

In 2017, Cambodia made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government released the Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children, including child labor. In addition, the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth repatriated approximately 500 child laborers back to Thailand and provided training to law enforcement officials on identifying human trafficking victims, including children. In addition, the Ministry of Education conducted trafficking-in-person awareness training for education officials and teachers in six provinces. However, children in Cambodia engage in the worst forms of child labor, including forced labor in brick making and commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. Due to challenges in accessing basic education and the absence of a compulsory education requirement, children are vulnerable to involvement in the worst forms of child labor. Inadequate resources and training also hamper the Labor Inspectorate's capacity to enforce child labor laws, especially in rural areas and in high-risk sectors.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Cambodia engage in the worst forms of child labor, including forced labor in brickmaking and in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (1; 2) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Cambodia.

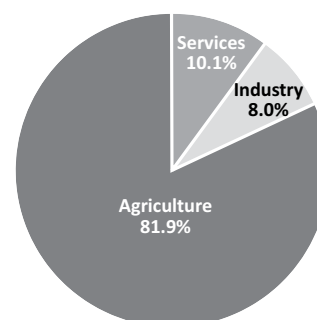
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	8.1 (236,831)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	81.6
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	6.1
Primary Completion Rate (%)		92.4

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2016, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018. (3)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Socio-Economic Survey (CSES), 2014. Data on working children, school attendance, and children combining work and school are not comparable with data published in the previous version of this report because of differences between surveys used to collect the data. (4)

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† (5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10)
	Peeling shrimp and shucking crabs (10; 11; 6)
	Production of tobacco, cassava, rubber, and rice (12; 7)
	Growing, cutting, carrying, and spraying pesticides† on sugarcane (13; 14; 15; 16)
	Logging† for the production of timber (8)
Industry	Making bricks,† including feeding clay into brick-making machines, drying bricks, transporting bricks to the oven,† and loading bricks onto trucks (5; 12; 17; 18; 19; 2; 8)
	Production of salt (12; 20)
	Construction,† including operating transportation equipment† (5; 21; 8)

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Industry	Production of textiles, including bleaching,† dyeing,† and finishing with chemicals;† garments; and footwear (5; 22; 23; 24)
	Production of alcoholic beverages† (5; 8)
	Work in slaughterhouses† for the production of meat† (5; 8)
	Manufacturing of wood and metal† products (5; 12)
Services	Domestic work (5; 9)
	Work as security guards† and in entertainment,† including as bartenders,† masseurs,† dancers,† and waiters† (5)
	Street work, including begging, vending, scavenging, and collecting garbage (12; 21; 9; 25; 26)
	Work as garbage pickers in dumpsites (27; 28)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (12; 1; 29; 9)
	Street vending, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (25; 8; 9; 30)
	Use in illicit activities, including drug trafficking (21)
	Forced labor in the production of bricks (2; 21)

† 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.




Children are trafficked domestically, from rural to urban areas, and internationally, to countries such as Thailand and Vietnam, for commercial sexual exploitation. (9; 1) In Cambodian brick factories, some children engage in forced labor, including in hazardous conditions, to offset family debt to employers. (2; 31; 8; 12)

Although the Education Law establishes free basic education, children may be required to pay school-related fees, such as for building maintenance, which are prohibitive for some families. (21; 32; 33; 12) Other barriers to education include 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 and children with disabilities. (12; 8)

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 child labor, including a minimum age for work and a prohibiting the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	No	15	Article 177 of the Labor Law (34)
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 (34; 35; 36)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 2 of the Regulation on the Prohibition of Hazardous Child Labor (35)
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 (34; 37; 38)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 10, 12, 15–17, and 19 of the Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation (37)
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 (36; 37)
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 (36; 39)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment			
State Compulsory	Yes	18	The Law on General Statutes for the Military Personnel of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (40)
State Voluntary	Yes	18	Article 42 of the Law on General Statutes for the Military Personnel of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (40)
Non-state	No		
Compulsory Education Age	No		
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 31 of the Education Law (33)

The Labor Law's minimum age protections do not apply to domestic or household workers, which leaves children vulnerable to child labor in this occupation. (34; 41; 42) Laws do not sufficiently prohibit commercial sexual exploitation of children, as the use or offering of a child for pornographic performances is not criminally prohibited. In addition, laws do not prohibit the recruitment of children under age 18 into non-state armed groups. (21)

Education is free, but not compulsory, through grade nine. (33) 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. (34; 33)

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 the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training (MOLVT) that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Department of Child Labor, Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training (MOLVT)	Enforce child-related provisions of the Labor Law, and train Commune Committees for Women and Children that oversee local child labor monitoring systems. (43) Includes 24 MOLVT interdepartmental inspection teams. (44)
Cambodian National Police Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Department	Enforce laws against human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children, in collaboration with municipal and provincial anti-human trafficking and juvenile protection offices. Commanded by the Ministry of the Interior. (21; 45) Field complaints about human trafficking, which can be filed through the anti-human trafficking hotline. (29)
Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans, and Youth Rehabilitation	Accompany the police on investigations, and refer victims of child labor to NGOs for services. (6)

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Labor Law Enforcement

In 2017, labor law enforcement agencies in Cambodia took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the authority of the MOLVT that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including training on hazardous work regulations.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$100,000 (8)	\$100,000 (8)
Number of Labor Inspectors	499 (21)	520 (8)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (21)	Yes (8)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
Initial Training for New Employees	Yes (21)	Yes (8)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	N/A (21)	N/A (8)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (21)	Yes (8)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	10,985 (21)	3,563 (8)
Number Conducted at Worksites	6,518 (21)	3,563 (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	230 (21)	240 (8)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	23 (21)	42 (8)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown (21)	34 (8)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (21)	Yes (8)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (21)	Yes (8)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	No (21)	Yes (8)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	N/A (21)	Yes (8)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (21)	Yes (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (21)	Yes (8)

In 2017, the Department of Child Labor (DOCL) received \$10,000 in funding for child labor enforcement operations, as well as for the implementation of the National Social Protection Strategy. (8) The DOCL employs 33 inspectors based in Phnom Penh and 1 child labor inspector in each of Cambodia's 25 provinces; however, the department did not conduct any child labor inspections during the first half of the year. (8; 46) When child labor inspections do occur, they are concentrated in the city of Phnom Penh, as well as in the provincial, formal-sector factories producing goods for export, such as textiles and garments, rather than in rural areas where the majority of child laborers work. (5; 22; 47)

The MOLVT has established regulations on hazardous work for children in several sectors, including in agriculture, brickmaking, fishing, tobacco, and cassava production; however, inadequate training limits the capacity of local authorities to enforce these regulations. (43; 48; 49; 8) For example, MOLVT inspectors visited various brick factories but found no child labor violations, despite numerous reports of children working in brick factories. (50; 2) In addition, sanctions for labor violations, including those related to child labor, are rarely imposed in accordance with the law. (44; 47)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2017, criminal law enforcement agencies in Cambodia took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including the lack of information regarding enforcement actions.

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Training for Investigators		
Initial Training for New Employees	Yes (21)	Yes (8)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	N/A (21)	N/A (8)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (21)	Yes (8)
Number of Investigations	Unknown (21)	Unknown (8)

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor (cont)

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Number of Violations Found	46 (21)	46 (8)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (21)	Unknown (8)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (21)	Unknown (8)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Yes (21)	Yes (8)

The Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth (MOSAVY), in collaboration with Winrock International, conducted 2 trainings for 105 MOSAVY enforcement officials and NGOs, Deputy Governors, Communal Councilors, and teachers with training. MOSAVY also organized 3 trainings on the identification of trafficking victims for 202 participants in Kratie, Svay Rieng, and Kompong Speu. (8) However, the Ministry of Interior has not yet introduced anti-human trafficking training into the curriculum of the Cambodian National Police academies. (51; 46)

According to the Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Department, police rescued 106 children engaged in the worst forms of child labor in the first nine months of 2017. In addition, MOSAVY repatriated approximately 500 Thai child laborers along the Thailand border in the Banteay Meanchey province back to Thailand, as well as 12 child human trafficking victims to Vietnam. (8)

In Cambodia, judges have discretion to determine whether perpetrators of crimes related child labor will be imprisoned or fined, as well as the amount of the fine. In part, due to high levels of corruption within the judicial system, the penalties imposed are not uniformly administered and do not adhere to the parameters prescribed by law. (6; 52; 53)

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 lack of a decree to allow the National Committee on Child Labor of the Cambodian National Council for Children to begin operations.

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

Coordinating Body	Role and Description
National Committee on Child Labor of the Cambodian National Council for Children	Coordinate child labor issues at the national level. Ensure that projects and programs follow the National Plan of Action on child labor. Includes concerned ministries, businesses, trade unions, and NGOs. Oversee Provincial Committees on the Protection of Child Rights and Provincial Committees on Child Labor. (54; 8)
Commune Committees for Women and Children	Advisory entities that raise awareness about 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. Led by the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training's Department of Child Labor. (21; 43; 55)
National Committee for Counter Trafficking	Coordinate government, NGOs, civil society, and private sector efforts to address human trafficking. Focuses on children's affairs, international cooperation, justice, law enforcement, migration, prevention, protection, recovery, reintegration, and repatriation. (56) 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. (46; 56)

In 2017, the National Committee for Counter Trafficking (NCCT) provided to 1,617 participants 39 trainings on children's rights, child labor exploitation obligations under ILO C. 182 on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor, and child sex tourist prevention. The NCCT coordinated further trainings with MOSAVY and the Ministry of Women's Affairs. However, the government has yet to issue a decree authorizing the National Committee on Child Labor of the Cambodian National Council for Children to begin operations and adequately function as a coordinating mechanism. (8) In addition, the Commune Committees for Women and Children are underfunded and have insufficient technical capacity for adequate social protection services to children involved in or at risk of child labor. (55)

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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
Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children (2017–2021)†	Aims to prevent and respond to violence against children, including the worst forms of child labor. (57)
National Plan of Action on Worst Forms of Child Labor (2016–2025)†	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. (21)
National Policies on the Elimination of Child Labor in the Fisheries Sector	Two policies address child labor in the fisheries sector, including the National Plan of Action to Tackle Child Labor in Inland and Coastal Fisheries and the Action Plan for Gender Equality Promotion and Child Labor Elimination in the Fisheries Sector. Seek to prevent and withdraw children from child labor and promote increased access to education and livelihood opportunities. (58; 59) During the reporting period, conducted awareness raising activities to help local fishers and families understand policy guidelines. (60)
Policy on Childhood Development and Protection in the Agricultural Sector (2016–2020)	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) In 2017, the government worked with international organizations to conduct workshops and trainings for agricultural officials. (60)
National Plan of Action on the Suppression of Human Trafficking, Smuggling, Labor, and Sexual Exploitation (2014–2018)	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. (56) During the reporting period, the government lacked the financial and human resources necessary to collect data on policy implementation. (60)
The Education Strategic Plan (2014–2018)	Seeks to ensure equitable access to education and improve the education system's response to human trafficking and child labor. (61) During the reporting period, provided scholarships to poor students at primary and secondary schools, and increased overall enrollments in primary schools. (60)
National Social Protection Strategy (2017–2021)	Aims to expand access to healthcare, nutrition, and educational services and promote the elimination of the worst forms of child labor. (62; 63) In July 2017, the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth launched a policy framework that outlines guidance for all government social assistance, including school feeding and vocational training programs. (45; 8)

† 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. (64; 65; 66; 67; 68)

The government has not specifically included child labor elimination and prevention strategies in the National Employment Policy and the Multilingual Education National Action Plan. (69; 70)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2017, 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 with the lack of access to social protection safety nets in rural communities.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor†‡

Program	Description
Cambodia Countering Trafficking in Persons (2015–2019)	\$8.5 million, USAID-funded, 4-year 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. (71; 72) In 2017, established national guidelines for identifying and referring human trafficking victims and assisted 725 human trafficking victims. (60)
Better Factories Cambodia†	USDOL, the government of Cambodia, Garment Manufacturers in Cambodia, and the ILO-funded program to monitor garment factories' compliance with national and international labor standards, including those related to child labor. (73; 8) In 2017, collaborated with garment manufacturers to investigate suspected child labor cases, which resulted in the confirmation and remediation of eight cases. (74; 75) Additional information is available on the program's website.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor[†] (cont)

Program	Description
UN WFP Country Program [†] (2011–2018)	Multi-government and private sector-funded, 8-year program implemented in collaboration with the Government of Cambodia that includes a school feeding program for children in need. In 2017, provided food assistance, although funding fell by 45%. (76)

[†] 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, including its worst forms. (77)

Many poor households in rural communities lack access to a social protection safety net, which increases the vulnerability of children to involvement in child labor as a means to supplement family income. (78)

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 that the law's minimum age provisions apply to children working as domestic workers.	2009 – 2017
	Criminally prohibit the offering and use of a child for pornographic performances.	2015 – 2017
	Criminally prohibit the recruitment of children under 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2017
	Institute a compulsory education age that is at a minimum equal to the minimum age for work.	2009 – 2017
Enforcement	Provide sufficient resources for the enforcement of child labor laws to ensure that inspections are conducted throughout the country, especially in rural areas and in the informal sector.	2010 – 2017
	Build the capacity of local-level authorities to enforce child labor regulations, including in agriculture, tobacco, cassava, and fishing.	2012 – 2017
	Collect and publicly release data on the number of investigations, prosecutions, and convictions for crimes related to child labor.	2015 – 2017
	Increase anti-human trafficking training for law enforcement officers, including at Cambodian National Police academies.	2014 – 2017
	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 – 2017
Coordination	Issue the relevant decree to enable the National Committee on Child Labor of the Cambodian National Council for Children to begin functioning.	2017
	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 – 2017
Government Policies	Publish information about the implementation of the National Plan of Action on the Suppression of Human Trafficking, Smuggling, Labor, and Sexual Exploitation.	2017
	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies into the Multilingual Education National Action Plan and the National Employment Policy.	2015 – 2017
Social Programs	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 – 2017
	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 – 2017

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