

## **Experiences of Former Cambodian Entertainment and Sex Workers Integrating into Christian Churches**

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## Abstract

The aim of this cross-sectional study is to explore the experiences of former female Cambodian entertainment and sex workers as they integrate into Christians churches. The research was carried out by the staff of Precious Women (PW), a faith based non-governmental organization (NGO) in Cambodia, which assists women in exiting the sex industry. Two separate qualitative questionnaires were designed. The first survey was developed to randomly survey 10 Christian churches in 4 different provinces across Cambodia. The goal was to assess church pastors, leaders, and members' perspectives about former entertainment and sex workers attending church. The second survey involved a cohort of 29 PW clients who were either former entertainment or sex workers. Several important discoveries were made from this primary research regarding church attendance by the PW clients. Firstly, the church surveys revealed that respondents were extremely open and desired to reach out to former entertainment/sex workers, however, understanding how to strategically accomplish this was a significant barrier. The second major discovery revealed that the majority of clients, who are no longer attending church services after graduating and exiting the PW program, listed job and family as the main barriers to attending. No client listed discrimination by church pastors, members, or leaders as a barrier for attending church before or after (re)integration. Further investigation and research needs to be done regarding the social, cultural, and religious influences of family as primary barriers to attending church by PW clients after (re)integration into the community.



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## Introduction

Precious Women is a faith based, local NGO which assists Cambodian women and underage girls in exiting the industry of commercial sexual exploitation ("Who We Are," 2016). Between 2008 and 2012, there was an estimated three fold dramatic increase in the number of women entering Cambodia’s commercial sex industry from 12,762 to 41,622 as female entertainment (FEW) and female sex workers (FSW) (Page et al., 2013). Precious Women organization was founded in response to this significantly high prevalence rate within this marginalized group of women in Cambodia ("Who We Are," 2016). Key drivers in the sexual exploitation of women in Cambodia include: limited income generating activities, mobile workforce, trafficking of women and girls, poverty, and widespread transactional sex (UN, 2009).

Until 2008 when brothels became illegal, FSW in Cambodia were categorized as ‘direct’ and were mainly brothel-based or ‘indirect’ (Page et al., 2013). Subsequently, more Cambodian women began entering the sex trade as indirect FSW, and are distinguished from direct FSW by the category of entertainment workers (FEW). FEW work in entertainment establishments and venues such as massage parlors or karaoke television (KTVs) as beer promotion girls, waitresses, hostesses to foreigners or karaoke girls. According to Seng, founder and director of PW, FEW

activities focus on serving customers, encouraging beer sales for financial commission. Services provided by FEW typically include alcohol and sometimes drug consumption with the customer, and allowing the customers to engage them in sexual touching of the breasts or genitals, and kissing inside the venue (Seng, 2016). Furthermore, FEW may or may not engage in transactional sex (selling of virginity, vaginal intercourse, or fellatio) outside the entertainment venue (Seng 2016).

Precious Women provides programs which include vocational training, education scholarship, job placement, safe temporary housing along with counseling and health checks. The program also encompasses a value system which supports the Christian faith ("Who We Are," 2016). Throughout the program, the staff of PW assists the clients with the (re)integration process involved with exiting the entertainment/sex industry. Part of this process also provides spiritual support for those who desire to integrate into a Christian place of worship in the community (Seng, 2016).

The first part of this research project was commissioned to develop a better understanding of the local church pastors, leaders, and members' perspective on the (re)integration of former FEW and FSW into their congregations. This includes their mind-sets, attitudes, and behaviors towards former FEW and FSW. The staff of PW hopes to gain a better understanding of how they can assist churches in the process of successfully (re)integrating their clients into congregations. Understanding their perspectives, can assist PW social workers to identify barriers their clients face when attending church, and to create positive relationships with church congregations for current and future clients. Discrimination against former sex workers by Cambodian society remains a strong concern.

The second part of this research project was commissioned for two reasons. First, to assess the spiritual experiences of PW clients as they (re)integrate into church congregations within their communities. Secondly, as a long-term evaluation of PW's process in helping those clients desiring to integrate into churches. Overall, PW has a committed program with a strong spiritual foundation within their organization for clients in the program. When clients graduate, and exit the PW program, community (re)integration includes opportunities for social and spiritual connection between the clients and a local church pastor and/or leader. This research project can provide the organization with a better understanding of their client's experiences as they face communities as former FEW or FSW. Subsequently, this project can assist with identifying gaps within and improve upon the spiritual and social aspects of their (re)integration process.

## **Literature Review (Background)**

Cambodian women in general are traditionally granted a lower status than men in society. Relationships in Cambodian society have a hierarchical configuration with the main one being gender (Waller, Welsh, & Sansfaçon, 2004). Gender discrimination is deeply embedded in and reinforced by social attitudes (Waller et al., 2004). This problem is further potentiated for those women who currently or in the past worked in the entertainment or sex industry. In particular, one

Cambodian proverb provides the opportunity to better understand the perspective within Cambodian society:

“Men are like gold. If it falls into the mud it can be cleaned and look shinier than before. Women are like cloth. If it falls into the mud it is stained for life and its value is gone” (Nou, 2016, p. 4).

An overall global concern with re(integration) for former FEW and FSW is the problem and complexity of stigma and discrimination. Various studies have reported continued problems involving stigma experienced by survivors who are involved or perceived to be involved in sexual exploitation by both families and communities (Morrison et al., 2015). Sexually exploited women (re)integrating into the community will face many challenges during this transition, and will confront cultural stigmas (Derks, 1998). In one particular study, researchers reported significant discrimination against sexually exploited females specifically by husbands, long term partners, family members, co-workers, teachers, neighbors, and fellow students (Morrison et al., 2015).

One of the goals of the PW organization is to assist with the integration, also referred to as (re)integration, of their clients into the mainstream community. Most all researchers would agree that leaving the sex industry and integrating back into the community is a long complex process (Baker, Dalla, & Williamson, 2010). Structural, political, cultural and legal factors along with cognitive transformations are key determinants which prevents women from exiting the industry (Sanders, 2007). By definition, social integration is a dynamic and principled process which achieves and maintains peaceful relations; mending conditions of social fragmentation, exclusion and polarization (UN, 2005). Within the human trafficking sector, (re)integration is defined more clearly as the process of recovery, and economic and social inclusion following a trafficking experience (Surtees, 2013). It involves:

“settlement in a safe and secure environment, access to a reasonable standard of living, and mental and physical well-being, opportunities for personal, social, and economic development, as well as access to social and emotional support” (Surtees, 2013, p. 17).

Talking about sexual issues within the church was found to be fairly taboo, according to one study, Chab Dai Safe Community Project Church Leaders Survey (Miles, Phuong, & Sworn). This research project revealed that a large percentage of the church members believed that prostitutes were not welcome in their church, however, a large percentage also responded that they are willing to invite them into their congregation. This particular research, which surveyed 84 church leaders in three provinces, showed that in general “there was a positive response and openness to church members being trained on outreach to prostitutes” (Miles et al., p. 31). Alternately, though, some participants of this same survey described the activities of prostitutes as ‘illegal’, believing they are disobedient to God and could corrupt the church (Miles et al.).

## **Methodology**

### *Study Questions*

1. What are the experiences and challenges that the PW clients encounter when (re)integrating into Christian churches?
2. From the results of this research, how can PW staff identify strategies and implement actions within the organization which could bring improvement to their program's (re)integration process involving the Christian churches?

### *Research Design*

This research project is a cross-sectional study using a mixed method approach involving in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and case studies. The research was carried out over a six-month period, July-December 2016. Two different questionnaire-based tools were designed which included both open and closed-ended questions. Each questionnaire was developed to target two distinct cohorts. The first questionnaire targeted respondents who are Christian pastors, and Christian church leaders or members. The second questionnaire targeted female respondents who are either past or present clients of the Precious Women organization. The first survey tool draft was designed by the report author. Subsequently, the PW social workers edited the draft, added new questions, and removed some questions they felt were not applicable to the survey. Finally, the survey was translated to Khmer by the PW staff members.

### *Sampling*

The first cohort interviewed targeted Christian pastors, church leaders, and church members who have a history of attending regularly church meetings and or worship services. Ten different churches were identified across Cambodia in 4 different provinces (see Table 1 below). For this research project, churches are those described as a local assembly or group of believers in Christianity according to the Biblical reference found in I Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:1-2 (Williams, 2014). Church membership, described by the respondents, ranged from 40 to 260 persons, with the exception of one “mega church” surveyed which membership is greater than 500. The Khmer staff of PW use the word “pastor” when translating from Khmer to English. The English word “pastor” for the purpose of this research is defined as a person, male or female, experienced in the Christian faith who is a decision maker, manager of church affairs, leader, Bible teacher or preacher, and maintains a careful watch for the spiritual needs of the church member within his or her congregation (Jackson, 1988).

Churches were selected by three different processes. First, a PW staff member randomly used the Google search engine to identify churches and contact the pastors by phone requesting interviews. Second, churches were identified and pastors contacted who had partnerships with faith-based non-governmental organizations well known to the PW staff. The third process, was completed by selecting churches which are well known to the PW staff. All respondents were

Cambodian nationals except one expatriate who is the regional pastor for a Khmer Church, and is fluent in the Khmer language.

TABLE 1.1: Respondents (church pastors, members, and/or leaders within the congregations)

<b>Church Name</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Province</b>	<b>Respondent Title</b>
New Life Fellowship Toul Svay Prey II	Phnom Penh	Phnom Penh	Male Pastor (Non-Asia expatriate; English primary language)
New Life Fellowship Toul Sangke	Phnom Penh	Phnom Penh	Male Pastor
Gospel Christian Fellowship	Phnom Penh	Phnom Penh	Male Pastor
Tomnup Toek Church	Phnom Penh	Phnom Penh	Female church leader/member
Glory Church	Phnom Penh	Phnom Penh	Female Pastor
The Way of Christ	Kandal	Kandal	Male Pastor and (1) female church member*
Good News Church	Battambang	Battambang	Female church leader/member
Phrah Christ Phnom Penh Church	Phnom Penh	Phnom Penh	Male Pastor & (1) female church member *
Sansok Church, Sansok II	Phnom Penh	Phnom Penh	Male Pastor & (5) church members *
New Life Fellowship Kampong Cham	Kampong Cham	Kampong Cham	Male Pastor

\*respondents answered in focus groups discussions

The second cohort interviewed were either FEW or FSW who had graduated from various vocational training schools such as beauty salon, sewing, and cooking as a part of the PW program. These schools are conducted for a time period between 3 months and one year. The total number of clients who had received services from PW between its founding in 2010 to August of 2016 is 82. The female respondents in this survey were all current or past clients in the PW organization who had received services within a time frame ranging from 2010 to 2016. The staff randomly selected 50 clients to contact as participants in this study. However, change in residential location and telephone numbers of the clients prevented the staff from reaching all 50 clients. Subsequently, the staff could make contact with 29 adult clients by telephone or face to face for the interview process.

### *Data Collection*

The interviews were completed by six PW staff members. The interviews were completed face to face within the first cohort of churches. The second cohort involving PW clients was completed by both face to face interviews and by phone interviews. The longest distance of travel to complete face to face interviews with clients and churches was Battambang which required two days of travel to and from Phnom Penh. Respondents were read the questions from the questionnaire and responded verbally. Answers were written on the questionnaire by the staff in both English and Khmer script. Later, the Khmer answers were translated back to English for the purpose of this report when the results were reviewed. In addition, 5 face to face interviews were done using videography in addition to the questionnaire; 3 in the church cohort and 2 in the PW

client cohort. The location of the face to face interviews took place in homes, restaurants, church buildings, church offices and the PW Phnom Penh office.

### *Instrument*

1. Questionnaire for church pastors, members, and/or leaders: 18 questions were designed and written in English, then subsequently translated into the national Cambodian language, Khmer, by the PW staff. All answers by the respondents were written and recorded by a staff member, and subsequently translated back to English.
2. Questionnaire for clients of the PW organization: 25 questions were designed and written in English, then subsequently translated into the national Cambodian language, Khmer by the PW staff. All answers by the respondents were written and recorded by a staff member, and subsequently translated back to English.

### *Protection of Respondents*

The names of the respondents within this research project will remain confidential. The respondents were reassured of confidentiality. Participant interviews were done face to face and by phone. Respondents gave consent to use their answers for data within this project. Permission to use videography was given to the PW staff during the interviews with the understanding that the videos will be used as part of this project. To maintain confidentiality, the church respondents selected were not informed by staff if PW clients attended their congregations.

### *Limitations*

The church pastor, church member and leader survey had limitations due the small sample of surveys acquired which was 10 out of a total 2,500 nationally registered churches with the Ministry of Religion and Cults (Nou, 2016). Geographical location of churches across Cambodia and the cost of travel created challenges in surveying a larger number of churches. This limitation makes it difficult to make a strong summary and conclusion connecting the responses from this survey to the overall views of all church members and pastors across Cambodia.

A second limitation for the PW staff involved church partners. Making new church contacts for the purpose of this study was time consuming. This took significantly more time to negotiate and coordinate interviews with church pastors who were not current partners with PW organization. The targeted churches were those who did have current PW clients in their membership due to the desire to maintain client confidentiality. The rationale for this was based on the concern that surveying churches which have current PW clients may perhaps “spotlight” and identify clients unintentionally. Careful concern was taken into consideration that some clients may desire to keep their past history as sex workers hidden from church members. While this

approach does protect client confidentiality, it does limit being able to evaluate PW's current (re)integration program from the perspective of current church partners.

Church Pastors, members, and leaders had a difficult time differentiating their perspectives between current and former FEW/FSW during the interviews. The majority of the respondents tended to view former and current workers within the same perspective (Kong, 2016). The interviewers struggled in reinforcing that the questions were targeting former FEW/FSW not those who continue to work in the industry. FEW and FSW are translated from Khmer to English as "entertainment workers". The staff at PW when designing the survey tool utilized the word entertainment worker in the surveys to represent sex workers because culturally that is the term used to describe women who work in the commercial sex industry.

Contacting PW former clients was difficult because many of them changed their phone numbers after exiting the program. The former clients are also transient, which prevented face to face interviews with many of the 29 respondents. Phone interviewing of the clients did allow wider geographical access to this hard to reach population. However, visual social cues are very important due to the sensitivity of the interview topic. These social cues were not as accessible in the phone interviews by the PW staff versus the face to face interviews. Phone interviews were less personable and clients tended not to be as open or forth coming with details or information of their experiences.

Lastly, bias among the respondents in the client surveys cannot be overlooked as a possibility. Surveyors were PW staff. The respondents may have felt compelled not to criticize or give negative feedback to questions which would reflect upon the surveyors themselves and the organization itself. The clients benefited from services provided by the PW organization and therefore the clients may have felt inclined to give answers that would present the organization and the social workers in a positive light. It is possible that clients feared damaging relationships and losing future services if answers were not given which promote the PW organization. Furthermore, PW staff are not professional surveyors, and had not been given special training on how to ask questions without bias.

## **Results**

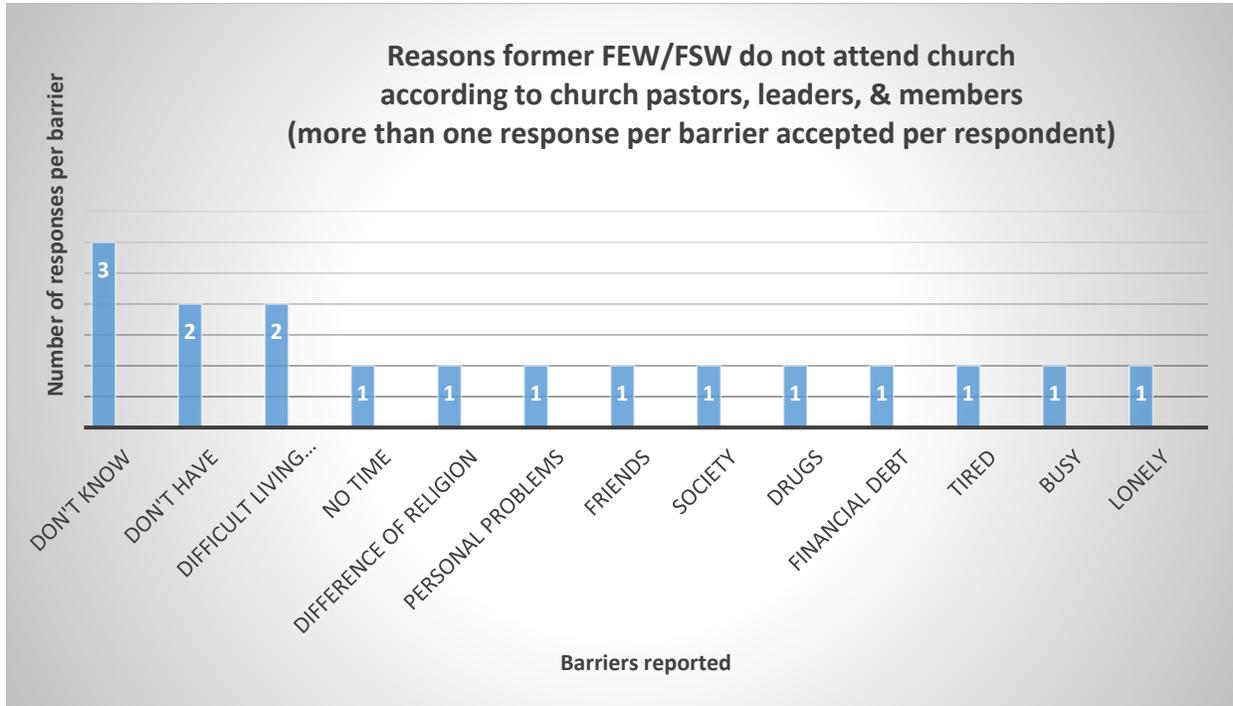
### *Church Pastors, Leaders, and Members*

*(For the purposes of confidentiality, the numbers below in Table 2.1 and 2.2 do not match the order of church names listed in Table 1.1)*

The results of the churches surveyed make a compelling conclusion that discrimination is experienced by former FEW/FSW. Approximately 40% of the respondents openly admitted that they themselves or other church members have participated in discrimination, and furthermore described specific behaviors by members such as "ignoring" or "excluding from activities". Another 30% respondents said they were "unsure" if discrimination had occurred by other church members. In contrast, it is interesting to note that when church respondents were questioned about barriers to attending church, only one church respondent listed rejection by society as a barrier.

Most respondents listed “unknown” as a barrier for church attendance by former FEW/FSW. Refer to Table 2.1 below.

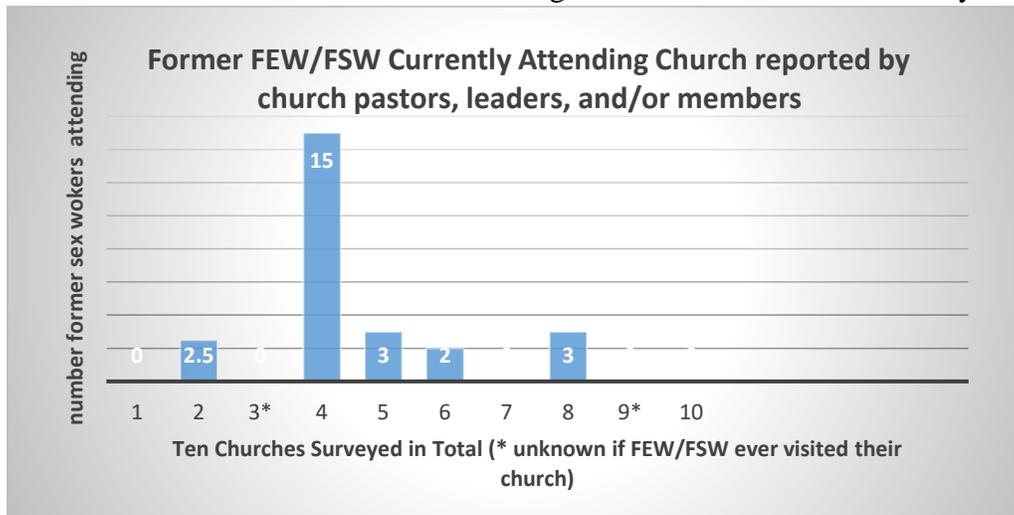
TABLE 2.1 Churches Surveyed: Reasons former FEW/FSW do not attend church (according to church pastors, leaders, & members)



Most all respondents had a desire to become more knowledgeable about how to help FEW/FSW. Eight out of ten respondents were open to having a PW staff come and provide training and informational materials to their congregations. In addition, 40% respondents stated their church has had “someone” come to share within their church about how to encourage and support former FEW/FSW. During the church surveys, three out of the 10 respondents offered the PW organization the use of their church building without a fee for programs such as “outreaches” or “fellowship parties”. One respondent offered to purchase bicycles for clients to assist with transportation needs.

The presence of former FEW/FSW in churches is not uncommon. Half of all the respondents stated that they do have former EW/FSW who attend their church. Refer to Table 2.2 below. In this survey, only one out of the 10 respondents surveyed stated that a PW client attends their church.

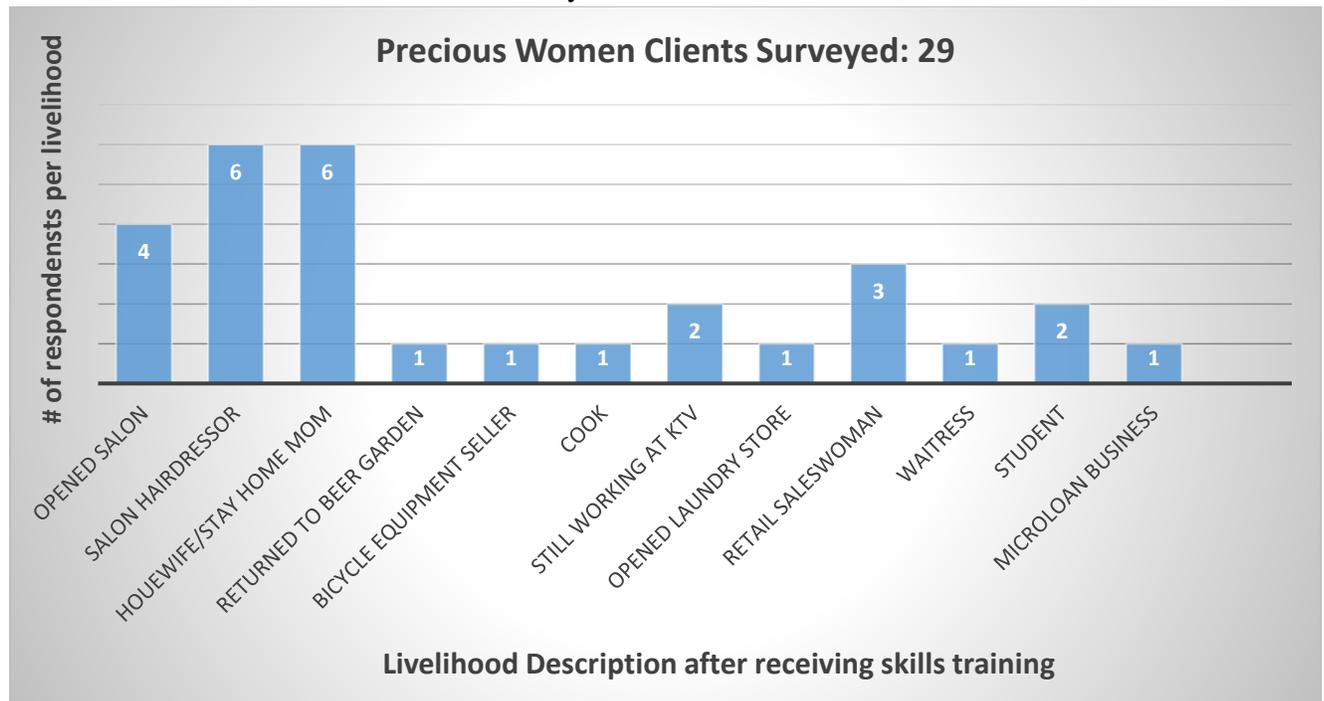
TABLE 2.2 Number of former FEW/FSW attending each of the ten churches surveyed



*Precious Women Clients Surveyed (former FEW/FSW)*

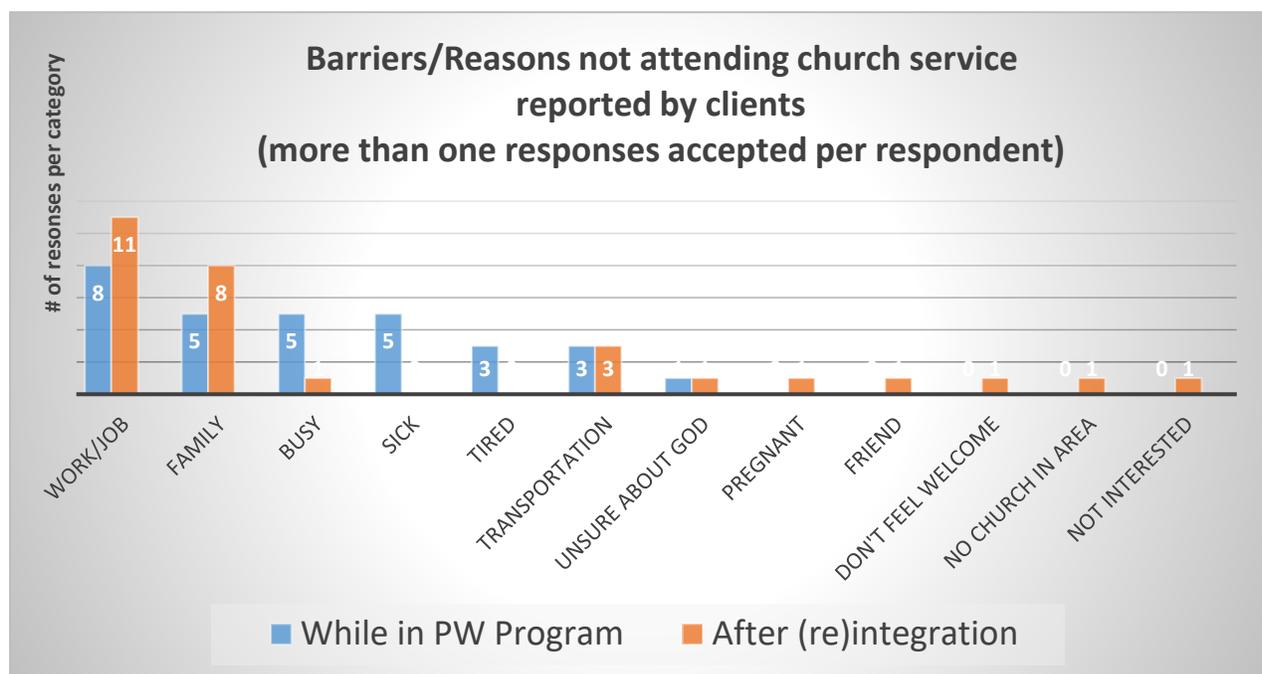
Precious Women clients were asked questions from two different perspectives. The first half of the survey questions were targeted to their experiences while in the PW program. The second half of the survey targeted their experiences after they either graduated or exited the program after receiving services. In addition, 1 client returned to working in a beer garden after exiting the PW program, and 2 clients continued to work at KTVs after exiting the program. The remaining 26 of 29 clients exited the entertainment and sex industry at the time of this survey. (See Table 3.0 Below).

TABLE 3.0 Precious Women Clients Surveyed: 29



The results from the clients surveyed reflects that clients were provided with consistent opportunities to attend church while in the PW program. Christian spiritual support was provided by the staff at PW. This is reflected in the survey which shows that 86% of the respondents state they were provided with personal Bible study discipleship. Furthermore, 93% of the clients stated they had voluntarily attended church services while in the PW program, and 78% of those clients stated they attended church services three to four times per month. Relationships outside family played an important support role for attending church while in the program; 93% of the clients having attending church services with either a PW staff member or friend. However, only 5% of the clients stated they attended church with a family member while in the program. See Table 3.1 below for reasons why clients either missed going to a church service or did not attend church.

TABLE 3.1 Barriers/Reasons Not Attending Church Services (reported by clients)



The second half of the client survey targeted client experiences after graduating/exiting the PW program as previously mentioned. Attendance to church services declined after (re)integration: 45% clients reported still attending church services, and 55% responded not attending church. When the clients were asked “If you are still attending a church service, who do you attend church services with?”, 68% were attending either with friends or alone by themselves. When all 29 were asked “Do you still accept Christianity for your faith?”, 72% responded “yes”, 3% were unsure, and 14% stated “no”. However, when asked “Do you believe that Jesus is your Savior?”, 72% responded “yes”, 28% were unsure, and none answered “no”.

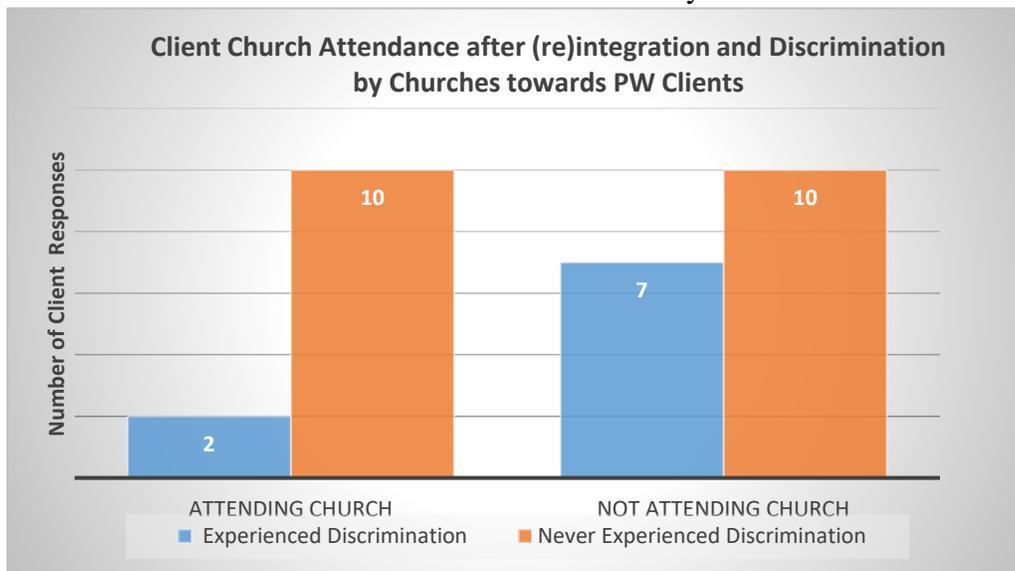
Questions targeting barriers or reasons why clients no longer attended church services after leaving the program were developed within the survey. When asked if a church was located near your home or village, 41% responded “yes”, and 59% clients said “no”. Furthermore, 53% of the respondents stated “yes” when asked “If transportation prevents you from going to church, then

would you attend if someone provided transportation?”. However, clients did not express that transportation was a major barrier preventing them from attending church. When asked, after exiting the program “Who or what prevents you from going to church services?”, only 10% of the clients listed transportation as a barrier” (See Table 3.1 above)

The majority of clients listed job commitments and family as the reason after (re)integration for not attending church services (See Table 3.1 above). While in the program job was also listed one of the main reason for not attending while in the program. Furthermore, family, “busy”, and sick were equal reasons for not attending.

Discrimination by church congregations was not reported by clients as a barrier for church attendance either while in the program or after during (re)integration in the community. Refer to Table 3.3 below which compares client church attendance with discrimination by church pastors, leaders, and members towards the PW clients. Respectively, 7% of clients attending church services experienced discrimination by church congregations while 29 % not currently attending church experienced discrimination in the past. Discrimination does exist. When clients were asked “Have you ever attended a church service and felt discriminated against by other church members because of your past?”, 31% said “yes” and 69% said “no”.

TABLE 3.3 Clients Church Attendance and Discrimination by Churches



## **Case Studies (Video/Audio recording translated to English)**

### Case Study #1 Pastor at Kampong Cham

How do you do! My name is XXXX and I am a pastor of New Life Fellowship in Kampong Cham province. We think that the places where the women and girls who work at night are dangerous for their lives. Even though they may have left or won't get involved with the church, we always give love and care to the women. We want to see their futures be better and don't want them to work in danger like that. When they come into the church, we always have our team help to take care of them and we show them love. We also motivate them to study the Gospel of God and encourage them to join one of our classes to help them grow in their spiritual life, become strong women who have control of their lives, no longer struggling with anger or difficulty to make decisions and to give them clarity. It is not only entertainment workers or women who are easily exploited. We are to value all women, whether they are orphans, widows or just starting to come to church. We have a vision that we want to lead them to and what is important is that they become a student of Jesus Christ to produce fruit. Our expectation is to see them become leaders in their communities also.

### Case Study #3 (Vocation training student at Precious Women)-

I am a student at Precious Women. When I lived with Precious Women, they taught me how to sew. Precious Women shares the stories of women, which made me happy and change my life. Now I have successful sewing skills! Precious Women allowed me to live in their Butterfly Home and gave me food and tools. I have since stopped studying and have returned to my province in, where I run my own business. I have a good husband, am pregnant and have a sewing machine that Precious Women gave to me (which is great because I can use my skill). I would lastly like to say thank you to Precious Women for supporting me for the year. Even though it was for only a short time, it was great for me.

### Case Study #3 (Female Pastor at Methodist Glory Church)

Hello, my name is XXXX and I am a pastor at Methodist Glory Church in Kandal market.

**PW:** Hello Sister! How many members are in your church?

**Pastor:** We have 36 members but only 30 come regularly.

**PW:** So as you know, we are from Precious Women which gives help to the women who work in the Entertainment Industry. How do you feel about entertainment workers and what do they look like to you?

**Pastor:** I don't think that they are bad but others do not think it is good. Some cannot relate to them. For me, I think that it shouldn't matter if the women work in KTVs because some of them do not want to work there and others want to work for themselves.

**PW:** When you say that some women don't like to work, what is it that the women don't like?

**Pastor:** Because of their family situations- poor families and parents sell kids to KTVs for basic needs for the family.

**PW:** Currently, do women come to pray to the Lord in church?

**Pastor:** No entertainment women come to the church.

**PW:** What do you think if Precious Women refers women to church? How would you and your members treat them?

**Pastor:** Entertainment workers have the right to come to the church. Members and I will welcome them if they come. The Bible says that women talk to the Lord in their heart and always speaks of women who work in the night, so we also provide value for them.

## **Discussion**

### *Church Pastor, Leader, and Member Perspectives:*

It is interesting to note that there appears to be a lack of recognition or understanding on the impact of discrimination as a barrier for former FEW/FSW to attend church. Approximately 40% of the church respondents stated that they themselves or other members have either in the past or currently do discriminate against former FEW/FSW. Another 30% of the respondents stated they did not know if discrimination occurred when an entertainment/sex worker attended or visited their church. There is evidence that an awareness does exist that discrimination is a strong response to former FEW/FSW. In contrast, however, only one respondent in the survey stated that “society and church members rejecting former entertainment/sex workers” is a barrier for these women to attend church. Furthermore, “unknown” was significantly the greatest response as a reason that former FEW/FSW do not attend church. The consideration by church members, leaders, and pastors that discrimination could prevent a former sex worker from attending church is almost nonexistent.

Tackling the topic of discrimination by the staff of PW against former FEW/FSW will be a challenge because of cultural barriers. However, 90% of the church survey respondents stated they would accept a former FEW/FSW into their congregation. This is a good sign regarding church acceptance of FEW/FSW. A recommendation for PW would be to continue to identify churches that are open and welcoming to receive their clients into congregations. It is a strong likely hood that the reason for the high rate of continued church attendance after (re)integration is because of the strong commitment and action that the PW staff take in assisting the clients to connect with a church congregation while in the program and during the transition process of (re)integration.

The church surveys reflect that most churches did not have outreach programs targeting this marginalized group. In addition, pastors often responded that they either did not feel equipped or did not have enough staff to develop a special program or leadership assistance. The surveyors in this research project agreed that that the local churches did not have a plan on how to reach out to FEW/FSW (Kong, 2016). Pastors openly admitted in the surveys that they were “too busy” to isolate a member of the church who is willing to commit to this marginalized group. However, PW staff need to encourage these leaders that a “special, technical program” is not necessary. Personal one on one friendship and relationship can have a significantly high impact on church attendance

by these women. A simplistic, successful approach is being utilized by the PW staff. Voluntarily making personal invitations to the clients to join them in attending church while in the program produces favorable results. According to Seng (2016), many of the women in the PW program do not want their identity to be as an FEW/FSW. Creating a special program by church congregations for these women may not be a favorable approach.

PW currently partners with three churches in Phnom Penh, along with an extensive network of churches across Cambodia belonging to the same church congregation called New Life Fellowship of Churches. In 2015, PW staff were invited to share information about FEW/FSW and on three occasions. Sharing information to churches is currently focused mainly on education and knowledge about the lives of this marginalized population. The need is still present to continue to build strong relationships with churches across Cambodia, and provide regular trainings to church members specifically on discrimination, and social and spiritual (re)integration support.

PW continues to be a bridge in building relationships between the church members and FEW/FSW. The majority of women exiting the sex industry need considerably more help and support than their own social networks can offer (Baker et al., 2010). It is very important that PW continue to be proactive in helping church members understand this concept and recognize the impact their role can play in supporting these women. The (re)integration phase is a vulnerable time for the women who have exited the sex industry. Their greatest need for help and support is during both the *breakaway* and *after the breakaway* stages from the sex industry (Baker et al., 2010). Church pastors, leaders, and members can be key supports for (re)integration particularly in the *after breakaway stage*.

### *Precious Women Self Evaluation*

PW's (re)integration process involves the social worker scheduling a counseling meeting with the client in the program. The social worker and the client together create a plan for a successful re(integration) into a community of the clients choosing. Not all clients return to their home communities, and instead remain in Phnom Penh. For clients desiring to return to their home community/village, the PW social worker will visit the client's village to meet with their family for a "family assessment". An assessment and evaluation is completed, then an agreement is made between the client and the family for re(integration). The social worker also meets with the commune chief to inform the community leaders of the agreement. Counseling with the client and family continues after (re)integration, and a PW social worker will contact the client once a month for follow up by phone for one year. During this follow up period of one year, PW will offer aid to clients in need with healthcare checkups and financial support for safe residency. PW also provides clients with bicycles, and soft skill training like empowerment training for the community.

Spiritual (re)integration: PW provides finances for transportation while the clients are in the program for those desiring to attend church. In addition, the PW staff offers personal open invitations to any client who desires to attend church with them. Church attendance is voluntary. It is interesting to note that within this survey 27 out of 29 clients surveyed had attended church

services while in the program, and the majority of respondents joined a PW staff member when attending (See Table 4.1). In addition, 78% of the 27 clients attended church services 3 to 4 times per month while in the program, and 46% of the 13 clients attended church services 3 to 4 times per month after (re)integration. Further investigation is needed to conclude that strong relationships along with fellowship and friendship provides the bridge for why clients chose to attend church while in the program. While emotional, spiritual, and transportation support was offered to clients to attend churches of their choice, they predominately and independently chose to attend church with a PW staff member.

The understanding of household and community influence in Cambodia can often be overlooked by those from developed, individualistic cultures. The poor live in household as economic and social units of importance. They understand themselves as part of a social unit rather than thinking of themselves so much as individuals (Myers, 1999). While the client has a strong relationship and social unit with the PW social workers and friends when in the program, it appears this relationship is perhaps lost after (re)integration into the community. Society in general places expectations on people which require obligations to one another as well as needs and wants (Friedman, 1992). Furthermore, households are the building blocks of larger social systems, and the need for affection, self-expression and esteem arise from human encounter within these systems (Friedman, 1992).

One cannot negate the fact that Cambodia's population is 95% Buddhist (Ray, 2009). Consideration should be given to the theory that the Christian social unit created by the PW social workers is frequently replaced with social family units which predominately support Buddhism once the clients are (re)integrated. The majority of clients who attend church after (re)integration, attend with either friends (44%) or alone (28%). As mentioned previously, further study needs to be done to investigate the impact of family influences which places a barrier to attend church services. This includes the client's obligation to help bring in financial income to the family by securing employment which may compete with church attendance. (Refer to Table 4.1 below). With further research, it may be possible to identify the possible explanations for why 72% clients identify themselves as Christian, 72% state they believe Jesus is their savior, 62% believe their faith in Christianity has helped them (See Table 4.2 below); however only 45% are still attending church services. Further research could explore: 1) Does a lack of financial resources prevent a client from attending church instead of working? 2) Does family exert emotional pressure on clients not to attend because of the Buddhist faith or financial obligation? 3) How does transportation barriers affect church attendance?

TABLE 4.1 Those who PW Clients Attend Church Services With

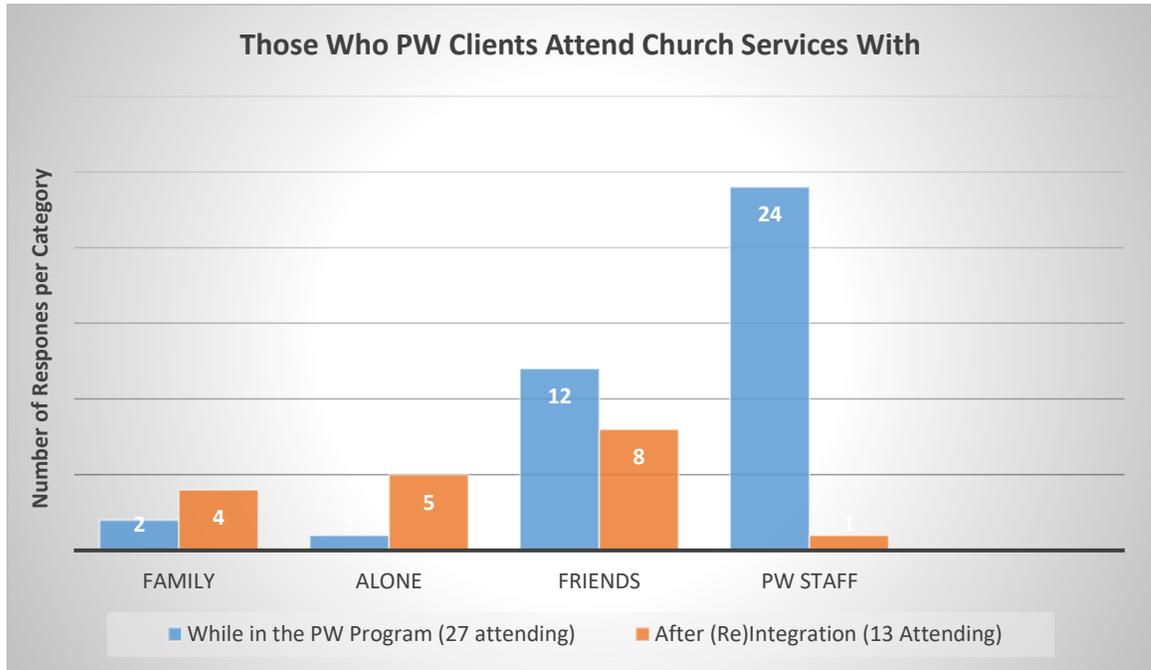
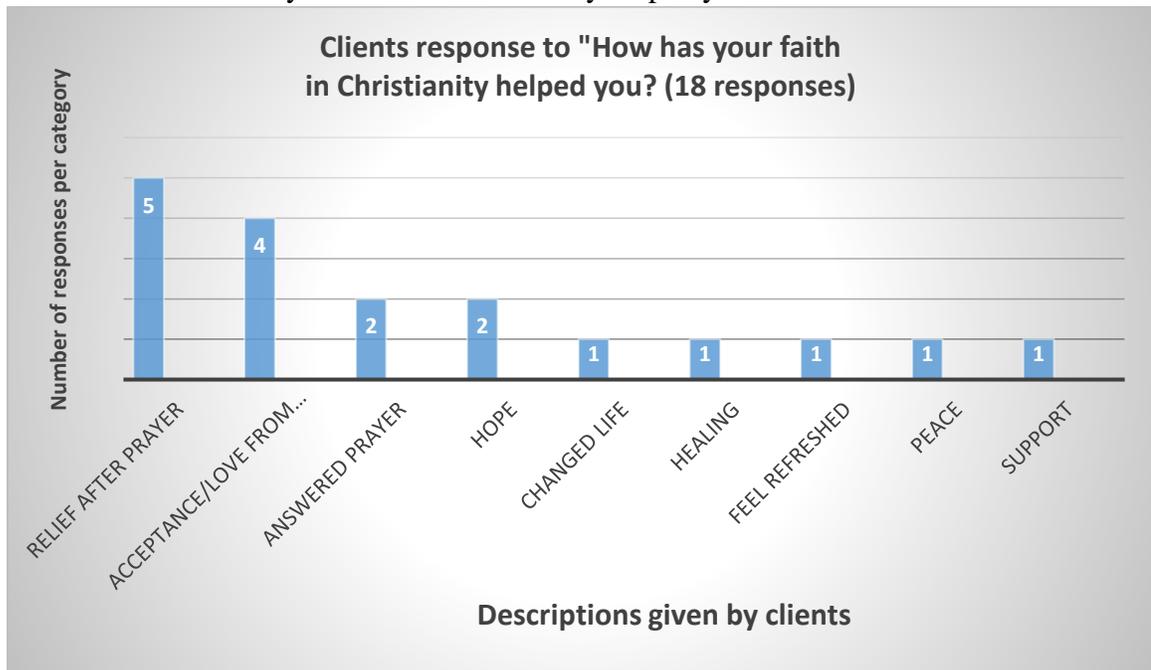


TABLE 4.2 How has your faith in Christianity helped you?



Answers to why about half of the clients stop attending church can provide the social workers at PW with a better understanding of how they can help with the spiritual (re)integration process. As revealed in the survey, 59% of the clients stated a church did not exist near their home. It is interesting to note that only 10% of clients stated that transportation was a barrier for attending

church after (re)integration, yet 53% stated they would attend if transportation was provided. More research needs to be done to understand the relationship between these variables. Currently, connecting a client with a church once they return to the province can be challenging for the PW staff. If a client requests assistance with locating a church in their home village/community then the social worker will locate a New Life Fellowship (NLF) network church near their home if one is present (Kong, 2016). There are roughly 150 NLF network churches dispersed across Cambodia. While the greatest barrier is job commitment for attending church and most clients do not have a church near their home, then PW staff need to consider alternatives to church building gatherings for their clients during (re)integration, such as life or cell groups and home Bible studies/discipleship.

The spiritual (re)integration process begins with an attempt by the social worker to contact a church pastor near the area where the client will be residing. However, because no “voice mail” is available on cellular phones and land lines are mostly nonexistent, this creates challenges with making contact. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for pastors to not have email accounts or internet access for common communication (Kong, 2016). According to one PW social worker, it is not uncommon for a pastor’s phone number to be given to a client with encouragement to make their own first attempt at connecting because of multiple failed attempts by the social worker (Kong, 2016). This is simply because the social worker is unable to reach the pastor by phone within the time frame that the (re)integration takes place. This gap in making a secure relationship connection between the client and a local church pastor or member is both a critical and vulnerable time frame. It could greatly impact the outcome of future church attendance.

Some gaps in this process were identified by the social workers themselves who participated as surveyors. The lead social worker identified a desire to improve their community follow ups of clients with more face to face interaction instead of phone call follow ups (Kong, 2016). However due to lack of financial resources and time constraints this may not be possible because clients are both transient and geographically dispersed across Cambodia after graduating vocational training and exiting the program.

## **Conclusion**

In looking forward, this research has been a great benefit to the Precious Women organization. It has helped the organization recognize areas of gaps regarding current relationships and build new partnerships with churches across Cambodia. While discrimination by church pastors, leaders, and members is still present, this was not identified as a primary barrier for why PW clients no longer attend church services after (re)integrating into the community. However, the research clearly demonstrated the need for the staff to continue with education to church congregations on the impact of discrimination, as well as the need for the development of friendships and fellowship between former FEW/FSW and church members. This research also provided the organization the opportunity to evaluate the spiritual impact it has had on its clients since its inception 2010. PW staff were able to evaluate the spiritual vision and mission aspect of their work, which is a strong component of the organization. In summary, PW staff provide a

healthy, effective spiritual mentorship program for its clients which encourages the growth of the Christian faith while in the program. Further research is needed which focuses on the social, cultural, religious, and financial obligations to family which prevent this marginalized group of women from attending church after (re)integration. Furthermore, additional investigation and strategy is needed to find alternative ways for the PW clients to practice their Christian faith which can overcome their current barriers to attending church services.

## Appendix A: Women Survey Questions and Results

<u>Nº</u>	<u>Question</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Details</u>
01	What services did you receive at PW?	100% Counseling 86% Bible Study 45% Housing 100% Skills Training 72% Life Skill 79% Home Visit to Village 76% Medical Care 38% Accomodation 52% Given Bicycle 62% Clothing 90% Financial Support 79% Training Tool 10% English Class	29 Counseling 25 Bible Study 13 Housing 29 Skills Training 21 Life Skill 23 Home Visit to Village 22 Medical Care 11 Accomodation 15 Given Bicycle 18 Clothing 26 Financial Support 23 Training Tool 3 English Class
02	How long did you receive services at PW?	21% 0-6 Months 52% 7 Months-1 Year 21% 1-1.5 Years 7% 1.5-2 Years 0 Other 0 N/A	6 0-6 Months 15 7 Months-1 Year 6 1-1.5 Years 2 1.5-2 Years 0 Other: 3 Years (2) 0 No Answer
03	What skill did you acquire from the PW project?	6% Sewing 67% Beauty 12% Cooking 6% General Education 9% Other	2 Sewing 22 Beauty 4 Cooking 2 General Education 3 Office Skills
04	How long ago did you graduate from a PW project?	21% Less than 6 months 28% 7 Months-1 Year 21% 1-2 Years 17% 2-3 Years 14% Other	6 Less than 6 months 8 7 Months-1 Year 6 1-2 Years 5 2-3 Years 4 4 Years
05	What do you currently do for your livelihood? (some respondents answered more than one livelihood)	14% Opened salon 21%BeautySalon/Hairdresser 21%Housewife/Staysathome 3% Returned to beer garden 3% Bicycle Seller 3% Cook 7% Still working at KTV 3% Opened Laundry Store 3% Clothing sales woman 7% General sales woman 3% Waitress	4 Opened salon 6 Beauty Salon/Hairdresser 6 Housewife/Stays at home 1 Returned to beer garden 1 Bicycle Seller 1 Cook 2 still working at KTV 1 Opened Laundry Store 1 Clothing sales woman 2 General sales woman 1 Waitress 2 Student

		7% Student 3% Microloan business	1 Microloan business
06	While you received services at PW, did you attend a church service and how often per month?	93% Yes 7% No 7% 1 time/month 15% 2 times/month 15% 3 times/month 63% 4 times/month	27 Yes 2 No 2 1 time/month 4 2 times/month 4 3 times/month 17 4 times/month
07	Who did you attend church services with? (answers are # of responses per category)	31% Friends 3% Alone 5% Family 62% PW Staff	12 Friends 1 Alone 2 Family 24 PW Staff
08	How did you travel to church? (answers are # of responses per category)	9% Bicycle 33% Motorbike 0% Walk 58% Tuk Tuk 0% car	3 Bicycle 11 Motorbike 0 Walk 19 Tuk Tuk 0 car
09	If you were NOT able to attend church service while receiving services from PW, but wanted to attend services then please explain why you were not able to go. (answers are # of responses per category)	16% Busy 16% Family 26% Work 16% Sick 3% Drunk 10% Transportation 3% Unsure about God 10% Too Tired	5 Busy 5 Family 8 Work 5 Sick 1 Drunk 3 Transportation 1 Unsure about God 3 Tired
10	How would you describe your Christian faith while enrolled in the PW project?	17% Weak (1) 66% Average (5) 17% Strong (10)	5 Weak (1) 19 Average (5) 5 Strong (10) (Scale of 1-10 was provided)
11	Do you believe that Jesus is your Savior?	72% Yes 0% No 28% Not Sure/NA	21 Yes 0 No 8 Not Sure
12	After you have graduated from the PW project, are you still attending a church service?	45% Yes 55% No	13 Yes 16 No
13	If you are still attending a church service, who do you attend with? (answers are # of responses to each category based on 13 attending church)	44% Friends 28% Alone 22% Family 6% PW Staff	8 Friends 5 Alone 4 Family 1 PW Staff (13 clients attending church)

14	How often per month are you attending service?	23% 1 time/month 31% 2 times/month 15% 3 times/month 31% 4 times/month	3 1 time/month 4 2 times/month 2 3 times/month 4 4 times/month (13 clients attending church)
15	Today, do you still have faith in Christianity and describe yourself as a Christian?	72% Yes 14% No 3% Unsure 10%No Answer	21 Yes 4 No 1 Unsure 3 No Answer
16	How has your faith in Christianity helped you?	4% Healing 4% Feel Refreshed 18% Relief after praying 4% Peace 4% Support 14% Acceptance/Love from others 4% Changed Life 7% Answered Prayer 7% Hope 4% Salvation 18%Helped with answers to problems 7% Comfort 4% Helped during sickness 4% Success	1 Healing 1 Feel Refreshed 5 Relief after praying 1 Peace 1 Support 4 Acceptance/Love from others 1 Changed Life 2 Answered Prayer 2 Hope 1 Salvation 5 Helped with answers to problems 2 Comfort 1 Helped during sickness 1 Success
17	Are there any churches near your home (near meaning 5 minutes by bicycle or in your village)?	41% Yes 59% No	12 Yes 17 No
19	If you would like to attend church but cannot, then what and/or who prevents you from going? (answers are based on # of responses per category)	28% Family 3% Don't feel welcomed 3% Pregnant 0% Community 3% Friend 38% Job 10% Transportation 3% Busy 3% No Church in the Area 3%Not interested in going 3% Unsure about God	8 Family 1 Don't feel welcomed 1 Pregnant 0 Community 1 Friend 11 Job 3 Transportation 1 Busy 1 No Church in the Area 1 Not interested in going 1 Unsure about God

20	Do you meet in a small group with other Christians to pray or study the Bible?	34% Yes 66% No	11 Yes 18 No
21	How many times per month do you meet with your small group? (answers are based on those attending small group in question 20)	36% 1 time/month 9% 2 times/month 9% 3 times/month 45% 4 times/month	4 1 time/month 1 2 times/month 1 3 times/month 5 4 times/month
22	If you would like to attend a small group with other Christians to pray or study the Bible but cannot, then what and/or who prevents you from going ? (answers are # of responses to each category)	15% Family 9% Busy 3% Unsure 3% Friend 12% Transportation 3% Do not like church 12% No church near home 39% Work 3% Unsure about God	5 Family 3 Busy 1 Unsure 1 Friend 4 Transportation 1 Do not like church 4 No church near home 13 Work 1 Unsure About God
23	If transportation prevents you from going to church, then would you attend if someone provided transportation?	53% Yes 47% No	9 Yes 8 No
24	Have you ever attended a church service and felt discriminated against by other church members because of your past as a sex worker?	31% Yes 69% No	9 Yes 20 No
25	Do you think church members or pastors could better support you?	86% Yes 7% No 7% Don't Know/NA	25 Yes 2 No 2 No answer
26	Case Summary		

\*Question 18 was removed from the survey because not all surveyors completely understand the question when acquiring data as reported by Sopheak Kong, surveyor. Question: Do you attend a church services that are near your home?

## Appendix B: Church Survey Questions and Results

<u>N<sup>o</sup></u>	<u>Question</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Details</u>
01	How many members attend your church?	52% Women 25% Men 23% Children	Total: 1,082 (562 Women/269 Men/251 Children)
02	Do any women who received service from PW attend your church?	10% Yes 90% No	Total: 10 (1 Yes/9 No)
03	Do any women who have exited entertainment work attend your church?	50% Yes 50% No	Total: 25.5 Women (5 Yes/5 No)
04	How many entertainment women have ever visited your church?	40% 2-3 Women 30% Don't Know 30%-Never Had	4- 2-3 Women 3- Don't Know 3-Never Had
05	What do the women who have exited entertainment work and attend your church currently do for their livelihood? (number of responses per category)	8%Takes Care of Family 8%Skill study at NGO 8% Works for company 8%Seller at Market 8%Factory Work 17%Still Works At 25%Don't Know 17%NA/Don't Have	1- Takes Care of Family 1- Skill study at NGO 1- Works for company 1- Seller at Market 1- Factory Work 2- Still Works At Night 3- Don't Know 2- NA/Don't have
06	In the past, have you ever had a woman who has exited entertainment work visit your church but not return again?	50% Yes 30% No 20% Don't Know/NA	5- Yes 3- No 2- Don't Know/NA
07	Referring to the past question, how would you describe their level of faith in their Christian belief? (5 answered)	40% Weak 40% Average 20% Strong	2- Weak 2- Average 1- Strong
08	Do you have a special plan, mentorship program or teaching program to disciple the women described above in the Christian faith?	10% LG Classes 20% Follow-up/Home Visits 10% Small Groups 10% Teach Dance 40% None 10% Not Sure	1- LG Classes 2- Follow-up/Home Visits 1- Small Groups 1- Teach Dance 4- None 1- Not Sure
09	If these women described above face challenges with attending church service, please describe these challenges. (number of responses per category)	5.5% No Time 11% Difficult Living Conditions 5.5% Difference of Religion 5.5% Personal Problems 5.5%Friends 5.5% Society 5.5%Drugs 5.5% Financial Debt	1- No Time 2- Difficult Living Conditions 1-Difference of Religion 1-Personal Problems 1-Friends 1-Society 1-Drugs 1-Financial Debt 1- Tired

		5.5% Tired 5.5% Busy 5.5% Lonely 22% Don't Know 11% Don't Have visiting our church	1-Busy 1-Lonely 4-Don't Know 2-Don't have visiting our church
10	Do you know of a woman who has exited entertainment work and lives within 15 minutes of your church and is a Christian but does not attend any church services?	0% Yes 50% No 30% Don't Know 20% No Answer	0- Yes 5- No 3- Don't Know 2- No Answer
11	Are there any women in your church who have exited entertainment work and are involved in a ministry position such as a volunteer, Bible teacher or leadership position at your church?	30% Yes 50% No 20% Don't Know/NA	3- Yes (Small Group, Youth Leaders, Welcome Ministry) 5- No 2- Don't Know/NA
12	If a woman who has exited entertainment work and visited your church did not return again, did you or someone from your church ask her why she did not return?	30% No 10% No Answer 10% -Don't have visitors 20% Yes 30% Don't know	3- No 1- No Answer 1- Don't have visitors 2-Yes 3 Don't Know
13	Has your church ever had or invited a staff member from PW or a similar organization to come share to your church members about how to help or encourage the Christian faith to a woman who has exited entertainment work?	40%- Yes 50% No 10% Don't Know/NA	4 - Yes 5- No 1- Don't Know/NA
14	Would your church allow a staff member from PW or a similar organization to come and speak or share to your church members about how to minister to, help or encourage the Christian faith to a woman who has exited entertainment work?	80% Yes 0% No 20% Don't Know/NA	8- Yes 0- No 2- Don't Know/NA
15	Has anyone from your church ever gone to either PW or a similar organization to teach the Bible or encourage Christian faith to the women who have exited entertainment work and are receiving services?	50% Yes 30% No 20% Don't Know/NA	5- Yes 3- No 2- Don't Know/NA

16	In the past have you or a church member ever discriminated against a woman who has exited entertainment work and visited your church or been a member of your church?	40% Yes 30% No 30% Don't Know	4- Yes 3- No 3- Don't Know
17	What qualities would you like to see in women who come to your church to attend services who have exited the sex industry and were referred to you from PW?	8% Relying on God 20% Grow Into Leadership 13% Connect with Others in Church 13% Share the Gospel in Community 13% No Longer Working at Night 33% Don't Know/NA	1- Relying on God 3- Grow Into Leadership 2- Connect with Others in Church 2- Share the Gospel in Community 2- No Longer Working at Night 5- Don't Know/NA
18	Do you think that you would be willing to accept a woman into your church who has been referred by either PW or a similar organization and give discipleship and mentoring to her in the Christian faith?	90% Yes 10% Don't Know	9- Yes 1- Don't Know
19	Recommendations/comments given by respondents to the surveyor: (number of responses per category)	Continue Our Work Grow Church Relationship Small Groups/Teachers Rely on God/Pray Learn Strategy Don't Know/NA	4- Continue Our Work 3- Grow Church Relationship 3- Small Groups/Teachers 1- Rely on God/Pray 1- Learn Strategy 3- Don't Know/NA

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