Program Evaluation

Community-Based Sexual Assault Response and Prevention Program

Social Services of Cambodia

2012

Program Evaluation

Community-Based Sexual Assault Response and Prevention Program

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Program Background

Social Services of Cambodia (SSC), a local NGO with a long history of providing social services in Cambodia (since 1992), designed its sexual assault program as a response to a growing need for services for victims of rape—a form of violence overlooked in Cambodia until recently. The program was not unique in this way alone. By providing counseling and other forms of support in a client's home, SSC sought to challenge the norm of offering only shelter-based services and take aim at confronting deep-rooted traditions of casting victims of sexual violence out of their communities. The program, funded by the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women, which ran from January 2009 until December 2011, addressed the physical, emotional and social needs of women and girls by offering high-quality, client-centered social work services for survivors and their supporters[1]; conducting engaging and effective awareness and prevention activities; and promoting sustainability of the community-based model through replication training for like-minded organizations.

Purpose and Objectives of Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to conduct a thorough assessment of SSC's work in order to report on past performance and provide recommendations for future programs. To achieve this, the consultant looked at (1) relevance (i.e. the extent to which the program model addressed the programmatic needs and policy priorities of Cambodia); (2) effectiveness (i.e. progress towards achievement of expected outcomes and, and success of the community-based model); (3) sustainability of results; and, (4) factors affecting performance.

Methodology

The evaluation was led by the consultant with an inclusive and participatory approach designed to solicit the feedback and ideas and collaboration of all key staff. Data was collected through one-on-one interviews with clients, their supporters, community members, staff, partners and village chiefs; group discussions; field observations of the community awareness and protection (CAP) team's work, social work practice, and group

[1] "Supporters" are defined by SSC as non-offending family and friends.

and individual supervision; and, review of relevant documents. Great care was taken to ensure all components of the methodology adhered to standard ethical guidelines for research on violence against women (VAW)[2], prioritizing the safety of clients and interviewers, and ensuring client confidentiality.

Program Context

Despite recent efforts by the Cambodian government to assert its commitment to women's rights, the country's deeply-rooted cultural beliefs about gender roles continue to reinforce inequality and sustain an environment largely tolerant of violence against women. While national statistics related specifically to the incidence of sexual assault in Cambodia are fragmented, studies of other types of gender-based violence show that rape is being perpetrated, perhaps to the greatest extent among poor women[3]. Further, data drawn from SSC's client files during the program show that young girls were at the highest risk[4] of experiencing sexual violence, mostly at the hands of people they knew[5].

Despite, or perhaps because of the frequent reports of rape in the media, misconceptions prevail and survivors suffer as a result. Survivors fear retribution from the perpetrator and the perpetrator's family. They are stigmatized by family and community members—a fate not shared by perpetrators. Survivors face corruption and discrimination at the hands of the police and court officials. They bear physical injuries and suffer from reproductive health issues like STDs and unwanted pregnancy. They endure social exclusion by their peers and are disempowered by the judicial system, which offers limited legal recourse. Further, they sustain deep emotional wounds that can last a lifetime.

Relevance

Although violence against women is gaining attention from the government and donor community in Cambodia, there is a significant deficit in the quality and availability of services specifically catering to victims of sexual assault[6]. Notable gaps exist for programs that incorporate psychosocial support, assistance for women and girls who want to live at home and not at a shelter, and services for survivors with special needs or disabilities. This

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[2] For guidelines see: Bamberger, M. & White, H. (2007). Using strong evaluation designs in developing countries: Experience and challenges. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Evaluation*. 4(8). 58-73.

[3] *Sharing growth: Equity and development in Cambodia.* World Bank. 2007.

[4] 53% of SSC clients (110 women and girls) were under 18. 84% of clients were under 30.

[5] 90% of clients knew their perpetrator.

[6] Amnesty International *(2010). Breaking the silence: Sexual violence in Cambodia.*

evaluation not only found that SSC addressed each of these gaps through its program but also confirmed that these components responded to the true needs and preferences of survivors of sexual violence.

Effectiveness

SSC's program achieved a significant proportion of its expected outputs and made considerable progress towards meeting its expected outcomes. SSC was successful in providing comprehensive, high-quality client-centered services. Clients received psychosocial counseling in their communities and at the shelter; 24-hour access to social workers; transport and escort to forensic medical exams and health professionals, lawyers and courts; and, in-kind support when possible. SSC was also effective in ensuring clients received high-quality services outside of the organization by training other agencies, which exhibited positive changes in perceptions of and responses to victims after training, and reinforcing best practices on an on-going basis.

The CAP team's interventions proved effective in increasing knowledge about and awareness of sexual assault among targeted community members. Qualitative data also indicated that, after SSC interventions, participants better understood the impact of sexual violence on a survivor—a crucial element for ensuring the response to sexual assault is sensitive and appropriate.

While these interventions clearly lead to an improved response, they may not have led to the prevention of sexual violence. In order to promote prevention, the interventions needed to link more effectively to the root cause of sexual violence—gender inequality—however these concepts were mostly absent from the program's discussions and key messages.

Although SSC spent considerable time designing assessment tools and developing the replication curriculum, the related outputs and outcomes were only partially achieved as a result of misjudgments early on and loss of leadership in the third year of the program. Progress was made in the form of one fully-replicated model and one semi-replicated model, partially ensuring the sustainability of the community-based approach, the main objective of the program's replication activities.

Finally, an achievement of huge importance was the ability of the program to show through empirical research that providing services to survivors of sexual assault in the community

where they live was not only feasible and effective but also reflected the preferences of clients. Data gathered for this evaluation provided evidence that this was true.

Although the assessment of the achievement of all expected outputs and outcomes was broad, it was not exhaustive. Limited on-going monitoring and evaluation of program activities and weak research skills among SSC staff hampered attempts to fully assess SSC's work.

Sustainability of Results

Part of SSC's internal definition of success was sustainable impact on the well-being of individual clients, in the practices of partner agencies, and in the promotion of a client-centered, community-based approach by other organizations responding to violence against women. Sustainability was achieved on all of these levels, although longitudinal evaluation would have provided further evidence of this finding.

Conclusions

This evaluation arrived at a positive overall assessment of SSC's sexual assault program. There is considerable evidence of achievements at the both the output and outcome levels. While, increased attention to monitoring and evaluation throughout the program would have greatly facilitated documentation of the program's merits, the evaluation found that SSC's community-based approach to sexual assault provides an effective model of service delivery that reflects the needs and preferences of clients and should set the standard of care for the sector.

Recommendations

1. The Royal Government of Cambodia has identified addressing violence against women as a national policy priority. SSC should capitalize on the current policy environment by positioning itself as an expert in the field and a resource for government officials mandated to implement new laws and reach targets set in policy initiatives.
2. In order to better understand its impact and to play a more influential role in the sector, SSC should dedicate more attention and effort to monitoring and evaluating all components of its program.
3. SSC should continue to advocate with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports to gain access to schools for its CAP activities.

4. SSC should rethink its schedule for work in communities to reach a greater number of male and female young adults in its awareness and prevention activities.
5. In order to provide more comprehensive services and fully meet the needs of clients, social workers should support clients throughout judicial processes.
6. As the judicial system is consistently identified as a discriminatory and re-victimizing institution, SSC should explore the possibility of delivering the 'Responding to Sexual Violence' training to court officials.
7. The CAP team's work in communities focused mainly on response and not prevention of sexual violence. To address this, the interventions should be redesigned to incorporate lessons on the root causes of sexual violence, emphasizing gender roles and gender inequalities.
8. SSC should use this evaluation as a tool to promote the community-based model, to forge new partnerships and further facilitate sustainability of the approach.
9. SSC should seek new funding for its sexual assault program in order to continue to fill the critical gaps in services for women and girl survivors of sexual assault.
10. SSC management should be more pro-active in communicating with donors to avoid budget and cash flow constraints, and pursue on-going fundraising to fill any anticipated gaps. Program management should also be more transparent with field staff about the availability and use of operating funds.
11. At the outset of a program, the intended impact for individual clients should be clearly defined to facilitate more effective monitoring and evaluation.

Lessons Learned

- Although confidential shelters provide a necessary refuge for women and girls who are experiencing safety concerns after an assault, most survivors will choose to receive services in their community—as was the case with 81% of SSC's clients.
- Girls and young women are a particular target of sexual violence: 53% of the program's clients were under 18, and 83% were under 30.
- Victims know their perpetrator: 94% of clients reported that their perpetrator was known to them.
- Working in the community during weekdays, as the CAP team did, will provide a homogenous sample of community members primarily comprised of women over 40 and very young children. Male and female young adults—a more appropriate target for

community awareness activities related to sexual assault—are unlikely to be available to participate in such activities on weekdays.

- A thorough assessment of potential replication agencies in the initial stages of partnership is critical to ensuring commitment to the availability of partner staff for training and delivery of high-quality services, to support sustainability of the community-based model in the long-term.
- Most clients and their families face extreme poverty. This is important to note because it highlights the importance of the monetary and in-kind support SSC provided and presents a fuller picture of the typical survivor profile.
- In order to maintain an efficient and equitable working environment, it is critical that social workers are represented in program management. Social workers felt disempowered without this and tensions between program management and social workers remained high as a result.
- Encouraging professional development and regularly creating space for it not only strengthened skills but also boosted staff morale and loyalty to the organization.
- MOUs are effective in ensuring the use of best practices and the delivery of quality services by partner agencies.
- Long-term shelters for survivors of sexual assault with physical or mental disabilities are scarce while the disabled remain highly vulnerable to sexual assault (15% of SSC's clients had a disability). This often led to such clients lingering in SSC's 'short term' shelter with no alternatives other than to return to their families who typically could not or would not care for them.