

## MINIMAL ADVANCEMENT – EFFORTS MADE BUT REGRESSION IN PRACTICE THAT DELAYED ADVANCEMENT

In 2019, Cambodia made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government, in conjunction with the ILO, conducted its first nationwide survey of child labor since 2012, with data scheduled for release in 2020. In addition, the government signed an agreement expanding funding to allow the International Labor Organization’s Better Factories Cambodia program to extend its monitoring mandate to additional sectors, including to formal subcontracting factories where child labor is found. However, despite new initiatives to address child labor, Cambodia is receiving an assessment of minimal advancement because 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, during the reporting period, judges were allegedly reported to have accepted bribes in return for dismissal of charges, acquittal, and reduced sentencing for individuals committing such crimes, especially for those with alleged ties to the government; this made children more vulnerable to the worst forms of child labor. Children in Cambodia engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in forced labor in brickmaking and in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Insufficient resources may hamper the labor inspectorate’s capacity to enforce child labor laws, especially in rural areas where the majority of child laborers work. In addition, continuing challenges in accessing basic education and the absence of a compulsory education requirement increase children’s vulnerability to involvement in the worst forms of child labor.



### I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Cambodia engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in forced labor in brickmaking and in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (1-3) Table I provides key indicators on children’s work and education in Cambodia.

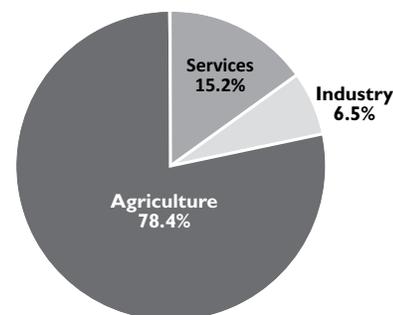
**Table I. Statistics on Children’s Work and Education**

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	8.4 (267,924)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	87.0
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	7.3
Primary Completion Rate (%)		88.0

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2018, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020. (4)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization’s analysis of statistics from Socio-Economic Survey (CSES), 2016. (5)

**Figure I. 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.

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Fishing, including deep-sea† and night fishing† (6-11,12)
	Peeling shrimp and shucking crabs (13,14)
	Production of tobacco, cassava, rubber, and rice (7,10-12,14)
	Growing, cutting, tying, carrying, and spraying pesticides† on sugarcane (10,11,15,16)
	Logging† for the production of timber (8,10,14)
	Production of salt (17)
	Production of bovines (102,103)
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 (1,6,8,11,18-21)
	Construction,† including operating transportation equipment† (6,8,10,11,22)
	Production of textiles, including bleaching,† dyeing,† and finishing with chemicals;† garments; and footwear (6,11,14,23-26)
	Production of alcoholic beverages† (6,8,14)
	Work in slaughterhouses† for the production of meat† (6,8)
	Manufacturing of wood and metal† products (6)
Services	Domestic work (6,9,12,27)
	Work as security guards† and in entertainment,† including as bartenders,† masseurs,† dancers,† and waiters† (6,11)
	Street work, including begging, vending, scavenging, collecting garbage, and exploitation in orphanages to solicit funds from tourists (9-12,22,28-30)
	Work as garbage pickers in dumpsites (10,11,31)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (9,11,12,27,32)
	Street vending, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (8,9,12,28,33)
	Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking (22)
	Forced labor in the production of bricks (1,11,12,14,22,27,34,39)

† 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.

In Cambodian brick factories, some children engage in forced labor, sometimes in dangerous conditions, to offset family debt to employers. (3,10-12,27,34,35) The rapid growth in the construction industry, particularly in Phnom Penh, has increased the demand for bricks and fueled child labor and debt bondage. (3,11,34,36) Failed harvests from droughts have compounded farmers’ debts, which they sell to brick kiln owners, thus placing their families into hereditary debt bondage until the debts are repaid. (3,11,12,34-37)

In 2019, the government announced an ambitious plan to eliminate child labor in the brick industry by the end of the year, and conducted a census of all 486 operational kilns in the country to document the prevalence of child labor in the brickmaking sector. Although the government will not publish results from the census until late 2020, the government inspectors announced that no child labor or debt bondage was found at these kilns and, therefore, inspectors did not issue any fines. (11,27,38,39) However, in 2019 independent researchers documented at least 638 cases of child labor at brick kilns, in addition to situations of debt bondage at 464 operational kilns. (11,27,38,39,40) Following completion of the government census, officials required brick kiln owners to sign contracts with 1,259 brick kiln family workers, agreeing not to loan them any money. (11,38)

Also during the reporting period, the government and the ILO conducted the first nation-wide survey of child labor since 2012. They plan to release results in 2020. (11,14,41)

Children are subject to human trafficking domestically, from rural to urban areas, and internationally, to countries such as Thailand and Vietnam, for commercial sexual exploitation. (3,9,25,27,30) During the reporting period, there were reported cases of teenage girls dropping out of school in Sihanoukville to work in casinos where there is a high risk of exploitation, including commercial sexual exploitation. (27)

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Online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC) is reportedly increasing in Cambodia, facilitated by an increase in cheap, high-speed Internet access. (10,11,30,42) To help address the emergence of OSEC within Cambodia, a local NGO set up an online platform and a hotline for people to report issues of OSEC. (43)

Research has found that children who are placed in residential care facilities or orphanages in Cambodia are at a higher risk of engaging in the worst forms of child labor, including child sexual exploitation, and are exposed to conditions that can negatively affect their developmental and health outcomes. (11,30) Of the 265 residential care institutions housing 7,634 children, many private institutions reportedly exploit children as “sham” orphans to lure donations from foreigners. (11,30)

Although the Education Law establishes free basic education, school-related fees, such as for building maintenance, are prohibitive for some families. (11,22,44,45) Other barriers to education include denied enrollment for children without birth certificates, limited transportation to schools in remote areas, lack of drinking water and toilet facilities in some schools, language barriers, and an insufficient number of teachers. These barriers particularly affect ethnic minority children, children with disabilities, and children from rural and disadvantaged communities. (8,11,46-50) Research also found that children living in provinces bordering Thailand are at a higher risk of dropping out of school to find work following the migration of their parents to Thailand for work. (51)

In 2019, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports created a Special Education Department to help institutional systems address the needs of vulnerable children, including those with disabilities, to keep them in school. (52)

## 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 minimum age for work and prohibiting the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

**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 (53)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Articles 173 and 177 of the Labor Law; Regulation on the Prohibition of Hazardous Child Labor; Articles 339–340 of the Penal Code (53–55)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 2 of the Regulation on the Prohibition of Hazardous Child Labor (54)

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

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 15–16 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 (53,56,57)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 10, 12, 15–17, and 19 of the Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation (56)
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 (55,56)
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 (55,58)
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 (59)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	Yes		The Law on General Statutes for the Military Personnel of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (59)
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)

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. (54) 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. However, the regulation does not specify legal protections for household workers employed by their relatives. (10,50,53,60-63)

Cambodian laws also do not sufficiently prohibit the commercial sexual exploitation of children, because the use or offering of a child for pornographic performances is not criminally prohibited. In addition, the laws do not prohibit the recruitment of children under age 18 into non-state armed groups. (22,55)

Education is free, but not compulsory, through grade nine. (45,63) The lack of compulsory schooling 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. (45,53,63)

### 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 authority of MOLVT that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

**Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement**

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training (MOLVT) – National Committee on Countering Child Labor (NCCL)	The Secretary-General doubles as the head of MOLVT’s Child Labor Bureau. (11,40) Not dependent on MOLVT for funds. (10) Enforces child-related provisions of the Labor Law, and trains Commune Committees for Women and Children that oversee local child labor monitoring systems. (40) Includes 24 MOLVT inter-departmental inspection teams. (64) Tasked with removing children from child labor, including at brick kilns. (11) Employs 1 child labor inspector in each of Cambodia’s 25 provinces. (10,48,65) During the reporting period, conducted 2 training sessions for 418 labor inspectors in 21 provinces on how to inspect for child labor in brick kilns. (11) Visited all active brick kilns in 2019. (41,66)

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

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of the Interior – Cambodian National Police Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Department (AHTJP)	Commanded by the Ministry of the Interior and reports to the AHTJP Department Director. (22,30,66) enforces laws against human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children, in collaboration with municipal and provincial anti-human trafficking and juvenile protection offices. (22,30) Fields complaints about human trafficking, which can be filed through the anti-human trafficking hotline. (32) Oversees the Information and Technology Office which searches for evidence of trafficking in persons and sexual exploitation of children on the Internet, printed media, and other sources. (40,64) In 2019, rescued 196 underage victims of human trafficking and referred them to MOSAVY for processing and rehabilitative services, prior to sending them back to their families. (64) Also during the reporting period, collaborated with multiple NGOs to provide 4 trainings, including on investigation of child violation offenses and online child protection and sexual exploitation to 221 AHTJP officers. Six AHTJP officers attended three trainings on investigation and suppression of online child violations in Vietnam, Malaysia, and Thailand. (64)
Ministry of the Interior – Cambodian National Police Anti-Cybercrime Department	Located within the Criminal Investigation Department. (30,66) During the reporting period, assisted with drafting a new Law on Cybercrime. (30,66,67)
Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans, and Youth Rehabilitation (MOSAVY)	Refers victims of child labor to NGOs for services. Operates the Poipet Transit Center to identify children at risk of being trafficked or children who have been trafficked. (3,27) In November 2019, MOSAVY adopted the Prakas on the Guidelines of Basic Competencies for Social Workforce, in collaboration with UNICEF and USAID, to strengthen social work practices and child protection systems in Cambodia. (11,64) The Prakas ensure all social services providers, including governmental institutions, NGOs, and the private sector, comply with the guidelines. (64) Also during the reporting period, processed 1,662 victims of child trafficking via the Poipet Transit Center, referring 396 children to NGOs to access rehabilitation services before sending them back to their families. The remaining 1,266 children were sent directly back to their families. (64) Hosted 5 workshops on identification of victims of human trafficking, management of trafficking in person victim data, and capacity building to 481 MOSAVY district officials, chiefs of villages, commune councilors, and police and health officials. (64)

### Labor Law Enforcement

In 2019, labor law enforcement agencies in Cambodia took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of MOLVT that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including financial resource allocation.

**Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$100,000 (10)	\$100,000 (11)
Number of Labor Inspectors	615 (10)	649 (11)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (10)	Yes (11)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Yes (10)	Yes (11)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Yes (10)	N/A (11)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (10)	Yes (11)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	8,167 (10)	7,123 (11)
Number Conducted at Worksite	8,167 (10)	3,284 (11)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (10)	3 (11)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	10 (10)	3 (11)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	10 (10)	3 (11)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (11)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (10)	Yes (11)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (10)	Yes (11)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (10)	Yes (11)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (10)	Yes (11)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (11)

The National Committee on Countering Child Labor (NCCL) relies on other bureaus within MOLVT to alert them to possible child labor issues in their specific sectors before the NCCL inspects. (11) Due to the

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segregated nature of MOLVT, bureaus with chief inspection responsibility within a sector with a known child labor issue are not equipped with the proper technical training and expertise to identify child labor, and bureau staff and typically ask very few questions. (10,11) In an effort to improve labor inspectors' performance, MOLVT said it now requires that all labor inspectors take and pass a newly created online examination that aims to assess and improve overall technical skills and legal knowledge, in order to continue working as labor inspectors. (11,66)

The government only proactively inspects the brick kiln industry and the export garment sector for child labor, but during the reporting period MOLVT also focused on conducting labor inspections in the construction and entertainment industries. (11,66) However, when child labor inspections occur, they are concentrated in the city of Phnom Penh and in the provincial, formal-sector factories producing goods, such as textiles and garments for export, rather than in rural areas where the majority of child laborers work. (6,10,11,23,50,66)

Following up on the government's plan to eliminate child labor by the end of 2019, MOLVT issued to all provincial labor departments in Cambodia instructions aimed at preventing children from entering brick kilns, and publicized that brick kiln owners who use child labor or forced child labor could face fines, brick kiln closure, and possible criminal prosecution. (11,37,68,69) MOLVT stated that it will begin fining non-compliant brick kilns in 2020. (70)

With the goal of improving inspection efficiency, the NCCL began conducting joint labor inspections with inspectors from other labor bureaus in the garment sector, in parallel with the inspections conducted by the ILO's Better Factories Cambodia (BFC). (11) To further align with BFC, the export garment sector instituted a zero-tolerance policy for child labor in 2019. (11) Children discovered in garment factories are immediately removed and placed in vocational training or other studies, and upon reaching the legal working age, are guaranteed employment. (11,71) Children discovered working in other sectors are removed and referred to the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans, and Youth Rehabilitation (MOSAVY) for assessment. (10,11,72,73)

The government, the ILO, and NGOs all agree that the labor inspectorate is insufficiently funded, resulting in insufficient training of labor inspectors and an insufficient number of labor inspections. This affects the ability of the labor inspectorate to conduct inspections outside of Phnom Penh and in rural communities because labor inspectors require more funding to cover transportation costs. (10,11) Lack of funding also prevents the labor inspectorate from conducting inspections in hospitality and nightlife establishments after business hours, because the inspectorate is not able to pay inspectors for overtime. (10) In addition, the labor inspectorate does not have the ability to inspect child labor abuses in domestic work, which is overseen by the Sub-National Committee of Women and Children. (10,11) While unannounced inspections are permitted, they rarely happen and anecdotal evidence suggests that when they do happen, most occur on cassava farms. (10,11,48)

The MOLVT has established regulations for children on hazardous work in several sectors, including in agriculture, brickmaking, fishing, tobacco, and cassava production. However, malfeasance within the MOLVT and law enforcement limits the capacity of local authorities to adequately enforce these regulations, resulting in sanctions for child labor violations being rarely imposed in accordance with the law. (8,10-12,50,70,74,75) Overall, NGOs have indicated that the government lacks the capacity to deal with child labor and are overwhelmed at the scale of the issue, particularly in the construction industry. (11)

### **Criminal Law Enforcement**

In 2019, criminal law enforcement agencies in Cambodia took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the authority of the Cambodian National Police that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including failing to take active measures to investigate public officials who participate in or facilitate the worst forms of child labor.

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**Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Yes (10)	Yes (11)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (10)	N/A (11)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (10)	Yes (11)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (21)	7 (11)
Number of Violations Found	39 (10)	30 (11)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (10)	Unknown (11)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (10)	Unknown (11)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to The Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown (21)	Unknown (11)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (10)	Yes (11)

During the reporting period, research found that criminal law enforcement officials, writ large, failed to take significant actions on credible reports against government officials complicit in the worst forms of child labor, including at entertainment establishments where the commercial sexual exploitation of children is known to occur, and at brick kilns whose owners may subject families and children to debt-based forced labor in brick kilns. (12,27,50,73)

Research has found cases of government officials profiting directly from the commercial sexual exploitation of children and indirectly by being permissive of it, especially when undertaken in establishments by those with ties to the government. (12,71,76) Furthermore, research found that owners of entertainment establishments at which child sexual exploitation is known to occur sometimes used their connections to law enforcement officials to avoid investigation, prosecution, and fines. (12,27,50,71,76) Research also found instances where raids into these establishments were thwarted by “tip-offs” from working-level police in advance of the raids. (12,27)

In particular, police officers have reported that they sometimes avoid investigating child labor complaints at brick kilns, and instead assist in the capture and jailing of runaway brick kiln workers to avoid potential retaliation by politically connected owners who use their connections to avoid potential investigations and fines. (34,50,71,77) Despite these trends and calls from Prime Minister Hun Sen to investigate and prosecute government officials complicit in promoting the worst forms of child labor, this does not appear to be occurring. (27,50,73)

The government does not authorize anti-trafficking police units to conduct undercover investigations, which significantly constrains the ability of law enforcement to pursue human traffickers, including those involved in child sexual exploitation. (11,12,27,42,50) In addition, many law enforcement officials, particularly those located in rural areas, are unaware of how to properly conduct anti-trafficking work, as most did not receive training on basic law enforcement techniques. (12,27) Furthermore, law enforcement officials investigating suspected trafficking cases are expected to personally cover all expenses, including transportation costs, and are rarely reimbursed in full or on time. This has led to officials reportedly pursuing cases for which costs will be covered on their behalf. (11,27,71)

Unlike in prior years, the government did not report investigating or prosecuting labor recruiters for illegal practices that may have contributed to or involved human trafficking, which continued to perpetuate widespread labor exploitation. (12)

In Cambodia, judges have discretion to determine whether perpetrators of crimes related to child labor will be imprisoned or fined and the amount of the fine. The penalties imposed are not uniformly administered and do not adhere to the parameters prescribed by law. (3,50,78) In some cases, prosecutors and judges have been known to accept bribes in return for dismissal of charges, acquittal, and reduced sentencing, especially for those with alleged ties to the government. (12,50,71) According to an NGO, use of “judicial supervision,” where defendants are released on their own recognizance in advance of trial, has resulted in as many as 30 percent of human trafficking suspects not returning to participate in their criminal trials; severely limiting the ability of law

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enforcement officials to hold criminals accountable and putting the population at risk. (12,27) In addition, the government has yet to fully implement the “Child Friendly Court” program that will make it easier for child victims to provide testimony by using video-conferencing technology instead of confronting defendants in-person, which can result in re-traumatization. (27)

The government’s ability to properly save and store data related to the worst forms of child labor was found to be inadequate, due to outdated data collection storage platforms and a lack of resources. (27)

## IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms 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 the efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

**Table 8. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor**

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Committee on Child Labor – Cambodian National Council for Children	Coordinates child labor issues at the national level including, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all child right policies and programs. (8,30) Ensures that projects and programs follow the National Plan of Action on Child Labor. (8) Includes concerned ministries, businesses, trade unions, and NGOs. Oversees Provincial Committees on the Protection of Child Rights and Provincial Committees on Child Labor. (8,79) Coordinates all government ministries, institutions, international NGOs, development partners, and the community in promoting and protecting children’s rights. (21) Research was unable to determine whether this coordinating body was active during the reporting period.
Commune Committees for Women and Children	Advisory entities that raise awareness of child labor regulations, promote school attendance, collaborate with provincial labor departments to monitor for child labor violations, and refer children at risk of or engaged in child labor to social protection services at the local level. Led by the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training’s (MOLVT) Child Labor Department. (22,30,80) During the reporting period, began organizing and training officials to oversee local child laborers, especially those living or employed at brick kilns. (64)
National Committee for Counter Trafficking (NCCT)	Coordinates government, NGOs, civil society, and private sector efforts to address human trafficking and sexual exploitation. (27,30,81,82) Focuses on children’s affairs, international cooperation, justice, law enforcement, migration, prevention, protection, recovery, reintegration, and repatriation. (81) Chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister and the Ministry of Interior, with 4 vice chair ministries and 14 participating ministries. Oversees Provincial Committees for Counter Trafficking in each province. (3,65,81) Has six working groups with inter-ministerial membership, each chaired by one ministry, including Prevention (Minister of Education); Protection, Recovery, Reintegration, and Repatriation (Minister of Social Affairs); Law Enforcement (Chief of the Cambodian National Police); Justice (Minister of Justice); International Cooperation (Minister of Women’s Affairs); and Migration and Labor (Minister of Labor). (27) During the reporting period, approved and promulgated a new 5-year national action plan outlining detailed inter-agency steps to combat trafficking in persons and protect victims. (12,29,71) Led production and launch of a victim identification manual and screening tool app in use at the Poipet Transit Center. (30,71) In addition, developed a database to gather and store information on the movement of Cambodian nationals into and out of Thailand. (71) In August 2019, hosted a seminar on Strengthening of Capacities and Code of Ethics and Human Trafficking Prevention, in coordination with the Ministry of Information, to improve the capacity of journalists, reporters, and TV presenters and encourage them to investigate and report on trafficking in persons crimes and other related stories. Organized the National Anti-Human Trafficking Day to raise public awareness on human trafficking issues, with 3,500 government officials attending. (27) Also in 2019, delivered 113 trainings to 3,712 law enforcement officers on anti-trafficking laws, investigative techniques, and evidence collection. (64)
Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT)	High-level policy dialogue comprising of the six nations of the Greater Mekong Sub-Region. (27,83) Meets regularly to discuss regional anti-trafficking agenda and share information. (27) Coordinates through Cambodian COMMIT Task Force, chaired by senior officials from the Ministries of Justice and Women’s Affairs. (27) Maintains annual COMMIT Work Plan with anti-trafficking programming and policies. (83) UN Action for Cooperation against Tracking in Persons acts as COMMIT Secretariat and convenes meetings. (83) Research was unable to determine whether this coordinating body was active during the reporting period.

The Commune Committees for Women and Children are underfunded and have insufficient technical capacity to provide social protection services to children involved in or at risk of child labor. (80)

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### 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 integrating child labor elimination and protection strategies into relevant policies.

**Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor**

Policy	Description
National Plans of Action on Combating the Worst Forms of Child Labor	The <b>National Plan of Action on Worst Forms of Child Labor (2016–2025)</b> aims to build the capacity of law enforcement officers, strengthen the enforcement of relevant laws, raise public awareness of child labor issues, and enhance child labor monitoring systems at the community level. (22) Research was unable to determine actions taken to implement this policy during the reporting period. The <b>National Plan of Action on the Reduction of Child Labor and Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2016–2025)</b> is overseen by MOSAVY. Creates a roadmap to the complete eradication of the worst forms of child labor by 2025 in various sectors, including service, agriculture, mining, and energy. (21,63,84) Conducts awareness-raising activities, legal action, and collaborations with civil society actors. (21) Research was unable to determine actions taken to implement this policy during the reporting period. The <b>National Plan of Action on the Suppression of Human Trafficking, Smuggling, Labor, and Sexual Exploitation (2019–2023)</b> aims to prevent and eliminate all forms of human trafficking, including by strengthening criminal law enforcement to protect children from exploitation in entertainment venues, integrating anti-human trafficking and child safety issues into the public school curriculum, and promoting the inclusion of vulnerable children in both formal and informal education. (81) Coordinated by the NCCT, with input from Ministries of Justice; Women’s Affairs; Foreign Affairs; Labor; and Social Affairs, Veterans, and Youth Rehabilitation. (10) Policy was implemented during the reporting period. (64)
Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children (2017–2021)	Led by the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MOWA). (64) Developed in response to the Cambodia Violence Against Children Survey (CVACS) conducted in 2013. (66) Aims to prevent and respond to violence against children, including the worst forms of child labor. (85) Acknowledges online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC) as an issue and references the need for OSEC-related interventions in policy and governance. Acknowledges the need to properly “assess the scale and specific nature” of OSEC in Cambodia to inform developments. (11) During the reporting period, the MOWA and the MOSAVY co-chaired the Inter-ministerial Steering Committee on Violence Against Women and Violence Against Children. (64)
National Policies on the Elimination of Child Labor in the Fisheries and Agricultural Sectors	The <b>Action Plan for Gender Equality Promotion and Child Labor Elimination in the Fisheries Sector (2016–2020)</b> is overseen by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries under the Fisheries Administration of Cambodia (FiA). Aligned with the Strategic Framework for Fisheries (2010–2019). (63) Seeks to prevent and withdraw children from child labor and hazardous work in the fisheries sector. (86) The <b>National Action Plan on the Elimination of Child Labor in Fisheries</b> is overseen by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries under FiA. Aligned with the Strategic Framework for Fisheries (2010–2019). (63,84) The <b>Policy on Childhood Development and Protection in the Agricultural Sector (2016–2020)</b> establishes a strategic framework to protect children working in the agricultural sector. Seeks to prevent and reduce child labor, especially in hazardous work, and improve agricultural vocational training for youth ages 15 through 17. (7) Research was unable to determine actions taken to implement these policies during the reporting period.
National Child Protection Policies	The <b>National Social Protection Strategy (2017–2021)</b> aims to expand access to healthcare, nutrition, and educational services and to promote the elimination of the worst forms of child labor. (87,88) The <b>Capacity Development Plan for Family Support, Foster Care, and Adoption (2018–2023)</b> is overseen by MOSAVY. Improves services for children without parental care, vulnerable to child labor, and ensures that children can still live in a family setting. (10) Maintains a comprehensive database of all children living in residential and foster care. Funded by USAID through UNICEF. (10) Research was unable to determine actions taken to implement these policies during the reporting period. The <b>Education Strategic Plan (2019–2023)</b> seeks to ensure equitable access to education and improve the education system’s response to human trafficking and child labor. (89) Policy was implemented during the reporting period. (64)
Strategic and Operational Plan for the Implementation of Juvenile Justice Law (2018–2020)	Overseen by MOSAVY, funded by UNICEF. Seeks to build a sustainable juvenile justice system, and to provide effective protection and support to incarcerated juveniles who are vulnerable to child labor. (10) Research was unable to determine actions taken to implement this policy during the reporting period.

‡ The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (81,89,90-93)

In September 2019, Cambodia became the 26th Pathfinding country to join the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, which aims to have a world where “every child grows up safe and secure.” (11,94) The Government of Cambodia created an action plan, which includes the goal of ending all forms of violence against children, while reinforcing the government’s dedication to implementing the inter-ministerial Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children. (11)

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The government has not specifically included child labor elimination and prevention strategies in the National Employment Policy. (95)

### VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2019, 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 adequacy of programs to address the full scope of the problem in all sectors.

**Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor**

Program	Description
Better Factories Cambodia†	USDOL, the Government of Cambodia, Garment Manufacturers in Cambodia, and ILO-funded program to monitor garment factories' compliance with national and international labor standards, including those related to child labor. (8,64,96) Additional information is available on the program's website. During the reporting period, removed two child laborers from export-oriented garment factories. (11,64) In November 2019, MOLVT, Ministry of Commerce, and the ILO signed a Memorandum of Understanding to expand government funding to extend the monitoring mandate to the travel goods and bag sector and to formal subcontracting factories. (11)
Cambodia Countering Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) (2015–2020)	\$10 million, USAID-funded, 5-year (included 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. (64,97,98) During the reporting period, distributed 24,396 public awareness materials including, leaflets, videos, posters, and information cards on safe migration and human trafficking. Assisted approximately 43 victims of human trafficking, and 1,241 people vulnerable to human trafficking. (11,64) Provided CTIP trainings to 466 participants, and 97 soft skill trainings, including safe migration, to 698 people ages 15-39 years and identified as being vulnerable to human trafficking. (11,40,66) Additionally, advocated for 31 communes to allocate and use funds for trafficking in persons prevention activities. (64)
United Nations World Food Program (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. (99) During the reporting period, supported the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport with a school feeding program in 1,167 primary schools in 8 provinces and provided 268,322 students with meals and food stuffs. Furthermore, 8,414 of the total 268,322 students received funds for food in addition to breakfast. (11,64) Announced that, with additional funding from the government, program will provide 2,000 tons of rice to 56,785 children in 205 primary schools in 6 provinces in 2020. (11,64)
Family Care First (FCF) REACT (2015–2020)	Led by MOSAVY. Funded by the European Union, USAID, the GHR Foundation, Save the Children Hong Kong, and UNICEF. (41,64) Aims to support more than 7,000 Cambodian children to live in safe, nurturing, family-based care. (41,64) Secretariat and Advisory Board collaborate with ministries, institutions, and relevant NGOs to review, amend, and develop policies, legal standards, concept notes, and strategic plans to support the common goal of ensuring safe, nurturing family-based care for Cambodian children. (11) During the reporting period, MOSAVY expanded non-monetary support. Launched Family Care First Secretariat as program's leadership body to strategically engage MOSAVY, enable the leadership of Family Care First, and promote the sustainability of the work. (11)

† Program is funded by the Government of Cambodia.

‡ The government had other social programs that may have included the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. (100)

The government does not currently have a system in place to monitor and promote the reintegration of victims of forced labor and human trafficking, leaving victims vulnerable and at higher risk of recidivism, and leaving the government heavily reliant on NGOs to fill this need. (71) Therefore, during the reporting period, the government signed Memorandums of Understanding with four NGOs to be able to provide these services to victims. (27)

Many poor households in rural communities lack access to a social protection safety net, which increases the vulnerability of children to child labor as a means to supplement family income. (3,101) Although Cambodia has implemented programs that target child labor, the scope and resources provided to these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem. (10,11)

### 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).

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Institute a compulsory education age that is at least equal to the minimum age for work.	2009 – 2019
	Criminally prohibit the offering and use of a child for pornographic performances.	2015 – 2019
	Criminally prohibit the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2019
	Ensure that all children are protected by law, including children working outside of formal employment relationships.	2018 – 2019
	Extend labor protections to child household workers employed by their relatives.	2018 – 2019
Enforcement	Build the capacity of local-level authorities to enforce child and forced labor regulations, as applicable, in the agriculture, brickmaking, tobacco, cassava, and fishing sectors, by providing more technical training opportunities on how to properly identify child labor during inspections for labor inspectors in all bureaus within the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training.	2012 – 2019
	Provide sufficient resources, including transportation costs, for the enforcement of child labor laws to ensure that all investigations and inspections, including unannounced inspections, are conducted throughout the country and in all sectors, especially in rural areas, in the informal sector, and in the construction industry.	2010 – 2019
	Strengthen, permit, and provide funding to the labor inspectorate to include more on-site investigations, particularly at establishments that operate outside regular business hours and domestic work.	2018 – 2019
	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 – 2019
	Ensure that malfeasance is addressed in all law enforcement agencies, including not accepting bribes to influence the outcome of cases, and investigating and prosecuting labor recruiters, politically connected individuals, and government officials who are complicit in facilitating the worst forms of child labor, including debt-based forced labor in brick kilns.	2019
	Authorize the anti-trafficking police units to conduct undercover investigations, including cases involving the commercial sexual exploitation of children, and 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.	2019
	Ensure law enforcement officials have sufficient financial and human resources to effectively oversee the “judicial supervision” program to ensure defendants return to participate in their criminal trials, and fully implement the “Child Friendly Court” program.	2019
	Collect, properly store, and publicly release disaggregated data on criminal law enforcement efforts, including the number of prosecutions initiated, the number of convictions, and the number imposed penalties for violations related to the worst forms of child labor.	2015 – 2019
Coordination	Ensure that the Cambodian National Council for Children and the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking are able to carry out their intended mandates.	2019
	Increase funding and enhance training for Commune Committees for Women and Children to enhance social services provision for children involved in or at risk of child labor.	2016 – 2019
Government Policies	Undertake activities in support of the National Plan of Action on Worst Forms of Child Labor, the National Plan of Action on the Reduction of Child Labor and Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor, the Action Plan for Gender Equality Promotion and Child Labor Elimination in the Fisheries Sector, the National Action Plan on the Elimination of Child Labor in Fisheries, the Policy on Childhood Development and Protection in the Agricultural Sector, the National Social Protection Strategy, the Capacity Development Plan for Family Support, Foster Care, and Adoption, and the Strategic and Operational Plan for the Implementation of Juvenile Justice Law.	2019
	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the National Employment Policy.	2015 – 2019
Social Programs	Ensure that Residential Care Facilities and orphanages protect the health and well-being of children living there.	2019
	Increase access to free basic education by eliminating unofficial school fees and addressing issues related to limited transportation, inadequate school infrastructure, insufficient number of teachers, and language barriers.	2013 – 2019
	Establish a system to accurately capture and monitor the reintegration of victims of the worst forms of child labor, including human trafficking.	2019
	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 – 2019
	Provide sufficient resources to all social programs so that they can fully address the extent of child labor in Cambodia.	2019

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