policies. In addition, the scarcity of the WPA’s resources leads to the selection of a few selected areas, which mainly deal with economic enhancement programmes for low-income women. As the central locus of power in this strongly state-centric society determines the spheres of permissible areas in which it is possible to enter into debates and discussions at the policy-making level, this hinders healthy debates on other equally important but controversial areas of
gender empowerment, such as gender equality, sexual rights and women’s representation in politics in policy-making arenas.

CONCLUSION

In the matrix of states’ responses and women’s movements’ impacts, Lovenduski (2005) suggests different categories of WPAs according to their responses to women’s movements’ agendas. Through policy analysis, this study identifies that the WPA in Malaysia is categorised as non-feminist, as it does not support critical women’s movements’ agenda but “manages to gender or degender policy debates using other methods” (Lovenduski as cited in Chapter Two, p.45). This study discerns that the WPA exhibits high capacity in the implementation of its economic empowerment policies and classifies the entrepreneurship programmes as class-based and non-doctrinal policies. By virtue of this, there is less resistance from the other actors. Furthermore, the programmes correspond with the nation’s overarching development goals, where the inclusion of women in the labour market is viewed as crucial to enabling Malaysia to achieve its developed economic status. This study observes that the combination of class-based and non-doctrinal policies (such as the entrepreneurship programmes) is well-received and is better implemented compared to doctrinal and non-doctrinal status-based policies.

This may be explained in terms of the institutions’ subconscious desire to maintain the status quo of the established patriarchal setting. Promoting gender policies that target elevating women’s positions in the society might be seen as challenging the existing patriarchal system, thus explaining the great resistance towards status-based policies compared to class-based policies. This study also finds that non-doctrinal policies have better opportunities to be debated and discussed at the policy-making level than doctrinal policies do. The latter face greater difficulty in reaching consensus
among the actors involved, leading to stalemate discussions and fewer resources being allocated for these policies.
CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

This study explores the capacity of the WPA to implement gender empowerment initiatives in Malaysia. It focuses on a holistic single case study of the WPA, namely, the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development. The WPA was officially established as a full ministry in 2001; it had however existed in other forms prior to this. The main research question addressed by this research is: What are the factors which shape the capacity of the WPA to implement gender empowerment initiatives in Malaysia? To answer this the theoretical framework of state feminism is used together with feminist institutionalism analytical tools of formal and informal rules. This enables the research to assess the state’s capacity in pushing gender empowerment initiatives in its policy-making process. The cross-cutting approach of state feminism theoretical framework and feminist institutionalism analytical tools offer a new perspective on the analysis of state feminism as it provides gender lens to understand how the state institution that the WPA is located is gendered by providing the analytical tools to examine the dynamic interaction between the state institutional formal and informal rules in WPA’s operations and how they shape the capacity of state feminism in Malaysia.

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

To structure the discussion, the thesis uses four key determinants which are crucial in shaping the WPA’s capacity to implement gender empowerment initiatives. These are the Ministry’s 1) institutional structure, 2) resources, 3) relationships/networks, and 4) mission. To update and provide a dynamic analysis of state feminism, this study draws on a feminist institutionalism lens, in particular the conceptual tools of the formal and informal rules which help capture the dynamic and complex institutional
setting. It also examines the interaction between these formal and informal rules which influence the WPA’s capacity in its implementation of gender empowerment initiatives. The cross-cutting approach of state feminism theoretical framework and the feminist institutionalism analytical tools not only enable the examination of the key determinants but also distinguish the interaction of formal and informal rules within the institutional setting of the WPA’s operation that shape the WPA’s capacity. This study also examines the ways the interaction between the formal and informal rules strengthen or weaken the WPA’s capacity in implementing gender empowerment initiatives. Through the above analyses, this study provides a comprehensive insight into the state of Malaysia’s institutional course towards gender equality through gender empowerment initiatives.

Chapter Two begins by examining the current theoretical and practical understanding of the state’s role in furthering the gender agenda through a review of state feminism literature. It also addresses the limitations of previous research on state feminism. Chapter Three describes the research methodology which this study adopts. It elaborates on the selection of research strategy, research design and case study choice of this research. It further reflects on the limitations of this study in term of its research strategy and research design, including challenges faced by the researcher during the fieldwork phase. Chapters Four to Seven synthesise the subset of research questions with the answers from its empirical findings to answer the main research question: What is the capacity of the WPA to implement gender empowerment initiatives in Malaysia? The concluding chapter summarises the main findings of this thesis and its original and significant contributions to the body of knowledge. It also identifies the limitations of the research, possible areas for future research work, and the recommendations of this study.
Chapter Four presents the empirical analysis, which is based on the main finding that the WPA in Malaysia has a solid institutional structure contributed to by its institutional stability and strong bureaucratic foundation. This stability derives from the strong state authority and the dominant party system within the Malaysian political context, while its bureaucratic foundation is based upon the colonial legacy of the British bureaucratic infrastructure.

This study has analysed the WPA’s institutional structure to address the first subset of the main research question: How does the institutional structure of the WPA shape its capacity? It finds that the Agency has a solid institutional structure contributed to by a strong bureaucratic foundation and its location within a stable institutional setting. This structure has the advantage of having full ministerial status, which secures its position within the institution of the state. Prior to its establishment as a full ministry, the WPA existed as a department under the prime minister's department. Its elevation to a dedicated ministry has helped it to gain acknowledgement from other actors and given it greater entitlement to carry out its policies and plans including the implementation of gender empowerment initiatives.

As a ministry the WPA also comes under the purview of the federal government, which according to the Malaysian constitution has greater administrative powers than state-level government. Furthermore, as the federal government is formed by the winning political party, there is no apparent conflict between the WPA and federal government policy. This may not be the case where the WPA is located under the purview of the state government. In particular, in the 2008 and 2013 general elections, several
states won by the opposition parties. This study finds that representatives from opposition-controlled state governments have reported that gender empowerment initiatives by state agencies do not receive appropriate support from federal government machineries, especially in terms of financial and human resources.

As a post-colonial nation, the state institution that the WPA operates in has tended not to experience intense political turbulence despite the highly diverse nature of Malaysia’s society. This has been as a result of the country’s strong state authority and dominant party system which has kept the nation politically stable. The strong authority of the state is partly due to its post-independence nation-building role which sees the government exerting extensive control over national economic growth. State involvement in many realms of both individual and societal life, and the use of the state’s authority to prevent volatility in society, have resulted in a stable institutional setting although it constrains individuals’ and civil society behaviour and movement to be within the specific perimeter highly regulated by the state.

This study also establishes that the strong state authority which exists in Malaysia is manifested in the top-down approach adopted by the WPA in which the WPA as the extension of the state’s arm determines the outcome of issues on the gender agenda and limiting debate on gender-related issues within boundaries deemed appropriate by the state in a highly diverse in terms of ethnicity, religion and class society in Malaysia. The role of the state is further amplified by the nature of the institutional framework which allows it to limit the participation of external actors including women movements in decision-making process in Malaysia.

In relation to the dominant party system, Malaysia has been ruled by the same political party since its independence in 1957. Under this system, the ruling party administers the state apparatus to achieve its political vision and mission, and manages the state without the need to redistribute its resources excessively in order to win political battles which leads to political
stability and the prevent administrative turmoil. On the basis of this, this study establishes that the political context accounts for the solid institutional set-up in Malaysia. However, this model of administration also suggests that debate on gender issues, as well as being circumscribed by the top-down approach of government, is also determined by the political party’s gender culture, which necessarily renders the WPA highly dependent on political will in pursuing gender empowerment initiatives.

The established position of the WPA within a stable institutional setting has reinforced its capacity since its establishment as a full ministry. Despite this, this study finds that the existence of the WPA is not guaranteed in any official documents (for example, the Constitution), thus making its survival insecure and dependent upon the political will of influential decision-makers, such as the prime minister. This informal status accounts for the many structural changes which the WPA has undergone since its establishment as a ministry in 2001.

The chapter continues by analysing the manner in which the bureaucratic system influenced the WPA institutional set-up and locks it into a path-dependence effect. It does so through the examination of three factors. The first is the adoption by the WPA of the open-service system for administrative and diplomatic officers and the centralisation of power in the prime minister’s department, as practised by (and inherited from) the British colonial administration. The second is the contribution of the competent administrative infrastructure and framework governing the WPA as a full ministry at the federal level. The third factor is the fusion of political and administration within Malaysia’s bureaucratic system.

This thesis ascertains that the WPA in Malaysia has a strong bureaucratic foundation inherited from the British bureaucratic infrastructure and knowledge as the British colonial period has built a Weberian-based administration system infused with local ruling structure and custom. The path-dependence effect has resulted in the adoption of the open service
system for ADS officers, who act as policymakers in all government administrative institutions, including the WPA. Although the WPA is led by ADS officers who are competent bureaucrats, they are not necessarily equipped with a passion for gender issues, as is the case of femocrats which means that appointments to senior positions in the WPA are often made from within the civil service itself. In fact, this research finds that individuals from outside the government service are rarely awarded positions in the WPA. It discovered one occasion on which an outsider was appointed to head a newly established agency within the WPA; however, this was due to her reputation and wide networking potential. Despite being well-equipped with administrative knowledge therefore, WPA officers do not have sufficient expertise in dealing with gender-related issues. At the same time, the benefit of an open service in a closed system provides a new ministry such as the WPA with the necessary administrative skills to function as a long-standing state institution.

Another example of the British colonial legacy in Malaysia is the centralisation of power, notably in the Prime Minister’s Department. The WPA is very much governed by power of approval issued by the Prime Minister’s Department as the central administrator in significant matters such as recruitment, yearly plans, budgets and initiatives. Occasionally, the WPA restructures its organisation to accommodate new initiatives and plans introduced by the Prime Minister’s Department. This study finds that here, on the contrary, its establishment as a full ministry limits the capacity of the WPA, as its hierarchical position in the state apparatus results in it being subordinate to the Prime Minister’s Department. Prior to the creation of the Ministry, the WPA in Malaysia had existed as department (HAWA) located in the PM’s Department which placed it at higher position in the Malaysian administrative setting.

Apart from its colonial legacy, the strong bureaucratic foundation of the WPA is contributed to by the competent administrative knowledge of its
officers. This knowledge is made up of three elements as identified by this study, namely: 1) existing administrative knowledge, 2) proper frameworks which govern WPA behaviours, and 3) firm initiatives for civil service reform. In respect of the first element, this study discovers that although the WPA, set up in 2001, is a relatively new ministry compared to other established ministries and government organisations, it consists of both old and newly established agencies and departments. Some of these, such as the Social Welfare Department (1948) and the National Population and Family Development Board (1966) have been in existence since before and shortly after independence. Nonetheless, as identified earlier in this study, the officers serving the WPA are “insiders” of Malaysia’s bureaucratic institutions and thus already familiar with the formal and informal rules within the state institution; this knowledge facilitates the WPA in strengthening itself despite its young age.

Pertaining to the second element, the WPA is also subject to various frameworks which guide its behaviours in the delivery of high quality services. Among others, it is required to submit annual reports which are audited both internally and by other government agencies, including the National Audit Department. As the WPA is located under the purview of the federal government, it is advantageous for the WPA that its behaviours are governed by various laws, regulations, policies, and quality management standards of the federal government as stipulated in the federal constitution. This strengthens the WPA’s capacity as an organisation due to stringent frameworks in place to ensure high quality service delivery to its stakeholders.

With regard to the third element, this study finds that the Malaysian bureaucracy is continuously aiming for improvement to its service delivery. Apart from obtaining various quality certifications (such as the ISO 9000), the WPA has embraced the e-technology to provide better services and to reach out to more stakeholders. As a senior officer of the ministry emphasises “knowledge through information sharing” is a key means to empower society,
and the WPA is one of the most prominent and visible ministries to use social media, including Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. Its use of e-technology enhances the WPA’s capacity by disseminating information to its stakeholders (including women organisations and the public) and facilitating their interaction with the Ministry.

This study finds that the operation of the WPA with its basis in a strong bureaucratic foundation is also influenced by the informal rule of the fusion of politics and administration. The close relationship between bureaucrats and the ruling political party often oversteps the boundary of political neutrality supposedly practiced by a bureaucratic institution. Scholars classify high ranking bureaucrats in Malaysia as “the extension of the ruling party” (Husain & Brahim, 2004, Pepinsky, 2007, Chin, 2011, Siddiquee, 2013). This results in the existence of blurred boundaries between the ministry’s purpose of establishment and the political agenda. For instance, in the run-up to the 2013 general election the state machineries (including the WPA) were mobilised by the ruling political party to contribute to their election campaign.

Thus, although the WPA in Malaysia possesses a solid institutional infrastructure, its capacity is limited by a number of factors. The institutional stability contributed to by the strong state and dominant party system is counteracted by the restrictions placed upon Malaysia’s civil society, in particular the country’s women’s movements. This has resulted in a highly politically infused WPA, with a resulting reduction in healthy debate on gender issues at policymaking level. Furthermore, the WPA relies heavily on approval from the Prime Minister’s Department, which lessens its capacity to function independently despite its full ministerial position at federal level. The end result is that although the WPA possesses adequate capacity in its institutional establishment to function, its ability to promote gender empowerment initiatives is limited.
Finding Two: High Access to But Limited Authority and Over-Concentration of Resources in Specific Areas

Chapter Five highlights the issue of the WPA’s access to resources and the degree of its authority over them. The issue of the integration of access and authority is an essential element in the assessment of the Ministry’s capacity to implement gender empowerment initiatives. The second finding of this research as discussed in Chapter Five indicates that the WPA possesses high access to resources but limited authority to use them. This answers the second subset of the main research question: How do the resources of the agency shape the capacity of the WPA in Malaysia? Apart from the availability of resources, the elements of access and authority are crucial in determining the capacity of the WPA to carry out its policies and plans, specifically in implementing gender empowerment initiatives.

This study analyses two types of resource to which the WPA in Malaysia has access as a result of its full ministerial position within the government machine. Firstly, it has a dedicated minister as its head, who in this capacity has access to political resources. The WPA has greatly benefited from the influential leadership of its former minister, who was able to gain access to political resources due to her personal proximity to the locus of power, in particular the prime minister. However, access such as this also has to reckon with informal rules, which make its success heavily dependent on the personal influence needed to persuade other actors to grant such access in the first place. This access is thus not secure as it was good under Shahrizat Jalil, the former minister of the MWFC, but it would not be guaranteed under her successors.

Secondly, as a full ministry the WPA has access to administrative resources and is entitled to receive, control, and allocate them as deemed appropriate, including budget and personnel. It also has the autonomy to make use of other useful government infrastructure. However, it is not
relieved of constraints of the formal rules within the institution, and this limits its authority over its resources.

This situation is linked to the institutional bureaucratic setting which is underpinned by a) the centralisation of power and located in the Prime Minister’s Department, and b) the nature of WPA mandates which at times encroach upon the territory of other ministries and government organisations. For instance, the WPA is subjected to the approval of other actors, especially the Prime Minister’s Department (such as the Economic Planning Unit, the Implementation Coordination Unit, the Public Service Department) and the Ministry of Finance, as well as international organisations such as UNDP and ADB which act as funders for WPA programmes. One explanation as to why the WPA has to get past various gatekeepers (especially in the Prime Minister’s Department) before gaining access to and authority over resources is that as a developing nation, Malaysia consolidates its resources through the Prime Minister’s Department agencies. This is primarily aimed at achieving the national vision of becoming a developed economy by 2020 (in contrast, in developed nations, macro-economic objectives tend to be more focused towards areas such as socio-economic progress).

The capacity of the WPA is also determined by the utilisation and allocation of its resources. The Ministry covers a wide range of mandates (reflected in its name: the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development). This research establishes that that the allocation and utilisation of WPA resources are thinly spread and moreover overly concentrated in specific areas, particularly social welfare and economic empowerment.

With a wide range of stakeholders, the Ministry has a presence almost everywhere at grassroots level, including at the state and district levels which require micro resource management. This has put a strain on the already resource-strapped ministry as the WPA in Malaysia only received on average 0.2% of the total Federal government budget allocation for development as
observed in the 8th and 9th Malaysia Plans. Furthermore, its vast size (as a full ministry it has various divisions and five agencies under its purview) means that the WPA has to cover the operational costs of a broad mandate, especially in terms of human and financial resources. Constraints to these resources mean that at times the agencies operating under the WPA have to prioritise certain programmes and plans at the expense of others. These agencies are, for example, involved in smart partnerships with other actors, including international organisations and civil society. This involves both human and financial resources, which are needed to implement programmes related to gender empowerment initiatives.

This research also finds that the limited resources of the WPA are also overly concentrated in specific areas. The WPA practices selective allocation of resources in order to conform to the national development plan. The agency receiving the highest allocation of resources is found to be the Social Welfare Department (SWD); this is also the biggest department in the WPA and consumes most of the WPA resources. As Malaysia is still an economically developing nation, the main national objective is to improve economic standards, and that the way of doing so is by providing welfare assistance especially through the SWD.

These circumstances have resulted in fewer resources being assigned to other agendas of the WPA, in particular for gender empowerment programmes operating through the WDD and the NIEW. This is especially true for gender-related programmes which are not directly related to national economic enhancement. Furthermore, as the programmes and policies under the SWD tend to encompass a wider range of society’s stakeholders, this department is given higher priority by the central locus of power. There is an informal understanding within the WPA that by allocating resources exclusively to women’s agendas, other groups in society which also need immediate attention from policymakers (such as the destitute, senior citizens, children and disabled groups) may be side-lined. Whereas social welfare
agendas are more inclusive as a tool to enhance economic living standards as it covers the majority of the WPA’s stakeholders. Furthermore, women-friendly resources (such as the Children Assistance and Surrogate Parents Assistance) are also available under the category of gender neutral social welfare assistance.

Despite its good access to resources, the WPA is thus faced with limited authority in determining its resource utilisation. Furthermore, they are overly concentrated in the area of social welfare, leaving the remainder to be spread thinly across the WPA organisation as a whole, with the end result that its capacity is hampered.
Finding Three: Formalised Relationships and Wide Network with Various Actors

Chapter Six proceeds to analyse the significance of the WPA’s networks and its relationships with various actors achieved while carrying out its task within Malaysia’s institutional context. The WPA engages with a mixture of actors, among which are women’s organisations, other government agencies and international organisations. This study has found that the WPA in Malaysia engages with various actors, within both domestic and international frameworks. This finding addresses the third subset question of this research: How do the relationships and networking of the agency affect the capacity of the WPA in Malaysia? Its relationships and networks are structured, involving various groups both at domestic and international levels.

The study has identified three groups of actors with which the WPA interacts: 1) intra-agencies, 2) intergovernmental agencies, and 3) interorganisations, including women’s groups, international organisations and sovereign states. As a full ministry, the WPA is recognised formally by other actors as the representative of the Malaysian government in regards to gender-related issues. It thus has a well-structured formalised engagement with actors not only within government organisations but also from outside the state apparatus, such as women movements, internationally with nations at the state and regional levels, and international organisations such as OIC, NAM and UNDP. This study therefore went on to reclassify the groups with which the WPA engages formally as 1) governmental organisations, 2) local women’s organisations, 3) foreign governments, and 4) international organisations.

The study finds that the capacity of the WPA is reinforced by the existence of structured formal engagements with other actors (for example the NBOS initiatives) which sees the WPA in strategic partnership with other
relevant ministries to achieve a common national goal. Its structured relationship with other actors within the state apparatus has helped the WPA to push for gender empowerment initiatives to be included within government plans and policies. Apart from the above, as a ministry the WPA possesses political legitimacy, authorising it to act on behalf of the Malaysian government. It is thus able to engage with foreign governments through bilateral and multilateral agreements, and to utilise its position to form associations with regional and international organisations (such as the ASEAN, the OIC, the ADB, the UN and the NAM). These factors have resulted in WPA having a wide network across the globe.

Despite the advantages of having of a formally structured relationship framework including other actors, the WPA is nevertheless constrained by the gendered setting of the state institution that perpetuate traditional vertical power relations between government organisations. As a new Agency, the MWFCD becomes dependent on the goodwill of these actors in its implementation of gender empowerment initiatives due to its lack of formal authority to sanction other actors. Indeed, the Agency often lacks the authority to advocate on such due to its subordinate position to other more established and powerful actors in the state’s institution strong hierarchy. Within this framework, and especially when working with other governmental organisations, the WPA often acts as coordinator, bringing together other actors on specific gender issues rather than leading the initiative. Furthermore, this research establishes that the WPA practices selective engagement when building relationships with Malaysia’s women’s movement, filtering the issues and types of women movements and seldom engaging formally with categorical feminist movements.

The WPA’s expansion of its networks is the result of the its well-connected leadership at the highest level of the organisation, and has occurred despite it being a relatively new organisation. The former ministership of the WPA was held by the female leader of the ruling coalition,
whose dual position within the political party and the WPA significantly influenced the range of the Ministry’s networks. In this regard, Shahrizat’s strong political influence thus had a positive effect on the WPA’s relationship with other actors, particularly as she was personally close to the locus of power within the state institution. Furthermore, as the Malaysia bureaucratic setting mainly operates within a rigid hierarchical setting, having an influential leader who has good rapport with powerful political players facilitates communication at senior levels. On the other hand, this makes the success of WPA networks highly dependent on individual leadership and may not be replicable and also is open to accusations of lack of transparency and corruption. This research therefore suggests that there is a need to ensure transparent and permanent networks of the WPA to reduce its dependency on informal individual capacity. This study also proposes that the WPA’s capacity may increase by developing a mechanism to transfer the informal network to the organisation which ensures the continuity of relationship between the WPA and other parties involved as well as create a more transparent network in its implementation of gender empowerment agendas.
Finding Four: Institutional Capacity to Achieve Its Mission & Vision is Highly Variable

Chapter Seven concludes the empirical chapters by analysing the WPA capacity through four specific policy areas: violence against women (VAW), marital rape, entrepreneurship programmes and the gender responsive budgeting (GRB) pilot project. Through the policy analysis this research identify how the capacity of the WPA (in terms of institutional structure, resources, relationships and networks) shapes its implementation of gender empowerment initiatives in Malaysia to approach the fourth subset question of this study: How does the WPA’s capacity shape its mission and vision?

This study observes that the WPA focuses its capacity on specific areas such as its programme on economic empowerment for low income women. This programme centres on small and medium enterprises specifically related to food and handicrafts. Furthermore, it corresponds to the broad national development plans and is less controversial than gender issues which challenge the institutional viewpoint of traditional gender roles such as women’s political representation and women’s sexual rights.

Therefore, through a policy analysis using Htun and Weldon’s (2010) policy matrix, this study discovers that the capacity of the WPA to deliver gender empowerment initiatives varies significantly depending on the type of the policy (Refer Table 18,p.253). This study learns that the capacity of the WPA capacity also depends on Malaysia’s national vision. The government tends to frame gender empowerment strategies to fit the bigger national goals. This concurs with Kano’s findings which highlight that the state’s motivation to implement gender empowerment initiatives are due to national interests in which the state needs women’s participation to achieve its goals (2011). This is illustrated through the WPA’s tendency to prioritise and
execute programmes and policies which relate to economic empowerment and poverty alleviation programmes.

In reforming its organisational structure, the WPA has for example, included a specific unit to deal with economic empowerment programmes. The main function of the WDD, is the economic empowerment of women through entrepreneurship programmes. Thus, the WPA’s financial and expertise resources pertaining to gender empowerment programmes are also directed towards entrepreneurship programmes as championed by the WPA. It also receives support from other actors, especially from governmental organisations such as the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development and the prime minister’s department. Moreover, from the perspective of institutionalised gender roles, entrepreneurship programmes are not seen as controversial, and thus are more likely to be well-received by other actors within the institutional setting.

This study ascertains that despite the clear vision and mission and the synergising of all the agencies and departments under its purview, some of the Ministry’s interpretations of vital gender concepts are vague to the extent which its capacity is affected. The absence of a common consensus on crucial gender-related concepts tends to result at times in different actors having different interpretations and attaching different weight to the same issue, making it more difficult to push through a policy for implementation purposes.

This study discovers that the state’s gendered architecture which favours male-dominance at the highest level of decision-making and conservative gender culture inevitably imposes constraints on the WPA’s capacity to achieve its mission and vision, as this has to be done within the permissible gender values circumscribed by the state. At times, the implementation of gender empowerment initiatives are based on the institutional viewpoint which reinforces traditional culture by confining the involvement of women to conservative gender roles in society. On the other
hand, as a developing economy, Malaysia focuses its institutional capacity on achieving economic development, and this is reflected in the WPA’s mission and vision.

Nonetheless, there are instances where it appears that the WPA’s capacity is affected by the lack of will on the part of other actors. For example, although the GRB pilot project conforms to the existing national development plan, it received a lukewarm response from other actors within the institutional setting and thus remained stagnant. On the other hand, the successful framing of a doctrinal issue into a non-doctrinal issue (such as domestic violence) by the women’s movement enhances the WPA’s capacity to address the issue. Marital rape, however, remains controversial despite legal reforms, due to the lack of consensus on marital its definition by various actors, in particular, enforcement authorities. Moreover, the societal value ascribed to gender roles within marriage often moulds the response of victims towards marital rape.
RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION

This significant body of original empirical research contributes to three main fields of literature: state feminism, feminist institutionalism and regional gender politics literature in the Asia-Pacific region. This thesis is the first study to delve into state feminism in Malaysia through a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the WPA’s capacity in implementing gender empowerment initiatives. The cross-cutting approach to state feminism and feminist institutionalism has proven useful in explaining the factors which shape the WPA’s capacity in a Southern hemisphere, post-colonial and developing context. This research has thus made substantial theoretical and empirical contributions to this field of knowledge.

Theoretical Contribution

Expand the Analysis of State Feminism in Non-Western Settings

The thesis explores and analyses the capacity of state feminist institution in a different context of post-colonial, conservative and quasi-democracy context. This enables state feminism literature to travel beyond its existing context of Western, liberal democracies as this study discusses how state feminism functions in a different setting by examining the factors that shape the capacity of a state feminist agency in the global South and enrich scholarship on state feminism in a non-Western context.

Update of State Feminism Literature Using Feminist Institutionalism Analysis

This study has become the first original research to update the existing literature on state feminism and feminism institutionalism by adopting a cross-cutting approach between the two fields of knowledge. It synthesises the state feminism theoretical framework using feminist institutionalism conceptual tools, such as path-dependence, and especially the formal and informal rules.
The existing literature mainly concentrates on the measurement of the effectiveness of gender policy machinery (Stetson & Mazur, 1995; McBride & Mazur, 2010), whereas the cross-cutting approach adopted by this study allows for a theoretical dynamic analysis of the state’s capacity to implement gender empowerment initiatives by pivoting the study on the WPA’s institutional setting and examines the gendered nature of the state and thus expand the theoretical framework of state feminism and feminist institutionalism’s approach. Moreover, the prevailing literature on state feminism has given less attention to the feminist institutionalism dimension in studying the role of the state in gender empowerment initiatives, and vice versa. This study mainly updates the discussion of state feminism theoretical frameworks by analysing the interaction of formal and informal rules of a state institution and how a conservative and politically infused state setting is gendered.

By using the conceptual tools used by feminist institutionalism scholars, this study manages to capture the dynamic interaction between formal and informal rules within the WPA’s institutional setting and how they influence the key determinants of the Ministry’s capacity positively or adversely. The interaction between both sets of rules is able to encapsulate factors which strengthen or weaken the WPA’s capacity. The relationship between the formal and informal rules is at times complementary; at other times they contradict one another, and this has shaped the WPA’s capacity to implement the gender empowerment agendas which come under its remit.

Furthermore, this study establishes that in certain instances even formal rules contradict each other, placing further constraints on the WPA’s capacity to function. It has also identified that even formal rules have different weighing at times, and that the more influential and powerful formal rules may weaken the adoption of other formal rules. An example of this is the authority the WPA has over its resources. As discussed in Chapter 4, although its full ministerial position grants it
access to these resources, its authority over some of them is limited by powerful actors, especially the Prime Minister’s Department. Concomitantly, it has limited authority over other resources, as at times it encroaches on the territory of other ministries or departments. This is in line with the finding of Outshoorn (1995) which reveals that the WPA in the Netherlands faces challenges in executing its tasks, as gender-related matters are also the responsibility of other agencies. This study however, is the first to analyse the phenomenon using the feminist institutionalist analytical tools of formal and informal rules.

On the other hand, this study discovers that in the absence (or lack of implementation) of formal rules, the interaction of informal rules operating in Malaysia’s quasi-democratic context contributes positively at times to the institutional capacity of the WPA. For example, interviews with WPA officers reveal that informal rules at times provide flexibility for them to engage with feminist movements in a conservative state setting. Although the WPA does not actively engage with the branches of the women’s movement that are critical towards the government’s stance, it employs the main actors of the critical movement under different capacities, for instance, their academic or personal capability.

This research also discovers that informal customs shape a viewpoint widespread in the institutional culture of Malaysia, entrenched in a particular societal, religious context. This is reflected in the mission and vision of the WPA which, constrained as it is by the traditional view prevailing in society, reinforces traditional gender roles. Interviews with WPA officers as part of this research reveal the moral dilemma they frequently face in pursuit of gender empowerment initiatives, as at times they are seen as contradicting the conservative teachings of Malaysian society. Consequently, there is a lack of common consensus in the WPA on vital concepts such as gender equality.

The interaction between formal and informal rules captured by this research thus provides a comprehensive analysis of the factors which
shape the WPA’s capacity, adding to the growing literature on the importance of taking these rules into consideration when analysing the gendered disposition of institutions (Chappell, 2006; Waylen 2009; Harrell 2009; Annesley & Gains, 2010).

This study’s original theoretical contribution is therefore its cross-cutting approach to its analysis of state feminism, through which it manages to update the literature by suggesting the analysis of the apparent institutionalisation of feminist demands. This study contributes to state feminism literature as it captures and categorises wider factors that come into play in the analysis of the state’s response and reactions towards gender issues. It also enriches the discussions of state feminism by providing in-depth analysis on the state’s capacity using a cross-cutting approach as previous literature studies focus on measuring the effectiveness of state feminist institutions. By examining the state’s capacity, this study provides insights on factors that influence state feminism within specific setting and enable further understanding to modify and improve the WPA’s capacity which may contribute to the study on the effectiveness of state feminism across the globe.

**Empirical Contribution**

*Expands the Coverage of State Feminism Literatures*

As mentioned in the Introduction, this research has managed to expand the existing scholarship on state feminism through its analysis of the capacity of a women’s policy agency in a non-Western, post-colonial and economically developing context. Although great attention has been given to the role of the state generally in promoting gender issues since the 1980s, previous scholarship on state feminism has tended to focus on the specific settings of Western, liberal democratic and post-developed perspectives (Stetson & Mazur, 1995; Outshoorn & Kantola, 2007; McBride & Mazur,
This research includes in-depth discussion of the expansion of state feminism findings outside this context by identifying factors which are crucial to understanding the capacity of a women’s policy agency in a developing, conservative society.

This research has also emphasises the role of the state in the discussion of state feminism in a state-centric society. As the state holds a strong authority over society’s sphere of involvement, it has the upper hand in decision-making while other actors (for example, civil society) have limited space to participate in the process. This enhances the importance of the WPA as the dominant actor in engaging with gender issues in a setting that has scarce critical feminist movements on the ground. While previous literature on state feminism often focus on the interplay between the state, the WPA and critical women’s movement (Stetson & Mazur, 1995; Friedman, 2000; Curtin, 2008) and suggest that the lack of participation from women’s movement reduces the effectiveness of state feminism, this study finds that the state has a significant role to play in the absence of strong feminist movements on the ground. This study finds that women groups in Malaysia are not necessarily feminist due to diverse opinions on gender roles influenced by socio-cultural norms and religious values. This enhances the importance of the top-down approach of state’s official gender machinery such as the WPA in Malaysia as the women groups may not be as proactive in pushing for gender agendas due to their differences in ideologies.

Despite the fact that women organisations in Malaysia operate in constrained spaces due to the limitations imposed by the state, other relevant actors (including the international and regional organisations mentioned before (such as the UNDP, the ADB, the ASEAN, and the NAM) fill the gaps through various means. They exert pressure on the state, and lend expertise and financial support to ensure that gender empowerment initiatives receive appropriate attention from the Malaysian policymakers. This can be seen in the example of GRB pilot project initiative. This study
notes therefore the importance of international actors to the study of state feminism in a post-colonial, quasi-democratic and economically developing country such as Malaysia.

This study also shows that in the context of a developing economy, national development often takes centre stage in terms of policymaking. Gender debates which fit the national development policy are thus more likely to receive the attention of the locus of power. Furthermore, as economic development remains the highest priority in a developing nation, gender empowerment initiatives are also structured to suit the bigger national goal. This is illustrated through the centralisation of power within Malaysia’s bureaucratic setting, where the prime minister’s department coordinates the structure, programmes and policies of government organisations (including the WPA) to ensure they correspond to the national development goals. This is reflected in the WPA’s over-concentration of resources in social welfare and entrepreneurship programmes, both of which are intended to elevate the economic standards of its recipients. Here, in contrast to the context of state feminism in developed states (where economic development is not the highest national priority), state feminism resources can be allocated for other critical gender-related concerns.

Colonial legacy is also an element highlighted by this study, especially in regard to the institutional structure of the WPA. The male-dominance bureaucratic setting resulted from colonial policies as high-ranking positions in government organisations are continuously filled by male civil servants and the rigidity of bureaucratic system in which it continuously follows its past trajectory of institutional behaviour affects the WPA’s institutional structure as it only allow bureaucrats to lead the Ministry. This limits the participation of feminist actors from outside the system to be included in decision-making processes. While the bureaucrats who mainly manage the WPA are excellent administrators, they are not necessarily equipped with gender knowledge or a passion to fully understand gender issues. In comparison, state feminism in
Western, developed and liberal democratic contexts are often populated with femocrats who have a parallel understanding of and passion for gender issues. However, if the WPA in Malaysia is filled by feminist actors from outside the system, they may not be well-versed in the highly intricate and complicated informal rules and administrative knowledge that exist and this may limit their capability to champion gender issues from within the state institution.

Another important element which is not mentioned explicitly in existing state feminism literature is the fusion between politics and administration. This is because previous studies of state feminism tended to concentrate on how it functions within a liberal democratic setting. This study has explored the relations between the political party and the WPA and finds that in a strong state society where a political party dominates, political influence plays a great role in determining the WPA’s capacity. The political influence of the former WPA minister assisted the WPA to get buy-in from other actors; at the same time, however, it has made the WPA less critical towards the leadership’s stance on women issues. This is because the basis of duty and loyalty towards the political party blurred the boundaries between bureaucracy and party. Furthermore, cooperation and unity on gender issues across political parties is almost invisible because of a tendency to engage in partisan politics (the exception to this is the issue of domestic violence which manages to unite every actor, regardless of background).

This study has drawn attention to factors which shape the WPA’s capacity in a non-Western state feminism setting. This has enhanced the current understanding of state feminism by identifying factors that are absent in previous literature, thus allowing state feminism theoretical frameworks to travel across the globe. The crucial nature of factors such as colonial legacy, national development goals and fusion of bureaucracy and politics, makes it crucial to recognise their significance, because of the influence they exert on the WPA’s capacity to implement gender empowerment initiatives.
As the current feminist institutionalism literature tends to be mainly theoretical, its empirical work on the global South and developing countries is scarce and limited. This study enables feminist institutionalism to develop its empirical analysis beyond the existing coverage of feminist institutionalism in a Western, developed and liberal democratic setting, by using a non-Western institutional perspective (in this case, the WPA in Malaysia) into the existing scholarship.

This study develops the empirical evidence of the interaction between formal and informal rules operating within an institutional setting. It further captures examples of the role of informal rules in shaping actors’ behaviour towards formal rules in a quasi-democratic setting. This research reveals that in such a setting, informal rules that are supported by influential political players and vice versa are given more weight than formalised rules. This is apparent in that, despite its clear mission as stipulated in its website and publications, the WPA often functions as a distributor of social welfare as reward to its political supporters while placing lesser importance on controversial gender issues which may challenge society’s status quo, such as women’s political empowerment.

Furthermore, despite the WPA’s formal politically neutral stance as an agent of the state, this study has discovered that in a quasi-democratic environment of Malaysia, the institutional setting prioritises political affiliation with the ruling coalition party when determining its political strategy. This is epitomised by the lack of cooperation on gender issues across political parties and women groups due to clashes of political ideology. This study establishes that there are disjointed efforts between the WPA under the federal government and women agencies under the states government ruled by the opposition parties. Interviews and document analysis also revealed complaints from the opposition parties of having been side-lined in the gender empowerment efforts of the federal government under the ruling party.
This informal rule weakens the WPA’s capacity as it is not able to function objectively and cannot assume a neutral position from which to pursue its mission and vision.

This study also illustrates how informal rules that are based on political power have led to the creation of formalised rules in a semi-democratic setting. For example, the personal proximity of the WPA leadership to the locus of power, especially the prime minister, influences the WPA’s capacity as illustrated by the creation of Special Advisor to the Prime Minister on Women’s Affairs despite the existence of a specific ministry dedicated to women agendas, namely the MWFCD. Informal rules in the form of political influence thus play a great role in the creation of formal rules to appease powerful political players, despite its overlapping functions.

Therefore, this study as the pioneer research to explore Malaysian institutional setting by utilising feminist institutionalism tools has contributed to enriching feminist institutionalism empirical works in a global south context. This study facilitates feminist institutionalism to enrich its empirical findings by recognising dimensions of formal and informal rules, and their forms of interactions that are absent in the feminist institutionalism studies. It also adds non-Western, quasi-democratic setting dimensions in understanding institutional perspectives and the factors that may facilitate or deter institutions to adopt appropriate behaviours and strategies in regards to gender issues.

Development of Regional Gender Politics Literature

The first empirical contribution of this original research is that it fills a gap in the scholarship on gender politics in the South East Asia region and in Malaysia specifically. Apart from the state, current literature on gender politics, especially in Malaysia, mainly focuses on actors such as civil society, in particular women’s movements (Weiss & Hassan, 2003; Lai Suat Yan,
2003; Martinez, 2003; Blackburn, 2004; Ng, Mohamad, et al 2006) and political parties (Mohamad, 2002; Ting, 2007).

This thesis thus pioneers the discussion on the capacity of the state through the lens of the WPA and its work in gender empowerment. By including the state as the main actor of gender empowerment initiatives, it adds to the literature of gender politics in the region by analysing the state’s role in improving gender status. This is because the state often holds the focal point of society’s life, especially in post-colonial and economically developing nations such as Malaysia.

This thesis has contributed to the literature in several ways. Firstly, it represents an extensive pioneer study on state feminism in Malaysia. Thus, Malaysia with its unique characteristic as a multi-ethnic, rapidly developing, post-colonial nation provides an interesting augmentation to the existing literature on state feminism and the theoretical framework of feminist institutionalism. In addition, this study has identified different forms of engagements between important actors, and recognised the importance of international actors and conventions in the pressure they exert on the state to implement gender empowerment initiatives in the absence of strong women movements.

Furthermore, there is a pressing need to examine the government’s role in advancing gender issues. Despite the existence of a dedicated WPA, Malaysia has continued to slide down the Global Gender Gap Index, from 72 in 2006 to 100 in 2013 (the UN Report, 2014). This study has therefore identified the factors which shape the capacity of the WPA, and finds that although it is established as a full ministry, it continues to be hampered by institutional weaknesses.

Although discussion of other actors, such as women’s movements, the private sector and political parties, contribute greatly to the literature of gender politics in Malaysia, considering its authoritative nature, the role of the state is also nevertheless crucial. In addition, with the collective power of a
strong state authority and a dominant party system in Malaysia, civil society and political parties, particularly the opposition, have limited space and influence over the decision-making process, as the state does not actively engage with actors that are critical towards the ruling political party and government’s stance. The government’s capacity in promoting gender empowerment issues therefore has a bearing on the analysis carried out in this study.
FUTURE RESEARCH AREAS

The study on WPA in Malaysia is extensive and multifaceted. To generate further understanding and expand the existing theoretical framework of feminist institutionalism as well as to enrich state feminism empirical works, there is a need for more case studies to allow further assessment and comparison of elements that influence the WPA’s capacity in different settings. This thesis recognises the limitations of this research which include the researcher’s own limitations. This thus opens the possibility for future research related to this study in a number of areas, as highlighted in the preceding paragraphs.

Firstly, although case studies can be enriched by longitudinal data, time and knowledge constraints have not allowed this research to delve further into the impacts of institutional changes on the capacity of the Malaysian WPA. For example, it has managed to capture data for only a stipulated time period (December 2011-June 2014) and has therefore disregarded additional changes that occurred prior to and after this time. Future research may thus explore the effect of institutional changes on the WPA’s operation and the way it influences the Ministry’s capacity to tackle gender empowerment initiatives. The longitudinal research may be used to determine whether similar or different results are generated during each phase of the WPA institutional changes (such as a change in leadership or the implementation of the government transformation programme).

Secondly, this study does not capture in detail the complexity of relationship between the WPA and the agencies and departments under its jurisdiction. The interviews and document analysis conducted as part of this research focused on gender empowerment initiatives, and the study thus does not include those agencies and departments under the WPA which deal with issues not directly related to gender (such as social welfare and social policy). The research thus only examines the WPA as a ministry and the
agencies and departments under it which deal solely with gender empowerment issues (such as the WDD and the NIEW).

Further research could be conducted in the form of an embedded single case study investigating all departments and agencies under the WPA, with its unit of analysis enabling the Ministry’s operations to be examined as a whole, including all departments and agencies under its purview. Moreover, this would provide a cross-cutting view of the WPA’s capacity and effectiveness within an institutional setting.

In addition, this study did not develop measurement tools with which to analyse the effectiveness of the WPA in the field of gender empowerment; more detailed analysis using a single embedded case study may develop the appropriate measurement tools with which to do this. A cross-cutting analysis will facilitate greater comprehension, through comparative studies of the WPA and the agencies under its range.

Thirdly, this research encountered challenges in its attempts to obtain the extensive range of documents needed to enable in-depth examination of the WPA. The rules and regulations operating in Malaysia stipulate that government documents are subject to the Official Secrets Act, limiting the availability of data for this research. This offers an explanation of why officials interviewed as part of this research preferred to give information off the record to avoid possible awkwardness in sharing information deemed ‘inappropriate’ for outsiders (of which the researcher was deemed to be one). Malaysia’s strong hierarchical bureaucratic setting also leads to a preference for only sharing information which has been verified and approved by one’s superiors.

In addition, the political climate, specifically the impending general election at the time of the fieldwork, contributed to the difficulty in gaining access to officials. At the same time, the opposition parties were gaining support in the highly state-controlled and dominant party nation which makes officials more stringent in sharing information due to this highly sensitive
period. This factor, in addition to the existing restrictive laws and strong hierarchical bureaucratic setting, and alongside increased time constraints and additional implied workload, may have contributed to the reluctance and slow response from officials to request for interviews.

These conditions hindered the researcher from obtaining extensive detail on the WPA’s operations; other sources of data were relied on, such as government documents, and reports produced by the women’s movement and international organisations. However, this in itself provided an insight to the researcher into the operational environment of the WPA, which proved useful in explaining this environment in relation to the WPA’s institutional structure within the state and the role it plays in shaping the WPA’s capacity.

Fourthly, this study identifies and examines only the factors influencing the WPA’s capacity from the perspective of actors operating within the Agency, and does not capture in detail the perspective of other actors also working to implement gender empowerment initiatives. Nevertheless, it does not disregard the importance of the wide variety of other actors working on the ground (such as politicians and officials), especially at local level (for example, state and district level) administration. It also recognises the significance of actors external to the government, such as members of the women’s movement and civil society, the role of international institutions such as UNDP, and the impact of international conventions such as CEDAW on gender empowerment initiatives in Malaysia. Future research might therefore usefully address subject matter related to the study by exploring the WPA using domestic and international frameworks in relation to gender empowerment initiatives to further explore the role of external actors apart from women movement especially in the global South. It also may acquire greater understanding of the factors influencing gender-related doctrinal issues in a conservative society, the role of international organisations and conventions in the implementation of national gender empowerment initiatives, and the dynamic relationship between political
gender culture and institutional capacity, specifically in a conservative dominant party system setting such as Malaysia.

Fifthly, this study concentrates on the WPA’s capacity at federal level. It does not capture the complex interaction between the federal level administration and the state government, again because of the researcher’s time constraint and lack of expertise. This thesis is thus limited to the federal level administration of the WPA which provides a detailed explanation of its capacity, both in specific areas of gender empowerment initiatives and also in terms of the interaction of formal and informal rules within the areas identified, in order to understand their strengths and conflicts. Future research on the capacity of the WPA may thus endeavour to explore the aspect of federalism by including the perspective of the officials on the ground, who act as implementers of federal level policy but who, because state powers are limited according to the constitution, are subservient to federal level officers. This research may also capture the tension between the state and federal governments, notably in those states managed by the opposition parties, and how this tension contributes to impeding gender initiatives. Understanding this conflict may provide an explanation which addresses the concerns associated with the implementation of gender policy at the local level.

Finally, while this study aims to provide a deeper analysis of the WPA in Malaysia as a case study, it is unable to provide a generalisation of non-western, post-colonial, developing state feminism. Rather, it aims to enrich existing materials, thus paving the way for future research on state feminism outside the existing western, developed nation domain. This study also provides references for further research on the institutional capacity of the WPA, especially for countries within regions which resemble the Malaysian context. A potential research area to be explored is therefore that of comparative studies on non-Western state feminism. Although several such studies have been conducted, this present research is the first to address the
issue of state feminism in Malaysia. This comparative study will enable non-Western state feminism to expand its theoretical analysis and empirical works by identifying commonalities and differences in state feminism across the globe, leading to the augmentation of state feminism and feminist institutionalism theoretical frameworks.

UNDERSTANDING THE INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY OF NON-WESTERN STATE FEMINISM

This research has examined the capacity of the WPA in a non-Western setting using cross-cutting techniques to analyse state feminism through a feminist institutionalist lens. Set in Malaysia, the case study has highlighted the dynamic institutional setting in which the WPA operates, and which differs from the existing literature on state feminism in a Western context. The research finds that a unique institutional environment exists within the WPA operational setting and that this structure provides an understanding of the WPA’s capacity.

This study has also pioneered the adoption of feminist institutionalism analysis in a state feminism empirical study, thereby identifying both the formal and informal elements which interact with each of the factors shaping the WPA’s capacity. The cross-cutting framework employed by this research has proved to be a useful method of analysis. It enables the integration of two approaches to provide a better understanding of institutional dynamics. Subsequently, this study was able to distinguish the interaction between formal and informal rules and how they influence and affect various aspects of the WPA’s capacity. The cross-cutting framework developed by this study also offers a scheme which analyses the level of influence of each component identified as formal and informal rules in order to comprehend the factors which shape the WPA’s capacity within its institutional setting.
The interaction between numerous formal and informal rules results in a complex institutional situation for the WPA to operate within. Furthermore, these institutions are not equal but rather their interaction persists in influencing each another, resulting in the continuing existence of the WPA and institutional changes over time. This study also finds that on occasion, the existence of formal and informal rules strengthens the Agency’s capacity, while at others it reduces it. It also finds that the gendered institutional viewpoint influences the WPA’s capacity through the formulation of its mission and vision.

This study has also identified that the capacity of the WPA in Malaysia to implement gender empowerment initiatives varies. This is because the factors are granted different weighing as a result of the interaction of various elements, as discussed in chapters four, five and six. In addition, this study has discovered a dichotomy with the existing literature in relation to the engagement by the state of women’s movements in gender empowerment initiatives. While Western state feminism emphasises the role of the women’s movement in influencing the state’s gender empowerment initiatives (Stetson & Mazur 1995; Friedman, 2000; Curtin 2008), this is undermined by a strong state authority and a range of restrictive laws. In a decision-making process involving the participation of weak women’s movements, the state thus inevitably has the upper hand in determining the gender issues put forward for debate. As a consequence, international actors especially UNDP and the ADB play a significant role in engaging with the state to ensure gender empowerment initiatives receive appropriate and continuous attention from policymakers.

As a relatively young ministry within the government institutional setting, the WPA has limited capacity in implementing gender-related agendas. It is filled with bureaucrats instead of femocrats, and the regular changes in appointments mean that new WPA officials have to go through a steep learning curve in understanding gender issues, which undeniably
consumes time. The process enabling the WPA to attain greater legitimacy within the institutional setup as the advocate of gender issues is therefore ongoing, albeit gradually and slowly. The limitation of the WPA’s capacity is also largely due to the centralisation of power at the prime minister’s department which limits the autonomy of the Agency to act.

The WPA, despite its position as a full ministry, is obligated to conform to consolidated national development plans as decided by the locus of power, that is, central government. This study thus finds that the WPA is also subject to the strategies of politicians at the decision-making level. This is demonstrated by the existence of two portfolios within state institution which deal with women-related agendas, the WPA and the Women Entrepreneurship Unit under the PM’s Department resulted from political tactics by high-ranking politicians designed to favour their supporters. The existence of these two portfolios at ministerial level may prove an obstacle for the WPA, as it means there is the potential for a conflict of interests to arise between the two agencies. It is recommended that both portfolios are reconciled in order to prevent this. Through this reconciliation, a single resource pool can be allocated to improving women standards in society, rather than being divided between a numbers of groups with a similar purpose.

The WPA’s capacity to implement gender empowerment initiatives is also limited by its vast mandate and thinly spread resources. Analysis of WPA resource utilisation found that due to the widespread nature of its organisation, WPA resources are also over-concentrated in the area of social welfare, thus undermining its role as state advocate for gender empowerment initiatives. There is a need for the WPA to re-examine the main purpose of its establishment; currently, its focus is mainly on social welfare and the improvement of economic standards. Although this aids women from low-income groups, it also alienates affect women from other economic backgrounds who come forward with issues for discussion.
This study suggests that the creation of a specific agency which deals with gender-related issues would be likely to be instrumental in ensuring that such issues receive adequate attention from policymakers, instead of the WPA’s current practice of having a wide mandate, with a remit to get involved with societal matters. This results in policy debates seeing gender-related issues being intertwined with societal related issues, diluting their importance and causing the WPA to lose the momentum needed to push them forward, as it has multiple issues to handle at the same time.

Despite its constraints, it is thus undeniable that the WPA has contributed greatly to the improvement of women’s status in the Malaysian society. The Malaysian government in its effort to enhance the economic status of the country, has recognised the vital role played by the Malaysian women in the national development process. Gender issues have been incorporated into the national development plans since the 1970s until the present time. Beginning from the Third Malaysia Development Plan (1976-1980), women’s active participation and contribution in the development process has stimulated the government to integrate and increase female participation in society.

This research will be useful for actors that have interest to champion gender issues such as feminist policy makers, civil society and academics to further understand the institutional strengths and weaknesses of the WPA, thus allowing more informed choices of actions and strategies to move forward.
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Appendix 1: Parliament Standing Order Amendment

Amendment of Standing Order 36

1. Standing Order 36 is amended in paragraph (4) by inserting after the word “language” the words “or make a sexist remark”.

Explanation:
This amendment seeks to provide specifically that a member is also prevented from making any sexist remark.

Amendment text:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standing Order 36 (4) original text</th>
<th>Standing Order 36 (4) text with amendment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(4) It shall be out of order for Members of the House to use offensive language.</td>
<td>(4) It shall be out of order for Members of the House to use offensive language or make a sexist remark.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Appendix 2: Table of interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview No</th>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>PA to MP Fuziah (PKR)</td>
<td>02/03/2013</td>
<td>KL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Officer WDD</td>
<td>08/02/2013</td>
<td>JPW Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Officer WDD</td>
<td>13/02/2013</td>
<td>JPW Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Govt Officer (Technical)</td>
<td>14/02/2013</td>
<td>KL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Religious scholar</td>
<td>20/02/2013</td>
<td>KL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Govt officer (technical)</td>
<td>22/02/2013</td>
<td>KL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>EPU</td>
<td>22/02/2013</td>
<td>KL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>EPU</td>
<td>22/02/2013</td>
<td>KL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>NGO-SIS</td>
<td>11/03/2013</td>
<td>KL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>NGO-religious based</td>
<td>12/03/2013</td>
<td>KL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>ADS Officer</td>
<td>15/03/2013</td>
<td>KL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>GLC based officer</td>
<td>21/03/2013</td>
<td>KL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>WPA stakeholders</td>
<td>07/04/2013</td>
<td>KL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>NIEW</td>
<td>10/04/2013</td>
<td>NIEW Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>NCWO</td>
<td>11/04/2013</td>
<td>Phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>MWFCD</td>
<td>12/04/2013</td>
<td>MWFCD office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>MWFCD</td>
<td>12/04/2013</td>
<td>MWFCD office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>MWFCD</td>
<td>12/04/2013</td>
<td>MWFCD office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>MWFCD</td>
<td>12/04/2013</td>
<td>MWFCD office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>MWFCD</td>
<td>12/04/2013</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
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<td>Phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>NGO-AWAM</td>
<td>24/04/2013</td>
<td>Phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>UMNO</td>
<td>25/04/2013</td>
<td>Phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Former UMNO high ranking member</td>
<td>27/04/2013</td>
<td>Kedah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Government officers (group)</td>
<td>29/04/2013</td>
<td>Putrajaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Political campaigner</td>
<td>06/05/2013</td>
<td>KL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Political campaigner</td>
<td>06/05/2013</td>
<td>KL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>WPA stakeholders</td>
<td>10/05/2013</td>
<td>KL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>single mother-recipient of WPA initiative</td>
<td>17/05/2013</td>
<td>Putrajaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Government officer</td>
<td>28/07/2013</td>
<td>Phone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3: Client Charter MWFCD

CLIENT'S CHARTER
MINISTRY OF WOMEN, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (KFWKM)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Services</th>
<th>Standard Response Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Waiting Time At Our Services Counters</td>
<td>• We will entertain you within FIFTEEN (15) minutes upon your arrival at the counter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaints/Enquiries Management</td>
<td>• We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint/enquiries within ONE (1) working day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• We will provide response to your complaint/enquiries within THREE (3) working days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suppliers/Vendors Payment Management</td>
<td>• We will ensure payment to suppliers/vendors within FOURTEEN (14) working days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselor Registrar</td>
<td>• We will process your registration (with complete documents) within THIRTY (30) working days.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Should you require further information please contact the Corporate Communications Unit, Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development at 03-2693 0085

Last Update 07/04/2011 10:19 PM

Appendix 4: Civil Service tiers for Professional and Management group (Malaysia)

Grade 41

Grade 44

Grade 48

Grade 52

Grade 54

Source: Public Service Department circular
Appendix 5: Ninth Schedule of Malaysia Federal Constitution

NINTH SCHEDULE

LEGISLATIVE LISTS

List I - Federal List

1. External affairs, including -

(a) Treaties, agreements and conventions with other countries and all matters which bring the Federation into relations with any other country;

(b) Implementation of treaties, agreements and conventions with other countries;

(c) Diplomatic, consular and trade representation;

(d) International organizations; participation in international bodies and implementation of decisions taken thereat;

(e) Extradition, fugitive offenders, admission into, and emigration and expulsion from, the Federation;

(f) Passports, visas, permits of entry or other certificates; quarantine;

(g) Foreign and extra-territorial jurisdiction; and

(h) Pilgrimages to places outside Malaysia.

2. Defence of the Federation or any part thereof, including -

(a) Naval, military and air forces and other armed forces;

(b) Any armed forces attached to or operating with any of the armed forces of the Federation; visiting forces;

(c) Defence works; military and protected areas; naval, military and air force bases; barracks, aerodromes and other works;

(d) Manoeuvres;

(e) War and peace; alien enemies and enemy aliens; enemy property; trading with an enemy; war damage; war risk insurance;

(f) Arms, fire-arms, ammunition and explosives;

(g) National service; and

(h) Civil defence.

3. Internal security, including -
(a) Police; criminal investigation; registration of criminals; public order;
(b) Prisons, reformatories; remand homes; place of detention; probation of offenders; juvenile offenders;
(c) Preventive detention; restriction of residence;
(d) Intelligence services; and
(e) National registration.

4. Civil and criminal law and procedure and the administration of justice, including -

(a) Constitution and organization of all courts other than Syariah Courts;
(b) Jurisdiction and powers of all such courts.
(c) Remuneration and other privileges of the judges and officers presiding over such courts;
(d) Persons entitled to practise before such courts;
(e) Subject to paragraph (ii), the following -

(i) Contract, partnership, agency and other special contracts; master and servant; inns and inn-keepers; actionable wrongs, property and its transfer and hypothecation, except land, bona bacantia; equity and trusts, marriage, divorce and legitimacy; married women's property and status; interpretation of federal law; negotiable instruments; statutory declarations; arbitration; mercantile law; registration of businesses and business names; age of majority; infants and minors; adoption; succession, testate and intestate; probate and letters of administration; bankruptcy and insolvency; oaths and affirmations; limitation; reciprocal enforcement of judgments and orders; the law of evidence;

(ii) the matters mentioned in paragraph (i) do not include Islamic personal law relating to marriage, divorce, guardianship, maintenance, adoption, legitimacy, family law, gifts or succession, testate and intestate;

(f) Official secrets, corrupt practices;

(g) Use of exhibition of coats of arms, armorial bearing, flags, emblems, uniforms, orders and decorations other than those of a State;

(h) Creation of offences in respect of any of the matters included in the Federal List or dealt with by federal law;

(i) Indemnity in respect of any of the matters in the Federal List or dealt with by federal law;
(j) Admiralty Jurisdiction;

(k) Ascertainment of Islamic law and other personal laws for purposes of federal law; and

(l) Betting and lotteries.

5. Federal citizenship and naturalisation; aliens.

6. The machinery of government, subject to the State List, but including -

(a) Elections to both Houses of Parliament and the Legislative Assemblies of the States and all matters connected therewith;

(b) The Armed Forces Council and the Commissions to which Part I applies;

(c) Federal services including the establishment of services common to the Federation and the States; services common to two or more States;

(d) Pensions and compensation for loss of office; gratuities and conditions of service;

(e) Government and administration of the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur and Labuan including Islamic law therein to the same extent as provided in item I in the State List and in respect of the Federal Territory of Labuan, native law and custom to the same extent as provided in item 13 of the Supplement to State List for States of Sabah and Sarawak;

(f) Federal Government contracts;

(g) Federal public authorities; and

(h) Purchase, acquisition and holding of, and dealing with, property for federal purposes.

7. Finance, including -

(a) Currency, legal tender and coinage;

(b) National savings and savings banks;

(c) Borrowing on the security by the States, public authorities and private enterprise;

(d) Loans to or borrowing by the States, public authorities and private enterprise;

(e) Public debt of the Federation;

(f) Financial and accounting procedure, including procedure for the collection, custody and payment of the public moneys of the Federation and of the
States, and the purchase, custody and disposal of public property other than land of the Federation and of the States;

(g) Audit and account of the Federation and the States and other public authorities;

(h) Taxes, rates in the federal capital;

(i) Fees in respect of any of the matters in the Federal List or dealt with by federal law;

(j) Banking, money-lending’ pawnbrokers; control of credit;

(k) Bills of exchange, cheques, promissory notes and other similar instruments;

(l) Foreign exchange; and

(m) Capital issues, stock and commodity exchanges.

8. Trade, commerce and industry, including -

(a) Production, supply and distribution of goods, price control and food control, adulteration of foodstuffs and other goods;

(b) Imports into, and exports from, the Federation;

(c) Incorporation, regulation and winding up of corporations other than municipal corporations (but including the municipal corporation of the federal capital); regulation of foreign corporations; bounties on production in or export from the Federation;

(d) Insurance, including compulsory insurance;

(e) Patents, designs; inventions; trademarks and mercantile marks; copyrights;

(f) Establishments of standards of weights and measures;

(g) Establishments of standards of quality of goods manufactured in or exported from the Federation;

(h) Auctions and auctioneers;

(i) Industries, regulation of industrial undertakings;

(j) Subject to item 2 (c) in the State List; Development of mineral resources, mines, mining, minerals and mineral ores, oils and oilfields; purchase, sale, import and export of minerals and mineral ores; petroleum products; regulation of labour and safety in mines and oilfields;

(k) Factories, boilers and machinery, dangerous trades; and
(l) Dangerous and inflammable substances.

9. Shipping, navigation and fisheries, including -
   (a) Shipping and navigation on the high seas and in tidal and inland waters;
   (b) Ports and harbours; foreshores;
   (c) Lighthouses and other provisions for the safety of navigation;
   (d) Maritime and estuarine fishing and fisheries, excluding turtles;
   (e) Light dues; and
   (f) Wrecks and salvage.

10. Communications and transport, including -
    (a) Roads, bridges, ferries and other means of communication if declared to be federal by or under federal law;
    (b) Railways, excluding Penang Hill Railway;
    (c) Airways, aircraft and air navigation; civil aerodromes; provisions for the safety of aircraft;
    (d) Regulation of traffic by land, water and air other than on rivers outside harbour areas wholly within one State;
    (e) Carriage of passengers and goods by land, water and air;
    (f) Mechanically propelled vehicles;
    (g) Posts and telecommunications; and
    (h) Wireless, broadcasting and television.

11. Federal works and power, including -
    (a) Public works for federal purposes;
    (b) Water supplies, rivers and canals, except those wholly within one State or regulated by an agreement between all the States concerned; production, distributions by supply of water power; and
    (c) Electricity, gas and gas works; and other works for the production and distribution of power and energy.

12. Surveys, inquiries and research, including -
    (a) Census; registration of births and deaths; registration of marriages; registration of adoptions other than adoptions under Islamic law or Malay custom;
(b) Survey of the Federation; social, economic and scientific surveys; meteorological organizations;
(c) Scientific and technical research; and
(d) Commissions of inquiry.

13. Education, including -
(a) Elementary, secondary, and university education; vocational and technical education, training of teachers; registration and control of teachers; managers and schools; promotion of special studies and research; scientific and literary societies;
(b) Libraries; museums; ancient and historical monuments and records; archaeological sites and remains.

14. Medicine and health including sanitation in the federal capital, and including -
(a) Hospitals, clinic and dispensaries, medical profession; maternity and child welfare; lepers and leper institutions;
(b) Lunacy and mental deficiency, including places for reception and treatment;
(c) Poisons and dangerous drugs; and
(d) Intoxicating drugs and liquors, manufacture and sale of drugs.

15. Labour and social security, including -
(a) Trade unions; industrial and labour disputes, welfare of labour including housing of labourers by employers; employers liability and workmen's compensation;
(b) Unemployment insurance; health insurance; widow's orphan's and old age pensions; maternity benefits; provident and benevolent funds; superannuation; and
(c) Charities and charitable institutions; charitable trusts and trustees excluding Wakafs; Hindu endowments.


17. Professional occupations other than those specifically enumerated.

18. Holidays other than State holidays; standard of time.

19. Unincorporated societies.
20. Control of agricultural pests; protection against such pests; prevention of plant diseases.


22. Censorship.

23. Subject to item 5(f) of the State List, theatres; cinemas; cinematograph films; places of public amusement.

24. Federal housing and improvement trusts.

25. Co-operative societies.

26. Subject to item 9A of the Concurrent List, prevention and extinguishment of fire, including fire services and fire brigades.

27. All matters relating to the Federal Territory, including the matters enumerated in items 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the State List and in the Cast of the Federal Territory of Labuan, the matter enumerated in items 15, 16 and 17 of the Supplement to State List for States of Sabah and Sarawak.

List II - State List

1. Except with respect to the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur and Labuan, Islamic law and personal and family law of persons professing the religion of Islam, including the Islamic law relating to succession, testate and intestate, betrothal, marriage, divorce, dower, maintenance, adoption, legitimacy guardianship, gifts, partitions and non-charitable trusts; Wakafs and the definition and regulation of charitable and religious endowments, institutions, trusts, charities and charitable institutions operating wholly within the State; Malay customs. Zakat, Fitrah and Baitulmal or similar Islamic religious revenue, mosques or any Islamic public places of worship, creation and punishment of offences by persons professing the religion of Islam against precepts of that religion, except in regard to matters included in the Federal List; the constitution, organisation and procedure of Syariah courts, which shall have jurisdiction only over person professing the religion of Islam and in respect only of any of the matters included in this paragraph, but shall not have jurisdiction in respect of offences except in so far as conferred by federal law*, the control of propagating doctrines and beliefs among persons professing the religion of Islam; the determination of matters of Islamic law and doctrine Malay custom.

2. Except with respect to the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur and Labuan, land including -
(a) Land tenure, relation of landlord and tenant; registration of titles and deeds relating to land; colonization, land improvement and soil conservation; rent restriction;

(b) Malay reservations or, in the States of Sabah and Sarawak, native reservations;

(c) Permits and licences for prospecting for mines; mining leases and certificates;

(d) Compulsory acquisition of land;

(e) Transfer of land, mortgages, leases and charges in respect of land; easements; and

(f) Escheat; treasure trove excluding antiquities.

3. Except with respect to the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur and Labuan, agriculture and forestry, including -

(a) Agriculture and agricultural loans, and

(b) Forests.

4. Local government outside the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur and Labuan, including -

(a) Local administration; municipal corporation; local town and rural board and other local authorities; local government services, local rates, local government elections;

(b) Obnoxious trades and public nuisances in local authority areas;

(c) Housing and provision for housing accommodation, improvement trusts.

5. Except with respect to the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur and Labuan, other services of a local character, that is to say -

(a) (Repealed).

(b) Boarding houses and lodging houses;

(c) Burial and cremation grounds;

(d) Pounds and cattle trespass;

(e) Markets and fairs; and

(f) Licensing of theatres, cinemas and places of public amusement.

6. State works and water, that is to say -

(a) Public work for State purposes;
(b) Roads, bridges and ferries other than those in Federal List, regulation of weight and speed of vehicles on such roads; and

(c) Subject to the Federal List, water (including water supplies, rivers and canals); control of silt; riparian rights.

7. Machinery of the State Government, subject to the Federal List, but including -

(a) Civil List and State pensions;

(b) Exclusive State services;

(c) Borrowing on the security of the State Consolidated Fund;

(d) Loans for State purposes;

(e) Public debt of the State; and

(f) Fees in respect of any of the matters included in the State List or dealt with by State law.

8. State holidays.

9. Creation of offences in respect of any of the matters included in the State List or dealt with by State law, proof of State law and of thing done thereunder, and proof of any matter for purposes of State law.

10. Inquiries for State purposes, including commissions of inquiry and collection of statistics with respect to any of the matters included in the State List of dealt with by State law.

11. Indemnity in respect of any of the matters in the State List or dealt with by State law.

12. Turtles and riverine fishing.

List IIA - Supplement to State List for State of Sabah and Sarawak

13. Native law and custom, including the personal law relating to marriage, divorce, guardianship, maintenance, adoption, legitimacy, family law, gifts or succession testate or intestate; registration of adoptions under native law or custom; the determination of matters of native law or custom; the constitution, organization and procedure of native courts (including the right of audience in such courts), and the jurisdiction and powers of such courts, which shall extend only to the matters included in this paragraph and shall not include jurisdiction in respect of offences except in so far as conferred by federal law.
14. Incorporation of authorities and other bodies set up by State law, if incorporated directly by State law, and regulation and winding up of corporations so created.

15. Ports and harbours, other than those declared to be federal by or under federal law; regulation of traffic by water in ports and harbours or on rivers wholly within the State, except traffic in federal ports or harbours; foreshores.


17. Libraries, museums, ancient and historical monuments and records and archaeological sites and remains, other than those declared to be federal by or under federal law.

18. In Sabah, the Sabah Railway.

19. (Repealed).

**List III - Concurrent List**

1. Social welfare; social services subject to Lists I and II; protection of women, children and your persons.

2. Scholarships.

3. Protection of wild animals and wild birds; National Parks.

4. Animal husbandry, prevention of cruelty to animals; veterinary services; animal quarantine.

5. Town and country planning, except in the federal capital.

6. Vagrancy and itinerant hawkers.

7. Public health, sanitation (excluding sanitation in the federal capital) and the prevention of diseases.

8. Drainage and irrigation.

9. Rehabilitation of mining land and land which has suffered soil erosion.

9A. Fire safety measures and fire precautions in the construction and maintenance of building.

**List IIIA - Supplement to Concurrent List for State of Sabah and Sarawak**

10. Personal law relating to marriage, divorce, guardianship, maintenance, adoption, legitimacy, family law, gifts or succession testate and intestate.

11. Adulteration of foodstuffs and other goods.
12. Shipping under fifteen registered tons, including the carriage of passengers and goods by such shipping, maritime and estuarine fishing and fisheries.

13. The production, distribution and supply of water power and of electricity generated by water power.

14. Agricultural and forestry research, control of agricultural pests, and protection against such pests, prevention of plant diseases.

15. Charities and charitable trusts and institutions in the State (that is to say, operating wholly within, or created and operating in, the State) and their trustees, including the incorporation thereof and the regulation and winding-up of incorporated charities and charitable institutions in the State.

16. Theatres; cinemas; cinematograph films; places of public amusements.

17. Elections to the State Assembly held during the period of indirect elections.

18. In Sabah until the end of the year 1970 (but not in Sarawak), medicine and health, including the matters specified in items 14 (a) to (d) of the Federal List.
Appendix 6: Sample Interview Questions (Matrix)

1. WPA
   a. Motives/Function
      i. Why WPA in Malaysia is established?
      ii. What are the motives/motivations that drive the department is promoted into ministry?
      iii. What is the environment that promoted WPA to be established and later expanded to a ministry?
      iv. How stable is WPA establishment? What it depends on for its continuity?
      v. What are the main functions of WPA? Supportive of other ministries?
      vi. National interest or gender interest comes first?
      vii. Who are the main stakeholders of WPA in Malaysia? Who does WPA represents? Any particular categories of women?
      viii. What are the scopes of WPA in Malaysia?
   b. Location
      i. Why WPA expanded to be a ministry?
      ii. What are the differences of scopes after WPA becomes a ministry?
      iii. Who decided that changes of WPA location?
      iv. Where is the location in state’s apparatus?
      v. How close it is to power locus?
      vi. Federal and state level relations?
   c. Access
      i. How WPA gain access to state’s resources?
      ii. Who are the gatekeepers to state’s resources that WPA has to go through?
iii. How does WPA identify access to international resources? What are the processes to gain access to international resources?

iv. How does WPA present gender agendas to the state?

v. Who are the gatekeepers to state in forwarding gender agendas?

vi. Key individuals that ensure state feminism’s importance in state institution?

d. Resources

i. How WPA gain resources from state and international organisations?

ii. How many staffs for WPA?

iii. What is the biggest department for WPA and the highest allocation of budget?

iv. What kind of resources available for WPA?

v. Forms of support received from state’s institution (including legislature and judiciary?)

vi. Opportunity cost with other state’s agencies?

e. Networks

i. Relationship between women’s movement and WPA in Malaysia? What kind? How?

ii. How does WPA being perceived by other players in state institution? (Including legislature and judiciary)

iii. How does WPA interact with other state agencies to gain access to state’s resources and to forward gender agendas?

iv. Relationship between WPA departments and secretariats?

v. Forms of state’s response to women’s movements voices?
vi. Relationship between WPA and other state’s branches (legislature and judiciary)

f. Others

i. Intersection identity: ethnic, religion and gender. Which one comes first for WPA? How does WPA deal with identities that overlap with another? Which one prioritised by WPA?

ii. How does WPA view and handle doctrinal policies changes? Where the pressure comes from?

iii. Does WPA consider itself to be a feminist institution? How WPA defines feminism? Does WPA subscribe to feminist ideology?

iv. How WPA assist the nationalisation process?

v. How do socio cultural values influence WPA in defining proper gender placement in society?

vi. How does WPA view and handle doctrinal policies changes? Where the pressure comes from?

vii. Effects of colonial legacy on gender relations in Malaysia. What are the colonial legacies? How does WPA identify these colonial legacies (i.e. gender relations, policies, law?)

viii. Domination by Malay Muslim in MOWFCD. Effects on all women representation? Equal attention to minority women? (Non-Malays, non-Muslims?)

2. UNDP

a. Resources

i. How does UNDP give access to UN’s resources to Malaysian WPA?

ii. What are the supports given by UNDP to Malaysian WPA?
iii. What are the outcomes expected from WPA Malaysia?

b. Access
i. Who are the gatekeepers to WPA Malaysia and vice versa?

3. Women’s Movement

a. Forms of WM
i. Ideology of WM-welfare NGOs@political parties@religious organisations@gender?

ii. Critical or non-critical?

b. Network

ii. Who are main alliances of women’s movement? Other domestic women movements? International women movements or international organisations?

iii. Relationship between women’s movement and WPA in Malaysia? What kind? How?

c. Resources
i. Do women movements in Malaysia have enough resources to pressure the state? Why and how?

d. Access
i. Does WM have access to WPA resources?

ii. Does WM capable of reaching WPA without going through bureaucracies?

iii. Who are the gatekeepers to WPA/state?

4. Political parties
a. Political parties’ women wings roles in pushing for gender initiatives?
b. Political parties' ideologies influence in gender relations? Priorities for feminist agendas?

c. Female MPs initiatives to give inputs to WPA? (Gender Caucus)

5. **Cabinet Committee on Gender Equality**

a. Existence and effectiveness of Cabinet Committee on Gender Equality?

b. Who are the members?

c. What are the functions of CCGE

d. When they meet? How often? What are the outcomes?
### Appendix 7: Table for data sources (Post fieldwork)

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<td><strong>4.</strong></td>
<td>Government documents (circulars/policies)/interviews/Organisational structure/constitution/Published materials/speeches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITEM</td>
<td>RESOURCES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRENGTHS</td>
<td>1. Rights to receive and control its own budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Autonomy to allocate its own resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Access to established institution’s infrastructure and resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEAKNESSES</td>
<td>1. Cover vast areas inadequate to its resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Lack of experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. High cost to engage with professional experts (answerable to Ministry of Finance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Staff function as administrators than advocators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORMAL/INFORMAL</td>
<td>1. Personal/political influence on resources allocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Subjected to public service policies (open service system)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Power relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Seniority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Hierarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITEM</td>
<td>RELATIONSHIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| STRENGTHS | 1. Inter agencies (vertical and horizontal)  
   a. Existence of inter agencies cooperation mechanism (NBOSE, Transformation Programme)  
   2. Civil society  
   a. Strong partnership with women organisations’ umbrella body (NCWO)  
   3. Active participation at international level | 1. Government circulars and memos/Ministries speeches/MWFCD reports/MWFCD websites/interviews/internal documents/ministries published materials  
2. MWFCD annual reports/news articles/speeches/interviews/social media feed/published materials  
3. Government circulars/memos/country reports/annual reports/speeches/interviews/internal documents/published materials |
| WEAKNESSES | 1. Function as coordinator instead of advocator  
2. Depend on goodwill from other players  
   a. Lack of implementation  
   b. Time taken too long  
3. Limited space for civil society to engage with the state | 1. Interviews/public service circulars/MWFCD documents/articles/books/shadow reports/IO reports  
2. Interviews/reports by civil society/ombudsman/annual reports/published materials/press statements/speeches/news articles  
| FORMAL/INFORMAL | 1. High influence of former leadership (dual roles as minister and Chief Women wing)  
2. Conservative public sector culture  
3. Power relations  
   a. MWFCD and other govt agencies (earning and spending ministries?)  
   b. State and civil society (strong state)  
4. Selective partnership | 1. Interviews/annual reports/Observations/social media feed/speeches/news/party’s social media/parliament Hansard  
2. Internal documents (e.g. Presentations/interviews/speeches/news articles/government policy documents/interviews/published materials  
3. Interviews/news articles/videos/speeches/books and journal articles  
4. Interviews/Published materials/speeches/Press statements/books and articles |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>MISSION</th>
<th>EVIDENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRENGTHS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Optimises all agencies under MWFCD</td>
<td>1. Ministry’s organisational structure/Government circulars and memos/Ministries speeches/MWFCD reports/MWFCD websites/Reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Provide gender sensitive information/data</td>
<td>2. MWFCD annual reports/published materials/internal documents/government circulars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Availability of instrument</td>
<td>3. Country reports/UN reports/World Bank report/Published materials/Books and journal articles/government circulars/interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>MDG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Gender information and sex disaggregated data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>Capacity building</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>Legislation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td>Gender budget</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEAKNESSES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Reinforces traditional gender roles in society</td>
<td>1. Interviews /MWFCD documents/articles/books/press statements/news/speeches/social media feed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Too focused on non-controversial issues i.e.</td>
<td>3. Interviews/published materials by MWFCD/internal documents/speeches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Economic development</td>
<td>4. Interviews/reports/published materials/press statements/internal documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Violence on women</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Vague understanding on important concepts (i.e. equality, empowerment) and measurement tool of initiatives impacts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORMAL/INFORMAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Influence of Islamisation process</td>
<td>1. Interviews/MWFCD website/annual reports/published materials/Books and journals/Government documents (i.e. policies, circulars)/Constitution/Malaysian law/speeches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Included in national development plan</td>
<td>2. Government documents/interviews/speeches/news articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Relationship between political party and government institution</td>
<td>3. Interviews/news articles/videos/speeches/social media feed/published materials/books and journal articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Social cleavages in society</td>
<td>4. Government documents (circulars/policies)/interviews/Organisational structure/constitution/Published materials/speeches/social media feed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Religion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 8: Finding Analysis (Formal/Informal Rules) Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESTABLISHMENT/SET UP</th>
<th>STRENGTHS/ENABLERS</th>
<th>WEAKNESSES/CONSTRAINTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FORMAL</td>
<td>1. Full ministerial set up, not an agency</td>
<td>1. Small size despite its vast mandate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Has dedicated minister and Deputy Minister- part of cabinet line-up</td>
<td>2. Subjected to institutional structures that have been established since pre-independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Parliamentary system-Ministers are also part of legislature</td>
<td>3. Complies with PM office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Under the purview of Federal Government</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INFORMAL</td>
<td>1. Stability of government</td>
<td>1. Fusion between state and political party; high influence of political party on institutional set up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Continuity depends on political will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESOURCES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STRENGTHS/ENABLERS</td>
<td>WEAKNESSES/CONSTRAINTS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **FORMAL**     | 1. Rights to receive and control its own budget  
                        2. Autonomy to allocate its own resources  
                        3. Access to established government infrastructure and resources | 1. Resources are not adequate to cover its vast mandates  
                                                                          2. Lack of experts  
                                                                          3. Resources subjected to PM’s office approvals (Economic Planning Unit, Civil Service Department)  
                                                                          4. Staff function as administrators than advocators |
| **INFORMAL**   |                                                             | 1. Personal/political influence on resources  
                                                                          2. Selective allocation of resources |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELATIONSHIP</th>
<th>STRENGTHS/ENABLERS</th>
<th>WEAKNESSES/CONSTRAINTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| FORMAL       | 1. Existing inter-ministerial/ agencies cooperation mechanism (NBOSE, National Transformation Programme)  
2. Strong partnership with women organisations’ umbrella body (NCWO)  
3. Active participation at international level | 1. Function as coordinators instead of advocators  
2. Limited space for civil society’s engagement with the state |
| INFORMAL     | 1. High influence of former leader                                                  | 1. Dependent on goodwill of other players  
 a. Lack of implementation  
b. Time taken too long  
2. Power relations  
a. Earning ministries Vs Spending ministries (e.g. MWFCD)  
b. State and civil society (strong state)  
3. Selective partnership |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Strengths/Enablers</th>
<th>Weaknesses/Constraints</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **FORMAL** | 1. Synergise all agencies under WPA  
2. Availability of instruments to achieve its mission  
   a. MDG  
   b. Gender information and sex disaggregated data  
   c. Capacity building  
   d. Legislation  
   e. Budget | 1. Reinforces traditional gender roles in society  
2. Top-down approach  
3. Too focused on non-controversial issues:  
   a. Economic development  
   b. Violence on women |
| **INFORMAL** |  | 1. Influence of conservative cultural and religion in decision makings  
2. Vague understanding on important concepts (i.e. equality, empowerment) |
Appendix 9: List of MWFCD (and agencies) websites

1) Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development
2) Social Welfare Department
3) National Population and Family Development Board
4) Women’s Development Department
   - http://www.jpw.gov.my/
5) Institute Social Malaysia
6) NAM Institute for the Empowerment of Women
Appendix 10: Participant Information Sheet

University of Manchester
School of Social Sciences
Participant Information Sheet

What is the title of the research?
‘The Role of the National Women’s Policy Agency in Malaysia in Gender Equality Initiatives’

Who will conduct the research?
The research will be conducted by Rabi’ah Aminudin, PhD Candidate of The University of Manchester under the sponsorship of the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education

What is the aim of the research?
The research is the requirement for researcher’s PhD degree which intends to contribute for greater insights into non-Western State Feminism

Why have I been chosen?
You as key personnel that have the experience and expertise in the research area

What would I be asked to do if I took part?
To share information that are related to the research area and to recommend relevant access points to data needed

What happens to the data collected?
The data collected will be solely used for academic purpose and confidential data will only be accessible to student and immediate supervisors

How is confidentiality maintained?
The researcher is responsible to safeguard access to data and ensure anonymity of interviewees when requested

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?
It is entirely the choice of interviewee although it may affect researcher’s ability to explore further on the research matter

Will I be paid for participating in the research?
Participation in this research is voluntary and unpaid.
What is the duration of the research?

The research starts from 2011 and expected to finish in 2014. The fieldwork is expected to last for four months and each interview session is estimated to take about an hour.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?

This outcome of this research is a PhD dissertation and journal articles which may be published in coming years

What benefit might this research be to me or other subjects of the research?

It is greatly hoped that the research will provide in-depth analysis on the role of Women Policy Agency in Malaysia and offer inputs for efforts on gender equality initiatives.

Contact for further information

The researcher can be contacted through email at: rbaminudin@gmail.com/ rabiah.aminudin@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk or by phone: +6019-3722471