

Message from the Editor :

This year we come to the 17th International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers. Every year, sex workers organizations all over the world carry out different types of activities to increase public concern on sex workers' vulnerability to violence, and to urge the society to eliminate discrimination against sex workers. During 2019, we collected complaints from more than 800 sex workers, who were violently treated by different people such as police officers, customers and brothel owners.

Sex workers are often vulnerable to violence and crime. Not only because their freedom and choice are greatly limited by the law in Hong Kong, that they can hardly use their own solutions to cope with these situations, it is also related to the police. On one hand, some frontline police officers may abuse their power to suppress sex workers. On the other hand, when sex workers face violence and crime, they often think that the police will not accept their case. Police officers may even tease them or have a bias. They therefore tend to tolerate but not report their case, become more vulnerable to crime and violence.

Since June, Hong Kong police repeatedly clashed with other Hong Kong citizens. We began to see how sex workers changed their attitudes towards police from distrust to fear. Some are more determined not to call the police for the reason that the police are busy with the public activities and have no time to investigate their case. In fact, the complaints about police officers we collected from sex workers also dropped significantly (the number of complaints about violence faced by sex workers are as below). This may probably



(image: www.resolutewen.pixnet.net)

because most police force is deployed to deal with public activities. It is even difficult for sex workers to find one police officer on the streets. The law gives the police the power to fight against crime and to protect people's life and property. Citizens therefore call the police when they are in trouble. If sex workers refuse to report to police for fear or believe that the police will not spend time on their case, it loses the meaning for the police to fight against crime. Sex workers will become more vulnerable and further be targeted by bad guys and criminals.

Sex workers call the police for help, provide crime information for the police, then the police investigate, collect more useful information, arrest the lawbreakers, and increase sex workers' awareness through education. This is the ideal mode for sex workers to cooperate with the police. Just like other citizens, if sex workers cooperate with police, it is more probable to prevent and combat crime. If citizens are reluctant to provide crime information, or the police are inactive to execute their duties, only harms will be resulted in the society.



(image: www:kknews.cc)

As a conclusion, we appeal to the police to seriously handle the cases of sex workers and remain impartial. The police management should also review the performances of its officers, and penalize those who break the law or code of conduct. At the same time, an independent complaint system should be developed. Investigating police officers by other police officers should stop so as to increase the trust in police of sex workers and other citizens. Only when there is genuine police-public cooperation and mutual trust, we have the most effective crime prevention and fight crime activities.

Below is the number of complaints about violence from sex workers in the past 4 months.

<u>Police violence/abuse</u>		<u>Client/criminal violence</u>	
Arbitrary arrest	30 cases	Denial of payment	5 cases
Police break into house without warrant	20 cases	Candid camera	10 cases
Free massage service before arrested	3 cases	Theft	1 case
Force/coax into signing the statement	1 case	Robbery	2 case
		Triad threats and harassment	5 cases
		Rape	1 case

Our work and movement:

Hong Kong

Sex Worker's Victory

Ching (pseudonym) used to work in the one woman brothel. She also worked as an estate agent and in cosmetic sales job. However, she did not feel earning enough money. She learnt from WeChat that one foot massage parlour owned by another village friend was hiring a massage worker, so she applied the job. On her first day of work, one customer showed up. Ching opened the door and this man asked about the charge and service. The owner of the massage parlour went to him to tell him the charge and service. The owner first told the customer to go for a shower before entering the room. She then asked Ching to enter the room to serve the customer. Ching massaged the customer for 4-5 minutes. She heard the noise of police entering the parlour. The customer also turned round and said he was a police officer. The police officer was about to leave the room. He suddenly grabbed Ching's breast. He told Ching not to mention anything about grabbing the breast but only how she provided him full-body massage to his colleagues outside. Ching was taken to the police station to provide the statement. Ching did not agree to the statement. She firmly stated that she only provided foot massage service to the customer. Yet, the police charged Ching for 'assisting in the operation' of unlicensed massage establishment. Ching could not accept it. She thought it was just the first day of her work, and she only opened the door without greeting or talking to the customer. She did not admit guilty. She did several times feel hesitant to defend for herself in the court. Eventually, her lawyer got the surveillance clips in the massage parlour, proved to the judge that Ching only opened the door for the customer. Also, it was the owner to greet the customer and Ching entered the room upon the request of the owner. Ching was acquitted and won the case.

Nevertheless, it is rare to see victory like Ching's case. During 2019, we had 25 women who had their cases taken to the court. Although many of them were either coaxed or threatened by the police to sign the statement, which was full of false information, as they could not show how they were coaxed and threatened, they could only admit guilty. Some of them may feel angry about it and take the case to the court. Yet, as the judges often think that the police officers are trustworthy, they tend to believe in the words of the police officers. Most of the time, sex workers lose the case.

To a certain extent, when the judges tend to believe in the police, it shows the bias of the judges. Because of this bias, it is necessary for sex workers to understand their legal rights. As long as they understand their rights, they can respond properly to all negative situations.



(image: www.hkcfa.hk)



Stories/experiences of Migrant Chinese sex workers

Shenzhen

Part-time job

Sisi (pseudonym) shared her past experience of working in a park.

“At that time many stood in the park. It was not as strict as it is now. Everyone could work without worry. In fact, sex workers are not allowed to stand there.” Sisi told us that she still works in some parks. Sometimes she dances with others. She may have customers if she is lucky enough.

“Business is not good now. Very often we cannot go to work. My eldest sister and second-oldest sister are also in Shenzhen. Second-oldest sister is pretty. One of our friends likes her very much. He even wants to marry her, but when we work in this industry, it does not mean that we can get married whenever we want. We see many people, and we therefore understand that we can only trust ourselves. As a result, even though that man likes second-oldest sister, she will not get divorced with her current husband. We understand very well: we come all the way from home to Shenzhen mainly for earning money. It is an ability to make much money. I think second-oldest sister is very capable. She is good-looking and does much skin care. Many people do not believe that she is older than I am. Hence, though we dance at the park, second-oldest sister attract more customers.”

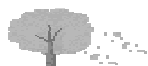
Sisi said she has been staying in Shenzhen for many years with her sisters. They all work in the sex industry but the business is very different to the past. Her second-oldest sister has living allowances from her customers. My eldest sister works at construction sites and receives 100RMB per day. Sisi cooks for one village friend, a 6-person household, and she has an extra income of 2000RMB each month. Sisi said, “It is not possible not to work part-time. You cannot live in Shenzhen.” Here eldest sister now helps cleaning a small district. She sometimes works with her and sells the cardboard boxes. Sisi is very pleased with this job, “I tell you, it is a skill to collect cardboard boxes. You need to use your brain if you want to earn more money.’ She is proud to tell us how she collects cardboard boxes with her eldest sister.



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(image: www.vectorstock.com)

Individual sex workers in Shenzhen did work several jobs in the past. Yet, when everyone admits that an economic recession has come, it becomes a norm for sex workers doing part-time jobs.



Linking with the world

South Africa

Teaching English at Zi Teng

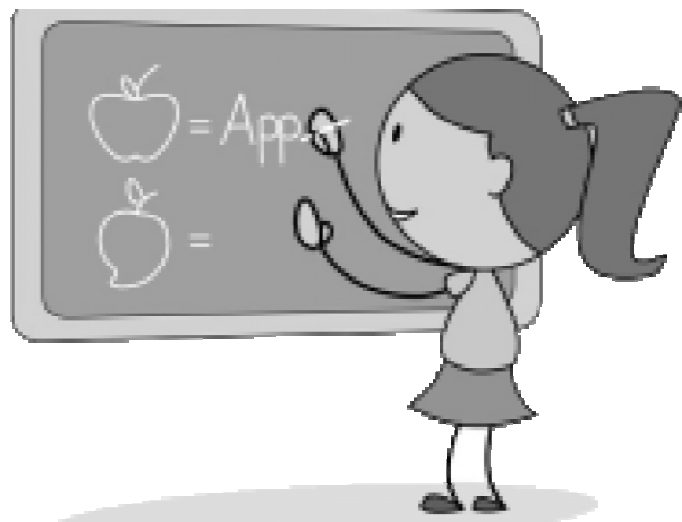
It is always happy to introduce our volunteers to you. This time we have Tracy, who helps us producing one pamphlet and teaches English to sex workers. She is from South Africa and teaches English in one university in Hong Kong.

“Over a period of 2 decades I had done postgraduate study in gender studies and feminism, then international development, where I specialized in migration, and then in linguistics and teaching English to adults. My studies have been a reflection of both my interests and values, and I wanted the same from my volunteering work. I knew I wanted to work with women, possibly migrant women workers, and I eventually came across Ziteng by searching for organisations working with sex workers in Hong Kong. I wanted to work with this group of people because, due to stigma and prejudice, they are particularly marginalized in society. I was interested in Ziteng because they, like me, do not regard all sex workers as victims in need of saving.

I have taught weekly English lessons to groups of the women at Ziteng for the last two summers now. I was initially interested in volunteer work which did not involve teaching. This is what I do in my job, and while I enjoy my job, I wanted to do something different outside of work. However, I also feel that when volunteering it's important to match skills required and skills on offer. I have 16 years of teaching experience and knew this was the best way I could make a contribution.

As it turned out, the teaching felt completely different from my daily teaching at work, and it was incredibly rewarding. There were professional challenges though. For example, the women were at different levels and this required some managing during the lesson. It's essential for every individual to feel like they are getting something from the lesson so I needed to think about how to facilitate this. Many of the women were complete beginners – a level I had actually never taught before. As I teach at a university, I no longer encounter these students of English and I had to develop new techniques to overcome what was sometimes a complete inability to communicate.

What made it most rewarding for me though was that the women were extremely dedicated and willing to participate during the lessons. Although they did not always know each other, they helped each other, and those with more English could sometimes help with translations. Ultimately, the satisfaction for a teacher of teaching a level like this are the visible improvements your students make from one lesson to the next. It was also satisfying to teach in a context motivated and not focused on their grades. It's recommend to all language teachers.



where my students were intrinsically motivated and not focused on their grades. It's definitely an experience I would

What is happening in sex workers community?

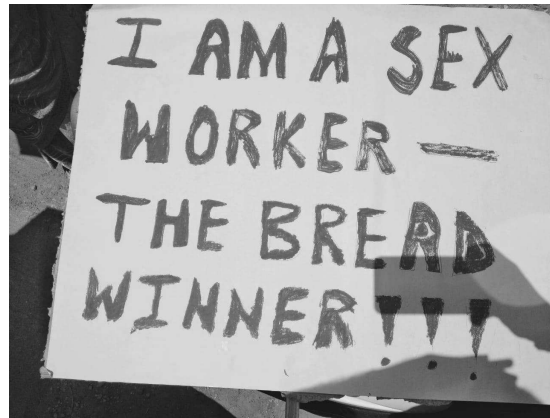
Global

Sex Worker Pride Day

14th September 2019 was the first Sex Worker Pride Day. It was created to celebrate sex workers' self-determination and the achievements of the sex worker rights movement. Many sex workers organizations over the world organized different activities to mark the day.



(image: Twitter of PIC Amsterdam)



(image: website of Ashodaya Samithi)

For example, some groups like Scarlet Alliance and St James Infirmary in San Francisco in USA, shared in statement their work and the achievement of sex workers in their countries, some groups like the Prostitution Information Center (PIC) in the Netherlands and Maggie's in Toronto in Canada had live performances. In India, hundreds of sex workers marched with red umbrellas in Mandya city and announced the formation of their own group, whose members were empowered to decide to fight for their own rights.

It was a pity that we could not join this year, but we are happy to see how friends all over the world celebrated the first Sex Worker Pride in different ways. We hope we can share with you how sex workers protect their rights, or successfully fight police abuses in next year's Sex Worker Pride.



List of Donors (September/2019 – December/2019)

September	Anonymities	5,100	October	Anonymities	9,000
November	Anonymities	9,000	December	Anonymities	5,000

We apologize for any omissions!!

Application for Membership

Name: _____ Age: _____

Occupation: _____ Gender: _____

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I am willing to join the following activities:

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