

Women's Voices

**Frustration
Anger Despair**

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Introduction

Cambodia is becoming increasingly open to foreign capital and dependent on the rules of international trade agreements, with trade liberalisation policies being prescribed by international and national banks, governments, trading organisations and even aid agencies as the development strategy to be followed. However these policies are pushing poor women even further into poverty. As the experiences of many developing countries has shown, WB/IMF and WTO liberalisation policies take rights and services away from the poor, threaten democracy and widen the gap between rich and poor. These policies also result in further entrenching the separation of men and women's work, with women receiving fewer opportunities in the use of new technology, education and training.



Trade liberalisation and rapid economic growth in a low-income country like Cambodia brings modern infrastructure and expensive consumer goods for the wealthy and middle classes. It requires gearing the economy away from subsistence agriculture and appropriating the lands of the poor for export crops to earn the foreign exchange to pay for imports and pay off foreign loans.

Privatisation of agricultural supply companies and lack of subsidies to local producers cause the costs of inputs such as seeds and fertilizer to increase, making it more expensive to grow crops. Local agricultural producers also face competition from increasing flows of subsidised imports. The local economy becomes increasingly monetised, making it more difficult for farmers to survive through agricultural work alone. Privatisation and degradation of land and

natural resources makes it more difficult for agricultural families to supplement their livelihoods by foraging for food and firewood in the forests and fishing in local streams. Unless they are very large property owners and can sell some of their produce, farmers become more dependent on wage employment, which is scarce in provincial areas.

Along with costs brought on by droughts, floods and sickness, these financial pressures are leading farmers to mortgage their land to rich landholders in the village or, increasingly, to borrow large amounts of credit at interest rates which they cannot repay, leading to a cycle of debt, landlessness and migration. The exploitation of the poor by the multilateral lending institutions such as the WB and IMF is being played out on a micro level by micro-finance institutions (charging usually between 10-30% interest per month) and NGOs with micro-credit programs (charging 4-6% interest per month).



The money economy provides inadequate opportunities for poor women, forced into migration because of unpayable debts and no access to a livelihood in their village. These women are driven into more economically productive activities than subsistence agriculture, such as garment factory work, sex work, and begging in city and urban centres, ironically contributing towards Cambodia's cash economy and "development" as touted by international banks and many aid organizations.

Those poor that do not migrate remain to toil a land that can no longer sustain a livelihood, but plunges people into a perpetual cycle of debt. This further increases vulnerability and hardship instead of sustaining a livelihood.

Women farmers are especially vulnerable to loss of land and hardship as they face gender discrimination; own smaller farms and more often need to rely on hiring labourers. They also must contend with a double load of agricultural work and domestic housework and childcare.

These case studies, collected by WAC during the course of our work in the areas of research and support to women's organizations, poignantly illustrate the daily struggles of women immersed in extreme conditions of deprivation, neediness and destitution. The women protagonists of these stories have shouldered the responsibility for the survival of themselves and their children, obligated to make dire decisions to stay alive. Many found themselves alone, some because of widowhood,



some because marriage is not a guarantee for women to be supported, some because being a daughter does not mean having equal opportunities as a son. Families cannot afford to keep children in school, especially girls who are traditionally burdened with the care of the family members. It is the girl children that are most commonly sent to the city to work to support their families and many families now depend on the income sent home by their daughters.

These social and human tragedies, occurring as Cambodia becomes more integrated into the global economy through unsustainable and exploitive "economic development" are all part of the "success" story of globalisation and trade liberalisation. As Cambodia gears itself towards WTO membership and further liberalisation policies, more public services and assets in Cambodia will become privatised, putting them out of reach of the poor and even the government and under the control of foreign companies. Trade policies will further disadvantage local industries and agriculture, as cheap imports flood into the country and

more land is turned into agri-businesses or stripped of natural resources for export. As Cambodia's rapid and unsustainable economic liberalisation becomes more "successful", landlessness, migration and destitution of Cambodia's poor is likely to further increase, with more women like those in the following stories suffering the consequences.

These stories show the impact of such policies on poor Cambodian women. Each woman's story is real (though their names have been changed to protect their identities). Each story demonstrates how gender discrimination merges and entwines itself with trade liberalisation policies to generate more inequity for women, more despair and more violence. The stress that poverty creates on families and communities is experienced most powerfully by women, through domestic violence and drunkenness, desertion, family pressures and expectations, and social violence and discrimination.

These testimonies bear witness to lives and dreams betrayed.



Women in Agriculture

As part of the ongoing research with agricultural workers at WAC, we visited villages in Prey Veng Province where many Garment Workers in Phnom Penh come from. WAC took these case studies from the village women in order to find out about changes in rice production and supply, food security, and living conditions from a gender perspective, and assess the impact of increasing trade liberalisation and globalisation on the lives of Cambodian rural people.

Listen to the voices of rural women:

There is no water so we just stay at home waiting for the rain to come.

In the last two years the rice productivity has decreased because of the drought and we have not been able to repay our debts.

I am in debt with an NGO and a private moneylender... because I did not have enough money for food. Now I just try to pay for my debts and feed my family.... Sometimes they [my children] have nothing to eat all day.

My husband left last night... I don't know why... I don't know how I will manage if he does not return and continue to support me and our child.

I am unable to plant rice on this land because I am too old and have no money to buy seeds or fertilizer.

People are frightened of the credit NGO organisation which charges 4% interest monthly.

Case study 1: Woman headed household, food shortages.

Sumnang heads her own household. She has two elderly parents and 10 children. Her oldest child is 37, her youngest is 9. Some of her children and their spouses live with her, as well as one of her grandchildren. Altogether there are 11 people living in her household.



Her living conditions have changed over the past few years. It is more expensive now to grow rice and her expendable income has decreased. She owns land, but she can only feed her family for 8-9 months of the year from rice production. The rest of the time they suffer from food shortages. Before she was married she did not sell labour, or very rarely, now she heavily relies on the sale of her labour.

Caring for her children put her in debt because of their medical and other costs. If she had no money she had to borrow money to go to the doctor. A private creditor charges 20% interest monthly. She says that people are also frightened of the credit NGO organisation which charges 4% interest monthly.

Now that the children are grown up they can help with the household income, so in this way it is not as difficult now as it was when they were younger. Two boys have left to work as wage labourers. Her daughter was a garment worker but was sacked after a machine broke down.

Case study 2: Less production

Hong is 34 years old and her husband is 36 years old. They have a son and four daughters. Their son is 7 years old and their daughters are aged between 3 and 16 years old. The 16-year-old daughter is in grade 4. Hong finds that it is difficult to keep the children in school, as even though this year education is free they still have to pay for books, pencils, etc.

They own wet season land and dry season land but the dry season land is now mortgaged to other villagers. They mortgaged this land to hire someone to clear their land of tree roots. When they can pay back the money they will get their land back but they have not yet made any repayments.

The rice they grow is only enough to feed their family for 6 months of the year. In the six months they have no rice they buy rice on credit. They borrow 100 Kg of rice, which they pay back through family labour or in rice after the harvest.



For the last few years they have also cleared forest land to grow vegetables such as watermelon and cucumber which they sell at the market, but this year they cannot because there is no water so they just stay at home waiting for the rain to come. The main sources of water, such as the pond, are dry this year and the main water line is very low. If they had enough money they could dig a well to get water.

In the last two years production has fallen because of drought and this year it is still very low. They use two sacks of fertilizer on their land, which they buy from the village (at a cost of 46,000 riels per sack, which is an increase from the previous year). Sometimes they use three sacks of fertilizer but this year they used less because there is less water. For the last five years they have always used fertilizer and every year they usually need to increase the amount they use to get more production.

The last two years have been hard for the family because of drought. Hong and her husband both have to try to find more food. Hong is currently pregnant again but she still works hard because she has to; they cannot afford to hire much labour. So she has to work unless she falls down and cannot get up. Sometimes if she cannot work her husband works alone.

When they get sick she use traditional medicine. Her husband has a bad leg and uses traditional medicine to treat it. She has to work more because of her husband's bad leg.

Apart from the mortgage she also has a debt of around \$80 (US) which she borrowed from her relative with no interest.

They cannot find any wage work to do.

Case study 3: Violence

Sray Pao is 23 years old. She has lived in this village her whole life. She has grade 4 education and can read and write a little bit. Sray Pao was abandoned by her parents when she was young. She has three brothers and one sister. One of her brothers is a monk and another brother works in a garment factory in Phnom Penh. She lives with her husband and children in a house that her grandmother gave to her. Her grandmother lives next door.

Sray Pao's grandmother arranged her marriage. Her husband is an orphan and he is 24 years old. He comes from another village, has no education and is illiterate. They have two children - a girl aged 5 and a boy aged 2. She is also currently nine months pregnant.

When she was eight months pregnant she was raped by a man from a neighbouring village. The rapist was a friend of her husband's and one night he slept at their house after he and her husband had been out drinking. When her husband left the house the man raped her. He is now in jail but Sray Pao doesn't know how long for.



In court Sray Pao asked for two million riels in compensation for the crime but she has not yet received any money, and she is in debt for the money she had to pay to travel to the provincial court in Prey Veng to give evidence and to prosecute the case, and the bribes she had to pay in court. She had to

borrow money to pay for these expenses and also for her medical costs at the clinic in the village as ever since she was raped she has suffered from shortness of breath and abdominal pain. At the medial clinic it costs \$12-15 for the medicine and treatment of each illness.

Sray Pao is trying to save money to pay back her debts but is not sure if she will be able to pay back the money or not.

She wants both of her children to get a high education but she is not sure she can afford to pay for it.

Sray Pao and her husband have produced less rice for the past two years because there has not been enough water. They hire a water pump for \$25 which they use once a week. For one hour the water pump costs 800- 1000 riels (20-25c), using their own fuel.

Sray Pao still works on her land and she does wage labour on other people's land even though she is pregnant. When she works on the land her grandmother looks after her children.

They have enough rice to feed themselves for five to six months of the year. The rest of the year they have to buy rice. Sometimes they don't have enough rice to eat.

Sray Pao and her husband are happily married but sometimes they fight with each other because they have nothing to eat. Sometimes when they have nothing her grandmother gives them food.

Case study 4: Debts

Theary is 42 years old. She has grade 3 education. Her husband has year nine education. They have three children. Their two daughters are aged 18 and 21, and have grade 5 and 4 education, respectively. They also have a 12 year-old son who is in grade 2. Education is now free for her son.

The rice that they grow can feed them for eight months of the year. In the last two years the rice productivity has decreased because of the drought and they have not been able to repay their debts. The amount of fertilizer they use has also gone up because the soil quality is worse due to lack of water. They don't use a water pump, they just rely on the rain and they don't know how to access any extra water.

They owned 1 hectare of land but they mortgaged half of it five years ago to a rich villager for 2 chi of gold (approximately \$65) to pay for food and other living expenses. Theary says it was her decision to mortgage the land and borrow money, which she did in her name. Her husband is shy and lets her make these decisions, because if a man asks for money it makes him lose face. Theary hopes she will be able to pay back the loan and reclaim her land in 1-3 years from now.

Three years ago she also borrowed \$55 from ACLEDA, at 4% interest per month for rice and other food and living expenses. She told us that the policy of ACLEDA is that the borrower has to pay back the money within a year and then they can borrow again. Theary borrows as part of a community group of 12 families who are her neighbours. She says that if one person doesn't pay back the money one of the others in the group will pay it back instead, but some of the indebted family's assets will be taken (before her family were able to borrow the money from ACLEDA they had to pass an assets test).

To survive, Theory's family also need to supplement their livelihoods through wage labour.

After the harvest season Hong's husband sells labour in Kein Svay, transporting soil for landfill. He works in Kein Svay for two weeks at a time, comes back for three days, and then goes to Kein Svay again. He has been doing this for about 6 months of the year for the past three years. Because her husband spends a lot of time away from home Theory gets her uncle to sleep in the house next door for safety.

Theory also has a small business. She buys food from the market and sells it to schoolchildren. After she finishes working on her land she also sells her labour in the village. She does harvesting and transplanting on other people rice fields.

Her two daughters went to Phnom Penh to work in a garment factory. However they only worked there for two weeks, and for the last month they have had no work. They have not been able to send any money home and now they have no money themselves, so Theory and her husband sent them money through a relative in Phnom Penh.

Life is more difficult for Theory's family now because of the drought. It is more expensive to buy food and the family has to spend more time working to make more money. They work harder and it is harder to find wage work now because everyone needs extra money.

They never go hungry for rice but they don't have enough other food to eat such as meat and fish and vegetables. If something in the house breaks they have no money to fix it and they have to borrow money from relatives.

If someone in the family gets sick they buy



medicine from the nurse in the village. If they don't have enough money to buy medicine they can get it on credit. They currently owe the nurse \$10. Theory is currently sick. She is weak and she has a headache and she suffers from chronic stress and fatigue because she is worried about her family.

Theory says that the village chiefs are poor too and they need time to find money for themselves so they cannot help the poor families.

Case study 5: Women head of household, a hard life

Rasmeay is a widow. Her husband died in 1987. She has 4 daughters (33 year old twins, a 34 year old, and a 16 year old) and a son who died. All her daughters have grade 4 education. Her twin daughters are married and live in Kompong Som where they work with their husbands in the rice fields. Her 34-year-old daughter is widowed or deserted (her husband went to Thailand with the army 5 years ago and she has not heard from him since), and has a 4-year-old son as she was pregnant when he left. Her 16-year-old daughter goes to school.



Rasmeay shares the housework equally with her 34-year-old daughter. Her daughter says she cannot describe how difficult her life is. She misses her husband very much. If her husband was here he could help support their livelihood, sell labour, and she could stay at home to take care of her child, but as it is she doesn't have time to take care of him.

Rasmei had 2 ha of land, which she mortgaged part of for 2 chi of gold in 1986. She used the money for her husband who was sick, and she has not yet paid the money back. She also has some land that the government provided.

This year she produced less rice because of drought. The quality of the soil is a problem when it is dry, and fertilizers make the soil even harder.

They cannot produce enough rice to feed themselves and have lacked food for two months of the year for the past two to three years because of the drought. Her daughters sell labour to buy the extra rice they need. She says it is very difficult to find money. They live one day at a time. Her sister and brother help as she can borrow food from them.

She borrowed \$13 from ACLEDA 2 years ago, at 4% interest, to pay back her neighbours who she had borrowed money from for her husband's funeral. She has already paid back the money after 1 year and then borrowed it again. The money she paid back to ACLEDA she got from the labour her daughters sell, and from selling animals (pigs, ducks, and chickens).

Case study 6: A woman's responsibility for her family.

Chan Ngong is 50 years old and lives with her 54-year-old husband. She was born in this village, while her husband came from another village. They have 6 children, 3 boys (6, 20, and 23 years old) and 3 girls (21, 22, and 24 years old). Three of their children are married; the other three children live in the house with their parents. The older children have been educated up to grade 3 to 5. The 6-year-old girl is in grade 2. Her parents want her to have a longer education than the others but don't know if they can afford to keep her in school. Even though her education is free, they will need her to help them work so they can provide food for the rest of

the family. Chan Ngong's 20-year-old son is still studying in grade 4 and also looks after their 4 cows and carries water, and her 21-year-old daughter helps her mother make and sell noodles and cook and wash for the family.

Chan Ngong's two married children all worked for two years (her daughters in Garment factories and her son building houses) to save up money for their weddings. Now one of her married daughters has a market stall selling food, the other owns and works in a bread shop. Her son is a fisherman. Each of the three children send money home every 1-2 months which the family uses to buy rice, food, and for other living expenses.



They also had four other children who became sick and died. This affected them both very deeply. She feels that it contributed to her husband's sickness and memory loss. They are both sad much of the time and cannot stop thinking about their children, and now they feel that they can no longer think properly.

Her husband also thinks and worries a lot about their family, which is what he thinks made him sick with TB. He worries that their children don't have enough food and he feels helpless to make things better. He also drinks a lot to stop thinking about his family and the problems

they have. He is still sick with TB and has to buy medicine from the village nurse. Chan Ngong gives him money to buy medicine, which she makes from selling noodles.

Rice production is difficult because of the last two years of drought and because they have no animals and no transport. The rice they produce is only enough for the family to survive for 2 months of the year and for the rest of the year they have to buy rice.

They mortgaged their land to buy food and will pay back the money with the remittance their children send them. Chan Ngong also owes money to ACLEDA, which she borrowed to buy fertiliser and food. However, they ended up using all the money to buy food instead of fertiliser so they bought 1 sack of fertiliser on credit from the middleperson (who sells rice and fertiliser and gives credit) at double the normal price. They also borrowed money from this middleperson, which they pay back with interest, and they will have to sell a pig to pay for this. They have also borrowed around \$100 from family members, neighbours, and other villagers, which they mainly borrowed to pay for medical expenses.

Case study 7: Widow in dire poverty

Phally is a 37-year-old widow. Her mother arranged her marriage to her husband who died four months ago. He went to work in a garment factory in Phnom Penh last year. He lived nearby the factory and died one night in his sleep in the bed he shared with two other people, but no one knows how he died. She heard about his death from another relative who worked in the factory. She misses her husband very much. When he was alive he used to support her and take care of everything.

She has no mother or father but does have a mother-in-law. She has two sons, aged 16 and 13, and two daughters, aged 7 and 5. Her 16 years old son works in Phnom Penh building houses.

In one week he can send home about \$5. He has been in Phnom Penh nearly one year and has not yet been home but sends money home through a relative in the village who works in a garment factory in Phnom Penh. Apart from going to school her other children also help their grandmother look after her buffalo. Phally will keep the children in school until they are old enough to sell labour (about 16 years old).

Phally has a small business. She buys fruit and vegetables from the market and sells them in the village. She has been doing this for the last four months since her husband died. She makes between 400–800 riels (10c to 20c) per day.

When her husband was working in the garment factory before he died he earned \$35 a month and sent home \$10 a month. Before this her husband worked building houses in Phnom Penh.



She used to have land from her husband's mother and from her sister, but seven years ago when she was very sick in hospital her husband mortgaged the land and they were never able to pay any money back. She had TB for five years. The first night she was sick the village nurse came to stay with her and looked after her. For one night this cost \$15 including medicine. The next day she went to the hospital. She stayed in Kandal district hospital for two months and then took medicine for one year. She had to pay the hospital \$12 to stay there and she had to spend approximately \$15 on living expenses whilst she was in hospital.

She also owes money to her relatives, which she borrowed so her husband could migrate to

find work. It cost him \$50 to get the job in the garment factory and he also had to pay the initial living expenses. After her husband died she borrowed rice from her brother-in-law and \$8 worth of rice from the rice seller (middle man) in the village. Because he felt sorry for her he did not charge her any interest.

Her family is very poor. They have nothing except the house (which is falling apart in some places). In the house she does not even have a tank to hold water but has to use a small bucket and frequently collect water from the creek.

Phally says it is very difficult to find money now. Ever since her husband died she and her family have not had enough food. She feels desperate.

Case study 8: A husband's story...of women's migration

Hour, is a 58-year-old man and his wife, Chenda, is 55. His wife and their 16-year-old daughter went to Phnom Penh ten days ago to work as dishwashers in a restaurant. They are being paid \$10 each a month. They send home about half of this amount.

This is the first time Chenda and her daughter have gone to work in Phnom Penh. Hour expects them to keep working in Phnom Penh until Khmer new year when they will return to the village. Hour wanted to send his youngest daughter to work in a factory in Phnom Penh instead but she is only 16 and looks too small and he didn't have enough money to buy her the necessary papers. The couple's other daughter, Aneeda, who is 23, also went to Phnom Penh to work as a construction worker ten days ago. Their 18-year-old son also worked as a construction worker earning \$1 a day but he has now returned to the village.

Hour and his wife have land and they can grow enough rice to feed their family for six months of the year. If the family needs to borrow rice they have to pay it back at 100% interest. If they borrow money from the village moneylender they have to pay it back at 30% interest. If this year's harvest is poor because of drought (like last year) Hour will have to mortgage their land to his neighbour in the village.

The family owes the NGO GRET \$75 at 4% interest per month. The interest and capital is accrued per year so GRET will collect this on March 23 2002, exactly one year since the money was borrowed.

Food shortages last year made Hour seek this credit from GRET. He also spent some of the money on buying pigs and buying fertiliser for the rice crops. The cost of fertiliser is \$11 per sack cash and \$16 if bought on credit. He discussed obtaining credit with his wife but he made the final decision.



Hour grows only wet rice, not dry rice because there is no water to irrigate dry rice land. This year if he can pay back the money to GRET he wants to borrow \$60 more to dig a well. If he can make this well he may be able to grow dry season rice but will also need electricity to run the pump, and if he hires a generator he will need to pay \$1 for one hour of pumping.

Hour does not know if this plan will allow him to make enough money to pay back the loan or to make a good income. He said that if he can grow dry season rice at least he can grow enough to feed his family all year, which he cannot do at present. Until three years ago he always had enough rice to feed his family but drought and floods have meant his crops have been poor, his debts have increased and food shortages have intensified.

He heard about GRET when staff approached the village talking about credit. Anyone who wants to borrow will have their land and amount of cattle assessed. If the family is not able to pay back the loan within the approved time GRET will take away their land or livestock. There is no possibility of a time extension.

If a family needs to buy food or medicine and does not have enough money the alternative to GRET is the moneylender who charges 30% interest. Hour sometimes borrows small amounts from the moneylender if he is desperate but he does not like to do this. He borrowed from the moneylender to buy rice last year and to attend village ceremonies. He has to repay the debt within five months or else give the moneylender a piece of his land. Luckily he has not yet had to give the moneylender any of his land as he has managed to pay back the loans.

Now he must settle with GRET and he must pay in full or else they will confiscate or sell his land. If he does not have enough money by then he will sell a piece of land or borrow money from the moneylender to pay back GRET.

He is worried about his wife and daughter alone in Phnom Penh. If they get sick or have an accident he will not know or be able to help them. He thinks of them a lot, especially during meal times.

Case study 9: When a husband disappears...

Mom is 25. She is married but her husband left last night, for no apparent reason, and took his clothes and all the photos from the house. She has a three and a half month old baby girl. She also had a four-year-old daughter who died two years ago. Her daughter was having seizures and she and her husband took her by moto to the public hospital. When they got to the clinic the little girl had a seizure and died before she saw the doctor.

Mom has half a hectare of land including the land her house is on. She is only able to grow enough rice to last her for 3½ months of the year. She does not know how she will feed herself and her child after this time. For the past two months her husband has refused to give her any money. She does not know why this is so and why her husband has left.

Mom borrowed \$13 from her GRET group. She joined this group last March and must pay back the debt by March 23. She has also borrowed \$50 US from her aunt with no interest and \$16 from the moneylender that she must pay back by October at a very high interest rate. She borrowed this money to pay for the expenses associated with giving birth to her daughter and for food for her family and for relatives when they came to visit.

If her husband does not come back she will live with her mother and father, who are rice farmers. She will not borrow any more money because she is afraid she will not be able to pay it back.



Mom worked for one month in Kompong Som as a construction worker before her older daughter died but she came back because she missed her child very much and she needed to work on the farm because the rain was coming. After her daughter died in

2001 Mom worked in construction for one more month but then the company ran out of work for her to do. She says there is no more work in Kompong Som, in fact someone came back to the village yesterday because there was no work there. Men can earn \$1.8 a day on a building site because they do the 'heavy' work, carrying cement or bricks up to the first floor, but women earn only \$1.2 a day as they only filter sand.

Mom relied on her husband for the family's only source of income and does not know how she will manage if he does not return and continue to support her and their child. Her biggest worries are the debt to GRET and her deteriorating living conditions because of lack of food.

Case study 10: Sickness and debts

Sray Mao has been a widow for many years. She finds it difficult being a widow because she feels alienated. Before her family owned 2-3 hectares of land, but they had to sell it along with everything else they owned when her husband became sick and died, as his medical treatment had to be paid for.

She has five children: a 23 year old son, a 19 year old son, a 16 year old son who is a monk, a 13 year old daughter who is deaf, and a 10 year old daughter. The youngest girl goes to school and her 16-year-old son is in grade 5. She has to pay for books, pens and school clothes, but this year the school registration was waived. They also receive free health services and medicines from a health centre that is only 1 year old.

Sray Mao worked as a construction worker in Phnom Penh from '93-98. Her son now works as a construction worker in Thailand and



Phnom Penh. Her other son works in Thailand on a fishing boat. It is difficult for him as he is always being chased away because he is an illegal immigrant, but he always escapes.

This year Sray Mao started sugar palm production. One tree makes about 5kg of sugar. From harvest to rainfall (i.e. the dry season) is 5-7 months, and this is the time during which palm sugar can be collected. She sells the sugar to a middle person.

Sray Mao is in debt with an NGO and a private moneylender (interest rates of 4% from the development agency and 15% from the private creditor, monthly). She got into debt 4-5 years ago because she did not have enough money for food. Now she just tries to pay for her debts and feed her family. Some bribes also have to be paid.

Sray Mao is worried about the future of her children. Sometimes they have nothing to eat all day. Husks from the rice are donated to her and her family, and Hun Sen also gives some rice and emergency parcels to her village. Sometimes her young daughter and son go fishing 4-5km away on other people's land, but they get chased away. Sray Mao wants to have land so that her children can help her grow rice.

Beggars

After following the migration patterns of garment workers, WAC's research turned to the situation of people's livelihoods in rural areas. We needed to understand what the push and pull factors are that are causing massive movements of people from rural to urban centres. As can be seen in the previous case studies, the initial stage of this research has revealed that many people are forced to leave their villages and migrate to Phnom Penh in order to sustain themselves and their families back in the village.

The final destination varies according to the family's wealth. Access to work in garment factories needs a sizeable monetary investment, which for many families is too great. In these cases women must find other ways to make an income: work in the rubber plantations in the provinces, construction work in Phnom Penh, sex work, or begging in Phnom Penh.

WAC has begun preliminary research among newly arrived beggars in Phnom Penh. Some came from the villages where WAC agricultural research was conducted. In the interviews with the beggars the same reasons for migrating came up again and again, with almost each beggar interviewed. Debts dominate the lives of Cambodian people. People are deeply in debt, with moneylenders as well as with NGOs. After years of micro finance projects, the outcome is increased poverty and hardship - a sad reflection on the development industry. NGO credit schemes are a major contributing factor to debt and landlessness that, rather than providing the rural poor with tools to secure their subsistence, are "development interventions" with extremely adverse effects on people's lives.

The following case studies highlight the failure of the promise of development and bear witness to the hardships of those who shoulder the burden of this unsustainable under-development, as they tell their own stories. These stories of women forced to beg to support their livelihood demonstrate gender inequity at work. These women are widows or deserted wives rendered unproductive and worthless by society. These women are victims of domestic

violence and exploitation by their husbands, whose escape from their own poverty and sense of alienation is drunkenness and violence. Hear the women speak who bear the brunt of the hardships:

I feel very embarrassed when I raise my hand up to people and say “Could you give me 100 riels to buy food to eat?”

Since we married until now I am the one who takes responsibility in our family because my husband does nothing besides get drunk and beat me and the children up.

I had no money to buy food and rice for my sons to eat ... so I decided to mortgage my land to the Cambodian Health Committee (CHC) ... But I could not afford to pay the interest so I borrowed from a moneylender.

When my daughter got sick I decided to mortgage my land to get the money to buy medicine and pay for her treatment.

When he drank he always beat me up and sometimes I was unconscious or bruised all over my body. Sometimes he would crack my head open, even when I was 3 months pregnant.

I feel sorry for my children because they cannot go to school.

If no one stops me from doing this I will beg until I die because if I don't beg who will feed me?

Case Study 1: Debts

I am 43 years old. I live in a village in Svay Rieng province. I have 2 sons; one is 17 and the other one is 15 years old. I am a widow.

I came to beg in Phnom Penh with three other villagers and my eldest son earlier this month (March 2002). I came because of the hardships caused by drought and flooding for the past 3 years.

Because of these natural disasters our living standards became poor and sometimes I had no money to buy food and rice for my sons to eat. Day by day we were living in bad conditions so I decided to mortgage my land (20A) to the Cambodian Health Committee (CHC) for 500,000 riels and I have to pay 20,000 riels every month in interest (i.e. 4% interest). But I could not afford to pay this interest every month so I borrowed 3 chi of gold from a moneylender. To the moneylender I pay back 10,000 riels a month, of which 2000 riels in interest.



My debt became so high and I could not earn enough money to release me from it, so I decided to sell my land, my cows and my buffaloes but the money that I made from those sales was still not enough. I still owe CHC 200,000 riels. So I decided to come to Phnom Penh and beg and I borrowed 15,000 riels from the villagers to pay for transportation (which I will pay back when I go back home, with 3000 riels interest).

Every night, we sleep near the gate of Kantha Bopha Hospital, which is near the Royal Palace. In a day, my son and I together can earn only 2000-3000 riels and we use 1000 riels for buying food and what is leftover we keep and save to pay for the debt.

I would like to appeal to NGOs and the government to help us because we are in trouble and we are also unable to earn money to send our children to school.

Case Study 2: Being alone

I am 70 years old. I live in Angkor Sar commune, Mesang district, Prey Veng province. I live alone because my husband and my children died in the Pol Pot regime.

Before the Pol Pot regime I had a lot of land because I had many children but when my children died my land was taken away. Now I have only 5A of rice land but I am unable to plant rice on this land because I am too old and have no money to buy seeds or fertilizer. So I gave my land to other villagers to plant on and they share the produce with me when they harvest it. However the rice produce that I get from them is not enough because it is only a little and I need to eat a lot.

In my village when someone distributes something to the villagers, the commune and village chiefs always give it to the rich and those living in good conditions in the village, never to the poor people – they always miss out. I get angry with them.

Because I could not get enough rice to eat and was angry with the chiefs in my village I borrowed 50,000 riels without interest from the villagers to travel to beg in Phnom Penh. I travelled with other villagers because I was scared to go alone as I didn't know the location well and also I didn't know anyone there. I just came here around 5 days ago and so far I have



been begging in Phsar Toul, Tum Poug, Phsar Boeung Keng Kang, and Phsar Chbar Ampeou. At night I sleep somewhere near the Royal Palace.

Everyday, I can earn from 2000-3000 riels but I eat a lot and am also sick so the money that I earn I use for buying food and medicine and whatever is leftover I keep and save, but it is not much.

If no one stops me from doing this I will beg until I die because if I don't beg who will feed me?

Case Study 3: Widowhood and dependents

I am 65 years old. I am a widow. I live in Kampong Trabek commune, Kampong Trabek district, Prey Veng province. I have two sons and a daughter who died recently. My two sons live in Siem Reap province and Phnom Penh with their families.

My daughter's husband died last year and she got sick and came to live with me and brought her three children. When she got sick I decided to mortgage my 1 ha of land for 1.5 chi of gold to get the money to buy medicine and pay for her treatment. She didn't get better though and passed away last month and left three grandchildren for me to look after. They are studying at primary school.

Before, when I had energy, I planted morning glory and sold it in the village and I also raised pigs and chickens. Now that I'm old I can no longer dig and plant vegetables. I have no land to

plant rice on and I have no money to buy food or rice to feed my grandchildren or care for their other basic needs.

I came to beg in Phnom Penh 15 days ago. I left my grandchildren at home with nobody taking care of them.

Every night, I sleep near Phsar Thmey (Central Market) with other beggars. Sometime gangsters pretend to sleep with me and touch my pocket because they

want to get my money. One night when I fell asleep somebody took my money and I lost 5,000 R.



I will go back to my homeland during Khmer New Year and I don't know yet whether I will go again to beg in Phnom Penh or not.

I think that next year I will be able to repay my debt and take my land back. I will ask for money from my son to repay the money I got from mortgaging my land so that I can farm my land during the rainy season.

Case Study 4: Debts and widowhood

I am 47 years old; I live in a village in Prey Veng province. I am a widow; my husband died last year because he had high blood pressure. I have 5 children: 2 daughters and 3 sons.

When my husband was alive, my children and I never migrated because my husband always went to the fields to forage for food (such as getting fish from the lake near the field and grubs and snails from the rice fields), and we helped each other with transplanting. But after he died our living standards dropped because I had to feed my young children alone and I had no land to use because I mortgaged my 25A of land to a moneylender for 7chi of gold to cure my husband's sickness.

Now I have no money to release my land from the moneylender. Fortunately, the moneylender didn't charge interest but they won't allow me to use my mortgaged land until I can pay back the 7chi of gold.

I came to Phnom Penh around 7 months ago with my youngest daughter who is 5 years old. My other children live in the village and the oldest ones look after the younger ones. While I am away if they have nothing to eat sometimes they ask for food from our relatives or from the other villagers.



My daughter and I can earn only 2500-3000 riels a day and we always go home whenever we earn 30,000 riels (about once every month) because if I do not go back home my other children will have nothing to eat. When I go back home I bring rice for them.

To come to Phnom Penh I borrowed 10,000 riels from a villager who charges 30% interest per month. I do not want to beg for long because it is very difficult for me and also I feel very embarrassed when I raise my hand up to people and say “Could you give me 100 riels to buy food to eat?”

During the night we stay under the Japanese bridge with other beggars who I know from begging at Central Market.

In the rainy season I will go back home to do harvesting and transplanting for the villagers and they will give me 2000 riels a day with 3 meals.

Case Study 5: Debts

I am 34 years old. My husband was a soldier and he died from malaria. I have a daughter who is 5 years old. I live in a village in Prey Veng province.

I have 30A of rice land but I have not been able to do transplanting on this land for the past 2 years because of drought. There is nothing else I can do besides farming, and when my rice land cannot produce a crop I have nothing to eat. Last year my living conditions were very bad so I decided to borrow money from a moneylender in my village (around 40,000-50,000 riels) to buy rice and food and every month I have to pay the moneylender 8000-10,000 riels in interest (about 20% interest) and now I am still in debt.

Because of this debt, I decided to beg in Phnom Penh with my daughter but I do not beg myself. I ask my daughter to beg because I feel very embarrassed and worried that people will not give me any money because I am young and not disabled.

When my daughter goes to beg I always wait for her at a place we both know. In a day she can earn around 1000-2000 riels and we use 1000 riels to buy food to eat together and at night we stay in front of the hotel near Norodom School. When we stay there I am afraid that someone might rape me but I have no choice.



I have been in Phnom Penh around two weeks. Before I came, I borrowed 5000 riels without interest from the villagers for transportation and we will stay and beg until after Khmer New Year (when we can earn a lot of money) and then we will return home with our savings to pay off some of our debt.

Case Study 6: Loss of land, a husband's violence.

I am 34 years old and my husband is 30 years old. We have been married over 10 years and we have 2 children. Our son is 5 years old and our daughter is 6 months old. Since we married until now I am the one who takes the responsibility in our family because my husband does nothing besides get drunk and beat me and our children up. We live in Krang Svay commune, Preah Sdach district, Prey Veng province.

In the last 5 years my husband sold our 1ha of farmland for 3chi of gold to another villager to buy a motor to run a business as a moto dup [motor taxi driver] in Phnom Penh. Afterwards he lived in Phnom Penh alone for 2 years. I never went looking for him because I didn't know where he lived, or what he was doing in Phnom Penh. After two years he came back home without his moto, and with no money. During the two years that he lived in Phnom Penh he never came to visit me or sent any money home.



I came to beg here (in Phnom Penh) 4 days ago. I came to earn money to pay back to the moneylender because in the last 5 months I borrowed 400,000-500,000R to buy food, rice and to pay for our other basic needs, as my husband does nothing in the village. Every time my husband gets drunk he asked me for money and if I have no money to give to him he always beats me and our children. When I went to negotiate to borrow from the moneylender they asked me to mortgage my 60A of house land to them because they were afraid I would not be able to afford to pay them back. They told me "If you want the money you have to mortgage your land. If you don't I will lend you nothing." I agreed to their demand. And every month they charge me 100,000 riels, of which 5000 riels is interest.

Since I borrowed the money until now I have never paid them any interest because I earn nothing in the village and my husband is also unemployed. I decided to come to beg in Phnom Penh to earn money to pay for the interest and release my house land from them and also I do

not want my husband to beat me anymore. Every time I asked my husband to find a job he would always beat me and say no. I have divorced my husband 5 times already but every time he comes back and cajoles me to take him back and I never refuse because I don't want my children to lose their future and I also don't want others saying my children have no father.

This is the first time I have come to beg, and I have been here around 4 days with my children and in a day I can earn 500 riels, which I use to buy food and rice so I save nothing. At night-time I stay with other beggars under the banyan tree, which is in front of Botum pagoda.

If I don't try my best to earn money to repay them back, they will get my land.

In harvest season I will go back home to work as a labourer harvesting rice harvest for other villagers for which they will pay me 2000 riels a day with 3 meals.

Case Study 7: Family debt

I am 45 years old and my husband is 48 years old. We have 4 children (2 sons and 2 daughters), and we live in Theay commune, Bar Phnom district, Prey Veng province. One of my daughters is married already and my other three children are single.

I had 1ha of rice land and 150m of village land (10x15m), which my house is on, but when I got sick I sold my rice land to get money to cure myself. After my daughter got married I had nothing to give to her to run a small business so I mortgaged my village land to the moneylender for \$100 to buy a motor for my son in-law to run a moto dup (motor taxi) business in the village and they charged me 20% interest. But now my son in-law can't afford to release us from this debt because sometimes in a day he can't earn any money from his

business and the debt has increased to \$270. His wife wants to hang herself because of this debt.

Because of this, my husband, my little children and I decided to come to Phnom Penh to beg but my daughter and her husband stayed in the village. In the city, during the daytime we always come to beg along the river and my husband and I together can earn around 2000-3000 riels on a normal day but during national festivals or holy days we can make a lot of money.

We just came to beg about a month ago and during the night we asked permission from the police to stay at Phreah Kam Long (where people go to make a wish) in front of Utna Lorm pagoda.

Case Study 8: Debts and family illness

I am 82 years old. I am a widow and I have 5 children (2 sons and 3 daughters). Four of my children live in different houses in the same village. They are all married but they are very poor. We live in Reap commune, Pea Rang district, Prey Veng province.

I am so old but I still help to feed my 5 grandchildren and one of my daughters, who is 33 years old, because she is infected with a disease she caught from her husband who was a policeman. Her husband died for 4-5 years ago from this disease. Now my daughter's body is very thin and she looks seriously ill.



I have 5A of farmland but unfortunately for the last 3 years I have not been able to plant rice on this land because of draught and flood. I was not able to plant anything to feed my daughter and my grandchildren so I borrowed 50,000 riels from a villager to buy some food, rice and some medicine for my daughter and they charged me 30% interest per month. I borrowed the money 1 year ago but I am still in debt because I am unable to repay them. If I sold my farmland I would be out of debt but I want to keep this land for my grandchildren.

I decided to beg in Phnom Penh to earn money to repay to the villager and also save money to buy good medicine to cure my daughter. I've only been here for around 10 days with 2 other villagers and at night we stay together near the gate of the Cambodiana hotel.

Sometimes I can earn just enough to buy food to eat but at other times I can earn around 1000-1500 riels per day, so I can save 1000 riels a day. On a holy day I can earn around 5000 – 6000 riels.

I am worried about my daughter and my grandchildren in the village so every time someone goes to the village I send 500 or 1000 riels to my daughter so she can buy food to eat.

When I save a lot of money I will hire villagers to plant on my farmland, and if I can't earn money anymore from begging I will go back home to take care my daughter and my grandchildren.

Case Study 9: Landlessness and dependents

I am 70 years old. I am a widow and I have 2 sons who are 45 and 40 years old. They are both married and renting houses in Phnom Penh (for \$10 per month). They both work as moto dups (motor taxi drivers), and one of my daughter-in-laws is a fried banana seller. When my sons

went to Phnom Penh they left their children in the village for me to look after. I live in Kos Sotin commune, Kos Sotin district, Kompong Cham province.

I have no farmland or house land but my relative allowed me to build a cottage to live with my 4 grandchildren on their land. When it is raining or windy I always ask my grandchildren to go to stay under my neighbour's house because I am afraid my house will fall down. Sometimes my grandchildren and I ask for the left over rice from a meal from the other villagers because we have no money to buy rice and other food.

I borrowed 100,000 riels without interest from the villagers to buy food and to pay for sending my grandchildren to school because their parents are very poor. Both of my sons are not kind to me even though I feed and take care their children and both of their wives look down on me because I am poor and have no house or land. I never buy a big fish to cook; I just buy a small one. When the villagers see this they blame me and say, "You will have no energy and also be sick if you only eat small fish".



I decided to beg in Phnom Penh and left my eldest grandchild (who is 18 years old) to look after his brothers and sisters at home. I pity them because I left them alone with nothing for them to eat. Before I left my relatives collected 5000 riels to give to me to travel to the city.

I just arrived here in Phnom Penh 20 days ago and in a day I can earn only around 300-500 riels because I do not dare to beg and I also feel very embarrassed in front of other people. During the night I stay at my relative's house, which is near the National Assembly. They are also poor.

I want to talk to Hun Sen to ask him to help me to build a new house, but I think it is very difficult to get to talk to him.

I am not sure when will I go back home because I have not yet been able to save any money.

Case Study 10: When a migrant worker must turn to begging

I am 37 years old and my husband is 34 years old. We married in 1980 but now we are divorced because he remarried 2 years ago. However he often comes to sleep and have sex with me and as a result I have a son who is now 2 months old. Now I have to feed 3 children (2 daughters and a son). My oldest daughter is 13 and my middle child is 3 years old. I have no parents because they died in the Pol Pot regime.

I came from Romeang Thkaol commune, Svay Teab district, Svay Rieng province. Now I do not have house land but I have 1ha of farmland that I left with my brother to keep for my children when I pass away. My brother plants rice on this land every year but he never shares any rice produce with me.

I have rented a house to live in the Building area since 1992 and every month they charge me 20,000R but now since the Building area was destroyed by fire I have asked permission from the Sangkat chief to build a small house to live in with my children.

Before my husband and I were divorced my husband worked as a construction worker and in a day he could earn 5000R, and my oldest daughter worked as lotus fruit and morning glory seller. In the morning we bought the morning glory to sell at the market and in the afternoon we sold the lotus fruits along the river, and we could make a profit of around 3000 riels a day. At night I went to the park in front of Wat Botum to sell oranges and if someone asked me to go out to have sex with them I always went. I worked like this for 3 years but now I have stopped doing this because I am too old and I have lost my beauty too. I am very lucky because I didn't catch HIV or any other STD from the clients who I went to have sex with. If I didn't sell sex I would not have been able to afford to feed my children, as my husband only gave me 2000-3000 riels of what he earned and with the leftovers he bought wine to drink so he was drunk every day. When he drank he always beat me up and sometimes I was unconscious or bruised all over my body. Sometimes he would crack my head open, even when I was 3 months pregnant. Sometimes the neighbours came to stop him.

My daughter and I started to beg before the water festival in 2001. The reason that we did this was because we had no capital to buy lotus fruits to sell. Every evening my daughters and I leave home to go to beg in front of the Royal Palace, because during that time many people come to sit and relax there. In a day I can earn around 600 riels but my daughter can earn much more than me - around 1000-2000 riels per day because she carries my little son and when people see her they pity her.



I feel sorry for my children because they cannot go to school.

Garment Workers

WAC commenced its engagement with garment workers in 2001, and continues to strengthen their relationship with this group. To date there are 240 000 people employed in the Garment factories in Phnom Penh, most of them migrant women. Yet despite these numbers minimal information is known about the lives of garment workers. This has sparked WAC to commence a gender social study with these workers.

The study has been conducted through field interviews, as well as focus group discussions and workshops held at the WAC office. Workers utilised these forums to speak out about their problems, and unite to find solutions. Listen to the hopes and dreams of the workers:

What appears below are first hand accounts of the realities faced by these young women. They reflect the outcomes of a system that has reduced human beings of the South to being the new exploitable raw resources of global capitalism, which puts profit before people, profit before life.

In our homelands we had freedom but we didn't have money. In Phnom Penh we have work to do and we can earn money to support our family, but we work long hours and our freedom is limited".

When I get married or I am able to start a new job I will stop working in the factory. I won't let my children work in garment factories because it is really hard work and I want them to be government officers.

I do not want to work in the factory anymore because we have suffered many problems and we work under pressure. I want to have another job with more freedom. I want to go back home and do farming work in the countryside.

In the future I don't want my children to work in the factory because I have suffered a lot of bad experiences and don't want my children to suffer the same in life.

Life as Garment Workers: our work

Forced to work overtime and public holidays

Garment workers work for the whole month but get little money. Workers must complete their scheduled work and if they do not finish this in time they are forced to work overtime until they finish. It does not matter how the work is completed (e.g. if a worker finishes the work by herself or if her group works together to get it done), only that the work is completed. The hours taken to finish scheduled work are not calculated in a dollar value as the factory owners feel that it is a workers duty to complete their assigned tasks. If workers fail to complete their assigned work three times they are dismissed.

As well as having to work overtime to complete their scheduled work, workers and are forced to work regular overtime (often until 10pm) and for this they get \$60 a month. If they refuse to work overtime factory owners force them to put their thumbprint on a letter that is written in Chinese, so the workers cannot understand it. If they have their thumbprint taken three times it will lead to their dismissal.

Unfair and illegal leave conditions

If workers take a day off \$7 (for each day) will be cut from their salary but for one day without overtime they earn only \$1.50. On public holidays, such as International Women's Day, Independence Day and the Water Festival, some workers are not permitted to take the day off.

The workers were also treated unfairly and illegally during the commune elections. The factory owners said that they would, as required by law, give the workers three days to go and vote in the elections, including the Sunday, but they still cut workers' bonuses (for example in some factories their work bonuses were cut from \$10 to \$7). After voting in their provinces, if workers were not able to make it back to Phnom Penh by Monday they were dismissed. Owners also



checked workers' forefingers to confirm that they had indeed gone to vote, and if their forefingers were not black then the owners cut their salary (by \$10 to \$15) or the worker was thumb printed. Any worker who lost their commune election card was not allowed to go to their province and still worked on voting day, which went against the order of the Prime Minister. They were also paid the normal flat rate, not double time as stated in the labour laws of Cambodia.

Factory owners often do not grant leave as required by the labour law or on compassionate grounds. One worker had family problems as her mother had died and she asked for four days off to attend her mothers' funeral. The owner agreed and even signed a paper stating such. But when she came back the owner claimed that they had only given permission for tree days leave and they cut her bonus.

Workers cannot speak out about their working conditions

When staff from a worker's union or from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour go to monitor working conditions factory owners threaten workers not to talk truthfully. If workers speak out about working conditions the minute the staff leave the worker will be fired. Even if

workers do want to speak out against their working conditions they often can't because the factory manager and owner walk along with the representative from the workers' union or the Ministry.

Unfair Dismissal

Labour laws in the factories are often not complied with. Dismissals happen almost on a daily basis. Factory owners use all kinds of strategies and often make false claims of worker misconduct. Accusations of eating or chatting at work, or of not doing all the work ordered, are all excuses used to dismiss workers. If workers take three consecutive days off without prior permission they will also be sacked.

Factory owners also force the resignation of workers that the factory wishes to dismiss.

According to Cambodian labour laws, after finishing a three-month probationary period workers are to become permanent staff members, but at the "Red Roof" factory (so called by it's workers because it has a red roof) this is not the case. When Ministry staff came to monitor conditions at the factory they found that the factory owner had sacked probationary workers and had not given some money to workers that was owed to them for the time worked at the factory before.

Permanent workers are worried as owners often want to dismiss them because they have to be paid more money than probationary workers and are not as easy to sack.

Garment workers speak out about their living conditions:



The houses where we live are not hygienic, many people share the same rooms and toilets. When it is raining water comes into the house and everything is flooded. We spend 5 dollars each on a small room, which is shared by 3 or 4 people. Water and electricity sometimes cost us more than the normal rate. The house owner behaves like our boss, workers cannot go out and have to

follow his rules. We eat very cheap food made by vendors around the factory.

The neighbourhood around where we live is not safe; when we come back from the factory at night we are afraid. In Russey Keo gangsters rob us on the day we receive our salary. We are afraid of robbers and even of rape, but we don't ask the factory boys to walk home with us because we are afraid that people will gossip about us and say that we have a boyfriend.

Garment Workers: discrimination outside the factory

Neighbours, relatives, or other people in their village claim that garment workers are bad girls. Garment workers are considered bad because they live in town and may go out with men.

The people in the village look at how the garment workers dress and judge them to be bad girls. Some workers say that if they go back with new clothes people blame them and say they are a bad girl. However, if they go back home wearing the same old clothes, people blame them

and say they spend all their money with boys and do not have enough money to buy new clothes.

The boys working in the factories say that people in the village tell them to be careful with the girls in the factory, because they are all bad girls. However village people may change their attitude according to the girl's amount of money: if the workers come back with little money they criticize, but if they come back with a lot of money they criticize less. Either way, women factory workers are always much more criticized than men.

Garment workers may not be considered good women even for marriage - in some cases engagements have been broken because the girl was a garment worker. Some village boys who work in garment factories tell other boys in the village not to marry factory girls because they are not virgins.

Workers feel that people in the village do not understand how difficult their life is, how tired they are. Sometime even their families, who they are supporting, look down on them. However, many garment workers report that their families treat them better since they have been working. They say that before they were scolded or beaten, but now this no longer happens because their family miss them and appreciate the money they send home. In some cases in the beginning their families were not happy with them, but after they started to receive money from their daughters they began to appreciate their work. Families also think that daughters can save money better than boys, and prefer to send girls to the factories.

Some workers are angry with their families because they would like to continue to go to school.



Garment Workers: How life is.

Sormphy is 22 years old. She left her village in Prey Veng two years ago to work sewing buttons on shirts in a garment factory on the outskirts of Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh.

The legal minimum wage in the garment industry is \$45 a month for a 48-hour week, but that is frequently ignored. Compulsory overtime usually takes Sormphy's monthly wage to \$55-60. She worries that the overtime – and maybe her job – will vanish as the industry is hit by cutbacks in orders from the United States and Europe.

Home is little more than a wooden box 1.5m square that she shares with three other women. It is in a compound filled with similar boxes. The unpaved lanes between these box dwellings are both passageways and the place where the inhabitants cook over open fires; in the rainy season these passages run thick with mud. She pays \$6 a month for rent, which includes electricity for a light.

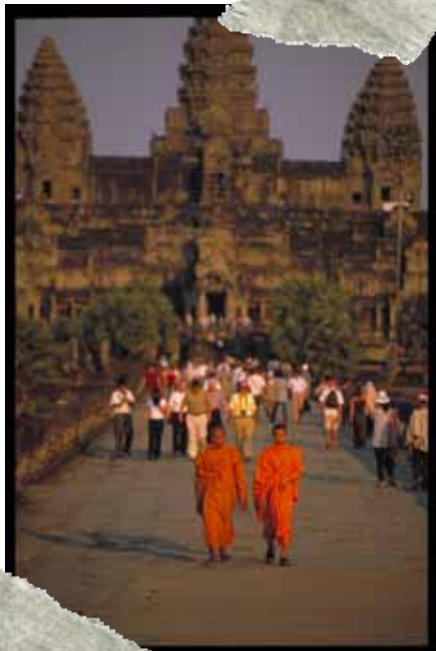
Like most of her co-workers, Sormphy regularly sends money home to her parents – in her case, \$25 a month. That leaves her around \$25 a month for food and other expenses, if overtime is not cut back and there are no other problems. Last November, she missed a day's work because of illness and lost the \$5 bonus given for perfect attendance.

In February this year, she wanted to travel back to her village to vote in Cambodia's first modern commune elections. The government issued a regulation requiring the garment factories to allow workers time off to travel and vote, without loss of wages. But she was afraid the order would not be enforced, so she didn't go.

Even though Sormphy's life as a garment worker is not easy, there are not a few Cambodians who envy her job. In a country where the average per capita income is around 75c a day, the

garment factories attract streams of young people, nearly all of them women, from all over the country. New workers often pay a fee of \$15-\$40 to a job broker or as a bribe to factory officials to get their job. Between twenty and twenty two percent of Cambodian women aged 18-25 work in the garment industry.

Some 85 percent of the Cambodian population still live in rural areas. For young women who want something more than the familiar progression from poor farmer's daughter to poor farmer and farmer's wife and then widow, there are few alternatives to the garment industry. Although it did not exist until the mid-1990s (the first factory opened in 1994), by the end of the decade Cambodia's garment industry was producing more than 90 per cent of the country's merchandise export income.



In the services sector, Cambodia also has a growing tourism industry, but it is still dwarfed by the garment industry. Many of the jobs in the tourism sector also require some knowledge of a foreign language or other skills possessed by few young women from the countryside, who are less educated than their brothers. At age 18, the school enrolment rate for girls is one-third of the rate it is for boys. Only 22 percent of adult Cambodian women are able to read a newspaper and write a simple letter.

Virtually all of Cambodia's garment production is exported, mostly to the United States and Europe. But there is little direct investment by Western companies. Garment factories in Cambodia are mostly Asian-owned subcontractors (chiefly from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China) who compete to supply the shirts or trousers to giant retailer merchandisers such as GAP and Nike. These retailers sell the garments that Sormphy and her co-workers make for a hundred times what they are paid for producing them.

Subcontracting is an essential part of a system ensuring the super-exploitation of workers in Cambodia, Indonesia, Vietnam, and many other countries. The big Western merchandisers can choose suppliers from many countries, and from among many subcontractors in most of those countries. The subcontractors have to compete against each other to meet the criteria that are most important to the contractor. Nearly always, the most important criterion is price.

This arrangement means that most of the profits of the industry are concentrated at the top of the chain. Subcontractors have very little room to manoeuvre. They cannot raise production prices (such as by increasing wages) without risking the loss of their sales. Profits can therefore be increased or protected only by cutting costs. The easiest, often the only, way to do that is to reduce labour costs.



There is further pressure on Cambodian workers' wages because many of the country's non-labour costs are higher than in other Southeast Asian countries. After three decades of warfare that only ceased completely in 1998, the few paved roads are full of potholes and often blocked in the wet season by submerged or broken bridges. Telephone communication is available in most of the country, if at all, only by mobile phone. Electricity supplies are improving in the

capital and major towns, but are still unreliable. The same is true of clean water. Meanwhile, underpaid public servants try to make a living by inventing regulations that businesspeople operating in Cambodia need to bribe their way out of.

Despite this, Cambodian garment workers have higher wages than their more skilled counterparts in Vietnam. This is largely due to a strange twist of international trade rules that is shortly about to disappear.

In the early 1970s, governments in the US and many other developed countries were under pressure from their own textile industries, which were losing markets to imports from the Third World. Their response, in 1974, was to impose a “temporary” arrangement known as the Multi-Fibre Agreement (MFA). This established limits on the amount of textiles each underdeveloped country could export to developed country markets; below that limit or quota, countries could export without being hit by prohibitive tariffs or outright bans.

The MFA arbitrarily and unfairly prevented developing countries from increasing their production in one of the few areas where they were capable of competing internationally. But there was a side effect of partly reducing some of the competition between garment-producing developing countries. For example, Indonesia might be able to export garments to the US more cheaply than Cambodia can, but its MFA limit prevents it from increasing its sales at Cambodia’s expense.

Without this side effect of the MFA protecting Cambodia from the competition of its neighbours, the Cambodian garment industry would not have begun. But the MFA is to end by 2005, and Cambodia applied for and ratified membership to the WTO in late 2004, which also has resulted in the abolition of such quotas. It is possible that when this happens most of the investment that has flowed into Cambodia since the mid-1990s will flow out again just as quickly.

In the brave new world of globalisation and the WTO, there are far fewer corners where small, poor producers can find a partial shelter from unequal competition. The US and the EU each spend billions of dollars a year to subsidize agricultural exports, but Cambodia doesn't have the means to subsidise garment exports, even if it had the power to thumb its nose at WTO rules, as the US does.

The normalization of trade relations between the US and Vietnam, and China's admission to the WTO, add to the competition that Cambodia is likely to face. Even before this competition hits, the industry is already feeling the impact of an international slowdown. In June 2001 the Minister of Finance said that only 188 garment factories were still operating. This compares to 218 that were in operation at the end of 2000.

Orders from the US and Europe were cut back in the second half of 2001, especially after September 11. By the new year, many factories were working irregularly, for only two or three weeks a month.



The garment industry employers' association recently declared that Cambodia has "too many holidays" for such a poor country. At the end of February, it also persuaded a Ministry of Labour advisory committee to support its plan to abolish the wages premium for night work in the industry, but the workers are resisting this proposal.

Cambodia's young female garment workers like Sormphy cannot be said to have benefited from the existing world trade arrangements, but the changes to come are likely to make their situation worse. Past inequities have left their country with no chance to compete in the current world trade order, even if the new rules were much fairer than they actually are.

Most of the workers say they don't know what they will do if their factories close. In rural Cambodia, there is often a social stigma attached to women who have lived outside of family control, making it difficult for them even on brief visits home.

Commonly factory owners are reported to have told their workers that they would all become sex workers if the factory closed. Sormphy says she's determined that won't happen to her. But she doesn't say how she would avoid it if or when her job disappears. She certainly cannot return to her village in Prey Veng, which she left because of food shortages and the high debts that her parents have incurred because of floods, droughts and the high costs of pesticides and fertilizers. If these debts are not paid off then more land will have to be sold. The debts are with private money lenders at 15% interest per month and with a LINGO at 4% interest a month. Neither the moneylender nor the NGO will renegotiate the repayment. In the last two years her father has had serious illnesses that have resulted in expensive medical bills, and more money being borrowed to cover these costs. Her parents have also used some of the money they borrowed to send her brother to school, because educating boys is important in Cambodia. Girls' education is often considered an unnecessary expense.

Life as Garment Workers: how people see us

Garment Worker Speech

Today you will hear the voice of one but the voice represents the story of thousands. Who are the thousands? They are women, they are workers, they are the poor, they are the victims of an invisible violence – but no less agonizing, sinister and tormenting than the pain and scars of physical abuse.

Where do we come from? We come from provinces throughout Cambodia – we are here because our mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters cannot grow enough to feed us, they cannot earn enough to give us a basic education.

WE ARE THE POOR

When we migrate to Phnom Penh :

We live in bad conditions –crowded, dirty, unhygienic shacks.



We work in bad conditions – the work is hard – we are berated by our superiors – When times are good for the bosses and they have many orders from abroad we are forced to work from dawn to night – If we refuse to work overtime we risk dismissal– many of us work on Sundays.

When orders are down and the bosses do not need us we sit and wait for days or weeks for a chance to earn some money again.

If we are sick they cut our salary

If we are late they cut our salary

If we have to go home they cut our salary

The law sets a minimum salary, but very few of us receive this minimum salary.

We send money home to our families. To do this we eat poorly, and we have no leisure activities because they cost money. Many of us have lived this life for years but we have nothing to show for it – just poor health – weakness, sadness and lethargy.



We are poor women workers -

We are stigmatised and subjected to harmful and offensive words:

- “you are a bad girl”
- “you have many boyfriends”
- “you do bad things in Phnom Penh”
- “do not marry a garment worker; they are not good girls”

This destroys our souls and emotional well being because we give all we have to our families and the national economy.

This is the recognition that society gives us in return – social violence that is no less tormenting and painful than physical violence.

But we are good enough to make you rich.

But we are good enough to contribute to 90% of Cambodia’s exports.

But we are good enough to sustain families throughout the country.

But we are good enough to pay for the education of our brothers.

STOP BLAMING US – GIVE US YOUR SOLIDARITY NOT YOUR BAD WORDS.

Sex Workers

The following case studies provide some insight into the lives of sex workers in Cambodia, and the circumstances that lead them to the sex trade.

The women narrate their stories with honesty and sincerity, they do not ask for pity, but challenge you to judge them and expose your own privilege. Their stories echo the same needs, lack of options, discrimination, and exclusion as we have seen in the stories of the other women workers. However, in the case of the sex workers, violence dominates their life experience, and extreme discrimination and stigmatisation increase the weight they carry.

As a result, these women have rejected the victim mould and react to their situation with anger, even though their anger cannot possibly be proportionate to the amount of violence they have suffered and are continually subjected to. Many of them organize themselves and try to find a common solution to the problems they face in their lives, based on mutual respect and solidarity. WAC is supporting this process.

Before I decided to do sex work I thought about it again and again but I had no option because I didn't have anything left with me beside myself.

I worked as a sex worker.. [I earned].. enough to get back our land title.

My mother had a second husband who always hit her. I pitied her and decided to become a sex worker so I could earn money for us. I was 14 years old.

Why do other people look down on me? Why do they want to do something bad to me even though I have never done anything wrong to them?

Case Study 1: It is easy for a girl to fall into sex work.

When I was 16, my mother would always blame and curse me. One day, I decided to run away. A villager invited me to go with her to Veal Reang district in Kampot province. She said I could work as a cook for a group of loggers. Two other girls from the village came with us. One of them had also run away from home because she was angry with her stepmother.

When we arrived in Veal Reang, the group of loggers wasn't there anymore. They had stopped logging. The woman from the village brought us to an area which we would find out later was a brothel area. She went inside a house and made us wait outside. The three of us sat there and waited until night-time. A woman who was selling cakes across the street asked us where we were going. We said we were going to Kompong Som. But I actually didn't know where Kompong Som was. She said that we shouldn't travel anymore because it was dark and asked us to stay for the night.

When we ate lunch, a woman came to visit. She asked us not to go to Kompong Som anymore and to stay in Veal Reang. She asked me to work for her as a cook. I did not know then that she was a karaoke bar/brothel owner.



The three of us who came from my village were separated from each other. I became a cook in the karaoke bar. At night-time, the other girls in the karaoke bar would ask me to join them in watching pornographic videos. I was afraid, I didn't want to see. But they said "No, this is good for you to see".

One night, a man came and saw me. He asked the owner if I was a virgin. The owner answered that I was a virgin but that I was the cook. The man bargained with the owner. He offered her 2000 Baht.

After that, the owner persuaded the two other girls to become sex workers. She also persuaded me saying that I could earn money to send to my parents. After I agreed, she sent me to Sre Ambal district in Koh Kong province.

From Sre Ambal, the brothel owner's husband brought me to Phnom Penh. At the guesthouse in Phnom Penh, he raped me. He then gave me \$15 and told me to go back to Sre Ambal and tell his wife that he couldn't get a client for me. He threatened that if I don't go back, he would find me and shoot me.

When I got back to Sre Ambal his wife asked me if I slept with her husband. I said no. She said, "I do not believe you. If I catch you lying, I will slash your face." This made me answer with an even stronger "NO".

Later, the owner gave me to a client saying that I was a virgin. But after that, the client complained that I was not a virgin. The owner said, "You said you are a virgin. Why does the client tell me you are not?"

I told her that I had lied to her and that I had already slept with a man before in my homeland.

After that, I met the brothel owner's nephew. He fell in love with me but he was already married. He worked as a porter and earned 30,000 riels per day. He paid 200,000 riels to the brothel owner for my "freedom" and to keep me as his second wife.

However, one day this man's wife came to the brothel owner and said she knew that her husband had another woman. I said nothing. But I pitied her. So I went to another brothel and borrowed some money to give to the (old) brothel owner.

Soon afterwards the man came to look for me at the old place. The old owner asked him to find me and bring me back, threatening that she would slash my face if I didn't accommodate her nephew. But I refused because he already had a wife.

The new brothel owner went to negotiate with the old brothel owner and ended up selling me to yet another brothel. They sold me for a more expensive price and I had to work for 7 months to pay this debt off.



In this brothel, I would receive 5 to 6 clients a day. I even had to cook and take care of the brothel owner's children.

After 7 months, the owner said I needed to pay 100,000 riels more to buy my freedom. So I looked for another brothel to borrow some money.

In the 4th brothel, I only needed to receive clients for 5 days to pay them back. This brothel owner was very kind. When I earned another 100,000 riels she told me to go visit my parents.

When I visited my parents, they knew about my work and persuaded me to stay. I sold boiled bananas and sugarcane in Neak Leung, Prey Veng province. However, not long after my return my father died of malaria. I am the oldest of 4 siblings and when my father died my mother brought us all to live in Phnom Penh. We moved into the Building area. I worked as an echay (waste picker) and would also sell makak (sour fruit). It was difficult. My mother wanted to go back to Neak Leung but we didn't have enough money.

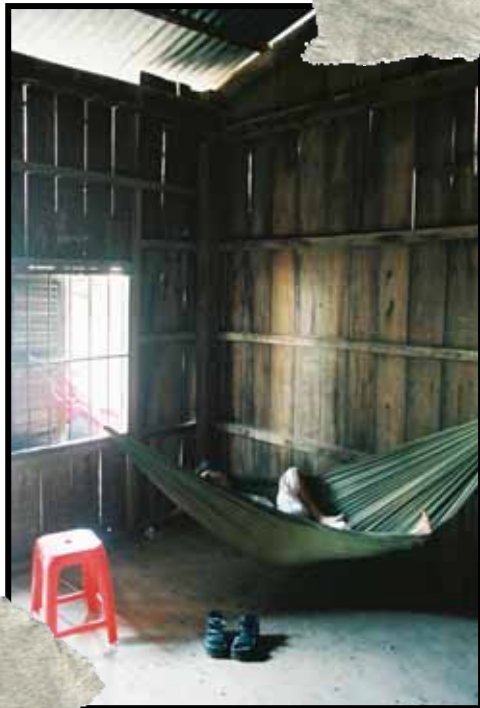
So I decided to become a sex worker again. In one month, I was able to earn 120,000 riels. After that, I went to stay with my mother in Neak Leung. She was always sick. A year after my father died, my mother also died.

I needed to look after my siblings. The youngest was 11 years old then. During my mother's illness, I had bought medicine from the drugstore on credit and this had left me in debt. I told the owner I would go to Phnom Penh to earn money to pay her back.

I stayed with my old aunt's family in Phnom Penh but the couple always quarrelled. It was difficult to live with them, so I decided to become a sex worker again. I could earn between 10,000 riels to 200,000 riels but I would give some of this money to my aunt because she was poor and I was able to save money by staying with one of the brothel owners. My sister was also a sex worker but she wasn't helping out with my brothers. After 3 to 4 months, I earned enough money for one of my brothers to become a monk.

My other sister still stays with my aunt, and she comes to see me every four days to ask for \$10. If I don't give her money, she curses me. Every month or so I try to visit my house in the province. Whenever I need to borrow money, the brothel owner helps me. When I earn money, I ask them to keep it for me too.

Sometimes when I am not well they allow me to rest. I don't have to pay for the room but when I receive clients, half of what they pay goes to the brothel owner. I eat my meals with them. Sometimes clients give 1,000 to 2,000 riels extra for me to keep.



The police always come to arrest us and ask for money. It is nearly Khmer New Year and they always come at this time of the year. They bring us to the Sangkat and we need to pay them money to be released. Sometimes they arrest clients too and ask them for money.

Ten days ago they arrested 40 women. If the police get money from the women then it is okay for them. This always happens before festivals- the Water festival, Chinese New Year, Pchum Benh, and Khmer New Year.

Case Study 2: Sex work is the only opportunity I have to pay off my debts and support my family.

I come from Udong District in Kompong Speu Province. My mother died when I was 8 years old. I have five brothers.

When I was 17 years old, my father got very sick. It was difficult for me. I sold our rice farm and our cow to get money to look after my sick father. We sold everything except the house we lived in. He would get a little better, but after three months he got sick again. I took the land title of our house and borrowed \$150 from another family. I bought medicine, and everything

else to take care my father. But unfortunately he died. When he died, we didn't have money for the ceremony. I borrowed another \$50 and had to pay \$10 interest per month. Three months later the lenders came to ask for the money but I had no money to pay them back.

During that time, a man wanted to marry me but he was poor too. My brother wanted me to marry but I refused. I ran away. I knew a woman in Phnom Penh and I went to find her by myself. I worked as a sex worker. The first time, I was paid \$350 and gave \$50 commission to that woman. I stayed another month in Phnom Penh to earn another \$100. I had earned enough to get back our land title (\$400). By this time I also had to pay back not only the \$150 I borrowed, but also an additional \$30 per month in interest.

When I got it back I stopped doing sex work. I had \$50 capital and I started to sell vegetables at the market in Kampong Speu. Five to six months later my youngest brother got sick. I had to stop selling vegetables to look after him.



After he got better, a man came to marry me. I was 18 years old. When my child was nearly two years old my husband, who worked as a soldier, was shot and killed in Pailin. My parents-in-law came to get my daughter but I did not agree to let her go. Now she is almost 7 years old.

Since that day, I have had to earn money for my daughter and my brother. Because it was so difficult, in 1997 I became a sex worker. I came by myself to Building. I borrowed money from the brothel owner to buy a rice farm for my brother.

All of my brothers know about my work. One of my brothers comes to visit me, he is a soldier in Phnom Penh. He said it up to me if I want to do sex work, but I should not get STDs or HIV/AIDS and cause problems for the family.

Now I want to borrow money again to buy a bigger rice farm for my brother. And if we have enough land, I want to go home and do work on the farm. I now work at a karaoke bar in the Building area. I get paid \$30 a month and receive between 4-6 clients a day, but half of what I earn goes to the brothel owner, half goes to me. In two months, I can earn up to \$130 for myself.

Case Study 3: The target of harassment by a policeman.

I am twenty-five years old. I moved from Stung Treng to Phnom Penh nearly one year ago. I used to work in a brothel in Stung Treng and when I came to Phnom Penh I started working in front of the train station. But here a policeman would always come and try and arrest me. He doesn't want me to sleep in the gardens in front of Wat Phnom.

In Stung Treng if I have sex with men I can get 40 000 riels per night. A long time ago my friend asked me to come to Stung Treng but when I got there they sold me to a brothel. I sold sex in Stung Treng for one year so I could pay the owner back and when I came to Phnom Penh I found clients by standing in front of the train station. I came to Phnom Penh because I thought I could make more money. But I only make just over 10 000 riels per night now. I usually have three to four clients a night and charge 3 000 riels per client.



The police always come in a group of three and always try to arrest me. They always beat me with a long stick on my back and legs three or four times. I am always able to run away so they have never caught or arrested me, but they always beat me badly. The police at Wat Phnom Station always burn down the grass in the garden. They keep doing this so we cannot sleep in the gardens because they don't want us to.

About a month ago I started working at Phka Chhuoktep (the Magic Lotus Flower), a bar with many foreigners. I started working there because I need to send a lot of money home to my parents. Since working there I met a foreigner who comes to the bar and pays me \$5 just to sit and drink and talk with him. Last week this foreigner took me to Calmette Hospital for some blood tests and tomorrow I find out the results. My friends at work told him that I was always sick, running a high temperature and was always very tired. He was worried about my health so he took me to Calmette for the tests. I think it cost \$20 for the treatment and check-up. If I want to go anywhere this foreigner will take me there. On Saturday we are going to Kompong Som together. We have never had sex together, we only just sit and drink.



I met him one day and he took me to Beoung Kok guesthouse, I thought for sex but when we got there he rented a twin share room, a room with two beds. We lay together for awhile and he noticed that I had a really high temperature, that I was very hot, so we slept in separate beds for a few hours in the

afternoon. I love this man and I think he loves me. When I first saw him at Phka Chhuoktep he wanted me to come over to his table, but I was only new and I was a bit scared at that time because I had never been around a foreigner before. But I thought to myself "If I am scared

how can I get money?" There is a translator there who helps us talk with the foreigners and we sometimes do Khmer massage. She is a Tiger beer girl who works there. The first time I met him the beer girl said that he wanted to have sex with me, and so I said okay and he asked how much. I told him thirty dollars and he said that he only had twenty. When I heard this I felt so much happier than before because I thought now I would have money for supporting my parents and myself.

Since I met this foreigner he has taken me to the markets to buy some things like new clothes. Before I met him I had no good clothes, but see, now I have some. He also brought me a watch that cost \$30 but a few days ago I was not feeling well so I pawned it for some money. I would like to go and meet him everyday and chat with him for a little while because now he knows a small amount of Khmer. He doesn't know that I am sleeping on the streets, I have not told him because I don't want him to know. He gave me two photos of himself but I do not know about our future together, maybe he is just with me because he pities me and is giving me money and gifts because of this?

I got the job in Phka Chhuoktep through a moto dup who took me there. He told me about this place and I said okay, take me there. I did try and take some of the other women from the streets, like my friend, but she is not interested because she is scared of foreigners. Most of the girls that work at Phka Chhuoktep are Vietnamese, so I need the beer girls that work there to help me talk with the foreigners. I try and give them 2 000 riels for translating for me but the beer girls say that they don't want to take money from me because they pity me.



I work at night and this one policeman always comes during the daytime to try and arrest me when I am sleeping because he thinks that he can catch me then. I used to sleep until about

lunchtime and he always came and beat me while I was asleep. I always woke up and run away from him and he chased me and hit me with a big stick.

Before I always used to sleep during the daytime but a few days ago I smoked yama for the first time, I paid 5 000 riels for one tablet and smoked it. This is the first time I did yama. I took it because I cannot sleep because of this policeman - he comes everyday now - so I had some yama so I could stay awake. I brought the yama near the Sharaton [sic] Hotel. Many of the girls smoke yama secretly, because they don't want anybody to know that they smoke it.

The night before last when I was coming back from Phka Chhuoktep I dropped something on this policeman's street. The police come up to me and asked me where I had come from and I said that I was working. They asked me where I was working and I told them I was working in a bar, and they said you don't smell of beer or wine and I told them that I cannot drink while I am working. The police asked me "Do you sell sex?" and I said "No I don't sell sex" Then they asked me to come back with them and have sex (they always ask me to do this). So I said "If you want to have sex with me we must measure you, if you are shorter than me then it will be hard for us to have sex" [she is very tall]. All of them were shorter than me, so I quickly left.

Case Study 4: Family sacrifices

I am the eldest of 4 children. I have one younger brother and two sisters. My mother earns a living by selling vegetables in the market. My father is very sick. My mother brought me to Tuol Kork two and a half months ago. We come from Neak Leung, Prey Veng province. I am happy to be able to help my parents.

The brothel owner paid \$150 to my mother when I first came here. After that, she was given \$20 and then another \$30 the last time she visited.

Some days I receive 4-5 clients, some days none. The brothel owner always blames me when there are few clients.



[When probed about the slash wounds on her left wrist and lower arm]

I have wanted to kill myself a lot of times, but then I think of my family and worry about who will support them.

I miss my parents and our home.

Case Study 5: A deserted girlfriend

I was born in Ang Prasad district, Takeo province. My father is a fisherman and my mother is a farmer. I have three brothers and four sisters and I am the fourth child, so you can see that our family is a big one and my parents are not able to feed us. I dropped out of school in grade 2 and when I was thirteen years old my parents brought me to live with another family as a servant and I earned 40 000 riels per month. At that time my family was in a difficult situation

and my mother sold 4 farms and the other 5 farms were pawned (we have 20 farms). When I knew about this I gave my salary to my family and they were able to buy back the five farms.

I was persuaded by my boyfriend to come here but he didn't sell me. My parents were trying to force me to marry a man who was a farmer. I didn't love him. So I agreed to leave my house with my boyfriend and he brought me to his aunt's house at Kien Svay and later I rented a house for 40 000 riels per month to live with him. A few days later he told me to live in the house alone and he said that I should stop having a relationship with him, and he left me.

So I lived in that house alone. I didn't agree to do the sex work but the gangs always wanted to rape me and I was in a difficult situation so I decided to do it. I was not a direct sex worker; if the clients knew me they could come directly to me but if they didn't know me and my house owner they went to the brothel to call me.



There was a gang in Kiev Svay who wanted to rape me but I was lucky. There were five men in the group but only one came to the house where I lived to try and rape me. The first time he was drunk and went into my house (I stayed alone) and tried to force me to have sex with him but I shouted for help and my house owner (a man) heard and came to help me. The second time my house owner went to a ceremony in his village and this man again tried to rape me but my neighbour (a woman) passed my house and heard me talking with someone as if I had a conflict so she came into my house and helped me. The third time he was drunk again and nobody helped me

because my house owner had not yet comes back from his village. But the man was drunk so I tried to fight with him and I bit his shoulder. He was so angry and slapped me and I ran out of the house.

My life is so bad; some people always want to do the bad things with me. Now I live in a karaoke bar and work as a waitress there (bringing beer for the clients, washing the dishes, etc.) One evening when I was washing the dishes behind the house 2 gangs wanted to rape me but when I saw them I went inside the house. The two men tried to rape me four times but they were not successful.

Before I decided to do sex work I thought about it again and again but I had no option because I didn't have anything left with me beside myself. I just receive two clients a week and my parents don't know that I do this job.

I am not yet saving because I don't have much money. Honestly I don't want to do this job, if I had \$100 I might give up this work and start a small business. [There is a woman who comes to call her and tell her that there is a client waiting for her at home. She is a freelance sex worker].

Case Study 6: Assaulted by a security guard

Mut Earn is 32 years old. She was born in Kiriwong district, Takeo province. She has a 55-year-old mother and a 5-year-old son. She and her husband separated in 1995, a month after she gave birth. Her husband was in Ta Khmov Hospital and when she went to visit him with their baby the doctor told her "Your husband has left the hospital already." She was very sad and she decided to go to Phnom Penh in order to look for her husband but when she got there she had nothing and the money that she had from the house was also finished. But she did not go back to her hometown because her cow had been stolen and her brother had sold her land, so she had nothing there. Instead she decided to find a job and rent a house in Phnom Penh.

She rented a house in Sangkat Tonle Basak, Khan Chamka Morn, which cost 25 000 riels per month. She has rented this house for the last 5 years. Initially the landlords were reluctant to rent the house to her because they were afraid that she had no money to pay for the house.

Now she is an orange seller sex worker because she cannot find another job to do and she needs the money to pay for the house and to support herself and her child. She hires a babysitter to look after her child when she sells oranges. She earns 5000 to 6000 riels per night. But if it rains, she will earn nothing because she cannot sell oranges and has no clients.

Her old mother also tries to work as a construction worker to support her and her son. She and her mother are also responsible for her brother who has a family in his hometown, because he has no job, no land and no cow. So she must try to sell oranges even when she is sick and when people do bad things to her.



Once when she was selling oranges in the park a park security guard demanded money from her and said that if she didn't give him money she would have to have sex with him. But she disagreed and she did not pay him any money because she hadn't yet earned anything that night. A few days after this incident she had a serious problem with this park security guard. The man kicked her in the stomach and bladder and he still continued to beat her, so to protect herself she stabbed him once in the shoulder. Then other police came and arrested her and brought her to the police station. At the police station they accused her of starting the fight and she was ordered to pay compensation to the security guard. If she didn't pay she would be sent to prison. She did not have enough money to pay, so she decided to borrow money from her friend to pay the guard compensation.

After that assault her body became weaker and weaker, especially her bladder - it was very painful when she urinated and there was blood in her urine. So she had treatment for more than 3 months and she has to pay for her treatment by continuing to sell oranges with her mother.

She complains "Why do other people look down on me? Why do they want to do something bad to me even though I have never done anything wrong to them? Why do these things happen to me? Sometimes I want to die but I must to live for my son."

Everyday she is afraid and worries about her child because she thinks that she will die soon and nobody will take care of him.

Case Study 7: A young girl and her family's life of violence and exploitation

I am sixteen years old. I have been a garbage collector since I was seven years old when I started collecting garbage with my older sister. We always collected garbage around Wat Phnom at night. My sisters and I would leave our house together in a big group and separate at Wat Phnom where we would each collect garbage alone. One day when I was about eight years old a gangster raped me. When my friends saw me on the ground they stopped collecting garbage and carried me home.

I cannot remember much about the rape as when he raped me he held a handkerchief over my mouth and drugged me, so I don't know what happened. I woke up some time after and saw that I was bleeding from my vagina.

After that my friends went to tell the person who buys the garbage from us what had happened and they asked him to support me. He gave them 20 000 to 30 000 riels so I could buy some medicine.

When this happened my father was working in Sre Ambel district where he would buy garbage from there to bring to Phnom Penh and sell here for more money. My father found out about my being raped and said that he would come back home because of this. My mother also asked him to try and buy some medicine for me because I was sick.



After the gangster raped me my health was not good. I needed to buy some medicine because I was bleeding badly from my vagina day and night, it didn't stop. During my sickness my mother took me to a private clinic and they said it would cost \$150 for surgery to cure my bleeding. My mother took me to a private clinic as at that time she did not know about public hospitals. So she agreed to the high price that the clinic asked for my surgery. My vagina was torn when the gangster raped me and I needed surgery to stop the bleeding. But we did not have \$150. My older sister volunteered to do sex work, to sell her virginity for my surgery. She asked my mother's permission, telling her that she wanted to go and work in a brothel to help me out, but my mother said "no wait until your father gets back."

Because of the rape my father came back from Sre Ambel to buy some medicine but some people robbed him on the way home. He did not have much money on him as he had bought some medicine in Sre Ambel and the robbers beat him badly because of this. Some friends brought my father back home. He was badly beaten and very sick, and bleeding from his nose. He was so sick that he was almost dead and I still needed surgery. My older sister saw our problems and did not wait for mum's approval –she went straight to the brothel and sold her virginity. The brothel owner offered her \$250 so she went to the brothel straight away to sell her body.

But the night that my sister went into the brothel [her sister negotiated the sale only of her virginity for \$250 and thus was to work only one night for this amount] our father died. My sister heard that he had died and begged the brothel owner to release her but they refused, saying that she had agreed to spend the night in the brothel so she could not leave. So my older sister could not join the ceremony to mourn the death of our father. So because of my problem my real father died. My mother has re-married since but my stepfather does not love my sisters or me. He only loves the children he has had with my mum.

All of the villagers helped pay for my father's ceremony, contributing 1000 to 2000 riels each, but my mother also borrowed some money to burn my father's body. She borrowed around 200 000 riels from a moneylender and had to pay back 10 000 riels per day plus 500 riels interest. A few days after my father was cremated my older sister came back with only \$20 which she gave to my mother. She was cheated by the brothel owner because although she was a virgin the client she was given to sleep with, a foreigner, told the brothel owner that she was not [so he did not have to pay \$250] and the brothel owner believed the client. So the owner and her client cheated her and \$20 is all she could get.

Around five or six months later my mother was in serious debt as she had no of money for living and could not pay her debts back. Within six months of my father dying my mother was

500 000 riels in debt. When my older sister found out she went to the brothel and borrowed \$100 from the owner, putting herself in debt with the brothel owner. But this was not enough to pay back all my mother's debts and I was still bleeding a bit [she still had not had surgery]. I bled heavily for two years and after three years it started trailing off and when I was thirteen I stopped bleeding altogether.



When I was ten years old a young girl from Sre Ambel, maybe around eighteen years old, came to ask my mother to support her. My mother said "no I cannot support you - I have all my children and I cannot support them so how can I support you as well?" She then asked my mother to take her to a brothel and sell her as she did not feel

confident about going on her own. My mother agreed and took her to a brothel near Churoy Changvar Bridge and sold her. But at the brothel the girl negotiated her price for selling her virginity (\$150) and my mother just stood there –she did not negotiate for the girl. Five days after this when the brothel owner fell asleep the girl from Sre Ambel ran away.

The girl had borrowed the money from the brothel owner and when she ran away she still owed them this money. The owner came to see my mother as they could not find the girl and the owner asked my mother to find the girl or pay her back the money. So my mother took the responsibility for paying back her debt [by association –she was the one who took her to the brothel and who could be tracked down]. My mother did not have \$150 to pay the brothel owner back so the owner said that she should give her daughter, my second sister, to her and to pay the debt off. She said my sister could cook and clean clothes in the brothel and prepare meals for sex workers in return for the \$150. My mother was scared that the brothel owner would go to the authorities and complain about the girl running away and owing her money

so she sent my second sister, who was 14 years old, to her brothel to cook and clean for the owner. My mother asked how long they needed my sister to stay at the brothel for and the owner said two to three months.

My second sister stayed in the brothel for one week before a foreign client came to find a girl. This man saw my sister and wanted to have sex with her. The brothel owner said “No, she is not a sex worker she is my servant”. He said “I will give you \$250 for this girl” and when the owner heard this price she agreed and sent my second sister with the foreigner without asking her first. The foreigner took my sister to a hotel that I cannot remember the name of and they had sex there. This foreigner could also speak Khmer. To get out of paying \$250 for my sister he held a gun to her throat and said “Don’t tell the brothel owner that you were a virgin, I forbid you to tell anyone that you were a virgin”. When the foreigner took my sister back to the brothel he claimed that my sister was not a virgin and so he would only give the owner \$10 for sex with my sister. My second sister tried to tell the brothel owner what had happened but the owner did not believe her because of what the client had said and so the owner gave my sister \$5 and kept \$5.



After my sister had sex with the foreigner she got sick but the brothel owner kept her in the brothel to work the other girls’ debts off and would not let her seek treatment. She felt tired all the time and had difficulties breathing. Then one month later I went to collect garbage and piled it out the front of the brothel that my sister was staying in. The owner was very friendly with me, she told me to come in and sit down and relax but my sister did not want me to stay anywhere near the brothel. At this stage I did not know that this place was a brothel. I just thought it was a place where people sat, drank, ate and talked.

One day when I was sitting down at the brothel a foreigner came in and he noticed me and smiled at me so I smiled back, but I did not know what this meant. I thought he was just being nice but my sister chased me away and told me to go home. This happened a second time twice when I went back to visit my sister again. Then one day I was looking after my little sister while my mum went to the market, and I carried her to my older auntie's house while mum was away. When I came back home I saw that the brothel owner was waiting out the front of our house. She had come to ask me to go and sit and relax at her house. I told her I would go but first I needed to cook some rice for us to eat. But the owner said to me "no if you go now you will get some money". I didn't know that I could get money for just sitting and talking so I left my house quickly and went to the brothel. When I arrived at the brothel the same foreigner was there and he told me to sit next to him and he held my hand.



He said to the owner that he wanted to have sex with me and the owner replied that sex with me would cost \$400. He tried to bargain her down to \$300 and during this negotiation the owner asked my sister who had been with me all this time to go outside. My sister said "why do I need to go outside?" and the owner said "It's ok, you can go through to your house, just leave your sister here to talk with me". So after the owner asked this of my sister she came back and bargained with the foreigner and they eventually agreed on \$350. After this, the foreigner asked me to go into the room with him for a few minutes and he said "Please just go and sit in the room for a moment". So I went and sat in the room and he followed me in. He closed and locked the door behind him and I was surprised so I asked him "what are you doing?"

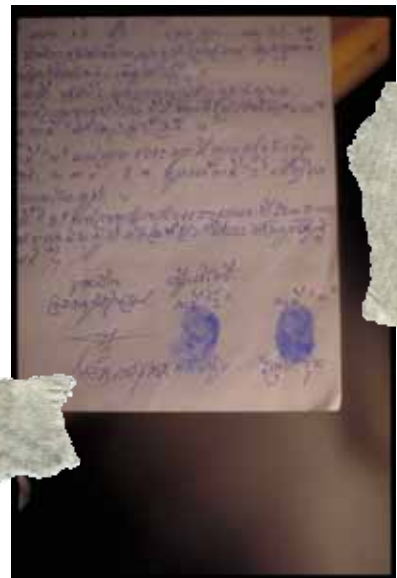
In the meantime my sister arrived at home and told my aunt that I stayed at the brothel alone, she told her the owner had chased her away and told her to go home and that the foreigner was sitting near me and negotiating with the owner. When my aunt heard this she said “this is not a good situation”. My aunt asked one of her male cousins to go with her to the brothel to try and find me. When my aunt arrived she asked the owner “Where is my niece?” and the owner answered “Your niece has gone back home”. But my sister had gone with my aunt and her cousin and she said “No, she is not back home because I have just come from home and she was not there”. So my sister, aunt and her cousin ran through the brothel calling out my name. When I heard them calling out my name I cried out “Help me! I am in this room!” I tried to struggle free from the foreigner but he gripped the neck of my shirt tightly. I broke free and ran around the room and he was chasing me round and round the bed and when I ran past the door I tried to kick it hard so they could find the room I was in. I could not get out of the room because it was locked on the outside and inside. But my aunty heard me screaming and asked the brothel owner to open the door. She did this and I was released and the foreigner quickly left.



Late in the afternoon, just after this had happened, my aunty went to the to Khan Russey Keo police station to complain about the brothel owner who tried to sell me to the foreigner but the police there said they could not do anything [the comment was made that this brothel was protected by the police at Khan Russey Keo]. So we went to Sangkat Srah Chork and when they heard what we told them they went straight to the brothel. When they went to the brothel they asked the owner “Why did you force this little girl to sell sex?” and she answered that she didn’t force me to sell sex because I agreed to sell sex, I volunteered by myself. I said to her and the police that I did not volunteer because I did not know that this place was a brothel. But the owner didn’t think she could win against me, so after this she asked her husband who was a police guard on the Churoy Changvar Bridge to help her. So he

supported her and said “My wife [mistress] is not wrong, the little girl is wrong” but the police at Sangkat Srah Chork went and arrested the owner and took her to the police station. I also told the police at this station that if they took a bribe from this woman or anyone else I would know and I would do my best to expose them.

The brothel owner asked her husband to get some money together in order for her to be released from jail [bribe money]. So her husband came back to the brothel and got together some items that he sold for \$200. But he went back to the station and told his wife that he was only able to get \$50 for all the items he sold and he kept \$150 for himself. In the meantime the brothel owner’s husband pitied me because he knew that she was going to try and bribe her way out of jail. He also knew that his wife was not a good woman, which she is Vietnamese and he knows what she is up to, so he told me to stay away from the brothel once his wife was free. I went to the police and said that if you take this money from her and let her be free I would go to the police above them and tell them what had happened. So after the husband came to me and told me that he had tried to pay a bribe for the release of his wife I told the police that I wanted to take my complaint further, to go the courts and to trial.



When we went to trial the brothel owner still said “I am not wrong, the girl is wrong and so is her mother because her mother tried to rent a room for her at my place, her mother tried to sell her to me!” My mother shouted “No this is not true!” So the judge asked “Who rented the room for selling sex?” My mother and I said that we did not know, I told him that I just went there and sat down, hung out, that I didn’t know it was a brothel. My mother said that the owner tried to sell me that she didn’t know what was going on. After this the owner agreed and said “Yes this is what happened, I tried to sell the girl”. When she admitted this, the owner was sentenced to 15 years jail and she is still in jail. Her brothel has also been closed down.

I still collect garbage like I have done since I was seven. Sometimes I get 7000 riels or 5000 riels a day; depending on how long I work and how much garbage I am able to collect. Some days I work from 7am to 8pm, other days from 3am to 12pm, it depends. I collect garbage with my sisters - sometimes it is the four of us, other times the five of us; it depends. My older sister continued to sell sex for about three years, but now she has stopped selling sex and sells coffee in Tuol Kork. She works in a café in front of the police station near Psar Touch. She used to work in a brothel in Tuol Kork but she became so very tired all the time that she stopped. I think now she can earn maybe 50 000 riels per month at the coffee shop. When she started working in the brothel she borrowed \$150 from the owner and it took her three and a half years to pay this back”.

Case Study 8: I become a sex worker to help my family buy land

“I came to Tuol Kork when I was 13 years old. I am the middle child of three. I have two brothers. My parents were very poor and I needed to earn money. We were homeless. We had come from Kampong Cham to Phnom Penh and we were sleeping on the side of the streets. Someone told me I could find a job serving coffee in Tuol Kork.



My mother had a second husband who always hit her. I pitied her and decided to become a sex worker so I could earn money for us. I was 14 years old.

I rented a room for myself in Tuol Kork. I would receive an average of 10 clients per day. During the first few years I was able

to buy land across the river for my mother. Little by little, I earned more and was able to build a small house for my family.

After three years, I stopped doing sex work to live with my family in the house I had built for them. But my stepfather and his eight children were also living there. They were not kind to me or to my family. Within a month of my return home my youngest brother died of typhoid fever. Nobody would help me and they just put his body behind our house. I asked my mother to help me take him to the pagoda. But she said we had no money and would not be able to afford it. So I borrowed \$100 from a brothel owner. After that, I had to go back to doing sex work. It took 8 months of work for me to pay back the \$100. I would service between 5-10 clients per day.

The brothel owner was cruel to me. When I became sick and had a vaginal discharge I didn't want to receive clients, but she hit me on the back with a thick piece of wood and I bled.

Now I am free and I rent my own room and find clients by myself. In the past I could earn more because I serviced up to 10 clients a day, but now I only have 2-3 clients per day. Gangs and robbers have come here in the past and they threaten and rob the clients. Because of this, the men are scared to come to Tuol Kork”.



Police Extortion and Violence Against Sex Workers

The following case studies were taken shortly after the government ordered the closure of all Karaoke bars in Cambodia in November 2001. The closing of the Karaoke bars served to make the life of sex workers more difficult, pushing many of these women out onto the streets where they were forced to charge less for sex, were exposed to gang rape and became an easier target for police violence and extortion.

When I see a policeman I see a tiger. I am scared; the police are just waiting to jump on us.

I asked them why they needed to arrest me, but they grabbed my wrists, twisted them and dragged me onto a moto then took me to the police station. My wrist was cut from where they grabbed me and twisted the skin so hard.

After he beat me, the policeman handcuffed my wrists to the table leg. I had to sit on the floor like this all night. There was nowhere for me to go to the toilet, not even a pot to urinate in... I was told I couldn't have anything until I gave them \$30.

The policeman screamed at me, using the Khmer term of address used for an animal, and said "Why don't you go back to the village? Why do you still go and work as a prostitute [srey khoiach]?"

Case Study 1: A threat to life and security

“On December 16, at about 10pm, I was standing on the street in Tuol Kork waiting for clients when I was arrested by the police. There were five of them, in uniform. They told me I wasn’t allowed to earn money this way, that what I was doing was wrong because now the Government had closed the brothels [in fact it was the Karaoke bars and not the brothels that had been ordered to be closed]. They said it was illegal for me to stand on the street and wait for clients [it is not illegal].

I asked them what could I do, if I couldn’t stand on the street? My house is down an alley, and I need to find clients so I can live. I asked them why they needed to arrest me, but they grabbed my wrists, twisted them and dragged me onto a moto then took me to the police station. My wrist was cut from where they grabbed me and twisted the skin so hard.



At the Tuol Kork khan police station, they demanded \$30. But I didn’t have any money. I was locked in a room, and they took my photograph. I asked them why, but they just said they had to take my picture because they didn’t want me to work any more. Then one policeman hit, kicked and slapped me. He screamed at me, using the Khmer term of address used for an animal, and said “Why don’t you go back to the village? Why do you still go and work as a prostitute [srey khoiach]?” He spoke very badly to me.

The policeman took a small platinum ring off my finger, and took 10,000 riels out of my back pocket. The ring was worth about 20,000 to 25,000 riels. But the policeman still demanded \$30. I was told that if I didn't pay, I wouldn't be released.

The room I was locked in had a chair, but I was told I could not sit on it. Instead, after he beat me, the policeman handcuffed my wrists to the table leg. I had to sit on the floor like this all night. There was nowhere for me to go to the toilet, not even a pot to urinate in. They didn't give me anything to eat, even though I asked for it. I wasn't given any water either. They told me I couldn't have anything until I gave them \$30.



My friend came to the police station to see if I was alright and to bring me some food, but she was told she could not see me unless she came with \$30. So she went back to my neighbourhood and borrowed the money for me.

She came back to the police station at 5pm the next day. I had been handcuffed to the table leg all that time. I didn't sleep all night. Mosquitoes were biting me all the time, I was cold and I was cuffed to the table.

When my friend brought the money, the police released me. They didn't give me a receipt, they didn't give me any papers – nothing. They just told me to stop doing this work and that if they saw me again they would arrest me. Now I have to work more to pay the loan back. I have to pay 10,000 riel a day for 12 days. My room costs 4,000 riel a day to rent. I now get about 2-3 clients a day; sometimes they pay me 3,000 riel, sometimes it's 5,000 riel.

I have been arrested many times before; I can't count the number of times. Sometimes they ask for \$20, sometimes they ask for \$30. And they always beat me. It's the same every time.

I know the policeman who beats me. I know his name.

Case Study 2: Police brutality against women

"There is a policeman whose name I know in Russey Keo; his second wife was a brothel owner, and I know that she was involved in trafficking. I have seen it with my own eyes – she took two women to be sold to a brothel for \$250. They were about 18 or 19 years old; they thought they were being taken to work as cooks in a restaurant.



Afterwards, the brother of one of the women sued the brothel owner. She was arrested, and sent to prison. Because of this her husband got angry.

He knew that the brother who sued his second wife used to work in a brothel nearby. So he went to that brothel, but it was closed. There was a woman nearby, a sex worker from another place, and she was talking with another man.

The policeman asked them where the brothel owner was, but when they both said they didn't know he got angry. He beat the man with his pistol and dragged the woman away to the police station. He beat her at the police station, hitting her with his gun. He beat her all over her body,

and he cut her head open. After he had beaten her very badly he let her go. He threw her out of the police station and she had to take a moto to get away.

She was taken to hospital. It cost \$10 to treat her; she had to have her head stitched. She had a cut, which was 4-6cm long. She's gone back to her home village now; she is sick and there was no one to take care of her if she stayed in Tuol Kork."

Case Study 3: Intimidation, extortion and abuse of power

"I work in Russey Keo. Everyday the police are arresting workers and asking for money - \$40 to \$50 from each woman. It's happening all the time. The police think they have the right to do what they like with us.

Although we are human beings, we have no rights. We are just bodies, with no rights to do anything. When I see a policeman I see a tiger. I am scared; the police are just waiting to jump on us.



arrest them and steal money from them.

Everyday they are watching us and following us around – even to the market. Everywhere we go, they watch us. They want to stop all sex work in Russey Keo, and they want to get money from the women. Some sex workers have even given up and gone to be garbage collectors but the police are still watching them and wanting to

Sex workers are poor; we have a right to work. The law doesn't say we have no right to work. But the law only seems to protect traffickers. The women have no rights.

The law is supposed to prevent trafficking. If women volunteer to work doing this there is no law against it. But they stop us, beat us, and take our money. We agree that the police should arrest those who are involved in trafficking, but now we are being arrested. This is the wrong way round. It is against the law.

Most of the women who work with me rent a room together; we are just trying to earn a living – to find a way to stay alive, and to support our families. None of the women have any money to pay the police, so they have to borrow from people at high rates of interest. For \$50, we have to pay \$20 interest. We have to pay them \$5 a day, every day, for two weeks. We go out from night to morning, selling sex to try and get the money.

Sometimes there are clients, sometimes there aren't. We are hungry, we owe money, and we want to survive. So if a client wants sex without condom sex workers will do it because they need the money to pay their debts and they want to feed their children. All the women who sell sex are poor; they earn money to support their families. They support their mothers, their fathers, their children, their brothers, and their sisters. And we have to rent our rooms – my room costs 7,000 riel a day. Some women pay 10,000 riel a day. There is no money spare to pay off the police, so we have to take out loans, then we have to work even harder to try to pay them back.



How can we survive when we are harassed by the police like this? It is illegal. Some women are beaten by the police – both at their houses and at the police station. Some have had their watches and rings stolen by the police. When the police arrest one woman, and there is no one there to see it, they take anything they can. Which police do this? Most of the police in Russey Keo. Except perhaps the chief of police – because he doesn't go outside of his office."

Case Study 4: Police anger, corruption and brutality

"At around 9pm on Monday December 17, I was talking with two other women in front of my house. We were just chatting together. Then five policemen arrived on motos. The other women ran away, but I didn't think they would arrest us for just talking together so I didn't run. I was squatting on the ground when they arrived. As I stood up they grabbed me by the hair and dragged me towards the moto. It really hurt.

They took me to the Tuol Kork khan police station. I was locked in a room. They asked me what my name was and where I had come from, then they took my photograph. I was left in the room with one policeman. He pushed me to the floor and started to beat me, kick me and stick his elbows and knees into me. I tried to protect myself with my arms, but that just made him angrier. He screamed at me and addressed me as if I was an animal. He kept saying "Why are you still working like this? Why don't you go home?" He was also telling me that I'm too old, I should stop my work.

He kept asking for money. I had \$3 in my back pocket so I gave that to him. But it wasn't enough. I was told I had to pay \$40.

My friend knew I had been arrested, so she borrowed money from my neighbours then came to the police station. She only had \$25, but the police said they would accept it. Maybe they thought that because I am older, I can't earn enough money to pay them \$40.



My friend got to the police station at 4pm the day after I was arrested. I spent the night in the locked room, with no chair to sit on or anything. There was only a pot to urinate in. I couldn't sleep all night; there were mosquitoes biting me all the time.

When I was released, they just told me to stop working. They didn't give me a receipt or anything.

I know the name of one of the policemen who arrested me – he is Chief of Police in Tuol Kork Khan. He wasn't the policeman who beat me. I don't know if he heard me being beaten – I was crying out, but I was locked in the room and I don't know if anyone could hear me from outside.

Case Study 5: Rights abused

“On December 8 2001 there was an event held in Wat Botum park to mark the start of a 16 day campaign against violence against women. I went along, then afterwards went to the park to work. I worked until midnight. Because it was so late, I didn't think there would be any police around so I would be safe. But then three men came up to me. They were on two motos, and they were wearing ordinary clothes.

One of them asked me if I was a brothel keeper, and how many women I had. I told them I worked on my own. I thought they were clients. Then one of the men grabbed my wrist hard.

He twisted it, and started shouting at me. He said “You don’t know that you do wrong? All the brothels are closed, but you are still working.” I told him I wasn’t a brothel owner, I was just working on my own and that it wasn’t illegal. But he kept twisting my wrist and shouting at me. I wanted to run away, but it was impossible.

Then they were all shouting at me and saying “Why are you still working? You are doing wrong”. I told them I worked through my own choice, that no one forces me to do it but I do this work because I am poor and I have to support my family. But they would not listen.

They pulled my arms behind my back and carried me onto the moto. They twisted my arm around, and held me so hard that my wrists swelled up. It was really painful.



They forced me to pay them \$10 when we got to the police station. They told me that if I didn’t pay to be released they would leave me locked in the police station all night, and the next day they would send me to the Ministry of Social Affairs. And all the time they kept twisting my wrist and hurting me. I told them that I would sue them if he hurt me any more.

The \$10 I gave them was all the money I’d saved over the past month. I wanted to send it to my two children; they are 10 and 14 years old, and they live in the countryside with my sister. But they took everything. I was left with no money at all. The \$10 was all I had. But at least they only asked me for \$10 – my friends are being asked for \$40 or \$50. Maybe they asked for \$10 because I was talking about my rights, and telling them they couldn’t do this to me because what I was doing was not illegal.

Nobody recognises that it is my body I sell. Nobody recognises us as human beings, with rights of our own. We get money taken off us all the time."

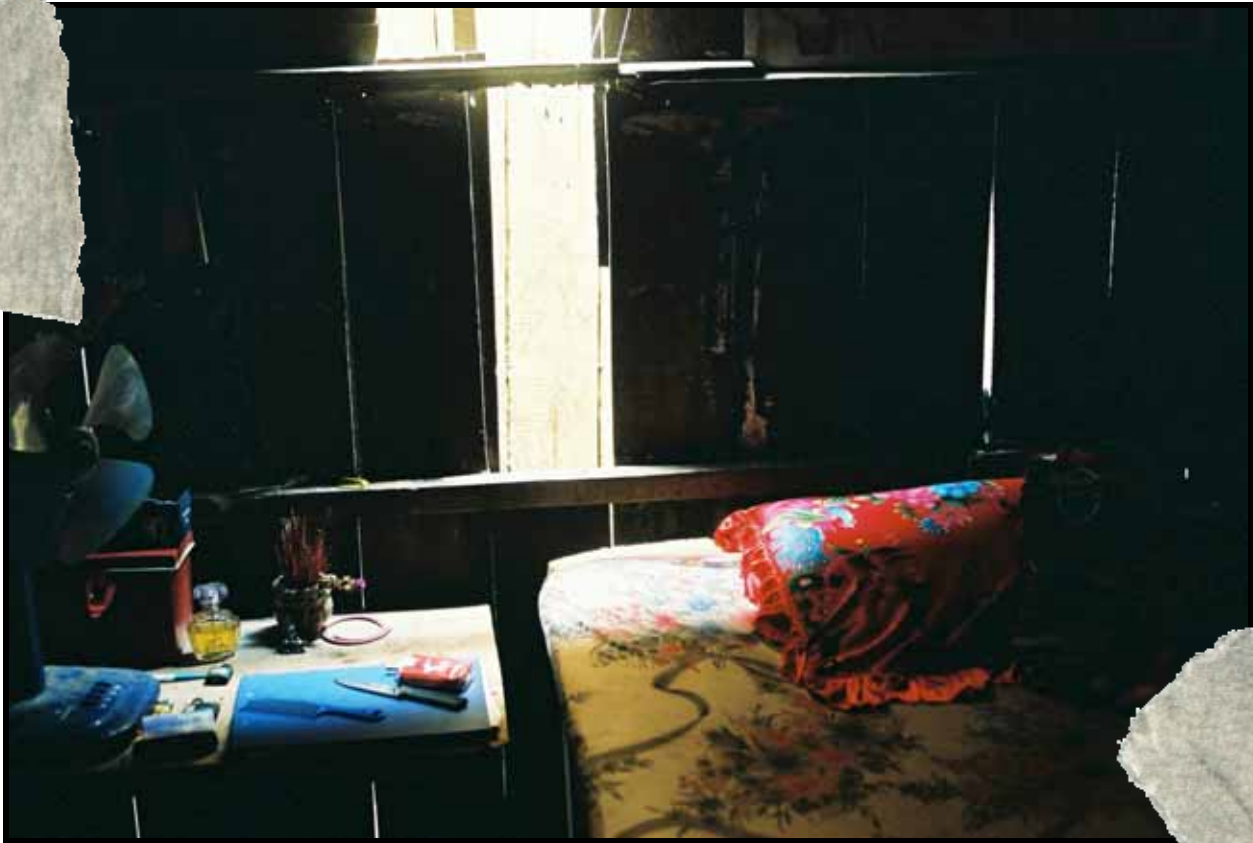


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P1	Womyn's Agenda for Change (WAC)	P52	WAC
P2	WAC	P53	WAC
P3	WAC	P55	Ming Tse Chong – Oxfam HK/WAC
P4	Howard Davies – Oxfam	P57	Matt Sammels
P6	WAC	P59	WAC
P7	WAC	P60	WAC
P8	WAC	P61	Ming Tse Chong – Oxfam HK/WAC
P12	WAC	P62	Ming Tse Chong – Oxfam HK/WAC
P13	WAC	P63	Ming Tse Chong – Oxfam HK/WAC
P15	Howard Davies – Oxfam	P65	Ming Tse Chong – Oxfam HK/WAC
P17	WAC	P66	Ming Tse Chong – Oxfam HK/WAC
P19	WAC	P68	Ming Tse Chong – Oxfam HK/WAC
P21	WAC	P70	Ming Tse Chong – Oxfam HK/WAC
P22	WAC	P72	Ming Tse Chong – Oxfam HK/WAC
P26	WAC	P73	Ming Tse Chong – Oxfam HK/WAC
P28	WAC	P74	WAC
P29	Ming Tse Chong – Oxfam HK/WAC	P75	Howard Davies – Oxfam
P30	WAC	P76	Howard Davies – Oxfam
P32	WAC	P77	WAC
P33	Howard Davies – Oxfam	P78	Ming Tse Chong – Oxfam HK/WAC
P35	WAC	P80	Ming Tse Chong – Oxfam HK/WAC
P37	WAC	P81	WAC
P39	WAC	P82	Ming Tse Chong – Oxfam HK/WAC
P42	WAC	P83	Ming Tse Chong – Oxfam HK/WAC
P44	WAC	P84	WAC
P45	WAC	P86	WAC
P47	Howard Davies – Oxfam	P87	Ming Tse Chong – Oxfam HK/WAC
P48	Ming Tse Chong – Oxfam HK/WAC	P88	Ming Tse Chong – Oxfam HK/WAC
P50	WAC		