

# Investigating Patterns of Domestic Violence in the Marginally Urban Communities on the Outskirts of Siem Reap, Cambodia

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## 1. ABSTRACT

Domestic abuse has come to be more widely recognized as an extensive social issue throughout the Western world in the past few decades. Less appreciated, although certainly acknowledged, is the extent to which domestic violence afflicts poor countries. The research presented in this study seeks to characterize the experience of domestic violence in Cambodian communities on the marginally urban outskirts of Siem Reap. Data was gathered through participant observation and interviews that focused on demographic, socioeconomic, and personal questions. Out of the eleven women interviewed, four admitted to experiencing domestic abuse, and one was not asked this question. In addition, over half said that violence was a problem among other families. The stories of the women are portrayed as narratives to illustrate their experiences. Overall, the consumption of alcohol by husbands was strongly associated with violent incidents and most wives readily linked the socioeconomic stress with their spouse's propensity to drink. These results are discussed in the context of the Cambodian social-political climate, the existing literature on domestic violence in Cambodia, the 2005 government Demographic and Health Survey, and the existing legal protections and social resources for domestic violence victims.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

*Violence against women is the most pervasive yet least recognized human rights violation in the world.*

— L. Heise, M. Ellsberg, M. Gottmoeller, 2002 [1]

Domestic violence is a major social issue throughout the world that affects affluent and poor countries alike. While violence affects both genders, it is largely directed at women. While there is a growing body of literature on domestic violence in developed countries, the nature and experience of this issue in the developing world is less appreciated and understudied. The Southeast Asian country of Cambodia is one such country in which domestic violence is a pressing but inadequately addressed social problem. At least one in five Cambodian women have experienced domestic violence and there is poor support for victims [2]. Legislation is insufficient and the entire issue is enshrouded in silence as a private family matter. There are few resources for the vast majority of the population who live in the rural countryside as agriculturists and experience domestic violence. Poverty and financial stress, factors known to influence if not in some cases cause domestic violence, are high. Substantial data does exist in

the form of population surveys and more localized studies, which serve to document the extent and nature of domestic violence and characterize its particular cultural manifestations in Cambodia. Furthermore, some legal progress has been made and there are a number of women's rights groups in the country working to improve the situation for women. Still, there are ample opportunities for more research into this issue to both illuminate its causes and inform future interventions. In addition, research serves the important purposes of allowing victims to share their experiences—in many cases research presents the first chance for women to discuss their experiences.

The present study seeks to add to the existing literature on domestic violence in Cambodia by examining this issue in marginally urban village communities on the outskirts of Siem Reap. The scope of the research is limited and therefore it is primarily intended as both a preliminary investigation and as a narrative project that will illustrate the lived experience of domestic violence among women, effectively giving a voice to domestic violence victims. The project was conducted through field work in which semi-structured interviews with local women took place. A number of demographic and socioeconomic questions were asked in addition to questions regarding domestic violence, where appropriate. The research was conducted in coordination with two NGOs, Medicorps and Build Your Future Today Center (BFT Center), and the interviews took place with the help of a translator, Kosal Sang.

This research focuses on village communities referred to here as marginally urban because of their proximity both to the rural countryside and the urban city of Siem Reap, a city experiencing rapid growth through tourism and the emergence of a number of tourism related businesses and industries. The proximity of these villages to Siem Reap has resulted in a unique lifestyle that taps into both worlds. Many continue to practice agriculture and yet many work in

the city during the daytime, often in the burgeoning construction industry. In addition, many goods and supplies are obtained directly from the city and play a large part in the daily life of villagers (clothing, cookware, lighting, etc.). NGOs are also more likely to work in these communities rather than in more secluded rural settlements simply because of access, transportation, and logistics considerations. Thus, many residents of these villages had numerous items acquired through charitable NGOs, ranging from basic goods like batteries, clothing, and kitchenware, to large pots, wells, and entire houses or concrete foundations. These marginally urban communities therefore represent a transition from a more traditional, subsistence-agriculture based lifestyle to a more urbanized, wage-economy based lifestyle, a transition that the entire country has been undergoing since the fall of the Khmer Rouge. This transitional atmosphere is dynamic and constantly shapes community relations and individual lives. For these reasons, these marginally urban communities present a unique and important environment for the investigation of domestic violence.

Based on the nature of these communities and the prior data and literature concerning domestic violence in Cambodia some expectations and hypotheses were generated before conducting this research project. Because domestic violence has been documented as a widespread social issue it was expected that it would be encountered in some of the interviews. Additionally, it was anticipated that financial stress and economic hardship might play important roles in producing violence because these factors are known to influence domestic violence [50, 53-58]. It was also thought that these factors might play an especially important role in this study sample because of the unreliable and often arbitrary way in which some families benefit from NGOs and city-work and others do not. In other words, employment and subsistence are variable and unstable, and can exacerbate inequality and financial stress even if city contact with the city

results in increased income. In addition, consultation with BFT Center personnel suggested alcoholism and gambling as potentially important factors associated with domestic violence that should be examined. Finally, it was thought that Buddhism and the presence of Buddhist monks might play some role in mediation or conflict resolution. In short, the main hypotheses were that poverty, alcoholism, and gambling might be associated with domestic violence, and that the marginally urban structure of the villages might contribute in a unique way to the interplay between these factors.

### 3. BACKGROUND

#### 3.1 Cambodian History and Culture

*“The perception among Khmer that their culture has been lost, or is being lost, is pervasive. The destruction from years of warfare, the horrendous losses during the years of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979), followed by the presence of their traditional enemies, the Vietnamese, and, for hundreds of thousands of Khmer, the new realities of living beyond the borders of their country in camps and in third countries, all raise the anxiety that the Khmer as a people will cease to exist.” [3]*

— Judy Ledgerwood, May M. Ebihara, and Carol A. Mortland 1994 [4]

*Whether they like it or not, most Cambodians in 1990 inhabit a global village. ... In the 1990s, Cambodia is in the process of joining or being pulled into the wider region. It is difficult to predict the effects of this development on its sovereignty, its culture, and the well-being of its people. And it is impossible to say what use Cambodians in the twenty-first century will make of their history since 1945.*

— David Chandler, 1991 [5]

*The most crucial question for Cambodia is not so much its international position as its ability to rebuild a political system of its own.*

— Serge Thion, 1986 [6]

The country of Cambodia is located in Southeast Asia and is bordered by Vietnam in the east, Laos in the north, Thailand in the west, and the gulf of Thailand in the southwest. The country has a small population just under 15 million [7]. Most Cambodians live in the rural

countryside, which is largely undeveloped and impoverished; only 20% of the population is urban [7]. The capital and largest urban center of the country, Phnom Penh, is located in the southern central region of the country (country map to the right) and contains a population of 1.55 million people [7]. With a population just under 200,000, Siem Reap, located in northwest central Cambodia just north of the Tonle Sap Lake (the largest lake in Southeast Asia), is one of the largest urban areas in the country after the capital. Over 90% of Cambodia's population are speakers of Khmer



(pronounced Kh-my), the official language, and 96% are adherents of Buddhism, which plays an important role in their culture and community relations [8].

Over the centuries Cambodia has passed through a series of kingdoms, European colonization, occupations, independence, military coups, a communist revolution, and a finally a restoration of monarchy and tentatively peaceful and free elections. The earliest settlements in Cambodia stretch back into prehistory, with archaeological evidence demonstrating settlements in caves dating back to 4200 B.C.E. and perhaps earlier [9]. These nomadic, hunter-gatherer communities, which may have practiced swidden agriculture, gradually developed into a more sedentary culture that by 500 B.C.E. lived in fortified settlements with complex social systems and efficient agricultural production [10]. The following millennium represents the beginnings of the historical period before the rise of kingdoms, in which the Mekong River Delta (southeast of modern Phnom Penh) became a key region of developing civilizations [11].

In time the Mekong Delta would become the site of the Funan Kingdom, which was established in the first century and lasted until the sixth century. Systematic rice irrigation techniques and enhanced trade and contact with Indian and Chinese cultures distinguished this kingdom. Exports from Funan were primarily forest products and precious metals [12]. The extent of foreign contact is noted by the excavation of Roman coins in the area. As Funan gradually declined the Chenla Kingdom rose in power between the fourth and eighth centuries, but it was in 802 AD that the Khmer King Jayavarman II endeavored to establish the Angkorean Empire near present day Siem Reap, an empire that would last for over 600 years and whose temples still stand today [10]. The following centuries would see the construction of the magnificent temple complexes now referred to collectively as Angkor Wat (photographs depicted in Appendix III), which attract millions of tourists annually. Artistic reconstructions of these temples decorate the flags of all major Cambodian political parties, including the communist party. The Angkorean Empire lasted until 1432, when it was sacked by the Siamese (Thai) [9]. Migrations southward led to the founding of Phnom Penh as a new capital, a title it lost in 1505 but finally regained in 1866 under King Norodom I [12].

During this middle period came European contact. Portuguese missionaries first arrived in 1556, visiting the city of Lovek, the new capital, during the reign of King Cham. During the next three centuries Cambodia faced declines in territory as the country was plagued by constant disputes with or between its neighbors, Thailand and Vietnam [13]. Conditions became particularly bad in the nineteenth century. Historian David Chandler calls the first sixty years of this century the “darkest portion of Cambodia’s recorded history prior to the Armageddon of the 1970s” due to “foreign intervention, chaos, and the sufferings of the Cambodian people [12]. At last, in 1863, a tentative treaty was signed with French naval officers offering King Norodom I

protection in exchange from timber and mineral exploration rights. This established Cambodia as a French Protectorate, as part of French Indochina. French control lasted until the Second World War, when the French in Indochina capitulated to the wishes of advancing Japanese forces from China [10].

For the most part administration was left in the hands of the French; the Japanese were content to extract resources for the continuation of their war machine. On March 9, 1945, however, through a coordinated effort the Japanese seized control of Cambodia, disarming French units, and the following day King Norodom Sihanouk announced that the French protectorate had come to an end [5]. Following the end of WWII, Allied forces soon disarmed and repatriated the Japanese troops in Cambodia. Sihanouk was able to bring about independence officially in 1953 and he continued to rule until General Lon Nol seized power in a military coup in 1970 and Cambodia was established as a Republic [9]. The following four years were a highly unstable period full of civil war, invasion, conflicts with Vietnamese, and bombings, that the government survived largely because of assistance from the United States [12, 14].

On April 17, 1975 the unstable Republic succumbed to takeover by the Khmer Rouge (the Red Khmer) communist faction, a radical guerrilla group lead by Cambodian officials educated in Paris. The Khmer Rouge overtook Phnom Penh and enacted an extreme program of social and economic transformation, renaming the country Democratic Kampuchea (DK). Cities were evacuated, money and social classes abolished, religion was prohibited, agriculture and social activities were collectivized, and radical ideology imposed in an effort to revolutionize Khmer society by empowering its agricultural base. However, from the outset the regime's goals were unreasonable, perhaps insane: rice quotas for the entire country, for example, were set at levels over twice as high as the levels in the most productive areas before the revolution [5].

Educated professionals were targeted and killed, families were turned against one another, even loyalists were suspected and imprisoned; in all over 1.5 to over 2 million Cambodians were killed through execution, starvation, or disease, up to a quarter of the country's entire population.

The revolutionary party fiercely controlled all aspects of life, and was itself veiled in secrecy, with its leader Saloth Sar donning the revolutionary name Pol Pot just as the Khmer Rouge claimed power [14]. Fear and terror were used to manipulate the people, but these qualities were also pervasive throughout the regime inner party. Constant dread of enemies and subversives was ever-present, motivating campaigns of torture and execution, many of which took place in the state-controlled secret prison known as Tuol Sleng (S-21) [15]. Economic failures and food shortages led to further suspicions that population members were failing to adopt the correct "revolutionary consciousness". Over 14,000 suspected enemies were interrogated and executed at S-21 due to such suspicions or accusations. Pages upon pages of archived material from this facility detailing "strings of traitors" and "networks of conspiracy" uncovered through forced "confessions" illustrate how paranoid the inner party was over threats to its power [16]. Despite such methods of pervasive control, the regime deteriorated through its own paranoia and the collective economic and social disintegration of Cambodian society as a result of its policies. The DK period came to an end in 1979 when the Vietnamese invaded and ousted the Khmer Rouge [16]. One chilling account of this period comes from anthropologist Alexander Hinton in his book *Why Did They kill?*, which describes the ideological tactics implemented during the DK period drawn from in-depth interviews with many important party cadre members, including prison officials and senior party officials [16]. The cruelty and suffering of this period also have been described in personal accounts [17, 18].

Following the Vietnamese invasion, the 1980s found Cambodians slowly trying to rebuild their country and recover from the losses suffered under the DK. Aid and attention from Western powers was elevated during this period, however conflicts between the newly created People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK), the surviving Khmer Rouge, and two other political factions hampered progress by locking the country in a state of civil war [3]. Finally, after a decade of unrest peace accords were signed in Paris, the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) was established, and UN-sponsored elections were held in 1993 despite boycotting from the Khmer Rouge, which was never fully disbanded. The defection of Ieng Sary, the former DK foreign minister, began the dissolution of this group; Pol Pot was sentenced to house arrest the following year and died the year after, however other party officials and Pol Pot himself enjoyed or continue to enjoy considerable impunity for their actions [5]. Despite another coup, elections held in 1998 established a coalition government between the royalist political party FUNCINPEC and the Cambodian People's Party (CPP). At the turn of the century Cambodia was finally enjoying its first period of peace in nearly 40 years. Elections have continued to be relatively peaceful since then.

Over the last decade Cambodia has rapidly become modernized. Skyscrapers now dot the horizon in Phnom Penh and numerous private-sector, international, and government-funded projects contribute to development in diverse ways [19]; a project funded by the Ministry of Public Works and Korean Eximbank, for instance, is currently underway to expand the banks of the Siem Reap River, an effort that may alleviate flooding during the rainy season but will also evict the many people who live on the river bank. Western restaurants are beginning to appear in cities—a KFC was the first in Siem Reap—and numerous Western commodities, from Disney memorabilia to Angry Birds shirts and backpacks—are commonly found in stores. Economic

development has been occurring in the garment, construction, agriculture, and tourism industries [7]. The population continues to grow, having more than doubled since the early 1980s. However, in spite of these advances, Cambodia remains one of the poorest countries in Southeast Asia, by some estimates the poorest [20], with an average wage of \$2/day and an estimated 4 million living on less than \$1.25/day [7]. Some enduring obstacles are the “widespread existence of nepotism, clientelism, and corruption” and the domination of power and wealth by the elites [6, 21, 22], factors that are complicated by the misuse and outright thievery of foreign aid [23]. Moreover, the Cambodian government continues to violate the rights of its citizens with impunity, violations that are largely overlooked by the international community, and which in some cases seem to be linked to economic interests. The U.S. government, for example, lifted an aid ban on Cambodia just after the country awarded Chevron a contract for offshore oil drilling [24]. Some efforts have been made to counter these trends. For example, a large-scale human rights education program for health professionals was implemented at the invitation of UNTAC in the early 1990s [25].

Many correlations have been drawn between poverty, poor health, and disease, and Cambodia is no exception to this rule. With only 0.23 physicians/1,000 people health care is hard to come by and expensive for the vast majority (an estimated 80% or roughly 12 million people) of the population who live in rural areas [7]. One patient in the local hospital, a rural farmer, for example, had to have his leg amputated after a traffic accident because he was unable to be seen in time due to lack of transportation and hospital crowding. Many live without electricity or safe drinking water, infectious diseases continue to be a problem, especially HIV and malaria, and 37% of Cambodian children are chronically malnourished [7, 8]. Infant mortality hovers around 95 per 1,000 live births, compared to 5.9 in the United States [26, 27]. For women, these

socioeconomic conditions are compounded by cultural legacies that perpetuate gender inequality and discrimination and assert male dominance. “In terms of gender issues,” the Cambodian Committee for Women writes, “Cambodia has one of the highest rates of discrimination, this being assisted by Khmer culture and traditions that tend to position women at a lower status than men” [8]. Debt-bondage and brothel-based sexual exploitation, along with other forms of prostitution such as “bar girls” and “professional girlfriends” are other manifestations of gender discrimination and inequality, however in some interesting cases it seems women may manipulate these social arrangements for profit, opportunity, and even increased social status [28-30].

Social status and rank are very important in Cambodian culture and are largely formulated through the concept of *face*, which Alexander Hinton refers to as “one of the key elements informing group interactions” [16]. One’s face is determined by the impressions of others and is correlated with honor and shame, and these impressions exert strong control over behavior. Conformity to social hierarchy, respect for elders, dominance of men, religious adherence, and community values are regulated in part by social pressure, expectations of behavior from others, and social evaluations. The social structure that coordinates these communities is a local Buddhist shrine, a *wat*. Cities and communities continue to be organized around these religious centers. Buddhist religious practice, particularly nonviolence and the control of anger through the law of karma, are especially important in personal and community relationships [16]. The importance of Buddhist values in communities is illustrated by a study of Cambodian refugee communities in Massachusetts in which Buddhist monks played a central role in anger regulation and conflict resolution [31]. Generalized reciprocity is also an important element of Khmer culture, dictating the shared use of resource and informal exchanges of goods.

Despite the contention that reciprocity has diminished in recent decades due to lingering mistrust from the DK period and the progressive introduction of market economic systems, it nevertheless still plays an important role: “In everyday practice, villagers on occasion share food, alcohol, care of children, stories and information with one another, if not on a universal scale, then at least between a few select kinfolk and neighbours” [4]. However, the importance of market economies and wage labor, especially in urban cities, cannot be denied, regardless their effect on community and social relationships.

In sum, Cambodia is a country with a rich and deep history that has recently undergone dramatic changes, from decolonization to revolution to invasion and finally slow political stabilization. At present it seems the country will continue to enjoy relative peace and political stability with increasing influence and investment from foreign countries stimulating development. Despite Western contact, however, Cambodia’s legacy of poverty, which stems from the DK-period policies, and poor public health continue to challenge the nation, yet traditional cultural values, especially Buddhism, continue to be important. However, despite the anxiety expressed in the quotes preceding this section, it is likely that Khmer culture will persist, perhaps transformed, but nevertheless uniquely Khmer. The perseverance of Buddhism and other social customs through the colonial period and during DK, when religion was outlawed, point strongly to this fact. These customs and cultural conditions are the background upon which the contemporary social problem of domestic violence takes place in Cambodia

### 3.2 Background on Domestic Violence in Cambodia

*The oppression of Cambodian society is that they think that women can be victimized, whatever, that's okay. The custom is like that. But for us women, I think there's real suffering. But there is not choice, because the Cambodian custom is this way already.*

— Cambodian immigrant living in the United States, 2005 [32]

*For many Cambodians, home remains a place where terror reigns.*

— Cambodian Committee for Women, 2010 [8]

*Social empowerment remains one of the most pressing demands of women rural and urban activists in Cambodia. In spite of the tremendous sacrifices women were asked to make throughout the 1980s—giving up sons to the war, taking over agricultural production for the defence of the motherland, supporting the front throughout the war and staffing state institutions—they were left with little status, prestige or dignity after the war.*

— Kate Grace Frieson, 2011 [4]

Domestic violence as a social problem has been addressed by researchers and social workers more prevalently in developed countries than in developing countries, despite being a widespread problem common to both. Cambodia is no exception in this regard, a fact evident from the relative absence of research articles available on domestic violence in this country. This section will provide an overview of the published literature surrounding the topic of domestic violence within Cambodia after explaining the social and legal context of this important social issue. It will begin with a description of the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Protection of Victims, which was passed in 2005 by the Cambodian government. This law represents the first and only legal precedent concerning domestic violence in the country after the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1992. Recent government health surveys will also be discussed, which have provided a valuable systematic and comprehensive overview of a variety of health determinants across the country, including domestic violence. After establishing the current legal and social context

surrounding domestic violence an overview of the existing literature will be given with a focus on the factors involved in motivating violent behavior in Cambodian marriages and current work that seeks to mediate and alleviate the suffering of victims.

Although the Cambodian government ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) [33] in 1992 it took another 13 years before the government was to pass any formal law concerning domestic violence. This occurred in 2005 when the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Protection of Victims (hereafter referred to as the Domestic Violence Law) was passed by the Cambodian government [34]. The law's described objective is "to prevent domestic violence, protect the victims and strengthen the culture of non-violence and the harmony within the households in society in the Kingdom of Cambodia" and espouses a purpose of establishing "a legal mechanism to prevent domestic violence." According to the law, domestic violence is defined as "the violence that happens and could happen towards 1) husband or wife, 2) dependent children, and/or 3) persons living under the roof of the house who are dependent of the households." Furthermore, violence is defined as "acts affecting life, acts affecting physical integrity, torture or cruel acts, and/or sexual aggression." In comparison to this definition, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, passed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1993, defines domestic violence as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life" [35]. Interestingly, while human rights terminology plays an important role in the U.N. document's definition of domestic violence human rights rhetoric is almost completely absent from the Cambodian Domestic Violence Law.

The Domestic Violence Law established a legal foundation for understanding, preventing, and addressing incidents of domestic violence and provides guidelines for families, law enforcement officers, and the court system for handling domestic violence cases. It represents the first legal effort in this regard in the country after CEDAW. In addition, the law makes suggestions on mediation and counseling strategies for families and asserts “the State shall pay attention to educating and disseminating this law to make citizens throughout the country aware of the provisions in this law.” Although the Domestic Violence Law represents a praiseworthy step toward addressing a widespread and severe social issue, many would argue that it is poorly formulated, implemented ineffectively, and inadequate overall. The Cambodian Committee of Women (CAMBOW), a self-described “coalition of 34 local organizations working to advance the causes of women in Cambodia,” has argued in a 2007 report, for instance, that the implementation of CEDAW and the 2005 Domestic Violence Law are insufficiently addressing the needs of Cambodian women and more legal reform is required [36].

In its 2007 report, CAMBOW examined a number of laws in addition to the 2005 Domestic Violence Law and concluded “Cambodia’s laws relating to violence against women are failing to protect Cambodian women from violence, exploitation in any form, and discrimination. The laws need to be amended, drafted and implemented in accordance with the principles of the CEDAW” [36]. The report covers four major issues involving women: domestic violence, marriage, rape, and human trafficking, and illustrates many of its points through case studies and personal quotations, complemented with literature references. Overall, the CAMBOW report represents a substantial and recent condemnation of the current atmosphere surrounding domestic violence legislation and its effectiveness in Cambodia. Another report relevant here is the 2010 document prepared by NGO-CEDAW and CAMBOW entitled

*Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women In Cambodia, 2010* [8]. This document likewise argues that the CEDAW ratification and 2005 Domestic Violence Law are “promising, but implementation has been weak” [8]. The report ends the chapter on domestic violence with 11 recommendations for the Cambodian government, which range from empowering women to providing improved guarantees of economic, social, and health-oriented rights for women. One of the largest issues is that the majority of the rural population simply is not aware of CEDAW or the Domestic Violence Law. A report published by Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC) for example reported that “some respondents were aware of the Domestic Violence Law, but it appears that further dissemination and enforcement efforts are needed, along with an array of interventions by government and other agencies” [37]. The ratification of CEDAW and passing of the 2005 Domestic Violence Law are nevertheless encouraging, however, because they demonstrate that the Cambodian government is at the very least aware of domestic violence against women and at some level interested in addressing this problem. One last encouraging document is a 2010 government handbook that acknowledges the lack of awareness surrounding domestic violence issues and attempts to provide guidelines for discussing domestic violence and mediating conflicts [38].

In 2005 the National Institute of Public Health and the National Institute of Statistics of the Cambodian government published a Demographic and Health Survey that reported in detail many statistics regarding population health throughout the country [2]. This survey is the second of three like it, the others being published in 2000 [13] and 2010 [39]. The 2000 and 2005 surveys examined domestic violence, among many other issues, and both concluded that domestic violence is a widespread and pressing social issue. The methods and results of these

surveys were similar and the 2005 survey will be discussed in detail because it represents the more recent of the two. The 2010 Demographic and Health Survey did not survey women on the issue of domestic violence but did include a chapter entitled *Women's Empowerment and Demographic Health Outcomes* that discussed the economic status of women, employment, attitudes toward wife beating, and reproductive health.

With regard to domestic violence data, the 2000 and 2005 Demographic and Health Surveys mirrored the research project reported here in many ways. A number of pointed questions were asked in a safe interview setting by trained interviewers to assess physical and emotional violence measures. The survey and measurement methods were modeled on work conducted by Murray Straus and colleagues in 1990 [40]. The 2005 survey interviewed a total of 2,037 women between the ages of 15 and 49 from urban and rural provinces throughout the country and reported that 22.3% had experienced some form of domestic violence; with 10.3% experiencing an incident of violence within the past 12 months [2]. The 2000 survey reported similar results, with 23.2% of 2,403 ever-married women reporting that they had at one point experienced domestic violence [13]. The 2005 survey reported a number of additional interesting observations worth noting. For instance, if violence did occur it was seen to begin early after marriage and increase in prevalence with age. Additionally, rates of violence were highest in the marriages of women who were later divorced or separated, with 33% experiencing emotional violence and 24% experiencing physical violence [34]. Furthermore, violence was observed to be lowest among women with secondary or higher education and higher among women who are employed for cash [34]. The survey also reported that roughly only one in three women who have experienced violence sought help from someone else [34].

The Demographic and Health Surveys have compiled ample evidence that domestic violence is a widespread and serious social issue throughout the country, revealing that just over one in five ever-married women have experienced violence in some form during their marriage. According to a 2010 U.N. report on violence against women worldwide violence varies greatly geographically, with some countries reporting shockingly high rates of near or over 50% (Zambia, Peru, Ethiopia), and others reporting levels less than 10% (Canada, Albania, Switzerland) [41]. Among the countries represented here, Cambodia's rate of 20% is on the lower end of the spectrum, but is still comparable to the U.S. average between 20 and 25% [42, 43] and the global average of 30% [44] and nevertheless still a high number. While these numbers serve to illustrate the extent of the social issue they do little to probe the cultural subtleties and etiological components of domestic violence. As Rebecca Surtees writes, "Uncovering a glaring social problem is one thing. Accounting for it and addressing it in appropriate ways is another" [45].

One of the key themes in an article published by Surtees in 2003 is that in order to "understand and redress domestic violence, it is critical that we analyze and understand the cultural terrain upon which this violence occurs" [45]. Surtees argues that in Cambodia this cultural terrain consists largely of the importance of the household and the status and prestige associated with female domesticity and the role of the wife and mother, a dynamic supported by the Buddhist monastic order which relies on women's donations to a large degree. Related to the value of the household and domesticity is the fact that domestic violence in Cambodian culture is conceptualized as a "private, family issue rather than as a public and social problem" [45]. This view is illustrated well in a study investigating domestic violence among Cambodian immigrant women in the United States: "[When] our family has a fight, we can't let outsiders know. We

just want to keep it in our family” [32]. The cultural conception of masculinity also contributes to the generation of violent behavior: according to study in Cambodia conducted in 2010 “the dominant construction of masculinity is associated with dominance, control, and superiority over women” [37]. Furthermore, Cambodian men often feel justified in the use of violence as a means of punishing their wife’s failures in household matters. This belief is restricted neither to men nor to Cambodia. One cross-cultural study found, for example, that men and women accept wife beating as a justified response to transgressions in a variety of Asian cultures to varying degrees depending on the country [46]. Rates were reported up to 57% in India and 56% in Turkey; the rate in Cambodia was reported as 35% (only women surveyed, 36.9% among rural respondents and 25.8% among urban). Another study conducted by researchers from Columbia University found similar results for Asian immigrants living in the United States [47]. It is therefore clear that wife beating is a cultural practice that at least some fraction of both Cambodian men and women accept as normal and appropriate behavior, when used in response to perceived transgressions [47]. One article summarized such transgressions, which exist as cultural norms in countries across the globe, including Cambodia, as “not obeying her husband, talking back, not having food ready on time, failing to care adequately for the children or home, questioning him about money or girlfriends, going somewhere without his permission, refusing him sex, or expressing suspicions of infidelity” [1].

The 2010 report prepared by NGO-CAMBOW sums up the many factors associated with the perpetuation of domestic violence and the silence of victims as follows: “the permissiveness of the community, the fear of being stigmatized, social rejection, the isolation of victims, and ignorance of laws prohibiting domestic violence” [8]. Another illustration of the gender-based inequality that legitimates and drives domestic violence comes from one Cambodian aid worker,

who explained in a 1998 interview “When a man is killed by a woman, the woman will go to jail. When a man kills a man, the man will go to jail. When a man kills a woman, the husband pays off the family, or nothing at all happens. It is the difference between women and men” [45]. A similar view is seen in the informant quoted at the beginning of this section that cites Cambodian customs as victimizing towards women. Thus, there are numerous cultural components that contextualize the experience of domestic violence in Cambodia ranging from gender inequalities, traditional values associated with domesticity and marriage, the public vs. private dichotomy, and the attitude that wife beating is an appropriate and acceptable practice. Domestic violence is affected not only by a sociocultural context, but it is also structured by political, historical, and economic factors. This is especially true in Cambodia, a relatively poor country that has over the last half-century undergone many dramatic political, economic, and developmental transitions and changes.

An article published by the London School of Economics in 2008 entitled *‘Fire in the House’: Gendered experiences of drunkenness and violence in Siem Reap, Cambodia* attempts to shed some light on how these transitional processes influence the experience of domestic violence, and thus paints a more complete picture of the context in which wife beating takes place in Cambodia. [27]. In this paper Katherine Brickell examines violence and alcohol consumption through one hundred oral history interviews conducted in two locations, Slorkram in the center of Siem Reap and Krobei Rei which encompasses communities in the rural vicinity of Siem Reap. Brickell frames her discussion largely in terms of the post-conflict developmental transition Cambodia has been undergoing and continues to undergo since the 1975-1979 Democratic Kampuchea period. This transition is threefold: “from armed conflict to peace, from political authoritarianism to liberal democracy, and from a socialist economic system to one

based on market-driven capitalist growth” [27]. The oral history interviews depict associations between poverty, alcoholism, and violence, as well as violence as a legacy of the Khmer Rouge regime: “They drink because they are unhappy and have stressful work earning money for the family,” “Today’s violence arises from people’s experiences during Pol Pot and the Vietnamese” [27]. Brickell concludes that violence is “conceived of in context of a myriad of post-conflict dynamics” and that an emphasis is placed on “external factors as largely responsible for gender-based violence” rather than alcoholism per se [27]. Furthermore, she makes note of what she calls “one of the most serious and perhaps alarming aspects of domestic violence in Cambodia – the culture of impunity and tacit acceptance surrounding it” which depends greatly on the norms associated with private matters, family, and the household [27]. Overall, this study situates alcoholism and domestic violence within a cultural and historical context and argues that it is essential to take this context into account when designing interventions and conducting future research.

Brickell’s research suggests some of the causes behind domestic violence behavior and describes how financial stress, alcohol consumption, and changing cultural values are interlaced in complicated ways with macro political, social, and economic transitions. R.V. Bhatt likewise emphasizes economic concerns and substance abuse as prime causes of domestic violence [48]. The 2010 GADC report also identified alcohol abuse and financial issues as risk factors for domestic violence, along with childhood experiences of violence, social isolation, sexual coercion, and patriarchal expectations [37]. In an analysis of the 2000 Demographic and Health Survey dataset, Kathryn Yount and Jennifer Carrera tested five hypotheses in an effort to further elucidate how marital resources and early-life experiences predict domestic violence [20]. The main findings of this study are an association between reduced household standard of living and

the likelihood of experiencing physical domestic violence and the observation that wives with more children and fewer years of schooling were more likely to experience domestic violence. In other words, poverty and socioeconomic dependence on their partners predisposed Cambodian wives to experiencing domestic violence in the 2000 dataset. Yount and Carrera suggest two mechanisms that may account for the relationship between household standard of living and domestic violence: 1) “men in poor households who lack economic resources may instead use physical force to control their partners” and 2) “a low household standard of living may elevate men’s stress, which increases the risk of physically abusing their wives” [20]. These mechanisms may be especially important in Cambodia because the majority of the population is poor and may frequently experience stress associated with supporting their families. In many cases this stress is not unrelated to the continuing developmental challenges the country faces, which are again results of the systemic infrastructure collapse precipitated by the Khmer Rouge takeover in the 1970s.

A later study on the 2005 health survey dataset was performed by researchers at Texas Tech University to expand on the analysis conducted by Young and Carrera [49]. While Yount and Carrera examined the relationship between martial resources and domestic violence the authors here asked specifically how the frequency of spousal discussion predicted domestic violence. Consistent with the view of the Cambodian family as a male-dominated, patriarchal social structure, Sothy Eng and colleagues hypothesized that spousal discussion would be interpreted as a threat to male power and thus correlated positively with domestic violence and the level of control by the husband. The study found that the frequency of spousal discussion positively predicted the experience of emotional violence, but not physical violence. Here ‘spousal discussion’ refers to daily life conversations and Eng et al. interpret their results as an

indication that increased discussion by wives challenges accepted gender norms held by husbands and motivates them to exert control over their wives through increased emotional violence. These studies together demonstrate that domestic violence in Cambodia takes place in a very culturally specific context, influenced and is structured by the recently unstable political atmosphere, traditional gender and family values, gender inequality, socioeconomic factors, and numerous other components such as education level, early-life experiences, and the frequency of spousal discussion.

Social science research often seeks to understand behavior such as domestic violence in order to design improved prevention, mediation, or intervention strategies. Although legal and institutional efforts to redress domestic violence in Cambodia continue to be lacking, especially in the rural countryside, the efforts of some groups, especially women's rights oriented NGOs, are worth mentioning as existing efforts that seek to ameliorate domestic violence. Surtees' article discusses the work of two NGOs, the Cambodian Women's Crisis Center (CWCC) and the Project Against Domestic Violence (PADV), and their efforts to design culturally sensitive domestic violence interventions that take into account the complex cultural terrain of domestic violence in Cambodia. CWCC, for instance, attempts to reconcile marriages through the use of negotiated marriage contracts. This approach is notable for two reasons: 1) reconciliation is preferable over separation and divorce because of the traditional value placed in marriage and family (hence this approach is culturally sensitive) and 2) CWCC's mediation contracts represent an improved and enforced version of a preexisting state-administered marriage reconciliation process. One important distinguishing feature of CWCC's marriage contracts is that they emphasize the wife's decision-making power instead of allowing the decisions to be based only on the husband's interests.

The Project Against Domestic Violence (PADV), in comparison, is primarily an awareness agency that seeks to shift the problem of domestic violence from the private to the public sphere, thus transforming the cultural terrain in which it exists. PADV has produced a number of different informational materials intended to educate the public on the issue of domestic violence, but one of their most interesting and influential campaigns has been a 1998 national theatre tour in which a theatre troupe enacted a play that depicted two families, one enjoying a “happy and good life” and the other suffering “much misfortune and pain, due to domestic violence” [45]. This approach not only served the purpose of raising awareness surrounding domestic violence but also subtly encouraged a shift in the way domestic violence is conceptualized—surely a matter suitable for a public performance is not something that should be private and never discussed. Furthermore, the play implicitly denounced domestic violence as an appropriate method of handling domestic matters insofar as it was associated with the misfortune and unhappiness of the family in which it took place. The underlying argument is violence begets misery so one *should not* use violence as a means of resolving conflicts. Together, the work of CWCC and PADV demonstrate that there are groups within Cambodia who are involved in addressing and alleviating the problem of domestic violence, and that they are doing so through culturally sensitive methods. As Surtees writes, the most compelling aspect of these approaches is “how their interventions mesh with social norms, while simultaneously challenging the permissibility of domestic violence” [45].

Another recently published document that seeks to address the silence surrounding domestic violence is the already mentioned guidebook entitled *Talking About Domestic Violence: A Handbook for Village Facilitators* which was published in 2010 by the Cambodian Ministry of the Interior and UNDP Cambodia [38]. This handbook was created based on the

work of the Access to Justice Project (2006-2010), which was intended to “create solutions that bridge the gaps between the formal and informal justice systems in a way that is effective, responsible and accessible”. It is meant to provide guidelines for conducting community conversations on domestic violence and mediating resolutions to disputes. This handbook, published through government ministries, further illustrates efforts made by the Cambodian government to confront the issue of domestic violence.

The government health surveys and the work of women’s rights groups and other researchers have made it clear that domestic violence is a serious social issue in Cambodia, with statistics on par with worldwide averages. Moreover, the presentation of domestic abuse is unique in Cambodia, with a number of cultural values and norms, both informal and institutional, serving to perpetuate the problem and maintain the silence of victims. Despite the efforts mentioned above, many women still lack awareness or resources when it comes to domestic violence—there is really nowhere to turn; not even the police can be trusted. Poverty exacerbates the problem, further limiting the agency of women, rendering them dependent on their husbands, and in some cases motivating the anger and violence itself. Many changes will be needed to alleviate the problem of domestic violence, from shifts in cultural attitudes, political and institutional reform, improved education, counseling strategies, social support, resource centers, and more. While some of these efforts have been undertaken to various degrees, there is still much room for improvement, work that will require the coordination and cooperation of the government, Cambodians, health workers, NGOs, and foreign countries.

#### 4. METHODS

The purpose of this research study was to provide a preliminary understanding of domestic violence in marginally urban Cambodian communities through ethnographic fieldwork. The methods utilized were participant observation and one-on-one translator-facilitated interviews. The research project was initially established through correspondence with the humanitarian organization Medicorps, through which I was placed in contact with BFT Center, a Cambodian-based NGO headquartered in Siem Reap. This connection was established after I expressed an interest in engaging in anthropological fieldwork in Cambodia.

The research took place during three weeks in the month of May during the year 2012. Interviews were conducted in collaboration with BFT Center, which had already developed a network of communities in which it led various outreach programs, which ranged from English language lessons to health education to the donation of food or construction of wells. Thus, in this study, BFT personnel introduced us to the families to be interviewed. A Khmer medical student, Kosal Sang, facilitated the interviews by serving as a translator. Typically, I would ask questions which Kosal would translate into Khmer. He would then do his best to translate the women's responses back to me but in some cases the answers became very drawn out and he was unable to remember and translate everything that was said. Usually, the only individuals present in the interviews were the interviewed woman, Kosal, and myself with the exception of babies, children, and in some cases BFT personnel. Other exceptions are noted in the results section. A total of 11 interviews were conducted.

The villages surveyed were all located within 25 miles of Siem Reap and accessible by motorbike after a 20-30 minute ride. Upon leaving the urban center of the city paved roads quickly turned into rough, uneven, and narrow dirt roads upon which two cars would have

difficulty passing one another. Buildings and other establishments disappeared and were replaced by vegetation, rice fields, and occasional structures. A 'village' constituted a collection of households within a somewhat localized space and also encompassed some measure of agricultural land. A dozen households is a rough average for the size of a village. Each household was typically constructed in somewhat close proximity to the dirt road that connected it to other villages and Siem Reap. The interviews were conducted within or just outside of the household of each individual interviewed.

The interviews were semi-structured and took place in the morning between 9am and 12pm and were recorded with an iPhone. Notes were also taken by hand during the interviews and compiled afterward. Photos of the villages and in some cases the interviewed families were also taken to improve the documentation process and some are appended below. A generalized questionnaire was followed but questions were tailored to the individual interview, the presence of others, and the individual's willingness to respond. Before this research occurred IRB approval was obtained from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville Institutional Review Board and an informed consent document was prepared in English and translated into Khmer. The interview questionnaire followed a pattern that proceeded from general biographical and demographic information to socioeconomic questions to questions concerning marriage relationships and domestic violence and was developed in consultation with BFT staff. In hindsight, other questions present themselves that would have been very useful to ask, such as whether or not participants were aware of the 2005 law on domestic violence. However, the haste in which the research project was formulated and conducted resulted in some omissions such as this. The informed consent document was presented at the beginning of the interview as we explained our identity and the intent of the research. A copy of the informed consent

document is attached as appendix I (English) and appendix II (Khmer translation). An overview of a typical series of interview questions is as follows:

- What do you do for a living? What does your husband do for a living?
- About how much a day do you make? Does your husband make? Do you feel like this is sufficient to meet the needs of your family?
- How do you spend the money earned?
- Have you made any visits to the local health center? The city hospital? Why and how was the treatment you received?
- Can you describe the work of BFT and your impression of the organization?
- Do your children attend school? What is your level of education?
- Have your children taken English lessons?
- What would you like your children to be able to do in the future?
- Tell us about your family (children, relatives, their occupations, etc.).
- How long have you and your husband been married? How is your relationship?
- Have you had any arguments or disagreements with your husband?
- Has domestic abuse been an issue in your family? Can you describe this?
- If domestic abuse has been an issue, what coping strategies have you used to deal with this?
- Do you know if domestic violence is a problem in other families?
- What do you think is the reason behind families that do not have an issue with domestic abuse?
- What do you think are the causes of domestic abuse in your family? Does your husband drink or gamble? Do you think this plays a role?
- Are you or your husband stressed economically and do you think this plays a role in domestic abuse?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

The interview recordings and notes were compiled and analyzed for patterns based common themes and similarities. As mentioned, each interview was adjusted to the individual circumstances and the responses and responsiveness of the individual being interviewed. The interviews provide narrative descriptions of domestic violence experiences and thus offer a window into these experiences within a specific cultural and social context. This narrative aspect was part of the intended purpose of the research, as it both gives a voice to victims and provides insight into the lived experience of domestic abuse.

A few concerns regarding the methodology should be mentioned here. These concerns involve mainly the honesty of the answers we received. The most apparent concern with the methodology is the fact that both of the interviewers, Kosal and myself, are males who were attempting to discuss domestic violence with women. In the majority of domestic violence cases males are the perpetrators of violence, thus the women interviewed may not have felt comfortable discussing domestic violence with us. The experience of Katherine Brickell in her research suggests, however, that this might not be that great of a concern, as she reported that in the majority of cases “women appeared happy to discuss their lives with the male research assistant” [27]. Another reason the women may not have felt comfortable discussing domestic violence with us was a lack of trust or understanding about how the information would be used, even after our purposes were made apparent. Additionally, domestic abuse is considered a private matter in Cambodian culture and as such not openly discussed or made public in any way. It is not something that is talked about and even though resources for domestic violence victims remain few and far between there is even less willingness among victims to access these resources. Therefore it is likely that some women simply did not feel inclined to discuss this issue with us because it is such a private matter. A final concern is the presence of other family members in some of the interviews. In some cases other villagers, family members, and even the husbands of the interviewees were present or nearby during the interview. This could have influenced the women’s openness in responding to our questions greatly and we attempted to adjust our questions in these settings to avoid introducing unnecessary conflict. Despite these concerns the expressiveness of some individuals when asked about domestic abuse suggests that their answers were fully honest. Instances in which Kosal and I shared doubt regarding the honesty of the interviewees will be mentioned below in the results section.

## 5. RESULTS

The interviews ranged from around 20 minutes to over an hour. In general, the women interviewed were very open to discussing their lives and the opinions and experiences regarding domestic violence, as evidenced both by the detail of their answers and their emotional engagement during the interview. Some of the women, for instance, barely had to be asked about domestic violence before they were vigorously recounting their frustration with their husbands. The women were first asked about the employment, background, and family. Their ages ranged from 20 to 55, with an average age of 36, and their number of children ranged from 0 to 11, with an average of 4. Income also varied, averaging approximately \$5.00/day but ranging from \$1.50/day to between \$10 and \$15/day. The average wage in Cambodia is around \$2.00/day. There was a good level of consistency between the different families regarding employment. Most wives stayed at home during the day to look after the children and were involved in craft activities such as basket weaving (which could be sold to other Cambodians or tourists) or bamboo framing (for houses). Husbands, on the other hand, typically worked in temporary construction or other wage-labor positions in the city, to which they would commute every day. Generally the husbands made more money because of this, but their employment was also insecure; once a project was finished a man could remain jobless for a month or more until being hired again. The eleven women interviewed came from 4 different villages that were all near one another within a roughly 30-minute commute by motorbike from Siem Reap. Near to these villages was a community health center that could provide basic treatments and some medicine (e.g. contraceptives, pain relievers, etc.) and all the women interviewed were aware of the health center and the services it provided. None of the women reported having discussed domestic violence with health workers. Figure 1 depicts the overall demographic information and Tables 1

and 2 present more detailed information on demographics and employment, respectively. These figures are appended later in the results section and are ordered first by response to whether violence was prevalent (yes, no, doesn't know) and then by age (younger to old). The order is consistent across all three tables.

Out of the eleven women interviewed, four admitted that their husbands were violent towards them, with the violence primarily being physical (hitting, slapping, beating) with very little mention of any use of weapons. In three of these cases the husbands were also reported to harm the children. One of the eleven women was not asked about domestic violence because of the constant presence nearby of both her husband and other families. A total of seven interviewees said that they were aware that violence was a problem among other families (only two of these also reported suffering domestic violence themselves, thus five women who were not victims of domestic violence reported that it was a problem in other families). When asked what they thought the cause of the violence was, alcohol, economic stress, poverty, and gambling were most commonly cited, however not all women had ready answers to this question. A variety of responses were given to the question of how the women coped with the problem. Some said they simply ignored their husband when he became violent, others appealed to village managers or family members, and one was actively seeking a divorce (an extreme solution given the stigma associated with divorce in Cambodian culture). The results of the questions specific to domestic violence are reported in Figure 2 and Table 3 presents more detailed information.

Beyond reporting the results an important part of this research project is the presentation of narratives characterizing the lived experience of domestic violence within the Cambodian cultural context for the women interviewed. This not only gives these victims a voice but also provides a more complete description of how domestic violence behavior is structured, produced,

and culturally interpreted. Moreover, these interviews could potentially guide future research and efforts to design domestic violence interventions. Following the tables and figures are narratives that depict the experiences of our interviewees, as related to us in their answers to our questions. The narratives represent the viewpoints of the four individuals who admitted to suffering domestic violence and those of four individuals who did not experience domestic violence. In the following narrative essays the real names of individuals and the names of the villages in which they live have been changed to protect the confidentiality of the research participants. Any direct quotations are written verbatim from what Kosal translated into English from the original Khmer during the interview.

**Table 1: Detailed Demographic Information**

Name	Village	Age	Children
Yoki	Svay Chek	n/a	3
Cheayean	Phnum Proek	30	2
Kiri	Phnum Proek	35	3
Sreykun	Chamkar	43	5
Vatey	Svay Chek	n/a	11
Sreykeo	Chamkar	20	1
Tola	Phnum Proek	35	5
Nuon	Phnum Proek	44	3
Lim and Ary	Chamkar	47, 44	3
Soriya	Chamkar	55	7
Soboan	Koas Krala	22	0

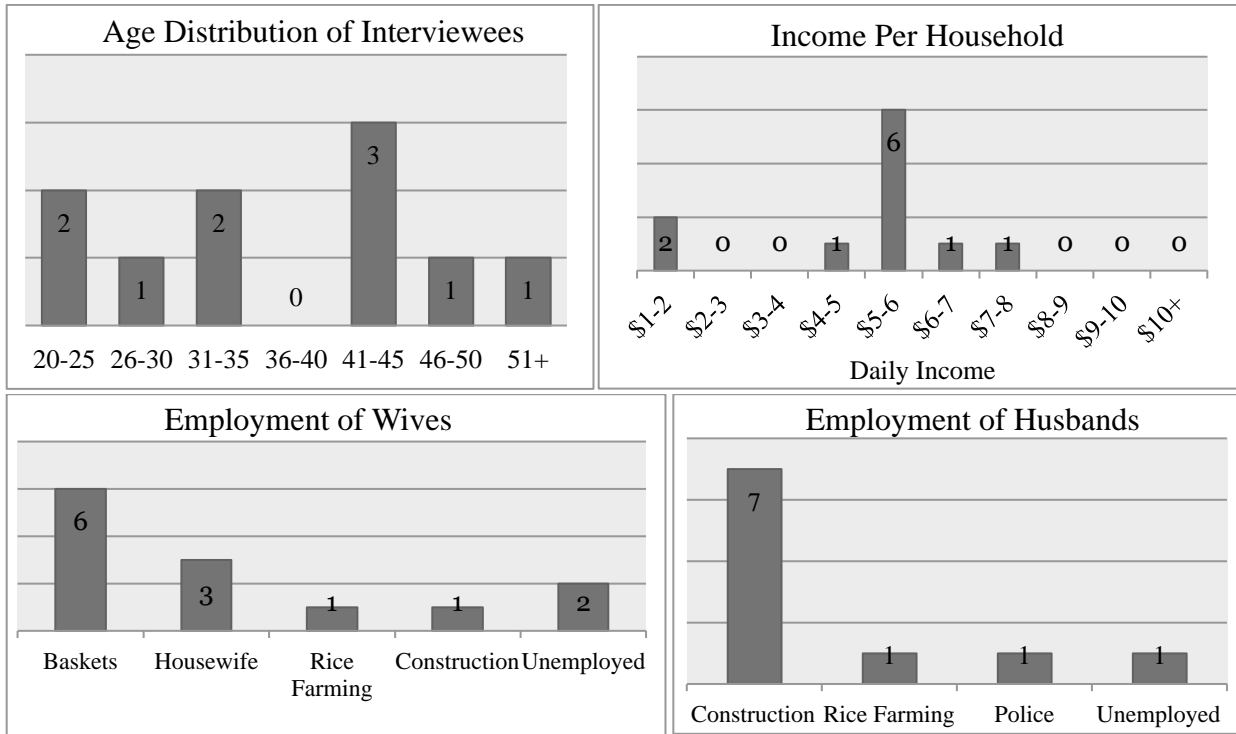
**Table 2: Employment and Income Information**

Employment of Wife	Employment of Husband	Income	Expenditures
Construction in Siem Reap, \$2/day	Construction in Siem Reap, \$4-5/day	\$6-7	Family Food
House maid, unemploy.	Carpenter, \$4/day	\$4	Family Food
Basket selling, \$1-2/day	Construction in Siem Reap, \$3-4/day	\$4-6	Food and clothes
Basket selling, \$1.5	Previous construction employment	\$1.50	School, Food
Basket selling, \$1/day		\$1	
Housewife, baskets, \$1	Construction in Siem Reap, \$4/day	\$5	Food and Groceries
Housewife, occasional basket making	Construction in Siem Reap, \$5-6/day	\$5-6	
Sowing; BFT; baskets	Husband does not live with wife	\$10-15	
Rice Farming, Palm Juice	Rice Farming, Palm Juice	\$5	
Unemployed (remittances from family)	Deceased (previously a policeman)	\$5	
Bamboo wall framing, ~\$4/frame	Recycling, ~\$5 per visit	\$7	

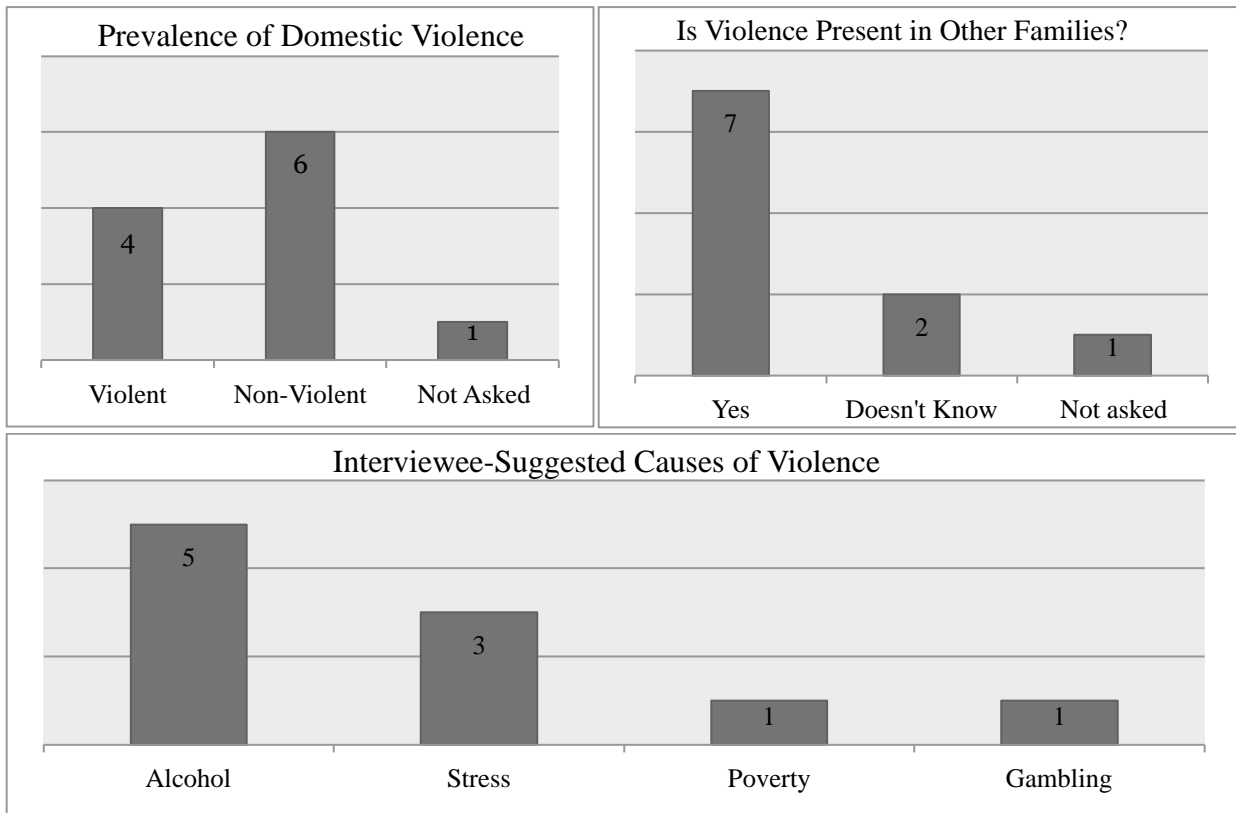
**Table 3: Detailed Information Pertaining to Domestic Violence Questions**

Name	Is husband violent?	Harms children?	Violence among other families?	Identified cause(s):	Coping strategy?
Yoki	Yes	n/a	Yes	Alcohol, stress, poverty	Ignore husband
Cheayean	Yes	Yes	Doesn't know	Alcohol, stress	Parents help
Kiri	Yes	Yes	Yes	Alcohol, stress, gambling	Manager/monks
Sreykun	Yes	Yes	Doesn't know	Alcohol, doesn't know	Divorce
Vatey	No	n/a	Yes	Alcohol	Ignore husband
Sreykeo	No	No	Doesn't know	n/a	n/a
Tola	No	No	Yes	n/a	Ignore husband
Nuon	No	No	Yes	n/a	n/a
Lim and Ary	No	No	Yes	n/a	n/a
Soriya	No	No	Yes	n/a	Ignore
Soboan	Not Asked	Not Asked	n/a	n/a	n/a

**Figure 1: Demographic, Employment, and Income Information from all Interviews.**



**Figure 2: Domestic Violence Interview Data.**



*Tola, Phnum Proek Village*

Tola is 35 years old with 5 children. She has been married to her husband since 1998. He works as a construction worker in Siem Reap. While her husband earns around \$5-6 per day, Tola is unemployed, making her husband's income the sole income of the family. When asked about her relationship with her husband, Tola replied that her husband has never been violent toward her. They do have disagreements, however, most often about the "family economy". Because they own no agricultural land, they must buy rice and other food items. Furthermore, she spends around \$0.25 per child for school daily, and this is of course in addition to other daily expenses and other occasional costs, such as clothing. When Tola was asked if her husband's income was sufficient for their family's needs, she replied, "Of course it is only a little bit". Tola's husband does not gamble and only drinks occasionally with friends. When asked if she knew about any other families in which domestic violence was an issue, Tola pointed to another house nearby, where her cousin lived, stating, "The man, the husband is always drunk and he goes to the drinking place again, and the wife goes to work. The wife just had a small baby three or four months ago and then she goes to work while the husband drinks". Tola's cousin made money by hiring herself out to farms where she could make up to \$2 or \$3 per day. When Tola was asked about whether her cousin talked to her about her husband, Tola replied, "Sometimes when she's free she comes and talks to her but mostly she doesn't dare to talk about it if her husband is around."

*Yoki, Svay Chek Village*

Yoki lives with her husband and three children in a small stilted home made of wood and bamboo bands, which she built with her husband's help. Yoki's family lives a short walk from the center of Svay Chek Village. She works as a construction worker in Siem Reap, currently

mixing sand and cement and moving bricks. Her husband also works in construction in the city, however he works on a different project. Yoki said that one of the problems of construction work is that one must find a new job after each project is finished. Her children, except for the youngest (4 years old), attend school at the Community Health Center.

When asked about domestic violence, Yoki readily answered that her husband is often violent and abusive, however never towards the children. Aggression usually appears after he drinks rice wine with friends. According to Yoki, he is violent “almost everyday”. Often, when Yoki has been working late at the construction site and cannot have food prepared by dinnertime she returns home to find her husband drinking. He blames her for the absence of dinner and violence ensues. Yoki stated that she was also aware of domestic violence among other families. Yoki faces a difficult situation and feels very bad about it. She cannot get divorced because of fear for her children’s future. She hopes each of her children will study as far as possible to one day get a good job to provide for their families.

When asked about the causes of family violence, Yoki said that stress and discontent over economic limitations were important factors. Her husband would be blamed by his boss at work, for instance, and then return to drink with friends and then become violent. Although Yoki makes about \$2/day and her husband \$4-5/day, this is all spent on food, and it is often not enough. Like Tola’s children, \$0.25 goes to each of Yoki’s children everyday for school. Tellingly, Yoki said that some nights when her husband has not been drinking he would complain about his family’s situation and his inability to provide for them, suggesting he was conscious of their economic difficulties and that they had an emotional impact on him. Yoki also said that one way she tries to cope with her husband when he is angry is by ignoring him and pretending not to hear him.

*Soriya, Chamkar Village*

Unlike many of the women in Chamkar Village Soriya is widowed and all but two of her seven children live in other provinces. Soriya is fifty-five years old with seven children, five of which live and work in other provinces. Her husband died three years ago and worked as a policeman while alive. Soriya is unemployed but receives remittances that allow her to provide for herself and her children. She lives in a fairly large home with a concrete foundation and a patio a short distance from one of the main roads that runs through Chamkar Village.

Soriya mainly receives remittances from one of her daughters who works as a masseuse in another province. This daughter sends between \$150 and \$200 per month to Soriya. This daughter is divorced. Her other children, who mostly work in construction, are too poor to send remittances. Soriya said that while alive her husband made enough money to send their children to school and take care of them, but that currently the monthly remittances from her daughter are not always sufficient for their needs and she will sometimes borrow money, usually less than \$25 at a time.

Soriya was married in 1981 and her marriage lasted for 29 years until her husband died. She said that although her husband would drink he was not abusive. She called him 'innocent'. He would drink just a little so as to not interfere with his work as a policeman and he was not involved in gambling. He was somewhat worried about his salary but did not know what to do about it. Stress was only a minor issue. Sometimes Soriya would become angry with her husband because he was lazy and would not complete household chores. When Soriya blames her husband in this way, she said he would just ignore her and pretend not to hear her accusations.

*Cheayean, Phnum Proek Village*

Cheayean lives in Phnum Proek Village with her 6 year old daughter and 3-year-old son. Cheayean is 30 years old and is currently unemployed although she used to work as a household maid. Her husband works as a carpenter in the city making about \$4/day, \$1.5 of which is spent on his food. The remainder is spent on family food.

When asked about her relationship with her husband, Cheayean said that her husband is violent and drinks everyday. The violence is mainly hitting and slapping, and extends to the children as well. Cheayean raised the shirt of her daughter to show us a small bruise on the lower portion of her back. Cheayean had not heard about domestic violence issues in other families.

Although alcohol is a contributing factor, Cheayean did not know about gambling because her husband works far away from home. When he is drunk he will often complain about their land and house being too small, and Cheayean said that she would retaliate that if he did not waste money then he could build a bigger house.

Cheayean's parents lived just next to her and Cheayean said that they would often intervene during fights. Cheayean also said that her husband would listen to the village manager when he came to talk about the issues but never change his actions afterward. In addition, Cheayean said that her husband would express regret over his actions when sober, although this would not prevent him from doing the same thing again in the future.

*Lim and Ary, Chamkar Village*

Lim and Ary live together in Chamkar Village and have been married for 19 years. They were married when Lim returned from the Khmer/Thai border after the UN-sponsored elections in 1993. Their parents arranged their marriage and they have been married the 19 years since and now have 3 daughters of the ages 12, 15, and 18. The eldest volunteers with BFT and helps to

teach English, having become passably good at the language herself. The youngest daughter performs traditional dances at the Angkor Children's Hospital in Siem Reap. This was the only interview in which the husband was also present and participated in the interview as well.

Lim is 47 years old and Ary 44; both are farmers and obtain their main subsistence from agriculture. Lim also climbs palm trees and makes palm juice, and Ary weaves baskets. From the baskets and palm juice, the family earns roughly \$5/day, however this income is variable. Around \$2 of this is spent by the children, mainly for school. Ary said that they trust their children and leave the money upstairs, allowing the children to take it as they need it. A small amount is spent on food, however Ary said that sometimes it is not enough. Lim and Ary have also borrowed a lot of money from relatives (their parents have been generous and donated money to them as well). Ary estimated that they owe relatives around \$1,000. Much of this is for their house, a relatively large structure standing high on a dozen concrete stilts eight feet from the ground. Their debts are paid 'little by little'. Lim is illiterate, and Ary can only read a little in her native language of Khmer.

Lim and Ary said that they have had only small problems in their marriage, such as verbal arguments. Dom drinks but only socially and is not violent. Their arguments usually consist of how household chores will get accomplished at the end of the day when everyone is tired. Ary did not know of any other villagers who have problems, except for Sreykun.

*Sreykun, Chamkar Village*

Sreykun's home in Chamkar Village is across a small ditch near a dirt road that runs through the village. Sreykun is 43 years old and has 5 children. Sreykun's interview was very interesting and informative. Sreykun household is relatively large, however it is not spacious enough to provide adequate comfort for the 8 people who call it home. It consists of concrete

foundation stilts upon which a house made primarily of wood and bamboo sits. Sreykun indicated that she built the bamboo-thatched roof herself, without her husband's help. There was a small battery powered light for nighttime (which was cheaper than candles), and there is also a small pond, made by Sreykun, which holds fish provided by BFT.

Sreykun was barely asked her age, one of our first questions, before she was off and running with lengthy complaints about her husband. When her husband lived with her, he was frequently drunk and violent. Sreykun said that he did not know how to gamble, describing him simply as "drunk and lazy". In the past, he would work as a construction worker, however he might work at most one week a month, spending the little money he made from this on alcohol. When he was drunk, he would "slap, kick, and hit" Sreykun and all 5 of the children. Sreykun said that he "was very cruel when drunk" and would destroy their belongings and damage the house as well. Sreykun continued to explain in greater detail how her husband's drinking habits had impacted her life.

During the growing season, for instance, Sreykun's husband would leave and work for himself elsewhere, returning only during the harvest season in order to benefit from some of Sreykun's agricultural profits. Sreykun said that she would often visit a natural conservatory area maintained by the Apsara Authority (near Angkor Wat) in order to cut down wood to use for her house or sell, but that she would have to leave early and wait until nightfall to return home so as to avoid getting in trouble for taking the wood (it was illegal to do so). During these periods of her absence, she said her husband would harm the children, damage the house, and even take household possessions to sell outside to buy more alcohol. This would continue until there was nothing left in the house to sell. Sometimes, then, Sreykun would stay home to prevent this. Or,

if her husband had been drinking the previous night and was hungover, Sreykun would be able to fight back and stop him from damaging the house and harming the children.

Sreykun had trouble giving a reason for her husband's bad habits and violence. She did say that her father-in-law was violent, like her husband. Aside from this observation, Sreykun did not know if violence was a problem in other families, mainly because most families lived some distance away from her. When her husband is violent, Sreykun said that no visitors would come to see her, and she said that even though she once asked the police for help, her husband continued to be violent.

Sreykun does not have a formal divorce yet, although her husband has been gone for a year. She will have to visit the court and pay a fee to get a formal divorce, but she says that now that he is gone she feels happier and "better than before". She still sees her husband from time to time (he lives just down the road) and it makes her feel bad again to see his face. Although she is happier now, Sreykun said that while her husband was still living with her she thought about committing suicide many times, and attributed her decision to continue living to her children.

#### *Nuon, Phnum Proek Village*

Nuon has perhaps some of the most unique marital and employment arrangements among those living in Phnum Proek and other nearby villages. Nuon is 44 years old with three children, ages 7, 9, and 14, however her husband has not lived with her for the last 7 years. Her husband now lives with another woman who lives about 30 or 40 kilometers away. This arrangement arose because originally he was seeing another woman, and his wife argued with him over it, but finally after having a child with the other woman Nuon just told him to leave. Because of the children he had with Nuon, the husband will still return home and stay perhaps 1-2 days every month, usually bringing \$10-15 for Nuon. Nuon and her children live in a nice wooden house

built on a concrete platform and raised on stilts. A wooden staircase leads up to her home from the ground.

Inside her house Nuon had three sewing machines that she used to make school uniforms. Although she had to buy fabric and did not work year-round, she could make up to \$15/day by selling three uniforms at \$5 each to BFT. One of the sewing machines was donated by BFT, the other two were bought by Nuon herself. Nuon also cooked breakfast and taught Khmer in the village, for which she received \$10/month from BFT. Despite all of this, Nuon said that her income was insufficient, and she sometimes would make baskets, making about \$2/day for 2 baskets. Her husband was a construction worker previously, making about \$100/month, but at the time of the interview she said that she really did not want to know what he was doing then. She said that he would drink every day but would not fight, only make arguments. Gambling was also a problem but that may have stopped two years ago. Nuon said that violence is a problem in other families sometimes, pointing to a house on the west side of the village. Nuon said that she is of course mad with her husband, but during their marriage and since then he has not been violent toward her.

#### *Kiri, Phnum Proek Village*

Kiri is 35 years old and lives with her two daughters and one son in Phnum Proek Village. The youngest is only 45 days old. Like many women, Kiri's husband is a construction worker in the city and makes \$3-4/day. Kiri makes baskets, selling them for \$1-2/day. The family income is spent mainly on food, but sometimes used for new clothes.

When asked if her husband is violent Kiri said "Yes, of course." Kiri said that he is drunk almost every day and that when he is drunk he curses, blames, and screams at her. If Kiri cannot tolerate the verbal abuse she retaliates, but at first she tries to ignore him. Kiri said that stress

from outside probably contributes to this problem, and that gambling is also an issue. However, her husband can be violent even when not drinking. Her husband is also violent toward their children, but it is always physical abuse, which results in bruises.

Kiri is not sure how to prevent her husband from being violent, but she said that monks help in other villages by giving advice to husbands. The village manager is also a resource, which provides help. Kiri indicated that domestic violence is a problem in other families as well.

## 6. DISCUSSION

*Participants said that Khmer women are told to be patient and endure abuse from their husbands. There is a strong value on keeping the family together, and divorce is thought to be detrimental to the family and the children. In addition, domestic violence is often viewed as the women's fault, such that divorced women are viewed with disapproval in the community.*

*Many participants stressed that they would not ask for help or let outsiders help and that talking about your problems with others is at odds with Khmer customs, highlighting the public-private division in Khmer social practices.*

— Rupaleem Bhuyan and colleagues in a study of Cambodian immigrant women [32]

*“Men go out to drink and beat their wives but society does not blame them or criticize them. I feel that women are subjected to unjust acts.” “My experiences have left me feeling hopeless about the law.” “What I learned from all of this is that I hate my husband, I am scared of all men and I hate all policemen, as they do not help women at all.”*

— Perspectives of three different informants from the 2007 CAMBOW Report [36]

*Poverty and associated stress are key contributors to intimate partner violence.*

—Rachel Jewkes, 2002 [50]

Some considerations are important in the interpretation of the data presented here. In all, four women admitted to suffering domestic abuse out of the ten that we asked this question. We did not ask Soboen this question because Kosal and I decided it would not be wise given the presence of her family nearby, and in two other cases in which we did ask the wives about

domestic violence we felt their answers might be untrustworthy for the same reason and based on their responses to other questions. Thus, despite the small sample size, the four positive responses represent a high percentage, higher than the other estimates of domestic violence produced by the government health surveys. However, this number should be interpreted with caution for a number of reasons. First, only eleven interviews were conducted. Expanding the sample size is obviously necessary before concluding more broadly about the prevalence of domestic violence in these communities. Second, Kosal and I were directed toward each of these individuals to interview through BFT's recommendations. We were not sure how BFT made these recommendations. One likely possibility was that they directed us to talk with families that they were already aware had domestic problems, knowledge that would not be unreasonable for them to possess. This would clearly bias our sample toward cases in which domestic violence took place. Despite these concerns, the stories of Yoki, Kiri, Cheayean, and Sreykun, coupled with the seven women who admitted to being aware of domestic abuse in other families, make a compelling argument that domestic violence does occur in the marginally urban village communities on the outskirts of Siem Reap. Moreover, the stories of each of these women illustrate important themes that can be interpreted through the lenses of local and global domestic violence research to better understand this problem within Cambodian culture.

One of the fundamental questions regarding domestic violence is of cause: *Why does domestic abuse occur?* Only a few factors have been determined to be generally universal predictors of domestic violence. One of the least disputed is that women are most likely to be abused by an intimate partner they are involved with in a relationship and that males are most likely to be the perpetrators of violence [51, 52]. Other studies have demonstrated the importance of a variety of factors, however poverty and its concomitant economic stress are some of the

most important and broadly implicated causes in the production of violent behavior towards intimate partners [50, 53-58]. Alcohol consumption and drug use are also important variables that are commonly correlated with domestic abuse [48, 50, 58-61]. Economic stress and hardship often provide a basis for anger and frustration that can become ready motivation for violence, which can often be triggered or released by the disinhibition that occurs through alcohol consumption or drug use [50]. Furthermore, it has been observed that domestic abuse motivated by financial stress can exacerbate economic hardship and lead to more domestic conflict in a vicious cycle [56].

In addition to poverty and substance abuse, social acceptance of violence as a means of conflict resolution and attitudes of male superiority or patriarchy are highly predictive of domestic violence of husbands toward wives [50, 62, 63], attitudes which are dynamic and shaped by political discourse and cultural changes over time [64]. These factors are often intertwined and interrelated: an abusive husband may use his income to support his habit of drinking, thus drawing more money away from food, clothing, or other purchases and exacerbating poverty. Or, as research has shown, husbands in low-income groups are more likely to adhere to beliefs of male superiority and patriarchy [63]. As domestic abuse became gradually recognized as a pervasive social problem over the past several decades researchers developed an 'ecological model' to describe the causation of this complex social behavior [1, 65, 66]. According to Lori Heise, this ecological approach "conceptualizes violence as a multifaceted phenomenon grounded in an interplay among personal, situational, and sociocultural factors" [66]. Four concentric circles that represent expanding levels of explanation characterize the model [1]. Personal and individual factors first; these include behaviors such as alcohol abuse or childhood experiences of violence. Surrounding this circle is one that includes familial relations

and the immediate social context in which the abuse occurs. The third level encompasses community environment and relations, and the final level encompasses the local culture and includes institutions and social structures that may, for instance, shape cultural norms that influence domestic violence. This model is attractive because it allows the complex nature of domestic violence to be explained in a dynamic way. Violence can be described in terms of poverty that results from individual actions and also from structural inequalities, and then may be also influenced by childhood experiences and substance abuse problems. The observation that no one cause is wholly predictive of domestic violence demonstrates the usefulness of the ecological approach [67], which has been adopted more broadly by theorists in recent years [1].

The ecological model is especially useful in explaining and making sense of the stories presented here, in the context of the observed factors that are most predictive of domestic abuse: poverty, stress, and substance abuse. Poverty and financial stress were apparent in our interviews and consistent with the documented prevalence of poverty and poor health throughout Cambodia as a whole. Furthermore, as described previously, cultural attitudes in Cambodia promote male dominance, legitimate physical violence of husbands over wives, and discourage women from seeking redress from their communities or law enforcement officials, instead disenfranchising them through silence [8, 32, 36, 45]. Even in the instances in which our informants sought help from village managers or family members it did not seem like these actions resulted in a significant change in their situation. These observations are reinforced by the claims of our informants regarding the cause of domestic violence in their families. Yoki, Kiri, Cheayean, and Sreykun all identified alcohol as a factor that caused domestic violence and all but Sreykun mentioned stress as well. Indeed, alcohol consumption and financial stress were themes throughout these interviews. Many of the interviewees mentioned that their income was

insufficient for their daily needs, however many of these were also supported by loans and gifts from relatives—Lim’s and Soriya’s families, for instance (an observation that also suggests the perseverance of communal reciprocity in Khmer culture). Others who were less fortunate with acquiring resources through social networks were more likely to face elevated levels of stress due to economic hardship. Notably, out of all of those interviewed, the three families that enjoyed the most relative wealth and economic security also described their marriages as peaceful. These families included those of Lim and Ary, who cultivated rice and palm juice, Soriya, who receives remittances from her children and whose deceased husband worked as a policeman while living, and Nuon, who made money sewing clothing to sell to BFT in addition to other sources of income. Their houses were likewise comparably better built than others and they seemed to be the owners of more possessions.

The stress and hardship experienced by some of the informants is further demonstrated through their responses. Yoki, for instance, described how her husband would complain about being unable to provide for his family when sober and would often become violent after being blamed by his boss at work for mistakes. Likewise, Cheayean said that her husband often complains about their land and house being too small when he is drunk. Furthermore, domestic abuse clearly exacerbated economic hardship for many women. Sreykun was vehement in recounting how her husband would sell household possessions during the day or otherwise squander his income on alcohol and Yoki remarked that she could not consider divorce out of fear for her children’s future. Thus, as Claire Renzetti writes, “While economic stress and hardship may increase the risk of domestic violence, domestic violence may also cause financial problems for domestic violence survivors and entrap them in poverty and an abusive relationship” [56].

The unique environment of the villages studied here further influences the experience and production of domestic violence and represents the community and societal levels of the ecological framework. These villages were situated in close enough proximity to Siem Reap for the creation of many urban job opportunities but were still located in rural farmland that allowed that continuation of traditional subsistence methods. However, the flow of goods from the city to the village was obvious: many of the villagers' homes were constructed through the work of NGOs from the city and displayed numerous items, from bicycles to radio sets to backpacks and clothing depicting well known characters from Western television, that exemplified the many material connections to Siem Reap. These connections resulted in new employment possibilities, new sources of food, clothing, and household goods, and also new resources: BFT routinely taught English lessons and health lessons in the villages, for instance. While increasing socioeconomic status in some ways, this connectivity to Siem Reap also seems to have exacerbated stress, through unpredictable employment and the further disintegration of more traditional forms of subsistence. Lim's family was the only family that seemed to derive their entire subsistence and income through agricultural practices, for example. All of those interviewed whose husbands worked in construction in the city had temporary jobs and would have to find new work when their projects were completed. The interplay of these forces thus created an unusual atmosphere that at once offered enhanced material and financial success while doing so only in a very uncertain way, leaving the village communities to inhabit a very liminal space. Most of the families of the participants in this study neither wholly relied on agricultural, which previously had been a permanent mode of subsistence, nor could they subsist entirely on the husband's salary as did Cambodians living in Siem Reap, who had more permanent occupations that were largely created by the tourist industry. Consequently, the

structure of these marginally urban communities and the associated uncertainty may have resulted in elevated levels of stress that could contribute to domestic violence.

One final interesting observation is the willingness of the women to discuss the issue of domestic violence in their families. For each of the four women who admitted to suffering domestic abuse from their husbands, it was not a challenge to encourage them to discuss their experience. Yoki and Sreykun were especially expressive. In Sreykun's interview, which lasted almost an hour, we hardly had to ask about her husband before she was vigorously recounting her numerous complaints towards him. It is important to remember the interview context here—Sreykun was talking to a foreign American male and a younger Cambodian male, both of whom she had never met before, about domestic abuse. Her willingness to openly discuss her experience is very telling and points to the fact that, cultural attitudes notwithstanding, women distinctly perceive domestic abuse as a problem and not something to be passively accepted. This awareness was present in the other interviews as well and strongly suggests that while social norms may be very influential in domestic and cultural family or group interactions they do not necessarily dictate the individual views of those within the culture. The refusal of some of the women to accept male dominance or the view that violence is an appropriate answer to transgressions speaks to potential that exists for shifting cultural norms regarding the acceptability of domestic violence.

While a number of intertwined factors may have resulted in violence, another interesting question remains: *Why were some of the marriages non-violent?* A related question is also interesting: What strategies might be helpful in mediating conflicts in the families in which domestic violence has occurred previously? In this study some participants mentioned that they would ignore their spouse in the context of disagreements to avoid greater conflict, others

mentioned the involvement of relatives who lived nearby or village managers or Buddhist monks. However, there was no consensus regarding strategies that could ameliorate the violence. Buddhist religious practice may be one effective strategy, however. Because the vast majority of Cambodians are Buddhist, Buddhism represents a readymade educational avenue to which many Cambodians are already attuned. Previous studies have shown that Buddhist principles of nonviolence have been useful in negotiating feelings of anger after the DK period and also for Cambodian refugees living in the United States who experience domestic violence [16, 31].

While this study has been productive in offering preliminary insight into the occurrence of domestic violence in the marginally urban village communities on the outskirts of Siem Reap, Cambodia, and illustrative in the nature of the vivid experience of domestic violence for four survivors, it leaves open many further lines of inquiry. One simple extension of this research is an expansion for a larger sample size, to be conducted in a more systematic fashion. The dynamics of the unique part urban, part rural community environment and the interplay between this environment and the production of domestic violence could also be further studied. In either of these efforts, it would be helpful to investigate in the interviews if the women are aware of any resource groups or information on domestic abuse, if they are aware of any laws regarding domestic violence, and if they would feel safe confronting the police about their husbands. It would also be helpful to interview more male Cambodians regarding their understanding and perception of this issue. Another interesting topic for future research is the role of Buddhism and how religious practice influences and shapes conflict and domestic violence. Some previous studies mentioned earlier the role of Buddhist monks in mediating conflict [16, 31], however Surtees also noted that Buddhist tradition could encourage female domesticity [45] and Alice Yick has argued that in some cases Buddhist doctrine can encourage passive acceptance of

suffering [68]. Thus, the influence of Buddhism could in some cases ameliorate violence but in others tacitly encourage it. Investigating this interplay further would be an interesting line of inquiry. Finally, the role of the village managers could be explored further. While these individuals were mentioned in some cases the extent to which they were capable of resolving conflict was unclear to us. Overall, such efforts would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the reality of domestic violence in Cambodian families.

## **7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The research presented here illustrates the lived experiences of four Khmer women who have experienced domestic abuse at the hands of their husbands in Cambodian villages. Their accounts exemplify many themes found in the literature regarding domestic violence: a combination of poverty, financial stress, alcohol abuse, cultural norms concerning male dominance, and a culture of silence among victims that together result in domestic violence. Based on the informants' answers, poverty, stress, and alcoholism played dominant roles. Moreover, aside from impromptu assistance from relatives and in some cases village managers, none of the participants mentioned any awareness of other resources they could turn to, which illustrates the isolation of domestic violence victims. These observations are supported by previous research in Cambodia and elsewhere and stress the need for improved support systems and resources for women, education programs to shift cultural norms, and political and legal reformation that will encourage women to seek help while creating for men disincentives for violence. Despite the existence of some programs like this and laws like CEDAW it was not apparent to us that any of these resources had reached our informants. They also represent a calling to address and modify the structural violence that results in unequal distributions of poverty throughout the world and generates economic and psychological stress, which may then

be transformed into violence. These measures and more attention to the problem are needed—domestic violence against women is a social issue that cannot be overlooked. As Lori Heise writes, “Violence against women is the most pervasive yet least recognized human rights violation in the world” [1].

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## **9. APPENDICES**

### **9.1 Appendix I: Informed Consent Document**

#### **Investigating Patterns of Family Violence and Suicide in Siem Reap, Cambodia and Surrounding Villages**

##### **INTRODUCTION**

You are invited to participate in research concerning mental health and family violence. This study is intended to foster a better understanding of issues surrounding these topics for doctors, nurses, community health workers, and social workers in your community and the global community.

##### **INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY**

If you wish to participate, you will be asked to discuss subjects ranging from suicide to family violence to mental health based on your own personal experiences. This interview will last on average between 30 minutes to an hour, but the time may vary according to the circumstances.

##### **RISKS**

The only foreseeable risk is that the recollection of past trauma may be stressful, discomfoting, and upsetting. You can stop the interview at any time or decide not to answer any questions.

##### **BENEFITS**

This research will give you a voice. It is our intention to share your feelings and opinions with local community health workers and other professionals. We hope that hearing from you will help to reduce family violence and suicide in the future.

##### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Full confidentiality of personal identity is a guarantee of participation. Interview transcripts will be stored on a secure computer under encrypted folders, and any publicized data will use pseudonyms instead of real names. If any photographs or audio recordings are to be used, you will be explicitly asked beforehand about their use.

##### **CONTACT**

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact Medicorps (in Cambodia) at 855(0)12-303-211 or at their U.S. Office at 93 S Jackson Street, #6120, Seattle, WA 98104-2818.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at (865) 974-3466.

**PARTICIPATION**

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed. Return of the completed survey (questionnaire) constitutes your -consent to participate.

-----

I have read this form and fully understand its content and agree to participate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
date

\_\_\_\_\_  
signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
date

9.2 Appendix II: Khmer Translation of Informed Consent Document

គំរូនៃការសុំអនុញ្ញាតដំឡើងប្រព័ន្ធស្រាវជ្រាវ និងការផ្តល់ព័ត៌មានអំពីការស្រាវជ្រាវ និងការធានាថាអ្នកបានដឹងអំពីគុណភាពនៃការស្រាវជ្រាវ  
បុរេសាកលវិទ្យាល័យ និង ស្រាវជ្រាវ-ភូមិកម្មស្រាវជ្រាវ

+ការណែនាំ

អ្នកត្រូវបានអនុញ្ញាតឱ្យចូលរួមក្នុងការស្រាវជ្រាវ  
ដលៃទាក់ទងនឹងបញ្ហាផ្លូវចិត្ត និងអំពើហិង្សាក្នុងគ្រួសារ ។ ការសិក្សានេះ  
គឺមានបំណងដើម្បីលើកទឹកចិត្ត អោយមានការយល់ដឹងលម្អិតលម្អនៃការចេញផ្សាយ  
ជូនបុគ្គលិកទាំងនេះសំរាប់រដៀបរដៀបឱ្យបាន គឺលាបដំបូលយ៉ាងណា ភ្នាក់ងារសុខភាពតាមសហគមន៍  
អនុវត្តនៃការសង្កេត នៅក្នុងសហគមន៍របស់អ្នក និងសហគមន៍ទូទាំងពិភពលោក ។

+ព័ត៌មានអំពីអ្នកចូលរួមដល់ការស្រាវជ្រាវ

បុរសិបបើអ្នកមានបំណងចង់ចូលរួម អ្នកនឹងត្រូវបានសាកសួរអោយ ពិភាក្សានូវបុគ្គលិក  
បទ ដលៃមានចំណាត់បុគ្គលិកពីការផ្តល់ព័ត៌មាន រហូតដល់អំពើហិង្សាក្នុងគ្រួសារ និងរហូតដល់  
បញ្ហាផ្លូវចិត្ត ដោយផ្អែកលើបទពិសោធន៍ផ្ទាល់របស់អ្នក ។  
បទសម្ភាសន៍មានរយៈពេល ៣០នាទីមួយដំបូង ប៉ុន្តែពេលវេលាអាចមានភាពខុសប្លែកក្នុង  
អាស័យដ្ឋានតាមកាលៈទេសៈ ។

+គុណភាពហានិភ័យ

ហានិភ័យដលៃអាចពុំយ៉ាកណាទុកបានតម្លៃយកនោះគឺ ការប្រមូលទិន្នន័យពី អតីតកាល  
ដលៃអាចផ្តល់អោយមានសំពាធ ហាត់បង្អួចសុខភាព និងផ្តល់អោយព្រួយបារម្ភ ។  
អ្នកអាចបញ្ចប់បទសម្ភាសន៍បានគ្រប់ពេល រឺក៏សម្រេចចិត្តមិនចូលរួមនូវសំណួរណា ដលៃអ្នក  
មិនចង់ឆ្លើយ ។

+អត្ថប្រយោជន៍

ការស្រាវជ្រាវនេះ នឹងផ្តល់អោយអ្នកនូវសិទ្ធិបញ្ចុះចេញមតិ ។ នេះគឺជាបំណងរបស់យើង  
ដើម្បីចែករំលែកនូវអារម្មណ៍ និងគំនិតរបស់អ្នក ជាមួយនិងភ្នាក់ងារសុខភាពតាមសហគមន៍  
និងអ្នកជំនាញដទៃទៀត ។ យើងសង្ឃឹមថា  
ទស្សនៈរបស់អ្នកនឹងជួយកាត់បន្ថយនូវអំពើហិង្សាក្នុងគ្រួសារ និងអំពើអត្តឃាត  
នាពេលអនាគត ។

+ការកុសាការសម្ងាត់

ការសម្ងាត់ទាំងស្រុង និងអត្តសញ្ញាណរបស់បុគ្គល ត្រូវបានធានាសំរាប់ការចូលរួម ។  
ការថតចម្លងនូវបទសម្ភាសន៍ នឹងត្រូវបានរក្សាទុកយ៉ាងមានសុវត្ថិភាពនៅក្នុងម៉ាស៊ីនកុំព្យូទ័រ  
ក្នុងបុគ្គលិកដាក់ឯកសារ ដលៃមានបញ្ចប់លទ្ធផលសម្ងាត់

ហាវើយសំរាប់ទិន្នន័យដលៃត្បូរផុសពុផុសាយ  
នឹងត្បូរមានបុរើឈុមោះកុលងៃកុលាយជំនួសអោយឈុមោះពិតបុរាកដ។ បុរសិនបើមានរូបថត  
រឺការថតសមុលង ដលៃនឹងត្បូរមានបុរើបុរាស់  
នោះអុនកនឹងត្បូរមានសាកសួរយ៉ាងចុហស់លាស់មុនការបុរើបុរាស់វា ។

+ ទំនាក់ទំនង

បុរសិនបើអុនកមានសំនួរដលៃទាក់ទងនឹងការសិកុសា រឺទម្រង់ការណាមួយ  
អុនកអាចជុវើការទំនាក់ទំនង Medicorps (កមុតុជា) តាមរយៈទូរសំពុទុលខេ : 855 (0) 12 303  
211 រឺក៏ការិយាល័យនលៃសហរដុបអាមេរិក 93 S Jackson Street, # 6120, Seattle, WA  
98104-2818 ។ បុរសិនបើអុនកមានចំងល់អំពីសិទុធិរបស់អុនក

កុនុងនាមជាអុនកចូលរួមទាក់ទងកុនុងការ Office of research compliance (865) 974  
3466។

+ ការចូលរួម

ការចូលរួមរបស់អុនកនលៃកុនុងការសិកុសានេះ គឺដោយចតេនា  
អុនកអាចបដិសធើមិនចូលរួមដោយកុមានការពិន័យ។ បុរសិនបើអុនកសំរេចចិតុតថាចូលរួម  
អុនកអាចនិងដកថយពីការសិកុសាបានគុម្រពលៃ -----ដោយកុមានការពិន័យ  
និងកុមានការហាត់បង់នុវដលបុរយនោះជន័ ចំពោះអុធិដលៃអុនកត្បូរមានគដេតុលសិទុធិអោយ។  
បុរសិនបើអុនកឈប់ពីការសិកុសាមុនពលៃដលៃទិន្នន័យត្បូរមានបុរមុលទាំងសុរុង  
នោះទិន្នន័យរបស់អុនកនឹងត្បូរមានបុរគល់ទលៃអោយអុនករិញ រឺក៏បំផុលាញចលៃ។  
បុរគល់អោយរិញនុវការសុទុងទាំងសុរុង (បញុដីសំនួរ)  
និងត្បូរមានពិចារណាកិចុចពុមពុរៀងរបស់អុនកកុនុងការចូលរួម ។  
ខុញ្ញុមានអាននុវបបែបទនេះ និងមានយល់ខុលីមសារទាំងសុរុង ហាវើយយល់ពុមកុនុងការចូលរួម។

ហតុថលខោ កាលបរិចុផទេ  
ហតុថលខោ កាលបរិចុផទេ

### 9.3 Appendix III: Selected Photographs



**Photos 1-2:** Characteristic photographs of dirt roads leading to and between villages outside the outskirts of Siem Reap. The roads were easily traversable via foot, motorbike, or bicycle, but proved difficult for four-wheeled vehicles in some locations.



**Photo 3:** A view of the landscape from a paved road on the way to the villages.



**Photos 4-5:** Typical view of the flat agricultural land used primarily for rice farming in the rural countryside.



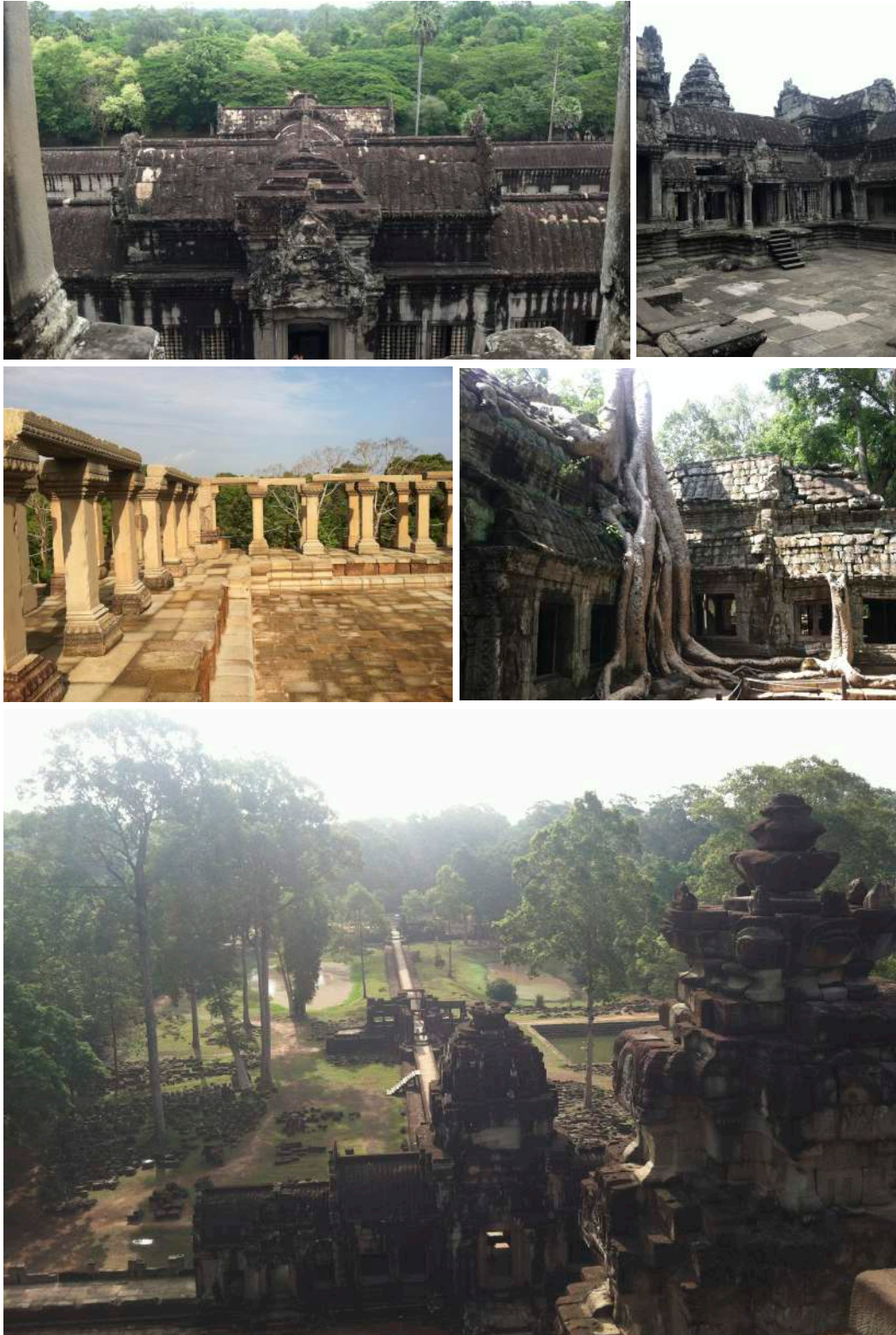
**Photos 6-9:** Views of villages and examples of some of the different types of house structures that families live in. A variety of materials were utilized, ranging from scrap wood and bamboo to concrete foundations and metal sheeting. Most homes were built directly on the ground but some were stilted upon concrete slab foundations.



**Photos 10-14:** Photographs of homes and other structures found in villages depicted the mixture of rural and urban lifestyles. Clothes are dried on trees and animals roam freely through villages but battery powered televisions and radios, bicycles, and modern cookware was commonplace.



**Photos 15-18:** Photos of statues and inscriptions from Angkor Wat.



**Photos 18-23:** Photographs depicting temple complexes at Angkor Wat.