

SEX INDUSTRY NEWS BIZ

Prohibition of signs advertising prostitution in Kwun Tong area

Early in February this year, we learned from eight women who worked in the one-woman apartments that they were convicted of displaying signage, were given suspended jail sentence and fines. The signs included wordings like “new girls”, “welcome” and also a website outside their doors. This was violating the law “Prohibition of signs advertising prostitution”.

Please be reminded that according to Hong Kong law, it was illegal to post up or allow display that helped promote sex work.



Visitors to Bell House were required to sign in

In September, regardless of the opposition from the business units, the Owners' Corporation of Bell House in Yau Ma Tei decided to keep the main gate of Block A 24 hours closed. The new policy became effective not even one week after the decision had been made. It has caused great inconvenience to customers of the business units of the building.

The Owners' Corporation claimed that due to a number of previous robbery cases, the new measure was introduced for the sake of security. But at the same time, the Owners' Corporation also had discussion about “advising” sex workers of “one-woman-apartments” to move out of the building. We had more than once clarified that “one-woman-apartments” were not illegal and expressed that we were willing to facilitate direct dialogue between sex workers and the Owners' Corporation. However, the Owners' Corporation insisted on implementing the new measure. Some sex workers told us that their business had been affected by the new measure and they were planning for moving. Some said they would strengthen their communication with the customers and look for a “flexible way” to maintain the business.

Recently, many buildings in Yau Ma Tei, Tsim Sha Tsui and Mong Kok area have introduced new security measures, such as requesting all visitors to sign in and register the HKID card numbers, closing the main gate etc., which cause significant damage to business of “one-woman-apartments”. We wish to try our best to facilitate communication between sex workers and owners' corporations for a better arrangement which can balance interest of both sides. If any of you have a similar experience, please contact with us.

WORK REPORT

AFRO

Shop

The shop has been in operation for almost half a year, the trainees worked together and started from stretch. Their work included stock-take; delivery; making invoices; distribution of promotional leaflets and sales. It was not yet the time to say that the Shop was successful and the sales volume was not particularly satisfactory. Fortunately, trainees still tried their very best to continue to learn from their heart. We understand that this was going to be a long yet rewarding journey!

In order to enhance retail and sales skills, a meeting on the 25th of July was set up for trainees to meet with the CU Cooperative, run by friends from Hong Kong Women Workers Association, to share experience. The trainees to visit the Cooperative were warmly welcomed by the women workers. The Cooperative has been set up for six years and trainees raised many questions and had learned a lot from them. We were confident that this meeting would inspire the trainees in thinking out of the box in order to deliver better services

Meeting

new

Legislative

Councils

The newly elected Legislative Councilors started their term on 8 Oct. That day, AFRO joined the Hong Kong Women Coalition on Equal Opportunities and gathered at the entrance to the Legislative Council Building. We sent the Councilors our greetings and presented to them our ten policy recommendations (in the form of Ten Commandments) based on politics, economy, social and cultural issues of women in Hong Kong. We expressed our hope that the Legislative Council could show concern to women from different sectors. AFRO also raised the issue about decriminalization of sex work.

Cash Donation

Last year, AFRO joined WiseGiving.com, a website launched by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS). (<http://www.wisegiving.org.hk/en/donation/search/ngodetails.aspx?ID=12>).

Now, you can make cash donation with minimum amount of HK\$100 to Action for REACH OUT via any



in Hong Kong. The cashier will issue a transaction record for you when the transaction is completed. Please keep the transaction record and send to Action for REACH OUT, P.O. Box 98108, Tsim Sha Tsui Post Office, Kowloon, Hong Kong to request for an official donation receipt.

(Please present promotional materials with barcode for donation at any



in Hong Kong.



Talking about sex work in school

Recently, we have actively contacted different schools and universities to organize educational events, to share our work and experience with the students and academia, and to talk with them about decriminalization of sex work and problems faced by sex workers. The response has been very positive. In the coming few months, we will be busy visiting different schools and universities.

Let us know if you are interested to talk about sex work with us or join us as a volunteer for the educational events.

AFRO's NEWS READING

School yards no longer a haven from sex abuse (2008.10.27)

(http://www.thestandard.com.hk/news_detail.asp?pp_cat=30&art_id=73454&sid=21175388&con_type=1&d_str=20081027&sear_year=2008)

The Hong Kong Law Reform Commission released in July 2008 a consultation paper on the Interim Proposals on a Sex Offender Registers. The establishment of an administrative scheme was recommended and it was expected to enable employers, with the consent of prospective employees, to check their records of sex offenses for jobs related to children or the mentally incapacitated persons. Parents could also use this mechanism when hiring a private tutor. Children wards in hospitals, religious groups and voluntary work are all bound. The consultation period have already ended at the end of Oct 2008.

“Soliciting for an immoral purpose”, which streetwalkers are commonly charged against, is also on the list of sex offenses mentioned in the Interim Proposals. We find it unfair as consented sexual act should not be intervened and it in fact has nothing to do with sexual abuse against children or mentally incapacitated persons. We are highly concerned as the establishment of this mechanism would diminish the opportunities for sex workers to change jobs in the future. We are also worried that it would abuse the privacy and human rights of people who have previous records of sex offences and affect their rehabilitation. We have already submitted our concern in writing to the Law Reform Commission.

Activities

Meeting with Midnight Blue: Male sex workers group

We organized a meeting with Midnight Blue, a male sex workers groups, with female sex workers on 8 August.

Four members and two staff came to our Drop-in Centre to meet with our members and staff. At the beginning, we were a bit reserved and once we broke the ice, everybody participated actively in the discussion. Our members were very interested to know more about the male sex industry while they would like to learn more about the psychology of women clients, e.g. service satisfaction.

Barbeque Gathering (1 Nov 2008)

In celebration of the 15th Anniversary of AFRO, a barbeque gathering had been held on 1st Nov 2008 (Sat) at Victoria Recreation Club, Deep Water Bay. Despite the different background and languages, we were all enjoying ourselves in the event, had great fun in singing, chatting and games playing. The celebration ended happily at last.

We would like to thank everyone who shared the joy and happiness with us, and of course friends who sponsored and supported us alongside. We promise we will strive for the rights of sex workers



AFRO Clinic

The number of women patronizing the clinic continued to grow. They came for different reasons. Some came because of word of mouth for a thorough check-up; some knew that it was free of charge; and some had never had a similar check-up done at all and only learned about the importance to check-up during our outreach service.

Our nurse would normally ask why they came and how they learned about our service. Usually they quickly answered that they were not well, or they were concerned that they got infected, or they wanted to know about their health No matter for what reason they came to our clinic, we were very pleased that they came to realize the importance of health.

Some women preferred to have their check-ups done in their own home countries or home towns which was not a problem to us. At the same time, we would remind them to understand more the check-up procedures and pay special attention to sexually transmitted diseases and other general information about illness.

Future Work

Hong Kong Sex Cultural Festival

Date: 30 Nov 2008
Time: 2pm-6pm
Venue: Pedestrian Zone, Chater Road, Central

AFRO would hold a booth and share with the public more about sex workers and the sex industry.

International Human Rights Day Carnival

Date: 7 Dec 2008
Time: 2pm-6pm
Venue: Pedestrian Zone, Sai Yeung Choi Street, Mong-kok

Together with more than ten human rights concern groups, AFRO would join the International Human Rights Day Carnival, to discuss the issues on human rights, and present the public with the discrimination of the sex workers in the booth.

Fund-raising Sale (7 Dec 2008)

Date: 7 Dec 2008
Time: 10am-5pm
Venue: TST Star Ferry

We believe that NGOs should actively explore and pursue new fundraising opportunities. Apart from submitting proposals applying for funding support, we also try to raise fund through different channels. We find fund-raising sale a feasible way and also a great opportunity for us to involve sex workers, friends and volunteers. let us know if you or your friends can kindly offer in-kind donation. All clothes, accessories, Christmas decorations, stationeries etc. are welcome.

Please remember this important day. Come and shop for Christmas!

AFRO's Hotline : 2770 1002