



*a preliminary analysis report on*

# Deoum Troung Pram Hath in Modern Cambodia

**A Qualitative  
Exploration of  
Gender Norms,  
Masculinity and  
Domestic Violence**

Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC)  
with support from Partners for Prevention, the International Center  
for Research on Women and the UN Trust Fund

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Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC)  
#89, St. 288, Sangkat Olympic, Khan Chamkarmorn,  
Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
P.O.Box 2684, Phnom Penh 3 or Mail Box at CCC 128

Tel: (855-23) 215 137  
Fax: (855-23) 996 934  
Mail: [gad@online.com.kh](mailto:gad@online.com.kh)  
Website: [www.gad.org.kh](http://www.gad.org.kh)

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## Definition of Boros Deoum Troung Pram Hath

In Cambodia society, Deoum Troung Pram Hath is referred to men 'Boros' only and it is commonly used 'Boros Deoum Troung Pram Hath'. 'Pram' translates to five and 'Hath' refers to the measurement between the elbow and the tip of the hand.

'Boros Deoum Troung Pram Hath' is a traditional definition that refers to the two and a half metre length of cloth worn by Buddhist monks to cover the chest (Deoum Troung) during the duration of their monkhood. Such men were highly regarded due to the knowledge and personal attributes gained during monkhood.

'Boros Deoum Troung Pram Hath' therefore referred to men who were highly educated, impartial and understood dharmas and Buddhist philosophy. Such men possessed gentle and proper manners, strict discipline-abiding behaviour, high capabilities and strong consciences, serving as role models for other men. Specifically, those who sought self-happiness and shared this happiness with others.

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## Preface

Violence against women and girls remains one of the most pervasive yet least recognized human-rights abuses in the world. Domestic violence, rape and trafficking are serious concerns in Cambodia, involving a significant proportion of women. The Violence Against Women 2009 Follow-Up Survey by Ministry of Women's Affairs cites that 64% of respondents knew of a husband in their community who acted violently toward his wife. Moreover, 22.5% of female respondents had suffered violence from their husbands. The levels of violence against women can be attributed to the pervasive gender inequality in Cambodia, which stems from the rigidly defined gender roles of men and women. Tackling these norms which perpetuate an environment conducive to violence against women is key to violence prevention efforts. Yet, boys and men are often left out of violence prevention efforts, with most responses to violence against women focusing on women's rights and empowerment, legal reform, protection and service provision. Whilst these interventions continue to be key priorities, these efforts can be complemented by working with boys and men to address root causes of violence against women and girls, and ultimately strives to create societies where gender-based violence is unacceptable to all.

It is with this understanding that Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC) with support from Partners for Prevention, a UNDP, UNFPA, UNIFEM and UNV regional programme for Asia and the Pacific, the International Center for Research on Women, and the UN Trust Fund has conducted research on men and masculinities in Cambodia, leading to this report - Deoum Troung Pram Hath in Modern Cambodia: A Qualitative Exploration of Gender Norms, Masculinity and Domestic Violence.

This qualitative research project examines the links between masculinity, gender, and domestic violence in Cambodia. The research aims to further understand the links between masculinity, gender, and domestic violence, and identify further entry points for non-governmental organizations and policy makers in their ongoing efforts to prevent violence against women and girls. In particular, the research findings will be a useful tool to review existing policies and laws, and more importantly inform policymakers and other stakeholders to design programs and projects to transform harmful attitudes and behaviors that can foster violence.

This report presents the preliminary analysis of research that was carried out in the rural provinces of Prey Veng and Pursat, and also in Phnom Penh, the capital city of Cambodia. The study consisted of focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and key informants conducted in March 2009. Key findings of this research demonstrate the links between masculinity and violence against women, and sheds light on the masculinity norms that young Cambodian men are subject. The research also offers recommendations for how policymakers can build effective responses. In addition, the findings include information on societal attitudes toward violence against women, and the core factors that enhance women's risks of violence in the home. The findings also focus on influencing factors to violence such as alcohol abuse, sex outside of marriage and financial issues.

We strongly believe that this research report will contribute toward a better understanding of the root causes of violence against women and girls - including structural male dominance, masculinity norms, and unequal gender relations - and their links with gender-based violence. This information will help policymakers make more informed decisions on making prevention measures a priority, as well as more effective implementation of the domestic violence law relevant government plans of action. Furthermore, this new information can also help support NGOs and other civil society organizations in terms of their work on advocacy, campaigning, policy and programming for violence prevention.

Phnom Penh, October 12, 2010  
Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC)

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All photos are property of GADC and were taken during the in-depth interviews and focus group discussion during the data collection period of this research.



## Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
GBV	Gender Based Violence
CDHS	Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FHI	Family Health International
GADC	Gender and Development for Cambodia
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICRW	International Center for Research on Women
IDI	In-depth Interview
IWDA	International Women's Development Agency
MOEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MOWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
NGO	Non-government Organisation
P4P	Partners for Prevention
PADV	Project Against Domestic Violence
PSI	Population Services International
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
SBC	Strategic Behavioural Communication
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNV	United Nations Volunteer

## Executive Summary

Commissioned by Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC) this qualitative study examines the links between masculinity, gender, and domestic violence. It is based on a review of existing information from government and non-government bodies, as well as regional and international sources.<sup>1</sup> The field study was conducted in two rural provinces of Cambodia and in the capital, Phnom Penh. The main research methodology included focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with married respondents who were both male and female, perpetrators and non-perpetrators of spousal violence, victims and non-victims of familial abuse.

This report documents the key findings from a preliminary analysis of the data. However, given the wealth of information collected, a second round of analysis is being undertaken to further explore certain issues raised in this report, and will be published in early 2011.

### A. Findings

The findings of this study are grouped into three chapters dealing with:

1. masculinity and norms;
2. attitudes towards violence against women and the core factors enhancing the risk of violence; and
3. inter-related factors contributing to violence, along with responses to violence.

#### 1. Masculinity and Norms

Some of the key Cambodian constructions of masculinity identified by respondents indicated that men are expected to be:

- the head of the household;
- the breadwinner;
- superior to women and girls;
- dominant over women; and
- strong and brave.

Cambodian men are expected to be the head of the family and everything in a boy's socialisation is designed to prepare him for this responsibility. All other norms and characteristics stem from this expectation and definition of the man's dominant role. While most male participants construed masculinity in opposition to what is feminine, there were a few voices in the study that alluded to the complementary roles of husbands and wives. At the same time, however, they were aware of their dissenting stance and felt that they could not discuss these ideas openly with other people. The existence of differing versions of masculinity indicates that it is possible to promote alternative understanding of manhood that are not

<sup>1</sup> Literature Review (Appendix E)

based on gender inequality.

The standards for masculinity impose severe pressure on some men, particularly as those standards have become more difficult to fulfil in the face of changing economic circumstances and as more women enter the workforce. Some men recognise the expectation to play different roles and take on more household responsibilities. In fact, it was found that more men than women expressed acceptance of gender norms that had altered to become more equitable, and this suggests a starting point for interventions. It also highlights the need for interventions with women, given the strong internalisation of unequal gender norms.

## ***2. Attitudes Towards Violence Against Women and the Core Factors Enhancing the Risk of Violence***

Although violence is considered morally unacceptable, some rural male participants expressed mixed feelings about domestic violence. On the one hand, a violent man was considered “cowardly”, but a man who is afraid of his wife was also considered “cowardly”. Urban men however were united in their opinion that violence is unacceptable, that men should be patient, control their anger and avoid talking back to their wives. One urban respondent even suggested that men who commit domestic violence harm the reputation of all men.

The study identified the following five risk factors associated with violence against women in the home: unequal gender relations;

- childhood experiences of violence;
- social isolation and violence as a private matter;
- sexual coercion and control; and
- reasserting patriarchal control.

Rigid gender norms and gender inequality were found to be the two main underlying causes of violence against women in Cambodia<sup>2</sup> and the study data reveals that failure to uphold gender-based expectations of behaviour often leads to violence. Childhood violence was a common experience in many men’s and women’s lives, and was often cited as a risk factor for experiencing or perpetrating violence later in life. However the study cannot make the definitive causal links on this issue because not all children from violent families grow up to model the behaviour of their parents. Indeed, there were examples of men who experienced extreme violence as children that have not become violent adults, often through concerted efforts not to repeat the patterns they learned as children.

Violence committed by men at home is viewed less negatively than violence committed in public, which

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<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Women’s Affairs, 2009, Violence Against Women 2009 Follow-Up Survey

reaffirms findings from numerous studies conducted within and outside of Cambodia showing that domestic violence is regarded as a private matter rather than a crime. Nevertheless, there is shame in outsiders becoming aware of domestic violence in Cambodia. Gender norms do not encourage open discussion of sex or sexuality particularly among women and the study found that there was a clear lack of knowledge and communication about sexuality. There was however striking agreement between men and women regarding the belief that men had the control and power over sexual behaviour within marriage. Women said that denying their husband sex would result in assumptions or accusations of infidelity, and/or physical violence or forced intercourse.

### **3. Inter-related Factors Contributing to Violence and Responses to Violence**

Although many male respondents said that domestic violence is never justified, they cited certain factors that contribute to violence. These include:

- alcohol abuse;
- financial issues; and
- sex outside marriage.

As noted in previous studies<sup>3</sup>, respondents reported that the role of alcohol in contributing to violence is very strong in both urban and rural settings. They did not specify, however, whether they saw alcohol as the cause of violence or simply a trigger. Men said they wanted the freedom to drink with friends without criticism from their wives. A common conflict scenario was when men were denied money from their wives for drinking and/or gambling. Extra-marital sex was less frequently mentioned as a cause for conflict, but it was mentioned as a cause of much anguish for some women.

When conflict becomes violent, Cambodian women have limited options. Their help-seeking efforts are inhibited by public attitudes towards discussion of violence and sexuality, and both the perceived and real availability of support services. Despite the existence of a specific law against domestic violence<sup>4</sup>, both men and women did not view domestic violence as a crime that should be referred to police or judicial authorities. Women who asked local authorities for help were often provided with an inadequate response, therefore discouraging them for seeking further assistance. Some respondents in the study had heard of the Prevention of Domestic Violence and The Protection of Victims Law<sup>5</sup> (hereinafter referred to as the Domestic Violence Law), but they felt there was gap between the policy and its implementation.

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<sup>3</sup> Violence Against Women Survey Reports from 2005 and 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Kingdom of Cambodia Government Document: Ministry of Women's Affairs, Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Protection of Victims, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

## B. Conclusions and Recommendations

The recognition of clear links between masculinity, gender norms and violence leads to several important conclusions and recommendations for GADC and other agencies in their ongoing efforts to prevent violence against women.

These recommendations, which are in effect entry points for agency programmes as well as for policy and advocacy stakeholders, are organised into six topics, in accordance with the areas of action outlined for Partners for Prevention (P4P), a regional joint programme between UNDP, UNIFEM, UNV and UNFPA in Asia and the Pacific. These are:

1. Holding men accountable:
  - work on building awareness of the Domestic Violence Law and other laws to protect women from violence, build capacity of local authorities to enforce these laws and strengthen communication and coordination among commune committees, and advocate with provincial courts to try cases involving domestic violence, trafficking and rape; and
  - use counselling skills to work with perpetrators through the men's and women's core group dialogue programmes, and enlist former perpetrators to serve as positive role models.<sup>6</sup>
2. Victim support:
  - encourage people to speak out, seek services and condemn violence through radio broadcasts, TV talk shows, public meetings and education campaigns; and
  - coordinate with government efforts to change attitudes and build capacity among service agencies.
3. Legal and Economic Empowerment of Women:
  - develop violence prevention programmes for men that provide an understanding of, and skills to cope with, rapidly changing socioeconomic and political realities;
  - support core men's group dialogue to share with their peers positive experiences of helping in the home and provide them with an opportunity to act as role models in their community; and
  - integrate campaigns promoting healthy dialogue and recognising the respective contributions of women and men to their families into a wide range of development projects that seek to strengthen livelihoods.
4. Primary Prevention:

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<sup>6</sup>The dialogue programme is part of the two GADC projects of Women Empowerment through Legal Awareness (WELA) and Men's Perspective Project (MPP). The WELA establishes and supports community-based core women groups (CWGs) to empower grassroots women through legal awareness and interventions. The project also monitors media reports on cases of violence against women (VAW). Similarly, the MPP project also establishes and supports community-based core men groups (CMGs) to help transform traditional masculine ideologies, to end violence against women and promote gender equality in the family and community.

- include young people in public campaigns on violence prevention;
  - implement interventions with adolescent and adult males and females that are sensitive to the Cambodian context;
  - ensure that core men's and women's groups discuss the behaviour and attitudes of young people, and ways to ensure effective cross-generational communication about these topics; and
  - incorporate gender-based violence and masculinity issues into other programmes related to peace building and conflict resolution, as well as gender issues.
5. Public Security:
- expand discussions in core men's and women's groups to include the joint
  - roles and responsibilities of citizens and authorities to build community networks and strengthen social infrastructure.
6. Engaging Men for Equality:
- strengthen male involvement in preventing gender-based violence in Cambodia;
  - train and support staff to approach violence from a gender sensitive perspective and to act as positive role models themselves;
  - encourage men and women to talk about responsible sexual behaviour; and
  - provide information to men and women about Cambodia's Labour Law<sup>7</sup> and its provisions for paternity leave.

This qualitative exploration of Cambodian masculinity raises issues that require further investigation. Some of the important questions raised include:

- What is the relationship between economic and social change, gender constructs and violence?
- What advocacy strategies are most effective to encourage law enforcement against perpetrators of gender-based violence?
- What impact do programmes that engage men and boys have, and what are some promising practices for engaging men and boys in Cambodia?
- How can these strategies be tailored to be effective for males of different ages and life experiences?

GADC plans to put these programmatic recommendations into practice through its core men's and women's groups. GADC urges policy makers to make implementation of the Domestic Violence Law, and other components of the government's National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women, a priority. Finally, GADC hopes other NGOs and civil society groups to expand and improve their advocacy, dissemination and social service activities in such a way to respond to the needs raised in this study.

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<sup>7</sup> Kingdom of Cambodia Document: Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour and Veteran Affairs, Labour Law, 1997.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Several Cambodian gender relations document the traditional male role.<sup>8</sup> Most focus on the negative and damaging consequences of the inequality that is inherent in those relations, particularly as manifested in violence against women. However few of these studies comment upon, or study, men who do not engage in violent activities. The studies agree that Cambodia's society is hierarchically structured and where sex is just one pertinent factor among many, including age, wealth, urban-rural residence, position/occupation, education, family reputation, and religious piety. Cambodian culture expects men to be strong individuals who are the heads of their families and the primary breadwinners. However outside this consensual conception of the male role, there are conflicting cultural messages on their behaviour, recreational activities and also a recognition that male ideals may not always be fulfilled. For the most part these studies note the relative lack of research on masculinity and have called for further investigation. What has been most obviously lacking in the available literature is the evidence base essential for policies and programmes targeting gender-based violence prevention, especially those engaging men and boys.



The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has emphasised the value of research on masculinity for effective policy development action to address the issue of violence. The results of the national survey report published by the Ministry of Women's Affairs in 2005, *Violence Against Women: A Baseline Survey*, highlighted the need to obtain information on the various influences that construct or deconstruct men's attitudes towards violence, traditional gender norms and fatherhood. As well as the mental health needs of men arising from the stresses placed on them by changing roles and relations within Khmer society in order to devise methods and techniques for engaging men and transforming their harmful masculine practices.<sup>9</sup>

### 1.1 Objectives

The objective of this study was to answer questions regarding the link between masculinity, gender, and domestic violence, with a view to enhancing GADC's programmes as well as streamlining its existing project activities in study locations

<sup>8</sup> See Bibliography. While a thorough literature review was undertaken prior to the study, only those references most pertinent to the findings are discussed in this report. These references are incorporated into those parts of the text relevant to the findings, or occur in footnotes as applicable, and are not discussed separately.

<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Women's Affairs, *Violence Against Women: A Baseline Survey* (Phnom Penh, 2005).

The broader aim was to identify further entry points for non-government organisations and policy makers in their ongoing efforts to prevent violence against women and to share the findings with relevant actors. In particular, the research aimed to assist the formulation of legal and policy recommendations for national machineries, to review the existing policies and laws, and to provide information about designing appropriate educational and communication materials at the project level to transform men's harmful attitudes and behaviour in relation to violence.

## **1.2 Methodology**

The study consisted of focus group discussions and in-depth interviews conducted in March 2009 by local staff trained in qualitative data collection. Research tools (see Appendices A-D) were developed by GADC with external technical assistance provided by P4P.

Respondents were both men and women. In the rural areas, GADC staff first met with commune councils that allowed the research team an opportunity to introduce the methods and purpose of the project. Commune councillors identified potential participants who the research team then invited to take part. Apart from the commune chief in Pursat, other key informants included two high ranking government officials, one each from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MOEYS), and the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), and two representatives of non-government organisations (NGO), one international and one local, who work to prevent domestic violence.

The field research was carried out in the rural provinces of Prey Veng (Theay Commune, Baphnom District) and Pursat (Metoek Commune, Bakan District) as well as in the capital, Phnom Penh (Boeung Tompun and Niroth Sangkat communes, Meanchey Municipal District). Although GADC had worked in those rural districts of Prey Veng and Pursat for some years, these specific locations were new to the programme.

As shown in Table 1, there was a total of 12 focus group discussions (FGD's) conducted. Their purpose was to explore the social norms around masculinity and violence against women. Special emphasis was placed on exploring the various options available to women faced with violence, and the role of law in mediating these options. The FGDs were segregated by gender and duration of marriage (fewer and more than five years), the premise being that younger individuals, married for less time, might have different views on the roles and responsibilities of partners. Each discussion lasted approximately one and a half hours. They took place in public spaces such as primary schools, pagodas or farm fields. Discussions were moderated in Khmer and tape recorded. Two additional people accompanied each group as note-takers notes and GADC staff members made rotating observations. Data collection teams were coordinated according to sex so that men conducted male FGDs and women conducted female FGDs. Spouses were not included in the sample.



## Methodology Guide for Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Table 1: Focus Group Discussions

Method of Research	Length of Marriage	Men	Age Range	Women	Age Range	Study Location
Focus Group Discussions (4 FGDs per province/city, 2 men's and 2 women's groups)	Married more than 5 years (6 FGDs)	7 pax	28-48 yrs	7 pax	28-44 yrs	URBAN Sangkat Boeung Tompun and Sangkat Niroth, Khan Meanchey, Phnom Penh
		8 pax	26-30 yrs	8 pax	29-47 yrs	RURAL Metoek Commune, Bakan District, Pursat Province
		8 pax	29-48 yrs	8 pax	30-40 yrs	RURAL Theay Commune, Baphnom District, Prey Veng Province
	Married fewer than 5 years (6 FGDs)	8 pax	25-38 yrs	8 pax	21-26 yrs	URBAN Sangkat Boeung Tompun and Sangkat Niroth, Khan Meanchey, Phnom Penh
		8 pax	24-32 yrs	8 pax	19-33 yrs	RURAL Metoek Commune, Bakan District, Pursat Province
		8 pax	26-30 yrs	8 pax	21-27 yrs	RURAL Theay Commune, Baphnom District, Prey Veng Province

Using similar techniques, 40 in-depth interviews (IDIs) were held: 16 in Phnom Penh, and 12 in both the Prey Veng and Pursat Provinces, as listed in Table 2. In order to safeguard privacy, IDIs were held in the homes of participants unless others were present at the time. In which case, interviews were conducted in neutral community spaces. The interviews were segregated according to whether male respondents were perpetrators or non-perpetrators of domestic violence, and whether female respondents were victims or not of domestic violence. Spouses were not included. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Female interviewers interviewed female participants and men conducted the male interviews.

Confidentiality and safety of all respondents was ensured. Researchers visited each respondent at home two

weeks prior to the interview to discuss their confidentiality guidelines. At these meetings, the respondents provided informed consent and the researchers explained that they would not judge the respondents nor share their identity or confidential information with others.

### **Methodology Guide for In-Depth Interview (IDIs)**

Table 2: Guide for In-Depth Interview (IDIs)

Men	Age Range	Occupation	Level of Education	Women	Age Range	Occupation	Level of Education	Study Location
4 perpetrators	23-48 yrs	1 construction worker 1 taxi driver 1 businessman 1 farmer	Grade 1 – 5	4 Victims	21-46 yrs	2 housewives 1 nail cutter 1 garbage collector	No school (1) Grade 2-5 (3)	Sangkat Boeung Tompun and Sangkat Niroth  Khan Meanchey
4 non-perpetrators	23-48 yrs	1 teacher 2 taxi drivers 1 farmer	Grade 1- 12	4 Non-victims	21-46 yrs	3 sellers 1 housewife	No school (2) Grade 1-5 (2)	Phnom Penh
3 perpetrators	22-28 yrs	3 farmers	No school (1) Grade 1-6 (2)	3 Victims	25-29 yrs	3 farmers	Grade 1- 6	
3 non-perpetrators	22-28 yrs	3 farmers	Grade 6 – 7	3 Non-victims	25-29 yrs	2 sellers 1 farmer	Grade 4- 12	
3 perpetrators	28-38 yrs	3 farmers	Grade 1 – 8	3 Victims	24-32 yrs	3 farmers	No school (1) Grade 1-2 (2)	Theay Commune Baphnom District
3 non-perpetrators	28-38 yrs	2 farmers 1 fisherman	Grade 1 – 5	3 Non-victims	24-32 yrs	2 farmers 1 sugar palm maker	No school (1) Grade 5 (2)	Prey Veng Province

Data from the FGDs and IDIs were transcribed in Khmer by the GADC team. The interviews were then translated into English through external contracting. Following translation, the GADC team reviewed the transcripts to ensure their accuracy. With technical assistance from International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), GADC developed basic themes for a codebook. These themes are reflected in the topic headings used in this report. GADC then used these topics to code half of the interviews and the majority of the focus group discussions. Using the same coding system, ICRW analysed the rest of the interviews. All coding and analysis was done with Atlas TI software.

Qualitative research is not designed to be representative of a country or community and this limitation

is acknowledged. Nevertheless, every effort was made to ensure that a cross-section of people was represented from both rural and urban areas. The sensitive nature of domestic violence, especially in Cambodia where it is regarded as a private matter, makes it very difficult for people to speak openly. Therefore, as with all research on violence against women, there is likely to be some under-reporting of violent experiences. Furthermore, while every effort was made to carry out thorough transcription and translation, there remains the possibility that some errors occurred or that the full meaning of Khmer language was not reflected in English translation.

Given the nature of qualitative research, it is not possible to draw statistical correlations or associations and identify the root causes of violence. However, we can explore men's and women's understandings of these issues and offer some possible explanations.

As previously mentioned, a second round of analysis is being undertaken to further explore some of the issues raised in this report. In particular the next analysis will look at the different life experiences of perpetrators and non-perpetrators of violence, and examine more thoroughly the implications of the research for campaigning, policy and programme development for violence prevention. The second analysis will be published in early 2011.



## Chapter 2: Findings on Cambodian Masculinity

This chapter presents the first key finding of the research, that examines the links between masculinity and violence against women and the policy and programmatic implications of the findings. It discusses the masculinity norms into which young Cambodian men are encultured, and suggests how policy makers might respond.

### 2.1 Cambodian Masculinity

Some of the key Cambodian constructions of masculinity identified by respondents indicated that men are expected to be:

- the head of household;
- the breadwinner;
- superior to women and girls;
- dominant over women; and
- strong and brave.

#### 2.1.1 Head Of The Household

A core characteristic of Cambodian masculinity as indicated by the data is the male role as head of his family, the primary manager, decision maker and provider.<sup>10</sup> This is the overwhelming societal expectation for a man and everything in a boy's socialisation is designed to prepare him for this eventual responsibility. Many men mentioned the advice and teachings of their parents, especially fathers, as the source of standards such as:

- working hard to earn money;
- saving money; and
- managing the family, which may involve using discipline.

Respondents, both male and female and of varying ages stressed that men made most of the decisions in the family:

Mostly, a man does the decision making because he is the breadwinner. Moreover, he is expected to take the lead (doeuk mok).

*Urban man, married less than five years*

One female respondent explained the decision making process in her household and the consequences

<sup>10</sup> In particular, refer to International Women's Development Agency, Inc. (hereafter, IWDA), Men's Talk (Phnom Penh, 2008) which found that the role of provider is central to a man's sense of pride and identity, but that this role is also a source of pressure for most men.

of usurping her husband's role:

If I want to do something, my husband decides this for me; for example, buying household items. I cannot make up my mind until I ask him first, because he is the breadwinner and when he decides to buy something, I buy it. I do the housework and he is the breadwinner. I have discussions with him, and if he makes a wrong decision, we all are wrong. If I make a decision alone and buy something wrong, he will blame me and say that I insisted on buying it and I was pigheaded to buy it.

*Rural woman, non-victim of partner violence, aged 27*

### 2.1.2 Breadwinner

Men discussed their role as breadwinners extensively, indicating it is clearly a key component of their identity:

My parents expect me to be a man who can earn money to feed his family. When my wife asks me for money, I have money for her. They don't want my wife to say that I am inferior to her and the other men in my neighbourhood.

*Rural man, perpetrator of violence, aged 29*

On the other hand, women are expected to take care of household duties, care for children, and to manage the budget.<sup>11</sup>As reflected in strong cultural traditions, women are expected to defer to their husbands' opinions and to speak softly. It was also acknowledged however, that these rigid gender roles are changing and that men are taking on housework just as women are also earning more income. Significantly, one respondent noted the impact of television programming in promoting different understandings of gender roles, which highlights the potential impact of such advocacy tools:

Therefore, we husbands must doek mok (take the lead); it means that we not only work outside the home but also do housework sometimes. In general, this awareness is also raised through TV programmes. Now, it is different from the old generation. That is, men can also wash dishes.

*Urban man, married less than five years*

### 2.1.3 Superiority Over Women and Girls: Men's Higher Status

Although some respondents said that their male and female siblings had been treated equally, most acknowledged that men have a higher status than women in Cambodia. Both male and female respondents confirmed this:

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<sup>11</sup> The IWDA study, Men's Talk, noted that 'most men did not perceive women to be contributors to family revenue, despite the fact that women in Cambodia contribute more than 50 per cent of household income.' See Men's Talk, p. 13.

It is generally accepted that men were born superior and to control (loeu) women.

*Urban man, married more than five years*

My father loves the boy more than the girls. When the boy is sick, he always gives him his full attention, but it's not the same with us girls. Girls are not as useful as boys; we can only do small chores at home. But boys have long legs.

*Rural woman, victim of partner violence, aged 32*

Some respondents reported that their parents had treated sons and daughters equally, but additional qualify comments made it clear that this was not the case, which raises questions about how people interpret the concept of equality. One of the most frequently cited privileges of men's higher status was better access to education. The belief that education is more important for men than for women was linked to a rigid gendered division of labour. For example, a number of respondents indicated that education is necessary for a man as it increases men's chances of finding a good job, linking it to his expected role as the breadwinner.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, it was suggested that daughters had less time for their studies because they were expected to focus on household chores, fulfilling their socially constructed gender role as homemaker. With more in-depth analysis of the data to come, we will examine how these attitudes are changing with growing female employment and increased levels of female education.

A man must be literate or have high education as well as good attitude and dignity. Those who are illiterate are considered incomplete men – or a half man (kan las).

*Urban man, married more than five years*

One respondent demonstrated how strong this bias is, noting that his parents promoted equality, but that he still believed that education is more important for males:

My parents told their daughters to try to study hard for their future and not to depend on their husbands too much, and they told their sons the same – not to depend on their wives to make a living. They think that in Khmer society today there is an equal right to participate ... Sons must try to study more, study hard, and study well so that they can help their family and become the family heir.

*Urban man, non-perpetrator of violence, aged 25*

<sup>12</sup> Not only men hold to this opinion. The National Institute of Public Health and National Institute of Statistics, Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey 2005 (Phnom Penh, 2006), p. 271, recorded that about 42 per cent of women felt that married women should not be allowed to work outside the home. It also found (ibid.) that 45 per cent of women agreed that it is better to educate a son than a daughter.

Some respondents argued that men's greater access to education was associated with the need to travel great distances. This reflects the real danger of violence that women face outside the home as well as a gender disparity associated with male and female mobility. Daily travel to a distant school is thought to pose security risks for women and relocating is not encouraged due to the expectation of living with their parents until marriage (at which point young husbands often move in with their wives' families):

My parents allowed their sons to obtain a higher level of education than their daughters because they thought that sons could find a better job when they were well educated. They wanted their daughters to continue their studies, but they had more work to do than sons, especially housework. The main reason is that they were afraid someone could rape (the daughters) along the way home at dusk. Moreover, they thought that daughters could look after them [parents] when they were sick.

*Rural man, perpetrator of violence, aged 24*

Others, especially my sister, did not have a chance to study more because my parents thought that she was just a woman, and women are not allowed to stay away from the family. It does not matter for a man to be away from family. My parents allowed their sons to be away because they thought if we were lucky enough, we could get a good job and have a better life.

*Rural man, non-perpetrator of violence, aged 29*

Social control over women's mobility is linked to another tool of maintaining gender inequality, control over women's sexuality. The preoccupation with women's reputation or honour and the sexual purity of women in the Asian context is said to be "central in sustaining gender inequality, simultaneously justifying violence against women and depending upon such violence to reinforce hegemonic systems of gender differentiation and gender inequality."<sup>13</sup> As explained by one respondent:

Women cannot go out at night as men can; therefore women must inform other members in the house if they want to go out. Men are entitled or free to go out; they will never lose anything like women [will].

*Urban man, married more than five years*

### **2.1.4 Dominance Over Women: Characteristics of Masculinity**

Respondents repeatedly used the words strong, firm, brave, determined and reliable to describe the characteristics of men. Echoing the existing literature, several respondents said a man has a five-hudt

<sup>13</sup> L.R. Bennett and L. Manderson, 'Introduction: gender inequality and technologies of violence,' in Bennett and Manderson, eds, *Violence Against Women in Asian Societies* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), p. 9.

chest.<sup>14</sup> Both women and men voiced these societal expectations.

A striking feature of the data, however, is the complete lack of reference to physical appearance as a marker of masculinity. References to physique, body type or looks are conspicuous by their absence. Physical strength is sometimes mentioned, but usually in comparison to women. For example, men say that men must be stronger than women; a woman is not as strong as a man. Alternatively, they say that men are stronger and more determined or decisive than women. The ability to serve in the army, and handle counter attacks in war is also used as one example of men's strength and women's weakness. At the same time however men are expected to be gentle:

A perfect man knows how to be gentle and how to be ferocious – he knows everything! He is not always gentle or always cruel. He is gentle to those to treat him well. If someone provokes him or wants to fight, he will not retaliate or fight back. He will just be patient, so how can it be a man? (laughing).

*Urban man, married more than five years*

### **2.1.5 Strong and Brave: Alternative Constructions of Masculinity**

Dominant constructions of masculinity in Cambodia often reflect rigid gender norms, male superiority and control over women. However some respondents also mentioned alternative constructions of masculinity. While most men constructed masculinity in opposition to what is feminine, there were voices that alluded to the complementary roles of husbands and wives. This is very much in keeping with Khmer culture, which encourages people to avoid conflict and achieve consensus:

Men and women have their individual strengths, like the Khmer saying that “Rice seedlings depend on soil and men depend on women”. We complement each other.

*Urban man, married more than five years*

Men voicing such opinions were aware that their understandings of masculinity were different from the norm. Some felt that they could not discuss these ideas openly with other people, highlighting the strong pressure for men to adhere to dominant notions of masculinity even when they hold alternate views:

<sup>14</sup> One hudt is the distance from the tip of the fingers to the elbow; a five hudt chest implies a ‘complete’ man. Many studies show that Cambodian men are expected to be mentally and physically strong, not the type to walk away from a fight. See, for example, the recent works of Liz Giles. Pilot Project: Phase One-Men Against Violence Toward Women. (Phnom Penh: PADV), 2004 and Katherine Brickell ‘We Don’t Forget the Old Rice Pot When We Get the New One: Gendered Discourses on Ideals and Practices of Women in Contemporary Cambodia,’ Signs: Journal Women in Culture and Society, in press. Alistair Hilton, I Thought It Could Never Happen to Boys (Phnom Penh: HAGAR, 2008) discusses the ‘feminisation of victimisation, shame and honour’ as a major barrier to raising awareness and addressing sexual violence against boys.



I have some different expectations, that is, we both help each other in order to earn income for a better life. It doesn't mean that I am a man and can do everything to feed the family without the help from my wife. My wife can help me do some work to earn income, and we have to help each other, such as doing the housework. For example, if my wife cooks, I look after my kid.

*Urban man, married more than five years*

My expectation differs from the society – I would like women to have equal rights and opportunities in all work. I would like husbands to help do their wives' work (do housework), and wives can also do their husbands' work. I don't think men today can talk with other men about these social expectations because when men start talking about this issue, they fear that they might be criticised by friends and neighbours.

*Urban man, married more than five years*

The specific characteristics of these men who have more positive interpretations of masculinity and how are they different from other men will be explored in more detail in future analysis of the research. This will be particularly important in promoting men's role in violence prevention.

## **2.1.6 Discussion and Policy Implications**

### ***A. Gender Roles are Learnt Early in Life***

Informants in this qualitative survey revealed that gender roles are absorbed early in the Cambodian context. Children learn norms from their parents, both through active socialisation and observation. The socialisation process for a boy is designed to prepare him for the eventual role as head of the family and many informants mentioned the role their fathers played in developing their masculinity. In contrast, girls are prepared for a life of domestic duties, with particular importance placed on being quiet, maintaining peace and deferring to her husband. Gender roles are further reinforced by the school curriculum, community, media and other institutions.

This highlights the need for engaging boys at an early age in gender equity and violence prevention programmes. This could be achieved through policies that promote gender equitable parenting, and educational and youth development initiatives with boys and young men.

### ***B. Multiple Masculinities in Cambodia***

The research reveals that no single version of masculinity exists in Cambodia. Men and women have different views about what it means to be a man. Some men discussed the importance of women's rights while others seemed to remain rooted in more gender inequitable values. Similarly, some men said they valued mutual understanding with their wives, while others asserted their right to make decisions.

Participant discussions referenced both positive and negative notions of “manhood” as related to gender equality.

Positive examples of masculinity included:

- valuing women;
- valuing the family;
- showing mutual understanding; and
- standing up for others (bystander interventions).

Harmful examples of masculinity included:

- the right to discipline women;
- the right to control women; and
- lack of partnership.

The evidence of multiple constructions of masculinity in Cambodian society indicates that it is possible to promote alternative understandings of manhood that are not based on gender inequality. More in-depth analysis of the data is needed, however, to develop a clearer understanding of why men have differing views in this area, and what qualities or insights enable or motivate some men to ignore peer pressure. Future analysis will therefore look at the characteristics of men with alternative constructions of masculinity. This will help to understand what factors contribute to men being gender equitable and non-violent.

In addition, existing traditional beliefs that men need to take responsibility and find mutual understanding with others, offer fertile ground for those seeking to design interventions that build upon positive masculine characteristics, as do the beliefs offered by men who feel they are in the minority in their thinking.

### *C. Notions of Masculinity in Cambodia are not Static*

Notions of masculinity inevitably change over time. In Cambodia, the standards for masculinity have become more difficult to fulfil for men as challenges such as earning an income increase. Furthermore, as more women enter the formal workforce we see some men recognising the need for them to play different roles and take on more household responsibilities. In fact, it was found that more men than women expressed acceptance of gender norms that had changed to become more equitable, and this suggests a starting point for interventions. However, it also highlights the need for interventions with women, given the strong internalisation of unequal gender norms. In light of the fact that some respondents indicated that their ideas had departed from local norms, the data suggest a need for further study of the dynamics of changes in attitudes.

### *D. Hegemonic Masculinities Remain Dominant*

While there is variation in people's understandings of Cambodian masculinity, it is clear that a dominant notion of masculinity is associated with dominance, control and superiority over women. Within the focus groups, the characteristics of a "real man" were discussed in terms of ideals with little debate regarding the value or relevance of those ideal characteristics. Hegemonic masculinities maintain their dominance in part because they do not invite questioning. This was evidenced by the fact that men who did not conform to dominant masculine ideals felt unable to share their alternative understandings with other men for fear of ridicule. Clearly there is strong pressure for men to adhere to the dominant notions of masculinity even when they do not necessarily believe them.

The data suggest that interventions could benefit from a focus on single sex peer groups, as promoted in the studies by the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA)<sup>15</sup>, and Project Against Domestic Violence (PADV)<sup>16</sup>, and to provide an opportunity to reflect on gender norms and the advantages and disadvantages of upholding them. In light of comments from men and women alike that it is difficult, if not impossible for them to live up to these standards, such groups would create space for discussions about changes in society that may lead men and women to view their roles differently. Men's groups would no doubt be attractive to men given the high value placed on male solidarity, as noted in other studies.<sup>17</sup> Discussions

about male/female relations would also be useful. One study found that men want to talk about relationships with women. It noted, "there was tremendous energy around the discussions and the men expressed appreciation of the opportunity to share their personal stories. For many of the men this was the first time that they had openly discussed and reflected on topics associated with women."<sup>18</sup>



<sup>15</sup> IWDA, Men's Talk, p. 20.

<sup>16</sup> Liz Giles. Pilot Project: Phase One-Men Against Violence Toward Women. (Phnom Penh: PADV), 2004

<sup>17</sup> PSI and FHI, Let's Go For a Walk: Sexual Decision-making Among Clients of Female Entertainment Workers in Phnom Penh, Cambodia (Phnom Penh: PSI, 2007), p. 13.

<sup>18</sup> IWDA, Men's Talk, p. 24.

## Chapter 3: Findings on Violence

The second part of the key findings discusses societal attitudes towards violence against women and the core factors that enhance women's risk of violence in the home. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the policy implications of such findings.

### 3.1 Attitudes on Violence Against Women

Although many respondents said that violence against women is sometimes acceptable, some noted that they had been taught to avoid violence and made strong statements that violence is not acceptable. In fact, the urban men who had been married fewer than five years agreed in their focus group discussion that violence is unacceptable:

A husband should not hit his wife because she is as capable of leading the family as a man is. If we don't love our wife who is close to us everyday, who can we love? We husbands need to stay close to our wife, and if we don't love her and remain faithful to her, who should we love and be faithful to? It is impossible to love and be faithful to other people outside family circle if we don't first love our family.

*Rural man, married more than five years*

If we use physical violence against our wife, having once been criticised by our friends, this is not regarded as being a real man. If a wife beats her husband when he is drunk, that man can no longer be considered a real man, but an incomplete man (pee hudt).<sup>19</sup>

*Urban man, married more than five years*

Some respondents said that women played a part in provoking violence<sup>20</sup>:

Some men don't want to do that (commit violence) but they do because women talk back and are very stubborn. Sometimes, when a husband is patiently talking a wife will provoke violence by searching for a cleaver to attack him with which he then has to respond to.

*Urban man, married more than five years*

Rural male participants from a focus group discussion in Prey Veng presented contrasting views on how men who commit violence against women are viewed. One man felt that a violent man is "cowardly". Another man disagreed with this characterisation, saying that instead, a coward is a man who is afraid of his wife. Respondents explained that others in the community might look down on men who commit

<sup>19</sup> A 'two hudt' man is considered incomplete. This is opposed to a complete 'five hudt' man.

<sup>20</sup> This finding is similar other studies on GBV such as IWDA, Men's Talk, p. 4

domestic violence. One even suggested that this behaviour hurts the reputation of all men.

If men use violence against women, the community doesn't value us as good guys because it affects our community. They want to reform our family to make it better. If we have problems with our neighbours, they will criticise us, saying that we disturb the peace and that we argue every day, so we are not good people.

*Rural man, married less than five years*

Men who treat women unfairly may spoil the sense of masculinity of other men ... Women may think all men are the same.

*Rural man, married more than five years*

Respondents also presented advice on ways to prevent or avoid violence. Urban men (regardless of the length of their marriages) said men should be patient, control their anger and avoid talking back to their wives. Several men suggested that men should leave home for a short time until things cooled down. One rural male respondent, a 30 year old a perpetrator, said that he benefited from advice from radio broadcasts by the Women's Media Centre stating, "I listen to Channel FM102 Mz every night, and I pick up some good advice from the programme".

## 3.2 Factors Enhancing the Risk of Violence

### 3.2.1 Unequal Gender Relations

The research indicates that rigid gender norms and gender inequality are the underlying causes of violence against women in Cambodia.<sup>21</sup> There are strong codes for male and female behaviour, and the data reveals that failure to uphold gender-based expectations of behaviour often leads to violence. For example, a husband may use violence to "police" and "enforce" gender norms if he perceives that his wife has failed in her duty:

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<sup>21</sup> Acceptance of marital control by husbands and, in turn, acceptance of violence when a wife does not comply with her husband's expectations is well documented. About half the men in the IWDA study, *Men's Talk*, p. 17, said they had the right to exercise power and control over women. In the Ministry of Women's Affairs, *Violence Against Women: A Baseline Survey*, a significant number of respondents said that even extreme violence by husbands towards wives is sometimes acceptable. It noted that "for all levels of violence except the most extreme category (throwing acid, stabbing or shooting) women showed greater acceptance of violence than men." See p. 18. Even higher numbers of respondents said this violence was acceptable when a wife challenged her husband's dominance (by arguing, not obeying, questioning a husband about money or girlfriends, etc.) than when the wife simply failed to fulfil her gender role. See p. 19-20.

Some violence occurs because some women don't listen or accept men's reason; and some women would rather be beaten. Being like this, they learn to understand and listen to each other.

*Urban man, married more than five years*

If a wife is wrong, for example she doesn't stay at home and goes gambling, so when her husband arrives home, she hasn't prepared food for him, her husband will get angry with her. Some men will use violence against women when they get angry.

*Rural woman, married more than five years*

He says that I should obey him because he is my husband and the head of the household. He says that I'm illiterate and that I can't understand anything deeply ... Just by virtue of the fact that he is my husband, he believes he can do anything and when I do not obey him he curses me out loud. He does not talk about things quietly. He makes sure everyone hears it.

*Urban woman, victim of partner violence, aged 29*

Others note that arguments about economic issues such as a husband's failure to earn income could descend into violence. Gender-based expectations of behaviour extend to the belief that women should endure violence by the husband as a means to resolve conflict between them. Women and men reflected this belief equally:

If a husband is unable to earn income, which makes his wife grumble and sometimes curse her husband, then violence is going to happen because the wife won't listen to reason. The husband commits violence, like giving her one or two slaps in order to threaten or to stop her from behaving like that next time. A man is like that! A strong man (pram hudt) because he wants to show other people that he is strong.

*Urban man, married more than five years*

### 3.2.2 Childhood Experiences of Violence

The qualitative research in Cambodia shows that childhood violence was a common experience in many men's and women's lives.<sup>22</sup> Participants discussed childhood experiences of violence that included

<sup>22</sup> Studies show that young people in Cambodia experience significant amounts of violence. See, for example, the recent works by Graham Fordham and Luke Bearup cited in the bibliography. It is commonly believed that violence is learned behaviour. All the men in the perpetrator group organised by PADV agreed that children learn this from their fathers. See Liz Giles, Pilot Project: Phase One - Men Against Violence Toward Women (Phnom Penh: PADV, 2004), p. 26. Participants in Alistair Hilton's study, *I thought It Could Never Happen to Boys*, p. 120, also said they believed in a cycle of abuse, although the author calls for more research on this matter.

witnessing violence between their parents, observing community violence between men and women, as well as personal experiences of emotional, sexual and physical violence by family members and peers. In-depth interviews with male perpetrators of violence and female victims of violence in particular revealed childhood histories of violence indicating the influence of a cycle of violence. Below are some quotes from men and women in violent relationships about their own experiences of violence as children.

My parents died during the Pol Pot regime. At that time, I was just three years old. My elder brother was married when I lived with him. I lived with his wife and his children. He was kind to me, but my sister-in-law told my brother to hit me when she saw me fail to do something. At that time he didn't ask me any reason, he just came to give me a slap. I fell from the back of a buffalo, so then I ran back home ... When he hit me, I didn't say anything, I just kept it in my mind and I thought that I would hit him back when I grew up. At that time, I was only five years old. He often hit me during the farming season. I didn't know why. I wanted to ask him, but didn't dare because I was too small. I always wondered why he hit me.

*Rural man, perpetrator of violence, aged 38*

When I grew up, I used to see my parents having an argument at home in the garbage site. At that time I was around 20 years old. My father used violence against my mother because he was drunk.... After my mother was hit, she cried and when I saw this I was angry and I wanted to help my mother but I couldn't do anything because I was afraid of sin if I hit my father ... We thought that our father was a bad person because he always started arguments with his wife when he was drunk. I felt pity for my mother when my father hit her, but I could only stand and look.

*Urban man, perpetrator of violence, age unknown*

He [the father] hit both my mother and me at my house with a bamboo stick that left scars on my thigh ...At the age of ten, he hit me and my brother very often, and our mother was seriously injured. He didn't do any business but just drank alcohol and hit his family. My mother was a vendor and when she came back home, she was hit and the rice was spilled. As a result we didn't have dinner and went to sleep hungry.

*Urban woman, victim of partner violence, aged 29*

While we cannot make definitive causal links based on qualitative research, these examples indicate that there are probable associations between witnessing and experiencing violence as a child and living with violence later in life. This is supported by research detailed in the following chapter.

The qualitative research also demonstrates that intergenerational transmission of violence is not absolute and that not all children from violent families grow up to model the behaviour of their parents. There were also examples of men who experienced extreme violence as children and witnessed violence between their parents, who did not become violent as adults, often through concerted effort not to repeat the patterns they had learned as children. For example, one rural man, aged 32, whose stepfather had regularly beaten him and his mother said in an in-depth interview:

From the beginning, I promised myself that I would not follow in my stepfather's footsteps when I had my own family. I will try my best to work hard and save money so that my family will live in harmony. I will not make violence or bring any harm to my family. This has been in my thoughts ever since I could understand things ... My wife and I have never committed violence against each other. We love each other. We never allowed the shadow of violence to succeed in us (he laughed). From childhood, I have had some experiences of violence, especially in time I lived with my parents. I am not bothered when someone says I am afraid of my wife. It is not that I am afraid of my wife, but it is because I love and respect her.

*Rural man, non-perpetrator of violence, aged 32*

### 3.2.3 Social Isolation and Violence as a Private Matter

There is a distinction between the acceptance of violence in public and private spaces in Cambodian society. Violence committed by men at home is viewed less negatively than violence committed in public, bringing to mind the numerous studies in Cambodia and elsewhere showing that some view domestic violence as a private matter rather than a crime.<sup>23</sup>

Beating women in their household is less illegal than outside (the home) because people think that it is a family issue, which can be justified.

*Urban man, married more than five years*

If a husband disciplines his wife, he should do this at home. If it's talking, fighting or whatever he wants to do at home, nobody will blame him. But if a husband disciplines his wife in public, it seems that he is cruel and inhuman, and treats women like animals.

*Rural woman, married more than five years*

<sup>23</sup> M. Warrington, for instance, notes that in the home, 'once the doors are closed, what happens behind them, particularly if it concerns adults, is seen as being of no concern of anyone else.' See 'I must get out: the geographies of domestic violence,' Royal Geographical Society, 26, 2001, pp. 365-82.



One respondent summed up the conflicting views in this area:

The community views the case as wrong because violence and brutality took place. However, the community also considers that it is each individual's affair.

*Rural man, married more than five years*

While violence inside the home is often accepted, there is also shame in outsiders becoming aware of domestic violence. Therefore women often remain silent about their abuse.

We have never had big problems and we never tell anyone about our conflicts. However, if my mother asks me, I will sometimes tell her some things but not all. Only our family was present during the conflict. We never have conflict outside the house.

*Rural man, perpetrator of violence, aged 30*

One respondent reported that there are sanctions surrounding telling others about family matters:

If a woman gossips about her husband and her mother-in-law, the husband should talk to her. He should not use violence but if she continues to do it, he can use violence against her.

*Rural woman, victim of partner violence, aged unknown*

Respondents also noted that women who break gender roles in public are more likely to face violence as a result, while private deviations from gender norms within the home may be forgiven more easily. Not surprisingly, women stated the importance of restricting their own movement in public. Some women mentioned the importance of remaining indoors and leaving only when accompanied by others.

The magnitude of shame associated with revealing any conflict, problems, and especially violence outside the family is such that some women often prefer to suffer in silence:

My mum always taught me to behave in certain ways. We should not go from house to house. We should stay home most of the time and do the work in the house making sure the kitchen is clean so that when visitors come to the house they will not say something bad about us ... (My mother) does not want me to go to other houses very often because she's afraid we will gossip and this only brings trouble. She told me that when I have a husband I should not go here and there too much because my husband would get jealous and that he might beat me up.

*Rural woman, victim of partner violence, aged 32*

Women's social isolation has been shown to be a risk factor for partner violence in several international

studies. With reference to South Asian communities, Venkataramani-Kothari argues that “family boundaries are clearly defined and a strict distinction is drawn between insiders and outsiders. Each individual is made aware of the prohibition regarding exposing family information to the outside world.”<sup>24</sup>

### 3.2.4 Sexual Coercion and Control

Respondents cited explicit gender norms that reflect how women and men are socially permitted to behave with regard to their sexuality. The majority of these norms do not encourage open discussion of sex or sexuality, particularly among women. There was a clear lack of knowledge and communication about sexuality, exemplifying the impact of reticence around sex and sexuality in Cambodia.

A man’s sexual needs or desires are often viewed as uncontrollable or insatiable.<sup>25</sup> Both men and women said that husbands have a right to have sex with their wives whenever they choose. According to most respondents, the only legitimate reason for a woman denying sex with her husband was menstruation and even this excuse was unacceptable for some husbands:

A wife must understand her husband’s needs. As a wife, she must fulfil all his needs when he wants to have sex.

*Urban man, non-perpetrator of violence, aged 29*

Conversely, female sexuality was rarely, if ever, discussed. Women referred to sex as a duty. Women’s sexual pleasure was considered as a secondary consideration and any discussion of either sexual pleasure or sexual displeasure was limited by social restrictions regarding sexuality. When women did mention enjoying or initiating sex with their husbands, it was subtly mentioned. A subset of men expressed acceptance that their wives might occasionally initiate sex. They made excuses for this behaviour, saying that it was acceptable, but only sometimes.

There was striking agreement between men and women with regards to the belief that men had control over sexual behaviour within marriage. Men decide when and if sex should happen and a woman’s desire and/or pleasure is rarely of consequence:

<sup>24</sup> Venkataramani-Kothari, A. 2007. ‘Understanding South Asian Immigrant Women’s Experiences of Violence.’ In S. D. Dasgupta (Ed.). *Body evidence: Intimate violence against South Asian women in America*. New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press. p. 14.

<sup>25</sup> Liz Giles, for the PADV study, Pilot Project: Phase One in 2004, recorded the top answers on male characteristics related to sexuality from the men in groups were: strong sexual desire, having sex until death, love at first sight; having many sexual partners; being the one who initiates sex; forcing a woman to have sex; and having sex without thinking about the feelings of the partner. The participants also believed that it was generally accepted by both men and women that men will have multiple partners. (pp. 83-4).

I think it isn't good for a woman to disagree to have sex with her husband, because she is already married so she has to have sex with him, even if she doesn't love her husband. But she can disagree to have sex with her husband if she is concerned about HIV/AIDS transmission.

*Rural woman, married less than five years*

Sexual violence shared similarities with other forms of violence wherein the act of sexual coercion or force was often explained by gendered sexual roles.<sup>26</sup> Women said that denying sex with a husband would result in assumptions or accusations of infidelity and/or physical violence or forced intercourse:

Whether or not I want it, I have to satisfy his need. So to avoid the accusation (of infidelity), I have to allow him. The reason I don't want to sleep with him is because I'm scared I might get pregnant again. I've already been pregnant eleven times, six with my previous husband and five with the present one. Of the five with him, two were miscarriages and two were aborted. The last abortion was about two weeks ago ... and it cost me 20,000 riel.<sup>27</sup> I had to sell my gold piece to do it ... To be honest, there is not a day in a month he does not make me sleep with him if he's at home. The bleeding from the abortion hasn't stopped yet, but I have no way of fighting against him. Once he gets a hold of my wrists, that's it. Whenever he wants, he just does it.

*Rural woman, victim of partner violence, aged 32*

Sometimes, when I am unwell, even if I don't have any feeling, I cannot resist his force ... He forces me but he never beats me. He only seizes both my wrists and tries to get what he wants. I do not talk to him, but he is fine with that.

*Rural woman, victim of partner violence, aged unknown*

If a woman refuses to have sex with her husband, I think she may have a lover.

*Rural woman, victim of partner violence, aged unknown*

A number of women reported being raped by their husbands. However, more analysis is required to explore

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<sup>26</sup> The PADV study cited shows acceptance of marital rape noting, "Marital rape is not a part of the Khmer lexicon, except within human rights organisations, and is generally considered to be an aspect of a husband's rights within the marriage," p. 100. This confirms findings in the 2005 MOWA baseline study that "although most respondents thought that men did not have the right to force their wives to have sex, only 55 per cent thought that rape in marriage was a crime. Women were twice as likely as men to think that men are entitled to force their wives to have sex," p. 57.

<sup>27</sup> Approximately \$5 US.

how women interpret marital rape and whether they see it as an act of violence, a crime or if they accept it their duty as a wife. Some respondents blamed the victim suggesting that women could invite rape by over-stimulating men by dressing provocatively. Pornographic films were also blamed for inciting men to rape women. Responses raised questions as to whether men viewed marital rape as truly being rape, but six of the rural men married longer than five years agreed that marital rape should be viewed as violence. Other men also agreed:

It might happen when a wife denies sexual intercourse to her husband. He may have an excuse that he is officially married. Such a case is also included as violence.

*Rural man, married more than five years*

### 3.2.5 Reasserting Patriarchal Control

Many respondents acknowledged that it was hard for men to live up to the expected role as primary breadwinner. Some men thought that failure, or inability to act as the primary earning member, is akin to not being a “real man” and that respect is lost towards such an individuals from society, wives and families.

[With regard to another man who lost his job], he was upset because when he had a job he had friends but when he lost his job, he also lost his friends. People thought that he was useless, so he started drinking wine.

*Rural man, married less than five years*

If his wife acts as the income earner and the man just stays home doing the washing and taking his wife’s salary to spend drinking, he is not considered a real man. He [is considered to be] a useless man in the society.

*Urban man, married more than five years*

We see that men are suffering as a result of the dominant notions of masculinity and some even report incidents of self-harm associated with perceived male disempowerment:

When [a man] loses his job, he is very discouraged. He also loses the characteristics of a man and a leader. When he is discouraged, he might be heartbroken, commit suicide, be careless with himself, drink wine and walk about aimlessly because of criticism and blame from his wife.

*Rural man, married less than five years*

Respondents also described how notions of masculinity and a man’s failure to earn income can contribute to violence against women:

If a husband is unable to earn income, this makes his wife grumble and sometimes curse her husband and then violence is going to happen because the wife doesn't listen to reason. The husband commits violence, like giving her one or two slaps in order to warn her or to stop her from doing that again. A man is like that! A strong man (pram hudt), because he wants to show other people that he is strong.

*Urban man, married more than five years*

This quote indicates that some men reassert their power over women through violence when they feel that their masculinity is undermined. Other international research also indicates that men's perceived loss of power is associated with perpetration of violence against women. For example, Jewkes and Abrahams argue that violence against women occurs when men can no longer exert patriarchal control or provide economical support.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Counts and colleagues argue that in societies where women's status is in transition, violence is used to reinforce male authority.<sup>29</sup>

### **3.2.6 Discussion and Policy Implications**

#### ***A. Most Men Think Violence is Unacceptable***

Attitudes toward violence against women varied among the participants. Some used language rejecting violence, saying it was an unacceptable behaviour. Others accepted violence as a normal occurrence.<sup>30</sup> However it is important to note that the majority of men said that violence against women was never justified and that non-violent men see others who act violently as giving men in general a bad reputation. This is an important finding for interventions because it indicates that non-violent men may be interested in working on behavioural change with violent men because they see that it directly impacts on their reputation in society.

The data is unclear how the three decades of war has affected men's understanding of masculinity and violence or the likelihood that they would be involved in violence, either as perpetrators or victims. It would be helpful to explore this link more deeply in further research or discussions groups as part of an intervention.

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<sup>28</sup> R. Jewkes and N. Abrahams, 'The epidemiology of rape and sexual coercion in South Africa: an overview,' *Social Science & Medicine*, 55, 2002, pp. 1231-44.

<sup>29</sup> D.A. Counts, J.K. Brown and J.C. Campbell, eds, *Sanctions and sanctuary: Cultural perspectives on the beating of wives* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1992).

<sup>30</sup> This is similar to other studies such as the Ministry of Women's Affairs, *Violence Against Women: A Baseline Survey*, p. 85.

### *B. Violence Directly Related to Gender Inequality*

Respondents discussed several root causes of violence. First and foremost, the data reveals that violence against women is rooted in masculinity or structural male dominance and unequal gender relations. In Cambodian society men are expected to provide money for the family and to demonstrate their strength (which may include disciplining the family). Women are expected to remain quiet and deferential, managing the household and not refusing sex with their husband.

Respondents indicated that physical punishment is often used to “discipline” women who are seen to have transgressed their prescribed gender roles. Violence against women serves as a policing mechanism and a way of maintaining male authority, reinforcing prevailing gender norms.



The data focusing on sexual coercion and marital rape illustrates the clear inequality between men and women, particularly with regards to sexuality. Respondents repeatedly made it clear that such coercion and violence is routine and accepted by men and women. Furthermore, the privacy that surrounds sexual activity enables this form of violence to be easily perpetrated. The research clearly indicates that women are often unable to control their reproductive health or negotiate safe sexual practices. Studies suggest that married women have a low success rate in negotiating condom use with their husbands and that married women are one of the groups at highest risk of contracting HIV. One study notes that HIV transmission from husbands to wives is increasing and that “almost half of all new infections occur among married women.”<sup>31</sup> This is a significant problem as Cambodia has the second highest HIV prevalence rate in South and Southeast Asia.<sup>32</sup>

Other research indicates that there are serious physical, mental and reproductive health consequences of marital rape including increased risk of miscarriages, abortions, unwanted pregnancies and stillbirths. Recent research on HIV in intimate partner relationships in Asia also highlights that women are particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and that pervasive gender inequalities undermine women’s ability to negotiate safe sexual practices. Furthermore, gender-based violence can interfere with women’s ability to access treatment, maintain adherence to antiretroviral treatment or carry out infant feeding choices. Evidence also exists that living with HIV can constitute a risk factor for gender-based violence, with many people reporting experiences of violence following disclosure of HIV status, or even following admission that HIV testing has been sought.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Jenne Roberts, *Preventing Spousal Transmission of HIV in Cambodia Phnom* (Penh: UNIFEM, 2009), p. 13.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Program on International Health and Human Rights, *HIV/AIDS and Gender-Based Violence Literature Review*. 2006, Harvard

### *C. Dominant Masculinity is Harmful to Men as well as Women*

Importantly, the research highlights the negative impacts that dominant notions of masculinity have on men as well as women. While the impact on women is more obvious, it is necessary to acknowledge that not all men are privileged in the same way and are often marginalised by multiple levels of inequality in society. This is particularly evident among men who articulated feelings of helplessness, loss of identity and even self-harming behaviour associated with being unable to fulfil dominant expectations of masculinity such as being the breadwinner.

### *D. Cycle of Violence*

While quantitative data is required to clearly define risk factors associated with violence in the Cambodian context, the qualitative data collected by this study gives an indication that children learn the “normality” of using violence in punishment and conflict situations. As noted in other studies, it is likely that children in violent homes learn to use violence rather than alternate, more constructive methods, to resolve conflicts.<sup>34</sup> It may also lead to permissive attitudes towards violence.

The data supports evidence from other regional studies on the intergenerational transmission of violence and on the increased likelihood that children who have experienced or witnessed violence are more likely to experience a violent relationship as adults, either as the perpetrator or victim.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, addressing childhood violence is vital in any work on the prevention of violence against women.

The research also revealed that that childhood violence doesn't necessarily lead to violence in later life. More in-depth analysis of such examples is required to understand why some children appear to endure violent childhoods without perpetuating the same behaviour. This may have particularly important policy implications for working with victims of child abuse or at-risk families.

The data also investigates spousal conflict resolution methods. One study documented the weak lines of communication between spouses and an array of gender norms that discourage women from openly disagreeing with their husbands.<sup>36</sup> Although several respondents, male and female, offered advice on ways

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School of Public Health: Boston MA.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, E. Lee, 'Domestic violence and risk factors among Korean immigrant women in the United States,' *Journal of Family Violence*, 22, 2007, pp. 141-9.

<sup>35</sup> Refer to the bibliography for details of Ellsberg et al. (1999), Jewkes and Abrahams (2002), Martin et al. (2002), Wekerle and Wolfe (1999), and Whitfield et al. (2003).

<sup>36</sup> According to the Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey 2005, 56% of married women said they did not talk with their husbands about things that happen at home or at work or in the community or what to spend money on. National Institute of Public Health and National Institute of Statistics, Phnom Penh, 2006, p. 268.

to defuse conflict, the note of inevitability in respondents' descriptions of episodes of violence suggests that there is a need for building capacity for strengthening communication within relationships.

### *E. Public and Private Spaces*

Attitudes about public versus private spaces provide both a challenge and an opportunity for violence prevention. The wide acceptance of violence in a private setting is a major challenge. This idea rests on powerful ideas about men as the heads, and disciplinarians, of their families, as well as gender norms requiring women to be obedient and to stay home. But there are many signs that that acceptance is not as strong as it was in the past. Respondents note a high rate of awareness of domestic violence in their communities, so it is not clear that Cambodians actually succeed in keeping these secrets. Respondents also said that they did not want domestic violence in their communities. It is possible that interventions may be designed to create positive campaigns that show how ending domestic violence is a priority for everyone and would help the entire community. Awareness campaigns on the Domestic Violence Law have begun to make progress in this area, simply by naming domestic violence and thus marking it a public policy priority in Cambodia.



## Chapter 4: Findings on Other Factors and Responses to Violence

Apart from the core, underlying factors that put women at risk of domestic violence, there are other risk factors associated with intimate partner violence. The first of these is alcohol abuse, a trigger factor that needs to be explored in some detail. Extramarital sex and financial demands are other factors that can spark violence. After discussing the policy implications of these factors, the chapter turns to an examination of the responses to violence, especially help-seeking strategies and current perspectives on the efficacy of the Domestic Violence Law.

### 4.1 Inter-related Factors

Although many male respondents stated that domestic violence is never justified, they cited several factors that contribute to creating a gateway to violence. In many cases, these factors were blamed entirely for violence with little recognition of the underlying power imbalances that put women at risk of violence. The majority of respondents most often linked alcohol and economic issues with violence against women.

#### 4.1.1 Alcohol Abuse

Respondents reported that the role of alcohol in contributing to violence is very strong in both urban and rural settings.<sup>37</sup> Researchers recorded that drinking alcohol is considered as “a manly activity” and that men face peer pressure to drink.<sup>38</sup> Graham Fordham argues that the context of drinking is a root cause of violence, as opposed to drinking (*phoek Si*) as it is often associated with gambling and loss of family income.<sup>39</sup> Repeatedly in the present study, regardless of gender or setting, alcohol was cited as a spark for violence:

Domestic violence happens to some families because some husbands like drinking, then go home and seek trouble and beat their wives and children.

*Rural man married, perpetrator of partner violence, aged 30*

Many responses illustrate the interconnection of alcohol abuse with other factors, such as conflicts over finances and the existing rigid gender roles and persistent inequality:

What happened that day was the husband came home drunk and asked for money from his wife to continue drinking. But his wife refused and grumbled. Suddenly, the husband slapped

<sup>37</sup> As noted in other Cambodian and regional studies such as Violence Against Women Survey Reports from 2005 and 2009.

<sup>38</sup> Katherine Brickell, ‘Fire in the House: Gendered Experiences of Drunkenness and Violence in Siem Reap, Cambodia,’ *Geoforum*, 39 (5), 2008, pp. 1672-3.

<sup>39</sup> Graham Fordham, “Wise” Before Their Time: Young People, Gender-Based Violence and Pornography in Kandal Stung District (Phnom Penh: World Vision, 2005), pp. 65-6.

her and kicked her.

*Rural woman, non-victim of partner violence, aged 27*

This incident took place because the husband drank so much that he got drunk and sought troubles with his wife at home. Moreover, the wife at home did not take good care of the children and did not cook rice for her husband.

*Rural man, non-perpetrator of violence, aged 22*

One woman said she was taught to accept her husband's drinking, and the high incidence of this behaviour suggests that other women have received the same advice:

[My parents said] "Treat your husband well and do not get into arguments with your husband about drinking alcohol." My (late) father told me, "When your husband returns home, serve food for him. Be careful! He might argue with you."

*Rural woman, married more than five years*

Men repeatedly mentioned wanting the freedom to drink with friends without criticism from their wives. Alcohol was often mentioned as simply being an inevitable part of the male social scene. Respondents made no comments about the concept of alcohol abuse, although some differentiated between drinking alcohol and drunkenness.

#### **4.1.2 Financial Issues**

Conflict sparked over financial matters reflected the sensitivity that exists regarding gender roles, specifically that of the male role of breadwinner and the female role of household manager. One common scenario involved men requesting money for alcohol and being denied by the wife. Another frequently noted scenario involved a woman's complaints regarding the man's ability to earn income and therefore failure to fulfil his gender role. Yet another reason related to accusations that a woman was not fulfilling her duty to manage the household's funds:

He blames me for not being able to save money, but I never get to spend it. It's him who takes the money and spends it on his drinking. Sometimes he does not return home for a couple of nights. And me! I stay home and cook for the kids. No other woman experiences the pain that I go through every day. During the seven years that we've been together, he has slapped me twice until my nose bled. I ran to seek help from my neighbour. I had bruises on my face and my ear hurt for two weeks. When he slapped me the first time, I asked the village chief to help me and he promised me that he would deal with my husband the next day, but after my husband invited him to drink, he forgot to find justice for me.

*Rural woman, victim of partner violence, aged 32*

### 4.1.3 Sex Outside of Marriage

Though less frequently mentioned, sex outside of marriage or arguments about extramarital affairs were cited as precursors to conflict. Women said that sex outside of marriage is a source of angst for women whether they are accused of it or their husbands are having affairs.

The last time it happened was when he had an affair with that woman after which I caught them together. He grabbed my hair and wanted to slap me.

*Rural woman, victim of partner violence, aged unknown*

A husband may scold his wife that she does not love him and accuses her of having outside affair. If he could not go out for sexual intercourse outside, he may rape his wife because he could not control his sexual desire.

*Rural man, married less than five years*

Despite fears of HIV or other diseases, a wife's denial of sex may result in accusations that she is engaging in extramarital sex. Part of the concern with perceived adultery or actual sex outside of marriage is the issue of public reputation. A man's control over his wife's sexuality must never be questioned in public. Any demonstration of disrespect toward the husband (in action or words) was cited as another precursor to violence.

If a woman betrays her husband, and if she has another lover, the husband should use violence against her.

*Rural woman, married less than five years*

### 4.1.4 Discussion and Policy Implications

Respondents discussed the range of interconnected factors that can lead to violence including financial issues and particularly alcohol abuse. Numerous studies in Cambodia and beyond show that excessive drinking magnifies other conflicts. Respondents in this study did not explore how alcohol is associated with other factors, and more research in this area would be useful. As noted in the existing literature however, male drinking patterns are associated with marital violence across various ethnic groups and classes. Studies have also found that an abuser's alcohol use was related to a greater likelihood of physical injury.<sup>40</sup> However, as noted in the literature, the role of alcohol in intimate partner violence is complex.

<sup>40</sup> L.R. Brecklin, 'The role of perpetrator alcohol use in the injury outcomes of intimate assaults,' *Journal of Family Violence*, 17 (3), 2002, pp. 185-97.

The association between alcohol use and intimate partner violence is due to a combination of factors. Alcohol contributes to violence through enhancing the likelihood of conflict, reducing inhibitions and providing a social space for punishment. It is important to remember that the use of alcohol does not explain the underlying imbalance of power in relationships where one partner exercises coercive control. Therefore, while decreasing the use of alcohol may reduce the risk of partner violence, it will not eliminate it. Interventions should approach this problem in an integrated way, taking into account the central role of alcohol in men's lives.<sup>41</sup> At a time when male identity seems to be under threat, it would be useful to examine the wish of men to socialise with other men, and to explore ways that this social sphere does not occur in opposition to family life.

The pressure to be the principal earner in the family is a definite cause of anxiety for men. Failure to fulfil this role can result in violence as men try to reassert the power they feel they have



lost. Men's inability to see their value disconnected from their earning capacity contributes to a negative situation. The data is clear about the tremendous blow to male identity when a man cannot earn income, but is much less clear on coping strategies, or the ways that men develop an alternative view of their self-worth. Comments from male respondents that they cannot talk about their alternative views provide further evidence that more discussion on men's options and opinions is needed. Interventions aimed at illuminating these attitudes and what is required to change them also need to address the issues of sexuality and sexual coercion, given their role in causing conflict and the casual acceptance of these practices.

## 4.2 Responses to Violence

### 4.2.1 Help-Seeking

Help-seeking behaviours by women experiencing violence are limited by many factors including attitudes towards public discussion of violence and sex, and the perceived and real availability of support services. International data on this issue is not relevant, as Cambodia does not have effective law enforcement or social services to provide care and support. Cambodia is well known for its weak rule of law and lack of

<sup>41</sup> Numerous respondents also mentioned gambling as a component of these social settings. Losing money to gambling serves to increase economic stress and leads to violence.

social welfare services.

Respondents named several barriers to seeking help. The distinction between public and private space affects responses to violence. The idea that domestic and sexual violence are strictly private issues causes women to remain silent. Shame and the need to maintain familial unity also prevented women from seeking help:

I never told anyone about my husband forcing me to have sex with him because it is embarrassing.

*Rural woman, victim of partner violence, aged unknown*

She came back home because she didn't want other people to say that a wife had left the house. It's shameful for a woman to do that. It was an embarrassing for all of us.

*Rural woman, victim of partner violence, aged unknown*

Several respondents mentioned economic factors as a reason to keep the family together even though there is violence. However, these comments did not take into account the increasing role of women as breadwinners:

If we are men and we beat those innocent women – we are wrong. Beating a wife is also wrong, but that it is a domestic issue – they tolerate or pardon the perpetrator. If he is imprisoned, who feeds their children? This is a massive loss.

*Urban man, married more than five years*

Several respondents said they talked to family members, such as their parents or siblings, about the violence in their homes. In many cases they received advice about doing a better job to fulfil their family duties in order to prevent violence in the future, reasserting the notion that women cause violence by not adhering to socially defined gender norms. Some respondents said they had attended local meetings or training sessions on domestic violence but the data does not include in-depth information about these sessions or their impact.

Despite the existence of a specific policy on domestic violence, women and men did not view domestic violence as an issue that involved police or judicial authorities. Only a few respondents reported notifying police of a personal incident. This is not surprising in a country with strong traditions of informal dispute resolution outside of the court system.

As noted in other studies, the most common resource sought for conflict resolution was the village chief.<sup>42</sup> Normally, the village chief and other leaders try to discourage violence by discussing the negative impact for the community and family. However it is not uncommon for the village chief to simply encourage couples to reconcile and their comments may serve to reinforce negative attitudes regarding violence and gender roles.<sup>43</sup>

The village chief also came to intervene when we were arguing. He told us that we were husband and wife, so no matter who did something wrong, we should forgive each other. He told my wife not to blame me when I went to drink with my friends.

*Rural man, perpetrator of violence, aged unknown*

When the commune chief arrived, he stopped gambling. He told the chief that he hit his wife because she looked down on him in front of others and she did not allow him to play cards.

*Rural man, perpetrator of violence, aged unknown*

Women who do ask local authorities for help may be met with an inadequate response, discouraging them from seeking further assistance. Accounts of these local interventions had mixed results, but few resulted in prosecution. One respondent's comment reflected the fact that intervention by a village chief can have little impact:

The village chief used to come and talk about this, but no one listened to him. I have not seen the police coming to arrest those (perpetrators) either.

*Rural woman, non-victim of partner violence, aged unknown*

Another respondent said that police can be bribed to ignore these offences:

The parents of the abusers (husbands) take their money and bribe (the police) so that the husbands will soon be released. The wives who stay at home do not know (that the bribery has occurred). So I don't really know about laws.

<sup>42</sup> The Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (CDHS) 2004 reported that one in three women who experienced violence sought help, an increase over the 2000 CDHS where only one in five women did. In the majority of cases (51 per cent) this help came from their own family. The 2005 MOWA baseline survey pointed out that women's ability to get help was limited to options available or perceived to be available to them, naming commune or village authorities, or the police. Far fewer respondents mentioned the courts which are often located far away; 27 per cent of them said they would have to travel up to six hours to access a court. Disturbingly, agencies that provide counselling, legal aid, or shelter were even less accessible.

<sup>43</sup> The 2005 MOWA baseline survey found that of the 330 respondents who reported seeking help, the vast majority of help-seekers (82 percent of the men and 96 per cent of the women) were urged to reconcile with their partners by the authorities.

*Rural woman, victim of partner violence, aged 24*

Many respondents felt they could help stop domestic violence by giving advice to others.<sup>44</sup> Some explained that they had tried to intervene in domestic violence situations in other families, but with no success. This indicates that men also want to stop violence but are not sure how to do so effectively:

Then the husband started beating her. I went to help to stop him from beating her but he didn't listen to me. It was not easy to help, as it was their family affair.

*Rural man, non-perpetrator of violence*

The husband accused her of having an affair with another man. Then the battle broke out in the middle of the night. I wouldn't dare help in that situation. There is nothing I can do when I see such violence happening but ask the elders to talk to them.

*Rural woman, victim of violence, aged unknown*

One key informant said that men have an important role to play in preventing violence:

If men do not participate in preventing violence, it is impossible to achieve our goals ... Men's and women's participation is very important to contribute to minimising domestic violence. Men have to know about the consequence of violence.

*Interview with key informant, H.E. Chan Sotheavy, Secretary of State of Ministry of Justice (MoJ)*

Comments from other female respondents demonstrate that women feel that they have few viable options and they must fend for themselves:

Whenever he wants to beat me, I draw a knife and he keeps a distance from me. I can't allow him to beat me anymore, it hurts, but do I dare stab my own husband?

*Rural woman, victim of partner violence, aged 32*

#### **4.2.2 Perspectives on The Domestic Violence Law**

Certain respondents in both the focus groups and individual interviews said they had heard of the Domestic Violence Law and key informant interviews reinforced their comments. However, both community participants and key informants from NGOs cited a disconnect between policy and implementation.

<sup>44</sup> Many respondents suggested that they and others should advise other men to cease their violent behaviour, but none mentioned possible interventions that involved listening to these men. With few counselling options available in Cambodia, however, this is not surprising.

Some examples from community and policy maker interviews demonstrate that there is also a gap in understanding the law:

I ask them about the violence law. They do not know. Maybe we did not disseminate it to them. Local people are not aware of laws.

*Interview with key informant, Mr. Sea Sokhon, Senior Technical Officer, Strategic Behavioural Communication (SBC) of Family Health International Organization (FHI)*

Some of our relatives are not aware of the laws... Their implementation is not effective.

*Interview with key informant, H.E. Nat Bunroeun, Secretary of State of Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS)*

Like I said, if a husband hits his wife because he understands that she is his own possession and the police cannot interfere in his internal matter, this is his misconception because he lacks an understanding of the law.

*Interview with key informant, H.E. Chan Sotheavy, Secretary of State of MoJ*

Many respondents said that increased awareness of the law would greatly assist efforts to end domestic violence, which suggests that the law has the potential to break through attitudes about the acceptance of domestic violence in the private sphere. That knowledge will cause people to change their behaviour is not surprising in Cambodia, where the education system relies heavily on rote learning and where the government and civil society place a high value on dissemination campaigns.

However, even where the policy was recognised or praised, respondents did not mention efforts to implement the law. Others said that people know about the law but that it does not deter violent behaviour:

Men know about laws but they still violate them.

*Rural woman, non-victim of partner violence, aged unknown*

The most important thing is to enforce laws and participate in implementing laws. Phnom Penh and provincial residents do not.

*Interview with key informant, Nat Bunroeun, Secretary of State MoEYS*

Even though we spend a lot of money conducting dissemination campaigns, the violence still occurs, because people face livelihood problems, still go gambling, still drink alcohol and use drugs. It is related to biological, psychological, sexual and physical health, and economic factors. We should promote family income generation policies and hold dissemination campaigns that



will help reduce domestic violence.

*Interview with key informant, Sea Sokhon, Senior Technical Officer, SBC of FHI*

### 4.2.3 Discussion and Policy Implications

The study data highlights that there are few options available to women seeking help for domestic violence. This confirms earlier government studies findings, showing that local authorities and service providers assist few victims of partner violence.<sup>45</sup> The small role of social service providers reported by respondents reveals a significant gap in services and even a lack of awareness about the types of services available. Cambodia has few psychosocial service agencies and few agencies offer counseling services. However, there are signs of change in this area with the Royal University of Phnom Penh establishing the first department of social work offering course at Master Level, and a call for counseling services for both men and women in the Domestic Violence Law.

It is clear that further efforts are needed to address the barriers such as shame, economic disempowerment, fear and secrecy that prevent women from accessing necessary assistance. In more concrete terms, the data mentions significant gaps in law enforcement and services. It is clear that law enforcement is extremely weak and that judicial and police officers require further training. But the requirements for changing police attitudes and behaviours need to be seriously considered to appropriately tailor such trainings. Similarly, village chiefs and commune councillors, as community leaders, require specifically tailored trainings on the effects of domestic violence and the law.

Passage of the Domestic Violence Law was an important step in breaking through perceptions that such violence is acceptable in a private setting, and respondents place great faith in the potential impact of increasing awareness of this law.<sup>46</sup> Clearly however, greater awareness raising of the law and ensuring its implementation is necessary. Indeed, the law itself calls for dissemination of the law and places emphasis on “the responsibilities within households and respecting the rights of each other in order to promote the value of Khmer families, morality, good manners, ways of living, ways of preserving and educating the households, ways to solve conflicts through non-violent and peaceful means, as well as to instruct them to be aware of the measures to prevent domestic violence and protect the victims.”<sup>47</sup>

The willingness of several respondents to intervene in other families’ domestic violence incidents

<sup>45</sup> Ministry of Women’s Affairs, *Violence Against Women: A Baseline Survey*, and *A Fair Share for Women: Cambodia Gender Assessment* (Phnom Penh, 2008).

<sup>46</sup> Cambodia has several relevant legal instruments. Cambodia is a signatory to the global Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. In 2008, the Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation was approved.

<sup>47</sup> Law on The Prevention of Domestic Violence and The Protection of Victims, Article 33.

illustrates positive attitudes that reject domestic violence. Although these comments also reflect that people see no other option for addressing this problem other than personally intervening. Nonetheless, these comments are a step forward and can provide a basis for policies and programmes that harness political will in communities. In addition, the language used in the Domestic Violence Law regarding families and values indicates that positive messages about peaceful families can be linked to existing cultural norms. Other studies suggest that discussions on human rights and the impact of domestic violence can help to change attitudes.<sup>48</sup> It is possible that some of these discussions could be included in all male settings, to provide an opportunity to reflect on positive gender norms and provide peer support, as well respect the high degree of interest by men to socialise with other men.



Similarly, the data suggests that women could gain support and confidence from peer groups, particularly since so many women are able to articulate their frustration at domestic violence and in some cases their determination to put an end to it. As outlined in the existing literature, women in other countries report that they rely primarily on informal networks for help.<sup>49</sup> This may also help to counter their feelings of isolation and shame.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, IWDA, *Men's Talk*, p. 24, and p. 32, where men said that discussing the impact of domestic violence helped them see it in a new way, and motivated them to change their behaviour. They also said that discussing it with other men was helpful.

<sup>49</sup> World Health Organization, *WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women*, 2005.

## Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

In this concluding chapter we present the key findings of the study and offer detailed recommendations at the programmatic level for organisations and agencies that address gender-based violence, as well as for policy makers and advocates. Areas requiring further research that were identified during the study are listed, as well as the next steps in this important work for gender justice and violence prevention.

### 5.1 Conclusions

The study revealed the following key findings:

- people's understandings of Cambodian masculinity vary, however the dominant construction of masculinity is associated with dominance, control and superiority over women;
- while some men held alternative constructions of masculinity that promoted gender equality they felt that they could not discuss these ideas openly, especially amongst other men, highlighting the strong pressure for men to adhere to dominant notions of masculinity even when they do not support them;
- the attitudes expressed towards violence varied among respondents. Some participants used language rejecting violence, saying it was unacceptable while others spoke of violence as being part of married life;
- violence against women including sexual coercion and marital rape is rooted in constructions of masculinity that promote structural male dominance and unequal gender relations;
- physical punishment is often used to "discipline" women who are seen to have transgressed prescribed gender roles;
- violence against women serves as a policing mechanism and a mechanism for maintaining male authority, which therefore reinforce prevailing gender norms;
- other risk factors associated with violence include childhood experiences of violence, alcohol abuse and financial issues;
- both men and women suffer because of dominant notions of masculinity in Cambodian society;
- help-seeking behaviour is limited by many factors (see Figure 1), including the belief that domestic violence is a private issue, shame and a shortage of avenues for help; and
- some respondents were aware of Domestic Violence Law, but this law dates back to 2005, and it appears that further dissemination and enforcement efforts are needed, along with an array of interventions by government and other agencies.

Gender roles impact on both help-seeking behaviours and violence. The path to violence outlined in this study usually passes through influencing factors, such as alcohol abuse and financial issues, before reaching physical or sexual abuse. These factors are often mistakenly perceived as the cause of violence. This misconception is dangerous to programming efforts. Focusing only on influencing factors (such as

alcohol prohibition) fails to address the underlying cause of the problem such as structural male dominance, masculinity norms, and unequal gender relations. The norms that affect help seeking behaviour are usually barriers to treatment for survivors of violence. The barriers that keep women from utilising services that may or may not exist are multilayered as Figure 1 below illustrates:

Figure 1: Barriers to Help Seeking



The main gaps beyond those embedded in social norms are found at the policy implementation level. There is weak infrastructure for law implementation, which is exacerbated by authorities that do not recognise the causes of violence, or its impact, and furthermore do they have the tools necessary to implement the laws. Furthermore, few agencies offer support for victims or work to change cultural norms. Addressing such barriers will greatly improve women's ability to access legal protection.

## 5.2 Recommendations

The recognition of clear links between masculinity, gender norms and violence leads to several important conclusions and recommendations for GADC to consider in ongoing efforts to prevent violence against women. The following recommendations have been grouped into programmatic and policy/advocacy suggestions. They have been further organised into six areas: holding men accountable; victim support; legal and economic empowerment of women; primary prevention; public security; and engaging men for equality. This grouping aligns with areas of action for Partners for Prevention (P4P). These recommendations also reflect those outlined by the RGC's National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women 2009-2012, which includes four strategies:

1. Raising public awareness and dissemination of the Domestic Violence Law in order to change attitudes
2. Enhancing and improving social, medical and legal services for victims
3. Developing and improving policies and laws regarding access to the courts, education on violence prevention in schools and communities and mainstreaming gender into efforts of government institutions, civil society groups and other stakeholders
4. Strengthening the capacity of officials and agencies on legal and social components.

### 5.2.1 Programmatic Recommendations

#### A. Holding Men Accountable

The data shows a clear disconnect between the Domestic Violence Law and its implementation. In order to promote this law, all NGOs need a comprehensive understanding of its provisions and implications. The full range of programmes by local and international non-government organisations addressing gender and/or violence must include policy actions in order to support its legitimacy and make the law more widely understood and accepted.

Recommended strategies and activities for holding men accountable for their own violent behaviour therefore should include the following:

- work on building awareness of the Domestic Violence Law, the Trafficking Law,<sup>50</sup> and the Criminal Code<sup>51</sup> (with regard to rape) through a multi-level campaign, including a radio talk shows and face-to-face discussions among men so that local authorities and the public will have a more comprehensive understanding of relevant legislation;
- build capacity of local authorities (district, commune and village level councils, chiefs and police)

<sup>50</sup> Royal Government of Cambodia Document: Ministry of Justice, Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation, 2008.

<sup>51</sup> Royal Government of Cambodia Document: Provisions Relating to Judiciary and Criminal Law and Procedure Applicable in Cambodia During the Transitional Period, 1992.

to enforce the Domestic Violence Law by providing support at monthly commune and villages meetings and public forums, and by working with commune councils and the general population to strengthen communication and coordination among the commune committees, especially the women and children's commune committees;

- advocate with provincial courts to encourage them to try cases involving domestic violence, trafficking and rape;
- seek budget support/partnership in order to assist the courts in processing these cases;
- find partners with counselling skills to work with perpetrators through the men and women's core group dialogue programs; and
- enlist former perpetrators to serve as positive role models. These activities will support governmental efforts to raise awareness about the Domestic Violence Law and to improve the capacity of the courts in handling these cases and also improve social services.

### *B. Victim Support*

Along with a deficiency of agencies to provide support, the data reveals an underlying notion in Cambodian society that sexual and domestic violence are private issues. As such, victims of violence face many barriers to getting help and support. People are reluctant to discuss sex and violence, and the victim is often blamed and subjected to discrimination. People must be encouraged to speak out; women must be encouraged to seek services and men must be encouraged to support women in seeking services. Programmes need to create safe and comfortable spaces to talk about violence.

These efforts should take place on several levels as the following recommendations indicate:

- continue radio and TV talk shows to spread the message that violence is not the fault of the victim but of the perpetrator;
- continue public meetings and campaigns to bring the issue of sexual and domestic violence into the public forum;
- continue capacity building efforts with local authorities in order to advocate for victim's rights, to reduce discrimination against victims and to encourage a shift in attitudes and beliefs about victims of violence;
- work to find counselling partners to support victims through core group dialogue programmes; and
- coordinate with governmental efforts to change attitudes and build capacity among service agencies.

### *C. Legal and Economic Empowerment of Women*

The data shows that conflict over financial issues is often one component of disputes resulting in violence against women. Prevailing gender roles lead men and women to perform different types of work that are not equally valued. Decision making tends to be divided along those same lines, making choices about shared resources contentious.

As women take on new roles, men must be equipped to become supportive partners. Both men and women need to understand how to deal with changing notions of masculinity. Programmes should acknowledge the contributing factors to such violence, such as men's economic marginalisation, alcohol use and infidelity. At the same time, these programmes should recognise the fundamental causes of violence, namely the unequal power structures and gender norms existing between men and women. It should be emphasised that power and roles need to be shared in relationships, and programmes should focus on changing beliefs and behaviours.

Consequently, the recommendations of this study are:

- develop violence prevention programmes for men that provide an understanding of, and skills to cope with, rapidly changing socioeconomic and political realities

With specific reference to the existing GADC programme, activities should:

- support the core men's group dialogue to share positive experiences of helping in the home and provide them an opportunity to act as role models in the community. These groups will provide a valuable addition to government efforts to create parenting programmes through MOEYS, as outlined in the action plan; and
- integrate campaigns promoting healthy dialogue and recognising the respective contributions of women and men to their families into a wide range of development projects that seek to strengthen livelihoods.

#### *D. Primary Prevention*

An underlying cause of sexual and physical violence is gendered power inequalities. Informants reported that the family environment is a primary place where gender roles are learned and internalised. It is advisable therefore, that GADC and other agencies working to prevent gender-based violence should:

- include young people in public campaigns on violence prevention;
- implement interventions with adolescent and adult males and females that are tailored to be sensitive to the Cambodian context. This may include working with instructors of the same sex and the same age as the target audience, who employ some degree of cultural sensitivity. These programmes should specifically engage young men, some of whom are already questioning rigid gender norms;
- ensure that the core men and women's groups discuss the behaviour and attitudes of young people, and ways to ensure effective cross-generational communication about these topics; and
- incorporate gender-based violence and masculinity issues into other programmes related to peace building and conflict resolution, as well as gender issues. Discussions on gender norms and violence prevention should be mainstreamed into their work. This work with youth will be best coordinated

with the government's work with young people in the school curriculum.

### *E. Public Security*

For the majority of women who are abused, assistance is difficult to access. Police, commune or village authorities are the only options available. Courts are distant, while agencies that provide counselling, legal aid or shelter are even more inaccessible. Furthermore, local authorities and police generally fail to enforce existing laws against violence. In view of these constraints, the recommendation is as follows:

- in order to strengthen community harmony, GADC should plan to expand discussions in its core men's and women's groups to include the joint roles and responsibilities of citizens and authorities to build community networks and strengthen the social infrastructure. These discussions should ultimately create both support, and a demand for, increased law enforcement (through training and other efforts) as envisioned by the government action plan and increase awareness that violence against women is a crime. Together, improved law enforcement and stronger cooperation with citizens could change the culture of acceptance of violence.

### *F. Engaging Men for Equality*

Research shows that a significant number of men recognise that a lack of mutual understanding incites domestic violence and that there is dual responsibility of both husband and wife to prevent family violence. The existing research also notes that talking about the consequences of violence appeared to have a profound impact on male participants, leading some to undertake not to commit violence against women. In view of these findings, GADC along with other NGOs and similar agencies should:

- continue developing a strategy to strengthen male involvement in preventing gender-based violence in Cambodia;
- provide implementing staff with training and support, both to approach violence from a gender sensitive perspective and to act as positive role models;
- encourage men and women to talk about responsible sexual behaviour. The concepts embodied in the Domestic Violence Law and disease prevention practices can be used as a starting point to discuss responsible behaviours. This strategy will also include information about RGC's HIV policy and personal responsibility for prevention of transmission. Experimentation with ways to incorporate ideas about sexual health, including sexuality education and sexual pleasure should also occur. This will be challenging in the Cambodian cultural environment, but a possible starting point may be a discussion of the acceptance of sex outside marriage. This approach would include discussions that encourage men and women not to stigmatise or discriminate against people with HIV/AIDS. This strategy would augment the government's efforts to include sexual health education in public schools and to establish a new Committee on Social Morality, Women and Family Values; and
- provide information to men and women about Cambodia's Labour Law and its provisions for



paternity leave.<sup>52</sup> GADC and other NGOs working in the area should encourage men to use paternity leave so that they can help with family care.

Similarly, other programmes addressing issues highlighted in the study could incorporate exploration, discussion and action plans to implement solutions to these problems. It would be useful if the many agencies focusing on public health and sexual health could concurrently delve further into the underlying attitudes about masculinity, as they seek to promote healthy behaviour. In addition, labour unions and employers and employees should promote paternity leave programs.

## 5.2.2 Recommendations for Policy Makers and Advocates

### A. Holding Men Accountable

Most respondents acknowledged the existence of strong gender roles, but only a few recognised these norms as a source of violence. Therefore those individuals and institutions in positions of authority that are able to intervene in gender-based violence situations need to have a deeper understand about violence and the constructs of masculinity. Dialogues and sensitisation programmes with policy makers are necessary to ensure effective responses to this violence. Therefore:



- to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable, it is recommended that the ministries of Women's Affairs, Information, and Justice take into consideration the important role they must play in engaging the courts and authorities at the provincial level, so that domestic violence, trafficking and rape cases will be prosecuted; and
- men and women in legislative roles should raise awareness about the Domestic Violence Law and related policies affecting gender and human rights to ensure that this legislation is appropriately implemented. These policy makers are encouraged to assess the budgetary and infrastructure requirements for full implementation and monitoring of the Domestic Violence Law. Policy makers and advocates alike should encourage law enforcement personnel to engage with the community in a positive way and to be proactive in raising awareness and ensuring compliance with the law, so that they can fulfil their duty to work towards violence prevention.

These recommendations fit well within the provisions of the government's action plan to establish policy and related mechanisms by expanding access to the courts, strengthening the criminal justice system, including domestic violence in policy training materials, and amending laws and regulations to improve

<sup>52</sup> Kingdom of Cambodia Document: Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour and Veteran Affairs, Labour Law, 1997.

implementation of the Domestic Violence Law by strengthening capacity in the courts.

### *B. Victim Support*

As part of the government's efforts to strengthen social service delivery and improve access to the criminal justice system, it is recommended that the relevant agencies be encouraged to provide female staff to work directly with victims. The survey revealed that it is difficult for most people to talk about sex or violence, and this difficulty is increased when a woman is trying to talk to a man. Providing female staff members for counselling, legal, and victim support would help ensure that female victims feel more comfortable talking about their experiences and accepting help.

### *C. Legal and Economic Empowerment of Women*

The expectation that men should be the main income provider for the family and responsible for financial decisions does not recognise the value of unpaid work that men and women share to support their families and their homes. The economic value of unpaid work that women and men do must be recognised. Therefore:

- the government should be encouraged to include this topic in the public education curriculum and in media campaigns;
- school textbooks and public campaigns could challenge traditionally gender norms by showing males and females in positive, if unconventional, roles. For example, women and girls can be portrayed studying, working, and earning money outside of the home, as well as in positions of power. Positive images of men and boys can be shown helping with housework, caring for family members or working under female bosses; and
- civil society organisations and other agencies are encouraged to engage in campaigns that highlight respect for women and domestic violence prevention.

### *D. Primary Prevention*

Most participants stated that their understanding of gender norms was largely gained from elders within in their family and community. An increasing percentage of Cambodian children now receive a primary education that creates an entry point for primary prevention programs. Through the efforts of GADC and similar NGOs, educators should be encouraged to promote concepts of gender equality, conflict resolution, knowledge of the laws, and updated messages about gender roles and sexuality.

Specific strategies could include:

- carrying out critical reviews of school curriculum at the pre-school, primary and secondary levels to include ways of promoting gender equality that engage both boys and girls;
- developing training for teachers, administrative staff and other groups dealing with children and youth to promote ways to engage boys and young men in efforts to promote gender equality;

- including messages and activities targeting boys and young men and promoting gender equality within existing sexuality education and HIV/AIDS prevention programs; and
- engaging sporting groups in the public and private sector to promote gender equality among boys and men, for example, by drawing on existing experiences by local organisations such as Pour un Sourire d'Enfant.<sup>53</sup>

### *E. Public Security*

Incidents of violence discussed in this survey were often brought to the village chief. Encouragement of provincial policy and commune chiefs to provide leadership in this area, to ensure improved cooperation and action should occur. In addition, increased focus on these cases by the Office of Public Security at the commune level and with commune police would be welcome.

### *F. Engaging Men for Equality*

The data gathered in this survey showed that most people do not recognise the link between existing gender norms and violence. There needs to be greater understanding by men and women of the relationship between gender equality and violence, and for increased efforts to promote gender equality through public policy.

For their part, NGOs, social service providers and violence prevention advocates have an important role to play, by simplifying training tools and materials to ensure that they are effective and easy to use, and in providing adequate services for victims. In order to promote equality on an immediate and practical level, organisation policies should grant paternity leave and encourage men to use this time off so that they can assist within the family.

Specific strategies could include:

- strengthening the use of mass media campaigns for positive, non-violent messages about manhood, including participation in domestic and household tasks, care giving and respect for women;
- using financial and social policy to improve the balance between work and family life, and encourage men to make equal contributions to domestic work, i.e. paid paternal leave provisions; and
- providing information on parent education programmes to fathers about gender equitable ways to rear children, emphasising advantages of such approaches.

## **5.3 Areas for Further Investigation**

In addition to recommendations, this qualitative exploration leaves potential areas of further investigation for GADC, NGO's, service providers, research institutions and other professionals in Cambodia:

- What is the relationship between economic and social change, gender constructs and violence?

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<sup>53</sup> Pour un Sourire d'Enfant (PSE). Website can be found at: [www.pse.asso.fr](http://www.pse.asso.fr)

- What advocacy strategies are most effective to encourage law enforcement against gender-based violence?
- What is the impact of programmes that engage men and boys and what are some promising practices for engaging boys and men? and
- How can these strategies be tailored to be effective for males of different ages and life experience?

These questions reflect GADC's continued commitment to linking policy and programmatic action to prevent violence. With an ultimate goal of equality and a society free of violence, the path to becoming a "real" man will have to be rebuilt alongside the construction of a path of empowerment for women.

## **5.4 Next Steps**

The Domestic Violence Law and the National Action Plan to Prevent Violence on Women provide a solid foundation for further efforts to prevent violence against women. In the short term, GADC plans to put the programmatic recommendations into practice in its core men's and women's groups. This report will be followed up by a second report with more in-depth analysis of the qualitative data in some of these areas.

GADC urges policy makers to make implementation of the Domestic Violence Law and other components of the action plan a priority. Finally, GADC urges NGOs and other civil society organisations to expand and improve their advocacy, dissemination and social service activities in such a way as to respond to the needs raised in the study.

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## Appendix A: Guide for Group Discussion - Men

### I. Societal expectation and social norms for men and women

1. How does society expects you to be a man/woman?
2. What is it like to be a man and a woman in our society?
3. Do you think men/women are able to meet all these expectations? Why? Why not?

*Probe: Impacts*

- What happens when men cannot meet their expectations? Why? Why not?
- What happens when women cannot meet such expectations? Why? Why not?
- Are your expectations different from social expectations? Is it possible for a man to question his expectations? (Individual expectations) OR
- Are these expectations changing? How?

*Moderator's Attention:*

- Try and get different responses

### II. Social norm related to Violence Against Women

1. Is violence against women acceptable? Why? In what situations?

*Probe:*

- If not acceptable, why does it happen?
  - Is it justified in some situations/locations (inside/outside home)?
  - Are some forms of violence justified?
  - Physical, psychological and/or sexual violence
  - What do you think if a woman refuses to have sex with their husband?
2. What do you think when you see another man perpetrating violence against a woman?
  3. What does the community think about men who use violence against women?

*Probe:*

- Are men who use violence against women stigmatised / ashamed?

### III. Resources and Recourses

1. What can be done when a woman experiences violence (victims)?
2. What can we do as a group of men or women to prevent violence?



3. What can a man do to prevent himself from acting violently? Here should be a probe for q 3 above
4. Do you know of any laws that prohibit violence against women? Tell me your opinion of such laws?
5. In your opinion, why does domestic violence reoccur even when anti-domestic violence laws and programs are in place?
6. Have you seen any programs on prevention of violence against women? What do you think about it? What else could be done?

## Appendix B: In-Depth Interview Guide – Men

### I. Personal Information:

- Ethnicity
- Religion
- Age
- Sex
- Marital Status
- Educational Status
- Occupation
- No. of Household members

### II. Childhood Experiences:

1. Please tell me about your childhood? Where did you grow-up? Where did you spend most time? With whom? What was your experience?
2. Did you experience/witness of violence when you were growing up? Probe: where, when, who, how?
3. Were men and women treated differently in your house? How? How was your sister treated? How did men treat the women in your family? Did you see a man using violence against a woman in your household?
4. How does your family expect you to be a man?

### III. Current Relationships and Experiences with Violence

1. Please tell me about your relationship with your wife?  
Probe: e.g. who makes the decisions? On what issues?  
In case answer is not clear, probe for: areas of decision-making and why? Who works? Who earns an income? Who provides care of children?
2. Have you ever had any argument with your wife? Why? What happens?  
In case they say 'No', what are the issues on which you and your wife differ? Your likes/dislikes, hers?
3. What happens if you don't agree on any particular issue?  
Probe: All forms of violence. Explore physical violence happening or not.
4. When did this happen last? Try to get the whole story  
Probe: Tell me what happened in detail (What was the issue? Who did what? Where did it happen? Were other people present? Did you talk to someone afterward? Did your wife talk to someone after?)
5. Tell me what you do so that you do not become violent against your wife?  
Give me an instance when you were angry for some reason, but you controlled your anger? How do you control your anger? Tell me what happened in detail (What was the issue? Who did what? Where

did it happen? Were other people present? Did you talk to someone afterward? Did your wife talk to someone after?)

6. In general, are you satisfied with your sexual relationship with your wife?

Probe: Have you ever experienced or faced any problem with your wife related to your sexual relationship? Are there any moments when you wanted to have sex, but she didn't? How often? When was the last time? What happened? Was there any argument? How did you deal with it?

#### **IV. Resources and Recourses**

1. What can you do if you see a man using violence against a woman?

Has this happened to you? Tell me about it. If you saw it happened, what would you do?

2. What can be done when a woman experiences violence (victims)?

3. Do you know any laws that prohibit violence against women?

Tell me what do you all think about it?

4. In your opinion, why does domestic violence reoccur even when anti-domestic violence laws and programs are in place?

5. Have you seen any programmes on prevention of violence against women? What do you think about it? What else could be done?

## Appendix C: In-Depth Interview Guide- Women

### I. Societal expectation and social norm for man and woman

1. How does society expect you to be a woman?
2. What is it like to be a woman in our society?
3. Do you think women are able to meet all these expectations? Why? Why not?
4. Probe: What happens when women cannot meet such expectations? Why? Why not?
5. Are your expectations different from social expectations? Is it possible for a woman to question her expectations? Are these expectations changing? How?

### II. Social norm related to Violence Against Women

1. Is violence against women acceptable? Why? In what situations? (Inside/outside household)  
Probe: If not acceptable, why does it happen? (Inside/outside household) Is it justified in some situations/locations)? (Inside/outside household) Are some forms of violence justified? (Within household) Physical, psychological and/or sexual within household) What do you think if a woman refuses to have sex with their husband? What happens? Why not happen?
2. What do you think when you see a man perpetrating violence against a woman? (Inside/outside household)
3. What does the community think about men who use violence against women?  
Probe: Are men who use violence against women stigmatised / ashamed?

### III. Resources and Recourses

1. What can be done when a woman experiences violence? (Behaviour of victim in seeking for outsider intervention)
2. What can we do as a group of women to prevent violence?
3. What can women do to prevent violence from occurring?
4. Do you know any laws that prohibit violence against women? Tell me your opinion of such laws?
5. In your opinion, why does domestic violence reoccur even when anti-domestic violence law and program are in place?
6. Have you seen any programmes on prevention of violence against women? What do you think about it? What else could be done?

## Appendix D: In-Depth Interview Guide - Women

### I. Personal Information:

- Ethnicity
- Religion
- Age
- Sex
- Marital Status
- Educational Status
- Occupation
- No. of Household members

### II. Childhood Experiences:

1. Please tell me about your childhood? Where did you grow-up? Where did you spend most time? With whom? What was your experience?
2. Did you experience/witness of violence when you were growing up? Probe: where, when, who, how?
3. Were men and women treated differently in your house? How? How was your sister treated? How did men treat the women in your family? Did you see a man using violence against a woman in your household?
4. How does your family expect you to be a woman?

### III. Current Relationships and Experiences with Violence

1. Please tell me about your relationship with your husband?  
Probe: e.g. who makes the decision? On what issues? In case answer is not clear,  
Probe for: areas of decision-making and why? Who works? Who earns an income? Who provides care of children?
2. Have you ever had any argument with your husband? Why? What happens?  
In case they say 'No', what are the issues on which you and your husband differ? Your like/dislike, his?
3. What happens if you don't agree on a particular issue?  
Probe: All forms of violence. Explore physical violence happening or not.
4. When did this happen last? Try to get the whole story:  
Probe: Tell me what happened in detail (What was the issue? Who did what? Where did it happen? Were other people present? Did you talk to someone afterward? Did your husband talk to someone after?
5. Tell me what do you do to avoid violence?  
Probe: Give me an instance when you were angry for some reason, but you controlled your anger.

How do you control your anger? Tell me what happened in detail (What was the issue? Who did what? Where did it happen? Were other people present?) Did you talk to someone afterward? Did your husband talk to someone after?

6. In general, are you satisfied with your sexual relationship with your husband?

Probe: Have you ever experienced or faced any problem with your husband related to your sexual relationship? Are there any moments when he wanted to have sex, but you didn't? How often? When was the last time? What happened? Was there any argument? How did you deal with it?

#### **IV. Resources and Recourses**

1. What can you do if you see a man using violence against a woman? Has this happened to you? Tell me about it. If you saw it happened, what would you do?
2. What can be done when a woman experiences violence (victims)?
3. Do you know any laws that prohibit the use of violence against women? Tell me what do you all think about it?
4. In your opinion, why does domestic violence reoccur even when anti-domestic violence law and program are in place?
5. Have you seen any programmes on prevention of violence against women? What do you think about it? What else could be done?

## Appendix E: Literature Review

### 1. Cambodian Masculinity Norms

Existing studies document traditional male gender roles in Cambodia. However, numerous studies noted the relative lack of research on masculinity and also called for further research. One researcher noted that most studies focused on problems or sexual behaviour such as domestic violence or rape, and noted a lack of research on men who do not engage in violent activities.<sup>1</sup>

Nonetheless, several studies cite norms for masculinity as defined in Chbab Proh (Rules for Men), proverbs and other cultural influences. These rules are disseminated less widely than the Chbab Srei (Rules for Women), which were written between the 14th and 19th century.<sup>2</sup> The rules for men are more individualistic, compared to those for women (which focus on responding to men).<sup>3</sup> It is worth noting that in Buddhism, Cambodia's predominant religion, it is suggested that women earned less merit in their previous life.<sup>4</sup> These rules are not the only codes for men. Cambodia has a hierarchical society where sex is one factor among many, including age, wealth, urban-rural residence, position, education, family reputation and religious piety.<sup>5</sup> Cambodian culture expects men to be strong individuals who are the heads of their families and primary breadwinners. There are conflicting cultural messages about their behaviour and recreation, however, and recognition that male ideals may not always be fulfilled.

#### 1.1. Head of the Household

Many studies confirm the male role as head of the household.<sup>6</sup> Women are viewed as financial managers<sup>7</sup> and most decisions are made jointly. But men make the final decisions, in particular in the "use or sale of valuable assets such as land, vehicles and cattle."<sup>8</sup> Other family members are expected to defer to the head of the household and show respect and obedience. "A Cambodian proverb says that a man should not be 'under the wife's apron,' and therefore under her control." This is "one of the most extreme insults to a

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<sup>1</sup> Hilton, Alistair (2008) *I Thought It Could Never Happen to Boys* (Phnom Penh: HAGAR), p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> Brickell, Katherine (in press) "We Don't Forget the Old Rice Pot When We Get the New One': Gendered Discourses on Ideals and Practices of Women in Contemporary Cambodia" *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, p. 2. See also Giles, Liz (2004) *Pilot Project: Phase One – Men Against Violence Toward Women* (Phnom Penh: Project Against Domestic Violence), p. 76.

<sup>3</sup> Giles, p. 78.

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Women's Affairs (2008) *A Fair Share for Women: Cambodia Gender Assessment* (Phnom Penh), p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Giles, p. 80. See also Ministry of Women's Affairs (2008), p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> International Women's Development Agency, Inc. (2008) *Men's Talk* (Phnom Penh), p. 12. (Further citations will refer to IWDA.)

<sup>7</sup> Giles, p. 81.

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Women's Affairs (2008), p. 8.

Cambodian man.”<sup>9</sup> One study noted that although 91% of women agreed that a wife has a right to express her opinion even if she disagrees with her husband, “ only 47% disagree with the statement that men should be making the important decisions in the household.”<sup>10</sup> This decision making role extends beyond the family. “In public decision making, men are seen as more skilled and more suited.”<sup>11</sup>

In contrast, women are expected to defer to their husbands, do housework and speak softly and gently.<sup>12</sup> However, compliance with these standards varies widely, depending on whether people live in urban or rural areas and others factors.<sup>13</sup>

As the head of the household, men are expected to be the primary breadwinners. “Men’s role as the provider is central to a man’s sense of pride and identity.”<sup>14</sup> At a young age, boys learn they should grow up and make a living. This gives them a “source of personal pride and feelings of self worth.”<sup>15</sup>

Almost half, (48%,) of the respondents in men’s discussion groups organised by the Project Against Domestic Violence (PADV) said they would consider a man without a job to be lazy, and a man who depends on his wife. This label of being “lazy” is particularly harsh in Khmer culture. Five of the respondents said that a man with no job is “under the wife’s apron,” which is considered to be “one of the most extreme expressions of contempt that can be directed at a man,” even though more women are now earning income outside the home.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, male respondents in one study acknowledged that fulfilling this role can be difficult, and a source of pressure.<sup>17</sup>

Some people believe that women should not work outside the home. About 42% of women feel that married women should not be allowed to work outside the home.<sup>18</sup> One study notes “most men did not perceive women to be contributors to family revenue, despite the fact that women in Cambodia contribute more than 50% of household income.”<sup>19</sup> Although the same study noted that “about half of the men said

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<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Women’s Affairs (2005), p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> National Institute of Public Health and National Institute of Statistics (2006), p. 271.

<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Women’s Affairs (2008), p. 157.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.12 and 20.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> IWDA, p. 13.

<sup>15</sup> Fordham, Graham (2005) “Wise” Before Their Time: Young People, Gender-Based Violence and Pornography in Kandal Stung District (Phnom Penh: World Vision), p. 64.

<sup>16</sup> Giles, p. 26. See also Brickell, p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> IWDA, p. 13.

<sup>18</sup> National Institute of Public Health and National Institute of Statistics, p. 271.

<sup>19</sup> IWDA, p. 13.



their wives have equal rights and demonstrated ways in which they promote/allow, or encourage their behaviour – such as sharing housework, being more active fathers, and supporting their wives work/income generation.”<sup>20</sup>

Education is also more highly valued for male children, because they are perceived to have more employment options later on. A full 45% of women agreed that it is better to educate a son than a daughter.<sup>21</sup> These attitudes are reflected in lower school enrollment rates among girls, with females accounting for only 35% of university students and 39% of upper secondary student populations.<sup>22</sup>

## 1.2. Personal Characteristics

Many studies show that men are expected to be mentally and physically strong, someone who will “not walk away from a battle.”<sup>23</sup> Men must have a “five hudt chest,” with one hudt being the distance from the tip of the fingers to the elbow.<sup>24</sup> Boys and men cannot cry and they are expected to solve their own problems, and to “act like a man from an early age.”<sup>25</sup>

These traditions are very strong in Cambodian culture. “There was little variation in responses to the question about how a man should be or behave ... He is ‘strong’, ‘courageous’, and is a ‘leader’. He knows what is right and wrong and is always law abiding. He takes ‘responsibility for his actions and is ‘persistent.’”<sup>26</sup>

In another set of research, boys who were sexually abused are reported as saying that ideals about male strength and bravery were particularly problematic when it came to responding to such abuse. These ideas are so strong that boys and service agencies alike seem unaware that boys can be sexually abused. One boy stated, “I thought it could never happen to boys.” As a result, the boys who are abused are deeply ashamed. In the words of one boy “I blame myself ... I’m a male.”<sup>27</sup> In contrast, these boys said that they were vulnerable and needed protection.<sup>28</sup> “Boys can’t cry out. If we cry, they say we are weak, but they don’t know how much hurt we have,” one boy said.<sup>29</sup> These attitudes make it difficult for boys to seek help. “Boys

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>21</sup> National Institute of Public Health and National Institute of Statistics, p. 271.

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Women’s Affairs (2008), p. 74.

<sup>23</sup> Giles, p. 95. See also Brickell, p. 11.

<sup>24</sup> Hilton, p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>26</sup> IWDA, p. 12.

<sup>27</sup> Hilton, p. 92.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

are seen as a lot tougher, not seen as victims, and are left to fend for themselves.”<sup>30</sup>

Some saw these boys as “less than” boys, and used feminine language to describe them.<sup>31</sup> This may be due in part to Cambodian ideas that place a high value on female virginity, but do not recognise this status in males. Cambodians believe that “boys are like the rice before it is threshed – if it falls into the water it can still grow. Girls are considered like the white rice – if you drop it – it will die.”<sup>32</sup> Respondents explained that rape of a boy is not seen as serious as the rape of a girl, and that “they cannot become pregnant so people don’t care about their reputations.”<sup>33</sup> One respondent stated, “if this happens to girls, they lose their future and virginity. It’s painful for the body and mind, and no one will love them anymore. (People think that) boys are still boys and can forget it.”<sup>34</sup>

Hilton describes the “the feminisation of victimisation, shame and honour,” as a major barrier to raising awareness and addressing sexual violence against boys. These attitudes may even make it harder for social service agencies to recognise such abuse. The staff at one agency that would be expected to be aware of sexual abuse cases involving children all said they were not working with any boys who had been sexually abused.<sup>35</sup> “Unravelling and making sense of the victimisation of males challenges perceptions that are almost set in stone ... powerful myths, beliefs and stereotypes related to males, power, invulnerability, masculinity, victimisation, honour and sexuality obscure the male victim’s experiences. They combine to shroud the issue in silence, isolate victims and ultimately protect perpetrators.”<sup>36</sup> This leaves the victims struggling with their emotions, while “the need to be independent and self-reliant and live up to expectations of the man with a five-hudt chest contributes to their difficulties.”<sup>37</sup>

### **1.3. Male Behaviour**

Studies outline differing standards for behaviour. Respondents in the IWDA study said that “men should also be ‘gentle’, ‘polite’, and ‘loving and respectful’ to everyone. Therefore to be masculine, a man should be both strong and gentle ... The majority of participants said that fulfilling these expectations was not difficult,” with one notable exception, the role of provider, as noted above.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p. 91.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. p. 168.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> IWDA, p. s 12-13.

Men are cautioned to avoid “three kinds of madness (women, drinking, gambling).<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, however, a common saying is that “men are gold, women are cloth.” This saying originally referred to sexual conduct, and was construed to mean that only women would suffer permanent damage to their reputation if they failed to abide by standards for their behaviour. Now the saying is used in the context of all types of conduct.<sup>40</sup>

Nonetheless, expectations about behaviour are constantly changing, as a result of many factors. PADV found contradictions in descriptions of normal men compared to the ideals mentioned above. When respondents listed common characteristics of men, only three percent of these characteristics matched the respondents’ own descriptions of the ideal.<sup>41</sup> For example, a total of seven men said that a man who does not drink, gamble or use sex workers or drugs is a “good man,” but 15 said that a man who did do these things was normal.<sup>42</sup> Citing caution about the three forms of madness, one researcher notes “society does not enforce these rules in practice.”<sup>43</sup> Other studies note that gambling, sex outside marriage and use of alcohol and other drugs appear to be increasing.<sup>44</sup>

Some studies reflect that standards have eroded over time. Participants in the IWDA study said that men have become less gentle, honest and respectful of tradition. “Men in my father’s generation were very gentle and highly respected elders. Men in this generation do not listen or respect their parents and elder.”<sup>45</sup> They study also noted increased conflict among men and a rise in gang activity.<sup>46</sup>

In contrast, women are expected to live up to the Chbab Srei, even though more women are in the workforce.<sup>47</sup> One female respondent estimated that about 80% of women she knew still follow the Chbab Srei, although they may reinterpret them.<sup>48</sup> This means that women show deference to their husbands, do housework and speak softly and gently.<sup>49</sup> Adherence to these standards does vary, however, based on urban

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<sup>39</sup> Giles, p. 87. See also Brickell, Katherine (2008) “Fire in the House’: Gendered Experiences of Drunkenness and Violence in Siem Reap, Cambodia” *Geoforum* 39(5), p. 1672.

<sup>40</sup> Brickell (in press), p. 13.

<sup>41</sup> Giles, p. 23. See also Fordham (2005, p. 73).

<sup>42</sup> Giles, p. 24.

<sup>43</sup> Soprach, Tong (2008) *The Impact of Premarital Sex Amongst Young People in Cambodia*. (Phnom Penh), p. 14.

<sup>44</sup> Ministry of Women’s Affairs (2008), p. 14.

<sup>45</sup> IWDA, p. 14.

<sup>46</sup> IWDA, pp. 13-14.

<sup>47</sup> Brickell (in press), p. 7.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12 and 20. See also Ministry of Women’s Affairs (2008), p. 10, which notes that more than 90% of the care of household and children is done by women.

and rural factors and others.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, although young women who work in factories enjoy greater freedom and mobility, these young women are sometimes stigmatised in their home communities.<sup>51</sup>

## 2. Masculinity and Violence

### 2.1. Underlying Causes of Violence

Several studies document Cambodia's experience recovering from three decades of war and a society with weak rule of law. "Domestic violence must be viewed in the larger context of Cambodian society, where notions of power and status determine social relations and a culture of impunity prevails. The prevalence of domestic violence is directly related to the prevalence of violence in society at large, and modern Cambodia's history of violence. Currently, violence is accepted as a normal end to a conflict in Cambodia, as people see no other possible solution."<sup>52</sup>

One result of Cambodia's violent history is that Cambodia has a serious problem with youth gangs, who engage in theft, violence, *bauk* (gang rape with three to ten males and one female, who may be a sex worker) and other activities. Young people said that both young men and women were members of gangs: 48% said gangs were for strong boys, 39% said they were for strong girls, and 35% said they were for boys in general.<sup>53</sup> When asked why people join gangs, young people said that gang members wanted to be powerful, and drew parallels to patronage system among adults.<sup>54</sup>

Young people in Cambodia experience significant amounts of violence. A survey of 580 young people found that 62% had witnessed and assault or robbery by a youth gang.<sup>55</sup> In another study, 56% of boys and 19% of girls were subject to physical violence by teachers.<sup>56</sup> Young people also reported being beaten by their parents: 67% of boys and 38% of girls were beaten by their fathers, and 76% of boys and 60% of girls were beaten by their mothers.<sup>57</sup> As the researchers note, despite other studies where "women have been cast in the role of victims with little or no agency, while men have almost always been demonised as violent aggressors," mothers used violence more frequently than fathers against their own children.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>51</sup> Ministry of Women's Affairs (2008), p. 12.

<sup>52</sup> Ministry of Women's Affairs (2005), p. 85.

<sup>53</sup> Bearup, Luc (2003) *Paupers & Princelings: Youth Attitudes Toward Gangs, Violence, Rap, Drugs and Theft* (Phnom Penh: Gender and Development for Cambodia), p. 44.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., pp. 44 and 70.

<sup>55</sup> Bearup, p. 27.

<sup>56</sup> Fordham (2005), p. 46.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 48-49.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., pp. 49-50.

To a certain degree, this use of violence was accepted by the young people who reported it. A full 73.4% said they had witnessed an assault where the victim deserved to be assaulted.<sup>59</sup> Fewer than half the respondents (46.7% of the boys and 41.4% of the girls) in Fordham's study said violence by a teacher is always wrong.<sup>60</sup> Some young people (11.4% of boys and 15.5% of girls) said that violence by a parent is acceptable.

It is considered normal to use violence to discipline children. "It is clear ... that there is a significant amount of violence inflicted upon children in the sample's district. However, when violence was raised during interviews with village and commune chiefs, the answer was always that there was no violence in that village or that commune. In each case when this assertion was pursued further, respondents admitted that there were occasional episodes of violence but that they were usually confined to the same four or five problematic families. The problem, then, is not solely stopping violence, but that the use of violence to discipline and even to teach children is considered so normal that it is not recognised as violence. As a result, it is not redressed and appears nowhere in the crime statistics. Not only this, but a high proportion of respondents approve of the use of this violence."<sup>61</sup>

It is commonly believed that violence is learned behaviour. All the men in the perpetrator group organised by PADV agreed that children learn this behaviour from their fathers.<sup>62</sup> Participants in Hilton's study also said they believed in a cycle of abuse, although the author cites a need for more research.<sup>63</sup>

Khmer culture does not proscribe domestic violence outright but it does encourage qualities that prevent violence, such as non-aggression, tolerance and forgiveness (although other traditions indicate tolerance of violence).<sup>64</sup> But these ideas may not have much power to influence behaviour. Of the 88 responses to survey on the characteristics of a good man, only five said that a good man does not commit domestic violence.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, one researcher suggests that part of masculinity is *kum*, or revenge or payback of a slight with interest.<sup>66</sup>

Acceptance of marital control by husbands, and in turn, acceptance of violence when a wife does not

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<sup>59</sup> Bearup, p. 27.

<sup>60</sup> Fordham (2005), p. 47.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>62</sup> Giles, p. 26.

<sup>63</sup> Hilton, p. 120.

<sup>64</sup> Giles, p. 101.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>66</sup> Fordham (2005), p. 73.

comply with her husband's expectations, is well documented. "Women were more likely than men to say it is justified for a man to forbid his wife to wear certain clothes, or to insist on knowing where his wife is at all times."<sup>67</sup> About half the men in the IWDA study said they had the right to exercise power and control over women.<sup>68</sup>

Surveys also show support for violence by husbands. More than half, 55%, of the women surveyed in the CDHS agreed with at least one reason to justify a husband beating his wife. "Women are least likely to consider that a husband is justified in beating his wife if she refuses to have sexual relations with him. Women are most likely to consider that a husband is justified in beating his wife if she neglects the children (45%)."<sup>69</sup>

In the governmental baseline survey on domestic violence, a significant number of respondents said that even extreme violence by husbands toward wives is sometimes acceptable. A full 30% of men, and 26% of women, said that throwing acid, stabbing or shooting – acts that can cause death – are sometimes acceptable. 21% of men and 26% of women said that burning or choking is sometimes acceptable. The study notes that "for all levels of violence except the most extreme category (throwing acid, stabbing or shooting) women showed greater acceptance of violence" than men.<sup>70</sup> Higher numbers of respondents said this violence was acceptable when a wife challenged her husband's dominance (by arguing, not obeying, questioning a husband about money or girlfriends, etc) than when the wife simply failed to fulfill her gender role.<sup>71</sup>

Notable among the variations among groups in this data is that young men aged 15 to 24 were more likely to see more extreme forms of violence as acceptable. "This indicates that despite rising education levels and a greater commitment to ending domestic violence by policymakers, attitudes about domestic violence have not improved. In contrast, they are generally static, and worsening in some groups."<sup>72</sup>

Research with men's groups by IWDA and PADV yielded similar results. IWDA cited a challenge to male power as the main cause of violence, and noted that more half the participants believed that women provoke men's violence behaviour.<sup>73</sup> "Men feel pressured to fulfill a masculine role and a failure to fulfill this role has a negative effect of a man's self esteem and sense of identity. When men feel that women do

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<sup>67</sup> Ministry of Women's Affairs (2005), p. 47.

<sup>68</sup> IWDA, p. 17.

<sup>69</sup> National Institute of Public Health and National Institute of Statistics, p. 274.

<sup>70</sup> Ministry of Women's Affairs (2005), p. 18.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>73</sup> IWDA, p. 38.

not understand this pressure it can be a trigger for violence.”<sup>74</sup> Respondents also said that some husbands use violence when their wives do not fulfill their traditional roles such as doing housework or caring for the children.<sup>75</sup>

In the PADV men’s groups, 27% said men were responsible for domestic violence, but 23% of these respondents cited a lack of mutual understanding, “implying dual responsibility of both husband and wife,”<sup>76</sup> and described the interactive nature of their relationships and any resulting violence.<sup>77</sup> Victim blaming was a “predominant response” to the question of responsibility and perpetrators complained that their wives were still provoking them even though the men had changed their ways.<sup>78</sup> Men repeatedly asked the PADV facilitators to meet with their wives to teach them the “rules of the lady.”<sup>79</sup>

Another factor may be a reaction to gender norms. In the IWDA study, “many men said their wives expect them to provide, and some men get frustrated because their wives do not understand this pressure. This in turn creates even more pressure, which sometimes results in violence.”<sup>80</sup>

Some attitudes show a clear rejection of domestic violence in Cambodia. The men in the IWDA study said that that “the dominant feeling violence arouses for people (men, women, boys and girls) is shame.”<sup>81</sup> In addition, the study noted “talking about the consequences of violence appeared to have a profound impact on the men. Several of the men who currently use violence made verbal commitments to stop following the discussion.” Men who did not use violence said they wanted to end violence against women because “bad men’ spoil their reputation.” Some men reported that they had successfully made a commitment not to use violence even though they experience violence from their parents.<sup>82</sup>

The PADV men’s groups also reported negative attitudes about other men who hit their wives.<sup>83</sup> However, it is noteworthy that “violence in isolation was less likely to attract criticism than were other types of unacceptable behaviours, such as public drunkenness, excessive gambling, social disruption and lack of

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>76</sup> Giles, p. 33.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., pp.102-103.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 103. See also pp. 34-36 on victim blaming.

<sup>80</sup> IWDA, p. 13.

<sup>81</sup> IWDA, p. 34.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Giles, p. 39.

respect for others.”<sup>84</sup>

Other factors may also play a significant role in causing violence. The baseline study reports that the most frequently cited influence on male behaviour toward women was lack of law enforcement, followed by male friends and peer pressure.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, domestic violence is not always seen as crime, but rather as a private matter.<sup>86</sup>

Once again, the research demonstrates contradictions in social norms for men. One study outlines two difference values systems.<sup>87</sup> It describes “pleasure indulgent masculinity” where men show commitment to their friends by socialising, drinking alcohol and seeking sex as a group. This is in opposition to the ideal of “self restraining masculinity” based on “traditions of filial piety, social harmony and self control.” As in other areas, there is a “noteworthy contrast between the private value systems men articulate and the standards that groups of men impose on one another.”<sup>88</sup> As a result, married men report “near-constant friction between demonstrating loyalty to the peer group and to their wives.”<sup>89</sup> Other studies focus more on pleasure seeking behaviour.<sup>90</sup>

The top answers on male characteristics related to sexuality from the men in the PADV groups were as follows:

- strong sexual desire, have sex until death, love at first glance
- having many sexual partners
- being the one who initiates sex
- forcing a woman to have sex
- having sex without thinking about the feelings of the partner.<sup>91</sup>

Men reported that it is “generally accepted, if not condoned, by men and women, that men will have

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>85</sup> Ministry of Women’s Affairs (2005), p. 23.

<sup>86</sup> Ministry of Women’s Affairs (2008), p. 135.

<sup>87</sup> PSI and FHI (2007) Let’s Go For a Walk: Sexual Decision-making Among Clients of Female Entertainment Workers in Phnom Penh, Cambodia (Phnom Penh).

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. iv.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 7. See also Giles, p. 84, which notes that men cannot be seen as being afraid of their wives.

<sup>90</sup> See also Soprach, Tong (2009) Young People Talking About Valentine’s Day in Phnom Penh in 2008: A Qualitative Study (Phnom Penh), p. 8, which notes that “males can seek sexual pleasure without being subject to a wide range of social sanctions.”

<sup>91</sup> Giles, p. 83.



multiple partners. Taking a second wife may be a sign of status.”<sup>92</sup>

*Let's Go For a Walk* describes a scenario where men pool their funds to go out for the night, beginning in restaurants and ending their evenings in brothels. The study says this scenario is common, and that group solidarity is “enormously important.”<sup>93</sup> This creates pressure for men to visit brothels with their friends. Some men say they are “powerless to resist” their friends, and must continue to brothel.<sup>94</sup> The men are admired by peers for having sex many times in a night and convincing women to have sex with them and for enthusiasm in seeking sex.<sup>95</sup> One reason it is difficult to opt out is cultural pressure to avoid conflict, makes it hard to refuse.<sup>96</sup> Although some men opt out when the group goes to a brothel, others say they admire them for this, although these men are subject to teasing and being called “womanly” or “like a girl.”<sup>97</sup>

This behaviour starts early. “The transition from boyhood to manhood is often marked by an initiation into sexual experience, and in Cambodia this often occurs with a sex worker while accompanied by friends.”<sup>98</sup> Similarly, as males come of age, a rite of passage occurs when they have more autonomy and freedom, shown by *dar leng* with friends.<sup>99</sup>

Sexual coercion and violence are not uncommon in Cambodia. As noted above, two of the most common male characteristics identified by the PADV men’s groups were forcing women to have sex, and having sex without thinking of the feelings of the partner.<sup>100</sup> The same study shows acceptance of marital rape. “Marital rape is not a part of the Khmer lexicon, except within human rights organisations, and is generally considered to be an aspect of a husband’s rights within the marriage.”<sup>101</sup> This confirms findings in the baseline study on domestic violence, which note “Although most respondents thought that men did not have the right to force their wives to have sex, only 55% thought that rape in marriage is a crime. Women were twice as likely as men to think that men are entitled to force their wives to have sex.”<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84. See also Roberts, Jenne (2009) *Preventing Spousal Transmission of HIV in Cambodia* (Phnom Penh: UNIFEM), p. 25, which cites general acceptance of “informal” polygamy and patronage of brothels and a belief that men have stronger sex drives, hence the entitlement to have sex with multiple partners, including sex workers.

<sup>93</sup> PSI and FHI, p. 13. See also Giles, p. . 84.

<sup>94</sup> PSI and FHI, p. 22.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22 and 7.

<sup>98</sup> Hilton, p. 54.

<sup>99</sup> Fordham (2005), p. 70. This study notes that this behaviour is also common in Laos and Thailand.

<sup>100</sup> Giles, p. 83.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>102</sup> Ministry of Women’s Affairs (2005), p. 57.

Several studies document the incidence and acceptance of *bauk*, which is gang rape, often of a sex worker. This is usually committed by younger men.<sup>103</sup> Studies speculate on several causes of *bauk*, including stress, the difficulty for youth to find jobs, decades of war and the “unresolved history of the Khmer Rouge,” peer pressure and pornography.<sup>104</sup> Bearup notes that short of willing partners and money, young people turn to gang members and *bauk* to affirm masculinity, and this creates a sense of ritual.<sup>105</sup>

Respondents in these studies showed an “extreme lack of empathy” with the woman, who was often deceived, coerced or even abducted by pulling her hair or slapping her until she complied.<sup>106</sup> This makes sense in a society where rape of a sex worker is not generally condemned because of her profession.<sup>107</sup> In addition, participants in one study did not make ethical distinctions between situations involving several men and one woman where the woman had been tricked (into being with several men) or where she gave consent.<sup>108</sup>

Respondents said they liked *bauk* because it affirmed their masculinity, and as a way to have fun with friends.<sup>109</sup> *Bauk* was also widely accepted by young people in general. Only 134% of male and 13% of female respondents said that *bauk* was wrong because of the lack of consent. The most common answer was that *bauk* was dangerous due to the risk of contracting STDs, reported by 33% of males and 40.7% of females.<sup>110</sup>

## 2.2. Contributing Factors to Violence

Studies identify several contributing factors, including alcohol abuse and pornography.

With regard to alcohol abuse, researchers characterise it as an overlooked issue.<sup>111</sup> Brickell and other sources called for more research on links between masculinity, violence and drinking alcohol.<sup>112</sup> However, researchers report that drinking alcohol is “a manly activity” and men face peer pressure to drink.<sup>113</sup> In

<sup>103</sup> PSI and FHI, p. 24.

<sup>104</sup> Soprach (2008), p. 35 and 40.

<sup>105</sup> Bearup, p. 94.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>107</sup> Giles, p. 100.

<sup>108</sup> PSI and FHI, p. 23.

<sup>109</sup> Bearup, p. 89. See also Soprach (2008), p. 15.

<sup>110</sup> Bearup, p. 29.

<sup>111</sup> Brickell (2008), p. 1668.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1674.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1672-1673.

group social situations that end up in a brothel, “the centrality of alcohol in men’s social lives cannot be overstated.”<sup>114</sup> With few jobs, “men want to demonstrate their power to show who is boss in the family” through increased use of alcohol. Due to frustration, it is seen as “natural” to drink.<sup>115</sup>

Fordham states that the context of drinking is a root cause of violence, as opposed to drinking phoek Si, as it is often associated with gambling, which can cause a man to lose his money, leading him to go him and demand more money from his wife. This can cause conflict.<sup>116</sup>

In another study, “Just over half of the men believe the main cause of violence is alcohol consumption yet slightly less than half of the participants believed that this is an excuse rather than a reason for violence ... Many men spoke about their inability to ‘control their mind’ when they drink and that a cause of violence is stress in the mind.”<sup>117</sup>

International studies shed more light on the link between alcohol and violence. “When stressed people drink, they tend to become violent” and to increase defensive activity and perception of being challenged.<sup>118</sup> In addition, researchers have noted an increased use of alcohol in Southeast Asia.<sup>119</sup> However, the role of alcohol in intimate partner violence is complex. It is important to acknowledge that alcohol is not a root cause of violence against women such as patriarchy and gender inequality in society. However, it is clearly a risk factor that we need to explore in more detail. Lee has suggested that alcohol may be used as an excuse for violence occurring in intimate relationships, which allows the victim to forgive the abuser. Others suggest that conflict when inebriated may be more likely to result in violence because of the effect of alcohol.<sup>120</sup> However, social anthropologists have argued that the connections between violence and drunkenness are socially learnt.<sup>121</sup>

Although there are few studies on the impact of pornography in this region,<sup>122</sup> some studies posit that pornography does have an influence on behaviour, especially among young people. These studies note an increasing amount of pornography coming into Cambodia and that these materials are violent.<sup>123</sup> In a

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<sup>114</sup> PSI and FHI, p. 20.

<sup>115</sup> Fordham (2005), pp. 65-66. See also IWDA.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> IWDA, p. 33.

<sup>118</sup> Fordham (2005), p. 67.

<sup>119</sup> Brickell (2008), p. 1668.

<sup>120</sup> See Lee (2007).

<sup>121</sup> Quoted in Jewkes et al. (2002), p. 1613.

<sup>122</sup> Fordham (2005), p. 25.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p. s 78 and 83.

study of Cambodian youth, Fordham found that pornography is “highly significant” in the lives of young people.<sup>124</sup> Only 16.5% of youth in the study had not seen it, and the mean age of exposure was 13.2 years of age, some much earlier.<sup>125</sup> A later study showed that “a significant proportion of Cambodia’s young people (both boys and girls) are exposed to extremely hard-core pornography, and that this has real impacts on their lives, whether they are directly exposed to pornography or whether their exposure is indirect.”<sup>126</sup>

Fordham states that this exposure has an influence on masculine and feminine behaviour.<sup>127</sup> He links pornography to increasing sexualisation of youth<sup>128</sup> and states that “pornography teaches young people sexual scripts, and if it is violent pornography they are violent scripts.”<sup>129</sup>

Female respondents in his studies reported that boys acted differently after viewing pornography. “As several girls put it, boys are not “gentle” any more and they speak “rudely” following exposure to pornography.”<sup>130</sup> More significantly, Fordham describes a link between pornography and rape. “It is highly likely that there is a direct link between the consumption of pornography by young people and sexual violence and rape—rape within marriage, gang rape (bauk) and, particularly, the rape of girl children by boys who themselves are minors or even in early adolescence.”<sup>131</sup> Fordham cites a 15-year-old boy who said he was unaware that he had committed rape by having sex with a five-year-old girl, because he was copying what he had seen on a VCD.<sup>132</sup> He notes “those who work with victims of bauk or child victims of rape see a direct link to increased access to pornography in the context of little sex education.”<sup>133</sup>

## 2.3 Responses to Violence

Several Cambodian studies document the experience of seeking help in a situation of domestic violence. The CDHS 2004 reports that one in three women who experienced violence asked someone for help, which was an increase from the 2000 CDHS, where one in five women sought help.<sup>134</sup> “Women were most likely to seek help from their own family (51%) or from some other source (46%).” The likelihood of seeking help was

<sup>124</sup> Fordham (2005), p. 25.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. s 78-79.

<sup>126</sup> Fordham, Graham (2006) “As If They Were Watching MY Body”: Pornography and the Development of Attitudes Towards Sex and Sexual Behaviour Among Cambodian Youth (Phnom Penh, World Vision), p. 93.

<sup>127</sup> Fordham (2005), p. 78.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> Fordham (2006), p. 51.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>131</sup> Fordham (2005), p. 21.

<sup>132</sup> Fordham (2006), p. 52.

<sup>133</sup> Fordham (2005), p. 87.

<sup>134</sup> National Institute of Public Health and National Institute of Statistics, p. 298.

linked to the identity of the perpetrator. “Women were least likely to have sought help if the perpetrator of violence was a person other than a husband (23%). By contrast, one third of women who experienced violence by their husband and others (38%) or women who experienced violence by a previous husband (53%) sought help.”<sup>135</sup>

In the earlier governmental baseline study, “the respondents said that women would be most likely to seek help from communal authorities or village elders, followed by police or the courts. Respondents said that a woman was less likely to seek help from a lawyer or legal aid or an NGO offering counselling or support, and least likely to ask for help from an agency that offers shelter, especially in cases of emotional abuse or rape in marriage. Respondents in urban areas and those with higher incomes said that a woman was more likely to seek help from an NGO. This may reflect the higher availability of NGOs in urban areas.”<sup>136</sup>

The baseline study pointed out that women’s “ability to get help when they are being abused is limited to options that are available or perceived to be available to them,” citing communal or village authorities, or the police, as the only avenues that are actually available.<sup>137</sup> “Far fewer cited the courts, which are often located far away. In fact, 38% of the sample said they would need to travel two hours to reach a court, and 27% of the respondents said they would need to travel up to six hours. Transportation costs to the courts averaged US\$4. Agencies that provide counselling, legal aid, or shelter were even less accessible.”<sup>138</sup>

The study notes that women are often unsuccessful in obtaining help. “Local authorities and police not only fail to enforce existing laws against violence, they also reported similar levels of acceptance of domestic violence as the general sample ... Other key resources (counselling, health centres, legal aid) are simply not available in most geographic areas.”<sup>139</sup>

Among the 330 respondents who reported that they sought help in the baseline study, more than half had sought a divorce, most often through communal authorities.<sup>140</sup> The study notes that “women and those with lower incomes were more likely to seek a divorce for physical abuse or injury or emotional abuse.” However, “the vast majority of the respondents who sought a divorce themselves were urged to reconcile by the authorities. 82% of the men and 96% of the women were urged to reconcile. The final result was that roughly three quarters of the respondents were reconciled.”<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ministry of Women’s Affairs (2005), p. 63.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

It is interesting to note that Fordham reports that although Westerners may favour divorce as a solution to domestic violence, Cambodian women do not want to divorce their husbands, because of social stigma, economic hardship, and the impact on children.<sup>142</sup>

### 3. Global and Regional Literature

#### 3.1. Regional Literature

The descriptions of domestic violence outlined in Cambodian studies show similarities with regional studies. One study documented a “complex web of interconnected systems that support and reinforce gender-based violence in their societies”<sup>143</sup> in 14 groups organised in Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand. Participants said their societies tended to blame the victims for such violence. Participants said that Theravada Buddhism, which has traditionally barred women from ordination, is a strong cultural force in their countries.<sup>144</sup> They noted that men have better access to education and cited several gender norms stressing that men are strong and women are weak. They noted that being born as a woman is a sign of bad karma.<sup>145</sup> Furthermore, they reported that these attitudes are reflected in legal and law enforcement systems.<sup>146</sup> Participants from Cambodia and Myanmar said their countries had strong traditions of violence overall, as well as a history of colonisation and subjugation.<sup>147</sup>

Similarly, in Vietnam, domestic violence is attributed to a “complex field of cultural forces that consists of a patrilineal tradition of ancestor worship, assumptions about females’ versus males’ character, Confucian virtues, and a history of war.”<sup>148</sup>

A study in Vietnam described a scenario illustrating cultural views of violence, as “hot” male characters would explode, as “cool” (and thus passive and flexible) females endured to ensure harmony.<sup>149</sup>

The study notes that men are deemed superior to women because they can reproduce the family lineage,

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<sup>142</sup> Fordham (2005), p. 93.

<sup>143</sup> Norsworthy, Kathryn L. (2003) ‘Understanding Violence Against Women in Southeast Asia: A Group Approach in Social Justice Work,’ *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, Vol. 25, No. 2/3, p. 148.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151-152.

<sup>148</sup> Rydstrom, Helle (2003) “Encountering ‘Hot’ Anger: Domestic Violence in Contemporary Vietnam” *Violence Against Women* 9, p. 676.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 676-677.

and they are heads of the household with responsibilities for important rituals.<sup>150</sup> On the other hand, “because of an inferior status, a female is expected to comply with the wishes of her husband and to endure if he demonstrates anger. Women often emphasised to me that they have to “swallow the pill” (nhin nhuc) if their husbands become angry and/or violent.”<sup>151</sup> Vietnamese wives are expected to respect and even fear their wives and fathers, as outlined in the Four Virtues.<sup>152</sup>

The study explains that many war veterans, some still suffering from malaria and other missing limbs due to the war, are known for their bad temper, and this can lead to violence. In such a case, as in others where a “hot” man “boils over,” the correct response is for a woman to remain “cool and enduring,” in order create harmony. This creates pressure on a woman to create harmony, and if she fails, she may be blamed for the violence herself.<sup>153</sup> Women who report domestic violence cases are counselled to go home to create harmony in their households.<sup>154</sup>

Similarly a Bangladesh proverb “Shongshar shukher hoy romonir guney” (Bangla proverb) explains that a “good woman” can make the household prosperous and the family happy. “Good woman” is defined by society as tolerant, shy, soft, giving, caring, respectful and obedient to elders etc. and by implication a woman who protests, challenges, demands is a “bad woman.”<sup>155</sup> “An important premise of masculinity has its source in the commonly accepted notion “shamir payer nichey behesth” (a woman’s heaven lies under the feet of her husband).”<sup>156</sup>

Themes of female purity, in contrast to male norms, are also common in the region. One study characterised this preoccupation with women’s reputation and the sexual purity in Asia to be “central in sustaining gender inequality, simultaneously justifying violence against women and depending upon such violence to reinforce hegemonic systems of gender differentiation and gender inequality.”<sup>157</sup>

Other studies have documented the impact of social isolation. With reference to South Asian communities, Venkataramani-Kothari argues that “family boundaries are clearly defined and a strict distinction is drawn

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p. 684.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> These virtues focus on household and family work to save the husband’s face, a gracious appearance, speaking softly and knowing one’s place being faithful and making sacrifices for a husband. Furthermore, the study notes that such idealized females are common throughout Southeast Asia. Ibid, p. 686-687.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p. 692.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., pp. 692-693.

<sup>155</sup> Gas, Gita R. (2007) Addressing Violence Against Women in Bangla Desh (presentation at WAM in Japan), p. 1.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Bennett and Manderson (2003), p. 9.

between insiders and outsiders. Each individual is made aware of the prohibition regarding exposing family information to the outside world.<sup>158</sup> Warrington reports that in the home, “once the doors are closed, what happens behind them, particularly if it concerns adults is seen as being of no concern of anyone else.”<sup>159</sup>

A study on four Pacific countries traced problems with mental health and violence to lack of opportunities for young people in rapidly changing societies.<sup>160</sup> The study notes that young people in Vanuatu are frustrated due to a lack of power and high unemployment, which leads them to “try to become powerful by being aggressive.”<sup>161</sup> Young people in Fiji are facing a population explosion and limited employment opportunities, which leads to social problems.<sup>162</sup> The study notes that alcohol plays a role in violent situations,<sup>163</sup> and reports that other studies show that “aggression is a factor of human nature and is triggered by unmet basic needs.”<sup>164</sup>

### 3.2. Global Literature

The WHO Multi-Country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence against Women<sup>165</sup> found that among women who had ever had a partner, the range of lifetime prevalence of physical or sexual violence, or both, by an intimate partner was 15% in urban areas of Japan to 71% in provincial areas of Ethiopia. Estimates at most sites ranged from 29% to 62%.<sup>166</sup>

The lifetime prevalence of physical violence ranged from 13% in urban areas of Japan to 61% in provincial areas of Peru. Prevalence at most sites fell between 23% and 49%. The prevalence of sexual violence by partners ranged from six percent in urban areas in Japan and Serbia and Montenegro to 59% in provincial areas in Ethiopia. The prevalence at most sites fell between 10% and 50%.<sup>167</sup>

The study noted several trends. In all parts of the study, urban areas of Japan consistently reported the lowest prevalence of all forms of violence. The highest prevalence rate was found in the provinces of

<sup>158</sup> Venkataramani-Kothari (2007) p. 14.

<sup>159</sup> Warrington (2001), p. 371.

<sup>160</sup> Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific (2004) *Masculinity, Mental Health & Violence: A Synopsis of Four Pacific Country Studies: Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Fiji and Kiribati* (Fiji: NZ Aid).

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>165</sup> The study, published in 2005, included research from the countries of Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, Japan, Namibia, Peru, Samoa, Serbia and Montenegro, Thailand and the United Republic of Tanzania.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*



Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Peru, and the United Republic of Tanzania.<sup>168</sup> In all the countries where surveys were conducted at two sites, except Thailand, the percentage of women reporting sexual abuse was higher in the provinces than in urban areas.<sup>169</sup>

The study also found variation in the overlap between physical and sexual violence. Most countries reported that “physical partner violence was almost always accompanied by sexual violence,”<sup>170</sup> with the exception of Thailand, Bangladesh and Ethiopia. Women who were separated or divorced or living with a partner without marriage reported a higher level of violence, as did younger women aged 15 to 24 years old and women with less education. As the authors note, these findings “reflect the fact that violence often starts early in partnerships, as well as the likelihood that separated women may have left violent relationships.”<sup>171</sup>

The study also collected data on controlling behaviour by intimate partners, which ranged from 21% in urban areas of Japan to 90% in urban areas in the United Republic of Tanzania.<sup>172</sup> The study also found a correlation between physical or sexual violence and these controlling behaviours. “For example, nearly 40% of women in Peru province who had ever suffered physical or sexual, violence, or both, by an intimate partner had experienced at least four of the controlling behaviours mentioned, compared with seven percent of women who had never experienced violence. This pattern holds true for all of the sites.”<sup>173</sup> The study noted that these findings were consistent with previous research in several different countries.

Other studies have documented the social isolation of women as a risk factor for partner violence.<sup>174</sup> Brown suggests,

The isolation of a wife is also determined by the degree of privacy a society traditionally assigns to the domestic sphere. In general when domestic activities take place almost entirely out of doors and in full view of the rest of the community, or when domestic activity is audible through thin house walls, it is less likely that women will be battered because others will step in. There is greater danger that wives will be abused when the domestic sphere is veiled in privacy.<sup>175</sup>

Similarly, Michalski argues that having a low degree of social isolation or strong network support contributes

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> See Warrington (2001); Hanmer (2000) and Neilsen et al. (1992).

<sup>175</sup> Brown (1992), p. 13.

to a low rate of domestic violence.<sup>176</sup>

Studies also confirm the role of childhood violence in laying the groundwork for abuse later on. There is strong evidence in other countries in the region and globally, those children who have either experienced violence themselves or witnessed violence when growing up are more likely to end up in a violence relationship, either as the perpetrator or victim.<sup>177</sup> Recent studies in the Pacific have also revealed this.<sup>178</sup> It is likely that children in violent homes learn to use violence rather than other more constructive methods to resolve conflicts.<sup>179</sup> It may also lead to permissive attitudes towards violence. There is further evidence from the region about the intergenerational transmission of violence noted in the section below.

Other studies have examined the role of alcohol abuse in contributing to domestic violence. Among partner characteristics, men's drinking patterns have been found to be associated with marital violence across various ethnic groups and classes in several developed and developing country settings.<sup>180</sup> Studies have also found that an abuser's alcohol use was related to a greater likelihood of physical injury.<sup>181</sup> However, the role of alcohol in intimate partner violence is complex. Historically, feminists have been hesitant to accept this association because it fails to deal with what they consider the root cause of violence, namely patriarchy and gender inequality in society.

As in Cambodian research, responses in the WHO study varied regarding the justification of violence against women. "Women appear to make distinctions regarding the circumstances under which wife beating may or may not be 'acceptable.' In all sites, substantially more women accept wife beating in the case of actual or suspected female infidelity than for any other reason. Wife beating is also widely tolerated in circumstances where women 'disobey' a husband or partner."<sup>182</sup> Furthermore, the study reported that in all countries except Thailand, acceptance of violence was much greater among women who had experienced such violence. "This may indicate either that women learn to 'accept' or rationalise violence in circumstances where they themselves are victims, or that women are at greater risk of violence in communities where a substantial proportion of individuals subscribe to the acceptability of violence."<sup>183</sup>

<sup>176</sup> Michalski, Joseph (2004).

<sup>177</sup> See Ellsberg et al. (1999); Jewkes and Abrahams (2002); Martin et al. (2002); Wekerle and Wolfe (1999); Whitfield et al. (2003).

<sup>178</sup> See SPC (2008) and (200

<sup>179</sup> See Lee (2007).

<sup>180</sup> See Cocker et al. (2000); Jewkes and Abrahams (2002); Koenig et al. (2003); Moraes and Reichenheim (2002); Rao (1997); Scott et al. (1999) and White and Chen (2002).

<sup>181</sup> See Brecklin (2002).

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., p. 41. This finding is also reminiscent of other research in Bangla Desh, showing that blaming the victim is a common response. Gas, p. 4.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

In addition, the study asked women if wives had the right to refuse sex with their husband. The study offered both a question that listed possible reasons why a wife might refuse, and also asked if a wife can refuse under any circumstance. Respondents answered differently, based on different reasons why a wife might want to refuse (such as being sick, if she does not want to, if the husband is drunk or if the husband mistreats her.) "In all sites, fewer women felt that a wife has the right to refuse to have sex because she does not want to than when her husband is drunk or abusive."<sup>184</sup> The proportion of women who said that a wife has a right to refuse sex to her husband under any circumstances varied widely among countries (from 15% in the provinces of the United Republic of Tanzania province to over 90% in urban areas in Brazil and Serbia and Montenegro and among different sites within countries (in Peru, from 40% in a provincial setting to 86% in the city).<sup>185</sup>

These findings on justification for violence a woman's limited rights to refuse sex to her husband are deeply intertwined with gender norms. The In-Depth Study on All Forms of Violence Against Women: Report of the (UN) Secretary-General<sup>186</sup> links violence to gender norms establishing male dominance. "Violence against women serves as a mechanism for maintaining male authority. When a woman is subjected to violence for transgressing social norms governing female sexuality and family roles, for example, the violence is not only individual but, through its punitive and controlling functions, also reinforces prevailing gender norms."<sup>187</sup> The study further notes that customs, traditions and religious values are often used to justify violence against women."<sup>188</sup>

The UN Secretary General's report lists several causes for domestic violence. The study notes that several countries have legal doctrines providing impunity for violence committed against family members or in the home, and also states that many countries do not prosecute domestic violence cases. The study also outlines several risk factors for domestic violence, as noted below:

- For an individual (perpetrators and victims): a history of abuse as a child; witnessing marital violence at home; frequent use of alcohol and drugs; low educational or economic status; and membership in marginalised and excluded communities.
- For a couple or family: male control of wealth and authority to make decisions; a history of marital conflict; and significant interpersonal disparities in economic, education or employment status.
- For a community: female isolation and lack of social support; attitudes that tolerate and legitimise

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> This report was published in 2006.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid. p. 29.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid. p. 30.

male violence; and high levels of social and economic disempowerment, including poverty.

- For society: gender roles that entrench male dominance and female subordination; and tolerance of violence as a means of conflict resolution.
- For the state: inadequate laws and policies for the prevention and punishment of violence; and limited awareness and sensitivity on the part of law enforcement officials, courts and social service providers.<sup>189</sup>

With regard to pornography, several international studies show that violent pornography leads to callous attitudes about rape and acceptance of this type of violence, as it lowers self-esteem among females.<sup>190</sup> Pornography “also creates unreasonable expectations about sex, increased demand by men that wife fulfils new desires, which can lead to fights.”<sup>191</sup>

In addition, the WHO study found that when women seek help, they do so mostly from informal sources, such as family, friends and neighbours. The study attributed the lesser use of formal services primarily to a limited availability.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid. p. 34.

<sup>190</sup> Fordham (2005), p. 84.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid. p. 86. See also Fordham (2006) p. s 48-49 for an overview of international studies on the link between violent pornography and aggression, including rape.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid. p. 87.



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