

# GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN ETHNIC MINORITY COMMUNITIES

CARE International has a special focus on **working with women and girls to bring sustainable changes to their communities.**

In Cambodia, CARE has spent over a decade working with **women and girls from ethnic minority communities.** CARE Cambodia also has a specific focus on **addressing gender-based violence.**

A recent study brought together these two areas of expertise to consider the specific situation of women in ethnic minority communities in relation to gender-based violence. This qualitative study spoke to groups of women in Ratanak Kiri province and interviewed key informants from within ethnic minority communities in August 2015.

## KEY FINDINGS: TYPES AND PREVALENCE OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED BY WOMEN IN RATANAK KIRI

### HARMFUL PRACTICES

In the communities visited, early marriage is a harmful practice that is passed on by tradition. This was reported as common, but also improving; the lower age of marriage is estimated to have increased from about 13-14 years of age in the past to 15-16 years currently.

### INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

#### *Physical Violence*

Women in the target communities report commonly experiencing physical violence from their spouse or partner. This was described as ‘small violence’—which does not result in injury—and serious violence—which results in bruises, broken bones or cuts. Physical violence without injury was reported by women to be far more common than violence with injuries.

Different key informants did not agree on whether there has been an increase or decrease in physical violence against women in Ratanak Kiri Province in recent years.

#### *Economic Violence*

Generally women in ethnic minority communities were identified as the ‘managers’ of money in the family and women reported they managed the money in the household. They were able to make day-to-day decisions about household spending. However, while women manage the money, the ‘big decisions’ about financial purchases are made by the men typically in consultation with women. As head of the household it was the man’s responsibility to decide.

#### *Psychological or Emotional Violence*

Women reported psychological or emotional violence including ‘yelling’, and ‘saying bad things to them, such as they are stupid’. Another type of psychological or emotional violence described was the husband having another relationship. Women commonly reported that a cause of violence ‘was when the wife was jealous’ over the ‘second wife’ or another woman in his life.

### SEXUAL VIOLENCE (PARTNER AND NON-PARTNER)

Generally women in the community would respond that rape was ‘not as common’ in the community; it happened, but not commonly like ‘domestic violence’. However, women were able to describe behaviors they used to protect themselves from being raped. Within marriage, women’s understanding was that submission to sex was required.

Government authorities at the district and provincial levels were far more able to report on cases of rape that had occurred.

*Many marriages in ethnic minority communities are not registered, which can result in less access to formal support structures.*

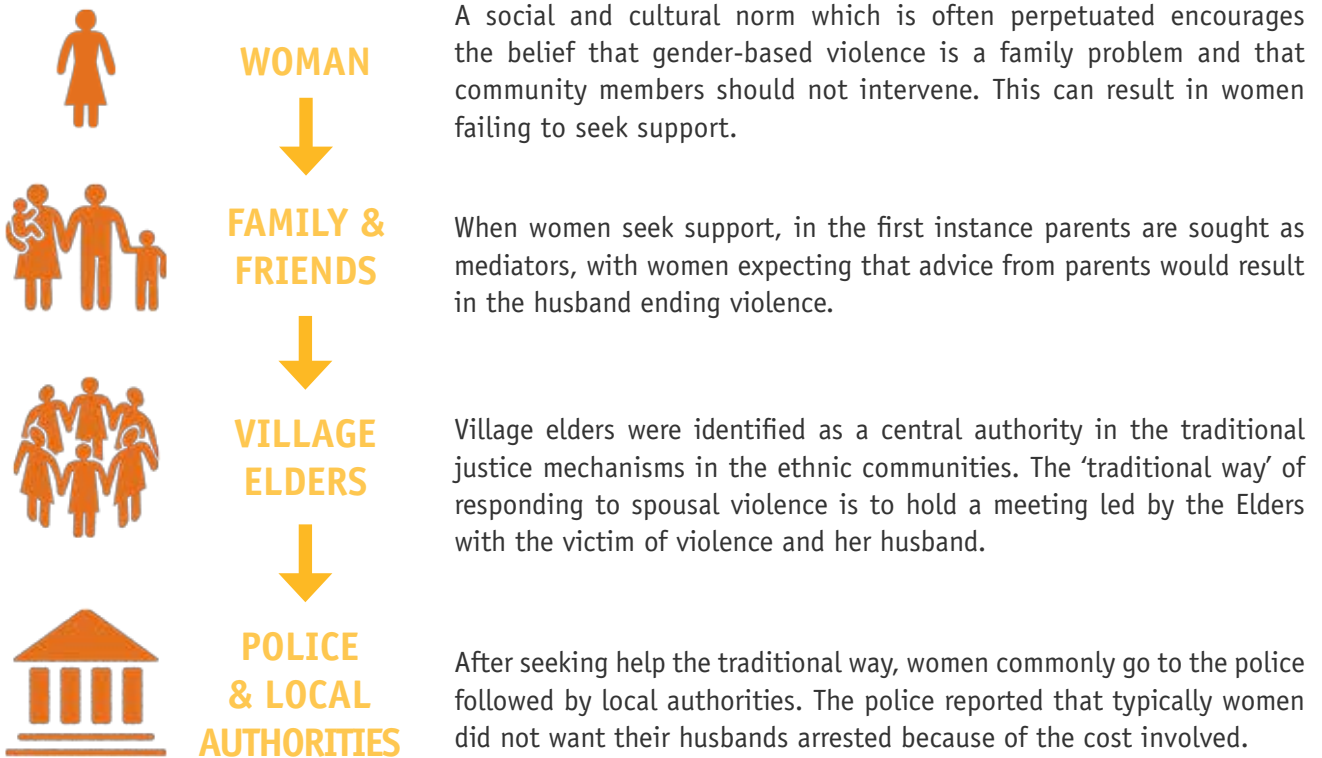
*Women and men both identified small violence as common and on-going.*

*Women manage household money but ‘big decisions’ about money are made by men.*

*Women reported that emotional violence was common in the community and occurred ‘all the time’.*

*Varying reports regarding sexual violence could be the result of perceived shame in reporting.*

## KEY FINDINGS: SOURCES OF SUPPORT



Both the traditional justice system and the local authorities have little training on gender-based violence and are likely re-victimizing the woman by providing inadequate response that results in blaming the woman for the violence. Women experiencing gender-based violence have limited access to safe shelter, counseling services, legal supports and other social services.

*"Violence happens a lot to women in the community. Mostly when their husbands are drunk, but there are very few serious cases."*

FGD participant

*"It is very difficult for women. Most want to hide and not let people know because they will have a lot of cost if the violence is known."*

CCWC Focal Point

*"People do not want to go to court, they do not want to pay the costs or go to jail."*

Commune Chief

The full document *Gender-Based Violence in Ethnic Minority Communities* is available on the CARE Cambodia website at [www.care-cambodia.org/research](http://www.care-cambodia.org/research).



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