

# Cambodia

## [Structure of Cambodian Task Force on Human Trafficking](#)

## [Signed Decision to Establish National Task Force](#)

### **The Situation**

Cambodia is a source, transit, and destination country for human trafficking. The traffickers are reportedly organized crime syndicates, parents, relatives, friends, intimate partners, and neighbors.<sup>1</sup>

### **Source**

Cambodian men, women, and children are trafficked for sexual and labor exploitation in Thailand, Malaysia, Macao, and Taiwan.<sup>2</sup> Men are trafficked for forced labor in the agriculture, fishing, and construction industries. Women are trafficked for sexual exploitation and forced labor in factories or as domestic servants.<sup>3</sup> Children are trafficked for sexual exploitation and forced labor in organized begging rings, soliciting, street vending, and flower selling. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Youth Rehabilitations found that 76 percent of trafficked persons returned from Thailand had come from families who owned land, 93 percent owned their own house and had no debt on the land or house, and 47 percent stated that their mother was the facilitator of their trafficking.<sup>4</sup>

### **Transit**

Cambodia is a transit country for victims trafficked from Vietnam to Thailand.<sup>5</sup>

### **Destination**

Cambodia is a destination country for women and children who are trafficked from Vietnam and China for sexual exploitation. Common destinations for trafficking victims are Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, and Sihanouk Ville. A 2005 report estimated that 2,000 victims in Cambodia have been trafficked into sexual exploitation, approximately 80 percent of whom were Vietnamese women and girls.<sup>6</sup> [ECPAT Cambodia](#) reports that as many as one third of the trafficking victims in prostitution are children.

### **Internal Trafficking**

Cambodia has internal trafficking of women and children from rural to urban areas for sexual exploitation. Many victims believe they will be working as domestic servants but are later coerced into sexual exploitation.<sup>7</sup>

### **Causes**

There are many causes of human trafficking in Cambodia. The [UN Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking \(UNIAP\)](#) argues that human trafficking is relatively new to Cambodia. Human trafficking in Cambodia has increased because of a number of factors, including poverty, socio-economic imbalance between rural and urban areas, increased tourism, lack of unemployment, education, and safe migration; poverty being the most significant cause of trafficking.<sup>8</sup> The [International Labour Organization](#) argues

that the aftermath of the Khmer Rouge regime is still felt both psychologically and economically and plays a direct role in labor and sexual exploitation arising from ill-prepared migration. The upheavals caused by the conflict and lack of opportunities in rural areas have fueled a return to the cities and urban areas, all but emptied during the Khmer Rouge period. With well over half the population below the age of 20, Cambodia faces a growing problem of providing decent work for its young population, further increasing the drive toward cross-border migration for employment, and perpetuating the cycle of vulnerability to human trafficking.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Cambodian Government**

The Cambodian Government was placed in the [Tier 2 Watch List in the 2007 U.S. Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report](#) for not fully complying with the Trafficking Victims Protection Act's minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but making significant efforts to do so. The Government remained in the Watch List because it has not increased its efforts to combat trafficking since 2005.<sup>10</sup> Some law enforcement and government officials are believed to have accepted bribes to facilitate the trafficking and sex trade. There are reports of government officials who are complicit in the trafficking by accepting bribes.<sup>11</sup>

The [1996 Law on Suppression of Kidnapping, Trafficking and Exploitation of Humans](#) criminalizes debt bondage, slavery, and forced child labor in Cambodia.<sup>12</sup> The penalty for trafficking in persons under the age of 15 is 15-20 years of imprisonment; the penalty for trafficking in persons over the age of 15 is 10 to 14 years in prison.<sup>13</sup>

### **Prosecution**

According to the Cambodian [Ministry of Interior](#), the police arrested 65 people for human trafficking,<sup>14</sup> and 53 were convicted with penalties ranging from 5 to 24 years of imprisonment in 2006. An anti-trafficking NGO reported the arrests of 21 people and 28 convicted with penalties ranging from 1 to 19 years of imprisonment, and civil compensation ranging from 3 million and 10 million riels (\$750-2,500) to the victims.<sup>15</sup>

In 2006, the government prosecuted several police officials for trafficking-related corruption charges. The former Deputy Director of the Police Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Department was convicted for complicity in trafficking and sentenced to five years' imprisonment; two officials under his supervision were also convicted and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. Police arrested two military officers and one member of the military police for running brothels and trafficking; one was sentenced to a five-year suspended sentence and fined five million riels (\$1,250).

In 2006, 13 foreign child sex tourists were arrested by the Cambodian police and three were convicted, with sentences ranging from 1 to 18 years' imprisonment. Cambodia continued to assist U.S. law enforcement authorities in the transfer to U.S. custody of Americans who have sexually exploited children in Cambodia. During the past year, Cambodia coordinated the deportation of one American national who was accused of child sex tourism for prosecution in the United States under the extraterritorial provisions of the U.S. Government's PROTECT Act. Additionally, Cambodia assisted in

the deportation of two other American nationals with outstanding U.S. charges for child sexual exploitation and child pornography.<sup>16</sup>

### **Protection**

The Cambodian Government operates two temporary shelters and collaborates with NGOs to assist in reintegration of victims. Law enforcement and immigration officials implement formal procedures to identify victims among vulnerable groups, such as girls in prostitution, and to refer them to provincial and municipal Departments of Social Affairs, where they are interviewed and referred to short- or long-term NGO shelters depending on their needs. Victims may file civil suits and pursue legal action against traffickers. In 2006, 252 Cambodian victims who had been trafficked to Thailand were repatriated by the Thai government in coordination with the [Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans, and Youth Rehabilitation \(MOSAVY\)](#) and Cambodian NGOs.<sup>17</sup>

### **Prevention**

The Cambodian government is raising awareness through posters, television, radio, and traditional local theater. In 2006, the police conducted an awareness raising campaign among 20,000 students in Seim Reap and 3,000 students in Phnom Penh.<sup>18</sup>

### **International Cooperation**

On May 6, 2005 the government and the other five member states of the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Trafficking (COMMIT) met in Phnom Penh and agreed to approve the plan of action developed in March 2005 in Hanoi.<sup>19</sup>

### **Recommendations**

The U.S. Department of State recommends that the Cambodia Government should pass and enact comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation and make greater efforts to prosecute and convict public officials who profit from or are involved in trafficking.<sup>20</sup>

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- 1 UNIAP: Cambodia Overview
  - 2 UNIAP: Cambodia Overview
  - 3 2007 US Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report
  - 4 2006 US Department of State Human Rights Report
  - 5 UNODC: Trafficking in human beings: Global Patterns
  - 6 2006 US Department of State Human Rights Report
  - 7 UNIAP: Cambodia Overview
  - 8 UNIAP: Cambodia Overview
  - 9 ILO-IPEC: Cambodia, The Situation
  - 10 2007 US Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report
  - 11 2006 US Department of State Human Rights Report
  - 12 2007 US Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report
  - 13 2006 US Department of State Human Rights Report

- <sup>14</sup> 2006 US Department of State Human Rights Report
- <sup>15</sup> 2007 US Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report
- <sup>16</sup> 2007 US Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report
- <sup>17</sup> 2007 US Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report
- <sup>18</sup> 2007 US Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report
- <sup>19</sup> 2006 US Department of State Human Rights Report
- <sup>20</sup> 2007 US Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report

Source: <http://www.humantrafficking.org/countries/cambodia> [15 July 2009]