

WOMEN'S ACTION FOR CHANGE



NEWSLETTER

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ABOUT WEST PROJECT

With the support from VOICE Program through Oxfam, CWCC has been implanting a project named 'Women's Empowerment for Social Transformation (WEST)' in the three target districts of Banteay Meanchey: Mongkul Borei, O' chrov and Svay Chek. The WEST project is part of CWCC's advocacy program that is implemented to empower and build confidence of women and girl survivors of GBV (sexual abuse, trafficking/exploitation and domestic violence), women and girls with disability, older women whose children migrated to work in

Thailand, and female migrant workers. The WEST project seeks to enable them to express their needs and claim their rights for access to services needed. To date, the project has formed and built the capacity of 12 women support groups with 180 members, one women provincial network and six social ambassadors to influence service providers in addressing the needs of vulnerable women and girls.

AGED BUT NOT ALONE



The change of global landscape has impacted the environment, human nature, politics, economy and society. Nowadays, it is evident that the old comprise the majority population at rural areas, while the youth population has migrated to work in the city or crossed borders. The Women's Empowerment for Social Transformation (WEST) project, supported by VOICE program and implemented by Cambodian Women's Crisis Centre (CWCC) has empowered the elderly people like Chork Samath to continue her role in the community.

Due to her age, illness, and having caretake two grandchildren, Chork Samath was met with multiple challenges.

She used to tell the women support group that "Taking care of grandchildren is not as easy as taking care of immediate children." Even when Samath would get exhausted, her grandchildren are always full of energy and seeking constant attention.

Since she participated in the program, she gained a lot of knowledge and courage from the women support group meetings. Her challenges were shared and advised on. The motivation she earned from the group made her feel that she is not left behind.

Chork Samath, 65 years old, lives in Kork Kdocuh, Banteay Neang commune, Monkol Borey District; in Bateay Meachey Province. There, she is a member of a woman support group of 15 women in Kork Kdocuh village. In her early age, her family was so in

deep poverty, and the war continued for years, which prompted her to drop out of school at second grade.

Her first marriage was when she was 17-years-old, and she gave birth to a son. Her marriage life did not go well. Because of her mother in law, they decided to get a divorce. Her second marriage was blessed with two sons. Due to living standard, the couple migrated to Thailand for better jobs. Yet, their earnings were still unsatisfactory. Shortly after, her husband passed away because of an illness. She came back to Cambodia for his funeral. Samath was in deep agony and despair. However, she still had to go back to Thailand to earn money. She was not granted a working permit visa, so she had to come back to Cambodia every 14 days to renew her stay. Due to the low income and having to take care of her grandchildren, she came back to hometown. She has been taking good care of her two grandchildren since.

In 2018, she was selected to participate in a women support group of 15 members under the Women's Empowerment for Social Transformation (WEST) project.

At the age of 65, Chork Samath has been an active participant in the meetings, trainings, radio program and other activities organized by the WEST program and different advocacy groups and organization. She shared her enriched experiences to the women support group, for the next generation.



A LIFE CHANGING JOURNEY OF RYNA

Hem Ryna is a wife of a taxi driver. She is 30 years old and lived in Phnom Thom Tbong village, Oury Prasat commune, Monkol Borey district, Baneay Meanchey Province. She has two sons and one daughter. Ryna used to be a housewife and took care of her children with the little money provided by her husband.

In 2006, due to the difficulty in income generation, this family migrated undocumented to Thailand. This journey comprised of hiding from the Thai police on a crowded bus and walking across the forest for days. A job in the cotton factory gave her around 150 bath per day (approximately 20,000 Riel). Seven months later, her family was arrested and imprisoned for seven days before getting back to Cambodia.

In 2014, her family migrated, again, to a construction site in Thailand. Less than a month, they were sent back by Thai soliders.

In 2018, Ryna heard about the Women's Empowerment for Social Transformation (WEST) project, of Cambodian Women's Crisis Centre (CWCC) and became an agent of change in a women support group as a member of commune council of Oury Prast commune. Ryna received a number of training and capacity building on gender equality, women in leadership, women's rights, gender based violence, advocacy and women in policy and safe migration.

"Before participating in the project, I did not know what gender and gender based violence were. I did

not know that violence impacted the society. I thought it was only an individual's issue," said Ryna.

After becoming a Social Ambassador of the 'Women's Empowerment for Social Transformation (WEST)' project, Ryna gained self-esteem. She is confident in making decisions in her family and her career. She is committed, hard-working, and bold in all forums and activities including International Women's Day, District Forum, and the year-end meeting.

She became a project leader for the International Women's Day. Although she was scared at first, she performed well. Ryna said with confidence, "That was the first time in my life to lead projects and activities. That was an incredible change for my life which I have never dreamed of."

In 2020, her active involvement impressed the Head of Commune Council, and she was appointed as the village focal point in Phnom Thom Tbong village. This project has further developed her confidence and social participation. Nowadays, Ryna earns sufficient income to support her family.

Ryna emphasized, "The participation in a project of Cambodian Women's Crisis Centre (CWCC) under the VOICE program, gave me this opportunity." Ryna has never expected that her life would change from being a housewife to an income generator to support her family and a leader in her community.



AN EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION

The Women's Empowerment for Social Transformation (WEST) project, under the VOICE program, and implemented by Cambodian Women's Crisis Centre (CWCC), contributed to promote the happiness and ended violence in families. Chenda's case is one viable example.

Violence in families is a social issue. A norm that a wife should remain tolerant, patient and enduring to all the uncertainties in the family exists till this day. The Women's Empowerment for Social Transformation (WEST) project aims to uproot such norm and foster a society where women and children can be happy and free from oppression.

Chenda got married when 20-years-old and has 3 children. Over the past 18 years, she lived with sadness enduring violence in her family. Male supremacy was ingrained in her husband. After his affair with another woman, he became aggressive. He committed verbal and physical violence in the family and destroyed household equipments. This has negatively impacted Chenda and children. Her case was intervened by CWCC.

A member of Cambodian Women's Crisis Centre (CWCC), Hom Samang, provided immediate support upon hearing about Chenda's situation and brought Chenda to stay in a safe shelter of Cambodian Women's Crisis Centre to provide legal support and presentation. In 2016, the Batteaymean Chey court issued divorce verdict.

Two years of being separated from his wife and children changed Chenda's ex-husband. He decided to change and asked to come back in the family. He has ended his relationship with his affair partner, and has quit alcohol, drugs and act of violence.

As a member of Women Self-help Group (WSG), Chenda shared her knowledge of women's right and gender based violence with her ex-husband. Her ex-husband changed his behavior and took a good care of his wife and children. Day by day, he participated in the Women's Empowerment for Social Transformation (WEST) project with sincerity.

Chenda said, "A happiness in a family depends of each family member's act."

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