Message from the Editor:

We are often invited by schools and social centers to share our working experiences and sex workers’ general situation. Many of them do appreciate our work saying that we have done a good job and we can help the sex workers. Nonetheless, we deeply understand that we have very limited power. Sometimes we can do nothing to sex workers’ problems.

Take for example, we had two cases recently. Both women are single mother, who respectively have to take care of their 7-year-old and 15 year-old daughter. Yet, both of them have to attend the court hearings. The mother of the 7-year-old daughter insists she is framed by the police and she is several times beaten by the police. Eventually she is found guilty but her mental health has been seriously affected. She suffers mental illness. She also intends to beat her daughter whenever she feels upset. When we know this, we quickly ask her to go to the doctor. Luckily she accepts our advice and now she no longer thinks of beating her daughter even she is in bad mood. On the other hand, the other mother does not have very good relationship with her daughter. Due to her job nature, she rarely talks to her daughter. One day, she commits suicide as her daughter refuses to listen to her. She is saved but she loses her memorizing ability. She even cannot go on to work in the industry. Nevertheless, she still has to attend the court hearing. As long as she cannot well present her statement at the hearing, she loses the case and is sentenced to 2-month imprisonment but simultaneously given a one-year suspended sentence.

Sex workers have other identities such as mother, daughter, neighbour, committee member of the Owners’ Corporations. Though we can provide them with on-job support, we are powerless when they are troubled with other daily problems, particularly the child-caring problems. What can we further offer them? If they hide their job from the family, it is more difficult for us to intervene. Hence, when we come to these cases, what we can do is just standing beside them, and trying our best to reduce as many troubles as we can. This includes applying documents at different government departments, and filling the forms for them. Regrettably, these are all we can do.
Our work and movement:

Hong Kong
Pros and cons of social media

May (pseudonym) one day met a client in the staircase. When he saw May, he just asked ‘Are you from China?’ May said yes and asked the man if he is Mainland Chinese. The man also said yes and entered the room with May. Later, that man quickly took off his clothes after going to toilet. He pressed May to lie on the bed and forced May to have oral sex. He did not allow May to use the condom. He also wanted to kiss May’s lips, but May insisted that she had to use the condom and could not let him kiss her lips. The man then pulled May’s hair and threatened May, ‘I have two wives. You know why my first wife was dead? I killed her. I also have a mistress. She gives me a lot of money.’ That man kept reminding May that he would not be taken to the jail even he killed someone in Hong Kong. May was scared at that moment, fearing that he would kill her. She therefore listened to him and did oral sex with him. However, if May became slow in her actions, she would be beaten by that man. Suddenly, her phone rang. She got the social media message. May told the man that she worked for a boss, who would come to collect her service charge. If she did not reply, her boss would immediately come here. The man let May reply. It was actually May's friend. When May replied she secretly told her friend she was in danger. Later, her friend sent her message again. The man again let May reply the message. At this moment, May quickly seized the opportunity to open the window and shouted for help. The passers-by noticed and quickly called the police. The man was eventually arrested. He was a Mainland Chinese who possessed the Seaman’s Identity Book. He was taken to the jail for 8 days for assaulting May. He would also be deported when he was released from jail. Nevertheless, May was seriously hurt. She got 6 stitches in one of her ears. Her face and cheek swelled. She also had serious headache and muscle aches throughout the whole body. She had to stop working for 10 days. She could only go back to work if the doctor was satisfied with her conditions.

If May did not use any social media, she would not know to seize the opportunity to relax the man’s vigilance and to ask for help from her friend and the passers-by. Social media is very common nowadays. May is not the only one. Many sex workers also feel interested in the social media, so as to keep contact with their family and friends, as well as to make new friends. Though it is convenient to maintain social networks with this social media, the effects and impacts vary much according to how sex workers use it. In some cases, sex workers may be helped or saved by the social media just like the case of May. However, social media may bring sex workers many troubles and risks.

In the past 3 months, we continually received the complaints from the sex workers and the massage workers. They told us how they met some villains through the social media, and how these villains cheat them, refuse to pay for the services, blacken their names, physically assault them, blackmail and threaten them. Below are the cases where sex workers and massage workers face violence and police abuse. 10 of them are related to the use of social media. In addition, the sharp increase in the number of mafia harassment is definitely alerting. Yet, the police still refuse to pay serious attention on the problem. What they ‘prioritize’ is not to fight the crime, but to find someone for them to open the case file.
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<td>Excessive license check</td>
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<td>44 cases</td>
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**Client Education**

We were invited by the Tsueng Kwan O (South) Integrated Family Service Centre of the Hong Kong Family Welfare Society in August to share with the members of the men’s group the situation of sex workers. The members raised many questions. For example, they wrongly thought they could vent their anger by buying sex workers’ services, they believed that they could visit sex workers more ‘safely’ if prostitution is legalized in Hong Kong, the red-light district is set up and sex workers are required to have mandatory test. There was also a member who has a disability. He shared with us his experience in visiting a sex worker. Probably because he is shy or afraid, he did not straightly tell the woman that she hurt him. Neither did he tell the sex worker he felt uneasy in the whole transaction.

From the questions of the members and the disabled man, what we can see is that some clients have very little idea and much misunderstanding about the sex industry and sex workers. There is also a lack of communication between the clients and the sex workers. Some of them even think that they can do whatever they want to sex workers, and they intend to put the responsibility of having safe sex on sex workers’ shoulders.

Apart from the police, landlords and common residents, sex workers often meet the clients. To improve the working environment of sex workers, it is also necessary to educate the clients. That is to say, the clients can better understand the work of sex workers, well communicate with the sex workers, and learn how to respect sex workers and other residents in the community, it not only reduces the friction between sex workers and the clients, it also directly betters sex workers’ working environment. At the same time, it indirectly eliminates the conflicts between sex workers and the community, as well as the discrimination and discontent of the community towards sex workers.
Linking with the world

London, England
Anti-Social Behaviour Order
Ms CH was given the Anti-social Behaviour Order (ASBO) about four years ago when she was ill and not in a position to challenge it. Some of the evidence used didn’t even relate to her but to another woman. Ms CH is then not guilty of loitering. She lives in Tower Hamlets -- her home is in the red-light area! Every time she leaves her house she risks being arrested for loitering regardless of what she is doing. On this occasion she was waiting for a taxi. If Ms CH faces charges of breaching an Anti-social Behaviour Order (ASBO), she will be banned from loitering throughout the whole borough of Tower Hamlets for 26 years. This offence carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison.

What is the evidence needed to prove loitering? “Standing on a street corner looking in the direction of several men” has been enough in some cases. So it isn’t what you do, it is who you are that seems to be the greatest proof of street prostitution. How is a woman who has worked in the past ever able to defend herself and be believed when the case relies on hearsay evidence from the police alone and is heard before magistrates who rubber stamp what the police say.

Regarding to the case of Ms CH, the English Collective of Prostitutes had been giving full support to Ms CH. We also responded to the appeal of ECP and sent support letter to the Director of Public Prosecutions, the member of parliament and so on, to demand for the drop of the prosecution. Fortunately, Ms CH was found not guilty of charges of breaching an Anti-social Behaviour Order (ASBO). The ASBO bans her from loitering throughout the whole borough of Tower Hamlets for 26 years and now must be abolished in its entirety.

In court, police officers’ evidence was exposed as unreliable. They said they had seen Ms CH loitering but under cross examination they were forced to admit that they were driving fast and it could have been anyone! ASBOs are orders, imposed using a civil standard of proof -- the balance of probabilities. But breaching an ASBO is a criminal offence carrying a five-year maximum prison sentence. No complaints from the public or evidence of nuisance are needed in court and magistrates generally rubber-stamp unsubstantiated police claims.
Regarding to this case, the English Collective of Prostitutes commented, “This case exposes how draconian ASBOs are. Hundreds of women have gone to prison on the word of a police officer alone. It also exposes the injustice of the prostitution laws. Women, who are constantly running from the police, are forced into isolated areas where they are more vulnerable to rape and other violence, and can’t come forward to report attacks. In some towns around the UK, street workers are saying that there are 10 rapes a week and rapists are allowed to operate with impunity. If there was ever a case for decriminalising prostitution this is it.”

Support letter to the Director of Public Prosecutions demanding for the drop of the prosecution of Ms CH

Dear Keir Starmer,

We are Zi Teng, a sex workers concern group in Hong Kong. We write to ask that the prosecution of Ms CH for breaching an Anti-social Behaviour Order (ASBO) be dropped. The ASBO is draconian. It bans her from loitering throughout the whole borough of Tower Hamlets for 26 years. Breaching an ASBO carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison.

Ms CH lives in Tower Hamlets -- her home is in the red-light area. Every time she leaves her house she risks being arrested for loitering regardless of what she is doing. On this occasion she was waiting for a taxi. ASBOs are deeply unfair. They are given out on the basis of hearsay evidence from the police. No-one needs to come to court to give evidence that a nuisance was caused to them. Magistrates nearly always rubber stamp the police evidence.

A conviction for breaching an ASBO could wreck Ms CH’s life. She is the devoted mother of a three-year-old boy. She just got permanent accommodation near to where her son lives. If she is convicted she may be imprisoned. 17,000 children are already separated from their mother by imprisonment “causing long-term emotional, social, material and psychological damage” [Howard League, Voice of a Child, 2011]. Ms CH would be made homeless again which she fears would drive her back onto the street.

Pursuing ASBOs against sex workers undermines safety, shunts women around often into more isolated areas where they are more at risk of violence. The Metropolitan Police have acknowledged that it deters women from reporting violence. At a time when more women are going into prostitution to feed themselves and their families, why isn’t help being provided instead of criminalisation and imprisonment.

There is no public interest in pursuing this case and we urge you to drop the prosecution.

Sincerely,
Zi Teng
sex workers concern organization
**Different working situation**

**Shenzhen, China**

**Threat from cervical cancer**

We would like to share with you the latest working situation of the sex workers in Shenzhen.

According to our partner in Shenzhen, many of the sex workers they meet are from the rural area. They enter the sex industry for the sake of family. As they do not have medical insurance in Shenzhen, it is a great difficulty for them to go to the doctor or to buy medicine. They are afraid of using up their incomes, which probably are reserved for their children’s school fees, the family expenses of the aged in their hometowns, or the school fees of their siblings. Among the sex workers whom the center staff meets, 60% is under the age of 29, and more of these young women are under the threat of cervical cancer. Fortunately, thanks to the education of the staff, more sex workers now understand the purpose of cervical screening. Many of them go to the center for the cervical screening. Some of them also introduce their friends to the test.

In addition, our partner has talked to 53 sex workers during outreach. Only 15 of them had done the screening in the hospitals or women organizations. In other words, the awareness of cervical screening among sex workers is quite low, that many of them have no idea what the screening is for. In this case, it is high time to provide the screening especially for sex workers, and to popularize gynecological health education.
Introduction to Sex Work Research/Documents/Events

Africa

Sex workers’ resilience and resistance

It is often common for researchers to investigate into the working situation of sex workers, especially their vulnerability to STD/HIV and violence. A group of researchers also conducted a research to study the impact of violence and human rights abuses on the lives of sex workers. 55 in-depth interviews and 12 focus group discussions were conducted with the female, male and transgender sex workers in Kenya, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe. However, what is encouraging about this research is that the researchers aim to provide more respect and power for the interviewees by training sex workers to conduct the interview. Another encouraging point is that it does study sex workers’ survival strategies and supports. As stated in the research, “Sex workers’ fears of being exposed, which entrenches a deep reluctance to be public about their experiences and therefore to claim their rights, is slowly beginning to change, as sex workers across the continent are increasingly finding their voices and telling their stories.”

Apart from sex workers’ agency, the research provides much information on the violence faced by sex workers in Africa, how female, male and transgender sex workers are greatly exposed to abuses and exploitation in the context of criminalization and social stigma against sex work, homophobia and transphobia. The research also looks into other stakeholders such as the landlords, brothel owners and security guards. In brief, it provides comprehensive information about sex workers in Africa, ranging from sex workers’ working situation, ‘working partners’ to their survival strategies and the importance of sex worker organizations in the sex worker rights movement. If you are not familiar with the issues surrounding sex workers and sex work, this research may serve a good reference.

For the full report, you can visit
http://www.globalizationandhealth.com/content/pdf/1744-8603-9-33.pdf

List of Donors (07/2013 – 09/2013)

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We apologize for any omissions!!
Application for Membership

Name:______________________________  Age:______________________________

Occupation:________________________  Gender:__________________________

Telephone: (H)______________________ (O):______________________________

e-mail:____________________________________________________________

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I am willing to join the following activities:
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Zi Teng
Hong Kong Post Office Headquarters P.O. Box 7450
Tel :  852 - 2332 7182
E-mail :  ziteng@hkstar.com
Website :  http://www.ziteng.org.hk
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