



# 2023 Annual Report

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# Executive Directors' Message



2023 marks my 12th year with Project X, and a year of many important milestones.

As an organisation that strives to provide social, emotional and health support for people engaged in the sex industry, we are grateful to have renewed our **sexual health programme** grant, and proud to have finally secured a **Tote Board Social Service Grant** to hire a full-time social worker to meet the needs of the community. Alongside those two programmes, we continue to provide art therapy, counselling, and group support to sex workers who are struggling with the stressors and traumas in their lives in an affirming and non-judgmental environment.

We are proud of the multiple and varied collaborations we entered into this year. A grant and partnership with **Sing Lit Station** allowed us to kickstart and launch our inaugural anthology of writings by sex workers - a project that underscores our commitment to amplify the voices of sex workers to challenge the stereotypical mainstream narratives. Funding from **Gilead's Rainbow Grant** enabled us to offer free Pre Exposure Prophylaxis (PreP) screening to sex workers, a community that has not been reached in traditional educational campaigns. A collaboration with **Anglo American** enabled us to initiate a campaign to reach entertainment workers who are at risk of abuse and exploitation, and forged a new partnership with **Go With The Flow**.

# Executive Directors' Message

We released two separate joint statements: one with **Action for AIDS** on how HIV prevention is a shared responsibility and should not only fall on the person living with HIV; and another with **Pink Dot**, on how the media's use of derogatory terms to describe transgender women should not be condoned in this day and age.

Another significant milestone was our move out of our office at **Orchard Towers**, a space that had been our home for the past six years. Orchard Towers, while famous as a red-light district for the past 30 years, finally met its demise as pressure mounted from various parties to shape a "family friendly image" for the mall (*sex workers have families too!*). We are grateful for the many contributors who helped us to move our office (back to Little India!) and sponsored the renovation and furnishings for our new space. We now have windows and a wonderful sunset view!

While many things change, one thing remains constant and that is there will always be sex workers in Singapore and there are many in precarious situations and require support. And for these reasons, Project X will persevere in our mission to empower sex workers; create access to social services for those in need; document and speak up against violence; and foster a more compassionate and inclusive society. The achievements of 2023 are a testament to the collective efforts of our team, partners, and supporters. I am deeply grateful for your continued commitment to our cause, and I look forward to what we will accomplish together in the coming year.





# Board Members

## PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES COMMITTEE

To oversee new programme development, and to monitor and assess outcomes of existing programmes are in line with the vision, mission and objectives of the organisation.

## HUMAN RESOURCES

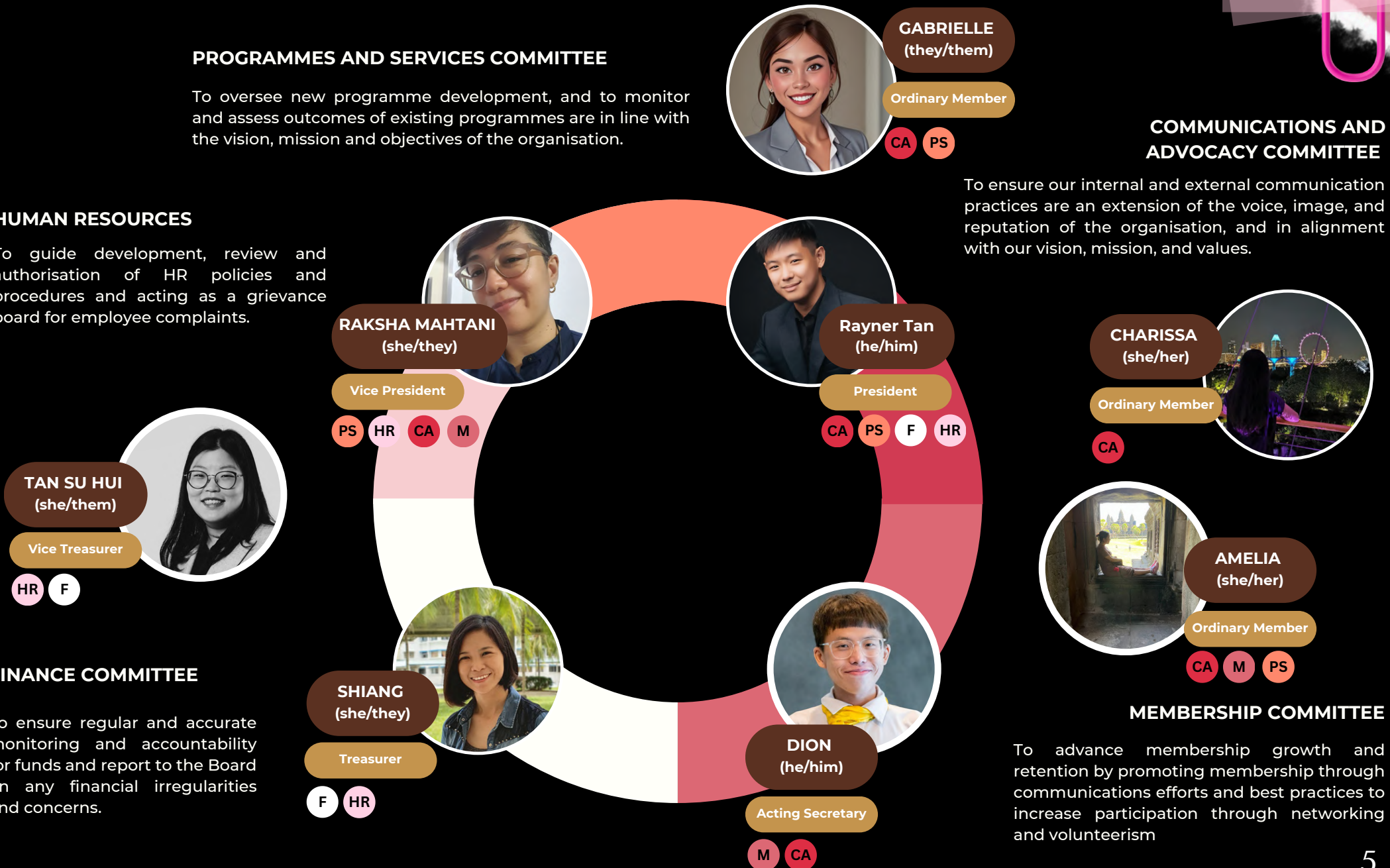
To guide development, review and authorisation of HR policies and procedures and acting as a grievance board for employee complaints.

## FINANCE COMMITTEE

To ensure regular and accurate monitoring and accountability for funds and report to the Board on any financial irregularities and concerns.

## COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVOCACY COMMITTEE

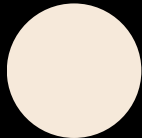
To ensure our internal and external communication practices are an extension of the voice, image, and reputation of the organisation, and in alignment with our vision, mission, and values.



# Code of Governance



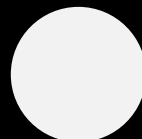
***None of the board members receive remuneration or benefits for their service on the board.***



***No staff receives more than \$100,000 in annual remuneration.***



***No staff is a close member of the family of the ED or board members and receives more than \$50,000 in annual remuneration.***



***Our Annual General Meeting took place on 12 June 2023, with 6 board members, 13 general members, and 4 members of the management team in attendance***

# Management Team



**NOR**  
(they/them)

Programmes Manager



**VANESSA HO**  
(she/they)

Executive Director



**WANY DEE**  
(she/her)

Outreach Director



**TRACY LIJING**  
(she/her)

Programme Executive



**KHENG LENG**  
(she/her)

Social Worker

# Key Highlights

## *Capacity Building*



### **OCTOBER**

*Hired Kheng Leng, our  
Social Worker*

*Nor attended Kontinentalist  
Data Visualisation Workshop*

*Annual General Meeting:  
Renewal of Board  
Leadership*

*Sherry went to Nigeria for Global Network  
of Sex Workers Project (NSWP) Board  
meeting*

*Sherry went to Amsterdam for Red Umbrella  
Fund Programme Advisory Committee*

*Sherry went to Bangkok to become the Chairperson  
for Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers*

*Cabaret matinee viewing,  
sponsored by Sing Theatre*





*Continued support by  
The Therapy Room*

## NOVEMBER

*Expanded our Peer Educator  
team. We recruited Tracy  
and Neisha!*

## DECEMBER

*Self Care Day Team Retreat.  
Under the Do-Good Fund of the  
Central Singapore Community  
Development Council (CDC),  
trainers and students from ITE  
spearheaded the self-care  
session, Mindfulness through  
DIY Hand Cream with Essential  
Oils, at our drop-in centre!*



*Kheng Leng attended  
Asia Pacific HIV Practice  
Course 2023*



# Key Highlights



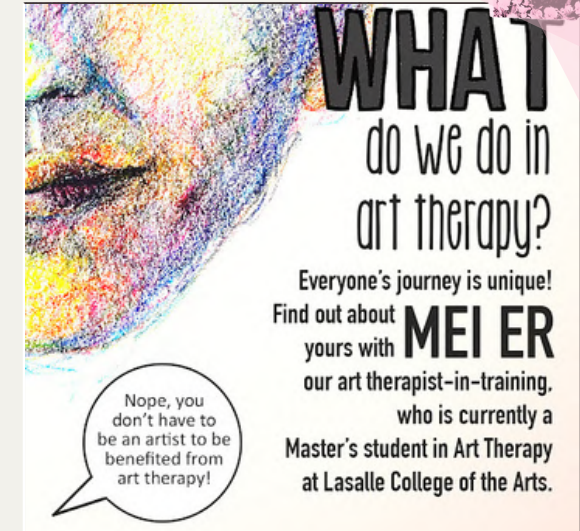
## Jalan Besar Writer's Incubation Programme

We conducted writing workshops to expose sex workers to different writing styles, techniques and prompts—setting the stage for their stories to take shape for our anthology!



## Free PrEP Screening for Adult Service Providers and Entertainment Workers

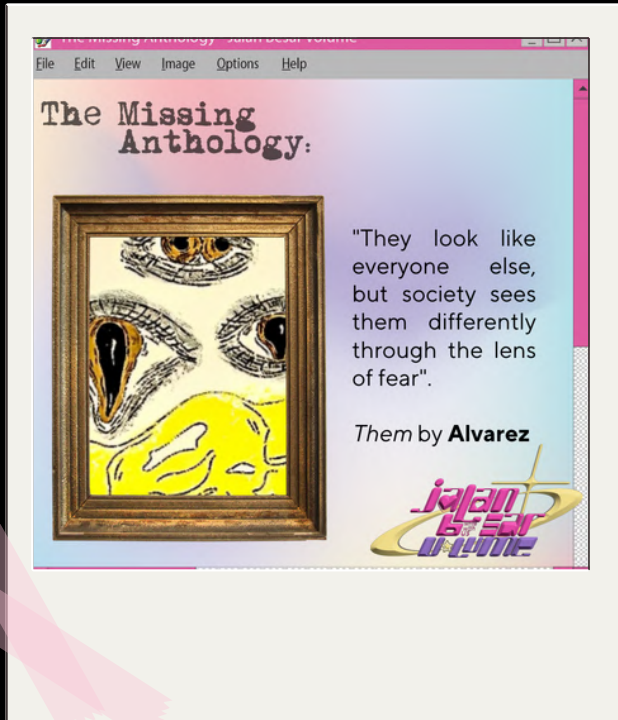
In collaboration with NUH and supported by Gilead Rainbow Grant, Project X provided 25 adult service providers access to free HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) consultation and screening.



## Art Therapy with Mei Er

In August, we resumed our Art Therapy services with art therapist Mei Er, conducting 16 sessions for 2 sex worker clients.

# Key Highlights



## Launch of the Missing Anthology: Jalan Besar Volume

In September, to commemorate Sex Worker Pride, Project X launched our inaugural volume of the Missing Anthology which contains submissions by sex workers for sex workers.



## Moving Out

We bade goodbye to our Orchard Towers Drop-In Centre where we've been based since 2017. We moved to our current location at Little India.

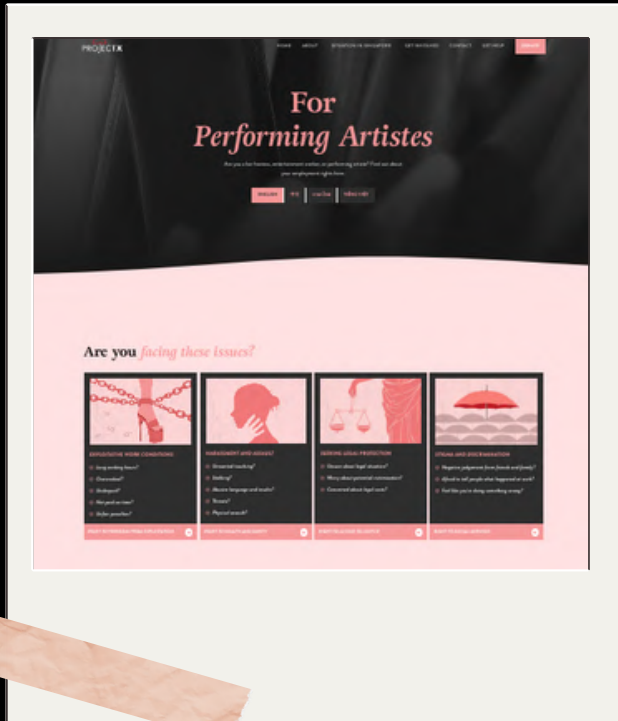


## The Next Step Programme with Kheng Leng

Funded by the Tote Board Social Service Fund, we hired our new social worker, Kheng Leng, to aid community members, especially those seeking to voluntarily exit the industry or diversify economic opportunities, in developing skills and gaining work experience.

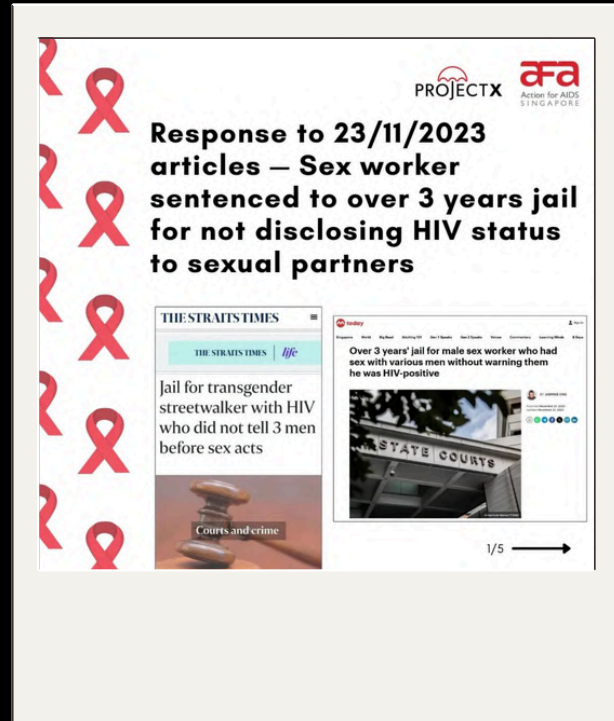


# Key Highlights



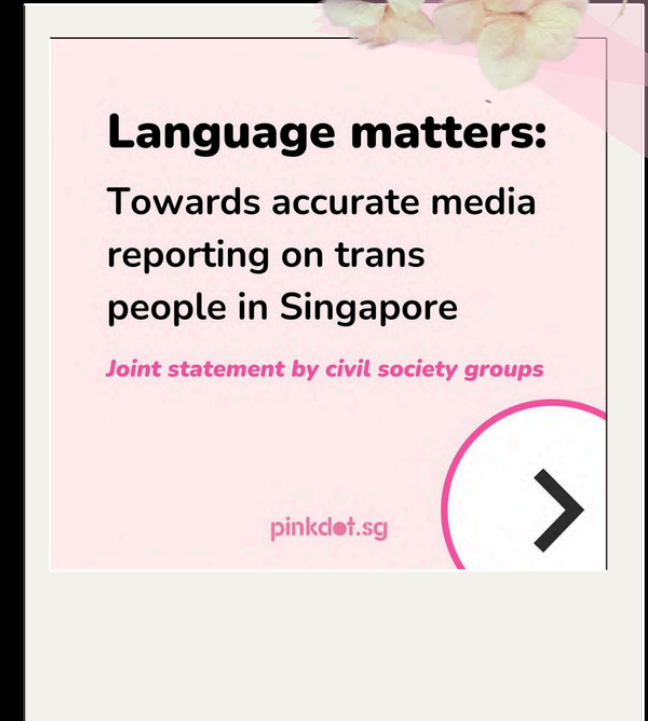
## Launch of Performing Artistes Page

The website provides a snapshot of workers' employment rights and what they can do in four different languages i.e. English, Mandarin, Thai, and Vietnamese.



## AfA-Project X Joint Response to 23/11/2023 articles - Sex worker sentenced to over 3 years jail for not disclosing HIV status to sexual partners

We stress our commitment to ending HIV by combating stigma and focusing efforts on improving access to HIV education, prevention, and treatment for everyone.



## Joint Statement by Civil Society Groups on Accurate Media Reporting on Trans People in Singapore

We strongly condemn the Chinese-language media's representation of transgender sex workers and emphasised the exigency to wield language responsibly.

# Outreach





# Key Figures

**178,301**

Condoms Distributed

**438**

Free HIV Tests Administered

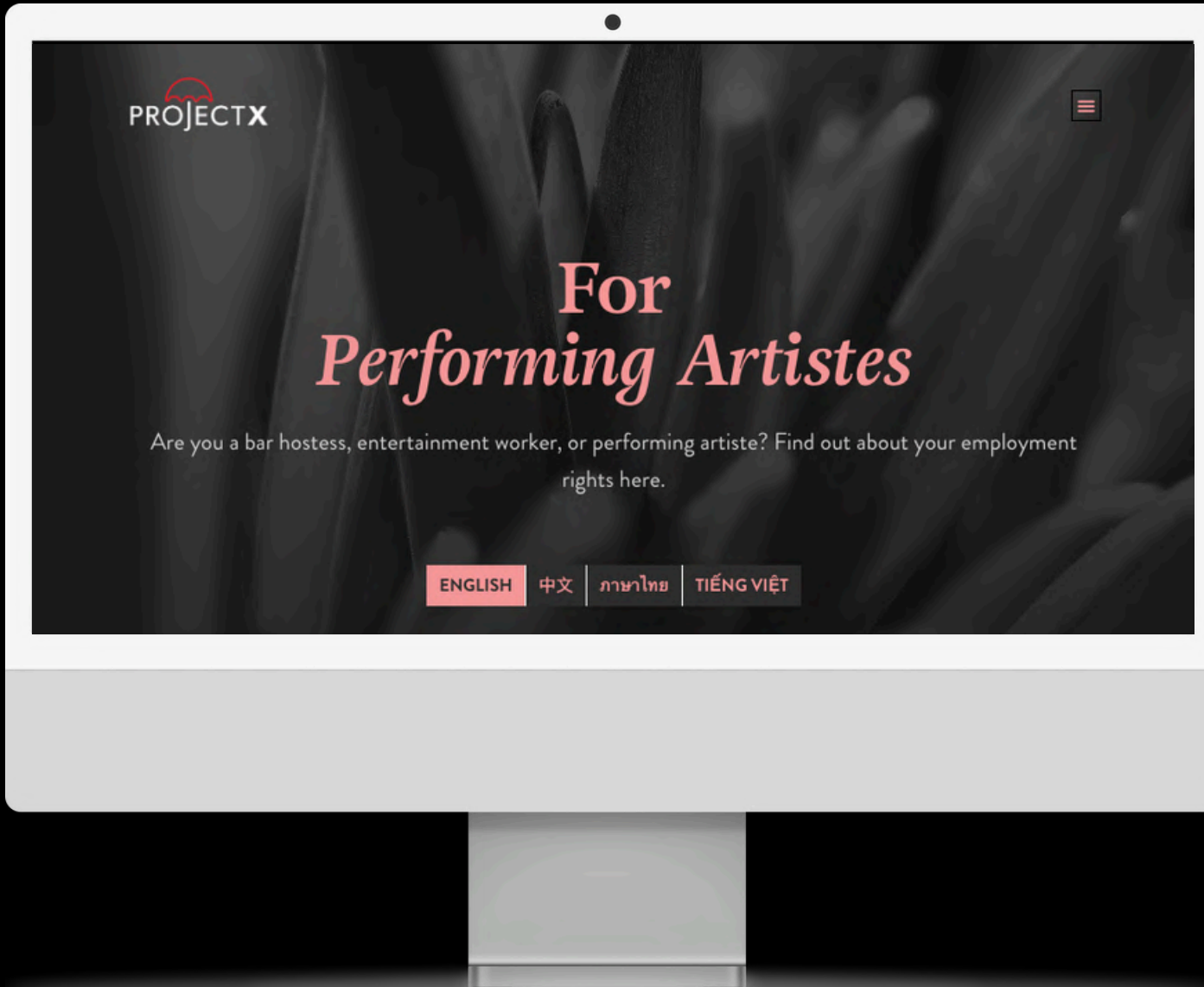
**331**

Free STI Tests for Chlamydia  
and Gonorrhoea Provided





# For Performing Artistes



In January, Project X launched the *For Performing Artistes* page, providing a snapshot of workers' employment rights and what they can do in four different languages i.e. English, Mandarin, Thai, and Vietnamese!

# Casework



# PROJECT X MANAGES 3 BROAD CATEGORIES OF CASES:

## Access to Justice

*We support sex workers who have experienced abuse in the course of their work or who are facing hardships due to the criminalisation of their work.*

## Sexual Health

*Through our sexual health testing programme, we provide anonymous and confidential sexual health testing in collaboration with AFA and DSC. We support sex workers in seeking treatment by assisting them to make appointments with clinics and accompanying them if they face challenges and/or fears on their own.*

## Social Support

*We provide social work support to help sex workers set goals, and develop plans to navigate through situations such as financial hardships and employment concerns.*



# Casework

## 75 CASES

received through our case management system\*

Some cases have overlapping classification\*

Medical  
40

Legal (Criminal)  
15

Legal (Civil)  
1

Social  
17

Financial  
2

## NOTABLE CASES

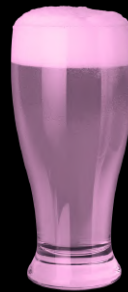


### STEALTHING remains a problem.

*Of the three cases reported, none resulted in any convictions, and victims were in turn investigated for their sex work activities.*

### Some arrested sex workers ARE MADE TO STAY IN SINGAPORE

*for more than 6 months to assist with investigations. They come to us hoping to return home as soon as possible to reunite with their families. We provide them emotional support through para counselling, and assist them to file appeals.*



*Some workplaces pressure workers*  
**TO MEET ALCOHOL SALES, OR FACE BEING FORCED TO PROVIDE SEXUAL SERVICES**

### A VICE SYNDICATE REFUSED TO PAY A WORKER,

*after collecting earnings from her, bordering on human trafficking and/or forced labour.*

### SOME CLIENTS FAKE PAYMENTS OR REPORT SEX WORKERS AS SCAMMERS

*to the police to avoid payment.*





# Casework Project X Received\*



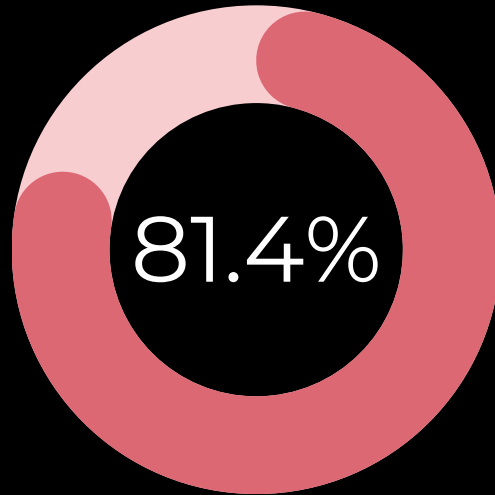
*Some cases have overlapping classification\**



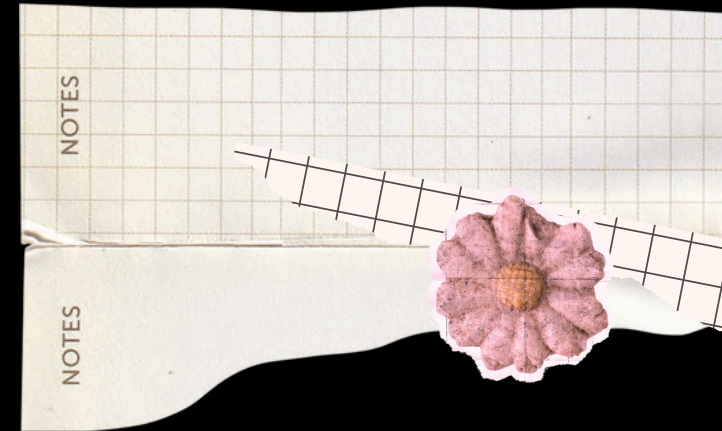
# Client Referrals

## TYPES OF CLIENTS

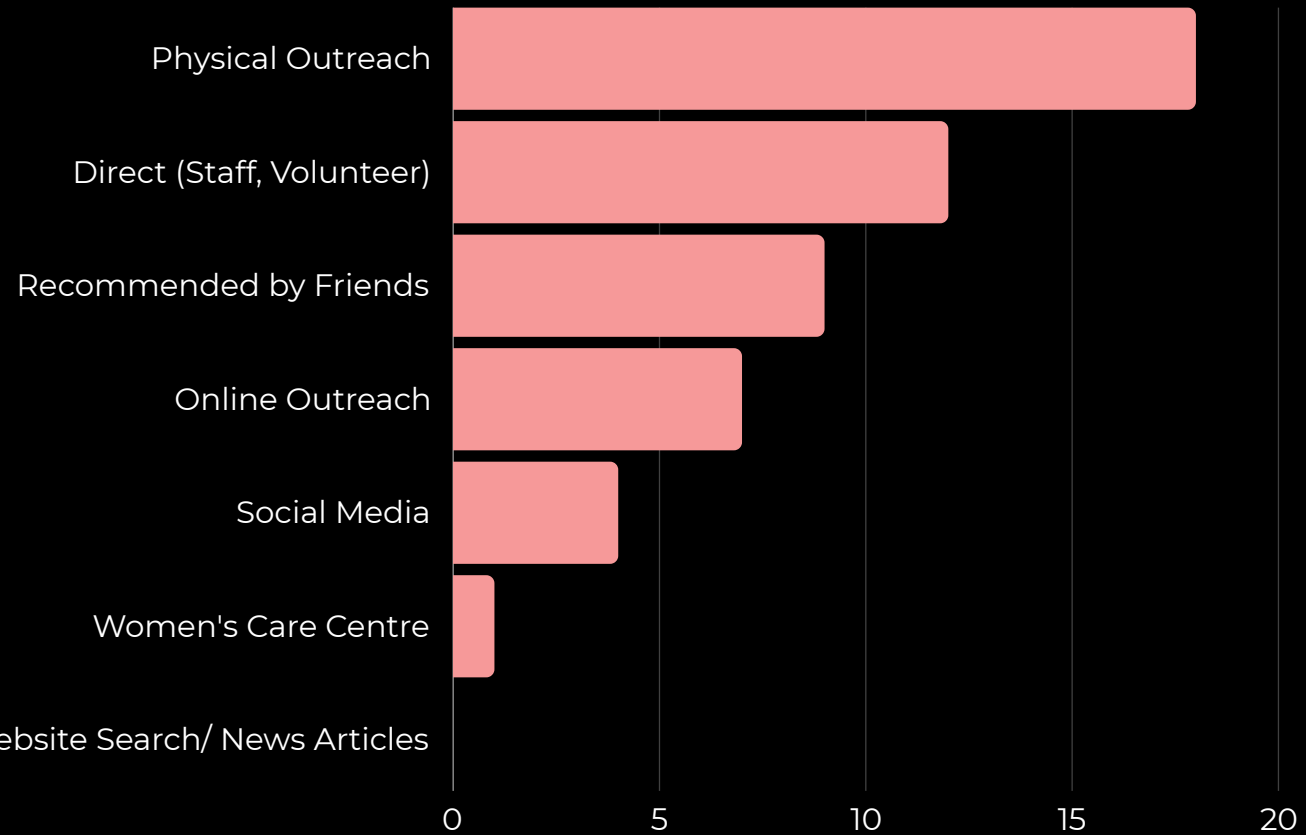
New Clients (10)



Returning Clients (41)

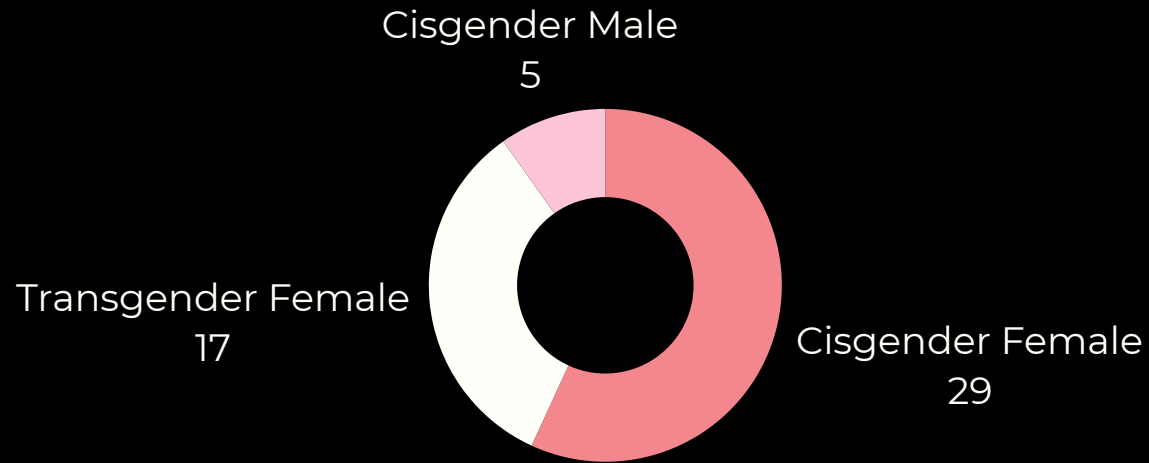


## NUMBER OF CLIENTS WHO FIRST MET PROJECT X THROUGH



# Case Breakdowns

## GENDER

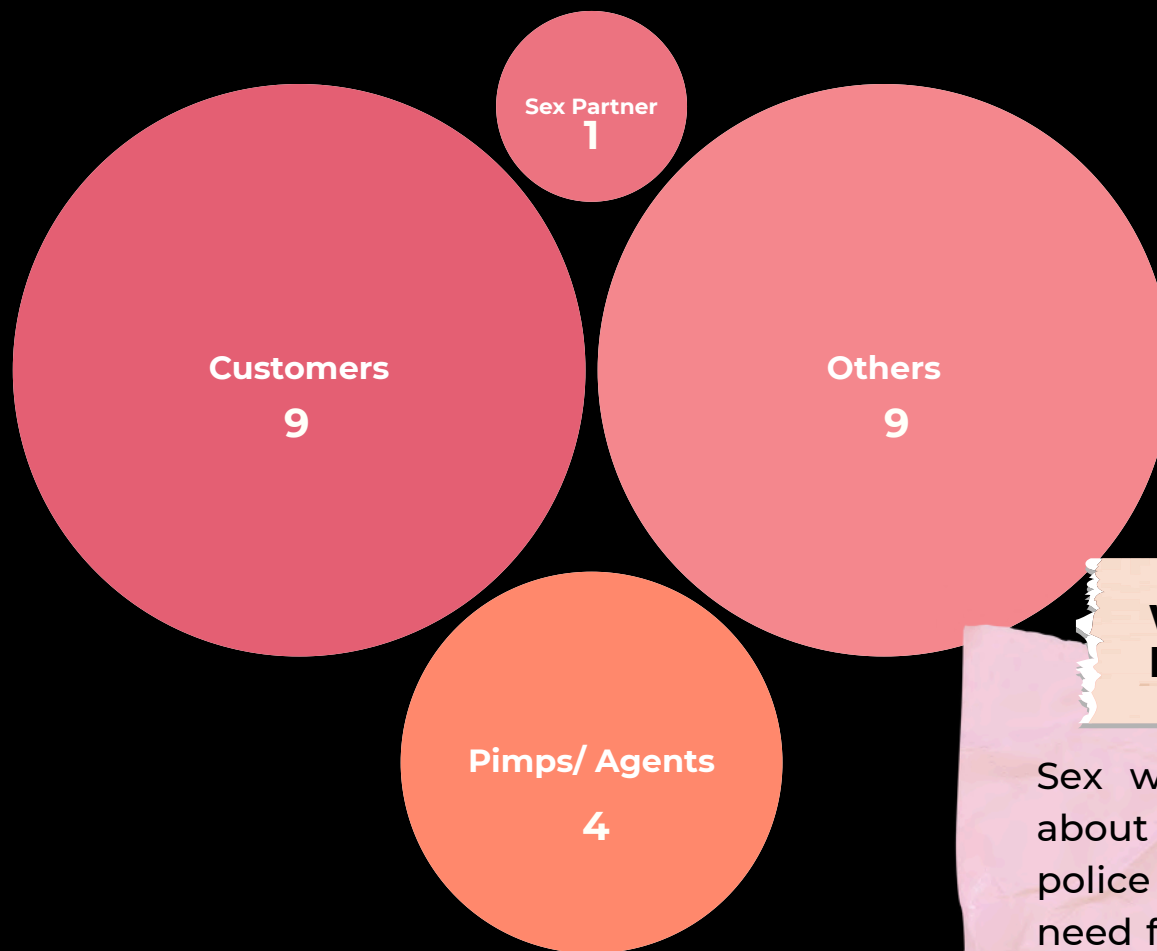


## NATIONALITY OF CLIENTS

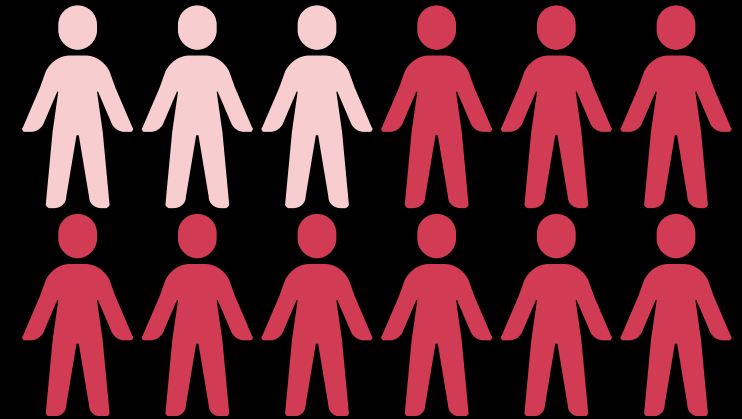


# Case Breakdowns

## IDENTITY OF ABUSERS



## TOTAL CASES THAT SHOULD'VE BEEN REPORTED: 12



*Only **3** out of the **12** cases (25%) that should have been reported were reported.*

## WHY IS THERE NON-REPORTING TO THE POLICE?

Sex workers fear discrimination, feeling unsure about the outcomes there might be if they make a police report, or not getting the recourse they need from the justice system. This may stem from a desire to be discreet or simply from having past negative experiences with the police.

# Finances

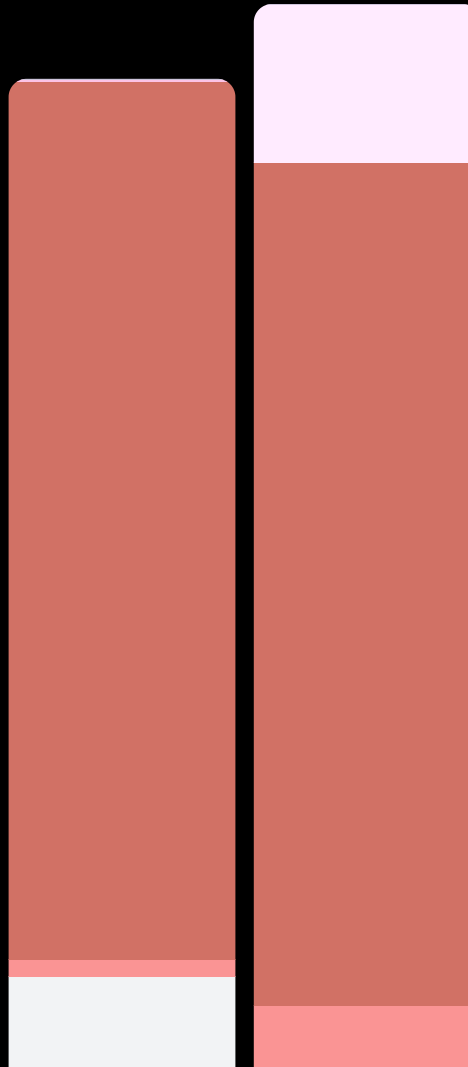




INCOME:  
\$441,244

Grants for  
Charitable  
Activities  
87.12%

Other 6.13%  
Donations 6.75%



EXPENDITURE:  
\$445,804

Charitable  
Activities  
76.89%

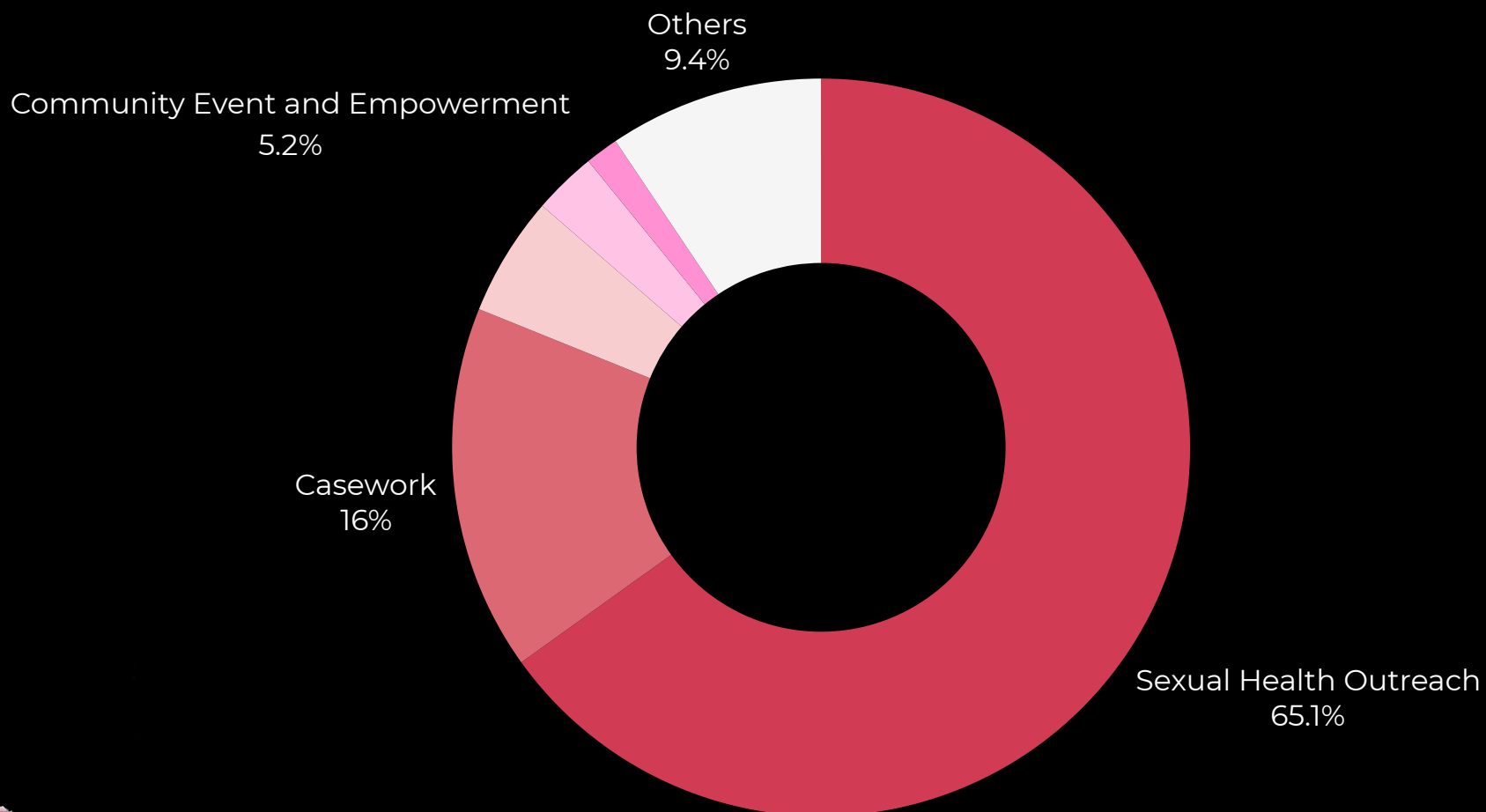
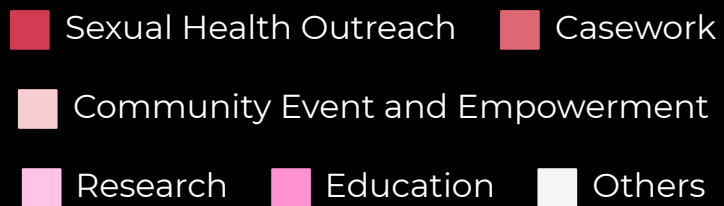
Others 6.51%

Governance 16.6%





# EXPENDITURE: \$445,804



# Our Sponsors, Donors and Grants



Gilead



National Youth Fund  
Youth Corps  
Community Internship



National Council of  
Social Services Tote  
Board Social Service  
Fund



Sing Lit Station



Heckin' Unicorn



Club Chrome



Diva Pole Academy



Bridge the  
Digital Divide



Go With The  
Flow



Anglo-American  
and the Charities  
Aid Foundation

CALL FOR DONORS



Scan the QR code below using  
your bank's mobile banking  
app OR input our UEN  
number **T14SS0189D**

**And individual donors...** of which 8 key contributors contributing \$6,350 for our office move  
and many others aiding daily expenses  
*Project X extends our gratitude to all our sponsors who make our work possible.*

# Communications and Public Education





# Events for Public Awareness



**6 JUNE**

*Gilead Rainbow Academy Site Visit*

**8-10 JUNE**

*Asia Pacific AIDS & Co-infectious Conference (APACC) 2023*

**24 JUNE**

*PINKDOT 2023*

**3 OCTOBER**

*NTU Guest Lecture by Vanessa Ho, for Asst Prof Lee Eunbi, Sex in the Media*



# Events for Public Awareness



**10 OCTOBER**

*Vanessa speaks at 3rd Global Mental Health Summit by The Silver Ribbon*

**26 OCTOBER**

*Rayner and Raksha got posters at 2023 Asia-Pacific Chemsex Symposium*

**22 NOVEMBER**

*Sherry represents Project X at NUH organised booths for World AIDS Day*





# Collaborative Events



**28 NOVEMBER**

*2023 Singapore Writers' Festival  
Writing Sex In The City Panel*

**28 NOVEMBER**

*Asia Pacific HIV Practice Course  
(APHPC) Site Visit*

# Project X in the Media



31 OCT

"Man offered S\$2 to sex worker instead of agreed fee in repeat offence, gets jail"



4 AUG

"Nightclub doors at Singapore's '4 Floors of Whores' are closing for good in less than 30 days. Its nightclub owners and sex workers are trying to figure out where to go next"

18 JUL



"The Risks and Rewards of Telegram Sex Work"



21 AUG

"First step on a long road towards full equality': Relief from LGBTQ groups over intention to repeal Section 377A"

27 NOV

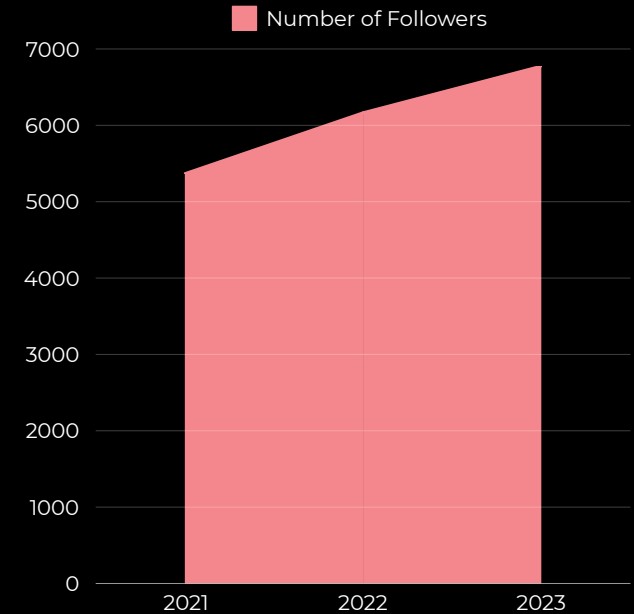
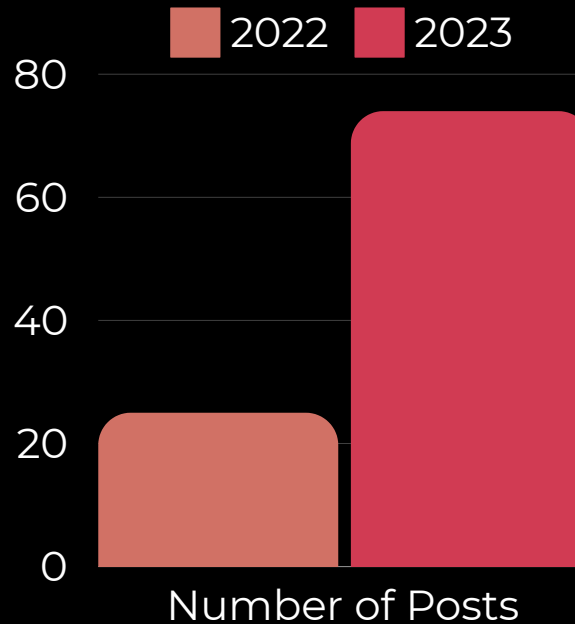
Forum: Not fair to lay responsibility for disease prevention solely on persons with HIV

"Sexual health should be a shared responsibility between partners, regardless of their HIV status."



# Analytics

In 2023, Project X posted a total of 74 posts, which is 49 more posts than the 25 posts we had in 2022.



However, we only gained 611 new followers in the year, a drop from 798 followers in 2022.

As of 2023, we have a total of

**6,777**

followers in 2023

VS

**6,166**

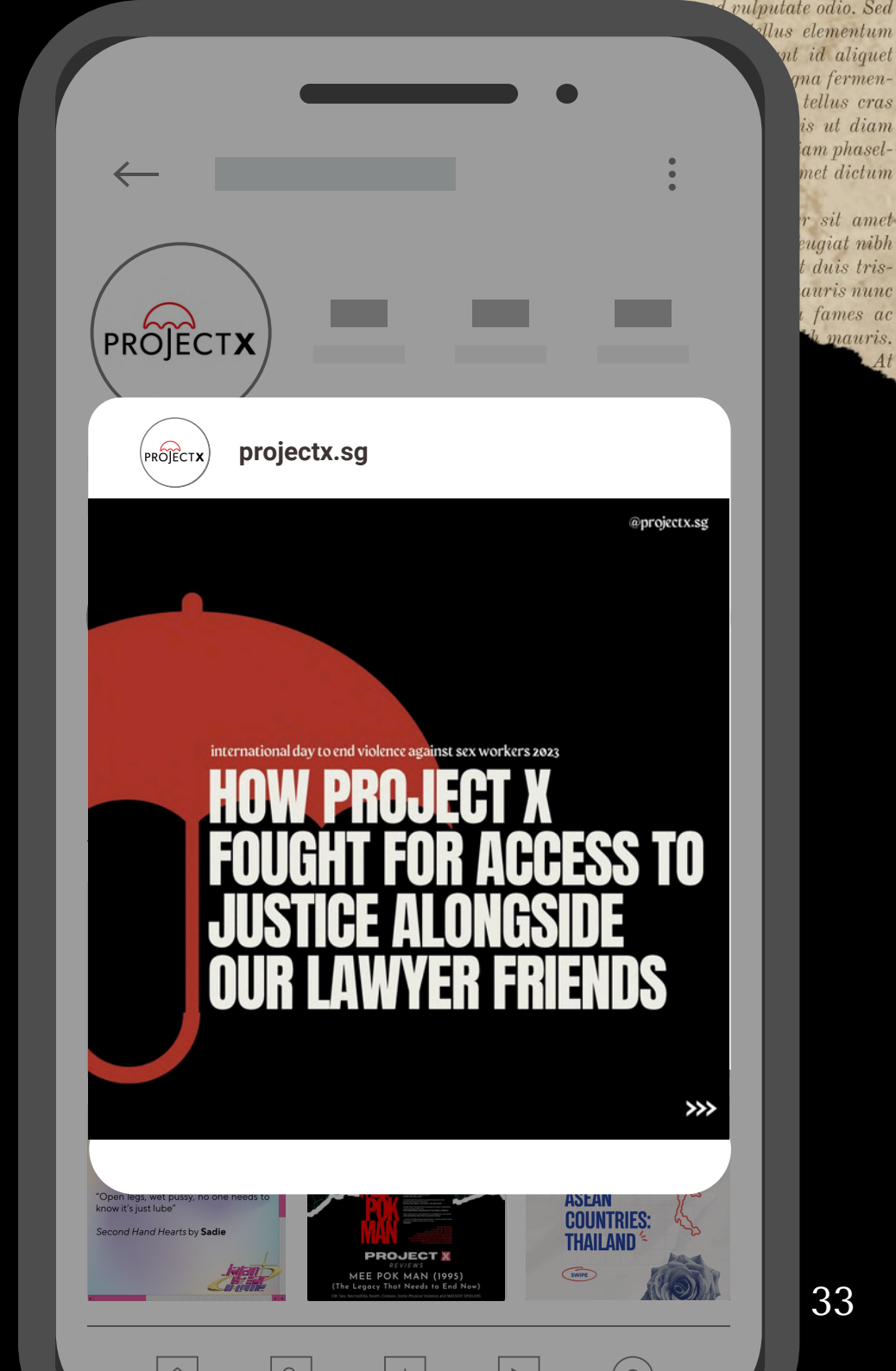
followers in 2022



# Analytics

Our Instagram posts this year reported headlines in the news involving abuse towards sex workers, educated our followers on sexual health and affirmed time and time again of our stand towards the sex worker community in Singapore, regardless of gender, class or citizenship. We've also shared about the events we attended and our takeaways.

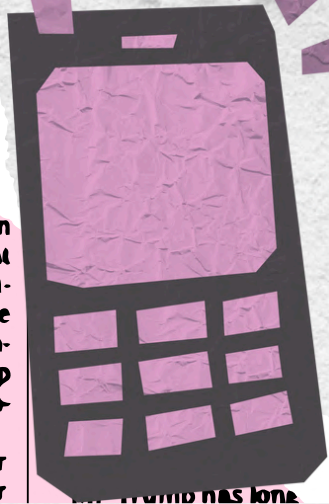
- *Launch of Reading Red: A Deep Dive into Singapore Sex Work Narratives*
- *Launch of Sex Work in ASEAN series*
- *Launch of the Missing Anthology: Jalan Besar Volume*
- *Transgender Day of Remembrance*
- *International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers 2023: How Project X Fought For Access To Justice Alongside Our Lawyer Friends*



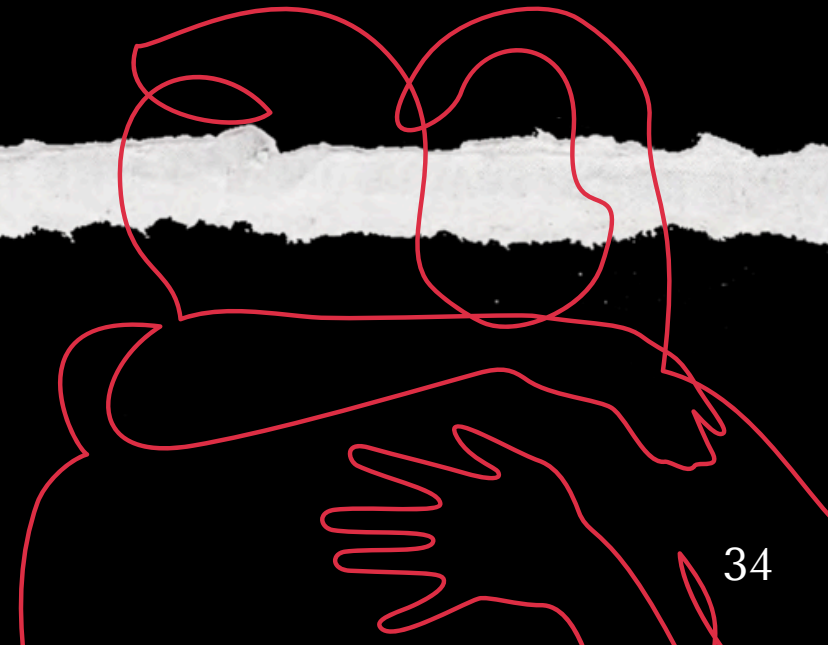
# Community Events and Empowerment<sup>2</sup>

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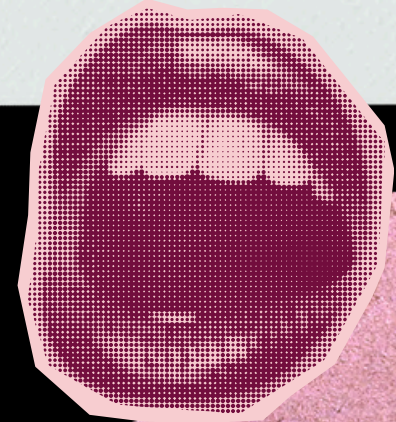
# Community Events

**26 JANUARY**     *Lunar New Year Dinner*

**14 FEBRUARY**     *Valentine's Day*

**8 MARCH**     *International Women's Day*

**17 MAY**     *Project X Open House: Hari Raya &  
International Day Against Homophobia,  
Biphobia & Transphobia*





# Community Events



**28 JULY**

***Board Games Night***

**23 AUGUST**

***National Day: National Dishes Potluck Party***

**13 SEPTEMBER**

***Sex Worker Pride & Launch of The Missing Anthology: Jalan Besar Volume***

**17 NOVEMBER**

***House Warming Party: Deepavali & Transgender Day of Remembrance***

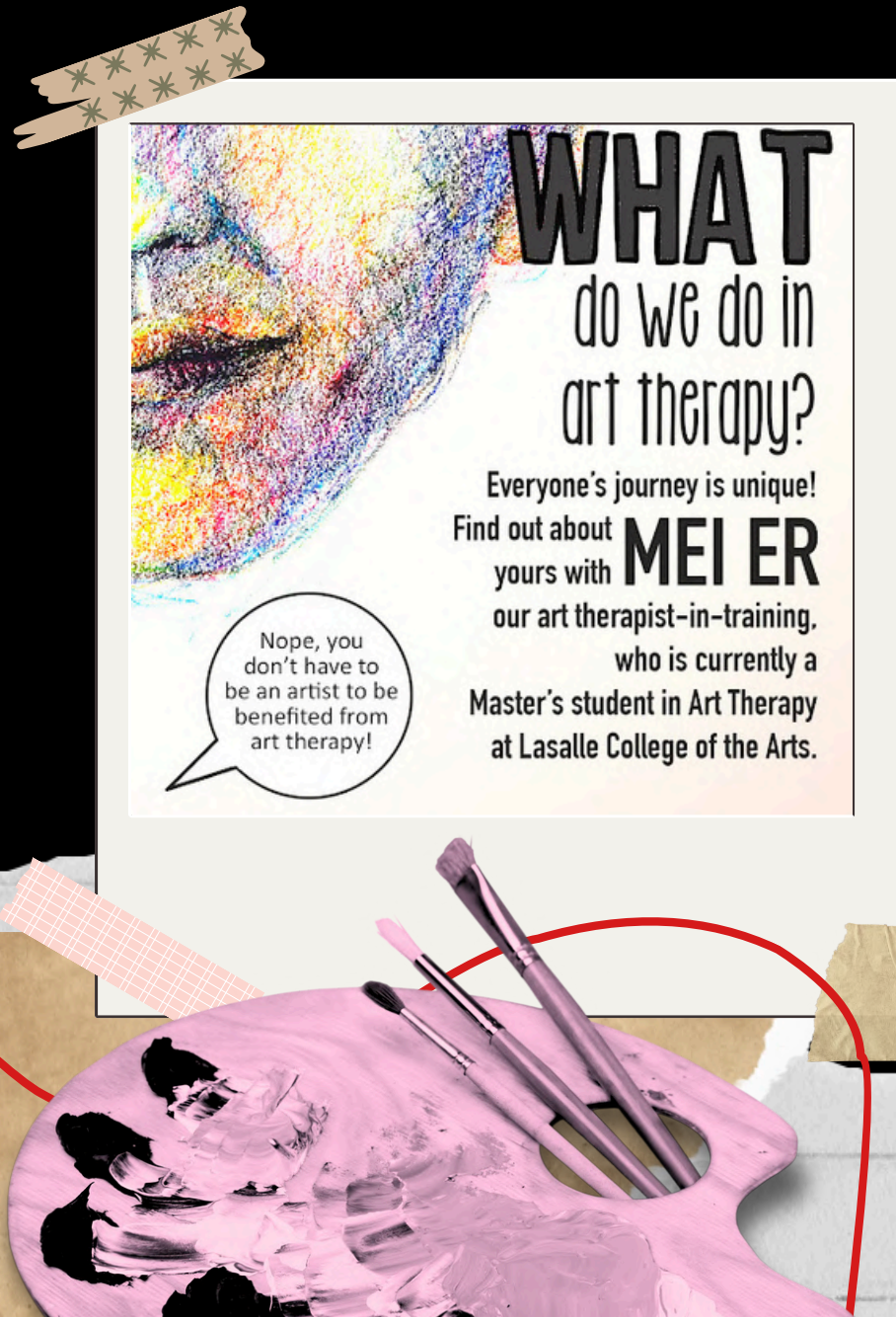






# Community Programmes & Services

# Art Therapy



In 2023, we continued offering art therapy sessions for sex workers in Singapore with art therapists, Prarthna Agarwal and Mei Er.

Art therapy services offered at Project X serve as a vital intervention for nurturing mental well-being and addressing the interpersonal challenges faced by sex workers in Singapore. Sex workers here often report

## ANTICIPATING STIGMA, FEARING JUDGEMENT

from healthcare professionals, **inevitably reducing the mental health support available to them.**

Utilising creative expression as a tool, our community members at Project X find art therapy a therapeutic modality for self-care, expression and reflection. This year, **we observed a notable return of clients who have previously engaged with art therapy techniques.** While some initially found the medium daunting, **the majority generally enjoyed the opportunities the medium offers for self-expression and healing.**



# Art Therapy



Prarthna Agarwal



Mei Er

With funding support from **Impact Investment Exchange**, in July 2023, Prarthna also initiated:

## VOICES OF THE SUN

*Teletherapy group sessions designed for our client's interests and desired creative explorations.*

Mei Er conducted  
a total of

**16**

sessions with 2  
clients

across

**24**

hours

Prarthna conducted  
a total of

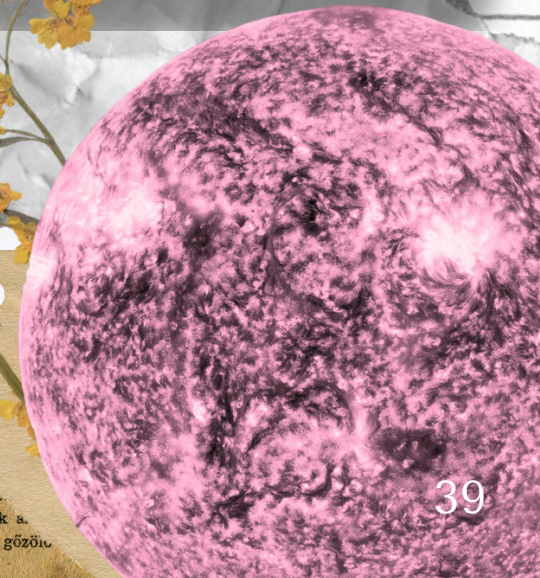
**13**

sessions with 7  
clients

across

**20**

hours



2. a.  
való cíteve.  
Lekötözzük a.  
jük ki. A gözőit.

# The Next Step Programme



WANT TO EXPAND YOUR  
SKILLSET, GAIN WORK  
EXPERIENCE, OR ENGAGE IN A  
SIDE HUSTLE? WANT TO TRY  
SOMETHING NEW?

## The Next Step

We welcome employers keen  
on providing job tasters,  
internships, and employment  
too!

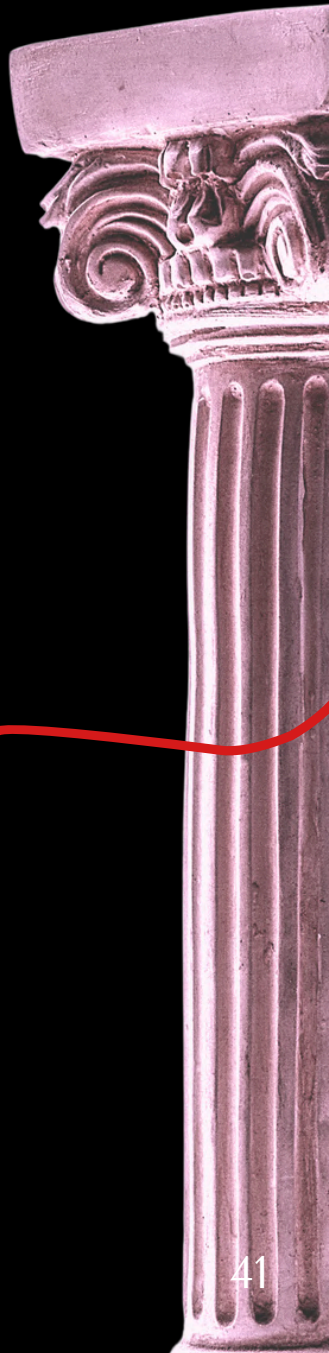
Reach out to us at

- [khengleng@projectx.org](mailto:khengleng@projectx.org)
- 8852 8813

With the help of Kheng Leng, we launched The Next Step Programme, which **connects sex workers looking to expand their skillset, gain work experience, or engage in a side hustle, with employers** who are keen to provide job tasters, internships, and employment.



# Advocacy



# Filing of Parliamentary Questions



## CASES INVOLVING PERFORMING ARTISTES

**Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang** asked the Minister for Home Affairs in respect of holders of work permits for performing artiste (a) what is the number of criminal cases (i) reported (ii) prosecuted and (iii) convicted, in the last three years; and (b) what are the top three offences.

**Mr K Shanmugam:** The Police do not track data on offences specifically by holders of work permits for performing artistes.

## SETTLING IN PROGRAMME FOR PERFORMING ARTISTES

**Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang** asked the Minister for Manpower whether the Ministry will consider requiring a holder of work permit for performing artiste to attend a Settling-in Programme (SIP), similar to the SIP currently conducted for migrant domestic workers and work permit holders from certain sectors.

**Dr Tan See Leng:** Non-Malaysian Work Permit holders in the construction, manufacturing, marine shipyard, and process sectors as well as migrant domestic workers attend the Settling-in-Programme (SIP). The Ministry of Manpower will review this from time to time, but has no plans currently to extend it.



# Advocacy Programmes

## **Attending the Annual Trafficking in Persons Stakeholders Engagement Session**

We contributed Project X's observations and represented the concerns of sex and night entertainment workers in this annual engagement session that brought together stakeholders from civil society, the private sector, academia and the government.

## **Partnership with Providence Law Firm and other pro-bono lawyers**

With the consent of the sex workers involved, we shared their experiences of reporting stealthing and being subject to inappropriate treatment by law enforcement in the report. The case studies informed the report's recommendations to law enforcement agencies regarding enforcement practices when handling stealthing cases, and investigations involving sex workers.

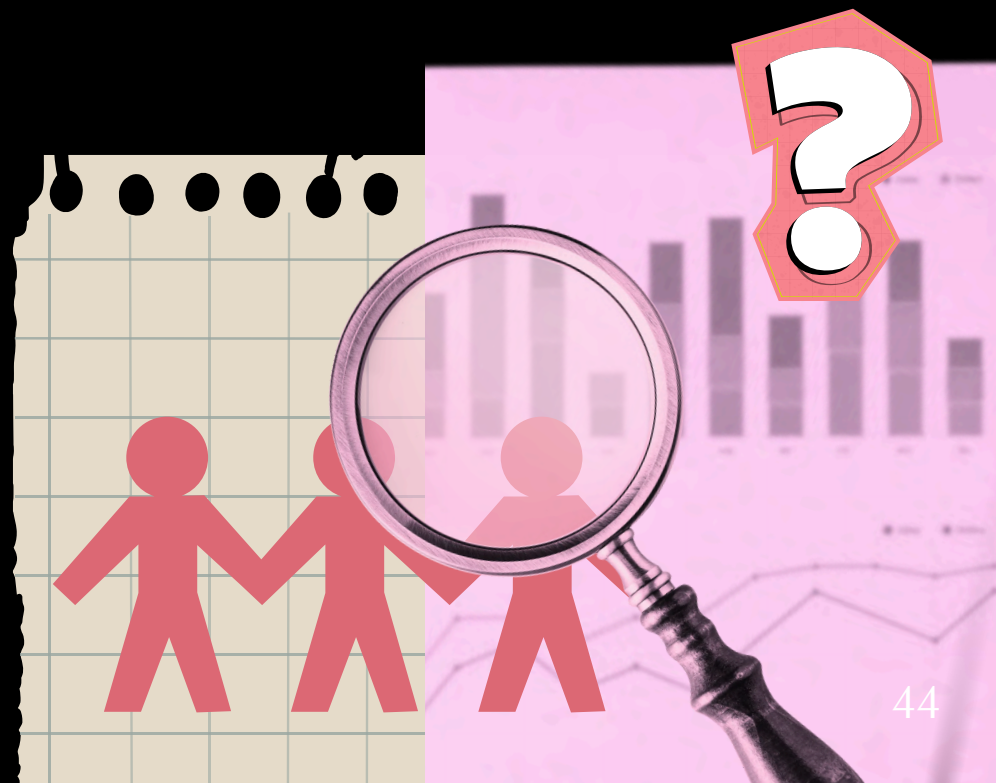
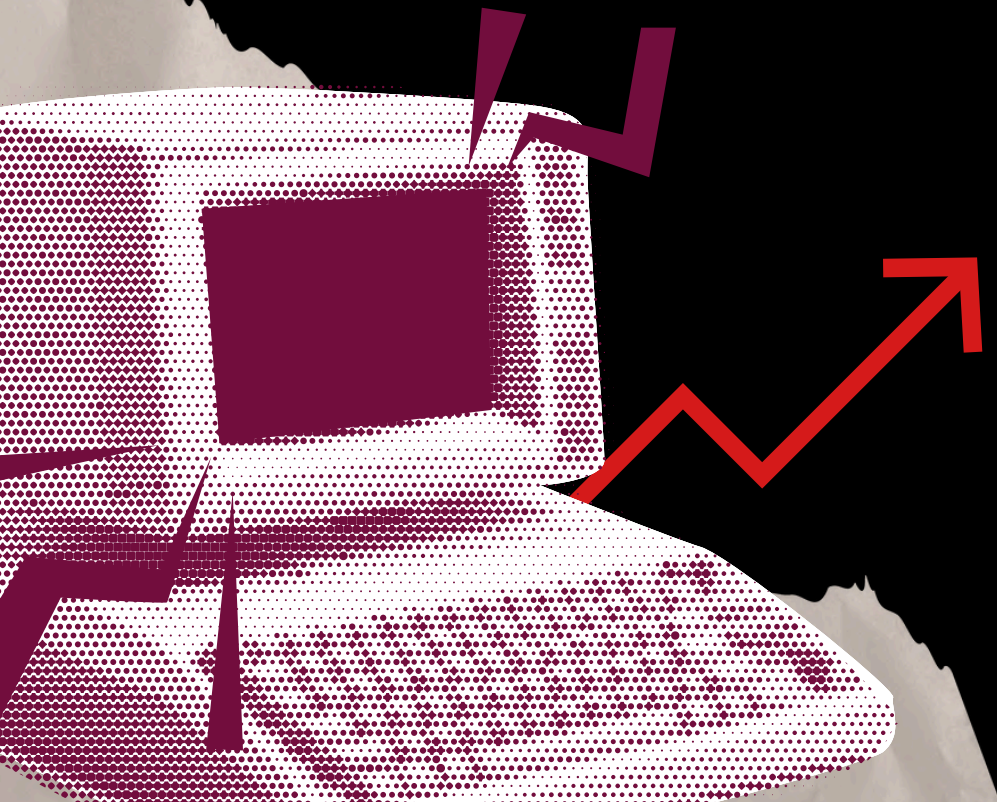
## **AfA-Project X Joint Response to Articles- Sex worker sentenced to over 3 years jail for not disclosing HIV status to sexual partners**

We stress our commitment to ending HIV by combating stigma and focusing efforts on improving access to HIV education, prevention, and treatment for everyone.





# Research





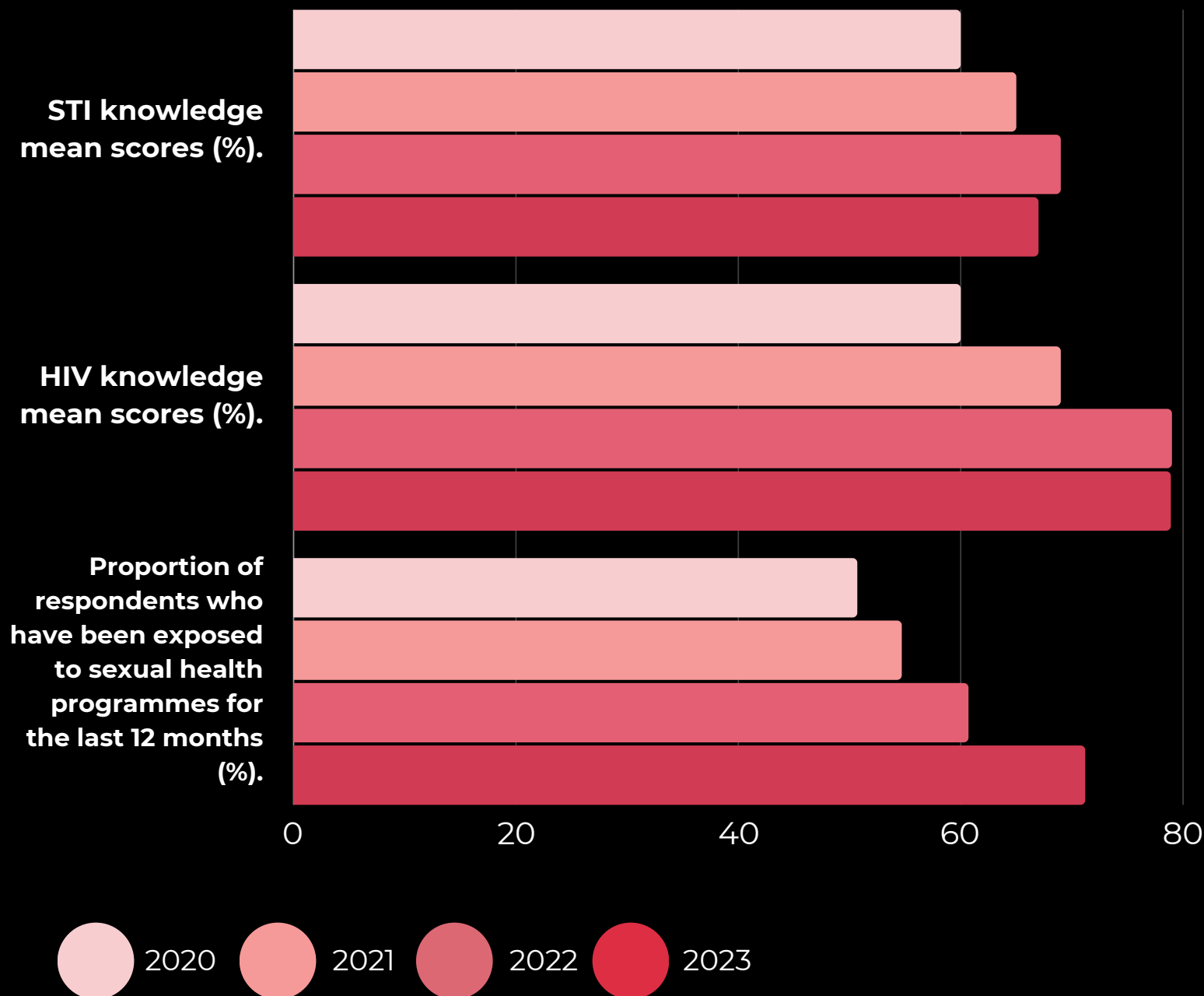
# Survey Insights



\*As survey took place at the end of the second year of COVID-19, sex workers were very different to those surveyed in past years. There were also more surveys conducted face-to-face.

The Year End Survey 2023 is the fourth iteration of this survey and was conducted with the main purpose of uncovering the effectiveness of Project X Society's past year programme implementation for sex and entertainment workers in line with the 2020 baseline survey results. The survey questionnaire involved questions regarding condom use, STI and HIV literacy and sexual health in general. 371 sex and entertainment workers were surveyed.

# Sexual Health Knowledge



Through the cross-tabulation method, we find that the **exposure to sexual education is relevant to the good knowledge of STI and HIV, as well as the behaviour of using condoms with the recent client.** The respondents ranked in the top 25% percentile for scoring well in STI quizzes and who were exposed to sexual health programmes account for 156 (42%). Similarly, the proportion of respondents who did not use condoms with their last client but were exposed to sexual health programmes is 25 (6.7%).






# Health-Seeking Behaviour

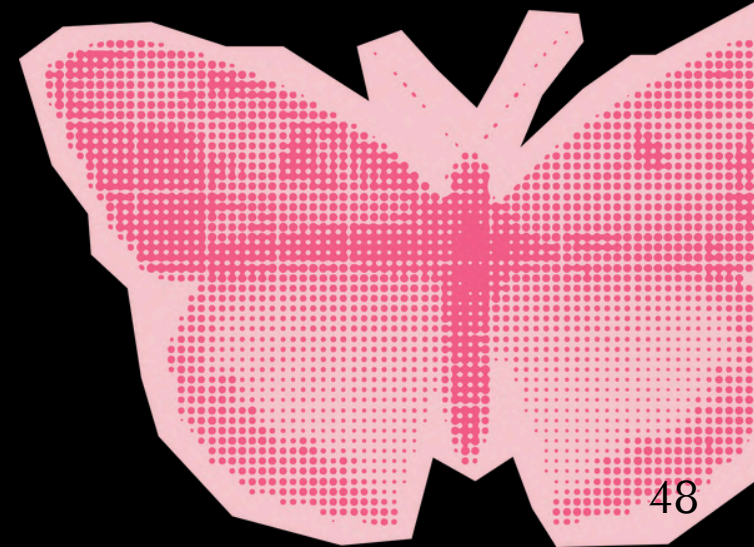




Although there was a slight decrease in knowledge about HIV and STI, respondents' condom use and testing frequency increased. In fact, there was a 2.3 percentage point increase in the proportion of respondents who report condom use with their last client. There was a significant increase in the proportion of people who have ever gone for an STI screening test, and marginal increase in the proportion of people who have ever gone for an HIV test.

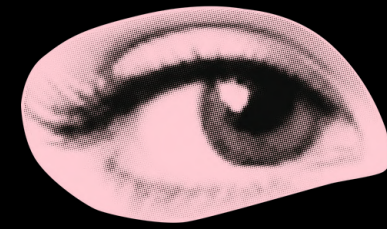
Project X has made substantial contributions to sexual health and awareness, generating a ripple effect that has positively influenced the community. As one of the leading sources for safer sex supplies and a figure of support, Project X intends to continue to further engage with more sex and entertainment workers in areas of sexual health.



# Testimonials by Volunteers, Interns & Sex Workers



# Volunteer and Intern Testimonials



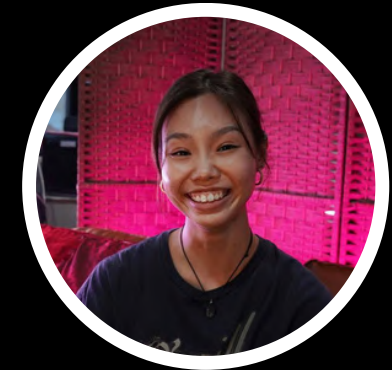
Sophia, former intern

"Interning at Project X gave me the opportunity to actually be on the ground to interact with sex workers and understand their needs, which goes beyond whatever I can get from reading up online or any classroom learning. To be able to learn the vocabulary of sex work from sex workers themselves, listen to their worries, and hand out supplies to them, really made me feel closer to and more passionate about speaking up for sex workers and their rights in Singapore."



Suraj, volunteer

"It has been a rewarding experience. The training sessions were informative. Volunteers are actively encouraged to ask questions and interact with sex workers during weekly outreach sessions. I have learnt so much from their stories and witnessed the meaningful impact outreach sessions have on sex workers!"



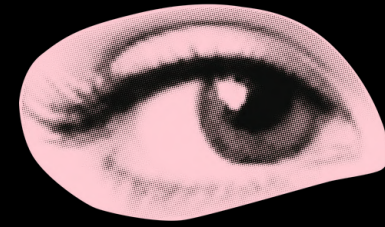
Yuh Xin, volunteer

"Project X is the best organisation that I've volunteered with. The team makes every person they interact with feel like family in a way that no other organisation has done. Both outreach and creating content to counter mainstream sensationalism of sex workers has made an issue that was previously theoretical for me, personal. I've laughed with the Project X community about the absurdity of the narratives surrounding sex work. I've also cried on the streets of Geylang when stories of elder trans workers emerged during conversations.

Demanding for fair labour rights for sex workers has become an intimate issue for me, that I will continue to contribute to."



# Testimonies by sex workers



“Throughout my career as an adult service provider, Project X has provided me with guidance and support. I appreciate the support and care with all the items like lube condoms, pads, free HIV and STI testing. Thank you Vanessa and the Project X team.” - Mandy

“Grateful for the access to resources such as STI testing through Project X. I can work with an ease of mind knowing that there's an organisation in Singapore that advocates and supports for sex workers like me”  
- Jessie