Top 10 Findings...So Far...
Butterfly Longitudinal Research
Beginning in 2010, Chab Dai Coalition’s Butterfly Longitudinal Reintegration Research Project (BLR) has been following the lives of 128 child & adult survivors of human trafficking, exploitation, and/or abuse; listening, analyzing, and disseminating their stories to promote survivor-informed practices among anti-human trafficking service providers and policy makers. After 9 years of studying and 4,500+ files of data collected, while in preparation for the final report & closing of the BLR at the end of 2019, the team has developed an illustrated report of what we find to be the study’s top 10 findings, so far.

This booklet is an overview of our findings and while they may seem provocative, all—along with our recommendations—have been and continue to be communicated to programs and policymakers so the anti-human trafficking movement can make informed responses, together. We thus ask stakeholders to dive deeper through our 10 other reports to date, covering topics on: resilience, stigma, boys & men, and filial piety, to name a few. Please find the list of all our publications on the next page and make sure to check out our website to see the full Top 10 report and more information, videos, & news updates from Butterfly!

www.chabdai.org/butterfly

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We also send our appreciation to each of the Assistance Programs & Butterfly Research Consultants that have partnered with Chab Dai since the beginning of the project. All have given the team and project a wealth of access, insight, and reflection on our findings, recommendations, and programmatic implementation.

Finally, we express our thanks to Imago Dei Fund, Love 146, Stronger Together, Tenth Church, Karakin Foundation, Change of Path, ACCI, and to anonymous donors for their continuing financial support. These organizations & people share in our foundational belief that knowledge and survivor-voices are essential for a brighter future free of human trafficking.

Publication Design by Amanda Daly
Excluding finding #9, all accompanying quotes are directly from the study’s participants.

"There are many children who like this [participating in the Butterfly interviews] personally because we have a lot of chances to say/share what we never tell others.

But when I meet with you, I can tell you and you not only listen to me, but you also bring my idea to practice. This is what I think and I'm really grateful for this."

**Finding One**

**The deep trust the participants have built towards the research team has led to richer and more authentic interviews over the years.**
“During regular interviews, the BLR team conducts individualized and confidential meeting, with active and attentive listening as the primary goal. The research team strives to provide a safe space, in which the boy’s thoughts and emotions can be validated as real and important. This kind of space seems to be starkly contrasted to the king of environment that many of the male cohort live in from day-to-day. For a number of respondents, their interviews seem to be a much-needed space where they are able to express pent-up emotions—something that seems to be especially true as time progresses through the re/integration process [and beyond].”

“...the team believe retention is largely due to participants trusting that their identities will be kept confidential, their stories matter and they are valued as individuals.”


The shelters for the male participants ended up being highly emotionally and physically violent for a number of reasons, including: bullying, xenophobia, and elitism. One respondent gave a recommendation that boys in the shelters need to be separated along age and maturity lines, because the physical, mental, and sexual maturation is severely different between 12—and—16 years-old males.

"At first, staying there was easy because we were the same age and we respected each other... It [trouble] started after the big boys came."
“The current program is good, but I think they should divide boys to live in different places for those who obey and do not obey shelter regulations...They should have skills to control all bad children effectively. They should create strong regulations for those boys, shouldn’t let boys living mixed together like we did so that the good boys wouldn’t change to bad boys. If they live together, they would all be bad.... I suggest having skilled staff that can control those kinds of boys.”


“If there was no argument [in the shelter], it would be happy living there. I felt like we are brothers. For my idea, it’s better to classify small boys and older boys... In shelter, there were small and big boys together... Because big boys stay together, they might be afraid of each other if they want to make argument. And if shelter mother gives us more advice, we will respect each other. If they mix together like that, the boys might feel ‘I am bigger so I don’t respect the small boy.’ If they think like this, then they will have arguments. At that time, there were big bosses like Leap and Davuth. Some boys wanted to be on Leap’s side, so when they made problems, Leap would help them..... At that time, it was really disorganized. The big boys took the small boys’ food.... At first, staying there was easy because we were the same age and we respected each other... It [trouble] started after the big boys came.”

"I did not want my reputation to be bad because there was an organization that sent me home....

...but when they [neighbors] saw that the organization sent me there [home], they knew I worked for a bad workplace."

**Finding Three**

**On Top of the Stigma Against This Cohort Within a Community, NGOs and Shelters Have Unintentionally Created a Stigma Against the Children and Youth They Work With. This Being That Because of These Respondents’ Association with the NGOs and Living at the Shelters for Years on End, The Community They Have Been Re/Integrated Into Sees Them as Being Promiscuous.**
“Friends at school made me feel unhappy because they mocked me and say bad words about me. I felt they were discriminating against me because they know that I used to live in a shelter. They say that shelter children were sexually exploited and raped until they got pregnant without a husband.”


“They [family] stopped looking down badly like they did before; just sometimes they recall my bad background, which then hurts my feelings, when my sister blames me for going out at night... but in my mind I’m afraid of my brother-in-law who looks down on me, even now... He blames me and looks down on me most of the time. Whenever he has a problem with my sister he blames me for being a prostitute and calls our family ‘prostitute family’.”

“All organizations, if they help the children, please help them to become successful and do not abandon them.

In addition, do not think that those children who have a job can stand strong, that is not right.

On the other hand, they have to visit them or their family to know the reality of their situation...

They have to follow up with them often and use polite and sweet words to them.”

Finding Four

There is a real sense of ‘shock’ once a participant is re/integrated back into the community from a shelter. Once this shock is relieved and some semblance of stability was observed by the NGO, their case is closed and access to the wealth of resources the NGO provides is cut-off. This has led participants wondering why they were treated like family within the shelter but then feeling ‘dropped’ back in the community. Moreover, participants have responded to these experiences by:

1. Feeling socially isolated from the culture and spirituality of their re/integrating communities and
2. Feeling like promises made by the shelter have been unfulfilled.
Finding Four Cont’d

“When I left the shelter, I have no chance to believe in God. I cannot go to the church.”

“Before I was a Christian but now I am a Buddhist. My father pressured me to burn the incense and hasn’t allowed me to go to the church.”

“A strong majority of [BLR male] respondents (79%) cite feeling the effects of poverty in a variety of ways as they are re/integrated back to their communities. Among the 79%, one-in-five describe lacking food, nearly half (47%) cite having insufficient education for gainful employment, and nearly a third (32%) cite an inability to live with their immediate families due to poverty.”

End of Year Progress Report 2012

The Forgotten Cohort,
There is a heavy lack of the NGOs working with the families of the participants while in the shelter, before and during re/integration. This has left the participants:

1. Feeling undeserving of all these services given to them while in the shelter and wishing they’re family could have access to the same

2. Not working with the family before the re/integration process led that aforementioned shock, and a continuing uphill battle of stable livelihood during and after the re/integration process

3. Many participants were forced to quit school to work shortly after they were re/integrated to provide financial support for their family
Finding Five Cont’d

“Some participants who reintegrated in 2012 described their frustration and stress at the lack of assessment and financial support in their reintegration packages, which then meant they found it difficult to stay in school or training upon leaving the shelter. They often found themselves in the same impoverished circumstances they were in prior to their sexual exploitation, and the ongoing education of participants was found to be often compromised during the reintegration process.

‘The reintegration assistance support is not enough. Twenty USD a month and a bicycle is not enough money for me to continue studying. The shelter social workers only come for less than ten minutes every few months so they do not know my difficulty.’”


“Familial poverty seems to drive the majority of these [difficulties in work and school], pressuring boys to quite school and pursue ways of generating income to support their family’s basic needs. For instance, a respondent cites that his grandfather forced him to stop his studies in order to take up vocational training with his uncle. He describes that his grandfather does not believe in the importance of finishing school and prefers to that he takes up vocational training, which can earn money faster...

‘I stopped my schooling because I had no support for my studies from [the shelter NGO] anymore. So, I need to learn repairing skill with my uncle, even though I don’t like it.’”


“[I] act as a princess. I do not do anything [at the shelter]. After eating, I just sleep. It is easy for me and it is not like other places where people need to work hard and do not have enough food to eat.”

Due to a lack of proper re/integration protocols, oversight in the stabilization of the family, and limited community resources, the participants have been forced to ‘move where the opportunities are’—this being in or out of country, multiple times a year, and/or without proper social support, increasing their vulnerability to re-exploitation.

Finding Six

Throughout 2013...

"I live with my stepmother, father, and older sister. My stepmother and I don't get along together... I will go to live with my real mother in the province because she called and asked me to live there.

...I want to move out with my cousin. Some of my neighbors are very rude towards my family. They yelled at my little siblings and hit my Aunt.

...I moved to live in a rental room with my older sister and cousin.

...I still don't get along with my stepmother."

...My older sister got married and moved out to live with her husband.

...I moved back to live with my father, he asked me to come back home.
“The majority of male cohort [68%] demonstrates significant housing instabilities during their re/integration periods. These instabilities seem to come from a number of factors they are faced with upon re-entering their communities. Among this majority, nearly a third (32%) of the respondents state that they had to move from their home communities to search for work. Twenty-six percent cite having to change where they lived due to violence at home or in their communities. Other reasons for housing instability include: migration to avoid an exploiter who still lived in the community, international migration of a parent, migration due to a parent’s incarceration and/or release from prison, and migration for education”


“Almost no participant describes staying with the same family unit over three or four years. The following story by one survivor in 2013 exemplifies the blending and changing nature of her family unit during one year: ‘I live with my stepmother, father, and older sister. My stepmother and I don’t get along together. She is always making conflicts and arguing with me. My father got in a traffic accident and injured his hand. I will go to live with my real mother in the province because she called and asked me to live there. I want to move out with my cousin. Some of my neighbors are very [rude] towards my family. They yelled at my little siblings and hit my Aunt. I moved to live in a rental room with my older sister and cousin. I wanted to earn money to help my older sister support us because she was the only one working. I tried working in a nightclub quit because it was not a good job. I could find other work. I moved back to live with my father, he asked me to come back home. My father didn’t want me to live alone. My older sister married and moved out to live with her husband. I still don’t get along with my stepmother.’”

Furthermore, because of limited re/integration protocols and inattentive social workers, the participants don’t have access to the social capital to overcome compounding traumas after their ‘case has been closed’ (i.e. poverty struggles, violence in community, death of loved ones, etc.). The Butterfly researchers have heard many respondents say to them that they are willing to meet with the team over the years, because they are the only people who will actively and confidentially listen to their stories and emotions.

Finding Seven

“Sometimes, I asked him [husband], how and if he considers me.

I asked him if he thinks that I have no heart, no ideas, and no brain and that is why I am able to receive whatever he does.

Nowadays, does he know how I feel?

I asked him if he knows about how I got sick and how our son got sick.

Did he understand how I survived?

He said nothing.

Then he said with rude words that I did not have a brain.

I didn’t know anything.

And he told me not to talk to him because I do not have brain, I am like a dog, I do not know how to think.”
**Finding Seven Cont’d**

“I am happy to see and talk to you because even [NGO] who works based in my community, they had never come to visit and ask me like you do. I am happy. It seems like they don’t care about us anymore after my case was closed. They don’t care what I am doing right now.”


“While no specific or diagnostic questions on emotional health were asked during interviews, it is nevertheless notable that nearly half of the male respondents seem to demonstrate a decline in emotional health as time progresses. This trend appears to be diverse and manifests in a variety of ways, including: low self-esteem, severe anxiety, anger/combativelessness at home and work, isolation from family and/or peers, and suicidal thoughts...

‘We are in debt... I feel sad about this matter so much! Sometime I want to commit suicide by taking poison pills!’”

"We didn’t really want [respondent] to come home yet when the aftercare center sent him back. This boy is not like the other kids... I previously sent him to another shelter in the province, but he ran away."

**Finding Eight**

It has also come to light that the mothers and families of many participants who have been re/integrated back into the communities, deeply seek for them to be taken back by the NGO shelter program. While with an NGO, the families then know that their children are given the care and resources they cannot provide due to the instability of their livelihoods. However noble the intentions are on part of the families, these sentiments of wanting an NGO to raise their children have left the participants feeling unwanted at home.
“This non-acceptance for a boy’s re/integration came in various forms from case-to-case. An 18-year-old respondent cited confusion when his mother did not want him to come home from the aftercare facility. While the respondent’s parents initially said that they were unable to accept the child back due to their poverty, further information from the respondent’s step-father indicates a different reason. In 2015, the research team had a conversation with the respondent’s stepfather who says, ‘we didn’t really want [this respondent] to come home yet when the aftercare center sent him back. This boy is not like the other kids’.

The stepfather cites that this participant would often leave home with peers who seemed to have a negative influence over him. The stepfather continues, ‘I previously sent him to another shelter in [the] province [for vocational training], but he ran away.’ The research team cites that his parents did not seem to care greatly for their son’s well-being. When he was eventually re/integrated back into his family, he was accepted with reluctance, as the family had no other choices for alternative care.”

As of 2017, 23 out of 64 female participants who had stayed in shelter program and then subsequently re/integrated back into the community, have been or are currently, in re-exploitative situations (sexually or for labor).

"Early in 2013, the participant disclosed to the Butterfly team the ‘real reason’ she returned to [the Karaoke TV establishment] was for sex work.

She stated she was deeply disappointed with the shelter’s re/integration financial support..."
“Of the seven participants who responded they had been sexually active with more than one partner in the past year...four participants said they had been paid for sex...three [of these participants] said they, ‘felt they had been sexually exploited’... ‘The broker who finds clients for me takes some of my money when I have sex with the clients.’ ‘My boss took half of my earnings after I had sex with the client.’ ‘My boss forced me to have sex with the clients.’


“Two years earlier, when the participant turned 18 years old, she told the research team that she left the shelter and went to live at a KTV establishment in another town because she needed to help her sister with her newborn baby. During that time, the research team was able to visit the participant at the KTV. Over the course of the past two years, it has appeared to the team and to the former AP that the boss has increasingly limited the participant’s freedoms and agency. He forbade her to leave the premises and took away her phone. Throughout this time, the former AP and the Butterfly Research team continued to maintain contact: Though the AP offered to help her leave, she refused to go.

Early in 2013, the participant disclosed to the Butterfly team the ‘real reason’ she returned to [the Karaoke TV establishment] was for sex work. She stated she was deeply disappointed with the shelter’s re/integration financial support. When she learned from a friend about the money she could earn in Karaoke she followed. Later this past year, the team learned from the former AP, the participant had ‘escaped’ for a few hours and had asked for their help to get free. By the time the AP were able to locate her at the police station, she had changed her mind. The AP felt the KTV owner and the police were colluding to keep her at the venue. Since that time, the owner has forbidden her to have any contact with the Butterfly Research team or the former AP.”

Out of the 20 interviews done in February 2018, the Butterfly research team has assessed that only five participants have stable livelihoods (healthy social support, stable & enough income, safe living environments, etc.). To all of the participants, when asked what their definition of a ‘successful life’ is, there has been a major focus on stable and good income.

"Most of the victims who stayed in the shelter were not successful. They succeeded only 3 to 4 of them."
“I don’t even know what they should do as the leaders don’t even know what they should do too... To me, I think that if they want to provide skills for women, they should allow us to study for the whole day. Please don’t ask us to learn how to sew bags for half-day and salon half-day. Time is quite short in a half-day, as we just sit there, the time is over...To make the skill helpful, they should focus on the training skills and conduct specific trainings. They should provide certificates to the participants to make it easier for them when they open the shop. Participants should finish their course with good training skills no matter what they learn...I think outside [training] is better. They know more than the inside trainer. Moreover, they are more professional with salon skills. If we take an outside training, we get the certificate for this course, but if we take training inside the shelter, we get only certificate from the shelter (laugh).”


“Most of the victims who stayed in the shelter were not successful. They succeeded only 3 to 4 of them. Some of them are working in the organization. Some of them work at different places... They sometimes said that it was easy to live in the organization and they did not do anything. They have someone to take care them. They have food to eat. They have people to bring the food for them and they can sleep well. They can learn and so on. They thought that it was easy for them and when they go home, they think work at home is difficult for them. They speak badly to the members of the family.”

Experiences in Shelter Care, “Vulnerability in the community due to dramatic difference between shelter and community life,” 2018. p140.
Experiences & Perceptions of Spirituality Among Survivors of Human Trafficking
Pathways to & Freedoms from Re-Exploitation
Spirituality of Survivors of Sexual Trafficking, Exploitation, and/or Abuse
Survivor Perceptions and Experiences of Justice
The Final Report on the Butterfly Longitudinal Research Project

UPCOMING PUBLICATIONS

ABOUT CHAB DAI

Chab Dai started in Cambodia in 2005 and has grown from a core group of 8 faith-based organizations to a full coalition of 50 plus member organizations in Cambodia. Chab Dai Coalition functions as a learning community aiming to see Christian organizations lead the way forward in raising the standard of care for survivors and those at risk. Though founded in Cambodia, the vision behind Chab Dai has expanded into autonomous organizations in the US, Canada and UK because human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation are global issues. The international offices focus on awareness raising, advocacy and collaboration building.

VISION: The vision behind Chab Dai (literally, “joining hands” in Khmer) is to bring an end to trafficking and sexual exploitation through coalition building, community prevention, advocacy and research.

MISSION: Chab Dai sees its mission and commitment is to see an end to abuse and trafficking through collaboration, networking, prevention and direct project development as human trafficking, exploitation and abuse are global issues victimizing and enslaving millions of men, women and children in every country, and of every nationality and race.
In honor of Siobhan Miles
Founder of the Butterfly Longitudinal Re/integration Research Project. All of this would not have been possible without her compassion and care for the children of Cambodia.

Please reach out to us with any questions, comments, and/or feedback you may have:
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