

SIREN human trafficking data sheet

STRATEGIC INFORMATION RESPONSE NETWORK

United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP): Phase III

CAMBODIA

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Country information



CAMBODIA

Total population: 14.4 million¹

GNI per capita/year: US\$380

Neighboring countries: Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam

What is human trafficking and why is it a problem?

Human trafficking is a serious violation of human rights. "Human Trafficking" is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. "Exploitation" includes, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs².

What is the human trafficking situation in Cambodia?

Human trafficking in Cambodia is far from a homogenous phenomenon. Trafficking networks in Cambodia range from small-scale ad hoc activities to large-scale and well-organised operations. Cambodia now experiences significant internal and cross-border trafficking, and is a country of origin, transit and destination.

Cambodia's turbulent history has impacted significantly on human trafficking trends. Societal structures and traditions, such as the centrality of the family, the Buddhist religion and respect for elders, have been undermined. While peace has returned, the impact of the violence on society and communities is still visible.³ Poverty and economic inequality is also a significant contributing factor to human trafficking in Cambodia. 34% of Cambodians live on less than US\$1 per day.⁴ Many people still experience periods of hunger, resulting in 45% of children under five being underweight and 13% severely underweight.⁵ Limited opportunity for education and vocational training has created a large pool of unskilled workers seeking employment. The lack of viable employment opportunities in Cambodia and the inadequacy of rural farming options for supporting families have encouraged many Cambodians to seek employment elsewhere, often resulting in irregular and uninformed internal and cross-border migration which renders them vulnerable to traffickers.⁶

As a result of the deaths of approximately 2 million people in Cambodia under Khmer Rouge rule (1975-1979), nearly 50% of the population in contemporary Cambodia is below 20 years old.⁷ 150,000 to 175,000 people join the labour force annually and this is expected to increase to over 200,000 by 2010.⁸ At present, the job creation rate does not support the increasing labour supply. The urgent need for more legal employment opportunities for Cambodians is a particular concern for the development sector. In Cambodia, where international employment opportunities may be the most viable solution to an increasingly burgeoning labour supply, ensuring the protection of migrant workers recruited into international positions is imperative in preventing human trafficking.

Some other causes commonly cited to explain the emergence and detection of human trafficking in Cambodia include the economic liberalisation and opening up of the country during the arrival of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC); uneven economic development from the influx of foreign currency; corruption; discrimination and gender inequality; increasing scarcity of productive agricultural land; natural disasters; debt pressures; inadequacy of safe and legal avenues for migration; and increased tourism.



Who is being trafficked in Cambodia?

Human trafficking affects men, women and children. It is commonly acknowledged that women and children are more vulnerable to trafficking than other sectors of the population. Whilst this may be the case, trafficking in men is also a serious issue that is quite commonly overlooked in discussions on human trafficking.

Of the officially repatriated cases, almost all victims repatriated from Thailand and Vietnam were children identified as being trafficked into begging or street selling and were from localized areas in key border provinces of Cambodia. The Cambodians repatriated from Malaysia and the Vietnamese repatriated from Cambodia were all women trafficked for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation.⁹ While men are only newly acknowledged as victims of trafficking in Thailand with the passing of the new Thai human trafficking law, counter-trafficking NGOs report receiving increasing numbers of complaints from Cambodian men trafficked to Thailand to work in the fishing industry over the last few years.¹⁰ Within Cambodia, trafficking is predominantly women for commercial sexual exploitation¹¹ and children and women for domestic work.¹²

Where do trafficked persons come from and how are they exploited?

Source and Destination locations within Cambodia	
Source provinces within Cambodia	Destination cities within Cambodia
<p>Source provinces for domestic trafficking are usually highly populated rural areas in close proximity to urban/tourist centres, especially those susceptible to economic downturn such as that caused by severe droughts and flooding. Provinces commonly perceived by the NGO community in Cambodia as source provinces for domestic trafficking are Kampong Cham, Prey Veng, Kandal, Takeo, Battambang and Phnom Penh (particularly from fast developing urban slums).</p>	<p>The most common destination provinces in Cambodia are: Phnom Penh (for commercial sexual exploitation, begging, domestic work, and labour exploitation); Koh Kong (for the fishing industry, construction and commercial sexual exploitation); Sihanoukville (for begging and commercial sexual exploitation); Siem Reap (for commercial sexual exploitation, begging, domestic work and construction) Poipet (for begging and commercial sexual exploitation); and Battambang (for commercial sexual exploitation). These trafficking destination hot-spots are specifically urban areas.</p>
Types of Cross-border and Internal Trafficking	
Cross-border Trafficking (out of Cambodia)	Internal Trafficking (into and within Cambodia)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Trafficking to Thailand of men women, children and for labour exploitation (especially begging and fishing), sexual exploitation, and domestic work. ❖ Trafficking to Vietnam of children for begging. ❖ Trafficking to Malaysia of men, women and children for sexual exploitation, labour exploitation (especially factory work and construction work) and domestic work. ❖ Trafficking further abroad to countries as far away as Saudi Arabia for domestic work, Taiwan and Korea for marriage, United States for adoption and Somalia for labour exploitation in the fishing industry etc. ❖ Vietnamese and Chinese are also trafficked through Cambodia to locations further abroad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Trafficking from Vietnam of children and women for commercial sexual exploitation. Vietnamese communities living within Cambodia are also particularly vulnerable to internal trafficking. ❖ Trafficking from further abroad (from countries such as China and Eastern Europe) for commercial sexual exploitation ❖ Trafficking within Cambodia, largely from rural to urban areas of children and women for commercial sexual exploitation.

What is the scale of human trafficking in and from Cambodia?

Human trafficking is an underground crime with a complex definition making it difficult to holistically quantify. No universally accepted estimate of the number of trafficked persons being trafficked into, out of, or within Cambodia exists. Whilst existing numbers do not represent the whole problem of trafficking in and from Cambodia, they do reveal that a significant problem exists and that effort is needed to address the problem. 1061 victims of human trafficking have been officially repatriated in government-to-government repatriations between 2005-2007 (see breakdown on next page). 179 cases of human trafficking were received from 25 NGOs in an ECPAT survey on trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation between 2005-2006.¹³

Who is working against human trafficking in Cambodia?

Counter-Trafficking Actors in Cambodia
<p>Counter-trafficking interventions to combat human trafficking are currently being carried out by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The Royal Government of Cambodia: <i>The Leading Task Force to Fight Human Trafficking, Smuggling, Exploitation and Sexual Exploitation of Women and Children</i> led by Deputy Prime Minister Sar Kheng¹⁴, and <i>The National Task Force to Implement Agreements, Memoranda of Understanding between the Royal Government of Cambodia and Relevant Countries on the Elimination of Trafficking in Persons and Assisting Victims of Trafficking</i> led by Madam You Ay, Secretary of State for the Ministry of Women's Affairs, and involved relevant ministries;¹⁵ ❖ 8 UN Agencies (IOM, UNICEF, ILO/PEC, UNFPA, UNIFEM, UNDP, UNODC, UNIAP); and ❖ Over 100 non-governmental organizations

What is being done in Cambodia?

- ❖ **Prevention** activities are implemented across the country, mainly in source areas. Prevention efforts include awareness-raising campaigns on human trafficking and safe migration, education and capacity building, creation of child protection networks, poverty alleviation and disaster response projects through micro-credit schemes. Some of the key prevention efforts being undertaken in Cambodia are: developing legal labour recruitment channels to Thailand, Malaysia and Korea to ensure the protection of migrant workers abroad; child safe tourism campaign to prevent trafficking in the tourism industry; community mobilisation and poverty alleviation campaign in 5 key border provinces; and integrating human trafficking issues into the school curriculum.¹⁶
- ❖ **Protection** measures involve activities taking place to provide post-harm assistance to trafficked victims including identification, rescue, repatriation, family tracing, family assessment, reintegration, short/medium/long-term shelter, medical, legal, psychosocial, education and vocational education assistance. Some key protection efforts being undertaken in Cambodia are: official repatriation and reception of trafficking victims (see below for numbers); family tracing and assessment and ongoing case monitoring of reintegration; and the development of National Standards on Victim Protection.¹⁷ There are many victim assistance agencies in Cambodia providing shelter and other forms of post-harm assistance.
- ❖ **Prosecution** involves activities relating to the criminal justice process, including investigations, apprehensions, arrests, prosecutions and convictions. Some key prosecution efforts being undertaken in Cambodia are: the establishment and ongoing operation of a specialised Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Police Department;¹⁸ the development of a focused Suppression Campaign to combat human trafficking in Cambodia;¹⁹ the implementation of the new Law on the Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation;²⁰ the development of a cadre of specialist judges and prosecutors that have a strong understanding of the issues and sensitivities involved in cases of human trafficking.²¹
- ❖ **Policy** involves activities relating to the development of a comprehensive and consistent policy framework to effectively address trafficking in Cambodia. Cambodia is currently in the process of finalising and implementing its Second National Plan of Action on Trafficking in Persons and Sexual Exploitation (NPA TIPSE 2006-2010). This is in line with its commitment under the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT), which brings together the six Mekong countries in the fight against human trafficking.

How many trafficking victims are repatriated each year?

Official Repatriations from Thailand of Cambodian Human Trafficking Victims	
Year	Number repatriated
2005	186
2006	232
2007	160

Official Repatriations from Vietnam of Cambodian Human Trafficking Victims	
Year	Number repatriated
2005	93
2006	113
2007	224

Official Repatriations from Malaysia of Cambodian Human Trafficking Victims	
Year	Number repatriated
2005	19
2006	6
2007	3

Official Repatriations from Cambodia of Vietnamese Human Trafficking Victims ²²	
Year	Number repatriated
2005	12
2006	5
2007	8

What is happening to the traffickers in Cambodia?

Between 2006-2007, 43 cases of domestic trafficking were investigated involving 58 offenders, and 31 cases of cross-border trafficking were investigated involving 49 offenders.²³ Nation-wide information on prosecutions for 2006-2007 is not available.²⁴

Type of Offence	2006	2007
Domestic Human Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation	33 Cases; 44 Suspects Arrested	9 Cases; 13 Suspects Arrested
Cross-Border Human Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation	16 Cases; 21 Suspects Arrested	10 Cases; 17 Suspects Arrested
Domestic Human Trafficking for Labour Exploitation	N/A	1 Case; 1 Suspect Arrested
Cross-Border Human Trafficking for Labour Exploitation	N/A	5 Cases; 11 Suspects Arrested
Debauchery	20 Cases; 25 Suspects Arrested	38 Cases; 42 Suspects Arrested
Pimping	39 Cases; 52 Suspects Arrested	28 Cases; 48 Suspects Arrested

What are the guiding principles behind counter-trafficking efforts in Cambodia?

- ❖ Key policy documents directing anti-trafficking interventions in Cambodia are:
 - Second National Plan of Action (2006-2010);
 - New law on the Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation (2008);
 - Campaigning Plan to Combat Human Trafficking, Smuggling, Exploitation and Sexual Exploitation of Women and Children (2007);
 - Cambodia-Thai Trafficking MOU (2003);
 - Cambodia-Thai Employment Cooperation MOU (2003);
 - Cambodia-Vietnam Trafficking Agreement (2005);
 - The COMMIT MOU (2004);
 - The Second COMMIT Sub-regional Plan of Action (2008-2010).

What else needs to be done to combat human trafficking in Cambodia, and why is it so important?

- ❖ Exploitative sites (fishing boats, factories, homes) should be given more attention to give a signal effect to the sector. To date, the focus has been largely on the community and the victims.
 - ❖ The 'demand' side (law enforcement, policing, awareness raising etc.) of human trafficking should be strengthened without neglecting current work to curb 'supply' (awareness, education, job creation etc.).
 - ❖ Research on human trafficking in Cambodia needs to be strengthened, by working more collaboratively with the various partners in the counter-trafficking sector both in the country and in the GMS region in order to better evaluate current interventions, and to identify and target emerging issues particularly related to a continued rise in migratory flows.
- Interventions to combat human trafficking directly support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), by addressing factors that contribute to an individual's vulnerability to trafficking such as poverty (MDG 1), lack of basic education (MDG 2), and lack of gender equality (MDG 3). Furthermore, interventions can also work to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS (MDG 6).

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¹ Population Projection 1998-2000 based on the Cambodia Intercensal Population Survey 2004 in National Committee for Population and Development (NCPD) [2007], *Cambodia Population Data Sheet 2007: Second Edition*, [NCPD: 2007]

² UN, 2000. *UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Woman and Children*.

³ During the Khmer Rouge period from 1975-1978, between two and seven million Cambodians died from disease, starvation and execution by the Khmer Rouge. At the end of the Khmer Rouge regime, civil war between various factions including the Khmer Rouge continued to disrupt society until 1991.

⁴ UNICEF [2005], *Cambodia: Statistics*, found at http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/cambodia_statistics.html, last accessed January 2008. Statistics quoted from 2005.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ IOM estimates that 30-40% of total migration flows in the region take place via unregulated channels. IOM [2007], 'Irregular Migration and Human Trafficking', Migration in South East Asia, found at <http://www.iom-seasia.org/>, last accessed February 2008.

⁷ Population Pyramid, Cambodia 2007 based on demographic estimates and revised population projection from 2005, as found in: NCPD[2007], *Cambodia Population Data Sheet 2007: Second Edition*, [Phnom Penh:2007]

⁸ ILO [2005], 'Presentation on Demographics of Cambodia' [Phnom Penh: 2005], presented at a workshop to develop Child Safe Tourism policy in 2005.

⁹ Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation/IOM, *The Return and Reintegration of Victims of Trafficking from Cambodia to Thailand 01 July 2004 – 30 March 2005 AND Repatriation from Cambodia to Vietnam of Vietnamese Victims of Trafficking from 15 May 1999 – 30 March 2005* [Phnom Penh: 2005]; DoSVY/IOM [2006]. Return of Cambodians from Vietnam [Phnom Penh: 2006], information on Malaysia and other supplementary information was received from the MoSVY.

¹⁰ Increasing number of complaints have been received by Licadho, Adhoc and LSCW

¹¹ ECPAT [2008], ECPAT Database Report on Rape and Trafficking for 2005-2006, [Phnom Penh: 2008]

¹² Brown, E [2007], "Out of Sight, Out of Mind? Child Domestic Workers and Patterns of Trafficking in Cambodia" [IOM, Phnom Penh: 2007]

¹³ ECPAT [2008]

¹⁴ *The Decision to Establish the Leading Task Force to Fight Human Trafficking, Smuggling, Exploitation and Sexual Exploitation of Women and Children* was signed by Prime Minister Hun Sen on 8 August 2007. Decision No 2815 SSR

¹⁵ *The Decision to Establish the National Task Force to Implement Agreements, Memoranda of Understanding between the Royal Government of Cambodia and Relevant Countries on the Elimination of Trafficking in Persons and Assisting Victims of Trafficking* was signed by Prime Minister Hun Sen on 12 March 2007. Decision No 13 SSR

¹⁶ Prevention projects mentioned are led by (in order they were mentioned) Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Women's Affairs and Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport respectively.

¹⁷ Led by Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation

¹⁸ Created in 2001 under the Ministry of Interior

¹⁹ *Campaigning Plan to Combat Human Trafficking, Smuggling, Exploitation, and Women and Children Sexual Exploitation* was signed by His Excellency Deputy Prime Minister Hun Sen on 17 July 2007. Decision No 012 Ph.K.

²⁰ Led by Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Interior

²¹ Led by Ministry of Justice

²² Information on repatriations from Cambodia to Vietnam received from MoSVY, Thailand to Cambodia from Poipet Transit Centre, Vietnam to Cambodia from IOM, and and Malaysia to Cambodia from MoFA

²³ Information gathered from the Department of Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection within the Ministry of Interior in March 2008.

²⁴ Ministry of Justice does not yet have a system to compile nation-wide information on prosecutions