



## Enhanced Access to Social Services for Female Sex Workers

**FEMALE SEX WORKERS IN VIETNAM** experience the denial of multiple rights, as a result of the illegal nature of sex work and the stigma and discrimination they face on the basis of the work they do. They risk exploitation, abuse and violence from clients and duty-bearers, and have little access to basic services, such as healthcare and legal protection.

Through this project, CARE addresses the underlying causes of marginalisation of female sex workers and works towards responsive and supportive policy and legal approaches to sex work, to enable them to have a stronger voice and equitable access to protections and services.

### KEY OUTCOMES



Female sex workers will have a **strong platform for collective voice and action**, through 'We Are Women' (WrW) clubs and **stronger links** with the Vietnam Network of Sex Workers and other self-help groups.



The **authorities will support the collective voice** and action of female sex workers, and both female sex workers and relevant authorities will learn how to **work together in decision-making**.



Key duty-bearers, such as **police**, the **local authorities**, and service providers such as **legal agencies**, will demonstrate improved **positive attitudes and behaviours** towards female sex workers.

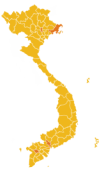
#### Participants

Over 2,200 female sex workers and 840 duty-bearers and service providers

#### Locations

Vietnam:

Activities in Can Tho City, Ho Chi Minh City, and Quang Ninh province, and national-level policy dialogue in Hanoi



#### Partners

Agencies under The Ministry and Provincial Departments of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs

#### Timeframe and Budget

July 2013 - June 2017  
Approx. US\$1,250,000

#### Donor

Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

"I was not aware of my rights in terms of **gender-based violence**; I thought it was ok for a client to violate me if he paid money. However, after legal training, I realised that he has **no right to hurt me** or the others."



**HOW DOES THE 'ENHANCED ACCESS TO SOCIAL SERVICES FOR FEMALE SEX WORKERS' PROJECT WORK?**

The project works with sex workers, policy and decision-makers within the Government of Vietnam, duty-bearers and service providers, such as the police and legal aid providers, to improve access to opportunities, services and protections for female sex workers.

**FEMALE SEX WORKERS ARE EMPOWERED TO INFLUENCE POLICIES AND DECISIONS THAT AFFECT THEIR LIVES, AND HAVE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES & SERVICES**

**RAISING THE VOICE OF FEMALE SEX WORKERS**  
 Making connections between female sex workers and the government creates a forum for female sex workers to engage in discussion about issues that affect them. We Are Women (WrW) club members develop the skills to engage in policy dialogue with the government about protections for sex workers, and government staff also support the clubs in their regular activities. WrW clubs participate in quarterly provincial and annual national dialogues with the government, and the government consults with female sex workers on laws and policies which affect them.

**CHANGING ATTITUDES OF DUTY-BEARERS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS**  
 By enabling sex workers to connect (through conversations and workshops) with duty-bearers such as the police and service providers like legal aid providers, the project works to challenge discriminatory views and practices towards sex workers. Standard Operating Procedures for legal aid service providers are piloted in 3 provinces, and government staff also receive training on gender-based violence and participatory facilitation skills that engage female sex workers.

**SUPPORTING THE EMPOWERMENT OF FEMALE SEX WORKERS THROUGH CIVIL SOCIETY**  
 WrW clubs are developed and engage female sex workers in networking, training and information sharing. WrW clubs are linked with the Vietnam Network of Sex Workers (VNSW), attend VNSW meetings, and are also connected to local civil society organisations, and social, health, financial and legal services.



**"Sex workers deserve to be protected. If we don't help them, who will?"**  
 Mr. Bach\* is a senior police officer in a major city in Vietnam. During his everyday work he encounters a lot of sex workers; usually when he is obliged to fine them because of the illegal nature of their work. Bach loves working for the police and feels that what he does contributes to society and helps people have better lives; however, he struggles to always see the point in punishing sex workers.

**"When I fine sex workers, sometimes I feel that what we are doing is not solving the issue. I notice the women continue being sex workers anyway; I always ask myself, if it is illegal, why do they do it?"**  
 Bach joined some of the activities organised as part of CARE's 'Enhanced Access to Social Services for Female Sex Workers' project, including workshops which promoted dialogue between female sex workers and duty-bearers such as the police. This enabled him to understand the difficulties and dangers they face, but also the reasons why they keep doing this job. As a result, Bach has shared his phone number with the sex workers he met, and asked them to call him in case they or any other sex workers ever need urgent help. In turn, he has gained the trust of the group, and demonstrated that the police can become allies for sex workers.

**"Now I have more understanding about the risks that female sex workers are exposed to. They get raped or robbed, and experience violence from their clients, partners or pimps. I now understand that they deserve to be protected. I will share what I have learnt with my colleagues. At first they might still have doubts, like I had before, but eventually they will understand that what we are doing doesn't impact on traditional culture: we are just doing what makes society better."**

\*Bach's name has been omitted to protect his identity.