This study was commissioned by CARE in 2014 to provide an independent analysis of knowledge, attitudes, practices and potential drivers of change among key duty bearers responsible for action on gender-based violence (GBV). It was conducted through a literature review of policy documents and media, interviews, and focus groups.

The main duty bearers for the purposes of this study are police and local authorities at the sub-national level. However the study also includes discussion of the role of Ministries, employers, workers representatives, NGOs, landlords and the media.

The study identifies areas of opportunity in which it will be most productive to focus energies and resources to address GBV. It also shows areas in which improvements have already been made.

By putting together findings on attitudes and actions, the study provides a holistic picture of how the two can reinforce each other to prevent duty bearers and victims from responding to and reporting incidents of GBV. Implementing strategies to break this cycle is the challenge presented by this study. The study identifies structures and duty bearer positions already in place that have can be leveraged to better address GBV and sexual harassment.

**KEY FINDINGS**

**The past two years have seen significant gains in addressing GBV and sexual harassment**
- Increases in the minimum wage for vulnerable workers such as those in the garment factory industry and some in hospitality and tourism industry have improved living conditions, as has better provision of amenities such as electricity.
- Changes in governance and pay arrangements in the police force as well as the plan to recruit more female officers could lead to a change of attitudes and incentives that spur more action on GBV.
- There has been at least one model example where a Sangkat Council has engaged with relevant business owners and residents to seek cooperation in addressing crime, including sexual harassment, in the hospitality and tourism industry.

**Current laws and policies lack detail and specificity**
- Existing laws and policies do include provisions on GBV, however they lack specificity about what constitutes sexual harassment.
- There seems to be little coordination among legal instruments and among agencies that implement them.

**The police can play a key role in preventing and responding to GBV**
- The Village and Commune Safety Plan tasks police with addressing domestic violence and violence against women and there has been a focus on community policing in the recently expired Cambodian National Police Strategic Plan. More could be done to assist commune police posts to implement these policies.
- Police currently perform their roles in a reactive way due to the limited incentives and means available to them to do their job.
- Police could make improvements to written record keeping, especially in relation to GBV.

**Sub-National Administration Councils could resource and educate existing committees and duty bearers to better prevent and respond to GBV**
- Responsibility for preventing and responding to GBV often falls to the Commune Committee on Women and Children and the Women and Children Consultative Committee.
- Officials (other than these committees) do not prioritize GBV and sexual harassment. This leads to insufficient coordination and excess workload for these Committees.
- Village Voluntary Guards take up roles due to a sense of volunteerism, however, do not necessarily take strong action on GBV.
- There is a lack of coordination and cooperation between police and local authorities. Sangkat chiefs and Women’s Committees have no direct influence over the police and have no way to compel them to give them relevant information.
- Community forums are held to discuss local issues however the meetings are not well attended by women most at risk of GBV and sexual harassment.
Actions taken by police and local authorities in response to GBV are limited by a practice of seeing some incidents as “minor” or “non-serious”

- Rape and sexual acts against minors are considered serious, and are strictly dealt with by duty bearers.
- Other definitions of "serious" are arbitrary and coloured by a lack of knowledge about GBV and stereotypes of some victims. For some duty bearers, an incident will not be serious unless it involves physical touching, for others it must lead to cuts and bruises to be treated seriously.
- Duty bearers tend not devote energy and resources to "minor" forms of harassment.
- The “compromise approach”, where women are pressured to accept an out of court solution, is pushed by authorities even when women would prefer a formal, legal approach to be taken.
- Most types of GBV and harassment are viewed as "non-serious", which reinforces the notion these actions are acceptable by community standards. This discourages reporting.

Stereotypes and attitudes towards women (especially in certain industries such as the garment industry or hospitality industries) prevent action on GBV

- There is a prevailing view held by duty bearers, the general public and women themselves that some women are "bad girls" and should tolerate some degree of harassment.
- Some duty bearers believe women invite harassment due to the way they dress.
- Women are conscious of views held about them and know that reporting incidents of violence that might not be seen as "serious" by authorities, will not lead to action, and therefore do not report GBV and sexual harassment.
- The under-reporting of GBV and sexual harassment leads duty bearers to underestimate the extent and impacts of GBV and reinforces their attitudes.

Worker’s representatives, NGOs and media are important duty bearers

- Cases of sexual harassment are more likely to be reported and responded to if victims have a “collective” voice, showing that associations and unions can assist in addressing GBV.
- Training and awareness raising about GBV and sexual harassment has been particularly effective when delivered by trusted NGOs.
- Local authorities and police use the media to stay alert to issues and incidents, and social media has been used to "name and shame" perpetrators of GBV, making the media a key duty bearer in efforts to reduce GBV.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS

The study identifies several proposed interventions in the areas of:

- Awareness raising and empowerment for victims
- Promoting policy priority and coordination
- Making policy work and shaping duty bearers’ incentives
- Engaging non-state actors

Duty Bearers and Gender-Based Violence was authored by PAK Kimchoeun, HOEUNG Sopheap & PRAK Rathyrea (MLT Consulting). To view the full report, with detailed findings and proposed interventions, please visit www.care-cambodia.org/research.