



COMMUNITY RESPONSES  
TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN  
PILOT EVALUATION



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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In line with This Life Cambodia's mission to listen to, engage with and advocate alongside communities, the work of This Life Cambodia's Community Research and Consultancy Program (CRCP) translates community voices into new knowledge, which can then be used to inform good practice programming and as a tool to advocate for positive change.

This evaluation was conducted in collaboration with This Life Cambodia's CRVAW Program team, who gave their valuable input into the design of the M&E Framework and data collection tools, organised the logistics of data collection, and connected CRCP with program participants. We thank them for their dedication and willing support and also for sharing their own experience and perspectives.

We would also like to extend our thanks to the participants in this evaluation, including the local authorities of Chi Kraeng commune, the Commune Committee for Women & Children, the Lower Secondary School Support Committee, teachers, and Student Council, and the many other community members who volunteered to participate in conversations about the program. The CRVAW program relies on their leadership and commitment and this evaluation would be incomplete without their voices.

Finally, we would like to thank our partners in the inter-agency pilot project. Investing in Children and their Societies (ICS) and Transcultural Psychosocial Organisation (TPO) each brought specific programming components to the ambitious interagency program, conceptualised collaboratively and financed by ICS.

# ACRONYMS

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| CCWC   | Commune Committee for Women & Children                               |
| CRVAW  | Community Responses to Violence Against Women program                |
| DV     | Domestic Violence  |
| ICS    | Investing in Children and their Societies                            |
| LPDVPV | Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims |
| MoWA   | Ministry of Women's Affairs  |
| NAPVAW | National Action Plan to end Violence Against Women (2014-2018)       |
| SSC    | School Support Committee   |
| TPO    | Transcultural Psychosocial Organisation                              |
| TLC    | This Life Cambodia   |
| VAW    | Violence Against Women   |
| VAWC   | Violence Against Women & Children                                    |

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# INTRODUCTION

The Community Responses to Violence Against Women (CRVAW) pilot program implemented by This Life Cambodia applied a community development framework for empowering community members to tackle the complex issues of domestic violence and violence against women and children at the grassroots level.

Grounded in the philosophy that communities are the experts in their own development, the program supported commune level action by: engaging with commune and village authorities to act on their own priorities for prevention and response (including the Commune Council, Commune Council for Women & Children, village chiefs and commune police); mobilising school community members to promote gender equality and support students who may be experiencing violence (teachers, Student Council, School Support Committee, and students at the Lower Secondary School); and by providing platforms for wider community conversations and awareness raising.

CRVAW was one part of an interagency pilot program by the same name, funded by Investing in Children and their Societies (ICS) and comprising interventions led by ICS, Transcultural Psychosocial Organisation (TPO), and This Life Cambodia. Activities were implemented in Chi Kraeng Commune, Siem Reap Province, from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2014 to 15<sup>th</sup> July 2015. The partnership was designed as a 3-5 year intervention, however ultimately ran for one year.

This report presents the achievements and outcomes from the three integrated project components of the CRVAW approach implemented by This Life Cambodia. Lessons learned and recommendations for future programming are also presented. This Life Cambodia is now building on this experience and evidence base to develop and reinforce these approaches in a *This Life Without Violence* program.

## A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

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

Community participants in the *Community Views on Violence Against Women in Chi Kraeng* research (TLC, 2014) and throughout the implementation of the CRVAW program referred mainly to 'violence in the family' or '**domestic violence**' to describe the situation in their community. Thus the term 'domestic violence' (DV) is used most commonly throughout this report as a term encompassing different forms of violence in the home, including but not limited to: gender based violence, violence against women, violence against children, or violence against any other family member. Violence may be perpetrated by persons of any gender, however international and local research frames domestic violence in Cambodia as a strongly gendered issue, and one of the most significant, yet under-reported forms of violence against women.



## BACKGROUND

In 2013, This Life Cambodia began research to prepare the foundations for a program to address one of the highest priority issues consistently identified during community consultation processes throughout This Life Cambodia programming. Domestic violence was repeatedly raised as a high priority particularly in Chi Kraeng Commune, where This Life Cambodia was implementing two programs, including the Lower Secondary School Development Program, and This Life Beyond Bars<sup>1</sup>.

In the same year, Partners for Prevention released alarming statistics on the prevalence and risk factors for violence perpetrated towards women by men, and UNICEF produced the first statistically representative study on the prevalence of violence against children in Cambodia. At a national policy level, the Royal Government of Cambodia's National Action Plan to End Violence Against Women highlights domestic violence (DV) as "the most widespread yet unreported" form of violence against women and a serious concern for Cambodian society (NAPVAW 2014-2018).

In response, and in line with international and local good practice guidelines that recommend interagency collaboration and interventions tailored to local contexts (UN 2013, NAPVAW 2014), an interagency partnership program was funded by ICS, comprising interventions led by This Life Cambodia, ICS, and Transcultural Psychosocial Organisation (TPO).

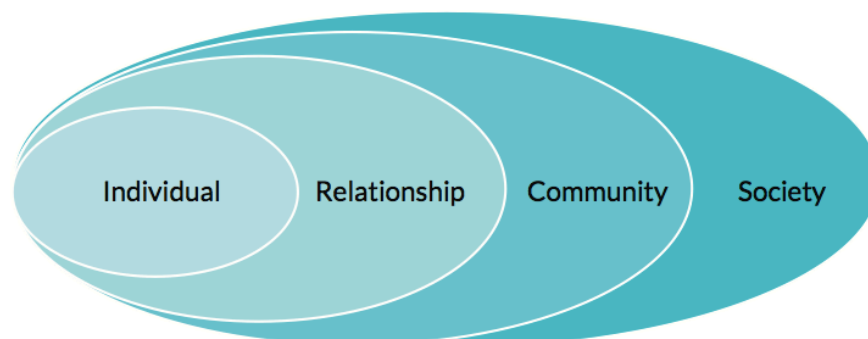
A key feature of the theoretical basis for This Life Cambodia's approach within this partnership was the concept of '**risk factors**'. The ecological framework developed by Heise, as outlined in the below diagram and table, distinguishes risk factors at four levels: the individual, the relationship, the community and society. These factors are associated with an increased likelihood that an individual will become a victim or a perpetrator of

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.thislifecambodia.org](http://www.thislifecambodia.org)

violence. This model offers a framework for understanding the risk factors of violence against women and children and is often used to guide the design of interventions in the fields of prevention and response (UNFPA & WAVE 2014).

**Diagram 1: The Ecological Framework**



Source: Heise 1998

Importantly, in and of themselves, risk factors do not cause a person to be violent or to experience violence, and people behave differently when faced with similar situations. While discussions of social issues often refer to 'root causes', use of the term when working in domestic violence or violence against women is problematic. 'Root causes' are sometimes used to refer to risk factors such as alcohol use or strongly held beliefs about traditional gender roles, and the use of the term cause can minimise, justify, or diminish the perpetrators responsibility for the violent behaviour

Violence against women is associated with a complex interplay of risk factors at the individual, relationship, community and greater society levels, which cannot be understood in isolation (Partners for Prevention, 2013). It is well understood that simply addressing one risk factor - such as alcohol abuse or gambling, for example - will not end violence against women. However, findings of the Partners for Prevention study suggest that the majority of risk factors associated with men's perpetration of violence can be changed.

**Table 1 Common Risk Factors for Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence**

|                    | Perpetration by men   | Victimization of women   |
|--------------------|---|--|
| Individual level   | Demographics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low income</li> <li>• Low education</li> </ul>                   | Demographics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young age</li> <li>• Low education</li> <li>• Separated/ divorced marital status</li> </ul> |
|                    | Child maltreatment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexual abuse</li> <li>• Intra-parental violence</li> </ul> | Child maltreatment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intra-parental violence</li> </ul>  |
|                    | Mental disorder: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti-social personality disorders</li> </ul>                  | Mental disorder: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depression</li> </ul>  |
|                    | Substance abuse: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harmful use of alcohol</li> <li>• Illicit drug use</li> </ul> | Substance abuse: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harmful use of alcohol</li> <li>• Illicit drug use</li> </ul>                            |
|                    | Acceptance of violence  | Acceptance of violence   |
| Relationship level | Multiple partners/infidelity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low resistance to peer pressure</li> </ul>        |  |
| Community level    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weak community sanctions</li> <li>• Poverty</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weak community sanctions</li> <li>• Poverty</li> </ul>  |
| Societal level     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional gender norms and social norms supportive of violence</li> </ul>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional gender norms and social norms supportive of violence</li> </ul>                               |

Source: WHO/LSHTM (2010)

## COMMUNITY CONTEXT

### Community Views on Violence Against Women

Chi Kraeng Commune is situated in Chi Kraeng District, Siem Reap Province, about 75 km from Siem Reap City. It is one of 12 communes in Chi Kraeng District and is made up of 14 villages. The primary industries for families are agriculture and local business. Since 2011, TLC's ongoing community consultations with the Chi Kraeng Commune led by This Life Beyond Bars (TLBB) and the Lower Secondary School Development Program (LSSDP) repeatedly highlighted the need for a community-led response to domestic violence and its complex risk factors. The Chi Kraeng Commune also highlighted domestic violence as a priority issue in other forums such as their Commune Investment Plan, which is provided to a number of Government departments to inform national plans of action.

International good practice and national policy initiatives in Cambodia stress the need for localised, context specific interventions. Accordingly, the first step in program design was an in-depth qualitative and mapping study to develop a local understanding of community views on the nature, prevalence, and impacts of VAW, and to make recommendations on which to base program interventions.

This Life Cambodia, with funding from ICS, undertook the *Community Views on Violence in Chi Kraeng Commune* research in 2014. The research confirmed violence against women as one of the highest priorities in the commune, according to commune leaders, students and other community members who participated in interviews or focus groups. In addition to the impacts of domestic violence on women and other victims of domestic violence, most participants were also concerned about the devastating impact of domestic violence on children, with many sharing stories of children feeling scared, being separated from family, dropping out of school, and being unable to focus on study.

While some participants of the study recognized that the fundamental underpinning factors of domestic violence are based in gender inequality and dominant gender norms, for most it was the risk factors, individual, social and economic, that were viewed as the primary "causes" of violence against women, including alcohol misuse, gambling, poverty, because women refuse sex and many men have extra marital partners (This Life Cambodia, 2014, P24-5). Community members and civil service organisations often minimized the significance of violence by suggesting that it was caused by women's own behaviour, for example gambling or not completing household chores.

According to research participants, the most common process for dealing with reported cases of domestic violence in Chi Kraeng was to seek help and support via local authorities, however the research highlighted a number of gaps in their skills and knowledge to deal with individual cases. Local authority members later confirmed this as a high priority at the program planning and consultation workshops. There were also a number of local level barriers that prevent help-seeking behaviour including the shame experienced by women and families who are involved in domestic violence; the notion that domestic violence is a private issue; petty corruption, and a lack of support for women who experience domestic violence (ibid, P8).

The research explored potential for strategies for primary prevention, early intervention, protection and response. The approaches recommended were evidence-based, supported in the *Partners for Prevention study* (UNICEF 2013), and aligned with the *National Action Plan for Violence Against Women 2014-18*.

The research process established foundations for capacity building and community engagement, by providing an opportunity for the voices of Chi Kraeng Commune members

to be heard and translated into new knowledge to be used for positive change, in accordance with TLCs mission to listen to, engage with and advocate alongside communities.

**Key Recommendations from *Community Views on Violence Against Women in Chi Kraeng Commune (TLC, 2014)***

**Education Sector**

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

**Local Authority Sector**

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

**Community Sector**

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

**Health Sector**

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

**Family Sector**

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

## Baseline Statistics

ICS also commissioned a baseline study (CDRI, 2015) from which to measure and evaluate the community impact of the interagency project over the longer term. The household survey sample consisted of 25 men and 25 women, where possible, from the same households from each of seven villages in Chi Kraeng and one control commune for comparison.

### ***Summary of Baseline Report Findings (CDRI, 2015)***

- 73% of male respondents had committed at least one act of abuse in the 12 months prior to the survey, reported as emotional abuse 63%, economic abuse 40%, physical abuse 9% and sexual abuse 7%;
- 71% of female respondents had experienced at least one abusive act in the previous 12 months, reported as emotional abuse 67%, economic abuse 35%, physical abuse 15% and sexual abuse 19%;
- When asked about causes for violence, participants focused on individual factors including alcohol, drugs, gambling, sex outside of marriage and strong sexual desire.
- Both males and females reported their belief that the use of alcohol is a primary cause of emotional abuse, economic abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse.
- While 98% of men and 100% of women in Chi Kraeng agreed with the statement that “people should be treated the same whether they were male or female”, 58% and 54% also agreed with the statement that “if a wife does something wrong her husband has the right to punish her”.
- 80% of men and 83% of women surveyed in Chi Kraeng agreed with the statement that “a woman should tolerate violence in order to keep her family together”; however only 35% of men and 30% of women in Chi Kraeng agreed with the statement that “there are times when a woman deserves to be beaten”.
- Coping strategies for one third of respondents included approaching parents or family for emotional or economic abuse, the second third approached the local authority, and those suffering physical or sexual abuse if they sought assistance at all it was from the local authority including village chiefs and police.



# EVALUATION METHODS

This evaluation used primarily qualitative methods to understand the outcomes of the CRVAW pilot program from the perspective of the community members who participated in training and capacity building activities and who implemented actions in partnership with This Life Cambodia and partner organisations.

Evaluation data collection was conducted at the end of the pilot year, in July 2015. Monitoring data on participant feedback and participation in activities was also collected in the course of implementation.

## **Evaluation Guiding Questions:**

- What was the process of 'getting started' in the pilot program?
- How well did each of the 3 This Life Cambodia projects achieve expected outcomes?
- How well did This Life Cambodia program activities reflect community priorities?
- How effective and efficient was the multi-agency partnership?
- How well does the program align with the wider context of initiatives to end violence against women and children in Cambodia?

## EVALUATION INPUTS

This evaluation draws on CRCP team observations, participant feedback, and reflections of program staff, which were gathered throughout implementation. This report also presents findings of interviews and focus groups conducted in July 2015, at the end of the pilot year, as summarised below:

**Table 2: Summary of focus groups and interviews conducted for end of year evaluation**

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Local Authority Project | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commune Council Focus Group</li> <li>• CCWC Focus Group</li> <li>• Commune Chief Interview</li> </ul>  |
| School Project          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Council Focus Group</li> </ul>   |
| Community Project       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Members Focus Group</li> </ul>   |
| Program Staff           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program Coordinator Interview (F)</li> <li>• Local Authority Project Officer Interview (M)</li> <li>• School Project Officer Interview (F)</li> <li>• Community Project Officer Interview (M)</li> </ul> |

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

### Consent to Participate

A script for verbal consent was used to provide clear information to participants about the purpose of the focus group or interview prior to them giving their consent to be involved. It was explained to participants that they did not have to answer any questions they did not feel comfortable answering and that they were not required to participate. The team was also conscious that members of local governance groups would likely see their participation in the evaluation as part of their duties in their role, and so questionnaires were carefully designed to respect this dynamic.

#### **Free Prior Informed Consent**

- Free: participants were free to withdraw consent at any time
- Prior: decision to consent was made before interviews or focus groups commenced
- Informed: concise information about the research was given prior to consent

### Maintaining confidentiality & reducing risk

The aim of this evaluation was not to gather personal information about participants' own experiences of domestic violence. However it was recognised that disclosure of personal experiences of violence may occur during interviews and focus groups. Focus Groups were conducted with groups whose members knew each other well, who met often to discuss these issues, and who held responsibility as local authorities (with the exception of the Community focus group). Referral pathways were in place through the CRVAW team and partner organisations if needed.

The dynamics of violent relationships can present a risk of further violence if details are shared outside of the family. For this reason, the confidentiality of information collected during evaluation focus groups and interviews was of fundamental importance. We implemented a number of mechanisms to protect the confidentiality of the information collected, including:

- Evaluation tools were carefully designed to focus on the experiences of beneficiaries of the program, who were engaged based on their role as leaders in their community and not based on personal experiences of violence.
- Referral pathways through the CRVAW team were in place to respond to any adverse outcomes or disclosure from participants, and a member of the CRVAW team was present at each focus group.
- Questionnaires were designed to gather information about participants' views on the experience of unnamed others and their impressions of the issue in their community generally.
- No direct questions were asked about specific incidences of violence. Some participants shared information about specific cases in their community, however this information was generalised.
- It was explained to participants that no names would be recorded in transcripts or published in reports.

### Mature minors

It was established that this evaluation presented minimal risk to young participants. Young participants in this evaluation were Student Council members, and as such, in this role, were established by CRVAW staff and teachers to be mature enough to make an informed choice about whether or not to be involved. They were guided through the same verbal informed consent process as adult participants. Although some concern exists about young people's ability to consent to research without their parents' approval, in Australia the law says a minor (under 18 years) is capable of giving informed consent if they are considered to have sufficient understanding and intelligence to be able to understand fully what is proposed.

## LIMITATIONS

Measurement of the impact of interventions for prevention and responses to violence are complex, particularly within a short implementation timeframe. This evaluation is thus a narrative of the design and development of the pilot, presented alongside reflections from program participants and stakeholders including community members and implementing staff, collected at the end of the 12-month funding period. The findings focus on learning and capacity development outcomes with the recognition that a longer timeframe would be necessary to further analyse how knowledge had been put to use in practical ways. Finally, in order to keep the evaluation achievable with the available resources, this evaluation sought perspectives of only those who had been directly engaged in the program activities. This Life Cambodia's interventions under CRVAW were focused on empowering community actors to prevent and respond to violence, rather than on delivering direct services for victims or direct interventions with perpetrators. In future, developing an understanding of the direct experience of victims and perpetrators in the context of their community's response may be a valuable element of a longer-term evaluation, and this may be considered for M&E in future iterations of this program model.



# FINDINGS

This chapter documents the process of developing the CRVAW pilot project, and explores outcomes and challenges from the perspective of program stakeholders in each of This Life Cambodia's three interdependent project components: the Local Authority Project, the School Project and the Community project.

## ESTABLISHING GOOD PRACTICES

### Interagency partnership

It is well evidenced, in particular by the *UN Multi-Country Study on Men and Violence in the Asia-Pacific Region* (Fulu et al, 2013), that effective prevention and response to violence against women requires comprehensive, longer-term, and coordinated strategies that engage key actors in various sectors.

The CRVAW interagency partnership aimed to bring together resources and expertise in a partnership between civil society organisations and the community, for a coordinated, comprehensive and holistic response. Following the recommendations of the *Community Views on Violence Against Women* research (TLC, 2015), the partnership was designed to implement targeted intervention projects on the individual, family and community levels via 5 sectors: education (TLC), local authority (TLC), community (TLC), family (ICS), and mental health (TPO).

The interagency partnership aimed to address a number of risk factors while assisting the commune in promoting protective factors, leading to a meaningful response to violence

against women and children. This Life Cambodia brought experience in community development and capacity building and an already established relationship with Chi Kraeng Commune; TPO brought critical expertise and programming on mental health and psychosocial support; ICS brought experience in increasing economic opportunities for youth and an already developed a skillful parenting program.

During evaluation focus groups, community participants were asked to share their perspectives and experience of the interagency programming in their commune. Overall, respondents had a clear understanding that three organisations were working in partnership on DV issues and about which activities were conducted by each organisation. The Commune Chief and Commune Council in particular were appreciative of the amount of focus and attention brought to DV issues by the interagency program:

*"Thank you for bringing two other organisations to work here [on this issue]. You chose not to just do it yourself, but helped us find support from other organisations also" (Commune Chief)*

While partnerships have a myriad of benefits, they are not always easy, and the program faced some common challenges of interagency programs. At a strategic level these included: difficulties in establishing meaningful and measureable objectives that unified the separate approaches of partner agencies; lack of success in securing ongoing funding beyond the pilot year; and perhaps most importantly, a lack of well-established shared values to guide collaboration and ways of working at implementation level.

The CRVAW program team, in individual interviews, also noted related challenges in partnership at the implementation level. A major challenge for implementing staff was in managing the competing demands on the time of key community stakeholders participating in program activities. Another expressed challenge was that while good efforts were made by partners to collaborate at the community level – with each agency inviting the key staff of partner agencies to be involved in activities such as workshops and community events – there was a generally weak understanding of each organisation's strategic approaches and programming activities, ultimately preventing more meaningful collaboration.

Given these challenges, the decision was made to dissolve the partnership after the initial 12 months, although each agency independently continued delivering activities beyond this timeframe.

### **Community-led approaches**

One of the strongest positive outcomes of the program has been the high level of engagement from the Commune Council, Commune Committee for Women & Children (CCWC), School Support Committee (SSC), teachers, students, and Chi Kraeng citizens more generally. In the evaluation interviews and focus groups CRVAW program staff highly appreciated the willingness and commitment shown by local authorities, who in turn expressed their appreciation for the participatory approach summarised below.

*"We know that This Life Cambodia responds to the community's prioritised needs, so our relationship gets better and better to solve those issues" (Commune Chief)*

**Figure: Participatory approach to program design**



As a first step, a summary of the findings of *Community Views on Violence Against Women in Chi Kraeng Commune* (TLC, 2014) was presented back to the commune authorities for verification and as an opportunity to introduce each of the three NGOs in the interagency partnership. Local authority representatives strongly supported the accuracy of the findings and confirmed their commitment to the program.

Next, This Life Cambodia held a Participatory Planning Workshop with the 14 village chiefs, Commune Council members, school stakeholders and representatives from the commune health center, to discuss the implications of the findings, and to prioritise problems, risk factors and possible solutions. The output was a prioritised list of concrete actions, with a strong focus on training and awareness raising activities.

This approach built on This Life Cambodia's past success in implementing community-driven programming that not only responds to community priorities but also engages key actors in designing the responses, based on a participatory action learning cycle that is followed annually for three years:

#### **Community engagement & action learning cycle**



In practice, a community-driven intervention, particularly in the education, local authority and community sectors, aligns well with theories of change for ending violence against women that assert that: interventions must be tailored and based on analysis of the particular context, primary responsibility must rest with the state, and holistic and multi-sectorial approaches are more likely to have impact.

In the end of year evaluation focus groups, local authority and CCWC members were asked to reflect on their engagement with This Life Cambodia, and on how well This Life Cambodia activities responded to actual community needs. The Commune Chief in particular clearly articulated an understanding and appreciation of the participatory approach to empowering personal and community action. Further, participants in every evaluation focus group confirmed that CRVAW activities responded to their priorities by ensuring DV was on the agenda for action.

*"This Life Cambodia engages the community in discussion and staff members have good ability to engage and involve everyone. For every project idea, they never decide themselves, they always discuss with commune authorities. They also do not discriminate against regular villagers – it's a close way to do development" (Commune Chief).*

Given the shortened timeframe, many community priorities have not yet been acted upon, and ending violence against women is, of course, a long-term and complex goal. However, the findings in this evaluative process that citizens of Chi Kraeng commune have been able to participate in guiding the program in meaningful ways is a strong indicator of sustainability, and the program was able to act on many of community's identified priorities as groundwork in the first year.

### **Alignment with national policies and initiatives**

A key priority for the implementation of CRVAW, on behalf of This Life Cambodia as well as local authority members, was that it would strengthen capacity at the grassroots level to engage with national level policies:

*"I believe [TLC] activities are related to the development of the commune and of families. The activities empower decentralisation and are linked to the government plans for gender and women's empowerment in Cambodia" (Commune Chief)*

When asked about their personal views on what would end violence against women in Cambodia, each of the CRVAW program staff also highlighted the importance of alignment with national policy initiatives from the grassroots to the national level:

*"If we want something sustainable to happen, we have to follow the NAPVAW...I think the commune, after we build their understanding and they know their roles and responsibilities and people start understanding, [it will mean that] we have worked to help them reduce DV in their community. And you know, DV cannot be reduced in one day or one year, we have to spend more time, around 5 or 10 years. But we have to follow the strategic plan of the government as well so it can be sustainable in the community" (CRVAW Program Coordinator)*

**Table: comparison of NAPVAW Strategies and CRVAW activities**

| NAPVAW Strategies  | Relevant specifics  | CRVAW Activities   |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Strategy 1</b><br><b>Primary Prevention:</b><br>Reduce VAW through a multi-sectoral primary prevention strategy targeting key actors and settings for positive change   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase coordination and cooperation at all levels, government, NGO and civil society in primary prevention</li> <li>• Increase knowledge and skills of children and young people for gender equitable and non-violent relationships</li> <li>• Enhance capacity of education institutions to respond to VAW</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Governance capacity building on gender and DV issues</li> <li>• Student Council capacity building</li> <li>• Student workshops</li> <li>• Teacher and School Support Committee training</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Strategy 2</b><br><b>Legal protection and multi-sectoral services:</b><br>Increase provision of easily accessible, appropriate, quality services and coordinated response to the varied need of all survivors of violence against women without discrimination                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance coordination and cooperation at all levels, government, NGO and civil society</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage in an interagency partnership, and formal partnership with Commune authorities</li> <li>• Local Governance capacity building on gender, law and reconciliation.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Strategies 3-5:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formulating/implementing policies and laws</li> <li>• Capacity Building of key sectors at national level</li> <li>• Review, Monitoring &amp; Evaluation for evidence-based reporting and implementation of NAPVAW 2014-2018</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National level focus</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity building at the local (commune) level, aligning with national level policy initiatives</li> <li>• Local Governance capacity building for recording and monitoring data</li> <li>• Organisational commitment to evidence-based practice, M&amp;E, and sharing of lessons learned</li> </ul> |

### Staff training & capacity building

This Life Cambodia employed a team of three Program Officers and a Program Coordinator supported by a Program Advisor (Australian Volunteer for International Development). Two of the three original Project Officers were transferred from other program areas within the organisation, and so brought with them experience in This Life Cambodia's community engagement approaches. The third Project Officer was employed specifically for the role of Community Project Officer with a background in general psychology and experience in the drug and alcohol field. The Program Coordinator had worked in legal services as an advocate and community development officer in the area of women and children's issues.

The first step was to adapt This Life Cambodia's community-led approach to focus specifically on the issue of violence against women, while collating and building on the

numerous training manuals developed in Cambodia by government departments in partnership with international NGOs, on implementation of the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Protection of Victims (LPDVPV) and focusing on awareness raising and implementation activities.

It is also essential that facilitators working in the domestic violence field understand and are able to reflect on the importance of beliefs, personal attitudes and behaviour, and to engage with these in critical, yet respectful ways. From working with people who may know the facilitators or their family situation, to being able to impart knowledge and skills focused on victim safety and perpetrator accountability, facilitators need to act as positive role models as well as being able to respond to sometimes confronting questions and situations with tact, while both respecting the person and challenging what they are saying. This requires experience in critically engaging with complex concepts and beliefs. Staff training and team development was thus an essential phase in preparation for implementation of the pilot, and reflection and critical engagement with these issues continued throughout:

*"It quickly became evident that the focus of the program staff was on delivering training on the LPDVPV with the belief that when people became aware of the law they would change their behaviour. The focus of preparation at that stage was on legal training alone...Through critically engaging with concepts including beliefs and myths, risk factors, gender equality and equity, and the importance of victim safety, the officers became informed and passionate about informing others of their understanding and knowledge of the dynamics of domestic violence. Discussions and learning opportunities throughout the implementation phase were frequent and fruitful." (Program Advisor)*

The CRVAW team carefully constructed the program goal and aims to include elements of both prevention and response. The underpinning philosophy was focused on victim safety and perpetrator accountability, recognising that conceptualising gender based violence as a "women's issue" suggests that women are responsible for stopping the violence perpetrated against them, rather than men being responsible for stopping what is overwhelmingly a male use of violence against women. While there is much research consensus that the perpetration of domestic violence in Cambodia is influenced by societal level risk factors including rigid gender norms, a challenge is that risk factors at the individual level are often misperceived or misunderstood as *causes* of violence, for example; alcohol misuse, women's refusal of sex, gambling, or neglect of household chores. In evaluation interviews several CRVAW staff explained how they had critically engaged with this and other issues in their program, and each team member spoke about prioritising safety through their project:

*"I thought [ending] DV was all about training around DV law, but I've changed my mind, that it's not only about law. There should be other issues that we raise in the community and build their capacity and understanding around that. Change their thinking also." (CRVAW team member)*

*'We did a great deal of preparation before delivering workshops and training and this included how to respond to people who disclose being a victim or perpetrator of violence. We did many role-plays to ensure our responses were non-judgemental and continued to engage the person. We would then talk to them about a referral to TPO or ICS if they lived in the villages that they were working in.' (Program Advisor)*

## LOCAL GOVERNANCE PROJECT

The aim of the Local Governance Project was to: *collaborate with the local authorities and partner NGOs to build a system of response that prioritises safety of women and children and holds perpetrators to account.*

| Completed Activities  | Expected Outcomes   |
|---|---|
| Participatory Planning Workshop   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local authorities are engaged in prioritising and designing actions appropriate to their commune</li> <li>Local authority members and CCWC have increased confidence to support people who come to them with DV issues</li> <li>Victims have increased confidence in the abilities of local authorities and CCWC to intervene and support them</li> <li>Stronger, more useful data is collected about DV in the commune</li> </ul> |
| CCWC Monthly Meetings (x7)  |   |
| Commune Council Meetings (x2)   |   |
| Training Sessions (each delivered to 2 groups): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Domestic Violence</li> <li>2) Gender Equality</li> <li>3) Reconciliation &amp; Mediation</li> </ol> |   |

The Local Governance Project worked to build the capacity of existing sub-national mechanisms and networks to enhance their ability to better respond to individual cases of domestic violence in both formal and informal ways by increasing their awareness and assisting them in developing their skills and confidence. The approach prioritised the safety of women and children and holding perpetrators to account. This project worked in partnership, through consultation and participatory planning, with the Commune Council and Village Chiefs, the Commune Police, and the Commune Council for Women and Children, to provide training about the dynamics of domestic violence, gender, reconciliation and law.

Local governance members hold pivotal roles essential in the system of response. The program focused on provision of activities for all key people in local governance positions in the whole commune rather than targeting certain villages, in recognition of the importance of the commune structures and potential reach of the local governance mechanisms, and in recognition of the importance of consistent and rapid local responses to requests for assistance, while prioritising safety. It was important to engage with this cross section of community authorities authority to improve their response to incidences of violence as well as involving as many people as possible to enable on-going discussions and village level implementation.

The LPDVPV was proclaimed in 2005 and in the 10 years since, the Government, with some assistance from civil society organizations, has delivered domestic violence awareness-raising training and implementation training across Cambodia. As highlighted in various reports including the National Action Plan on Domestic Violence, this training has been delivered mostly in urban areas and has not effectively reached many rural communes and districts. Many local authority members in Chi Kraeng reported facing challenges in terms of lacking the resources, skills and knowledge to deal with cases efficiently and effectively, despite some having previously received training in this area. This finding is echoed in communes across Cambodia, with MoWA having identified a key challenge for survivors seeking services is that that local authorities often lack the skills to provide safe, survivor-centred interventions (MoWA, 2014). This highlights the need for more tailored training and resourcing for local authorities in rural areas, to enable them to confidently respond to individual cases of VAW, and a deeper understanding of the barriers that prevent them undertaking this role.

While the CRVAW research provided the rationale and suggested direction for program content This Life Cambodia actively involves communities in decision making about the activities we will deliver in their communities. The Community Planning Workshop was key in engaging Local Authority and CCWC in priority setting and decision making, and This Life Cambodia facilitated on-going consultation on planning of activities, the involvement of CCWC and LA members in community workshops and events, as well as ensuring that activities were successively building on, rather than repeating, previous Local Governance trainings.

Participants in the Local Governance Project included the Commune Chief, Village Chiefs, Commune Council members, Commune Police, and the Commune Committee for Women and Children (CCWC), a total of 56 people. Given the size of the commune meeting room the training was delivered separately to the CCWC and the Local Authority groups, this had the added benefit of optimal group sizes of between 15-20 participants.

CRVAW offered three training programs. Two sessions were delivered on each, in order to reach all members of the CCWC, village chiefs, police, and commune council. One of the major successes of the project was the consistently high rate of participation in activities throughout the year.

The initial focus of CRVAW's work was to raise awareness of the meaning and dynamics of domestic violence, victim safety and perpetrator accountability. An understanding of these concepts is fundamental for safe and effective intervention. There were many examples of participants' limited understanding about domestic violence as evidenced through many discussions and comments.

The first training session raised awareness of the dynamics of domestic violence and allowed for much discussion in examining facts and beliefs relating to domestic violence and gender. Following the training, participants indicated they understood more about domestic violence, and the CCWC in particular indicated that they gained a great deal from the facts and beliefs session, with many participants articulating their thoughts about gender roles and how this session challenged their thinking. In contrast the local authority participants already seemed to have a greater understanding of their role in intervening in domestic violence and were less likely to hold views that support gender inequality. Both groups appreciated the training opportunity and engaged well with the presenters and the training activities.

Gender equality was the topic of the second training. This provoked much discussion about traditional gender roles and how strong beliefs supporting gender inequality is a risk factor for domestic violence. Discussions focused on some of the accepted cultural and social norms that promote men as being of higher status than women, with many men identifying these ongoing behaviours as socially learned habits. Participants also talked about often hearing the word gender but not understanding its meaning and related their confusion to information they had received about the constitutional law.

The third training on mediation and the reconciliation process focused on victim safety and how reconciliation or mediation could be facilitated to prioritise safety, through various practices including listening to the victims perspective about her safety as well as using shuttle mediation when there are safety concerns. Many issues were raised in this training including an example of a reconciliation process regarding a rape case recently undertaken by the Police. This led to a discussion about the seriousness of certain crimes, including rape. Participants discussed the necessity of referring these cases to the Courts in the first instance, and of how reconciliation is not always the appropriate response. The discussions in both of these trainings highlighted the need for ongoing training and forums for further developing the practice of the CCWC and Local Authority, to continue to build their skills

and understanding to enable more effective responses to gendered crime, while prioritising safety.

Regular attendance at meetings of the Commune Council and CCWC was an opportunity for the CRVAW team to encourage involvement in and coordination of program activities, and to respond to queries about process and recording of information about incidences of violence. This also enabled ongoing discussions about the content of the trainings as well as a consultative mechanism to inform future direction. Opportunities to address issues raised in this forum was the responsibility of the local authority project officer, who also prepared and delivered short presentations during some of these meetings.

### Strengthening confidence and crucial understanding of the law

The primary positive outcome raised by several local authority members in evaluation focus groups was their increased understanding of the law and the legal provisions that enable responses to DV cases, alongside their increased confidence:

*"Previously when I was involved in a dispute between husband and wife, men used to say 'this is not your business'; I was very disappointed and used to go back home. After being trained about the law [on DV] I know how to find the [right] way to get involved even if the husband blames me and doesn't want me to get involved" (Village Chief)*

*"I learnt about the law on domestic violence, about how to settle the social problems, and now I can get more involved with the problems that happen in our society" (Village Chief)*

Examples of cases being addressed by the local authority prior to beginning implementation of activities included a community member approaching a local authority representative with concerns that her adult son was assaulting her. The local authority representative told her they were unable to offer assistance as this was not domestic violence and they did not know how to intervene. Another example was of a reconciliation meeting between a couple who were separated and who had sought assistance from the local authority due to ongoing unwanted contact by the husband when he had been drinking. The couple was advised that they should reconcile and remain together for the sake of their children's wellbeing.

During the program, the project officers were often asked to assist in reconciliation meetings as the local authority were very uncertain as to how they should facilitate these processes. To enable better facilitation of reconciliation meetings, each of the This Life Cambodia trainings focused on building upon knowledge bases and the understanding required to ensure victim safety and perpetrator accountability, while enhancing the capacity and confidence of participants via skills based active learning techniques.

*"We didn't know about the law, or in depth about the issue (...) Before we were not confident to try to solve issues in the commune. Now we work well, we know they [TLC staff] understand well about local authority responsibilities, laws and rights, so we feel more brave... Now I know what kind of DV incidents can be solved at commune level and what needs to be referred to the courts. Before, I used to send all cases to the court, but now I know how to reconcile at the commune level" (Commune Chief)*

Conversations with key people at the commune indicated that the training and technical support provided by the project was successful in raising participants' awareness of the dynamics of domestic violence and their need to remain focused on the safety of women and children:

*"Even small incidents need to be addressed as they can become bigger and we need to make sure victims are safe" (Police Officer)*

*"I asked her if there was somewhere she could take her children so that they could be safe" (Village Chief)*

### **A more consistent local response**

A key result of the increased legal understanding along with stronger appreciation of gender issues was the strengthening of the local system of response. Local authority and CCWC participants spoke about having a better understanding of steps to follow at village, commune and district level as a result of the training and technical support provided by the program.

*"I feel that we didn't do a good job in the first reconciliation with this couple. The wife wanted to separate but the husband wanted to stay together. We tried to get the couple to change their behaviour and stay together, but the agreement didn't stand and the wife sought assistance from the local authority again. In the second reconciliation meeting the couple agreed to separate, divide their property and planned care of their child including alimony". (Commune Police Officer)*

The Commune Chief and commune council members also reported an important increase in their knowledge about the law, the rights of the women and their confidence in responding:

*"[TLC] has shown us about the DV prevention law, how to solve the conflict out of court procedure, gender and DV; their presentation made it easier to understand" (Commune Council Member)*

*"Before, husbands used to say [DV] is a family matter. But after we learned more, we see it as a social issue, a commune issue. So we need to take action. Now we dare to intervene" (Commune Chief)*

Sometimes the people tasked with responding to instances of violence in their community are also experiencing domestic violence themselves. The project officers were encouraged to talk to participants who were emotionally reacting to the content of the training to provide them with support and where possible referral to other services. Through modelling behaviour the project officers were able to both provide support and be examples of how support can be offered.

### **Data collection**

A key output of the Local Authority Project was a template developed for Village Chiefs to record and report on domestic violence cases at CCWC and/or Commune Council meetings. The Commune Chief and Commune Clerk developed the form with technical support from the Local Authority Project Officer. As they were raised, cases were added to this at each meeting. The CCWC then began tracking cases and were able to highlight those where there had been more than one incident as well as following up new cases while maintaining a focus on victim safety. Village chiefs and the commune council in particular appreciated this tool, as it gave them a clear method for reporting at commune level the situation in their respective villages.

This tool was developed mid way through the program year, and so this evaluation process did not include analysis of the data collected. For future iterations of the program it will be important to support and facilitate data collection by local authorities themselves from the beginning of the project.

## Empowering women to speak out

Several village chiefs reported that the numbers of women coming forward for support had increased, sometimes directly after the Community Project workshops or focal events. Thus, a common statement across groups was the fact that, having a better understanding of the law, women know that they can seek support and know how to advocate for their rights. CCWC members responded unanimously that topics discussed in training sessions were empowering to women:

*"Women know they have rights to ask for support in time for intervention that can save their lives. They know there is someone to help - whether local authority, or other organisations" (Commune Chief)*

## Reaching further

In seven months with three training sessions, regular consultation and attendance at meetings, the CRVAW was able to contribute to the improved understanding and response to incidences of domestic violence by members of the Local Governance structures. Through acquisition of knowledge and practical skills, members of the Local Governance began responding differently when approached by community members for assistance, focusing primarily on the safety of women and children as well as more active intervention in speaking to families who have been reported as experiencing violence.

Increasing the knowledge and skills of the local authority increases protective factors for gender based violence. With less social acceptance of violence and the understanding that violence is not a 'family' or 'private' matter, it is more likely that perpetrators' behaviour will be challenged and that victims will be offered support and where possible services. Police are more likely to take such incidences seriously and refer matters to the Court where appropriate. The delivery of reconciliation meetings becomes more focused on listening to the wishes of the parties involved and assisting them in coming to an agreement.

Continuation of this project would have included further workshops on mediation and reconciliation to build upon the foundation knowledge and understanding already developed to ensure safe and effective intervention. Further training would be provided on more detailed mediation skills, safety planning, the laws pertaining to women and children. Reflective practice sessions would be implemented as a way of solidifying skills and understandings, leading to increased confidence and competence in ability.

Future program models would also benefit from improvements in data collection by the commune right from the beginning. This is important for appropriate follow up with people who had requested reconciliation in order to monitor the outcomes and safety of women. It would also help the program develop a better understanding of the satisfaction of the community in the application of reconciliation, and would give an overview of the types of offences referred to the Court versus those referred for reconciliation.

Involvement of the health centre staff in training would increase their skills and ability to screen for domestic violence, intervene or refer for reconciliation or criminal redress for serious assaults. This could also potentially provide valuable statistics on presentation for medical assistance and injuries.

An improved community response is only one aspect of an improved response to gender based violence. A holistic approach including services, monitoring and continued consistent

messages can assist in keeping women and children safe. Case monitoring is integral to safety and ensuring that alongside the improved local response there are counseling and group services available for women and children in addition to behaviour change programs for men, can help address the risk factors across individual, relationship, community and society. Whether these services are delivered by This Life Cambodia or by a partner organisation exploration of socially mandating men to engage in behaviour change programs through the contracting process used in the reconciliation process will require further consultation.

In 2017 there will be local government elections which potentially means a change of Local Authority members and may mean that the consultative process would need to begin again although it could be assumed that the issue of response to domestic violence would remain on the agenda as it has been a priority issue for some years raised both by community members and the local authority.

## SCHOOL PROJECT

The aim of the School Project was to: *collaborate with the lower secondary school in delivering primary prevention activities that foster non-violence and gender sensitivity.*

The School Project focused on primary prevention through collaboration with the Lower Secondary School (grades 7 – 9) in delivering activities that fostered a non-violent and gender sensitive environment. The CRVAW worked in partnership with the School Principal and School Support Committee, engaged with the student council, secondary school students and the school community, to build leadership capacity of the student council, provide training to support children experiencing domestic violence and supporting stakeholders in engaging in community events.

| Completed Activities   | Expected Outcomes   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mobilise the student council through fortnightly meetings</li> <li>School Support Committee &amp; Teacher training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dynamics of Domestic Violence</li> <li>Prevention and response</li> <li>Gender &amp; Women's Rights</li> </ul> </li> <li>Workshop for all LSS students on domestic violence, gender and healthy relationships</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student Council members understand about gender issues and DV, and help to raise awareness in their community.</li> <li>Student Council members know what to do when they hear about a DV situation.</li> <li>Teachers, Student Council members and SSC can identify and help support students who face challenges related to DV.</li> <li>Young people experiencing violence at home feel safe and supported at school</li> <li>Students, teachers, SSC members are all role models in their community about gender equality and non-violence.</li> </ul> |

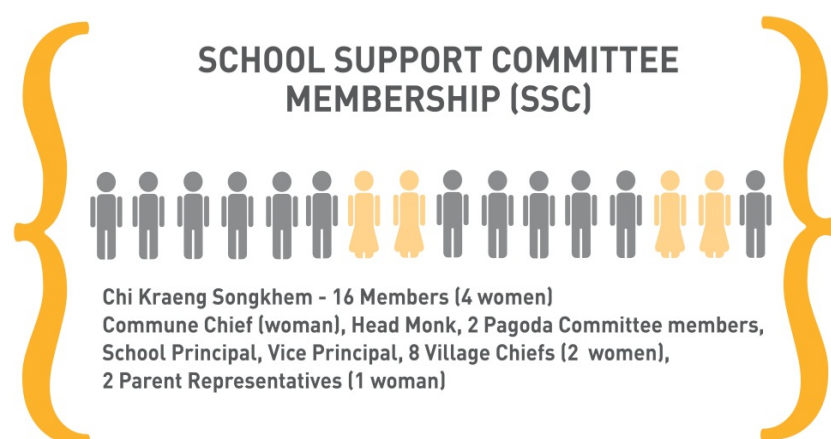
Through the *Community Views* research, concerns were highlighted about the adverse outcomes of DV for school children, including; depression, fear, shame, school non-attendance and school dropout. From a response perspective, it was recommended that capacity building support be offered to school stakeholders to identify and respond to signs of students experiencing DV. From a prevention perspective, it was also recommended that the CRVAW program provide activities for children on gender, healthy relationships, non-violent communication skills, conflict resolution and human rights values.

Established in 2010, the school offers grades 7 to 9 with a student population of 226 students in the 2014-2015 school year. When the School Project began, another of This Life Cambodia's programs – the Lower Secondary School Development Program (LSSDP) – was in its second of three program years at the school, working closely with the School Support Committee. Chi Kraeng Songkhem Lower Secondary was selected for the LSSDP because of the challenges shown in the school's statistics – low resources, high dropout rates, and low enrolment rates – combined with the commitment to school development demonstrated by the local authorities in Chi Kraeng, who wanted to see quality lower secondary education offered to students locally in the commune.

The same high level of commitment was shown to the CRVAW School Project, with high participation rates in activities by the Student Council Members as well as School Support Committee members and teachers.

### Outcomes for adult school stakeholders

Three training sessions were delivered to the School Support Committee and teachers, with high rates of participation. The School Support Committee in Chi Kraeng Songkhem is particularly active and dedicated, with a membership of teachers, parents, representatives of the pagoda, CCWC, and Local Authority members who keep education and school development on the agenda throughout their work for their commune. Most of these individuals were also engaged in consultation and participatory planning and other activities of the CRVAW Program as well as being involved in partner NGO activities throughout the year.



Training sessions aimed to build School Support Committee members' capacity to be role models in their community and to help young people who experience violence at home to feel more supported at school. These expected outcomes were based on priorities raised during the participatory planning process, which focused on the challenge of school drop out as a result of a difficult family life:

*"They wanted us to build their capacity to be confident to consult with the students at school or at home, so they could provide counselling to them and support them to remain at school" (CRVAW Program Coordinator)*

Each of the training sessions was interactive and encouraged sharing of ideas and knowledge. The first workshop addressed the dynamics of domestic violence together with skills training about behavioural signs of children who may be experiencing domestic violence at home, and how teachers and School Support Committee members can respond to these students. This Life Cambodia received overwhelmingly positive feedback about the

interactive presentation style, content and usefulness of information in this workshop, with participants requesting more training on various topics including law, families and prevention of violence.

The second training session focused on the prevention of domestic violence as well as how to provide support to women and children who have experienced violence. Evidence for the continued need for training about the dynamics of domestic violence was highlighted through participant discussion of circumstances where violence might be justified; for example, the use of violence when a woman does not do the housework. There was also much discussion about the reasons why women do not seek assistance when experiencing violence, which included the normalisation of domestic violence, that women don't want others to know what is happening giving the opportunity for the violence to continue, that the authority does not respond when approached or requires money to proceed, that women don't understand their rights, and the belief that no one is willing or able to intervene.

The topic of the third training session was gender equality and women and children's rights. Feedback suggested that this helped teachers gain a better understanding of how to talk about gender with their students. The School Project Officer explained that teachers see the topic of gender as important for prevention and is highlighted in both the NAPVAW and the Neary Rattanak. Although gender discussions are included in the national school curriculum, teachers had few practical ideas on how to articulate and teach these in the classroom, prior to training. The training provided was a first step in building the confidence of teachers to address gender issues in the classroom, however it was noted by the School Project Officer that more engagement and support is needed; despite best efforts, teachers are busy and this was at times challenging for the project.

*"This is the first time I have attended training about women's rights and I will take this new knowledge and share it with my granddaughter.... I appreciate that I am still alive to be able to learn these things and that as a child I didn't have these opportunities. If all women in the community have the opportunity to learn about their rights then they will understand that they have rights and don't have to keep quiet like we are told in the Chbap Srey." (SSC member).*

*"If men understand about women's rights, that men and women are equal, there will be less violence (male teacher).*

Teachers and SSC members noted in the evaluation focus group that a primary outcome of training from the School Project was their increased awareness of how they could identify and support students who may be experiencing DV at home.

*"They are vulnerable, may seem scared of us, and don't want to talk to anyone" (Teacher)*

Teachers and SSC members also spoke about gaining an understanding of actions they could take in particular situations to support young people exposed to or experiencing violence at home. However, given the short implementation period, there were few concrete examples of this knowledge being put to practical use.

### **School Curriculum**

While the development of a school curriculum was an identified priority, the reality of the delivery and facilitation of this created much discussion at meetings with the School Principal and teachers. One possibility put forward was for the teachers to be trained in delivery of the curriculum, however the teachers felt they already had many additional demands on their time and believed they did not have the capacity to deliver additional material as a part of the school curriculum. A second option considered was delivery by

CRVAW project officers as a part of the schools 7 allocated life skills classes each year. However, it was found that the school had a variety of competing government and other NGO demands for these classes focussed primarily on agricultural skills, health and hygiene. Given that this was considered a priority, in both the community research and the commune's subsequent priorities, our compromise was that the CRVAW team delivered one workshop to all students. For those students who attended school in the mornings workshops were delivered in the afternoon and visa versa. The students were divided into four classes and presented a two and a half hour interactive lesson about domestic violence, focussing on their knowledge and understanding of domestic violence and its effects. The majority of students found the lesson interesting and gave positive feedback as well as requesting further similar lessons

Consequently over the course of the year the project was further defined to focus on engaging with the Student Council as active participants in community events as well as being a key source of support for their peers in terms of prevention (promoting healthy, gender-sensitive attitudes) as well as response (helping friends to find appropriate support).

### **Mobilising the Student Council**

A major outcome for the School Project was the successful mobilisation and capacity building of the Student Council. Establishing the Student Council was included as a priority activity in the 2014-2015 School Development Plan. The group formed near the beginning of the school year, with a teacher nominated to supervise their activities. Although they had taken the first step in establishing the Student Council, teachers were unsure of how to mobilise them effectively and were also unsure of the activities students could be expected to undertake.

It was agreed with the school that taking a lead on non-violence and gender issues could be the first area of focus for the newly formed Student Council. The School Project Officer participated in fortnightly Student Council Meetings to build students' understanding of their role as Student Council members, and to support the general operations of the group. These Student Council meetings were taken as opportunities for capacity building related to gender issues and healthy relationships. The Student Council was encouraged to attend and participate in all of the focal events including their performance at the second focal event. The intention during this process was to enhance student leadership skills, as well as strengthening student relationships with the local authority with the aim of building community resilience.

Training delivered to the student council during regular meetings included the following topics: Role and responsibilities as student councillors, Domestic violence, Myths and beliefs, Gender equality, talking with friends, Healthy Relationships, and development and rehearsal of play for Healthy Relationships Focal Event.

Overall, capacity building through Student Council meetings was successful in raising awareness of DV and gender issues among these students, with the expectation that they would represent and support their peers. Student Council members were proud, motivated and passionate about contributing to change in their community.

### **Responding to violence**

Student Council members spoke about feeling empowered to react appropriately when they encountered instances of violence in their community. Although only one student raised a specific example of having put this confidence to use so far, the others did have

clear ideas of what they would do. The actions they described prioritised safety, including their own, by calling authorities, or running to seek help from neighbours:

*"If I had a phone with me, I would call the Commune Chief" (Student Council Member, girl)*

*"If I knew there was violence [happening] in a family, I would help but not face them directly. I would call to report to the village chief, commune chief or relevant authority" (Student Council Member)*

*"I would call neighbours to come to make sure that the violence will not get serious" (Student Council Member, boy)*

*"If I saw violence happening, I would help the victim by asking her to stay somewhere with more people around her...I would invite her to stay temporarily in my home". (Student Council Member, girl)*

### **Supporting peers at school**

During implementation a significant event occurred at a Lower Secondary School in a neighbouring district. A young man was filmed violently assaulting his girlfriend in a classroom while their schoolmates sat in stunned silence. This was posted on social media and shared many times before being removed. The young man was later arrested and charged with assault. This incident created an opportunity for open and frank discussions with the student council about violence in dating relationships, law and how to respond to such occurrences. The discussion highlighted how the student council believed that what they were learning through the CRVAW could help them support the girl and keep her safe.

Students in the evaluation focus group also spoke about knowing how to identify when their friends at school might be experiencing DV, and what they could do to help:

*"They sit alone, with a sad face and keep their feelings in their heart" (Student Council member)*

*"If they don't want to tell us, or talk about it, we can talk about something else or tell them a joke to make them feel comfortable to talk to us" (Student Council member, girl)*

*"I can help tell friends about what I have learned. And when they have DV in their family and they come to school feeling sad, I can help talk to them" (Student Council Member, girl)*

When asked whether the training provided was useful to them, students said they valued general knowledge about DV the most, followed by knowledge about gender equality. They spoke about gender inequality alongside other forms of discrimination such as mistreatment the poorest people in the community.

*"Gender equity means equality between men and women, and boys and girls. Discrimination is not right."*

Along with teachers and SSC members, students were particularly concerned that a difficult family life can result in students leaving school, and felt they could help by involving their teachers:

*"When I see my friend feeling sad, or I know there is DV at his home, I will report to my teacher to speak to his parents" (Student Council Member, boy)*

*If the student is close to dropping out of school I can go to tell the teachers and ask them to help talk and explain to the parents" (Student Council Member, girl)*

Given the short implementation period, it has not yet been seen whether students can truly put this confidence into action at school, and this was raised as a limitation by several stakeholders including teachers and program staff. However, Student Council members did see themselves as holders of important information to share within their community, and as agents of change:

*"We study because some people don't know [about gender and the impacts of DV]. We can help tell them" (Student Council Member, girl).*

### **Young people as agents of change**

The *Community Views* research recommended primary prevention activities with young people to begin to address cultural norms around gender as strongly held views about traditional gender roles is a significant risk factor for violence against women. A key finding of this evaluation is that the School Project was also able to challenge cultural norms around young people's active participation in public conversations and family matters.

Each of the Student Council Members said that friends or family asked them about what they were learning by participating in the CRVAW School Project. This provided the chance to share their knowledge, and they reported feeling confident to talk about gender issues with other students, teachers, their parents and other people in their villages. Students raised many examples of times when they had actively shared this new knowledge:

*"I told my mother and auntie what we learned and that we need to have good communication with our family and neighbours" (Student Council Member, girl)*

*"Performing the play [at the Community Project event] was a good way for me to broadcast to my community, to help them understand about good relationships with family and neighbours" (Student Council Member, girl)*

Students spoke about cultural norms of children showing respect for elders. They were realistic about the challenges of speaking out to older people as young people, but they did have ideas for how to do it:

*"We have to be polite to them, or say sorry to them before we can share our knowledge, because we are younger" (Student Council Member, girl)*

*"I think it is challenging to speak out to older people, because I am only young, but I have ideas of what to tell them when I see discrimination or DV" (Student Council Member)*

*"We have to be brave enough to share information" (Student Council Member, girl)*

Importantly, adult stakeholders in the School Project strongly supported the idea of Student Council members sharing this knowledge. Many of them described their motivation for sharing their own knowledge with children in terms of their confidence that children could then pass on this knowledge to their parents:

*"[So that] they know what DV is, and what to call it, and then they can talk about it to their parents" (Teacher)*

*"I feel proud to work with students and to talk about DV... I think if they understand about DV in their community, they can help prevent it. If they have some knowledge, they can*

*share it in their community and with their parents also. And hopefully when they get married DV won't happen" (School Project Officer)*

### Community-led Focal Events

The Student Council was present at each of the three Community Focal Events. At the International Women's Day Focal event the female student council members were invited representatives of the school and their fellow students. At the Community event on healthy relationships the whole Student Council was integral to the success of the night, performing a play of 5 vignettes of relationships and communication which they spent 6 weeks working on, co-writing the play with the Community Project Officer and rehearsing. They also performed at an LSSDP event on education and were active participants in the final focal event held at the school. All participants valued the Community events, with particular excitement about on the Night Show.

*"The Student Council are really smart and brave to do that. People felt happy and proud of them also. When I talk to people in the community – this group is famous! The Commune Chief talks about it too, how the Student Council have talent...And their parents were really happy to see their children perform, they say they love to join TLC activities and one mother said she couldn't believe her child could [perform like] that" (School Project Officer)*

### Reaching further & Lessons Learned

It was originally envisioned that the School Project would implement a comprehensive school-wide curriculum on gender and healthy relationships, at the same time as training teachers on how to adopt this curriculum into regular lessons. Because of staffing changes early in the program, limited free time of teachers, and competing priorities for content of life skills classes as well as the delay to implementation while interagency baseline data was being collected, this was not achieved. This raises an interesting point about intention and actual implementation: that this was an identified priority however there were too many obstacles in the way of practical implementation. Feedback from the workshop that all students attended was overwhelmingly positive with students wanting further similar opportunities. Accordingly the CRVAW team continues to see this as a priority and want to find a way to increase students access to such workshops whether through a program outside of school hours open to the general school population or to students referred through the teachers or the School Support Committee.

School Project stakeholders had ideas for how the project could achieve higher and more concrete impact with more students. The School Project Officer felt that a future focus for programming in Chi Kraeng Lower Secondary should be on supporting the Student Council to actively share their knowledge about healthy relationships and gender equality among their peers for further impact across the student population. The CRVAW Coordinator also felt that more comprehensive training should be provided to all students in future implementations of the School Project.

The nature of the student council is such that its membership changes year to year with older students moving out of the school and younger students becoming new council members. Thus it is important that the student council is able to access strong leadership training involving communication and social skill sets that can be modeled and taught to the newer student council members by their more experienced peers.

Student involvement in community events could be broadened to include additional marketing such as poster competitions as well as involvement of other students in performances.

Programs for at risk students or students self-referring to programs held outside of school hours were highlighted as potential future directions to address experiences at home, which could potentially impact on the school retention rate, as well as being a crime prevention initiative. These programs would focus on social skills and support of members.

## COMMUNITY PROJECT

The aim of the Community Project was to: **collaborate with community and NGO partners to raise awareness of DV with a focus on engaging men, prevention and the safety of women and children.**

In addition to playing an essential role in a community level response system, the Commune Committee for Women and Children (CCWC) has important responsibility for raising awareness to prevent violence against women in the community. The project included workshops and community events hosted by the CCWC to start conversations within the community about violence against women and its impact in Chi Kraeng, as well as highlighting the importance of victim safety, the law and the role of the Local Governance structure in response.

| Completed Activities                          | Expected Outcomes  |
|---|--|
| Community Workshops                           | Participants have increased knowledge of the issues, risk factors and impacts of DV on individuals, families and community.                      |
| 1) Domestic Violence                          |  |
| 2) Beliefs & Facts about DV (2 sessions)      |  |
| 3) Gender                                     | Community members generally are more aware of the risk factors and impacts of VAW and have opportunities to critically engage with these issues. |
| 4) Good Communication & Relationships         |  |
| Focal Events                                  |  |
| 1) Women's Rights day                         | Public conversations are stimulated about the impact of DV in a range of ways  |
| 2) Night show about Good Family Communication |  |
| 3) Gender Equality School Event               |  |

### Participation

The Community project worked closely with the CCWC on the design and implementation of the community workshops and focal events. With the purpose of increasing understanding of the dynamics of violence against women, challenge gender norms through promoting gender equality, and to raise awareness of the laws on violence against women, targeting less engaged groups, including men in particular. The Commune Chief, village chiefs and CCWC were integral partners in planning, organising and facilitating alongside CRVAW.

### Making DV a community issue

Initially CRVAW planned to facilitate four whole day community workshops, however due to concerns about the potential large number of participants, the length of the workshops, and people's willingness to participate in discussions and activities in large groups, the

decision was made to deliver four half-day workshops. This provided the opportunity to monitor the areas of concern and allow for changes in the planning of the next workshops.

Given that participants were enthusiastic and actively involved in discussions, the third and fourth workshops were delivered once each to larger groups of people. Village chiefs from the 14 villages in the commune invited ten people from their respective villages to attend each of the workshops, and they were encouraged to invite equal numbers of men and women. The vast majority of those invited attended. The first four workshops averaged approx. 70 attendees, the final two workshops averaged approximately 140 participants. Although some participants attended more than one workshop, Village Chiefs were encouraged to invite different people to each event. Various local authority members also attended, as did monks and elders.

The workshops were held at the two pagodas at the commune. The first two workshops focused on the dynamics of domestic violence, the second two half day workshops examined common beliefs and facts about domestic violence, the third workshop discussed gender equality and how inequality contributes to domestic violence, and the topic of the fourth workshop was healthy relationships and good communication.

As the workshops were delivered with different participants each time, each one included information about who to approach if someone was concerned about or experiencing domestic violence. At each of the workshops people spoke publicly and with considerable emotion about their personal experience of domestic violence. The presence of TPO counselors was invaluable in offering these people support and follow up services.

In the evaluation focus group, community members spoke about moving away from the notion that domestic violence is a private matter, towards seeking help and supporting neighbours:

*"We are neighbours and we can help solve problems, but if the case is serious we can ask them to speak with the village chief or commune chief because they have the authority and good communication skills to help" (Community focus group participant, man)*

*"If a family comes to me with violence I would respond by staying calm and encouraging them to tell the true story of what happened so that I can take action and support them effectively. We need to have good communication so they can trust us and tell us the true story of what happened" (Community focus group participant, man)*

### **Community-led Focal Events**

The three focal events were held at the beginning, middle, and end of the implementation period. The Commune Chief appreciated the opportunity for her community to lead these events:

*"For every event, This Life Cambodia staff come to the community and bring the topic to discuss how we can do this to be effective in Chi Kraeng, especially to reach [people from] each village. We always discuss" (Commune Chief).*

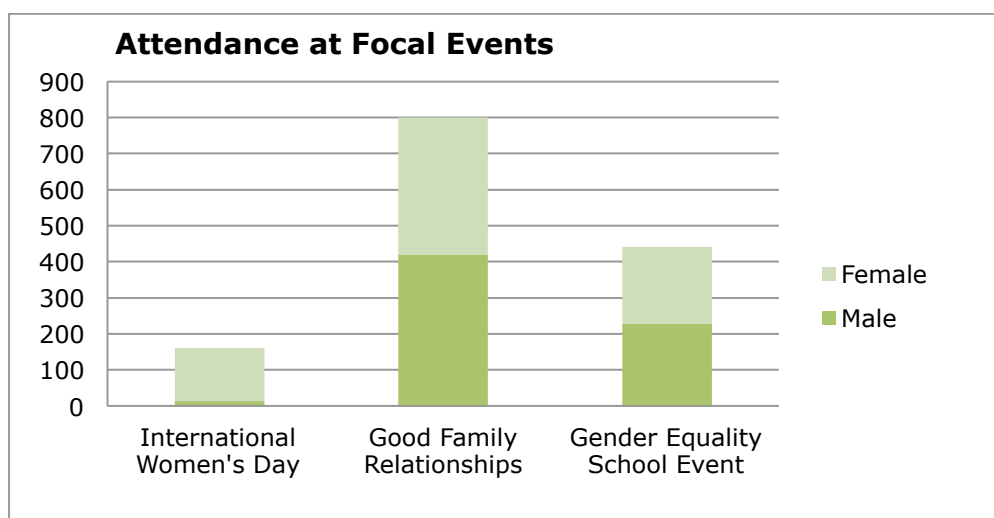
The first was a celebration of International Women's Day, with 160 invited participants, hosted by the Commune Chief. It was a day of celebration of women's rights and gender equality. Activities included games, dancing, lunch and speeches from the Commune Chief, the Women and Children's Consultative Committee member, who read the King's Mother's IWD speech, the Deputy District Chief and This Life Cambodia's Program Coordinator.

The second event was held on a Friday evening at one of the community pagodas and brought together key community members from each of the school, local authority and community projects. The topic was “healthy relationships and good communication” and the event was open to all community members. CRVAW project officers spent 6 weeks working with the Student Council to develop a play, providing artistic direction and ideas on content. Similarly project officers worked with an acting troupe from the commune providing guidance and information. Both groups performed on the evening and more than 800 community members attended. People expressed pleasure and gratitude for the opportunity to attend an event that showcased local talent. The students talked about how it was funny that the adults could learn from them about relationships. One of the aims of students participating in community events was to encourage leadership, participation and to strengthen relationships between the students and the local authority. TPO again provided a valued presence at this event.

People identified strongly with the stories presented to them by performers from their own community at this event and there was a great deal of enthusiasm for the event expressed in focus groups:

*“One man at the night show [focal event] pointed to the actors and said ‘that’s me!’” (Commune Council Member)*

*“I have learnt a lot about DV at the night show organised by TLC staff. A video from the night show was even posted on Facebook and some people who lived far away heard about this show as well even if they didn’t actually join” (Community focus group participant).*



The final focal event was held at the school with students, parents and local authority members. The event focused on gender equality. The day began with a welcome from the Commune Chief followed by a panel discussion about the Chbab Srey, gender equality and domestic violence. TLC then ran a number of activities that highlighted gender similarities, inequalities and values and beliefs for the students, before a presentation of prizes and lunch.

### Reaching further

In addition to achievements so far, participants in each project expressed a desire for project activities to reach further across the community – either by going directly from village to village or by engaging typically disengaged groups, in particular men. Overall, the adult participants in the evaluation felt that men were not engaged enough. They saw

this is as a whole community challenge and something that required collaboration between the NGO partners, local authorities, CCWC and friends and neighbours. Appreciation was expressed for TPO's support groups in specific target villages, and community members also wanted to see more information from This Life Cambodia reaching throughout all villages in the commune. The program did face challenges engaging men, as workshops were often held in the mornings while many of the men were working. Increasing activities at night was suggested as one way of encouraging men's involvement.

The CRVAW program officers felt that workshops would be more impactful if delivered at the village rather than commune level, allowing for more than 10 participants from each village. One project officer also spoke of the potential for follow up to the larger workshops, particularly with families who experienced DV, to speak about and share experiences in smaller, safe groups. It was also thought that follow up with those experiencing and talking about violence at workshops would be less complicated for local authority and project officers if CRVAW had an increased presence at the village level.

Intervention at the individual level was often discussed by the CRVAW team, for men, women and children, and it was recognised that raising awareness creates a need for services to ensure that those people who have identified as requiring assistance can access it. The delivery of services specifically for men who use violence as well as targeted group programs for women and children were considered integral future activities for continued community development.

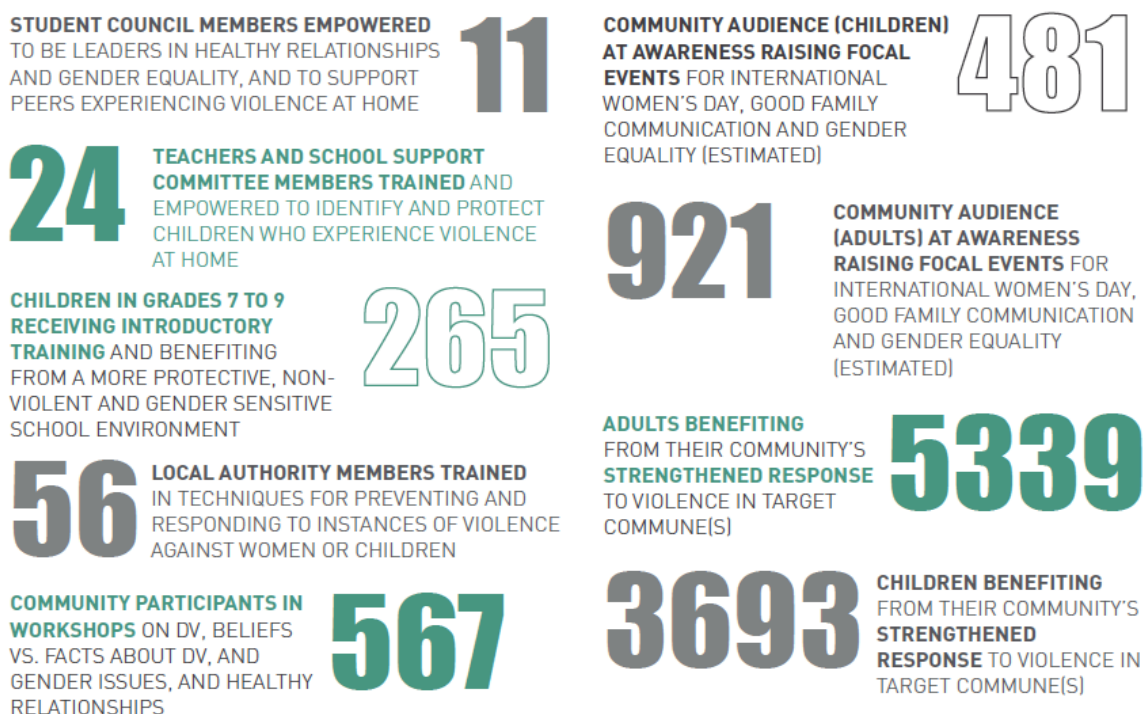
## CROSS PROGRAM FINDINGS

This Life Cambodia's CRVAW program framework was designed with the flexibility to respond to particular priorities across the School, Local Governance, and Community sectors. The projects were designed as separate but complimentary components of a whole community approach with a shared goal:

**Goal:** to empower the community to take action that prevents and responds to domestic violence.

This program evaluation highlighted several important themes in the community's perspective and experience of the program, and outcomes that reach across the three project components.

## Summary of Activities



### From abstract concepts to more practical understanding of gender equality

During conversations prior to beginning activities at the Commune it transpired that many of the Local Governance group had not previously participated in basic domestic violence training. As highlighted in various reports including the NAPVAW, this training has been delivered mostly in urban areas and has not reached many rural communes and districts including the Chi Kraeng area. The Local Governance members embraced the opportunity to learn more about how to enact their roles and increase support for women experiencing domestic violence.

In evaluation focus groups, the Student Council, School Support Committee, teachers, village chiefs and CCWC all reported valuing the opportunities provided by the program to go beyond a basic understanding of gender to begin to critically consider what gender equality means for their everyday life. For example, participants in student workshops learned that gender as a concept applies to both boys and girls, and Student Council members were able to list practical examples of gender equality in the evaluation focus group:

*"Girls and boys have the same rights, like the right to study, to develop themselves, to work and to participate" (Student Council member, boy)*

Although Chi Kraeng Commune already had relatively high participation of women as local governance members, including the female Commune Chief, she also saw changes in attitude among the Commune Council members:

*"One change is among the authorities. In the past we thought women were below men, even in the Commune Council. We thought their role was to look after children and stay at*

*home. After the training, the awareness raising and program staff cooperating with me as Commune Chief, we empowered women from villages to be more involved in local authority work. We believe even if women may not be as physically strong as men, they have the same management skills and abilities” (Commune Chief)*

Community members more generally also had the opportunity to critically engage in discussions about gender through the Community Project workshops. For example, participants in the Community Focus Group discussed how DV is sometimes committed by women but is most often committed by men. They learned that violence committed by anyone is a crime, but that gendered crime is significantly influenced by negative attitudes towards women and belief in traditional gender roles, which can give authority to and legitimise men’s use of violence against women while considering such acts as a private matters. CRVAW project officers spoke of working through this question with community members, and felt it was an achievement to have been able to encourage critical thinking about gender equality and DV risk factors.

The CRVAW program began to challenge the traditional gender roles outlined in the Chbab Srey, in particular those rules that reinforce the notion of male dominance. Through discussion in workshops, training, and at the school focal event some of these cultural expectations were critically examined inviting reflection about the notion of equality espoused in the constitution as well as in practical reflection of seeking assistance and maintaining safety. Many participants in the various trainings and workshops on gender said during feedback sessions that prior to the training they did not understand the term ‘gender’, thinking that it only referred to women. This emphasises that the messages from previous community education campaigns were not always understood in their entirety, suggesting that ongoing platforms for these critical conversations are essential for longer term impact as well as building capacity across communities to better understand and respond to domestic violence and gender inequality.

### **Community conversations**

The Community Project in particular was instrumental in opening up spaces for public conversations and brought together key people from each of the Local Governance, School and Community projects. In addition to stimulating discussion in workshops, many more people were reached through the three focal events.

*“Before it was a private issue and we didn’t really understand about DV. Then we prioritised it [for action] ... After we learnt more about the law, we know that the local authority can be involved and keep the victim safe (...) We can encourage the victim to get support from neighbours, the village chief or the commune chief. Before, the husbands used to say it’s a family matter, but after we learnt more, we see it as a social issue, a commune issue, so we need to take action” (Commune Chief)*

People identified strongly with the stories presented to them by performers from their own community at the second Focal Event on Good Family Communication, which featured performances by the Student Council and a local theatre troupe:

*“At the night show [focal event], the performances told stories that matched people’s stories in the community. So people understood and changed their attitude” (CCWC Member)*

Adults in the evaluation focus groups conducted across the CRVAW program spoke and even joked about the surprise they felt to see young people contributing their ideas publicly about social issues. Real pride in the Student Council was felt across the

community, particularly after their performance at the Community Project Focal Event on Good Family Communication.

### Reporting & Help Seeking

Prior to the implementation of the CRVAW, statistics on the incidence of domestic violence were not regularly kept by the CCWC. With the implementation of a recording system this has improved but it remains a work in progress with the statistics not yet being considered reliable.

*"We know [from the Community Views research] that in the past when there was DV people often didn't report it, and so after we conducted events to raise awareness, the local authorities received more reports...I see this as a success" (Community Project Officer)*

Given the short timeframe of the program and the complexities in measuring prevention and reduction, we cannot expect that violence will have reduced. However, the discussions as part of several evaluation focus groups raise interesting questions about how to view changes in a community, and participants in most focus groups shared a view that violence had decreased, but also that reports had increased.



## CONCLUSION

Lasting impact requires dedicated efforts at community level, over a longer time period, and the program was originally designed based on an annual action cycle, for 3 to 5 years. This evaluation has highlighted first steps and strong indicators of sustainable outcomes. The findings also highlight a number of priorities for reaching further within a longer-term program. The CRVAW program succeeded in engaging citizens across Chi Kraeng Commune in identifying priorities for action on preventing and responding better to DV and violence against women and children. Many of these actions were taken together in the 12-month timeframe.

The foundations of building knowledge and awareness, as the first step towards increasing the capacity, capability and confidence of the Chi Kraeng Commune to address domestic violence, has been facilitated by CRVAW within a community development framework. The comments from the beneficiaries indicate an appreciation for the approach taken, and an increased understanding of the dynamics and risk factors for domestic violence together with increased confidence to raise the issue with others, or intervene. Together, the three targeted interventions at the education, local authority and community levels provide a community development framework for preventing and responding to violence against women in the Chi Kraeng commune. That the Chi Kraeng commune has embraced this opportunity for learning and the CCWC and local authority have already made changes to how they respond in reconciliation meetings are significant positive indicators.

## SUCCESS FACTORS & LESSONS LEARNED

- **A community development framework** was successful for engaging a range of important stakeholders in identifying their concerns and prioritising their own actions.
- **Staff capacity building** was a key first step, with a focus not only on legal and technical knowledge but also opportunities to critically engage with concepts and beliefs about gender and violence.
- Community members, from local authorities to students, all valued the opportunity to **critically engage with the concept of “gender”** and how it plays out in their daily lives.
- **Student Councils can be strong advocates** and effective change makers within their community. The Chi Kraeng community was very proud of these students, and valued their efforts.
- **Local authority members developed confidence** through direct training in law and technical skills, as well as the opportunity to critically engage with complex issues. Many had not previously received training in these areas.
- **“Beliefs vs. Facts” exercises were effective** in facilitating critical conversations about violence and risk factors in various contexts within the program.
- **Community Project Focal events** provided the opportunity to interlink each of the three projects, by providing a platform for program participants to share their learning with their community in meaningful ways.
- Although partnerships can be challenging, **for community development interventions it is imperative that there are referral services in place** to then address the individual needs of those people who come forward to disclose or address their experience of DV.
- There were **sometimes competing demands on the time** of key stakeholders, however these audiences remained enthusiastic and committed throughout the implementation period and reasserted that ending domestic violence was a high priority in their community.
- **Monitoring of responses and collection of data** should continue to be a high priority from the very beginning of any intervention, to allow better direct responses as well as from an M&E perspective.
- Community members expressed a desire for programming and support or awareness raising activities for families directly at the **village level**, and not only at commune level, as well as a desire for support to **engage men in meaningful ways** in discussions about domestic violence. It is recommended that these priorities are considered for future programming.

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