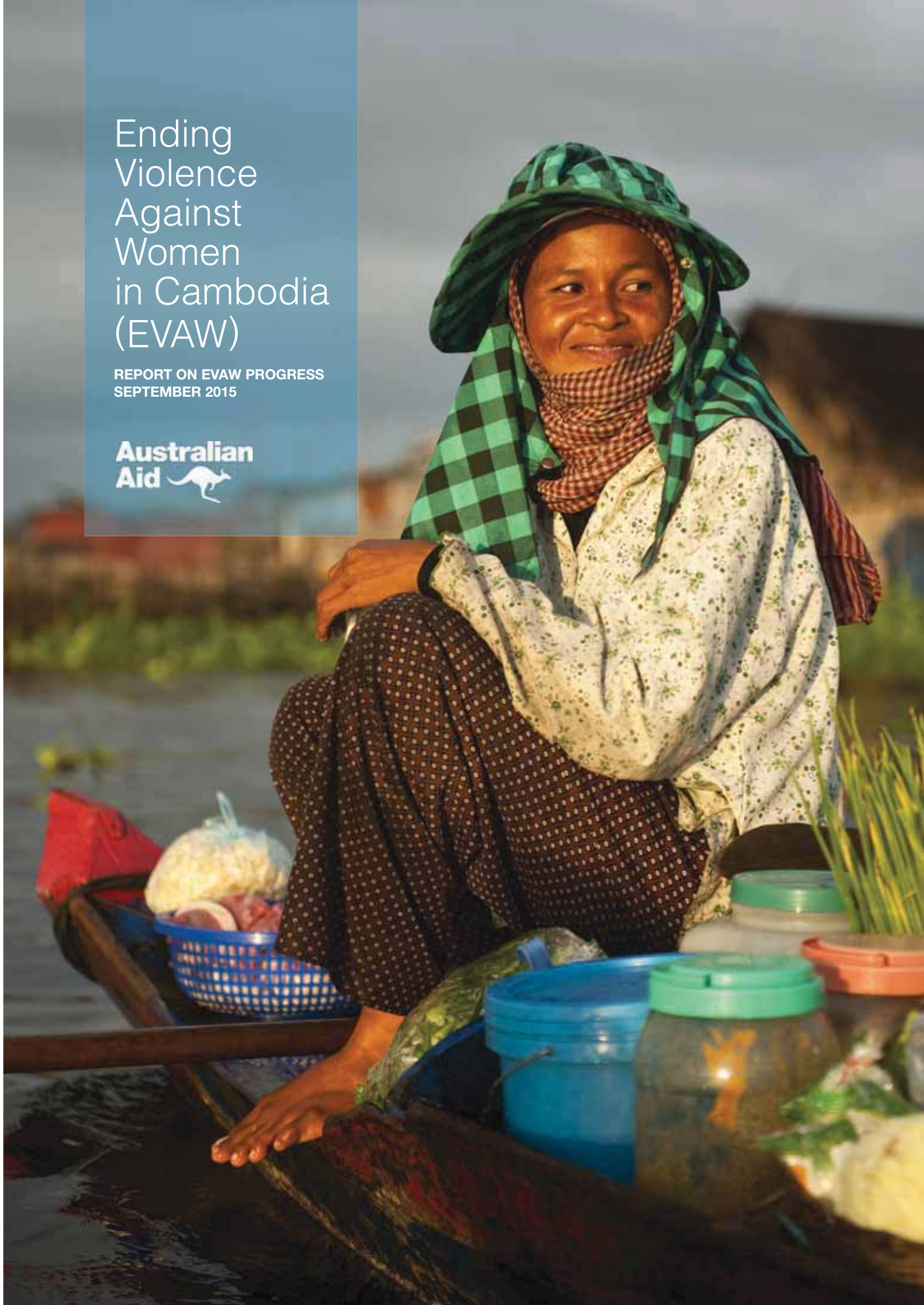


Ending Violence Against Women in Cambodia (EVAW)

REPORT ON EVAW PROGRESS
SEPTEMBER 2015

**Australian
Aid** 





Contents

About the Ending Violence Against Women Program	3
Profile: Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED)	4
Profile: Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Cambodia (TPO)	9
Profile: Hagar Cambodia	12
Profile: Legal Aid Cambodia (LAC)	17
Profile: GIZ Access to Justice for Women 2 (ATJWII) NGO Services	20



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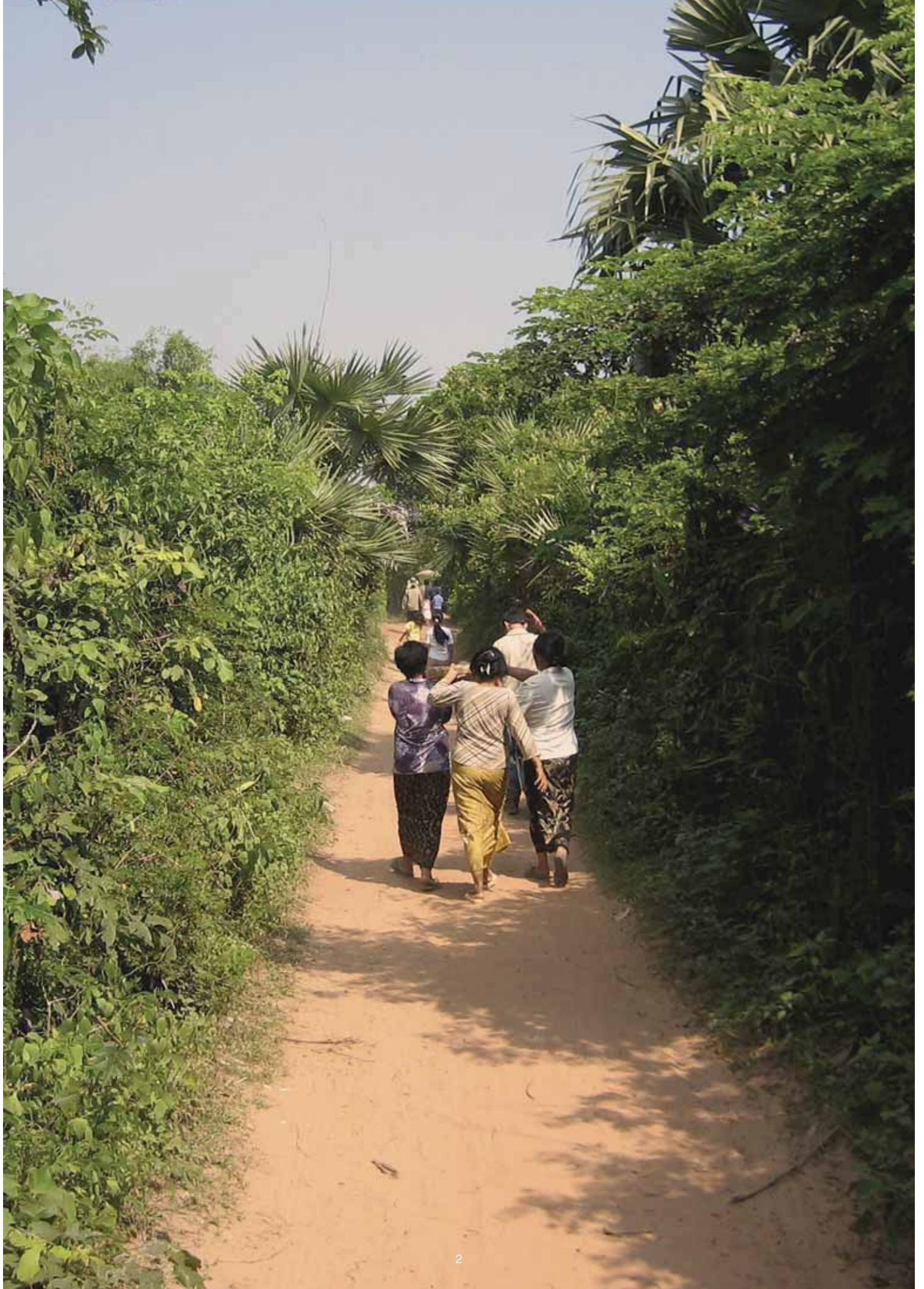
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Case studies written by John Nicewinter of Angkor Research and Consulting Ltd., with special thanks to Bopha Kren.



About the Ending Violence Against Women Program

The Australian Government's Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW) in Cambodia program is supporting initiatives of the Royal Government of Cambodia and the Cambodian Ministry of Women's Affairs to change attitudes and prevent violence so that women and girls can feel safe in their homes, in the workplace and in their communities.

Ending violence against women is crucial to achieving gender equality and delivering good development outcomes in Cambodia.

There is no one single cause of violence against women in Cambodia. Different forms of violence are driven by a variety of factors and therefore need to be addressed through a variety of interventions.

Cambodia has made significant progress in its efforts to prevent and respond to violence against women, but challenges still remain. While laws and policies addressing violence against women have been promulgated, implementation continues to be a challenge.

The EVAW program has three core focus areas:

- **Services** – aiming to ensure effective service support for victims of violence
- **Prevention** – working with government, civil society and the private sector on community attitudes
- **Justice** – working with law and justice sector institutions to improve policing and judicial responses to violence against women.

Program Activity

This information has been provided by non-government organisation (NGO) partners of the EVAW program. Data has been provided from the 2014/15 Annual Progress Reports.

The EVAW program funds four NGOs—Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Cambodia (TPO), Hagar Cambodia, and Legal Aid Cambodia (LAC)—to provide a range of services, including health, legal and reintegration services for victims of gender-based violence (GBV), as well as GBV prevention services.

The EVAW program also contributes funds to the German development agency (GIZ) to deliver the Access to Justice for Women 2 (ATJWII) program.

The case studies featured in this program impact report provide examples of how the NGO services funded by the Australian Government through the EVAW program have made positive contributions to the ability of women, their children and their families to live free from violence.

The names of individuals affected by violence have been changed throughout this document to ensure protection of identity. Images selected for use are representative of services and themes only; they are not images of the individuals referenced in case studies.

Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED)

2,057 Counselling sessions have been conducted

1,596 Entertainment workers have received counselling

1,367 Leaflets and booklets have been distributed

895 Referral training sessions have been conducted

343 Reported cases of SGBV have been referred to LAC, SSC and the CNP Hotline

47 Police officers have received SGBV training

9 Radio broadcasts regarding SGBV have been aired by the Women's Media Centre radio station

5 Support services have been working together: ACTED, LAC, SSC, CNP and WMC.

ACTED is reducing the risk of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) against entertainment workers in Phnom Penh through higher reporting rates of SGBV cases and strengthening the referral system for victims.

Objectives:

1. Entertainment workers have increased awareness of SGBV, their rights and the assistance available to victims.
2. Entertainment workers have improved access to services available from NGOs and government.

Service partners include LAC, Social Services Cambodia (SSC), Women's Media Centre (WMC) and the Cambodian National Police (CNP).

Case Study: Entertainment Industry

In Cambodia, a night out with the guys often involves a trip to an “entertainment establishment”—restaurants, beer gardens, karaoke bars and nightclubs where men can relax, have a few drinks and listen to music. These places are usually staffed by well-dressed young women, commonly called “beer girls”, who ensure the glasses are kept full and the customers are happy. This often involves nothing more than friendly banter. However, the close contact these workers have with large groups of men, combined with large amounts of alcohol, puts these women at high risk of harassment and even sexual assault from customers. Because it's not considered a glamorous job, the salary is low, and many of the women who work in these establishments are driven there by a combination of poverty and a lack of education. This also forces some of the women in these jobs to pursue sex work as well, making them even more vulnerable to abuse.

“To tell you the truth, five years ago domestic violence and violence against beer girls was common,” says a Cambodian National Police officer from the Ministry of Interior trafficking hotline. “Most people, especially women who work at entertainment establishments, were not aware of their rights and the laws that protect them. They did not know how to react to violence and harassment from customers.”

“A 2011 needs assessment revealed that women working in entertainment establishments were suffering from high levels of sexual and gender-based violence, including rape,” reports Ginny Haythornthwaite, ACTED Country Director. With support



from the Australian Government's EVAW program in Cambodia, ACTED was able to begin a comprehensive SGBV prevention program for women who work at entertainment establishments. This program targets the female employees through a network of peer educators made up of current and former entertainment establishment workers. ACTED also works with the owners of these entertainment establishments, making them equal partners in preventing violence and harassment.

For establishment owners, ACTED provides individual information sessions. This training includes the owners in the support system, giving owners the skills and ability to provide initial assistance to their staff if they are being harassed by clients, and the knowledge to refer them to additional support services if they become victims of violence. "Advocacy among entertainment establishment owners is increasingly important to the project's success," Ms. Haythornthwaite reports.

"The Australian Government is a very knowledgeable donor," says Ms. Haythornthwaite. "the support has allowed us to provide services directly to these women, including awareness of their rights, counselling and problem-solving training at their workplace, which gives women the skills to defuse difficult situations, and the confidence to stand up for themselves. ACTED also provides referrals to medical and legal support services for victims of violence."

In addition to direct support to women and establishment owners, ACTED also works with the Cambodian National Police

to support the operation of a national hotline to report violence against women and human trafficking, staffed by specially trained police officers. In 2014, the police handled 159 cases of violence and human trafficking reported through the hotline, including sexual exploitation and domestic violence.

Since the start of activities, ACTED has reached over 3,000 workers in 126 establishments—more than double their pre-project estimates. "Now, the women at entertainment establishments have knowledge and can find solutions to problems," says the police officer from the Ministry of Interior trafficking hotline. "All in all, because of ACTED activities, the violence in the community and at entertainment establishments has been reduced."

Case Study: The Lonely Girl Who Became an Outspoken Educator

Yos Sophea came to Phnom Penh from a rural area of Cambodia to study at university. Sophea's family is poor, and she describes watching her father beat her mother before she left. Because of their poverty, her family didn't encourage her to continue studying, and cut off contact with her when she moved to Phnom Penh. To support her studies, she took a job in a beer garden, going to school during the day and working at night. Unfortunately, her salary wasn't enough to cover both her living expenses and her tuition. In addition, sometimes she had to work until late at night, and the customers were rude and abusive. These experiences left her feeling lonely and upset, with little

confidence. “I felt worried because I couldn’t afford my expenses and my family didn’t support me. I wanted to be away from other people, and felt afraid when I met them.”

One day, an ACTED trainer came to her workplace and gave a session on women’s empowerment and sexual violence. “I learned things that I didn’t know before,” Sophea recalls. “Afterwards, I asked the trainer for some advice about my situation, and she recommended that I apply to be a peer educator. After I was accepted into the program, ACTED provided training on psychosocial support, counselling and ways to reduce sexual violence.”

After this training program, Sophea began working with the establishment owners and other workers to raise awareness of women’s rights and reduce sexual violence in entertainment establishments. As a peer educator, Sophea has gained a new respect for her fellow workers. “Before, I didn’t know very much about the other workers,” she confesses. “Now, after listening to their stories I understand that most of them started working in these establishments because they were very poor and could not afford their living expenses, the same as me. Now when I meet with entertainment workers and women in crisis, I am brave to speak to them. I try to encourage them the same way that ACTED encourages me.” Sophea has also learned the skills to help other women who are struggling with violent situations. “For example,” she explains, “there are some women whose husbands drink alcohol and use drugs, and when they come home they beat their wives. I can help these women through counselling and support, and if the problem is too big I refer them to the police hotline so they can solve the problem.”

Since becoming a peer educator, Sophea’s confidence and understanding of the world have increased. Being a peer educator also provides her with an additional salary, allowing her to continue her studies while gaining valuable work experience. She now has a positive outlook on her life, is making new friends, and has even begun to rebuild relationships with her family. “My life has changed a lot,” she reports happily. “Since I started working with ACTED, I have more friends. I also began calling my family every day, so that I can be close with them again.”

Case Study: The Story of Chhoub Chanda

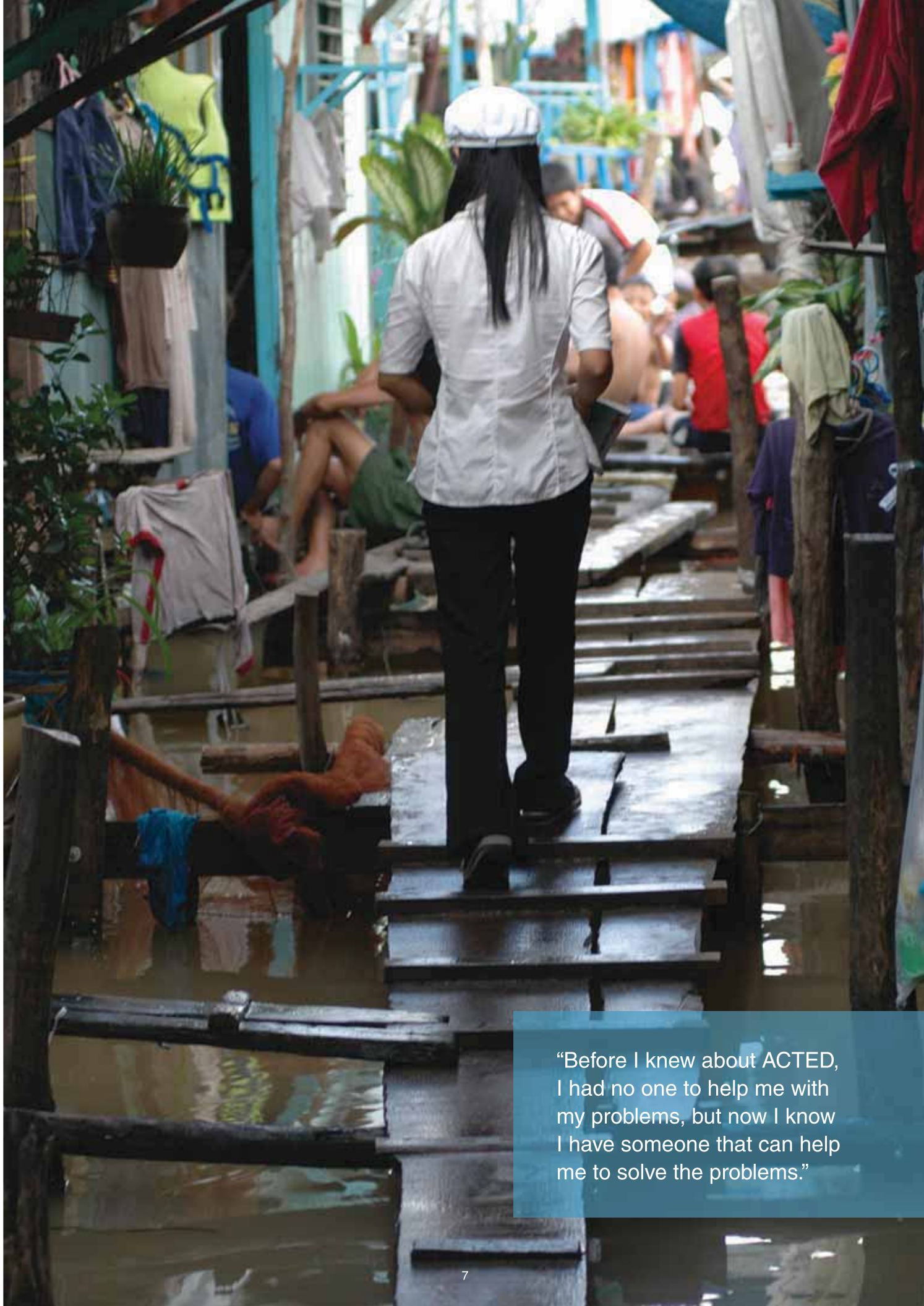
“Before I met this organisation I had a lot of difficulties in my life, and I didn’t dare to ask anyone to help me. I was a weak person.” So begins Chhoub Chanda, when explaining how ACTED support helped her. Chanda used to sell ice cream and sweets in her village in Kandal province, but moved to Phnom Penh in search of better economic opportunities. She now works at an open air restaurant/bar in one of the new suburbs on the outskirts of the capital city, surrounded by the villas of the wealthy. Like Sophea, she was intimidated by the customers and managers, and was unaware of her rights before she encountered ACTED.

“I first knew about ACTED when they came to teach directly at the restaurant,” she explains. “They asked to meet with all the female staff privately to discuss our problems. Afterward, the organisation invited me to join the workshop at ACTED and the meeting at the Ministry of Women’s Affairs.”

ACTED provided Chanda and other workers with an awareness of their rights, as well as support services to help them resolve any problems. “At that time, I felt that the organisation helped me a lot. I could call them and ask for help at any time. I felt that I was not afraid of anyone and if someone wanted to abuse me, I could file a complaint against them.” In addition to delivering this knowledge, ACTED helped Chanda by providing counselling and training in problem solving.

Thanks to ACTED support, Chanda has the confidence of a strong social support network, and has made positive changes in her life. “Now I feel that my life is not completely successful yet, but I feel protected and can take good care of all the customers. Before I knew about ACTED, I had no one to help me with my problems, but now I know I have someone that can help me to solve the problems.”





“Before I knew about ACTED, I had no one to help me with my problems, but now I know I have someone that can help me to solve the problems.”

1,031 Community members have participated in awareness raising sessions

215 GBV survivors have received counselling

135 Members have joined self-help groups

43 Community Resource Persons have been trained

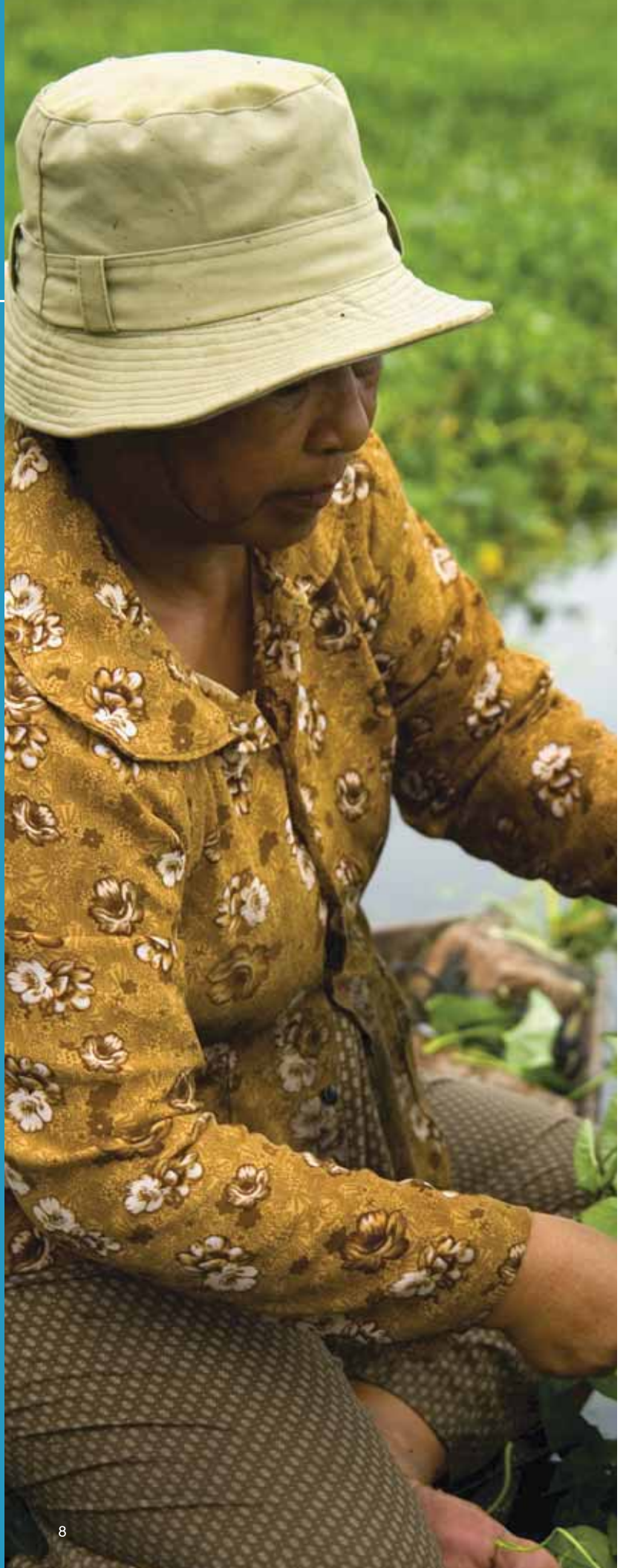
29 Clients have received individual counselling

23 Female survivors of GBV have received individual counselling

13 GBV self-help groups have been established

6 Men have received specialist alcohol counselling

Ending Violence Against Women
in Cambodia (EVAW)



Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Cambodia (TPO)

TPO is improving mental health for survivors of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and sexual assault by improving access to psychosocial services for survivors.

Objectives:

1. To increase the capacity of 60 Community Resource Persons in identifying, managing and referring survivors of GBV and sexual assault.
2. To increase mental health and wellbeing for approximately 250–340 survivors of GBV and sexual assault in two communes of Banan district, Battambang province, in 2013–2015.
3. To strengthen a support network of survivors of GBV and sexual assault at the community level.

Banan district is in a rural area of Battambang province, part of the fertile agricultural lands called the “rice bowl” of Cambodia. It also suffers from extreme poverty and a lack of social support services. “My commune is very poor, with many social problems such as alcoholism, gambling and domestic violence,” says Mrs. Chhub Sanith, Commune Councillor in Kandeu commune, Banan. “Because of these problems, I contacted organisations such as Banteay Srey and TPO to come help the people in my commune.”

From these requests and its own assessment of the area, TPO began working in Banan district in 2013 with funding support from the EVAW Cambodia program. But resolving GBV is a complicated issue. That’s why TPO provides counselling and support services for both victims of domestic and gender-based violence and the perpetrators, who are themselves often suffering from mental health problems, including alcoholism. In addition, TPO provides training for local government staff to identify and manage survivors of GBV and sexual assault, and refer them to appropriate legal and mental health services. “Before, when I was called to help victims of domestic violence I was afraid because I didn’t know what to do,” Mrs. Chhub laments. “Now I understand the process better than before, and when the victims come to me I can help them to address their problems in the commune and with the support of NGOs.”

Since TPO began its activities in Banan, it has trained 20 government staff like Mrs. Chhub, including the commune focal person for women’s and children’s affairs, commune councillors,

health centre staff and police officers. With the support of these civil servants, TPO has identified and provided assistance to more than one thousand community members in the past 2 years, including victims of domestic violence, male perpetrators, and high-risk groups such as people with disabilities, children and female-headed households.

“They came and explained about domestic violence,” says Mrs. Chhub. “And provided counselling and support for victims and their families to understand how to resolve their problems, and offered legal services for serious issues.”

As Mrs. Taing Sopheap (Research Monitoring & Evaluation Coordinator for TPO) explains, “Australian Government support has been crucial to strengthening the support networks for survivors of GBV and sexual assault in the community, including integrating Community Resource Persons and GBV victims into meetings with local authorities, which has been quite successful in addressing needs at the local level.”

“Now, living in the commune is better than before,” Mrs. Chhub reports happily. “People are not afraid, and know how to resolve the situation when there is trouble.”

Case Study: The Story of Aek Ponnleu

Mrs. Aek Ponnleu is one of the success stories of TPO’s activities in Banan district, and an extraordinary example of the changes that can happen through counselling and support.

“From when I was very young, my life was hard,” Mrs. Aek explains. “My mother died when I was 8 years old, and my father remarried. After that, it was difficult for me to live with my father and stepmother, as they were cruel to me, and my stepmother used to beat me. Later on I got married, but my family was poor and my husband used to beat me. We would argue because he frequently drank beer and gambled. In my family, domestic violence and arguments happened almost every day. This severely affected me, and caused me to have psychological problems for many years. I felt so worthless. Two times in my life I tried to kill myself: once after I was severely beaten by my stepmother and once after I was beaten by my husband. Both times I received help and recovered.

“Later, I met with TPO staff. They listened to my problems and gave me ideas and strategies to improve my life. I joined the self-help group, where I learned how to understand and manage my problems, including communication and coping strategies. Afterward, I began to talk with my husband and try to understand and change our situation. Together, we came up with a decision so that we could support our family and live in happiness. Now, my family uses kind words with each other, and we help each



other with domestic tasks and farming. My son and daughter go to school, and my husband and I can go to work. Our income has increased, because my husband is no longer drinking and gambling.”

Mrs. Aek now works with TPO as a Community Resource Person. Community Resource Persons are members of the local community—usually previous victims of domestic violence—who have undergone training in mental health, basic psychological issues, GBV and awareness of psychological support services for victims of GBV and sexual assault. They help to identify and counsel other women who suffer from domestic violence. Mrs. Aek is one of around 80 Community Resource Persons trained by TPO in the past 2 years.

In the past year, Community Resource Persons provided support to 215 GBV victims, helping them to recognise the signs and symptoms of domestic violence, teaching them coping strategies and anger management techniques, and referring them to counselling and other support services.

In recognition of her work helping families to address their domestic problems, Mrs. Aek was recently appointed as a deputy village chief. “I helped other villagers who experience domestic violence and had good results, so they slowly started to acknowledge my worth,” she explains. “Now I have good relationships with the other people and am more respected in the village. These days, people come to my house to share their problems and seek help from me.”

Case Study: The Story of Mrs. Keo Sothy

Mrs. Keo Sothy lives in Banan district in Battambang province with her husband and children. Like many in her community, her family is poor. Sothy tried to supplement her family's farming income by selling sugar cane juice, but her husband's drinking problem left little money for the family. “Before I met this organisation, I felt so depressed,” she says. “My husband was constantly drinking alcohol, and we had no money. We would argue, and sometimes he would get violent. I wanted to divorce him, because I felt hopeless and didn't know what to do. I



would have bad headaches because I worried so much about my situation.”

Sothy had never heard of TPO before its staff came to her village looking for people in need of psychological support services. “They were doing a needs assessment in my area, so I went to meet them and ask for help,” she recalls. “They interviewed me, and encouraged me to get counselling to better understand my problems and how to solve them.”

Shortly thereafter, Sothy began counselling and joined a self-help group facilitated by TPO staff working in her district. “With TPO’s support, I learned about coping strategies, conflict resolution, communication techniques and anger management,” she reports. “I learned how to resolve small problems before they became big problems.”

As Sothy gained control of her life, she longed to share what she was learning with others, especially her husband. “I learned so much from TPO that I also introduced my husband to them. TPO taught us how to communicate better and understand each

other. Now we don’t argue and are patient with each other. I am happy now because my family is better than before. I don’t have headaches anymore, because I am more positive about my life.”

With her improved confidence and hope for the future, Sothy now wants to help other victims of domestic violence in her community. “When I have happiness in my family, I want to share my experiences and knowledge with other families that have the same problems, so they can be happy also.”

Hagar Cambodia

554	Clients have received counselling, case management and economic advice
394	Family members have been provided with assistance
148	Individuals have received training on domestic violence
60	Clients have received counselling
42	Clients have shown a decrease in trauma symptoms
41	Clients have improved resiliency scores
39	Clients have been reintegrated into their community or family
14	Clients have been assisted to obtain a job

Ending Violence Against Women
in Cambodia (EVAW)

Hagar is helping survivors of human rights abuses experience safe reintegration into their families/communities and improved quality of life.

Objectives:

1. Reintegrated clients live in a safe environment free of violence.
2. Reintegrated clients have improved social capital.
3. Reintegrated clients and/or their families have increased economic stability.

Case Study: The Story of Sou Leakhena

Sou Leakhena, the eldest daughter of a poor farming family, was just 9 years old when she was raped. Her parents looked after cows for others in the village to make ends meet. One day, Leakhena's parents took the cows to graze and left her home alone. That day, Leakhena was raped by a neighbour in her village. She was taking a nap when she felt her attacker on her. "At first I thought it was a ghost," she says, crying as she recalls the incident. "But then he started touching me and I knew it was a person. I kicked out and asked who it was, and he replied, 'It's me.' And then I recognised him, as I spoke with him every day."

Leakhena's attacker then threatened to kill her if she reported the incident. Bravely, she told her uncle—a local teacher—about the crime, and he helped her to file a criminal complaint against her abuser. Unfortunately, it was not enough. "He had a lot of relatives who were rich. Maybe he had someone helping him," she wonders. "He was arrested and detained, but a few days later he was released. He offered my father KHR300,000 (about USD75) in compensation, but my father angrily rejected it, because he had raped me."

Sou Leakhena's case is all too common in Cambodia, where power and money can predetermine the outcome of a criminal case. After her experiences, Leakhena was shunned in her community because of her abuse. "I felt afraid and shy in public. When I would go anywhere, other people would stare at me," she remembers. "Some old people pitied me, some blamed me, and some children the same age as me did not talk to me anymore. This was because they knew my story."

Fortunately for Leakhena, her uncle also knew of an organisation that helped at-risk children. After listening to Leakhena's story, this organisation referred her to Hagar. Hagar provides direct support to survivors of human rights abuse in Cambodia, such as SGBV and human trafficking.



“[Australian Government] support has been crucial to Hagar providing a range of services for victims of trafficking and violence, including counselling, reintegration and social support.”

Once at the shelter, Leakhena was provided with counselling and support to heal from her experiences. She also went to school with the other children. “Hagar helped me a lot,” she says. “They provided me with study materials, clothes and education. I stayed at the shelter a long time, and learned a lot about how to live in the community after my abuse. My mother asked that I be brought home now, because I was older.”

Currently, Hagar is working with around 160 survivors throughout Cambodia, providing them with a safe haven as well as counselling, medical, and legal assistance to recover from their experiences and pursue justice. The ultimate goal of this support is to reintegrate survivors into their chosen communities whenever possible. Because of the complexity in addressing these issues at the individual level, Hagar works with survivors for as long as it takes to ensure their safety, security and wellbeing. Hagar also works closely with government ministries and other NGOs to ensure that the needs of the family are met, providing emergency food, vocational training and economic support.

“The Australian Government has supported ongoing client management services with Hagar for many years now,” Mike

Nowlin, Program Manager for Case Management, explains. “Their support has been crucial to Hagar providing a range of services for victims of trafficking and violence, including counselling, reintegration and social support.” In the past year, Australian Government funding has supported services for more than half of all the survivors in the reintegration program.

Before Leakhena was reintegrated with her family, Hagar assessed their situation to ensure that Leakhena’s family was capable of supporting her transition back into the community. This included having somewhere safe to live. “My previous house was very old,” she remembers. “There was no bathroom and we couldn’t live upstairs, only on the ground floor. Hagar helped us build a new house with a bathroom. After her observation, my teacher knew that my house was now safe, with relatives living around me. They also gave me a bicycle so I could continue going to school.”

Now, years later, staff from Hagar still routinely follow up with Leakhena and her family, to ensure that her transition and ongoing recovery is progressing smoothly. “Every three months, the staff come to visit me and my family. They ask about my living situation and monitor my studies, ask me what my grades are.

They encourage me. At first they visited every month, but now they think I am stronger and visit every three months."

When asked about how she has changed since first coming to the Hagar shelter, she is certain. "I feel that I am born again," she asserts. "Now I am not worried about anything, and I feel happy. I am braver, know how to understand and control my feelings, and know how to seek help when I have problems. I have more friends now."

And what about her plans for the future? "Now I work at a garment factory, but I want to improve my skills so that I can get better work. I want to help my family."

For Leakhena, the best justice that she has found has been in a life well lived. "Before, [my attacker's] life was better than mine. Now my living is better than his," she says happily.

Case Study: The Story of Pou Neary

Pou Neary comes from a poor family in the middle of Cambodia. Because of their poverty, her family was looked down upon by the other villagers. One day, when she was in third grade, Neary went fishing with her older brother and his friend. When her brother left for a minute, Neary was raped by her brother's friend. Running back to her house, she immediately told her mother what had happened. Her parents were very angry, and filed a complaint with the village chief.

But, even after a formal complaint, the perpetrator was still not brought to justice. "The village chief did not care about the case," Neary laments. "When the suspect was called in for questioning, he confessed to raping me. But the next time he was called, he didn't show up, so the case remained unresolved for a long time. My relative who worked in Phnom Penh helped my family to file a complaint with the police, but my attacker was still at large. They did not arrest him for some reason."

After taking her complaint, the local police referred Neary's family to the Cambodian Ministry of Social Affairs, which then referred her to Hagar for rehabilitation and psychosocial support. Once at

the shelter, she began receiving the support that she needed to help recover from the attack, and find justice for herself. "Hagar provided me with psychological help and counselling, as well as helping me to file complaints with the court and supporting my education with clothes and study materials," she explains. There, she also found acceptance. "I was not happy when this happened to me. I thought that I was different, and only my family had this problem. But when I came to Hagar, I realised that there are other children with the same problems as me. Some children are even poorer than me, and have struggled more in their lives."

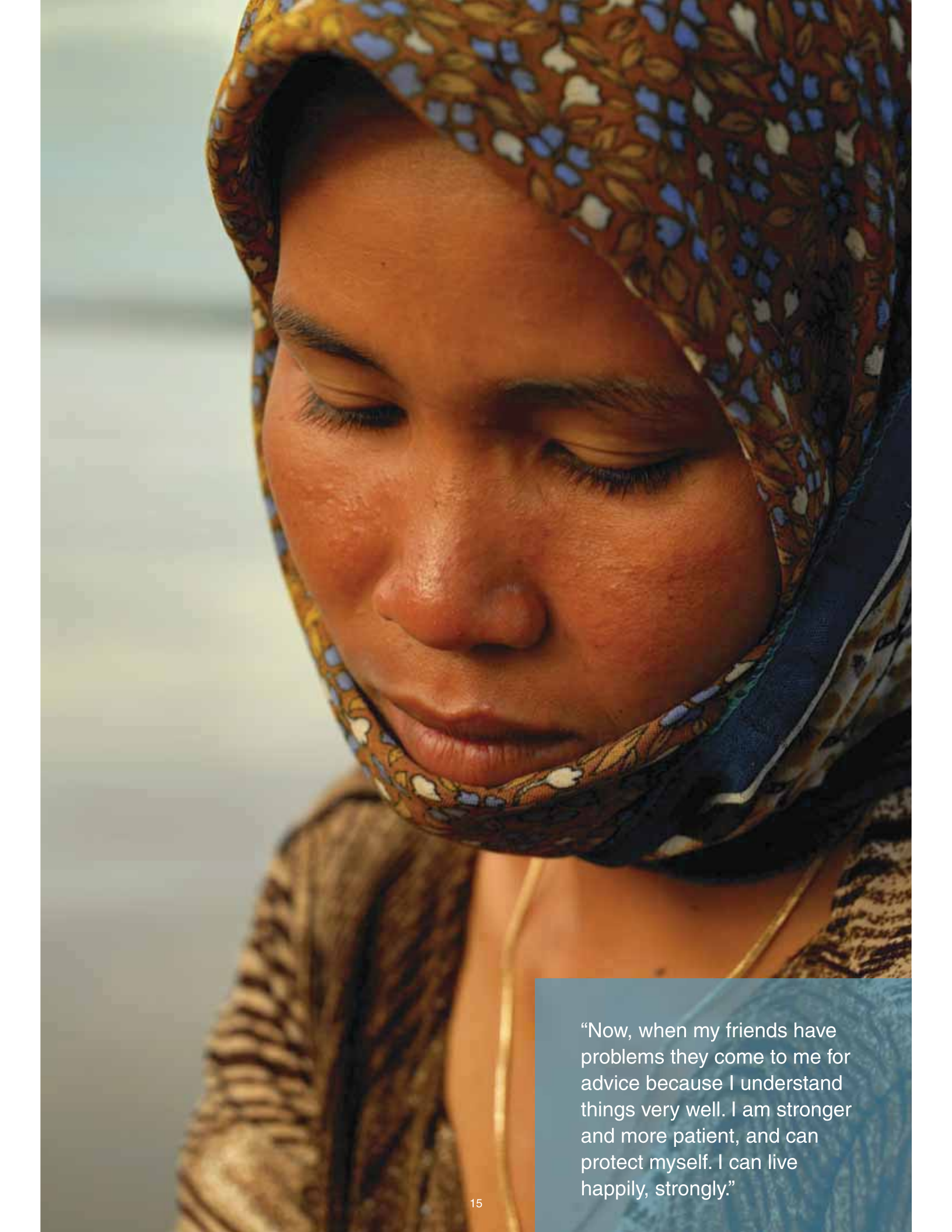
Gradually, Neary was reintegrated into her family and community, at first visiting them during school holidays, then increasing the frequency of visits. Now she lives with her family full time, and is continuing her education at the local high school, where she will graduate soon.

Since being reintegrated into her family, Neary has continued to receive funds to support her studies, and Hagar case staff visit her regularly to check on her progress. Hagar also provided funds to her family to repair their house and improve their economic condition, so they can better support Neary and their other children. "Now, the neighbours behave nicer towards us, because our living situation is better than before," Neary explains.

For Neary, it's hard to describe how much the support of Hagar has done for her. "For me, all the help I received was important," she says. "Without it, I would be hopeless. Especially important were the spiritual support, encouragement, and psychological counselling that I received. Now I understand more about society and about myself. I learned to live independently and control myself."

Neary's experiences have shown her an internal strength and resilience that she didn't know she had. "My life has changed a lot; it is much better now than before. Now, when my friends have problems they come to me for advice because I understand things very well. I am stronger and more patient, and can protect myself. I can live happily, strongly," she concludes.





“Now, when my friends have problems they come to me for advice because I understand things very well. I am stronger and more patient, and can protect myself. I can live happily, strongly.”

156 Members have attended training on GBV-related laws

145 Members have attended LAC-organised provincial, district and commune committees for women and children

99 Members have attended multi-agency criminal justice meetings

47 Cases of domestic violence and sexual assault have received legal services and proceeded through the court system

25 Cases of domestic violence and sexual assault have been successfully closed

11 Radio talk-show programs have been broadcast

8 New cases of domestic violence and sexual assault have been referred by police to court



Legal Aid Cambodia (LAC)

LAC is enhancing the rights of survivors of domestic violence and sexual abuse through strengthening the existing mechanisms at the sub-national level.

Objectives:

1. To continue to strengthen the existing sub-national level mechanisms combatting domestic violence and sexual abuse through coordinating and supporting meetings and training of key stakeholders to learn, discuss and solve issues arising from criminal and civil court proceedings. The members are invited from a variety of professions associated with the legal jurisdiction such as representatives from the court, prison, police, military police, social affairs department, women's affairs department, education, health, commune chiefs, and commune and district women's committees.
2. To increase access of survivors of domestic violence and sexual abuse to mechanisms to assert their rights.

In Banan district, Battambang province, LAC is implementing a holistic approach to ending gender-based violence and abuse. Within this district, LAC is working with all actors, from the victims and their local communities to the district civilian and criminal justice authorities, and even providing support to the provincial court. With Australian Government support through the EVAW program in Cambodia, LAC has worked to strengthen the abilities of sub-national institutions to provide support services to victims and actively combat domestic violence and abuse. In addition to working with state and civil society institutions, LAC also works directly with victims to ensure that they receive justice. Each year, LAC provides legal support and representation free of charge to around 45 victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse and their families.

"We recognise that our projects would not be successful without the support of the Australian Government and the cooperation and networking relationships with national and international NGOs, local government authorities, judicial police and court

officials," reports Mr. Phonn Thearin, Project Manager for LAC's Enhancing the Rights of Women and Children project, which has been financially supported by the EVAW Cambodia program since 2013. "The successful level of cooperation, facilitation and discussion which has occurred between LAC and the relevant local authorities regarding child protection and the rights of women and children demonstrate that they appreciate being part of this project."

"Before LAC came here, the people did not care about the law," explains Deputy District Governor Ouy Mouy. "Even victims didn't think that the law was important." Because Mr. Mouy is an influential member of his local district, many people would bring their problems directly to him for resolution. "Sometimes the victims would come to me with a complaint of domestic violence, and I ask them why they don't file a formal complaint with the police. They tell me that the police demand money from them to file the complaint, and then when their partner is arrested and they need to bail them out of jail, they need to pay money again."

"Now, staff from LAC come to work in the village, and improve the knowledge of women and children about their rights. They even invite the police to join the meetings," Mr. Mouy continues. "LAC has also helped the consultation committee for women's and children's affairs to improve a lot. LAC trains women to understand about the law, conflict resolution, and how to protect themselves from domestic violence and trafficking."

Even at the provincial level, it is often difficult for victims of domestic violence to find justice. Working in the Cambodian court system since 1996, Mr. Khum Ravy, Deputy Clerk at the Provincial Court of Battambang, has seen many domestic violence cases over the years. "It was very hard to find lawyers for the victims in the past, because people were not widely aware of domestic violence," he says. "Because LAC helped to raise awareness about domestic violence, now people are aware of it, and it is easy for victims to receive legal support from the organisation."

"LAC supports women and children victims of domestic violence in our province," Mr. Ravy explains further. "Victims seek help from LAC because they are not aware of the legal procedures. They go to the organisation by themselves, or are referred by the local authorities or police when they first seek help. They don't know if they will file a complaint or not, and are very afraid to do it on their own. But when the organisations support them, the complaint will be positively resolved most of the time."

"The most important thing that LAC has provided has been training to the women in this district, to protect themselves from domestic violence," says Mr. Mouy, the Deputy District Governor. "LAC helps to solve domestic problems without violence and without demanding any money from the families. They provide



“The most powerful result of this project has been justice. Justice for the victims of domestic violence and abuse. Because of LAC, the victims file a complaint and demand justice. Because of LAC, the court procedures are more efficient and they can solve the cases quickly.”

consultations on victims’ legal rights, and even help to file complaints with the courts. LAC does not care whether they are rich or poor, they still help women when they have problems.”

In addition to traditional legal advice and representation, LAC also has special procedures in place for working with underage victims of violence and abuse. “If the victims are under 14 years old, they are very afraid to testify or speak out against their accuser,” Mr. Ravy from the Provincial Court explains. “For children, LAC follows special procedures to help them feel comfortable and encourage them to speak with a lawyer or the courts.” LAC also provides transportation and food allowances to seek legal advice and attend court proceedings—costs that would otherwise restrict very poor victims and their families from seeking legal assistance.

As part of its network of cooperating partners, LAC has also provided workshops and training to the court staff on procedures for dealing with victims of domestic violence and abuse, including both legal and psychological methods for improving the outcomes of cases. “Every three months, LAC has workshops to explain about victims’ rights and legal support,” Mr. Ravy continues. “These trainings help the court staff understand how to conduct the procedures properly, collect evidence quickly and appropriately, and conclude cases promptly.”

Since LAC began working in Battambang, both officials agree that things have improved for victims of domestic violence. “Now the victims have confidence. They know that when they have problems, there is someone to assist them,” commends

Mr. Mouy. “In addition, the procedures of the district police have been greatly improved. I really admire the district police chief for his hard work to resolve domestic violence complaints. The district police have even agreed to waive the fees for domestic violence cases.”

“The most powerful result of this project has been justice. Justice for the victims of domestic violence and abuse,” says Mr. Ravy. “Because of LAC, the victims file a complaint and demand justice. Because of LAC, the court procedures are more efficient and they can solve the cases quickly.”

Case Study: The Story of Chek Sothea

Chek Sothea was just 17 years old when she was raped. Her older brother’s friend came to her house and asked to borrow a phone charger, and they chatted for a few minutes. Then he asked if she wanted to go to his house. Sothea agreed and got on the back of his motorcycle. “At first, I didn’t know where he was going,” she explains. “Then he stopped at a guesthouse, and told me to wait for him there, that he had to go home for a minute. When he came back, he dragged me to a room in the back of the guesthouse, and threatened to kill me if I shouted. I was so afraid that I couldn’t do anything.”

After the incident, she says, she suffered severe psychological trauma. “I did not want to do anything at that time,” Sothea reports. “I felt sad and wanted to stop studying. I wanted to move to a different village, start a new life. I was afraid it would happen to me again.”



Eventually, Sothea told her parents and they reported the case to the local authorities, who then referred her to LAC for legal assistance and counselling. “LAC helped me to find a lawyer and file a complaint against my attacker. They also encouraged me to continue my studies.”

After filing the complaint, Sothea’s case went to court, and ultimately had a positive outcome. Her attacker was convicted, ordered to pay compensation and sent to prison. Sothea still has to live with the scars of what happened to her, but has become more resilient and determined to continue her studies and improve her life. “It was my experience,” she says resolutely. “But it will not happen to me again.”

“My life now is better,” she concludes. “I am happy and try hard to study. Sometimes I feel afraid, but my family always encourages me to keep going.”

GIZ Access to Justice for Women 2 (ATJWII) NGO Services

1,765	Clients have received counselling, case management and economic advice
537	Clients have received legal advice
329	Clients have received legal representation
237	Clients have received individual psychosocial counselling
179	Clients have received shelter-based support
174	Clients have received reintegration support
121	Clients have received group counselling
116	Clients have been referred to medical services
72	Clients have been referred to vocational training

Ending Violence Against Women in Cambodia (EVAW)

The Australian Government has committed to providing funding to GIZ for the ATJWII program until 2016, through EVAW. The target group of this program is women and girls, particularly in rural areas, who have been victims of or are at risk of GBV. The ATJWII program will focus on establishing a referral system for victims in two provinces: Kompong Thom and Siem Reap.

To undertake this activity, the program has entered into a number of partnership agreements with NGOs to team up with the sub-national state actors, particularly the provincial departments of women's affairs.

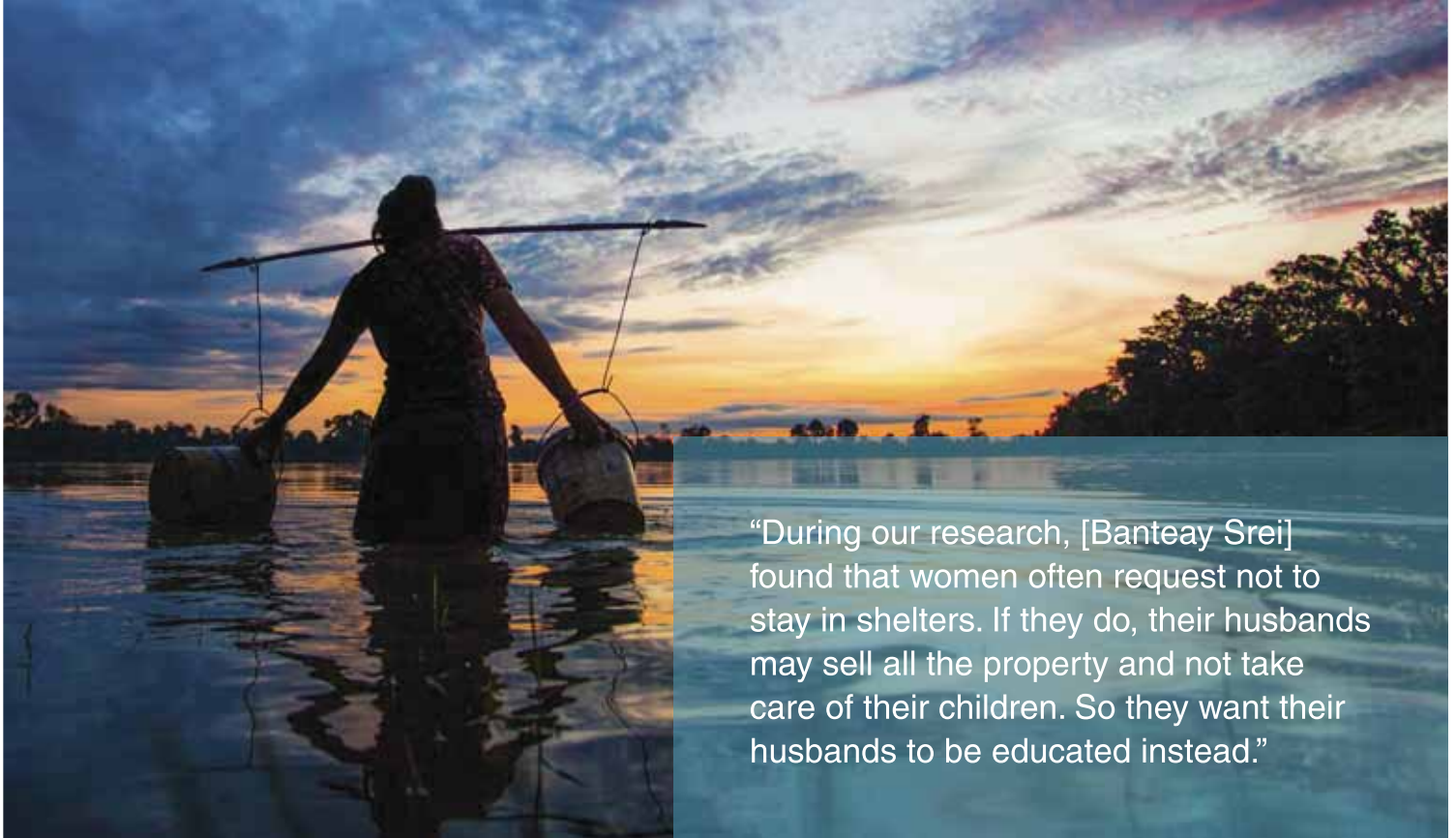
These NGOs include Banteay Srei, TPO, LAC and the Cambodian Women's Crisis Center (CWCC). Support is also being provided to strengthen the roles of Ministry of Women's Affairs and Provincial Department of Women's Affairs staff designated as Judicial Police Agents (JPAs).

Banteay Srei

Banteay Srei focuses on economically empowering families victimised by domestic violence and reintegrating them into their communities. In addition to its work with female victims of domestic violence, Banteay Srei also addresses the root causes of domestic violence through specific targeting of men and boys for counselling, psychosocial support, and awareness raising on women's legal rights, in attempts to change men's attitudes toward domestic violence. To increase its coverage, Banteay Srei trains local volunteers on how to recognise domestic violence, as well as basic counselling and intervention techniques.

Case Study: 'From addiction to a happy life'

"Because both my wife and I drank alcohol, no one earned money to support the family. Sometimes we had no food to eat,



“During our research, [Banteay Srei] found that women often request not to stay in shelters. If they do, their husbands may sell all the property and not take care of their children. So they want their husbands to be educated instead.”

and our children could not go to school.” So begins Dith Sophat as he explains what his life used to be like. Struggling with alcohol addiction, he and his wife couldn’t find stable work, and he sold firewood that he gathered in the forest near his house to earn a little money. “We had a lot of difficulties,” he recalls. “We fought almost every night, and broke many things in our house.”

Sophat’s story is all too common in Siem Reap. Although Siem Reap houses the Angkor Wat complex, one of the most majestic and popular tourist attractions in the world, rural areas of the province remain some of the most impoverished in Cambodia. With poverty comes hopelessness and other social ills, such as alcohol addiction and domestic violence, which only exacerbate families’ problems and continue the poverty cycle.

A village volunteer for Banteay Srei first heard about Sophat’s problems from his neighbours. After hearing of Sophat’s situation, the volunteer invited Sophat to join the counselling meetings in his village. There, Banteay Srei staff provided him with anger management and problem-solving techniques, and taught him how to avoid violence. The results, he says, were dramatic. “Now I have changed nearly 100%,” he says proudly. “Banteay Srei educated me and the other people in my village about how not to fight. I learned to talk quietly, not shout at other people, and when my wife is angry I should just leave her alone, and come back when she has calmed down.”

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In addition to counselling, Banteay Srei also provided economic support to Sophat and his family, so that they could provide for themselves and break the cycle of poverty and violence. “Banteay Srei provided us with water jars, a well, vegetable seeds and a cow, so we can farm. When the cow has calves, we will keep one calf and give the cow back to Banteay Srei, who will give it to another needy family.”

Now supported by ATJWII, and in partnership with EVAW Cambodia, Banteay Srei works with many families like Sophat’s in Siem Reap and Kampong Thom. Based on an initial needs assessment, they found that victims of domestic violence often struggle with opposing urges: the desire to stay in their home to make sure their children and possessions are looked after, and the need for distance between themselves and their partners. That’s why Banteay Srei established a “peace centre” in Siem Reap; a safe haven where men—both perpetrators and victims of domestic violence—can stay temporarily and receive counselling and support until their situation is stable enough to attempt reconciliation, or until the police intervene in the most serious cases. This way, the women can stay in the house and take care of the children.

“During our research, we found that women often request not to stay in shelters. If they do, their husbands may sell all the property and not take care of their children. So they want their husbands to be educated instead,” explains Mrs. Ren Samphass, Community Coordinator on Domestic Violence for Banteay Srei. “If it is a serious case—a criminal offence—then women can stay there until the police or authorities can resolve the matter. If it is not serious, we provide counselling and support for the men for a short time.”

Sophat has not had to use the peace centre since his family situation has improved. “Now I am able to support the family by farming and raising cows. I don’t need to gather firewood anymore,” he reports. “Since Banteay Srei educated us, my wife and I have stopped drinking. I feel very much happy with my life now. Our lives are better than before, and we love each other.”

Case Study: The Story of Meas Leakena and Her Family

Meas Leakena is a strong, industrious woman from a poor family in a rural part of Siem Reap province. Leakena used to hunt for red ant eggs, a delicacy in Cambodia, in the forest near her village. She would then sell them in the market to make extra money. Leakena’s husband began drinking after they got married and didn’t work, leaving her as the sole provider for her children. “Even when I was very pregnant, I had to go far into the forest to find ant eggs,” she recalls, crying. “I was afraid when I travelled alone on the deserted road so far into the forest; I worried that I could be robbed, raped or worse. Some neighbours cautioned that my baby might be born in the forest, but I had no choice. I had to work until the baby was born. Then, when the baby was born I stopped working to take care of the baby, but we had no money for food. For seven months, I only ate rice with salt. Even when our small house fell down in a storm, my husband never helped me. He thought of nothing but drinking.”

After she started working again, Leakena’s husband didn’t help with the housework or meals, often leaving their children to go hungry while he went drinking. One day, she came back late to find her husband heavily drunk and belligerent. “My husband complained that I worked hard every day just to pay for my own funeral. Then he grabbed a rod and hit me with it.”

Fortunately, Leakena’s neighbour, Mrs. Sam, was able to intervene and stop the abuse. However, the next time her husband started to hit her, Leakena hit back. “I grabbed a belt and started hitting him. I just could not tolerate what my husband had done to me. When my neighbour questioned me, I told her that next time he hit me, I would kill him and walk to the prison myself. That’s when she reported our situation to Banteay Srei.” Fortunately for everyone, Leakena’s neighbour was the village volunteer for Banteay Srei, which works with families struggling with domestic violence.

“Mrs. Sam gave my husband advice and a warning and when he came back home, he was better than before. She also informed Banteay Srei to bring both of us for counselling.”

“Banteay Srei brought us for counselling separately for a full day,” Leakena continued. “When he came back [from the training], my husband had changed a lot. He told the people in the village that women have equal rights to men, and not to hit or beat them as women have the right to file a complaint.”

In addition to counselling and awareness of women’s rights, Banteay Srei also provided some chickens for the family to raise, as well as KHR2,000,000 (approximately USD500) as capital to grow Leakena’s vegetable selling business. Banteay Srei staff and volunteers, including her neighbour Mrs. Sam, also follow up regularly with the family to follow their progress and offer domestic and economic advice.

Now, Leakena’s vegetable business is doing well and the family has a nice house and two motorbikes. They have also diversified their business into pig farming for additional income.

“I have learned a lot from this experience,” Leakena reflects. “Before, when my family suffered from domestic violence, we had nothing, we lived from hand to mouth. Now is much different than before. Because we stop arguing, it makes our lives much better. Before I was hopeless and thought about committing suicide, but now my husband and I have new hope for the future. I feel happy.”

Cambodian Women’s Crisis Center

Another local organisation that ATJWII has worked with is CWCC. With ATJWII support, CWCC runs a crisis shelter to provide accommodation for female victims of domestic violence, and also provides them with medical services, legal advice, psychosocial support and community reintegration, as well as conducting community awareness raising activities to reduce the prevalence of violence.

CWCC also provides livelihood development in the form of skills training and small business loans for women and children who have been victims of violence. This support allows the women not just to recover from their experiences, but to take direct action against their abusers, and eventually begin a new life after their ordeals.

Case Study: The Story of Phakka Ouk

“I knew CWCC because they came to my village to find women in crisis.” This is how Phakka Ouk begins her story. Although she lived in a rural part of Siem Reap province, one of the poorest areas in Cambodia, Ouk was ambitious and motivated to improve her life. A successful farmer, she owned her own fields and house, and also made snacks that she sold throughout the village for extra income. No matter how much money she made, it was never enough. “My living was very bad, because my husband was a soldier and liked to gamble a lot,” she laments. “He forced me to sell the house to repay his gambling debts. At that time, he told me that he stopped gambling and we could go live with him in the army barracks. I didn’t want to sell the house, but finally he convinced me.”

After selling her house, Ouk realised that her husband hadn’t stopped gambling. Instead, he used the money to further fuel his gambling addiction. “After 5 or 6 months, he told me that the house money was not enough to repay his loans, and requested that I pawn my field,” Ouk continues. “He promised that in a few months he would have enough money to get the land back, but he did not. Now we were left with nothing, so I went to live with him at the barracks.” Ever ambitious, Ouk started a small shop selling rice wine, cigarettes and sundries to the other soldiers. But her husband took all the money that she made for gambling.



“When he came back [from the training], my husband had changed a lot. He told the people in the village that women have equal rights to men, and not to hit or beat them as women have the right to file a complaint.”

Sometimes when he lost money, he would abuse her. “I was hopeless,” she says. “I had no one to depend on, nowhere to live, and no way to survive, because my husband didn’t care about me.”

Eventually, Ouk resorted to drastic measures to get away from her husband. “I had an idea. Every day, I buried the money I made. When I had about USD1,000 saved, I escaped to my parents’ house.” There, Ouk made the hard decision to divorce her husband. “He called me to come back home, but I made my decision. The village chief said that my problem could only be solved by CWCC. Then the village chief, commune chief and police filed the documents to request an intervention from this organisation.”

After being referred to CWCC by the local authorities, Ouk was offered accommodation at their shelter for survivors of abuse. There, she was provided with a new start: food, clothes, and the basic necessities of life, as well as emotional and legal support. “The most important thing CWCC did for me was to help me file the documents to get divorced from my husband. They also paid for treatment at the hospital when I was sick, taught me about domestic violence and my rights, and encouraged me.” She adds, “They gave me and my family a lot of hope for the future.”

With the support of CWCC, Ouk is now looking forward to the future, and able to reflect on her situation. “What I learned from this experience is to stop thinking about my problems in the past,”

she says. “I know how to make myself stronger. I can take good care of myself and my family, and earn a living by myself.”

“I hope that when I return home, I will have a job and can take care of my children. The most important thing is that I will not have a husband to disturb or beat me anymore.”

Case Study: The Story of Hong Sreypitch

“Before I met this organisation, my husband used to beat me and destroy the things in our house,” Hong Sreypitch says when asked why she sought help from CWCC. As a farmer with a small plot of land, she barely made enough money to support herself and her family. She wanted to work with her parents, selling goods in the market, but her husband forbade her from doing any other work, and would beat her for any perceived slight.

One day Sreypitch had enough of his abuse and fled the house with her children. “I took my children to live with my mother in my hometown,” she recalls, “but my husband came and took my children with him. When I went to get them he threatened to kill me, but I persisted and took my children back because I was worried what he would do to them. At that time our lives were not good, and we were living hand-to-mouth.”

In her hometown, Sreypitch sought help from a local staff member of the Cambodian Ministry of Women’s Affairs, who used the ATJWII pilot referral system to send her to CWCC for assistance.

As part of its support to female survivors of violence, ATJWII piloted a referral system in Sreypich's district. The referral system ensures that victims are provided with the appropriate assistance, including medical and legal aid, and that state and organisational resources for victims are uniformly utilised.

Sreypich has been living at the CWCC shelter for 5 months, as she still fears retribution from her husband, who has tried to find her many times. Living at the shelter, she and her children receive basic necessities, as well as occupational training, so they can improve their lives when they are reintegrated into their desired communities. "The organisation provided me with food, clothes, soap and household items," Sreypich explains about her experiences living at the shelter. "They also brought a teacher to teach me how to sew and become a tailor. I chose to learn sewing because when I return home, sewing can support my family and help my children have a better life."

Reflecting on her time at the shelter, Sreypich thinks about the things that she has learned in the past five months. "I learned a lot from this experience," she says. "[CWCC] taught me to persevere, to take care of myself and my children. With the support of CWCC, I can have a better livelihood and I know my rights."

"Now I try to do good things, and find help when I'm in trouble," she continues. "I know how to communicate better, and can work with my husband to avoid violence in the future. I am strong now, and I can return home and work to support my children."

Judicial Police Agents

ATJWII has also worked with local institutions (such as the provincial departments of women's affairs and provincial court systems) to develop JPAs. According to the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims 2005, and the Prakas on the Duties of Civil Servants of Ministry of Women's Affairs Rehabilitated as Judicial Police 2007, JPAs have a mandate to represent the victim as a complainant in court. Through ATJWII, GlZ provides training and support for the JPAs to effectively fulfil their function and act



"Now, victims file the complaints because they know that the local authorities and JPAs are helping them. The JPAs can find justice for women."

as representatives of victims of domestic violence and abuse, including improving cooperation with and between local law enforcement agencies.

As at December 2014, there were 129 JPAs nationwide providing appropriate support and referral services directly to victims of domestic violence, with 108 JPAs at the sub-national level.

Case Study: Testimony of three JPAs

"The JPAs have four roles," explains Mrs. Kang Sithavy, a Provincial Department of Women's Affairs staff member and JPA in Siem Reap province. "Firstly, we represent the victim. Secondly, we report and log the incidents and all subsequent case activities. Thirdly, we assist the police to investigate the crimes. And lastly, we also make sure that the domestic violence cases are being handled appropriately."

"Before I was a JPA, I felt very bad for the victims, because I couldn't do anything to help them," laments Mrs. Ngen Sarin, a JPA and official at the Office of Legal Affairs in Siem Reap. "Now, we have the procedures to follow when we meet a victim. Firstly, if violence occurred we help the victims to get medical treatment and safe shelter for a period of time. Then, if they want to file a complaint, we help them to access legal services."

JPAs work through an interconnected network of local and state institutions and NGOs to ensure that all victims of domestic violence have access to the different services that they need, and that those services are appropriately distributed, without any single organisation becoming overwhelmed.

"We do not work alone," explains Mrs. Serm Saiyoung, a JPA and Vice President of the Legal Defence Office in Siem Reap. "We cooperate with other organisations and the police and courts. In Siem Reap, we created a referral system that maps where victims should go to access certain services, and which organisations are responsible for which services. Now it is easy to send the victims to the right places."

These services include legal and medical assistance; counselling; conflict resolution and anger management training; safe shelters for victims of domestic violence and their children; and transportation, food and study allowances for counselling and court visits. In addition, many organisations also offer livelihood improvement classes in popular fields such as sewing, cooking, weaving and cosmetology, which allow victims to find employment and support themselves and their families after they have been reintegrated into their communities.

"When domestic violence or abuse is reported to authorities, they call us and we go to the scene to gather details of the crime," says Saiyoung as she describes the procedures that JPAs follow to deal with a domestic violence complaint. "Then I talk to the victim and see what their needs are, and what actions they want to take. If the victim wants to leave the house, they can go to the safe shelters of Banteay Srei or the CWCC. We first try to help the victims out of court, in the community. But if they can't reach an agreement at the commune level, we file documents to send their complaint to court and for legal assistance."

In addition to victim services, JPAs also participate in community outreach services, such as awareness raising sessions.

This included promoting the Ministry of Women's Affairs' "16 Days" campaign to end domestic violence, in cooperation with local organisations. JPAs also attend regular meetings with local authorities and police to improve their capacity and understanding of domestic violence.

All of the JPAs are very proud of their work, and eagerly highlight success stories from their time as JPAs. "One woman's husband beat her until her leg fractured," Saiyoung describes. "The victim rushed for help to the Provincial Department of Women's Affairs, who referred the case to me. We sent the victim to CWCC for medical services, and when she was better to LAC so that she could file a complaint. With the intervention and cooperation of our organisations, the suspect was arrested and sentenced to 15 years in prison." It is the role of the JPA to facilitate the referral of victims to the right service. Saiyoung explains that the aim is to provide the right service to a victim of violence at the point of seeking assistance.

"There was one woman in my district who was raped," Sithavy says. "Because she was poor, she did not have the money to file a complaint and the suspect could not be arrested for prosecution. My director was informed about this situation by the local authorities. She reacted quickly by sending me there, and we were able to get the complaint filed with the court. That is our success."

Since participating in the JPA program, all of the JPAs interviewed noticed changes in their local communities and reductions in domestic violence.

"Before, victims did not have knowledge of the law and how to protect themselves against violence," Saiyoung explains. "Because they thought domestic violence was a family problem, and the police thought that it was a common issue, no one tried to solve it. But now we do not think like that, and are improving the law to help women and children."

"Now, victims file the complaints, because they know that the local authorities and JPAs are helping them," explains Sarin, before telling how the JPA experience has had an impact on her life. "For me, JPA training has made it easier for me to do my job, and to solve the problems of victims of domestic violence. The JPAs can find justice for women."

"Because of ATJWII and the local authorities and organisations, the lives of the victims get better and the violence becomes less," Sithavy proudly concludes.



Ending Violence Against Women in Cambodia (EVAW)

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