

# MEN'S TALK

## *Men's Attitudes Towards Men, Women, and Violence Against Women in Cambodia*



**Supported by:**

**COMMUNITY ACTION AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN PROJECT**

Written and Researched by: Helen Brereton and Vannak Lim 2008

Published by: International Women's Development Agency, Melbourne, October 2009.

**iwda**  
international  
womens development  
agency inc.



Funded by:  **Australian Government**  
**AusAID**

# ***Table of Contents***

---

<b><i>Executive Summary</i></b>	<b>2</b>
<b><i>Part 1: Introduction</i></b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 Background and Rationale of the Project	5
1.2 About the Process	6
1.3 About the Team	7
<b><i>Part 2: Context: Violence Against Women in Cambodia</i></b>	<b>9</b>
<b><i>Part 3: Discussion of Major Findings</i></b>	<b>11</b>
3.1 Men’s attitudes towards masculinity and what it means to be a Khmer man	11
3.2 Men’s attitudes towards femininity and women’s empowerment	17
3.3 Men’s attitudes towards marriage	20
3.4 Men’s attitudes on the causes and consequences of Violence Against Women	25
3.5 What action men can take to reduce Violence Against Women	34
<b><i>Part 4: Conclusion</i></b>	<b>37</b>
<b><i>Part 5: Recommendations</i></b>	<b>39</b>
<b><i>Annexes</i></b>	
Annex 1: Summary of Men’s Group Discussion Questions	43
Annex 2. Summary of the “Community Action Against Violence Against Women” Project	44
Annex 3. Summary of the Mens’ Component	45

## ***Executive Summary***

---

The purpose of this study was to initiate a process aimed at reducing Violence Against Women by working with men within the context of a community based project, jointly implemented in Cambodia by two women's organisations. Through consultations with women in the target areas during the design phase of the project, a clear message emerged – “talk to the men”. The women said that if their new-found empowerment was to be recognised and valued, it had to be accepted by the men in their communities and, in particular, by their husbands.

To begin a process of working with men, men's focus discussion groups were held in ten villages in Battambang and Siem Reap provinces. The aim was to get an insight in the hearts and minds of men as a way to reduce Violence Against Women (VAW). Trained male facilitators initiated discussions in the groups with a view to encouraging the men to reflect on the causes of Violence Against Women and what men could do to reduce it. The premise underlying the design of the discussion questions was that the root cause of Violence Against Women is unequal power relations between men and women.

This report presents the findings of those group discussions and gives recommendations for the implementing NGOs.

The findings are grouped into five topic areas. The men's perception of masculinity and what it meant to be a man were explored in the first area. There was consensus that for a man to be masculine he should be strong and gentle. Further, and central to his identity and sense of pride, he should be the head of his household and the provider. A theme that emerged was that being a strong provider is a critical element of a man's identity and any perceived failure was seen to pose a threat to his masculinity. Further to this, men are frustrated because they think their wives do not understand this pressure, which can put even more pressure on the men.

The second area examined men's perception of femininity and women's empowerment. It became evident that the men's views on what it meant to be a woman remained quite fixed and narrowly defined – their role is to manage the household. At the same time however, there was evidence of growing receptivity by men of women's rights and empowerment. Many men acknowledged their wives' empowerment and said they believed men and women should have equal rights, that it is appropriate for husbands and wives to share housework, that men should be more active as fathers, and that husbands should support their wives in work/income generation.

The third area looked at men's perceptions of marriage/intimate relationships with women. There was agreement that men and women want the same things in such relationships: happiness, respect, love, support, honesty, and understanding.

The fourth area provided some revealing insights into men's attitudes to Violence Against Women. It highlighted the complexity of such violence and the contradictory feelings and beliefs the men have on the topic. It was during these discussions that several men in each of the villages revealed that they currently use violence against their wives, or had done so in the recent past. Most men appeared to believe the main cause of violence is alcohol consumption. They spoke about their inability to 'control their mind' when they drink and that a cause of violence is this loss of control. Many men also held the view that wives often provoke violent behaviour, particularly when they challenge

their husband's authority. However in most groups there were men who expressed a contrary view; these men believed that women should never be blamed for men's bad behaviour and it was the responsibility of men to 'control their minds', even if they were influenced by alcohol.

There was a belief expressed in many groups that some men use violence when women fail to fulfill their traditional roles as household managers. It became increasingly evident that if women are to question their husband's dominant role in the family, it is paramount that the men be educated on the meaning and implications of equal relationships. Without such education, it is likely that violence will increase.

Even though it was evident that in some villages a degree of Violence Against Women continues, the men agreed that such violence is bad and unacceptable and that it has a profoundly negative impact on women, children, men, and the community as a whole. The men said the dominant feeling violence arouses for people is shame. All 'victims' of violence, whether boys, girls, men or women feel ashamed.

An important issue that arose in many discussions was that men often see themselves as the victims of violence. A significant number of men said that their fathers had used violence against them, or they had been affected indirectly as witnesses to violence in their family. Men also complained of verbal abuse by their wives.

The fifth and final topic of the men's group discussions focused on actions that may be taken by men to eliminate or reduce Violence Against Women in their villages. One positive outcome of the project was the profound impact that the discussions on the consequences of violence had had on the men in the groups. Several men who acknowledged that they used violence persistently made verbal commitments to stop. There was widespread agreement that there should be more discussions about these matters; talking helps.

This report presents six major recommendations for consideration by Banteay Srei and IWDA to further develop their approach to working with men in the *Community Action Against Violence Against Women* project. It is recommended:

- That the project implements empowerment processes that includes men and women so both genders can be liberated from the confines of stereotyping.
- That male community leaders are recruited, trained, and supported to lead men's VAW preventive efforts.
- That grassroots level "men's support groups" are created, and other village level initiatives are supported and funded.
- That men who use violence in the targeted villages are helped to stop, and their wives and families are supported.
- That approaches to women's empowerment be expanded to include 'understanding men' and negotiation skills in relationships.
- That the lessons from the experience of working with men are shared with other national stakeholders.

## ***Part 1 – Introduction***

---

The purpose of this report is to document the findings of a Men's Action Research project, conducted as part of a larger AusAID funded project called 'Community Action Against Violence Against Women (CAAVAW)'. The qualitative research consisted of in-depth men's group discussions and key informant interviews that took place with over one hundred men in ten Cambodian villages in October 2007. The research was designed to gain a deeper insight into the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of men. There were three objectives;

- To encourage men to talk about men's and Violence Against Women (VAW) issues, and ways men can be supported to reduce VAW.
- To consult with men on ways the project could support men in the village to reduce VAW.
- To contribute to existing men's, gender and VAW related research in Cambodia.

The Men's group discussions covered five topic areas.

The first topic area was 'Men's attitudes towards masculinity and what it means to be a Khmer man'. This discussion was intended to encourage men to reflect on the construct of masculinity, and if/how beliefs about men are changing.

The second topic explored men's attitudes towards femininity, women's empowerment and marriage. Through extensive questions, the research aimed to gain insight into perceptions about women's empowerment, and how women's empowerment has impacted on the participants' attitudes and beliefs. Thirdly, the discussions explored men's attitudes towards marriage, including what men think women want in their marriages.

The fourth topic explored the causes and consequences of Violence Against Women. The facilitator promoted discussion about the causes of violence, how men who use violence are perceived, and the consequences of violence on women, children, men, and their communities. Personal discussion was encouraged on how participants individually manage their anger in non-violent ways, and how men who use violence can be supported to change their behaviour.

The final topic focused on action by men to reduce Violence Against Women. The men were invited to consider what they, as individuals, can do to become better men and more supportive husbands, fathers and community leaders. The men were also asked what they thought were the solutions to reducing VAW in their village, and how they felt they could encourage more men to be part of the solution to reduce violence.

This report is divided into five parts.

- Part 1 provides information on the project as a whole, the men's component of the project, and details of the methods used to collect the information contained in this report.

- Part 2 presents general contextual information of the current state of Violence Against Women in Cambodia.
- Part 3 presents a discussion of the findings of this research.
- Part 4 presents a conclusion to the overall report.
- Part 5 presents recommendations to the implementing NGOs.

## **1.1 Background and Rationale of the Project**

The Men's Action Research is part of the wider '*Community Action Against Violence Against Women*' Project (herein referred to as the 'project'). The goal of the project is to contribute to Cambodia's efforts to reduce Violence Against Women (VAW). See Annex 2 for an overview of the objectives and expected outputs of the project.

The project is funded by AusAID and is being implemented by two Cambodian NGOs; Banteay Srei and the Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC) in partnership with International Women's Development Agency (IWDA). Any reference to 'we' or 'our' throughout this document refers to these non-governmental agencies. The Men's Action Research discussions were facilitated by Banteay Srei<sup>1</sup>.

The project is funded through a Cooperation Agreement with AusAID. Implementation began in early 2007 for a 3 year period (concluding December 2009).

The project uses a village-based approach to reducing VAW in 40 Cambodian villages in Battambang and Siem Reap provinces. There are five inter-related key components/objectives of the village based approach;

1. Community Mobilisation: To implement a range of sustainable village-based solutions that work towards a reduction in Violence Against Women.
2. Women's Empowerment: To increase women's awareness, knowledge and confidence to realise their needs and human rights.
3. Working with Men: To promote village-based dialogue, understanding and action on men's issues.
4. Working with Local Authorities: To enable the Local Authorities to respond to abused women in a respectful and non-discriminatory way.
5. Support to Women: To provide a full range of support to women who choose to take action in the courts.

The agencies involved in this project have a long history working in the women's rights, VAW, and/or gender and development arenas. To date, each agency has primarily

---

<sup>1</sup> Banteay Srei was established as a Cambodian NGO in 2000. Its mission is to address poverty, the empowerment of women and men in villages, and to end gender-based violence.

focused on promoting women's rights and women's empowerment as a means to promote gender equality, and subsequently reduce VAW.

During the design phase of the project, initial consultations were held with women in the target areas. A clear message from most women was: 'talk to the men!' The women said that since being involved in the project they were now more aware of their rights and had increased confidence, but that their husbands were not always supportive of their new-found empowerment. During this design phase, we also heard stories of women who had challenged their husbands' authority but were then being punished by their husbands.

It was these consultations with women which led to working with men becoming a critical part of the project. Please see Annex 3 for more information on the objectives and expected outcomes of the men's work, which will encourage men to enable women's empowerment and reduce VAW. In conjunction with the men's work aspect of the project, women in the villages will be directly supported in a variety of ways<sup>2</sup>. The project aims to promote respect and understanding between women and men, as this is the key to promoting gender equality, and reducing Violence Against Women

## **1.2 About the Process**

The men's group discussions were conducted in ten rural villages in Battambang and Siem Reap provinces. Each group discussion lasted one full day in the villages where the men resided. In-depth one-on-one interviews were also held with five men – including an 'ajar' (wise man), a village chief, and other influential men. The discussions were facilitated by an appropriately qualified Cambodian male. No women were present.

The 10 villages were selected on the basis of an agreed selection criteria. Banteay Srei had already worked in each of the 10 selected villages, and all the villages selected for the project had a committed male community volunteer. Therefore, these villages may not be representative of villages in greater Cambodia, as it is probable that the residents of these particular villages already had some awareness of women's, gender and VAW related issues through previous exposure to the project. That is, it is conceivable that the discussions were more gender aware than they might be in other villages in Cambodia.

Each discussion group consisted of 10-12 men, between 18-70 years of age. The participants were invited by male volunteers already working on the project, (what Banteay Srei calls 'Gender Peace Network' members), based on an agreed selection criteria. The volunteers were instructed to randomly approach men who matched the selection criteria to participate in the discussion groups on a voluntary basis. There were no age criteria, as we wanted to ensure the group was representative of a broad cross section of men. The majority of the participants were farmers who are married with children. Other participants' occupations included seasonal construction workers,

---

<sup>2</sup> A major outcome of this project is that women are aware of their rights and have increased confidence to exercise them. Strategies being employed include: (i) supporting women who experience violence, (ii) supporting the dissemination of locally produced information targeting women, and (iii) promoting women's leadership and women's participation in the village/commune/district planning process.

teachers and bike repairers. There were also one or two students in each group and 'wise elders'. Officials, such as the village chief, were not selected to ensure the discussions would be as informal as possible. This study contains no analysis with respect to class, race or age.

Each of the villages selected to provide participants already has an active and committed male community volunteer, a Gender Peace Network (GPN) member ready to support the research and the longer term men's program. The ten male volunteers participated in a five day training program prior to the discussion groups taking place (10-14th September, 2007) and in a three day reflection workshop after all the men's group discussions had been completed.

Each group was asked the same 16 discussion questions (refer to Annex 1 for a list of discussion questions). The questions used to guide the discussions were intended to be challenging and thought provoking. We wanted to give men an opportunity to reflect upon and discuss attitudes about male and female roles in Cambodian society. It was also hoped that the discussions could prompt men to consider ways of changing their behaviour in support of women, and to produce a reduction in VAW.

There was some concern among members of the facilitation team that the questions were too personal, and that the men would not want to talk about their wives in public. In a pre-test of the questions with a select group, however, we found men keen to talk about these issues and some willingly shared highly personal information.

The facilitator encouraged men to speak "from their hearts" and emphasised that there was no right or wrong answer. The participants were invited and encouraged to talk about their own experiences and reactions in regards to the questions. For example, the men were prompted to say "this is what I think/feel", rather than speak in more general terms; "we think" or "men think this way".

### ***1.3 About the Team***

The core facilitation team was led by Mr. Vannak Lim. Mr. Lim facilitated and advised in the design of the research process, led the training program and workshops for the male volunteers, and led all the group discussions.

Mr. Phany took notes, provided analysis and translation. Mr. Sampol organised the community volunteers and logistical arrangements.

Helen Brereton advised Banteay Srei on the design of the process, trained the facilitator and note taker, and wrote the English version of this report.

The following people all made substantial inputs into the content and/or process for design, implementation and analysis of results.

***From Banteay Srei***

Ms. Chhoeun Thavy	Executive Director to 2009
Ms. Hing Sitha	M&E and CAAVAW Liaison Officer
Ms. Sou Fatima	Project Officer on CAAVAW
Ms. Phan Tol	Project Officer on CAAVAW
Mr. Ren Somphas	Project Officer on CAAVAW
Ms. Sok Panha	Current Executive Director, 2009

***From the 10 Participating Villages***

<b>Name</b>	<b>Village</b>
Mr. Sun Mab	O Tkov
Mr. Chhorm Saron	Do Dantrey
Mr. Sean Sath	Prolet
Mr. Bouy Vong	Sambour
Mr. Suy Kin	Sras
Mr. Pheng Thon	Koh Ream
Mr. Buth Sarath	Sang Rang
Mr. Sun Sothavuth	Damnak Lourng
Mr. Ey Phakna	Phom Thmey
Mr. Nou Sareth	Svay Chroum

***From IWDA***

Katie Richmond	IWDA Cambodia Project Manager
----------------	-------------------------------

***And the following individuals:***

Michael Brereton  
Kate Finch

## ***Part 2 - Context: Status of VAW in Cambodia***

---

Cambodia is recovering from 30 years of civil war, during which violence became an accepted part of conflict. Many Cambodians grew up in an environment of war, public violence and death. The fact that violence is entrenched in Cambodian history and culture compounds the difficulty of addressing and overcoming the problem of Violence Against Women.

Violence Against Women in Cambodia has been on the domestic political agenda for nearly a decade. VAW first gained political recognition in 1998, when the Cambodian Government introduced the first draft of a domestic violence law. The Project Against Domestic Violence (PADV) conducted the first survey of VAW in 1996, which confirmed high levels of Violence Against Women – both in the home and in society in general. A national health survey in 2000<sup>3</sup> also included questions about VAW, and found high levels of Violence Against Women, both in intimate relationships and more public displays of violence, such as rape and gang rape.

Violence Against Women, both in the community and the home, is widespread and is a serious problem in Cambodian society today. According to available data, the incidence of VAW remains unchanged in the past 5 years. The National Health Survey of 2000 found that 23% of women aged 15 to 49 who had ever been married had experienced domestic violence. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) National Baseline Survey of 2005 found that 22.5% of female respondents had suffered violence from their husbands<sup>4</sup>.

The Royal Government of Cambodia has made reducing Violence Against Women a priority in many of its policies and plans, and in the country's legal framework. This is evidenced by the passing of The Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of the Victim (DV Law); a new law that reflects the country's commitment to eliminating domestic violence. This law, however, stresses prevention rather than criminal prosecution, as it contains no penal provisions, which means perpetrators cannot be punished using it.

The government's premier policy document - 'Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency' - states "women are entitled to the equitable distribution of economic resources, equal opportunity to participate in socio-economic development, and equitable legal protection, thereby enabling women to avoid domestic violence and trafficking". The Cambodian Millennium Development Goals include a target to "reduce significantly all forms of Violence Against Women and children". This will be done by implementing laws, collecting statistics, raising awareness and increasing the number of people counseled by qualified personnel<sup>5</sup>.

Despite these positive legal, political and policy developments in Cambodia, the reality remains that laws and policies are generally not enforced, and levels of reported

---

<sup>3</sup> The Cambodian Demographic and Health Survey of 2000 was conducted by the Ministry of Health, with the support of UNPFA.

<sup>4</sup> Violence Against Women – A Baseline Survey (2005), MoWA, UNIFEM and GTZ

<sup>5</sup> Royal Government of Cambodia (2003), Cambodian Millennium Development Goals Report 2003.

violence are increasing. Violence Against Women continues to take place in an environment of impunity and discrimination. Many challenges remain in implementing these policies and laws as entrenched discriminatory attitudes and behaviours toward women remain.

Within this context it was decided that the best way this project could contribute to existing efforts was to implement a meaningful, community empowerment approach, which promoted opportunities for men and women's empowerment and change. This would include addressing issues like improved communication within the family, community based self-help structures, referral systems, counseling and working with men. Working with men is a relatively new area of work for our organisations, and is also a relatively unexplored area in Cambodian development projects<sup>6</sup>.

---

<sup>6</sup> The NGO Project Against Domestic Violence (PADV) and other organisations – like UNIFEM, GTZ and GAD/C – have completed some research on VAW, which include responses by men.

## **Part 3 – Discussion of Major Findings**

---

This section presents the major findings of the men's group discussions. These findings were discussed at a three day workshop after the discussion groups took place, with participation from the ten male community volunteers representing the selected villages.

This section is divided into five parts:

- 3.1 Men's attitudes towards masculinity and what it means to be a Khmer man.
- 3.2 Men's attitudes towards femininity and women's empowerment.
- 3.3 Men's attitudes towards marriage.
- 3.4 Men's attitudes around the causes and consequences of Violence Against Women.
- 3.5 What action men can take to reduce Violence Against Women.

Each part is further broken down according to the questions that were asked at the discussion groups. For a complete list of the 16 key discussion questions refer to Annex 1.

### **3.1 Men's attitudes towards masculinity and what it means to be Khmer man**

The first topic explored in the men's group discussions was men's perception of masculinity and what it means to be a man. The participants discussed the impact of their beliefs on their behaviour, and if/how their beliefs about how a man 'should' behave are changing.

It is important to note that the term masculinity was not always understood by some of the participants. Most men understood the concept to mean collective beliefs about what makes an 'ideal' or 'good' Khmer man. The facilitators explained that: *"masculinity is a collection of beliefs about what a man 'should' be and how he 'should' behave"*.

#### **3.1.1 What does the term masculinity mean to you? How do you think a man 'should' behave? How do society's beliefs about masculinity impact on you?**

There was little variation in responses to the question about how a man should be or behave. The stereotypical man was seen as the head of the household and the 'provider'. He is 'strong', 'courageous', and is a 'leader'. He knows what is right and wrong and is always law abiding. He takes 'responsibility for his actions and is 'persistent'.

It was emphasised by all groups that men should also be 'gentle', 'polite', and 'loving and respectful' to everyone. Therefore to be masculine, a man should be both strong and gentle. This response challenged the idea that men would think being gentle and displaying emotions could be considered weak, and not 'manly'.

The participants also discussed how the expectations society placed on them as men impacted on them. Did they, for example, find it difficult or easy to live up to these

expectations? The majority of participants said that fulfilling these expectations was not difficult, but with one notable exception. Participants from every group said that some men can find it difficult to fulfill the role as the 'provider' for the family and the assumption that they would be the provider was considered a significant source of pressure for many of the men.

*For me being gentle, looking after the children, doing heavy work is fine, but it is so hard to get the income to support my family.*  
(Participant in Sambour Village, Siem Reap)

Providing for the family was a reoccurring theme throughout the discussions. To be a strong provider was seen as a critical part of a man's identity and a perceived failure to be the provider was considered a threat to a man's masculinity.

Men's role as the provider is central to a man's sense of pride and identity. There was the perception among men that there are more income generation options for young men today; especially with educational levels rising. All participants agreed that younger men are better educated and have more knowledge. Older men were considered to be more humble, and have lower expectations of life.

*Older men expect only to live and survive as best they can.*  
(Participant in Sambour Village, Siem Reap)

Many men said their wives expect them to provide, and some men get frustrated because their wives do not understand this pressure. This in turn places pressure on the men, which sometimes results in violence. (For more information refer to section 3.4.1).

It was interesting to note that most men did not considered women as contributors to family revenue, despite the fact that women in Cambodia contribute more than 50% of household income (Refer to section 3.2.1)<sup>7</sup>.

### **3.1.2 Do you think society's beliefs about masculinity are changing? How?**

This question was intended to invite participants to explore if, and how, the parameters of masculinity were changing over time. In practice however the question prompted a discussion about the generational differences in life experiences.

The participants agreed that being gentle, polite and respectful were not valued so much today as masculine traits. The men noted that men are generally becoming less gentle, and younger men are becoming 'less honest and respectful' than before, particularly with respect to their elders. Many of the participants agreed that men today do not respect the authorities and the law, or each other. Men today have less concern about traditions, Khmer customs and social norms.

*Men in my fathers' generation were very gentle and highly respected elders. Men in this generation do not listen or respect their parents and elders. They usually make conflict with other young men.*

---

<sup>7</sup> Refer "A Fair Share for Women" (2004), Ministry of Women's Affairs, World Bank, ADB, UNDP, DFID.

*Men in the older generation were pure and kind. They shared things with each other without expecting something in return. They did it from their heart. Men in this generation are not as kind as before. When they help someone, they seem to be expecting something back.*

(Participant in Sang Rang Village, Battambang)

It was felt that as men today have less respect for other men, conflict among young men has increased. The issue of men being violent towards each other emerged from most of the discussion groups. The fact that many 'bored and frustrated young men' were becoming 'gangsters' was also noted, especially in Battambang.

The participants were asked how they felt about the future of their sons and boys in the community. The majority of the participants had positive expectations about their sons' future. They expressed the belief that future generations will have more income generation and education possibilities.

*I believe my children will have a better future. They are smarter than before. They are young, but they can read and write well. I see the signs of hope.*

(Participant in Prolet Village, Siem Reap)

A small number of participants were less optimistic and held little or no hope for their sons.

*My sons are poor and do not have good grades. We are illiterate, we cannot provide additional support to them and that's why they do not perform well in school.*

(Participant in Sambour Village, Siem Reap)

Social change, therefore, is evidently shifting the norms of masculinity from one generation to the next.

### **3.1.3 Do you think your beliefs about masculinity give you more power and control over your wife?**

This question led to highly personal and emotive discussions in each of the men's groups. There were significant differences of opinion among the participants that reflected on the state of gender relations in Cambodia. (This topic is further discussed in section 3.4.2.)

Around half of the men believed that men have more power and control than women; it is men who provide for and protect their families, and this is the way it should be. They argued that men have more power simply because they are stronger than women and felt that it was more than a 'habit from our ancestors'. In their view men are stronger, 'more courageous' and are 'the ones who dare to confront'. The same men were later to argue that a woman challenging a man's authority is justification for him being violent. (See section 3.4.1).

*Men are number one and women are number two. Men are the ones who find income for the family. The women only take care of doing housework...But the men are the pillar – the one who makes the families rich and prosperous...so men automatically have more power.*

(Participant in Phum Thmey Village, Battambang)

*In reality men are stronger and have more influence than women. We have more power. I have never seen a woman with more power than a man.*

(Participant in Sambour Village, Siem Reap)

Other men with more progressive views believed that that men and women have equal rights. From a women's rights perspective these responses are encouraging. These men explained how they were practicing equality within their relationships, saying that it was their responsibility, as men, to allow women to exercise their power and rights. They said men need to be less controlling of their wives', and that husbands need to share decision making with their wives and share housework duties. In a couple of the villages there was some discussion about how some women now have more power than men, because women are now earning an income.

*Now I understand that when my wife goes out I should help with the housework, rather than wait for her to come home and do the work for me.*

*Some women have the power of control over their husband. If the woman is the one who earns the income for the family, they can order him to do this or that.*

(Participant in Thkov Village, Siem Reap)

As illustrated by this quote, there were men who believed that men and women now have equal rights, but they seem confused as to the implications of this equality. In reality their wives never questioned the husband's power or authority, so they continued to make the decisions and their wives followed. The rhetoric of equality meant little in their reality, illustrated in this example;

*My wife just seems to listen to me and she never disagrees with my point of view.*

(Participant in Sambour Village, Siem Reap)

### ***Do men believe men and women have equal rights?***

Results from a 'quick quiz' in section 3.4.1 gives insight into how many of the men believe men have more rights than women. Just under half of the men agreed with the statement "men have more rights than women".

*Now we have equal rights. We have laws, now women have the same rights like us. They can even stand as a candidate for the election.*

*Khmer culture no longer gives men more power, rather these men choose to control their wives; but that does mean society grants them more power anymore.*

### 3.1.4 What is acceptable behaviour for men and women?

The participants were presented the following six statements and asked if these actions were appropriate or acceptable behaviour for a man. The statements were read out again and they were asked whether this was acceptable behaviour for a woman.

	<i>Acceptable for a man</i>	<i>Unacceptable for a man</i>	<i>Acceptable for a woman</i>	<i>Unacceptable for a woman</i>
1. Insisting on knowing where spouse is all the time	52	48	58	42
2. Accusing spouse of being unfaithful	5	95	9	91
3. Not allowing spouse to speak to a person of opposite sex at a party	1	99	1	99
4. Not giving spouse any money	0	100	0	100
5. Not allowing spouse to meet with his/her friends	0	100	0	100
6. Asking spouse to share housework duties	100	0	100	0

These results showed few contradictions between what was acceptable behaviour for men and women.

The fact that opinions quite evenly divided between men and women regarding the acceptability of "insisting on knowing where their spouse is all the time" is interesting.

*I want to know where and how long she will go somewhere, so that I do not need to wait and be worried, and it shows our wives love us. They don't want to lose us. As the men, we are proud because of that.*

Some men indicated that they liked it when their wives wanted to know where they were.

*It is good. It shows that our wives love us very much; and it can protect me from finding other partners/girls. If she accused me of that, I would be afraid and would never use prostitutes to have sex with.*

While other men thought it was unacceptable behaviour for both men and women.

*To be a man and a good husband, we need to be open and trust our wives; it shows we are jealous and this will make conflict in the family.*

The men believed it to be unacceptable for both men and women to accuse their spouse of being unfaithful. Similarly, it is unacceptable to 'not allow him/her to speak to a person of the opposite sex at a party'. It was also considered unacceptable for both men and women to not give their spouse any money or not allowing him/her to meet with friends.

### ***Summary of Findings:***

#### ***3.1 Men's attitudes towards masculinity and what it means to be Khmer man***

- Men want to talk and share experiences: the participants were keen to debate and share their experiences as men.
- Being masculine in the Cambodian context means a man should be both 'strong' and 'gentle'. However, there is a perception that men are becoming less gentle, and conflict between men is increasing.
- Being a 'provider' and the 'head of the household' is a central part of a man's identity and sense of pride.
- Being seen as the provider is also potential source of pressure. A perceived failure to provide for a family is a potential threat to man's masculinity.
- Most men believe that men and women now have equal rights, but believe men have more power.
- There are widely varying beliefs about a man's right to exercise power and control over women. About half of the men believe they have the right to exercise their power and control over women. The other half felt it was a man's responsibility to support women's empowerment.
- From a women's rights perspective, there was evidence of favourable shifts in men's beliefs and behaviour. About half of the men said their wives have equal rights and demonstrated ways in which they promote/allow, or encourage their behaviour, such as sharing housework, being more active fathers, and supporting their wives work and income generation.
- Men were generally positive about the future of their sons/younger men. They believe future generations will have more income generation and education possibilities.

## **3.2 Men's attitudes towards femininity and women's empowerment**

The second topic of the men's group discussions was women and their role in the family and society. The men were invited to talk openly about their perception of femininity and how they expect a woman to behave. The men also shared their thoughts about women's empowerment and if/how the status of women is changing. There was tremendous energy around the discussions. It was apparent that for many of the participants this was the first time they had reflected and discussed topics directly associated with women.

### **3.2.1 What do you understand by the term 'femininity'? How do you think women should behave?**

The responses to this question show that men still have a fairly narrow view of 'femininity' and how a woman should behave. There were uniform responses to these questions across all villages.

It was expressed that a woman should be 'gentle' and 'polite', and that she is responsible for the housework and child rearing. Many participants believed that she should spend most of her time at home. She needs to give good advice to children and take care of family members when they are sick. She is also expected to look after the property and to spend money sparingly. Several participants spoke of the importance of their wives playing the role of hostess, 'by attending to the needs of household guests in a gracious and polite way'. She should use 'sweet words' and not insult or scold her husband. She should respect her parents, parents' in-law, and elders.

*A woman needs to do the housework such as cleaning and decorating the house, preparing the food, washing clothes, feeding the animals etc. If she did not she would not be a good woman.*

(Participant in Sambour Village, Siem Reap)

Most of the participants' perception of femininity did not incorporate women's role in income generation. It was clear that strict gender roles still apply: men are the providers and women are the household managers and caretakers. In reality however, women in Cambodia contribute to more than 50% of household income<sup>8</sup>.

*Women now do three types of work well. First they must manage the children, second they do the housework; and third, they find income for the family.*

(Participant in Koh Ream Village, Battambang)

The participants were asked if they thought fulfilling these expectations may be a source of pressure for women. The response to this discussion question was quite varied. At one end of the spectrum men believed their expectations for women were not a source of pressure at all, and that women also share these expectations.

---

<sup>8</sup> Country Gender Assessment (2004)

*They were not forced by the society or culture, but Khmer women do it voluntarily.*

(Participant in Sang Rang Village, Battambang)

*These tasks are not burdens for women. Being a good Khmer woman requires her to have all these qualities and behaviours.*

(Participant in Sreah Village, Siem Reap)

Around half of the participants believed that it was difficult for women to meet all of these expectations and that husbands needed to help their wives with household duties.

*As husband and wives, we need to help and support each other; especially men need to give their wives a helping hand with some of the housework, looking after the children and preparing food.*

(Participant in Prolet Village, Siem Reap)

*Now is not like the ancient times! Men should help their wives, like wives help their husbands!*

(Participant in Svay Chrum Village)

All the groups were asked about their understanding of the moral code 'Chha'p Srei'. This code is frequently cited in literature and analysis about Cambodian women, and refers to how a Cambodian woman should behave. Almost all participants had never heard of it, while a few older participants said they had heard of it but couldn't remember what it said.

### **3.2.2 Do you think the women's status in your family, village and Khmer society is changing? If so, how?**

The vast majority of the participants believed that the status and situation of women has improved in recent times, with men in each village believing there had been great advances for women. These men cited more and better health centers and the fact that women find it easier and safer to deliver babies. Women have access to transportation (i.e. motorbikes) which gives them more freedom. Women's access to education has increased, and women today have much greater knowledge than in previous generations.

*The situation of women is so much better than before. My wife is less tired and my daughters go to school. I hope my daughters will have a good future.*

(Participant in Sambour Village, Siem Reap)

*Women's situation now is improved. They understand about their rights more than before. However, to exercise their rights, they need to respect their husbands as well.*

(Participant in Koh Ream Village, Battambang)

The groups discussed the fact that women are now 'less bound by traditions' and have more knowledge and freedom. The majority of men seemed to think these changes were

positive. They agreed that their wives are now are better off, and they were hopeful for their daughters' future.

Women's participation in the public sphere was also acknowledged by three of the groups. They specifically mentioned that women now have the right to be elected to the Commune Councils. Several village groups discussed the fact that some organisations come and work with women to encourage empowerment, and now the women are stronger and more courageous than before.

Two of the groups believed that women's situations have improved because they can now generate their own income. It is interesting to note that men identified women's economic participation as an example of women's improved situation, but they do not associate income generation with being a 'good woman' or see it as a feminine trait.

*Women are also taking part in finding income for the families. Now the women even go out far from home to work and get income to support the families. It is really different from women in older generation. Some men in this generation help to do house work.*

(Participant in Rel Commune, Siem Reap Province)

A small number of participants (in two villages only) indicated that the situation for some women had worsened. This was either due to increased poverty, or because the women remain in abusive marriages where "*husband's still use power and control*"<sup>9</sup>. The men spoke of the positive developments for women in general, and for family members in particular. However some said the changes had not been good. For example, they felt that young women showed less respect for their culture and elders and that some women now dress in a "sexier" manner which is seen as a sign of disrespect.

*The bad thing is that young women do not respect Khmer culture. They dare to wear sexy clothes, wear shoes or do not take off their hats when they enter a pagoda.*

(Participant in Samnak Lourng Village, Battambang)

---

<sup>9</sup> Participant in Svay Chrum Village, Battambang.

### **3.3 Men's attitudes towards marriage**

The discussion about women's empowerment was followed by a highly personal discussion about what the men wanted in their relationships with their wife, and what they thought their wife wanted from them. It is worth noting that there was some concern among the Banteay Srei team that the questions about the men's relationships with their wives were too personal. They felt that the men would not want to talk about their wives in public. However, in a pre-test of the questions with a small group we found that the men were keen to talk.

#### **3.3.1 What do you want from your relationship with your wife? What do you think your wife wants in her marriage to you?**

These questions generated a more harmonious and gentle atmosphere. The participants in all ten discussion groups said woman want: 'happiness', 'respect', 'love', 'support', 'honesty', and 'understanding' in their relationships with their husbands, and that men want the same things from their relationships.

*If the spouses really love, support, tolerate and understand each other- for sure they will have happiness in their family lives.*  
(Participant in Phum Thmey Village, Battambang)

#### **3.3.2 What do you think are the ingredients of a healthy marriage? What do you think you can do to improve your relationship with your wife?**

Participant responses indicated that in a good marriage "a husband and wife listen to each other", they love and respect each other, they tolerate and forgive. They are gentle and speak politely and give each other a helping hand. They are open and honest. Men speak politely to their wives, and wives never use 'bad words' or violence against them. A healthy marriage is free of all forms of violence.

*A husband and wife truly support each other. They help each other and give each other a helping hand. A husband helps with the housework...and a wife understands and encourages her husband to do the good things and find the income for the family.*  
(Participant in Sang Rang Village, Battambang Province)

Here again stereotypical gender roles were reinforced, with the men believing that women want a husband who is a 'good provider' and men want a wife who can look after the household and care for their children.

Men were also asked what they thought they could do to improve their relationship with their wives. Standard responses included providing more income for the family, behaving gently and resolving conflicts in non-violent ways, and helping with housework. Some groups also discussed meeting the emotional and spiritual needs of their wives.

*I can improve my relationship with my wife by respecting her rights and dignity...and by forgiving her when she makes a mistake.*  
(Participant in Prolet Village, Siem Reap)

### ***What does a farmer of 30 years want in his intimate relationship?***

This information was gathered during a one-on-one interview with a farmer of 30 years and former monk, married with one son from Pouk District, Siem Reap Province;

#### ***What do you want from your wife?***

- I want my wife to understand me.
- I want my wife to speak good/sweet words and respect me.
- I want my wife to do housework and take care of my son.
- I want my wife to love me as I love her.
- I want my wife to be honest with me.
- When I do something wrong, I want my wife to talk and give feedback to me. I don't want her to talk those things with outsiders.

#### ***What does your wife want from you?***

- She wants me to look after my son and her.
- She wants honesty, love and respect from me.
- She wants understanding from me.

*"What I want from her and what she wants from me is the same."*

#### ***What do you think are ingredients of a good marriage?***

- Husband and wife love and understand each other.
- Both husband and wife think about the long-term future.
- Both husband and wife help each other.
- If one spouse gets angry, the other party should just go away for awhile or do other things with calmness.
- Both husband and wife respect the spouse's parents.
- Make decisions together e.g. before deciding to sell land, a husband and wife should talk and make the decision together.

### ***3.3.3 Do you talk to your wife about your problems and feelings? Do you feel supported by your wife? Do you think your wife feels supported by you?***

Most of the men who answered this question said they generally do talk to their wives about their feelings and problems. They said it was good to discuss things in hard times because their wives understood them and could support them. Many spoke of the relief they experienced when they shared their problems and feelings with their wives. For example:

*If she knows how I feel, she could support me and I feel less stressed and moody.*  
(Participant in Phum Thmey Village, Battambang)

*When I was unhappy I talked with my wife; she listened to me and I felt great relief.*

(Participant in Prolet Village, Siem Reap)

*When I was worried about the future of my family, I discussed it with my wife and then I felt better because I got support from her.*

Several groups made a distinction between sharing “small problems” and “big problems”. They tend to talk to their wives about big problems, but not small ones. Sharing “small problems” can be seen a sign of weakness. For example:

*If it is a small thing, I don't want to show I am weak in front of my wife.*

(Participant in Or Thkov Village, Siem Reap)

*I don't tell my wife if I have small problem or stress. To be a strong man, there is no need to inform her about small things. I will let her know my feeling with only very big matters.*

(Participant in Svay Chrum Village, Battambang)

A smaller proportion of men in almost all groups were not as open in sharing their feelings with their wives. They indicated that their wives would not understand; that they would over react. They believed that sharing their problems would only create more problems or make the problem even bigger.

Overall, men said they felt supported by their wives, and they believed they supported their wives in return; helping around the home, cooking and providing spiritual support.

A 50 year old farmer, married with 6 children from Borvel Commune, Battambang Province made this very thoughtful and insightful comment:

*There is one young couple in the village that I really admire. They are the model young spouse and living in full harmony with each other. They support each other and do things without thinking this is the tasks of wife or husband. They do not wait to be told. They gain much respect from the villagers because they have good character and have high persistence. They even bought some land and sold it at higher price. Now they have become rich.*

**Summary of Findings:**  
**3.2 & 3.3 Men's attitudes towards femininity, women's empowerment and marriage**

- Overall, men believe women are meant to be soft, gentle and obedient, and that their role is to look after the household and children.
- The men's interpretations of femininity did not incorporate women's role in income generation, with the majority believing that this is strictly the men's domain.
- Men's beliefs about femininity and masculinity grant men more power and control in intimate relationships and in society.
- Most men have never heard of '*Chha'p Srei*' (the code for expected moral behaviour of women which is frequently cited in literature).
- There was evidence of growing receptivity by men of women's rights and empowerment.
- Men believe the status of women has improved. Men understood the notion of equal rights and most believe men do not have more rights than women.
- Men were divided in their opinions as to whether women felt pressure to fulfill their roles and expectations. In group work it would be useful for men to explore how they could ease the pressure for their wives and how their wives could ease the pressures placed on the men.
- Men believe the situation for women has improved, as evidenced by women's increased access to education, health and transportation. A small majority of men acknowledged women's increased participation in the political sphere.
- Men believe that women have increased opportunities for income generation which is a positive development for the family. However, women's economic power did not emerge in discussions about femininity and what it means to be an 'ideal' woman.
- Men believe that women today are bound less by tradition and that the definition of what is socially acceptable for a woman is broadening.
- Men and women want the same things in intimate relationships: happiness, respect, love, support, honesty, and understanding. The men said they, and their wives, want to be understood, respected, appreciated and loved.
- Men want to talk about relationships with women. There was tremendous energy around these discussions and the men expressed appreciation at the opportunity to share their personal stories. For many of the men this was the first time that they had openly discussed and reflected on topics associated with women.

### ***What an 'Ajar' [a wise old man] thinks about women and intimate relationships***

The following one-on-one interview was conducted with a 70 year old farmer and "Ajar" (Ajar in Buddhism is someone who is old and respected, and has strong moral authority) from Battambang. He is a farmer who is married with four children and 12 grandchildren from Koh Ream Village, Knach Romeas Commune, Borvel District and Battambang Province. He is also the head of the *Moronak Sangkrous Association* [the association that support the poor in case their family members die]. When there is a problem in the village he is often invited to mediate.

**What do you think it means to be a good man?** "A good man never commits bad activities that impact on our society; they do only good things. They have good character and they respect Khmer culture, norms and tradition. They respect elders and other people in general. They know what is wrong and what is right. Good men need not to be rich, even if they are poor, but if they have good attitude and do as things described earlier, they deserve to be good man." He said that now 70% of men are 'good', about 20% are 'not so good but not so bad' and around 10% are 'bad'.

**How are men's attitudes towards women changing?** "Usually in Khmer culture, men have more power and, authority than women. People know that clearly so that it is normal for them to use violence against their wives. But now there are some organisations working to reduce the problems. There is still some violence happen, but there is less now than before".

**How do you think the situation of women is changing (if at all)?** "Women's situation now is improved. They understand their rights more than before. However, to exercise their rights, they need to respect their husbands as well. The living standard/livelihood of women in general is a bit better than before. There are also poor women that have more difficulty than before, but the numbers are fewer. The health situation is worse than before. Now there are many people that get sick compared to before. The money that is spent for health problem is greater than before."

**What do men and women want from each other when they get married?** "Men and women want heart from each other. By the word heart I mean love, honesty, care, support, understanding, and tolerance. They want the property as well. Some men and women search the background of their future spouse whether they are good or bad, rich or poor and can be reliable or not before they decide to get married."

**What are the ingredients of a healthy marriage?** "When two hearts become one. When man and women truly love and support each other. They are patient and reasonable. They respect and are honest with each other."

### 3.4 Men's attitudes on causes and consequences of Violence Against Women

The fourth topic of the men's group discussion explored issues related to Violence Against Women. The men discussed the causes of violence, the acceptability of it, and the consequences of violent behaviour on men, women and children. This discussion highlighted the complexity of VAW and the contradictory feelings and beliefs which the men have on the topic. It was during this discussion that several men in each of the villages revealed that they currently used violence against their wives, or had done so in the past. Others spoke of the pain and suffering they endured as victims of their father's violence.

#### 3.4.1 What are the causes of Violence Against Women?

In order to stimulate discussion on the causes of violence, the men in Battambang (B) and Siem Reap (SR) provinces were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statements or commonly held 'myths' about the causes of violence.

Myth	Agree			Disagree		
	B	SR	Total Agree	B	SR	Total Disagree
Violence is caused by drug or alcohol problems.	44	39	83 (87%)	1	11	12 (13%)
Violence is learned from father to son.	25	35	50 (59%)	20	15	35 (41%)
Stress and pressure lead to violence.	21	36	57 (60%)	24	14	38 (40%)
Violence is caused by mental illness.	30	35	65 (68%)	15	15	30 (32%)
Women provoke men's violence.	18	26	44 (52%)	27	14	41 (48%)
Men who use violence are "bad" and should be punished.	45	50	95 (100%)	0	0	0
A man's friends may influence his violence.	44	50	94 (98%)	1	1	2 (2%)
Men are entitled to be violent if his wife disobeys him.	17	29	46 (54%)	28	11	39 (46%)
Men have more rights than women.	26	20	46 (48%)	19	30	49 (52%)

The men believed the main causes of VAW are:

#### (i) Alcohol consumption:

Most of the participants believed the main cause of violence is alcohol consumption, and discussed the fact that when some men drink they 'lose control of their mind' and when that happens, they are violent towards their wives. The groups indicated that men drink when their wives complain about their behaviour (see point ii below) and when they are stressed (see point iii below).

*When I get drunk I can not control my mind so I could not stand to hear my wife blaming me about something – I wanted to use violence against her to show that she, as my wife; should not behave like that. I felt ashamed with all my friends when my wife behaved like that.*

(Participant in Sambour Village, Siem Reap)

*The root cause of violence is the wine. When men drink wine, they cannot control their mind so that they dare to use violence against their wives.*

(Participant in Do Dontrey Village, Siem Reap Province)

*I know violence is bad and I should be punished. But I cannot stand and control my mind. I use violence against my wife.*

(Participant in Sang Rang Village, Battambang)

A small minority of the participants strongly disagreed that violence is caused by drug or alcohol problems. They said that alcohol was an excuse that men use. They said many men get drunk but are never violent towards women. They argued the real cause of violence is the 'mind'.

*I got drunk like the others but I would never be violent against my wife. Wine and other external things are not the cause of violence.*

(Participant in Sambour Village, Siem Reap).

*Before I drink and get drunk, I was angry with my wife already but I dare not to do anything. But when I drink my friends told me that I needed to give my wife some lessons. So when I get drunk, I dare to use violence against her. This is what happened previously but now I never use violence against my wife anymore.*

(Participant in Borvel Commune, Battambang Province)

It was reported by some villages that it is 'not only men who love drinking'. Women too are drinking more and domestic violence happens when one of both of the spouses are drinking.

**(ii) Women provoke men to be violent by challenging men's authority:**

Just over half of the men believed that women provoke men's violent behaviour and that this provocation occurs when women challenge men's authority or question his behaviour. Participants said this can happen when a woman complains about a man's ability to adequately provide for his family.

A woman questioning a man's behaviour is not considered to be acceptable for a woman (as explored in section 3.2, *Men's attitudes towards femininity*). The men believe a wife not only has no right to challenge her husband, but also may be punished if she does so<sup>10</sup>. Recent research by the Ministry of Women's Affairs also found that most women believe that a wife challenging her husband's dominance or right to do as he pleases justifies him being violent<sup>11</sup>. This highlights one of the difficulties for women's rights

---

<sup>10</sup>These figures and discussion notes supports the findings from the MoWA/UNIFEM/GTZ study. This quantitative research concluded that men use violence to punish women who challenge them.

<sup>11</sup> Refer Violence Against Women – A Baseline Survey (2005), MoWA, UNIFEM and GTZ

advocates in developing ways a woman can challenge a man's behaviour in a way that doesn't result in violence.

*Men use violence when their wives scold them, or their mothers. Men can't stand to hear that. If a husband told [his wife] something, and she doesn't listen or obey, then we need to use violence. We are the head of the family; our wives need to respect and listen to us.*

(Participant in Koh Ream Village, Battambang)

It is interesting to note that the Violence Against Women Baseline Survey found that men complained that they consider themselves as 'victims of verbal abuse' by their wives. The Survey found that 12% of men claimed that their wives had acted violently towards them<sup>12</sup>. (The issue of men as victims of violence also came up in section 3.4.5 below).

The men also believe that some men use violence when women fail to fulfill their traditional roles. Women can (sometimes unknowingly) provoke a violent response from a man when they behave in a way that is considered to be inappropriate or to go against traditional beliefs about how a woman should behave. For example, when they argue, complain or disobey, when she is 'supposed' to be gentle, passive and quiet. Or when they choose to leave the household (to socialize with friends) and fail to perform household duties to their husband's standards.

*'Men use violence when their wives do not perform the household tasks; instead they chat with friends, drink or gamble. Most men can't stand that...so they hit their wives.'*

48% of the men however disagreed with the assertion that women provoke violent reprisal from their husbands. They claimed that women have the right to challenge men's bad behaviour. Some men said that if men were respectful to their wives, their wives would be respectful to them in return.

*'We can use non-violence; there are other options besides using violence. Men are the ones who use violence. They cannot control their mind and themselves.'*

*'Our wives will listen and respect us if we listen and respect them. They have the rights to not obey us.'*

(Participant in Koh Ream Village, Battambang)

### **(iii) Poverty, stress and pressure:**

This was a cross cutting theme throughout the discussion groups. It was noted in Part 3.1 of this report that men believed that being masculine means being the provider and head of a family and that these demands can be a source of pressure for men. The men believed that women also expected men to be strong providers. They expressed that men can be violent when they feel the stress and pressure associated with meeting these societal expectations. The men noted that that some wives, who failed to understand or recognise the impact of these pressures, complained and nagged which created tension in the home.

---

<sup>12</sup> Violence Against Women – A Baseline Survey (2005), MoWA, UNIFEM and GTZ (p.2)

*'I was under much pressure to provide for my family. My wife and children did not help me and this created more pressure for me. I would get so angry I hit my wife almost every day for 20 years.'*

(Participant in Koh Ream Village, Battambang)

*'When I came home from the fields feeling very tired my wife blamed me for spending the money. She did not ask why. In fact I spent the money for hiring other people to prepare the soil...I was so tired and angry with her...and violence started happening.'*

(Participant in Sang Rang Village, Battambang)

*'My wife doesn't understand the difficulty for me to be the head of the family. To find the income and lead the family is not an easy task.'*

(Participant in Phum Thmey Village, Battambang)

**(iv) Cycle of violence: poor male role models:**

A strong message conveyed through the research was that men are also the victims of violence themselves. Many men in the focus groups talked about being directly and indirectly affected by violence, because their fathers used violence against them, or they have been witnesses of domestic violence. Many participants (59%) believed violence is learnt by sons from their fathers. The research also showed that 98% of the men interviewed felt that a man's friends may influence his tendency towards violence. This peer influence could be an important area for future work with the men.

*Young people are like the blank piece of paper. If their fathers did something, they watched and copied their actions.*

(Participant in Phum Thmey Village, Battambang)

Some of the participants argued that not all children follow the example set by their fathers. This was considered especially true if the boys got a good education and hence had the knowledge to 'think differently to their father'.

*Before my father used to use violence against me. I felt hurt, anger, tension and stress...I promised myself not to use violence, whether in my own family or with others, for the rest of my life. Violence costs a lot and has so many bad impacts. I had trauma because of it.*

(Participant in Sang Rang Village, Battambang)

*My father used violence against my family, but I committed myself not to use violence like my father".*

(Participant in Damnak Village, Battambang)

**3.4.2 How do your beliefs about masculinity and femininity contribute to Violence Against Women?**

This question was intended to promote awareness and understanding of the link between masculine and feminine stereotypes and the causes of violence. The question required explanation by the facilitator. He referred to the group's response regarding the

attributes of a 'good man' and a 'good woman' and reminded them that they had said men need to be strong and in control, and women should be quiet and obedient.

Some of the participants then made the link between power and violence. The men again said that in reality men have more power than women. Most men did not see or experience women being powerful in their personal relationships. Since men had more power, they felt they were entitled to be violent when a woman challenged their authority.

*In Khmer society men believe they have power and control over women and that it is perfectly OK that they can use violence against women.*  
(Participant in Koh Ream Village, Battambang)

Although this was the common perception, participants in two of the village groups disagreed. They argued that some men just 'think' and 'want to believe' they have more power and control, and that this kind of thinking gave them the misguided permission to use violence against their wife.

These findings highlight the need for on-going efforts to promote women's empowerment. Women, like men, need skills in how to negotiate and communicate in intimate relationships. Women need to understand how their behaviour can contribute to the cycle of violence and learn new ways to challenge their husband's behaviour. (Refer to recommendation section of this report for information on how this could be addressed.)

### **3.4.3 When you feel angry and frustrated what do you do?**

This question promoted discussion about the different ways men express and manage anger. The facilitator explained that every person experiences feelings of anger sometimes but what was important is how they react or respond to this anger. The participants of each group shared a wide range of non-violent ways to manage anger. The most common strategy described was to leave the home, or situation, and calm down.

*We should be patient, and just go outside to calm ourselves down when we were angry. We don't need to use violence.*  
(Participant in Sang Rang Village, Siem Reap)

*I go to the rice fields 2 or 3 times a day and scream.*  
(Participant in Prolet Village, Siem Reap)

Some men said they did not express their anger and preferred to remain silent, while others said once they had calmed down they might talk to the person they were angry with. Anger management methods used by the men included sleeping, listening to music, singing karaoke, watching TV, eating, meeting with friends, showering and going out to the rice paddy and screaming. Some said they would take anger out on an animal or property. Other men spoke of more reflective methods like meditating or trying to change what they were thinking.

*I think about something that makes me happy – like a past sweet memory.*  
(Participant in Svay Chrum Village, Battambang)

*I hit or fight something like a cow, dog or buffalo to calm down my anger.*  
(Participant in Sambour Village, Siem Reap)

While the discussions largely focused on non-violent ways to manage anger, some men again admitted when they get angry they sometimes turn to violence. They said they were physically violent towards their wives and/or family members; or they yell and 'speak bad words'. The expression "I loose control of my mind" was again cited.

*Sometimes I cannot control my mind and feelings, so I use violence against my wife. But I know it is not good and I need to change that bad behaviour.*

*When I get angry I like to express it. If I could not express it, I would feel even more frustrated and want to use violence.*  
(Participant in Sreah Village, Siem Reap)

The facilitator asked the groups how men who use violence could be encouraged to express feelings of anger and frustration in non-violent ways. The participants said that men should express their feelings more openly and that if they did that, they would feel relieved. Men pointed out that if they do express their feelings more openly, their friends and/or family will be able to help them. (This matter is further discussed in section 3.5 *Action to be taken to reduce VAW.*)

#### **3.4.4 Do you think the use of violence is ever acceptable?**

Overwhelmingly the answer to this question was "no, violence is unacceptable". Men do not want to use violence in their families and communities. All participants agreed with the statement "men who use violence are bad and deserve to be punished". Even the men who use violence agreed it was bad and must be eliminated from their village. Men who use violence give the 'good' men a bad reputation. These findings differ from the UNIFEM National Baseline Survey of 2005 which found there were high levels of acceptance of violence by men and women.

#### **3.4.5 What are the affects of Violence Against Women on the people in this village?**

In the final question under the topic of Violence Against Women, the men were invited to reflect on the impact of violence on children, women and men in their village.

##### **(i) Impact of VAW on children:**

Men spoke passionately about the negative impact VAW has on children. Some participants said that they used to be the victims of domestic violence and they recalled their 'terrible' feelings at the time. They felt 'ashamed', 'afraid' and 'worried'. Children with violent fathers 'cannot concentrate at school', they feel withdrawn and shy. They are scared and cannot sleep.

*I want to run away as far as I can to leave the situation in my family. My father uses violence against my mother. I hate him. Now I want to go to Thailand – I just want to get away from him.*

(Participant in Sreah Village, Siem Reap)

Some of the participants expressed concern that boys learned bad behaviour and later become violent themselves. They record 'bad feelings in their minds that never go away'. The men spoke of the negative impact on female children. They see their mothers as victims and they too can repeat the cycle by marrying a man who uses violence. There was also discussion about the indirect impacts of violence of children. It was pointed out that even if a child's own father wasn't violent, they could see and hear other men who were.

*The children feel ashamed and shy...they hate their father and mother...they have no joy, no future, and associate with a gangster group and use drugs.*

(Participant in Or Thkov, Siem Reap)

*Maybe they record it in their mind, think it is ok and use violence later. Who knows?*

(Participant in Koh Ream Village, Battambang)

**(ii) Impact of VAW on women:**

Shame was noted as the most common reaction of women to being victims of violence. Men said they felt pity for women in violent relationships. They believed that these women were very afraid and fear that their children will copy the violent behaviour demonstrated by their fathers. The men also spoke of the negative health impacts for women, which they noted as fatigue and an inability to look after their children.

**(iii) Impact of VAW on other men:**

This discussion point sparked an interesting conversation where some group members expressed their anger towards men in the group who do use violence. They described how the bad behaviour of some men who use violence had a negative impact on the 'good men'. Many men stated that they had no respect for men who use violence. Men also spoke of the negative practical impacts such as noisy behaviour which kept them up at night. They believed that outsiders "look down on the all the men in the village because some use violence". The bad reputation of men in the village also had a negative impact on men's ability to find a life partner.

*People in other villages think all the men are no good and they would not let their daughters marry us.*

(Participant in Sreah Village, Siem Reap)

***After discussing the impacts of violence, some participants said they felt even more committed to stopping being violent themselves. They expressed surprise at the negative impact their violence had on everyone. See also section 3.5 which detailed what action the men said they would take to reduce VAW.***

### ***Summary of Findings***

#### ***3.4 Men's attitudes on causes and consequences of Violence Against Women***

- Just over half of the men believe that the main cause of violence is alcohol consumption. Slightly less than half of the participants believed that alcohol consumption was used as an excuse rather than a reason for violence.
- Men frequently claim that they drink because they feel stressed.
- Many men spoke about their inability to 'control their mind' when they drink and said that stress was a major cause of violence. Men wanted to talk about these issues and noted that talking helps.
- Over half the participants believe women provoke men's violent behaviour. They also believe VAW is unacceptable and 'bad'. The other participants argued strongly that women shouldn't be blamed for men's behaviour and men need to learn to 'control their minds'.
- Women were seen by some men to provoke violence when they challenged men's authority. They noted that women can put pressure on men by expecting them to be the provider, and complaining when he fails. When a woman complains about a man's ability to adequately provide, his masculinity is challenged and he uses violence to show he is strong.
- Men also believe that some men use violence when women fail to fulfill their traditional roles, e.g. not doing the housework or not taking adequate care of the children.
- A perceived failure of both women and men to fulfill their narrowly defined traditional roles contributes to VAW. Only a minority of the men understood the link between gender stereotypes and violent behavior.
- The men believe that men have more power than women. Unequal power relations between men and women are the root cause of violence. When women challenge this power (and step outside the parameters of how a woman 'should' behave) they provoke violence from men.
- It was seen that encouraging women to challenge their husband's dominant role in the family - without educating men on equal relationships - can result in more violence.
- Men are also the victims of violence. Many of the men in the groups were directly affected, because their fathers used violence against them, or were affected indirectly as witnesses of violence. They also complained of verbal abuse by their wives.

- Stereotyping men as the perpetrators or oppressors and women as the victims is unhelpful. Labeling men as 'violent' implies an innate quality rather than a behaviour which can be altered, and talking about women as 'victims' does not encourage empowerment in situations of violence.
- The men manage their anger in a wide range of ways. The participants could see the link between feelings, anger and violent behaviour. It was useful for the men who use violence to hear of non-violent ways peaceful men express their anger.
- All the men believe VAW is 'bad' and can see the profoundly negative impact it has on women, children, men, and the entire community.
- The men said that the dominant feeling violence arouses for people is shame. All 'victims' of violence, whether men, women or children feel ashamed.
- The men spoke of the negative impact on female children. These children are at risk of repeating the cycle of violence by marrying a man who uses violence.
- Boys who are the victims of violence carry anger and shame and can also repeat the cycle. However, some men said this is not always the case; some men made a conscious commitment not to use violence; even though their fathers had been violent towards them or their mothers.
- Talking about the consequences of violence appeared to have a profound impact on the men. Several of the men who currently use violence made verbal commitments to stop following the discussion. Talking about these issues helps.
- The 'good men' [i.e. those who are not violent] are partly motivated to end VAW because 'bad men' spoil the reputation of all males in their village or community.

***“Mostly when men get drunk they dare to commit violence against their wife. Women are weak and they are afraid if their husband screams at them. Usually, if the wife dares to confront their husband, men will use violence against them.”***

(Participant in Sang Rang Village, Battambang Province)

### **3.5 What action men can take to reduce Violence Against Women**

In the fifth and final topic of the men's group discussions, the action men could take to reduce VAW in their villages was discussed. They were asked what they could do to be better individually in relation to VAW and what they could do as a group of interested men in the community. There also was some discussion about the support men who use violence needed to stop their bad behaviour.

#### **3.5.1 What can you do now (after this meeting) to be a better man and a good role model for younger men and women?**

The men were asked to consider their own process of personal development and how they could improve their own lives as well as their relationships with their wives, families and other community members.

The most common response to this question was that men who used violence committed to changing their behaviour. Many of these men said that after the session, they were more aware of the negative effects of violence, and had a greater understanding of ways to manage their own violent behaviour. This was perhaps the most positive outcome of the meeting: verbal commitments to stop being violent in front of their fellow village members.

*To be angry with my wife is not good – I need to re-think that. If I hit her there is no benefit. What will I get? I loose my reputation as the good husband and I feel ashamed.*

(Participant in Svay Chrum Village, Battambang)

The participants also made commitments to stop other 'bad' behaviours. This included excessive drinking, gambling, smoking, using prostitutes and using 'bad words' against their wives and other people in the village. Several men said they needed to find a way to 'control their mind' and to be responsible for their actions.

The idea of being a 'good man' resonated strongly within the group. Being a good man meant being more "loving", "tolerant" and "respectful of others". Several men said they would start by "loving themselves, then their families and community". Others said they now understood the need to behave in 'good ways' and made commitments to being 'good men'.

Participants in all the village discussion groups also spoke about being better husbands and fathers. They said they would support their wives by "helping with household tasks", "listening to her", understanding her point of view, and would be more "open and honest".

Men also spoke about handling issues better by discussing problems and decisions with their wives, and sharing "the suffering of family members". Many men said they wanted to be better fathers by "giving [their children] happiness", "encouraging them to study harder", and "to hope for a good future for them".

### **3.5.2 How can men support other men in the community who are violent to stop this behaviour?**

Across the many discussion groups, early in the day it was agreed that all men who are violent were 'bad' men and deserve to be punished. By the end of the day a more compassionate view of men who use violence had developed and thought was given to constructive ways to support the men who use violence so that they could learn new behaviours and stop their violence. Suggestions from the groups included:

- Explain the negative impacts of violence to the men in the village who use violence so that they understand the consequences of their actions.
- Teach men who use violence other ways to manage their impulses and stress and to 'control their minds'.
- Be positive role models to other men.
- Start a program that invites both men and women to talk openly and honestly about violence so that they can better understand each other.
- Strengthen the implementation of the law and provide punishment those who use violence.

### **3.5.3 What action can the male community leaders (or Gender Peace Network members) do to reduce violence in their villages?**

As explained in Section 1 of this report, all the villages selected for the project had a committed male community volunteer (what Banteay Srei calls 'Gender Peace Network' members) who had been recruited by Banteay Srei. The ten male volunteers participated in a three day reflection workshop after the group discussions had been completed. At this reflection meeting the leaders were asked what action they now wanted to take in their villages. Some of the suggestions included:

- **Establish Men's Support Groups.** Most of the leaders said they wanted to form some sort of men's group in their village. They said the men's group discussions were useful and that the model should be developed so men could meet to discuss problems in the village and possible solutions to those problems. Some leaders liked the idea of a "Good Men's Group" that focused on promoting positive role models. Others spoke of a "Men's Support Group" that worked with perpetrators of violence. Some liked the idea of a group, but were not sure what they or the group could do.

*Convince others to do the good things, promote tolerance, promote and disseminate what they studied today, and clean the environment.*  
(Participant in Or Thkov Village, Siem Reap)

- **Awareness raising, men's discussions and information dissemination on men's issues.** All the leaders were enthusiastic about the topics covered in the Men's Group Discussions. These topics were new to them and other men in the village. They were keen for these types of discussions to continue and to include

other men from their communities. Some spoke of a “forum to exchange ideas about violence”, while others said the men’s group could be a “space to talk freely about VAW and other development issues as well” and to improve knowledge on “women’s and men’s rights”. Several of the men said information about “being a good man – what does it mean and how to do it?” needs to be disseminated.

Some innovative ideas were proposed such as ‘organising a men’s cooking competition to show men can make delicious food’. Others said they want to make posters, show ‘educated movies’, have question and answer sessions about VAW, and organise a march to promote people’s rights and domestic violence.

Several leaders wanted to reduce violence in their villages by educating people about the impact of alcohol consumption.

- ***Being/promoting positive role models in the village.*** This was a recurring theme in the discussion groups with the men recognising the importance of ‘good men’ being role models in the village. The male volunteers said a concrete action they could take was to be a positive role model and recruit other suitable men to actively promote positive, non-violent behaviours to other men and boys.

*Be the role models for other men. Be the good man and do what it takes for the family to have true happiness, so the others will feel inspired and want to do the same thing.*

(Participant in Svay Chrum Village, Battambang)

- ***Educate the perpetrators of violence.*** Some of the male community leaders noted that they already intervene in cases of violence. In pairs, they approach the perpetrator of the violence, once he has calmed down and is in a more peaceful state of mind, and talk to him about his behaviour. Other male leaders stressed that it is important not to intervene when the violence was actually taking place because this could make the situation worse. It was also stressed that this work needed to be done in cooperation with local authorities.
- ***Promoting economic development.*** Several of the male leaders said they wanted to promote economic development in their village. Poverty, and the associated stress of failing to be the providers for the family, was a leading cause of violence and so they requested that Banteay Srei support them with the provision of certain services such as a water well, assistance to raise animals, funds for repairing roads, and agricultural expertise.
- ***Promoting women’s empowerment.*** Finally several leaders thought it was important to promote women’s voices in the village by ‘encouraging women to speak out; to have their say’. It was suggested that the men’s group could hold meetings together with women to hear their viewpoints.

***The challenge for Banteay Srei and IWDA is how to best support these male community leaders. Recommendations are presented in the next section.***

## ***Part 4 – Conclusion***

---

The conclusion to this report is based on the outcomes of group discussions and interviews with men from ten rural villages within the Battambang and Siem Reap Provinces. The men's group discussion format proved to be a powerful means to explore attitudes to VAW and promote change.

This research confirmed that there is a widespread perception within the targeted communities that men are more powerful than women. Within this unequal relationship, a challenge to men's power is the main cause of violence. Men feel pressured to fulfill a masculine role and a failure to fulfill this role negatively affects man's self esteem and sense of identity. When men feel that women do not understand the pressure on them to provide it can be a trigger for violence. Some men admitted that they had been violent and described the feelings of shame associated with this violence. These feelings of shame often became apparent when they understood that this behaviour is seen negatively in the community. As a result, they acknowledged the negative consequences of their bad behaviour; and often expressed a desire to change their actions.

There is enormous scope for men in target communities of the project, given suitable support and training, to work with those who continue to use violence to change their behaviour, particularly as this study has seen that young men who have different opportunities to their fathers are in a positive position to discuss Violence Against Women and make decisions to act in non violent ways.

While inequality between men and women within the villages continues positive signs of change emerged from the discussions. More than half the men within the groups believed that men and women have equal rights. They maintained that wives should be supported and given opportunities outside the home. These men also said they helped their wives by sharing housework and child raising tasks, and spoke of the satisfaction it gave them and the happiness that comes from respectful relationships. It was evident throughout the discussions that men and women want the same things in intimate relationships: happiness, respect, love, support, honesty, and understanding.

An understanding of men should be included in women's empowerment strategies. Most men still believe that men are more powerful, and that women provoke violence. Women also need to understand their part in violent relationships, and at the same time understand they are not responsible for their husband's behavior. Women need skills and confidence to negotiate their needs in the relationship.

Most initiatives towards gender equality must focus on women's empowerment; but achieving this vision of gender equality and reduction in VAW is not possible without changes in men's lives as well. The promotion of understanding between men and women is a critical step towards gender equality and the elimination of violence.

Achieving the goal of non-violent communities must be a long term process that will require significant investment in staff and male community leaders. It is also dependant on continuing investment in supporting women's empowerment and leadership, providing assistance to women in violent relationships, and creating support for those who choose to leave their home or community.

This research invites development workers in Cambodia to consider: What are the most effective ways to broaden the definition of masculinity and femininity? How can men be given opportunities to assume a positive role within the household? How can men be taught to be better fathers? How can men be encouraged to support their wives to work and socialise outside the household? And, how can women be encouraged to support their husbands?

## **Part 5 – Recommendations**

---

The final section of this report presents six major recommendations for consideration by Banteay Srei and IWDA to further develop their approach to working with men in the *Community Action Against Violence Against Women* project. Five of the recommendations incorporate minor recommendations relevant to the implementation of the corresponding major recommendation.

It is recommended:

### ***5.1 That the project implements empowerment processes that includes men and women so both genders can be liberated from the confines of stereotyping***

The strategy to promote gender equality and the prevention of VAW needs to provide opportunities for men's and women's empowerment and change. It is for that reason the principle underlying the project's approach should be the promotion of human dignity through overcoming pressures on both men and women.

The project needs to consider men as partners, and enablers of women's empowerment. However, the work with men should not be considered a separate strategy or project. Rather it should be an integral part of the project's multi-faceted community based approach, with women's empowerment being the central focus.

The strategies and activities implemented by the project should endeavor to bring about attitudinal and behavioural change for both men and women. It has become evident through this research that a perceived failure of both women and men to fulfill their narrowly defined traditional roles is a major cause of VAW. However changing attitudes and behaviours is a long term process and it will take generations to bring about such change; though this report shows that this change is happening already. The recommendations presented below should be considered in this context.

### ***5.2 That male community leaders are recruited, trained, and supported to lead men's VAW preventive efforts***

The male volunteer leaders (or Gender Peace Network members) are central to the success of the working with men approach. More time and investment is needed in preparing and training these leaders so that they understand the complexity and psychological underpinnings of violent behaviour and relationships. Banteay Srei staff also need more training and support in understanding behavioural change and group formation methods. This will require some personal reflection on their life experiences, the nature of their relationships, and their belief systems. It is further recommended that;

- A three year training program is initiated to develop the capacity of the male leaders to lead men's groups and facilitate discussion.
- Training is given to the male leaders in 'understanding men and working more effectively with men', which would include an understanding of promoting behavioral change and human development processes.

- The male leaders also be given opportunities to deepen their understanding of the causes of violence and strategies to reduce it.
- The male leaders and Banteay Srei staff be given more support on working with families in conflict.
- Training and supervision is given to the male leaders in group facilitation skills.
- An ongoing process of identifying and training new male leaders is initiated.
- The male leaders are paid a small amount for their time and effort. This payment could be one day a fortnight, or more depending on the work completed.
- Banteay Srei continues to organise regular men's networking meetings so men can learn from, and support, each other.
- Banteay Srei recruits a trained full-time [male] staff member to provide day to day support for the male community leaders.

### ***5.3 That grassroots level “men’s support groups” are created, and other village level initiatives are supported and funded***

The discussion groups demonstrated that the men involved need and want to talk. This study found that the men's group discussion format became a powerful method to explore attitudes and promote change. Already the male leaders who participated in this research process expressed a desire to establish some form of men's support group in their villages. This interest needs to be harnessed and training provided to the male community leaders in establishing and maintaining men's groups.

The men's support groups could provide much needed opportunities for men to process and deal with personal issues in a climate of trust. The men would be able to express the stress they experience in relation to achieving their role of the provider and at the same time, perpetrators may gain on-going support. The groups need to be flexible, in order to respond to issues as they emerge in the village.

The men's support groups can be a means to promote dialogue among men in the villages on the following topics;

- Alternative models of respectful and caring male and female relationships.
- The expectations of a father.
- How men could ease the pressure for their wives and how their wives could ease their pressure.
- How men can support women's empowerment.
- How to manage anger.
- How to help/work with children living in families in conflict.
- The impacts on VAW on the village.
- How men who use violence can be helped to stop that violence.
- Communication and negotiating skills in relationships with women.
- Cultural change across generations.

It also is recommended that Banteay Srei recognises that some of the ideas and activities proposed by the men's support groups would require funding and that such funding should be made available. The male leaders already have put forward some of their ideas as described in Section 3.5: *What action men can take to reduce VAW*. For

example, public forums and awareness raising events, talks at schools, sporting events for young men at risk, recruiting positive male role models in the village.

#### ***5.4 That men who use violence in the targeted villages are helped to stop, and their wives and families are supported***

Men who use violence are seldom given opportunities to understand their problems, take responsibility for their actions, and transform themselves. The project needs to find ways to get men who use violence to take responsibility for their behaviour. Men need tools to manage their anger and frustrations, and be support to break the cycle of violence. Working with perpetrators of violence is a delicate and sometimes risky process. There are no easy, 'quick fix' solutions and the male community leaders will require further support and training in order to do this effectively. As a first step it will be necessary for staff and volunteers to look beyond stereotyping men as the perpetrators or oppressors, and women as the victims. Therefore it is further recommended that:

- The male community leaders receive training in working with men who use violence, and how to make those men accountable for their actions.
- Men's support groups actively encourage men who use violence to attend meetings for on-going support.
- The men's support groups hold forums and discussions on anger management, so men who use violence can hear how non-violent men manage their anger and frustrations (as described in section 3.4.3, *When you feel angry what do you do?*).
- The Local Authorities (especially Village Officials) and police are provided with training in good practise in the intervention into cases of family violence.

While working with men who are using violence, it is of paramount importance to provide support to their wives and children. More investment is needed in mechanisms to work with couples who are in violent relationships. Coordination with the Local Authorities and the police is vital in this regard.

It is important that all community volunteers understand that men are solely responsible for their violent behaviours, and while women need to take responsibility for their own behaviour, they are not responsible for making their husband stop. It is further recommended that:

- The men's support group leaders liaise with women volunteers and leaders in the village to provide support to the wives and children of men who are violent.
- Gender Peace Network Members and other women leaders are provided with training in how to work with women and children in violent families.
- That these women are given information and have access to support services.
- Women are given the knowledge and tools to find ways to challenge their husbands in a way that does not invite more violence.

### ***5.5 That women's empowerment approach be expanded to include 'understanding men' and negotiation skills in relationships***

The idea for conducting the men's group discussions came from women in the villages who said "talk to the men!" Yet in the ensuing discussion groups, many men said that they believed that women do not understand the pressures the men face, and it is the women who provoke violence. Most of the men also believed a 'good woman' should stay at home and look after the household and their families. It is important that women understand what men think, even though they may not agree. It is also important that women understand how their behaviour affects the nature of the relationship with their partner. While men need to understand what women think and feel, a parallel process of working with women to understand men should also be implemented. Accordingly, it is further recommended that:

- A study is conducted whereby groups of women may gather to discuss stereotypes of men and women, and the links to VAW. The findings can be documented in a complimentary study, i.e. "Women's Attitudes Towards Women, Men and VAW".
- Female community leaders/Gender Peace Network members are included in all men's related trainings as described above.
- Women's leaders are supported to initiate awareness raising discussions on men and women stereotypes and VAW in the selected villages.
- Joint group work with men and women is initiated to discuss VAW issues and to increase women's confidence in speaking about these issues with men.

By increasing women's understanding of men, and by giving them the tools and confidence to negotiate what they want in relationships with their husbands, the expected outcome of this project "*women are aware of their rights and have increased confidence to exercise them*" is more likely to be achieved.

### ***5.6 That the lessons from the experience of working with men is shared with other national stakeholders***

The experience in implementing this project and its men's and women's empowerment strategy will provide invaluable information to other stakeholders in Cambodia. IWDA can also assist by collecting resources and information about men's related work in other countries. To that end it is further recommended that:

- A workshop is convened to disseminate the findings and recommendations from this study.
- The lessons learned from the project are researched, documented and disseminated.
- Connections with other organisations in the region (including Australia) that have experience in men's and VAW related work are established.

## ***Annex 1: Summary of Men's Group Discussion Questions***

### ***Topic 1: What is it like being a man today?***

- 1 How do societies beliefs about "masculinity" [what it means to be a man] impact on you?
- 2 Do you think societies beliefs about masculinity are changing? How?
- 3 Do you think our shared beliefs about masculinity give you [men] more power and control over your wife?

### ***Topic 2: Men, women and their relationships***

- 4 What do you understand by the term "femininity"?
- 5 Do you think women's status in your families, village and society is changing? Or staying the same? How does this impact on you?
- 6 What do you want from your relationship with your wife?
- 7 What do you think are the ingredients of a healthy marriage?

### ***Topic 3: Men, violence and non-violence***

- 8 Why do you think some men are violent?
- 9 Do you think our beliefs about masculinity and femininity contribute to Violence Against Women? How?
- 10 Do you think the use of violence is ever acceptable?
- 11 What are the affects of Violence Against Women on the people in this village?

### ***Topic 4: What are the solutions to reducing violence?***

- 12 What can you do now [i.e. after this meeting] to be a better man?
- 13 What action can this group take to make changes in this village?
- 14 What will be the next step after this meeting? Will you meet again as a group to discuss these matters further? How can you develop your ideas further and put them into action?

## ***Annex 2: Summary of “Community Action Against Violence Against Women” Project***

### **PROJECT DESIGN SUMMARY**

#### **Goal**

To reduce Violence Against Women in 40 Cambodian villages.

#### **Purpose**

To contribute to Cambodia’s efforts to change the attitudes and behaviours related to Violence Against Women by empowering men, women and communities.

#### **Objectives/Components**

1. To empower communities to mobilise on promoting non-violent ways to reduce VAW in 40 Villages
2. To increase women’s awareness, knowledge and confidence to realise their needs and human rights.
3. To promote village-based dialogue, understanding and action on men’s issues.
4. To enable the Local Authorities to respond to abused women in a respectful and non-discriminatory way.
5. To provide a full range of support to women who choose to take legal action to end violence.

#### **Expected Outputs**

- The Village Support Networks members are aware of the causes of VAW and are actively promoting non-violent ways to resolve conflict within families and in their villages.
- Women have increased self esteem and confidence, and are aware of their rights and able to access services available to them.
- Approaches and tools for promoting men’s behavioural change are developed, and the lessons learned are documented and widely disseminated.
- The Local Authorities are responding to cases of Violence Against Women in a non-discriminatory way.
- Women who choose to take action are supported, and have accessed all available government and non-government services, including legal action in the courts.

## ***Annex 3: Summary of Men's Component***

### **COMMUNITY ACTION AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN PROJECT 2007-2009**

#### ***SUMMARY MEN'S COMPONENT***

**Objective:** To promote village-based dialogue, understanding and action on men's issues.

**Expected Output:** *Approaches for promoting men's behavioural change are developed, and the lessons learned are documented and widely disseminated.*

#### ***Strategies and Activities***

##### ***1. Men's Research and Awareness Raising***

- Conducting a "Men's Action Research" project by facilitating "Men's Group Discussions" in 10 villages.
- Publishing the research findings and sharing with government, donors & NGOs.
- Networking with other NGOs, MoWA etc on working with men.
- Monitoring by IWDA

##### ***2. Village Level Mobilisation***

- Supporting the creation of Village Men's Groups.
- Networking meetings for the coordinators of the Men's Groups.
- Recruiting of male role models in villages.
- Supporting & funding men's activities at the village level.
- Training and support for male Gender Peace Network members in working with men.
- Training for Banteay Srei (BS) staff in men's behavioural change.

##### ***3. Training for volunteers & Village Chiefs to engage with men who use violence***

- Training and support for ADHOC and BS staff and volunteers, and other NGOs, in working with men who use violence.
- Training for Local Authorities (LA) in working with men who use violence.
- Developing (or contributing other NGO/donor) resources and training on men's behavioural change.