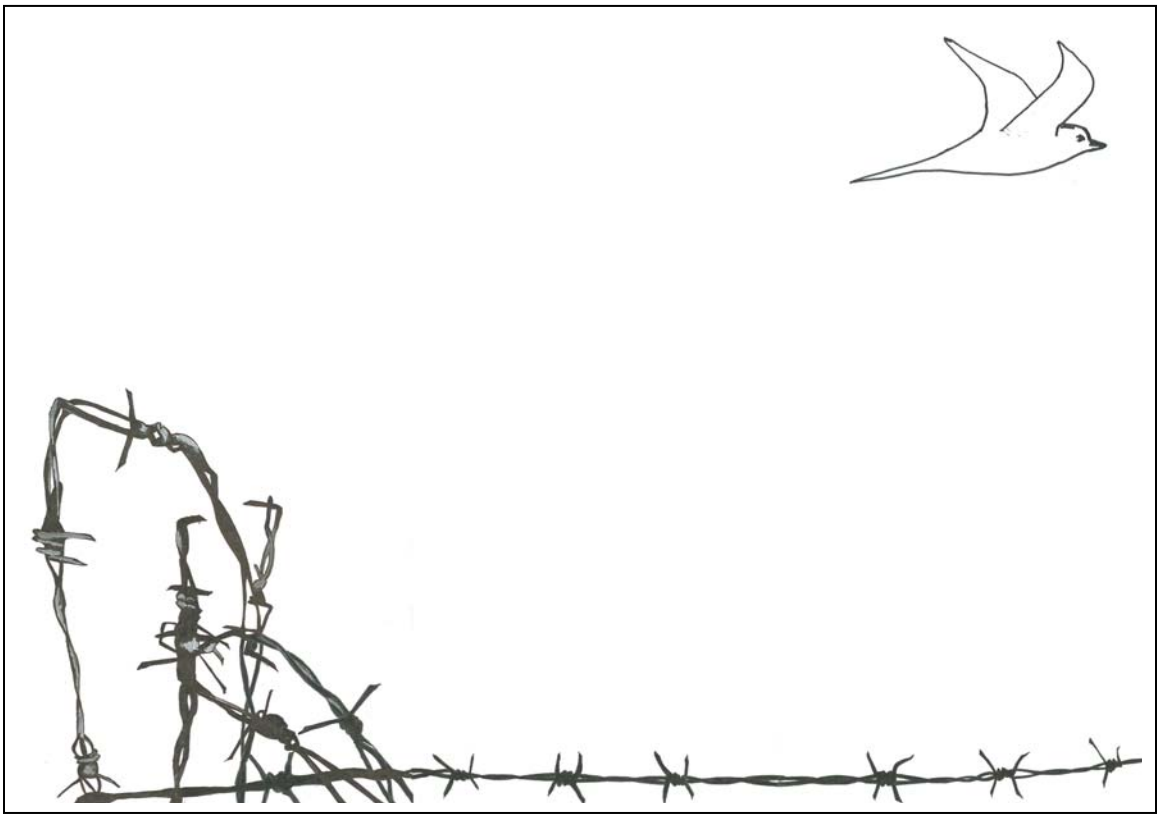
The Ties that Bind

Migration and Trafficking of Women and Girls for Sexual Exploitation in Cambodia



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Note on Language

There is much debate about the choice of terminology when speaking of 'prostitution' as opposed to 'sex work', with the terminology often reflecting the ideological position of the speaker. In the context of this report, we speak of 'commercially sexually exploited women and girls' (CSEWGs). The choice of wording does not reflect an ideological stance on the part of IOM regarding the legalisation of sexual exploitation.

Secondly, as this report will show, some workers, especially those in karaoke parlours, provide sexual services but do not define them as such if they do not involve penetrative sex. These workers are referred to either as 'karaoke workers' or as CSEWGs – the author contends that submitting to sexual harassment is in fact a sexual service.

Thirdly, in the women and girls' own narratives, extensively quoted in this report, terms referring to commercial sexual exploitation are translated into English. The derogatory *srei koich* (broken woman/girl) is written as 'prostitute'. More often, respondents referred to themselves as *srei*, (girls), or their labour as *twer srei* (to be a girl).

Lastly, reference is made to 'women' and 'girls' throughout the report. The report defines a woman as being above 18 years old and a girl as being under 18 years, following the UN Palermo Protocol. As the demand for underage girls is a key part of trafficking patterns within Cambodia, it is important to distinguish, where possible, practices involving 'girls' rather than 'women' or, as in most cases, both.

Acronyms

APLE	Action Pour Les Enfants
CDHS	Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey
CDWs	Child domestic worker
CSEWGs	Commercially sexually exploited women and girls
DSAVY	Department of Social Affairs, Vocational Training and Youth Rehabilitation
HIV/AIDS	Human Acquired Immuno-deficiency Syndrome/Virus
ILO	International Labor Organization
IO	International organisation
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KWCD	Khmer Women's Cooperation for Development
LICADHO	Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights
LSCW	Legal Support for Children and Women
MSAVY	Ministry of Social Affairs, Vocational Training and Youth Rehabilitation
MWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
NCHADS	National Center for HIV/AIDS, Dermatology and STDs
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIS	National Institute of Statistics
PDWA	Provincial Department of Women's Affairs
UN	United Nations
UNTAC	UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia

Glossary of Terms and Definitions[1]

Achar	Khmer term meaning a Buddhist layman who often liaises between the Buddhist pagoda and the local community
Bouding	Slum area in central Phnom Penh which includes commercial sex establishments and a large rural to urban migrant population
Female exogamy	Custom of females seeking a mate or marriage partner outside of their own kinship group or class, religion, ethnic group or area of residence
Khuy Kromom	Khmer term meaning to deflower (a virgin girl/woman)
Matrilocal	Custom or practice of a new husband moving to his wife's village or household after marriage (tends to be found among matrilineal societies)
Patrilineal	System in which family descent is reckoned through the blood links of males; typically, names and property follow the male line of descent, a man's descendants are his own children, and women are little recognised as ancestors
Patrilocal	Custom of a newly married couple taking up residence in the groom's family household or village
Twer srei	Khmer term translated as 'to be a girl', meaning to be a woman working in commercial sexual exploitation, a term frequently employed by CSEWGs to describe their work

[1] Sociological terms cited from the Online Dictionary of Social Sciences

Executive Summary

The focus of this study is on internal trafficking within Cambodia, among both commercially sexually exploited women and girls (CSEWGs) and child domestic workers (CDWs). This report presents the findings regarding trafficking among CSEWGs of Khmer and ethnic Vietnamese origin within Cambodia. The research goal was to map the processes and mechanisms of trafficking within Cambodia. The study was conducted in 3 target provinces – Siem Reap, Koh Kong and Kampong Som, which had been previously identified in IOM's counter-trafficking work as having a high prevalence of trafficking.

Two main methods were used to assess the patterns and mechanisms of trafficking among CSEWGs. The research conducted 203 in-depth interviews (Survey 2) with women and girls working in direct and indirect commercial sexual exploitation locations. A minority of these interviews (15) took place in the commercial sexual exploitation locations, to minimise bias. Furthermore, a rapid assessment tool previously piloted by Arensen (2004) that was designed for use among semi or low literate populations and is self-administered by respondents was used in brothel-based commercial sex locations (Survey 1). This survey was statistically significant for all of the research locations studied.

The definition of trafficking used followed the UN's Palermo Protocol, though this was operationalised in different ways. In Survey 1, trafficking was defined as i) being underage (under 18 years) either at the time of the survey, or at the time of entry into commercial sexual exploitation, or entry into commercial sexual exploitation through ii) deceit/deceptive practices, or ii) through force. Survey 2 operationalised trafficking in similar ways, but additionally included force through acquired debt.[2]

The limitations of the study mainly concerned problems of access. It was found that access to respondents often was a reflection of the strength of counter-trafficking efforts by local government agencies and NGO partners. While strong efforts were made to minimise bias, especially interviewer and location bias, in many cases there was strong suspicion from the target group that may have led to an underestimation of certain factors, such as people accompanying women and girls into commercial sexual exploitation, or concerning current age. Lastly, trauma and social affiliation was found to have a strong effect on narratives in in-depth interviews. Women and girls may be reluctant to openly criticise people who have exploited them if they perceive little redress to their current exploitative situation.

The patterns and social structure of commercial sexual exploitation were found to be extensively interlinked to the paths of trafficking. Both public health and counter-trafficking monitoring systems, for instance, mainly concentrated on lower-scale establishments, such as brothels. Brothel-based CSEWGs were the only group who were consistently interviewed and registered by local authorities.

The exploitation of women and girls within the brothel is strongly supported by a semi-parental relationship, which is reflected in the language used in this social context. This may be especially socially significant for women and girls who have fled their

[2] Force through acquired debt was found to be an inconsistent indicator of trafficking and was assessed through qualitative methods only.

households owing to extreme patterns of sexual and physical abuse. In other commercial sexual exploitation locations, it was found that there was a high variety of means of control and force used to manipulate women and girls into providing sexual services, and that this did not always correspond to the perception of the levels of choice that women and girls had to choose their clients. Many overt forms of control were found in karaoke establishments, for instance, though women who work there are perceived to make their own decisions about providing sexual services. This perception is actively manipulated in many cases for the purpose of recruitment of young girls, often through deceptive practices, into karaoke establishments, and forms an active part of the virginity trade.

Recent alterations in the social structure of the commercial sex trade are posited to have resulted from concerns to evade counter-trafficking monitoring systems, and arguably to sustain the virginity trade. This can be seen, for instance, in the systematic shift from 'direct' to 'indirect' commercial sexual exploitation locations in most of the provinces studied. Trafficking also appears among small mobile groups in certain 'entertainment' places, although it is hard to ascertain whether the prevalence of these groups is increasing.

Cultural norms, such as gender-based norms, were found to have a strong influence and to sustain trafficking practices. Most clearly, it delineates the demand for the virginity trade. Furthermore, norms that stigmatise and blame women and girls for 'immoral and unwomanly' behaviour, while excusing sexual promiscuity in men, contribute to patterns of violence against women that are pivotal to trafficking. Shame and social stigma were found to be strong tools used by traffickers or recruiters from source communities.

In terms of patterns of social vulnerability to trafficking, the research explored how a woman or girl's relationship to her household can make her more vulnerable, not only to trafficking, but also to sexual exploitation, and migration into commercial sexual exploitation in general. It is argued that in some cases, a woman's relationship to her household can be indicative of her social vulnerability. Three different relationships to the household are posited, which influence the pattern of trafficking – connected, disconnected and 'satellite'. Rupture with the household was found to often be the result of patterns of abuse, including rape and sexual abuse. Extensive links with migration into child domestic work were also found – over 50% of Khmer CSEWGs had formerly worked as domestic workers, and they were often removed from their households owing to family dysfunction that later made them vulnerable to entry into commercial sexual exploitation.

Problems prior to entry into commercial sexual exploitation were found to be high though this appeared to vary according to ethnicity. Both Khmer and ethnic Vietnamese CSEWGs identified 'illness' as a factor that facilitated their entry into commercial sexual exploitation, at 53% and 32% respectively. However, levels of debt were found to be significantly higher among ethnic Vietnamese women and girls, at 62%, compared with 40% for Khmer women and girls. This supports the findings of other research which has shown the link between debt and patterns of trafficking among the ethnic Vietnamese (Farrington, 2002). Family dysfunction, such as the effects of divorce and stepparents, appeared to have a stronger explanatory power among Khmer CSEWGs.

A significant minority – 38% - of women interviewed in Survey 2 had entered commercial sexual exploitation through the sale of virginity. Entry into commercial sexual exploitation

after this sale appeared to be perceived to be axiomatic. Ethnic Vietnamese women and girls were again an over-represented group, at 28% of all respondents. Girls in the virginity trade were overwhelmingly younger than their counterparts working in commercial sexual exploitation locations – age at first sex was on average 16 years old for ethnic Vietnamese and 17.2 years for Khmer girls. In terms of clients groups, the majority were Asian with 'Western' men accounting for only 9% of the total client group. Cambodian men formed 49% of the total of clients buying virginity. While in the majority of instances this trade appears to be voluntary for women and girls selling their virginity, there was a high use of force and incapacitation through drugs or alcohol at the time of first commercial sex. The virginity trade appears to range in its use of facilitators. Some respondents are directly approached by clients, particularly in karaoke locations. In many instances, the sale is brokered by local agents, often the managers – *maykaa* – in higher class karaoke establishments. The virginity trade has overwhelmingly moved out of the brothel.

The purpose of the current study was not to measure prevalence of trafficking. However, a measure of *ever* having been trafficked were compiled from the results of Survey 1 and 2, using aspects such as age, force and deceit (and a further aspect of force through acquired debt for Survey 2). In Survey 2, much of the trafficking was found to occur through the virginity trade. A total of 49% of women in Survey 2 had been trafficked *at some point*. In Survey 1, 30% of women and girls had been trafficked when they entered commercial sexual exploitation.

In terms of patterns of recruitment, the networks that facilitate trafficking were found to be dynamic, often evolving owing to community-based counter trafficking efforts, among rural communities and/or CSEWGs' communities, as well as owing to more formal counter-trafficking conducted by local authorities and NGO partners. Several key recruitment networks were distinguished, including household-based networks; 'friendship' (women and girls who were formerly CSEWGs) based networks, male-based networks and opportunistic networks. All of the networks were found to take advantage of dysfunction within the household, gender-based norms that support violence against women and patterns of social shame to perpetuate trafficking practices.

In terms of destination forms of control, these were found to vary widely according to location. They included the use of debt, systems of fines and payments, use of force and threats to families in source communities, threats of revelations concerning the women and girls' involvement in commercial sexual exploitation, as well as the evolving use of drugs. Perceptions of 'force' and 'control' were found to be pivotal to perpetuating or countering trafficking related practices. The use of overt force was found, for instance, to be clearly defined as a trafficking practice by CSEWGs, while debt was not. In some cases, women and girls felt that they could approach local authorities for help to counter patterns of exploitation within a commercial sexual exploitation establishment, and they identified this as a recent and evolving aspect.

In conclusion, trafficking and related practices within Cambodia were found to rely and exploit gender-based norms that blame and stigmatise women and girls for involvement in the commercial sexual exploitation industry, regardless of the patterns of force and violence that have led to their presence there. This strongly suggests that counter-trafficking efforts need to address patterns of social vulnerability and wider norms that support not only the trafficking of women and girls, but also sexual violence and exploitation, to be effective.

1. Background

1.1 Lack of access to concerted data collection

Several factors have coalesced to make the assessment of patterns, prevalence and methods of trafficking within Cambodia difficult. This ultimately means that interventions to address trafficking are piecemeal and proceed on the basis of a lack of evidence.

There is currently a lack of cooperation between agencies, such as NGOs, (who manage a range of counter-trafficking interventions, from rescues to return and reintegration), and government agencies, to establish effective data collection methods. While cooperation certainly exists in terms of interventions, no single agency is charged with collecting information on trafficking victims, and it was found that even those which had databases for this purpose had not maintained them and they were thus ineffective.[3]

This gap has often been filled by other research methods, which seek to assess prevalence or patterns within the commercial sex places where trafficking is assumed to take place. A major drawback of this kind of research (including this report) is that trafficking is a dynamic and evolving process. Trafficking networks and processes may evolve, peak and die out, to be replaced by other methods of exploitation. A longitudinal approach would thus yield more significant data for the purpose of measuring prevalence and evolving patterns, but this is not possible without cooperation between different agencies.

A recent review of research on trafficking in Cambodia revealed that this research is often small-scale, and for the most part concentrates on cross-border trafficking and trafficking for sexual exploitation (Derks et al., 2006). It was also found to fail to incorporate and build upon previous research findings. Derks et al. further argue that attempts to measure trafficking within Cambodia have been controversial, often owing to the difference in interpretation of the definition of trafficking between agencies, which is often a reflection of their stance on the legality of commercial sex.

Most of the research conducted so far has predominantly concentrated on the patterns of sexual exploitation and trafficking within brothel-based sexual exploitation, which could partly be a reflection of the difficulty in accessing other sexual exploitation locations. This report challenges this assumption. For many commercially sexually exploited women and girls (CSEWGs), the first commercial sex takes place outside of any commercial sexual exploitation place, and at a significantly younger age. This supports the supposition that indicators to measure the rate of trafficking are only valid if they are based on adequate qualitative research on the methods through which trafficking takes place.

All of the points above have the consequence that there is a lack of an effective baseline, not only for measuring prevalence, but also for assessing evolving patterns of sexual exploitation and trafficking.

[3] This has also been found by other research projects, including Arensen (2004).

1.2 Legal status and counter-trafficking efforts

Legal status of commercial sex and the effectiveness of counter-trafficking efforts were not within the remit of this study, but they have had a significant effect on the patterns and processes of trafficking within Cambodia, as well as on the research process.

The Cambodian legal code effectively makes profit gained from commercial sexual exploitation illegal, and penalises the provider of commercial sex, such as the brothel owner or pimp, and not the CSEWG. However, as has often been remarked, CSEWGs themselves are often arrested or harassed by police, who have launched periodic crackdowns on commercial sex establishments. It has been noted that the official illegal status of commercial sex establishments often means that they exist in a corrupt and symbiotic relationship with local authorities – often paying for protection and the rights to operate, and subject to swift reprisals if they fail to do so.

Nonetheless, commercial sex establishments often exist within a semi-legal framework, with a semi-official registration process conducted by local commune authorities for CSEWGs, mostly in brothels. Initially, this occurred as part of the HIV/AIDS monitoring system, specifically for the enforcement of the 100% condom use policy (Lowe, 2003). This differentiates between 'direct' CSEWGs – whose main income earning activity is the provision of sex - and 'indirect' CSEWGs, who may have another profession (such as beer seller) and who decide to earn extra income from providing sexual services.

It must be emphasised that the HIV/AIDS process of monitoring and registration has been incorporated into anti-trafficking mechanisms. CSEWGs reported sometimes being interviewed by police to assess whether they were 'voluntary' or forced. It assumes that 'indirect' CSEWGs are more 'voluntary'. In effect, this division is often arbitrary, and by calling themselves 'indirect' commercial sex locations, many establishments have effectively evaded monitoring by local authorities, regardless of the level of sexual exploitation (or of the likelihood of trafficking) that exists.

Interaction between local authorities and commercial sex establishments, specifically for counter-trafficking efforts had a strong bearing on some of the data collected during the research. There is a conflict within the Cambodian Legal Code and some aspects of the UN Palermo Protocol on Trafficking. For instance, the age of sexual consent in the Cambodian legal code is unclear[4] yet, in effect, local authorities and establishment owners have adopted the UN definition and there is a widespread understanding that girls under the age of 18 are underage.

Lastly, counter-trafficking efforts have become part of the corrupt and symbiotic relationship between local authorities and commercial sex establishments. While the level of prosecutions may be low, commercial sex establishment owners may often have been threatened with arrest and/or prosecution, and will have taken steps to avoid this.

The extensive effect of this on the patterns of trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, as well as research, will be discussed in Sections 3 and 7.

[4] The age of consent stipulated in the Family Law for marriage is 16 yet the UNTAC Penal Code (No. 57) considers sexual assault/rape for those less than 15 years an aggravated offence. The UN Palermo Protocol, which has been ratified by the Cambodian government, clearly states that all those under 18 years will be considered to be trafficked, regardless of their level of consent.

2. Methods and Objectives

2.1 Overview

The main focus of this research project was on trafficking within Cambodia, given the strong emphasis on cross-border migration and trafficking of other research projects. There were two key target groups within the research project: domestic workers and CSEWGs. The research goal for the project was **to map the process and mechanisms of trafficking within Cambodia.**

The research objectives were as follows:

i) To map the types of demand that are leading to migration and trafficking to key provinces (Koh Kong, Kampong Som and Siem Reap), particularly for CSEWGs and domestic workers.
ii) To understand the interaction and mechanisms in internal trafficking within Cambodia, and its relationship to cross-border trafficking.
iii) To understand the process and mechanisms of trafficking within Cambodia.

Several key methods were used to research the CSEWGs. Firstly, in Survey 1, the project adapted a research tool that had previously been used to assess the level of trafficking in brothels (see Arensen, 2004) and was suitable for use with a group with low levels of literacy. The research tool used innovative pictorial representations instead of a written format to ask questions, and was designed to be filled in by the CSEWGs themselves, so that it ensured complete confidentiality. This was used with direct CSEWGs (brothel-based) only.

The questionnaire measured trafficking in three ways – being underage at the time of entering the commercial sex place, being deceived and being forced into commercial sexual exploitation. This research tool had already been piloted by Arensen (2004), and found to be effective. It did not measure levels of debt bondage, which had been felt by Arensen to place women and girls being studied at risk of violence from the brothel owners. Minor adjustments were made to the questionnaire for this research project, including looking at previous employment before entering commercial sexual exploitation, and expanding on some of the response categories on questions regarding recruitment into the commercial sex place.

The questionnaire was translated into Vietnamese (a pre-tested Khmer version was already available) and then administered by project staff in brothels, often in groups of several CSEWGs. The sample was a convenience sample; however, as can be seen from Table 1 below, it was statistically significant for all of the research locations.[5]

The sampling frame was gathered from provincial HIV/AIDS offices, or from local authorities who were a part of provincial HIV/AIDS committees.[6] The brothels and the numbers of CSEWGs within them were also manually counted by the research team, to

[5] A formula developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) was used, giving 95% confidence, as cited in Sarantakos (1998)

[6] Provincial HIV/AIDS committees are often comprised of government officials from a variety of local department offices, such Departments of Social Affairs, Women's Affairs and Labor (among others), as well as Health. These statistics were felt to be the most valid as, for instance, registration in local communes often underestimates CSEWG numbers owing to registration cost.

rectify discrepancies in the official figures. It can be seen that government statistics often underestimate CSEWG populations, apart from in Kampong Som, where the brothel areas were faced with forced eviction and there had been a reduction in the population. Numbers of indirect CSEWGs were significantly higher in all provinces studied.

Access was only refused in two brothels in Kampong Som, although issues of data quality will be discussed below in Section 2.2. Local authorities accompanied the research team in all three locations, although in one province (Kampong Som), this was found to be a significant hindrance,[7] and was stopped. In the other provinces, government staff were recruited from provincial government departments (such as DSAVY and PDWA), which could more effectively facilitate access.

Table 1: Numbers of CSEWGs sampled (Survey 1)

Location	No. sampled	Total sample (PHD/gov. statistics)	Total sample (manual count)
Kampong Som	127	135	132
Koh Kong	67	65	75
Siem Reap	118	110	131
Total	**312**	**310**	**338**

In terms of process, the questionnaire was administered by two researchers in groups ranging from one to 15 women and girls. Both brothel owners (if present) and CSEWGs were clearly told that all the research was confidential and that particular details such as names or brothel numbers would not be recorded. They were also shown a sealed box where all questionnaires would be posted once they were completed. Thus, survey results could not be traced to a particular person or commercial sex establishment. The researchers then clearly went through each question, reading each question several times and showing each picture and its meaning. The questions had been designed to be simple and easy to understand. It was emphasised that the questions pertaining to entry into the brothel related to the first brothel that they had worked in, and not the brothel of current work. The expatriate team leader accompanied the research team at all times, though most often was outside of hearing distance of the survey, talking to brothel owners.

Qualitative data, namely in-depth interviews, with a much wider variety of CSEWGs, in brothels and karaokes, discos, bars and other locations, were also conducted. A total of 203 interviews were done with women working in different commercial sex locations. As much as possible, these would be conducted in a neutral location, often a hired temporary office. A total of 15 of the interviews were conducted in the brothels, and only two of these were done within public spaces – the rest were done in a private room in the brothel. The interviews were conducted by two researchers of Khmer and Vietnamese ethnic descent, who either had substantial previous experience, or were trained intensively before and during research. One of the researchers (of Vietnamese descent) had formerly worked in commercial sex herself, and it is felt that her involvement significantly contributed to the validity of the research process and findings. The expatriate team leader participated in some of the interviews, though only those which were conducted in the Khmer language.

[7] The local village chief accompanied the research team in the major brothel area, but openly interfered with the research process and was felt to be a hindrance.

Each project location was mapped at the beginning of the research project, using motodups[8] and direct observation. Efforts were then made to recruit CSEWGs from as many different locations as possible, mainly using a snowball technique. The use of a PEER research approach[9] was piloted in Kampong Som but was found to be ineffective; however, peer recruiters were extensively used by the project. A small stipend was provided to interviewees and peer recruiters to cover transport and opportunity costs. This was felt to be necessary as most interviews took place outside of the commercial sex place. In a small number of cases, former CSEWGs were contacted using motodups (a total of two: one in Kampong Som and one in Koh Kong), who were known in low-income areas. In Siem Reap, extensive interviews took place through social networks accessed by the ethnic Vietnamese researcher among her former peers. The total numbers of interviewees and the location of interview can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Number of CSEWGs sampled (Survey 2)

Location	Direct CSEWGs	Indirect CSEWGs	Ethnic Vietnamese CSEWGs	Khmer CSEWGs	Total per province
Kampong Som	25	21	18	28	46
Koh Kong	47	19	14	52	66
Siem Reap	13	78	18	73	91
Total	**85**	**118**	**50**	**153**	**203**

Finally, key information was collected using a questionnaire that was filled in from the in-depth interviews (Survey 2). This was developed once key ideas had emerged from the initial inductive research process, such as the incidence of rape, family dysfunction and experience of child domestic work. This method was also used to assess the numbers of trafficked women.

For both surveys, it must be noted that they are a measure of *ever* having been trafficked, rather than *current* rates of trafficking. As has been explained, an accurate measurement of the prevalence of trafficking was not within the remit of this research project. A sample that concentrated on current rates would have focused on younger CSEWGs. While these certainly comprised the majority of the CSEWGs interviewed, older CSEWGs could also be informative about how trafficking networks had evolved owing to counter-trafficking efforts.

2.2 Limitations

The difficulties of conducting research on trafficking and, in particular, of getting a representative sample, has been well recognised (IOM, 2005). Practices related to trafficking are illegal and often hidden from view. The phenomenon often involves successive links in a chain of social interactions; it is rare that research can uncover all of these links. As Kelly (2002) points out, victims of trafficking themselves may have incomplete knowledge of the social links among those who have conspired to traffic

[8] Local motorbike taxi drivers, who are often highly knowledgeable of commercial sex locations in their capacity as both clients and those taking clients to purchase sex. Using motodups to map commercial sex locations in trafficking research has been used by Steinfatt (2003).

[9] The PEER research approach uses peer researchers to conduct interviews among their peer groups and has been applied in other HIV/AIDS-related research, with male university students and female beer sellers (see Fletcher and Wilkinson, 2002). However, trafficking research was found to need wider social networks than those that could be accessed using PEER.

them. Research has thus often concentrated on victims of trafficking, rather than service providers (such as traffickers themselves or brothel owners), and on the demand side, namely clients.

Relatively little attention has been paid to how the policy environment and counter-trafficking programs may have affected issues to do with research. Previous research done on trafficking in Cambodia faced relatively few problems in terms of access to commercial sex places, for instance, whereas this research project had to contend with numerous difficulties. Counter-trafficking efforts may stigmatise CSEWGs, especially if they are confounded with an abolitionist approach which seeks to stop all forms of commercial sex. Finally, the research team's stance as a neutral observer is nonsensical in era of multiple agencies contending to maintain access to commercial sex places.

Trafficking practices appear to move on a continuum of open to closed, depending on not only the effectiveness of counter-trafficking interventions, but also seemingly on the strength of locally based actors (government or NGOs). Research may be easier and more valid in an era when there are relatively few challenges to the networks that traffic and become less so as practices become more closed. It remains an observation of the research process that research was easier in certain provinces where local actors had been more effective in establishing systems of monitoring in *some* commercial sex locations, and more difficult in areas where those systems were weak (and where corrupt links between commercial sex places and local authorities were more obvious) and counter-trafficking efforts relied on external organisations.

It is recognised that the means of introduction to a person may bias results – for instance, overt association with a counter-trafficking organisation may affect assertions of neutrality. In general, the research team relied on association with local authorities when conducting Survey 1, which was designed to be, as a respondent-filled form, absolutely confidential. The in-depth interviews used CSEWGs' networks to recruit participants, although initial contact with them often occurred in the commercial sex place. Greatest attention was paid to overcoming place and interviewer bias. The majority of interviews were conducted in a safe and neutral location. All interviews conducted with ethnic Vietnamese respondents were done only by the Vietnamese data collector. Most interviews conducted with Khmer respondents were conducted with a Khmer interviewer (although the expatriate team leader joined in some cases).

Efforts to pair respondents and interviewers in same language groups clearly improved data quality, especially when they were conducted through social networks available to the ethnic Vietnamese researcher. However, it must also be recognised that the lines of enquiry then followed, rather than explored, particular cultural concepts. For instance, it may be culturally sensitive for an 'insider' to ask questions regarding family dynamics which may have pushed a woman into commercial sexual exploitation, whereas it would be less so for an 'outsider'. Arguably, this is compensated for by the trust that can develop between people of the same language and/or ethnic group.

In Kampong Som, one local HIV/AIDS organisation with which the project had been cooperating instructed all CSEWGs and brothel owners not to talk about debt bondage – information on this practice is thus gathered from the other provinces in the study.

Nonetheless, it must be recognised that certain information was consistently found to be invalid, in particular regarding age, people accompanying the woman to the brothel, or

even some brothel conditions. This was particularly the case with those of Vietnamese descent, who were often reluctant to talk to researchers and, in some areas, seemed to be under more forms of control by brothel owners. Other forms of enquiry were simply not possible, or would have been invalid – this included interviews with brothel owners about how they recruited women and girls. In most cases, information was triangulated by having several respondents confirm each other's reports, for example, concerning virginity selling practices in a particular location. In some cases, information could not be crosschecked if the researchers felt that this put an interviewee at risk.

The last, and most important, limitation to the research concerns the effects of trauma and social affiliation on narrative. Relatively little research has focused on this. However, it had a clear effect on research findings in several key ways. Practices related to trafficking, as this report will explore, as intimately related to cultural norms that support sexual exploitation and shame. The privacy and neutral location of the in-depth interviews with the women and girls were thus key to understanding how they had entered commercial sexual exploitation, and they often expressed that they had never revealed their painful past to anyone before. However, it is more than likely that rates of rape for instance, are underestimated in this report. Issues that remain shameful often involve an admittance of agency on the part of the interviewee, for instance, in actively pursuing a sexual relationship that then became exploitative or then led to trafficking.

Furthermore, it remains an observation that the role of close family members, such as parents, in trafficking are often inscrutable or even avoided in the testimonies of trafficked women. This is partly related to the strong social acceptance of the rarely contested rights of parents to exploit their children's labour. However, it also more deeply relates to how these social practices will be unquestioned so long as there are few alternatives and they are unlikely to be changed. Thus, Khmer respondents were more likely to talk about and be critical of the role of their parents than their Vietnamese counterparts, who comparatively have less access and trust in intervention agencies, and less social networks to rely on (see Section 3.1). Yet, social affiliation seems to play a deeper role, as a similar effect was observed in talking to women and girls about their lives as child domestic workers. So long as a child or an adult still considers themselves to be an essential part of the household (even though they may have little contact with it), their own worth is also tied to the social 'value' of the household, and they will usually be reluctant to criticise it, especially to outsiders. It is often only once they have divested themselves of the moral claims that the household makes on them that they feel that they can voice to their criticisms or disquiet. Inevitably, this rarely happens.

Lastly, questions relating to entry into commercial sexual exploitation, given strong discrimination against CSEWGs, can be felt to be an accusation rather than a means of understanding life circumstances. Certain factors can be overemphasised, while their importance cannot be discounted. For instance, women and girls often talked about abject poverty pushing them into commercial sexual exploitation, and it was often later in the interview that other precipitating factors, such as family dysfunction, domestic violence, and exploitative relationships, came to be explored.

A related point is the lack of cultural space for the expression of the effects of trauma, or equally of power relationships, on personal experience. In almost all cases, emotional

pain is underemphasised, or is expressed as physical pain.[10] The psychological aspects of, for instance, children being forced to be sexually exploited is rarely expressed, even if the interview is taking place with them as an adult. Emotional pain seems to often be expressed as physical pain. Similarly, respondents can seem to acquiesce and accept exploitative relationships – it takes further probing to discover that this is often more reflective of their perceived inability to change their circumstances rather than an uncritical acceptance.

All of this should be borne in mind when analysing the processes and mechanisms of trafficking within Cambodia. It directly relates to how projects can address social vulnerability in the future. We should consider why, for instance, research on trafficking in the US has placed a strong emphasis on sexual and other abuse within the home for the substantial migration of children into commercial sexual exploitation (Spangenberg, 2001), whereas that in Cambodia focuses on poverty and patterns of migration. Is this a true reflection of different means and processes of sexual exploitation, or simply of its lack of cultural expression and visibility?

2.3 Definition and operationalisation of trafficking

Since 2000, most research on trafficking has used the UN Palermo Protocol as the definition of trafficking. It states that:

> Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of position of vulnerability, or giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

It further states that:

> The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered 'trafficking in persons' even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article;
>
> (d) 'Child' shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.

While the use of this definition is widespread, for research purposes it falters in several respects. Most importantly, it is unclear how 'exploitation' or 'consent' should be understood. In this report, 'trafficking' was measured in several key ways.

i) Being underage (under 18 years) at the time of first commercial sex and where there had been a financial transaction.
ii) The use of force or deception in the recruitment and use of women for the purposes of prostitution (including the use of drugs and other forms of intoxication, forced sex, threats and the use of violence, and inability to leave the commercial sexual exploitation place).
iii) Some methods of control, such as debt bondage, using a clearly delineated definition (see below).

[10] This emphasis has also been noticed by psychologists working in mental health services in Cambodia. For instance, see Physicians for Human Rights (1996).

In the case of debt bondage, the qualitative research did not support the blanket use of the presence of debt to indicate trafficking. In particular, there seems to be some substantial differences between different ethnic groups in this regard – debt has been found to be a significant means of exploitation of Vietnamese CSEWGs, but less so for Khmer (see Section 7.3). The use of debt as a means for force and control was only used to indicate trafficking if the woman or girl expressed that they were never able to pay it off,[11] or if they realised that it was exploitative in some way. Debt was not used as a measure of trafficking in Survey 1.[12]

Debt bondage is defined as a condition arising from a pledge by a debtor of his/her personal services or those of a person under his/her control as security for the debt, if the value of those services as reasonably assessed is not applied towards the liquidation of the debt, or the length or nature of those services are not respectively limited or defined.[13] The presence of debt in itself does not indicate slavery-like conditions, but the inability to repay it does. Furthermore, debt bondage may exist and entail giving up fundamental rights and freedoms on a temporary basis.

2.4 Background to the provinces selected

The three key provinces (Koh Kong, Siem Reap and Kampong Som) were chosen based on IOM's previous experience with trafficking, which had identified these places as 'hot spots', owing mainly to their links with tourism and foreign-led demand. In some of these places, there is substantial evidence that there is the establishment of organised paedophile networks (APLE, 2005), which had been previously noted in Phnom Penh (Grillot, 2005). In some provinces, there is a clear establishment of a male expatriate culture imported from Thailand, where heavy use of commercial sex is evident. However, the patterns of migration and trafficking are led by indigenous demand in at least two of these provinces (Siem Reap and Kampong Som), whereas the third province (Koh Kong) has been found to be a significant transit route and recruiting ground for international trafficking, especially to Thailand and to Malaysia.

All three of the provinces have launched a variety of anti-trafficking efforts, with a combination of actors, including government (anti-trafficking police and local commune police, MWA and MSVY), and civil society (most notably, human rights organisations, although there are also some NGOs who focus exclusively on trafficking and exploitation of women and girls through commercial sex). All three provinces had experience substantial crackdowns on brothels prior to the research period, with varying effectiveness. The most extreme version was Siem Reap, which had closed down over 10 brothels and arrested over 75 people.[14] The least active was Kampong Som, which had experienced one forced closure of a sex establishment over a year prior to the research, and little since then.

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[12] Debt was not used as an indicator as the previous survey designers had felt that asking this question would put the women/girls at risk from retribution from commercial sex establishment owners (Arensen, Personal Communication, August 2005).

[13] UN Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices similar to Slavery, Article 1.

[14] Personal Communication, Head of Anti-Trafficking Police, Siem Reap, February 2006

3. Patterns of Commercial Sex

3.1 Overview of commercial sex

Despite the lack of clear data, the very high rates of trafficking in commercial sex places (particularly brothels) presented by some earlier surveys would suggest that trafficking in persons is an inseparable part of the sex industry, since the post-conflict liberalisation of Cambodia's economy and the consequent boom in the sex industry. The effects of counter-trafficking interventions may be contested given, for instance, the low level of convictions and the consequent presence of 'repeat offenders'. Nonetheless, it is clear that, inasmuch as the sex industry and the trafficking practices that sustain them exist symbiotically, so then counter-trafficking efforts will have had an effect on the social structure of commercial sexual exploitation and its culture in Cambodia.

Trafficking is clearly a dynamic process, evolving in response to demand, constraints and pressures. The social structure of different commercial sex places and the forms of control within them are essential to understand evolving trafficking practices.

The most visible and researched commercial sex location is the brothel. In two of the provinces studied, brothel areas were located outside of the centre of town. In one province (Koh Kong), the brothel area had been forced to the outskirts by local authorities owing to social undesirability. Brothels can often be found in distinct 'areas', as opposed to more high-class establishments or more informal commercial sexual exploitation, which will mostly be found in areas where 'entertainment' is being offered. They are thus much more loosely dispersed. Brothel areas are also visibly subject to much more forms of control and monitoring by local authorities than other places. Brothel-based CSEWGs were the only group in the research who were consistently interviewed and registered by local authorities (including the commune police).

The social structure within the brothel, and other commercial sex locations, is clearly important to explain the patterns of power that can be used to exploit women and girls. The language used in reference to interpersonal relations within the brothel uses the language of the family but sits alongside language of violence and domination. As Derks (1998a) points out, the word most frequently used to describe the relationship between the *meebon* (brothel owner) and CSEWGs is *jengjom* – literally to raise or feed – which as she says implies a semi-parental relationship. This demonstrates the interdependence of the *meebon* and the CSEWGs in her brothel, as one brothel owner explained: 'If the girl leaves the brothel, it is like she is taking the rice out of my bowl'. Derks has called these relationships 'matron-client' relations. However, the term *jengjom* can also be applied to raising animals or cattle, and thus also strongly implies an economic benefit, and an exploitation of labour.

The powerful ties of duty and obligation of a child towards those 'raising' him or her was also evident among child domestic workers who were also studied by the project. The implication of a semi-parental relationship was essential to understanding patterns of sexual and physical abuse. If a child had entered a household that was part of their extended family network, they could lay claim to that child, and to the right to exploit the child's labour, through asserting that they were 'raising' the child. *Jengjom* implies a strong duty and moral obligation on the part of the child to repay whoever has 'raised' him or her. Most commonly, this is the parents, but in cases of family disintegration,

other people could claim this right. Frequently, if the parent had put the child into debt bondage to an employer, their rights over their children, specifically to choose how or where they would work, seemed to have been rescinded. House owners could then 'trade' in their domestic workers, move them to other provinces or other households, without consulting the child's parents.

The cultural precedents for the relationship that can be seen within the brothel, and other commercial sex locations, clearly reinforce their widespread acceptance. The language of the family is overtly used. Brothel owners are usually referred to using terms, such as 'ma' and 'pa',[15] or alternatively (if the girl/woman has a strong relationship still with her own parents), 'aunt' and 'uncle'. Even when there is no commercial sex establishment, and the women or girls work in small mobile groups with one mamasan, for instance, in a bar or nightclub, they will refer to her as a 'mummy'. Even in these small groups, the 'mummy' will negotiate all deals with clients and protection for those under her control. The parental language does not negate the exploitative nature of the relationship. In fact, it clearly reinforces the rights to exploitation. In some of the CSEWGs' narratives, for instance, *meebons* exclude relationships with other people, such as boyfriends, who may threaten the women and girls' income, or the brothel owner's rights over it. Vietnamese women in some karaoke parlours in Siem Reap, for instance, were not allowed to have contact with Vietnamese men, in case they developed such relationships.

The language of violence also sits side by side with this parental language, and methods of exerting power and control over the CSEWGs are clearly visible in the brothel, most often in reference to male employees. This is most obvious with the *cuen kaen* or the brothel guards. *Kaen* means to bend, as in to bend metal or to someone's will. *Cuen kaen* are sometimes said to be there to protect brothel owners and women, particularly from drunken clients; however, they also clearly play a role in enforcing behaviour within the brothel, in following women who are in debt to the brothel owner to make sure that they do not run away, and in using violence to enforce the rules laid down by the brothel owners. Other people, such as motodups who bring clients to the brothel, are often the brothel owners' relatives, and will also be part of the brothel economy. They play a vital role in making sure that women and girls do not run away when they go to see clients outside of the brothel. *Kmeng steuv*, or 'young hooligans' play a more ambiguous role, sometimes being in the employ of the brothel owner and sometimes being a woman's boyfriend, often financially supported by her. In this case, she will be said to be *jengjom songsaa*, or 'raising' her boyfriend.

However, it is the brothel's existence as a substitute family that seems to carry the most socially significant meaning for some women and girls, most especially those who have left their families because of severe physical or sexual abuse. Again, there are strong links between migration into child domestic work and later into commercial sexual exploitation. As children, girls may flee their households because of these same patterns of abuse or be placed into domestic work, where they will face even further risks of

[15] There is widespread use of family-based terms in Cambodia; however, 'ma' would normally only be used in reference to a woman's own mother, or to her mother-in-law.

abuse. For one woman, it was the brothel that finally provided her with the loving warmth, or *peap kok kadao*[16] that she felt she had missed all of her life,

> *My stepmother beat me. I could not play with her child. She did not allow me to go to school because she hated me. She allowed her child to go to school. She hated me because I was (my father's) first wife's child. My stepmother often blamed me … I didn't want to be beaten by them, whenever my stepmother beat me, my father did not do anything to help me … I wanted to know whether living a life of a prostitute was similar or different from living with a stepmother. I thought that an unfortunate person like me should live a life of a sex prostitute ... I thought that I would be looked after when I was sick, and that it was like living in a family. I wanted to live with prostitutes because I thought it was like a family. There was happiness … I call the brothel owner mother. I feel that she is like my real mother … She does not allow other girls to call her aunt. She wants them to call her mother … When I worked at the grocery store I did not have this feeling. I called the owner of the shop aunt because I was employed to sell groceries for her. She did not love me as her daughter. When I was sick, she simply gave me money to buy medicine. She did not take care of me. I felt that she was superior to me because she used unpleasant words to talk to me. Also, she did not trust me … Living with the brothel owner is better than living with my father and stepmother, I feel more at home here.*
>
> CSEWG, Koh Kong.

For many women who have maintained the strength of their family relationships, this mimicry of kin relations clearly offers a poor substitute. Yet, its social imitations of kinship are one factor that explains how women and girls, forced out of their homes often by patterns of abuse, can be attracted to life in a brothel. As will also be explored later, it also seems to be perceived as a 'best option' for women or girls with few social support networks, and this partly explains some of the patterns of trafficking.

Beyond the brothel, there are many other locations for commercial sex, and there is an assumption, in terms of both policy and interventions (for reproductive health and counter-trafficking) that brothels are the main spaces where it occurs. CSEWGs in other places allegedly have a main profession, and a worker may choose to provide extra sexual services to a client, but is not forced to do so. However, it is assumed that in the brothel, sexually exploited workers will have less choice and will be routinely forced to receive clients. As has been explained before (see Section 1.2), the HIV/AIDS monitoring system has incorporated this assumption, and counter-trafficking activities in many of the provinces studied have often mapped themselves onto these.

This demarcation between the levels of 'choice' that a girl or woman has in choosing her clients is in fact artificial, especially in its assumed relationship to the level of trafficking. The likelihood of different kinds of trafficking within different locations will be explored in depth in Section 7. The research found that elements of choice vary highly by different locations, regardless of their type. Different forms of coercion, including debt bondage, use of drugs and alcohol, enforcement of the rights of clients to sexually harass workers, systems of fines, threats and use of violence, or more subtly, a process of acculturation to the prevailing commercial sex culture around them, are all used to manipulate and force women to provide sexual services. The only distinct relationship that we can distinguish between commercial sex 'type' and means of coercion is based on the relative wealth and political connections of various establishments. More violent forms of

[16] This is loosely translated as 'warmth' and refers to feelings within many different types of relationships. In context of women talking about their families, especially if they were in a precarious situation within it, they described the lack of 'warmth' between family members.

overt control may be used in wealthier establishments, where monitoring by local authorities may be less concerted.

The social structure of the karaoke parlour, for instance, is illustrative of how forms of manipulation may be exerted to entice or force women and girls into providing sexual services. The term 'karaoke' encompasses a wide range of establishments, from low to high income, and with totally different client groups. Some parlours may only have a few women working there, but the provision of sexual services varies highly from place to place. Some places have a few girls who will have sex with clients, while other specifically state that they will only provide alcohol and entertainment, but no sex. Regardless of whether a client can have penetrative sex with a karaoke worker, the levels of sexual harassment in these parlours are exceedingly high, as this research and others have found (KHANA, 2001). Women and girls will routinely have to sit with clients to 'provide entertainment', and will often be hugged, kissed, have their breasts squeezed, and moreover, be blamed by the karaoke owner if they do not accept this. In higher class establishments, women will be recruited to be sexually exploited – they will be expected to provide sexual services, though they often do have the right to refuse sex with a client.

Larger karaoke establishments often have a more complex social structure than the smaller ones. The social roles within the larger karaokes are often divided between those who do not provide sexual services and those that do, providing an easy route from one to the other. Often, this progression can be made through the selling or losing of virginity (which will be fully explored in Section 7). Women and girls are often recruited into different roles depending on their age, relative attractiveness, and virginal status. Older women, who would not be able to attract so many clients, often progress to semi-managerial positions, as the *maykaa* or manager, who often does the direct dealing with the clients regarding price and location of sexual services with the karaoke girls. There may be one or several *maykaas* in a karaoke establishment, especially if there are women of different ethnic groups, in which case, they will often deal with their own ethnic groups only. The *maykaas* have a similar matron-client relationship with the karaoke women, who directly pay them a commission on each client's fees. However, their relationship with the karaoke owner is often difficult to ascertain, especially in exploring the owner's involvement and benefits from financial transactions for sexual services.

The karaoke girls and women themselves are often told when they are recruited that they will only be required to sing and play different songs. However, their different pay scales reflect their involvement with clients – they are often only paid when they sit with clients. Some karaoke parlours provide rooms for having sex on the premises, while others penalise workers for having sex with clients during work hours, and expect all sexual transactions to happen outside. Young women or girls who are recruited into the karaoke parlour are often asked whether they are still virgins or not. In larger establishments, they will often start work as the *neak ja ta kok*, (or ice-supplier, who has to put ice into client's beer glasses). In small places, they may play many other roles. In this way, young virgin girls are 'made available' to clients, and are subject to quite a wide range of manipulation to provide sexual services, though direct force is not often used. The clear implications of this for patterns of trafficking will be explored in Section 7.

The use of the social and employment role of *neak ja ta kok* to recruit young girls and women into establishments where they may later become providers of sexual services is also seen in a variety of other locations. This includes restaurants, discotheques and

nightclubs, hotels and bars, some of which may have workers who provide sexual services. There appears to have been a dramatic growth in the variety of 'entertainment' places available since the post-conflict period, with the concomitant spread in the locations where commercial sex is available.

The pressures exerted on patterns of commercial sexual exploitation by counter-trafficking activities, including police crackdowns, are often difficult to delineate, especially in the absence of data on the different kinds of commercial sex locations. However, it seems that in some cases, extreme measures have been taken to evade detection by the authorities. This can be most clearly seen in the dramatic shift in sexual exploited populations from 'direct' to 'indirect' locations, for instance, from brothel to massage parlour, though often the social structure and means of control within the brothel/massage parlour stay the same, and all that changes is the token provision of massage services and a sign put at the front of the shop. This is most clearly seen in Kampong Som after a high profile closure of a brothel in an ethnic Vietnamese dominated area in 2004. According to NGO figures, prior to this the 'indirect' CSEWGs population had been about 200, and after this it swelled to over 600.[17] Moreover, in Kampong Som and Siem Reap, the owner of the brothel/massage parlour would not be visible or easily contactable – the role of dealing with outsiders, and often actively pretending to be the owner, is taken on by the *maykaa*. Women and girls may also assert that they do not have a *meebon*, that they merely have a landlord who they rent rooms from.[18]

Younger, underage sexually exploited girls may be kept at separate locations, and brought in to the brothel at the request of clients. This particularly seems to be the case in areas where there are established paedophile networks.[19] Recent research (Gyer, 2005) reported that underage girls are available for sexual exploitation in a brothel area of Kampong Som, for instance.

Beyond the brothel, at the higher end of the economic scale, there has also been a shift towards more mobile and smaller groups of CSEWGs, often working with a 'mummy'. These are some of the hardest groups to access and to research, especially if there are trafficking-related practices amongst them. In Kampong Som and Siem Reap, the research team directly observed women who were being kept in private houses, and were escorted to work in bars and discos at night time. Other groups in Phnom Penh worked on the streets, through a network of male employees who would find clients along busy streets, and take them to guesthouses. Lastly, the virginity trade overwhelmingly takes place outside of the brothel or karaoke, in a variety of locations.

The systems of control and coercion used among these small groups appear to be the same as those that were *previously* used on a larger scale in the brothel. Moreover, one

[17] Personal Communication, Som Satum, KWCD, 06/09/05

[18] This would avoid penalties under the Cambodian Law on Trafficking, which outlaws people making profits from commercial sex, such as the brothel owner, and not the CSEWG.

[19] Gyer's (2005) research did not come to the conclusion that Kampong Som was a paedophile area, but did report that very young children were available for commercial sexual exploitation in a brothel area. Recent work by an NGO, however, has contradicted this finding, and had collected many case histories (Personal Communication, Zelda Hunter, APLE, 8 December 2005). However, these may also reflect the most 'visible' aspects of paedophilia, often exploitation of children from poor itinerant families, rather than the organised provision of children through commercial sex establishments.

single location may support many small groups working within them, and the level of 'choice' and 'force' will vary between groups. This can be seen, for instance, in some of the larger nightclubs, in which some CSEWGs may be operating completely independently, alongside women and girls who kept under guard, in debt bondage and controlled with the further threat of force. Similarly to brothels, these small groups are usually comprised of a mummy and some *cuen kaen*, as well as the girls themselves.

The implications of patterns of commercial sex for trafficking will be explored in Section 8

3.2 Vietnamese community in Cambodia and trafficking

This study aimed to include both Vietnamese and Khmer CSEWGs in seeking to understand the patterns of trafficking within Cambodia. Data collected on cross-border trafficking shows clearly that Vietnamese women and children are over-represented as an ethnic group (for instance, see Farrington, 2002). Though exact numbers of the Vietnamese ethnic population have never been published in Cambodian census data, some have given estimates of ethnic Vietnamese groups occupying approximately 5% of the population (CIA, accessed July 2006). Women and children of ethnic Vietnamese origin habitually form 30% or more of estimates of trafficked populations.

The study did not focus on cross-border migration, which has already been extensively explored by Derks (1997, 1998a). Commenting on the successive waves of migration, Derks also remarked that, 'ethnic Vietnamese living in Cambodia are often divided into different categories that reflect their length of stay in Cambodia'; however, she asserted that more recent flows of migration during the phases of economic liberalisation had relied on earlier migration flows during the period of Vietnamese occupation (during the 1980s).

Nonetheless, there is a contrast between the older, more established communities, often involved in agricultural micro-industries, and the newer, peri-urban communities. All of the provinces selected had small Vietnamese communities, which only sometimes had links to the commercial sex establishments located nearby. Siem Reap, for instance, has a relatively old Vietnamese fishing community, but there seemed to be little interaction between this community and migration into the sex industry. Both Koh Kong and Kampong Som also had communities based around the fishing industries, with more links to Vietnamese communities based on the sex industry. A recurrent theme for many of these people is landlessness and lack of economic opportunities. They are highly mobile, moving from one community to another in search of economic opportunities. Farrington (2002) also commented on the mobile nature of families involved in child trafficking in Poipet, suggesting that they come from less established communities.

The presence of Vietnamese CSEWGs is often equated with illegal migration. However, those in this study can be classified as more long-term migrants. Those who were either born in Cambodia, or who have lived there for more than five years accounted for over 70% of the sample in Survey 1, for instance.[20] It was also clear that for those who were

[20] While this certainly means that most of the Vietnamese CSEWGs are long-term migrants, it does not mean that they are entitled to Cambodian nationality. Schousboe-Laursen (2004) has explored how Cambodian nationality has sought to exclude Vietnamese applicants. Birth in Cambodia only entitles citizenship if the parents are 'legally settled', and many ethnic Vietnamese are excluded from applying.

not born in Cambodia, a peak time for migration occurred during the period of economic liberalisation, broadly during the 1990's, who were often, as Derks (1998a) points out, attracted by rumours of good economic conditions and wealth to be made. It seems that these populations were often attracted into urban communities connected to local trades, but often without the access to political leverage to be able to attain a secured settled legal status.

Recent research has refocused on some of these communities and their connections to the sex industry, as it has become apparent that there are recurring source and transit areas, often with mixed Khmer and Vietnamese populations, from which the majority of Vietnamese CSEWGs either come through or originate from. One aspect that seems crucial to these areas is the mobile nature of their populations. Chba Ampoeu and its neighbours, Chak Angkre Leur and Kraom, are all areas that are persistently referred to as sending areas in interviews. Its population is for the most part, poor and marginalised, with a mix of long-term residents (some with links to the sex industry), and rural to urban migrants.

Recent research has thus concentrated on some of these locations – Reimer (2006) in urban source areas in Phnom Penh and Farrington (2002) in Poipet. Both of these studies highlighted a variety of factors that have been found to facilitate trafficking within Vietnamese communities, which relate to their position as an often stigmatised migrant ethnic group living within Cambodia. This includes the precariousness of their social situation within Cambodia, poverty and the inability of households to survive crises (such as emergency healthcare costs), the 'normalisation' of entry into commercial sexual exploitation, debt, materialism, family honour, and the place and social value of women within the household. Farrington (2002) also talked of the lack of social support networks, and documented the direct links between known traffickers and debt agents.

Both studies highlight, however, that the sale of children for commercial sexual exploitation can involve the consent of the parents, as part of a household strategy for survival or economic advancement. Beesey (2003) has talked of the dislocation and lack of traditional cultural values that has led to practices such as community-wide child selling practices among ethnic Vietnamese communities in Cambodia.

There is a real difficulty in researching this phenomenon, particularly in the current counter-trafficking climate. There is also a real danger of further stigmatising Vietnamese communities through this discussion – Arensen et al. (undated) have highlighted how stigma among care-givers perpetuates the notion that trafficking, particularly in children, among the ethnic Vietnamese owes to intractable cultural differences that cannot be changed.

When looking at cultural differences that may support this exploitation within the household, however, it is difficult to clearly delineate between the pressures that might exist in Khmer and Vietnamese cultures, and the consequent pattern of trafficking. Vietnamese culture is traditionally patrilineal and patrilocal, for instance, with female exogamy. This means that after marriage, the woman will live with the husband's family, and her own family will no longer have any (especially financial) claims on her. It is traditionally shameful for a woman's family to rely on their daughter after marriage, though strong bonds of duty may support the exploitation of her labour before it.

This is a tradition that appears to be going through rapid change, possibly for a number of reasons, including the low status that a woman may have within her marriage, and the cultural respect extended to her for supporting her parents when she is an adult. In this research, CSEWGs most often make reference for their desire to support their parents, and the strength of the cultural notion of filial piety – the duty of the individual towards the family – is apparent (Slocomb, undated).

Such a significant shift in tradition, however, is also arguably linked to the rapid modernisation and the evolution in sexual mores – or it is certainly something that is used by traffickers to justify and appeal to parents to sell their children, who are often told that they will 'lose their virginity with their boyfriends anyway' and so it is better to get money for it. The perceived unreliability of marriage is also a recurrent theme – Chab Dai's (Reimer, 2006) research revealed community perceptions that men who their daughters might marry are 'bad' or 'unreliable'. Derks has also remarked that there is a common belief that Vietnamese women can remarry after they have worked as CSEWGs. However, Khmer women also can be found remarrying, often with men who they have met through commercial sex, though frequently their marriages are abusive and unstable. This would also seem to be the case with Vietnamese women, although further research could clarify this further.

Ultimately, as this report will explore, different forms of trafficking use varying means of exploitation and coercion which are found among Khmer and Vietnamese communities. For instance, researchers have isolated the notion of 'filial piety', the allegiance of the family members to each other, as a cultural belief that lends support to parents' exploitation of their children in commercial sex. However, Khmer women also have strong moral obligations to support their families, especially if they are the oldest daughter (LSCW, 2005a; Derks, 2005).

The differences in patterns of trafficking among Khmer and Vietnamese girls and women are more adequately explained by the access to trafficking networks in certain areas (which are denser in some areas), as well as the by the patterns of demand. It has been remarked that there is strong demand for Vietnamese girls and women among Asian client groups, for instance.

4. Cultural Norms and their Influence on Trafficking

Cultural practices and beliefs are most clearly apparent in the patterns of demand that fuels trafficking – the trade in virginity is one clear example. They also delineate and inform the patterns of exploitation, abuse, sexual stigma and shame that are interwoven into patterns of trafficking, and that are arguably exploited by traffickers. Gender, especially women's and girl's place within the household, and more importantly, how they come to be separated from the household, are a pivotal part of not only the trafficking practices within Cambodia, but also of voluntary migration into the sex industry.

Discussions of trafficking practices in Cambodia usually highlight aspects such as the culture of impunity that allow such criminal practices to be perpetuated. However, researchers have also argued that there are widespread cultural attitudes that support trafficking (O'Connell Davidson and Anderson, 2003). This report discusses these attitudes and how they are manifested in the experiences of women interviewed.

4.1 Gender norms and their influence on trafficking

Gender norms, and how they shape perceptions of 'acceptable' behaviour and female sexuality, are clearly important to a discussion of trafficking, as they contribute not only to trafficking practices but also arguably to counter-trafficking interventions. However, Cambodia is undergoing an accelerated modernisation[21] – demonstrated not only in the aspirations for a 'modern life' and increased rural to urban migration (Derks, 2005) - but also in rapidly evolving social and sexual norms, especially in urban areas. Maltoni (2005) has also pointed out that the stigma for these rapid changes in migration and norms are often borne by women in societies undergoing these kinds of rapid social change.

Much of the research done on gender, cultural norms and sexuality has been done in the context of health projects (specifically HIV/AIDS), and not migration. Traditionally, sexual relations for women, namely marriage, are mediated through the household. Despite modernisation, marriages are commonly arranged and have to be sanctioned by a woman's parents (CDHS, 2001). Women and girls are protected by the household until and beyond their marriage. Khmer society is matrilocal, meaning that women bear the responsibility for the reproduction of the household (Ebihara, 1971).

Women's social value is strongly tied to upholding certain sexual moral codes, for instance, regarding virginity before marriage. The discrepancy in the cultural construction of sexuality has often been referred to when looking risk of HIV/AIDS, but this research will argue that it is more widely related to patterns of abuse. While women are overwhelmingly judged for their perceived adherence to a sexual moral code of 'good' behaviour, men are not and seem to be expected to be promiscuous (UNFPA, 2000). Men's sexuality is conceived of as being an 'uncontrollable force', and thus is often excusable. This can be seen in the different language applied to sexually active men and women. A woman who is no longer a virgin is irreparably devalued, and

[21] This period of 'modernisation' is relatively recent, occurring since the liberalisation of the economy (1993) and the end of the period of Vietnamese occupation (1991) opened Cambodia up to more 'Western' influence.

referred to as *koich hawy* (already broken) (Phan and Patterson, 1994). A sexually promiscuous man, however, could be referred to as *kuhl* (naughty, or mischievous) – a word that could equally be used to refer to a slightly naughty child, and implying behaviour that is ultimately not strongly sanctioned against.

A woman's value thus depends on her 'newness' – or virginity, and declines after this. This can be seen in many different aspects of social relations, as well as those within the sex trade. A CSEWG will often have her own path of migration within the sex trade, from high class establishments (at a higher value) to further down the economic scale (Derks, 2005). More blatantly, while a girl or woman may command a high price for selling her virginity, she may equally get a high price for her second or third commercial sex, with the price decreasing for each sexual intercourse that takes place. To a lesser extent, this pattern can also be seen among women who marry several times – it appears from this research that subsequent marriages are less stable, and often open to levels of exploitation that would not be tolerated in first time marriages.

Sexual violence and rape may be widely tolerated if it is against women who are perceived to be 'sexually loose' (Jenkins, 2006; Grant, 2004).[22] Sexual shame, felt by women who have been raped and trafficked, is a strong tool that facilitates the sexual exploitation of women. As will be explored later, women or girls who had been raped were often blamed by their immediate family, the implication being that she had not made enough of an effort to preserve her sexual purity. The expectation of this reaction, moreover, was often enough to force the young woman to keep this exploitation secret. However, equally shameful is the accusation that the woman or girl has willingly sought out or desired sexual relations. This was often seen in the testimonies of the women interviewed – the implication that they had followed a man, or have been sexually incautious, often keeps means of exploitation used by some (especially male) trafficking networks shamefully secret, and they are unlikely to be reported.

This is especially the case given the socially recognised association between a woman's sexual morality and her migration from her household. This can be seen, for instance, in the expression referring to sexually loose women – *koat meun cuen* ('she has got legs' – meaning that she walks far from her household), implying that she may engage in sexual relationships that are not sanctioned by her household. Some women thus may be stigmatised for being away from their village. This pattern is seen, for instance, among garment workers who return home. Derks (2005) has also commented on these patterns of migration, observing that leaving the village may be far easier for women who are 'widows' (often meaning divorced, or separated from their spouse), than for young (virgin) women who are still under the protection of the household.

The picture is complicated by rapidly evolving sexual norms, and the discrepancy between these in an urban and rural context. This is particularly seen with the evolution of a youth culture, which is often based on aspirations towards modernity, consumerism, but also freedom and sexual love, and which are often unreconciled with traditional sexual norms in source communities.

[22] This is very clear when looking at the phenomenon of gang rape perpetrated against CSEWGs. Bearup (2003) highlighted that young men target women who are perceived to be sexually loose, and Sophrach (2004) catalogued how the vast majority of both male and female students did not regard forced sex with a CSEWG as rape.

Women, of course, do not blindly follow the cultural prescriptions that are dictated to them. They often choose to engage in relationships, and to build a life that may not be approved of within their household.[23] Their reasons for entering commercial sexual exploitation are often much more complicated than the cultural stereotypes of them, portrayed by their clients, for instance (including that they are sexually greedy, or that they liked to have sex), and CSEWGs in this research often reacted with anger to these portrayals. However, this report will argue that women who are socially acknowledged to have broken their relationships with their household are also perceived to be easy to exploit, and that they are actively sought out by traffickers.

4.2 Attitudes that support trafficking

O'Connell Davidson and Anderson (2003), in their research with CSEWGs and their client groups, identified certain attitudes that could lead to support for patterns of trafficking in a given setting. Specifically, they differentiated between clients who conceived of women working in commercial sex as providing a service (and thus whose 'voluntariness' was an important facet) and those who asserted that those women and girls could be temporarily acquired.

This report will argue that some aspects of the patterns of trafficking appear to have changed since the start of the boom in the sex trade (namely, the period of economic liberalisation in the early 1990s). Those forms that have continued to thrive, for instance, the virginity trade, have a strong cultural basis. Cambodia has already been typified as a 'rape prone' society, based on aspects such as high levels of general violence, male dominance and the silencing of female sexuality (Grant, 2004, quoting Sanday, 1986). Arguably, where high levels of sexual violence are tolerated against women, trafficking, as a form of sexual violence, will also thrive.

In the narratives of those who participated in this research, it is often difficult to disentangle norms that support patterns of sexual violence against women and those that support trafficking. They are clearly interlinked. First of all, as will be explored later, when we look at the testimonies of women and child domestic workers who have been raped, many of them were promised some form of compensation by the rapist – be it money or marriage – often in the act of being raped, though in only two out of eleven cases was there any compensation or retribution. Rather than being conceived of as an act that caused irreparable damage to the women and girls, rape, though seen as immoral, could also be compensated for. As will be discussed in Section 7 on the virginity trade, this notion is key to the perpetuation of a practice which is often done without the consent of the victim. It is also a clear support to the 'acquisition' of women and girls, albeit on a temporary basis, that fuels the trade.

Related to this idea are the patterns of sexual exploitation and forced sex that certain women endure. Health research has demonstrated that women within marriage, for instance, face a lack of sexual decision-making rights that often fuels husband to wife transmission of HIV/AIDS (Nelson, undated). Women who are no longer virgins and who work in the sex trade are strongly stigmatised. Though they often try to negotiate out of such situations and are not placidly accepting of them, it is common for both clients and establishment owners to reinforce the message that women are there for client's sexual pleasure and entertainment only. The narratives of karaoke women and girls is

[23] See, for example, CARAM's (1999) research with garment workers.

especially telling – while it is often thought that they do have the rights to choose their clients, in practice they will often be forced to accept extensive sexual harassment, not to show emotions that are not conducive to 'entertainment' (such as anger or depression), and in some establishments, financially penalised for any behaviour that might displease clients.

For many women, much of the voluntary economic migration between commercial sex places revolves around trying to find establishments that do not force them to accept clients. Yet, as this report will explore, some practices related to trafficking may be accepted by the women and girls themselves more than other forms. It is not just ideas about acquisition that strengthen trafficking practices, but also those of moral wrong and blame.

This can be illustrated with the case of debt bondage. Derks (2005) has remarked on the common practice of debt bondage within Asian societies. It has been repeatedly found to be central to understanding patterns of trafficking in Cambodia, especially among ethnic Vietnamese commercially sexually exploited workers (Beesey, 2003). In Cambodia, the survey with child domestic workers found that it is a relatively common practice (10% of CDWs are estimated to be in debt bondage), almost exclusively practiced by parents who are exploiting their children's labour. Children may be used to repay a parent's debt, sometimes from one relative to another. Given the strong duty of the child towards the parent, these practices are rarely openly questioned.

It was striking how often women, in their descriptions of life within the brothel, referred to some brothel owners as *kaic*, or 'mean', for using violence or verbal abuse, but were more accepting of forms of control based on the use of debt.[24] It seemed to be accepted that rates of repayment for instance, would vary from place to place, and even that certain people, such as traffickers, could demand a 'commission' for having found the job. Thus, in one interview, a woman strongly asserted that there was nothing wrong with her debt of 5,000 Thai Baht that her friend claimed for having taken her to a brothel in Thailand, though this had not been agreed to before she left. This acceptance can also arguably be seen in the narrow interpretation of the trafficking definition used by local authorities, who are unlikely to intervene to address exploitation used on the basis of debt (especially if the woman has worked in commercial sex for a relatively long time), and in some cases, are called in to witness and enforce contracts for debt repayment.

The patterns of exploitation between a parent and a child are also similarly widely supported by cultural precedent. Derks (2005) has talked of the duty, or *khun*, of the child towards the parent, that culturally can never be repaid. It was apparent in the women's narrative that this was felt by both Khmer and Vietnamese women, though Khmer women seemed to be much more likely to be critical of this practice, and the exploitation that it led to, than Vietnamese women.[25] It seems apparent that the parent's right to exploit a child's labour is widely practiced, although it might not be socially

[24] This does not mean that all forms of debt are accepted by women and girls. For instance, it is well recognised by some of the women that sex establishment owners can use debt as a mask for cheating the workers. Brothel owners are said to, *sii loi pii leur yurng*, or 'eat/consume the money from us', meaning that they are 'eating' the profits that should be the women's.

[25] Arguably, this does not reflect a difference in culture as much as the lack of social support networks within the Vietnamese communities in Cambodia that makes them less able to challenge practices in their household.

condoned. There is also certainly some evidence that parents' involvement in the exploitation of their child's labour is becoming more prevalent. Some sex establishment owners demand to sign agreements with a CSEWG's parents before admitting them to work, for instance, as a measure to prevent penalisation by the local anti-trafficking authorities.[26] This implicitly recognises the difficulties that a child may face in refusing to work for their parents' benefit. This is especially the case when the child's social value is so intimately tied to the wealth of the household that they have come from (this will be explored in depth in Section 7).

Lastly, the patterns of sexual shame permeate many of the trafficking narratives, often discrediting women's and girls' place within the household and making it difficult for them to return to it. As will be discussed later, it is striking how for many women, the loss of virginity means an axiomatic entry into commercial sexual exploitation. They will often find themselves working in the same sex establishment that, for instance, arranged the sale of their virginity. In many instances, perpetrators of sexual abuse or of trafficking are not challenged because of the sexual shame that women and girls feel. The fear of disclosure, and of ridicule within their communities, is a tool that seems to be often used by the traffickers.

[26] Current anti-trafficking measures enforced by local authorities often relies on a system of tip-offs (Beesey, 2003), which parents have used in the past to track down their children in cases of abduction into commercial sexual exploitation. This arguably represents a small percentage of the cases of trafficking, however.

5. Social Profile

5.1 Analysing migration and vulnerability to trafficking

The discussion above has highlighted some of the links between migration, sexual shame and a woman's relationship to her household. These links, however, are undergoing rapid change with the increasing feminisation of labour migration, especially in key areas such as garment work. Has migration become an accepted part of the social landscape in Cambodia, or do relationships with the household still play a pivotal role in mediating some people's migratory experience?

Previous analyses (see for instance, MWA and IOM, 2004; LICADHO, 2006), which often form the basis of counter-trafficking campaigns, have highlighted how migration in itself makes people vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation, particularly in the form of 'blind' migration. However, it has not analysed how or why people become 'blind' migrants, beyond a lack of social networks and economic need. Derks (2005) has differentiated between voluntary, involuntary and bonded migration into commercial sexual exploitation. However, can these social analyses be more closely tied to an understanding of risk groups? Traffickers, for instance, may be targeting different social vulnerabilities – can we thus differentiate different forms of migration and/or trafficking from each other according to different social groups?

Maltoni (2005), in his analysis of migration patterns among garment workers and beer sellers,[27] found that for the former, their migration was often mediated by the household and its networks. Other research has also identified that garment workers can often be found living and working in groups that originate from the same village, and that they will thus be more accountable to upholding social norms that are practiced in their home villages, mostly because of the fear of gossip and loss of reputation (CARAM, 1999b). In contrast, Maltoni (2005) found that beer sellers have often broken those links with the household, and are more likely to migrate through networks based on friendship.

An analysis that looks at the relationship with the household arguably is more appropriate for counter-trafficking purposes. Firstly, it allows differentiation between forms of trafficking that are mediated by the household, and those that are not. Secondly, it has been observed that patterns of trafficking are related to patterns of sexual violence. Retribution and compensation for acts of sexual violence, for instance, in the cases of rape that women and girls talked about during the research, are often linked to not only the woman's status, but the status of her household as a whole, as well as the household's willingness to seek retribution for the woman within it. In other words, some households, and consequently, some women and girls, will be more socially recognisable for being under the protection of their household than others. As will be explored later, this is often seen in patterns of 'community-based' counter-trafficking, where the household takes its own actions to recover a girl who has been trafficked from her village by a known trafficker. While the cases of this are few, they do illustrate that women who have a more precarious position within the household a less likely to be 'rescued'.

[27] Beer sellers are women who are hired as 'promotion' women to sell certain brands of beer; however, they may also sell sexual services to supplement their incomes and widely perceived to supplement their income with the provision of sexual services.

A woman's relationship to her household, in some cases, can be indicative of her social vulnerability. This can be seen when comparing data from both the child domestic workers survey and the CSEWGs research (see Brown, 2006). Over 50% of CSEWGs have worked as child domestic workers at some point in their lives before their entry into commercial sexual exploitation. Yet, there are very few cases that directly link trafficking from domestic work into commercial sexual exploitation, strongly suggesting that this correlation is more indicative of a persistent social vulnerability.

Derks (1997) found certain kinds of family dysfunction, such as divorce, as a persistent social characteristic of Khmer women trafficked to Thailand. From the child domestic workers survey, however, it was clear that in many cases, a child's position within a household may be perceived to be precarious and at risk of physical and/or sexual abuse. This is most often seen if the child is already in an exploitative relationship with the parents (and is known to be abused), but most especially seems to involve the presence of a stepparent. This child is then often removed (by members of the immediate or extended family, or a neighbour) from the household and into domestic work, where they often face an even greater risk of all kinds of abuse – overwork, physical, sexual and mental abuse. In many other cases, when a child's parents can no longer care for them, they will be adopted into an extended family member's household, but their position within it may in effect be as a domestic worker, in other words, they have to work to justify their presence and expense. In many cases a child may have entered domestic work because of voluntary economic migration, but in other cases, this represents a social signifier of the household's neglect, willingness to tolerate certain forms of abuse of the child, and of the child's precarious relationship to their households. Those who are most at risk of exploitation, and who often work in slavery-like conditions,[28] are those who have broken their relationship with their household. Patterns of debt bondage, however, are almost entirely in found in cases where the entry into domestic work is mediated by the household.

On the basis of the qualitative research with CSEWGs, three different types of relationships with the household can be distinguished – connected, disconnected and 'satellite'.

The first type – 'connected' – is where migration into commercial sexual exploitation by a woman or girl is an openly acknowledged part of the household livelihood strategy, often done through the direct connections to the sex industry that has been established by other family members. Women or girls may state that their entry into commercial sex is voluntary, but it clearly relies on an exploitation of the parent-child relationship.

The second type – 'satellite' – is typified by women who still maintain contact with their households, are often key economic providers, but are unable to fully integrate back into the household. Their work as CSEWGs may or may not be acknowledged, and cultural norms mean that they will keep their professions hidden, yet they and their income is essential to the reproduction of the household. This is most often seen among women who are divorced or who have large numbers of dependents within the household (for

[28] The definition of slavery-like conditions, according to Anti-Slavery International, involves the following components; forced to work – through mental or physical threat; owned or controlled by an 'employer', usually through mental or physical abuse or threatened abuse; dehumanised, treated as a commodity or bought and sold as 'property'; physically constrained or has restrictions placed on his/her freedom of movement.

instance, often the oldest daughter). Women in this group often plan economic migration into other labour sectors through friendship networks, but often find that their salaries are very low given the number of dependents that they are obliged to support. Once in an urban setting, a lack of options can lead to migration into commercial sex through local or friendship networks, though in effect, women are highly mobile and may migrate in and out of commercial sex at different points in their lives (White et al., 2004). Crucial to this group's migration is thus their position within the household prior to that – for women who have recently divorced, they are often an adjunct to the household, and with a perceived moral imperative to contribute to its economy. They seem much more likely to migrate than other (married or single) members of the household. Clearly, it is their migration through 'friendship' networks that is often tenuous and that leaves them vulnerable to exploitation during the migration process. However, it is also clear that exploitation of the parent-child relationship also occurs, though the family's dependence on the woman/girl's earning in sexual exploitation may not be openly acknowledged.

The third type – 'disconnected' – is the most distinct, and as will be explored in Section 6, presents the most persistent set of risk factors, both for migration into commercial sex, as well as for trafficking. 'Disconnected' women or girls have often broken their ties with their household, often because of persistent patterns of abuse (physical, emotional and sexual), which means that they cannot remain a part of the household. As will be discussed later, however, it is not just the pattern of abuse that forces the child out, but more importantly, the way that patterns of abuse are dealt with by the household, who often prioritise the wholeness of the family unit above the child's welfare, particularly in relation to issues of sexual violence (such as rape or the threat of attempted rape).

The rupture of the child's place within the household can be sudden (often when the child decides to leave the household themselves), but more commonly is gradual. According to this research, the child may migrate into the household of an extended family member or often into child domestic work, so that they become peripheral to the household, but still connected to it (in effect, 'satellite'). This then may provide the child with the social networks needed to make a final break and to establishing themselves in a new environment. From the in-depth interviews, it is clear that the child's presence within the household has often been contested for a long time. Most often this owes to the presence of a stepfather or mother, who resents the economic burden of the child, and who forces the child out, often through early entry into the labour force, denial of access to resources within the household, or through persistent abuse. However, an additional factor is sexual shame, which often accompanies an abrupt rupture with the household. This is often seen after cases of rape, if the woman feels that she will be blamed by the household.

Crucially, as will be explored later, in cases of an abrupt break with the household, the woman will deal with significant stigma for breaking from the household and will be unable to return unless certain conditions are fulfilled that restore her social respectability – most often for the women interviewed this was some form of economic contribution to the household, or a marriage. However, it is also noticeable that even when the woman tries to reintegrate back into the household, she is often repeatedly vulnerable within it. The brothel's function as a substitute family is thus particularly pertinent for this social group.

This social group has been persistently found among both child domestic workers and CSEWGs – strongly suggesting that they are persistently socially vulnerable to

exploitation. In their lives as both domestic workers and CSEWGs, their perceived lack of options and social support networks means that they are often unpaid and working in semi-slavery like conditions.[29] More importantly, they are often socially identifiable at the village level as well as when they leave it, making them vulnerable to both sexual exploitation and trafficking.

Clearly, the relationship to the household is not the only factor that will affect how a girl or woman enters into commercial sex. Other aspects – such as gender, the presence and use of social networks, counter-trafficking activities in the destination point, among others – will all affect the likelihood of trafficking. However, the household has been recognised as the basic unit of social construction within Cambodian society, and arguably a child's relationship to it will expose them to a different set of social vulnerabilities.

5.2 Socio-demographics of trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation

As has already been explored, ethnicity is a key aspect that seems to determine entry into commercial sex, as ethnic Vietnamese women are over represented in the numbers of CSEWGs. In some areas, such as Siem Reap, they comprise the majority of CSEWGs. Similarly to other research (for instance, see Reimer, 2006), residency in Cambodia also seems to determine not only the likelihood of entry into commercial sex, but also the risk of trafficking. For instance, whereas 32% of the ethnic Vietnamese women in Survey 1 overall were short-term migrants (present in Cambodia for less than five years), these women comprised less than 9% of the trafficked sample[30] (see Section 7 for a breakdown of trafficking types and ethnicity). This confirms the importance not only of source areas within Cambodia, but also of the dynamics within these communities that are facilitating the high prevalence of women's and girl's movements into the sex trade.[31]

There are significant differences between the Khmer and the ethnic Vietnamese women who participated in the research. Firstly, in terms of age – assessing the age of entry into commercial sex is very complex, mostly because, as will be discussed in Section 7, first commercial sex often takes place as part of the virginity trade at a much younger age than entry into a commercial sex establishment. The average age for doing this in Survey 2 was found to be 17.2 years for Khmer girls, compared with 16 years for ethnic Vietnamese girls, whereas entry into a commercial sex establishment was much later, at an average of 19 years. There may be a significant time gap between selling virginity and starting work as a CSEWG, though the networks used may be the same for both. In the brothel-based survey (Survey 1), the average age was a lot higher – at just over 22 years old. However, 20% of the sample was still considered underage at the time that they entered commercial sex in the brothel.

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[30] Given the difficulties for ethnic Vietnamese people in gaining permanent residency status in Cambodia (see Schousboe-Laursen, 2004), the survey distinguished between people based on length of time spent in Cambodia, rather than on the basis of legal settlement status.

[31] Estimates of the prevalence of child/women 'selling' into commercial sexual exploitation vary; Reimer et al. (2006) gave the figure of 30-40%. However, this seems to have been reached on the basis of key informant interviews, rather than a methodologically sound enumeration.

A number of other factors strongly suggest that structural barriers to participation in the job market may be forcing ethnic Vietnamese girls and women into sexual exploitation. For instance, Table 3 below shows that, on the whole, ethnic Vietnamese women are more literate than their Khmer counterparts, with 26% of them saying that they can read and write a lot, compared with only 9% respectively. It must be noted, however, that respondents did not say which language they were literate in. Ethnic Vietnamese respondents have limited participation in formal schooling, and strong social values may support education in Vietnamese language only. This, of course, would reinforce the processes of segregation and marginalisation seen among these communities.

Table 3: Khmer and Vietnamese respondents who can read and write (%)

Can read/write	Don't know how	Know a little	Know a lot
Vietnamese	30	40	26
Khmer	48	42	9
All	44	42	14

Note: Survey 1, n=312

This pattern is further reinforced when considering the data on participation in the labour market prior to entry into commercial sexual exploitation. Table 4 below shows that Khmer women mostly come from a rural background, with 61% having worked as farm workers prior to commercial sex, compared with only 22% of ethnic Vietnamese women. Access to formal labour markets, such as garment factory work, also seems to be strongly dependent on ethnicity – 21% of Khmer women said that they had worked in the garment industry, compared with only 7% of ethnic Vietnamese women. This also emerged from some of the qualitative data, where a few respondents were denied jobs because they did not fulfil basic residency registration requirements. The same pattern in ethnic distribution in labour sectors is also seen in those who have worked as beer sellers – 16% of Khmer respondents had done so, compared with a very small proportion of ethnic Vietnamese women at 1%. There are significantly higher proportions of ethnic Vietnamese women and girls who said that they had no work prior to becoming a CSEWG – 26%, compared with 16% for their Khmer counterparts.

However, it is unclear whether these high rates of unemployment among ethnic Vietnamese women and girls reflect consistent structural barriers or a process of 'grooming' of young women for entry into commercial sexual exploitation.

Table 4: Work prior to entry to commercial sexual exploitation, by ethnicity (%)

Work pre-commercial sex	Ethnic Vietnamese	Khmer	All
Farm worker	22	61	52
Domestic worker	12	33	28
Garment worker	7	21	18
Coffee shop worker	28	16	19
Beer girl	1	16	12
No work	26	16	18
Other	26	31	30

Note: Survey 1, n=312. Respondents were allowed to give more than one response.

Of note, there is a discrepancy with the results from Survey 2, which showed that 50% of all those interviewed using qualitative methods had worked as child domestic workers. This may be a reflection of the different populations in both surveys (Survey 2 included

many more women and girls working in other forms of commercial sex – Survey 1 was brothel-based). However, it is also likely that the use of qualitative methods was more able to address difficult issues, and it was found that work in domestic work can be strongly stigmatising.

Lastly, a look at marital status points to interesting differences between the Khmer and ethnic Vietnamese that are reflective of the latter's early entry into commercial sex, often without establishing their own family. Overall women, who had not been trafficked in Survey 1 were much more likely to have ever been married, at 63%, compared with only 47% of women have been formerly or are currently trafficked. This differs according to ethnicity, however, with only 30% of ethnic Vietnamese women having been married, in contrast to 67% of their Khmer counterparts. They are similarly unlikely to have children – only 22% of ethnic Vietnamese women have had children, compared with 34% of Khmer women.

Divorce and the dissolution of a marriage, especially if there is the presence of dependents, are some of the key factors that facilitate voluntary economic migration into the sex trade and, as will be explored later, there are no apparent ethnic differences in this route. However, the ethnic differences in marital status correlates with the qualitative data, that often shows that ethnic Vietnamese women and girls enter commercial sex as part a household strategy, that there are often extended family members who are dependent on their income, and both parents and commercial sex establishment owners fiercely enforce this, often through preventing relationships with boyfriends who culturally have the right to remove the woman from her enforced situation.

The patterns of 'push' factors will be explored in Section 7.

6. Entry into Commercial Sexual Exploitation

The routes into commercial sex are long and complex, often involving a string of actors. However, as Derks (1998a) points out, it is often difficult to distinguish between networks of actors that facilitate voluntary migration and/or trafficking – these paths may make use of the same source areas, recruiters and destination points. Research has often distinguished between push and pull factors leading to migration (or trafficking) into labour sectors such as the commercial sex industry. However, arguably the patterns of social vulnerability for some of the women are set well before they enter commercial sexual exploitation. Deciphering these patterns of vulnerability can be confusing, given that trafficking as a phenomenon often relies on the presence of networks (Kelly, 2002), as well as the power hierarchies that support them. Nonetheless, the following discussion will outline the ways in which discrimination, patterns of abuse, family dysfunction and materialism can coalesce to make women and girls socially vulnerable to working as CSEWGs or to being trafficked.

6.1 Child domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation

The links between domestic work and commercial sex have been explored by researchers on trafficking (Anderson, 2006; O'Connell Davidson and Anderson, 2003). Both labour sectors are informal, and apparently resistant to formalisation, predominantly female, low skilled and open to a variety of methods of exploitation and abuse, often because of the low social status of its workers.

As has been briefly outlined, the links between domestic work and commercial sex are not, however, necessarily reflective of a direct link between trafficking from one sector to the other – though cases of this were apparent, they were few. Interestingly, domestic work is overwhelmingly a rural to urban migratory phenomenon, as are certain paths of trafficking. Yet very few women are deceived into sexual exploitation through promises of work as a domestic worker, and this is probably a reflection of the widespread perception that a domestic worker is placed in a position of vulnerability within a household, where there is high likelihood of abuse. Research with child domestic workers showed a high concern and fear of trafficking among parents, and a consequent reliance on family-based networks.

The findings on the paths and links from domestic work to commercial sexual exploitation are based on the survey on trafficking and child domestic workers (see Brown, 2006), as well as in-depth qualitative interviews with CSEWGs, many of whom previously worked as domestic workers. The results from Survey 2 show that domestic work is the largest labour sector for many of the respondents, after the agricultural sector. However, an examination of the links between domestic work and commercial sex is pertinent to an analysis of migration and trafficking among Khmer women and girls. This focus on the paths from domestic work to commercial sexual exploitation is arguably much more indicative of a pattern of social vulnerability than from the agricultural sector.

This can be seen in a variety of ways. There are first of all the discrepancies between the two sampled groups studied (current child domestic workers and former CDWs now working as CSEWGs). The age of entry into domestic work for both sampled groups is very young – at around 14.8 years (CSEWGs) and 14.5 years (current CDWs), although

this also strongly suggests that, in theory at least, overall the age of entry for women in the former group is significantly lower than the average age for entry into domestic work[32] for all people in domestic work.

However, only 13% of current CDWs list a stepparent in the family, compared with 22% of CSEWGs who worked as CDWs. This strongly supports the notion that certain characteristics, most often entailing abuse within the family, will precipitate an entry into commercial sexual exploitation, often within quite a short time of work as a domestic worker[33]. Both of these figures are certainly elevated compared with the national average, which has recently shown that nationally only at 2.6% of marriages result in divorce (NIS, 2004).

In terms of voluntary economic migration, CSEWGs' previous work as domestic workers often deepens our understandings of the economics at play. As domestic workers, they are often underpaid, work excessive hours and with accompanying social isolation. Domestic workers are often marginalised within the household, unable to join in family based activities, and forced to work in hard conditions with relatively little allowances for sickness or rest.

> *As a child, I sometimes made some mistake and the landlord always beat me harshly with his leather belt. I have been suspended from eating sometimes too. Usually, I just ate all the left over rice and food after they had finished eating. At first, he told me to come and work for him as a servant for 60 000 Riel per month. We were desperate then, because my mother was bedridden after suffering a stroke and one of my sisters was sick then too. I borrowed US$80 from him to have my mother hospitalised and for her medication. I had a harsh time then, they treated me harshly all the time that I was working for them. They beat me every time I made a minor mistake. They made me clean the toilet and they deprived me of my meals to punish me.*
>
> CSEWG, former domestic worker, Siem Reap.

The similarities between this woman's situation as a child domestic worker, and that of many CSEWGs, are striking – her family is facing a crisis and is unable to meet the costs involved, and she has become the person responsible for trying to financially provide for them. This respondent was later trafficked to a karaoke parlour by a 'friend' (who was a former trafficking victim herself – see Section 7 on networks) for the forced sale of her virginity. Economically, the salary that her friend had promised her was much higher than that she made as a domestic worker. It was also socially much more desirable, as it did not involve being a child domestic worker. More importantly, she had already been socially demarcated as someone who had to and was willing to leave her household to enter a work sector (domestic work) that is widely socially acknowledged to

[32] The sample for CDWs measured child domestic workers, and not all domestic workers – therefore, only those children who were identified and who were under the age of 18 years (range 10-17 years). However, many people above 18 years old work as domestic workers – an average of this age would be significantly higher. CSEWGs were asked at what age they started work as domestic workers, with no age limit. This figure thus represents an average for their age of entry. While there is no figure for the average age of entry into domestic work across all age groups, it can be seen that it would at the very least be higher than the average calculated from child domestic workers.

[33] If the average age of work as a domestic worker is 14.5 years, then it is notable that a significant majority have entered commercial sex soon after – 44% of the CSEWGs had sold their virginity, and on average they did so by the age of 16.5 years, while entry into other forms of commercial sexual exploitation could occur much later.

be punitive, harsh, and open to abuse. Given the conditions that she worked in as a child, this respondent has in fact been trafficked as a domestic worker and for commercial sexual exploitation.[34]

We should also note the patterns of debt bondage – the survey among current domestic workers found that 54% of them said that their families were in debt, and 9% were working in debt bondage. The links between debt and commercial sexual exploitation are themselves complex, ranging from direct links between debt brokers and commercial sex establishments (see Farrington, 2002), to the social stigma that families suffer if they are unable to meet their debts within a community, often forcing them to find drastic solutions. However, it also points to the wide social practice of debt bondage.[35] Women who were held in debt bondage in commercial sexual exploitation had often already experienced it as child domestic workers. While this research points to clear patterns in the commercial sex trade[36] and domestic work, it is highly likely that it exists in other sectors – a few respondents also mentioned being in debt to employers in brick factories or restaurants, for instance.

The issue of debt bondage is also worth exploring in relation to child labour, as they are often strongly predicated on cultural beliefs regarding the parent-child relationship. Most clearly this relates to the concepts of duty of the child towards the parent – or '*khun'* – that Derks has already extensively explored in contexts such as CSEWGs and their remittances to their families. This widely supports the parents' rights to exploit their own child's labour, and while people such as neighbours or even employers may not agree with the decision of a parent putting their child into debt bondage to an employer, they certainly feel that they have very few rights to interfere in this. The many facets of this cultural belief can be referred to as 'the power of *jengjom* – meaning 'to raise' – which culturally often conclusively asserts the power of the person who has raised the child to exploit their labour.[37]

This power to assert parental rights are arguably akin to asserting *property* rights – mostly clearly in the sense that it effectively enables the 'owner' the moral rights to exploit a resource without interference from forces outside of the family unit, even state authorities. The similarities with property rights are also seen in other facets – namely, that this right can be transferred, and, furthermore, is significantly altered by debt bondage.

There are a variety of social situations when this right is transferable, which have strong implications for patterns of trafficking. This is most clearly seen when the original family unit disintegrates, or can no longer provide for itself. Children, and the right to use their

[34] The patterns of debt bondage, coupled with those of abuse and enforced work, harsh punishments all support the analysis that this respondent was working in 'slavery-like' conditions.
[35] Derks (2005) cites other researchers who have noted that debt bondage is a specifically a characteristic found in Asian societies, and is widespread in Cambodia.
[36] This has been commented on extensively – see Beesey (2003), Derks (2005).
[37] The power of this concept is most clearly seen when it is challenged – if opposition to parent's actions are voiced, they will ask in return whether this person will raise the parent in return, essentially meaning that if the person opposing them does not have the means to provide for their livelihood, they cannot challenge their actions in trying to provide for the family unit. In effect, this belief asserts the right of the individual to act within the family unit, without interference from the state or societal moral standards, and as such it is key to supporting exploitative practices.

labour, can then be appropriated by someone within the extended family unit, or even from outside of it.

It was consistently found among child domestic workers and the CSEWGs that kin relationships did not mitigate the risk of abuse, in fact, it seemed to reinforce the 'owner's' semi-parental rights over the child. Some of the most severe cases of physical, sexual and mental abuse in the research came from CSEWGs who had been taken into their relatives' households as child domestic workers. In their narratives, there is often a direct link between the exploitation of their labour and the patterns of abuse.

> *Each month, my cousin hit me 28 times. When my neighbours tried to prevent him from hitting me, he hit them. He was not rich but he could earn enough money for his family. I knew then that I had the right to notify the local police of his violence but I thought that I should not do that because I was staying in his house then. When the neighbours asked him not to hit me, my cousin hit me even more, saying that it was not their business to interfere … He beat me again so I ran away.*
> CSEWG, former child domestic worker, Kampong Som.

It should also be noted how this respondent's cousin's status, as the person who had taken her into his household (and thus 'raised' her), effectively not only prevented the effective intervention of those close by to prevent this abuse, but also her own sense of her right to appeal for help from the local authorities. Very soon after having run away from this household, this respondent found herself working in commercial sex, recruited through local networks.

For the child domestic workers, the links to slavery-like conditions are most apparent when the family unit cannot provide for itself. In these cases, it seems that the child may be perceived to have few options, and may find themselves working in households for little more than basic subsistence needs.

> *When I worked there, I did not get any money. The house owner did not buy me any jewels as the woman (the recruiter) had told me. She only bought me used clothes. She beat me and cursed me when I broke a dish ... I worked at her house for nearly a year. I never visited my house. One day my mother visited me in Phnom Penh. She asked for 50,000 Riel from the house owner. The house owner refused to give the money to my mother. She said that my mother should thank her for raising me and that my mother should not ask her for money.*
> CSEWG, former child domestic worker, Kampong Som.

In this case, the mother was able to assert her parental rights and remove her child from this household. However, the rights to do so would have been severely rescinded had the mother borrowed money from the house owner. In these cases, the parental, and arguably, property rights over the child become altered.

This can be most clearly seen in the use of contracts. The use of contracts was found to be used with both CSEWGs and with child domestic workers. Far from having a legal basis, these contracts are not believed to protect the worker's rights, but rather, to enforce servitude to the 'owner', and the common belief in their power to do so, as a means to exert power over social behaviour, is striking. In one case, a child domestic worker was sold by her adoptive mother to another family by making a contract forcing her to work for 20 years (see Brown, 2006). There was no other means of control exerted over the child for the exploitation of her labour. Clearly, the family's belief in their

right to do this[38] has the biggest implications for patterns of trafficking, but their belief in it as a means of exerting control is also crucial. Furthermore, many of the house owners in the CDW survey asserted that they did not have a contract because they did not want to *twer bap*, (do a 'bad deed', or 'immoral action') towards the child domestic worker, demonstrating that the use of the contract is clearly associated with the use of force.

The presence of debt among CSEWGs often entails a period of enforced harbouring, where the girl or woman's movements will be severely curtailed (see Section 7 for a full discussion of this in the context of commercial sex). Many CSEWGs have already experienced this form of control in their work as child domestic workers. However, it was also clear in the context of the child domestic worker survey that in cases of debt bondage, the house owner had rights to transfer the child to another location, without the consent of the parent, as well as their cultural right to exploit the child until that debt had been paid off. It appeared that patterns of abuse increased during the period of debt bondage, a finding which is substantially supported by the qualitative data.

Beyond the similarities of means of enforcement used in both work sectors, one of the key mechanisms that seem to link commercial sex and domestic work is the inculcation of values that demand the sacrifice of the child's well-being for the benefit of the family as a whole. As will be discussed later, the effects of this can often be seen in the virginity trade, where often girls and women state they 'voluntarily' agreed to have commercial sex for their families, though arguably they have been acculturated to this role in the context of domestic work. This is not to suggest that this cultural imperative comes from work in this sector alone – female work in Cambodia overwhelmingly entails young women, often from rural areas, supporting their families, and the cultural attitudes that support this are deeply ingrained within the society. However, few other work sectors are as harsh as domestic work, involving excessive work, stigma and risk of abuse.

One case study is indicative of this pattern. This woman worked in a disco, where virginity selling was a common occurrence, her only work before this was as a child domestic worker where she worked excessive hours (up to 20 hours per day), and she later sold her virginity to a client, giving all of those earnings to her mother.

> *My mother came to receive my salary every two months. When she came, I told her that I was completely exhausted there. She told me that she knew well that being a servant was not a happy life … I asked the house owner to let me go home, but she did not agree to let me go. I didn't tell her that I was very tired with her household chores, I just told her that I wanted to go home. I did not dare to say that I was really tired then for fear that they would think that I was a lazy girl … (I ran away) … at home, my mother reprimanded me for coming home and I told her again that I was too tired to continue working as a child domestic worker. Five days later, my mother drove me away from my family. She forced me to go and stay with a house owner at Leur market … I didn't want to work as a servant myself but my mother forced me to go and earn money for her. I was very angry with my mother then ... I asked my mother why she considered money more important than her own daughter … I thought that other people had a mother to care for them, while I also had a mother, but my mother did not care for me.*
>
> CSEWG, former child domestic worker, Kampong Som.

[38] This contract was made between the child's adoptive mother and her house owner family, without any consultation with her, and without requiring her to sign any part of the document. This case was referred to a human rights organisation by the research team.

Entry into domestic work for a child, especially if there is a pattern of debt bondage, is often an indicator of family dysfunction, in several ways. First of all, as in the case above, it is reflective of an exploitative relationship with the parent. While these cases were a minority in the CDW survey, there were certain parents who had repetitively put their children into debt bondage to their employers, and in fact, showed a determined preference for house owners who would give loans. The parallels with women and girls who work in the commercial sex industry and whose household is dependent on their indentured labour are once again apparent.

However, work as a CDW can also be an indicator of family dysfunction and abuse within the home. It is the separation of the child from their household that is significant in domestic work. This is seen in the colloquial terms for domestic work, *neu chea muy kee* – 'to stay with them'[39] – which refers to staying in someone else's household and not to the work as such. In cases of abuse, or the perceived risk of it, a child may be removed from her household by concerned neighbours or extended family to be a domestic worker. In the narratives of CSEWGs, this was often a precursor to a complete rupture with the household.

This breaking with the ties of the household, and the role that it plays in vulnerability to trafficking, will be extensively explored in Section 7 on networks.

6.2 Family problems, abuse and rape

Family dysfunction recurs in the narratives of CSEWGs and domestic workers, both trafficked and voluntary. Yet, the links between patterns of family abuse and entry into commercial sexual exploitation has been rarely explored, with the exception of Derk's report on trafficking of Khmer women and children to Thailand (1997). As has been argued, it can clearly cause a change in the relationship between the child and her household that can make her vulnerable to traffickers and other forms of exploitation.

It is often not just the abuse itself that causes this vulnerability, so much as the way in which it is dealt with by the household. The range of abuse suffered by CSEWGs when they were children living in their household is complex, yet it is consistent that the integrity of the household was placed above concerns for the welfare of the child. This is particularly the case with sexual abuse. However, fear of sexual abuse is also a prime concern for many Cambodian and Vietnamese families, as virginity is highly valued. This was clearly seen in the domestic workers survey (Brown, 2006), for instance, in the sense of responsibility that house owners felt to protect the CDWs.[40] It becomes pertinent to examine in what circumstances these protection mechanisms fail, and how this causes a rupture with the household.

[39] 'Them' in this expression often refers to non-relatives.

[40] As they were no longer in their own households, female CDWs were felt to be unprotected, and some house owners said that they would be liable to pay compensation to the parents should their daughter's virginal status be compromised, For a further discussion of this, see Brown (2006).

Table 5: Family problems before commercial sexual exploitation (Survey 1)

Family problem	Vietnamese %	Khmer %	All %
Illness	36	51	47
Lack of food	32	53	48
Debt	62	40	45
Loss of land	11	31	26
Domestic violence	9	34	28
Alcoholism	15	21	20
Gambling	3	9	8
Stepparent	11	32	27
Divorced/dead parent	29	55	49
Other	15	28	25

Table 5 above shows the results from Survey 1, the respondent-filled survey among brothel-based CSEWGs. For both groups there are strong issues related to the livelihoods of the household, for instance, 'illness' was a problem for 36% of ethnic Vietnamese women, and for 51% of Khmer women. It is also interesting to note the ethnic differences between 'lack of food' (ethnic Vietnamese – 32%, and Khmer – 53%) and 'debt', which is very high among ethnic Vietnamese families at 62%. Household debt is a persistent factor among the households of trafficked groups (IOM, 2003; Farrington, 2002), though there is little research that can elucidate the reasons for these very high levels of debt among ethnic Vietnamese. However, lack of formal legal status and the consequent reliance on small-scale credit agents, who often loan at exorbitant rates, has been posited as one factor (Reimer, 2006), and Farrington (2002) suggests that difficulties in meeting daily living expenses and poor profits from the small scale enterprises that the Vietnamese find themselves confined to could be another factor.

The difference between responses given for 'lack of food' are also interesting, suggesting that more ethnic Vietnamese households have secure livelihood status before they enter into commercial sexual exploitation. However, as will be explored later, in these households several other family members may already be working in the sex industry, thus improving the economy within the household, and it is possible that the household was highly insecure before then. Lastly, 'loss of land' is also a strong and emerging factor for Khmer families, at 31%. However, ethnic Vietnamese are unlikely to identify this as a factor, as in many communities, lack of legal status effectively bars them from land ownership (Reimer, 2006). Farrington (2002) has documented how this unsettled status can still have a dramatic effect on livelihood, owing to high rents and discrimination from landlords.

For both Khmer and ethnic Vietnamese women, perception of economic need, for themselves or for their family, is not static. The majority of those who sell their virginity, for instance, do so in response to an immediate and often desperate economic need, yet once they have entered into commercial sex, they are unlikely to leave it and their perceptions of economic needs adapts. This will be further explored in Section 7.

Overall, the striking differences between these two groups relate to family composition and dysfunction. From these results, this is a stronger effect among Khmer CSEWGs than among their ethnic Vietnamese counterparts. Divorce and parental death, for instance, emerges as one of the strongest factors for both Khmer and ethnic Vietnamese women, at 55% and 29%, respectively. Survey 2 also identified that 22% of women in in-

depth interviews came from families with a divorce.[41] The presence of a stepparent is also concomitantly a persistent issue, at 32% for Khmer and 11% for ethnic Vietnamese. There is consistency between the two surveys which both identified social problems such as alcoholism at the same rates – approximately 20%, though this is significantly lower for ethnic Vietnamese women. The startlingly high figures for domestic violence, at 34%, also suggest that family dysfunction is a very important factor leading to commercial sex for Khmer women. It should be noted that all of these figures are well above the national average, for instance, the national divorce rate is only 2.6% (NIS, 2004), and rates given for domestic violence in the CDHS survey (2001) indicated that only 23% of women had ever experienced domestic violence.[42]

These findings strongly support the hypothesis that marginalisation and abuse within the household can precipitate entry into commercial sexual exploitation. The qualitative data reveals a pattern of abuse by family members and others that can sometimes be so severe that the woman has to leave the household. Often this entails migrating to other places, the process of which may put her at risk, though more commonly it seems to result in relying on friendship networks that are sometimes exploitative and connected to the sex industry. This will be explored in Section 7.

The most consistent patterns of abuse are seen not only in the context of domestic work, but when the child is perceived to become an adjunct to the household. This is often when they are absorbed into extended family members' households, often because of family disintegration, or the presence of a stepparent. In both of these situations, the child appears to be perceived to be an economic burden, and often assumes the status of a child domestic worker, with severe physical and mental abuse. Some of the respondents even directly refer to their status as 'being like' a child domestic worker. For some, the abuse can become unbearable.

> *After her divorce, my mother went to Thailand to do business. She left me with my aunt and uncle. I did all of the housework. My aunt told me to stop going to school because she wanted me to do the housework for her. My aunt and uncle beat me up when they were angry with me. They also beat me when I did not prepare meals on time for them. They sometimes tied me to a mango tree and let ants bite me. They also used to give electric shocks to my body. One day I left their house because I could no longer bear the suffering. However, she found me. She beat me because she thought that I left the house in order to work as a prostitute. When I lived with my aunt, I had no freedom. She made me do all of the housework.*
> CSEWG, former child domestic worker, Kampong Som.

The links between child abuse and the presence of a stepparent has only recently become a phenomenon that has been recognised in Western societies (Daly and Wilson, 1996).[43] It should be noted that in Cambodian society, there is a strong belief not

[41] The discrepancies in these figures could be a reflection of the fact that the figure in Survey 1 is amalgamated (for divorce and death), whereas those for Survey 2 are given for divorce only, and furthermore those for Survey 2 are not stratified by ethnicity.
[42] The CDHS (2001) sampled married women, who gave rates of 23.4% of domestic violence inflicted by anyone, and a lower 17.5% inflicted by spouses.
[43] Daly and Wilson (1996) used evidence of homicide rates in Chicago to demonstrate that genetic relationship to a child was a significant risk factor for lethal assaults on children. Resentment of a stepparent towards a child was also posited as a reason not only for elevated homicide rates, but also for more brutal methods of assault compared with genetic parents.

only that a stepparent will often abuse a (non-genetic) child, but also that a female child will be at risk of sexual abuse. One respondent, for instance, mentioned that fear of abuse was a key reason that her mother did not remarry, and this came out in the child domestic worker survey as a key reason that children were often removed from their households by concerned extended family members (Brown, 2006). In the CSEWG narratives, the presence of a stepparent often entailed being cut off from the resources within the household, such as food and access to education. Most often, it directly results in the child being pushed into earning income for the family.

> *I worked as a farm labourer in my village. I earned 3,500 riels per day. My stepfather still beat me, although I was the person who earned money to support the family. When I gave money to my mother, he was happy. When I had no money, he cursed and beat me.*
> CSEWG, Siem Reap.

For the ethnic Vietnamese, the presence of a stepfather seems to be especially important for a girl child. Traditionally, Vietnamese culture is patrilineal and patrilocal, and it is often seen in the women's narratives that the father is the upholder of moral norms within the household. In these cases, there seems to be a strong imperative for the girl child to earn household income, and if not, she will be seen as a burden on household resources. For one respondent, it is clear that both her and her mother seemed unable to address the patterns of her abuse.

> *(My stepfather's) children often hit me and beat me. I have never told my mother about being mistreated or beaten. I just wanted to solve the problem on my own. I wanted to bear everything in mind but I did not want to share it with anyone else. All of my neighbours knew about it and saw it and they re-told my mother now and then. I am sure that my mother has known that my stepfather's children often hit me and beat me and mistreated me.*
> CSEWG, Siem Reap.

The duty of the child towards the parents is exploited by the stepparent, and may be condoned by the parent if it is perceived to contribute to the household economy.

> *When I went to live with (my father), he told me to stop studying because he believed what his wife said. She said that I would end up working in the kitchen, no matter how well I was educated. She actually wanted me to work for her. She made me do all of the housework. She also told me to work for other people so that I could earn some money for her.*
> CSEWG, Siem Reap.

For many of the CSEWGs, patterns of physical and mental abuse are often accompanied by the threat of or actual rape. This can often happen in the context of child domestic work, where many rapes occur – 18% of former CDWs experienced attempted rape, and 10% were actually raped. This does not represent a rate of rape within domestic work as a sector however – CSEWGs as a sample arguably represent the extremes of exploitation experienced as domestic workers, and are not representative of the group as a whole. However, overall, 20% of CSEWGs had ever experienced rape before entry into commercial sex,[44] so at the very least rape during domestic work contributes to a woman or girl child's entry into commercial sexual exploitation. White et al. (2004) found similar levels of rape at 15% before entry into commercial sexual exploitation.

[44] This figure does not encompass rape during commercial sexual exploitation, which other surveys have found to be very high (see Jenkins, 2006).

The sexual violence committed against these women, often when they were very young children,[45] is important for exploring a variety of factors, including sexual shame and the consequent breaking of ties with the household, patterns of impunity and blame that can result in later acceptance of sexual exploitation in the context of commercial sex, and most importantly, the attitudes towards rape by members of the household that sustains a culture of silence which directly facilitates the work of traffickers and their networks. It also should be emphasised that it often provides a direct but voluntary route into commercial sex – women who have lost their virginity often feel that they then have few options besides this, given that they will be perceived to be unfit for marriage.

Rape, and the threat of it,[46] seems to often occur within the social contexts already explored – domestic work, and dysfunctional families (those with an abusive stepparent or extended family member households). In the context of domestic work, this was most often perpetrated by a member of the household, most commonly a male relative of the landlord. When the child was in the household, the stepfather was the most common culprit, though this was followed by male neighbours and men working in migrant professions that the women and girls found themselves in prior to commercial sex. In only one case of rape of a child domestic worker did the family seek to negotiate some form of compensation – in this case a payment was made and the girl was recruited into commercial sexual exploitation immediately after when it became publicly known that she had lost her virginity, and the local authorities were not involved in this negotiation process.

The low social status of the child domestic worker within a household is clearly crucial to explaining these patterns of sexual violence. However, it is also striking how often in these narratives the rapist addresses the issue of compensation, sometimes in the act of the rape itself. In these cases, it seems that it is the idea that rape can be compensated for, rather than being seen as something that irreparably damages a victim, that almost enables it to take place.

> *I was at home with my cousin when he raped me. I tried to scream and shout for help but no one heard me … While he was raping me he said that he would pay me some money for having made me lose my honour, promising that he would pay me as much as I asked for. But he would not have any money until his land had been sold … From that time on, he has never been at home. I was a virgin when I got raped. I lost a lot of blood then and it hurt like hell and I cried a lot. I begged him to let go of me but he didn't listen to me. I didn't know why he behaved towards me in such a terrible way … I thought my cousin was just a spoiled brat, he was the very person destroying my life … He has never taken any responsibility for what he has done. I have been waiting for him to pay me money for a long time but he has never come home ever since he raped me.*
> CSEWG, Siem Reap.

In the cases of rape of a child domestic worker, the victim will often try to remove herself from the household as quickly as possible,[47] often without telling anyone about the rape,

[45] The earliest age for rape of the respondents was eight years old.
[46] Technically, both rape and attempted rape are illegal in Cambodian law, with higher penalties if this is committed against a child under 15 years (LICADHO, 2006).
[47] This is one of the key reasons that assessing patterns of sexual violence among CDWs is almost impossible – from the CSEWG research, it seems that if rape is going to happen, it will do so within a short time of entering the employer's household (often a few weeks or months), and

principally because of shame and fear of retribution. However, rape within the household is much more likely to be known about, especially if it perpetrated by the stepfather. In almost all of the cases, no measures were taken to protect the child, and often the integrity of the household is put above the concerns for the child.

> *My stepfather raped me when I was 15 years old. He managed to rape me when my mother had just given birth to my sister for some days, lying in the delivery bed in one of the wings of the house. I screamed for help while he was raping me and my mother came rushing to help me but I got raped. She fought him but they still lived together afterwards. My mother even blamed me for the rape, saying that I got raped because I loved her second husband. She loved my stepfather and my half sisters and brothers more than me. I cried, telling her that I did not love him ... I was just a child then. My first menstrual period had just appeared two months before then. He hurt me severely and I lost a lot of blood. I loathed him then. I got depressed quite a lot whenever I remembered my mother saying that I loved her second husband.*
> CSEWG, Siem Reap.

In the women's testimonies, it is common to find that they keep the rape silent,[48] mostly because they are afraid of being blamed, regardless of the situation in which the rape took place. As the case above illustrates, it is the woman or the female child who overwhelmingly bears the blame for not maintaining her virginal status. Sometimes, if the child's situation in the household is precarious, the issue seems to revolve around sexual jealousy, rather than abuse, and often then entails the removal of the child rather than attempts to protect them. In the following case, a woman and her sister left their own household because of the threat of rape from their stepfather, and were taken into another household to be child domestic workers, though only for basic subsistence needs.

> *I had a really hard time there. I had to work very hard all of the time without getting any pay there. I had been staying with her for three years before I left her house to seek some employment in some café. I left my sister there with her and intended to turn back to collect my sister after I had found a job ... I came back to my former landlady's house. I heard them (landlord and landlady) arguing with each other. The landlady was jealously blaming her husband for loving my sister, who was only nine years old then. I didn't dare to enter her house again and I turned back, walking away.*
> CSEWG, Siem Reap.

This child was later, according to her sister, sent into debt bonded domestic work. Very soon after that, she found herself trafficked into a brothel through male networks (see Section 7). Above anything else, the representation of these sexual relations as being based on emotional attachment serves to deflect the blame towards the woman. If the situation of the woman or girl within the household is already precarious, this often serves to protect the rapist so that he can abdicate from any responsibility.

> *My cousin and her husband went to Kampot. Her husband had told his younger brother to look after me at home. His younger brother actually lived close to his house. At night he tried to rape me while I was sleeping on my bed. I screamed and cursed him. He then ran away to his house. I told my cousin about that. She then went to ask her brother in law if he had really*

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the child will leave very quickly after this. The shame of rape further compounds the difficulties of measuring this phenomenon.

[48] Out of 40 cases of rape, the woman or girl notified someone in order to get compensation in only three cases.

attempted to rape me. He told her that he had not done anything. My cousin's husband was angry with me. He said that I wanted to seduce his younger brother.
CSEWG, Kampong Som.

This woman had already survived one rape attempt by her cousin's husband, and was later raped by a neighbour and, when she later became a CSEWG, a client. In terms of sexual violence, it seems that some women are socially demarcated as being repeatedly vulnerable to rape, or the threat of it. As seen in the case above, this seems to be linked to the household's willingness or ability to negotiate for compensation if a woman has been assaulted. These negotiations will almost always be done through a household's social connections, and many women mention their poverty, lack of *kasai* – political connections, or often simply money, as preventing them from making any complaints. Even when the rape is known about within a household, it is common to find that the women's claims of rape are ignored to maintain the integrity of the household

When my friend went to bed a young man next door tried to rape me. I fought against him, scratching his face and he could not rape me then. All the people in my friend's family knew about his attempted rape but they did not have any reaction or say anything about it … I did not tell my mother and my stepfather about it. I didn't want them to notify the police of the rape attempt because I thought then that I was poor and they were richer than I was and if I tried to bring him to justice, the police would not believe in what we were claiming but the police would certainly believe what the rapist said because he came from a rich family and he had enough money to give to the police to make white become black and black become white themselves.
CSEWG, Siem Reap.

In cases where the family does decide to try to get compensation, this seems to be done in negotiation between the parents of each party. Failure to do so may be a further affront to family honour, as one ethnic Vietnamese girl explained,

My mother asked him to pay for having raped me and making me lose my virginity but he refused. The rapist's parents were living in Hue City, Vietnam, and at the time that he raped me he was living in Cambodia by himself, he was not very poor though. I felt extremely embarrassed with my neighbours because he abandoned me after raping me.
CSEWG, Koh Kong.

The similarities to Cambodian culture can also be seen, where it has been observed that often families will force the marriage of their daughter with the rapist, in order to preserve their honour because of her loss of virginity.

For one respondent, however, the links with her political connections and redress were made explicit, demonstrating how often patterns of sexual violence are facilitated by a general culture of impunity. Her account not only also shows how strong fear of retribution can be, but also how some women are socially demarcated as being vulnerable to sexual exploitation, seemingly because they are labelled as being 'dishonourable'. In this case, she was working as a beer seller,

One customer persuaded me to go out with him, but I refused. He promised to take me home, but I still refused. He then threatened the owner of the karaoke parlour. I tried to run away from him, but he finally found me. I had no choice but to go out with him.

Later, his attempts to rape her are noticed by a military policeman, who stops to help her.

The man (rapist) told him that I was just a beer girl, and he would not let me go. The officer told the man to let me go … The officer then called a group of military police, and they arrested the man. He asked me if I was raped, I told him that he (rapist) was about to rape me. The man apologised to me. He thought that I was like the other girls whom he had slept with. He said those girls never informed the police … The customer who tried to rape me said that he had raped many girls in Phnom Penh before, but no one had informed the police. He was a bodyguard working for an officer in Phnom Penh. He was put in jail for three days … He treated me like that because he did not respect me. He thought that no one would help me. He didn't think that I had a relative who was a policeman. People will look down on me if I am alone. I never told my relatives when I had problems … I would not involve my relatives in my problems because I didn't want their reputations to be affected … He was asked to sign a contract not to do anything to me again in the future. If I were killed in the future without any reason, he would be questioned. Police kept his photograph. That officer prepared the paperwork for the man to sign and stamp his thumbprint. I signed and stamped my thumbprint on the paper too. I promised not to sue him.
Former CSEWG, Kampong Som.

Her account clearly shows that women without protection, primarily of their household, will be perceived to be socially vulnerable, especially if they work in 'dishonourable' professions that effectively would prohibit them from using those networks.

The social consequences of rape are most often borne by the woman or the female child. This often relates to the loss of virginity, and the consequent loss of honour. Women who have been raped fear retribution and blame from their own household, but they also feel themselves to be no longer 'marriageable' with grave consequences for their status within their household.

I didn't tell anyone the truth because I was embarrassed. I thought that if other people knew the truth about me, they would laugh at me … One of the men loved me. I didn't want him to be upset…After I lost my virginity, I had no confidence to meet the man that I loved. I felt that I could not get married to him because I was not a virgin. I thought that he would hate me when he knew what had happened to me … He loved me because he thought that I was a virgin.
CSEWG, Siem Reap.

Women who have been raped refer to themselves as being 'spoilt', or *koich hawy*, which results in a direct loss of social status. Shame often means that women do not want have the rape publicly known about, as has been explored, they will often be if not directly blamed, certainly at risk of being perceived to be complicit in some way. There seem to be several social outcomes of this culture of silence that directly relate to trafficking. One is that the household, often through female networks, can traffic the woman or girl directly into commercial sexual exploitation. This can be seen among Khmer and ethnic Vietnamese households. More generally, many of the women who had been raped found themselves in commercial sex very fast after losing their virginity, with varying degrees of voluntariness. Lastly, it can result in a complete break with the household, particularly if the parents, unaware of their daughter's rape, try to force a marriage either with the rapist himself, or with someone else that could result in her non-virginal status being discovered.

Arensen (2004) noted that trafficked women often stay in commercial sex for longer than their non-trafficked counterparts. It can be hypothesised that this may be because women who are vulnerable to trafficking have already broken their ties with their

households, either because of abuse, rape or the threat of it, or other reasons. Section 8.2 on Networks, will more closely examine how women and girls who are disconnected from their households face particular social vulnerabilities. These may be recognised in the source place itself, particularly if other forms of abuse are publicly known, to local traffickers. As has been explored above, however, it is precisely this disconnection from the household that is socially recognisable, and that makes women and girls vulnerable to both sexual exploitation and trafficking, rather than the migration process itself.

6.3 Poverty, discrimination and materialism

As has been explored, both Khmer and ethnic Vietnamese families often face severe livelihood issues before their daughters enter commercial sex. Some of the descriptions are of severe poverty, as in the household's inability to meet its basic subsistence needs. Food shortages, periodic starvation, and lack of access to school among other factors emerge from the CSEWGs' narratives.

The patterns of social vulnerability that contribute to migration and trafficking into commercial sexual exploitation have been explored above. However, the sheer poverty of some of the women and girls, the social expectations that they will contribute to the household economy, the poverty of options in other work sectors that often provide no more than basic subsistence existence, as well as the commoditisation of, for instance, not just sex but of virginity, all further contribute to the patterns of migration into commercial sex. However, it is also noticeable that often perceptions of economic need change – whereas the immediate one is to secure the household, or pay for healthcare costs, later 'needs' might be to significantly improve the household's social status through acquiring material goods, or an improved style of housing.

For the ethnic Vietnamese families, some of them appear to have migrated to Cambodia, often through severing economic ties, and with the hope of participating in the perceived economic 'boom' of the post-UNTAC phase. However, in their narratives, the actual harshness of life in their new situation comes across, particularly through the level of debt that they face trying to meet their daily subsistence needs.

> *We had to move to Cambodia because my family was too poor then. Both my father and my mother could not earn enough for our daily living. My parents had to have our own house sold to get money to move to Cambodia. Before my family moved, there was someone who came back from Cambodia, and who told my father that he could find a job making bricks in Cambodia.*
> CSEWG, Siem Reap

The lack of social support of households, from within the social community that they find themselves in or from extended family members, recurs for both Khmer and ethnic Vietnamese women and girls. For ethnic Vietnamese families, their ambiguous legal status makes accessing formal credit especially difficult (Reimer, 2006),

> *We did not borrow any money from the State bank because we did not have any land to make a deposit. They have never lent us any money for fear that we would not be able to pay it back. We did not borrow any money from my neighbours either. We have been poor all of our life. I have got some close relatives and they were all as poor as we were.*
> Vietnamese CSEWG, Kampong Som.

Lack of social support networks has been found to recur as a factor that may facilitate trafficking networks operating in very localised ways. This can be seen among some more recently established ethnic Vietnamese communities, where they often find themselves in communities of relatively short-term migrants, who lack the support of extended family members, are living in very mobile communities and who are unable to access credit. However, both Khmer and ethnic Vietnamese women talked of the discrimination that they faced towards their family's poverty as being a key factor that led to their decisions to enter commercial sexual exploitation. Lack of community and extended family support can precipitate a girl's entry into the labour market, despite her mother's protection.

> *My mother's relatives were not happy with my mother, because she came to borrow rice from them everyday. They said why don't you send your children to find work! They looked down on my family and they said that my family are thieves and why should we need to borrow rice every day and they are bored that my mother always comes to borrow rice from them. I was very upset and I asked my mother if I could go to find a job, at that time I was 16 years old but she did not agree, she said that she did not want her children to leave her but I decided to go because I saw that my family had so many difficulties.*
> Khmer CSEWG, Siem Reap.

In some communities, there is a clear emergence of 'consumerist values'. These 'values' are often underemphasised in the women and girl's narratives, who firstly depict their desires to support their families, as these are highly valued social attitudes. CSEWGs are not only stigmatised for having commercial sex, but also for showing 'materialist' values that are not directly linked to a contribution to the household,

> *I wanted to earn as much money as possible to buy what I used to have before…I found that I was at the very bottom of society now to have sex with anyone who paid for it.*
> Khmer CSEWG, Koh Kong.

As will be explored later, some of these 'material' values have been seen to emerge in some communities where, for instance, the virginity trade flourishes (Reimer, 2006). Again, these values cannot be understood in isolation – they emerge against a background of discrimination owing to poverty, lack of social support and family dysfunction.

> *When my father was sick, no one would help us, they wouldn't lend us any money to cure him, they looked down on us because we were poor … My cousin got married and then her husband left her with two kids and now she has nothing. Another girl I know went to be a prostitute, and now she has a big house … I wanted to be a prostitute, I wanted to have money so that they would stop looking down on us.*
> CSEWG, Phnom Penh.[49]

In some cases, the presence of former CSEWGs in a poor community serves as an inducement to enter commercial, in the case below, once the woman had already broken her ties with the household (in this case, because of rape and family dysfunction).

> *I was also ashamed of being raped so I went to Siem Reap with one of my friends who told me that it was quite easy for prostitutes to earn money there … I found some girls near my house could earn thousands of dollars and I wanted to be like them, I wanted to have a lot of money to help my family so I wanted 'to be a girl' myself then. I didn't tell my father or*

[49] This respondent later sold her virginity, at the age of 15 years.

stepmother that I had decided 'to be a girl' then. I thought that I was a parentless child then so there was little point in telling them what I was going to do. I didn't hate my father or my stepmother but I just think that they never wanted to set their eyes on me and my father loved his second wife more than me so I decided to become a 'girl' then. My friend showed me the way how to go to Siem Reap.
CSEWG, Siem Reap.

While CSEWGs overwhelmingly talk of the shame of their professions, and of their consequent inability to return to their home or acknowledge their source of income, for some this is not the case, if they are perceived to be economically successful. If some women and girls talk about the 'power of gossip', and of the fear that they will be looked down upon by the rest of their community, shame and embarrassment is, to a certain extent, mitigated by economic success.

I had a friend who was a prostitute in Phnom Penh … My friend told me that she was a prostitute, she was not embarrassed to tell me the truth because she could earn a lot of money.
CSEWG, Kampong Som.

For many of the women and girls interviewed, 'material' values serve to connect them to an emerging modernity (Derks, 2005), and most especially, a youth culture that values freedom and 'happiness' (see, for instance, Bearup, 2003). However, these values are not merely 'materialistic' and definable as the need for social status based on acquisition of material goods alone. For many women, the higher incomes of commercial sex buys respect not only for themselves and but also for their household.

I was tense and sad when the debt owner came to demand the money that my mother owed and they blamed her and said bad words to my mother. So I wanted to work to earn a lot of money and did not want anybody to look down on my family.
Vietnamese CSEWG, Siem Reap.

Furthermore, for women and girls who come from families that are abusive or dysfunctional, especially if this owes to the presence of a stepparent, higher income may allow them to redress power imbalances within the household, which often played a significant role in placing them into commercial sexual exploitation in the first place.

There was a timber trader that came to ask me to marry him, but I did not agree because I don't want to have a husband yet, and I want to find money for my mother and for my younger siblings, I think that if I can make enough money for my mother to buy a house then I will ask her to divorce with my stepfather because I pity my mother, when I came to visit her I saw my stepfather hit her and I pitied her, I am not angry with her.
CSEWG, Siem Reap.

Women who as children, were marginalised within the household because of their status as 'dependents', even if they contributed significantly to the household, occupy a different social status once they become the main income earner. They are often more able to voice their opinions and gain a moral authority in household decision making. In some cases, as the woman above demonstrates, it would allow the exclusion from the household of an abusive parent.

7. Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking

7.1 The virginity trade

The commercial sale of virginity is one of the major routes into commercial sexual exploitation for those women who were surveyed – 38% of the women interviewed in qualitative interviews had had their virginity sold (voluntarily or involuntarily). This trade clearly shapes the patterns of trafficking within Cambodia, and given the extensive cultural links between virginity loss (through trafficking, voluntary sale, or sexual violence such as rape) and the sex industry, it is arguably the largest factor contributing to entry into commercial sex.

Derks (1998a) has documented the demand for virginity in context of the trafficking among Vietnamese women and girls, however, there is an equally brisk trade for Khmer virgins. The term often used to refer to sex with a virgin – *khuy* – means to, 'to open a bottle, to uncork or to make a hole' (Derks, 1998a). It can also be referred to as *lok sim* – or to sell 'the original', meaning virginity. Sex with a virgin, it has been hypothesised, is believed by some men to have a rejuvenating and purifying effect (Derks, 1998a; 2005). However, as will be explored later, there also seems to be a strong connection between the links and trafficking networks to places where perceived 'sinful' activities occur – such as casinos, especially among certain nationalities (often of Chinese origin). However, there is currently a lack of demand side studies (Derks et al., 2006), on the virginity trade, which is possibly a reflection of the difficulty in access to this target group.

Social background

In terms of nationality, it can be seen from Table 6 below that while the majority of women involved in the virginity trade are Khmer (55%), Vietnamese are again a very over-represented group. A high 52% of all ethnic Vietnamese girls and women interviewed had sold their virginity, compared with 34% of Khmer women and girls.

Table 6: Ethnicity of women/girls in the virginity trade (Survey 2)

Ethnicity (CSEWGs)	No.	% of sale cohort (n=78)	% of ethnic group (Khmer n=153, Vietnamese n=50)
Khmer	52	55	34
Vietnamese	26	28	52
Total	**78**	**100**	

Derks (1998a) also reported the perception that virginity for Vietnamese girls not as culturally important as it is for Khmer girls. However, from the social background of the respondents in Survey 1, it seems that there are some persistent social differences among Vietnamese and Khmer women or girls that suggests a process of 'grooming'[50] for the virginity trade which is also strongly supported by the qualitative data.

[50] 'Grooming' is commonly used as a term to describe the relationship between a paedophile and his underage victim (see AIDéTouS, 2005). This may involve gifts and other inducements to gain the 'trust' of the victim before sexual exploitation can take place.

Predominantly ethnic Vietnamese commercial sex areas, such as Svay Pak in Phnom Penh, were previously the location of a thriving trade in underage girls[51], principally for the Asian and Western paedophile market (Thomas and Pasnik, 2002). While ethnic Vietnamese women are more literate than their Khmer counterparts (see Section 5), they are also less likely to have had another profession before their first commercial sex, to be married or to have had children. Given that most ethnic Vietnamese women are long-term migrants (having been born in Cambodia, or lived there for more than five years), their over-representation in the virginity trade reflects not just cultural imperatives, but also processes of marginalisation and social exclusion within certain ethnic Vietnamese communities.

The results from the in-depth interviews also strongly supports the supposition that the virginity trade is the main fuel for the entry of underage girls into prostitution, though as will be explored, there is evidence of the demand for underage girls among certain nationalities. While the age for first commercial sex, within the context of the virginity trade or in other commercial sex establishments, is 19 years old, it is only 16.8 years for those who sell their virginity. When this is stratified by ethnic group, it is clear the Vietnamese girls are much more likely to be underage – on average they are just 16 years old, compared with 17.2 years for their Khmer counterparts.

Client groups

Details on client groups, such as nationality, were collected in the context of in-depth interviews, and this was later put into statistical form. While as much detail was gathered as possible, in some cases, women did not know precise details – 'Chinese', for instance, could refer to mainland Chinese, or ethnic Chinese groups coming from their diaspora in other countries. Given the language barriers that exist, there is often relatively little detail that can be garnered from the women's descriptions.

The trade in virgins is nonetheless an overwhelmingly Asian male phenomenon. As can be seen from Table 7, men of 'Western' origin account for only 9% of the total clients who bought sex with virgins, with the majority of the rest of the clients coming from Asia. This is strongly supported by other research that has demonstrated that Western men are often involved in the sexual exploitation of underage boys and girls, but do not have a demand for virginity as such (APLE, 2005). When stratified by girls who were underage at the time of selling virginity, there appears to be little significant difference – the largest change is of 1.4 percentage points, among Westerners, and actually decreases for certain nationalities, such as Cambodians (a decrease of 7.3 percentage points).

The results also clearly demonstrate, however, that much of the trade in virginity is home grown – 49% of all clients are Cambodians, or of Cambodian origin. However, the qualitative narratives show that many of the other nationalities, such as Chinese clients, include men who live and work within Cambodia (for instance, as garment factory owners), rather than tourism-related groups, although it is difficult to make any conclusions about the exact proportions.

[51] Svay Pak, as one of Phnom Penh's most notorious commercial sex areas, was allegedly closed down by authorities, with many of its inhabitants moving to Siem Reap (Thomas and Pasnik, 2002). However, it also appears that many of these former establishments may have recently reopened.

Table 7: Nationality of clients buying virginity (Survey 2)

Ethnicity (Khmer)	No.	%
Khmer	36	46
Japanese	3	4
Korea	2	3
Taiwanese	2	3
Foreign/Western	7	9
Thai	3	4
Filipino	2	3
Chinese	13	17
Other	3	4
Don't know	5	6
Total	**78**	**100**

When stratified by ethnic group of the girls and women, there is also significant variation in the client groups (see Table 8 below). The desire for certain qualities, such as whiter skin, has often been talked of as a demand factor that leads to ethnic Vietnamese women's entry into commercial sex (CARAM, 1999a). This can clearly be seen with Chinese client groups, for instance, who comprise 35% of clients buying sex with ethnic Vietnamese women and girls. However, there is also an increase among Westerners to 11.5%, but this could also owe to the demand for very young girls among this male group.

For Khmer women and girls, Cambodian men account for the overwhelming majority of their buyers, at 67%. This also confirms other research on commercial sex in other countries that shows that client groups tend to prefer CSEWGs of their own nationality (see O'Connell Davidson, 2001).

Table 8: Client groups, by ethnicity of the woman/girl (Survey 2)

Clients of ethnic Vietnamese virgins	%	Clients of ethnic Khmer virgins	%
Khmer	11.5	Khmer	67
Japanese	11.5	Korean	2
Korean	4	Taiwanese	2
Taiwanese	4	Western	8
Western	11.5	Thai	2
Thai	8	Filipino	4
Chinese	35	Chinese	8
Other	8	Other	2
Don't know	8	Don't know	6

The trafficking networks and social context of the virginity trade among Cambodian client groups is quite complex and varied. This will be explored in Section 7.2.

Conditions for women and girls selling virginity

This section will briefly explore some of the conditions that women in Survey 2 experienced for the sale of their virginity. The complex social processes that delineate the social norms and expectations, networks and forms of control and coercion that facilitate the virginity trade will be explored in a later section.

Firstly, the average amount made from the sale of virginity is very high for both Khmer and Vietnamese – at an average of US$482, with a range of US$20 to US$2800. The majority – 83% – received the cash that they were promised. However, out of this group, 13% of women and girls did not receive the amount that was promised. These figures for the money received, however, are not reflective of the total amount that would have been involved in the transactions. A number of people can be involved in the trade in virginity, all of whom may demand their own 'fees' – most commonly the brothel owner, but additionally in some cases involving neighbours, karaoke managers, the client's staff or motodups, and local recruitment agents.

The remainder – 17% – did not receive any money, and this was often reflective of the severe forms of coercion that were used to subjugate the girls and women.

As will be explored later, there are a variety of conditions and mechanisms in which the sale of virginity was found to take place, often dependent on an ethnic divide. For ethnic Vietnamese girls, local networks often work with the household for the sale of virginity, and in these situations, it is often difficult to assess how 'voluntary' or forced the sale is. Girls may initially say that they were opposed to being sold, but then may agree to it after family pressure has been put on them. For Khmer women, there seems to be a greater variety of situations used for the sale of virginity, however, there also seems to be more overt use of force.

This is reflected in the figures on how many of the women were unconscious at the time of their first commercial sex. Table 9 shows how many of them were incapacitated at that time.

Table 9: State of incapacitation at time of sex (all CSEWGs, Survey 2)

Conscious at time of sex?	No.	%
Unconscious	8	10
Drunk	3	4
Conscious but drugged	3	4
Conscious	64	82

Note: sale cohort n=78.

This means that 18% of those that sold their virginity were incapacitated in some way at the time that they did so. This varies slightly by ethnicity – 19% of Khmer, compared with 15% of ethnic Vietnamese women and girls were incapacitated. The methods used also seem to vary – whereas ethnic Vietnamese were much more likely to be unconscious (11.5% were so, compared with 10% of Khmer) at the time of sex, Khmer women were more likely to be drugged with what appears to be sexual stimulants or amphetamine-type drugs, as well as alcohol. In fact, as will be discussed later, there seems to be much more effort put into the manufacture of 'compliance' through all forms of drugs (including alcohol) for Khmer women than for ethnic Vietnamese women. Among the latter, their significantly lower age is a factor that may account for higher rates of unconsciousness – the qualitative descriptions show in a few cases clients giving them drugs 'for the pain'. The qualitative descriptions certainly show that these girls often suffer severe physical damage and that the experience is often traumatic.

My family did not have enough to eat and I wanted to earn money… I agreed to khuy kromom (sell virginity) because my family was too poor and while it was raining my mother bought a

plastic tent to shield us from the rain … I slept for two days with the client who khuy kromom me in a big hotel, but I don't know which hotel. The client started to sleep with me suddenly when we got to the hotel. I cried and I hurt and I had blood after I slept with him.
CSEWG, Siem Reap.

While it is hard to assess the levels of 'voluntariness' involved, in cases where there is a protracted negotiation between the client and the girl or woman, the respondent sometimes openly states that they decided to sell their virginity. Clearly, the high financial rewards and difficult social situations that they often come from plays a role in this trade, and women/girls appear to not really be fully informed of what the sale involves.

Nonetheless, there also seems to be some differences between the Khmer and ethnic Vietnamese groups. Overall, it can be seen from Table 10 below that 70% of women and girls stated that they willingly sold their virginity, and this confirms other research which has found that the migration into commercial sex is often 'voluntary' (for instance, see Beesey (2003) on ethnic Vietnamese women and girls). However, in many cases among the ethnic Vietnamese, the pressure of the household is such that in 8% of cases, it is unclear whether the women or girls 'consented' to being sold. This is likely to be a severe underestimation, as has been explored; exploitation within the household revolves around deeply engrained and inculcated cultural beliefs. 'Force' is thus more likely to refer to 'overt' force, applied by someone outside of the household. For Khmer girls and women, however, the use of overt force was apparent in 31% of cases.

Table 10: Use of force in sale of virginity (by ethnicity, Survey 2)

Stated willing or forced	Vietnamese %	Vietnamese no.	Khmer %	Khmer no.	Overall %	Overall no.
Willing	73	19	69	36	70	55
Forced	15	4	31	16	27	20
Don't know	12	3			3	3

Patterns and processes of trafficking in the virginity trade

The virginity trade is very difficult to disentangle from the general recruitment into the sex trade. Women who have lost their virginity, through rape or sale of their virginity, often see their options as subsequently limited to earning an income through commercial sexual exploitation. In their narratives, there is often an unquestioning assumption that loss of virginity entails an axiomatic entry into commercial sex, often in the same location that has facilitated the sale of their virginity.

It should be noted that the sale of virginity has overwhelmingly moved out of the brothel, and into higher class establishments, such as karaoke. There is a clear and noticeable difference between the narratives of older and younger CSEWGs who sold or were forced to sell their virginity. Younger women have almost exclusively had their first commercial sex in high class hotels, guesthouses or very high class karaoke establishments. It was repeatedly found that brothel owners in some locations refused to admit women who were still virgins. As will be explored below in Section 7.4, police and CSEWGs themselves were much more likely to recognise the sale of virginity as trafficking, but less likely to define some of the forms of control, such as debt, as also being so. Arguably, this has led to a perception among brothel owners and CSEWGs

alike that arrests are more likely for virginity selling than for any other kind of trafficking.[52] Section 7.4 will explore this in terms of the police monitoring system.

The scale and variety of locations where the virginity trade is negotiated, particularly for Khmer women, is also an emerging pattern. Arguably, this has followed an explosion of 'entertainment' locations which often can also be informal commercial sex locations, such as bars, discos, beer gardens, and even restaurants. Even in these contexts, negotiations for virginity can take place. What seems to be more instrumental in this context is the client's nationality. Whereas Khmer male clients can negotiate directly with a woman or girl in a variety of locations, other nationalities cannot, and consequently rely on a variety of networks often tied to 'foreigner' (usually Asian) specific commercial sex establishments.

This was clearly seen in the case of Koh Kong, where several networks were found to operate for the provision of women and girls to the virginity trade, along a strong ethnic divide. Ethnic Vietnamese girls were being provided specifically for clients in the casinos, along the Thai-Cambodian border. In one case, this was done through a small scale operator, who had links to a relative who was mostly involved in trafficking of ethnic Vietnamese women to Malaysia. This network thus operated entirely separately from any commercial sex establishment. Another network was found operating through a brothel, again for the provision of virginity to the casinos, but also involving voluntary migration into commercial sex. While it is not known how the traffickers made contact with the clients, both networks clearly relied on a household decision to sell their underage girl children.[53] In both cases the girls were brought by their mothers to the operators, and borrowed money against the future sale of virginity. Interestingly, the brothel owner, though she was Khmer, had direct links to an ethnic Vietnamese area – Neak Loueng – where she was a highly respected member of the community, even though her work as a brothel owner was openly known. In one CSEWG's descriptions, the brothel owner's links to money lending were also clear.

> *When my child was sick, I didn't have money to pay medical treatment. Therefore, I borrowed money from a woman who was a brothel owner in Koh Kong. Those who needed money borrowed money from her. After that they became girls at her brothel. All villagers knew that she was the brothel owner. I borrowed 7,000 Baht from her to pay my child's medical treatment. My child was ill with dengue fever. I told my mother that I went to Koh Kong to work as a housemaid. I didn't tell the truth because I didn't want her to be worried about me. She didn't want me to do that job. I also told people in my village that I worked as a housemaid. The brothel owner was very kind. She was often involved in religious activities. She helped poor people in rural villages. Villagers talked many good things about the brothel owner. She would not bring girls to Koh Kong unless they wanted to come.*
> CSEWG, Koh Kong.

[52] While the low level of prosecutions makes this difficult to assess, it is noticeable that many of those that have occurred have been done because of alleged virginity selling. Of five people interviewed in jail in Kampong Som on trafficking related charges, for instance, all were there because of their involvement in the virginity trade (though at the time of interview, some were awaiting convictions).

[53] In the case of the first operator, this was confirmed by neighbours, as well as by a former CSEWG who had once been harboured in this trafficker's house when she was recruited from Phnom Penh to be trafficked to Malaysia. In the second case, the underage girl was directly observed in the brothel. This case was referred by the research team to the local authorities for intervention.

This brothel owner recruited both ethnic Vietnamese and Khmer CSEWGs, both for 'voluntary' entry into commercial sex, as well as for household-based decisions to sell girl children. The perception of this recruitment as being based on the choice of the household or the individual woman seems to be instrumental in establishing this network, despite the very young age of the girls being sold. Moreover, relatives ran her other brothels along the Thai border, in Laem, another location that has been repetitively described by women in this research as involving an Asian clientele, casinos and a brisk trade in virgins. A girl could thus sell her virginity in one location and then return to work in commercial sexual exploitation in another location, without being questioned by the authorities.

However, in contrast, separate networks exist in Koh Kong for the provision of virgins to a more Khmer clientele. As has been explained, this no longer involved the brothel, but higher class karaoke establishments. The political backing of these establishments seemed to be pivotal to their immunity to monitoring – several of these are not only owned by police authorities, but also count them and other local authorities as loyal customers. As will be explored later, recruitment into even small-scale karaoke establishments revolves around the pretence of a lack of force, all the while exerting various forms of pressure to get women and girls to acquiesce to the sale of their virginity.

The links between networks and casinos was described by women as occurring in key locations, and again, often worked alongside 'voluntary' paths of migration into commercial sex. These locations included Phnom Penh, Laem, Poipet and Koh Kong, and overwhelmingly recruit ethnic Vietnamese women and girls.[54] It appears that the recruitment of girls and women to sell their virginity was often based through household-based networks, and most of the time these were female networks, sometimes established by other members of the family who had already worked in commercial sexual exploitation.

> *In Poipet, I work in a casino the owner of which was an acquaintance of my cousin who had once been working there before … When I arrived in Poipet, I gave her a ring and she came to pick me up and took me to the brothel. I was only 12 years old then. She allowed me to stay in the brothel but she did not allow me to work during the first week there. She kept watching me during that first week before she let me have my virginity sold to a Thai client for US$200 … I gave my parents all of the money that I could earn then … There were so many girls selling their virginity in the casino where I was working. I saw some new girls coming to have their virginity sold now and then.*
> CSEWG, Siem Reap.

In many cases, the involvement of the household, such as the parents but most often involving the mother, appears to have become solidified because of efforts to avoid detection by the authorities. The use of contracts will be explored in Section 7.3, yet in other higher class establishments, some of the owners were said to require one to be signed before they would allow the selling of virginity to occur. This arguably reinforces the alliance between the commercial sex establishment and the parents for the exploitation of the female child within the household. As one ethnic Vietnamese CSEWG in Siem Reap commented:

[54] These locations have many Khmer CSEWGs as well, but the recruitment into casino-based commercial sex and the virginity trade often concerns ethnic Vietnamese women and girls.

The brothel owner did not receive any girls selling their virginity here. He was afraid of breaking the law and being arrested … the brothel owner never accepted any girls selling their virginity unless their parents took them to the brothel. If the girls came along by themselves, the brothel owner would not dare to receive them. He was very afraid of being blamed for having forced young girls to become prostitutes … He only receives those brought to the brothel by their own parents, he is afraid of being accused of human trafficking.
CSEWG, Siem Reap.

Stories, rumours and personal experiences of commercial sex establishments being closed down because of the virginity trade has clearly informed a response to it. As well as contracts, removing the location of the sale from the brothel and political connections, the trade may have simply become more secret and harder to detect. As explained in Section 3, the links between different 'actors', such as the commercial sex establishment and the *maykaa* or 'manager', have become more obscured. While many CSEWGs assert that there is often no relationship between them in the virginity trade, this more likely a reflection of the strength of the economic alliance between them, and their ability to keep it unknown to others. One woman who worked in a high class karaoke parlour in Siem Reap described how the virginity trade used to be widely talked about but was now kept secret through the use of violence directed at those that talked about it outside of the work place.[55]

The owner of the karaoke parlour didn't force me to sell sex. At (Commercial Sex Establishment), customers can have sex with virgins. Most of the virgins are the girls who serve ice and beer to customers. I am not interested in this problem because it is not my business. Most of the customers who had sex with virgins were Cambodian high-ranking officials. People tried to keep a low profile regarding this problem, so that not many people knew about that. After they lost their virginity, they came back to work again. After that, they would sleep with customers on a regular basis. I don't know much about virgins selling sex. Some people were beaten up because they gossiped about virgins selling sex outside of this place (commercial sex establishment).
CSEWG, Siem Reap.

The importance of the *maykaa* for the sale of virginity is apparent in many of the women and girls' narratives. As explored in Section 3, there may be several *maykaa* within one commercial sex establishment, often with different responsibilities depending on the ethnicity of the women and girls who work there. Broadly speaking, they are responsible for 'dealing' with clients, and liaising with them when they require sexual services. In some areas, the density of the social networks that link people in the community to her is apparent, through CSEWGs and their families themselves, to people connected to the *maykaa*, such as clothes washers.[56]

When I was 14 years old I worked at a karaoke … my mother knew someone who did the laundry for a Mummy close to my house. Mummy means that she brought the girls for clients and she was working in a big place because close to my house there were a lot of girls working in that Karaoke, they know the Mummy through the girls and she used to bring the girls into the shop. When my mother told me about selling sex, I agreed because my mother

[55] This was also found by the research team – often women who worked in the same establishment were completely unaware that virginity trading was happening. Obviously, only firm conclusions on the presence of virginity selling could be reached if it was confirmed by first person reports.

[56] There is also some evidence from the research that both of these people, the *maykaa* or the 'mummy', and even the clothes washers, are themselves often former CSEWGs.

had no money and was sick and my younger brother and sister had no money for going to school, most of the Vietnamese girls near my house, they sell sex because their mother has no money. The mummy knows many people from abroad and who to contact to sell sex to, my mother kept contacting the mummy and she said that if my mother wants to sell me for sex then she will contact a Taiwanese man for us.
CSEWG, Siem Reap.

As will be explored later, the processes and mechanisms of trafficking for the virginity trade can vary substantially by area. For the woman above, there was an apparently widespread acceptance of commercial sexual exploitation within her local neighbourhood, and the 'normalisation' of their attitudes is clear.

Notably, it is her mother who makes contact with the local *maykaa',* whose position as someone who has access to regular clients makes her the key link in the chain of actors involved in this trade.

This is important as there is some evidence that particularly in the case of Khmer men, virginity is often bought by regular clients, who have done so repeatedly. The alliance between the *maykaa* and those clients, in fact, appear in some locations to fuel the trade in virginity.

In the past, the maykaa looked for virgins for customers. The managers used to work at a karaoke parlour in Phnom Penh … My friend lost her virginity because she slept with a customer. One of the parlour managers received money from both the customers and the karaoke girls … However, there have been few customers looking for virgins since the former manager has left … There were five to six customers who often slept with virgins.
CSEWG, Koh Kong.

While the *maykaa* is often instrumental in the recruitment of virgin women and girls, it is also clear that often the demand for 'newness' and virginity is client led – in many of the locations where virginity selling was found to occur, there appears to be little involvement from the commercial sex establishment. This does not mean that there is not a planned supply – the presence of 'new' girls enhances the prestige of any establishment, and CSEWGs themselves are often highly mobile, moving from location to location, because of this pressure to appear 'new'. Conversely, they also describe patterns of abuse by commercial sex establishments once they have been there 'too long' and are perceived to be 'old'. Nonetheless, in many areas the trade appeared to involve a direct negotiation between the client and the woman or girl.

I asked the bar owner to let me work for him in his bar, and he agreed at once, telling me to come back that evening to start working. I didn't ask him how much I would be paid each month, and I didn't tell him whether I was a virgin or not, either. I was afraid that they would pity me when they knew that I was a virgin. After half a month of working there, I met a man of 30 years old who wanted to pay for my virginity. He was a taxi driver. He often comes here to drink. He has been here many, many times. I asked him for US$500 for my virginity and he agreed.
CSEWG, Siem Reap.

This pattern of planned opportunism is clear in many of the accounts – women and girls may have migrated to urban centres for economic or other reasons, and often find work in low skilled service sectors that in effect, include a strong element of informal commercial sex. When confronted with the offer of high amounts of money that the virginity trade can bring, they appear to agree to a sexual transaction that they would

otherwise not have considered. Again, this pattern appears to be ethnically determined – for ethnic Vietnamese women, the trade is overwhelmingly conducted through local agents, maternal or other relative based networks, and to a much lesser extent, friendship networks. The use of these networks, in their narratives, often reflects a desire to contribute to the livelihood of the household. Khmer women and girls also often refer to their 'need' to provide for dependents in the family, however, in many cases, the decision to sell virginity is also reflective of the break with the household, and consequently of the need to maintain its public face and 'honour' through adhering to sexual and social norms.

> *Presently, I have five brothers and I am the only daughter in my family … My brother was married and could not do anything to help my parents but he had to take care of his own family. I couldn't stand seeing my family in such a hard situation and I decided to seek some clients to have my virginity sold to get some money to support my family then.*
> Ethnic Vietnamese CSEWG, Kampong Som.

> *After one month, the karaoke owner told me that if I agreed to sell my virginity, she would give me US$500. Since I had no parents, no siblings and no relatives there in Phnom Penh to rely on, I decided to sell my virginity then. I loathed my mother and I did not want to go and live with her because she had left me and she had never come to see me as a child.*
> Khmer CSEWG, Koh Kong.

Karaoke and deception

Unlike in the brothels, or even higher class karaoke establishments, there is often active recruitment of women and girls who have their virginity intact into karaoke parlours. It is worth exploring this in detail, as it was found that both karaoke girls/women and the parlour owners often did not define this recruitment as trafficking, though the patterns of deception involved clearly would define these as trafficking cases.

As was explored in Section 3, the structure of the karaoke parlour enables the recruitment of virgin women and girls. The social roles within a karaoke parlour may be various, and if it is large enough it will include one or several *maykaa*. However, even in the smaller and more low-scale establishments, roles will be assigned separately for those who provide sexual services and those who do Karaoke girls and women are widely perceived to all sell sex, however, this is not always the case, and varies highly by location. Karaoke parlours are also often perceived to be the place of 'romance', where the girls and women must be 'seduced', as opposed to the brothel, which provides sex (Francis and Maclean, 1999; KHANA, 2001).

Both karaoke owners and CSEWGs perceive themselves to have a 'choice' in the provision of sexual services, which is clearly defined as penetrative sex. In one parlour in Koh Kong, recruitment of women and often girls was done by the owner's mother in her native province. Women and girls were actively deceived by her, but there appeared to be few repercussions as long as girls were not forced to provide penetrative sex. However, it is also clear that the women and girls are working in a location that is socially shameful and stigmatising.

> *The parlour owner's grandmother brought those girls here from their respective villages. Most of the girls working in the restaurant are from Prey Veng Province and Neak Loueng ... Many villagers in Prey Veng Province asked the parlour owner's grandmother to take their daughters to work in a restaurant. Therefore, she brought them here. When they arrived here, they didn't see any restaurants. The parlour owner feared that they would cry and want to go*

back home. The parlour owner then persuaded them to stay here for four to five days and to drink with customers. As time passed, they found it enjoyable. Finally they didn't want to go back to their villages. They told their mothers that they worked in the restaurant. If they told them that they worked in a karaoke parlour, their mothers would come and get them back home. Some of them were found by their mothers to have worked in the karaoke parlour. The parlour owner tried to persuade their mothers so that they could continue to work here. They allowed their daughters to work here, but they told them not to be involved in sex. The parlour owner's grandmother came here once in every three to four months. If she found anyone pretty in the village, she would bring her here.
CSEWG, Koh Kong.

Many of the respondents, especially those from rural areas, appear to be very uninformed about the work that is entailed in a karaoke parlour. Traditional values emphasise the importance of young women's sexual ignorance, but this may also be a reflection of rural and urban differences in karaoke.[57] However, the pretence of being a 'restaurant' or a similar establishment is often used by recruiters, and the provision of sexual services is downplayed.

One day, there was one of my friends coming home from Phnom Penh to see her parents here. She told me to go to Phnom Penh to work in some karaoke there, I told her that I did not know what karaoke meant and what I would be doing working there. She explained it to me, telling me that I would only be working as a waitress, bringing clients some food and drinks as they are singing along in the karaoke room. I would be paid US$30 a month there … She showed me her hand phone and I believed her then that she could earn a lot of money in Phnom Penh. She lured me to Phnom Penh, saying that I would have a hand phone myself after only a few months of working there. But she didn't tell me about having sex with clients to get paid then. I really wanted to be as rich as my friend and so I went to Phnom Penh … I didn't know clearly about what they actually do in the karaoke then. About half a month after I started working there I saw some girls going into another room doing something. Sometimes I saw some girls were in client's arms. Sometimes I saw some girls having their clothes taken off. Sometimes I saw them kissing each other and I realised then that it was not a good place there.
CSEWG, Siem Reap.

The degree of force used to coerce women and girls into providing sexual services varies by location. However, most of them will have to accept a high degree of sexual harassment, enforced by both the karaoke owners, and the clients. This is clearly a traumatic experience for many women.

They did not tell me what to do when I was there at first but when I started to go to the room with some clients to sing, my cousin's wife told me not to scream when some client fondled me or squeezed my breast, otherwise the karaoke owner would fine me some money then. She asked me to try to do whatever they asked me so that they would leave me some tips to eat rice later … I felt frightened then. Some clients kissed me and embraced me in the karaoke room when I was there with them. They intended to squeeze my breast but I did not like it so I ran away from the karaoke room then.
CSEWG, Siem Reap.

The perception that karaoke women are 'for the entertainment' of the clients, and their consequent lack of sexual decision-making rights, emerges from these accounts.

[57] Even in rural areas, some households may possess karaoke machines, to be used for entertainment or even for weddings in the village. This is very different from the more complex entertainment services provided in urban areas.

Women may have the right to refuse sex with a client, but through a variety of means, they are forced to accept the client's dominant rights to touch, embrace, kiss or fondle them. Again, this pattern of sexual exploitation is often directly supported by the notion that the women and girls are 'spoilt already', merely by their association with the shame and stigma of karaoke work.

> *Sometimes, while I was sitting with some clients in the karaoke room, some of the clients fondled my breast and I stopped them from doing that so, they got angry with me because other girls always let them fondle their breast as often as they wanted to but I didn't. I think that they can never buy me with their money, no matter how much they have. Some clients told me I might as well stay at home, and I told them that I was here to earn some money, because I did not get a good education and if I got a good education, I would not be here and I would find a better job in a better place, not here. The clients then told the karaoke owner about my reaction and the owner reprimanded me, saying that the clients were polite enough, I should not have reacted like that. I said nothing to her then.*
> CSEWG, Siem Reap.

The structure of the karaoke is clearly related to the demand for virginity. This is most clearly seen by the position of the *neak ja ta kok* – or the 'ice picker' – often a young girl whose job is to fill client's glasses with ice. This role is not related to the provision of sexual services, but it functions as a means of recruiting young girls and women into the karaoke, and where pressure can later be applied to sell virginity. In one woman's account, the fact that she was disconnected from her family (owing to a pattern of abuse) was one factor that made her recruitment through local agents in her neighbourhood, and her acquiescence to sell her virginity, easier.

> *I went to Boeung Japon to rent a room to live on my own. At lunch time, a woman next door asked me if I was a virgin, I said yes I was, so she took me to a karaoke to recommend me to the owner that I was a virgin, so she accepted me. The karaoke shop owner gave her some tips and she went home … The karaoke owner let me do the household chores, cleaning the house, doing the washing up, and putting ice into client's drinks. When the lady next door took me there, she told me that I would just do the household chores, but I would not have to do anything immoral, so I liked it there because I never intended to become 'a girl'. After one month there, the karaoke owner told me that if I agreed to sell my virginity, she would give me US$500. Since I had no parents, no siblings and no relatives there in Phnom Penh to rely on, I decided to sell my virginity then.*
> CSEWG, Koh Kong.

In this case, the woman made an informed decision to sell her virginity, despite the deceptive practices that were used to recruit her to the karaoke parlour. A lot of the virginity selling that occurs seems to be based on a process of 'cultural influence', especially if the woman or girl are recruited through friendship networks. In the social context of the karaoke parlour, commercial sex is 'normalised' and presented as an attractive choice.

> *My friend and I took a taxi to Kampong Som. She took me to the house that she rented near 333 karaoke parlour. Every evening she would make herself attractive and put on sexy clothes. I wondered why she put on pretty clothes. I then asked her about that. She told me that she was a karaoke girl, and she had to drink beer and sing songs with customers. I decided to follow her. She told me not to be worried. She told me to just follow her. My friend persuaded the owner of the karaoke parlour to employ me. I didn't sleep with customers for money. Customers often touched me. I got accustomed to it over time ... After working at that karaoke parlour for five to six months, the parlour manager introduced me to a customer. She*

told him that I was a virgin. She wanted me to sleep with him... Before I slept with the man, I had talked with my friend. She had no objection to me sleeping with the man. She had sold sex when she was a virgin. The parlour manager negotiated the price with the man. After I slept with the man, the parlour manager gave me US$800. I gave the parlour manager US$100 to show my gratitude to her … After that I slept with other customers.
CSEWG, Kampong Som.

However, as will be explored in below, once women and girls have been recruited, they often find themselves in a sexually exploitative environment, which can lead to trafficking. As has been explored, there is a high level of sexual harassment in many locations, and client's rights to do so are often reinforced by a system of fines, or directly by the karaoke owner. The payment systems in some locations also directly reflect the level of choice that women and girls may have for providing sexual services – in some parlours, the only income that they can make comes from clients themselves, either through 'tips' when they sit with clients or payment when they have sex with them. In other locations, where there is a greater element of choice, workers are given a monthly salary which they supplement with informal commercial sex. Even if women and girls are given a 'choice' about the clients that they provide sexual services to, in many locations they will ultimately be penalised if they do not have sex with clients on a regular basis.

Despite this, many of the karaoke women and girls who were interviewed did not seem to view the deceptive practices used to recruit them as being trafficking,[58] even when they clearly find the sexual harassment and stigma of working in a karaoke parlour traumatic.

My relative told me to say to them that I was a newcomer here. I didn't know anything … I was so afraid that I burst out crying then. My relative comforted me, saying that there was nothing wrong with letting them hold my hands or allow them to embrace me. I was not angry with her then … My relative did not mean to harm me or deceive me. She just wanted to help me to earn some money to help my parents.
CSEWG, Siem Reap.

Crucial to this acceptance appears to be the perception of choice in accepting clients. One woman, for instance, was sold by a neighbour from Bouding to a brothel where she found the conditions unbearable. Her relative later deceptively recruited her to a karaoke in Siem Reap, promising her work in a restaurant. The difference of her definition seemed to revolve around the use of direct force and the perception of choice.

My sister in law's sister told my mother to stop letting me sell mangoes because it made my skin dark and she asked me to go to Siem Reap to be a waitress where I could get a salary of US$60 a month, I told my mother that I was scared that they would cheat me again, but she said don't worry she won't cheat you because she is a close relative. I came to Siem Reap with her, and she is a maykaa in (karaoke parlour) … I agreed to work but I felt that I was working at a place that I don't like again, but this place is better than the brothel, in the brothel they (clients) come in and we have to receive them, even if we are just eating and our mouth is full of rice, here it is better, we can choose whether we like them or not … That sister brought me here because she pitied me that I walked around selling mangoes and still cannot make any money .
CSEWG, Siem Reap.

[58] Most of the women did not use 'trafficking' as a term in talking about their experiences, however, they did not refer to their recruitment as being 'cheating' or 'deception' in their descriptions, which are the most common colloquial expressions used to refer to trafficking.

The patterns of stigma and shame are also fundamental to understanding how these deceptive practices persist. For the woman above, her lack of virginity and the consequent social shame had made her vulnerable to being trafficked twice, as well as arguably making her accept her work as an informal CSEWG.

Women and girls who have been recruited from their own communities by local agents may be unwilling to confront the deceptive practices of the trafficker if it means that they can maintain their honour and virginity in their local communities. One woman in a Koh Kong karaoke parlour, for instance, was deceptively recruited through a family member (her uncle in law, who was an achar[59] in a local wat, and was also the father of the karaoke owner). It seems that it is his presence in the community that makes her unwilling to seek redress, as well as the fact that her virginity is still intact.

> *If I had known clearly about the job in advance, I would never have left my house to be a karaoke girl here because I am always afraid of the clients… I thought that the achar, who loved my aunt, had deceived me because when he came to gather more girls, I overheard him talking on the phone about how many girls he would take to work in the karaoke bar … When I arrived in Koh Kong, I just knew that I had been deceived because when serving beer to clients, they kissed me and hugged me … I thought that if the owner forced me to sell my virginity or have sex with clients I would quit and go home … When I go home again, I would ask him why he deceived me, telling me to go and work as a waitress in a café but in the end it turned out that I am in a karaoke bar like this, and the clients kissed and embraced me. I would just ask him like I was telling a joke, but I would not make a fuss, I still have my virginity.*
> Karaoke worker, Koh Kong.

Patterns of force in the virginity trade

The patterns of force used in the virginity trade are in fact highly varied. While it appears that there is an ethnic divide between the use of force among Khmer and ethnic Vietnamese women and girls, this more accurately refers to the use of 'overt' force (see above). It must be emphasised, for instance, that there are a wide variety of cultural practices that constitute force – the use of contracts, or of family pressure, of strong feelings to shame and social stigma that hides patterns of sexual exploitation are just some of the key examples. While the patterns of force used in the virginity trade remain similar to those used for commercial sexual exploitation in general, there are some key differences that are worth highlighting.

Overt force for the purpose of the virginity trade happens in the minority of cases (10% of the overall sample (n=203), but 27% of the virginity sub-sample (n=78)). While it is associated with trafficking into a commercial sex establishment, it is rare to find these cases. Most often, the virginity trade is conducted outside of the commercial sex establishment. As noted in Section 3, this is the result of the strong fear of being found to be a virginity broker among establishment owners.

In those cases that occur within the commercial sex establishment, former trafficking victims described being harboured through force, used by both the establishment owners and notably, the client.

[59] *Achar* are layman, but are part of the religious hierarchy within the Buddhist pagoda, often providing the link between villages and the religious community. They are always men, and are often respected moral leaders within the local society.

There were four young men who put me in a room where I was detained for two months before a forty year old Khmer man came to have sex with me. I was not allowed to meet anyone there but I had to stay in the room all day long. I begged the man to let go of me and forgive me. But he never listened to me. He just wanted to go to bed with me. I was 13 years old then. My period had just appeared twice in my life then. As a little virgin girl, I felt terrible pain when he deflowered me and I cried a lot and a lot then. I had to have sex with one client each day after that.
CSEWG, Siem Reap.

However, even in cases where the virginity sale is done with the consent of the woman or girl, their narratives often describe the implication or threat of force, for instance, the use of bodyguards, not being allowed to leave the location, and having sex despite often expressing strong feelings of fear and pain.

Arguably, however, patterns of force most commonly use other means of exploitation. This can be seen, for instance, in the widespread use of contracts, most often between the commercial sex establishment owner/managers, and parents. This may have solidified patterns of exploitation within the household itself, while allowing the brokers to evade the likelihood of detection by counter-trafficking authorities.

No matter how much they were paid, the manager always charged them US$300. Before carrying out the selling of virginity, the manager forced the girl and her mother to have their name signed in a contract, committing that they took full responsibility for their decision of selling the virginity and that the manager took no responsibility in any cases.
CSEWG, Siem Reap.

This is especially important given the high use of household-based networks seen in both the virginity trade and commercial sexual exploitation (see Section 7.2).

However, in many cases (most often involving Khmer women), the patterns of force used involve deception and recruitment into Karaoke type establishments, where a variety of methods are used for forceful removal of a woman or girl's virginity. This accounts, for instance, for the high rates of incapacitation during the sale of virginity. Karaoke workers will be expected to drink with clients, for instance, regardless of whether they are providing (penetrative) sexual services. While karaoke owners may be complicit in the deceptive recruitment practices, the forceful removal of virginity can often be arranged by other people, most often other CSEWGs or their kin who have established links with clients. The case below is illustrative of this pattern. The girl involved was recruited by someone from her own village to become a *neak ja ta kok* in a provincial town. Her mother had already borrowed money from her recruiter, who is the figure who appears to be the most pivotal to the patterns of force used.

I arrived at that karaoke parlour in the evening. When I got into the karaoke parlour, I saw people singing and people holding each other. That woman knew the karaoke parlour because she worked there. Once I arrived at the karaoke parlour, the parlour owner asked me if I was a virgin. I told her that I was … I wanted to stop working there, but the owner of the karaoke parlour said that my mother owed money to her. She told me that I had to pay back the money to her before I could leave the karaoke parlour ... I was not angry with my mother for borrowing money from the woman because she didn't know anything about the job, either … After the karaoke parlour was closed, she asked me and my friend to go out with her. After that we went to a guesthouse together. We played cards and ate fruit together at the guesthouse. When I got up the next morning, I saw a man sleeping with me on the

bed. I didn't ask him anything because I was stunned. I was also afraid of him because I had never known him before. I had no clothes. I then went back to the karaoke parlour. I met my friend's elder sister there, but I didn't say anything with her, because I didn't want anyone to know what had happened to me. I was embarrassed. If other people learned that I lost my virginity, they would consider me a bad girl … My friend's elder sister said that she didn't know where I had gone last night and that she had to go back home. I didn't give any responses. She had done something like that to her younger sister before ... She was sure that I would not dare to have any argument with her because she had lived near my house before. I didn't know how I could inform on her.
CSEWG, Siem Reap.

It should be noted that the implication that the girl herself was complicit in her virginity loss is actively used by her 'friend', and that the shame and social stigma of no longer being a virgin, as well the fear of revelation in her home village, are enough to keep her silent. The strong shame of rape is a tool that appears to be actively used in many contexts of trafficking (see Section 7.2). The advantage of using social shame is that, as can be seen in cases of rape, they are unlikely to be reported.

Lastly, while these patterns of force depend on the complicity of the clients, there are some cases where there appears to be a strong focus on the manipulation of consent, often through the use of drugs or alcohol.

On the first day, he told me not to be afraid, and he said he would not force me. I asked him when he had known me ... He told me that he had known me for a long time. But I was not interested in what he said. I stayed in the room for one week. The man showed pornographic movies to me. There was a person delivering food to the room every day. I didn't know if there was any substance inside the food. After I ate the food, I always wanted to have sex.
CSEWG, Siem Reap.

7.2 Trafficking and networks

Estimations of trafficking

The prevalence of trafficking among our sample was measured in several key ways. As explained in Section 32, the UN's Palermo Protocol was used and 'trafficking' was operationalised to mean entry into commercial sex when either underage, by force or by deceit. Survey 1 used a respondent filled questionnaire adapted for both literate and non-literate audiences, which had previously been piloted in trafficking research (Arensen, 2004). Survey 2 used post-coding of qualitative in-depth interviews to assess prevalence of trafficking. It uses the same criteria as Survey 1, with the added category of 'debt by force' to indicate trafficking.

As explained in Section 7.3, levels of coercion and debt are in fact a highly variable according to location and even individual status of the CSEWG. It is therefore an unreliable indicator for levels of trafficking, especially for quantitative surveys. However, if the main data collection uses qualitative methods, it often revealed the distinction between debt that was forcibly acquired, that which involved debt bondage, or that which was voluntarily acquired and involved no visible means of exploitation. Only the first two kinds were included in the measurements of trafficking.

Both surveys are subject to their various biases. Survey 1 is arguably strongly linked to a bias of place, having been administered in commercial sex establishments (though with

confidentiality assured). The survey also documented conditions for entry into a commercial sex establishment, and therefore does not capture essential patterns of trafficking involved in the virginity trade. Survey 2 was based on an inductive research process – its findings are thus to be considered a minimum estimation. Most of the interviews were conducted outside of the commercial sex place, and thus are not subject to biases of place.

It is clear from the results of Survey 2 that much of the trafficking that occurs is through the virginity trade. 38% of the overall sample (n=203 interviewees) had sold their virginity, through force or not through force. These girls are overwhelmingly underage at the time of sale – 74% of them were under the age of 18 years, and 14% of them are under the age of 15 years. This also strongly varies by ethnicity – only 65% of Khmer girls in the sale cohort were underage at the time of virginity sale, compared with 92% of ethnic Vietnamese girls. This also confirms the results from the qualitative data that shows that ethnic Vietnamese girls are also more likely to be trafficked into niche markets catering to paedophiles (see Section 7.2), but it is also the persistent poverty of this group makes early entry into work more likely.

Table 11: Trafficking in the virginity trade (Survey 2)

	No.	% of sale cohort (n=78)	% of overall sample (n=203)
Trafficked (all forms)	61	78	30
Underage	58	74	29
Forced	21	27	10

Force appeared to be used in a minority of cases, 10% of the overall sample, but 27% of the sale cohort. This included girls who were unconscious at the time of having sex. However, it must also be noted that 'force' in this case must refer to the use of overt force, as many of the girls may have succumbed to pressures within their households that they do not refer to as force. Nonetheless, this varies by ethnicity – only 19% of the Vietnamese sale cohort experienced the use of force, whereas 31% of Khmer girls did.

Overall, the results from Survey 2 show that 49% of women and girls in in-depth interviews had been trafficked at some point. This is a measure of ever having been trafficked, rather than their trafficking status at the time of the survey.

In terms of kinds of trafficking, it can be seen that most frequently girls are underage when they enter commercial sex – 43% of the total sample (Survey 2). Deceptive recruitment was used in 21% of cases, direct force in 9% and force through acquired debt in 13% of cases. These categories are not mutually exclusive and where, for instance, force was used, force through acquired debt was also likely to be present.

Table 12: Breakdown of types of trafficking (Surveys 1 and 2)

Type of trafficking	Survey 1 (% of total sample, n=312)	Survey 2 (% of total sample, n=203)
Deceit	15	21
Force	5	9
Deceit and force	16	8
Force through acquired debt	N/A	13
Underage (current and at time of entry)	20	43
Total % who have ever been trafficked	33	49

Table 12 above clearly shows that when factors such as measuring age at the time of entry into first commercial sex are incorporated, it significantly increases measures of ever having been trafficked. This can be seen for all factors measured (force, deceit and forcefully acquired debt). It strongly suggests that all previous attempts to measure the prevalence of trafficking within Cambodia have been underestimations.[60]

However, the discrepancies between the two surveys strongly support some of the findings from the qualitative data. Average age, for instance, of entry into commercial sex (including the sale of virginity) in Survey 1 was 21.4 years (CSEWGs were aged an average 22.1 years at the time of the survey). Only 20% of girls were underage at the time that they entered into commercial sexual exploitation (current and former underage girls). However, in Survey 2, 74% of girls were underage when they had their first commercial sex experience (including the sale of virginity). This strongly supports the finding that underage sexual exploitation most frequently happens away from the brothel, and that girls who sell their virginity may wait until they reach a suitable age before entering commercial sex.

Survey 1 also measured two other indicators of trafficking – deceit and force. Overall, 15% of women and girls said that they were deceived into commercial sexual exploitation, and 5% cited use of force. However, this again varies strongly by ethnicity – only 4% of ethnic Vietnamese CSEWs said that they were deceived, compared with 18% of their Khmer counterparts. Furthermore, only 4% of ethnic Vietnamese respondents said that force had been used when they entered commercial sexual exploitation, compared with 5% of Khmer women.

Finally, the results from Survey 1 also support the finding that most of the internal trafficking, into commercial sex establishments at least, originates from communities within Cambodia, as only 9% of the trafficked sub-sample could be classified as being short-term (resident for less than five years).

Recruitment: patterns and processes

Patterns of trafficking have been hypothesised to arise owing to a variety of factors. Social vulnerability, patterns of demand and counter-trafficking interventions all play their part, though trafficking does not occur without the presence of the networks that feed it.

All research into trafficking, including this research project, will suffer from certain weaknesses in trying to assess trafficking networks. As Kelly (2002) said in her review:

> Women and children who are trafficked are seldom able to provide a detailed account of precisely where they were and who was involved, either because they are not told anything, or what they are told is false. Where researchers have made direct contact with traffickers, they have tended to be small-scale operators, whose knowledge extends only to the stages prior to, and following, their own involvement.

This research interviewed firstly CSEWGs who were current or former victims of trafficking, or 'voluntary' migrants into commercial sex. However, exploring the networks that support trafficking was only done if it was felt that this would not place the

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Most previous attempts to measure the prevalence of trafficking have often been based on indicators of women and girls present in places of commercial sexual exploitation. For instance, Steinfatt (2003) measured age and used debt as an indicator for force and bondage.

participant at risk – there were many networks that could have been investigated but in many cases the research team could not guarantee the safety of the participants. Furthermore, difficulties in research are often a direct outcome of the strength and organisation of criminal networks (Kelly, 2002). It is thus often a fragmented research process.

The research did interview convicted traffickers in two prisons in Kampong Som and Koh Kong. However, it was felt that these interviews were often of limited use, for various reasons.[61]

This research shows the extensive patterns of abuse, social vulnerability and sexual exploitation that might make a woman or girl more likely to be recruited by these networks. However, it also shows that the networks used are as varied as the people involved in the sex industry itself, encompassing not only professional traffickers, but also CSEWGs themselves, former CSEWGs, the mothers of CSEWGs, managers (*maykaa*), people who work or are associated with the *maykaa*, the establishment owners themselves, and moving onto male-based networks, such as 'boyfriends', motodups (who are often relatives of the brothel owner), and the people in the wider social realm of the brothel, for instance, local authorities, who, as clients or for economic gain, often aid trafficking and sexual exploitation practices.

Kelly (2002), quoting Stulhofer and Raboteg-Saric (2002), distinguishes between *organisers* (belonging to criminal networks), *managers* (commercial sex establishment owners who organise the recruitment and trade in women and girls), and *aides* (including people within local authorities who may support the work of local operators). Brown (2000) has commented that the pattern of trafficking within Cambodia probably is made up of small scale 'cottage' industry type organisation, principally owing to the lack of pressure for the sex industry to become organised beyond this. The 'culture of impunity' within Cambodia would seem to facilitate a less centrally controlled pattern of development (Brown, 2000). However, while this might be the case in relation to Khmer owned establishments, this assertion is unproven in more ethnic Vietnamese establishments. Nonetheless, it would seem that in Cambodia, the analysis of the layers of operation should be more focused on *managers* and the forms of control that they use (Section 7.3) and *aides* (this section and Section 7.4).

This section will explore the various different networks that appear to often be used, the social means of exploitation used that perpetuate trafficking practices, and where possible, their links to those higher up in the networks of trafficking.

[61] As Kelly (2002) points out, these traffickers are often at the lower end of the trafficking scale, and included family members who had sold children into sexual exploitation, *maykaas*, brothel owners, and traffickers. Given the culture of impunity, the rate of prosecutions in Cambodia is low. Furthermore, even once convicted, those interviewed often sought to refute their convictions, and proclaimed their innocence. It can be hypothesised that the process of conviction in Cambodia, often proceeding without a real consideration of evidence and often done on the basis of non-payment of bribes (LICADHO, 2006) does not allow for those convicted to irrefutably admit their culpability.

Networks: how they live and die

Systematically assessing how networks are created, sustained and die out, along with certain trafficking processes, can be difficult in the absence of consistent baseline data, or any consistent data gathering mechanisms to assess national patterns.

However, there are some clear cases that demonstrate that networks evolve dynamically. One study conducted in 1999 (IOM, 1999) along the Thai-Cambodian border, for instance, mentions trafficking networks to Koh Kut in Thailand as being in the process of evolving, as, 'some of the women expressed a wish to travel to Koh Kut…where there are many fisherman and apparently also tourists'. By the time that research was conducted in 2005-6, this network appeared to have boomed and died, and some former trafficking victims had returned to work in brothels in Koh Kong. Demand in Koh Kut appeared to mainly come from the Cambodian male fishermen community, who in many cases were also traffickers. These networks often recruited from women and girls living and working in commercial sex in Koh Kong, mainly through male-based networks, who, posing as clients, would try to induce the CSEWGs to go and 'live' in Thailand, where they would then be trafficked into a brothel. At the time of the research, this recruitment was still active – newly arrived women and girls described attempts to recruit them. However, it appeared to have limited success, principally because of information sharing among Koh Kong's brothel-based CSEWGs about conditions in Koh Kut. To survive, the trafficking network had to move elsewhere, and use other means, and there was some evidence that it was moving to other CSEWG locations, in Kampong Som and Phnom Penh[62]. However, other research has confirmed that trafficking networks, including those for commercial sexual exploitation, from Koh Kong to Thailand are extensive and ongoing (LSCW, 2005b).

Interviews with former trafficking victims identified several factors that facilitated the creation and maintenance of these networks. It appears that the perception of economic gains was key to the initial creation of this path of migration, which again confirms the finding that trafficking networks function best alongside existing economic and voluntary migration. However, former trafficking victims also identified the 'culture of impunity' at the destination as pivotal to sustaining trafficking practices. This included the collusion not only between the brothel owners and the traffickers, but also with the client group in general. It also concerned a strong alliance between the *managers* – the brothel owners – and the *aides* – the local authorities who lacked the political will to tackle the issue.

However, analysis of networks to individual commercial sex establishments quickly reveals that brothel owners, for instance, may use a variety of recruitment methods. One network to Klong Srun, just over the Cambodian border in Thailand for instance, used both CSEWG networks and relative-based networks to recruit new CSEWGs. Again, this network takes advantage of existing practices – CSEWGs regularly use their own social networks for voluntary economic migration, mostly because of their great concern with finding commercial sex establishments that are economically productive and with good conditions. CSEWGs themselves are highly mobile (White et al., 2004) and friendship networks greatly facilitate this. However, the second recruiter was a relative (the brothel owner's son in law) who recruited both from CSEWG locations in Phnom Penh, and from other areas in Koh Kong.

[62] This was confirmed by interviews with a CSEWG in Kampong Som, and with a convicted trafficker in Koh Kong prison.

To a certain extent, the strength of a recruitment network will depend on the ability of a source community to share information on trafficking practices. Trafficking practices may become saturated in some areas, and that recruitment is then no longer effective. Recruiters often fit a social profile that is likely to be trusted (Kelly, 2002), but this may change with experience. There is some evidence that 'traditional methods' – recruitment from rural areas through deceitful promises of work given by a female and apparently wealthy recruiter – have become harder, through direct experience of trafficking.

> *When I was at home with my family, a woman took me to meet another woman coming from Phnom Penh. She told me then that in Kampong Som a girl could earn US$200 a month from working as a karaoke girl ... I didn't believe what they said but I decided to accompany them to see what they were doing, because there was also another girl from my home village following us. She was only 16 years old then. Her mother let her go but I told her that they were all liars and not to let her daughter go with them, but she ordered me not to prevent her daughter from going so I went with them ...We went to Kampong Som by taxi … she took us to a (karaoke) and she asked me to get out of the taxi but I refused … her appearance and dress told me that she was a maykjal who always went to the countryside to deceive young girls, and trafficked them to a brothel ... I knew then that she deceived us to have us trafficked to the brothel so I asked the taxi driver to drive her to the police station. She was so afraid that she cried a lot then. I pitied her and I told her not to deceive any more young girls from then on. That little girl and I went home then. She thanked me again and again for having rescued her. Her mother agreed to let her go with the maykjal because she was just a poor country woman. Earning US$200 per month was the greatest dream for them. It was a fortune and that was why she let her daughter go without any suspicion.*
> CSEWG, Siem Reap.

This testimony is clearly an exception. However, the concurrent survey conducted with CDWs, who are also a group of rural to urban migrants, showed that fear of trafficking was a strong concern of parents, who took measures to ensure that their daughters remained protected. Those who were not protected fit a pattern of social vulnerability that has been extensively discussed in Section 6. CSEWGs' descriptions of communities where trafficking networks have proliferated describe a process of moving from *manager-controlled* to *user-controlled* rural to urban migration. This pattern has also been observed in trafficking in other areas of Cambodia (see IOM, 2003). In some of the accounts, experience of trafficking means a shift from reliance on *maykjals*, for instance, to family or friend-based networks linked to commercial sex exploitation.

> *Some girls had been trafficked in 1994 and were allowed to go home and see their families for the first time only six months ago. Some of them told me then that they had been trafficked to brothels in Phnom Penh … They had been forced to have sex with clients ever since … Villagers in my hometown no longer let their daughters go to work for anyone after they knew this. There is no more human trafficking in my hometown nowadays. Any girls who would like to be a 'girl' can ask their friend to take them to the brothel to meet the owner and ask her to receive them to work for them as a 'girl' on their own free will but there are no maykjals nowadays.*
> CSEWG, Siem Reap.

Clearly, the saturation of networks in one area does not mean that they cannot equally proliferate in another area. There is certainly enough evidence that once a network dies in one area, it simply moves to another, and is mobile by its very nature, CSEWG's descriptions of traffickers repeatedly show that (often female) recruiters move into poor areas, and that they often disappear once they have successfully located and sold their victim. Other traffickers appear to have mobile professions – one was a vegetable trader,

moving along routes and communities from Phnom Penh to Kampong Som. Another worked with a mobile fair, moving from one provincial town to another.

However, the locations that persistently recur as centres for trafficking are not in fact rural communities, but decidedly urban ones. Contemporary patterns of trafficking may in fact have to rely less on recruitment in rural areas in the face of consistently high female rural to urban migration. One location – Bouding[63] – recurs consistently as a centre for both virginity trafficking, and for forced and voluntary commercial sexual exploitation. It also seems that many of the recruitment agents connected to Bouding work, or used to work, in areas where jobless rural to urban migrants, often escaping a troubled past, are likely to congregate – on the riverside and around urban parks (near the Independence Monument area).[64] The key characteristics of this area that seem to have maintained its importance for trafficking include its connections to the sex trade (for park-based CSEWGs and brothels located inside of Bouding itself), its importance in receiving rural to urban migrants in search of employment, and the general poverty of the population that it receives.

Furthermore, certain kinds of trafficking, such as the provision of underage girls, may exist through links to specific urban communities. There certainly is strong emerging evidence that in certain urban communities, the perception of commercial sex has been 'normalised', and that many of the connections to particular commercial sex establishments now pass through these.

> *I was 19 years old when I went to work as a 'girl' in Siem Reap. I didn't want to work in Phnom Penh because it was my home town, I didn't want any one there to know me. In Siem Reap, I came to a massage parlour called Pkgai Prak to be a girl. I have been here for more than one year so far. I am here to earn some more money to help my mother. I knew this brothel because when I was at home, I used to hear many people coming back from this brothel saying that they could earn a lot of money from this brothel then.*
> CSEWG, Siem Reap.

It is difficult to make conclusions about whether traffickers have become more targeted, especially in the absence of data from counter-trafficking organisations (NGOs, IOs or authorities) about new areas being targeted or, for instance, without an adequate social profile of trafficking victims who have been rescued and in social care institutions.

However, as has been extensively argued, comparison of the contemporary CDW data with the CSEWG data appears to strongly support the importance of social vulnerability being a factor that can put women and girls at risk in both a rural and urban setting, once their troubled relationship with their household is known. As one woman who had been raped by her stepfather and severely abused said:

> *One day, I met a girl at one of my cousin's wedding. She told me to go to Siem Reap to seek employment in some café's as a waitress there, adding that waitresses were well paid. She knew well about my family, my background, and my situation but I did not know anything*

[63] At the time of writing this report, Bouding, a slum area in central Phnom Penh, was being cleared of its residents to make way for 'commercial development'.
[64] This area used to be a place for street based CSEWGs to congregate, seeking clients (Jenkins, 2006), though they have to a large extent been now cleared out, and widespread patterns of severe sexual exploitation means that some were found by this research to have migrated to brothels in Koh Kong.

about her and I didn't know where her house was, either. She took me to a karaoke in Siem Reap, asking me to sit waiting for her there and she would come back soon after getting something for both of us to eat. But she was gone and she has never come back ever since … The karaoke owner told me that I had been trafficked in by the very girl who took me there … The owner told me later that the girl who took me there had once been a prostitute there before she became a maykjal herself.
CSEWG, Siem Reap.

As will be discussed, this woman's description of the trafficker being a former CSEWG is interesting – it can be hypothesised that CSEWGs themselves know very clearly about the kinds of social dysfunction that leads to entry into commercial sex.

More fundamentally, these kinds of social dysfunction also, in an era of partially effective counter-trafficking efforts, define who is likely to be 'rescued' and who is not. Apart from formal counter-trafficking mechanisms through local authorities, people and households have been shown to take their own means of prevention. However, as both the CSEWG and the CDW research clearly showed, these often fail if the household already has an abusive and exploitative relationship with the child it is meant to be protecting.

In one case encountered in Koh Kong, for instance, a local trafficker had recruited several young women and girls for work in his relative's karaoke parlour.

The parlour owner's younger brother who was a motor taxi driver in Phnom Penh brought young girls to Koh Kong. He was the person who went to recruit young girls from small towns and villages, especially from Mesang in Prey Veng province. He has been to my village. Every time he came to Koh Kong, he brought with him 3 young girls. When I first arrived in Koh Kong, I suddenly wanted to go back home, but no one took me back. I didn't know any NGOs. I knew that the owner of the karaoke parlour was doing something illegal, but I didn't dare to inform any authorities because the parlour owner had money. For me, I didn't have any money.
Karaoke worker, Koh Kong.

However, three other girls who were also trafficked by the same trafficker at the same time were rescued by their parents, who came to get them back. In this woman's case, her abusive relationship with her own family meant that she was not rescued. Moreover, the other girls were rescued very quickly by their families (within a period of a few weeks), and arguably were thus able to avoid the processes of stigma and social blame. Though she did not enter commercial sex until some time later, once she did return to her home village, she had been away too long to avoid the strong gender-based stigma.

When I went to my hometown, I told my parents that I worked at a restaurant in Koh Kong. I didn't tell them that I was a karaoke girl because I didn't want them to blame me. I knew that being a karaoke girl was not good. My neighbours didn't believe me. They said that I was not a good girl as I had been away from home for such a long time. They thought that I was a prostitute.
Karaoke worker, Koh Kong

This is consistent with other descriptions of trafficking which detail this period of 'breaking in'. In Cambodia's cultural context, separation from the household and from the rural community can be perceived to entail a transgression of gender-based norms that then make reintegration into a rural community hard. For karaoke workers, the processes of stigma can be such that they will be tainted as CSEWGs even if they have in fact not had any commercial sex.

An analysis of the recruitment mechanisms and networks that sustain trafficking repeatedly reveal this use of the cultural patterns of not only stigma and blame, but also of trust. For instance, while CSEWGs repeatedly reveal that people in their communities no longer trust 'outsiders', they also reveal an amazing trust of people from their own rural communities. The CDW survey revealed that this is often because of a feeling that they will be able to hold people within their own communities accountable should trafficking occur. The CSEWG data, however, shows that fear of revelation of having worked as a CSEWG is a tool that is actively used by the traffickers and recruiters. One woman, a victim of trafficking, was recruited in her own village, and described her recruiter in the following way:

> *An acquaintance of mine from another village came to my house telling me to go and work for her brother in Phnom Penh for 60,000 Riel per month and that I would be given some more money for my daily expense … She persuaded me to leave for Phnom Penh, promising that she would help to take care of my mother while I was away … I was afraid of getting sold to some brothel. But I thought then that she was a villager there and that she had promised to take care of my mother when I was away. So, I felt free to go with her to Phnom Penh then. And she was not a stranger, but she shared my village there.*
> CSEWG, Siem Reap.

Arguably, certain trafficking practices, and networks, will persist if they are strongly upheld by cultural patterns of stigma and blame, for the simple reason that they are unlikely to be publicly acknowledged and challenged. There is a strong resemblance between the cultural processes used in trafficking and those used in perpetuating sexual violence, such as rape, for instance.

An analysis of some of these networks reveals the depth of the challenge for counter-trafficking efforts.

Lastly, before we analyse these networks, it is worth commenting on their sheer density. As has been explored, there is evidence of networks to particular areas which are poor, often with landless populations, or existing high rates of labour migration. However, it also seems that trafficking, especially in rural communities, is not in fact planned but contains strong elements of opportunism. Arguably, this would not be possible without a thriving sex trade, and without the numbers of people who are currently or formerly associated with it. Research in Cambodia on HIV/AIDS and the sex trade, for instance, has revealed the open and available nature of commercial sex (FHI, 2004), and the consequent sexualisation of a number of sectors to feed this demand.

In all of the networks presented in this report, the availability of networks linked to commercial sexual exploitation consistently emerges. Nonetheless, the varying nature of these networks can also be differentiated, based on whether they are planned, opportunistic, or more commonly involve an element of both – *planned opportunism*. Planned networks emerge when there is a clear link between a brothel owner and consistent areas of recruitment, for instance, among urban communities where acceptance of commercial sexual exploitation is high. Even then, opportunism plays a strong role – families who are in financial difficulties and facing crises may be approached by local agents (Reimer, 2006; Farrington, 2002). Household and friendship-based networks feature strongly in these kinds of settings.

Opportunistic networks seem to exist when a 'trafficker', most often someone who has another profession unrelated to commercial sex, grabs an opportunity to traffic, though there is little evidence that they have done this repeatedly. Many cases of trafficking, however, seem to involve 'planned opportunism', in that recruiters take advantage of people who may be in a temporary position of social vulnerability, such as rural to urban migrants, or in a precarious position within an abusive household. The level of 'targeting' is hard to ascertain without more information from recruiters themselves, however, opportunistic networks do recur among women and girls with a certain social profile, and more importantly, in certain urban locations. This will be further explored later.

Household-based networks

So far, this research supports the view that migration into commercial sex and vulnerability to trafficking often owes to a rupture with the household. However, there are further ways in which households interact with trafficking patterns. Some of these point to a difference based on an ethnic divide, between Khmer and ethnic Vietnamese women and girls.

This ethnic divide, however, can be overemphasised, as there are strong commonalities between the interactions between the household and CSEWGs. Firstly, there is a clear differentiation between households that facilitate entry into commercial sex and those that become dependent on their family member's income once this has started. As White remarked in her study, 'it was found that entire families are not only benefiting from, but may be relying on women's continued involvement in the industry', and this can be seen among both Khmer and ethnic Vietnamese families. As was explored in Section 5, these women then become 'satellites' of the household, often unable to reintegrate into it but pivotal to its economic status. There often appears to be an adjustment of perceptions of economic 'need', particularly for voluntary economic migration into commercial sexual exploitation – while an economic crisis (mostly health-related) may have provided the initial impetus to enter commercial, later a pattern of economic reliance becomes established.

The strong cultural norms regarding virginity also lead to convergences between both Khmer and ethnic Vietnamese household's attitudes towards loss of virginity and entry into commercial sex. Women and girls who have been raped often regard their consequent entry into commercial sex as axiomatic – the research found cases of raped women and girls being sold into commercial sex, often by their mothers, among both Khmer and ethnic Vietnamese groups. Most often, however, Khmer women and girls appear to react through self-imposed exile from the household.

However, there do appear to be differences among both groups in terms of the community-wide attitudes towards trafficking and entry into commercial sex. This emerges less from openly stated attitudes as from descriptions of recruiters and local agents the within communities, as women rarely describe their parents as directly supporting or pressuring their involvement in commercial sexual exploitation.

From the Khmer women's narratives, it is clear that there is involvement of the household, especially mothers, in the facilitation and reliance on their daughter's involvement in commercial sex, though again, this is often obscured in the testimonies. In one woman's description, the community-wide social ostracising of her friend's

mother's because of her open reliance on her daughter's commercial sexual exploitation was apparent.

My friend's mother who lived in the same village as me asked me if I wanted to work either as a prostitute, a karaoke girl or a waitress at a restaurant in the provincial town. She told me that I would be paid US$100 per month and that her daughter earned a lot of money working there. All the people in my village knew that my friend was a prostitute in Kampong Cham provincial town. Whenever she visited the village, villagers did not allow their daughters to talk to her because they thought that their daughters would follow her ... My grandmother did not allow me to meet my friend, but I still went to meet her. The villagers hated my friend's family, especially her mother, because she allowed her to work as a prostitute … I decided to become a girl because I had already lost my virginity, I did not care as I had before.
CSEWG, Siem Reap.

Even when the reliance on commercial sex is not openly acknowledged in a community, mothers who have accepted their own daughter's commercial sexual exploitation appear to become active recruiters. In some cases, the mothers themselves appear to be former CSEWGs. Their move from CSEWG to recruiter is a progression often seen within the hierarchy of the commercial sex establishment. One girl, for instance, had worked with her mother in the same karaoke parlour. When her mother returned home, she put her daughter, who had lost her virginity through rape, into debt bondage. The local connections that she has made through trafficking her daughter appear to facilitate her role as a recruiter for other commercial sex establishments.

Some customers said that they would stop loving my mother, and that they would love me. Some customers felt sorry for us. I felt happy and embarrassed because of the fact that both my mother and I worked at the same karaoke parlour. After working at the karaoke parlour for two months, my mother returned home to look after my younger brothers and sisters. I was left alone at the karaoke parlour. I have been working at the parlour ever since. My mother has a one-year old baby and is expecting another one. Therefore, she can no longer work as a karaoke girl … I have many friends working at a discotheque. They slept with customers. Some of them were taken there by my mother. The owner of the discotheque gave my mother 400 to 500 Baht for each girl. After she stopped working at the karaoke parlour, she took two girls to the discotheque.
Karaoke worker, Koh Kong.

For both Khmer and ethnic Vietnamese women and girls, the presence of a stepparent, commonly a stepfather, seemed to lead to a decision to put a woman or girl to work in a commercial sex establishment. In some cases, it was clear that this decision was a means of 'dealing with' sexual abuse within the household. As has been explored in Section 6, this often does not entail an understanding of the girl child as being a victim of abuse, but instead perceiving her as a sexual threat who presents a danger to the stability of the household, and as a consequence, who needs to be excluded from it.

My stepfather wanted to rape me and he wanted to love me. One day, he caught me, and he wanted to rape me but my mother arrived on time. My mother said that I wanted to work as a prostitute ... She had an argument with him everyday because of me. She told everyone that I had allowed him to rape me. She didn't want me to stay with her because she was fed up with me. One day my stepfather was drunk and he entered my room in order to rape me. I ran to the neighbour's house. My mother told the neighbours that I had allowed him to rape me.
Karaoke worker, Koh Kong.

In this case, as in many others, entry into a commercial sex location is facilitated by the household, where the woman or girl is vulnerable to sexual exploitation. This girl's virginity was sold to a client without her consent or prior knowledge, and when she was incapacitated by alcohol. In her narrative, it is clear that both her exclusion from the household and her rape for the purpose of the virginity trade are supported by a process of social stigmatisation that effectively excuses her exploitation – she is easily portrayed as having transgressed important gender norms regarding 'proper' female behaviour.

For both Khmer and ethnic Vietnamese women and girls, the presence of a stepparent in the household may put substantial pressure on them to start providing for the household, rather than remaining a financial burden.

> *My stepfather told my mother to take me to sell my virginity. At that time, my mother was in love with my stepfather so she agreed but she did not tell me that she was taking me to sell my virginity, she told me to work in a coffee shop instead because our family was too poor. My mother took me to a brothel … one girl there asked me whether I knew that my mother had taken me to sell my virginity, and when I heard that I didn't even know what the word khuy kromom was … I demanded to go back home but the girl that had brought me from the brothel and the coffee shop owner did not allow me to come back. Then I cried because I was just 16 years old. The girl that brought me from the brothel and coffee shop felt afraid of the police and called my mother to come and beg me. My mother begged me to help our family because we are poor. The girl who brought me from the coffee shop told me I owed money and could not leave. My mother begged me and I pitied her so I agreed to khuy kromom.*
> CSEWG, Siem Reap.

The social pattern among ethnic Vietnamese CSEWGs often involves extensive involvement of the female members of a household, whereas this is more of a rarity among Khmer women and girls. As White et al. (2004) remarked, entry into commercial sex is most often facilitated by these female controlled networks, and it is striking how often the male head of the family is either excluded from the decision-making process or is seen as a figure to be feared. This may be due a more patrilineal/patriarchal system where the male head of household is the upholder of moral values (Ethnomed, 1996).

The overwhelmingly common entry route for ethnic Vietnamese girls into commercial sex is through the sale of virginity. In the in-depth interviews, this was often represented as a decision that was voluntarily taken by the girls themselves, in order to help ease the poverty in their families. In some cases, however, it can be seen from their accounts that the livelihood status of the families was not under immediate threat. Yet, women and girls commonly make references to notions of 'sacrifice' and duty to explain their decisions to enter commercial sex.

The involvement of the household in facilitating entry into commercial sex is often not apparent, and is only discussed when the assumption of power that they are relying on is disintegrating or being challenged. As Section 7.3 will explore, the social control mechanisms within the ethnic Vietnamese communities, often including the collusion between commercial sex establishment owners and parents, often precludes this disintegration. Other researchers (Farrington, 2002; Reimer, 2006; Slocomb, undated) have pointed to the lack of social support or extended family networks that solidify the power imbalances in the parent-child relationship, and thus facilitate patterns of trafficking. Opposition to these practices, perpetuated by parents, is often muted. For one woman who was interviewed, who was trafficked by her parents to a brothel at the

age of 12 to pay off their debt, her opposition only became apparent when her parents started to discuss selling her younger sister's virginity.

> *I told them that if they did that I would kill myself. I said let me by the only one (who works as a prostitute), just me, it's enough already.*
> CSEWG, Koh Kong.

As the main income earner in her household, she was able to make her parents respect her decision. However, in other cases, it is only a relationship with a man that seems to be able to threaten the reliance of the household on their daughter's income. In some cases, women do leave commercial sex and marry, setting up their own households, where their parents will have less claim over them. However, in others, they are threatened with social ostracising from the household for choosing to have these relationships.

> *My mother asked me why I wanted to live with that man…she was pretty upset with me because I would not listen to whatever she said to me because I loved him so much. She asked me what I would choose, love or filial duty and I told her that I would choose love. My mother was angry with me for that … then my parents and all of my siblings disowned me. I continued to stay with my husband for another five or six months and my mother fell sick, suffering from a cancer on her arm, because she was so upset.*
> CSEWG, Koh Kong.

For many of the ethnic Vietnamese women interviewed, however, it is clear that their aspirations are visibly linked to raising the economic status of their household which will in turn raise their own social status. Commercial sex is perceived to provide a much higher level of income than any other sector that they could become involved in. Moreover, while the involvement of the members of the household is underemphasised, particularly when describing their initial entry into commercial sex, they often re-emerge later in the narratives. Other researchers have also commented that the patterns of debt bondage owe most often to family involvement and dependence on ethnic Vietnamese CSEWGs (Beesey, 2003; Slocomb, undated). However, in many cases, migration itself is directly facilitated by female relatives, often the mother or older sister. Maternal networks that share information about commercial sex establishments appear to be pivotal in establishing migration routes. This can be seen in certain areas, for instance in Siem Reap, where many of the CSEWGs originate from urban communities in Phnom Penh.

> *I came here to Siem Reap with a lady living next door. She told me that it was easier to earn money here and there was no persecution (from the police). Her daughter has been earning money as a prostitute here for a long time and she knew that I could earn money easily here. That was why she took me here. So many girls in my hometown have been earning money as 'girls'. They were all as young as I was. They became prostitutes because their family was too poor then. I was not afraid of getting trafficked in because the lady who brought me here used to be my uncle's wife and they went their separate ways some years ago. I was not afraid because my mother also accompanied us here.*
> CSEWG, Siem Reap.

Other researchers have attempted to explain this pattern of extensive and apparently collective involvement of households in the exploitation of their daughters' commercial sex income in terms of macro-processes, such as the dislocation of traditional values (Beesey, 2003), or severe stigmatisation and marginalisation (Reimer, 2006). As was

explored in Section 3, these are certainly important – the relationship between processes of marginalisation and trafficking within these populations has been observed in other contexts. In addition, power imbalances within a household can be reinforced in communities that become self enclosed owing to discrimination against them.[65]

However, in some of the narratives, there is also a shift from trafficker-controlled to 'user-controlled' practices – in other words, trafficking itself provided an entry into commercial sexual exploitation, and subsequently, the household found a means of controlling the means of exploitation itself, often with the help of the trafficking victim.

> *I had been a girl at Phsar Silarp, the brothel owner there was a woman, she used to tell us that she would never force us to have sex with clients, that she just served beer and drinking. Yet, we can have sex with clients if we were willing. It was my elder sister who took me there to be a girl. My sister knew this brothel, since there was a woman from Chau Doc town coming to my house to lead my sister to Phnom Penh, telling my sister that she would work as a waitress in a café. And my sister followed her to Phnom Penh a couple of years ago as and she used to be a girl there ... My sister realised then that she had been deceived, trafficked in to that brothel to earn money for them but she said nothing then. Like all other girls there, my sister as was not allowed to go anywhere from the brothel just in case they ran away. There were still some girls there that my sister didn't know who had taken them in and they had never got paid anything while they were there.*
> CSEWG, Koh Kong.

Given the lack of longitudinal data, however, it is impossible to say whether this is a general pattern that extends beyond this household. Nonetheless, it can be discerned that the involvement of the household in trafficking, especially girl-child selling practices, appears to have become solidified, partly in response to avoiding counter-trafficking efforts.[66] Some commercial sex establishments now require a signed contract from parents before they will accept their daughters for brokering a sale of virginity.[67] In many of the ethnic Vietnamese women and girl's narratives, local agents and brokers appear to known and trusted to the family, for instance, brokering the sale of several of the female members' virginity. As will also be explored in Section 7.3, the local nature of these trafficking networks also partly explains their power – the location of the families houses are known to the trafficker or commercial sex establishment, who can then put direct pressure on them should agreements on sexual exploitation be broken.

There is also some evidence that sexual exploitation perpetuated by the household may be related to concepts of sexuality, though there is only fleeting discussion of this. There is very little discussion of the psychological impact of commercial sexual exploitation on girls. Even when directly approached, it is difficult to disentangle issues of loss of honour and social shame from feelings of abuse. However, it firstly can sometimes be seen that definitions of 'abuse' are very narrowly defined as physical abuse, and secondly that these issues do not appear to be discussed among households that depend on CSEWs,

[65] For instance, Caber's study (2000) of the Bangladeshi community in urban parts of London showed how gender-based norms that subjugated women were strengthened in communities that were enclosed because of discrimination of the wider population, especially when compared with women's position in households in Bangladesh.

[66] This is particularly the case with the sale of virginity, especially if the girl is underage. As has been explained, it is now commonly understood that government authorities (police and courts) will severely punish those found to be involved in this trade.

[67] The contracts were described to involve the written consent of the parents to the sale of virginity, thus clearly implicating themselves should this be later reported to the authorities.

Vietnamese girls sell their virginity because their mother has no money and then they send the money to their mother and their mother does not worry, she just asks are they good clients or not? Good clients means that they do not punish us, they buy us things and bring us to visit places.
CSEWG, Siem Reap.

There is some hint that the involvement of the household may be more pronounced depending on the age of the girl. This needs to be confirmed by data from trafficking victims. However, other trafficking patterns, for instance, for child begging networks in Svay Rieng, has shown a strong involvement of the household (IOM, 2003). Recruitment into 'niche' markets aimed at paedophiles appears to operate in areas where acceptance of commercial sex may already be very high. A Khmer CSEWG described her entry into commercial sex occurring through the networks that were established when she worked in 'hugging clubs', where foreign men paid to molest underage girls without having penetrative sex. The involvement of both her household and the wider community is clear in her narrative,

My mother knew that I was working in a brothel when I just started. But my father didn't know anything. I didn't dare to let my father know it for fear that he would stop me then. My family was really poor then. We were broke all time then. That was why I had to start earning money at the age of 13. At that very beginning, I didn't have sex with any clients, I just let them embrace me and then I got paid… At that time, I found US$10 as valuable as a fortune … My sister had her virginity trafficked in before me. She was one year older than me ... Both my father and my mother knew that I was a girl. All my neighbours were extremely poor then. We had no houses, no jobs and no money then. As children we didn't know how to earn money ourselves. My house was not very far from the brothel. After having my virginity trafficked in, I stayed at home waiting for clients. When there were some clients coming, the brothel owner came rushing to call me to go there and have sex with them … My mother came to receive my payment each month, we seemed to be in debt all the time though each month, she just lent my mother US$50 or US$60 … Since I was too young to be a brothel at that time and other brothel owners didn't dare to receive immature girls. It was only at her brothel immature girls were acceptable then. I only knew later that some brothels at Svay Pak also received immature girls at that time.
CSEWG, Siem Reap.

'Friendship'-based networks

'Friend'-based networks are pivotal not only for the recruitment of new girls and women into commercial sexual exploitation, but also often facilitate the mobility of CSEWGs from province to province. They seem to interact with trafficking practices in several key ways – firstly, as a means of 'cultural influence' in certain (urban areas) that supports the 'normalisation' of perceptions of commercial sex; secondly, as a means of recruitment into commercial sex; thirdly, as a means of re-trafficking, from one commercial sex establishment to another.

'Friendship'-based networks are almost exclusively made up of current or former CSEWGs, who may or may not have reintegrated back into their rural communities. They are thus predominantly female-controlled networks. This is sometimes part of a clearly demarcated system of recruitment within the brothel. As we see elsewhere, certain CSEWGs within the brothel may become a key part of its hierarchical systems, and be trusted to become their recruiters. This accounts, for instance, for the high number of links between CSEWG areas in Phnom Penh, particularly around Bouding,

and brothel-based CSEWGs in Koh Kong. A culture of sexual violence in Phnom Penh (Bearup, 2003; Jenkins, 2006) had led to migration to provincial areas for some park-based CSEWGs. Women who had worked there routinely came back to Bouding to recruit new women and girls into Koh Kong's brothels. However, as will be explored later in this section, a 'friendship'-based network does not need to be tied to a system of power and hierarchy within a commercial sex establishment. Often, in fact, they can operate merely as part of a collusion between former CSEWGs and their regular clients.

It should also be noted how 'friendship' is viewed in these accounts. It often appears that these relationships are not in fact very long-standing or even attributed with great emotional significance. Again, for both Khmer and ethnic Vietnamese women and girls, reliance on friendship networks is often reflective of a certain relationship with the household. As Maltoni (2005) found in his study of beer sellers, migration is often mediated through friends once ties with the household have been to a certain extent broken, and this poses a greater risk of entailing trafficking.

In some areas, as has been explored in household-based networks, there is clearly a process of the 'normalisation' of commercial sex that has occurred (see Reimer, 2006). In the women and girl's narratives, it is clear that friendship established in local neighbourhoods often directly link women and girls to local agents and owners of commercial sexual exploitation establishments. However, as has been explained in household networks, friendship networks may sometimes be the means for implementing what is in fact a household-based decision to allow a woman or girl to enter into commercial sex. Again, the process of 'normalisation' of commercial sex among this woman's peer group has seemingly validated her decision to enter commercial sex.

> *About how I knew to have my virginity trafficked in, well, it was one of my friends, who was a girl in that brothel who took me there ... At the age of 18, I went back there to that brothel to be a girl myself … One day, I met a girl called Van at Martini Bar, one of whose girls was my friend, called Ngoc. Ngoc's house is next to mine. It was Ngoc who took me to Van's mother to be a girl in her brothel. I went there to be a girl because my family needed some money then. My father had a bad back and he needed some money for medication. So I borrowed US$150 from the brothel owner for my father's medication, signing a contract to work for her for three months ... Near to my house, there were ten other girls, working in various brothels in Phnom Penh. They were all Vietnamese. All of their families were too poor then. So, they had to have their virginity trafficked in there at the age of 16 or 17 years old to support their parents and they have become girls ever since. Three of them were girls at the brothel where I was.*
> CSEWG, Siem Reap.

Friendship networks in these urban communities often do not seem to occur through any pattern of pressure, but rather through 'cultural influence', in which commercial sex is presented as being an easy and desirable option. This ties into a more general observation that the difficulties of commercial sex often do not appear to be openly discussed in these urban communities.

At home I made friends with a Vietnamese girl, who is a dancer in a bar. Her sister and she are both prostitutes. Her sister was about 20 years old. She told me then that we were all poor, that the best way for us to earn money to help our family was going to a disco to dance with clients and get paid by them. She told me that no one would force me to go to bed with clients there, that we would just dance … We could make up our own mind whether we wanted to go to bed with

clients or not but no one would push us to … I didn't have any idea about selling my virginity then but I just thought that other girls could go to bed with clients and so could I.
CSEWG, Siem Reap.

It must also be noted that the use of friendship networks does not negate the pressure of the household on the women and girls before they enter commercial sex. In the narrative of the woman above, it is apparent that she already perceives her role as 'helping the family'. As such the role of the friendship network, while certainly more socially visible, can only work in collaboration with socially inculcated values that posit the women's role in the family as being pivotal to their livelihood strategy (see Section 8.2.4 on household networks).

Friendship networks, or more accurately (former or current) CSEWG networks, can also be seen to directly recruit women and girls into commercial sex, as well as into the virginity trade, often through deception. Without having accounts from the 'friends' – or recruiters – themselves, it is difficult to delineate whether this recruitment is systematically planned or opportunistic. However, in rural areas it often seems to rely on connections made at village level, where people are more likely to trust each other. Again, the pattern of dysfunction and rupture with the household because of gender norms emerges. In the case of the woman below, she had been raped when working as a child domestic worker and her loss of virginity propelled her to leave her household and rely on her friendship networks. However, despite her wariness of her recruiter, it is finally her lack of options that forces her into commercial sex, and her exclusive reliance on her 'friend'.

> *A girl living next to my house asked me to go to Siem Reap with her, telling me that it was quite easy to find a job in Siem Reap, and that it was easy to earn money in Siem Reap … She was a prostitute in Siem Reap at that time, and she was 20 years old then. My parents did not know where I was going because I had some problems with my mother and she drove me away. So, I didn't say anything to them when I left home. I just thought of earning my living with some kind of business or working for other people but I never thought that I would become a prostitute myself ... I knew that she had been a paid girl for a long time and I always worried that she would harm me and I kept watch all of the time to see what she could do to harm me then. Only some days afterwards, we ran out of money. We did not have any money for food and she took me to a karaoke to earn money … I wondered where and what we would do. She answered me, saying that we would be working in a karaoke. I asked her if I had to go to bed with clients and she said no. At the karaoke, the owner told me that there was a regulation in his karaoke that girls could not refuse to go to bed with clients there ... I was angry with my friend for having taken me there, but I didn't know what to do because I didn't have any money for food. I didn't have any money to send home to my mother, either.*
> CSEWG, Siem Reap.

In these narratives, the level of deception is apparent. It is repeatedly seen that 'friendship' networks rarely use direct force themselves. Instead, they often rely on the patterns of exploitation and power in the destination point, which can be highly evolved (see Section 7.3). More often, they rely, as male-based networks often do, on social vulnerability owing to a lack of adequate social support networks, and the stigma and shame of 'unwomanly' behaviour.

This is particularly the case in trafficking for virginity. 'Friendship' networks, similarly to male-based networks (see below), rely on the processes of social stigma and shame to ensure that women and girls have little redress once they have become socially tainted

by a loss of virginity. Accusations of 'cheating' or force in virginity trafficking, for instance, are easily deflected by the insinuation that it is the woman herself who has behaved immorally, and it is striking how effective this regardless of the conditions in which the commercial sex took place.

This can be seen in the following illustrative case of a woman who was recruited by her 'friend' to work in a bar, on the basis that she was not providing commercial sex. Her 'friends' collusion with former clients for the purpose of her rape is also apparent, yet, it is the implication that she herself is a 'loose' woman that silences her, and that also finally prohibits her from returning home.

> *While we were sitting in the bar drinking something, two middle aged men came in…my friend told me to say hello to them. Then they ordered some food and we ate together. Later, when I went to the lavatory for a while, they put some sleeping pills into a glass of wine and asked me to drink it up before they took me home … I felt dizzy and they said that I had got drunk and then they said that they were taking me home but they just took me to the hotel where I woke up the next morning and I found myself lying naked on the bed. I felt it hurt like hell then. I saw there was some blood on the bed sheet ... I called my friend to take me home from the hotel … At home, I had a quarrel with her then … I cried a lot then … she told me that I had been deflowered by one of those men during the night. She also said that I had lost my virginity already. She said that she asked me to go home after dinner at the bar but I just wanted to follow such men, and not follow her, so she let me go with them then … I was ashamed of losing my virginity and I didn't have any money then. That was why I did not dare to go home for a while. I intended to not go home until I could save a lot of money for myself.*
> CSEWG, Siem Reap.

Male-based networks

While the presence of 'boyfriends' as traffickers has been noted several times (Physicians for Human Rights, 1996; Boontinand and Sato, 2000), there has been no research into their participation in trafficking, though there has been on the extreme forms of sexual violence among urban youth (see Bearup, 2003; Fletcher and Wilkinson, 2002; Jenkins, 2006). Yet, male networks are important not only for recruitment, but as this report has argued, as the clients that create the demand that feeds trafficking. Male involvement in trafficking has most often been noted as part of systems of domination and control with the commercial sex establishment (Kelly, 2002), for instance, as part of a process of 'breaking in' women and girls to their newly enforced role as CSEWGs. However, how this extends into active recruitment has rarely been analysed.

The presence of all-male networks, for instance, between CSEWG communities and areas in Thailand, has already been noted. An analysis of male networks clearly reveals how these manipulate not only gender constructs that facilitate sexual exploitation (see Section 4) but also patterns of stigma arising because of rapid modernisation and social change. Maltoni (2005) has identified that in these cases of rapid change, changing norms may stigmatise women more than men. Cultural associations with 'modernity', for instance, may also associate this with a sexual permissiveness that sits uneasily with traditional norms about 'correct' female sexual behaviour.

Economic forces and the consequent labour migration, as well as patterns of abuse and exploitation, may push a woman or girl out of the household and to urban areas. Once there, the perception that they are part of an emerging sexually 'loose' youth culture may put them at risk of both sexual exploitation and recruitment by trafficking networks.

When I was working as a fruit shake seller, the bodyguard of the General Commander at (***) said that he loved me and that he wanted to go out with me, then he forced me to drink and when I was drunk I asked him to take me back home but he took me to a guesthouse and raped me … in the morning he pitied me, he thought that I sold fruit shakes and therefore I was not a virgin girl, and he thought that girls from Phnom Penh go out too much and that they have all lost their virginity to their boyfriends.
CSEWG, Siem Reap.

While it is impossible to draw firm conclusions about changes in prevalence in the use of male-based network, their use for particularly brothel-based commercial sex is clear. Male networks take advantage of evolving modern sexual norms, such as 'sweetheart' relationships, in an emerging youth culture (see Fletcher and Wilkinson, 2002). Yet, the patterns of social blame and shame emerging from the women's involvement in these relationships are because of 'traditional' gender norms that are also put to great use.

One woman, who was trafficked at the age of 17 years, had already disconnected from her household and become 'nomadic' – unlikely to return home and reliant on her friends and social networks, because she was raped by a neighbour.

I went to meet a man who worked at a funfair. I knew him because my friend's boyfriend worked there too ... I asked the man to bring me to Kampong Som. He said that he loved me. He brought me to a brothel in Kampong Som and he told me to stay at the brothel … He borrowed money from the brothel owner … He told me that he would earn money to get me out of the brothel … He didn't have any money to get me out of the brothel and he borrowed some more money from the brothel owner … When I was first taken to the brothel, I didn't know that I was at the brothel, the man told me that I would be employed as a housemaid … I later learned that the man's wife had been a prostitute at that brothel before. I later saw him take Vietnamese and Khmer Kampuchea Krom girls to another brothel. He cheated those girls the same way that he cheated me. He told me that he loved me. He needed money. He took those girls to the brothel because he wanted them to earn money for him.
CSEWG, Kampong Som.

The use of rape and sexual exploitation as an active tool to recruit women and girls into prostitution, to disconnect them from the household, as well as to 'groom' them into life in the brothel, was also seen. Again, this is clearly based on cultural beliefs that stigmatise women alone for the loss of virginity. For one woman, the fear of this revelation within her community alone accounted for not only her trafficking into commercial sex, but also her acquiescence to her trafficker's demands, and her presence, five years later, still working in commercial sex in a brothel in Siem Reap.

The motodup raped me … At that time I was 17 years old … I tried to protect myself, but to no avail. While I was being raped, I felt terribly hurt. I then begged him for mercy. He threatened to kill me if I informed the police. I didn't inform on him because I was fearful …. I didn't tell anyone the truth because I was embarrassed … Three months later I met that motodup again … He wanted me to be his wife, he said that if I refused, he would tell the truth to the people who worked with me. I asked him not to tell other people about the fact that I lost my virginity. I finally followed him because I did not want anybody to know the truth about me. Anyway, he had already raped me … He took me to a brothel. The man knew the brothel because he had been there before … The brothel owner asked me if I had been a prostitute before. She would not allow anyone who had never worked as a prostitute before to work at her brothel. I told her that I had worked at a few brothels before. The motodup told me to say like that.
CSEWG, Siem Reap.

It is clear from her account that there is no method of social redress that can counter her trafficker's threat to reveal her sexual status to her family and community. The same social processes that have been found to support sexual exploitation and rape (see Section 6) also facilitate trafficking.

While in the case above it is unclear whether this trafficker had done this as a single, opportunistic event, or as a planned livelihood strategy, in other cases, the use of male networks appear to have become part of the 'grooming' process, inculcating women into life in the brothel. One brothel owner even seemed to make consistent use of her own son, who had also raped[68] the woman interviewed, to acculturate her and other women to life in the brothel.

Opportunistic networks

All the networks explored so far involve an element of opportunism, apart from in those cases where there appears to be a process of 'grooming' for the sex trade, such as that sometimes seen in household networks. Most commonly, however, even these involve opportunism, as local recruiters will only approach families if they are facing a crisis of some kind.

However, this is qualitatively different from the recruitment methods in opportunistic networks, and which take place between people who have had no previous social relationship. These networks are more accurately described as *planned opportunism*, as they often operate in areas that seem to be targeted based on their likelihood of having many poor rural to urban migrants.

This appears to be an evolving pattern. In the narratives of older women, traffickers were mobile and worked in predominantly rural areas that seemed to be characterised by their poverty and existing labour migration patterns. However, both this research and that conducted with child domestic workers suggests that awareness and fear of trafficking is much higher, and that families are unlikely to trust people who are not a part of their existing social network.

Against a prevailing pattern of rural to urban migration, it is arguable whether traffickers in fact need to go to rural areas. In some commercial sex establishments, it is clear that owners and recruiters have come to use both rural and urban networks. Urban communities that function as receiving areas of poor and rural migrants, such as Bouding, or even areas along the riverside and Independence Monument in Phnom Penh recur as key locations where recruiters can find an easy supply of jobless and young migrants.

> *I later went to Phnom Penh, and I met the brothel owner that I am currently working for. I met her while I was walking at the riverside. I told her that I was looking for a job. She asked me if I had had sex with men before. I told her that I had. She then took me to Kampong Som. I have been working at her brothel since then. I have been working her for three years.*
> CSEWG, Kampong Som.

[68] This woman was actually sold by her friend to the man, and it is not clear that she defined losing her virginity to him as being 'raped', principally because he had given her some financial compensation. However, in her account, there is also the forceful use of alcohol and she was clearly incapacitated when she had sex, and thus it constitutes rape.

The links between these receiving areas in Phnom Penh are often connected to particular provinces, such as Kampong Som and Koh Kong. They are equally related to voluntary labour recruitment, albeit into the sex trade, as to trafficking. However, networks for the purpose of recruiting new girls for the virginity trade also operate in these urban areas, and seemingly persist because they target young, poor women with few employment options.

In some cases, it appears that recruiters target women and girls in employment sectors that are known to have harsh conditions. In the case below, it is clear that the recruiter is also taking advantage of a girl whose profession marks her as an urban to rural migrant – domestic work. However, in this case, the political connections of the house owner seem to have frightened the recruiter away.

> *One evening, while I was sitting outside, there was a woman who approached me. She asked me what I did at that house … The woman asked me if I got any salary. I told her that I did not get any. She said that I would not make any money living with that family and that I would earn a lot of money and have jewellery to wear if I went to work for her. I became interested in what she said. I decided to follow her because I wanted to make money. I immediately left the house without telling the house owners … I trusted the woman very much because I was so stupid at that time. I was only interested in money, so I did not care about anything. She first took me to her house, which was far from Pouk district. When we arrived at Seh Sdam market, she left me there alone. She thought that she would probably be at risk. That's why she stopped taking me with her. She might learn that the (politically powerful house owner) had informed the police.*
> CSEWG, Siem Reap.

However, while being poor and without employment are certainly key characteristics, this often does not in itself fully explain how and why recruiters manage to get women and girls to accept the harsh means of their exploitation, such as debt bondage. As has been argued throughout this report, this can only be done through fully exploring the relationship that the girl has to her household, her perceived lack of social options, and the use of social norms to bring about compliance.

An illustrative case in Siem Reap involved a girl (aged 17 years old) who had fled her household because of her mother's blame when she confessed that she had been raped. She was already a former trafficking victim, having been kept in debt bondage by her mother in domestic work as a child. Subsequently, she migrated to Siem Reap through her extended family members, and found work as a waitress, where she was underpaid and worked excessively (only getting two hours sleep). Having broken her ties with her household, she became reliant on her friendship networks. From there, she was recruited into a small, mobile group of debt bonded CSEWs operating in a middle-class nightclub. Her description of her induction into the group reveals how her social vulnerability is used to make her accept the practices that define her as a trafficking victim (though it is unclear if she perceives herself this way).

> *He told me that I could borrow money from the owner of the karaoke parlour before I started working, but I would have to work without getting paid for a few months. I would be paid US$3 for sitting and drinking beer with a customer. I would only get 5,000 Riel out of that amount of money. The rest would go to the owner and manager of the karaoke parlour … I finally decided to take the job. I borrowed US$20 from the owner of the karaoke parlour. I was required to pay back US$40 … The manager of the karaoke parlour suggested that I should borrow money from the owner of the karaoke parlour. The reason was that I would have a place to stay and food to eat … He told me that karaoke girls could not go out very often, and*

they didn't have much freedom. The owner of the karaoke parlour was worried when the girls went out with young men. He wanted them to learn how to take care of their health. In fact, I didn't want to borrow money from the owner of the karaoke parlour. The parlour manager persuaded me to do so … When it was time to work, the owner of the karaoke parlour went to get us to the karaoke parlour. I never wanted to run away, but I was locked inside the room with her. That made me very frustrated. Four to five girls here owe money to the owner of the karaoke parlour. Each of them owes US$40 to the parlour owner. They are closely watched … The manager of the karaoke parlour takes my money. I borrowed money from her to pay half of the rent. I don't have any money. At the moment I feel that I am working for nothing because the owner of the karaoke parlour has never paid me. I only receive the tips. I don't quite understand. I never have the courage to ask the owner of the karaoke parlour about this matter. Other girls get paid, but I don't. The owner of the karaoke parlour is very mean. She often uses unpleasant words to talk with us. She has hired young men to beat a karaoke girl. She told us that she would hire young men to beat us if we were not obedient.
Karaoke worker, Siem Reap.

As Derks et al. (2006) point out, debt is the main way used to bind a woman to commercial sexual exploitation, and it is clear that in this girl's case, the manager (*maykaa*) strongly encouraged her to take out her loan. Her perceived lack of options, without a 'place to stay or food to eat, appear to have made her compliant with their demands. Her lack of freedom, however, is reinforced with gender norms governing 'proper' female behaviour, where she is told that she will not have much freedom.

This case is far from isolated. Opportunistic networks seem to recruit women who have had similar social backgrounds, as do friendship networks. Against a pattern of severe labour exploitation and abuse within the household, certain women and girls may be more accepting of the trafficking practices used in commercial sex.

7.3 Conditions in the commercial sex establishment

The UN Palermo Protocol states that trafficking is constituted by 'force or other means of coercion', and that 'exploitation' shall include 'abuse of power or of positions of vulnerability'. The convention has been criticised for leaving unresolved issues concerning, for instance, the definitions of 'exploitation' or 'consent'.

However, this report has argued that certain forms of social vulnerability are certainly recognisable, and more likely to make trafficking victims accepting of certain forms of exploitation, if they perceive themselves to have less social options (see Section 7.4). Furthermore, 'conditions' in the commercial sex establishment are often not uniform. There has been an explosion in the locations and forms of commercial sex (Sokhunbet, 2005), and often small mobile groups of CSEWs, who are exploited and controlled, work alongside freelance CSEWGs who set their own terms, in the same establishment.

Conditions in the commercial sex establishment are an important facet of trafficking, yet, one of the most powerful forms of control arguably happens before women have entered it, namely patterns of sexual exploitation that devalue women into accepting that their few remaining options include commercial sex. This appears to be actively used by male traffickers, for instance (see Section 7.2.).

Forms of control within the commercial sex establishment are manifold. They concern not just forcing women and girls to provide sexual services, but as is seen in the case of Karaoke parlours, to accept their social place as providers of sexual entertainment, with

little recourse in cases of abuse from clients. Forms of control mostly concern patterns of debt bondage, manipulation to provide sexual services, and the use of social stigma and shame to enforce compliance with exploitative practices, as well as the direct use of threats and force.

There is arguably an ethnic difference in the forms of control between ethnic Vietnamese and Khmer women and girls, which in some cases appears to concern both parents and commercial sex establishments. In some cases, for instance, relationships between CSEWs and ethnic Vietnamese clients are jealously guarded against, for fear that these 'boyfriends' might aid their escape. In a few cases, these attitudes appear to be echoed by the parents themselves, who discourage relationships that might threaten the links of the woman to her household, such as with adopted children or potential husbands.

More generally, ethnic Vietnamese communities within Cambodia which are acting as key sending areas have a density of trafficking networks that is more rarely seen in other areas. Both commercial sex establishment owners and their aides (hired guards within the brothel) in many cases know the location of a woman or girl's house. Other research (Slocomb, undated) has alluded to the strong moral obligations to repay debts within ethnic Vietnamese culture. In some cases, however, it is also clear that threats of violence can be more directly used,

> *Then, I went to Martini's every evening to seek clients to have sex with, and earned money on my own. During that time, the brothel owner followed me all of the time, disturbing me. She said that I was still her debtor then, and that I had to come back and be her girl again. But I did not agree to go back to her brothel so she threatened to have some mafia kill me. Yet, she did not dare to do so because I was at home with my father and my sister then.*
> Ethnic Vietnamese CSEWG, Siem Reap.

In some cases, it appears that local commercial sex establishments can not only threaten individual women, but also force their family members to honour the debts that they have acquired in the brothel. For one ethnic Vietnamese woman, the very local and social links that she and her family had explained the repeated forms of control that she had to submit to. She had firstly sold her virginity to a man who was her mother's creditor. It can also be seen that when she later starts brothel-based commercial sex, the forms of control used extend well beyond it.

> *When I was 18 years old, I worked as a prostitute in the brothel near my house. My mother borrowed US$300 from the brothel owner and I signed a six months contract with the brothel owner. My mother knew the brothel owner because the brothel owner was my neighbour … When the girls did something wrong, the woman brothel owner hit them and cut their salary. I had a boyfriend but the brothel owner did not allow me to contact with my boyfriend and she also hired gangsters to beat up my boy friend. My boyfriend want to take me from the brothel by paying money to the brothel owner but the brothel owner did not agree because I had not yet finished my contract with the brothel owner. I was not yet finished contract because I borrowed US$700 more and had extended my contract by another six months. So I could not leave from the brothel. I escaped with my boyfriend from the brothel and the brothel owner caught my younger sister to be a prostitute instead of me to pay off the debt, but my younger sister did not agree because she was a virgin. I went to visit my mother and the brothel owner knew that I had come home, so he came to catch me to go back to the brothel.*
> Ethnic Vietnamese CSEWG, Siem Reap.

For Khmer women, the use of knowledge of place of residence is also important, but it is mostly used by locally-based traffickers, rather than commercial sex establishment

owners, and it often revolves around the transgression of strong gender norms concerning virginity, and the threat of revelation. This appears to be different from the ethnic Vietnamese women above, who are controlled by threats of violence against themselves and their families.

More generally, the use of violence is hard to ascertain, as it is often used through threats rather than directly applied. As explained in Section 4, the social structure of the brothel itself often involves the use of male employees, be they guards – *cuen kaen* – or motodups who can keep a watch over women and girls.

Within the commercial sex establishment itself, the most stringent forms of control are often financial, for instance, involving methods of payment. This varies from place to place but can be used to encourage the provision of sexual services. Some karaoke parlours, for instance, pay a base rate salary, with fees for sexual services either kept by the CSEW or split with the manager (*maykaa*). Others provide no base salary, effectively forcing women to earn income from sexual services. In many cases, income is divided in half between the woman or girl and the owner, sometimes with additional charges for utilities and food. This appeared to be accepted as an equitable system, especially if payment was regularly split at the end of the month.

However, this is clearly altered in cases where there is a debt. Levels of debt appear to be higher among ethnic Vietnamese women and girls, owing to their higher income levels. It has certainly been noticed as a key part of the pattern of sexual exploitation of ethnic Vietnamese women (Beesey, 2003), and of trafficking patterns in general (Steinfatt, 2003). In many cases, it changes the terms of payment to one that favours the brothel owner, making women and girls less able or likely to run away, as one woman whose mother is a brothel owner in a notorious part of Phnom Penh explained,

> *My mother is not afraid of her debtors being bankrupt or running away, since girls are paid US$50 to US$60 for each time that they have sex with their clients, and my mother always holds all of this sum of money, that is why she is not afraid of their running away. Then I sometimes even saw my mother give the clients only US$20 change for a US$100 note.*
> CSEWG, Koh Kong.

However, it is not always clear whether debt is as straightforwardly related to trafficking practices as has sometimes been suggested. In some cases, there do seem to be systematic methods of repayment, even if these are not as favourable as methods of payment for non-debtees. Some women may routinely borrow small amounts of cash before the end of the month as 'pocket money' (*loi jai*), or as an initial payment that they then choose to give to their families. As Derks et al. (2006) comment, 'it may also be a way in which CSEWGs engage themselves with the brothel owners'. Debts may not even be perceived to be a part of exploitation (CARAM, 1999a), and the findings on debt bondage among child domestic workers revealed that it is a condition of employment that some families actively seek out. Accessing credit services in the brothel may in fact be part of the 'helping' behaviours that brothel owners often perceive themselves to be providing (Beesey, 2003). It does not always correlate with other forms of exploitation, such as use of physical violence.

This is complicated by the finding that both CSEWGs and child domestic workers seemed to accept that during periods of debt bondage, they will not be allowed to leave their employment and their freedom of movement will be restricted. Though perceived to

be moral reprehensible,[69] there is nonetheless an acceptance that debt may be enforced by contracts. In this research, there were also cases of women migrating from brothel to brothel, apparently seeking more favourable terms and conditions of debt.

While the trafficking protocol is clear that debt, with harbouring (lack of freedom of movement) constitutes trafficking, it is not clear whether indigenous definitions would agree with this. Furthermore, patterns of force and forms of control vary according to the status of the CSEW. More stringent restrictions are much more likely to be applied to younger, newer women and girls, whereas those who have worked as CSEWGs for a relatively longer period often can have freedom of movement even with debt. This mostly seems to relate to their social identities as CSEWGs – once this is firmly established, they are seemingly perceived to be more 'trustworthy' and compliant, and thus less likely to rescind on their debts.

There are certain forms of debt are recognised as being exploitative by CSEWs, who describe never being paid, or having an unending debt, even though they receive many clients. In their narratives, exploitative debt is tied to means to prevent them from running away, most often being kept under watch in the brothel, but also never having enough money to make their escapes effectual.

> *She had never given me a penny then. I could only live on the tip that clients left me now and then and I was not allowed to go anywhere during the time I was there. The brothel owner had someone watch over me all the time there. They followed me wherever I was going to … After more than one year working there for her, I could save some money from the tip that some clients left me now and then to buy some jewellery. When someone asked me to have sex with them out, the brothel would always confiscate all my jewellery to prevent me from running away. I could never run away because I had never had any money with me then.*
> CSEWG, Kampong Som.

However, it is also clear that in many cases, debt and the obligation to repay it will be stringently enforced through a variety of means. Most often this involves being kept watch over by guards or older CSEWGs in the brothel, or even outside of it. The involvement of local authorities in patterns of debt bondage is also striking. Local police may be called in to witness contracts, though there is some evidence that this is now decreasing.[70] Photos of CSEWs may also be kept at local police stations in order to 'find them faster' should they disappear. In some cases, harbouring is enforced by 'guards' surrounding the brothel.

> *No one could run away from the brothel because if they wanted to run away, they had to go past the barracks where all of the soldiers had been paid some money by the brothel owner to watch over the girls there and prevent them from running away. The soldiers there seemed to know all of the girls in the brothel well, that's why running away was impossible.*
> CSEWG, Kampong Som.

[69] In the child domestic worker survey conducted concurrently with this research (Brown, 2006), house owners overwhelmingly stated that they did not have a contract with their worker as this would be 'morally wrong' and implied a restriction of movement.

[70] Some local human rights NGOs reported that they directly intervene in cases where a CSEW is forced to sign a contract, as this constitutes trafficking. Contracts for debts in commercial sexual exploitation may thus be reducing.

In some cases, it also appears that clients are complicit in these means of force and control. As will be explored in Section 7.4, clients rarely assist CSEWGs, even if they know that they have been trafficked, though it is hard to ascertain whether this is because they view CSEWs as being for their 'entertainment' only, or owing to a lack of faith in interventions that could assist them. Clients are often reported to tell brothel owners if CSEWs have told them about their patterns of abuse and sometimes clearly enforce the exploitation of women and girls.

> *Before customers could take girls out, they had to pay money to the owner of the nightclub. And also, they had to ensure that the girls would not run away.*
> CSEWG, Kampong Som.

Forms of control within commercial sex establishments are clearly thus evolving in response to an emerging era of counter-trafficking. Section 7.4 explores how women and girl's own definitions of abuse inform this. Physical abuse, for instance, is much more likely to be reported than forms of manipulation that reinforce a woman's socially devalued place within the commercial sex establishment, though of course this will depend on the strength of counter-trafficking in various locations. There is also some evidence that forms of control may be more forceful in wealthier establishments.

This is partly related to the systems of monitoring conducted by the police, which are far less likely to penetrate these higher-class establishments. However, it also appears that keeping newly-arrived CSEWs away from the police registration process is also a key way that women and girls are controlled, until after an initial period of 'breaking in'.

> *If any 'girl' told the police she was brought to the guesthouse by someone, owner would be in trouble. The owner of the guesthouse didn't want me to apply for the identity card. Applying for the card would cost her 50,000 Riel. The 'girls' who had the card could inform on the owner of the guesthouse if they were mistreated. Their names were with the police. The police came to the guesthouse once in every two or three days. They would sleep with new 'girls'. They had to pay money to the owner of the guesthouse. After working there for three months, the owner of the guesthouse applied for a card for me. I told the police what the owner of the guesthouse had told me to say. I told them that I was 20 years old.*
> CSEWG, Siem Reap.

It is hard to say whether trafficking practices have moved to smaller and more mobile groups in an effort to evade monitoring systems. These often include only a few CSEWs, a manager (*maykaa*) and more importantly, people in her employ to control the women and girls. Certain trafficking related practices, including debt bondage and the use of force are clearly present within them. They often operate in establishments that are higher class and perceived to be providing 'informal' commercial sex only, such as karaoke shops, bars and discotheques catering to Cambodian and foreign clients alike. While working alongside other CSEWGs who work 'voluntarily', force is often applied to the women and girls in these small groups for the provision of sexual services.

This does especially seem to be the case in trafficking networks that are harbouring underage girls, and operating to cater to 'foreign'[71] clients.

[71] 'Foreign' often refers to Western clients. The bar where this trafficking ring operates caters to Western sex tourists and sexpatriates in Phnom Penh.

I was taken to the house that the manager rented for girls and she let me stay there. At night, they used a car to take all of the girls to Martinis … After that, she rented another flat for me to share with another eight girls, aged just 14 or 15 or 16 years old. There were no mature girls there, because foreign clients just need immature girls ... I knew that I had been deceived and that I had lost my virginity … Other girls there had been sent by their own mothers, and their mothers came to receive the money each month … The manager hired a taxi driver to take girls to the bar every evening, she hired a gangster from the mafia to watch over all of the girls too. I couldn't run away then, because I didn't have a penny in my pocket..
CSEWG, Koh Kong.

7.4 Monitoring systems

It is not within the remit of this study to assess the effectiveness of counter-trafficking interventions. However, how these interact with evolving definitions of what constitutes trafficking, especially by commercially sexually exploited women and girls themselves, is clearly relevant to a discussion of the patterns and forms that it takes within Cambodia.

As it currently exists, the counter-trafficking system relies on prevention, principally through mass community-based awareness-raising, a system of tip-offs run by the Ministry of Interior and a local police monitoring and registration system that is, at best, patchily implemented. In this study, it was found that effective counter-trafficking systems seem to involve a combination of political will and locally-based NGO involvement.

However, it has been an unfortunate finding of this research that many trafficking victims evade the monitoring system, and have been found to still be working in commercial sexual exploitation. It thus has become pertinent to explore how these monitoring systems have worked, and how contemporary definitions of trafficking interact with these systems.

The research also conducted interviews with traffickers in prison who were awaiting or had been convicted (a total of seven interviewees). Out of these, five were connected in some way to the virginity trade, and it is noticeable that monitoring systems were also strongly concerned with the prevention of the sale of virginity, and less so with patterns of exploitation within a commercial sex establishment.

The legal status of commercial sex establishments and CSEWGs themselves had arguably previously aided patterns of corruption. Under Cambodian law, profit from commercial sex is outlawed – in effect, the brothel owners themselves, and not the CSEWGs, can be prosecuted. In effect, commercial sex establishments are often registered with local authorities[72] and have acquired a semi-legal status, yet equally can face threats of closure on the basis of the law. CSEWGs can also face arrest, often having to pay for their release (Lowe, 2003).

As will be explored, counter-trafficking efforts have also afforded opportunities to extend these corrupt links with police and local authorities. However, these are not always straightforwardly punitive towards CSEWGs, and commercial sex establishments have had to evolve their own practices to accommodate these changing power dynamics.

[72] As argued in Section 1, this owes principally to the implementation of public health campaigns, such as the 100% condom use program, and advocacy by health organisations to prevent police crackdowns that arguably force commercial sex 'underground' where they are harder to reach.

More importantly, this report has explored the different forms that trafficking can take. This section will explore the implication that some forms are more likely to be detected than others.

Perceptions of police and counter-trafficking

The links between police forces and commercial sex establishments have widely been understood to be corrupt, affecting both the implementation of public health campaigns (Lowe, 2003) and most especially anti-trafficking interventions. However, interviews with CSEWGs reveal that they do not always perceive these links as unilaterally supporting the commercial sex establishment owner's interests alone. Counter-trafficking efforts have in fact made the relationship with police far more ambiguous.

This can be clearly seen when comparing the descriptions between older trafficking victims and younger ones, which reveal an evolving power dynamic. Traffickers and their networks arguably often relied on the systems of control and domination in the destination to prevent detection. For instance, in this testimony from a woman who was trafficked in 1996 for the forced sale of her virginity, she directly refers to her inability to contact the police forces to prevent the brothel owner's extortion,

> *At that time I did not think of informing the police. I was satisfied because I could earn some money when I was staying with the man from the Philippines. The brothel owner always took some money from me whenever the man gave it to me … When the man left, I was forced to have sex with a Cambodian man. I refused to have sex with the man. The brothel owner then forced me to pay US$1,000 to her. I told her that I did not owe her any money … She said I ate her meals, that's why I owed money to her ... I didn't know how and where I could inform the police. I thought that the police might not help me, because the brothel owner had a lot of money. I thought that the police would be on the brothel owner's side because I saw some of them visit the brothel very often.*
> Former CSEWG, Kampong Som.

In a pattern similar to sexual violence and rape, women working in commercial sexual exploitation appear to often feel that the police can only be approached if they have enough money to bribe them. These links between the local police forces and commercial sex establishment owners are openly and socially visible to CSEWs in the places where they work, which operate in a pattern of power and domination that are readily recognisable. Local police authorities, for instance, are often called in to witness and enforce contracts that keep CSEWGs in debt bondage and sexually exploitable.

However, in their narratives explaining the harsh conditions of their existence, CSEWGs sometimes refer to Buddhist concepts of 'karma'. This is important given that this cultural beliefs and the fatalism that it entails have often been posited as a factor that makes CSEWs complicit in their own enforced sexual servitude (though women make references to their needs to support their families – see Derks, 2005). On probing, however, it is often revealed that this is often a recognition by CSEWGs of the strength of the patterns of power and domination between police and local brothel owners, and their own powerlessness in the face of it. The following testimony is from a woman who was trafficked twice (the first time for the sale of her virginity when she was underage), talking about her experiences in Koh Kong where she was sold by her 'friend', another CSEWG, into a brothel.

Then the boss contacted the police to come to take pictures and issue the paper work to put in the record in the police station so that they could find us in case we ran away when we still owed the brothel owner some money … I did not run away. While I still owed the brothel owner some money, wherever I went to, the brothel owner would always have someone follow me because she was afraid that I would run away but I never tried to run away then. If I ran away, I would have freedom, I owed 5,000-6,000 Baht but I was lazy to run away because I did not want to have debt in my next life … I was lazy to think about it, a chaotic story, so I just let it pass. I thought in my heart since it was a chaotic story it would not help if I filed a complaint with the police because they would not help me since they had collected money from the brothel owner ... I felt lazy because I did not want to stir up trouble because if I told the police, I would still lose because I was poor and did not have money and the rich always were rich. If I filed a complaint and did not have money to give to the police and they (brothel owners) gave money to the police that would cause me to lose the case.
CSEWG, Koh Kong.

These links between the police and commercial sex establishment owners are often not merely financial. Police are, after all, one of CSEWGs' biggest client groups,[73] often used by brothel owners as a means to avoid detection.

At that place most of the clients are Chinese, because it is expensive, if Cambodian clients come it is only the police who know the big boss and when they go there to drink the big boss charges them a cheap price.
CSEWG, Siem Reap.

Arguably, however, there has been a significant shift, not only in police practices (at local and national levels), but also in the perceptions that CSEWGs have of being able to avail themselves of police protection. In their accounts, brothel owners and other commercial sex establishment owners have to adapt their practices to avoid the possibility of being prosecuted.

One evening, a 'girl' had an argument with the brothel owner because she did not treat her the way that she treated other 'girls'. She fled the brothel. She persuaded two other girls to go with her. The three girls went to an NGO … (They) told the NGO that the brothel owner had forced the underage girls to sell sex. The NGO and police then went to arrest the brothel owner and closed down the brothel.
CSEWG, Siem Reap.

It is not always clear how this change in perception directly aids CSEWGs in the context of the commercial sex establishment, and in preventing their exploitation. Even in cases where women and girls seem to feel that they can contest patterns of power and domination, this is still undermined by their perceptions that their lack of financial resources will ultimately make them lose their case.

I never had any problems with the owner of the guesthouse. But one day, the owner of the guesthouse was angry with me because I slept with a man too long. She wanted to beat me. 'You would be in jail if you beat me just a little', I said. The police had told me that I could inform on my employer if she beat me. I knew that the owner of the guesthouse had taken my money, but I did not dare inform on her because she had threatened any prostitute who wanted to inform on her. I did not dare to inform the police because I didn't have any money.
CSEWG, Siem Reap.

[73] This can be clearly seen, for instance, in their repeated inclusion in the HIV/AIDS Behavioural and Sentinel Surveys, which often reveal a rate of HIV/AIDS acquired through commercial sex which is far above the national prevalence levels (NCHADS, 2004).

There seem to be several other key ways in which the police monitoring system was repeatedly undermined, and unable to detect trafficking in destination points. Firstly, it was repeatedly seen that there are very few means available to monitor or enforce an age limit on entry into commercial sex, though police who were interviewed were highly aware of its importance in counter-trafficking. Girls could easily lie about their ages to police, and were never required to corroborate it with any documentation.[74] Secondly, CSEWGs who had worked for fewer years clearly said that they were interviewed by police at entry point only. As can be seen from the woman above, patterns of abuse and exploitation that constitute trafficking can and often do happen after this point. Thirdly, interviews with police appear to have been repeatedly conducted in non-confidential settings, often with the brothel owners present. In fact, in many cases, women and girls are told what they can and cannot say when they have arrived in the brothel, and the threat of violence is readily apparent. Lastly, and more importantly, it can be seen that police monitoring systems are, at best, patchily implemented.

Many of the forms of trafficking, particularly the virginity trade, has simply moved out of the brothel to another location, even if it is facilitated by the same agents and brokers. Moreover, trafficking itself appears to be more prevalent in higher class establishments, though this also partly depends on the adequacy of local anti-trafficking efforts. Patterns of debt bondage, physical and sexual abuse appear to be more likely to be practiced with impunity in higher class places, compared with brothels, for instance. This could also be a reflection of the age and experience of brothel-based CSEWGs, who have often worked in several locations, and are thus more aware of how to approach local authorities compared with younger women and girls, who often work, for a higher salary, in higher class establishments.

While this research did not aim to review the legal aspects of counter-trafficking, it is also noticeable that enforcement of sexual exploitation often involves merely keeping women and girls hidden from local authorities until they have come to 'accept' their role. This pattern of 'breaking in' has also been seen in trafficking in other countries (Kelly, 2002). However, it is also a reflection of the premium that legal authorities place on catching trafficking 'in the act'.[75] Retrospective prosecutions, even with a sufficient evidence base, are non-existent.

Definitions of sexual abuse and trafficking

In some of the women's narratives, particularly those who have been repeatedly trafficked, it is sometimes striking how some practices are defined as great wrongs or misdeeds – *bap* – whereas later instances of exploitation are more accepted. Given the change in perceptions of being able to approach local authorities, but most especially, NGOs in cases of abuse, it is apt to explore exactly how abuse is defined by those exploited populations themselves. This related not only to perceptions, but also often to deep feelings of powerlessness and lack of support. This report has extensively

[74] While Cambodia is currently undergoing a civil registration program, this is acknowledged to be patchily implemented, especially among girls who are frequently underage, namely the ethnic Vietnamese, whose residence in Cambodia is often contested. Moreover, civil registration documents, such as family books, are often communally held in households, and thus not amenable to being used in a mobile profession.

[75] Personal Communication, 8 December 2005 with Zelda Hunter of APLE.

demonstrated that women who end up in sexual exploitation have often been exploited in many other ways before they entered commercial sex.

As has already been explored in Section 7.1, for instance, deceptive recruitment into karaoke parlours, where much of the virginity trade takes place, is often not defined as trafficking, so long as there is no direct physical force applied to the girls to provide sex. However, karaoke parlours use extensive means of manipulation for reinforcing women and girl's role as sexual entertainment, for instance, through control of their incomes,

> *When they lent us US$50, we had to repay them US$60 later though they were not savage or nasty, they allowed us to get our own way and they never forced us to do anything we did not like ...Any girls that had some disagreements with their clients, they would be fined US$5 for each time, or they would be driven away from the karaoke. I like working here, partly because I don't know where else to go.*
> CSEWG, Siem Reap.

As Beesey (2003) points out in his report on trafficking among ethnic Vietnamese CSEWGs, 'the recruiters, the brothel owners and/or managers are generally women. Whilst some are seen to be cruel and manipulative, they cannot all be characterised as such. Nor would they generally regard themselves in this context. Indeed many of them, the owners (meebon) at least, see themselves as helping and supporting the girls.'

From the in-depth interviews, it emerges that 'cruel and manipulative' is often most likely to be defined as the use of physical force, or through certain practices, such as forcing women and girls to have sex when they are sick or menstruating. Deception is least likely to be perceived as exploitative. In one woman's testimony, she was trafficked by a neighbour from Bouding to a brothel. Once she managed to escape, she returned home, and was later trafficked by her sister in law to a karaoke parlour in Siem Reap, who told her she would have a job as a waitress.

> *My relative did not mean to harm me or deceive me then. She just wanted to help me to earn some money to help my parents … I still felt frightened when I entered the karaoke room with many men there but I did not dare to go home. I was ashamed of not finding a job to earn some money and having to go home after some days away.*
> Karaoke worker, Siem Reap.

Other forms of control exerted in the brothel will also seemingly be accepted. A key example is debt. A CSEWG who is in debt, whether through choice or by force, will be subject to different forms of control than one who is not. This often entails the signing of contracts, lack of freedom and not being allowed to leave the commercial sex establishment, and physical abuse should they try to run away. However, it often seems as if the owner's rights to enforce repayment are to some extent accepted. This may partly owe to cultural precedent – patterns of debt bondage are not limited to commercial sex, and have also been found to be prevalent in child domestic work, for instance.

> *All the girls could get their own way there though some of them owed the brothel owner a lot of money then. The brothel owner has never forced any 'girls' to do anything they didn't want to. She just asked some fore comers to watch over the new comers there. She has never asked any 'girls' to sign any contract there but when some girl borrowed her some money, she just had them photographed to make the evidence of the loan taking out.*
> CSEWG, Kampong Som.

However, it is also clear that women or girls who have a serious lack of options, or who have been forced out of their households, may more readily accept certain forms of exploitation. As discussed in Section 3, the language and social structure of the brothel mimics that of the family. Women and girls who have fled patterns of severe abuse may be more accepting of exploitation or cheating practices within a brothel if they perceive that they have few social options or support networks. This can be seen, for instance, in the testimony of one woman who had fled her household because of the threat of rape, worked in slavery like conditions as a child domestic worker and later was trafficked into the brothel after gang rape. She initially seems accepting of the brothel owner's attempts to cheat her,

> *I fainted in the room because I had been raped by twelve young men. I stayed in the room for two days and the brothel owner brought me some rice to eat in bed but she did not buy me any medicine … She asked me to sit on a chair and a young Cambodian man came into the house. He asked me to follow him to the room and took off my clothes and had sex with me. I realised then that I had become a prostitute. I didn't know why I had agreed to do what they told me and I was so angry with myself … At the end of that month, the brothel owner paid me only 50,000 Riel but I did not know why. The other girls in the brothel got really angry with her … I don't intend to go to any other brothel because my brothel owner here is kind enough. She has never hit me or forced me to do what I don't like. She has never had anyone watch over me. I could go wherever I wanted to go ... So I forgave her the debt that she owed me.*
> CSEWG, Siem Reap.

Separation from the household again appears to be a pivotal factor. Women who are no longer virgins – *koich hawy* (already 'broken') – and thus socially devalued, and who are also unable to return to their households may be more accepting of their entry into commercial sex, through deception or other means. In some of the narratives, they are complicit in keeping their own exploitation hidden from local authorities.

> *Other 'girls' told me that the woman who brought me to the brothel had brought many girls here before. She tricked those girls into working at the brothel in the same way that she did to me … When I saw her, I did not inform police because I did not want to create any problems for the brothel owner, and I did not want her to be ashamed either ... I have never moved to another brothel because the brothel owner is kind to me. I have enough food to eat, I can choose to eat the food that I like. I have freedom. I have never told anybody that I was tricked into working as a prostitute here.*
> CSEWG, Kampong Som.

The implications of these definitions for counter-trafficking efforts should be clear. They are relevant not only to women and girls who lack social options, but to others who are also sexually exploited. While most associate trafficking with the use of 'force', in fact this research and other studies have found that it is much more common to use more subtle forms of deception and debt bondage (Derks, et al., 2006).

Rescues

A full analysis of counter-trafficking mechanisms was beyond the aims of this study, yet discussions about who could assist the women and girls who found themselves being trafficked formed a significant part of their narratives. As discussed above, relationships with police authorities have changed but remain ambiguous, at once protective and exploitative. The perceived ability to approach the authorities for assistance varied highly by location studied. Most often, women and girls talked of approaching clients for help.

Arguably, clients are one of the few groups that have complete access to trafficked women and girls in the context of their exploitation. It is thus interesting to note their reactions.

> *I did not know who could help me because I did not know anyone, I asked the boss to leave with my friend and I cried everyday and the guests were always asking me but I did not say anything. One guest slept with me and I cried and then he came again the next day, and he asked to sleep with me again but he did not sleep with me this time and he asked me why I was crying. I told him the story that they cheated and lied to me, and then they brought me here. I was 17 years old then.*
> CSEWG, Siem Reap.

In this case, as in many others, the client then apparently took no action to help. This may be reflective of an era where there was little faith in counter-trafficking agencies, however, it can also be seen that in some cases, clients will ally themselves with the commercial sex establishment for the purpose of sexual exploitation, and will report these appeals for help. Even more strikingly, where clients do assist CSEWs to leave their trafficking situation, it is overwhelmingly to become the client's mistress or second wife. Women often seem consenting to these relationships, given that it can give them a level of social respectability and in some cases enabled them to reintegrate back into their source communities. Nonetheless, these new relationships often appear unstable and sexually exploitative in themselves.[76]

The potential of clients as part of counter-trafficking monitoring systems needs to be explored. Section 7.1 showed how recently some clients have become more concerned with issues of 'consent', though its definition allows a wide range of interpretation that supports exploitation. It does appear that a greater awareness of trafficking may have resulted in clients being more focused on the need for consent.

[76] It is also possible that there are many successful relationships that result from clients and CSEWs, in which case, they would not appear in our sample, which often includes women whose relationships have subsequently failed and find themselves back in commercial sexual exploitation shortly afterwards.

8. Discussion

This report has extensively explored the patterns of trafficking within Cambodia, and has highlighted how trafficking related practices continue to thrive not only owing to a culture of impunity, but also to the widespread social norms that support exploitation of certain women and girls, and that fails to protect them when they are socially vulnerable.

It has been extensively argued that the women and girls who are vulnerable to being trafficked into commercial sexual exploitation were often socially vulnerable within their households beforehand. The large numbers of CSEWGs who formally worked as child domestic workers demonstrates that there is pattern of persistent social vulnerability that is linked to migration into these exploitative and abusive professions. Women who worked as child domestic workers also seemed to have experienced the more extreme end of exploitative practices, such as entry into work when they were underage, excessive hours of work, and a high risk of sexual and physical abuse.

The relationship with the household was also found to be pivotal, either facilitating entry into commercial sexual exploitation, or involving patterns of abuse that force a rupture with the household that then leaves women and girls vulnerable to both sexual exploitation and trafficking.

Recruiting networks seem to actively use norms that support the sexual exploitation of women and girls. Social shame and stigma resulting from rape, for instance, make it unlikely that certain forms of trafficking, such as that used by male recruiting networks, will be detected. In some cases, recruiters use the fear of revelation of perceived 'immoral' sexual behaviour in source villages as a means of forcing women and girls into sexual exploitation.

The patterns of the sex trade also have been revealed to be conducive to supplying the thriving virginity trade. The structure of roles within the karaoke industry is a key example of how trafficking uses deception and manipulation to recruit women and girls and to ensure that they are available for male clients to purchase.

It is clear social norms that support sexual exploitation and sexual violence against women and girls also support trafficking related practices. The role that regular clients play in the virginity trade, for instance, suggests that trafficking within Cambodia cannot be successfully addressed unless attitudes among the demand side, among male clients, are tackled. However, there is also a strong need to address the patterns of social vulnerability before women and girls migrate into commercial sexual exploitation, first and foremost through focusing on the gender-based norms that blame and marginalise them.

Lastly, while recruitment in rural areas persists, trafficking networks make great use of rural to urban migration patterns. Trafficking often occurs in areas where there are high numbers of poor migrants, or where commercial sex has become 'normalised'. There is an urgent need to focus on urban communities and to address long-term macro processes that have led to their persistent involvement in the commercial sex industry.

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