



COMMUNITY  
VIEWS ON  
VIOLENCE  
AGAINST  
WOMEN IN  
CHI KRAENG  
COMMUNE

[illegible]



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No. 313, Group 9, Sala Kanseng Village, Sangkat Svay Dangkum, Siem Reap province, Kingdom of Cambodia. [www.thislifecambodia.org](http://www.thislifecambodia.org).

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ADHOC	Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association
CC	Commune Council
CCWC	Commune Committee for Women and Children
CK	Chi Kraeng
CWCC	Cambodia Women's Crisis Center
ICS	Investing in Children and their Societies
LAC	Legal Aid Cambodia
LGO	Local Government Organization
LICADHO	Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defence of Human Rights
NAPVAW	National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
P4P	Partners for Prevention
TLC	This Life Cambodia
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
VAW	Violence Against Women
VHSG	Village Health Support Group
WRC	Women's Resource Centre



## DEFINITION OF VAW

The term "violence against women" means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. This definition draws on internationally recognized definitions of VAW, including Recommendation 19 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

The primary focus of this research is on intimate gender based violence, which participants referred to as 'domestic violence', therefore this term is used to present findings.

## PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

**This Life Cambodia (TLC)** is a not-for-profit non-government community development organisation based in Siem Reap. The organisation was established in 2007, and focuses on providing opportunities for communities to develop the essential infrastructure, skills and knowledge to make positive change in their lives and break free from poverty. TLC currently operates four programs, including the Student Assistance Program (SAP), the Lower Secondary School Development Program (LSSDP), the This Life Beyond Bars (TLBB) Program, and the Community Research and Consultancy Program (CRCP).

**Investing in Children and their Societies (ICS)** is a Dutch development organization that invests in social entrepreneurship in African and Asian communities and in the preservation of children's rights. ICS is committed to contribute to a world of children who can enjoy their childhood and are able to further develop themselves. In this world they are free from discrimination, exploitation and neglect.

## THE RESEARCH TEAM

**The Community Research and Consultancy Program (CRCP)**, of TLC, conducted this research. The work of CRCP provides a mechanism for the voices of marginalized communities to be heard. In line with TLC's mission to listen to, engage with and advocate alongside communities, CRCP translates voices into new knowledge, which can then be used as a tool to advocate for positive change. Key researchers included:

- Mr. Mono Tuot - CRCP Coordinator
- Ms. Shelley Walker - Research Evaluation Officer (AusAID funded position)
- Mr. Kimsorn Ngam - CRCP Officer

Research assistants included:

- Mrs. Sitha Hing
- Ms. Kundoeun So

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

This research was conducted as a starting point for a partnership project between This Life Cambodia (TLC), and ICS (Investing in Children and their Societies) to address the issue of violence against women and children in Chi Kraeng Commune in Cambodia.

Although there is much recent national and international evidence of the existence of violence against women in Cambodia, and many studies have helped to identify and understand the impact and root causes of this violence, limited research has been conducted at the local level.

An extensive 3-day Participatory Rural Appraisal conducted by This Life Cambodia in 2011, in Chi Kraeng Commune in Siem Reap Province, revealed that the issue of domestic violence was one the biggest issues of concern for their community, particularly for women and children. Based on these local findings and national evidence, in particular a recent UN multi-country study that revealed around a third of ever-partnered men in Cambodia had perpetrated violence against a woman, TLC partnered with ICS to develop a partnership project to aim to address the issue of VAW in Chi Kraeng. The Community Research and Consultancy Program of This Life Cambodia conducted this research. ICS provided funding for TLC to undertake this first phase of the project.

The second phase of the project will involve presenting findings back to the community to generate ideas and actions for working together with the community to develop solutions and strategies that respond to the local research findings and recommendations.

## Methods

The research involved two key components. First, it involved a systems mapping activity to determine what mechanisms, networks and committees exist and are working, to address violence against women, at the commune and village levels. Secondly, it involved interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders of Chi Kraeng Commune to develop a local understanding of community perception of the nature and prevalence of VAW in Chi Kraeng, including how the issue is dealt with in the community, what the adverse effects of VAW are on women and children, and what needs to be done to address the issue. A total of 47 participants were interviewed; 19 were involved in individual interviews and 28 participants were involved in focus groups. Participants were recruited via our own networks and snowball sampling. Participants included representatives of NGOs and LGOs, local authorities in Chi Kraeng, local villagers and students. Research safety guidelines were developed to protect participant safety and confidentiality. Interviews and focus groups were conducted in Khmer, with transcripts translated into English. A workshop was held with the research team to generate themes and topics from the findings.

## Findings

Findings of our study have revealed that violence against women is a huge concern for community members of Chi Kraeng Commune, with many members of local authority regarding it as one of the biggest issues in the commune. Although participants mentioned non-partner violence, most stories involved domestic violence and the adverse impact of this on women and children.

### **Views on causes of DV in Chi Kraeng**

For some participants of our study, there was recognition that the root causes of domestic violence are based in gender inequality and dominant gender norms, however for most it was the contributing factors, both social and economic, that were viewed as the primary causes of violence against women, including alcohol misuse, gambling, poverty, and because women refuse sex and many men have extra marital partners.

### **Views on impact of DV on the community**

In terms of the impact of domestic violence in the community, many participants spoke of adverse health consequences, including women experiencing minor injuries and mental health problems through to more serious life threatening injuries and even death in some cases. Some respondents shared concerns about the financial impact of domestic violence, due to costs related to property damage, health care treatment for physical violence and loss of family income productivity. Most participants were also concerned about the devastating impact of domestic violence on children, with many sharing stories of children feeling scared, being separated from family, dropping out of school, and being unable to focus on study.

### **Processes for dealing with DV in Chi Kraeng**

Although most common process for dealing with reported cases of domestic violence in Chi Kraeng is to seek help and support via local authorities, including in particular the Village Chief, the Commune Chief and the Police, findings highlight a number of gaps in their skills and knowledge to deal with individual cases, even though many report having received training in this area. Furthermore, while a number of local NGOs around Siem Reap are working in the area of domestic violence, few are working in Chi Kraeng Commune, and most are focused on human and legal rights education for villagers. The Chi Kraeng Community Health Centre is an important service for identifying and dealing with cases of domestic violence, however findings also highlight gaps in knowledge and skills for dealing with cases. Families and neighbours were identified by some as a key source of support and help.

### **Barriers that prevent a response to DV in Chi Kraeng**

Although there are a number of policy mechanisms in place to address violence against women and gender inequality in Cambodia, participants of our study highlighted a number of local level barriers that are preventing this from happening. These include in particular the shame experienced by women and families who are involved in DV, that prevents them seeking support and help in the first place. Petty corruption, a lack of skills, knowledge and resources for those whose role it is to respond to individual cases and a lack of support for women who experience DV, were all identified as barriers.

### **Ideas for solutions**

Whilst some participants shared ideas for solutions, most suggestions were limited to the expansion of strategies that were already being implemented, including more education and awareness raising about human and legal rights, more involvement of NGOs in this work, and more serious consequences for perpetrators.



# 1

## INTRODUCTION

ICS and TLC have established a partnership to develop a program for preventing and addressing the issue of violence against women and children in Chi Kraeng (CK) Commune in Siem Reap Province, Cambodia. We believe that for local program responses to be targeted and responsive to community need, that the community should be consulted first. Therefore, this first phase of the project involved developing a local understanding of the issue of VAW in CK Commune, with the aim of determining what exists in terms of mechanisms, organisations and initiatives to prevent and respond to the issue of violence against women. Furthermore the project sought to develop an understanding of community perceptions and views of the issue.

ICS provided funding for TLC to undertake this first phase of the project.

This research project will provide a starting-point for a longer partnership to address the issue of VAW, not only in Chi Kraeng Commune, but potentially other communes in Siem Reap, Banteay Meanchey and/or Oddar Meanchey Provinces.

This report presents the findings of this first phase of the project, 'Research about Violence Against Women in Chi Kraeng'. The second phase of the project will involve presenting findings back to the community to generate ideas and actions for working together with the community to develop solutions and strategies that respond to the local research findings.

The research involved two key components:

1. A systems mapping activity to determine what mechanisms, networks and committees exist and are working, to address violence against women, at the commune and village levels.
2. Interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders of Chi Kraeng Commune to develop a local understanding of the nature and extent of the issue of violence against women in Chi Kraeng Commune, including their suggestions for solutions.

# RATIONALE FOR PROJECT

## National evidence of VAW in Cambodia

A plethora of international and local research on gender inequality and VAW highlights widespread experiences of violence toward women across Cambodia. A 2009 survey conducted by the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) found that approximately 64 per cent of the sample knew a husband who acted violently towards his wife and 23 per cent of female respondents had experienced violence by their husbands (MoWA, 2009a). A more recent multi-country UN study (2013) has revealed 33% of ever-partnered men in Cambodia had perpetrated physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence against women.

Apart from the significant violation of human rights, violence against women results in both immediate and longer-term health outcomes for women, including physical injury, unwanted pregnancy, abortion, sexually transmitted infections, post traumatic stress disorder and depression (WHO, 2010). Furthermore, there is much evidence of the impact of VAW on children, particularly when the violence happens within the home and family of children; some evidence suggests that those who in fact suffer most from domestic violence are children and young people, with fear, depression, school non-attendance and physical injury being just some of the impacts for this group (UN, 2009).

A large body of research and literature highlights that VAW is embedded in inequitable norms, practices and attitudes that denigrate women's roles and contributions in Cambodian Society.

*VAW, in its many forms and manifestations, and across all settings, is a violation of human rights that restricts fundamental freedoms for women and girls... There are economic and social costs associated with VAW, and global evidence shows that violence consistently undermines development efforts at various levels, driving the depreciation of physical, human and social capital. (P4P, 2013)*

There is widespread recognition that VAW in Cambodia is a critical issue that needs to be addressed. The Cambodian Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA), as a key governmental institution of Cambodia and national mechanism to respect, protect and fulfill women's rights, has been leading and coordinating a process to prevent and respond to VAW. To intensify their efforts they have developed a 2<sup>nd</sup> National Action Plan to Prevent Violence against Women (NAPVAW) 2013-2017. A review of the first National Plan (2009-2012) identified that many organizations in Cambodia are working on prevention, protection and direct services to deal with VAW, but efforts are not well coordinated, and while laws and policies addressing VAW have been declared, effective implementation and efficient operation of these mechanisms remains a challenge. Limited services are available; therefore many women do not have access to these services. A Working Paper based on research (2013) exploring the implementation of policies that address VAW in Cambodia highlights improved awareness amongst the general population that VAW is a serious problem, yet understandings of the underlying social and gender inequalities that contribute to men's use of VAW are missing. Furthermore, research highlights that best practice approaches need to be implemented across a continuum of activities that address the complex interplay between individual, relationship, community, and societal factors (Deepali 2010).

## National Action Plan to Prevent VAW 2013-2017

The 2<sup>nd</sup> National Action Plan to Prevent Violence against Women (NAPVAW) 2013-2017 recommends that responses are required to stop violence before it occurs by addressing the underlying causes (Primary Prevention). Effective primary prevention interventions seek to build knowledge, understanding, capacities, and skills of communities to develop and foster respectful, gender-equitable, and non-violent relationships. Next it is recommended that an

increase in the provision of easily accessible, appropriate, quality services for all survivors of VAW, is required, including health and social services and rehabilitation, police protection, and ensuring access to legal aid and justice. It is also recommended that a multi-sector mechanism is developed that brings together the various sectors who are responding to VAW, so that knowledge, resources, skills and strategies can be shared, and responses can be coordinated. Although a range of national projects are currently underway to work on addressing the issue of VAW in Cambodia, comprehensive responses at the local level are missing.

## Local evidence of VAW in Chi Kraeng

TLC has been working in Chi Kraeng Commune for the last 2 years, through the Community Development and Local Governance Integration Project of This Life Beyond Bars (TLBB). The project aims to strengthen local and sub-national systems and mechanisms to address human and legal rights issues of children and their families who have been in conflict with the law. Through this work, TLC has long standing established networks and relationships with government authorities, NGOs and community networks, committees and organizations in Chi Kraeng.

An extensive 3-day Participatory Rural Appraisal conducted in Chi Kraeng Commune in 2011 by TLC, involving 65 villagers and key stakeholders from villages across the Commune, revealed that violence against women and children was a key concern for large sections of the community. In fact across six focus groups conducted with women, villagers, influential people in the community, students, families of prisoners and local authorities (Village Chief, Police and Commune Council), Domestic Violence (DV) was an issue that was prioritized for all but one group. For women, DV was considered the 2<sup>nd</sup> biggest concern in their community, amongst 5 issues, and for secondary school students, the issue of DV was a priority amongst only 3 other issues, including school dropouts, human rights issues and gambling/juvenile justice issues. The only group who did not discuss DV issues during the PRA process in Chi Kraeng, were families of prisoners, who not surprisingly prioritized issues including discrimination faced, prison visitation issues and health problems.

Findings from participants highlighted that VAW was an enormous issue for the Chi Kraeng community, highlighting a need for more comprehensive research to understand more fully, the nature and extent of the issue, so that we are better equipped to design responses that meet community need.

## ABOUT CHI KRAENG COMMUNE

Chi Kraeng Commune is situated in Chi Kraeng District, in Siem Reap Province, and is around 75 km from Siem Reap City. It is one of 12 communes in Chi Kraeng District. Chi Kraeng Commune is made up of 14 villages (Kompongsnao Lech, San Dann, Chi Kreng, Pring, Sro Mor, Kom Pong, Anlung Tnaoth, Anlung, Chambok, Beng, Kor, Ta Ram, Phneat, Bos Pok and Konpongsnao Kurt).

Chi Kraeng Commune has a population of 12,160 people, of whom 6,194 are women. The primary industry for families is agriculture and local business. The Chi Kraeng District 3-year Investment Plan (IP3) has identified Domestic Violence as a priority area for Women's Affairs.

**Figure 1 Location of Chi Kraeng in Cambodia**



A = Chi Kraeng District

# 2

## RESEARCH METHODS

Qualitative research methods were used to gather data for this study. A total of 47 participants were interviewed. 19 were involved in individual interviews and 28 were involved in focus groups.

Research participants were recruited via established connections and networks of the TLC LSSDP and TLBB Programs. Snowball sampling was also used to recruit participants, which involved consultation with those we conducted interviews and focus groups, to determine other important members of the community to participate in the study. Individual community members were identified by the key stakeholder sample.

All individual interviews and focus groups were conducted by Khmer researchers, with the support of a native English-speaking researcher for some individual interviews. Most interview and focus group data was transcribed in English; some was recorded in Khmer, and translated into English. The research team read all the transcripts and a workshop was held to determine topics and common themes.

An interview guide was used to lead the interview process, for both individual interviews and focus groups, being flexible enough to allow the discussion to wander to places that interested participants so they could take the lead if and when they wanted to.

All interviews with NGOs were conducted in the workplace. Individual interviews with key stakeholders were conducted in CK Commune; interviews were conducted in the Commune Council Office, the Commune Police Office, the Pagoda, the Lower Secondary School, and some were conducted in the home of Village Chiefs.



## Box 1 Interview & Focus Group Interview Topics

### **Community perception of the nature and prevalence of VAW in CK**

What does violence against women mean in the context of CK commune?

Are there commonly agreed upon definitions of violence against women? Can standardized definitions be established?

What are the most common forms of VAW in CK?

What is the perception of the prevalence of VAW in CK?

What are the perceptions of the underlying causes of VAW in CK?

What are the concerns over the presence of VAW in CK?

### **Current interventions to respond to VAW in CK**

How do local authorities respond to the issues of VAW in CK?

How do community members respond to the issue of VAW in CK?

What is the perception of the effectiveness of current interventions?

What is the level of reported cases of VAW in CK?

What is the perception of unreported cases of VAW in CK?

### **Finding solutions to respond to the issue of VAW in CK**

What has been achieved to date, to address VAW in CK?

What are the challenges that need to be addressed to effectively reduce VAW in CK?

What resources and support is needed to effectively implement already existing policies on VAW?

What resources and support are needed to promote new and existing policies to address VAW?

What are possible entry points at the local level to move forward with prevention and a response to VAW issues in CK?

Recognizing that all forms of violence are interconnected and stem from the same root causes, how do we move from the focus on individuals to an emphasis on community engagement?

How can the community (including women in particular) be involved in determining and designing solutions to address the issue of violence against women and children in CK?

# RESEARCH SAMPLE

Interviewees were categorized into 2 groups:

1. Key members of local government structures, NGOs and schools
2. Local villagers (including VHSGs, secondary school students)

Interviews were conducted with a number of key stakeholders including the Principal and 3 teachers at the CK Lower Secondary School (LSS), 3 Village Chiefs, the CK Commune Police Chief, the Women's Focal Person for the CK Commune Committee for Women and Children (CCWC), the CK Commune Chief, and the Vice Director of the CK Health Center. Individual interviews were also conducted with representatives of local NGO's working to address VAW. NGOs included, the Women's Resource Center (WRC), Banteay Srei, Legal Aid Cambodia (LAC), and LICADHO (Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defence of Human Rights

Two focus groups were conducted with students from CK LSS. One focus group comprised eight female students, and one was made up of eight male students. Two additional focus groups of seven and five members were conducted with Village Health Support Group (VHSG) members, whom all were women.

**Table 1 Individual Interview Sample**

Individual Interview Sample	
<b>Local Authorities</b>	Village Chiefs x 2
	Commune Chief
	Commune Police Chief
	CCWC Focus Person
<b>Community Representatives</b>	CK Lower Secondary School Teachers x 2
	CK Lower Secondary School Principal
	CK Health Centre - Vice Director
	Village Health Support Group Member
	Monk
	Village Elders x 2
<b>NGO Workers</b>	Women's Resource Center
	Legal Aid Cambodia (LAC)
	LICADHO (Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defence of Human Rights)
	Banteay Srei
	This Life Cambodia x 2

Figure 2 Age of VHSG Women

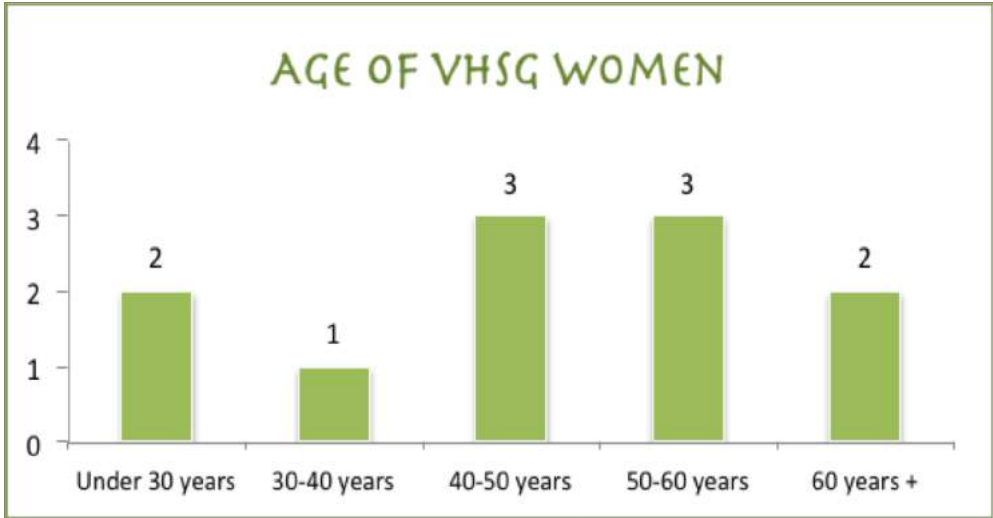


Figure 3 Student Focus Group Numbers

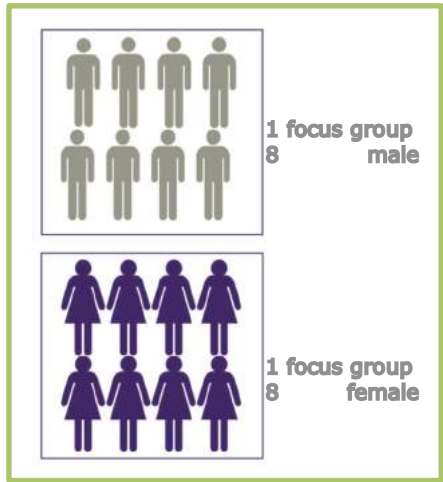
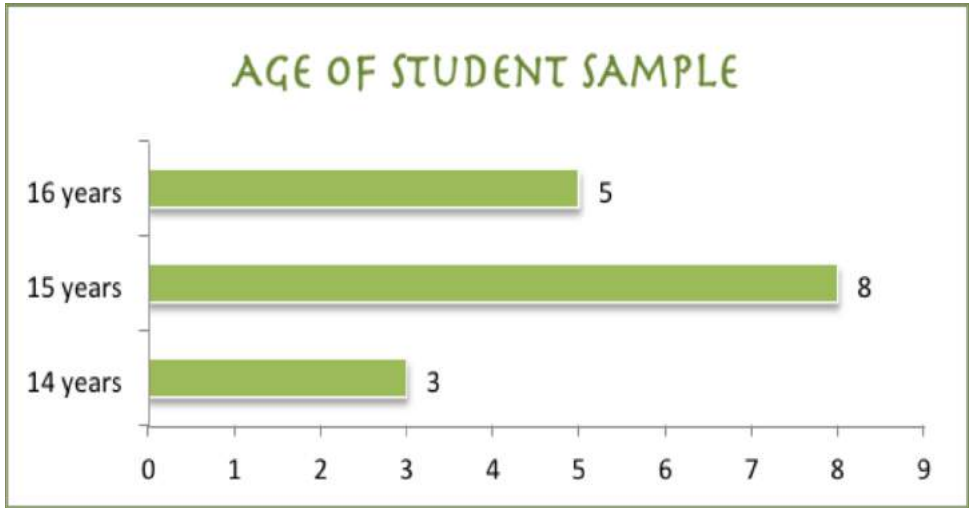


Figure 4 VHSG Focus Group Numbers



Figure 5 Age of students



## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research on violence against women (VAW) raises important ethical and methodological challenges in addition to those posed by any research. The nature of the topic means that issues of safety, confidentiality and interviewer skill and training are even more important than for other areas of research (WHO, 2003). It is often felt that the topic of VAW is too sensitive a topic to be explored, and that the risks that jeopardize the safety of participants outweigh the benefits. Many studies however, have been conducted around the world (P4P et al 2013, WHO 2003) that show that research on domestic violence against women can be conducted with full respect of ethical and safety considerations. Furthermore, evidence has highlighted that for women, participating in violence research can in fact be beneficial, rather than creating harm (Center for Health and Gender Equity, 1996). Given our commitment to ensuring all risks were minimized, we designed our own ethical and safety principals for this research, which were based on the WHO guidelines and lessons learnt from research conducted by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA 2010), which focus on the specific ethical and safety issues associated with planning and conducting research on this topic. Box 2 summarizes these principals.

An important safety measure for this project was to develop a 'safe name' for the project, for presenting in the community, which meant we did not reveal that the survey includes questions on VAW. We called the project 'The Women's and Children's Safety Project'.

As previously mentioned, although the aim of this research was not to gather personal information about participant's own experience of domestic violence, we understood, that by providing a safe space for participants to share, that it was possible that this could occur. Therefore, we had in place strategies to deal with these personal disclosures if they occurred. For example, researchers were advised about how to deal with disclosures of abuse, with information for referrals for support if this occurred. Furthermore, researchers had information to provide to women on additional referral services related to supporting victims of VAW, if needed.

### Consent to Participate

'Free Prior Informed Consent' (The NGO Forum on Cambodia 2012) is an international concept to acknowledge people's legitimate decision-making authority. Based on this principal, a number of strategies were put in place to ensure participants did not feel coerced to participate, that they felt free to withdraw consent at any time, and that they did not feel obliged to share only information with us that they thought we wanted to hear.

A consent script was used to provide clear information to participants about what it meant to be involved in the research, prior to their making a decision to be involved. We explained to participants that they did not have to answer any questions they did not feel comfortable answering and that they could stop the interview at any time, and as many participants were illiterate, we obtained 'voice signature consent', which involved individuals verbally consenting to be involved in the research.

#### Box 2 Free Prior Informed Consent Process

##### **'Free Prior Informed Consent' (The NGO Forum on Cambodia 2012)**

Free	= participants were free to withdraw consent at any time (no coercion)
Prior	= decision to consent happened before interviews
Informed	= concise information about the research was given prior to consent

## Maintaining confidentiality

The dynamics of violent relationships means that, sometimes when details of the violence are revealed to others outside the family, that this can provoke more violence. For this reason, the confidentiality of information collected during the interviews, was of fundamental importance. We therefore implemented a number of mechanisms to protect the confidentiality of the information collected, including:

- At the beginning of interviews, before consent was obtained, and at the end of the interviews, we briefed participants about the need for confidentiality; including the safeguards we had in place to protect their privacy.
- For focus groups with villagers and young people, no names were written on transcripts.
- Data was de-identified, to ensure personal information cannot be linked to a specific individual, couple or family. Thus, all personal identifying information, including names, places, location and dates of incidents, were removed from the data.
- For focus groups, participants were instructed not to share personal experiences, but rather to present the experience of unnamed others or impressions of the issue in the community.

## Mature minors

Although some concern exists about young people's ability to consent to research without their parents approval, in Australia the law says a minor (under 18 years) is capable of giving informed consent if they are considered to have sufficient understanding and intelligence to be able to understand fully what is proposed. Young people were recruited via teachers within the school; they selected students with whom they believed were mature enough to make an informed choice about whether or not to be involved.

### Box 3 Research Safety Principals

#### **VAW research safety principals for our study**

- The safety of respondents and the research team is paramount, and will guide all project decisions.
- We will protect confidentiality to ensure both women's safety and data quality.
- All those who participate in the study will give informed consent before participating in the data gathering activity.
- The study design will include actions aimed at reducing any possible distress caused to the participants by the research.
- Referral pathways to local services and supports will be in place to deal with any adverse outcomes or disclosures from participants.
- Researchers will ensure that findings are properly interpreted and used to advance policy and intervention development.
- Information gathering and documentation will be done in a manner that presents the least risk to respondents, is methodologically sound, and builds on current experience and good practice. Additional safeguards will be put into place for those participating in this research who are under 18 years.



# 3

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

The following chapter describes the findings of interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders and villagers in Chi Kraeng (CK) Commune, and a document review of policies and research. Participants were invited to share their views and perceptions of the nature and prevalence of VAW in CK, understandings of causes and contributing factors to VAW as well as the impact of VAW on the community, and finally their suggestions addressing the issue.

Most participants reported being aware that violence against women involves emotional, physical and sexual abuse, with every participant involved in individual interviews, and most involved in focus groups, having stories to share regarding each of these. Almost all stories shared were about intimate partner violence, usually referred to as 'domestic violence' (DV) by participants.

The recent United Nations Multi-country Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific (2013) conducted by Partnerships for Prevention has provided important data for helping to understand our own findings in the context of Cambodia. A population-based quantitative survey involving Cambodia, amongst six other countries, sought to understand the meaning and causes of men's violence against women. A population representative sample, including 1863 Cambodian men, and 620 Cambodian women participated in the study. Of ever-partnered Cambodian men, 33% reported having perpetrated physical and/or sexual violence against a woman, 20% had perpetrated partner rape, 8% had perpetrated non-partner rape, and 5% had perpetrated gang rape against a woman. Of men who reported having raped a woman, 16% did so under the age of 15 years, and 52%, did so under the age of 20 years. Of those who had perpetrated rape, 45% reported having received no legal consequences.

## VAW PREVALENCE IN CK

Although it was not the aim of this study to measure prevalence, we were interested in exploring community perception of this fact. Therefore, at the beginning of all interviews, basic prevalence data from the latest UN multi-country study about violence against women was presented to participants.

### DV is a 'big issue' in Chi Kraeng

It was stated that, 'findings of a new big study by the UN, have revealed that around one third of Cambodian men who have ever had a partner, have admitted to having perpetrated physical and/or sexual violence on a woman'. Most participants expressed surprise and concern about this fact, with an overwhelming number of participants reporting that domestic violence was a 'big issue' in their community. Some people also shared a view that the issue of DV is bigger in rural areas.

*One third is very high, but I think it is true because there are many men who drink too much alcohol and commit violence against women. (VHSG aged 57)*

*I believe the UN survey, because there are many men in Cambodia, especially men in the rural areas, who drink too much alcohol, and when they get home they commit violence on both women and children. (Female teacher)*

*It is a shame for Cambodian families and society. (Village Chief)*

*Often the wife comes to me for help because the husband drinks alcohol and treats her bad and wants to fight her - yes they come often. (Village Chief)*

*Violence against women is a very big issue that we should be concerned about because it can lead to divorce and affect the family, society and child's education opportunity (Monk).*

For many representatives of local authority and other key people in the community, DV is considered 'one of the biggest issues in the community'. NGO workers reported hearing villagers talking about it a lot when they were out in the field, and the Commune Police Chief felt it was one of the two biggest issues they have to deal with in the commune.

*Domestic violence is one of the biggest issues in the commune - this and gambling are the top safety policy issues because they are the biggest areas of conflict for our community. (Police Commune Chief)*

Two Village Chiefs and the Focal Person of the CCWC however, did report feeling that the issue of domestic violence 'was not as big as it used to be'. Their reasons for this included a feeling that there has been more education and awareness raising about domestic violence in the commune, and that the government policy about community safety and the establishment of the CCWC had also played a role in this. Some NGO workers were however concerned that this response was related to a need for local authorities to show that they were performing their roles effectively, given that prevention of VAW is a priority of the CCWC.

### Inconsistent reporting of DV cases

Although many cases of domestic violence are not reported to local authorities - for reasons identified later in this report - of the cases that are reported, it was difficult to obtain accurate figures. Neither Village Chiefs, or the Commune Chief were able to give us accurate records of the number of cases of domestic violence they had dealt with in the previous month or year. Although the Women's Focal Person for the Commune Council for Women and Children was

able to show us some hand written reports, there was no system for organizing, filing or recording this information.

*There is no system to record cases, so some cases are reported, and some are not. (CCWC Focal Person)*

Therefore Village Chiefs and the Commune Chief gave estimated numbers of cases they dealt with each month, which were inconsistent. For example the Commune Chief reported that she deals with one domestic violence case per month, however later in the interview she stated,

*Once a week a woman applies for divorce through the Commune Chief, and it's usually about domestic violence. (Commune Chief)*

However, Legal Aid Cambodia in Siem Reap, reported having dealt with around 115 divorce cases in 2013, with around 100 relating to domestic violence, which suggests that divorce cases relating to DV in Chi Kraeng, may not be filed as DV cases.

# THE NATURE OF VAW IN CK

## VAW is a private matter

A commonly reported barrier to challenging violence against women in Cambodia, is the notion that violence within the home is a private issue, and should not be discussed with neighbours or the community, which means women are less likely to report violence to those outside the immediate family (P4P, 2011; GADC, 2010). Participants of our study also talked about the silence that surrounds the issue of violence against women in Chi Kraeng; many participants shared a view that cases of DV are not reported, because it is considered a private matter rather than a crime. Participants talked about the importance of honour in Cambodian culture, and that the existence of DV in the family can bring shame to the family, which was the reason women and family members may not talk about their experience.

*Shame affects people talking about [domestic violence], so people rarely inform the village chief. (VHSG aged 41)*

*The number of reported cases of [domestic violence] in Chi Kraeng is low, but I think this is because there is silence about the issue, because people need to 'save face'. (Village Chief)*

*Generally people are shy and afraid to talk about [domestic violence]. In Cambodia the traditional culture means that women should not talk about these kinds of things to other people. Women should have pride. (Health Center Worker)*

The tendency for people to believe that domestic violence is an internal family problem means that children are also unlikely to share their concerns or seek help, due to fear of shame or other potential consequences. The Lower Secondary School Principal and teachers, all felt domestic violence was not something students would talk with them about, although the Principal did talk about his open approach in the school ground, to encourage children to discuss issues with him.

*I think if there is DV in the family, the students will be afraid to tell their teacher - maybe they will talk to their friends - maybe they are shy of the teacher - when I was a child and I had a problem, I did not tell my teacher - I only told my close friends or family. (Female teacher)*

## Sexual violence and rape against a partner

The recent P4P multi-country study (2013) found that 20% of Cambodian men had perpetrated rape against their wives, and that sexual violence towards partners was in fact more common (21%) than physical violence (16%). Participants of our study however, spoke very little about sexual violence and rape, with some local authorities, including a Village Chief and the Police Commune Chief, stating that they had not heard of any cases in the commune.

*Women don't want to report sexual violence to police. They don't want police to know. They are worried about the shame for their husband. (Commune Chief)*

*There have only been a few reported cases of sexual violence or rape in Chi Kraeng (CK). I don't think it happens much in CK. (Commune Police Chief)*

There were others however, who spoke of the particular shame and sensitivity that surrounds the issue of sexual violence, believing that cases are not reported to local authorities because of this.

Another potential reason for the limited discussions about sexual violence, may relate to the fact that although marital rape is the most common form of rape in Cambodia (P4P, 2013), it has not yet been criminalized; this absence of legal sanctions reinforces the notion that a

woman's body belongs to her husband, and that pressured sex in marriage is therefore an acceptable norm. This point is reflected in the recent UN study (P4P, 2013) 'feeling entitled to have sex, regardless of consent (sexual entitlement)', was the most common factor (45%) that Cambodian men gave for raping their partner. Furthermore, this study reported a strong belief by both men and women that 'if a woman doesn't fight back it's not rape' (men n=65%, women n=82%), with 42% of Cambodian men (42%) and women (50%) thinking 'a woman cannot refuse to have sex with her husband'.

It is however important to note, that a number of cases of violence against women were reported to have been caused by women's refusal to have sex, and men's accusations of their partners infidelity. It is possible that these cases may have resulted in sexual violence, even though respondents of our study did not label the violence this way. These cases are discussed later in this report.

## Non-partner violence

Although most stories shared by participants of our study were about intimate partner violence, there were also some stories of violence perpetrated against other members of the family, including siblings and children. Given there is a great deal of evidence that exposure to violence during childhood is part of a learned response to violence, that can manifest itself in experiences and committing violence as an adult, these stories are probably not surprising.

*There is a family who is over 4 houses next to my home; the father fights his son two or three times per week when he is drunk.*  
(Girl aged 14)

*I know a family where the father is always drinking alcohol and getting drunk - he would hit his older brother-in-law, who ended up moving to live in the rice field where he did the farming - and he would make conflict with his neighbours.* (Boy aged 16)

*I know a boy who drank alcohol a lot, and he would hit his older sister. The village chief called him out for warning.* (Boy aged 15)



# WHAT LEADS TO VAW IN CK

A study by the Gender and Development for Cambodia (2010) involving individual interviews and focus groups with almost 100 participants highlighted three core factors that contribute to violence against women, including alcohol abuse, financial struggles within the family, and sex outside marriage.

Furthermore, the factors found to be most consistently associated with intimate partner violence perpetration in Cambodia were; frequent quarrelling, men having had a large number of sexual partners, transactional sex and depression, as well as childhood abuse including emotional abuse or neglect, sexual abuse and witnessing abuse of one's mother (P4P, 2013), and gambling among members of the household (UN in Cambodia, 2011). Men in Cambodia with no high school education, food insecurity, and men who had experienced depression and alcohol abuse problems were also more likely to be perpetrators of physical or sexual abuse. However, most of these factors can be linked to larger social norms and patterns of gender inequality and notions of masculinity in society.

Our study reflected similar findings to those of other national studies, with alcohol abuse, gambling, accusations of infidelity, poverty, men pressuring partners for sex, and control over finances being the common factors discussed. Some participants also mentioned land conflict, couples not respecting each other, and men not having enough knowledge of domestic violence laws and poverty as causes of domestic violence.

*I think [domestic violence] happens because of the family economics and poverty, because of alcohol and drugs, and because people don't have enough knowledge about local laws. (LSS Principal)*

*I think the causes of domestic violence are gambling and drinking, sometimes land conflict, and sometimes people don't attend human rights training. (Village Chief)*

*It is because the husband drinks wine, and the wife gambles that violence happens. (Village Elder)*

*Domestic violence happens because people are poor, because people drink alcohol and because people are not aware of human rights and divorce laws. (Commune Chief)*

## Inequitable gender norms and VAW

As mirrored in the recent Partners for Prevention study to explore the implementation of policies to address VAW in Cambodia (2013), commune level participants and NGOs of our study often minimized the significance of violence, suggesting that it was caused by women's own behaviour, for example, her engagement in gambling or not completing household chores.

Much national and international evidence suggests that violence against women in Cambodia is related to gender inequality and inequitable gender norms, which place societal expectations on the way in which women and men should behave (UN Economic and Social Council, 2013). A Cambodian study in 2010 by Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC) found rigid gender norms and gender inequality were the two main underlying causes of violence against women. In the recent P4P multi-country study on VAW (2013), most Cambodian men and women (95%), believed in the abstract idea of equality - supporting the statement that 'people should be treated the same whether they are male or female', however when asked about views related

*I think women don't report [domestic violence] because it relates to the mindset of the women - they think the man is the leader, he works harder to make an income, so the women don't report it to save the husbands face. (Health Center Worker)*

to household practices and family, views were much more inequitable. For example 60% of Cambodia men and 67% of Cambodian women indicated that 'a woman should tolerate violence in order to keep her family together', and 96% of Cambodian men, and 98% of Cambodian women said 'a woman should obey her husband'. These findings are also reflected in comments from participants of our study.

*When the woman has been playing card gambling, and the husband comes home from the field for lunch or dinner and he is hungry, and there is no food because the wife has been gambling - he blames her for not cooking or looking after the children and gets angry and drinks more alcohol. (Police Chief)*

Gendered social norms and behaviours in Cambodia mean that men are generally expected to be in positions of power in intimate relationships. It is therefore common for the man's role to involve family management, decision-making and the provision of financial support, whereas the women's role usually involves being secondary to their husbands; they are expected to be cooperative, obey decisions by him, care for household affairs (including sometimes money), and raise children (P4P 2011, MoWA 2009). Other studies (Surtees 2003) have also highlighted that DV is sometimes viewed as a legitimate punishment for not preparing the food

or ineffective child rearing. There is thus much consensus that the perpetration of domestic violence in Cambodia is influenced by these rigid gender norms, as is highlighted in the following comments by participants of our study.

*Sometimes the husband gets angry at his wife when she joins a ceremony or celebration with her neighbours, because when he comes home she has not been looking after the children - he accuses her of wasting time - and then the conflict gets bigger and bigger and becomes physical violence. (VHSG aged 33)*

*My older sister was busy washing the baby clothes, and overcooked the rice, so her husband hit her. (Boy aged 16)*

*People used to think domestic violence was okay because they thought the wife belonged to the husband. (Girl aged 15)*

*I think DV happens because of people's mindset - the husband thinks he is the family leader and the woman should look after the house and children. (LSS Principal)*

### **Women's refusal of sex leads to domestic violence**

A belief that men should have control and power over sexual behaviour within marriage in Cambodia is reported in a number of studies (GADC 2010, Amnesty International 2010, P4P 2013). Our study reflects these same findings, with participants sharing many cases of women having denied their husband sex, resulting in physical violence.

*Sexual violence happens in my village - it is usually because the husband is drunk and wants to have sex with his wife, and the wife does not agree - sometimes this is because she is not well. (VHSG aged 41)*

*I think there are many cases of violence in the evening time because the wife does not want to have sex - for different reasons - sometimes she is sick, sometimes she doesn't like that her husband drinks alcohol - this makes the husband angry and then he becomes violent. And sometimes men just want their wife to have sex too often, and he gets violent because she doesn't want to. (VHSG aged 33)*

*Many cases of violence [against women] happen in the evening because the wife doesn't want to have sex; there are many different reasons for this - sometimes the wife is sick and sometimes it is because her husband is drunk. This makes the husband angry and so he commits violence against his wife. (VHSG aged 55).*

*In my village there are many cases of domestic violence because the husband wants the wife to have sex (VHSG aged 62)*

Many stories were also shared, of men behaving violently towards their wives, because they were suspicious of infidelity with another man.

*There is a family near by my house, and the father is violent towards his son, because he suspects he is having a sexual relationship with his wife (the boys mother), because he believes the mother and son are too close - the son is 20 years old. One day the father hit him on the head, which*

*A man went to visit his older sister - he stayed overnight at her home. There were many mosquitos, but she had no extra mosquito net, so she asked him to share her net with her baby, as her husband had gone frog hunting in the fields and would not be returning until the morning. Unfortunately her husband returned at midnight, and when he saw her brother asleep and holding his baby, he started shouting very loudly 'sa-hi-smon - you are sa-hi-smon'. He kept yelling and shouting at her, and would not listen. The conflict got bigger and bigger and he became violent. Now they are divorced. (VHSG aged 33)*

*caused bleeding. The mother was there when this happened, but she couldn't help her son because she was scared that he might hit her too, so the neighbour saved him. The mother did not report this case to the Village Chief or Commune Police because she was worried the case might get bigger and bigger, and that her husband might get more angry. (VHSG aged 57)*

*I know a woman who had her period and was not feeling well, but her husband came home very drunk and*

*wanted to have sex. When she said no, he asked her if she was a prostitute, saying 'that's why you won't have sex with me.' His wife got angry that he was wrongly accusing her, and the conflict got bigger and bigger. (VHSG aged 62)*

*One day my father went to the rice field and met a woman from his village along the way there - they talked together about their rice farms as they walked, but when the woman came back home, her husband was very jealous, and accused her of having sex with my father - he used rude words at his wife, and started hitting her. (Female teacher)*

### **Husband has a 'new girl'**

Some participants of our study, including young people in particular, shared a concern that domestic violence was caused by married men having a 'new girl'. The 'new girl' is assumed to mean a second wife, or a sex worker, which is probably more likely, given 49% of ever-partnered Cambodian men reported having had sex with a sex worker or transactional sex (P4P, 2013)

*I know 3 or 4 families in my village, where the father has a 'new girl'. When this happens, the wife curses the husband, because he gives money to the 'new girl'. (Girl aged 14)*

*I know a family and the husband has a 'new girl' and brings her to live with his wife. One day the husband got very angry with his wife because she called the girl rude words - her husband kicked her - eventually the mother and children left their home. (Girl aged 15)*

## **Economic control and VAW**

In our study, participants shared an overwhelming number of stories about violence perpetration in relation to control and power over money. There was a view, including by some members of local authority, that domestic violence is the woman's fault, as highlighted by the following comments.

*I think there are also many cases that are caused by the wife - when she does not give money to her husband, and when she plays cards. (VJSG member aged 62)*

*Economic violence happens a lot. The woman doesn't give money to the husband so he gets violent - it's the woman's fault for being controlling. (Commune Police Chief)*

Many participants also talked about conflict in relationships caused by men having control of money, and women not have the sufficient funds to buy necessary household items. This finding is also reflected in other studies, including the recent P4P (2013) study, which showed that over half of Cambodian of men (52%) reported using emotional abuse against a partner, with some of the most common types of abuse being 'withholding earnings from a partner' (31%), and 'taking partners' earnings' (17%). The following comments highlight these findings.

*Sometimes there is violence because the husband doesn't give money to his wife for buying food or household needs. (VHSG aged 24)*

*My husband makes an income, but he keeps 100% of the money, and when I ask him for money he only gives me 10% - the rest he keeps for fun with friends or KTV. (VHSG aged 33)*

*Sometimes the child is sick and the wife needs money to buy the medication, but the husband doesn't give her the money - he spends it on alcohol. (VHSG aged 57)*

A number of stories were shared that highlighted how this conflict about money, led to domestic violence.

*In my village a husband was very controlling of the family money, so his wife had none to spend on basic needs, including clothing and food, so she had to loan money from a neighbour - the husband did not know this. When the neighbour next saw the husband, he demanded the money be returned, which made the husband angry with his wife for borrowing the money. Then he hit his wife. (VHSG)*

*A man in my village used to always keep the money to himself - one day while drinking wine with his neighbours, she asked him for money to buy food - he followed her home and got very angry with her for "not saving face", by asking for money in front of his friends. (Female teacher)*

*The husband needed fertilizer but did not have enough money so he lent money from the seller - the husband asked his wife for the money to pay back the seller - she did not give it to him, so he fought her. (Girl aged 15)*

## Misuse of alcohol and VAW

Alcohol is often assumed to be a common trigger for violence perpetration, which is reflected in the results of our study, with most participants reporting a feeling that alcohol is one of the biggest causes of violence against women in Chi Kraeng. The recent UN study (P4P 2013) however, found alcohol was the least common response men gave for possible reasons for committing physical or sexual violence against women. Many studies have in fact established that violence against women is not caused by alcohol; but rather, within a context of gender inequality and rigid and inequitable gender norms (UN Economic and Social Council, 2013), alcohol can be a contributing factor for VAW. Furthermore, some literature poses that alcohol may contribute to violence against women, because it enhances the likelihood of conflict, by reducing inhibitions.

*My neighbour hits his wife when he is drunk. He forces her and his children and nieces and nephews to leave the house because he yells and curses and hits them. (Boy aged 16)*

*Men cause the problem - they drink alcohol and when they get home they blame their wife for not having food - then they fight - it should not happen. (Commune Chief)*

*I think DV is mostly about men being drunk. (NGO worker)*

*Sometimes when the wife calls the husband for lunch or dinner, he says no because he is drinking, and then they use bad words with each other and start fighting, which sometimes gets violent. (Village Chief)*

*Much violence is caused from arguments between couples - sometimes they use rude words that lead to fighting, especially when the husband or wife get drunks or from gambling. My sister has been affected by violence - her husband drank wine and he would argue and fight with her and his children. (Monk)*

## Gambling & VAW

According to media reports and some studies, gambling addiction poses a huge problem in Cambodia, however research on this topic is limited, despite reported continued growth of the gambling industry in South East Asia (IRIN, 2013; Lostutter, 2013). Many participants of our study reported feeling that gambling was a major cause of domestic violence. A particular theme amongst participants, involved men being angry with their wives for playing cards and not attending to household duties, as highlighted by the following stories.

*In some families the wife gambles - playing cards - she spends the whole day gambling and then when the husband gets home and the wife has not cooked the dinner or hasn't been looking after the children, the man gets angry. (Village Chief)*

*Men gamble with cock fighting and volleyball, which is okay, but when women gamble with cards men get angry and become violent because the dinner is not cooked. (Village Chief)*

*A woman had been gambling with cards with her friends, and when her husband came home and the rice was not cooked he hit her. (Boy aged 16)*

Others shared stories of gambling resulting in conflict over money, which resulted in violence against women.

*People gamble with card playing, volleyball and cock fighting. I know a man who lost money gambling and he asked his wife for more money - she said 'no' and he hit her. (Boy aged 15)*

*There are many cases of domestic violence caused by the wife, especially when she plays cards, and doesn't give money to husband. (VHSG aged 62)*

# THE IMPACT OF DV IN CK

Most participants talked about the negative impacts of domestic violence. The most common impact of domestic violence that participants spoke about were physical injuries, economic costs, and the effects on children, including in particular impacting on children's ability to study and attend school. Sometimes the adverse consequences were minimized, which suggests some of the behavior may be normalized in the community.

*There is a case in my village - the husband gets drunk a lot and the wife causes lots of fights because of this - she asks him to stop again and again - now he is getting angry with her for yelling at him, and in the last few months he has started hitting her and being violent. It is not serious. She has not reported this to anyone. (VHSG aged 42)*

*My husband used to drink alcohol - there was not a big problem, but he did hit me and curse me - I would run to my relative's home to sleep there because I knew [she] could help me when my husband was hitting me. (VHSG aged 54)*

## Health impacts of DV

There were many stories shared of the health impact of domestic violence on women, including stories of women receiving very serious injuries that sometimes required treatment at the local health center in Chi Kraeng, or hospitalization. A few participants even discussed the potential for domestic violence to lead to death, whether from suicide or the serious injuries perpetrated. The Health Center worker feels that domestic violence is one of the biggest issues they have to deal with, with some women experiencing serious health consequences, as highlighted in the following comments.

*There are many DV cases that come to talk to us at the Health Center, but also to have their wounds cleaned. Mostly they are head injuries, but sometimes they involve the hands and arms, from women defending themselves from being hit, and many women also come to the health center to deal with their mental health. Most of the women who are experiencing domestic violence cannot sleep at night, do not want to eat, and have stoma-aches, mostly from the stress of the situation. (Health Center)*

It was of concern that most young people involved in our study had stories to share, as highlighted by the following stories.

*I know a family where the father hurt his wife, and the daughter had to get help because the mother had serious injuries, so the relatives transferred her to hospital. The neighbours saw the violence happening, but they couldn't help because the husband had a stick and knife, and they were scared. Sometimes, when the domestic violence happened, the 11-year-old son called the police commune to help. (Girl aged 15)*

*I know a case where the husband was drunk, and used a knife to fight with his wife and child until they fell down from the house, and the village neighbours sent the mother to hospital. After the wife received treatment and felt well, the village chief came to her home 3 times and tried to help the husband and wife reconcile, but the wife didn't agree to live together, so finally they have decided to divorce. (Girl aged 14)*

*One family has conflict every evening - they don't have a rice field and so all the family drink alcohol and there is verbal and physical violence all the time - sometimes the wife gets injured. Once she needed to go to hospital - the case was reported to the village chief. (Boy aged 16)*



*One day a husband tried to cut his wife with a sharp knife - she reported this to the commune police, [who] called the husband to mediate and make a contract - but nothing changed - the commune police said to the husband, 'stop chopping your wife with the sharp knife', but he still yells and uses rude words with his wife. (VHSG aged 57)*

## Financial effects of DV

A Cambodian study (Fitzgerald & So, 2007) found that domestic violence can be a cause of downward mobility for poor families, due to the costs related to damage of property, treatment of physical injuries and loss of productivity. Our findings reveal these same issues.

*When the men get angry with their wife, they destroy the property, and break things, like pots and dishes and other things, and they have to be replaced, and it costs money. (Girl aged 14)*

*Domestic violence means time is lost to make an income and sometimes property is destroyed and this costs money - for example a husband destroyed the rice bag. (VHSG aged 24)*

*[DV] impacts on the financial situation of the family because it costs money to travel to the court and it costs money to have the injuries treated at the health centre or hospital. (Boy aged 16)*

Many cases of domestic violence were shared that resulted in divorce, however, stories were also shared of couples staying together because separating would create more financial difficulties for the family. A

comment by the Commune Police Chief reflects this view.

*[Domestic violence] makes the family poor because the trauma needs treatment, which costs money, and if the parents separate, there is no one to earn a living and make an income for the mother and children so the family decide to stay together. (Commune Police Chief)*

## Adverse effects of DV on children

The effects of DV on children have been documented in many studies. A Situation Analysis of Youth in Cambodia (UN, 2009) found that domestic violence in Cambodia has been found to strongly affect children within the family. Furthermore, this study found that those who suffer most from domestic violence are children and youths, who may live with fear, become depressed, start to misbehave, lose concentration at school, drop out of school or run away from home. Participants in our study shared similar concerns about the impact of domestic violence on children. The following comments by young people in this study highlight the fear and shame children face.

*It is scary when men hit women and children. (Boy aged 16)*

*Children become very worried when there is domestic violence in their family - they want to live with their parents without violence. (Girl aged 15)*

*The children feel ashamed if there is domestic violence in their family (Boys, aged 16)*

A number of students also spoke about children being separated from families when the effects of DV were serious.

*Some children become orphans; because divorce and fighting can be so bad it leads to people dying. (Girl aged 14)*

*DV leads to divorce, and then children can be separated from their brothers and sisters and their parents. (Boy aged 15)*

*Sometimes when the mother has been badly hurt by her husband, and needs to go to hospital, then there is no one to look after the children. (Health Center Worker)*



## Negative impact of DV on children's education

The UN study (2009) also found that young people who experience frequent domestic violence achieve poor study results in school and are often not present in class leading to school drop out; participants of our study discussed these same issues.

*Behind my house there is a family and the husband and wife are fighting all the time. When the husband drinks alcohol it gets worse. When the children see their father fighting, they want to help but they are afraid. I asked the children 'why don't you go to school'. They said they are worried about their mother staying at home and being hurt by their father, so they want to stay home to protect her.*  
(Female teacher)

*When there is domestic violence the children cannot pay attention to their study (Boy 15 years)*

*Children feel like they cannot study because when there is violence we cannot avoid thinking about this, because we are part of the family and it affects us too. (Boy aged 16)*

*Sometimes the children have to go and live with other family members, so they can't go to school. (Girl aged 15)*

*Generally students whose parents have domestic violence are not confident and don't want to come to school. (Female teacher)*

*My sister has two children. She has divorced her husband and the children stay with her. There were many problems before they divorced. The boy used to have to buy alcohol for his father to drink, and the father would threaten that he would take the children. Sometimes he used to hit my sister and the boys, and he would threaten my sister with a knife. Now after they have divorced the husband has gone to be a monk. My sister is still afraid he will take the boy ... He told her, 'next year I will stop being a monk and I will take one boy'. The boy is afraid about going back to live with his father - he is 8 years old, and has a 5 year old brother. When the husband used to fight my sister and the children, they called ADHOC, but still the problem kept happening. I want to help my nephew. He is very very scared of his father taking him, and my sister is very afraid too. He has threatened to kill my sister if she doesn't give him the boy. My sister is very stressed. She says she wants to marry another man. I am not worried about my sister - it's my nephew I am most worried about - and he can't go to school. (Anonymous)*

## RESPONSES TO DV IN CK

Our study sought to determine what mechanisms, policies, programs and approaches exist at the local level, to help deal with the issue of violence against women. In 2005, a new *Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Protection of Victims* was passed in Cambodia, to protect women from violence against men. However, apart from the work of some NGOs, who are implementing a small number of prevention initiatives in Chi Kraeng, almost all discussions by participants were focused on responding to violence after it has happened. As reported in the Gender and Development for Cambodia report (2010), when conflict becomes violent, the options for help or support for women are limited, and help-seeking efforts are inhibited by public attitudes towards discussion of violence.

Most participants spoke about the process of reporting through local government authorities, which was often accompanied by attempts at reconciliation or mediation, sometimes with success, sometimes not. Some respondents shared stories of families providing support, and some participants talked of cases dealt with through the support of NGOs and the local Chi Kraeng Health Center.

### Cambodian Domestic Violence Law

Although 93% of Cambodian men in the UN multi-country study on men's use of violence against women (P4P, 2013), reported knowing about the existence of a national law on violence against women, another study to explore the implementation of policies to address violence against women in Cambodia (P4P, 2013), found that actors at the commune level and below had little or no knowledge of any national policies regarding VAW, even though they were involved in violence response activities through local mechanisms. This finding is also reflected in the results of our study, with most local authority representatives having very limited knowledge or understanding of this law.

Unfortunately, the passing of the DV Law in Cambodia, whilst representing a step forward in protecting women's rights and eliminating discrimination against women, still falls short, with a lack of adequate definitions relating to what DV is, a lack of support and resourcing for those expected to be involved in reconciliation and mediation procedures, and a lack of consistency with the criminal code. The following points highlight some of the particular issues that have been identified with the implementation of this law (CAMBOW, 2007).

- There is no provision for the element of self-defence in any Cambodian legislation, in regards to women protecting themselves from DV. There have been many Cambodian women imprisoned for killing their husbands as a result of DV. Some participants talked about some serious cases of domestic violence that resulted in the husband going to prison. Furthermore, in conducting our research we also identified an NGO working with two cases in Chi Kraeng where family members have been arrested, tried and imprisoned as a result of VAW. One case specifically relates to DV and the killing of a husband in the act of self-defence. The wife is now serving time in prison.
- The DV Law recognizes marital rape as sexual aggression or violent sex, with no definition of violent sex in the law. Given many wives may not struggle against their husbands and remain silent whilst being raped, the DV Law fails to protect them. As consent is not mentioned in the Law, this means victims must prove that violence was used during rape.
- Throughout the DV Law, reference is made to 'authorities in charge'. For example it states that 'the nearest authorities in charge have the duty to urgently intervene in case domestic violence occurs or is likely to occur in order to prevent and protect victims'. The DV Law does not specify which authorities are referred to, which means that no one is essentially responsible.

## Local authority report process for DV in CK

In terms of the course of action for reporting DV in Chi Kraeng, most participants talked of the same process. The issue or incident of DV, is most often, first reported to the local Village Chief or the Commune Council. If this process did not help to resolve the issue or it was more serious, it would be referred to the Police Commune Chief, and if still no resolution or if the issue was even more serious, finally the case would go to the Provincial Court. Interestingly, in a study conducted by the Asia Foundation (2005), about the functions and performance of commune councils in Cambodia, it was reported that village chiefs are involved in around one out of every three mediation efforts, and commune councils are involved in around one out of five, with the village chief being part of the mediation process in 70% of all local conflicts.

### Village Chief intervention

The Asia Foundation study (2005) found that Village Chiefs play a central role in mediation and conflict resolution needs at the local level, which is reflected in our study results. Their study found that for DV, the village chief was the most common mediating actor (35%), with the village elder coming in second (29%), followed by the commune council (22%) and the police (4%). The first process of intervention for DV in Chi Kraeng also begins with the Village Chief.

The victim of DV is expected to first talk with the Village Chief, to obtain advice or assistance in mediation and reconciliation. Often neighbors or family members approach the Village Chief or other authorities on behalf of the victim. The Village Chief is expected to keep a record of the case for the Commune Council, based on the story of the victim. Next the Village Chief is expected to help the husband and wife to mediate, as well as making a contract with the husband to stop the violence. If the Village Chief is unable to deal with the issue, because the

case involves serious injuries, or the husband is very aggressive and violent, the case is referred to the Commune Chief.

*If someone experiences DV, the Village Chief gives counselling to each party - if they agree to stay together, they sign a contract. He then follows up. If there is still a problem, he contacts the Commune Chief. For the first complaint - he tries to counsel himself - makes notes in his book, then reports to the Commune Chief. He calls the police if it is big conflict - maybe when there is a serious injury involving bleeding. (Village Chief)*

*The DV Law states that the victim should first go to the Village Chief, whose role is to ask for detailed information from the wife to record in the book. If the case is serious, they bring the husband to meet with the wife to reconcile. If they can't solve the issue, they refer the case to the Commune Chief, and if the case is serious it is referred to the Police Commune - sometimes the couple listen to the police and stop the violence, but sometimes they don't. (VHSG aged 54)*

*One family in my village often has violence - I am counselling them to follow the other families who*

*don't have violence. Sometimes the families complain to me if the husband is violent, and I ask the husband 'what is the benefit of violence' - the husband doesn't like it when I do this, and accuses me of being on the wives side. (Village Chief)*

Amongst the responses from Village Chiefs and others, there were however some inconsistencies regarding their view of the exact process that should be followed. For example the following Village Chief thought all cases of DV should be reported to the Police.

*When there is domestic violence, the women come to me for counselling. I often do home visits to visit the villagers and so they talk to me if they have a problem. DV law says I have to report all DV cases to the commune police officers for a commune police intervention. (Female Village Chief)*

### Commune Chief and CCWC intervention

Commune Councils were first established in Cambodia in 2002 to provide a local government mechanism that would help move the nation toward democratic decentralization. Each Commune Council is composed of members, elected through a proportional system of nationally registered political parties. There are no independent candidates. The commune council has a five-year mandate (Asia Foundation 2005). Chi Kraeng Commune Council is made up of 7 members, two of whom are women, including the Commune Council Chief. Six members of the council are CPP members and one member is a representative of the CNRP.

Commune Councils play an important role in local-level conflict resolution. The Asia Foundation study (2005) found that 'one of the most prevalent and perhaps least acknowledged activities of the commune councils is dispute resolution', which was found to be their biggest role outside administrative duties. Furthermore, domestic conflict was the second biggest conflict Commune Councillors reported having to deal with. Findings of their study found that while village chiefs and elders represent the more common local mediators that citizens access first, commune councils are seen as credible and effective conflict resolution mechanisms. Furthermore, conflict mediation at the village and commune levels was experienced by participants as easier, cheaper, and more effective than at higher levels, which may be a reason why victims approach Village Chiefs and Commune Chiefs before accessing the court system or the police.

In Chi Kraeng, when cases of DV are referred to the Commune Chief, it is her role to follow up and visit the wife and husband, using the same process of reporting and mediation that the Village Chief uses. If the cases are too difficult for her to deal with, or are unresolved after the first intervention, they are referred to the Commune Council for Women and Children (CCWC) or the Police Commune. However, the Commune Chief did state, that she would not call the Police about sexual violence issues.

The Commune Chief describe the process she uses for mediation as follows,

*The method is to get the victim to cool down first. Then I ask her to describe what happened, without judging. In some cases, I need to call the husband and get him to cool down too, as he describes what happened from his perspective. Sometimes it works - sometimes it does not. (Commune Chief)*

### Commune Committees for Women & Children (CCWC)

The Commune Committee for Women and Children (CCWC) is an advisory sub-committee to the Commune Council and helps the Council to implement Government policy and other tasks related to women and children's issues. The Cambodian government established CCWCs in 2007. Their role is to recommend, advocate, coordinate, monitor and report, so as to ensure (a) that services and service providers in social and economic sectors provide benefits and empower women and children; and (b) that women and children receive these services without discrimination (UNICEF 2012)

Members of the CCWC include key members of the Commune Council (Commune Chief and Second Deputy, who is in charge of Social Affairs in a commune); a representative from the Health Centre (either in the commune itself or at the district level); a representative from the cluster school servicing the commune, the Women and Children's Focal Point (FP), who is either an elected female Commune Councilor or selected by the Commune Council and who receives an allowance; and several additional members selected by the commune itself.

The Chi Kraeng CCWC is made up of 21 members, including the Commune Police Chief, the Commune Chief, The Health Centre Chief, one member from each village, the Commune Clerk, and the LSS School Principal. The committee meets once a month, with a focus on issues related to women and children. Members of the CK CCWC reported that their role involves reporting pregnancies and births, having a budget for transport to send poor women to the

provincial hospital for deliveries, dealing with children's education issues, including school drop outs, and dealing with domestic violence and human trafficking issues.

The Chi Kraeng LSS Principal is the Domestic Violence Network Response (DVNR) person for the CCWC; each Commune is expected to have an elected DVNR. His role is similar to that of the Commune Chief, in terms of domestic violence cases, however it is a volunteer part-time role. He also transports, by motorbike, the victims who are perceived unsafe or hurt, to the Cambodian Women's Crisis Center (CWCC) in Siem Reap.

The CCWC Focal Person described a DV case she had recently dealt with.

*A lady was experiencing problems with her husband because he was economically controlling and violent, and wouldn't give money to her to buy food and other things for the family. I made the husband come into the Commune Office with his wife. Then I asked them to tell their story. I asked the husband why he was doing this. He told me it was his role to earn money and if the wife wants money she should ask him. I said to the husband, 'its difficult for your wife if she wants to buy something small and has to ask you every time'. And then I talked about the DV Law. Then the husband agreed and signed the contract. He stopped, but not all cases are like that. Sometimes I have to meet with a couple 3 or 4 times, and then they decide to live separately. (CCWC Focal Person)*

### Police intervention

Domestic Violence cases in Chi Kraeng are usually only referred to the Commune Police if they are serious, unless a victim or the family or neighbors of the victim report to the police before reporting to the Village Chief or Commune Council for other reasons. When the Police Chief receives a report from the victim, the family or the neighbours, he notifies the village police to visit the family. The village police meet with the couple or the husband to make a contract with the husband to stop the violence; they ask the woman if she would like to file a written complaint.

Many participants thought that the police intervention was more likely to stop the violence, usually because of the fear they instilled in the perpetrator.

*If the police come to solve the problem, it's helpful because there are more people and more ideas for helping solve the situation. It's the same procedure, but when they are involved, people are more afraid as the police can arrest them, so it makes them have more respect that if it is just me. (Commune Chief)*

*In some cases, I try counselling and it doesn't work, so I call the police, and when the police are involved it often works, because the police scare them and they listen. (Village Chief)*

*Usually when the police go to the house it stops the violence. Sometimes they bring the husband back to the police office and keep them there for a few hours - especially if he is drunk. They are often afraid while they are at the police office, so then they call the wife to come and get him. They explain to him to stop and get him to sign a contract (Police Commune Chief)*

### Court intervention

Some participants also talked about court interventions as an effective way to respond to domestic violence. The following story highlights this view,

*A husband used to commit violence on his wife when he was drunk. The wife reported to the Village Chief, but the husband did not change, next she reported to the Commune Chief but her husband still did not change, and then she reported to the Commune Police, but still he did not*

*change. Finally, the wife complained to the provincial court and they got a divorce. But now, 3 years later, the couple are living back together without any violence. The man finally understood his mistakes and the wife gave him another chance - he was scared and shamed in court, and now he does not commit any more violence. (Village Elder)*

## NGO & LGO responses to VAW

There are a small number of NGOs around Siem Reap who are working to address the issue of violence against women, however amongst those implementing activities in Chi Kraeng, most are involved in prevention initiatives involving workshops for villagers and local authorities about the law and human rights in relation to DV, divorce and human trafficking. NGOs in Cambodia play an important role in filling the gap in knowledge about domestic violence, including the provision of information about the law in relation to divorce and legal rights. Legal Aid Cambodia, LICADHO and TLC have been involved in running awareness raising workshops and training sessions about these issues. A fewer number of NGOs are involved in the provision of services to support women victims of violence, but we are not aware of any based in CK. See Box 4.

### Chi Kraeng Health Center

Chi Kraeng Health Centre is an important source of emotional and health support for women who experience domestic violence. The Vice Director reports dealing with many cases of DV every month, but believes staff do not have sufficient skills to deal with all the cases that present. The service has an outpatients department, and provides pregnancy care, and mother and child health services for women, including a suite for delivering babies. The cost for outpatients visit costs 2000 Riel, and those with a 'poverty card' can access the Health Center free of charge, as can those with a disability, those who are HIV positive, and monks.

### Health Centre Management Committee (HCMC)

We were unable to determine if Chi Kraeng Health Centre has a HCMC, whose aim is to work as the liaison between the Health Center and the community, and to monitor the health facility staff and recruiting volunteers.

### Village Health Support Group (VHSG)

The VHSG is an initiative that was set up to help implement community care for mothers and newborns in Cambodia. They are made up of elected leaders and health volunteers in the community, who are expected to provide assistance to community members relating to health. They provide pre-natal care and support, essential information after delivery, including key health and nutrition messages, and screening of the mother and newborn for health issues that can be referred to the health center (UNICEF 2012). The group also has a limited fund to assist poor families with access to health services.

Although their role is not directly related to DV, many VHSG members shared stories of directing women to the local authorities or the health center for help.

## Families helping to respond to DV

The following stories highlight cases where families had helped to resolve issues, with success.

*The wife talked with her parents, who told her to be patient - they also asked one of her husbands relatives to give him advice - he finally changed his behaviour and they have stayed together without any violence. (Female teacher)*

*Once after a dancing party my husband had been drinking and got very angry with me and threatened to leave. While we were fighting my aunt arrived and tried to help us - she said I should cool down and go to bed - in the morning everything was fine. (VHSG aged 42)*



#### Box 4 Local NGOs working to address VAW

##### **Legal Aid Cambodia (LAC)**

Legal Aid Cambodia is a Khmer-run NGO, with an office in Siem Reap, that provides free legal representation for women in conflict with the law, and women who are victims of crime (particularly for DV and sexual crimes). They provide community education on the rights of women, including campaigns against DV and training for police and the courts about the rights of women upon entering the judicial system. They deal with the issues of divorce, rape, trafficking and DV. LAC also assists women to press charges against perpetrators of DV, and to pursue civil compensation through the court system.

##### **Banteay Srei**

Banteay Srei is an NGO in Siem Reap, that empowers vulnerable women to improve their political, economic and psycho-social situation. They administer an advocacy project, 'Community Action Against Gender Based Violence', in 3 districts near Siem Reap, to build the capacity of local authorities to respond more effectively to VAW. They provide training to local authorities to increase their knowledge about legal rights and issues surrounding gender-based violence, as well building capacity in counseling for victims. They also have a 'Peace Shelter' that provides emergency and psychosocial support and legal counseling to survivors of DV. Banteay Srei work closely with the CWCCs, LAC, ADHOC, and TPO.

##### **Women's Resource Center - Cambodia**

The Women's Resource Centre is based in Siem Reap to provide emotional support and information for women. The service runs legal aid workshops to educate women about their rights. Around 80% of the women who access the service, do so in relation to domestic violence issues; these women receive support with legal issues, and are provided access to counseling via TPO.

##### **LICADHO (Cambodian League for the Promotion & Defence of Human Rights)**

LICADHO investigates cases related to violations of women's rights, such as DV, rape, sexual assault and human trafficking. They also assist victims with legal interventions and referrals to shelters, legal aid organizations and other vocational or rehabilitation NGOs. LICADHO were recently working in two communes near Siem Reap, to build the capacity of CCWCs, the Women's Focal Point, the police and local authorities to better respond to issues related to domestic violence. The program involved delivering seminars and workshops in villages, about violence against women. The program is no longer funded.

##### **Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)**

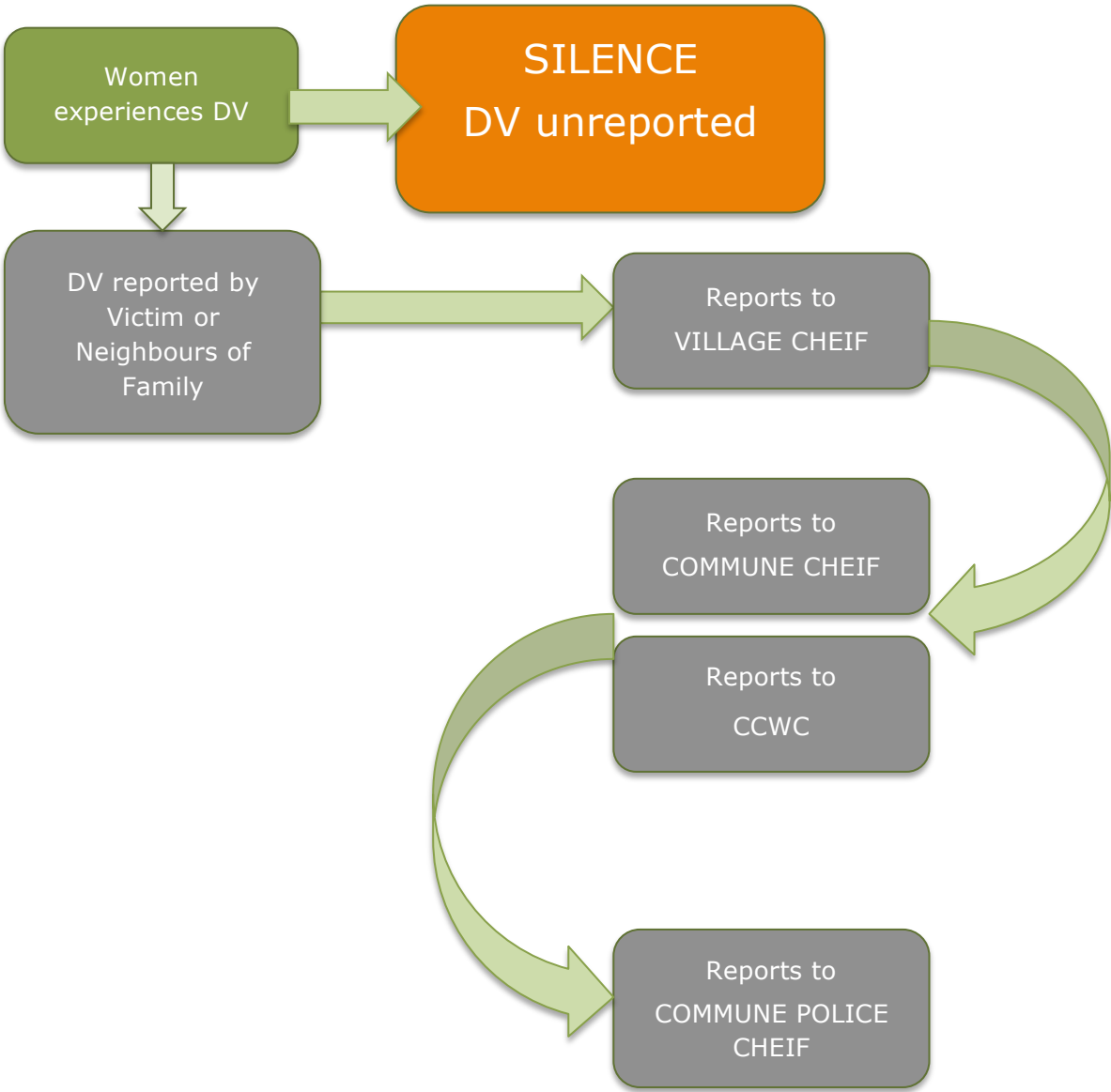
ADHOC is an NGO with an office in Siem Reap. They administer a 'Women's and Children's Rights Program', which focuses on monitoring, investigating and intervening in gender-based violence cases, by providing victims with legal aid, emergency assistance, counseling, legal representation, and by defending victims in court. They work in collaboration with other Human Rights NGOs, stakeholders, interested groups and local authorities to bring offenders and victims to justice. They also run training for community members and local authorities to raise awareness on legal rights and human rights in regards to the issues of domestic violence, trafficking and rape.

##### **TPO (Transcultural Psychosocial Organization)**

TPO is an NGO with an office in Siem Reap. Their aim is to work to heal the psychological wounds caused by the civil war and the genocidal regime inflicted on the Cambodian people. They deliver mental health interventions to disadvantaged, vulnerable people in rural Cambodia, using a mix of education, information, training and therapy approaches. The work is carried out in collaboration with primary health care workers and NGO partners in target areas. The service targets female survivors of domestic violence, people with substance abuse issues, physically disabled and mentally ill persons, war widows, female-headed households, women and children at risk of human trafficking.



Figure 3 Process for reporting DV to Local Authorities



# BARRIERS IN DEALING WITH DV

A number of barriers exist that prevent the implementation of effective responses to prevent and deal with DV in Chi Kraeng.

The Health Centre Worker talked about having to deal with many cases of domestic violence in the clinic on a weekly basis, but feeling she often lacked the skills to deal with the issues effectively. She was also concerned that others, who are expected to deal with cases of domestic violence, including the Commune Chief, teachers and other health centre staff, do not have the skills to deal with the issues. She said,

*I believe the commune chief, the health staff and the teachers are experts in their roles, but not in human rights and how do deal with domestic violence, and I try my best in my role, but I have no training. (Health Center Worker)*

*It is a very big responsibility for me on behalf of the village people, and sometimes I find it difficult. It feels like a mother role.*

*Sometimes I get stuck and so I call the CCWC to discuss the case. In most cases, the woman victim is crying, and sometimes when the husband is called, he is aggressive and this is difficult. (Commune Chief)*

The Commune Chief also talked about difficulties she sometimes faces, especially when the women are upset and the husband is aggressive.

The Asia Foundation study (2005), found similar findings; when councillors were asked what were the major problems or obstacles they face to carry out their role, it was a lack of resources, especially funds, and a lack of knowledge and skills.

Furthermore, for reconciliation and mediation the Law says both parties must agree, but in Cambodian culture, evidence suggests female victims are more likely to be coerced into choosing mediation or reconciliation over criminal charges, out of fear of the perpetrator, or pressure from family members in order to save face and not draw attention to the family's problems.

## Limited training for local authorities

A number of NGOs and government departments have provided training for local authorities about how to deal with domestic violence. This Life Cambodia in collaboration with LICADHO and Legal Aid Cambodia provides 2-3 days of training annually for the Village Chiefs, and for the CC and CCWC members. The United Nations Population Fund provides funding for the Commune Chief and the Commune Police Chief to run DV and reproductive health promotion workshops for 2 villages in Chi Kraeng every 3 months.

Although the Commune Chief and the Women's Focal Person for CCWC felt they had received a great deal of training about how to deal with DV, considering the complexity and depth of issues they are expected to deal with, it is probably not surprising that all the representatives of local government within Chi Kraeng Commune, including the Commune Chief and the CCWC representative, reported that there were times when they felt inadequate to deal with the issues they were presented with.

*It is hard in his role because sometimes the wife is wrong and I have to counsel her and she gets angry - but sometimes the man gets angry too, because it is his fault and he has to be counselled. (Village Chief)*

There were many stories shared of local authorities feeling unable to deal with the issues of domestic violence they were presented with, and needing to involve the next level of authority.

*When DV happens most people go to the village chief and if the village chief can't solve the problem, he will refer it to the CCWC, and if they can't solve the problem, they will refer to the police commune. (VHSG aged 55)*

## Petty corruption

In relation to sexual violence in particular, a report by Amnesty International (2010), found that victims of sexual violence in Cambodia are often expected to pay informal fees for health services, and that law-enforcement officials, including police and court staff, often arrange unlawful out-of-court payments between the victim and the perpetrator (or their families). In these cases, officials or civil servants take a share of the money paid by the perpetrator, while the higher authorities turn a blind eye. The victim is expected to withdraw any criminal complaint against the suspected perpetrator, and public prosecutors ignore their duty to carry forward an investigation, with or without a complainant.

The Asia Foundation study (2005) found that petty corruption was evident, with participants reporting that 'formal and informal fees' were being charged by the commune councils for such items, which may go beyond what is legal, with a 'service charge' expected for mediation and conflict resolution by the commune councils. Some participants of our study also talked about this issue, which is a potential barrier in women seeking support, as highlighted in the following comments.

*If a case of domestic violence is reported to the police, it costs money - they will charge 10,000 - 20,000 Riel for the document for the report, which is hard for poor families. (VHSG aged 33)*

*Some women pay bribes to the court to release their husband from the police office or prison, because they are worried about how they will survive financially. (VHSG aged 44)*

## Personal barriers for victims of VAW

Some participants talked about the difficulty for women of approaching the Village Chief, because he may be a friend with her husband, or he may be someone she does not like.

*Sometimes women don't want to go to the Village Chief because he drinks with the husband. (NGO Worker)*

*What if the woman can't stand the village chief and this is the only place to go. (VHSG aged 44)*

Some participants in our study talked about women's financial dependence on their husbands, and how this is a barrier for women to leave the relationships, which prevents them reporting their situation to authorities.

*Most women are dependent financially on their husband and it is therefore difficult for women to leave, especially if there are children involved. (NGO Worker)*

## Lack of resources to respond to individual cases

The CCWC Focal Person talked about feeling 'annoyed' at having to deal with cases of domestic violence, given her busy schedule.

*It's a big issue and it wastes time - when domestic violence happens they always come to me to solve the problem, but I have many other things to do - it's annoying. (CCWC Focal Person)*

The Commune Chief spoke of the difficulty of having to sometimes deal with DV cases that involved couples that had temporarily separated, with one partner living outside the commune, as far as 2 hours away. She said, 'having to travel these distances wastes a lot of time'.

# 4

## SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

We were interested in exploring participant's views and ideas about how the issues of VAW in Chi Kraeng could be addressed. Overall, respondents demonstrated general support toward the need for addressing the issue of violence against women in Chi Kraeng, however, given a lack of knowledge of potential prevention approaches, most ideas involved the expansion of already existing initiatives or activities. Many requests were made for the increased involvement of NGOs, and for more education and awareness raising about human and legal rights in relation to DV and divorce. It was also suggested by a number of participants that seeking strategies for encouraging men's involvement in education and awareness raising initiatives was important in helping to address the issue.

There were only a few participants, including the CCWC Women's Focal Person, who appeared to have some understanding that maybe education and awareness raising was not the only answer.

*I know we need more education in the community about DV and its bad effects, but at the same time the commune council and the CCWC are already educating villagers, but it makes no difference. (CCWC Focal Person)*

### More serious consequences for perpetrators

Some participants talked about needing more serious consequences for men who perpetrate violence against their wife; most comments about this came from students.

*I think you should detain perpetrators for 24 hours and give them a warning. (16 boy C)*

*The law should say that if a husband and wife fight, that they should be punished, and if it is a serious case, the husband should go to jail. If it is not serious, the commune or village chief can educate then if he can change his behaviour he should not go to jail. (Village Chief)*

### Education & awareness raising

Most of the suggested solutions related to the need for more education and awareness raising about domestic violence in the community in general; many were in fact convinced that if only perpetrators and the couples involved in DV knew more about the law, and the potential adverse effects of DV that this would solve the problem.

*We need to get the perpetrators to know about the law - if men understood this they would not perpetrate violence. (NGO Worker)*

*Many NGOs and commune organizations come here and run workshops and training but most participants are women - I think men should be involved too. Right now, women know more about human rights than men because women are the ones who attend the workshops. (Commune Chief)*

*I think the best way to solve the problem is to have more awareness about DV in the community. A problem is that the men who are violent don't usually come to the workshops on DV. (Police Commune Chief)*

There was a feeling that finding strategies for involving more men in particular, in education and awareness campaigns was important.

*We need to focus on men, as only some men who experience DV come to the human rights and legal rights workshops. (Commune Chief)*

## More NGO involvement

There was also a strong view that NGO help was also needed to deliver the education campaigns.

*TLC needs to conduct more awareness about the DV laws in the community, as some people say they don't know about the laws ... we should find NGOs to help - they should educate the victims and perpetrators. (Village Chief)*

*I think TLC should come to the village to educate the families who are involved in DV - they need to understand about DV Law. I also think all the men in the village should be educated about DV Law. (VHSG aged 55)*

The Health Center Worker was of the view that VHSG members and health center staff need support to develop their knowledge and skills to work with victims and families affected by domestic violence, and this is something NGOs could help with.

## Develop a domestic violence committee

A small number of women, who were unaware of the CCWC, talked about the need for a group or committee to be formed that was focused entirely on the issue of domestic violence in the community.

# 5

## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- Domestic violence is considered one of the biggest community issues for Chi Kraeng Commune
- Domestic violence is a private issue that leads to silence and prevents women and children accessing support and health care
- Sexual violence is under-reported in Chi Kraeng, due to shame and men's feelings of sexual entitlement in marriage
- Inequitable gender norms are a cause of DV, including an expectation that men hold more power in intimate relationships
- Poverty creates stress, which leads to conflict and leads to domestic violence
- Gambling and alcohol misuse are considered amongst the biggest contributing factors of DV in Chi Kraeng
- DV leads to serious health outcomes for victims, including physical injuries and mental and social health impacts
- DV leads to many adverse outcomes for children, including depression, fear, shame, school non-attendance and school drop-out
- DV leads to loss of income due to health costs, damage to property and loss of productivity due to physical injury or imprisonment
- Local authorities and health services and volunteers feel they lack the resources, skills and knowledge to deal effectively with individual cases of DV
- Limited local services exist to support victims of domestic violence

# 6

## DISCUSSION & PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS

Violence against women is recognised as a serious and widespread problem in Cambodia. Although a wealth of national and international research has been conducted on the issue, we were interested in developing a local understanding of the problem at the grassroots level.

Given the aim of the newly established TLC-ICS partnership is to develop a coordinated response to the issue of violence against women in Chi Kraeng Commune, it was our aim to develop a local evidence base that would inform the development of this project. Having a better understanding of community perceptions of the issue of VAW in Chi Kraeng, including what the community thinks about prevalence, the causes and contributing factors, as well as the impacts of VAW in their community, were really important to help us design a program response. Additionally, by having an understanding of the local mechanisms, networks and committees that exist, including how they operate, and how communities perceive these systems, was also considered important for our purpose of determining collaborative program initiatives to prevent and address VAW in Chi Kraeng Commune.

Through the conduct of 19 individual interviews; first with members of local authority including Village Chiefs, Commune Council and Police Chiefs, and representatives from the CK Lower Secondary School (LSS); and second focus groups with 28 individuals, including male and female LSS students and Village Health Support Group members, we have developed a thorough in-depth understanding of the complexities of the issue of VAW in Chi Kraeng Commune.

The findings of our study have revealed a number of important implications for responding to VAW in Chi Kraeng. First, it is important to note that most of our results are also reflected in findings of a number of Cambodian studies, including in particular those conducted by Partners for Prevention (P4P, 2011, 2012, 2013), the World Health Organization (WHO) and Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC, 2010).

Findings reveal that although domestic violence is regarded as a very significant issue in Chi Kraeng Commune, reporting of individual cases remains inconsistent and many cases go unreported due to the fear, shame and silence that surrounds the issue. The view amongst participants that violence within the home and sexual violence is considered a private matter, means that women and children are more likely to endure this violence and less likely to access services and supports. Coupled with the knowledge that rates of sexual violence perpetration within relationships is very high within Cambodia (P4P, 2013), and yet very few local authorities considered this was the case in Chi Kraeng, suggests further training and education is required at this level to challenge attitudes and beliefs that prevent survivors seeking support.

It is also clear from the findings of our local study, that many people in the community, including local authorities, key stakeholders, villagers and young people, view gender inequality and social norms around masculinity, as key factors that contribute to VAW, even if



they do not articulate it this way. These findings highlight the need for strategies that work at the level of challenging dominant gender norms that promote men as having more power in relationships, and programs that promote women's and girl's rights, and enhance their access to economic resources. Furthermore, initiatives that enhance the knowledge and skills of young people to develop healthy sexual practices, understand consent, improve conflict resolution and communication skills and foster respectful relationships will help to address these issues. There was equal recognition however, that a number of other social determinants including poverty, gambling and alcohol misuse, increase the likelihood of domestic violence, which points to the need for initiatives that work to address these issues. Furthermore, conflict within the home that was a result of these factors, was also recognized as a contributing issue, pointing to the need for interventions that provide couples and parents with the skills, tools, resources and support to foster healthy, non-violent safe home environments for women and children.

The overwhelming number of stories that involved serious health consequences for both women and children, and an obvious lack of local supports and services, highlights a need for increasing levels of local support for victims. Furthermore, a feeling by those who are expected to respond, of not being fully equipped to deal with cases effectively, suggests a need for targeted training and resourcing for health care workers, including those in both paid and volunteer capacities.

Furthermore, as local authorities in Cambodia are known to play a central role in mediation and conflict resolution, it is not surprising that victims of domestic violence access support from local authorities, including Village Chiefs, Commune Chiefs, Commune Councils and the local Police. However, of concern is that amongst those who deal with the issue, many report facing challenges in terms of lacking the resources, skills and knowledge to deal with cases efficiently and effectively, even though all report having previously received training in this area. This finding highlights the need for more tailored training and resourcing for local authorities regarding dealing with individual cases of VAW, and exploring in more depth, barriers that prevent them undertaking this role. Furthermore, respondents highlighted that in some cases family, friends and informal networks, including Village Elders, intervene to help deal with cases of DV, which highlights the need to explore more fully how informal systems of prevention and response can be enhanced.

Finally, although participants of this study provide limited ideas for solutions to address VAW in Chi Kraeng Commune, the overwhelming enthusiasm and support for more involvement from NGOs highlights a genuine need for support to address the issue of violence against women in Chi Kraeng Commune.

# 7

## CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusion

This study has revealed further evidence that the issue of violence against women is a serious concern for the community of Chi Kraeng Commune. Although most of the findings of our study match the results of much bigger national and international studies on violence against women in Cambodia, this study has allowed us to discover a number of local issues and potential entry points for program interventions that will help to address the issue of violence against women in Chi Kraeng.

It is the intention of TLC and ICS to work with Chi Kraeng Commune to help create an environment where women and children feel safe and free from violence and abuse, including interventions that will work to address gender inequality, increase positive non-violent family relationships and increase the accessibility and availability of support and health care services for men, women and children.

### Recommendations

As reflected in our findings, violence against women is associated with a complex interplay of factors at the individual, relationship, community and greater society levels, which cannot be understood in isolation (P4P, 2013). It is well understood, that simply addressing one factor - such as alcohol abuse or gambling, for example - will not end violence against women. However, findings of the P4P study do indicate that the majority of factors associated with men's perpetration of violence can be changed. All recommendations are focused on the need for strategies that work to eliminate VAW and strategies that address barriers preventing survivors of VAW from seeking and accessing support.

The following recommendations address the key findings of our study. Whilst some recommendations are focused on primary prevention, others are focused on early intervention, protection and responding to the impacts of violence against women. Most prevention approaches recommended are based on evidence developed by Partners for Prevention (2013), of interventions that are effective for prevention of VAW. Partner organizations will work with representatives of Chi Kraeng Commune to ensure community input and involvement in the design and development of initiatives and program responses.

### **Education Sector**

- Education on healthy relationships, non-violent communication skills, conflict resolution and human rights values, which can be integrated into primary and secondary school curricula
- Training for school teachers on identifying and responding to signs of domestic violence and the effects on students

### **Health Sector**

- Targeted training for Health Center workers and volunteers, to detect signs of DV and to be able to intervene to protect women and children
- Services and supports to provide local support and health care for victims of domestic violence
- Programs to address men's health problems, including in particular, mental health, alcohol and gambling

### **Family Sector**

- Programs to improve conflict resolution and promote healthy communication skills within relationships
- Parenting programs to improve skills, resources and support to foster healthy parent-child relationships

### **Local Authority Sector**

- Comprehensive targeted training on violence against women, including marital rape, for police and local authorities, that aligns with existing policy
- Strengthened data collection and monitoring systems, for the effective administration of justice and for reporting cases of VAW, for use by the police, commune councils, CCWC and village chiefs
- Targeted training in mediation and conflict resolution for local authorities

### **Community Sector**

- Programs to promote women's and girl's rights, and enhance their access to economic resources
- Communication campaigns to raise awareness of the laws on violence against women, targeting less engaged groups, including men in particular
- Targeted coordinated legal literacy education for villagers and community members on human rights and women's rights to be free from violence
- Targeted training for local community members, including for example Villagers, Village Elders and Monks, about strategies for identifying and supporting victims of VAW
- Social marketing campaigns to challenge dominant male stereotypes in the community

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## Student Focus Group

### WOMEN'S & CHILDREN'S SAFETY & WELLBEING STUDY

#### Introduce the research project

Describe TLC

Introduce interviewers

#### Why we are talking with you? (purpose of study)

We would like to know more about some of the issues that affect women and children's safety and wellbeing in Chi Kraeng Commune.

So we are talking to lots of important people in the community to find out what people think about these issues.

We think your views are very important, and so we would like to spend some time hearing what you have to say. Hearing what you have to say is very important to us.

What we are doing is called research or a small study.

#### What will happen in our meeting (methods)?

We have some questions we would like to ask you, but before we start, we would like to get your permission to do this.

We will spend about an hour talking together.

We will take notes, so that we don't forget any of the important things that you say.

#### It's okay to say no

Some of the things we talk about might be hard to answer, so it's okay to not answer.

It's your choice to be involved, and there won't be any consequences if you decide not to be.

#### What will happen to the information?

When we have finished meeting everyone, we will collect the information together to write a report about what we have found out.

We will use this information to help us develop a program to address women's and children's safety and wellbeing issues in Chi Kraeng Commune.

#### Confidentiality

We might use some of the things you say in our report.

We will keep your name private, and remove information that will identify you, so no one can tell that it was you who shared the information.

#### Understanding

Do you have any questions about anything we have said?

So are you willing to be involved in this focus group?

## QUESTION GUIDE

### WOMEN'S & CHILDREN'S SAFETY & WELLBEING STUDY

#### 1. Icebreaker question

#### 2. About violence against women in Chi Kraeng

**Local Evidence:** This Life Cambodia conducted a PRA in Chi Kraeng a few years ago, and one of the issues that many villagers, including students, were concerned about was domestic violence.

2.1 What does the term domestic violence mean to you?

**UN Study:** A recent UN study was conducted about violence against women.

Around 1500 Cambodian men & women participated in the study. More than 30% of ever-partnered men reported having perpetrated some kind of violence against women.

2.2 Are you surprised to hear that almost 1/3 of Cambodian men surveyed reported having perpetrated violence against a woman?

2.3 Tell us about the types of violence against women that happen in CK.

2.4 Why do you think violence against women happens in CK?

2.5 Do you think violence against women is a big issue in CK?

- Why / why not?

2.7 Do all cases of violence against women get reported to the authorities?

- Why/why not?

2.8 We think there may be cases of violence against women in the community that are never reported to anyone. What do you think about this?

#### 3. Solutions for violence against women in Chi Kraeng

3.1 What happens in CK when a woman experiences violence?

- Where does she go/what does she do/who does she tell?
- Who gets involved when a woman experiences violence?

3.2 What do you think about the police intervention?

- Does it work? Does the situation get better/worse?

3.3 Do you have ideas about how the situation can be solved?

#### 4. Questions & Thank-you





## VHSG Focus Group

### WOMEN'S & CHILDREN'S SAFETY & WELLBEING STUDY

#### Introduce the research project

Describe TLC & ICS (Investing in Children & their Societies)

Introduce interviewers

#### Why we are talking with you? (purpose of study)

We would like to know more about some of the issues that affect women and children's safety and wellbeing in Chi Kraeng Commune.

So we are talking to lots of important people in the community to find out what people think about these issues.

We think your views are very important, and so we would like to spend some time hearing what you have to say. Hearing what you have to say is very important to us.

What we are doing is called research or a small study.

#### What will happen in our meeting (methods)?

We have some questions we would like to ask you, but before we start, we would like to get your permission to do this.

We will spend about an hour talking together.

We will take notes, so that we don't forget any of the important things that you say.

#### It's okay to say no

Some of the things we talk about might be hard to answer, so it's okay to not answer.

It's your choice to be involved, and there won't be any consequences if you decide not to be.

#### What will happen to the information?

When we have finished meeting everyone, we will collect the information together to write a report about what we have found out.

We will use this information to help us develop a program to address women's and children's safety and wellbeing issues in Chi Kraeng Commune.

#### Confidentiality

We might use some of the things you say in our report.

We will keep your name private, and remove information that will identify you, so no one can tell that it was you who shared the information.

#### Understanding

Do you have any questions about anything we have said?

So are you happy to be involved in this focus group?

# QUESTION GUIDE

## WOMEN'S & CHILDREN'S SAFETY & WELLBEING STUDY

### 1. About you and your role (ice breaker)

- 1.1 Tell us about your role as a VHSG member.

### 2. About violence against women in Chi Kraeng

***Local Evidence:** This Life Cambodia conducted a PRA in Chi Kraeng a few years ago, and one of the issues that many villagers, including students, were concerned about was domestic violence.*

- 2.1 What does the term domestic violence mean to you?

***UN Study:** A recent UN study was conducted about violence against women.*

*Around 1500 Cambodian men & women participated in the study. More than 30% of ever-partnered men reported having perpetrated some kind of physical or sexual violence against women.*

- 2.2 Are you surprised to hear that almost 1/3 of Cambodian men surveyed reported having perpetrated physical or sexual violence against a woman?
- 2.3 Tell us about the types of violence against women that happen in CK.
- 2.4 Why do you think violence against women happens in CK?
- 2.5 Do you think violence against women is a big issue in CK? Why / why not?
- 2.7 Do all cases of violence against women get reported to the authorities? Why/why not?

### 3. Solutions for violence against women in Chi Kraeng

- 3.1 What happens in CK when a woman experiences violence?
- Where does a woman go/what does she do/who does she tell?
  - Who gets involved when a woman experiences violence?
- 3.2 What do you think about the police intervention?
- Does it work? Does the situation get better/worse?
- 3.3 How do you think the problem should be solved?

### 4. Snowball sampling

- 4.1 Who else should we talk to find out more about DV in Chi Kraeng?

### 5. Questions & Thank-you



## Local Authority & School Representatives

### WOMEN'S & CHILDREN'S SAFETY & WELLBEING STUDY

#### Introduce the research project

Describe TLC & ICS (Investing in Children & their Societies)

Introduce interviewers

#### Why we are talking with you? (purpose of study)

We would like to know more about some of the issues that affect women and children's safety and wellbeing in Chi Kraeng Commune.

So we are talking to lots of important people in the community to find out what people think about these issues.

We think your views are very important, and so we would like to spend some time hearing what you have to say.

Hearing what you have to say is very important to us.

What we are doing is called research or a small study.

#### What will happen in our meeting (methods)?

We have some questions we would like to ask, but before we start, we would like to get your permission to do this.

We will spend about an hour talking together.

We will take notes, so that we don't forget any of the important things that you say.

#### It's okay to say no

Some of the things we talk about might be hard to answer, so it's okay to not answer.

It's your choice to be involved, and there won't be any consequences if you decide not to be.

#### What will happen to the information?

When we have finished meeting everyone, we will collect the information together to write a report about what we have found out.

We will use this information to help us develop a program to address women's and children's safety and wellbeing issues in Chi Kraeng Commune.

#### Confidentiality

We might use some of the things you say in our report.

If there are some things you say that you do not want people to know you said it, we can keep your name private, and remove information that will identify you, so no one can tell that it was you who shared the information.

#### Understanding

Do you have any questions about anything we have said?

So are you willing to meet and talk with us?

# QUESTION GUIDE

## WOMEN'S & CHILDREN'S SAFETY & WELLBEING STUDY

### 1. About you and your role (ice breaker)

- 1.1 Tell us about your work (as the police officer, village chief, teacher, etc.)

### 2. About violence against women in Chi Kraeng

**Local Evidence:** This Life Cambodia conducted a PRA in Chi Kraeng a few years ago, and one of the issues that many villagers, including students, were concerned about was DV..

- 2.1 What does the term domestic violence mean to you?

**UN Study:** A recent UN study was conducted about violence against women.

Around 10,000 men and 3,000 women participated in the study (from Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, PNG, Sri Lanka & Cambodia).

Of men who had ever had a partner – between 26% & 80% had committed some form of physical and/or sexual partner violence.

Around 1500 Cambodian men & women participated in the study. More than 30% of ever-partnered men reported having perpetrated some kind of physical or sexual violence against women.

- 2.2 Are you surprised to hear that almost 1/3 of Cambodian men surveyed reported having perpetrated physical or sexual violence against a woman?

- 2.3 Tell us about the types of violence against women that happen in CK.

- 2.4 Why do you think violence against women happens in CK?

- 2.5 Do you think violence against women is a big issue in CK?

- Why / why not?

- 2.7 Do all cases of violence against women get reported to the authorities?

- Why/why not?

- 2.8 What do you think other people in the community think about the issue?

### 3. About violence against children in Chi Kraeng

- 3.1 Do you think violence against children is a big issue in CK?

- Why / why not?

### 4. Solutions for violence against women in Chi Kraeng

- 4.1 What happens in CK when a woman experiences violence?

- Where does a woman go/what does she do/who does she tell?
- Who gets involved when a woman experiences violence?

- 4.2 What do you think about the police intervention?

- Does it work? Does the situation get better/worse?

- 4.3 How do you think the problem should be solved?

### 4. Snowball sampling

- 4.1 Who else should we talk to find out more about DV in Chi Kraeng?

- 4.2 Who are the 'champions', or influential community members on DV in the community?

- 4.3 Where is the women's focal point in the community? (eg. shopkeepers)

### 5. Questions & Thank-you