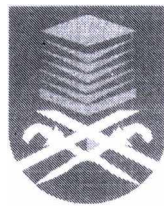# WOMEN IN CIVIL BASED SOCIETY: A CASE STUDY OF PERSEKUTUAN PERKUMPULAN WANITA SARAWAK (PPWS)

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4. Report

4.1   Proposed Executive Summary

Women in civil based society can be define as women's movement, women's pressure group or interes group, women's association and women's NGOs. It is an institution in civil society to address women's issues which the government has not been able to manage. It is a mediator whereby women issues can be brought to the attention of government. Since independence, more than 50 women's NGOs have been established in Sarawak and this is an important indication that Sarawak women have realized their important roles and contribution to the society. The study used qualitative method that emphasize on personal interview and research on secondary data. The study focused on the role and contribution of Persekutuan Perkumpulan Wanita Sarawak (PPWS) and other selected women's NGOs as the unit to be analyzed to seek the truth of challenges that inhibit Sarawak women to participate in civil based society. PPWS is one of the oldest women NGOs established and has played a vital role in coordinating all women's NGOs in Sarawak. Most o₁ Sarawak divisions have PPWS branch.

Through the civil based society, Sarawak women have played an important part in promoting the development of society. Their roles and contribution trough civil society have made society realize of the importance of their role in highlighting issues that need to be addressed. The increasing number of women NGO establishment has proven that they are needed in the development process. Their aspiration is to make their voices heard and to increase awareness among the societies that women have role to play in the development of the nation.

4.2 Introduction

Women participation in today's development process is very significant and their roles are equally important as man. Nation- building is not only men's job but it is also women responsibility. Azlina et al. (2011) stated women now could have greater opportunity to improve themselves by involving in civil society. Thus women now had realized their rights, educated and empowering them are a very crucial factor that need to be planned systematically. It is also important to determine the factors that inhibit some of the women in participating in civil society. Thus it will determine how effective the women's organization at advancing women perspectives in the public sphere and contribute to the public policy.

As mentioned by Minister in Chief Minister's Department Datin Fatimah Abdullah during officiating an International Women's Day in June 2011, gathering of women's groups and movements from Kuching and Samarahan, women form almost half of the state's population can contribute immensely towards the development of the state and its people. Women have to play effective role and needed to have the strength in various fields, including skill, knowledge and attitude. Men and women must work together for a better society. Women also could make their contribution through various roles- as career women in he public and private sectors, as entrepreneurs, as welfare and social workers as well as mothers and wives (The Borneo Post online, 2011).

Women in civil based society are a system or set of organization can be thought of as a mechanism for articulating women perspective. Meanwhile as stated by Weldon S.L and Bahu M. (2005) individual women's groups tend to be homogeneous in some way, reflecting the social network on which they are based, the set of women's organization as a system is more diverse. There is considerable ideological, racial, class and other diversity across women's groups, but they focus on set of overlapping issues that can be thought of as reflecting the social position of women. When women's group raises these issues for discussion, they provide some representation for women. Again this account

4.3 Brief Literature Review

Definition /Concept of Civil Based Society

Weldon S.L. and Bahu M. (2005) stated in their research title, "Women Representation And Civil Society: Women's Organizations And Press Coverage Of Policy Issues In Chicago" that civil based society is seeing as an arena in which it may be possible to use argument, persuasion, and shame to counter raw coercive power suggestion at relatively powerless groups may be able to exercise influence there. It also excluded and stigmatized can group together to demand recognition of their dignity and humanity, of their capabilities and worth. They also argued that civil society is a sort of 'policy primeval soup' where ideas of all kinds are sloshed together, transmission belt, bringing ideas from citizens to government, issues are taken up from public opinion and absorbed into the government agenda. It also consists of both counter-publics and dominant publics. Dominant publics address the broader community in a seemingly open way, but access and representation in these public tends favor socially, politically and economically.

In addition, Eto M. (2008) had discussed the concept of civil society in her research titled, "Autonomous Women's organization, civil society and democracy: How women's agencies link demands to politics". Eto's arguement was based on a comparative perspective of civil society as a hierarchy of desire where the personal needs and economic demands of each individual, constituting a layer of interdependent relationships, strengthen social cohesion and provide an impetus for social-economic behaviors in each individual. Thus civil society consists of voluntary civic association, which individual freely chooses to take part. She also classified civil society as the activity of self-organization for particular purposes of enhancing intrinsic social values namely private association, civic association and political association.

On the other hand, Young (2000) conceptualized civil society as a combination of two levels: self-organizing level and the public sphere. The former refers to the way