

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

STOP VIOLENCE IN THE HOME 2006 CAMPAIGN LAUNCH

Speech by Yang Berbahagia Datin Mina Cheah-Foong, Managing Director of The Body Shop Malaysia

Good morning. Yang Berhormat Dato' Seri Shahrizat Binti Abdul Jalil, Minister of Women, Family and Community Development, Yang Bahagia Dato' Simon Foong, Executive Director of Aquawalk Sdn Bhd, Ms. Gaye Philips, UNICEF Representative Malaysia, Ivy Josiah, Executive Director of Women's Aid Organisation, distinguished guests, press members, ladies and gentlemen.

First and foremost, it gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you to the launching of **Stop Violence In The Home Campaign 2006 and Behind Closed Doors** -a global report that focused on the devastating impact of domestic violence on children published by The Body Shop International and UNICEF.

We are indeed very fortunate to have with us this morning, Y.B. Dato' Seri Shahrizat Binti Abdul Jalil. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Y.B. for her graciousness in making time within her busy schedule to be with us to launch the campaign.

Some of the biggest victims of domestic violence are the smallest. This year, as a continuation to our annual Stop Violence In The Home Campaign, The Body Shop is teaming up again with WAO and together with UNICEF, helps to take action on domestic violence in the home, focusing on children as the forgotten victims.

New research published by The Body Shop and UNICEF 'Behind Closed Doors' confirms that the incidence and impact of domestic violence upon children is an issue of colossal proportions. Every year globally, as many as 275 million, between 8 and 9% of children are exposed to domestic violence. Those are just the ones we know about.

In Malaysia alone it is believed that 951,000 children witness physical or mental abuse between parents. Children exposed to domestic violence are often the forgotten victims, and they may well suffer from a range of severe and devastating effects.

Whilst effects vary depending on a range of factors, children's wellbeing, development and social interactions are all adversely affected. They may suffer from low self-esteem, and they may struggle with drug or alcohol addictions. They are also more likely to become perpetrators themselves or indeed become a victim of domestic violence as an adult.

Unless we act now, society will suffer when these children become adults. Domestic violence is a crime that globally affects at least one in three women. This problem is one of the biggest human rights challenges of our times.

Through the 2006 Stop Violence in The Home Campaign we put the focus on children. We're working to raise awareness for this huge issue by calling on governments to take action to put policies in place to support these children.

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The Body Shop is working with WAO and UNICEF all over the world, we're calling for governments to take action now to provide measures to safeguards these children. We want them to:

- 1) Raise awareness on the impact of domestic violence on children through public campaigns
- 2) Create public policies and laws that protect children and criminalize domestic violence
- 3) Allocate resources to support children exposed to domestic violence such as early detection programmes, and appropriate support for the victims

Members of the public can also help to make a difference by purchasing a Daisy Soap at RM8.50 or a Stop Violence In The Home Mint Lip Care Stick at RM17.90. All proceeds from sales of these two items will go to WAO in helping the children that stay in their shelter.

If we take action now we can help to change the lives of those children affected by domestic violence. We can change attitudes and traditions which condone abuse and we can play a vital part in helping to eradicate domestic violence once and for all.

We know it can work. For example in Trinidad and Tobago, children benefit from NGO run workshops to teach adolescents the benefits of developing healthy relationships and learning parenting skills.

And WAO, the core of their services and advocacy is the Refuge and Child Care Centre. At the Child Care Center, children exposed to domestic violence are given a home, schooling, counseling and a support system to meet their physical, mental and emotional needs.

We believe children are the future of our country and the next generation of leaders. All of us - parents, families, teachers, mentors, and community members have a responsibility to ensure a safe and secure living environment for our children and to give them a brighter future.

Once again, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Y.B. Dato' Seri Shahrizat Binti Abdul Jalil, Minister of Women, Family and Community Development for gracing us with her presence today to launch the Stop Violence In The Home 2006.

Thank you.