

---

8-2021

## "Going It Alone": Following the Male Cohort of Survivors of Sex Trafficking of the Chab Dai Butterfly Longitudinal Research Project

Jarrett D. Davis  
*up! International*, jarrett.d.davis@gmail.com

James Havey  
*Chab Dai Butterfly Research Project, Cambodia*, james.havey@chabdai.org

Glenn M. Miles  
*up! International*, drglennmiles@gmail.com

Nhanh Chanththa  
*Chab Dai Butterfly Research Project, Cambodia*, nhanh.chanththa@gmail.com

Sreang Phally  
*Chab Dai Butterfly Research Project, Cambodia*, sreang.phally@chabdai.org

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/dignity>

See next page for additional authors

 Part of the [Community Health and Preventive Medicine Commons](#), [International Public Health Commons](#), [Public Health Education and Promotion Commons](#), [Social Justice Commons](#), and the [Substance Abuse and Addiction Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Davis, Jarrett D.; Havey, James; Miles, Glenn M.; Chanththa, Nhanh; Phally, Sreang; and Vanntheary, Lim (2021) ""Going It Alone": Following the Male Cohort of Survivors of Sex Trafficking of the Chab Dai Butterfly Longitudinal Research Project," *Dignity: A Journal of Analysis of Exploitation and Violence*: Vol. 6: Iss. 4, Article 3. <https://doi.org/10.23860/dignity.2021.06.04.03>

This Research and Scholarly Article is brought to you by the University of Rhode Island. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dignity: A Journal of Analysis of Exploitation and Violence by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@URI. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons-group@uri.edu](mailto:digitalcommons-group@uri.edu). For permission to reuse copyrighted content, contact the author directly.

---

# "Going It Alone": Following the Male Cohort of Survivors of Sex Trafficking of the Chab Dai Butterfly Longitudinal Research Project

## Abstract

Over the past ten years, the Butterfly Longitudinal Research Project has followed 128 survivors of trafficking through their experiences in aftercare, reintegration, and beyond to better understand the recovery and reintegration of trafficking survivors within a Cambodian context. This paper focuses on the 19 males who were available to interview. Despite the project's wealth of data and analysis, there are notable gaps regarding the male cohort. In response, this paper examines this cohort holistically, considering their statements and broader narratives, merging them with previous collective observations of the Butterfly Project. Throughout this paper, data indicates a pattern of violence among the male cohort. The paper finds high rates of both physical and emotional peer-to-peer violence during the male cohort's time in residential care, as well as emotional violence from families following their community reintegration. Difficulties in work and school, frequent migration and housing instability are also prevalent. During aftercare, peer-to-peer violence is cited, with a majority describing a lack of trusting relationships. As respondents are reintegrated back into their communities, the majority report struggles with poverty and emotional violence from parents/carers. There is evidence of more positive peer relationships, fewer feelings of shame, and more trusting relationships. However, the majority still struggles with poverty, pressure to support their families, and poor emotional health. While peers are the primary source of violence experienced during aftercare, parents are most generally the source during the Reintegration and Life Beyond phases. Respondents describe deteriorating relationships with families/carers, increasing responsibility to be more independent, and continuing struggles to maintain their studies or employment.

## Keywords

Cambodia, sexual exploitation, boys, shelter care, bullying, resilience, gender

## Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

## Acknowledgements

The authors thank the male participants of the Chab Dai Butterfly Project and the rest of the Chab Dai research team. They also thank Eliza Piano for her help with copyediting. Funders of this project include: The World Charitable Foundation-Vaduz, The Isaac Charitable Foundation, Equitas, Love 146, Tenth Church, World Vision, World Hope International, Imago Dei, Earth Hair Partners, Hope for the Nations, Stronger Philanthropy, Sharon Ann, Jacques, Stronger Together Foundation—Canada, ACCI, Change a Path, TGCF plus an Anonymous donor.

## Authors

Jarrett D. Davis, James Havey, Glenn M. Miles, Nhanh Channtha, Sreang Phally, and Lim Vanntheary

## “GOING IT ALONE”: FOLLOWING THE MALE COHORT OF SURVIVORS OF SEX TRAFFICKING OF THE CHAB DAI BUTTERFLY LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH PROJECT

**Jarrett D. Davis**

*up! International*

 [0000-0003-1663-9039](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1663-9039)

**Glenn Miles**

*up! International*

 [0000-0001-6762-0739](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6762-0739)

**Sreang Phaly**

*Butterfly Longitudinal Research Project,  
Cambodia*

 [0000-0001-7010-3695](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7010-3695)

**James Havey**

*Butterfly Longitudinal Research Project,  
Cambodia*

 [0000-0001-8909-8494](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8909-8494)

**Nhanh Channtha**

*Butterfly Longitudinal Research Project,  
Cambodia*

 [0000-0002-5757-9151](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5757-9151)

**Lim Vanntherary**

*Butterfly Longitudinal Research Project,  
Cambodia*

 [0000-0001-9919-2601](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9919-2601)

### ABSTRACT

Over the past ten years, the Butterfly Longitudinal Research Project has followed 128 survivors of trafficking through their experiences in aftercare, reintegration, and beyond to better understand the recovery and reintegration of trafficking survivors within a Cambodian context. This paper focuses on the 19 males who were available to interview. Despite the project's wealth of data and analysis, there are notable gaps regarding the male cohort. In response, this paper examines this cohort holistically, considering their statements and broader narratives, merging them with previous collective observations of the Butterfly Project. Throughout this paper, data indicates a pattern of violence among the male cohort. The paper finds high rates of both physical and emotional peer-to-peer violence during the male cohort's time in residential care, as well as emotional violence from families following their community reintegration. Difficulties in work and school, frequent migration and housing instability are also prevalent. During aftercare, peer-to-peer violence is cited, with a majority describing a lack of trusting relationships. As respondents are reintegrated back into their communities, the majority report struggles with poverty and emotional violence from parents/carers. There is evidence of more positive peer relationships, fewer feelings of shame, and more trusting relationships. However, the majority still struggles with poverty, pressure to support their families, and poor emotional health. While peers are the primary source of violence experienced during aftercare, parents are most generally the source during the Reintegration and Life Beyond phases. Respondents describe deteriorating relationships with families/carers, increasing responsibility to be more independent, and continuing struggles to maintain their studies or employment.

### KEYWORDS

Cambodia, sexual exploitation, boys, shelter care, bullying, resilience, gender

**T**HE BUTTERFLY LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH PROJECT is a 10-year research project following a select group of survivors of sexual exploitation and trafficking. The study's purpose was to listen to the voices of survivors to gain an understanding of their perspectives and experiences as they are reintegrated into their communities and larger Cambodian society to better inform reintegration programming and policies, thus improving the quality of life for survivors. Since its inception, the Butterfly Project has generated a wealth of data as it followed the progress of 128 survivors of trafficking through their experiences in aftercare, community reintegration, and beyond NGO support.

The Butterfly Project explored a range of thematic topics about which its NGO partners needed information, including stigma, experiences of the judicial system, financial security and filial piety. While this wealth of data has helped bring about a better understanding of recovery and reintegration among trafficking survivors, most data analyses focused solely on the female cohort. This paucity of information with respect to the experiences of men and boys exists for a number of reasons, including social norms about masculinity and proscriptions from expressing emotions.

In view of these gaps in data, this thematic paper is notably different from previous papers in the Butterfly Project series. Instead of exploring nuance within an expansive qualitative dataset, the current paper examines the male cohort data broadly and holistically, merging their statements and broader narratives with the collective observations of the Butterfly Project team over a six-year period (2011-2016). The discussion shapes itself around three analytical phases, following the male cohort as they: 1) resided in an aftercare shelter for survivors of human trafficking, 2) transitioned out of shelter-life into a community re/integration programme, and 3) then their lives beyond all NGO support. Through this analysis, we hope to provide a stronger context for the somewhat limited set of male scholarship, develop an understanding of what this male cohort has faced during their years in and out of the care of an NGO and provide recommendations for future work and study with this population.

## **GAPS IN SCHOLARSHIP AND SERVICES FOR MALE VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

Gaps in research and services pertaining to male victims of sex trafficking have been documented, with health researchers commonly describing unsatisfactory qualitative data from male respondents, especially with regard to their emotional experiences (Affleck et al., 2012). This is believed to be due to traditional values and gender role socialization that often limits emotional expression by males, especially in some migrant, ethnic and working-class communities (Levant et al., 2006; Levant, 2003).

Over the past several decades, feminist scholars have greatly informed discourses about the sexual victimization of women and girls, purporting that it is rooted in regressive, masculine gender norms that are unavoidably linked with violence (Heilman, 2008; Stemple & Meyer, 2014). While scholarship on gender and exploitation has become more intersectional and inclusive, the perception of men as perpetrators and women as victims remains the dominant paradigm for understanding vulnerability to sexual exploitation (Ricardo & Barker, 2008; Stemple & Meyer, 2014). As one example, a promising report published by World Vision entitled 'Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Cambodia' (Shaw, 2013) included only girls and neglected to consider boys' experiences.

With growing evidence that the sexual exploitation of men and boys not only exists but is commonly underreported, the extent of research, policy, and practice directed at males in the developing world continues to be inadequate (Adjei et al., 2017; Cockbain et al., 2017; Frederick, 2010; Hohendorff et al. 2017; Hounmenou, C., 2017; Moynihan, 2018). These research gaps can result in vulnerable boys not being identified as victims of exploitation or abuse, limited targeted and evidence-informed care to exploited males (Hohendorff, Habigzang & Koller, 2017; Mitchell et al., 2017), and an increased likelihood that victims will exhibit risky behaviours in adolescence and adulthood (Homma et al., 2012).

In Cambodia, approximately 70 organizations work to address sexual exploitation, but only three primarily target boys and young men. Furthermore, the only shelter that housed boys in the country is now closed. Despite this reduction in service capacity, multiple grassroots studies in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Poipet, and Preah Sihanouk (Kampong Som) demonstrate significant and overlapping vulnerabilities to abuse and exploitation on the street (Davis, Blackburn, & Miles, 2020; Davis & Miles, 2020; Davis, Miles, Eno, & Rowland, 2021) and within the sex-trade industry (Miles & Blanch, 2012; Miles & Davis, 2014), yet often avoid identifying victims as male due to assumptions about their gender (i.e. *“a boy ought to be strong enough to protect himself from becoming a victim; if he can’t do that, then he’ll never be a ‘real man’”*).

Among the 128 participants in the Butterfly Project, only 22 were male, three of whom left the study within its first years. Nineteen males remained in the project throughout their reintegration back into the communities and for years following. It was apparent that the male qualitative data was considerably lacking in detail as compared to their female counterparts. The Butterfly Project researchers would ask a similar set of semi-structured questions to both sexes and, while the females would commonly tell stories and express their thoughts and feelings more freely, males tended to remain noticeably quieter, sometimes responding with only one or two words.

## SEXUAL ABUSE AND TRAFFICKING OF MEN AND BOYS IN CAMBODIA

Miles and Thomas (2007) conducted a national survey of 1,314 school children aged 14 to 16 in Cambodia, concluding that 18.9% of boys said they had been sexually touched on the genitals since they were nine years old, as compared to 13.5% of girls. Moreover, 1.8% of boys and 0.6% of girls disclosed that they had been raped, a comparatively smaller number of those who responded. In a culture where boys are seen as unable to be raped, it is interesting that more boys disclosed their victimization than girls (Hilton et al., 2008; Miles & Thomas, 2007). Further, Miles and Thomas reported that nearly one-quarter of each sex (23.5% of boys and 21.4% of girls) reported that they had witnessed the rape of a child in their community. This difference in witnessing and experiencing rape among children in Cambodia led the researchers to reflect on the possibility that children who, themselves, have been raped were reluctant to say so and preferred to disclose that they have witnessed the rape of another child instead.

In 2008, Alastair Hilton, technical advisor at a Cambodian NGO supporting male victims of sexual abuse, published a report on the sexual abuse of boys in Cambodia. The report examined cultural misconceptions with respect to male sexual abuse, finding deep traumas among survivors, in addition to ambivalence or even blame towards victims from service providers and child protection officials (Hilton et al., 2008). Initial research into the sexual exploitation of young men in Phnom Penh was conducted in 2012 (Miles & Blanch, 2012), as well as similar research in Siem Reap, Cambodia

(Davis & Miles, 2013). In 2014, Havey, Schafer, and Beer conducted research with men who buy sex from men, concluding that tourists and locals alike were avid buyers.

In addition to examining young people in the sex trade, research has been conducted on the unique vulnerabilities of street children in Phnom Penh (Davis et al., 2021), on the Thai-Cambodian border (Davis & Miles, 2017), and in Sihanoukville in Cambodia (Davis & Miles, 2021). All concluded that, within these contexts, boys were more vulnerable to sexual violence than girls, in addition to also being vulnerable to physical and emotional violence. Although some limited research has been conducted with young men in the sex industry in Phnom Penh Sihanoukville and Siem Reap in Cambodia (e. g. Miles & Davis, 2014; Yi et al., 2015), the focus has nearly always been on sexual health, ignoring their holistic needs and wellbeing. The current study seeks to provide a holistic understanding of experiences and perceptions of male survivors of human trafficking as pertaining to their emotional and physical health, relationships, and economic situation.

## METHODOLOGY

The Butterfly Project used a mixed-method approach over the course of the ten-year longitudinal study (Miles et al., 2014, 2020, 2021). Principally, the team used longitudinal survey tools, including both closed and open-ended questions. The team also utilized a number of qualitative data collecting activities such as focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, informal interviews, play, art projects, and participant observation. A key advantage of longitudinal research is that it allows for greater trust and rapport to be built with respondents over time while establishing a broad overview of their lives. As a result, stories became deeper and more nuanced as the respondents shared aspects of their lives that they may not have in a one-off interview.

In the fifth year of the project, the methodology shifted to a more qualitative approach, focusing more on producing thematic papers and exploring particular aspects of the respondents' lives. The team believed that such a focus was more appropriate for capturing the nuances and intricacies of the respondents' experiences (Miles et al., 2014). At this point, the team conducted a baseline case study analysis on each participant, compiling four-plus years of quantitative and qualitative data to document what is known, contradictory, and missing from each participant's story. The case study analyses resulted in detailed narrative summary data for each participant. Moving forward in 2014, the Cambodian researchers of the Butterfly Project conducted qualitative in-depth interviews with each participant, which were then transcribed and translated. The current article performed a thematic analysis on the narratives and interviews from 2011-2015, coding themes and analyzing quotes pertaining to health, violence, relationships, economics, and resilience.

## ETHICS

Annual reviews of the ethical process were conducted by the Royal Cambodian Government's Ministry of Health National Ethics Committee, and careful monitoring was done of the processes using the ethics standards suggested by the United Nations Inter-Agency Project (2008) and Ennew et al. (2009). Participants could choose to withdraw from answering questions at any time. All personal data was kept confidential and securely stored under lock and key. A thorough description of the Butterfly Project's ethical framework can be found in Miles et al. (2021).

## RESPONDENTS

The present paper draws from the male participants within the larger sampling of data collected by the Butterfly Project over a six-year period (2011-2016). The analysis examines the individual progression of 19 male members of the Butterfly Project throughout their aftercare and re/integration processes, providing an overview of themes and placing this data in the context of the larger Butterfly Project dataset. Males comprised about 17% of the total sample. At the beginning of the data collection of males in 2011, the male respondents' ages ranged from 10 to 17 years; five participants were under age 12, eight between 12 and 14, and the remaining six participants were 15-17 years old. The average age of the cohort was 13.3 years old.

All males were in the same aftercare programme in 2011 when the project began, and each began their re/integration process within the same two-year window (2012-2014). As only one shelter care centre was in operation for boys, all went through similar programmatic activities and timeframes. In comparison with the female respondents, the males were younger and a more homogenous group in terms of age, remaining unmarried, and economic class.

## THEMATIC DATA ANALYSIS

This paper merges the individual narratives and interviews of the male cohort over a six-year period with what was gathered about their social contexts and the collective observations of the Butterfly Project team. Furthermore, since the members were part of the same shelter and community reintegration programme, each reintegration narrative was similar enough for the longitudinal data to be divided into three subsequent phases, the amount of time spent in each phase averaging about two years:

*Aftercare* is the residential shelter for survivors of human trafficking in which each participant stayed and from which they were recruited into the Butterfly Project study. During their time in these 'aftercare' shelters, the boys were provided room and board, meals, access to free healthcare, schooling, legal support, and counselling services. Security was a fundamental issue for the aftercare shelters, especially if the participant had an ongoing legal case against their trafficker.

*Re/integration* refers to the two-year period of formal reintegration support from the NGO's aftercare programme. The Butterfly Project team understands re/integration to be a complex and broader term which, in reality, encompasses all three analysis phases of this paper.

*Life Beyond* is understood as the participants' time post NGO intervention. Following an average of two years residing within the aftercare shelter, two years of receiving reintegration programme support while in the community, the participant's case files were closed by the NGO, and the services provided through the reintegration programme were discontinued.

After compiling the narratives, field notes, and anecdotal data from the team, the researchers conducted a thematic analysis of the cohort's vulnerabilities and resiliencies over each of the three analysis phases. This required a systematic review of the complete compilation of narratives, field notes, and anecdotal information about the male cohort, pinpointing key themes or patterns in the data.

This analysis produced eight key vulnerability themes and seven key resiliencies within each of the three phases of re/integration and analysis. Tables 1 and 2, presented below, illustrate how each theme was defined, building on common

understandings of each theme and contextualizing them for the Butterfly Project’s male cohort.

**Table 1. Vulnerability Themes**

1	<i>Emotional Violence</i>	A form of psychological abuse which may have harmed a participants’ sense of self-identity, dignity, or self-worth. This theme included the following six sub-themes:
a	Discrimination	The treatment of an individual differently (in a negative sense), based upon their association with a particular group or class. Among the Butterfly Project’s male cohort, discrimination was predominantly based upon economic class, ethnic heritage, and/or perceived gender identity.
b	Disconnect/Isolation	Had few or no healthy social and/or familial relationships.
c	Lack of trust	Had little confidence that others did not have the respondent’s best interests in mind. In most instances, this was directly quoted by respondents and included parents, siblings, staff, peers, and community members.
d	Feelings of shame	Humiliation due to either previous actions or membership within a certain group or social identity. In many cases, this was associated with the respondents’ ethnicities or previous experiences of exploitation.
f*	Poor Emotional Health	A broad term that encompassed various deepening negative emotions, including feelings of isolation and low self-esteem.
e*	Antagonism with Parents	A general sense of disconnect and combativeness between the respondents and their parents/carers.
2	<i>Physical Violence</i>	A respondent’s experience of physical force was committed against him with the intention of causing harm.
3	<i>Violent Behavior</i>	A respondent’s usage of violence (physical or verbal) against another individual with the intention of harming them.
4	<i>Difficulties in work/school</i>	Includes attendance, performance, and maintaining consistent studies (formal and/or vocational) or employment.
5	<i>Migration/Mobility</i>	Moving from one living environment to another. This may be due to changing foster care or family situations, poverty issues, experiences of violence, as well as migration for education and/or employment opportunities.
6	<i>Poverty</i>	Not having enough financial resources to meet one’s basic needs.

\*As time progressed through the re/integration process, the types and sources of emotional

**Table 2. Resiliency Themes**

1	<i>Motivation for work/studies</i>	The respondent indicated that work and/or studies were a high priority in his life.
2	<i>Self-confidence</i>	The respondent indicated having trust in his abilities and judgments.
3	<i>Supportive family/carers</i>	It was apparent that the respondent's family/carers gave him ample support and encouragement. This was through several means, including financial aid, emotional stability, guidance, and mentorship.
4	<i>Positive relationships with peers</i>	The respondent's peer group were supportive, encouraged healthy choices, and gave the respondent notable enjoyment in his life.
5	<i>NGO Assistance</i>	Aid that is given to the respondent by means of NGO programming. This could include shelter, finance, casework, physical and/or emotional support.
6	<i>Economic stability</i>	The respondent's individual and/or family's financial situation was not burdensome. They were able to afford basic necessities without borrowing money from lenders.

## LIMITATIONS

Many factors could explain the more limited responses from the male Butterfly Project's participants to interview questions. Reasons include, but may not be limited to the characteristics and expertise of the interviewers not supporting the cohort to feel more comfortable during interviews; the possible invasiveness of qualitative research on sensitive and stigmatizing topics about which the boys may not have trusted the team enough to disclose; the boys' autonomy to choose to share or refuse to share information; the trauma experienced by the participants and; social masculine ideals of stoicism that may inhibit young men's ability to recognize or convey their feelings.

There were significantly more vulnerability themes identified than themes of resilience. While we attempted to extract more resilience themes, these were limited in the data itself. This is largely due to the nature of questions asked by the researchers and subsequent narratives provided by respondents, both of which tended to focus more on challenges that the participants faced in their day-to-day lives rather than providing details on positive factors.

## RESULTS

The following section explores the themes and patterns which emerge from the combined, verbatim transcripts of interviews with the male cohort. The themes and patterns are organized over the three phases of the boys' recovery/reintegration experience.

As mentioned, all respondents were part of the same shelter care program for child victims of human trafficking, exploitation, and abuse, as there was only one shelter in Cambodia catering to the needs of male survivors at the time. The respondents' ages upon entering the Butterfly Project ranged from 10-17 years of age with an average age of 13.3 years, making them all survivors of child sex trafficking. The length of time spent in aftercare varied, with some experiences lasting longer due to pending

court cases or family poverty issues, which made earlier reintegration potentially unsafe. On average, the research assessed that boys remained in the shelter for slightly less than two years (1.83 years); the shortest was for less than one year, and the longest was four years. In the longest case, the respondent's reintegration was delayed due to his chronic illness and family's poverty level. Since the family was unable to provide for the respondent's ongoing medical needs, it was decided that the respondent would remain in aftercare until alternative support was available.

## EXPERIENCES IN RESIDENTIAL SHELTER FOR SURVIVORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

While several themes were apparent during their experiences in aftercare, peer-to-peer violence was the most notable. Both physical and emotional violence from peers is strongly apparent in all but one of the respondents' narratives from when they were in the shelter. Furthermore, the respondents indicated a general lack of trusting relationships during aftercare.

### Physical Violence

Most boys (13 of 19) disclosed numerous accounts of physical violence from peers during their time in aftercare. Among this group, some boys appeared more strongly affected, describing the peer physical violence as a constant and continuing reality in the shelter. One respondent, 11-years-old at the time, cited numerous experiences of violent fighting between his peers and mentioned one instance in which he was left bleeding. At one point, he ran away from the shelter because of the level of violence; a common solution among the boys in the shelter: "I used to run away from the shelter because the other boys beat me. I was very angry."

In the majority of cases (11 of 19), the boys also acted violently towards their peers in the aftercare facility. One described numerous occasions in which peer fighting prompted him to hit back and become violent as well. He noted that other boys stopped playing with him because he became too rough. He also mentioned feeling that the shelter staff did not like him, potentially because of his violence towards his peers.

Qualitative data from 2011-2013 seemed to indicate a social hierarchy or power structure among boys. Age and the length of time spent in the aftercare centre appeared to grant some boys greater social capital and, thus, they asserted more authority over their peers. For some, this accrued social capital afforded them protection from violence while, among others, it appeared to give merit to their violence toward their peers.

In some cases, the boys seemed to proactively use violent behavior as a defense against receiving physical violence. For example, one participant was somewhat older than other boys, yet he had a physical disability that prevented him from walking normally. During his first few months in aftercare, this made him uniquely vulnerable to violence from peers both in and out of the shelter. Over time, he became more domineering and controlling over the other boys in the shelter, using violence and bullying his peers. This gained him the reputation as the "*big boss*" in the facility. His use of violence against the other boys seemed to hide his physical vulnerabilities and afforded him protection from violence.

### Emotional Violence and Lack of Trusting Relationships

Most respondents (15 of 19) mentioned being the recipient of various forms of emotional violence during their time in aftercare. In particular, this was seen in the form of discrimination and/or feeling disconnected from peers (13 of 19). Five described discrimination and/or feeling disconnected from the shelter staff. Four youth chose to isolate themselves because of a lack of trust. For many, emotional and physical violence were often connected as a part of being bullied by the peers living with them in the facility.

Five boys were targets of various forms of discrimination from their peers and individuals in the community. Their ethnicity, history of abuse, and socioeconomic status were cited as major reasons why they became targets for their peers. Several respondents were mocked by neighbors and within their schools because they had been sexually exploited. One respondent told the researchers that his uncle disclosed that he had been sexually abused by a monk to someone in the community. Eventually, the gossip spread throughout the community and the respondent was harassed.

Two individuals were discriminated against because of their Vietnamese heritage, which is commonly looked down upon in many Khmer communities. In other cases, their discrimination was attributed to the respondent coming from a poor family or having certain physical features, such as curly hair or a cleft palate:

I think I am discriminated against because of my ethnicity and because I used to be sexually exploited. They said Vietnamese steal Cambodian land. So, they do not want to talk to me.

Among the 13 boys who felt disconnected from their peers in the aftercare shelter, six youth specified that this was due to the physical violence in the center. An 11-year-old respondent had a number of difficulties connecting with peers because of discrimination, violence, and fighting, leading him to attempt to run away from the shelter. Over time, his peer relationships appeared to improve as new boys who were brought into the shelter seemed to respect him, perhaps because he now had seniority over the newly arrived boys. Despite these new non-violent relationships, this participant continued to be teased and shamed by the other children in the center.

While this boy's peer relationships were quite difficult, he did have good relationships with the shelter staff. Nevertheless, the boys had mixed feelings about the shelter staff managing the bullying and fighting. While many trusted and felt protected by the shelter staff, others described apathy from staff members, and some alluded to staff members actively disliking their clients:

Some shelter friends insult me by calling my mother a bad name. I used to inform the housemother about this, but she seemed to not care.

In addition to peer violence, some boys felt disconnected from their families during aftercare. This was particularly true in cases where the boys wished to be reintegrated back to their communities, but their families were hesitant to accept them back. This was often due to familial poverty, with parents and guardians not able to take financial responsibility for their child.

### Emotional Unrest About Family Poverty

In addition to respondents feeling discriminated against because of their families' poverty and their inability to be reintegrated, emotional anxiety about family debts

and poverty was notable throughout the cohort. Nearly half felt the effects of poverty in one way or another during their time in the shelter. Close to a third of the group (6 of 19) cited anxiety or emotional unrest regarding their parents' finances, specifically.

Poverty was a significant challenge for most respondents, and some indicated a strong sense of responsibility to help their families to alleviate it. This was particularly true for one 14-year-old youth, who, during the first year of the study, described a disagreement between him and the shelter staff regarding how long he was to remain in the shelter:

I feel responsible to pay debt because my family needs money to open a business. So, I have to work and help my family.

While this boy wished to be reintegrated sooner in order to assist his family with their financial responsibilities, the shelter insisted that he remain because his trafficking case was pending in court. The team was able to meet with this respondent only once following his departure from the shelter programme in the spring of 2012. During this meeting, he reported that he was happy to be back living with his family and, although he has accrued debt for books that he purchased to sell on the street, he was not yet worried about paying it off. He mentioned that the NGO staff had told him they would only continue to support him if he moved back into the shelter. He told the team that he was disappointed and hated himself for being illiterate. Despite the researchers' attempts to remain connected, contact with this youth was subsequently lost because he moved and changed mobile phone numbers frequently in his attempts to alleviate his family's debt.

### Substance Use

Alcohol, tobacco products, and drugs were used by four participants while in aftercare. Three of these four mentioned using methamphetamines, and another two used other drugs and alcohol. While it is possible that drug usage during aftercare was a coping strategy for trauma, violence, or emotional unrest, this connection was not clear in the qualitative interviews.

### Resiliencies During Aftercare

Despite the risk of emotional and physical violence in the aftercare centre, the boy's strengths and resiliencies were in evidence. Perhaps the most notable was having consistent NGO support available to meet their basic needs. Furthermore, nearly a third of respondents indicated increased self-confidence and demonstrating a positive outlook on their abilities to succeed in their studies, work and relationships.

While negative and often violent peer relationships occurred, strong positive alliances with peers were also apparent. Even years after their re/integration, respondents described the sense of having been in a family during aftercare. They also indicated a shared identity in some of their more positive peer relationships in the facility. In later interviews, after the boys had been reintegrated back into the community for some time, a number continued to look fondly on some of the close ties that they had built during their aftercare experience. This could have been a product of their shared experiences of aftercare and reintegration.

Lastly, even though it may not be a constructive resiliency, acting out against or bullying peers could be considered a form of resilience through self-preservation. For example, one respondent was initially bullied and abused due to his physical

disability. In response, he started using violence toward his peers, building his social capital, and developing the reputation of being the “big boss” in the shelter.

### The Reintegration Process

Upon beginning their community reintegration, the respondents ranged from 12-19 years of age, with an average age of 15.2 years. Financial support from the aftercare program was intended to last for two years after leaving. On average, the respondents spent slightly more than two years (2.2 years) with continued, predominantly financial support from the NGO when back in the community. The shortest reintegration period was less than one year, and the longest was three years. In several cases, community reintegration was abbreviated due to factors including migration for work, imprisonment, or running away from home. In other cases, the reintegration support period was extended due to cases of extreme poverty, migration, and lack of family support. As the youth began to reintegrate into their communities, negative changes were almost immediately notable due to the respondents’ struggles with poverty, disclosures of emotional and physical violence, difficulties in work and school, and housing instability.

### Poverty

The majority of respondents (15 of 19) felt the effects of poverty in several ways as they reintegrated back to their communities, an increase from nine youth who mentioned a variety of effects of poverty while they resided in aftercare. Among the previously mentioned 15, three described lacking food, and seven had insufficient education for gainful employment, and six could not live with their immediate families due to poverty. The Butterfly Project’s researcher team anecdotally mentioned that the male cohort and their families had significantly greater struggles with poverty compared to the female cohort.

Poverty seemed to be an underlying issue with respect to most of the vulnerabilities described during the participants’ reintegration, as they mentioned pressure to find work and earn money to support their families, largely due to debt. This prevented many respondents from continuing their education and often became the reason for emotional and physical violence. In other cases, lack of finances in local communities drove their parents to migrate to Thailand for work, leaving the respondents without sustained care. One 12-year-old respondent often lived without parents or siblings upon reintegration because his relatives had all migrated for work. He described a close relationship with his mother and had told her that he felt isolated when she and his siblings left. Throughout consecutive interviews, the team noted that this boy lost a significant amount of weight during his reintegration and was often ill.

### Emotional and Physical Violence

There was a notable increase in emotional violence as respondents reintegrated back into their communities, increasing from 15 cases during their time in the shelter to nearly all respondents (18 of 19) mentioning some emotional violence upon reintegration. Notably, the source of this emotional violence shifted from peers to family members. Disclosures of violence from parents/carers increased from zero to four, and disclosures of emotional violence from peers decreased by more than half, from 13 to six.

### Violence From Families and/or Carers

Stressors associated with poverty provide the context in which most of the violence occurred. The increasing financial strain on families put pressure on some respondents to start working - often causing them to stop their studies early. One respondent frequently mentioned that talking about work or school resulted in him being beaten and insulted by his grandfather. Though he was eventually forced to stop going to school and, instead, to study to become a motor repairman, this boy still fought with his grandfather over his education, stating:

My grandfather beats and blames me because I argue with him a lot, especially about my education. I stopped my schooling because I had no support for my studies from NGO anymore. So, I need to learn repair skills with my uncle, even though I don't like it.

A form of emotional violence was non-acceptance from families. Just under a third of the respondents (6 of 19) commented that their families did not wish them to be reintegrated. In most cases, this was because the families lacked the means to support the education and livelihoods of their children. An 18-year-old respondent was confused when his mother did not want him to come home from the aftercare facility. While the respondent's parents initially stated that they were unable to accept the child back financially, further information from the respondent's step-father indicated a different reason:

We didn't really want [this respondent] to come home yet when the aftercare center sent him back. This boy is not like other kids. I previously sent him to another shelter in the province, but he ran away.

The Butterfly Project team noted that this boy's parents did not care greatly for their son's well-being. This boy was finally, reluctantly, able to live with his family again because there were no other care alternatives for them to pursue.

### Violence From Peers and Community Members

Emotional violence from peers was commonly disclosed by the male cohort. Nearly a third of boys felt disconnected from or discriminated against during their reintegration process; most of these cases involved being bullied. In contrast to the increase in emotional violence, instances of physical violence decreased slightly during community reintegration (from 13 to 11). This decrease was due to the boys being removed from the high levels of peer-to-peer violence in the aftercare shelter.

### Shame and Lack of Trusting Relationships

Four respondents felt shame as they were reintegrated back into their communities, a feeling not previously mentioned during aftercare. This is potentially due to the fact that, while in aftercare, the respondents were living with other boys who had shared a similar experience of trafficking or abuse. In the community, the respondents may have begun to perceive themselves as different from their peers. This was no doubt exacerbated by the sharp increase in stigma and discrimination mentioned by respondents on community reintegration.

In addition to feelings of shame, more than one in four described a lack of trusting relationships in their communities. One 16-year-old told the team that he was afraid of stigma when his peers asked him why he had spent time in the shelter. This lack of

respect for his wish to keep his exploitation history confidential led him to distrust his community and isolate away from them:

I do not trust or believe anybody because I noticed that when I share my story to others, they often share it to others.

### Difficulties in Work and School

As previously noted, the boys had difficulties continuing their education upon reintegration. Eight cited various difficulties in maintaining their work or studies, and nearly one-in-three quit entirely. Familial poverty seemed to drive most of these difficulties, with families pressuring boys to quit school and pursue ways of generating income to support their families. One participant told the team that his guardian does not believe in the importance of finishing school and prefers that he take vocational training, with which he can earn money more quickly.

Another respondent dropped out of school due to pressures to help support his family. In response, the NGO facilitating his reintegration identified a vocational training opportunity for him. Once this participant enrolled in the vocational program, he experienced continued antagonism from his family to earn money instead, coupled with negative peer relationships within the program. These factors were associated with this boy beginning to use inhalants, and, as a result, he was no longer able to attend his training courses regularly and, eventually, he left the program.

### Housing Instability

For varying reasons, thirteen youth had significant housing instabilities during their reintegration periods. Among this majority, six had to move from their home communities to search for work, and five had to change accommodations because of violence at home or in their communities. Other reasons for housing instability included: migration to avoid an exploiter who still lived in the community; international migration of a parent; migration due to a parent's incarceration and/or release from prison and; moving for education.

Housing instability also affected the attrition rate of respondents. Due to their frequent and often erratic migration, the Butterfly Project team and supporting NGO lost contact with three boys within the first year of their reintegration back into the community, though two of these reconnected later. One respondent had illegally migrated to Thailand through a broker in hopes of finding work shortly after his reintegration. After three months, he returned to Cambodia because of both difficulties with Thai immigration police and the fact that he was unable to earn sufficient income. Two months later, he returned to Thailand but could only stay a little more than a month, explaining that there was no work available.

### Resiliency During Reintegration

Despite the lack of stability during reintegration, some resiliencies were shown by several respondents. Ten respondents showed considerable motivation to work or study during reintegration, which is an increase from aftercare. Eleven respondents mentioned having supportive parents/carers, and eight referred to positive peer relationships. Lastly, nearly all respondents continued to receive financial support from the NGO that provided their aftercare services.

## Life Beyond NGO Support Services

As respondents reached the end of the two-year formal reintegration support from the NGO, their social relationships seemed to improve moderately. The cohort described somewhat more positive relationships with peers, fewer feelings of shame, and fewer relationships lacking in trust. Despite these moderate improvements, the majority still indicated significant struggles with poverty, increasing pressure from families to earn income to support their needs, increasing difficulties in continuing work and/or school, and increasing struggles with poor emotional health.

## Continuing Struggles with Poverty

Twelve youth described struggles with economic stability, with six feeling anxious about whether they could support themselves and their families. Six could not access regular meals, which was an increase of two from the reintegration analysis period. Four more individuals could not complete their education because of struggles with poverty. Eight respondents had to live separately from their families as a result of the economic pressures, an increase of two cases from the respondents' reintegration period. Separations were due to the respondents and their families having to migrate to distant provinces because of a lack of local employment opportunities. This either involved the respondents leaving the family in search of employment or, for younger boys, the parents leaving them with guardians as they migrated for work elsewhere.

## Increasing Antagonism with Families

A number of the respondents described increasingly antagonistic relationships with their parents, caregivers, and other family members. This was largely with respect to respondents who already had histories of significant emotional violence within their families.

My mother always blamed me. She promised me, in front of [the NGO] staff before they reintegrated me, that she would support and encourage me, but she did not. She always blamed me. She blamed me every day.

Half of the cohort described discrimination or other forms of emotional disconnect from parents/carers. Some of this seemed to stem from pressure from parents and carers to earn more money to support their families further, particularly as time progressed and the respondents became older. The Butterfly Project team noted that as time progressed, more and more interview time was spent discussing these devolving familial relationships and their feelings associated with them.

In three cases, respondents disclosed being shamed and stigmatized by their parents with respect to their sexual exploitation. One commented that his father looks down on him and calls him names because he was sexually exploited. He was afforded no other care or support from other members of the family during his distress. Despite his lack of family support, he was still expected to earn money for them.

Additionally, some antagonism from parents/carers likely stemmed from previously violent or tumultuous relationships. One respondent described a difficult family context and commented that his regular interviews with the Butterfly Project team were the only times he felt able to express his thoughts and feelings, as he has no one else to share them with. While his biological father was no longer a part of the respondent's daily life, he disclosed that his father had once sold him and his brother:

I pity my mother more than him because my biological father used to sell me and my brother. He sold us to someone else, and my mother sold her jewelry to take us back. My mother became poor because of him.

### Increasing Difficulties in Work/School

As the two-year reintegration programme ended, difficulties in work and school increased from five respondents in the reintegration period to 11 respondents afterward. Six youth lacked the ambition to continue their work or schooling, and five additional participants quit these altogether.

In nearly all of these cases, family support was significantly lacking, with a number of the respondents having left to support themselves emotionally and financially. The respondents were often left living on their own or being moved between houses. For example, once a 15-year-old boy's reintegration programme funding ended, his mother expected him to become financially independent and refused to support him. This forced him to leave school and sell lottery tickets to meet his daily needs. His mother worked in a distant province and occasionally sent money to his sister, however unfortunately, these came with instructions that he was not to receive any of the money as he was expected to take care of himself.

Due to this increasing pressure to financially support their families, the youth often took up careers or vocational training programs in areas of work in which they had no interest. In addition to this, difficulties in maintaining studies or employment seemed rooted in emotional health, leading to combativeness with employers, depression, and a general lack of ambition.

### Poor Emotional Health

While no specific or diagnostic questions on emotional health were included during the interviews, it was notable that eight respondents demonstrated a decline in emotional health. This trend manifested itself in various ways, including low self-esteem, severe anxiety, combativeness at home and work, isolation from family or peers, and suicidal thoughts and actions.

Field notes from a series of interviews with one respondent indicated potential unresolved trauma in relation to his sexual exploitation nearly seven years later. The respondent expressed persistent anxiety about people in his community finding out about what happened to him. He was often unwilling to visit his hometown because the people from his village know about his abuse.

Another respondent, aged 19 in 2015, reported continuing difficulties maintaining stable employment due to his persistent anger and combativeness with his employers. These traits continued from when he was in aftercare when he used these as a defense mechanism to protect from the vulnerability that he is disabled. Interview transcripts showed severe and escalating anxiety in regard to his ability to provide income for his family. This anxiety appeared to have been a contributing factor to the respondent's increased substance use. Disclosed in the last interview of 2015, anxiety about his family's economic burdens and his inability to contribute - seemingly to the standard that he expects of himself - has also led to thoughts about suicide:

We are in debt. I feel sad about this matter so much! Sometimes, I want to commit suicide by taking poison pills!

Despite intervention attempts from both the Butterfly Project and the NGO shelter in which he had formerly resided, this participant sadly committed suicide in 2018.

Depression and feelings of isolation were common themes for two brothers who went through NGO care together. These feelings were exacerbated when one brother was arrested for possession of drugs, leaving the other alone in the community. In a 2015 interview, the researchers asked how he felt about his brother being incarcerated: “When I see him, there, I feel my tears drop.”

### Increased Drug Use

While only two respondents discussed substance use with methamphetamines following the close of their reintegration support, two others were unable to participate in interviews because they had been arrested for drug use and possession. This suggests that substance use may be a much larger issue than what the interviews seemed to reveal. Methamphetamines, locally called “ice,” were used in all four of these cases.

With one 21-year-old respondent, substance abuse seemed to be clearly connected to his emotional health, being used as an escape. This young man appeared to have experienced trauma, given his inability to maintain employment and provide for his family and, potentially, as a way to deal with the significant emotional violence that he experienced from various family members.

Another 22-year-old male was unavailable to be interviewed due to his drug-related arrest. In interviews prior to his arrest, this young man showed signs of emotional instability and low motivation for work, changing employment multiple times a year. His mother, previously his sole caregiver, was killed while this respondent was in the NGO shelter. He was reintegrated back to his province to live with his uncle but, as a result of an unhealthy relationship with him, moved out of his uncle’s house shortly afterward. This resulted in a continuously unstable home life. The unresolved tragedy of his mother’s death, his seeming rebelliousness against expectations of him, and an unstable relationship with his uncle appear to have had a corrosive effect on this man’s stability after reintegration back into his community. His uncle told the Butterfly Projects researchers in 2015 that he hopes his nephew is kept in jail for a long time because of the trouble gets in while in the community:

I wish the police would keep him in prison for longer because if he only stays for a short time, he will continue to be the same; using drugs and involved with a gang group.

### RESILIENCIES FOLLOWING REINTEGRATION SUPPORT

Despite the number of individuals who indicated a growing antagonism between them and their families, ten youth described some emotional or financial support from their families. While this support did not necessarily come directly from parents or guardians, nearly all described at least one family member who provided them some support. One respondent emphasized his close connection with his family since the beginning of the Butterfly Project in 2011. In 2015, he had trouble passing the national exam and graduating the 9th grade. Instead of becoming angry with him, his mother encouraged him to study hard and continue trying. Despite his family’s problematic finances, his parents supported him beyond his daily schooling and enrolled him in supplemental instruction for English and Thai. His mother told the team that she loves having her son back home and that he is always keen to help with household work as she requests.

Additionally, ten youth indicated having positive relationships with peers, two more than during the reintegration analysis phase. In a 2015 interview, one respondent spent much of his time talking about his friends at school and in the community. He joked that his new nickname is “*SMS Master*” - supposedly because of his speeding texting abilities.

Though poverty throughout the group was still a significant concern, financial stability appeared to be increasing for four youth, one additional participant from the reintegration phase. This suggests that some boys and their families continued to overcome financial obstacles.

## DISCUSSION

The following section reflects upon the preceding themes and patterns that emerged throughout the three analytical phases of this paper. Considering the full range of experiences, the interviews indicated distinctive patterns of violence, particularly emotional violence throughout. In many cases, the violence took place within a context of antagonistic family relationships and superficial social connections. The Butterfly Project team speculated that this isolation and emotional suppression could be the result of unresolved trauma, layered upon cultural expectation for males in rural Cambodian society. Furthermore, as time passed, the respondents increasingly experienced pressure to earn money to support their families, which pushed some to end their educational or vocational training programs early in order to start work as soon as possible. Some of this may be related to rigid gender norms or culturally imbued expectations for males, especially with regard to emotions.

### LACK OF EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Lacking trusting relationships and a seeming inability to express emotions was evident in many interviews, illustrated through respondents struggling to maintain stable employment, persistent anger and combativeness, substance abuse, and suicidal thoughts and actions. However, despite some participants’ seemingly callous and combative exteriors, the Butterfly Project team noted that they looked forward to the interviews. As well, some described the interviews as their only opportunity to express how they think and feel. One respondent never disclosed any of the information he gives to the Butterfly Project to others:

In my daily life, I would not dare to talk to anyone about these things.

The Butterfly Project team conducted individualized and confidential interviews, with active and attentive listening as the primary goal. The team strove to provide a safe space in which the boy’s thoughts and emotions could be validated as real and important. This seemed in stark contrast to the environments in which the boys lived day-to-day. Their interviews seemed to be a much-needed space in which they could express pent-up emotions - something that appeared especially true as the youth progressed through the reintegration process and subsequent conclusion of NGO support.

Poor or inconsistent relationships with family and community members were an overarching theme among respondents who were isolated or unable to express their emotions. Thus, it may be important to consider the potential therapeutic impact of the rapport between the respondents and the Butterfly Project team as it provided

the participants with a relationship based on empathy and unconditional positive regard, a core concept in client-centered therapy, developed by Carl Rogers (1951), which provides unconditional acceptance and support, regardless of what that individual says or does.

This recommendation for a consistent and empathic relationship between an NGO and their clients is of particular importance in that so much of it relies on trust. The Butterfly Project team noted that most of the boys had had experiences that left them questioning trust with respect to their aftercare programme, including broken promises, loss of contact, lack of individual time with the NGO staff, and lack of confidentiality regarding the youth's circumstances. Given the larger context of unstable or untrusting relationships, NGOs who work with male survivors must take special care to follow through and maintain a child-first approach with the relationships with their clients.

### FILIAL PIETY

The male cohort was much younger and came from backgrounds of significantly more poverty than the female Butterfly Project cohort. Previous Butterfly Project research indicated mounting pressure among the female cohort to be “*good daughters*” and “*good women*,” in comparison with the male cohort, who seemed not to feel as much responsibility to pay their parents' debts (Smith-Brake et al., 2015). While true, in a comparison of the significantly older female cohort with the younger, more financially disadvantaged male cohort, the reason for the differences seems not to be gender but age. The males were an average of about five years younger than females and likely felt less responsible for paying their family's debts, as younger children are less likely to be expected to support their families. As the male respondents aged, however, they indicated increased pressure to earn money to support their families. This was sometimes to an unhealthy extent, with one respondent describing anxiety to the point of contemplating and, later, committing suicide.

Given their ages and the existing gender-based social expectations, the male cohort generally demonstrated significant anxieties with meeting their families' most basic needs. In future studies on male survivors of trafficking and abuse in Cambodia, it would be important to garner a further understanding of masculinity within Cambodian society, asking questions exploring what it means to be a “good Cambodian male youth.”

### NAVIGATING RIGID GENDER NORMS

The Butterfly Project team described many boys as “stoic” or “silent” during their interviews, often lacking expression in reaction to questions about how they think and feel. The respondents seemed as though they needed to act tough and avoid expressing any strong emotions. An earlier study on the sexual abuse of Cambodian boys (Hilton et al., 2008) concluded that “team discussions and later comments confirmed that boys are not expected to cry, but be strong, solve their own problems and ‘act like a man’ from an early age.” This indicates a powerful expectation of men to be strong while navigating challenges such as poverty and supporting their families.

Despite being relatively unforthcoming about their own feelings, the cohort spoke more when talking about concrete or third-person topics. This phenomenon has been well-documented among qualitative researchers (Affleck et al., 2012; Duncombe & Marsden, 1993). Some research in the field of psychology understands this phenomenon to be partly gender role socialization (Levant, 2003), in which male emotional

expression is suppressed throughout childhood by mothers, fathers, and peer group socialization. Thus, as boys grow up, they lack the vocabulary to express their feelings and emotions (Affleck et al., 2012). By contrast, females are more commonly asked about their feelings and are often expected to take on a nurturing role in families; thus, they develop a greater capacity of expressing their emotions.

We propose the need for more research regarding gender norms and expectations on males, particularly within a rural Cambodian context. This may be especially important among survivors of sexual violence, as the identity of “victim” may be perceived to conflict with the over-arching social identities and cultural expectations of masculinity within Cambodian culture.

It is important that cultural realities are taken into consideration in developing methodological approaches to male respondents. For instance, semi-structured or ‘open-ended’ questioning has become an essential aspect of qualitative research practice. This long-form interview is often considered a key part of researching vulnerable populations (Affleck et al., 2012). It gives respondents the freedom and space to communicate their thoughts and feelings. However, given male identity and gender norms, asking emotionally sensitive questions can challenge the ways that some males have been socialized to behave, leaving them emotionally vulnerable and avoiding conversations (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2002).

## COMPOUND TRAUMA

Alongside the needed recovery and reintegration associated with their individual cases of exploitation, an overwhelming number of boys also had other severe and compounded traumas, which complicated their ability for a healthy recovery. These traumas included deaths of family members, physical disability, negatively perceived physical appearance, extreme poverty, family violence, family breakdown, discrimination, and the imprisonment of a loved one.

Aftercare programming provided counselling and other forms of support to deal with specific cases of exploitation and violence. While this is needed, it is also important to consider the larger context of violence and trauma that may affect recovery and the difficulties integrating into a society with strict preconceived understandings of how a ‘man’ should feel and behave. In addition, NGO programming largely focuses on poverty alleviation, which may neglect the numerous traumas and the complex emotional needs of male survivors. The Butterfly Project team noted that providing a safe and smooth integration into an aftercare program is often a challenge for the staff and house parents. In view of this, and based on the findings of this report, the development and diversification of male-orientated community-based counselling and social services are needed.

## CONCLUSION

Generally, the themes from the analysis identified poor social connections and little emotional support from peers and family members as problematic for the male respondents. Physical and emotional violence were common throughout aftercare, reintegration, and ‘life beyond analytical phases. While peers were the primary source of the violence during aftercare, parents are most commonly the instigators during the other phases. As time progressed, respondents were expected to be more independent, and many struggled to maintain studies or employment and describe deteriorating relationships with families.

Prior to this analysis, the Butterfly Project team was aware of the large gaps in information regarding the male cohort in comparison to the female cohort. To close these gaps, it is important to consider that disclosure of sensitive information requires a strong rapport and the development of healthier, more trusting relationships in which emotions can be expressed and vulnerabilities revealed.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Aftercare programmes for survivors of human trafficking, exploitation, and abuse should develop a stronger understanding of the underlying cultural and gender-based beliefs that isolate boys from expressing their feelings and receiving support. It is important to invest in the development of male-specific emotional support systems to overcome gendered assumptions, including counselling and program follow-up. Positive, lasting, and community-based mentor relationships are needed to create a regular, sustainable, safe space for boys and men to discuss their emotions and experiences with a trustworthy adult. Initiatives such as this could aid in challenging harmful masculine gender norms and develop a cultural context in which males feel safer to express themselves.

Given the apparent isolation and instabilities within family and community relationships, it is important for aftercare and reintegration services to spend more time working with families with respect to how they can better understand survivors' needs. The Butterfly Project interviews suggest the need for local authorities to provide better care and support for substance misuse. Numerous boys mentioned that follow-up interviews with their aftercare programme were conducted in the company of their parents or carers, which likely limited honest discussion. NGOs need to clearly state their commitment to the client following reintegration, including how many times social workers will visit and what ongoing services will be provided. Further, as a means of developing survivor-centred services, NGOs should allow greater survivor involvement in their aftercare's decision-making of programming to meet their needs.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Numerous male respondents were ridiculed in their families and communities for their histories of sexual exploitation. Research should examine how the respondents and their families understand the impact of this on their children in the context of related gender biases. An initial question might be, "Are males more likely to experience negative social consequences when they suffer sexual violence due to cultural gender assumptions?"

Individual and cultural perceptions and expectations of gender among male and female survivors of sexual exploitation should also be explored. Research could ask specific gender questions such as, "What does a good man act like?" and, "Why is this important?"

For qualitative researchers, semi-structured, 'open-ended' questions have become an essential part of research methodologies. However, such questioning may be too uncomfortable when exploring emotionally sensitive topics, especially with males. Future research could explore how to better encourage emotional expression. For example, arts therapy and visual storytelling methodologies emphasize the respondent as teacher and the researcher as learner (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2002). This could result in male respondents feeling powerful and in control, lessening vulnerability and encouraging dialogue. It would also be useful for future research to

investigate whether there is an increase in risky behaviours in adolescence and adulthood among child survivors (Homma, et al., 2012).

Discussions about coping strategies and key resiliencies in aftercare, emphasizing peer and family violence, would be helpful. Additionally, exploring in-group/out-group relationships among young survivors of violence, emphasizing how to interrupt power structuring and create safer, healthier environments in aftercare, would also be beneficial. Potential causes for substance misuse, including the impact of the violence and isolation should also be explored, as well as the long-term impacts of consistent respondent-researcher relationships.

To conclude, the need for more research on boys and young men who are sex-trafficked is emphasized. To echo Josenhans et al. (2020), researching and building programs specifically for male survivors of sex trafficking does not minimize the dire situations faced by many girls and women throughout the world but instead acknowledges and responds to the sexual exploitation of boys and men.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors thank the male participants of the Chab Dai Butterfly Project and the rest of the Chab Dai research team. They also thank Eliza Piano for her help with copyediting. Funders of this project include: The World Charitable Foundation-Vaduz, The Isaac Charitable Foundation, Equitas, Love 146, Tenth Church, World Vision, World Hope International, Imago Dei, Earth Hair Partners, Hope for the Nations, Stronger Philanthropy, Sharon Ann, Jacques, Stronger Together Foundation—Canada, ACCI, Change a Path, TGCF plus an Anonymous donor.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

**Jarrett Davis** ([jarrett.d.davis@gmail.com](mailto:jarrett.d.davis@gmail.com)) is an independent social researcher with ten years of experience specializing in gender, exploitation, and violence. Over the past 8 years, his work has focused on developing a better understanding of the vulnerabilities of people groups that are often overlooked in research, policy, and social development initiatives. He has led a variety of research projects with international organizations in Southeast Asia focusing on sexual violence against males and LGBTQ persons. More recently, he conducted research on Online Sexual Exploitation in Cambodia, Thailand, and the Philippines. He is currently based in New York.

**James Havey** ([james.havey@chabdai.org](mailto:james.havey@chabdai.org)) is the Project Management Advisor for the Butterfly Longitudinal Research Project. He is an anti-human trafficking researcher specializing in: re/integration policy and practice; community-based aftercare; the demand for sex industry; and, male and trans-female abuse. He holds a Bachelor's degree in International Affairs: Development Studies from Marquette University.

**Glenn Miles** ([drglennmiles@gmail.com](mailto:drglennmiles@gmail.com)) has over 30 years of experience focused on SE Asia. He pioneered several INGOs, has helped to develop several Toolkits for children to reduce sexual exploitation and has conducted research projects into the vulnerabilities of sexually exploited children/young people including boys, young men, and transgender. He has also conducted research into demand. He is an academic advisor for the Chab Dai Longitudinal Butterfly project. [www.gmmiles.co.uk](http://www.gmmiles.co.uk)

**Nhanh Channtha** has been the Assistant Project Manager for Butterfly Research Project since 2014. She has conducted interviews, data analysis, and disseminated findings. She has co-authored numerous publications. (<https://chabdai.org/publications/#research>.) She holds a Bachelor of Art in Sociology from the Royal University of Phnom Penh and a master's degree

in Holistic Child Development from MBTS, Malaysia. Currently, she is working with Mission Alliance, Cambodia as the program officer, mainly focus on children's education and protection

**Sreang Phaly** holds a Bachelor of Art in Sociology from the Royal University of Phnom Penh. He started working in the Butterfly Research in 2013 as Project Administrator/Researcher and is currently now the only remaining staff member with the Butterfly project as Project Closeout Coordinator to pack and process all Butterfly 'Big Data' for future use by researchers

**Lim Vanntheary** holds a double bachelor's degree in Sociology and English Education in addition to a Master's of Development Studies, all from the Royal University of Phnom Penh. Beginning work on the Butterfly Longitudinal Research in 2011 as part of Butterfly's original research team, Vanntheary has spent over nine years conducting interviews, analyzing data, producing reports, and giving presentations. From 2015-2019, Vanntheary was leading the Research Project as Project Manager and Researcher. Now, she is a Project Assistant at International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

### RECOMMENDED CITATION

Davis, Jarrett; Havey, James; Miles, Glenn; Channtha, Nhanh; Phaly, Sreang; & Vanntheary, Lim. (2021). "Going it alone": Following the male cohort of survivors of sex trafficking of the Chab Dai Butterfly Longitudinal Research Project. *Dignity: A Journal of Analysis of Exploitation and Violence*. Vol. 6 Issue 4, Article 3. <https://doi.org/10.23860/dignity.2021.06.04.03>  
Available at <http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/dignity/vol6/iss4/3>.

### REFERENCES

- Adjei, J. K. & Saewyc, E. M. (2017). Boys are not exempt: Sexual exploitation of adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 65(1),14-23.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2017.01.001>
- Affleck, W., Glass, K. & Macdonald, M. E. (2013). The limitations of language. *American Journal of Men's Health*, 7(2), 155-162. <http://doi:10.1177/1557988312464038>
- Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis & code development*. London: Sage Publications.
- Cockbain, E., Ashby, M. & Brayley, H. (2017). Immaterial boys? A large-scale exploration of gender-based differences in child sexual exploitation service users. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 29(7), 658-684.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1079063215616817>
- Cordisco Tsai, L., Lim, V. & Nhanh, C. (2020). Experiences of trafficked and sexually exploited boys transitioning from shelter programmes into the community: Findings from a longitudinal study. *Children & Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/chso.1237>
- Davis, J. & Miles, G. (2013). The Lingha boys of Siem Reap: A baseline study of sexually-exploited young men in Siem Reap, Cambodia. *Landas: Journal of Loyola School of Theology*, 27(1), 27-72. <https://doi.org/10.13185/la2013.27104>
- Davis, J. & Miles, G. (2017). "On the border": Exploring the perspectives & experiences of street involved children on the Thai-Cambodian border. Up! International. <https://up-international.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/On-the-Border-English-Web.pdf>
- Davis, J. & Miles, G. (2021). Boys are like gold: Sihanoukville, Cambodia. *Journal of Modern Slavery*, 6(1). <https://slavefreetoday.org/journal-of-modern-slavery-volume-6-issue-1-2021/>
- Davis, J. D., Miles, G., M., Blackburn, S. & Mosebach-Kornelsen, E. (2021). "There is always violence": An exploratory study of Phnom Penh, Cambodia, street-involved children. *Dignity: A Journal on Sexual Exploitation and Violence*, 6(1), Article 6.  
<https://doi.org/10.23860/dignity.2021.06.01.06>

- Duncombe, J. & Marsden, D. (1993). Love and intimacy: The gender division of emotion and 'emotion work': A neglected aspect of sociological discussion of heterosexual relationships. *Sociology*, 27(2), 221-241. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42855173>
- Frederick, J. (2010). Sexual abuse and exploitation of boys in South Asia: A review of research findings, legislation, policy and programme responses. UN [Innocenti Working Papers](https://doi.org/10.18356/f8e45fad-en). <https://doi.org/10.18356/f8e45fad-en>
- Ennew, J., Abeke, T., Bangyai, R., Karapituck, P., Kjørholt, A. T. & Noonsup, T. (2009). The right to be properly researched: How to do rights-based scientific research with children. *Bangkok: Black on White Publications; Knowing Children*. <http://www.knowingchildren.org>
- Havey, J., Schafer, P. & Beer, J. (2014). *Listening to the demand: A study of men who buy sex from male prostitutes in Cambodia*. Phnom Penh: Love 146 Cambodia. <http://gmmiles.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/MSF-Demand-Final-Report.pdf>
- Hohendorff, J. V., Habigzang, L. F., & Koller, S. H. (2017). "A boy, being a victim, nobody really buys that, you know?": Dynamics of sexual violence against boys. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 70, 53–64. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2017.05.008>
- Heilman, B. (2018). *Masculine norms and violence: Making the connections*. Washington, DC: Promundo-US. <https://promundoglobal.org/resources/masculine-norms-violence-making-connections/>
- Hilton, A., Kong, S., Nong, S., Oung, S., Sok, C., Sothearwat, S., ... & Meng, D. (2008). I thought it could never happen to boys. Phnom Penh: Hagar & World Vision. [https://www.academia.edu/17147312/I\\_thought\\_it\\_could\\_never\\_happen\\_to\\_boys](https://www.academia.edu/17147312/I_thought_it_could_never_happen_to_boys)
- Homma, Y., Wang, N., Saewyc, E. & Kishor, N. (2012). The relationship between sexual abuse and risky sexual behavior among adolescent boys: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 51(1), 18-24. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2011.12.032>
- Hounmenou, C. (2017). An initial exploration of prostitution of boys in the West African region. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 69, 188-200. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2017.04.027>
- Josenhans, V., [Kavenagh, M.](#), [Smith, S.](#) & [Wekerle, C.](#) (2020). Gender, rights and responsibilities: The need for a global analysis of the sexual exploitation of boys. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 110(1). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2019.104291>
- Levant, R. F. (2003). Treating male alexithymia. In L. Silverstein, & T. Goodrich (Eds.). *Feminist family therapy* (pp. 177-189). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, <https://epdf.pub/feminist-family-therapy-empowerment-in-social-context-psychology-of-women.html>
- Levant, R. F., Good, G. E., Cook, S. W., O'Neil, J. M., Smalley, K. B. & Owen, K. (2006). The normative male alexithymia scale: Measurement of a gender-linked li9kisyndrome. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 7, 212-224. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1524-9220.7.4.212>
- Miles, G. & Blanch, H. (2012). An initial exploration of young males in the male-to-male massage industry in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. *Social Work & Christianity*, 39(4), 407-434. <http://web.gmmiles.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Phnom-Penh-Cambodia-Study.pdf>
- Miles G. & Thomas, N. P. (2007) Don't grind an egg against a stone: Children's rights and violence in Cambodian history and culture. *Child Abuse Review*, 16(6), 383–400. <https://doi.org/10.1002/car.1010>
- Miles, S., Heang, S., Lim, V., Nhanh, C. & Sreang, P. (2014). *Butterfly methodology change: A reflection paper*. Phnom Penh: Chab Dai Coalition. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55a81f9be4b01a30079bb9d3/t/55b9519ce4b07ffe1f59c9fd/1438208412763/Butterfly+2014+Methods.pdf>

- Miles, G., Lim, V. & Nhanh, C. (2020). "I share everything in my heart to you": Tenth year evaluation of Chab Dai longitudinal butterfly research project. Chab Dai Coalition. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55a81f9be4b01a30079bb9d3/t/5fa106b944b5e83a898bdb38/1604388571910/Research+Evaluation+of+Chab+Dai+Longitudinal+Butterfly+Research+Project+-+Final.pdf>
- Miles, G., Havey, J., Miles, S., Piano, E., Lim, V., Nhanh, C., ... & Ou, S. (2021). "I don't want the next generation of children to be in pain like me": The methodology and key findings of the Chab Dai ten-year longitudinal study on sex trafficking survivors in Cambodia. *Dignity Special Edition*.
- Mitchell, K., Moynihan, M., Pitcher, C., Francis, A., English, A. & Saewyc, E. (2017). Rethinking research on sexual exploitation of boys: Methodological challenges and recommendations to optimize future knowledge generation. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 66, 142-151. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2017.01.019>
- Moynihan, M., Mitchell, K., Pitcher, C., Havaei, F., Ferguson, M. & Saewyc, E. (2018). A systematic review of the state of the literature on sexually exploited boys internationally. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 76, 440-451. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2017.12.00>
- Ricardo, C. & Barker, G. (2008). *Men, masculinities, sexual exploitation, and sexual violence: A literature review and call for action*. MenEngage Alliance Instituto Promundo. <https://promundoglobal.org/resources/men-masculinities-sexual-exploitation-and-sexual-violence-a-literature-review-and-call-for-action/>
- Rogers, C. R. (1951). *Client-centered therapy: Its current practice, implications and theory*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. [https://doi.org/10.1002/1097-4679\(195107\)7:3](https://doi.org/10.1002/1097-4679(195107)7:3)
- Schwalbe, M. L. & Wolkomir, M. (2002). Interviewing men. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds). *Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns* (pp. 52-70). Sage. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412973588.n14>
- Shaw, D. (2013). *Commercial sexual exploitation of children in Cambodia*. Washington, DC, International Justice Mission. <https://ijmstoragelive.blob.core.windows.net/ijmna/documents/CSEC-Prevalence-Cambodia.pdf?mtime=20210203031710&focal=none>
- Smith-Brake, J., Lim, V. & Nhanh, C. (2015). *Reintegration of survivors of sex trafficking: Experiences and expressions of filial piety and financial anxiety*. Phnom Penh: Chab Dai Coalition. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55a81f9be4b01a30079bb9d3/t/5705ec6759827e22b3443a23/1477607395573/BLR+2015+Working+Paper+Economic+Reintegration+Final.pdf>
- United Nations Inter-Agency Project (2008). *Guide to ethics and human rights in counter-trafficking: Ethical standards for counter-trafficking research and programming*. [https://www.endvawnow.org/uploads/browser/files/Ethics\\_Guidelines\\_Trafficking\\_UNIAP\\_2008.pdf](https://www.endvawnow.org/uploads/browser/files/Ethics_Guidelines_Trafficking_UNIAP_2008.pdf)
- Yi, S., Tuot, S. & Chhoun, P. (2015). Factors associated with recent HIV testing among high-risk men who have sex with men: A cross-sectional study in Cambodia. *BMC Public Health*, 15(743). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-015-2096-4>