



**Economic Reintegration of Survivors of Sex Trafficking:  
Experiences and Expressions of Filial Piety and  
Financial Anxiety**

**Thematic Paper**

**The Butterfly Longitudinal Research Project**

A Chab Dai study on (Re-) integration: Researching the  
lifecycle of sexual exploitation & trafficking in Cambodia

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[www.chabdai.org](http://www.chabdai.org).

and/or

[freedomcollaborative.org](http://freedomcollaborative.org)

## Executive Summary

Using a mixed methods approach, over a number of years with the same study subjects, the Butterfly Longitudinal Research Project seeks to learn about the (re-) integration of survivors of sexual exploitation and trafficking in Cambodia.

The present assessment used a compilation of data from the first 5 years of the longitudinal study and analyzed it through the thematic lens of economic reintegration. Specifically, this paper addresses two major themes in the reintegration of survivors of sex trafficking in Cambodia: filial piety and financial anxiety.

### Working Definitions (p. 20-22)

#### *Economic Reintegration*

Economic reintegration is an integral part of the reintegration journey of the survivor. It includes, not only employment and uses of money but also one's attitudes towards and relationship with one's economic and financial environment, individually as well as within one's surroundings (e.g. family, community, society).

#### *Filial Piety*

In summary, filial piety is the notion that children have obligations towards their parents. Filial piety is expressed differently in different societies, but is a highly held value in East and Southeast Asian cultures.

#### *Financial Anxiety*

"Financial anxiety can be described as feeling anxious or worried about one's financial situation" (Archuleta, Dale & Spann, 2013, p. 58). Further, "economic stress is the feeling of stress due to the current state of one's personal finances and/or due to fear about the economy" (Brown University, n.d.).

### Literature Review (p. 23-30)

#### *Filial Piety in Cambodia (p. 23)*

The concept of filial piety can be said to have originated, on one hand, in Chinese Confucianism and, when Indian Buddhism entered China, it evolved to support filial piety (Nichols, 2013). Filial piety has evolved and spread in different ways throughout Asia and the Asian diaspora, with the common thread of deep respect and gratitude towards one's parents remaining a very strong cultural value.

Filial piety in Cambodia is found at an intersection of different cultural and religious values, including Theravada Buddhism, Confucianism, and the centuries-old gender codes, Chbab Srei and Chbab Proh.

In Khmer culture, filial piety includes the expectation that daughters and daughters-in-law will provide daily assistance to parents and parents-in-law. Although filial piety has, at its foundation, a patriarchal bias, women in Khmer culture have long held positions of administrative power and respect (Ledgerwood, 1995, cited in Lewis, 2005, p. 6).

The proverb-turned-principle of filial piety in Khmer culture is termed "តបស្នងដល់ឪពុកម្តាយ-torb snorng sorng kun." Roughly translated, "តបស្នងដល់ឪពុកម្តាយ-torb snorng sorng kun" refers to the cyclical repayment of gratitude and honour to one's parents. Similarly to how Buddhism

evolved as it spread into China to include emphases on obligation towards parents and state, so it also changed upon its spread into Southeast Asia. The importance of gratitude or the duty of gratitude towards parents is an aspect that distinguishes Southeast Asian Theravada Buddhism from Indian and Sri Lankan Buddhism. Cambodian, Thai, and Lao Buddhist texts indicate the obligation of the child toward the parent is something no Buddhist can escape (Kourilsky, 2008, p. 1-2).

The effects of the Khmer Rouge genocide and civil war exacerbated the pressure on young daughters to contribute to the family livelihood. Brown (2007) likens filial piety in Cambodia to the “rights” of parents to make decisions about and for their children; because a parent has “raised” the child, they have a right to make use of the child’s labour.

***Filial Piety & Sexual Exploitation: Coercion, Choice & Risk (p. 26)***

The issue of coercion versus choice in sex work and sexual exploitation has long been debated in human trafficking and health literature (Law, 2000; Alexander, 2001; Micollier, 2004). Gray (2002) draws the distinction between Western and Cambodian worldviews, stating “autonomy” and “self-sufficiency” are important aspects of resilience in Western cultures whereas “family and community support” and “connection and support” are important aspects of resilience in Cambodian society (cited in Reimer, Gourley & Langelier, 2006, p.5).

Alexander (2001) argues context must be accounted for when looking at “sex workers’ choice.” He nuances, “The decision [to do sex work] is more or less a ‘free’ or active ‘choice’ depending on the degree of desperation. However, we cannot ignore the effect of a context imposed from outside, within which the decision is made. [...]” (Alexander, 2001, p. 2). This context, made up of family obligations, dire poverty, and systemic gender injustice, among other factors, makes the issue of “choice” a complex paradigm.

Research in Southeast Asia has shown the interconnections between filial piety and the economics of sex work. In the dual context of filial piety and economic hardship, agency becomes a function of the family’s needs and not the individual’s.

***Financial Anxiety in Survivors of Human Trafficking (p. 28)***

There has been a large amount of research done on the links between financial stressors and mental health. Gresenz, Sturm & Tang (2001) found a strong association between individual income and mental health, another important association being between mental health and socioeconomic environment (p. 201).

Martha Nussbaum (2005) argues violence against women affects many of their capabilities, including their control of environment. Therefore, issues of financial independence, increasing skills and knowledge for employment readiness, access to systems and structures, and concerns for safety are all important to the rehabilitation and reintegration processes of survivors of trafficking (Surtees, 2012).

Evidence shows that most victims of trafficking come from situations of severe poverty, with the entailing issues, such as lack of food, early education withdrawal, and the inability to meet basic subsistence (Brown, 2007, p. 52). This poverty is often exacerbated by a major incident prior to the victim entering an exploitative situation, such as illness, the death of a parent, or recurring debt.

One of the major vulnerability factors for survivors who are reintegrating is they are often going back to the same situation from which they were exploited or trafficked in the first

place, often with the same expectations to provide for the family financially. A survivor's ability to seek and secure sustainable employment is influenced by both internal (e.g. residual trauma and anxiety tied to trafficking, educational and employment background) and external (e.g. unstable economic environment) factors (Surtees, 2012, p. 12). Evidence has shown that some survivors can actually overcome their stigma and anxiety through their economic reintegration, among other factors.

### **Assessment Scope and Methodology (p. 31-35)**

The BLR Project has used a mixed method approach over the past five years (see Miles & Miles 2010; Miles & Miles 2011; Miles et al., 2012; Miles et al., 2013, Miles et al. 2014). The research team has used survey tools, asking both closed- and open-ended questions, as well as a number of qualitative data collecting methods, such as focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, informal interviews, play, art projects, and participant observation.

The present thematic assessment draws from a subset of participants within the larger pool of data collected in the BLR Project. The thematic assessment focused only on cohorts that had been (re-) integrated, for a total of 77 participants. Cohorts were included if the case study showed at least four visits for a cohort spanning at least two calendar years.

This assessment was seeking overarching themes on filial piety and financial anxiety, and was not intended to be a statistical analysis across all sample types. Alan Bryman's (2012) four stages of analysis were used to develop a large number of coding categories, in order to attempt a fuller picture of the group's expressions and experiences of filial piety and financial anxiety.

Relevant longitudinal data were compiled in the assessment as they related to several basic themes involving financial anxiety, economic stability/instability, filial piety (including feelings of financial obligation), and planning for the future. These included participants' responses, attitudes, perceptions and experiences relating to "worry" (about money, about debt, about the future, about their families), work satisfaction, family obligations, and money management.

### **Results (p. 36-51)**

In addition to the yes/no and multiple choice survey questions, interview data were coded into several categories relating to filial piety and financial anxiety.

#### ***Filial Piety (p. 36)***

##### Remittances and Feelings of Responsibility

An initial survey was administered in 2011 among all study participants; the results showed, overall, participants stated parents should be financially responsible for their children under 18; children under 18 should not be responsible to support or to repay the debt of their families, but children over 18 should; and, participants mainly disagreed that children are destined to become like their parents. Survey results also showed, overwhelmingly, participants agreed or strongly agreed men over 18 should be more responsible than women over 18 to support their families.

The categories included in the qualitative coding system pertinent to filial piety included whether participants had send remittances and given money to their parents or other members of their family, feelings of responsibility towards their family, other feelings towards their family, indications of their family's attitude toward the survivor, negative family influences, and some indicators of family breakdown.



One result was on sending money to one's parents or family; 67.5% of reintegrated survivors stated they give money to their parents or stated they wished they could but were unable to. In the vast majority of cases, money was given directly by the survivor to their parents; in a smaller number of cases, survivors gave the money to their in-laws or to surrogate parents (such as an aunt or grandmother).

Regarding expressions or statements of feelings of financial responsibility towards one's family, 22.1% survivors stated they felt responsible to take care of their siblings and 42.3% stated they felt responsible for supporting their family. There was also a general expression of wanting to provide for or support one's family. Often this was expressed in the desire to pursue education or better job opportunities in order to better provide for one's family in the future.

### Feelings Towards One's Family

These results focused on worry about one's family financial situation, whether or not a participant felt they could trust their parents, feeling cared for or uncared for by one's parents. Participants worried a great deal, continuously and cyclically, over many years, and one of their greatest worries was for their family's survival. Forty-two percent (42%) of participants expressed worry for their family's livelihood, at least once over the course of the study.

Participants were often asked during surveys or interviews whether they had anyone they could trust in their life. Overall, 42% of participants stated at least once during the span of the study they trusted one or both parents, usually their mother. On the other hand, nearly 30% of participants stated at one point they did not trust their parents, often deduced from the larger statement they did not trust anyone in their lives.

Other expressions of feelings towards one's family included participant expressing they had no regrets about their past (e.g. working in the sex industry, being sold into sexual exploitation) because they saw it as a sacrifice for their family (7 participants); feelings of missing one's parents, especially, but not only, when staying in an aftercare shelter (14 participants); feeling cared for by their family or having a "warm" feeling being with their family (20 participants), and feeling uncared for by one's parents (7 participants).

Finally, a set of indicators relating to filial piety include three chosen indicators of family breakdown: whether a sibling was also trafficked or experienced sexual exploitation (20.1%), statements relating addictions in one's family (30%), and instances of domestic violence in one's family (9.1%).

A 2015 focus group discussion on filial piety was conducted with a subset of participants in order to identify the survivor's perspective and experience in terms of family obligation and support. Eight participants were included in the focus group. Participants likened the term "obligation" with the words "heavy," "burden," "responsibility," and "difficult." They also expressed feelings of both being overwhelmed and needing to persevere in their obligations. Participants' definition of obligation is summed up in one participant's statement: "Obligation is our duty that we need to be responsible in our family."

When asked about the positive and negative impacts of filial piety, few focus group discussion participants were able to articulate any positives, but all participants had things to say about the negative impacts of having so many family responsibilities. Reported symptoms and expressions of feelings of responsibilities were stress, lashing out in anger, conflict with one's significant other, feelings of hopelessness and despair, inability to

concentrate, headaches, crying, sleeplessness, thoughts of suicide, physical illness, depression, and lack of motivation. Participants talked about feeling “heavy,” “complicated,” and “torn.”

Despite these negative statements on filial piety, participants disagreed with the use of the word “owe” in relation to their familial responsibilities, saying it should not be termed “debt” but “responsibility,” one that they assumed out of kindness and gratitude.

An earlier focus group discussion on Chbab Srei also found a similar expression, with a majority of participants stating they could help support their families by respecting and obeying their parents.

### ***Debt (p. 42)***

#### Repaying Debt

Surveys from 2011 and 2012 asked a number of questions pertaining to accumulating and repaying debt, both personally and in one’s family. One question related to the participants’ feelings about a hypothetical situation of debt: 91% of participants stated they would worry about repaying debt if their household (not necessarily them personally) was in debt. Another 5% would be concerned, 3% were uncertain how they would feel, and only 1% stated they would not be bothered.

Other debt-related questions included in the survey were on responsibility and choice around household and personal debt. On whether participants felt they had a choice about whether or not they got into debt, 69.7% responded “yes” and 30.3% responded “no;” 48.5% of participants stated they had been responsible to repay debt in the last year; and, 49.3% stated someone in their household had been responsible to repay debt in the last year. Qualitative data compiled over the whole study period found a similar result with 54.5% of survivors stating at least once they were currently repaying debt. Additionally, 64.9% of survivors stated at some point over the study period their parents currently had debt.

Debt for living expenses was often rolling in nature: participants or their families would have to borrow some money to make it through the month and they would pay back the lender once they received their paycheck, leaving them lacking to make it through the next month. Medical expenses were often related to unexpected illness, childbirth, or caring for an ailing and aging parent or relative. Family-related debt often referred to a survivor incurring debt in order to give or send money to their parents, often to pay the debt of the latter.

#### Anxiety Related to Debt

Well over half of survivors expressed feeling responsible to repay debt, whether their own or their family’s; additionally, over a third of survivors expressed worry related to having and repaying debt. Around 10% talked at some point about worry and fear around moneylenders calling in their debts. Related to the above indicators were direct statements about *not* feeling responsible to pay debt: 12 participants (15.6%) overtly stated they did not feel responsible to repay debt.

### ***Financial Anxiety (p. 46)***

One survey question touched on financial anxiety by asking if survivors felt they earned enough money from their main job. Survivors were divided as to whether they made enough money from their main job. In answer to the statement, “I earn enough money by working at my main job alone,” 22 participants either agreed or strongly agreed and 22 participants disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The coding system for the narrative qualitative data also tracked whether survivors felt they had enough money to cover their expenses. Over the span of the study period, 28.6% stated they felt they had enough money for their daily expenses, while 41.6% stated they felt they did not have enough money for the daily expenses (the remaining 30% did not mention whether or not they felt they had enough money for the daily expenses).

Other indicators of financial anxiety included expressing worry or fear about money (separate from worry about debt) (49.9%), expressing uncertainty or worry about the future (58.4%), and expressing planning for the future (85.7%). Of the 38 participants who expressed worry or fear related to money, 37 expressed this theme after their reintegration; five of those also expressed worry about money before their reintegration (i.e. when they were still living in the shelter). One participant expressed worry about money before reintegration and not after.

Second, 45/77 participants expressed uncertainty or worry about the future, whether it pertained to finishing school, finding a job, earning enough money, or other livelihood and well-being issues; 38 of those participants expressed this theme only after reintegration, six expressed it only before reintegration, and one expressed it both before and after reintegration.

#### ***Vocational Training & Employment (p. 47)***

For the purposes of the present assessment, categories for this theme were limited to number and type of job held by survivors before and after reintegration, monthly salaries, whether vocational training was utilized once survivors reintegrated, and main reasons for leaving employment. Findings on salaries showed that survivors who remain employed after reintegration are increasing their monthly salary from year to year.

One indicator for financial anxiety and employment was the number of different jobs held by survivors after their reintegration. Of the 77 survivors in the assessment, 59 were working after their reintegration (as opposed to only attending school or vocational training). Within that subset, the average number of jobs held by survivors was just over 2, with a significant number of survivors holding a single job after reintegration with one of a few aftercare-affiliated social enterprises. In fact, of the 18 participants who reported having only one job since their reintegration, 13 participants (72.2%) worked for an aftercare-affiliated social enterprise. Of the other five participants who reported having only one job after reintegration, three were also in school, so their job was part-time or irregular.

Thirty-one (31) participants in the assessment took part in some form of vocational training, either before or during reintegration. The assessment also tracked whether participants utilized their vocational training skills in their employment after reintegration. This indicator was tracked for 27 participants; 18 of these participants did utilize their vocational training in some way in the employment during reintegration, and 17 did not.

A total of 34 participants stated at some point the reasons they decided to quit their job, drop out of school, or leave a vocational training program early. The two most likely reasons were a negative workplace experience and urgent family financial need. There was often urgency in the reasons for quitting, and participants often felt a burden for providing more for their families.

***Notes & Limitations Regarding Data Collection (p. 50)***

It should be noted that many of the participants expressed the above themes did so multiple times over the span of their involvement with the study. Often in interviews taking place months and years apart, participants would express the same feelings and experiences over and over. These results changed little over the course of the study; the challenges, feelings of responsibility, and instability were ongoing for most survivors who expressed these themes.

Furthermore, the majority of themes on filial piety and financial anxiety were expressed after reintegration, once a survivor had gone back to living in the community; 63% of participants (48/77) expressed themes of filial piety and financial anxiety only after they reintegrated and 27% (21/77) expressed these themes both before and after reintegration. Only 5% (4/77) never expressed any of the themes, and another 5% only expressed these themes before reintegration and not after.

The sample sizes in this assessment are unequal in numbers of visits during a given year because not all participants were available three times every year. Surveys and interviews were all conducted in Khmer and were later translated into English. Transcripts and narratives are crosschecked to ensure translation accuracy. Surveys and preliminary findings are reviewed as a team to avoid cultural bias in translation and ensure that cultural perspectives are retained in data evaluations.

Analysis of the present assessment findings were also discussed and confirmed with the research team, in order to mitigate cultural and other contextual misunderstanding that may have occurred. The research team, then, including judgments and opinions about the qualitative data, but were careful come to consensus about analysis in order to include in the final report. In addition, qualitative coding systems may be vulnerable to slight inaccuracies, as the researcher is sometimes making judgments as to which statements made by participants fall under a certain thematic category or another.

***Discussion (p. 52-61)***

This section goes into more detail and analysis on the results of the longitudinal data used in the assessment.

***Filial Piety is an Expression of “Gratitude” (p. 52)***

Participants expressed themes of filial piety and, if asked directly, stated their duty towards their parents was an honour rather than a debt. Participants were often overwhelmed, however, by the worry they felt about their family’s livelihood and the responsibility of providing for their family.

**Worry and Responsibility**

The feelings of responsibility expressed by survivors are translated into reality, as seen in the fact that over two-thirds (68%) of participants stated they gave money to their parents at some point, and often many times, over the course of the study period. Statements regarding worry and responsibility clearly pointed to a constant concern for one’s family’s wellbeing and livelihood, and anxiety about being able to provide enough for them.

Survivors put off pursuing plans for the future or for themselves in order to help and support their parents. This was most often demonstrated in delaying education, employment opportunities, and marriage. In addition, many survivors stated their future plans included living with their parents, providing for their families, and a desire for positive family relationships.

### Honour and Gratitude

When asked directly about “sangkun” (the debt of gratitude one owes one’s parents), participants were reluctant to frame it in terms of a negative (debt), but rather wanted to explain it as an honour, a (positive) responsibility to repay gratitude to one’s parents. Participants in informal interviews sometimes spoke about gratitude when speaking of their responsibilities or feelings towards their parents. One survivor explained her feelings of responsibility to pay her parents’ debt, saying she considered it her “gratitude.”

Seven participants expressed one particular indicator of both responsibility and family honour: they expressed that the sacrifice of having been sexually exploited was one they willingly accepted because it was for the benefit of their family. One survivor was clear that she never regretted being prostituted, as she had sacrificed herself so her family could have a “good future.”

### Negative Relationships

Participants supported their parents and felt responsible to provide for them, even if the relationship between them and their parents was strained or negative. This was often the case between daughters and their mothers. Some survivors expressed sadness over the loss of relationship with their mothers, but continued to do what they thought of as their duty. They expressed the desire to be close to their mothers and to gain their mothers’ approval by being good daughters, including giving them more money.

### The Burden of Filial Piety

An interesting tension in participants’ attitude towards their parents was, though they talked of their duty as a sign of gratitude, they often also disclosed feeling it was a huge burden to provide for their parents. The burden of filial duties impacted participants’ mental health, with some talking about feeling suicidal, depressed, and stressed about needing to provide for their families.

Participants also expressed negative feelings and guilt when they felt they were unable to adequately support their parents. One participant expressed guilt that she had married, and was therefore not fully available to provide for her biological family. Some participants expressed feeling looked down on by neighbors for not giving enough money to their parents when they visited home.

Negative decision-making is also tied to the filial burden. Participants who returned to sex work, or considered returning to sex work, often did so because their families needed money or were pressuring them to earn more.

### ***Survivors Suffer from Financial Anxiety (p. 56)***

Survivors experience anxiety both over their present financial circumstances and about their plans for the future.

### Money and Mental Health

Reintegrated survivors experience consistent and recurring financial anxiety. Symptoms of financial anxiety are linked to the burden of filial piety, as stated by one participant, speaking about the negative impact of feeling financially responsible towards her family: “I have so many responsibilities so if I have capability (higher economic status), I wouldn’t feel stress. If I have no ability to handle it, I get aggressive and sometime when I cannot control my feeling I throw my anger on my children.”

The anxiety they feel is not only related to the responsibility and burden of providing financially for their families, but also regarding their financial situation in general. Survivors

are constantly worried about how much money they make, how they will pay all their expenses, how they will care for their children, how they will (or cannot) prepare for economic shocks like illness or the death of a family member, and how they will pay their own and their family's debts. Approximately half of participants stated at some point they felt worry or fear related to money, and nearly half stated they did not earn enough money for their expenses. This did not improve over time, but was a constant worry throughout the assessment period.

Gender seemed to play into feelings of financial responsibility. Financial anxiety was not only externally motivated, but female survivors especially put a lot of pressure on themselves to be "good daughters," and "good women." Overall, boys did not feel responsible to pay their parents' debt, only their own.

### Unrealistic Expectations & Concern for the Future

Plans for the future were very pliable and often changed from visit to visit throughout the study, and many were not very realistic about their ambitions. Some participants stated a different career ambition in every study visit, but never pursued vocational training or jobs in those fields. Many survivors seemed unable to draw a link between "dreaming" and realistic career ambitions.

One reason for this inability to plan realistically for the future may be that survivors are doing just that: surviving. If one is focused on making it day-to-day, or week-to-week, one may not have a full ability to imagine or plan concretely for the next job or opportunity. Indeed, symptoms of financial anxiety, disclosed in one of the participant focus group discussions, included a lack of motivation and hopelessness.

### ***Survivors are Financially Unstable and Indebted (p. 57)***

Underpinning the feelings of anxiety around finances was the very real financial instability experiences of survivors.

### Present and Future Financial Instability

Half of survivors stated at some point they did not earn enough money to cover their living expenses, and reasons for quitting employment was often associated with low or inadequate salary. Very few survivors ended up being unemployed (or if they did, they did not remain so) but the employment they did secure did not meet their financial needs.

Linked to this was also participants' inability to plan for the future, including lacking budgeting and financial planning skills. Some participants talked about preferring a smaller daily income (such as tips from working in KTV or hospitality) to getting a larger monthly paycheck. Additionally, although a large proportion of survivors expressed some form of planning or dreaming for the future, very few actually took concrete steps over the course of the study to achieve or work towards their ambitions.

The inability to plan for the future, linked to both inadequate income and inability to budget, means survivors are vulnerable to external shocks and cannot build capital to improve their livelihood.

### Cycle of Debt

Experiences of debt were among the most commonly talked about difficulties by survivors. Debt was the most pressing financial concern for most survivors. Debt among survivors and their families were not single events; debt in these families is a persistent and entrenched cycle from which they do not seem to be able to extract themselves.

The top four types of debt disclosed by survivors were living expenses, medical expenses, family, and housing or asset repair. This shows debt is often accrued because families do not have savings or a safety net for regular expenses and unexpected events.

***Survivors are Sometimes Unprepared for the Workforce (p. 59)***

There is a large amount of data on survivors' participation in aftercare education, vocational training and the job market; however, for the purposes of this assessment, only two themes are covered, which are related to financial anxiety.

**Vocation Training for the Job Market**

Determining whether and which types of vocational training prepare survivors for the mainstream job market has been a growing concern in literature in recent years. The results of the present assessment show a moderate view of how and if vocational training prepares survivors for employment after reintegration. Half of participants who attended vocational training used it at some point during their reintegration employment. Many of these ended up being employed by AP businesses or aftercare-affiliated social enterprises, and not in jobs outside the counter-trafficking sector.

Participants also expressed reluctance to enroll or complete their vocational training program because of the financial constraints of not earning any or enough money during the training. At least ten participants directly stated their reason for quitting their job or vocational training had to do with their family urgently needing their financial support.

**Aftercare-Affiliated Social Enterprises**

Salary tracking did show an increase in survivor salaries over the study period. It should be noted salaries were only tracked over multiple years for 25 participants, and those participants may have been more likely to hold stable, aftercare-affiliated jobs, and not informal jobs or jobs outside the counter-trafficking sector.

Another indicator of job stability is the fact that most survivors who held a single job during reintegration worked for aftercare-affiliated social enterprises or AP jobs. Generally, participants were more likely to feel more secure in these jobs, either financially or psychologically. Survivors expressed both satisfaction and dissatisfaction with their work experiences with counter-trafficking businesses.

**Conclusion & Recommendations (p. 62-66)**

An overarching tension in the findings on filial piety and financial anxiety among reintegrated survivors of trafficking is the gap between direct statements related to these themes and indirect expressions of these themes. Two examples of this tension are in themes of children's responsibilities towards one's parents and viewing filial piety as an honour or a burden.

In the initial survey, participants overwhelmingly disagreed (76%) that children under 18 should be responsible to support their families; however, the expressions of worry, responsibility, and guilt about supporting one's family were pervasive, even among participant under or around the age of 18. Secondly, although participants verbally framed their filial duty in terms of honour and gratitude, expressions of burden and difficulty were very high among those who expressed themes of filial piety.

Also, the fact that most survivors expressed themes of filial piety and financial anxiety only after they reintegrated points to the heightened stress during the initial reintegration stage, adding the many psychological and emotional issues at play around leaving the shelter and returning home or reentering the community.

The findings of this assessment may contribute to finding better and more holistic solutions for survivor reintegration, as well as implications for further research.

***The Centrality of Family (p. 62)***

The assessment concludes that family is the central focus and influencer of a survivor's economic reintegration process. It is therefore imperative to include family assessments, social work, and empowerment in reintegration services for survivors. The family environment, expectations, assets, and challenges should be taken account of and included in each survivor's reintegration plan.

***A Model for Financial Capability Among Survivors (p. 63)***

Based on the findings of the assessment, a framework of financial capability is recommended for programs to improve their economic reintegration assistance to survivors. This suggested model for financial capability among trafficking survivors is based on the existing framework developed for survivors of domestic violence in the United States. For the model to be adapted to the counter-trafficking sector, more research and testing should be done; however, the theoretical framework of the model is a good place to start.

Financial capability involves combining elements of financial literacy, vocational training and job readiness, job placement, and access to systems and resources. Postmus, Plummer, McMahon, & Zurlo (2013) frame this model in terms of empowerment, stating "empowerment is not the outcome of services, but rather a process in which women engage." Openly speaking about issues of filial piety and financial anxiety with survivors of trafficking could empower them to face and deal with these issues within their family context.

One aspect models for domestic violence and trafficking victims have in common is the need for safety in program implementation. Sanders (2013) emphasizes the centrality of safety in economic empowerment and security programs for vulnerable women.

There are three main facets of a financial capability model, which must be implemented together and in a larger context of ongoing social work, mentoring and coaching (both personal and work/entrepreneurship-oriented), and counselling. The first facet is financial literacy and education. This facet is not meant to be a one-time activity, but an ongoing process of learning and putting into practice what is learned throughout the second facet. The second facet of financial capability is applying knowledge to experience. This is usually the activity of job placement and employment experience, and because financial education is ongoing during job placement, it is reinforcing financial education through experiential learning. The third facet is supporting survivors to access systems and resources that will enable them to plan for the future and achieve their desired socio-economic outcomes. This facet includes a challenge to advocate and partner with institutions to promote more just and targeted products, resources, and policies for vulnerable populations.

The larger context of social work and counseling that is imperative to the implementation of this model can include involving a survivor's parents and family in the learning and coaching process. It can also include enabling survivors to think critically and realistically about what employment is available and possible to them.

***Implications for Further Research (p. 65)***

The present assessment can contribute to reintegration programs and services by providing an understanding of the instability and anxiety survivors experience in their financial lives



and how important the family unit is to the psychological and socio-economic well-being of the survivor. Future data assessment could focus on more specific areas of survivors' economic environment and economic reintegration services, such as:

- How survivors and their families prepare for or deal with economic shocks, such as medical emergencies or the death of a family member; if and how economic shocks played into the survivor's trafficking experience;
- The larger economic environment and the survivor's work environment; how vulnerable work played a role in the survivor's experience before and/or after trafficking;
- Analysis of survivors' and their families' physical assets and how they acquire and use assets as collateral or livelihood enhancement; the use of assets as savings; the loss of assets as an economic shock.

By the end of the 10 years of the Butterfly Longitudinal Research project, the research team should aim to have collected enough data to be able to draw a reasonable picture of survivors' economic and filial experience, before, during, and after their trafficking experience. This will greatly contribute to painting the full picture of how and why people are trafficked, what, specifically, contributes to a victim's vulnerability, and an understanding of how pre-trafficking vulnerability and risk can be mitigated to both prevent trafficking and to better assist and support trafficking survivors once they have reintegrated.

## Introduction

Using a mixed methods approach, over a number of years with the same study subjects, the Butterfly Longitudinal Research Project seeks to learn about the (re-) integration of survivors of sexual exploitation and trafficking in Cambodia. The study is taking place over 10 years, beginning in 2010 and completing its sixth year in 2015. The purpose of this study is to listen to the collective “voice” of survivors and to gain an understanding of their perspectives and experiences as they (re-) integrate into Cambodian society.

Through the dissemination of this “voice” and the research findings locally, regionally and globally, (re-) integration programming and policy will be informed and advanced, thereby directly improving the quality of programming and ultimately the quality of life for survivors of sexual exploitation.

The present assessment used a compilation of data from the first 5 years of the longitudinal study and analyzed it through the thematic lens of economic reintegration. Specifically, this paper addresses two major themes in the reintegration of survivors of sex trafficking in Cambodia: filial piety and financial anxiety. It is the conclusion of this paper that an overwhelming majority of survivors express and experience financial anxiety and function under a burden of filial piety, both of which pose great challenges to their economic well-being after reintegration from a trafficking experience.

### A Note on Reading this Report

The purpose of this report was to uncover overarching themes of financial anxiety and filial piety among survivors of sex trafficking after they had reintegrated into a community (i.e. their home community or a new community, outside a residential assistance program). Themes were categorized into “before” and “after” reintegration, in order to make some comparisons. In some cases, survivors did not have “before” information, because they reintegrated directly or shortly after exiting an exploitative situation.

Because these themes have not been explored extensively in previous literature, the aim of this paper was to explore and analyze themes qualitatively and broadly. Furthermore, themes came up within narrative accounts and open-ended interview questions and in very few cases were survivors asked specific, direct, or yes/no questions relating to these themes. Rather, these themes arose through conversations in which survivors brought up subjects themselves and expressed worries, fears, and realities as part of semi-structured interviews, not as survey responses. For these reasons, coding categories tracked responses over the entire study period, with an emphasis on the reintegration process, rather than tracking each instance year by year.

It should be emphasized the numbers cited in the Results section pertain largely to instances wherein survivors expressed these themes organically, or as part of more general, semi-structured interview. For example, survivors may have been asked directly if they currently had debt, but the broader conversation about their feelings towards debt and paying debt was often more informal and not survey-based. Conversely, if survivors did not express certain aspects of these themes, it is not necessarily indicative they do not experience them.

The main sections in the report are as follows:

- Literature Review: this section focuses on peer-reviewed research done in the areas of filial piety in Southeast Asia, financial anxiety, specifically among vulnerable and

traumatized populations, and economic experiences of survivors of trafficking during reintegration.

- Results: this section lays out the raw findings of the assessment, including theme-relevant findings within surveys early in the study period, theme-relevant findings in two focus group discussions (one having taken place early in the study period and another having been designed and carried out during the assessment), and findings from the qualitative theme coding process from narrative accounts and interview transcripts.
- Discussion: this section analyzes the results; in other words, it draws links between different results, outlines main themes coming out of the results, and draws various conclusions on how survivors express and experience financial anxiety and filial piety in reintegration.
- Recommendations: this section uses the previous sections to argue how the counter-trafficking community can move forward to better care for survivors in reintegration.

## **Discourse Regarding Definitions**

### **Human Trafficking**

Defined by the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons (UN Trafficking Protocol):

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

### **Sexual Exploitation**

“Child sexual exploitation” is when a child (under the age of 18) is involved in a situation or a relationship where they are being used sexually, and the child, or a third party, receives a reimbursement for this activity (money, gifts, affection or favors – e.g. alcohol, food or shelter). There are thought to be three main forms of sexual exploitation: prostitution, pornography, and trafficking for sexual exploitation. In this research we are interested in trafficking for the purposes of prostitution, the movement of children from one place to another, within a country or across a border, for the purposes of prostitution, and the exploitation of children through prostitution.

### **(Re-)Integration Assistance**

The provision of comprehensive programs designed to (re-)integrate victims of trafficking into society. This includes actively preventing stigmatization; providing job training; legal assistance and health care; and, by taking measures to cooperate with NGOs provide for the social, medical, and psychological care of victims and survivors (Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings, 2001). From our research findings we would add a provision to ensure adequate education continues in the community after leaving the assistance program.

### **Types of Assistance Programs (APs) and Declined Assistance**

An objective of this research is to understand the progress and experiences of participants from different types of assistance programs (APs) as they (re-)integrate. The following groupings are used in the BLR:

“Reintegration Assistance” refers to any level of ongoing support after a participant has left the assistance program (usually residential).

“Shelter” refers to assistance a participant receives whilst residing in the shelter.

“Community Program” refers to assistance in the form of employment and, possibly, additional psychosocial support, spiritual support, and further training.

“Transition Home” and “Family Group Home” refers to assistance at some level in group accommodation; it usually follows up after those who have been in shelter programs.

“Training Program” refers to any participant who is undergoing a type of skills training. The participant can be out in the community or in any type of residential program while receiving this training.

“Declined assistance” designates participants who originally refused to enroll in any assistance program, and may or may not currently be receiving assistance.

In the present assessment, two main categories are used; namely, “before reintegration” (usually referring to participant during their time in a shelter program or the time between exiting the sex industry and entering a community program) and “after reintegration” (referring to a participant who has left a shelter program, but may or may not still be receiving reintegration support or community assistance).

### **After-Affiliated Social Enterprise (AP SE)**

This term refers to businesses that focus on hiring (exclusively or in large part) survivors of sexual exploitation and trafficking, usually through partnerships with intervention and aftercare programs. They usually put a high emphasis on providing a safe and empowering work environment and either have their own social workers and counselors on staff, or partner with aftercare programs to provide these services for their employees.

## **Working Definitions**

### **Economic Reintegration**

The Butterfly Longitudinal Project has used the same definition of reintegration since its outset (Miles & Miles, 2011; Miles et al., 2012; Miles et al., 2013; Morrison et al. 2014; Morrison et al., 2015) from “Monitoring Anti-Trafficking Re/Integration Programs: A Manual” (Surtees, 2010):

Recovery and economic and social inclusion following a trafficking experience. This includes settlement in a stable and safe environment, access to a reasonable standard of living, mental and physical wellbeing, and opportunities for personal, social and economic development, and access to social and emotional support. It may involve returning to one’s family and/or community of origin; it may also involve integration in a new community and even in a new country. TVRP criteria for determining if an individual has been successfully (re-)integrated includes: 1) safe and affordable accommodation, 2) legal status, 3) professional and employment opportunities, 4) education and training opportunities, 5) security and safety, 6) healthy social environment (including anti-discrimination and anti-marginalization), 7) social wellbeing and positive interpersonal relations, 8) economic wellbeing/viability, 9) physical wellbeing, 10) mental wellbeing, 11) access to services and opportunities, 12) motivation and commitment to re/integration process, 13) legal issues and court proceedings, and 14) wellbeing of secondary beneficiaries.

Economic reintegration includes the aspects of survivor reintegration relating to economic and financial well-being and is an integral part of the reintegration journey of the survivor. It includes, not only employment and uses of money but also one's attitudes towards and relationship with one's economic and financial environment, individually as well as within one's surroundings (e.g. family, community, society). The literature agrees that an important component of reintegration is economic empowerment:

Economic empowerment is an overarching theme that includes the following: 1) an increase in financial literacy or the knowledge and skills to make sound financial decisions and obtain resources; 2) an improvement in economic self-efficacy or the belief that one has the resources, options, and confidence to be successful; and 3) an enhancement in economic self-sufficiency or economic behaviours that demonstrate their economic self-efficacy or financial literacy regarding personal financial management (Postmus, 2012, p. 1).

Surtees (2012) defines economic empowerment of trafficking survivors as follows:

In the context of re/integration, economic empowerment is about trafficked persons equipping themselves with the skills, resources and confidence to economically support themselves and their families and, in the longer term, contributing to the economic well-being of their communities (p.11).

### **Filial Piety**

In summary, filial piety is the notion that children have obligations towards their parents. Filial piety is expressed differently in different societies, but is a highly held value in East and Southeast Asian cultures. Lewis (2005) explains:

Filial piety encompasses a hierarchical relationship across generations with ancestor veneration, respect, obedience, and reverence according to age and gender at its core. It prescribes obligation and debt to one's elders and has a strong emphasis on extended family networks living in multi-generational households. Filial piety places elders, especially men, in a privileged position over younger family members. Indeed, filial piety preserves the emotional link between recollection and trans-generational inner reality as a path toward continuity of generations and cultural ideologies. Moreover, filial piety provides the rules and laws governing norms for obedience, education, docility, and power (Liem, 1998 & Detzner, 2004, as cited in Lewis, 2005, p. 6).

### **Financial Anxiety**

Definitions of financial anxiety have been developed mainly in research on students' experience of student loans and education-related financial strain. The research is further discussed in the literature review section below; a working definition for the purposes of this assessment is "Financial anxiety can be described as feeling anxious or worried about one's financial situation" (Archuleta, Dale & Spann, 2013, p. 58). Further, "economic stress is the feeling of stress due to the current state of one's personal finances and/or due to fear about the economy" (Brown University, n.d.).

### **Aftercare-Affiliated Social Enterprise**

This term refers to businesses which function with the purpose of providing employment to survivors and those vulnerable to trafficking. They often partner with assistance programs

(APs) to help survivors transition into employment after they reintegrate into the community either directly from exploitative employment or from a shelter.

**Surrogate Parent**

Within this assessment, the use of the term “surrogate parent” designates any person whom the participant views as their caregiver, guardian, or main parent. In some cases, such as when one or both of the participant’ parents are dead, it may be an aunt or a grandparent, and in some cases, it may be a different person whom the participant has assigned parental meaning.

**Survivor/Participant**

Within the assessment report, the terms survivor and participant are used interchangeably, depending on which term is appropriate to the context. Study subjects are often referred to as participants, but each of these subjects is also a survivor, and should be designated as such.

## Literature Review

### Filial Piety in Cambodia

#### Origins of Filial Piety in Asia

The concept of filial piety can be said to have originated, on one hand, in Chinese Confucianism. The Chinese character 孝 (“Xiao”) is written with the character for “old,” placed above the character for “son” (the elder is carried by the son). According to Nichols (2013), “the Early Confucian corpus functions as a tool wielded by fathers to moralize doctrines about obedience to parents and encode them in offspring for the express benefit of parents” (p. 225).

Confucius himself said, “In serving his parents, a filial son reveres them in daily life; he makes them happy while he nourishes them; he takes anxious care of them in sickness; he shows great sorrow over their death that was for him; and he sacrifices to them with solemnity” (Classic of Filial Piety). This exemplified how filial piety is not only a requirement during the parent’s lifetime, but throughout the child’s, beyond the parent’s death.

Early Indian Buddhism did not emphasize aspects of filial piety, but rather the importance of individual enlightenment and often men abandoned their family to become monks. However, upon entering China, Buddhism evolved to support filial piety, through reinterpreting Buddhist texts through a Confucian lens, and emphasizing certain (mostly little known) Buddhist stories that were more family-oriented (Nichols, 2013).

Filial piety has evolved and spread in different ways throughout Asia and the Asian diaspora, with the common thread of deep respect and gratitude towards one’s parents remaining a very strong cultural value. In a large number of studies on parenting and children’s attitudes towards parents, Asian children are shown to “have adopted and internalized the preferences of their parents to a greater degree than any other population in the industrialized world” (Nichols, 2013, p. 224).

#### “Torb snorng sorng kun” [តបស្ម័ងសងគុណ]

Filial piety in Cambodia is found at an intersection of different cultural and religious values, including Theravada Buddhism, Confucianism, and the centuries-old gender codes, Chbab Srei and Chbab Proh.

Although filial piety in China and other Asian contexts is centered on male dominance, the Cambodian context has changed how filial piety is viewed and played out: “In Khmer culture, filial piety includes the expectation that daughters and daughters-in-law will provide daily assistance to parents and parents-in-law. Although filial piety has, at its foundation, a patriarchal bias, women in Khmer culture have long held positions of administrative power and respect” (Ledgerwood, 1995, cited in Lewis, 2005, p. 6). Cambodia is not a matriarchal society, per se, but many of the cultural norms and worldview are reinforced and upheld by female cultural gatekeepers (i.e. mothers, grandmothers). Especially as relates to family livelihood, daughters have a disproportionate amount of responsibility to provide for their families: “Caregiving is unequally distributed across genders with daughters and daughters-in-law most often assuming the role of primary caregiver” (Kato, 2000; Zimmer & Kim, 2002, cited in Lewis, 2005, p. 15).

The proverb-turned-principle of filial piety in Khmer culture is termed “តបស្ម័ងសឹងគុណ-torb snong songng kun.” Roughly translated, “តបស្ម័ងសឹងគុណ-torb snong songng kun” refers to the cyclical repayment of gratitude and honour to one’s parents. សឹងគុណ-Sangkun is the debt of gratitude, mainly in the context of a child towards one’s parents: “Many families across Southeast Asia maintain a near-constant sense of awareness of the debt one owes for some benefit one person has bestowed upon another, with the debt of gratitude owed to parents being especially strong” (Lewis, 2005, p. 12).

This Khmer word comes from the pali-sanskrit word “គុណ-kun,” or “គុណ-gun,” and originally had two definitions, including “cord, string” and “quality or religious merit.” This Pre-Angkorian connotation was included in names given to monarchs and dignitaries in order to assign them merit; the word had evolved by the 10<sup>th</sup> century CE to include vernacular connotations of gratitude and duty. For example, words appeared such as “អរិ គុណ-ar kun” (thanks), “ធ្វើគុណ-thvoe kun” (doing a favour, obligated), “តបសឹងគុណ-tob sangkun” (demonstrate gratitude), and “bhlec kun” (being an ingrate, ungrateful).<sup>1</sup> The progression of the meaning of “គុណ-kun” from virtue to obligation can be understood in the appearance of the judicial functionary title “kunadosadarsi,” which was an inspector of merits and faults, originally regarding the payments of debts and delimitations of land claims (Kourilsky, 2008, p. 4-6).

Grégory Kourilsky (2008) contributed the understanding of the notion of “គុណ-kun” in Southeast Asian Buddhism. Similarly to how Buddhism evolved as it spread into China to include emphases on obligation towards parents and state, so it also changed upon its spread into Southeast Asia. The importance of gratitude or the duty of gratitude towards parents is an aspect that distinguishes Southeast Asian Theravada Buddhism from Indian and Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhism. Cambodian, Thai, and Lao Buddhist texts indicate the obligation of the child toward the parent is something no Buddhist can escape (Kourilsky, 2008, p. 1-2).

Southeast Asian, or Indochinese Buddhism evolved from Chinese Buddhism in that a fifth individual category was added to the existing categories of mother, father, prince/lord, and master-teacher: the added category was that of ancestors, adding duty and gratitude to one’s lineage of at least seven generations (Kourilsky, 2008, p.9). With this fifth category in mind, “kun” in Indochinese Buddhism should be understood on three levels:

1. The good or merits of the father and mother, who gave birth to the child, took care of him/her, and educated him/her;
2. The organic composites, both solid (father) and liquid (mother), transmitted into the body of the child during gestation;
3. The duty of obligation of the child, received through the two first levels (Kourilsky, 2008, p.15).

This understanding of “គុណ-kun,” combined with the Khmer worldview putting more family responsibility on the shoulders of daughters, has led to a disproportionate gratitude debt felt by women towards their parents and parent surrogates (e.g. grandparents, in-laws, aunts, uncles).

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<sup>1</sup> The Cambodian authors disagree with the use of the term “bhlec kun” to designate “ungrateful;” instead suggest the term “វិមិលគុណ-ro mil kun.”



### **Chbab Srei**

Another contributor towards expressions of filial piety in Cambodia is Chbab Srei, or the “ច្បាប់ស្រី-Code for Women.” Although there exist a number of codes for different demographic subsets, Chbab Srei is perhaps the most well known, and is still expected to be adhered to by a large number of Cambodians. Brickell (2011) explains Chbab Srei:

As one of several codes designed for men, children, monks, and other categories of people, the Chbab Srei (Code for women) forms a set of the normative Cambodian poems, which combine popular custom with Buddhist principles to offer practical advice concerning appropriate and inappropriate behavior and company... In the case of the Chbab Srei, which is disseminated by mothers and embedded through socialization and education, a woman is instructed to move quietly around the house, be polite, avoid vulgarity, and be careful to preserve the dignity and feelings of her husband despite any indiscretion on his part” (Brickell, 2011, p. 437-438).

“ច្បាប់ស្រី-Chbab Srei” and “សង្កត់-sangkun” are linked in that a daughter shows honour and respect towards her parents by adhering to Chbab Srei. And Chbab Srei itself reinforces importance of parental guidance and authority over the daughter. The committee of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) found Chbab Srei has contributed to the legitimization of the discrimination against women in Cambodia (Brickell, 2011, p. 440). When discussing how gender relations should change, Brickell’s (2011) female study participants agreed women should get the same rights as men, but ultimately it depended on whether or not their parents agreed with women’s rights. Also, for women much more than men, upholding the family’s respectability is equivalent to upholding one’s own respectability (Brickell, 2011, p. 449-50).

### **Confucianism in Cambodia**

In Southeast Asia, Confucianism is directly practiced more among Vietnamese populations than among Cambodians; however, it is important to understand its influence. For one thing, Confucianism and Buddhism have intertwined as they have moved into Indochina; for another, a high percentage of victims of sex trafficking in Cambodia are Vietnamese. Reimer, Gourley & Langelier’s (2006) findings make a “best guess” estimate that 30-40% of urban Vietnamese girls in Cambodia are sold for sex (p. 4). Brown (2007) agrees that Vietnamese girls and women are overrepresented in commercial sexual exploitation (p. 36).

Lainez (2011) found the majority of Vietnamese girls and women being sexually exploited in Cambodia are not recent migrants from Vietnam, but rather are longer-term residents of Cambodia (p. 1). Vietnamese residents of Cambodia mostly do not have legal status in Cambodia nor in Vietnam, and this fact lends to this community’s vulnerability (Reimer, Gourley & Langelier, 2006).

“The mother pushes the family’s economic burden onto her daughters as soon as they are old enough to generate income with their bodies. While according to Confucian precepts parents ought to preserve the virginity of their daughters until marriage, in fact they organize its commodification and monopolize the profits” (Lainez, 2011, p. 1). Indeed, research shows reasons girls are sold by their families include materialism and enhancing the family’s economic status through the purchase of assets beyond survival (e.g. jewellery, a house) (Reimer, Gourley & Langelier, 2006, p. 46).

### **Filial Piety in Modern Cambodia**

The effects of the Khmer Rouge genocide and civil war exacerbated the pressure on young daughters to contribute to the family livelihood. “Societal changes, such as the existence of fractured families in Cambodia that resulted from years of war and civil turmoil (Kato, 2000; Zimmer & Kim, 202), creates an emerging phenomenon of grandchildren living with elderly grandparents while parents migrate in search of work or when parents become ill and unable to work” (Kato, 2000; Knodel et al., 1995; Zimmer & Kim, 2002, cited Lewis, 2005, p. 16).

There was arguably a familial breakdown due to the disappearance of almost an entire generation of parents, who would have been responsible for passing on important customs, culture, and norms. Family values largely returned during the Vietnamese era, and in present day Cambodia, there is still an expectation of filial piety and family norms.

Brown (2007) likens filial piety in Cambodia to the “rights” of parents to make decisions about and for their children; because a parent has “raised” the child, they have a right to make use of the child’s labour. She explains, “This power to assert parental rights are arguably akin to asserting property rights – mostly clearly in the sense that it effectively enables the ‘owner’ the moral rights to exploit a resource without interference from forces outside of the family unit, even state authorities” (p. 41).

### **Filial Piety & Sexual Exploitation: Choice, Coercion & Risk**

The issue of coercion versus choice in sex work and sexual exploitation has long been debated in human trafficking and health literature (Law, 2000; Alexander, 2001; Micollier, 2004). Often centering on the sex worker/sex trafficking victim dichotomy, it is acknowledged that the notion of choice in Southeast Asia is different than the Western (e.g. North American) understanding of choice, which is often based on individualistic and neoliberal understandings of self. Many agree choice in most Asian societies must be understood within the context of a collective, more communal, family-oriented view of the individual; for instance, Sandy’s (2006) study among Cambodian sex workers saw the theme of “family values” tightly interwoven throughout the women’s narratives (p. 465). Gray (2002) draws the distinction between Western and Cambodian worldviews, stating “autonomy” and “self-sufficiency” are important aspects of resilience in Western cultures whereas “family and community support” and “connection and support” are important aspects of resilience in Cambodian society (cited in Reimer, Gourley & Langelier, 2006, p.5).

Alexander (2001) argues context must be accounted for when looking at “sex workers’ choice.” He nuances, “The decision [to do sex work] is more or less a ‘free’ or active ‘choice’ depending on the degree of desperation. However, we cannot ignore the effect of a context imposed from outside, within which the decision is made. [...] The decision to work in the sex sector may be conscious, an action, a knowing facing of risks (of the unknown, of one’s ability to cope), but the context in which that work will be done is defined by the society and the state apparatus that surround it” (Alexander, 2001, p. 2). This context, made up of family obligations, dire poverty, and systemic gender injustice, among other factors, makes the issue of “choice” a complex paradigm.

Research in Southeast Asia has shown the interconnections between filial piety and the economics of sex work. Simply put,

Filial piety (obeying parents and supporting the family) in conjunction with social and discriminatory attitudes and views of females and children (viewed as less than men and in some cases as property to be sold or bargained with) creates a situation

where females are susceptible to trafficking... Given the degree of poverty and the traditional cultural attitudes, girls and their families may be easily deceived into accepting gainful employment with the erroneous assumption that they will be able to earn enough money to support their families (Chung, 2006, p. 2).

Walters (2004) found, in Vietnam, "Sex workers are perceived by families and their own communities as dutiful daughters and temporary wives, providing not only comfort or material culture, but also crucial financial support for families." Lainez (2012) agrees and explains further: "For [Walters], the family is a constraining patriarchal social structure that bars women's independence, imposes strong economic obligations, and restricts them to the roles of dutiful wives, mothers, and daughters. Aligned with Walters' view, [the author] argue that certain families actually promote and control the commodified sexuality of their members—using several methods including narratives of gratitude—to preserve their economic and social unity" (Lainez, 2012, p. 151). Sandy's (2006) research in Cambodia also confirms "female labor migration for sex work is closely related to notions of filial duty... The wages women earn from sex work enable them to remit funds home to their families and conserve social norms which dictate that women (and not men) support the family, village and other basic institutions of Cambodian society" (p. 460-461).

In the dual context of filial piety and economic hardship, agency becomes a function of the family's needs and not the individual's, and certain norms supersede others. "[P]arents pressure their daughters by using narratives of gratitude and duty (cultural norms) to override the prohibition on the commodification of virginity (sexual norms) in order to secure income and improve the household's economic situation" (Lainez, 2012, p. 152). Indeed, Lainez's (2015) study showed commoditized sexuality finances both women and their families and underpins a women's sexual journey as a quest for honour (p. 335).

A woman's honour and her sexuality are intrinsically linked in Southeast Asian filial piety. Women must constantly balance the dire needs and wants of her family while also avoiding bringing shame on her family by breaking the Chbab Srei code. "The preoccupation with women's reputation or honour and the sexual purity of women in the Asian context is said to be 'central in sustaining gender inequality, simultaneously justifying violence against women and depending upon such violence to reinforce hegemonic systems of gender differentiation and gender inequality'" (GADC, 2010, p. 23). One overt example is, in Cambodian culture, women are not supposed to go out at night, whereas men can go out as they please. Thus, a woman is expected to care for her family, but her honour will be tarnished if her job keeps her out of the house past dark.

This issue highlights the constant risk negotiation a woman is undertaking to fulfill her filial duty towards her family, while also avoiding bringing shame on her family through the stigma of illness or sex work. Schunter (2001) explains this risk negotiation through the HIV/AIDS lens: "If the sex worker's prescribed role in the family structure, as a woman, is to ensure the family is taken care of, she may prioritize additional monetary compensation for unprotected sex, above the risk of transmitted infections, even though she will become a burden on, and a shame to, her family if she returns to her village sick with HIV/AIDS" (Schunter, 2001, p. 10). Another facet of risk negotiations is accepting the risk of bringing shame on one's family by "sacrificing" one's body in order to mitigate the risk of a family's shame brought on through poverty or continuous debt (Reimer, Gourley & Langelier, 2006, p. 47).

This risk negotiation continues throughout and after a survivor's return to her family. Lisborg (2009) "designates as risks the very factors that motivate the migration and result in trafficking. In other words, the push factors that cause a survivor to migrate in the first place are likely to be the primary risk factors they must confront upon (re-) integration. The push factors given by survivors he interviews in Thailand and the Philippines included 'family responsibility, economic needs and the pressure of debt, a lack of adequate job options, and a desire for the social status and respect that is gained through affluence.' These factors remain the most pressing factors after a woman's return" (cited in Reimer, Gourley & Langelier, 2006, p.9-10).

## **Financial Anxiety in Survivors of Human Trafficking**

### **The Impact of Financial Stressors on Mental Health**

There has been a large amount of research done on the links between financial stressors and mental health. Gresenz, Sturm & Tang (2001) found a strong association between individual income and mental health, another important association being between mental health and socioeconomic environment (p. 201). Sareen, Afifi, McMillan & Asmundson (2011) found "low levels of household income are associated with several lifetime mental disorders and suicide attempts, and a reduction in household income is associated with increased risk for incident mental disorders" (p. 419). Further, Shapiro and Burchell (2012) found financial anxiety is separate from depression and general anxiety and such anxiety leads to a delayed reaction to financial issues (p. 92). This could be demonstrated through "putting off" or avoiding money problems.

Much of the research on financial anxiety has been done around the financial stress of university students. Studies show a strong link between financial stressors and anxiety and depression among university students (Andrews & Wilding, 2004; Archuleta, Dale & Spann, 2013) as well as an association between debt and negative mental health outcomes and "a decreased sense of financial well-being and higher reported levels of overall stress" (Archuleta, Dale & Spann, 2013, p. 50-51). Other research finds financial satisfaction is tied to marital stability and satisfaction, and financial stressors negatively impact marital satisfaction. (Archuleta, Britt, Tonn & Grable, 2011).

Just as financial stressors are associated with mental health problems, financial satisfaction is intrinsic to general life satisfaction and "perceived financial well-being is related to one's overall psychological well-being" (Norvilitis et al., 2003, cited in Archuleta, Dale & Spann, 2013, p. 51). Lim, Heckman, Letkiewicz, and Montalto (2014) also found study participants that had received personal financial education were more likely to seek financial help (p. 156).

### **Financial Capability and Abuse**

Martha Nussbaum (2005) argues violence against women affects many of their capabilities, including their control of environment: "violence and the threat of violence greatly influence a woman's ability to participate in politics, to seek employment and to enjoy a rewarding work life, and to control both land and movable property" (p. 173). Research on economic empowerment and survivors of abuse has largely focused on financial capability among survivors of domestic violence (Postmus, 2010; Sanders, 2013; Sanders, 2014; Weaver et al., 2009). Adams (2011) states, "Abusers use physical, psychological, and economic tactics to isolate, control, exploit, and terrorize their[victims]" (p. 1). One notable similarity between survivors of domestic violence and survivors of sex trafficking is economic or financial abuse often played a role in the survivor's victimization.

Weaver et al. (2009, cited in Collins & O'Rourke, 2012) found three links between economic status and domestic violence: (1) victims of domestic violence are more likely to come from lower socioeconomic classes; (2) women who are economically dependent on their abusers are less likely to leave them and more likely to go back to them; and (3) economic abuse is in itself a form of domestic abuse in that it impedes a women's ability to become financially independent (p. 1). Sanders (2013) states domestic violence increases both in prevalence and in severity of abuse in lower socioeconomic classes (p. 86). Similarly, trafficking victims are more likely to come from lower socioeconomic and vulnerable communities and families.

Postmus, Plummer, McMahon, Murshid, & Kim (2011) found 94% of survivors of domestic violence had experienced economic abuse in at least one area (economic control, economic exploitative behaviours, and/or employment sabotage) (p. 1). These studies show economic or financial control and abuse are intrinsically linked in a survivor's experience, just as a sex trafficking survivor's experience is linked with her economic exploitation. Sanders (2013) sums up well the financial situation of survivors of domestic violence:

Survivors of domestic violence often have limited financial independence. Helping battered women achieve financial independence includes increasing their knowledge and skills to pursue greater economic stability and responsibility. It also requires access to institutional structures that permit them to use their financial knowledge and skills (Johnson & Sherraden, 2007). For survivors of domestic violence in particular, building financial capability must take into concern physical and emotional safety (p. 87).

Issues of financial independence, increasing skills and knowledge for employment readiness, access to systems and structures, and concerns for safety are all important to the rehabilitation and reintegration processes of survivors of trafficking (Surtees, 2012).

The impact of economic abuse is well documented, particularly among women who have suffered from poverty, homelessness, and domestic violence. Some of these impacts include abusers preventing women from working (affecting their capacity to be self-sufficient), harassment in the workplace by the abuser, and forcing the victim to engage in economically exploitative practices (running up debt, gambling, keeping her financially dependent on the abuser). Economic abuse as a form or facet of domestic violence contributes to the inability or difficulty of the survivors to leave the situation of violence (Postmus, Plummer, McMahon, Murshid, & Kim, 2011, p. 3-4). These impacts are also clearly seen in the ways traffickers keep victims under their control, through financial control and economic dependence on the trafficker.

### **Financial Anxiety and Reintegration**

Evidence shows that most victims of trafficking come from situations of severe poverty, with the entailing issues, such as lack of food, early education withdrawal, and the inability to meet basic subsistence (Brown, 2007, p. 52). This poverty is often exacerbated by a major incident prior to the victim entering an exploitative situation, such as illness or the death of a parent. "Severe poverty, often catalyzed by an illness in the family, and a lack of other options drove families to push their daughters into sex work" (Busza, 2004, p. 238). Lainez (2015) emphasizes recurring debt in the context of vulnerability (e.g. lack of savings) and external shocks (e.g. death, natural disaster) as a catalyst for young women entering the sex industry (p. 158).

One of the major vulnerability factors for survivors who are reintegrating is they are often going back to the same situation from which they were exploited or trafficked in the first place, often with the same expectations to provide for the family financially. Some of the issues faced upon reintegration are “factors that encourage and trigger migration, such as family responsibility, economic needs and the pressure of debt, a lack of adequate job options, and a desire for the social status and respect that is gained through affluence. These factors remain the most pressing factors after a woman’s return” (SIREN, 2009, p. 3). Furthermore, most trafficking survivors return home without any money to show for their time away, which can lead to “tension with family members left behind, who felt disappointed, frustrated and even angry over their failed migration” (Brunovskis & Surtees, 2012, p. 24).

Economic wellbeing, mainly in the form of securing and maintaining employment and financial income for oneself and one’s family, is one of the most pressing concerns for survivors of trafficking (Brunovskis & Surtees, 2012). Security and stability in one’s place of employment is also tied to economic wellbeing. Rebecca Surtees (2012) greatly contributed to the understanding of economic empowerment in the context of reintegration of sex trafficking survivors.

The workplace is a key environmental factor in our mental wellbeing and health. Economic well-being impacts personal identity, self-esteem and social recognition. Moreover, economic options contribute to social integration including social contact, social context, time structure and social identity, all of which affect people’s health and mental health status. For many trafficked persons, economic opportunities – whether a job or some form of income generation like a micro business – are their primary focus, from immediately after exiting a trafficking situation on through the longer term re/integration process (p. 11).

A survivor’s ability to seek and secure sustainable employment is influenced by both internal (e.g. residual trauma and anxiety tied to trafficking, educational and employment background) and external (e.g. unstable economic environment) factors (Surtees, 2012, p. 12). The larger economic environment, such as a depressed economy that does not have sufficient jobs for the number of job seekers, can be especially difficult for someone with a traumatic and “shameful” background, as employers may not prioritize hiring workers with a vulnerable or questionable background when there is a plethora of applicants for each position.

Surtees (2012) outlines some of the main challenges and obstacles to successful job placement for survivors of trafficking: these include stress, anxiety, and trauma linked to trafficking; lack of education, skills, and employment experience; low confidence in one’s own capacity; and, stigmatization, discrimination, and fear of being “found out” by employers and coworkers (p. 29). All these issues contribute to increasing the anxiety around financial and economic reintegration, which then in turn slows down the job placement and economic reintegration process.

Evidence has shown that some survivors can actually overcome their stigma and anxiety through their economic reintegration, among other factors:

A group of survivors... have overcome many of the stigmatizing situations they face in life. This group collectively shares several important resilience attributes and characteristics including the willingness to work hard and struggle, the perseverance

## Economic Reintegration: Experiences of Filial Piety and Financial Anxiety

to learn a skill or trade and excel at work, and the sense of having “earned honour” through life choices (Morrison et al., 2015, p.11).

There are many factors at play in the financial anxiety and economic (in)stability of survivors of trafficking and, as the literature outlined above demonstrates, although financial concerns are a foremost priority for survivors, economic reintegration must be addressed in the context of the other personal and environmental factors in the survivor’s life.

## Assessment Scope and Methodology

### BLR Project Methodologies and Data<sup>2</sup>

The BLR Project has used a mixed method approach over the past five years (see Miles & Miles 2010; Miles & Miles 2011; Miles et al., 2012; Miles et al., 2013, Miles et al. 2014). The research team has used survey tools, asking both closed- and open-ended questions, as well as a number of qualitative data collecting methods, such as focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, informal interviews, play, art projects, and participant observation. To continue collecting information on participants that migrate (e.g. Thailand) or move to inaccessible locations in Cambodia, the team has conducted phone interviews. The mixed method approach has allowed the BLR Project research team to establish a broad overview of participants' lives.

In 2014, at the midway point in the longitudinal study, the team conducted a baseline case study analysis on each participant. Four-plus years of quantitative and qualitative data were compiled and summarized 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 in the BLR Project. Subsequent to these narratives, qualitative surveys have been conducted, adding to the longitudinal data for most participants. Further details regarding BLR Project study methods, changes in methods from year to year, ethical standards followed, specific data collection tools and techniques, and strengths and weakness of the methodologies chosen are available in the project reports (see Miles & Miles 2010; Miles & Miles 2011; Miles et al. 2012; Miles et al. 2013, Miles et al. 2014).

### Research Team

A research team conducted the work used in the thematic assessment. Team members included expatriate and Khmer staff and advisors, both men and women. The team worked collaboratively throughout the data assessment process to describe expressions and experiences of filial piety in Cambodia society and financial anxiety and filial piety in the research subject group. Narrative summaries compiled by year were reviewed along with recent qualitative surveys. Economic reintegration data was coded into several categories, which then contributed to mapping out key themes and main findings. In this way, the team worked by consensus to document and describe culturally important aspects of filial piety and experiences of financial anxiety prior to and during/after reintegration.

### Assessment Methodology Scope

The present thematic assessment draws from a subset of participants within the larger pool of data collected in the BLR Project. The thematic assessment focused only on cohorts that had been (re-) integrated by the end of 2014, for a total of 77 participants. For each type of gathered data, information only from these 77 participants was included in the thematic analysis. Cohorts were included if the case study showed at least four visits for a cohort spanning at least two calendar years. Both male and female participants were included, as well as cohorts shelter programs, community-based programs, and the declined-assistance category. Data on these 77 participants was analyzed from both before and after their reintegration.

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<sup>2</sup> This section has been adapted from the Assessment Scope and Methodology section in Morrison, T., Miles, S., Lim, V. Nhanh, C., Sreang, P., & Bun, D. (2015). *Survivor Experiences and Perceptions of Stigma: Reintegrating into the Community*. Thematic Paper of the Butterfly Longitudinal Research Project: A Chab Dai study on (Re-)integration: Researching the lifecycle of sexual exploitation & trafficking in Cambodia. (Phnom Penh: Chab Dai).



The different types of data gathering methods in this assessment were:

- 1) Surveys, carried out in 2011 and 2012;
- 2) Focus group discussions, carried out in 2012 and 2015; and,
- 3) Transcribed semi-structured interviews and narratives of participant visits from 2011 to 2015.

### Surveys

Surveys were carried out in 2011 and 2012, near the beginning of the Butterfly Research Project study period. Because of this, most results from surveys are from reintegrated participants before they were reintegrated. The following are some of the research survey questions used in the assessment:

Q5. Have you worked to earn money in the past year?
Q5a. What is your main job?
Q8d. Have you done vocational training?
Q8e. What type of training have you done?
Q14a. What work would you like to be doing in five years time from now?
Q16. What do you think about the following statements? How much do you agree or disagree? 16a Parents should be responsible to financially support their children (under the age of 18 years.) 16b Children under 18 years of age should be responsible to support their families. 16c Adults over 18 years of age should be responsible to help support their families. 16d Children under the age of 18 years should be responsible to financially support their families to repay debt. 16e Girls under 18 years should be more responsible than boys under 18 years, to support their families. 16f Women over 18 years should be more responsible than men over 18 years, to support their families. 16g Boys under 18 years should be more responsible than girls under 18 years, to support their families. 16h Men over 18 years should be more responsible than women over 18years to support their families. 16k There is a greater likelihood children will have debt-incurring behaviours as the next generation, if their parents were in debt. (They will become like their parents.)
Q17. In your opinion, at what age do you think a child should start helping to financially support his/her family?
Q18. Who in your household contributes their earnings to the family needs in past year?
Q19. Who has received your financial help in past year?
Q 26. Imagine if your household was in debt: How do you think you personally would feel about being in debt?

Q27. Do you feel you have a choice about whether or not you get into debt?
Q28. Have you been responsible to repay debt in past year?
Q29. Has anyone in your household been responsible to repay debt in past year?
Q30b. If you really needed money urgently and you didn't have it: from whom do you feel you should borrow money?

### **Box 1 Survey Questions Used in Assessment**

#### **Focus Group Discussions**

In addition to the survey data, focus group discussions were held. The first focus group discussion was held in 2012 in a shelter setting and was on the topic of Chbab Srei. One relevant question discussed in this FGD was “What are ways children aged under 12 years and over 12 years can help support their families?” The second focus group discussion was conducted during the thematic assessment (late 2015) in order to gather more specific information on filial piety. Questions in this FGD included the following:

- 1) What does “obligation” mean to you?
- 2) What do you feel are your parent’s expectations of you in terms of taking care of them, providing for them, and providing for the family?
- 3) What are the positive and negative impacts when you are having so many responsibilities toward your parents and family?

Both focus group discussions used in this assessment were conducted with the same group of women in an aftercare-affiliated social enterprise, most of whom had spent under four months in a shelter before being reintegrated.

#### **Interviews and Narratives**

For each of the 77 participants in the thematic assessment, a full transcript/narrative of interviews and visits over the course of the study period was used to extract most of the information on the analysis themes. Although the cut-off for inclusion was the end of 2014 (i.e. participants were included if they had been reintegrated by the end of 2014) if data was already available for these existing participants for 2015, it was also included in analysis. Of the 77 participants having reintegrated, data from 2015 was available for 20 of those.

Alan Bryman's (2012) four stages of analysis were used in the coding of qualitative data. Bryman’s method consists of coding, or indexing, chunks of qualitative data into categories that would be representative of the same phenomenon (Gibbs, 2011). The objective of coding data into categories is not to count the number of times the code appears, but to interpret the categories into themes that inform analysis of a qualitative data set. Bryman’s suggested four stages of qualitative analysis are:

1. Read the text as a whole; identify overarching themes and unusual events; group cases into types, depending on research questions.
2. Read the text again, marking the text, making marginal notes, and creating labels for codes into which data will indexed.
3. Code the text: systematically enter each code into thematic labels; eliminate repetitions, and think of code groupings.
4. Relate general theoretical ideas to the text: coding is only the first part of qualitative analysis, therefore the analyst then interprets the codes, identifies interconnections between codes, and relates codes to research questions and existing literature.

The coding system in the present assessment consisted of creating a large number of coding categories, in order to attempt a fuller picture of the group’s expressions and experiences of filial piety and financial anxiety. The table below shows an overview of the coding system used in the assessment’s qualitative analysis approach. The broad themes discussed in these results are expressions and experiences of filial piety, debt, financial anxiety, and some aspects of vocational training and employment.

**Table 1 Themes & Coding Categories Used in Assessment**

Theme	Coding Categories
<b>Filial Piety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has given money to parents</li> <li>• Feelings of responsibility (to take care of siblings, to “provide” for family)</li> <li>• Feelings towards family (worries about family’s livelihood, trusts/ doesn’t trust parents, feels cared for/uncared for by family, feels lost/cut off from family, etc.)</li> <li>• Family’s attitude toward survivor (pressure to give money, involved in decision-making, etc.)</li> <li>• Family breakdown (addictions, sibling also trafficked, domestic violence)</li> </ul>
<b>Financial Anxiety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative feelings about debt (worry/fear about debt, responsibility to pat debt, etc.)</li> <li>• Currently paying one’s own/parents’ debt</li> <li>• Worry/fear about money</li> <li>• Worry/uncertainty about the future, plans for the future</li> <li>• Earn enough money for expenses/Doesn’t earn enough</li> <li>• Number of times moved house after reintegration</li> </ul>
<b>Vocational Training &amp; Employment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Type of job</li> <li>• Job after reintegration related/unrelated to vocational training</li> <li>• Number of jobs before/after reintegration</li> <li>• Reasons for quitting job, dropping out of school, leaving aftercare/assistance program early</li> <li>• Salary tracked each year before and after reintegration</li> </ul>

The coding system kept track of age and gender of participants, but overall the sample sizes were so small, comparisons on these criteria were limited. This assessment was seeking overarching themes on filial piety and financial anxiety, and was not intended to be a statistical analysis across all sample types.

The qualitative coding system was aimed at drawing out words, ideas, and categories within the scope of the assessment. In addition, the coding system divided responses and themes into the columns “before reintegration” (while in a shelter or temporary assessment center) and “after reintegration” (upon departure from the shelter, living in the community). Responses from participants living in a group home were categorized in the “before reintegration” category. This allowed for some comparison between themes before and after reintegration, and it also allowed the larger themes emerging after reintegration to be categorized as such.

### **A Note on Culture**

Many of the themes addressed in this assessment are founded on cultural norms, values, and beliefs and are often unspoken. Analyzing primary data, especially when not asking study subjects directly about cultural practices, must take into account the reality that most often people are not aware of or analytical of their own cultural assumptions. For example, Brickell (2011) found “Chbap Srei is so “uncritically absorbed” that both men and women often do not cite it directly as an influencing factor in their understanding of gender ideals” (p. 443).

Lainez (2012) also addresses this issue, specifically relating to expressions and demonstrations of filial piety:

Parents give life to, nurture and raise their offspring through costly sacrifice; in return, children owe them eternal gratitude that manifests through a set of duties. On the ground, research subjects rarely articulate these prescriptions as a debt of filiation that every child owes his/her parents and that he/she must repay throughout their entire life, as stated by several scholars, but rather as a set of “duties” or “obligations” they should assume without question (p. 162).

During the analysis of the data, coding was developed purposefully broadly, in order to capture as many expressions and experiences of filial piety as possible, given the fact that few participants would directly explain the reasons behind their duties towards their parents.

## Results

In addition to the yes/no and multiple choice survey questions, interview data were coded into several categories relating to filial piety and financial anxiety, using Bryman’s (2012) four stages of qualitative analysis. It should be noted, as interviews have been semi-structured and open-ended, the coding system only took into account instances when participants offered information about the relevant themes; in other words, just because a participant did not include expressions of filial piety in his or her answers does not necessarily mean these themes are not issues in their lives.

### Filial Piety

#### Survey

An initial survey was administered in 2011 among all study participants; the results in this sub-section are from that survey. The results of those who have reintegrated into the community equal 77 participants. Because the survey was done in 2011, most participants whose answers are outlined in survey results had not yet reintegrated from an aftercare program. Questions in that survey relating to filial piety are found in the methodology section above, the results are included below.

One of the questions relating to filial piety was on family responsibilities. In response to a series of statements, participants had to choose whether they agreed or disagreed, and to what extent. The two tables below show the results of these survey questions. The first table shows, overall, participants stated parents should be financially responsible for their children under 18; children under 18 should not be responsible to support or to repay the debt of their families, but children over 18 should. Finally, participants mainly disagreed that children are destined to become like their parents.

**Table 2 Perceptions on Family Financial Responsibilities**

	Parents should be responsible to financially support their children (under the age of 18 years.)	Children under 18 years of age should be responsible to support their families.	Adults over 18 years of age should be responsible to help support their families.	Children under the age of 18 years should be responsible to financially support their families to repay debt.	There is a greater likelihood children will have debt-incurring behaviours, if their parents were in debt.
Strongly Agree	60	7	51	6	2
Agree	12	3	17	9	7
Neither Agree not Disagree	1	8	9	10	13
Disagree	1	13	0	9	11
Strongly Disagree	1	45	0	42	40
Don't Know	0	0	0	1	2
Did not answer	2	1	0	0	2
Total Number who answered	75	76	77	77	75

The second table shows beliefs on what is expected of girls and boys, as well as women and men, in terms of financial support for the family. The responses were varied, except when it came to comparing men’s responsibility to support their family: overwhelmingly, participants agreed or strongly agreed men over 18 should be more responsible than women over 18 to support their families.

**Table 3 Perceptions on Family Gender Responsibilities**

	Girls under 18 years should be more responsible than boys under 18 years, to support their families.	Women over 18 years should be more responsible than men over 18 years, to support their families.	Boys under 18 years should be more responsible than girls under 18 years, to support their families.	Men over 18 years should be more responsible than women over 18 years, to support their families.
Strongly Agree	8	15	3	38
Agree	6	17	10	18
Neither Agree not Disagree	4	14	8	14
Disagree	13	11	7	4
Strongly Disagree	44	18	45	1
Don’t Know	1	0	1	1
Did not answer	1	2	3	1
Total Number who answered	76	75	74	76

Participants were also asked, “ In your opinion, at what age do you think a child should start helping to financially support his/her family?” and the average age was just over 20 and the most commonly occurring answer was 18.

**Qualitative Indicators**

The categories included in the coding system pertinent to filial piety included whether participants had send remittances and given money to their parents or other members of their family, feelings of responsibility towards their family, other feelings towards their family, indications of their family’s attitude toward the survivor, negative family influences, and some indicators of family breakdown.

**Remittances and Feelings of Responsibility**

The first indicator was on sending money to one’s parents or family. In the vast majority of cases, money was given directly by the survivor to their parents; in a smaller number of cases, survivors gave the money to their in-laws or to surrogate parents (such as an aunt or grandmother).

The number of participants that indicated they wished to send money to their parents is included in this result as it is an indicator, not only of actual financial support, but of an expression of filial piety, of a feeling of financial responsibility towards one’s parents. Statements about sending money to one’s parents were often combined with a statement about one’s responsibility to do so. For instance, one participant who sent half of her salary to her parents every month indicated in the same statement she was worried about her family, loved her parents very much, understood her family’s need, and felt responsible to support her family. Another participant, who could not send money to her family (her grandfather was her surrogate parent as her mother had died) because she was in the shelter and did not make any money, expressed a great amount of guilt in not being able to

do so, saying, “My grandfather is sick because of blood pressure... I cannot focus or think of anything because I cannot help them.”

**Table 4 Remittances to Parents/Family (n=77)**

Stated they give money to parents	Stated they wished to give money but were unable to	Total Number	Percentage of total reintegrated
47	5	52	67.5%

The second set of indicators includes expressions or statements of feelings of financial responsibility towards one’s family. These expressions or statements were included if they were made separately or in addition to direct statements about sending money to one’s parents.

**Table 5 Feelings of Responsibility towards Family (n=77)**

Expression or statement of feeling of responsibility	Number of survivors who expressed this theme	Percentage of total reintegrated survivors
Taking care of one’s siblings	17	22.1%
Providing for or supporting the family	33	42.3%

Participants often worried about their younger siblings, particularly as part of the larger worry about their parents’ livelihood. One participant state, “I feel like I am in deep pressure and now I am thinking of looking for night time job.” [What kind of job?] “I am not sure now. It is just my plan because I want to help my family and my younger siblings.” Another category of statements was a more general expression of wanting to provide for or support one’s family. Often this was expressed in the desire to pursue education or better job opportunities in order to better provide for one’s family in the future, as one participant stated, “I want to study and finish university so that I can have high knowledge and work to support my mother.”

***Feelings Towards One’s Family***

These results focused on worry about one’s family financial situation, whether or not a participant felt they could trust their parents, feeling cared for or uncared for by one’s parents.

The next result was often an extension of direct remittances or feeling or responsibility, or vice versa, centered on feelings of worry for one’s family’s livelihood. Participants worried a great deal, continuously and cyclically, over many years, and one of their greatest worries was for their family’s survival. As seen below, 42% of participants expressed worry for their family’s livelihood, at least once over the course of the study.

**Table 6 Worry about Family's Livelihood (n=77)**

Number of survivors who expressed worry or concern regarding their family's livelihood	Percentage of total reintegrated survivors
35	42.6%

Participants were often asked during surveys or interviews whether they had anyone they could trust in their life. Based on their answers, it was deduced whether or not their parents were people they trusted. Most often, when a participant spoke of being able to trust a parent, it was their mother, but in some cases it was their father. It should be noted that in three cases, participants stated they trusted their parents and did not trust anyone, at different points in time over the span of the study. In addition, in one case, the participant stated they did not trust anyone; however, their parents had previously passed away, so they were not counted in this category.

Overall, 42% of participants stated at least once during the span of the study they trusted one or both parents, usually their mother. On the other hand, nearly 30% of participants stated at one point they did not trust their parents, often deduced from the larger statement they did not trust anyone in their lives.

**Table 7 Trust of Parents (n=77)**

Statement of trust	Number of survivors who expressed this theme	Percentage of total reintegrated survivors
Does trust one's parents	33	42.3%
Does not trust one's parents	23	29.9%

Other expressions of feelings towards one's family included participant expressing they had no regrets about their past (e.g. working in the sex industry, being sold into sexual exploitation) because they saw it as a sacrifice for their family (7 participants); feelings of missing one's parents, especially, but not only, when staying in an aftercare shelter (14 participants); feeling cared for by their family or having a "warm" feeling being with their family (20 participants), and feeling uncared for by one's parents (7 participants). These results are outlined in the table below.

**Table 8 Other Feelings towards one's Parents/Family (n=77)**

Feeling toward one's family	Number of survivors who expressed this theme	Percentage of total reintegrated survivors
No regrets for past experience; sacrifice for family	7	9.1%
Missing one's parents (especially in the shelter)	14	18.2%
Feeling cared for or having "warm" feelings from family	20	26%
Feeling uncared for by parents	7	9.1%



Finally, the last set of indicators relating to filial piety include three chosen indicators of family breakdown: whether a sibling was also trafficked or experienced sexual exploitation, statements relating addictions in one’s family, and instances of domestic violence in one’s family. In the two latter categories, any instance involving the participant him or herself, a sibling, or a parent or surrogate parent was included. As seen in the table below, 20% of reintegrated participants in the study have a sibling who was also trafficked or sexually exploited; 30% deal with addictions in their family, which is always either drugs, alcohol, or gambling; and, 9% have experienced or witnessed domestic violence in their family.

**Table 9 Indicators of Family Breakdown (n=77)**

Indicator of family breakdown	Number of survivors who disclosed this indicator	Percentage of total reintegrated survivors
Sibling was also trafficked or sexually exploited	16	20.1%
Addictions within the family: drugs, alcohol, gambling	23	30%
Domestic violence in the family	7	9.1%

**Focus Group Discussion**

The two focus group discussions utilized in this assessment both had themes relating filial piety; the first, and more recent, because the subject of the FDG directly related to the theme of the assessment, and the second, carried out earlier in the study period, because it included discussion how young people could honour their parents, among other things.

The objective of the 2015 focus group discussion was to identify the survivor’s perspective and experience in terms of family obligation and support. Eight participants were included in the focus group, all of whom were employed by a community-based program, and had reintegrated directly from the situation of exploitation or trafficking (that is, none of the participants in this group had spent time in a residential rehabilitation/shelter program).

The discussion revolved around the following questions:

1. What does “obligation” mean to you?

When asked to define and discuss “obligation,” participants used words like “heavy,” “burden,” “responsibility,” and “difficult.” They talked about a “package of responsibilities,” a combination of things they needed to provide for their families, including food, clothing, housing, and medical costs.

They also expressed feelings of both being overwhelmed – *“It is too hard!”* and *“It is a lot of things to think about”* – and needing to persevere in their obligations – *“We should do what we need to do and don’t give it up.”*

Participants’ definition of obligation is summed up in one participant’s statement: *“Obligation is our duty that we need to be responsible in our family.”*

**Box 2 Perceptions of "Obligation"**

2. What do you feel are your parent’s expectations of you in terms of taking care of them, providing for them, and providing for the family?

Participants gave a long list of different things their parents expected of them, including being a good person, walking in the “right way,” having a good job and a good livelihood, either accessing high education or leaving education early in order to support the family financially, finding a good husband, giving them a proper home, and supporting them in old age and sickness.

In some cases, the responsibility to support one’s parents lessened after their own marriage. If parents make enough money to support the family, it seems the responsibility of the child to provide also lessens.

All participants agreed they would feel these obligations whether or not their parents asked them. Instead, they assumed the responsibility as a good child, as seen in the following statements:

*“My parent considered me as their pot for cooking rice. They give the entire burden to me but I don’t think that they mean to drop it on me. It is our responsibility to them, I think.”*

*“They don’t require anything from us but it is our responsibility when they are old... They looked after us when we were young so when they are old and cannot do anything, they depend on us. They won’t say that they depend on us but our role is to support them as much as possible.”*

In addition, all participants stated they continuously supported their parents or parents-in-law financially.

### **Box 3 Feelings about Parental Expectations**

3. What are the positive and negative impacts when you are having so many responsibilities toward your parents and family?

Few participants were able to articulate any positive aspects of having many family obligations; two participants agreed they should be proud to have gotten through their hardships and got themselves up when they fell down: *“We have to be strong and stand up!”*

All participants, however, had things to say about the negative impacts of having so many family responsibilities. Reported symptoms and expressions of feelings of responsibilities were stress, lashing out in anger, conflict with one’s significant other, feelings of hopelessness and despair, inability to concentrate, headaches, crying, sleeplessness, thoughts of suicide, physical illness, depression, and lack of motivation. Participants talked about feeling “heavy,” “complicated,” and “torn.”

Furthermore, all participants agreed the reason that pushed them to work in the entertainment industry (sex industry) in the first place was because they feel they had too much responsibility in their family.

### **Box 4 Positive and Negative Impacts of Filial Responsibility**

4. Why do you think it is your responsibility? Can you describe what you owe to your parents?

Participants mainly spoke of caring and providing for their elderly disabled and ill parents. More than speaking about specific responsibilities, though, participants disagreed with the use of the word “owe” in relation to their familial responsibilities. One participant said it was both a burden and not a burden that she supported her family out of kindness and gratitude.

Another talked of it in relation to karma: spurred from a connection between the mother and child caring for one’s family is a cyclical responsibility and she expected her own children would repay it to her later in life. All the participants agreed it should not be termed “debt” but “responsibility.”

#### **Box 5 Perceptions of Responsibility versus Debt**

5. What are your expectations of your children as they get older? How will they take care of you?

Participants talked about wanting their children to be good people, have a good education, and have a bright future. Although some talked about not wanting to put the same responsibility on their children that their parents put on them they also referred to wanting their children to put family ahead of friends “walk in the right path” and support them in their old age.

#### **Box 6 Participants' Expectations of their Children**

The other, earlier, focus group discussion was on the subject of Chbab Srei, and had participants rank the importance of various Chbab Srei tenets. Participants chose the following items as the key ways children over the age of 12 can help support their families:

1. Avoiding gambling
2. Avoiding illegal drugs
3. Not having sex young
4. Respecting and obeying their parents
5. Be responsible in their actions

During the follow-up discussion to the ranking exercise, participants brought each item on the list back to listening to and obeying their parents. As the parents have a responsibility to educate their children about the evils in the world, so then children are expected to obey that education. At the end of the discussion all the participants agreed respecting and obeying their parents’ advice was the most important aspect of Chbab Srei:

*Studying is important but to respect and obey parents is also important. When children don't respect and obey their parents, they will become bad children. Their lives won't have a clear goal. They can play gambling so their future down (sic). Everything will end if they don't obey their parents.*

### **Debt**

#### **Survey**

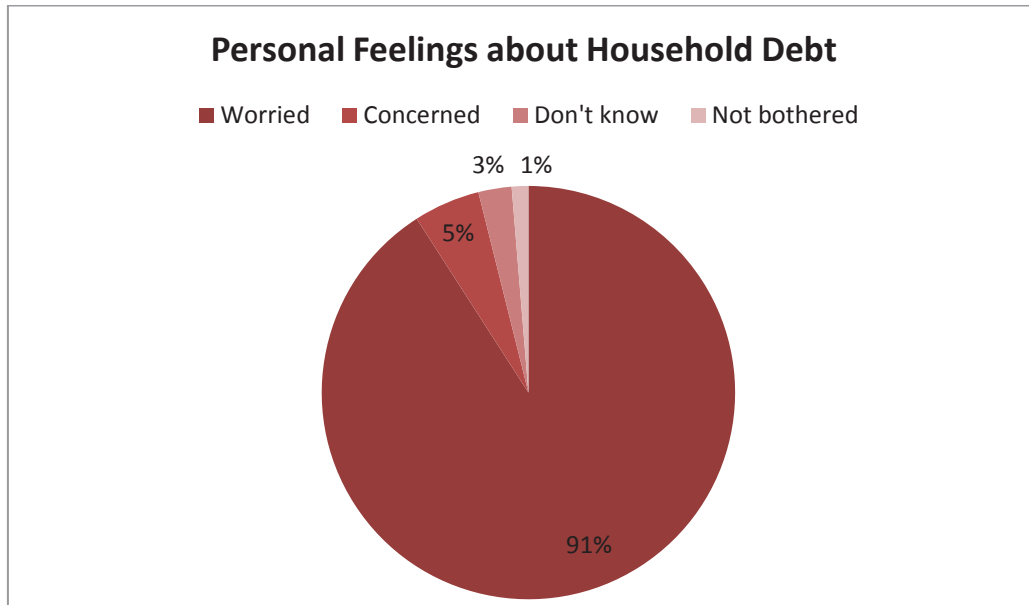
Surveys from 2011 and 2012 asked a number of questions pertaining to accumulating and repaying debt, both personally and in one’s family. One question related to the participants’ feelings about a hypothetical situation of debt. The survey question and possible answers were as follow:

Question: Imagine if your household was in debt: How do you think you personally would feel about being in debt?

Choices: Worried as to how I will repay it

Concerned but not worried how I will repay it  
 Don't know  
 Not bothered (not worried)

As seen in the chart below, a large majority of participants stated they would worry about repaying debt if their household (not necessarily them personally) was in debt. This result was the same regardless of gender.



**Chart 1 Personal Feelings about Household Debt (n=77)**

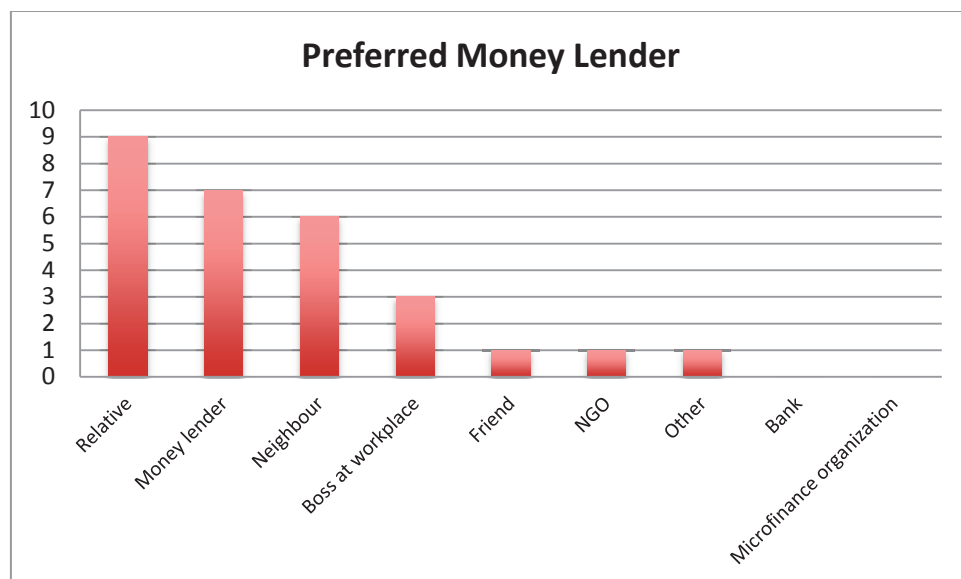
Other debt-related questions included in the survey were on responsibility and choice around household and personal debt. The table below outlines the answers to these questions.

**Table 10 Responsibility and Agency in Household Debt**

Question	Percentage answered "Yes"	Percentage answered "No"
Do you feel you have a choice about whether or not you get into debt? (n=33)	69.7%	30.3%
Have you been responsible to repay debt in past year? (n=33)	48.5%	51.5%
Has anyone in your household been responsible to repay debt in past year? (n=71)	49.3%	50.7%

As seen above, a larger proportion of participants stated they felt they had control over whether or not they went into debt. Participants were divided in half on whether they or someone in their household had been responsible to repay debt in the past year. It should be noted these surveys were given near the beginning of the study period, when more participants were still living in residential aftercare shelters.

Finally, the survey asked participants, "If you really needed money urgently and you didn't have it: from whom do you feel you should borrow money?" The chart below outlines the results.



**Chart 2 Preferred Sources for Borrowing Money (n=28)**

Among the multiple-choice answers, participants who answered this question (n=28) were most likely to borrow money from a relative, a moneylender (i.e. informal community creditor), or a neighbour. Interestingly, no participants chose either “bank” or “microfinance organization” as their preferred source for borrowing money in an urgent situation.

### Qualitative Indicators

The debt indicators used to code the qualitative data included the following categories: feelings of responsibility to repay debt, worry and fear about debt, harassment by moneylenders, and whether a participant was currently paying debt, either their own or their parents’ or family’s. The table below outlines some of the responses related to participants’ feelings around having and repaying debt.

**Table 11 Anxiety Related to Debt (n=77)**

Feelings about debt	Number of survivors who expressed this theme	Percentage of total reintegrated survivors
Feelings of responsibility to repay debt	48	62.3%
Worry related to debt	27	35.1%
Harassment by collectors	8	10.4%

Well over half of survivors expressed feeling responsible to repay debt, whether their own or their family’s; additionally, over a third of survivors expressed worry related to having and repaying debt. Around 10% talked at some point about worry and fear around moneylenders calling in their debts. Related to the above indicators were direct statements about *not* feeling responsible to pay debt: 12 participants (15.6%) overtly stated they did not feel responsible to repay debt. In addition, of the 27 participants who expressed worry about debt, four participants (14.8%) also expressed fear about debt, and one participant expressed only fear (not worry) about debt.

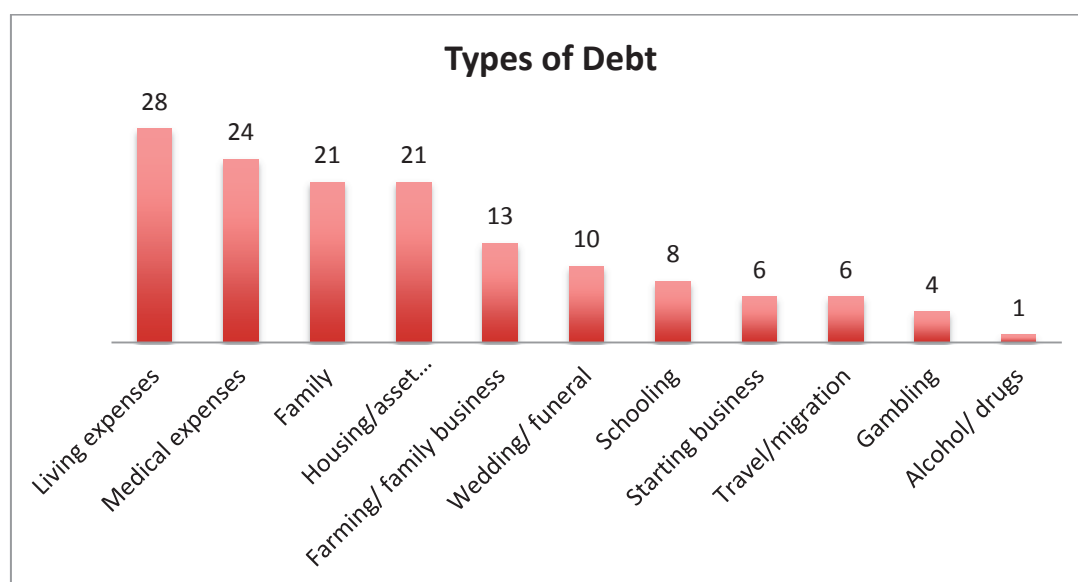
The table below summarizes statements relating to actual debt accrued by either participants or their parents. In cases where the debt was accrued by the survivor’s parents, the survivor was also paying that debt.

**Table 12 Experiences of Debt (n=77)**

Experience of debt	Number of survivors who expressed this theme	Percentage of total reintegrated survivors
Survivor currently paying one’s own debt	42	54.5%
Survivor’s parent(s) currently has debt	50	64.9%

Participants sometimes disclosed the amounts of debt they were repaying. There were 41 instances in the qualitative data where participants disclosed the amount of their own debt they were currently repaying; the average amount was approximately 360USD. There were 25 instances where participants disclosed the amount of their parents’ debt, which they were also often repaying; the average amount was approximately 965USD. In addition, most participants who talked about having debt or paying their parents’ debt spoke of it over multiple interviews and years, indicating that debt was cyclically being accumulated and repaid.

Participants also sometimes disclosed the type of debt they or their parents were repaying. There were 142 instances where participants specified the type of debt they or their parents were paying. The chart below shows the most common form of debt is to cover costs of living, followed by medical costs, money to give or send to one’s parents, and costs of building or repairing a physical asset.



**Chart 3 Types of Personal and Household Debt (n=142)**

Debt for living expenses was often rolling in nature: participants or their families would have to borrow some money to make it through the month and they would pay back the lender once they received their paycheck, leaving them lacking to make it through the next month. Medical expenses were often related to unexpected illness, childbirth, or caring for an ailing and aging parent or relative. Family-related debt often referred to a survivor incurring debt

in order to give or send money to their parents, often to pay the debt of the latter. Debt was also often incurred for repairing or purchasing an asset; for example, improving or building housing for oneself and one's family or purchasing a tuk-tuk or moto for one's significant other.

Other types of debt included paying for weddings, funerals, and other religious and cultural ceremonies; paying school-related costs for oneself or a sibling or child; bankrolling one's own or the family's business or livelihood (i.e. farming); various forms of travel, including visiting one's parents or helping a sibling migrate abroad; and, sometimes, participants were paying off addiction debts, mainly for a parent's gambling problem.

### Focus Group Discussion

There has not been a focus group discussion solely on debt; however, during the FGD on Chbab Srei, one question centered on reasons families get into debt. Participants offered multiple answers, including medical treatment for illness, gambling, building a house, failed business ventures, unemployment, and poor money management.

Participants linked money management issues with medical shocks; when a family doesn't plan financially, sickness can throw the family into turmoil and debt because they have no savings to deal with the shock.

### Financial Anxiety

#### Survey

The survey did not touch directly on survivors' feelings towards their financial situation; however, one question touched on it by asking if survivors felt they earned enough money from their main job.

As seen in the chart below, survivors were divided as to whether they made enough money from their main job, although all participants had an opinion about the issue. In answer to the statement, "I earn enough money by working at my main job alone," 22 participants either agreed or strongly agreed and 22 participants disagreed or strongly disagreed.

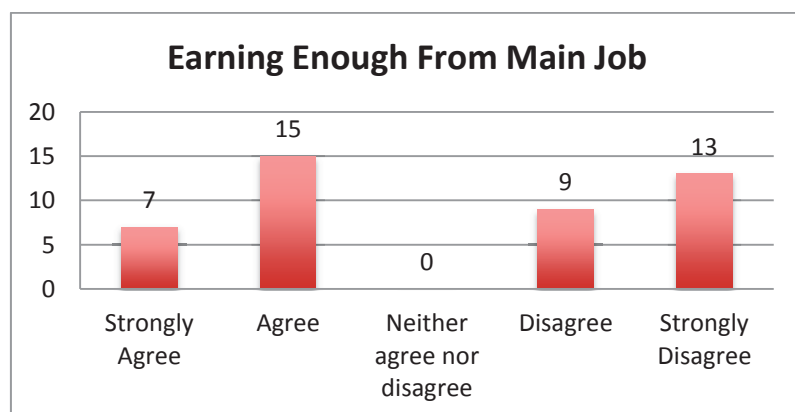


Chart 4 "I earn enough money by working at my main job alone" Responses (n=44)

#### Qualitative Indicators

The coding system for the narrative qualitative data also tracked whether survivors felt they had enough money to cover their expenses. During informal interviews over the span of the study period (starting in 2011 and going as far as mid-2015 for some participants and end-2014 for others), 28.6% stated they felt they had enough money for their daily expenses, while 41.6% stated they felt they did not have enough money for the daily expenses (the

remaining 30% did not mention whether or not they felt they had enough money for the daily expenses).

Other indicators of financial anxiety included expressing worry or fear about money (separate from worry about debt), expressing uncertainty or worry about the future, and expressing planning for the future. The results of these indicators are in the table below.

**Table 13 Expressions and Experiences of Financial Anxiety (n=77)**

Experience or expression of financial anxiety	Number of survivors who expressed this theme	Percentage of total reintegrated survivors
Worry or fear related to money (separate from worry about debt)	38	49.4%
Uncertainty or worry about the future	45	58.4%
Planning for the future	66	85.7%

Of the 38 participants who expressed worry or fear related to money, 37 expressed this theme after their reintegration; five of those also expressed worry about money before their reintegration (i.e. when they were still living in the shelter). One participant expressed worry about money before reintegration and not after.

Second, 45 participants expressed uncertainty or worry about the future, whether it pertained to finishing school, finding a job, earning enough money, or other livelihood and well-being issues; 38 of those participants expressed this theme only after reintegration, six expressed it only before reintegration, and one expressed it both before and after reintegration.

Finally, 66 participants expressed some form of planning for the future; this figure may seem higher than other indicators, and this could be due to the fact that a direct question about plans for the future was often asked during subject interviews. Of the 66 participants, 33 expressed planning for the future only after reintegration, 12 expressed planning only before reintegration, and 21 expressed planning both before and after reintegration.

Another tracked indicator was the number the times a survivor moved house after reintegration. Of the 68 survivors for whom this indicator was tracked, the average number of times they moved house after reintegration was 2.7 times. Sixteen survivors moved more than four times after reintegration, usually within a span of about two years. Lastly, 16.9% of participants discussed at some point the fact that they did not have proper identification documents, such as a birth certificate or family book, which may also be an indicator of economic vulnerability.

## Vocational Training & Employment

### Survey

There are a large number of indicators that could be tracked relating to vocational training and employment in both survey and qualitative data. For the purposes of the present assessment, categories were limited to number and type of job held by survivors before and after reintegration, monthly salaries, whether vocational training was utilized once survivors reintegrated, and main reasons for leaving employment.



In surveys, participants were asked how much they worked and how much they earned per month in their current employment; 59 participants responded and the average monthly wage was \$60 and they worked an average of 60 hours per month (many worked for assistance program on a part-time, irregular, or ad hoc basis while also going to school while living in the shelter).

### Qualitative Indicators

The qualitative data also tracked earnings of survivors over the span of the study, rather than in the above survey snapshot. Monthly salaries were tracked for 34 participants; that is, 34 participants disclosed their monthly earnings in at least two study years. The average monthly salaries for these 34 participants are outlined in the table below.

**Table 14 Average Monthly Salary (n≤34)**

Year	Number of participants who disclosed monthly salary	Average monthly salary
2011	5	57USD
2012	18	97USD
2013	27	120USD
2014	25	122USD
2015	12	142USD

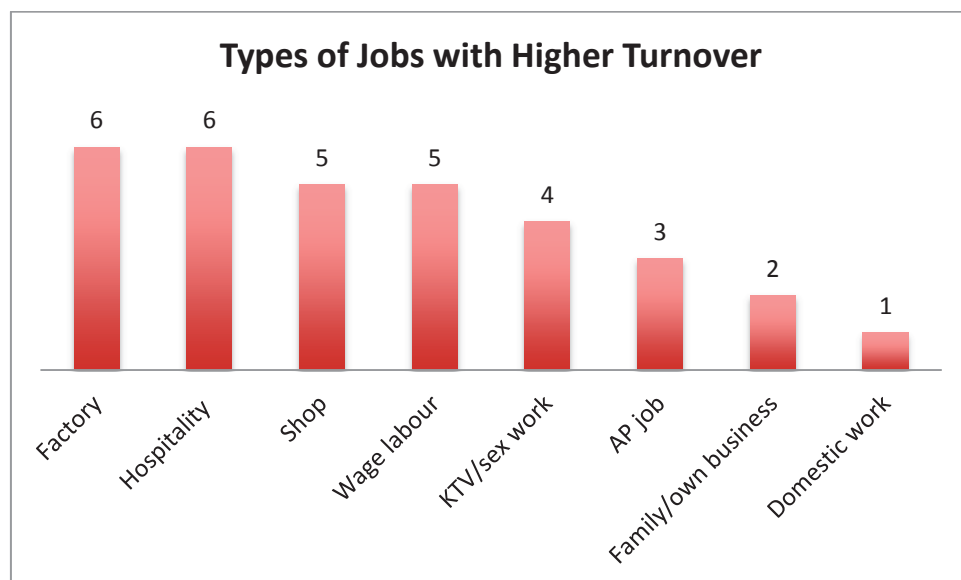
These figures clearly show that survivors who remain employed after reintegration are increasing their monthly salary from year to year.

One indicator for financial anxiety and employment was the number of different jobs held by survivors after their reintegration. Of the 77 survivors in the assessment, 59 were working after their reintegration (as opposed to only attending school or vocational training). Within that subset, the average number of jobs held by survivors was just over 2, with a significant number of survivors holding a single job after reintegration with one of a few aftercare-affiliated social enterprises. In fact, of the 18 participants who reported having only one job since their reintegration, 13 participants (72.2%) worked for an aftercare-affiliated social enterprise. Of the other five participants who reported having only one job after reintegration, three were also in school, so their job was part-time or irregular.

Thirty-six (36) participants stated they worked in an aftercare-affiliated social enterprise during reintegration and of those, 13 (36%) reported having only one job over the duration of the study (i.e. they stayed in the aftercare-affiliated social enterprise job throughout their reintegration until the present). The remaining 23 participants averaged three jobs per person throughout the assessment period.

Thirty-one (31) participants in the assessment took part in some form of vocational training, either before or during reintegration. The assessment also tracked whether participants utilized their vocational training skills in their employment after reintegration. For example, if their vocational training was focused on sewing, the indicator tracked whether their employment had anything to do with sewing, such as working in a garment factory or a home-based tailor business. This indicator was tracked for 27 participants; 18 participants did utilize their vocational training in some way in the employment during reintegration, and 17 did not. Seven of these participants both did and did not utilize it at some point; for example, some participants tried to set up a home business but later abandoned it due to faulty equipment or inadequate income.

Eleven (11) participants had a minimum of four jobs during/after reintegration; eight of those had received vocational training in aftercare but did not utilize it after reintegration (although three of those did utilize for some period of time during the assessment period). These participants averaged five jobs each after reintegration. The table below outlines the types of jobs survivors with a large number of jobs were likely to occupy.



**Chart 5 Types of Jobs with Higher Turnover (n=11)**

Factory work (usually garment factories) and hospitality (e.g. restaurants, hotels) were among the most common types of work survivors were likely to have if they had a high personal employment turnover rate. Working in a small shop, wage labour, or going back to the sex industry were also more likely to increase the number of jobs a survivor had after reintegration.

A total of 34 participants stated at some point the reasons they decided to quit their job, drop out of school, or leave a vocational training program early. The two most likely reasons were a negative workplace experience and urgent family financial need. Other likely reasons for quitting were included inadequate pay, illness or medical emergencies, direct family pressure, and lack of childcare. The table below outlines all statements made by participants when discussing reasons for quitting their job.

**Table 15 Reasons for Leaving Employment (n=34)**

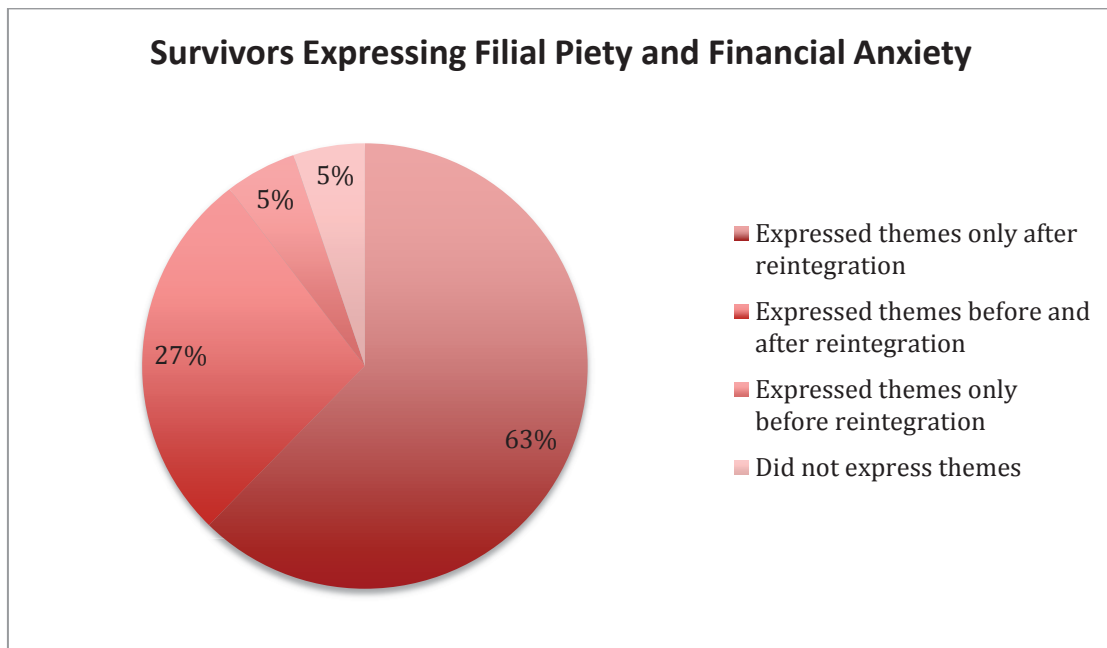
Reason for quitting job/school/ vocational training	Number of reintegrated survivors expressing this theme
Feel unable to learn; too difficult	4
Family needs urgent help	11
Family pressure	5
Pay too low; need to earn more/faster	9
Lack of transportation	2
Lack of childcare	5
Illness; medical emergency	3
Negative workplace experience	18

There was often urgency in the reasons for quitting, and participants often felt a burden for providing more for their families. The category of “negative workplace experience” included dislike or disinterest for the work and/or coworkers, not feeling valued by employers, bad management, and harassment in the workplace.

### Notes & Limitations Regarding Data Collection

It should be noted that many of the participants expressed the above themes did so multiple times over the span of their involvement with the study. Often in interviews taking place months and years apart, participants would express the same feelings and experiences over and over. These results changed little over the course of the study; the challenges, feelings of responsibility, and instability were ongoing for most survivors who expressed these themes.

Furthermore, the vast majority of themes on filial piety and financial anxiety were expressed after reintegration, once a survivor had gone back to living in the community. As seen in the chart below, 63% of participants (48/77) expressed themes of filial piety and financial anxiety only after they reintegrated. Only 5% (4/77) never expressed any of the themes, and another 5% only expressed these themes before reintegration and not after. Finally, 27% (21/77) expressed themes of filial piety and financial anxiety both before and after reintegration.



**Chart 6 Survivors Expressing Filial Piety and Financial Anxiety**

The sample sizes in this assessment are unequal in numbers of visits during a given year because not all participants were available three times every year. Surveys and interviews were all conducted in Khmer and were later translated into English. Transcripts and narratives are crosschecked to ensure translation accuracy. Surveys and preliminary findings are reviewed as a team to avoid cultural bias in translation and ensure that cultural perspectives are retained in data evaluations.

Analysis of the present assessment findings were also discussed and confirmed with the research team, in order to mitigate cultural and other contextual misunderstanding that may have occurred. In addition, qualitative coding systems may be vulnerable to slight

inaccuracies, as the researcher is sometimes making judgments as to which statements made by participants fall under a certain thematic category or another.

## Discussion

This section will go into more detail and analysis on the results of the longitudinal data used in the present assessment.

### Filial Piety is an Expression of “Gratitude”

Participants expressed themes of filial piety and, if asked directly, stated their duty towards their parents was considered an honour rather than a debt. Participants were often overwhelmed, however, by the worry they felt about their family’s livelihood and the responsibility of providing for their family.

### Worry and Responsibility

Results showed a large proportion of participants worry about their families (43%) and feel various types of responsibility towards their families. These feelings of responsibility are translated into reality, as seen in the fact that over two-thirds (68%) of participants stated they gave money to their parents at some point, and often many times, over the course of the study period.

The statements in the table below demonstrate the feelings of responsibility and worry participants have towards their parents and the desire to provide for them.

<i>Statements Regarding Worry and Responsibility to Provide for One’s Parents/Family</i>
“What I am concerned about the most are money and my mother.”
“I want to work and have a good salary so I can... help my family at the same time support myself.”
“I work and I want to go back and live with my mother because I want to take care of her.”
“I want to study until I can finish because I think if I finish high school, I can find a job and can earn money to support my mother and family.”
“I never feel bored (sic) in working to help my family. I am glad to do it for my family.”
“I feel responsible to my family. When I worry or have problems, I do not know who I should talk to.”
“I always think about how much money should I provide to my mother, how much will I pay for debt, or what thing should I buy for my mother and myself?”
“I worry a lot about her debt and I have to work to repay my mother's debt.”

### Box 7 Statements Regarding Worry and Responsibility to Provide for One's Parents/Family

Eldest children (and daughters in particular) may feel a larger burden to support the family. One participant, the eldest of nine children, spoke of this upon reintegrating into her family from a shelter program: she worried a lot because her family struggled financially only her parents worked to support the family. She wanted to work to help pay their debts, but also wanted to continue with her schooling, though she didn't know if that was even possible due to their limited means. She struggled with ongoing feelings of guilt and a pull to quit school to earn money right away for her family.

Birth order in participants’ families was tracked in 32 female cases; in 20 of the 32 cases (62.5%), the participant was the eldest sibling, the eldest daughter, or the eldest single daughter. This may indicate the likelihood that eldest girls are expected, or feel more responsibility, to provide for their families at a younger age. This is confirmed through various statements made by female participants, including one participant who spoke of worrying about her family and often sending money to them, as it was her responsibility to support them as the first child in the family. Another survivor, when asked if she felt

“belittled” by having such a big duty of assisting her family, responded, “I am not belittled, I think it's common for the elder child in a family.”

Survivors also put off pursuing plans for the future or for themselves in order to help and support their parents. This was most often demonstrated in delaying education, employment opportunities, and marriage. Some of the statements relating to this theme are in the table below.

<i>Statements Regarding Putting Off Future Plans</i>
“I don't have any plans yet and I don't know what to do because I think a lot about my family and I have many responsibilities for my family.”
[After turning down a marriage proposal] “I don't care about [having my own family] because I still want to live with my family and help them.”
“I think in the future I will marry and move to live with my husband, but then who will support [my family] instead? [...] If I marry, who will support my family?”

#### **Box 8 Statements Regarding Putting Off Future Plans**

In addition, many survivors stated their future plans included living with their parents, providing for their families, and a desire for positive family relationships.

<i>Statements Regarding Desires for the Future</i>
“I want my parents to move and live with me in Phnom Penh. ... I wish my family will love each other forever.”
“I want to buy a house and bring my family to stay with me in that house.”
“First I will save up money and if possible, if I have a lot of money, I will help my mum... and buy a house for my mum. I want to live with my mum. I don't want to live far away from my mum.”

#### **Box 9 Statements Regarding Desires for the Future**

##### **Honour and Gratitude**

When asked directly about “sangkun” (the debt of gratitude one owes one's parents), participants were reluctant to frame it in terms of a negative (debt), but rather wanted to explain it as an honour, a (positive) responsibility to repay gratitude to one's parents. One participant aptly described these conflicting feelings: “Actually, responsibility [you] can think of as a burden or not a burden, too. It does not matter if we don't do it but it is about our kindness and gratitude toward our parents and family. As we are family, we cannot stand watching them facing hardship. So if we are able to support them, we should do as much as we can” (BLR Participant, on what she owes her parents).

Participants in informal interviews sometimes spoke about gratitude when speaking of their responsibilities or feelings towards their parents. One participant demonstrated the cyclical gratitude repayment in her statement to her son, who was involved in a gang and used drugs, asking him, “This is your gratitude to me and your grandparents?” Another survivor explained her feelings of responsibility to pay her parents' debt, saying she considered it her “gratitude.” Other expressions of “sangkun” are in the table below.

<i>Expressions of “sangkun” by survivors</i>
“My parents] feel proud [of me]... I have a feeling that my parents are good people and they always encourage me, so I really thank them for giving birth to me and giving me life.”
“[My brother] always does this (earns money). When my mum was able to earn money, she helped her children and now it is their turn to help her.”

"I have a boyfriend but I don't want to marry or have a baby yet because I want to earn money to support my family first and to 'repay my parents' gratitude'."

"I think a lot when I have children I want them to respect elders. They shall help the elders when their elders have hardship... I want them to become good people, know how to respect elders and speak soft words."

[About having so much financial responsibility in the family] "I feel hard (sic) and tired, but now it becomes my habit and my duty that I give it all to my mom."

#### **Box 10 Expressions of "Sangkun" by Survivors**

Seven participants expressed one indicator of both responsibility and family honour: they expressed that the sacrifice of having been sexually exploited was one they willingly accepted because it was for the benefit of their family. This was also found among Vietnamese sex workers in Busza's (2004) study: "My mother cried a lot when she knew that [I was a sex worker]. I told her not to cry because I am willing to do this and I didn't feel bad about this" (p. 241).

Participants in the present study also made similar statements, such as one survivor who was clear that she never regretted being prostituted, as she had sacrificed herself so her family could have a "good future." Another participant, whose mother had sold her virginity, was asked if she blamed her mother at all, to which she replied, "No, I was the one who wanted to help my family." One participant made the decision to reenter the sex industry in order to pay her mother's debt, and her mother was unaware of the type of employment she was engaging in. Finally, one survivor, whose grandmother had sold her to a brothel when she was nine years old, justified it for the benefit of the family: "I think that even if my grandmother did wrong, I also had a responsibility for the family, even though I was too young... So even though I know it is wrong I needed to do it for my family."

The themes of honour and gratitude are mirrored in another study on coercion and force in the sex industry in Cambodia:

Many of the women I interviewed derive immense satisfaction from being able to support themselves and their extended families. Fulfilling an important cultural role of being dutiful daughters, in which daughters (and not sons) are held accountable for looking after their aging parents, siblings and children, some women working in the sex industry perceive themselves as acting virtuously in making a great personal sacrifice (Sandy, 2006, p. 465).

#### **Negative Relationships**

Participants supported their parents and felt responsible to provide for them, even if the relationship between them and their parents was strained or negative. This was often the case between daughters and their mothers. One participant was abused both physically and emotionally by her mother, but still expressed sympathy for her mother and desired to live with and support her mother. Her thoughts on the abuse she suffered were indicative of the assumed filial duty of a child towards her parent: "My mother cursed and shouted at me in front of others. I tried very hard not reply to what she had done to me because I understood that she was my mother."

Other survivors expressed sadness over the loss of relationship with their mothers, but continued to do what they thought of as their duty. They expressed the desire to be close to their mothers and to gain their mothers' approval by being good daughters, including giving them more money.

*Statements on Supporting One's Parents Despite Negative Relationship*

"I never wanted anything from her. I just wanted to make her happy but she didn't understand me. Whenever she needed money I always helped her because I felt pity for her. I wanted to help her but she didn't care about me. She gossiped about me."

[Discussing her relationship with her mother, who trafficked her] "I worry about my mother who is in prison. I want to be with her."

[Discussing her mother, whom she supports and for whom she pays debt] "My mother complains to me often because I don't give money to her and she is angry at me. Sometime I feel like I want to go back like before [want to go back to sex work]."

**Box 11 Statements on Supporting One's Parents Despite Negative Relationships**

**The Burden of Filial Piety**

An interesting tension in participants' attitude towards their parents was, though they talked of their duty as a sign of gratitude, they often also disclosed feeling it was a huge burden to provide for their parents. The burden of filial duties impacted participants' mental health, with some talking about feeling depressed, stressed, and even suicidal about needing to provide for their families. The focus group discussion on filial piety confirmed the link in other literature between financial filial duty and negative mental health outcomes.

The table below outlines some statements made by survivors about the burden of their filial duty as well as the feelings on shouldering that burden.

*Statements Regarding the Burden of Filial Piety*

"The biggest barrier for achieving my goals is I lack money to support my family... I want to be a chef so I for sure can help my family out. My parents need money. It is urgent for me."

"My older brother helps my parents but not much because he has a lot of debt. Before I felt the burden to carry all these responsibilities... I felt upset. I cried. I suffered - why am I the only one responsible for the whole family?"

"I feel responsible to pay debt because I borrowed money to celebrate the ceremony when my mother got sick. I worry a lot about the loan as I am the only one who is responsible to pay it. Sometimes it makes me feel very lonely."

"I have to work very hard to support the family. I feel tired of doing this."

"When I saw my family situation I could not stop my tears. We are a big family. Sometimes I want to commit suicide, but they motivate me."

"My family has a lot of problems; no income and a lot of debt as my mother does gambling. I feel very hurt about it. I am emotionally hurt by my family's matters."

**Box 12 Statements Regarding the Burden of Filial Piety**

Participants also expressed negative feelings and guilt when they felt they were unable to adequately support their parents. One participant expressed guilt that she had married, and was therefore not fully available to provide for her biological family: "I worry about them as I see them having difficulties... However, I cannot help them because I already got married. What I earn is only to support my own family. I cannot help so I feel not so good in myself." Another participants fittingly described the pressure to support one's family despite knowing the benefits of education would help more in the long run: "I want to finish my grade. I want to have a job, so I can support my family better than this... I can stay strong but when I see their face I cannot handle it, I feel softening (sic)... People insult me that I am rude that I do not listen to my parents [to quit school and find work] but they don't know how much I hurt inside." Pressure to support one's family came not only from parents, but also from other relatives and the wider community. Some participants expressed feeling



looked down on by neighbours for not giving enough money to their parents when they visited home.

Negative decision-making is also tied to the filial burden. Participants who returned to sex work, or considered returning to sex work, often did so because their families needed money or were pressuring them to earn more. One survivor decided to start providing sex for KTV customers after reintegration when her mother had a medical emergency and had to stay in the hospital for many days, accruing medical bills the family could not afford. Another was considering going back to “night work” (sex work) because of the pressure from her parents: “I told [my parents] that I want to work [at AP job] and they said that when I work here I didn't have money left and never help them. I help them a lot already and I don't know how much they want me to help. That's why I decide to work at nighttime but working at night I feel it is not good.”

### **Survivors Suffer from Financial Anxiety**

Survivors experience anxiety both over their present financial circumstances and about their plans for the future. This section covers some of the expressions and symptoms of financial anxiety in reintegrated survivors as well as their expression of anxiety through unrealistic expectation and planning for the future.

### **Money and Mental Health**

As demonstrated in the section above, reintegrated survivors experience consistent and recurring financial anxiety. Symptoms of financial anxiety are linked to the burden of filial piety, as stated by one participant, speaking about the negative impact of feeling financially responsible towards her family: “I have so many responsibilities so if I have capability (higher economic status), I wouldn't feel stress. If I have no ability to handle it, I get aggressive and sometime when I cannot control my feeling I throw my anger on my children.”

The anxiety they feel is not only related to the responsibility and burden of providing financially for their families, but also regarding their financial situation in general. Survivors are constantly worried about how much money they make, how they will pay all their expenses, how they will care for their children, how they will (or cannot) prepare for economic shocks like illness or the death of a family member, and how they will pay their own and their family's debts. Approximately half of participants stated at some point they felt worry or fear related to money, and nearly half stated they did not earn enough money for their expenses. This did not improve over time, but was a constant worry throughout the assessment period.

Participants often equated having more money with positive mental health outcomes, as seen in the quote above (“I wouldn't feel stress”). Linked to this was the sometimes-expressed desire to marry a wealthy man, who would then take care of them and their family. Much of a survivor's thought life revolved around financial concerns; for instance, one survivor summed up, “I think money is the big thing. I think money is everything, money, home, and other things.” On the other hand, survivors often talked about negative feelings when discussing their income or financial concerns: “I feel stress mostly when I don't have money. When I don't have money, it makes me feels angry and depressed.”

Financial anxiety was also expressed through the feeling of being overwhelmed, and some survivors talked about wanting things to be done for them (by their parents or AP staff) because they could not handle it on their own. One survivor struggled after reintegration, but also expressed her journey of resilience: “I feel that my reintegration was not really good because I feel responsible to work very hard to earn money by myself. I have to look after

myself at home unlike in the shelter, where I had enough food to eat, which was cooked by the shelter mother. But I think I should learn to live on my own.”

Gender seemed to play into feelings of financial responsibility. Financial anxiety was not only externally motivated, but female survivors especially put a lot of pressure on themselves to be “good daughters,” and “good women.” Overall, boys did not feel responsible to pay their parents’ debt, only their own. One female survivor stated, “We’re the women; we have a lot of responsibility after having kids... we women need to think all, both thinking and saving... Today is not enough. So tomorrow we must think... We need to think and do... we must be thoughtful, comprehensive, and self-check (sic), if we want our family’s good, we should start to be good from ourselves.” This seems to be in contradiction to those in the survey who said they believed adult men are more responsible than adult women to provide for their families.

### **Unrealistic Expectations & Concern for the Future**

Plans for the future were very pliable and often changed from visit to visit throughout the study, and many were not very realistic about their ambitions. Some participants stated a different career ambition in every study visit, but never pursued vocational training or jobs in those fields. Many survivors seemed unable to draw a link between “dreaming” and realistic career ambitions.

This theme was confirmed in Surtees’ (2012) study on economic empowerment of trafficking survivors:

Some trafficked persons have unrealistic expectations about their job options. They may want a job that does not match their skills/education or expect an unrealistically high salary. Some also have unrealistic perceptions about the work they are expected to do and confused motivations... This can lead to frustration and disappointment, which negatively impacts their ability to find and accept suitable job placements (p. 31).

One reason for this inability to plan realistically for the future may be that survivors are doing just that: surviving. If one is focused on making it day-to-day, or week-to-week, one may not have a full ability to imagine or plan concretely for the next job or opportunity. Indeed, symptoms of financial anxiety, disclosed in one of the participant focus group discussions, included a lack of motivation and hopelessness.

Often answer the 5-year dream question with an idea of job or training, but very few have thus far directly pursued opportunities that would lead to their dream.

Many want to open a little shop: “Because this job we can stay at home” (BLR Participant, on why she wants to open a grocery shop instead of work for AP SE). Another stated opening a grocery shop out of her house would allow her to make some money while staying home to care for her children.

### **Survivors are Financially Unstable and Indebted**

Underpinning the feelings of anxiety around finances was the very real financial instability experiences of survivors. This section deals with survivors’ earnings and desire for future earnings, as well as survivors’ experience with debt.

### **Present and Future Financial Instability**

Half of survivors stated at some point they did not earn enough money to cover their living expenses, and reasons for quitting employment was often associated with low or inadequate salary. Very few survivors ended up being unemployed (or if they did, they did not remain so) but the employment they did secure did not meet their financial needs. This is confirmed in the literature around socio-economic needs of trafficking survivors: “Even when respondents found work, salaries were not always enough to meet their living needs” (Brunovskis & Surtees, 2012, p. 26).

Linked to this was also participants’ inability to plan for the future, including lacking budgeting and financial planning skills. Some participants talked about preferring a smaller daily income (such as tips from working in KTV or hospitality) to getting a larger monthly paycheck. Additionally, although a large proportion of survivors expressed some form of planning or dreaming for the future, very few actually took concrete steps over the course of the study to achieve or work towards their ambitions. Many survivors stated their ideal job was to open a small grocery shop in their house, which would have the double benefit of being able to stay home and earn daily income.

The inability to plan for the future, linked to both inadequate income and inability to budget, means survivors are vulnerable to external shocks and cannot build capital to improve their livelihood. As Adams (2011) explains, “Achieving financial stability requires having not only income to cover daily living expenses, but also assets available to leverage in times of hardship, meet financial goals, and build long-term security” (p. 3). This is reiterated by an assessment participant, speaking on family responsibility: “Today we have enough but at the same time we have to think about what we will do for tomorrow and when tomorrow comes, we will think about it again for the day after tomorrow and next day. We have to be well-prepared!” Unfortunately, few have shown they can be “well-prepared,” and therefore sink into an ongoing cycle of debt.

### **Cycle of Debt**

Experiences of debt were among the most commonly talked about difficulties by survivors. Debt was the most pressing financial concern for most survivors; 62% expressed feelings of responsibility to pay debt, 55% had debt, and 65% stated their parents had debt. Debt among survivors and their families were not single events; debt in these families is a persistent and entrenched cycle from which they do not seem to be able to extract themselves. Furthermore, the result showing participants are most likely to ask their family to borrow money when they urgently need it may lead to a false notion that these survivors have a support network they can rely on, but ultimately the whole family unit, not just survivors, are functioning through this ongoing cycle of debt. Often survivors, in interviews, did not specify who they were borrowing money from, but the underlying assumption was they were most often borrowing from local informal creditors (or “loan sharks”).

Furthermore, the top four types of debt disclosed by survivors were living expenses, medical expenses, family, and housing or asset repair. This shows debt is often accrued because families do not have savings or a safety net for regular expenses and unexpected events. The debt category of “family” included when survivors borrowed money to send to their parents so their parents could pay for living expenses or their own debt. This also shows the link between filial piety and debt in that survivors would put themselves into debt in order to honour their parents by paying the latter’s debt. Paying a parent’s debt was also a filial expectation, as stated by one participant, who suffered feelings of guilt and often considered dropping out of school to provide more for her parents: “Every time [my parents]

borrow money from other people, people judge me that I have a job but do not support the family.”

Reimer, Gourley & Langeler (2006) and Lainez (2011) both found debt to be an entrenched cycle in the families of survivors of trafficking, especially in Vietnamese communities in Cambodia. Brunovskis & Surtees (2012) also found debt could be a remnant from one’s trafficking experience: “Survivors often have ongoing debt from their trafficking experience, be it from migration-related expenses, or inflated “expenses” owed to the trafficker during the time of exploitation” (p. 24).

Lainez (2015) looks at women engaged in sex work as actors in diverse economic relationships, and conceptualizes “sex workers as embedded in relations with informal creditors, sex migration brokers, employers in the sex industry, their families and their clients” (p. 4). Whether a woman became involved in the sex industry by choice, coercion, or calculated risk, these relationships are often important in her life. One participant in the present study went back forth between her AP job and working in KTV, depending on when and how much she or her parents went into debt. She wanted to work in the AP job, but the draw of the “easy money” in KTV contributed to the ongoing cycle of debt and repayment.

Gambling was also stated by a number of survivors as a cause of debt. Some participants spoke of a parent’s addiction to gambling; another disclosed her own gambling problem: “Gambling is the most powerful that lead everyone into debt. To repair house I can save money... I cannot save money for gambling. You know, I was a rich woman in the past. But now I am poor because I am addicted to gambling. Gambling can destroy your relationships, interfere with home and work, and lead to financial catastrophe.” Another form of gambling could be Tong Tin, an informal form of savings and loans group pervasive across Cambodia. It is not a legal entity, and can be beneficial to some participants who use it solely to save. However, people often refer to the groups as “playing Tong Tin,” pointing to the fact that it can be a form of gambling, and survivors often talk about going into more debt when they join these groups, rather than profiting from them.

### **Survivors are Sometimes Unprepared for the Workforce**

There is a large amount of data on survivors’ participation in aftercare education, vocational training and the job market; however, for the purposes of this assessment, only two themes are covered, which are related to financial anxiety. One theme was whether or not vocational training prepared survivors for the mainstream job market and the second theme was the benefits and challenges of working for an aftercare program or after-affiliated social enterprise after reintegration.

#### **Vocation Training for the Job Market**

Determining whether and which types of vocational training prepare survivors for the mainstream job market has been a growing concern in literature in recent years. Surtees (2012) found some of the main obstacles to successful job placement for survivors of trafficking included inadequate or unavailable vocational training opportunities, vocational training that does not align with market realities, lack of resources to attend long-term training, and a focus on certain forms of vocational training that leads to market saturation and impedes job readiness (p. 31-32). SIREN (2009) confirmed this, adding that vocational training is often treated as a personal goal and occupational therapy for survivors rather than a professional market-oriented activity that will lead to decent jobs (p. 5).

The results of the present assessment show a moderate view of how and if vocational training prepares survivors for employment after reintegration. Half of participants who

attended vocational training used it at some point during their reintegration employment. Many of these ended up being employed by AP businesses or aftercare-affiliated social enterprises, and not in jobs outside the counter-trafficking sector.

Participants also expressed reluctance to enroll or complete their vocational training program because of the financial constraints of not earning any or enough money during the training. At least ten participants directly stated their reason for quitting their job or vocational training had to do with their family urgently needing their financial support. For example, in response to a researcher's question on attending a NGO-assisted salon training course, in order to fulfill her dream, one participant stated,

I want to, but I want to wait until my family's economic [situation] becomes better first... I want to work and make money so that I can go to take this training course." This participant declined NGO assistance after exiting an exploitative KTV; when asked the reason, she said, "The NGO in Phnom Penh asked me to take a skill training but I did not want to because I didn't want to stay in Phnom Penh [as I would be separated from my family]. That NGO staff told me they would allow me to study but I had to stay there. Mostly, when they offered us to take skill training, they asked us to stay in the shelter. I can't stay there because of [my family's financial need].... If they allowed me to stay at home, I would take the training with them. (BLR Participant, on why she declined NGO assistance in the form of vocational training.)

At some points, survivors showed willingness to explore new jobs with better pay than working with assistance programs. However, they had difficulty in doing this as they had limited access to resources and skills. Sometimes the skills they learned while they were in the training program are unfit or inapplicable to work in their community. A number of survivors were doing very well with their skills training (e.g. cooking, sewing, hairdressing); however, these skills were unusable as they reintegrated to remote area and provinces. Therefore, they had to migrate to work in other places, where their risk and vulnerability increased.

### **Aftercare-Affiliated Social Enterprises**

Salary tracking did show an increase in survivor salaries over the study period. It should be noted salaries were only tracked over multiple years for 25 participants, and those participants may have been more likely to hold stable, aftercare-affiliated jobs, and not informal jobs or jobs outside the counter-trafficking sector.

Another indicator of job stability is the fact that most survivors who held a single job during reintegration worked for aftercare-affiliated social enterprises or AP jobs. Generally, participants were more likely to feel more secure in these jobs, either financially or psychologically.

Survivors expressed both satisfaction and dissatisfaction with their work experiences with counter-trafficking businesses. The table below outlines some of the statements made by survivors about their experiences with AP jobs and training.

*Expressions of Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with AP Employment*

“Sometimes I feel frustrated with low salary that the NGO gives me and I am not able to get the kind of training I want as my friends, they can get beautician training in outside shop.”

“I do not have any interest to learn or join vocational training skills. I would like to open a store selling coffee and food if possible. I think it will make more money then.”

“I am still working in the [AP SE] because I have no other choices. It is difficult to work here but I have to work because it is hard to find a new job.”

“When I worked at [AP SE], I felt different. My life wasn't dangerous like in the brothel. I have another life now.”

**Box 13 Expressions of Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with AP Employment**

## **Conclusion & Recommendations**

The main themes that emerged from this assessment are filial piety, in the view of survivors, is an expression of gratitude, although in practice is a difficult burden that weighs on people who are already economically and socially vulnerable; survivors suffer from sometimes overwhelming financial anxiety, displaying symptoms such as stress, ongoing worry, and fear with regards to their financial situation; the financial situation of these survivors being very unstable and wracked with debt, which is often cyclical in nature; and, survivors express an uncertainty about the job market and their economic future, and often feel unprepared for the workforce.

The sections below draw some of the larger conclusions based on these themes and recommendations for practitioners and researchers moving forward in this sector.

### **Tension Between Gratitude and Obligation**

An overarching tension in the findings on filial piety and financial anxiety among reintegrated survivors of trafficking is the gap between direct statements related to these themes and indirect expressions of these themes. In other words, what survivors said and how they acted were sometimes in contradiction to one another. Two examples of this tension are in themes of children's responsibilities towards one's parents and viewing filial piety as an honour or a burden.

In the initial survey, participants overwhelmingly disagreed (76%) that children under 18 should be responsible to support their families; however, the expressions of worry, responsibility, and guilt about supporting one's family were pervasive, even among participant under or around the age of 18. Secondly, although participants verbally framed their filial duty in terms of honour and gratitude, expressions of burden and difficulty were very high among those who expressed themes of filial piety.

It may be very challenging to understand how deeply entrenched the value of filial piety is in the Southeast Asian, and particularly the Cambodian, context. The concept of the individual is incredibly different in a Western, neoliberal framework. The neoliberal understanding of the "individual" can take account of one's sociological environment; however, in the Southeast Asian embodiment of filial piety, an individual does not exist apart from her community, which is, in Cambodia's case, the family. This has both positive and negative implications, as may be the case with any cultural phenomenon. In the case of survivors of trafficking reintegrating after an exploitative situation, the family is both a source of hope and burden.

The fact that most survivors expressed themes of filial piety and financial anxiety only after they reintegrated points to the heightened stress during the initial reintegration stage, adding to the many psychological and emotional issues already at play around leaving the shelter and returning home or reentering the community.

The findings of this assessment may contribute to finding better and more holistic solutions for survivor reintegration, as well as implications for further research.

### **The Centrality of Family**

The assessment concludes that family is the central focus and influencer of a survivor's economic reintegration process. It is therefore imperative to include family assessments, social work, and empowerment in reintegration services for survivors. The family

environment, expectations, assets, debts, and challenges should be taken account of and included in each survivor's reintegration plan.

When a survivor is without family, the research team contends, the survivor feels like she is "drifting." If she doesn't have a family to go back to, she is more likely to reenter an exploitative work sector (such as the sex industry). The family is the foundation of the individual, and the individual does not see oneself apart from family. When programs are seeking to support survivors reintegrating, services must always account for and involve family as much as possible. Be this financial counseling, planning for the future, setting realistic goals, or critical thinking coaching, the family's role as a strong agent in the life of the survivor, must be included.

Finally, the researchers recommend aftercare programs revisit both their reintegration services strategy and the amount of time they provide follow-up after reintegration. The economic reintegration environment should be assessed systematically, and increased efforts are needed to explore any and all economic options for the survivor, outside the traditional job placement options, and taking into account the family's capacities. Many research studies, including the present assessment, indicate the length of time a survivor needs support, financially and socioeconomically, after reintegration, must be longer than what is being offered by most aftercare programs.

### **A Model for Financial Capability Among Survivors**

Based on the findings of the assessment, a framework of financial capability is recommended for programs to improve their economic reintegration assistance to survivors. Family members and capabilities should also play an important role in the financial capability plan of each survivor.

This suggested model for financial capability among trafficking survivors is based on the existing framework developed for survivors of domestic violence in the United States. For the model to be adapted to the counter-trafficking sector, more research and testing should be done; however, the theoretical framework of the model is a good place to start.

Sanders (2013) implemented a financial capability model among domestic violence survivors and talks about designing individual financial capability plans to support women putting into practice the financial education and support they receive (p. 90). Results of this holistic financial capability model showed impacts on participants in three ways: it changed the way they think about finances, it changed the way they behave financially (consumer, budget, and debt repair behaviours), and it proved that real learning occurred (p. 91-94).

Financial capability involves combining elements of financial literacy, vocational training and job readiness, job placement, and access to systems and resources. In summary, the literature agrees, "Financial capability is participation in economic life that maximizes life chances and enables people to lead fulfilling lives; this requires knowledge and competencies, and the ability and the opportunity to act on that knowledge. This involves linking individual functioning to institutions. It also involves use of pedagogical methods that enable people to practice and gain competency in this functioning" (Smith-Brake, 2011, p. 23).

Postmus, Plummer, McMahon, & Zurlo (2013) frame this model in terms of empowerment, stating "empowerment is not the outcome of services, but rather a process in which women engage." They add that access to resources fosters this process of empowerment (p. 281). Part of the empowerment process is educating survivors about economic abuse and



exploitative activities, and “advocates should also be prepared to offer financial tools and strategies in an effort to increase survivors’ economic self-sufficiency” (Postmus, Plummer, McMahon, Murshid, & Kim, 2011, p. 15). Similar to this issue, openly speaking about issues of filial piety and financial anxiety with survivors of trafficking could empower them to face and deal with these issues within their family context.

One aspect models for domestic violence and trafficking victims have in common is the need for safety in program implementation. Postmus (2013) emphasizes the unique needs of domestic violence survivors, encouraging financial education programs to “incorporate information that is specifically targeted to the unique and complex safety concerns of... survivors” (p. 13). Sanders (2013) also emphasizes the centrality of safety in economic empowerment and security programs for vulnerable women.

There are three main facets of a financial capability model, which must be implemented together and in a larger context of ongoing social work, mentoring and coaching (both personal and work/entrepreneurship-oriented), and counselling. The first facet is financial literacy and education. This includes increasing survivors knowledge and skills around budgeting, money management, financial planning, and savings. This facet also includes aspects of employability, in order to enable the survivor to become job ready. This facet is not meant to be a one-time activity, but an ongoing process of learning and putting into practice what is learned throughout the second facet.

The second facet of financial capability is applying knowledge to experience. This is usually the activity of job placement and employment experience, and because financial education is ongoing during job placement, it is reinforcing financial education through experiential learning. Providing survivors with financial coaching and counselling as they reintegrate and through their first post-trafficking employment experience will also lend to their empowerment and learning process.

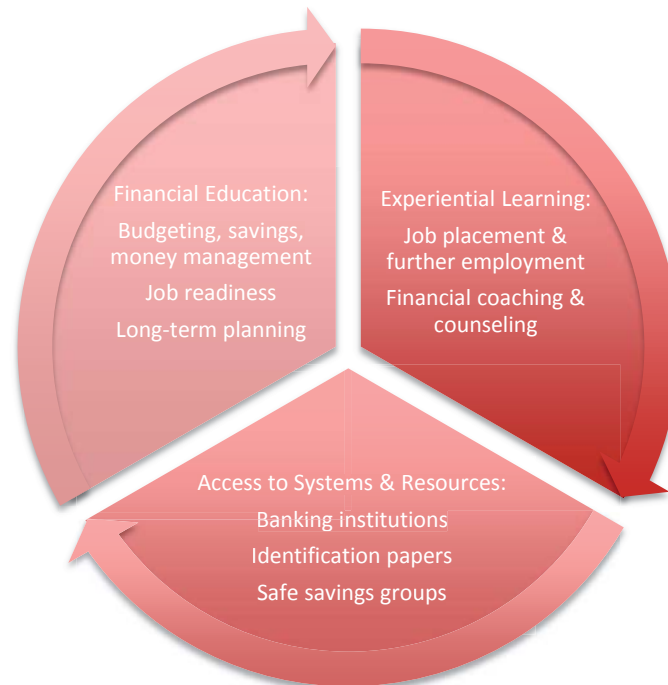
The third facet is supporting survivors to access systems and resources that will enable them to plan for the future and achieve their desired socio-economic outcomes. Shapiro & Burchell (2012) aptly state, “It is important to make financial knowledge more accessible and financial products more consumer-friendly, which may reduce individuals’ financial anxiety” (p. 101). This facet thus includes a challenge to advocate and partner with institutions to promote more just and targeted products, resources, and policies for vulnerable populations. Helping survivors access systems and resources includes ensuring they have proper identification papers, the opportunity to open and operate a bank account (which may include resources for mobile banking in rural areas), and connecting them with a safe savings or trust group in their community.

Sanders (2007) and Sherraden (2010) sum up the financial capability model for survivors: “Safe provision of financial education helps women become more financially independent. However, while financial education is vital, it is not sufficient. Financial resources and access to financial services and supports make it possible for women to apply financial knowledge and skills and become financially capable” (cited in Sanders, 2013, p. 101).

The larger context of social work and counseling can include involving a survivor’s parents and family in the learning and coaching process. It can also include enabling survivors to think critically and realistically about what employment is available and possible to them. As Surtees (2012) points out, “Working with beneficiaries to identify realistic and viable

employment options often takes time and intensive work, including longer term counseling” (p. 31).

The figure below outlines the model as described.



**Chart 7 Financial Capability Model for Survivors**

### **Implications for Further Research**

The Butterfly Longitudinal Research Project is the first study of its kind in the world. Initially, the study was aimed at enabling the 15 participating aftercare programs working with study participants to improve their services and support of survivors. As the project has progressed, the implications of the findings and type of research have grown. It is hoped that the BLR body of research will greatly contribute to the understanding of survivor reintegration, both in Cambodia and globally. The longitudinal nature of the research has already shed light on issues of trust and “voice” of the survivor (Morrison et al., 2014, p. 61-62).

The present assessment can contribute to reintegration programs and services by providing an understanding of the instability and anxiety survivors experience in their financial lives and how important the family unit is to the psychological and socio-economic well-being of the survivor. Future data assessment could focus on more specific areas of survivors’ economic environment and economic reintegration services, such as:

- How survivors and their families prepare for or deal with economic shocks, such as medical emergencies or the death of a family member; if and how economic shocks played into the survivor’s trafficking experience;
- Which factors, either based in assistance programs or externally, played into survivors’ self-defined and self-perceived success in reintegration;
- The larger economic environment and the survivor’s work environment; how vulnerable work played a role in the survivor’s experience before and/or after trafficking;

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- Analysis of survivors' and their families' physical assets and how they acquire and use assets as collateral or livelihood enhancement; the use of assets as savings; the loss of assets as an economic shock.

By the end of the 10 years of the Butterfly Longitudinal Research project, the research team should aim to have collected enough data to be able to draw a reasonable picture of survivors' economic and filial experience, before, during, and after their trafficking experience. This will greatly contribute to painting the full picture of how and why people are trafficked, what, specifically, contributes to a victim's vulnerability, and an understanding of how pre-trafficking vulnerability and risk can be mitigated to both prevent trafficking and to better assist and support trafficking survivors once they have reintegrated.

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