

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Our strategy

Violence against women is a human rights issue with significant social and public health implications. The prevalence of violence and the ways that society responds to it are a reflection of gender attitudes and power relations. UNFPA works to increase community awareness of, and involvement in, the promotion and protection of women's rights and gender equality, and the prevention of violence against women.

Our work

Understanding violence against women through improved data

Effective prevention of violence against women (VAW) and quality services for survivors depend on a clear understanding of the prevalence of violence and its dynamics. As a leading agency in data for development with a strong commitment to preventing and addressing VAW, UNFPA has played an important role in ensuring that reliable data on VAW is available. Most recently, UNFPA has successfully advocated for VAW to be included in Cambodia's major national data collection exercise, the Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey, which will take place in 2014 and has mobilised additional resources from the Australian Government to support it. This is expected to yield valuable data as an evidence base for programming and further establishes the issue of VAW as a political, social and health priority issue in Cambodia.

Putting sound policies in place

As a long-term partner of the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), UNFPA has been among the development partners actively involved in the recent formulation of the National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women. As part of this process a new and robust inter-sectoral coordination mechanism has been mobilised. UNFPA has provided technical inputs through policy development with particular focus on our areas of interest in primary prevention, data collection and the health sector's role in responding to violence against women.



Photo: UNFPA Cambodia

The Facts :

Like many other countries in the world, Cambodia has limited reliable data on violence against women. However, what we do know highlights that the issue is significant:

- 22% of women who have ever been married report having experienced physical, sexual or emotional violence from an intimate partner.
- 21% of men report having raped an intimate partner while 5% have taken part in a gang rape.
- While most Cambodian people are aware that domestic violence is illegal, many still believe that some circumstances justify a man hitting his wife.
- Women are more likely than men to believe that domestic violence can be justified: 46% of women as opposed to 22% of men agree that a husband is justified in beating his wife in at least one described circumstance.
- Violence against women is associated with unequal power relations between men and women, exacerbated by weak law enforcement and a culture of impunity.

- CDHS 2005
 - Fulu, E., Warner, X. and Moussavi, S., 2013. Men, gender and violence against women in Cambodia: findings from a household study with men on perpetration of violence. Phnom Penh: UN Women
 - CDHS 2010



Photo: Um Vanneth

Making a change through men and boys

Preventing violence requires real social change which is impossible without the engagement of men and, as research has shown that perpetrators' first offences often happen in their teens, working with young men and boys is particularly important. UNFPA has been among the supporters of the Good Men media and social mobilisation campaign organised by Paz y Desarrollo (PyD) and led by MoWA. This campaign has used a combination of radio, TV, performance, drama, sports and community activities to challenge damaging norms of masculinity and promote gender equity and non-violence. There has been a particular focus on remote areas and young men.

Mobilising communities against violence against women

Women and girls' first point of contact when seeking support in cases of violence is often local authorities and other community members. UNFPA supports the Ministry of Interior (Mol) and the MoWA to build local authorities' understanding of their role as duty bearers in cases of violence against women, through sensitisation to VAW, understanding of the law and mapping of locally available services.

Piloting integrated services at community level

UNFPA supports the local NGO Cambodian Women's Crisis Centre (CWCC) to pilot a multi-sectoral response to VAW at the community level in Banteay Meanchey province. CWCC provides a range of services related to the health, legal, psycho-social, shelter and livelihood needs of survivors of VAW and does so by mobilising a network of public service providers, local authorities and community volunteers. As well as providing essential services to survivors, this initiative enables us to learn lessons on ways of providing such services in the Cambodian context for feeding into future policy and programme development, especially with regard to working with the health sector.

Responding to violence through the public health system

Globally there is increasing recognition that VAW is a public health issue with enormous impact on the mental, reproductive and general health of women, but it is an issue that is often hidden and which health professionals may not feel confident to get involved in. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has recently launched global guidelines to support health systems in responding to VAW and Cambodia is among the countries working to adapt these guidelines for use in-country, with support from UNFPA.

CASE STUDY - A young victim of sexual abuse

Mulika is a 16 year old Cambodian girl who comes from a poor family of five. Due to extreme poverty, Mulika dropped out of school and migrated to Thailand to find work in the construction industry. While working at a construction site, Mulika was raped by a Cambodian man who was also working there. During the attack she was seriously beaten and cut with glass leaving her with serious injuries. She was sent to a hospital in Thailand but then returned to Cambodia for further medical care in Banteay Meanchey. On her return, Mulika's parents came to seek services from the UNFPA-supported NGO Cambodian Women's Crisis Centre (CWCC) to help file her case at the police station and to seek justice against the rapist.

Mulika was traumatized by the event and was admitted into CWCC's safe shelter. When she arrived she cried, hid herself away, and was bad-tempered and aggressive. She suffered from stigma and lack of support, especially when her fiancé decided to end their relationship. To help Mulika cope with her ordeal, the counselor at CWCC started to build a relationship with Mulika, by building up her confidence and encouraging her to speak about her suffering through drawing, painting, and doing manicures. CWCC helped her to connect with other survivors in the shelter through group play and therapy. Gradually, Mulika has built up her confidence through the group's emotional support and she has recovered from her trauma. Today, Mulika attends literacy class in the shelter and is waiting for the legal proceedings at the court to take place so that she can finally receive justice.

Mulika is not her real name. Her name has been changed to protect her privacy and in accordance with the Child Protection Policy of CWCC



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