

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

In 2022, Cambodia made minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Government of Cambodia launched and committed \$10 million to the National Action Plan on Early Childhood Care and Development, which aims to provide equitable and inclusive early childhood education and prioritizes an expansion of early learning curriculum, improved teaching materials, and a strengthened preschool workforce. Cambodia's Inter-Ministries Technical Working Group also drafted the Child Protection Law, which outlines children's rights and provides detailed information on how officials should conduct child-centered case management and referrals to social services. Despite initiatives to address child labor, Cambodia is assessed as having made only minimal advancement because it continued to implement practices that delay advancement to eliminate child labor. The government failed to take active measures to investigate, prosecute, convict, and sentence public officials who participate in or facilitate the worst forms of child labor, including commercial sexual exploitation of children and debt-based forced labor in brick kilns. In addition, judges, police, and labor inspectors were reported to have accepted bribes to overlook child labor offenses in the country, especially when the perpetrator had alleged ties with the government. Children in Cambodia are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and in forced labor in brickmaking. The government also failed to publicly release information on its criminal law enforcement efforts. Moreover, the lack of regulation in the microfinance industry has led to debt bondage and an increase in child labor.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Cambodia.

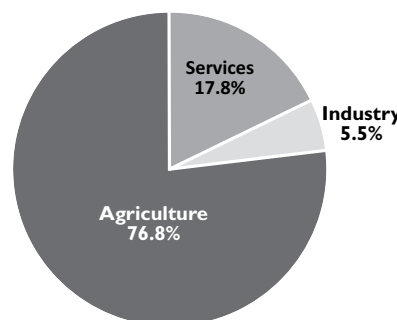
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	7.5 (243,371)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	87.6
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	6.3
Primary Completion Rate (%)		90.7

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2021, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023. (1)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from Socio-Economic Survey (CSES), 2017. (2)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Fishing, including deep-sea† and night fishing† (3-9)
	Peeling shrimp (8,11,12)
	Production of palm oil, bananas, tobacco, cassava, rubber, and rice (3,8,9,11-14)

Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (Cont.)

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Growing, cutting, tying, carrying,† and spraying pesticides† on sugarcane (3,8,9,14,15)
	Logging† for the production of timber (7,8,11)
	Production of salt (16,17)
	Production of bovines (18,19)
Industry	Making bricks,† including feeding clay into brickmaking machines, removing wood fuel from trucks and feeding to brickmaking machines, drying bricks, transporting bricks to the oven,† and loading bricks onto and off of trucks (3,5,12,14,20)
	Construction,† including operating transportation equipment† (3,5,9,13,14,21)
	Production of textiles, including bleaching,† dyeing,† and finishing with chemicals;† garments; and footwear (5,9,11,14,22,23)
	Production of alcoholic beverages† (5,7,11)
	Working in slaughterhouses† for the production of meat† (5,7)
	Manufacturing of wood and metal† products (5)
Services	Domestic work (3,5,13,16,24,25)
	Work as security guards† and in entertainment,† including as bartenders,† masseurs,† dancers,† and waiters† (3-5,9,14)
	Street work, including car washing, begging, vending, garbage scavenging, collecting garbage, and exploitation by orphanages to fraudulently lure donations from tourists (3,13,14,21,26-29)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3,13,27,29,30)
	Forced begging and street vending (7,13,14,28)
	Forced labor in the production of bricks (9,11,13,14,31,32)
	Forced labor in fishing (4)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

The rapid growth in the construction industry in Cambodia has increased the demand for bricks and fueled child labor and debt bondage in the country. Failed harvests from droughts have compounded farmers' debts, forcing them to sell their harvests to brick kiln owners and subsequently placing farmers' families into debt bondage. (3,9,13,20,30,31,33-35) Research also found that children work under similar debt bondage conditions in rubber plantations in northeastern Cambodia and in domestic work. (14) In addition, foreign investments in Cambodian banana production have resulted in the considerable use of child laborers on banana plantations in Kampong Cham and Ratanakiri provinces, many of which expose workers, including children, to dangerous chemicals and subsequent hospitalizations. (16,36) Furthermore, in recent years, the microfinance industry in the country has grown rapidly with inadequate regulation, leading to an increasing number of overburdened debtors. Cambodian human rights organizations cite cases of extrajudicial land sales, child labor, and debt bondage linked to the microfinance crisis. (16,37,38) Research also showed that children were taken out of school so they could work to help with credit repayment difficulties. (37) Although Cambodia conducted a nationwide survey of child labor in 2019, it has yet to publish the results of this survey or make the data publicly available, limiting public awareness of the true prevalence of child labor in the country. (14,27)

Cambodia is a source and destination country for child trafficking—on fishing vessels, in the agriculture and construction sectors, in factories, in domestic work (often through debt-based coercion), or for purposes of commercial sexual exploitation (CSEC). (13,24,26,27,30,35) Girls as young as age 14 are trafficked to China for CSEC. Many of these girls previously worked in the garment, hospitality, and tourism sectors, which were particularly stunted by the COVID-19 pandemic, pushing them to seek out livelihood opportunities elsewhere and making them vulnerable to CSEC and other forms of child labor. (27,29,39,40) Online sexual exploitation of children is also reportedly increasing in Cambodia, facilitated by an increase in access to high-speed internet. (9,26,27,41,42) In addition, research found that children who are placed in some residential care facilities or orphanages in Cambodia are at a higher risk of engaging in child labor. (9,13,26,27,43,44)




MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

Although the Education Law establishes free basic education, unofficial school-related fees, such as for extra classes or school uniforms, are prohibitive for some families. (3,14,45) Other barriers to education include denied enrollment for children without birth certificates, limited transportation to schools in remote areas, lack of drinking water, a severe shortage of teachers, language barriers, and a lack of safe sanitation conditions in some schools. (7,16,46) Sanitation conditions are particularly unsafe in Cambodia's "floating schools" on or near fishing communities, to which children as young as age 6 row themselves by boat each day. (16) These barriers disproportionately affect ethnic minority children, indigenous children, children with disabilities, girls, and children from rural and disadvantaged communities. (3,9,13,14,16,43,46-48) During the reporting period, the UN Child Rights Committee expressed concern over a Cambodian draft law proposing segregated classes for children with disabilities, fearing the exclusion of children with disabilities from adequate education. (49)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Cambodia has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor

Convention	Ratification
 ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
 UN CRC	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Cambodia's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of criminal prohibitions for the use of a child for pornographic performances in private spaces or through communication and information technologies.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	15	Article 177 of the Labor Law (50)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 173 and 177 of the Labor Law; Regulation on the Prohibition of Hazardous Child Labor; Articles 339 and 340 of the Penal Code (50-52)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 2 of the Regulation on the Prohibition of Hazardous Child Labor (51)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 15 and 16 of the Labor Law; Articles 10, 12, 15–17, and 19 of the Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation; Article 80 of Law on Juvenile Justice (50,53,54)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 10–20 and 22 of the Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation (53)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	No		Articles 15, 28, 33–37, and 41 of the Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation; Articles 284, 289, and 346 of the Penal Code (52,53)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 345 of the Penal Code; Articles 3 and 47 of the Law on Control of Drugs (52,55)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 42 of the Law on General Statutes for the Military Personnel of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (56)

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor (Cont.)

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		Articles 41 and 42 of the Law on General Statutes for the Military Personnel of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (56)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		
Compulsory Education Age	No		
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 31 of the Education Law (45)

During the reporting period, Cambodia's Inter-Ministries Technical Working Group drafted the Child Protection Law, which outlines children's rights and provides detailed information on how officials should conduct child-centered case management and referrals to social services. (16,57) However, Cambodia lacks compulsory schooling, which makes children under age 15 particularly vulnerable to child labor because they are not required to be in school but are not yet legally permitted to work. (45,50,51,58) In addition, although the Labor Code prohibits work by children under age 15, the law does not apply to children outside of formal employment relationships and, therefore, does not conform to international standards that require all children be protected under the law that sets a minimum age for work. (43,51) Moreover, the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training's (MOLVT) regulation on household work extends minimum age protections for domestic workers to age 18 and provides clear definitions of household work, but it does not specify legal protections for household workers employed in informal relationships, including when working for their relatives without a contract. (43,50,58,59) Finally, Cambodian laws do not sufficiently prohibit the commercial sexual exploitation of children, as the use of a child for pornographic performances is criminally prohibited in public places but not in private spaces or through the use of communication and information technologies. (27,52,60)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training (MOLVT)	Enforces child-related provisions of the Labor Law and trains Commune Committees for Women and Children that oversee local child labor monitoring systems. (12,61,62) Tasked with removing children from child labor, including at brick kilns. (9) Head of the MOLVT's Child Labor Bureau also serves as the Secretary General of the National Committee on Countering Child Labor (NCCL). (9,14,61) Refers cases involving possible criminal violations to the Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Department. (16) During the reporting year, held an International Children's Day event with 325 participants to raise awareness of child labor; and conducted 39 educational child labor prevention campaigns for 9,122 workers at consumer goods factories. (29) In 2022, also conducted 400 inspections to prevent child labor at brick kilns and other agro-industry enterprises. (29) Reports note that Commune Committees were likely underfunded during the reporting period. (63,64) Furthermore, research indicated that the MOLVT's labor inspectorate struggled to coordinate training with the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning, and Construction on ensuring safe working conditions and identifying child labor in inspections of construction sites. (3)
Ministry of the Interior—Cambodian National Police—Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Department (AHTJP)	Enforces laws against human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children in collaboration with municipal and provincial anti-human trafficking and juvenile protection offices; reports to the AHTJP Department Director. (26,29) Provides training to labor inspectors. (29) Fields complaints from the public about human trafficking, which can be filed through the anti-human trafficking hotline. (63) Oversees the Information and Technology Office, which searches for evidence of human trafficking and sexual exploitation of children on the internet, in printed media, and in other sources. (27,61,65) During the reporting year, in collaboration with Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MOSAVY), piloted new standard operating procedures to clarify the workflow and accountability of stakeholders tasked to address children's issues. (29)

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (Cont.)

Organization/Agency	Role & Activities
Provincial Police	Through their Anti-Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Bureaus, enforce laws against human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children at the provincial level and coordinates with the AHTJP. (14,63)
Commissariats—Bureaus of Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection and Bureaus of Criminal Police	Through their Criminal Police Bureaus, enforce criminal laws at the provincial level. (14,63)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2022, labor law enforcement agencies in Cambodia took actions to address child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the MOLVT that may hinder adequate enforcement of child labor laws, including financial resource allocation.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown (3)	Unknown (16)
Number of Labor Inspectors	602 (3)	592 (16)
Mechanism to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes (50)	Yes (50)
Training for Labor Inspectors Provided	Unknown (3)	Yes (16)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted at Worksite	176 (3)	252 (16)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	0 (3)	1 (16)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	N/A (3)	1 (16)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	N/A (3)	1 (16)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown (3)	Yes (16)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (3)	Yes (16)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (50)	Yes (50)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown (66)	Yes (16)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (3)	Yes (16)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (16)

Research indicates that Cambodia does not have an adequate number of labor inspectors to carry out their mandated duties. Reporting also indicates that labor inspectorates at the provincial level are unable to adequately enforce child labor laws due to insufficient funding and resources. (67) Evidence suggests that labor inspectors and other law enforcement personnel are unwilling to investigate child labor allegations involving powerful business owners. (16) In addition, law enforcement officials have requested bribes from employers when child labor violations have been found. Malfeasance within the MOLVT and law enforcement agencies limits the capacity of local authorities to adequately enforce regulations for children related to hazardous work, resulting in penalties related to the worst forms of child labor rarely being imposed in accordance with the law. (16,43,68)

The government did not provide disaggregated data on the sectors in which labor inspections were conducted, the locations of inspections, or labor inspectorate funding. (16) Research suggests that the government does not proactively conduct inspections in all sectors in which child labor is suspected to occur, and that authorities were known to give employers advance notice of inspections, enabling them to conceal abuses. (9,12) In addition, while unannounced inspections are permitted, the MOLVT indicated they are not plausible, as the inspectors are not yet equipped with the proper technical training and expertise. (3,9,14,16,69) Furthermore, although the MOLVT states that their inspectors can conduct "special inspections" in informal sectors in which children are believed to work (including agriculture, casinos, construction, domestic work, the entertainment sector, fishing, begging, scavenging, and street vending), these only take place when a specific request has been made or a serious violation reported. (16) Police also view brick kiln inspection as the MOLVT's responsibility and said they would only investigate a kiln if the MOLVT asked them to and reported suspected criminal activity. (38) Labor inspectors are also prevented from conducting inspections at some construction sites, as owners who are closely

Cambodia

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

affiliated with government officials or powerful tycoons are able to obstruct inspectors from accessing their properties. (14,30,63,66)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2022, criminal law enforcement agencies in Cambodia took actions to address child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Cambodian National Police that may hinder adequate enforcement of child labor laws, including insufficient training for criminal investigators.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2021	2022
Training for Criminal Investigators Provided	Unknown (3)	Unknown (16)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (3)	Unknown (16)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (3)	Unknown (16)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (3)	Unknown (16)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (3)	Unknown (16)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (3)	Yes (16)

The government failed to provide information on its criminal law enforcement efforts for the reporting period. (16) Evidence indicates that some government officials profited directly from the commercial sexual exploitation of children and indirectly by being permissive of it, especially when it is undertaken in establishments owned by those with ties to the government. (3,13,29,30,70,71) NGO contacts claim that the government has limited political will to investigate any Cambodian officials complicit in these illegal activities, and there was no evidence of public officials being investigated, prosecuted, or convicted during the reporting period. (3,13,24,30,43,64) Law enforcement officials investigating suspected human trafficking cases are expected to personally cover all expenses of the investigation and are rarely reimbursed in full or on time, which makes some law enforcement units more susceptible to malfeasance. (9,24,38,71)

Available research found that prosecutors and judges have been known to accept bribes in return for dismissal of charges, acquittal, and reduced sentencing. (12,27,38,71,72) The use of "judicial supervision," where defendants are released on their own recognizance in advance of a trial, has resulted in human trafficking suspects not returning to participate in their criminal trials as law enforcement lacks the resources to monitor defendants. Law enforcement rarely issued arrest warrants for absconded defendants unless NGOs were available to assist in the apprehension of said defendants. (38) Research found that due to outdated collection storage platforms, a lack of resources, and an absence in coordination among relevant government institutions, the government's ability to properly save and store data related to the worst forms of child labor was found to be inadequate. (12,24,30,63)

From January to September 2022, the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation helped reintegrate 91 Cambodian victims and suspected victims of human trafficking back into their communities, including 62 women and 15 children. It also referred 2,227 victims of human trafficking to social services, 672 of whom were women and 1,519 were children. (29)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established a key mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including insufficient inter-ministerial coordination.

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

Table 8. Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Activities
National Committee on Countering Child Labor (NCCL)	Serves as the primary interagency coordinating body for the government's various ministries on child labor issues. The Minister of Labor serves as its chair and the head of the MOLVT's Child Labor Bureau serves as the Secretary General. (3) Coordination across relevant ministries remains a challenge. (16) During the reporting period, established 14 municipal and provincial committees focused on countering child labor. (16) The committee includes other ministries like the Interior Ministry, the Justice Ministry, and Women's Affairs Ministry. (16)

During the reporting year, the National Committee for Counter Trafficking implemented an awareness campaign for 350 teachers focused on internet safety for children and the prevention of online child sexual exploitation. (29)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including implementation.

Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description & Activities
National Plan of Action on Combating the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2016–2025)	Aims to build the capacity of law enforcement officers, strengthen enforcement of relevant laws, raise public awareness of child labor issues, and enhance child labor monitoring systems at the community level. (21) Overseen by MOLVT. (14) Creates a roadmap to the complete eradication of the worst forms of child labor by 2025 in various sectors, including services, agriculture, mining, and energy. (23,58,63,73) Mandates awareness-raising activities, legal action, and collaborations with civil society actors. (73) Although research was unable to determine specific activities carried out under the Plan of Action during the reporting period, MOLVT reports they conducted trainings and conferences in the city and in provinces to raise public awareness about child labor. (16)
Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children (2017–2023)	Plan was set to end in 2021 but was extended through 2023. (16) Original plan was run by the Ministry of Women's Affairs and was developed in response to the Cambodia Violence Against Children Survey conducted in 2013. (27,65,74) Provided Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OSEC)-related interventions in policy and governance, including providing training for teachers and developing curriculum to help children build online safety skills; providing OSEC materials to law enforcement; and developing an online hotline to help identify platforms that perpetuate OSEC. (9,27) Details of the extended plan have not been made publicly available. (16)
Action Plan for Gender Equality Promotion and Child Labor Elimination in the Fisheries Sector (2022–2026) [†]	Aims to prevent and withdraw children from child labor and hazardous work in the fisheries sector, and to improve monitoring and evaluation mechanisms on child labor in this sector. Overseen, coordinated, and monitored by the Fisheries Administration, which falls under the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. (75) During the reporting year, trained local officials and conducted workshops in several provinces to raise public awareness of gender and child labor. (16)

[†] Policy was approved during the reporting period.

[‡] The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (6,54,76–79)

In 2022, the government also launched and committed \$10 million to the National Action Plan on Early Childhood Care and Development, which aims to provide equitable and inclusive early childhood education and prioritizes an expansion of early learning curriculum, improved teaching materials, and a strengthened preschool workforce. (80)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2022, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including the inadequacy of programs to address all worst forms of child labor.

Cambodia

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description & Activities
Cambodia Countering Trafficking in Persons (CCTIP) (2019–2023)	\$10 million, USAID-funded, 5-year (including a 1-year cost extension) program implemented by Winrock International to strengthen the capacity of government and community stakeholders to prevent human trafficking, protect at-risk populations, and increase the number of successful prosecutions of perpetrators. (81) During the reporting period, CCTIP and the Cambodian National Committee to Combat Trafficking began developing a 2-year action plan based on new human trafficking patterns in the country. Additionally, CCTIP awarded a 2-year grant to NGO International Justice Mission to reduce bonded labor in Cambodia's brick manufacturing industry and in cross-border online scamming/gaming. (16,82)
UN WFP Country Program† (2020–2024)	Multi-government and private sector-funded program implemented in collaboration with the Government of Cambodia that includes a school feeding program for children in need. (83) Provided school meals to over 200,000 children in 2022. (16)
Child Protection Programs	Family Care First (FCF REACT) (2015–2023) is led by MOSAVY. Funded by the European Union, USAID, the GHR Foundation, Save the Children Hong Kong, and UNICEF. (65,84) Aims to support more than 7,000 Cambodian children to live in safe, nurturing, family-based care. (65,84,85) Activities include supporting the development of Social Service Workforce Training curriculum, the reintegration of children from residential care institutions to family-based care, the closure of residential care institutions, and the provision of prevention and response social services. (3) During the reporting period, FCF provided cash and livelihood assistance to over 700 recipients, intended to reduce trafficking risks for children in extreme poverty. (16) Cambodia Child Protection Program (2009–2023) is led by UNICEF and MOSAVY, and aims to strengthen the child protection system in Cambodia and to prevent and reduce violence against children and unnecessary family separation. (14,63) Builds capacity of national and sub-national authorities in all 25 provinces to formulate and implement nationally-approved institutional and legal frameworks. Includes capacity building of the government and civil society child protection workforce to provide direct services to vulnerable children and families. (14) The government stated that the program is operational but failed to report implementation activities conducted during the reporting period. (12)

For information about USDOL's projects to address child labor around the world, visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/ilab-project-page-search>

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (86,87)

The government has yet to create a system to monitor and promote the reintegration of victims of forced labor and human trafficking, including children. As a result, survivors are left vulnerable, leaving the government heavily reliant on NGOs to fill this need. (27,38,64) Many poor households in rural communities lack access to a social protection safety net, increasing the vulnerability of children to child labor as a means to supplement family income. (88) Although Cambodia has programs that target child labor, the scope and resources provided to these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, particularly in online sexual exploitation of children. (44)

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Cambodia (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure the minimum age for work applies to all children, including those engaged in informal work in domestic work and employed by their relatives.	2018 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the use of a child for pornographic performances in not only public spaces, but also private spaces or through the use of communication and information technologies.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2022
	Establish by law a compulsory education age and ensure that it is same as the minimum age for work (age 15).	2009 – 2022
Enforcement	Build the capacity of labor law enforcement authorities to enforce child and forced labor regulations by providing more technical training opportunities on how to properly identify child labor during inspections and offer sufficient resources to labor law authorities to ensure the enforcement of child labor laws through investigations and inspections, including unannounced inspections.	2012 – 2022
	Ensure and permit labor inspectors to conduct unannounced inspections in all sectors in which child labor are reported to occur, including in the construction and entertainment sectors, and impose penalties when child labor violations are found.	2021 – 2022

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Ensure that inspectors of construction sites are trained on identifying child labor violations and that such training is coordinated with the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training's labor inspectorate.	2021 – 2022
	Increase regulation of microfinance and lending institutions to reduce borrowers' vulnerability to debt-based coercion; provide support to children whose families are victims of predatory microfinance institutions.	2022
	Increase the number of labor inspectors from 592 to 601 to ensure adequate coverage of the labor force of approximately 9 million people.	2022
	Establish and uniformly administer penalties for violations of laws on child labor, including its worst forms, in accordance with the parameters prescribed by law.	2009 – 2022
	Collect, properly store, and publicly release disaggregated data on labor and criminal law enforcement efforts, including labor inspectorate funding, initial training for new criminal investigators, the number of prosecutions initiated, the number of convictions, and the number of penalties imposed for violations related to the worst forms of child labor.	2015 – 2022
	Ensure that malfeasance is addressed in all law enforcement agencies, including not accepting bribes to influence the outcome of cases or providing tip offs in advance of raids, and investigating and prosecuting politically connected individuals and government officials who are complicit in facilitating and profiting from the worst forms of child labor.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that all criminal law enforcement officials are sufficiently trained on the techniques of how to conduct anti-trafficking work, particularly those located in rural areas and in brick kilns.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that funding for criminal law enforcement agencies is sufficient to cover all expenses, including transportation costs, for law enforcement officials.	2019 – 2022
	Ensure that inspectors routinely conduct inspections in informal sectors where children are believed to work ("special inspections") and not only when a specific request or violation is reported.	2022
	Protect and prevent intimidation of human trafficking victims and allow them access to protection services pending court proceedings.	2019 – 2022
	Develop procedures to monitor human trafficking perpetrators pending trial.	2022
	Ensure that the Commune Committees for Women and Children are sufficiently funded and able to carry out their intended mandate.	2019 – 2022
Coordination	Improve inter-ministerial coordination to address child labor.	2022
Government Policies	Publish activities undertaken to implement the National Plan of Action on Combating the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2016–2025) during the reporting period.	2022
	Publish activities undertaken to implement the Cambodia Child Protection Program (2009–2023) during the reporting year.	2022
	Publish the extended Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children (2017–2023).	2022
Social Programs	Publish the results of the 2019 nationwide child labor survey.	2020 – 2022
	Strengthen child protection services, gatekeeping mechanisms, and the alternative care system to reduce the number of children unnecessarily placed in residential care and ensure that Residential Care Facilities and orphanages protect the health and well-being of children living in them.	2019 – 2022
	Increase access to free basic education by eliminating unofficial school-related fees; eliminating the requirement of a birth certificate to enroll in school; addressing issues related to limited transportation and inadequate school infrastructure, including the unsafe "floating schools" on or near fishing communities; eliminating barriers to school for ethnic minority children, indigenous children, children with disabilities, girls, and children from rural and disadvantaged communities; and providing safe, sanitary schools with access to water and latrines.	2013 – 2022
	Establish a system to accurately capture and monitor the reintegration of victims of the worst forms of child labor, including human trafficking.	2019 – 2022
	Expand social protection safety nets in rural areas to ensure that poor children and their families have access to services that may mitigate the risk of involvement in child labor.	2016 – 2022
	Provide sufficient funding resources to all social programs so that they can fully address the extent of child labor in Cambodia, particularly the online sexual exploitation of children.	2019 – 2022

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

REFERENCES

- 1 UNESCO Institute for Statistics. Gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary education, both sexes (%). Accessed March 15, 2023. For more information, please see "Children's Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions" in the Reference Materials section of this report. <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>.
- 2 ILO. Analysis of Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Statistics from National Household or Child Labor Surveys. Original data from Socio-Economic Survey (CSES), 2017. Analysis received March 2023. Please see "Children's Work and Education Statistics: Sources and Definitions" in the Reference Materials section of this report.
- 3 U.S. Embassy- Phnom Penh. Reporting. February 8, 2022.
- 4 U.S. Department of State. Trafficking in Persons Report- 2021: Cambodia. Washington, D.C., June 9, 2021. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/cambodia/>
- 5 National Institute of Statistics of Cambodia and ILO. Cambodia Labour Force and Child Labour Survey 2012: Child Labour Report. Phnom Penh: November 2013. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_230723.pdf
- 6 Government of Cambodia. Policy and Strategic Framework on Childhood Development and Protection in the Agriculture Sector 2016–2020. August 2015. Source on file.
- 7 U.S. Embassy- Phnom Penh. Reporting. January 17, 2018.
- 8 U.S. Embassy- Phnom Penh. Reporting. February 14, 2019.
- 9 U.S. Embassy- Phnom Penh. Reporting. February 3, 2020.
- 10 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Trafficking in persons from Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar to Thailand. August 2017. https://www.unodc.org/documents/southeastasiaandpacific/Publications/2017/Trafficking_in_persons_to_Thailand_report.pdf
- 11 U.S. Embassy- Phnom Penh official. Reporting. January 28, 2020.
- 12 U.S. Embassy- Phnom Penh official. E-mail communication with USDOS official. March 8, 2023.
- 13 U.S. Department of State. Trafficking in Persons Report- 2020: Cambodia. Washington, D.C., June 26, 2020. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-trafficking-in-persons-report/cambodia/>
- 14 U.S. Embassy-Phnom Penh. Reporting. January 28, 2021.
- 15 ILO Committee of Experts. Individual Observation concerning Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) Cambodia (ratification: 2006) Published: 2018. https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/?p=1000:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100_COMMENT_ID:3338306
- 16 U.S. Embassy- Phnom Penh. Reporting. February 6, 2023.
- 17 Raksmei, Chhorn. Salt workers worry their children will drop out of school — much like they did. February 2, 2022. <https://vodenglish.news/salt-workers-worried-their-children-will-dropout-of-school-much-like-they-did/>
- 18 Asia Beef Cattle Network. Cambodia beef cattle industry. December 2016. <http://www.asiabeefnetwork.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/151101-Cambodia-profile.pdf>
- 19 National Institute of Statistics. Cambodian Socio-Economic Survey (CSEC). 2016. <https://www.nis.gov.kh/index.php/en/14-cses/12-cambodia-socio-economic-survey-reports>
- 20 Blomberg, Matt. Expose reveals child labor in Cambodian brick kilns despite crackdown. Thomson Reuters. February 12, 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cambodia-construction-child-labour/expose-reveals-child-labor-in-cambodian-brick-kilns-despite-crackdown-idUSKBN20702Y>
- 21 U.S. Embassy- Phnom Penh. Reporting. January 13, 2017.
- 22 Human Rights Watch. Submission by Human Rights Watch to the Committee on the Rights of the Child Concerning Cambodia. 2019. https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT/CRC/NGO/KHM/35821&Lang=en
- 23 ILO CEACR, Direct Request 182 (2018) Direct Request concerning Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) Cambodia (ratification: 2006) Published: 2018. https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/?p=1000:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100_COMMENT_ID:3338310
- 24 U.S. Embassy- Phnom Penh. Reporting. February 11, 2020.
- 25 Aye Myat Thi et al. Child Domestic Work, Violence, and Health Outcomes: A Rapid Systemic Review International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health. December 31, 2021. <https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/19/1/427>
- 26 United Nations – Human Rights Council. Sexual Exploitation of Children in Cambodia Submission – for the Universal Periodic Review of the human rights situation in Cambodia. July 9, 2018. Source on file.
- 27 APLE Cambodia and ECPAT International. Supplementary report on: "Sexual Exploitation of Children in Cambodia" to combined fourth, fifth, and sixth periodic reports of Cambodia on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including the implementation of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Bangkok, July 1, 2019. https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT/CRC/NGO/KHM/35818&Lang=en
- 28 UNICEF. Statistical Profile of Child Protection in Cambodia. New York. 2018. <https://www.unicef.org/cambodia/media/711/file>
- 29 U.S. Embassy- Phnom Penh. Reporting. April 4, 2023.
- 30 U.S. Embassy- Phnom Penh. Reporting. February 26, 2021.
- 31 Brickell, Katherine, et. al. Blood Bricks: Untold Stories of Modern Slavery and Climate Change from Cambodia. Royal Holloway, University of London, October 2018. Source on file.
- 32 Parsons, L. and Long Ly Vouch. A Survey of the Cambodian Brick Industry: Population, Geography, Practice. Phnom Penh: Building Workers Trade Union of Cambodia, 2020. Source on file.
- 33 The ASEAN Post. Cambodia's farmers fight debt bondage. January 6, 2019. <https://theaseanpost.com/article/cambodias-farmers-fight-debt-bondage#:~:text=>
- 34 Royal Holloway. New report finds modern slavery, which is part of construction boom in Cambodia, is linked to climate change. October 16, 2018. Source on file.
- 35 U.S. Embassy- Phnom Penh. Reporting. March 4, 2019.
- 36 Muyhong, Chan. Workers, including underage children, brave dangerous chemicals to make a living at Cambodia's banana plantations. CamboJA News. November 26, 2021. <https://cambojanews.com/workers-including-underage-children-brave-dangerous-chemicals-to-make-a-living-at-cambodias-banana-plantations/>
- 37 Institute for Development and Peace. Bliss, Frank. "Micro" Finance in Cambodia: Development, Challenges and Recommendations. Germany. 2022. <https://www.licadho-cambodia.org/reports/files/INEFReport-MicrofinanceInCambodia2022.pdf>
- 38 U.S. Department of State. Trafficking in Persons Report- 2022: Cambodia. Washington, D.C., July 19, 2022. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/cambodia/>
- 39 Blomberg, Matt. Pandemic seen fueling Cambodian 'bride trafficking' to China. Phnom Penh: Thomas Reuters Foundation, December 11, 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/cambodia-china-trafficking/pandemic-seen-fuelling-cambodian-bride-trafficking-to-china-idUSL8N21Q2MF>

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

- 40 Global Initiative. Cambodia's trafficked brides. 2022. <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/cambodia-trafficked-brides-forced-marriage-in-china/>
- 41 Blomberg, Matt. Cambodia feared lagging behind predators in cybersex trafficking crackdown. Reuters, September 10, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cambodia-sexcrimes-children/cambodia-feared-lagging-behind-predators-in-cybersex-trafficking-crackdown-idUSKCN1VW00B>
- 42 U.S. Embassy- Phnom Penh. Reporting. April 8, 2022.
- 43 U.S. Department of State. Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2020: Cambodia. Washington, D.C., March 11, 2021. <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/CAMBODIA-2020-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf>
- 44 Disrupting Harms in Cambodia. End Violence Against Children. 2022. [https://www.end-violence.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/DH_Cambodia_ONLINE_final_JS_\(1\).pdf](https://www.end-violence.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/DH_Cambodia_ONLINE_final_JS_(1).pdf)
- 45 Government of Cambodia. The Law on Education. Enacted: November 21, 2007. Source on file.
- 46 UNICEF. Why Are the Boys Leaving Lower Secondary School Early in Cambodia? August 2020. Source on file.
- 47 United Nations. United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Cambodia, 2019–2023. 2019. Source on file.
- 48 Government of Cambodia. Demographic and Socio-economic Situation of Indigenous Peoples in Cambodia. 2021. Source on file.
- 49 UN Office of the High Commissioner. UN Child Rights Committee issues findings on Cambodia, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Djibouti, Greece, Iceland, Kiribati, Somalia, and Zambia. Geneva. June 9, 2022. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/06/un-child-rights-committee-issues-findings-cambodia-canada-chile-croatia-cuba#:~:text=The Committee raised concern over the lack of,law proposing segregated classes for children with disabilities.>
- 50 Government of Cambodia. Cambodian Labor Law. Enacted: March 13, 1997. Source on file.
- 51 Government of Cambodia. Prakas on the Prohibition of Hazardous Child Labor, 106. Enacted: April 28, 2004. Source on file.
- 52 Government of Cambodia. Penal Code. Enacted: December 10, 2010. Source on file.
- 53 Government of Cambodia. Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation, NS/RKM/0208/005. Enacted: February 20, 2008. Source on file.
- 54 Government of Cambodia. Law on Juvenile Justice, NS/RKM/0716/009. Enacted: June 29, 2016. Source on file.
- 55 Government of Cambodia. Law on Control of Drugs. Enacted: December 9, 1996. http://www.cambodiainvestment.gov.kh/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Law-on-Drug-Management_full-text_961209.pdf
- 56 Government of Cambodia. The Law on the General Statute of Military Personnel of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces. Enacted: September 15, 1997. <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/93508/109344/F811412622/KHM93508 Eng.pdf>
- 57 Government of Cambodia. Draft Law on Child Protection. June 2022. Source on file.
- 58 ILO Committee of Experts. Individual Observation concerning the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) Cambodia (ratification: 1999). Published: 2018. https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100_COMMENT_ID:3338313
- 59 Government of Cambodia. MOLVT's Prakas on Working Conditions for House Workers. Enacted: May 29, 2018. Source on file.
- 60 U.S. Embassy- Phnom Penh official. E-mail communication with USDOS official. May 16, 2023.
- 61 U.S. Department of State official. E-mail communication with USDOL official. July 2, 2020.
- 62 Government of Cambodia. Sub-decree No. 283 on the Organization and Functioning of the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training. November 14, 2014. Source on file.
- 63 U.S. Embassy- Phnom Penh official. E-mail communication to USDOL official. March 3, 2021.
- 64 U.S. Department of State official. E-mail communication with a USDOL official. February 13, 2023.
- 65 U.S. Embassy- Phnom Penh official. E-mail communication to USDOL official. April 9, 2020.
- 66 U.S. Department of State official. E-mail communication with USDOL official. June 17, 2022.
- 67 ILO. Labour Inspection Structure and Organization: Cambodia. Accessed: March 10, 2023. https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/safety-and-health-at-work/country-profiles/asia/cambodia/WCMS_209354/lang-en/index.htm
- 68 U.S. Department of State. Trafficking in Persons Report- 2019: Cambodia. Washington, D.C., June 20, 2019. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-trafficking-in-persons-report/cambodia/>
- 69 U.S. Department of State. Country Reports on Human Rights Practice- 2018: Cambodia. Washington, D.C., March 13, 2019. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/cambodia/>
- 70 U.S. Embassy- Phnom Penh official. E-mail communication to USDOL official. May 27, 2020.
- 71 U.S. Department of State official. E-mail communication with USDOL official. February 12, 2020.
- 72 U.S. Department of State. Country Reports on Human Rights Practice- 2019: Cambodia. Washington, D.C., March 11, 2020. <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/CAMBODIA-2019-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf>
- 73 U.S. Embassy- Phnom Penh official. E-mail communication to USDOL official. July 18, 2019.
- 74 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Combined fourth to sixth reports submitted by Cambodia under article 44 of the Convention, due in 2018. June 12, 2019: CRC/C/KHM/4-6 <https://undocs.org/CRC/C/KHM/4-6>
- 75 Government of Cambodia. National Action Plan for Gender Equality Promotion and Child Labour Elimination in the Fisheries Sector 2022. Source on file.
- 76 Government of Cambodia. National Plan of Action of the National Committee for Counter Trafficking (2014–2018). February 6, 2015. <https://opendevelopmentcambodia.net/tag/national-committee-for-counter-trafficking-ncct/>
- 77 Government of Cambodia. Safety Village Commune/Sangkat Policy Guideline. Phnom Penh: August 2010. Source on file.
- 78 Government of Cambodia, Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation. Policy on Protection of the Rights of Victims of Human Trafficking. Phnom Penh: 2009. Source on file.
- 79 UNICEF. Official Launch of the National Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Online Child Sexual Exploitation in Cambodia 2021-2025. July 14, 2021. <https://www.unicef.org/cambodia/press-releases/official-launch-national-action-plan-prevent-and-respond-online-child-sexual>
- 80 UNICEF. New National Action Plan on Early Childhood Care and Development Launched in Cambodia. October 7, 2022. <https://www.unicef.org/cambodia/press-releases/new-national-action-plan-early-childhood-care-and-development-launched-ensure-no>
- 81 Winrock International. Launch of USAID Cambodia Counter Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) Program. August 26, 2021. <https://winrock.org/launch-of-usaid-cambodia-counter-trafficking-in-persons-ctip-program/>

MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT CONTINUED PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

- 82 U.S. Embassy- Phnom Penh. USAID Announces New Support to Combat Human Trafficking in Cambodia. Phnom Penh. August 16, 2022.
<https://kh.usembassy.gov/usa-id-announces-new-support-to-combat-human-trafficking-in-cambodia/>
- 83 World Food Program Cambodia. WFP Cambodia Country Brief. December 2022.
<https://www.wfp.org/countries/cambodia>
- 84 U.S. Embassy- Phnom Penh official. E-mail communication to USDOL official. March 4, 2020.
- 85 USAID. Education and Child Protection - Cambodia. Accessed: December 2020.
<https://www.usaid.gov/cambodia/education>
- 86 Aide et Action. Cambodian Consortium of Out of School Children. Accessed: March 25, 2020.
<https://action-education.org/en/our-projects-education-2/cambodian-consortium-out-school-children/>
- 87 Educate a Child. Cambodia Consortium for Out of School Children - Phase II. Accessed: March 25, 2021.
<https://educateachild.org/our-partners-projects/projects/cambodia-consortium-out-school-children-ccoosc---phase-ii>
- 88 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Roadmap: Developing a Risk-Informed and Shock-Responsive Social Protection System in Cambodia. Bangkok. 2020.
<https://www.fao.org/3/cb2195en/cb2195en.pdf>