

The Women's Foundation launches #MakePeopleCount campaign to raise awareness of sexual violence in Hong Kong Emotive film and call for urgent change kick-start action against sexual violence

Hong Kong, April 28, 2020 – The Women's Foundation (TWF) today launches a major campaign to raise awareness of sexual violence in Hong Kong and calls for urgent changes to legislation, employment policies and the education curriculum, aligned with [Sexual Assault Awareness Month](#) observed in April each year.

According to a survey, one in seven women in Hong Kong have experienced sexual assault, but 90 per cent of victims choose not to report the incident.¹ In the workplace, over a quarter of women cite harassment at work as a significant challenge they face.²

Fiona Nott, CEO, The Women's Foundation, said: "Sexual violence is a silent yet pervasive epidemic affecting Hong Kong. Most worryingly, although it's happening every day, victims face a number of barriers in reporting and the overwhelming majority choose not to speak out about the crime.

As we launch the #MakePeopleCount campaign, we are setting out to break the taboo; boost preventative measures, encourage individuals to become active bystanders to prevent or intercede when they witness sexual violence, and significantly improve the support available to victims - legally, from employers, from educators and from individuals. COVID-19 will force us to challenge the status quo in so many ways, to adopt radically different ways of thinking. This impetus for change is something we should seize on to change how we address sexual violence. It's time for our community to come together to provide wholesale solutions to this long-ignored issue and ensure the safety, dignity and human rights of all residents – particularly women and girls – are fully respected."

Ricky Chu, Chairperson of the Equal Opportunities Commission, commented: "The Equal Opportunities Commission supports The Women's Foundation for launching this important campaign to raise awareness around the prevalence of sexual violence and the challenges preventing victims from seeking support. We are committed to working with a diverse range of stakeholders to tackle this issue and create a safe, violence-free city for everyone."

As the first step to raise awareness of sexual violence, TWF partnered with Wunderman Thompson and award-winning director, Yan Yan Mak, to create an emotive film that highlights everyday scenarios where sexual violence commonly takes place and encourages people to see victims as real people who need support.

"Too often, people hear statistics but don't stop and think about how these numbers represent real people. By producing this short film, we hope to shine a light on the issue of sexual violence that people can't ignore, which spurs them into action," said Yan Yan Mak.

In addition to the Equal Opportunities Commission, several organisations and groups have joined our campaign to raise awareness about the prevalence of sexual violence in the city: End Child Sexual Abuse Foundation, Family Planning Association, Gender Research Centre - Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Harmony House, HER Fund, MTR, On Air Collective, PathFinders, Rainlily, Resolve Foundation, and The Zubin Foundation. Edelman, Facebook, the

Committee on Gender Equality and Diversity at the University of Hong Kong and Cosmopolitan are also supporting this campaign as PR Agency, Social Media Partner, Academic Partner, and Media Partner, respectively.

In order to help prevent sexual violence, and – in the event that it takes place – improve the protection and support available to victims, TWF has created a website with resources for victims, including legal and mental health contacts as well as information for companies and individuals around preventions and interventions available [here](#). TWF is also calling for:

- **Legislators and policy makers** to legally protect victims of sexual assault by updating the criminal law as a priority through introducing and passing a Bill to implement the Hong Kong Law Reform Commission's set of recommendations to protect individuals from sexual violence; update protections for individuals from sexual harassment by passing the Discrimination Ordinance (Miscellaneous Amendments) 2018 Bill; and look to change Non-Disclosure Agreements so that future acts of discrimination, harassment or victimisation cannot be silenced
- **Government** to work with technology and social media companies to provide enhanced protections against online sexual violence and harassment; to update sexual education curricula to be in line with international best practice; to implement a broad range of reforms in the Hong Kong Police Force, including: add a special unit to handle sexual violence cases together with a Code of Practice with the aim minimising trauma and increasing the confidence of both sexual violence victims and the public in the management of sexual violence crimes as well as strict preventative measures to protect against any further allegations of sexual violence against the Force
- **Businesses and employers** to review and strengthen corporate policies and ensure protocols are in place for full accountability and confidentiality for victims to step forward – building a culture focused on diversity and inclusion rather than a compliance-led mindset
- **Schools and educators** to educate young people on gender-based violence and sexual harassment awareness to improve understanding, and appropriate behaviour and response to non-consensual sexual advances
- **Individuals** to equip themselves with knowledge on sexual harassment, related laws and resources available to victims; be an active bystander and take action if they see what may appear to be sexual violence, call out instances where people may be unfairly placing blame on a victim, and refrain from judgment when listening to a victim's experience

For the full list of actionable recommendations, please visit [here](#). To watch the campaign video, please click [here](#).

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Notes to editors

References:

1. *A Survey on Hong Kong Women's Experience of Sexual Violence 2013*, HK Women's Coalition on Equal Opportunities, available at <https://rainlily.org.hk/chi/publication>
2. IPSOS Mori, February – March 2019, commissioned by The Women's Foundation's Male Allies Initiative

About The Women's Foundation:

The Women's Foundation (TWF) is a Hong Kong registered non-profit organisation dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls in Hong Kong. TWF is focused on challenging gender stereotypes, increasing the number of women in decision-making and leadership roles, and empowering women in poverty through ground-breaking research, innovative and impactful community programmes, and education and advocacy. For more information on TWF, please visit www.twfhk.org.

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