Cambodia

In 2010, Cambodia targeted child labor elimination in its National Social Protection Strategy. However, children continue to engage in dangerous work in agriculture and are victims of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation and labor. Additionally, gaps remain in Cambodia's enforcement framework due to a lack of resources for inspectors and investigators.

Statistics on Working Children and School Attendance

Children	Age	Percent
Working	5 - 14 yrs.	Unavailable
Attending School	5 - 14 yrs.	Unavailable
Combining Work and School	7 - 14 yrs.	Unavailable



Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Children in Cambodia are engaged in the worst forms of child labor. 992 Many of these children work in agriculture, while some fall victim to trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation and labor. 993 Children's work in agriculture commonly involves harmful activities, such as using potentially dangerous machinery and tools, carrying heavy loads and applying harmful pesticides, activities which are outlined on the list of hazardous child labor prohibited to those younger than age 18.994

Additionally, children work in a number of dangerous occupations, including fishing, portering, handicraft making, brick making and domestic service. Children reportedly work in the production of cassava, coal, gems and tobacco. Children also work in other hazardous activities, such as salt production, where they carry heavy loads, work long hours in the sun and suffer from cuts on their feet from the salt crystals.

Children also work on the street as beggars, street vendors, shoe polishers and scavengers. 998

Children working on the streets may be exposed to many dangers, including severe weather, vehicle accidents and criminal elements.

Cambodia is a source and destination country for trafficking in children. Cambodian girls are trafficked to Thailand for forced labor in factories and domestic work and may be forced into prostitution. Cambodian boys and girls are trafficked to Thailand and Vietnam for begging, selling candy and flowers on the street and shining shoes. Girls are trafficked internally and from Vietnam for prostitution. Girls who previously worked as child domestic laborers are particularly vulnerable to trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation. Cambodia is also a destination country for child sex tourism.

Education is free through grade nine but is not compulsory and significant barriers to accessing the education system still exist. In remote areas, children have to travel long distances to reach school and transportation is limited. This sometimes deters girls from attending due to safety concerns. ¹⁰⁰⁴ Because teacher salaries are low, instructors often charge extra fees to students for exams, snacks and even class time. ¹⁰⁰⁵ These

informal fees can make the cost of education prohibitive for poor children, who are the most vulnerable to worst forms of child labor.

Laws and Regulations on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Cambodian Labor Law sets the minimum age for employment at 15.¹⁰⁰⁶ Children younger than age 18 are barred from hazardous work according to a 2004 declaration issued by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Labor, Vocational Training and Youth Rehabilitation.¹⁰⁰⁷ The declaration lists 38 types of hazardous work, including working underground; lifting, carrying or moving heavy loads; deep-sea and off-shore fishing; working near furnaces or kilns used to manufacture glass ceramics or bricks; and handling and spraying pesticides and herbicides.¹⁰⁰⁸

WILOW TO THE PARTY OF THE PARTY	C138, Minimum Age	✓
	C182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	CRC	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
	CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓
	Minimum Age for Work	15
	Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18
	Compulsory Education Age	No
	Free Public Education	Yes

Children as young as age 12 are permitted to perform domestic labor as long as the work is not hazardous to their health, safety or morals and does not involve any type of hazardous work specifically prohibited.¹⁰⁰⁹

While the legal framework provides some protections against the worst forms of child labor, the Labor Law does not prohibit hazardous work in family-based agriculture or family businesses. 1010 Additionally, the lack of a compulsory school age in Cambodia leaves children vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor as they are not required to be in school but are not legally permitted to work.

Forced or compulsory labor is outlawed in Section 5 of the Cambodian Labor Law. 1011 The Constitution prohibits prostitution and the buying and selling of human beings. 1012 The Law on the Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation defines trafficking crimes, criminalizes child prostitution as well as sexual and indecent acts with minors and specifies fines and prison terms. 1013 In December 2010, Cambodia enacted a Penal Code that explicitly prohibits child trafficking, child pornography, child prostitution and the use of children in other illicit activities. 1014 However, the Code allows for judicial discretion in sentencing;1015 however, the impact of this discretion on sanctions for worst forms of child labor violations is not yet clear.

Children are not prohibited from crossing the border with Thailand with strangers or unaccompanied and do not need to show identification. ¹⁰¹⁶ This leaves children in the border regions vulnerable to trafficking. The minimum age for conscription into military service is 18. ¹⁰¹⁷

Institutional Mechanisms for Coordination and Enforcement

The Cambodian National Council for Children (CNCC) and its subcommittee for child labor are the main coordinating institutions on child labor issues at the national level. The CNCC subcommittee on child labor includes all concerned ministries, businesses, trade unions and NGOs and coordinates projects and programs with national policy on child labor. The Provincial Committees on the Protection of Child

Rights and Provincial Committees on Child Labor coordinate efforts to address child labor at the provincial level. 1020

The National Committee on Suppression of Human Trafficking, Smuggling and Labor and Sexual Exploitation focuses on coordinating policymaking efforts in these areas. The Committee includes 18 representatives from all government ministries. ¹⁰²¹ In 2010, the Committee's Secretariat released the country's first National Trafficking in Persons Report and produced an action plan for anti-trafficking efforts in 2011. ¹⁰²²

The Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training (MOLVT) and the provincial labor departments are responsible for enforcing the child-related provisions of the Cambodian Labor Law. 1023 The MOLVT has 12 inspectors dedicated to child labor in Phnom Penh and 27 child labor inspection officials at municipal and provincial levels. 1024 Reportedly, inspectors lack a sufficient budget for transportation, fuel and other necessities to carry out inspections. 1025 The Government does not officially release data on the number of child labor inspections or the number of children assisted. 1026

Laws against trafficking, child sexual exploitation and illicit activities are enforced by the Ministry of the Interior and 24 municipal and provincial anti-human trafficking and juvenile protection offices. There are approximately 210 anti-human trafficking police officers at the national level. During the reporting period, the Government partnered with NGOs to train 1,500 police on human trafficking. Complaints of human trafficking can be filed through nine antitrafficking hotlines.

In 2010, Cambodian police arrested 80 people suspected of human trafficking violations. Of these perpetrators, 78 were tried and 38 convicted of their crimes. Anti-human trafficking police, military police and Phnom Penh municipal police rescued 686 trafficking victims, 197 of

which were younger than age 18.¹⁰³² Trafficking victims were referred to local NGOs to receive social services.¹⁰³³ Trafficking investigators reportedly lack vehicles as well as other equipment essential for investigation such as cameras and computers.¹⁰³⁴

Government Policies on the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The National Plan of Action on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor 2008-2012 (NPA-WFCL) aims to reduce the percentage of working children ages 5 to 17 from an estimated 13 percent in 2005 to 8 percent by 2015 and to eradicate the worst forms of child labor by 2016. 1035

The NPA-WFCL addresses all worst forms of child labor and lays out the specific sectors, regions and activities in which these worst forms may be found. 1036 The Plan reflects the list of prohibited hazardous work through its list of priority sectors, including quarrying, brick making, portering, rubber plantation work, salt production, fishing and mining. Domestic service is also listed as a priority although it is not universally prohibited for children younger than age 18.1037 The NPA-WFCL also includes a matrix of outputs, activities, implementing agencies, resources and indicators to articulate how the Government will achieve its objectives in areas including research, policy, enforcement, social mobilization, education, protection, prevention and withdrawal. 1038

In September 2010, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport published the Education Strategic Plan 2009-2013. The Plan addresses access to education and targets marginalized groups, including child laborers, for entry into primary education. The Plan also highlights the need for vocational and life skills training for youth, to enhance youth productivity. This policy uses vocational training as a development strategy for marginalized youth, including child laborers. The Plan also highlights the need for vocational and life skills training for youth, to enhance youth productivity.

The issue of child labor has also been incorporated into other key development policies. The

Cambodia Millennium Development Goals have also adopted the NPA-WFCL objective of decreasing the share of children working to 8 percent by 2015. 1042 In June 2010, a draft National Social Protection Strategy was finalized, establishing social safety nets for poor children and mothers in an effort to eliminate child labor. 1043 The strategy was adopted by the Cabinet on March 18, 2011.1044 The ILO Decent Work Country Program, endorsed by the MOLVT, highlights child labor issues and outlines a framework for enhancing policies, laws and enforcement mechanisms to protect children. 1045 In addition, the MOLVT's First Occupational Safety and Health Master Plan (2009-2013) includes eliminating hazardous child labor as one of its six priorities. 1046

The Ministry of Social Affairs implements the Policy and National Minimum Standards for the Protection of the Rights of Victims of Human Trafficking. The policy includes guidelines to improve the treatment of victims and mandates training of officials. ¹⁰⁴⁷ The Policy specifically lists children among those identified as victims of trafficking in Cambodia. ¹⁰⁴⁸

Along with Burma, China, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam, Cambodia is a signatory to the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking. The members had a Sub-Regional Plan of Action for 2008-2010 and monitored achievement annually against established targets and indicators of progress. 1049

Social Programs to Eliminate or Prevent the Worst Forms of Child Labor

During 2010, the Government participated in a 4-year, \$4 million, USDOL-funded program to withdraw 3,750 children and prevent 4,500 children from the worst forms of child labor in subsistence and commercial agriculture and fishing by providing direct education services. The project works on several of the objectives laid out by the NPA-WFCL, including research,

policy development, legislation and enforcement, advocacy and education. The Provincial Agriculture Offices assisted the project in training families of child laborers on alternative income generation activities, such as chicken raising, fish culture and vegetable gardening. Labor inspectors helped build the capacity of the project's child labor monitoring committees by training them on labor laws, education policies and safe migration guidelines. 1052

The Government also participated in a 4-year, \$4.3 million, USDOL-funded project to develop national capacity to end the worst forms of child labor, which runs through 2012. The sectors targeted include child trafficking and child labor in fishing, brick making, salt mining and portering. Its objective is to withdraw 7,200 children and prevent 3,800 children in 15 provinces from the worst forms of child labor. During the reporting period, project staff worked with the Government to include child labor issues in the National Social Protection Strategy. 1054

The Government also worked with national radio and television stations to present awareness raising messages about child labor and addressed the issue at high-profile events throughout 2010. 1055

In an effort to eliminate trafficking in persons, the Government participates in several programs funded by USDOS. These projects provide victim assistance, including shelter and psychosocial support. They also build the capacity of local police and strengthen protection networks between human rights organizations, government ministries and local stakeholders. 1057

Education and poverty reduction are also addressed through a number of donor-funded initiatives that may indirectly reduce child labor. The Government participates in a 5-year, \$10 million, USAID-funded project to enhance access to education, targeting 202 primary schools and 101 lower secondary schools. The project provides improvement grants to schools for scholarships,

latrines and equipment including computer and science labs. ¹⁰⁵⁸ The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries participates in a United Nations food security and income generation program that aims to reduce poverty by training and supporting farmers' organizations to improve livelihoods. ¹⁰⁵⁹ Research was not available to show the impact of these education and poverty reduction programs.

Although the Government has made extensive efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor through social programs, these efforts rely primarily on international donor funding and thus are at risk of being unsustainable.

Based on the reporting above, the following actions would advance the reduction of the worst forms of child labor in Cambodia:

IN THE AREA OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS:

- Institute and enforce a compulsory education age.
- Enact laws to protect children from dangerous work in non-commercial and family agriculture and family businesses.
- Remove exceptions from the Labor Law that allow children as young as age 12 to work in domestic service.
- Enact laws that require children crossing the border with Thailand to travel with a parent to reduce their vulnerability to traffickers.

IN THE AREA OF COORDINATION AND ENFORCEMENT:

- Conduct routine inspections of industries in which hazardous child labor is known to occur.
- Provide adequate resources for the enforcement of child labor laws.

IN THE AREA OF PROGRAMS:

- Increase support to social programs combating child labor and work to achieve sustainability.
- Assess the impact that existing poverty alleviation and education programs may have on child labor.
- ⁹⁹² Data provided in the chart at the beginning of this country report are not available from the data sources that are used in this report. Reliable data on the worst forms of child labor are especially difficult to collect given the often hidden or illegal nature of the worst forms. For more information on sources used for these statistics, the definition of working children, and other indicators used in this report, please see the "Children's Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions" section.
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