According to Ms. PT, a GBV survivor with disabilities and WSG member, she felt so thankful for the opportunities offered by CWCC that allowed her to gain knowledge, skills, and the confidence to overcome her own problems and be part of the WSGs. She mentioned that CWCC helped her to apply her knowledge and experiences to help others to address their own issues. She notes that “Unlike before, I now have the full courage and confidence to discuss equally any matters within my family [husband]. I also feel confident enough to disseminate what I had learned from training by CWCC to other community members and intervene in domestic violence and rape cases”.

Ms. A.P, another WSG member also added that “the WSG is a very helpful mechanism because members are all women that makes it comfortable for women survivors to share their [GBV] issues and seek support. And because the group is based right in the community, it allows the group members to provide support, follow up/monitor the case, and intervene in domestic violence instantly”.

A WSG member from Phneay commune testified that “CWCC come to train our WSG members on disability inclusion, gender, and stop domestic violence against women and girls with and without disabilities. What they trained us is helpful and effective in responding to GBV cases. Since the training, I resolved 3 GBV cases, 2 domestic violence cases and 1 sexual abuse. First, I provide intervention to stop domestic violence, then I report the cases to the authorities. For me I am so satisfied with the training that CWCC provided to me. I am braver than before in engaging and helping women survivors because I understand clearly about women rights and what to do when our rights are violated. If I can make a request, I wish the organization also involve husbands in the future trainings, so men also get to learn about their rights and our [women] rights and understand the consequence of their actions”.

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**Significance of the change**

The significance of the change is considered to be significant. Evidence for this is that local authorities are equipped with stronger knowledge and skills while GBV related awareness and participation of community members in combating GBV cases in their local communities is rich in cross-party coordination and diverse in approaches ranging from intervention by informal groups to actions by the authorities.

**Level of ACCESS contribution**

The level of ACCESS contribution to the change is assessed as significant. Those interviewed believe that without CWCC’s work under ACCESS financial support, the reported change may not have happened. The local authorities appeared more determined in performing their duties while outreach and educational activities from communities are made possible by communities’ members themselves.
Reap and Kampong Speu provinces are two among ACCESS’ target provinces chosen because of their high incidences of GBV.

**Addressing gaps in knowledge and capacity to respond to GBV**

Cambodian Women’s Crisis Centre (CWCC), financed by ACCESS, address the knowledge and capacity gaps among commune officials and communities’ women by providing capacity building and facilitating community-based awareness raising. Before CWCC started their work in 2019, GBV was not a focus amongst officials at the community level. Moreover, local authorities had limited capacity to handle and support GBV cases as capacity development was predominantly focused on the provincial and district levels. A commune focal point from Svay Chek commune mentioned that “Actually, GBV related services were available in our commune long ago with support from the Provincial Department of Women Affairs, but the services were minimal and no outreach and education to community ever happened”.

In addition to that, awareness among community women about their rights and available GBV services was also low. The limited knowledge and capacity amongst officials coupled with low awareness of the survivors held back the GBV victims from seeking services/support they deserved. This left some survivors with no choice but to continue to stay in the abusive environment.

CWCC started its actions to improve the situation in these communities by 1) strengthening local authorities’ capacity to improve quality of GBV services provision, and 2) establishing and building capacity of Women Support Group (WSG) in each target commune. The establishment of the WSG was possible with the local authorities’ full acknowledgement and support with ultimate purpose that WSGs and the local authorities work collaboratively to address GBV cases in their communities. A WSG member from Phneay Comune in appreciation of the collaboration said “I am very happy and proud that our commune chief encourages me to get involved in combating GBV cases in our commune. They allow me to attend commune council meetings and talk equally to them. I am so proud that they acknowledge my contribution and that my opinions are being listened to”.

**Improved knowledge and capacity of local authorities and WSGs to respond to GBV**

As of December 2020, 97 (51 F) local authorities in 8 communes across the above target provinces were trained on GBV and disability inclusion, referral guidelines, and basic counselling. Many of the trainees perceive the training to be useful in helping them to address GBV cases. A commune focal point from Svay Chek commune mentioned that “CWCC trained us on Women’s Rights, GBV, Disability Inclusion, and Referral to Services. They also provided ongoing mentoring and coaching support while we are implementing our service provision. If we are not sure about something, we can also reach out to them [CWCC] to clarify or get their advice. The knowledge we gained and the tools we received during the training help us understand better on how to process different cases. Most importantly, we gained great collaboration with police after CWCC entered in our community. This makes it easier for us to call for their support when needed.”

WSGs were established in the eight target communes with approximately 20 members in each group. The group members are generally women vulnerable to GBV [women with disabilities and returned-home women migrants] and survivors of domestic violence. These WSGs were trained on GBV concepts, women’s rights, disability inclusion, advocacy, and how to report GBV cases to gain fundamental knowledge and skills to provide or coordinate support for the survivors and conduct awareness raising among community members. The WSGs received ongoing mentoring and coaching support from CWCC while they are conducting awareness raising and advocacy activities in their communities. WSGs primary role includes peer support, peer awareness raising, and community empowerment.

**Impacts of improved knowledge and capacity of local authorities and WSGs to response to GBV**

As of December 2020, these 8 WSGs have engaged in 72 domestic violence cases. WSG members’ involvement was mostly in the form of providing immediate interventions at the violence scenes, providing mediation, report the cases to the authorities when needed, and coordinate relevant support for the survivors. The groups also conduct awareness raising among their community members either by having small group gathering or doing home visits especially to households that are prone to domestic violence and abuse. Since their establishment till December 2020, the 8 groups have raised the knowledge and awareness on GBV and GBV case reporting among at least 1,080 (630F) individuals across the target communes.

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3 21% and 25% of women in Kampong Speu and in Siem Reap respectively reported experience violence since age 15 (CDHS 2014). These rates are above the national average (20%).