

Women Social Status and Domestic Violence Tiann MONIE (Cambodia)

The domestic violence is occurring everywhere in Cambodia. Most of Cambodian people do not understand well and sometimes do not accept that gender norms and roles can lead to discrimination and violence. According to the report on the population and health care in Cambodia, 23% of girls/women aged from 15 and 49 years old who married subsequently experienced domestic violence (The Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2005).

The discrimination against girls and women as well as the violence in Cambodia mainly results from: lack of education (including gender awareness); lack of opportunities for ownership; tradition and religion; poverty; no effective law enforcement in the country; understanding of what children's, girls' and human rights actually are; economic and political development situation; and lack of respect make girls and women particularly vulnerable to human trafficking. Moreover, unfortunately domestic violence in Cambodia is considered to be as a family problem not a social or public problem. While girls/women think that these problems are normal, many feel so ashamed of their situation they are afraid to speak up about it.

In addition, tradition and culture have educated girls and women to be quiet in any situation. They have no right to talk to many people about what is going wrong in their lives. In 2004, a Human Right Organization in Cambodia (ADHOC) discovered that "The domestic violence becomes more and more serious and ferocious, in Cambodia, from year to year. One in every five women is a victim of domestic violence".

In Cambodia, most girls and women do not have enough opportunities to participate in decision making that affects them and their futures. At meetings, girls are afraid to contribute opinions or express their problems or needs for solving them. They will say okay when the meeting approves the decision of men. They are not courageous enough to give a clear explanation to make people around them understand what the girls/women want to say or to do.

Empowerment is not a practical process through which that the Cambodian girls and women can acquire from both men and the government. Even though the right to learn and the right to play are both included in the Convention on Right of the Child, girls still do not have places where they feel safe to express themselves and where they can learn and play on their own terms.

In the world, education, access to information and participation are an important part of becoming empowered. In Cambodia, some girls have opportunity to talk and act around other people, through their families and their schools. But our concern is about the girls without families who are at a greater risk because they do not have a support system to help them stay in the program and succeed. Therefore, it is important to help such girls enter a support network of friends and mentors with whom they are able connect, communicate with and help and advise them if they stumble into difficulties.



▲ Awareness Workshop to stop Violence against the Girls/Women