

## **AFRO e-Newsletter (February 2009)**

### **1) SEX INDUSTRY BIZ NEWS**

#### Four more sex workers are murdered!

While the suspect who is believed to have been involved in the serial murders of sex workers in early 2008 is still detained and awaiting trial, four more sex workers who worked in Tsuen Wan, Ngau Tau Kok and To Kwa Wan were murdered during the period between Nov 2008 and Jan 2009!

On Feb. 4, police arrested a local 24-year-old man in connection with the most recent killings in Ngau Tau Kok and To Kwa Wan. "Enquiries are ongoing to ascertain whether the person arrested is connected to other similar offenses," a Hong Kong police spokesman said. The case would be brought to court on 26 March 2009.

While the suspect claimed that he accidentally killed the victims when he became too excited while in the sex act, police found some critical evidence to point to murder as autopsies confirmed that the victims were suffocated to death with pillows laced with chloroform. The police therefore believe that the two cases were planned.

Meanwhile, the police are still unable to identify the murderer(s) in the other two cases. Therefore, we urge all sex workers to stay alert. Stay calm and don't panic if you see any suspect. Always stay close to the door so that you can more easily seek help from others!

Since February 2009, AFRO has been distributing portable personal alarms among sex workers working in one-woman-apartments and those on the streets as they are most vulnerable to violence against sex workers. We hope that the small device would be useful and could give them some protection.

### **2) WORK REPORT**

#### Lunch party for 2009 Chinese New Year

To welcome the Year of Ox, about 15 sex workers joined AFRO for a lunch party which was held at our center on 13 Feb 2009. We enjoyed a rich pot of "Poon Choi" together, and were happy with what "Poon choi" means -- earning more and more money. All sisters who participated were very excited and they wished each other good health, and a peaceful and prosperous year.

#### Meeting with the Crime Prevention Bureau of the Police

On 18 February, more than 10 representatives from AFRO, Zi Teng and Midnight Blue attended a meeting with the Crime Prevention Bureau of the Police. The new person in charge of this meeting was Chief Superintendent Stephen CHENG Se-Lim. The 3 NGOs raised a number of cases which reflected the police's abuse of power and inadequate case-handling and proposed general improvements. The Chief Superintendent promised

to look into those particular cases. He also mentioned that they would initiate training for frontline police officers at different district divisions. The 3 NGOs would continue to monitor the situation.

#### Info-Activism Camp 2009 in Bangalore, India

Connie departed for Bangalore, India to join the Info-Activism Camp 2009 (19-25 February). This was a 7-day event that provided an opportunity for the participants to learn more about using technology for bringing social change. More than 100 activists and top information technologists gathered there, used media like independent films, underground radio and open source softwares etc. to share with the participants how information technology and digital media could be applied on rights promotion and advocacy.

Connie would bring back what she learnt from this event to Hong Kong and later share with us. At the camp, Connie also shared with the other participants about the situation of sex workers in Hong Kong, especially the murder cases in 2008 and 2009, as well as the efforts on advocating for sex workers' rights and the decriminalization of sex work.

#### International day of Sex Workers (3 March) in Kolkata, India

Leave Bangalore, Connie would fly to Kolkata and join Cherry there for the International day of Sex Workers event from 27 Feb – 3 Mar. Participants from different sex workers support groups worldwide would be there and join and the 5 days panel discussion and workshops about problems facing the sex industry, particularly about its status within patriarchal societies, human trafficking, sex workers' rights etc.

Connie and Cherry will share with the other groups about the situation of sex workers in Hong Kong and what had been done for the advocacy on decriminalization of sex work.

### **3) AFRO's NEWS READING**

#### **Domenica Niehoff; who fought to regulate and legalize prostitution in Germany; dies at 63**

*HAMBURG - Domenica Niehoff, a former prostitute known across Germany for campaigning to have the profession legalized and regulated, has died at age 63.*

*German media reported Friday that Ms. Niehoff, a severe diabetic, died Thursday of complications from a lung condition.*

*Hamburg's Asklepios clinic, where she had been hospitalized since last week, confirmed her death.*

*Ms. Niehoff left prostitution in the 1990s to open her own bar in Hamburg's red-light district, St. Pauli, and turned her attention to a number of social causes.*

*"What I have accomplished is that more about prostitution is discussed," Ms. Niehoff said in an interview last summer with Die Welt newspaper. "That it won't be whispered about as much."*

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[http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/obituaries/articles/2009/02/16/domenica\\_niehoff\\_fought\\_to\\_regulate\\_legalize\\_prostitution\\_in\\_germany\\_at\\_63/](http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/obituaries/articles/2009/02/16/domenica_niehoff_fought_to_regulate_legalize_prostitution_in_germany_at_63/)

#### **4) FUTURE WORK**

##### Sex workers outreach training workshops in Macau

AFRO is invited by the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, Health Bureau of Macau, to launch a series of training workshops in Macau (Apr – May 2009) where we would share with the trainees our work experiences in Hong Kong.

##### Self-defense class, Make-up class, Noah's Ark - Ma Wan Park Trip

We will organize a series of activities for sex workers in March. Please call 27701002 if you would like to know more details on these.

##### Peer Education

We would soon start recruitment for AFRO's peer education programme – training on legal and health issues, basic human rights and life skills. We welcome all interested sex workers to join.