



Traffick report: Cambodia

Cambodia's trafficking situation

Since recovering from decades of turmoil, genocide, and civil war, Cambodia now faces new challenges. Despite its recent economic growth in the past few years, it still remains one of the poorest countries in Asia. For the poor, education, vocational training and employment opportunities are insufficient to provide enough income to meet minimum needs.

This makes rural-to-urban and cross-border migration by vulnerable families and individuals common, as they move in search of economic opportunities to survive. In the process, many become victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, begging, or forced marriage.

Other factors such as gender-based discrimination, physical and sexual violence, family dysfunction, impact of HIV/AIDS, and indebtedness also increase vulnerabilities to trafficking. Though some victims are trafficked by strangers, many more are trafficked by someone they know, suggesting that family and community members play a major role in trafficking.

Cambodia is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children trafficked into sexual exploitation and forced labor. Many Cambodian women and children are trafficked to Thailand, Malaysia, Korea, and Taiwan destined for brothels, factories or domestic labour. Cambodian men are trafficked primarily to Thailand for forced labour in the construction, agriculture, and fishing industries. A significant number of Cambodian children are trafficked to Vietnam and Thailand for the purpose of forced begging.

As a destination country, people are also trafficked into Cambodia from surrounding countries like Vietnam. The primary victims are Vietnamese women and girls who constitute the second largest group of sex workers in Cambodia. Internal trafficking also occurs primarily for the purposes of sexual exploitation, to Phnom Penh, Sihanoukville, Koh Kong, and Siem Reap.

Concerted efforts by the Cambodian Government, UN agencies, and NGOs have done much to raise awareness on the trafficking issue, provide recovery services to victims, and step up action to arrest traffickers.

There have also been in recent years increased efforts to protect children from child sex offenders, as evidenced by arrests of pedophiles from Germany, Russia, and USA, among other countries. Finally, the Government is a signatory to the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Trafficking (COMMIT) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), showing the political will to combat this problem collectively.

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Trafficking snapshot:

38% of women and girls working in sexually exploitative conditions had entered the industry because their virginity had been bought.¹

In a survey of Cambodian sex trafficking victims to Thailand, only 25% reported being trafficked by a stranger. Two-thirds of the victims were trafficked by someone that they knew - a family member or someone from their community.²

In a survey of trafficked victims who were returned by the International Organization for Migration, 62% reported that the main reason for migration was to find jobs to help support their family.

73 suspected traffickers were arrested in Cambodia in 2005.³

More than 147,000 Cambodians were deported from Thailand in 2006 alone.⁴

Official records of returned trafficked victims to Cambodia between 2004 - 2006 detail 589 from Thailand, 231 from Vietnam, 59 from China, and 29 from Laos.⁵



1. Brown, Eleanor. "The Ties That Bind" IOM, 2007.
2. "The Ministry of Women's and Veterans Affairs Counter Trafficking Information Campaign Stakeholder Analysis of Six Provinces: Preliminary Results and Recommendations" MoWVA, March 2004
3. Dept of Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Statistics 2005
4. Huguet, Jerrold W., Ramangkura, Varamon "The Long Road Home: Analysis of Regional and National Processes for the Return and Reintegration of Victims of Trafficking in the GMS" 2007
5. *ibid.*

Nary* came from a small village. Five armed men raped her when she was 13 years old. Shame and guilt from this attack stigmatised her, and she drifted from family to family until one family sold her to a Phnom Penh brothel.

Nary was trapped there for over two years as a sex worker. She tried to escape but was caught, beaten, and forced to work again. Finally, the police raided the brothel, found Nary and placed her at World Vision's Trauma Recovery Centre. She is receiving trauma counseling plus healthcare advice; Nary is HIV positive.

Srey* borrowed money from a broker to come to Phnom Penh and work as a domestic servant. One day, after she came home later than she should, the family who had employed her threw her out. She was too afraid to tell her mother that she had lost her job, but she still owed the broker a substantial amount of money. The broker placed her into a brothel to pay off the debt to him. She was never able to do so.

Srey contracted HIV and AIDS at the brothel, where she was forced to have sex with clients without protection.

Sopheap*, now 16, quit school when she was in the third grade because her family needed her to work. She would scavenge for garbage to sell on the nearby Thai border. As an illegal immigrant, she was imprisoned in Thai custody many times. When a young woman flattered her beauty and told her how much she could earn working in a karaoke bar she agreed to try it.

Sopheap decided to go with the woman without informing and discussing with her parents, placing her at extreme risk of exploitation. She had not expected that her employers would force her to have sex, or that they would not allow her to leave. She was rescued by her father, who also filed a complaint against her trafficker, but the young woman had already fled.

* Names changed

Cambodia's trafficking solutions:

- Government authorities should effectively implement anti-trafficking legislation and policies that have been instituted in recent years. This includes the Anti-Human Trafficking Law, COMMIT, and bilateral agreements with Thailand and Cambodia.
- The latest proposed National Plan of Action to combat trafficking in persons needs to be approved by the government, and interventions should cover all forms of trafficking, not just sex trafficking.
- Bilateral cooperation between Cambodia and its neighbours, namely Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia, should be strengthened to allow for safe and swift repatriation of trafficking victims. More resources should be allocated for reintegration support of returnees.
- Trafficking prevention programmes need to address the root causes that render individuals vulnerable to trafficking, so that offers by traffickers become less attractive.
- All children and youth should be given the opportunity to participate in activities that affect them, including efforts to prevent trafficking in persons. Governments, parents, and international organisations should provide financial and technical support for children's participation in trafficking prevention.
- Poverty is not necessarily the root cause of all trafficking but it is still a major vulnerability factor. Social economic development for the poor should be continued and strengthened, targeting especially the 85% of the population in rural areas. In addition, the growing numbers of urban poor should be recognised within a trafficking risk context.





World Vision has extensive access to Cambodian communities and a long history of working to empower children and their families. World Vision's collaborations with other NGOs, plus a pragmatic approach of working alongside various government ministries, is leading to vital changes at local and government level in practices and attitudes that lead to trafficking.

Projects include:

- **Children at High Risk Prevention Project (CHRPP)**

This project is currently working to empower children to protect themselves from violence, exploitation and sexual abuse through community education activities. Since 1999, the CHRPP has launched 65 Children's Clubs in 4 provinces that has benefited more than 7,000 children by exposing them to positive role models, leadership development, and trainings on child rights designed to prevent trafficking, sexual exploitation and exploitative labour.

- **Mobilising Children for Child Participation project (MCCP)**

In this project, World Vision Cambodia and Child Wise work together with children, parents, other community members and local authorities – mobilising people to take cooperative action to build safer communities with and for children. It also assists small and large organisations to develop and implement policies and procedures to reduce the risk of children from being harmed.

The project is accomplished through the following four components: 1) Enabling children and youth to develop personal and collective safety strategies to prevent sexual abuse; 2) Assisting community leaders and parents to develop mechanisms to safeguard children from sexual abuse and exploitation; 3) Developing sensitivities and plans with local authorities to address child sexual abuse; and 4) Strengthening government bodies and NGOs working with children so that they have skills and systems to make organisations child-safe.

- **Children in Crisis, Laboratory of Learning Project**

Children in Crisis is an operational research project is aimed at employing evidence-based approaches to study the impact and increase the effectiveness of World Vision Cambodia interventions which provide aftercare for sexually exploited and abused children. This three-year action-research program will work in cooperation with the ATSACC Project. It is being carried out in partnership with Boston University and Tulane University PhD programmes.

Aftercare for Sexually Abused Children in Cambodia project (ATSACC)

The ATSACC ensures that children who are removed from sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation situations in Cambodia receive high-quality and appropriate aftercare through competent organisations. The ATSACC provides the first refuge for children rescued from trafficking and sexual exploitation, through a short-term assessment, care and protection facility and provides quality medium-term aftercare for child survivors of sexual abuse or exploitation who cannot return to their families, through the aftercare pod living model. It increases knowledge on effective interventions to prevent and respond to children working in the worst forms of child labour through the Laboratory of Learning Research Centre. This project also works to improve the capacity of faith-based and other organisations to provide quality aftercare to child survivors of sexual abuse and exploitation.



Opposite: Children take part in a youth forum on trafficking

Above left: A World Vision worker shares information with a community at risk from traffickers

Above right: Girls at World Vision's trauma centre learn vocational skills including hairdressing, weaving, computer skills or tailoring

- **Child Safe Tourism (CST) Project**

This project assists the Ministry of Tourism and local partners to promote understanding, build capacity, advocate, and mobilise action against commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) linked to tourism. The project partners with the Ministry of Tourism in setting up Child Safe Tourism Commissions, Child Peer Educator Teams, and Child Safe Tourism Promoters (from the tourism business sector) in all provinces to increase knowledge and action to prevent child sex tourism.

- **Child Sex Tourism Prevention (CSTP) Project**

This project focuses on strategic campaigns to deter foreigners and locals from engaging in child sex tourism. Utilising the media and advertising opportunities, this project targets would-be sex tourists, as well as Cambodian citizens who can assist in combating sex tourism, with a strong and effective message that sex tourism is illegal, immoral, unacceptable, and that authorities are watching sex tourists and will work to prosecute them. The project uses billboards, magazine advertisements, stickers and signs on buses and tuk tuks, public campaigns, and promoting cooperation between NGOs, international agencies, local police, international police, and judicial authorities to effectively support police investigations.

- **Law Enforcement Against Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Children (LEASETC)**

This project was launched in the Ministry of Interior by World Vision in 2000, and has enjoyed significant partnerships with UNICEF and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Significant achievements include establishment of a Department of Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Justice in the Ministry of Interior—with trained specialised police in 8 provinces and Phnom Penh; the development of a 24 hour national police hotline (currently in three highly vulnerable provinces and Phnom Penh) for reporting sexual exploitation, trafficking and abuse of children; the development of a national sex crimes database with the Ministry of Interior; and the development of a standard medical check form/certificate authorised by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Interior which can be used as evidence in domestic and international courts.

World Vision Asia-Pacific regional projects

Mekong Delta Regional Trafficking Strategy 2 (MDRTS-2) Project

World Vision's Mekong Delta Regional Trafficking Strategy project is addressing the issues of trafficking in five countries simultaneously - Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Thailand and Myanmar. The goal of MDRTS-2 is to reduce vulnerability to trafficking in both source and destination areas and to provide trafficking survivors with the support they need to start a new life after the trafficking experience. It also seeks to synergise country-level operations to create a united response to the issues of human trafficking.

Regional Advocacy anti-Child Trafficking Project (RACTP)

RACTP flows across Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. Its main goal is to improve the policy environment towards eliminating trafficking in persons, especially children, in the Greater Mekong Sub-regions. Strategies include the strengthening of local advocates on trafficking issues and partnering with governments to encourage real action to effectively combat human trafficking at community, national and regional level.

- **Neavear Thmey Trauma Center**

This center was established to facilitate psychosocial healing, recovery and community reintegration of girls and young women between the ages of 8 to 18 who have been sexual exploited, abused or trafficked. Since 1997 it has sheltered and counseled more than 500 girls and teenagers. In 2004, it expanded its scope to supervise the children's safe reintegration into their families and communities. Female residents receive comprehensive recovery services, including medical and psychosocial care, educational opportunities, vocational skills training, life skills development, and reintegration options (family reconciliation, foster care or small group homes). The capacity of the center is for 56 to 60 girls at a time.



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