

# A REPORT

BY FYI KL ON



a safe space to be vulnerable



DECEMBER 2019

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	2
About The Stigma Art Exhibition .....	3
Goal .....	3
Initiation .....	3
The Inspiration .....	3
The Big Picture .....	4
The Team .....	4
Curator .....	5
Artists .....	5
Concepts .....	6
Theme .....	6
Design Elements.....	6
Structure of the Exhibition.....	7
Online .....	7
On-site/Offline Exhibition .....	9
Timeline.....	10
Results.....	11
Collected Stories .....	11
Engagement on Social Media.....	11
Reach and Impressions .....	11
Page Likes.....	11
Age Group .....	12
What have we learned from the online campaigns? .....	12
Facebook (FB).....	12
Twitter .....	12
Instagram .....	13
Other related reach outs.....	13
Exhibition .....	14
Sales made from the Art Work .....	14
The Abort The Stigma Short Documentary.....	14
Best Practices and Recommendations.....	15
Acknowledgement .....	16

## Executive Summary

The **Abort The Stigma** (2019) was the first Malaysian online and on-site/offline art exhibition aimed to address abortion-related stigma in Malaysia through art activism in conjunction with World Safe Abortion Day. It showcased art works that were translated by a curated list of artists based on thirty anonymous submissions on their experiences going through abortion. This project was designed and led by the For Youth Initiative Kuala Lumpur (FYI KL) – a digital awareness platform on sexual and reproductive health in Malaysia – in collaboration with the artists who have themselves been championing for human rights. The initiative was supported and funded by the Reproductive Rights Advocacy Alliance Malaysia (RRAAM) and Asia Safe Abortion Partnership (ASAP). This report aims to document the creative processes, results, as well as best practices and recommendations that we have learned throughout the planning and implementation of the Abort The Stigma project.



Figure 1 A snapshot from FYI KL's Instagram

## Abort The Stigma Art Exhibition

In this sub-section, we briefly describe the creative processes that kicked off since February leading up to the exhibition from 28<sup>th</sup> September – 6<sup>th</sup> October 2019.

### Goal

This exhibition aims to create a space to initiate conversations around abortion among Malaysians by collecting and presenting stories of women from all walks of life – from the woman who misses her unborn child she lost due to a forced abortion by her ex-husband to the married woman who feels completely relieved after having an abortion – in the form of art work with the goal to #AbortTheStigma and normalise abortion as healthcare.

### Initiation

Each year, ASAP organises youth advocacy workshops for selected youth leaders across Asia with the aim to cultivate young leaders to champion sexual and reproductive health (SRH) issues, safe abortion particularly in the region. Upon completion of the four-day workshop, ASAP offers a small grant for its youth champions for short-term projects. Champions from countries like Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Lebanon, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Vietnam have previously benefited from this small grant.

This project is a product of this small grant initiative by youth champions from Malaysia. Also, this is the very first initiative of its kind from a team of youth champions in Malaysia, although other countries in the region have advanced such effort since 2012.

### The Inspiration

The Abort The Stigma project was conceptualised after Team Lead, Sangeetha Permalsamy, stumbled upon the House of the Unsilenced in Indonesia.



*More than 20 writers collaborated with survivors to create art work and music that were exhibited and performed in the house, they held discussions, and wrote stories that were read in the house as well.*

Inspired by the #MeToo movement, House of the Unsilenced produces and showcases new artworks, writings, and performances by artists and sexual abuse survivors, about surviving, healing, speaking up, seeking justice, living and loving as a survivor, and fighting for gender equality.

In this space, survivors can tell their stories using various creative mediums

Among the themes explored are on the lack of access to safe abortion and forced pregnancies.

## The Big Picture

The Abort The Stigma project is more than an art exhibition. Here, we summarise the components that make up this project.

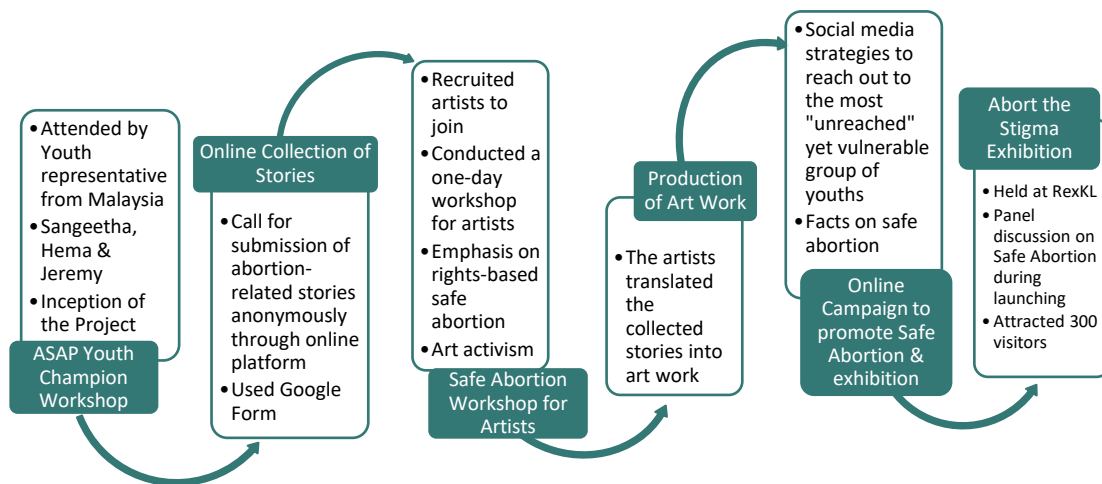


Figure 2 Process from the Inception to the Implementation of the Abort The Stigma Art Exhibition from February – October 2019

## The Team

The five youth champions involved in this project were:

### Sangeetha Permalsamy

She is also the Safe Abortion Officer attached with the International Planned Parenthood Federation, East and South East Asia and Oceania region (IPPF ESEAOR).

### Nuraini Rudi

She is also a Research Officer attached with the Infections Disease Unit of the Sungai Buloh Hospital.

### Fara Rom

She is the social media lead for the project and initiated FYI KL.

### Hema Darshini

She is a nurse working in a women-friendly health clinic.

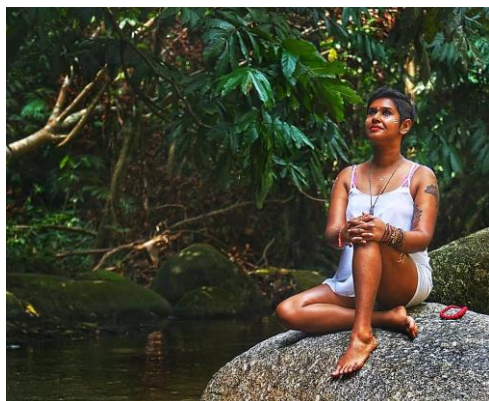
### Amanda Tiew

She is the Project Coordinator at the Reproductive Rights Advocacy Alliance Malaysia (RRAAM).





## Curator



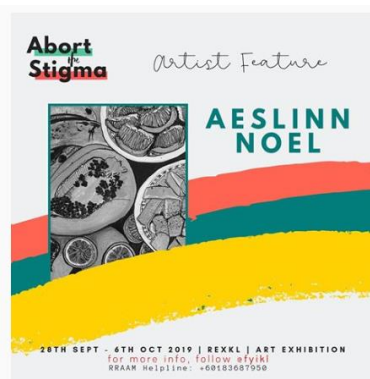
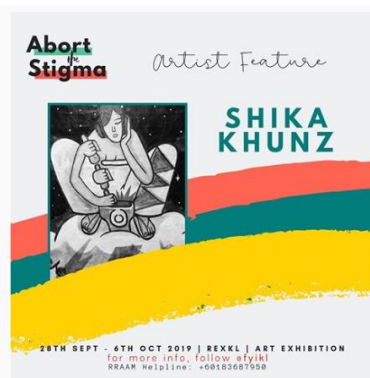
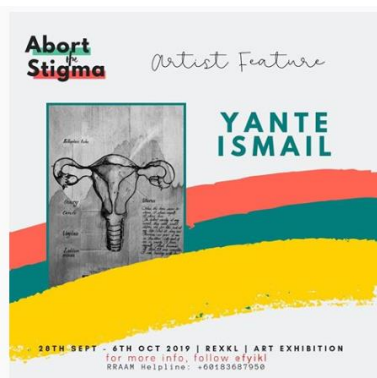
The exhibition was curated by Ruby Subramaniam, a Malaysian visual artist who is also a strong advocate in women's rights.

Her main tasks were to be the bridge between the FYI KL team and artists, as well as providing consultation on the narrative of the project. The specific tasks include:

- Input on type of artwork to be produced by the artist, i.e. canvas, paint supplies, sizes, shapes;
- Location and set up of exhibition;
- Narrative of the project.

## Artists

A total of nine artists had taken part in this project. Six of them had attended the one-day Safe Abortion workshop organised by the FYI KL team.



## Concepts

This sub-section summarises the concepts of the online campaign and on-site/offline exhibition, namely the theme, design elements, structure, and timeline.

### Theme

The theme of this project, “Abort The Stigma” was proposed by the artists after attending a workshop on Safe Abortion facilitated by the FYI KL team on 21 April 2019. The theme was an innuendo proposed by the artists that does not directly implicate abortion, but rather to abort the stigma that surrounds abortion.

“We did not want to isolate many people by using the word “abortion” directly because in Malaysia where it is a conservative country, this immediately closes the door. Therefore, in order to be inclusive, the campaign uses this mechanism.” –

*Organising Team*



Although Malaysia’s abortion laws permit abortions for physical and mental health reasons, it remains a taboo subject. After carefully studying the cultural perspectives, particularly the taboo surrounding this topic in Malaysia, the team came up with the theme “Abort The Stigma”.

In order to be inclusive, the campaign employed this strategy to talk about abortion with a highlight on the stigma related to it as it did not want to isolate the public by explicitly using the word “abortion”.

## Design Elements

### Outline of Woman’s Face

The team included an outline of a woman’s face to signify the image of women accessing abortion. The curves represent the challenges and barriers that prevent them from getting access to safe abortion because the community stigmatises it. The lips embody the aim of the project to speak out openly on stigma-related abortion. It is not the law or policy that prevents accessibility, but the stigma that is linked to it.

### Gender Neutral

Firstly, gender neutral colours, i.e. orange, green and yellow were selected for this campaign, in contrary to the feminine colours such as pink or red. Secondly, the team had decided to do away with feminine elements too, such as flowers.

## Structure of the Exhibition

The exhibition is divided into two sections: online and on-site/offline.



*The Online campaign drives the "Offline" exhibition, and vice versa.*

The online campaign aimed to:

- Promote facts related to safe abortion;
- Dispel myths on abortion;
- Engage with youths;
- Draw visitors to the exhibition;
- Post electronic versions of the artwork at the end of the exhibition.

The On-site/Offline exhibition aimed to:

- Showcase the art work by artists;
- Engage in face-to-face interaction with visitors;
- Provide a platform for discussion on safe abortion services on traditional media and online streaming.

The activities for both sections are elaborated below:

### Online

A total of three social media platforms and a website were used in this project. Posts were uploaded through Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Most of the postings contain similar content but tweaked according to curation style of the social media network and intended audience.



<https://www.facebook.com/fyiKL/>



<https://twitter.com/fyiKL>



[https://www.instagram.com/fyi\\_kl/](https://www.instagram.com/fyi_kl/)



<https://fyiKL.home.blog/>

- Call for anonymous online submission of abortion stories and experiences;
- Designed infographics on materials used for unsafe abortion, e.g. pineapples, Coke, hanger, and bleach;
- Produced short or live videos on safe abortion;
- Excerpts of stories submitted online;
- #321 (the abortion Penal Code) campaign in conjunction with the Malaysian Independence Day;
- Addressed myths and promoted facts on safe abortion on all social media platforms.

- A snapshot of a video produced by the FYI KL team on the "Three Questions on Abortion" posted on Twitter.



- A snapshot of an excerpt from an online submission posted on Twitter.





The features of the posts were:

- i. To provide facts on safe abortion;
- ii. To dispel myths related to abortion;
- iii. Simple language, laymen's terms, and speaking the modern slang of youths;
- iv. Non-judgemental;
- v. Easy-to-remember hashtags such as #321;
- vi. Includes RRAAM hotline details.



For Youth Initiative - FYIKL

· 23 August 2019 ·

Hangers are for jumpers,  
Bleach makes the colour switch,  
Turpentine cleans paintbrushes fine.

If these are what they used for  
Tell me, why is there blood on the floor?

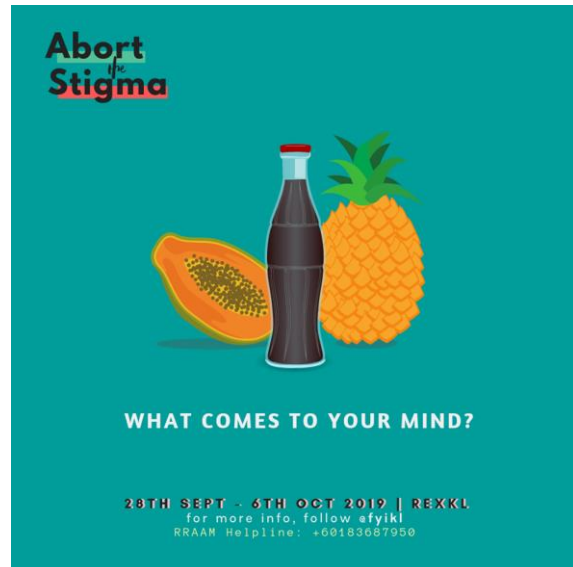
How are these three items similar?  
Please discuss below.

#AbortTheStigma  
#GugurkanStigma  
#312



7 shares

Like Comment Share



For Youth Initiative - FYIKL

Page Liked · 16 August 2019 ·

Papaya, Coke and Pineapple,  
The only option for some people,  
Ending misery and pain or simply,  
Wanting to live their life normally.

Comment below and tell us your thoughts

#AbortTheStigma  
#GugurkanStigma  
#312

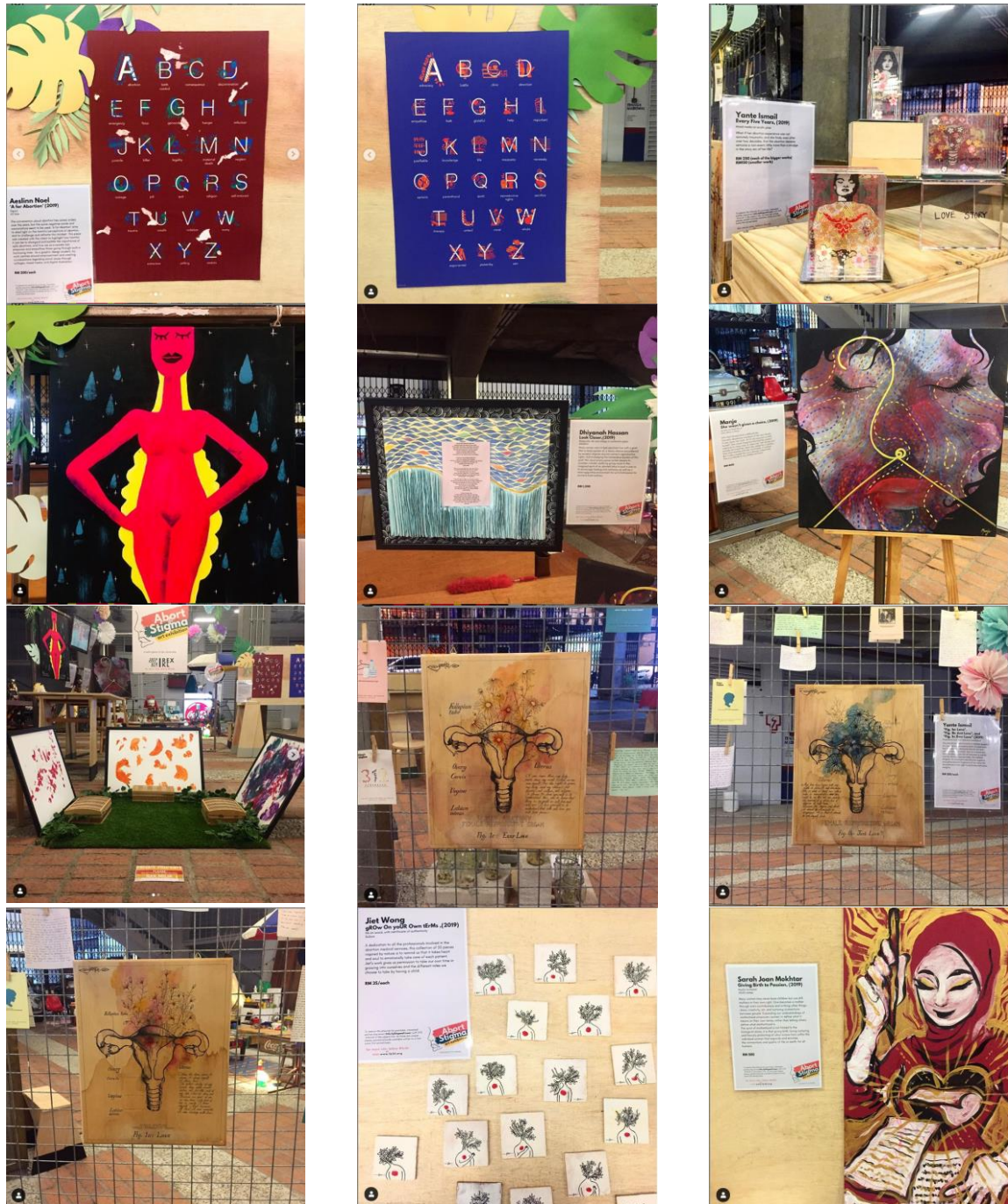


5 shares

Like Comment Share

## On-site/Offline Exhibition

The on-site exhibition was held from 28<sup>th</sup> September to 6<sup>th</sup> October 2019 at RexKL. The themes presented through the art work were on facts and myths, emotions, life and death, foetus, women's body, and the contribution of health care providers involved in providing safe abortion services. The art works were in the form of printed posters, oil paintings by brush and using the body, as well as drawings on glass and wooden blocks. Each art work is accompanied with a write up by the corresponding artist and were arranged beautifully within the allocated compound at RexKL. Additionally, the stories from the earlier submission were hand-written and displayed for the public to read them.



The exhibited art work were also on sale. A portion of the proceeds would be used to provide



*A notice at the exhibition to inform the visitors that the artworks are up for sale.*

subsidised or free safe abortion and post-abortion contraception services for individuals, as well as to maintain the project's website.



*A sample of stickers distributed during the exhibition.*

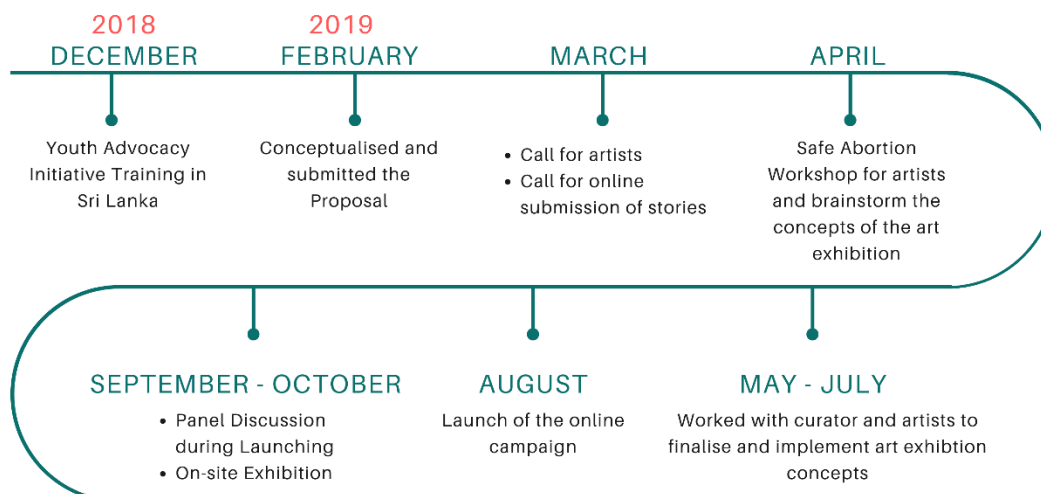
Apart from that, the other printed merchandise were: stickers and postcards with information of RRAAM hotline (safe abortion hotline in Malaysia ). These were distributed to the visitors at the exhibition.

## Timeline

This sub-section describes the timeline of the project that began in December 2019 to October 2019.

- For each of the social media platform, the team had carefully thought through on the content.
- Postings were done on a weekly basis online since the online campaign was launched in August 2019.

### The Abort The Stigma Timeline





## Results

### Collected Stories

A total of 34 English and 6 Bahasa Melayu submissions were received anonymously online.

### Engagement on Social Media

Three social media platforms were used in this campaign, namely Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The reach out are summarised below:

#### Reach and Impressions

Reach is the number of people who receive impressions of a page post. A total of 7,272 persons have viewed the online content of this project in September, an 81 fold increase.

On the other hand, Impressions are the number of times the posts from a page are displayed in a social media user's newsfeed, whether the post is clicked or not. Twitter has the highest increase in Impressions of 958 %from 13,900 to 147,000 from August to September. Instagram has achieved an increase of 310% during the same period of time.

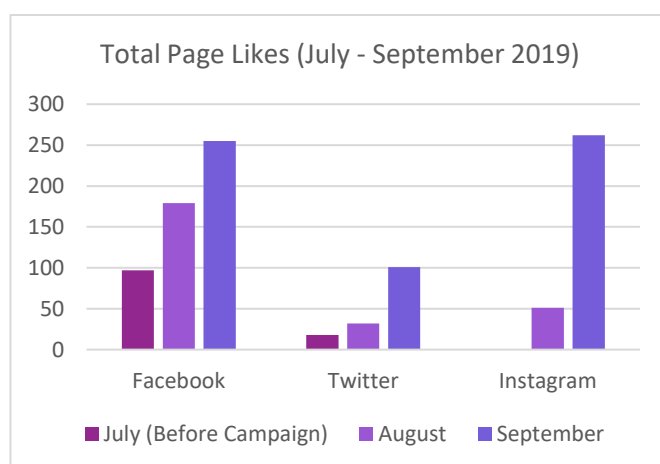
Platform	July (Before the launch of the online campaign)	August	September
Facebook*	89	2,158	7,272
Twitter**	3,616	13,900	147,000
Instagram***	0	3,655	15,000

\* Total Reach - The number of people who had any content from Facebook Page or about Facebook Page enter their screen through unpaid distribution. This includes posts, stories, check-ins, social information from people who interact with your Page and more. (Unique Users)

\*\* Tweet Impressions - Number of times Twitter users encounters FYIKL Tweets in timeline, search results, or from FYIKL profile

\*\*\* Instagram Impressions - the number of times posts has been viewed.

#### Page Likes



This bar chart shows the Total Page Likes on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. A stark increase is seen in comparison to before the campaign (July) and after the campaign was launched (August and September).

The highest number of likes were obtained on Facebook and Instagram. Facebook recorded a 162% increase in page likes, whereas the total followers from Instagram increased to 262 in the span of two months.

However, it is worth noting that although Twitter has the lowest increase in new followers, this does not imply that it is not an effective tool, as based on Impressions (i.e. no. of times a post has been viewed), Twitter has the highest reach out.



## Age Group

The only age-related data related to this campaign is from Instagram. Majority of users were aged 25 – 34 years old (46%), followed by 18 – 24 years old (36%), and over 34 years old (14%). Only 1% were between 13 – 17 years old.

## What have we learned from the online campaigns?

### Facebook (FB)



- Via Facebook, the least engagement was received by impression.
- However, it has gained the highest number of page likes.
- FB served as a platform to systematically organise event details and creating event page.

### Twitter



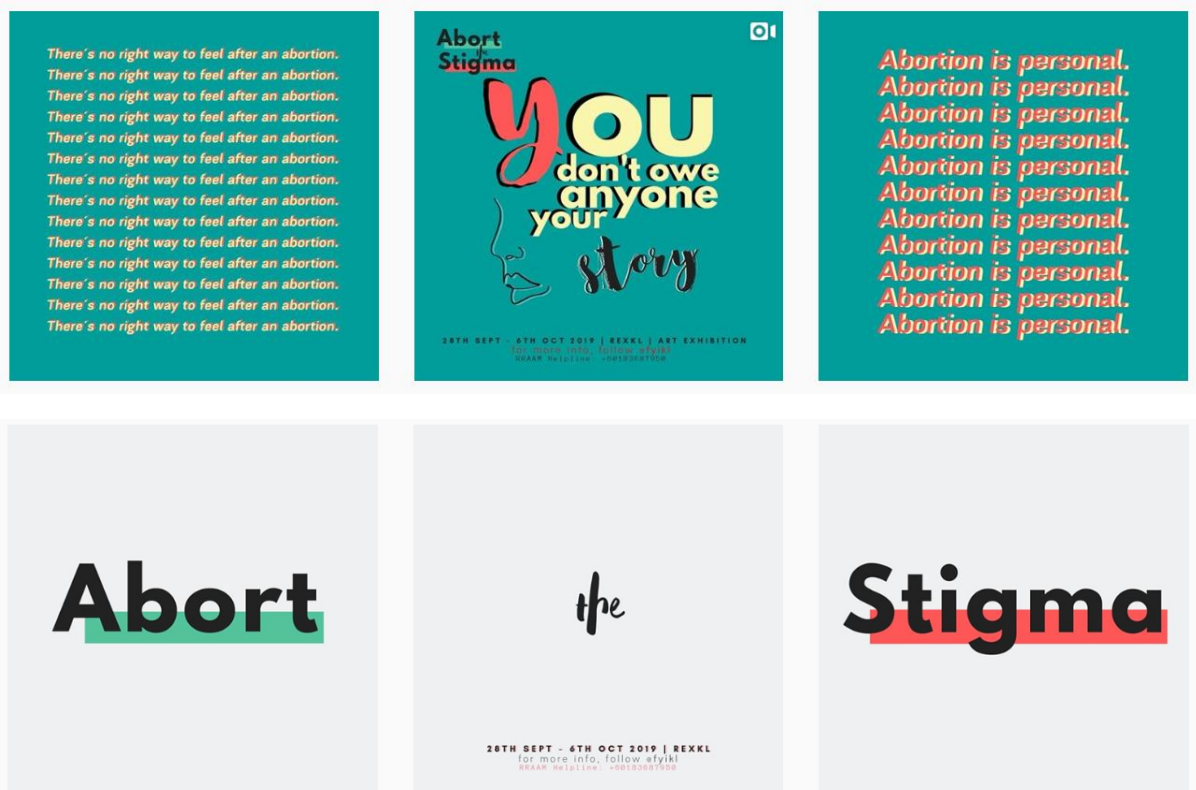
- Via Tweeter, the most engagement by Impressions were received.
- It served as a platform for individually targeted and active conversations with its users.
- One of the strategies used is to create anticipation, e.g. "If there are more than 20 retweets, FYI KL will share more information on safe abortion", story-telling method, and speaking the slang and language of young people.



- The team has managed to reach out to young people who used pseudonyms with a large group of followers on Twitter who have posted high-risk tweets relating to sexual activities and drug use.
- Additionally, the team noticed that a high number of Twitter impressions coupled with just an increase of 85 followers throughout the campaign period signifies that there are “silent followers” who are reading the Tweets, but do not want to openly “Follow” an account related to abortion.
- We had also collaborated with other NGOs and civil society groups, such as RRAAM, AWAM, Ilmu Seks, and Rape Watch Dog.

## Instagram

- Instagram received the second most engagement after Twitter.
- Creatively designed art work, including photos, stories, and videos were used to attract Instagram users to follow the account.
- Split grid is used to present the information.



## Other related reach outs

As a result of this campaign, we have also tracked the number of inquiries on the RRAAM hotline and clinic visits at one affiliated women-friendly clinic in Selangor.

- There was a 500% increase in number of people reaching out to the RRAAM hotline to request for information on safe abortion.
- There was a 30% increase in clinic visits at this women-friendly clinic.

## Exhibition

During the exhibition, a panel discussion was held in conjunction with the launching. It has attracted 100 visitors. The content of the discussion is summarised below:

- The experiences of women and girls who have had abortion;
- How does stigma-related taboo prevent women and girls from accessing safe abortion services;
- Accessibility, availability, and acceptability of safe abortion services in Malaysia;
- The Malaysian health care system and safe abortion.



Throughout the one-week duration of the exhibition, there were 310 visitors of different ethnic groups and nationalities who came to view the art work.

## Sales made from the Art Work



During the exhibition a total of RM 3,005.00 was raised from public donors who have purchased the art work. The profit was shared on a 50-50 basis with the artists and the team retained a final amount of RM 1,502.50.

## The Abort The Stigma Short Documentary

This documentary summarises the panel discussion and art exhibition. It is produced voluntarily by Perassath, a final year Mass Communication student.

Link:

<https://tinyurl.com/AbortTheStigma>



## Best Practices and Recommendations

Here is a list of lessons learned, best practices, and recommendations that have emerged from this project.

### 1. Creating a Safe Space for Conversations on Abortion through Art

- Art enabled us to reach out to a wider audience due to the subtlety that it provides in presenting a taboo topic such as abortion in largely conservative Malaysia.
- Art provided the channel to paint the picture of abortion stories told by women and girls, that “no one abortion story is similar to another” and “there is no perfect abortion stories” as different individuals undergo abortion for different reasons.
- Through the art work and stories, the audience understood better and were more receptive to the fact that women and girls are unable to avail themselves to safe abortion services due to the stigma attached to the procedure.

### 2. Youth-led, Youth-initiated, and Youth-run

- This project received minimum “adult” and funder intervention. Therefore, the youths had the flexibility to decide on the direction, methodology, and design of the project without much interference.
- We were also able to include youth artists of various background who were non-SRHR activists or advocates at the beginning to take up the cause and promote it.

### 3. Anonymity

- The call for online anonymous submissions of stories allowed individuals to express themselves freely and without the fear of judgement on their experiences.
- Contrary to face-to-face or individual interviews that are restricted to an Interview Guide, this method enabled individuals to describe the complexity of feelings in their own words.

### 4. Strategic use of social media

- We engaged with youths online through three social media platforms, namely Twitter, Instagram and Facebook; each has its own strengths and audience coverage.
- This has enabled a 9,500 total reach on Facebook, 164,000 Tweet impressions, 18,500 Instagram impressions throughout the campaign period. This generated an increase of calls over the RRAAM Hotline from 95 calls in August to 346 calls in October (264%).
- The strategies to reach out to wider scope of youth audience were: the use specific hashtags e.g. #GugurkanStigma #AbortTheStigma, request for share or retweets, and interaction with the audience.
- From this practice, the Youth Champions have identified Malaysian/local Twitter users using pseudonyms with a large network of followers who were actively posting on abortion-related issues, and gained their support to share about the exhibition.

### 5. Safe Abortion Workshop for Artists

- A Safe Abortion Workshop was organised for a total of 10 artists who were interested to join the project initially in order to ensure that they understood about rights-based safe abortion and the objectives of the project.
- Six of the artists were identified by the curator after the workshop.
- The artists were then requested to conceptualise and produce the artwork based on the anonymous submission of stories.



## **6. Gender Neutral Design Elements**

- It is recommended to use gender neutral design elements for the campaign to shrug off societal perception that associates abortion-related stigma to women.

## **7. Stickers with RRAAM Hotline Details**

- The tastefully designed stickers were effective in reaching out to a wider audience as it can be pasted on walls at public toilets, in the university, colleges, and places frequented by youths.

## **8. Location**

- RexKL is situated at Petaling Street and it is widely accessible via public transportation. The visitor flow was high especially during the weekend as it is one of the must-visit locations by tourists and young people.

## **9. Leads Generation from Online and On-site campaigns**

- In the age of social media, both online and on-site campaign strategies are important. We have found that the two strategies are linked to each other to generate leads, especially marginalised youths on information and access to safe abortion services.
- We have received a surge in inquiries related to safe abortion services through the RRAAM Hotline.

## **10. Sustainability and Continuity**

- This project was designed with a sustainability plan in mind.
- Part of the sustainability plan is to tap on existing youth-led social media account, i.e. FYI KL.

## **Acknowledgement**

The FYI KL team would like to extend their appreciation to RRAAM, ASAP, the artists, and the public for taking part in this conversation to normalise abortion in Malaysia.