This *Human Trafficking Snapshot* was developed to provide background for practitioners who want to conduct counter trafficking activities in Cambodia.

The *Human Trafficking Snapshot* serves the following purposes, to:

1. Identify key Trafficking in Persons (TIP) trends, including priority target audiences by geography, age, gender, ethnicity and so forth;
2. Provide media consumption data;
3. Provide an information resource for the counter-trafficking sector and local IOM X partners to ensure consistency of messaging across all related activities.
# Table of Contents

**WHAT IS IOM X?** ................................................................. 1  
**HOW IS THE SNAPSHOT USED?** ........................................ 1  
**INTRODUCTION** .................................................................. 2  
  - CAMBODIA DEMOGRAPHICS .............................................. 2  
  - MIGRATION INFORMATION ............................................... 3  
**HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN CAMBODIA** ................................. 4  
  - OVERVIEW ..................................................................... 4  
  - HUMAN TRAFFICKING TRENDS ....................................... 6  
  - COUNTER-TRAFFICKING ACTIONS ................................. 10  
  - REPORTED CHALLENGES IN COMBATTING  
    HUMAN TRAFFICKING ...................................................... 12  
**MEDIA CONTEXT** ................................................................ 13  
**KEY RESOURCES** ............................................................. 14  
**ENDNOTES** ...................................................................... 15
WHAT IS IOM X?

IOM X is the International Organization of Migration’s (IOM) innovative campaign to encourage safe migration and public action to stop exploitation and human trafficking. The campaign leverages the power and popularity of media and technology to inspire young people and their communities to act against human trafficking – the buying and selling of people for the purpose of exploitation – which is happening in every country in the world today. The campaign is produced in partnership with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and works closely with celebrities, private sector partners, government agencies, NGOs and youth groups across Asia Pacific.

HOW IS THE SNAPSHOT USED?

The Human Trafficking Snapshot is a strategic document used by IOM X to guide the development of key messages and calls-to-action for the prevention of specific country-related TIP themes/issues of IOM X video programmes and activities.

IOM X’s process of creating video programmes and activities involves the use of the Human Trafficking Snapshot and in-country consultations with partners and IOM staff to identify the priority TIP theme/issue in the country. The identified issue and media consumption information is then further analyzed through the application of the Communication for Development (C4D) strategic planning tool. The key output of this process is a briefing document, which outlines key messages and specific calls-to-action to be shared both internally and with relevant partners (production houses, co-implementing organizations).

Not all information in this snapshot is IOM data. To compile this snapshot, IOM X conducted a desk review by consulting an array of sources, including information from governments, international organizations, (I)NGOs and local and international media sources. The snapshot uses the most up-to-date information available.
INTRODUCTION

Cambodia continues to recover from a recent history of nearly 40 years of civil war and conflict. The mass violence has had an effect on the country’s demographic shape: nearly 65% of the country is below the age of 30. Despite steady economic growth, Cambodia remains one the least developed countries in Asia, with a substantial amount of its government budget coming from foreign assistance.

Cambodia is also an active member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT).

Cambodia is a source, transit and destination country for men, women and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking.1

CAMBODIA DEMOGRAPHICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>15,577,899 (2015 est.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Urban vs. Rural | **Urban**: 20% of total population  
Rural: 80% of total population (2012 est.) |
| Demographic Trends | Around 60% of the population is under 25 years old (2010 est.) |
| Poverty | 13.5% (2014 est.) of the population lives below the poverty line |
| Unemployment | 0.3% (2016 est.) (However, underemployment is high and most employment is in the informal sector) |
| Youth Unemployment (ages 15-24) | **Total**: 0.4%  
Male: 0.4%, Female: 0.3% (2016 est.) |
| Religions | Buddhist (official) 96.4%, Muslim 2.1%, other and unspecified (2012 est.) |
| Ethnic Groups | Khmer 90%, Vietnamese 5%, Chinese 1%, Other 4% |
| Languages | Khmer (official) 95%, Other 5% |
| Literacy (age 10 and above) | **Total population**: 73.6%  
Male: 84.7%  
Female: 64.1% (2012 est.) |

Sources: World Bank Cambodia Profile, UNDP, BBC Media Action
Cambodia’s porous borders, under-developed infrastructure, poverty, geographic location, and legacy of prolonged civil war render the country a major source, destination and transit point for irregular migrants.2

Most probably due to the high cost of passports (USD 100-200 depending on how many days are given to process the document1) and the time consuming nature of obtaining proper documentation, most migrants travel by irregular (illegal) means as opposed to the regular (legal) channels.3 Migration to Thailand is very popular, and there are basically two types of such labour migrants: those who work and stay for months or years inside Thailand, and those who work in areas near the border, mostly in agriculture.4 Apart from Thailand, popular destination countries for migration include Malaysia, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan Province of China, Singapore and Japan.

In May 2014, the Royal Thai military seized control of the Thai government and declared a coup. In the weeks that followed, it is estimated that 200,000 Cambodian migrants in Thailand returned to Cambodia amid rumours of violent crackdowns on illegal workers in Thailand.5 Many of these migrants returned home empty-handed due to the rushed exodus and thus faced uncertain futures. Many would have tried to re-enter the Cambodian labour force, but a lack of employment opportunities would have rendered many vulnerable to exploitation.

1 For a passport issued in 20 working days the cost is USD 100; 10 working days USD 150; 1 working day USD 200; and an additional USD 4 for photos. Passports for children aged five years old and younger range from USD 80-160, depending on processing time.
## HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN CAMBODIA

### OVERVIEW

#### United States Trafficking in Persons Tier Ranking

Tier 2 – Government does not fully meet the US Trafficking Victims Protection Act’s (TVPA) minimum standards, but are making significant efforts to meet those standards. This includes implementing policies concerning the 3 Ps (Prosecution, Protection and Prevention).

#### Global Slavery Index

9 of 167 – This index ranks 167 countries based on the proportion of population that is estimated to be in modern slavery. Low ranks indicate a higher prevalence and risk of modern slavery in the country.

#### Source

Cambodian men, women and children have been trafficked to many countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Viet Nam, Saudi Arabia, China, Taiwan Province of China, South Korea, the United States, Somalia, Indonesia, Mauritius, Senegal and South Africa.

#### Destination

Cambodia has been reported as a destination country for women and children trafficked from Viet Nam, China and Eastern Europe for sexual exploitation.

#### Transit

Vietnamese and Chinese have been trafficked through Cambodia to locations beyond.

#### Internal

Internal trafficking usually occurs from rural areas that are in close proximity to urban/tourist centres. Source provinces for internal trafficking are Kampong Cham, Prey Veng, Kandal, Takeo, Battambang and Phnom Penh. The Svay Pak area specifically operates as a transit point for child sex trafficking victims from Viet Nam who are subsequently exploited in Phnom Penh. Vietnamese communities living within Cambodia are also particularly vulnerable to internal trafficking.

#### Main industries

Commercial sex work, domestic work, fishing, construction, agriculture, child sex tourism and begging/street hawking are the main industries where trafficking exists.

#### Victims

Young Cambodian men and women, as well as children, are at risk of trafficking. Parents sometimes sell their children into forced labour, making children the most vulnerable to human trafficking and exploitation.
HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN CAMBODIA

OVERVIEW

**Traffickers**

A decentralized network of Cambodian facilitators called Me Khyol provides a variety of services to illegal migrants. Me Khyol can facilitate journeys for legal and illegal migrant workers, but they can be termed “traffickers” when there is deception involved in forcing someone into a situation to which they did not agree.

Fraudulent employment agencies cooperate with traffickers by withholding documents, such as copies of employment contracts and passports, and engage in the falsification of legal identification and age verification documents to allow for the recruitment of children.

*Sources: US TIP Report (2018; 2017; 2015), Global Slavery Index (2018; 2016), IOM*
HUMAN TRAFFICKING TRENDS

TREND #1: TRAFFICKING OF MEN AND BOYS WITHIN FISHING AND FISHING-RELATED INDUSTRIES

WHAT?
Cambodian men and boys have been trafficked for forced labour to work in the Thai fishing industry. They are increasingly also being trafficked to Malaysia, Indonesia, Mauritius, South Africa and further afield. Only a fraction of Cambodian fishers have work permits or have entered the regularization process in Thailand.

WHERE?
Victims are trafficked from Svay Rieng, Prey Veng, Kandal, Kampong Cham to Thailand (Rayong, Songkhla), Malaysia and Indonesia, often transiting in Poipet.

HOW ARE VICTIMS RECRUITED?
Brokers often approach potential victims through connections in a village with promises of work. The price per head for a fisher is known as a kahua. Depending on the amount of the kahua, a trafficked fisher could work from one month to as long as six to eight months before earning any wages. In some cases, victims are kept working on boats for years without pay. Fishers might be unable to leave work due to the threat of financial damage and/or physical violence or threat of denunciation to authorities.

WHO IS AT RISK?
Able-bodied young men and boys

TREND #2: TRAFFICKING OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION TO AND WITHIN CAMBODIA

WHAT?
Significant numbers of adults work in the commercial sex industry in Cambodia, which includes both those who are trafficked (and exploited) and those who work voluntarily (and not exploited).

The implementation in February 2008 of the Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation, and improved law enforcement overall, led to the forcible shutdown of many brothels. Despite this, the trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation has continued.

Trafficking of children for sexual exploitation, especially those under the age of 15, while once a highly visible industry, has become increasingly clandestine, with virgins being seen as particularly valuable.
HUMAN TRAFFICKING TRENDS

WHERE?
Internal trafficking happens from Poipet, Sihanoukville, Koh Kong, Siem Reap to Phnom Penh and Sihanoukville. Victims are also trafficked across borders from China, Viet Nam and Eastern Europe to Phnom Penh.

HOW ARE VICTIMS RECRUITED?
Many women exploited in the sex industry initially entered voluntarily in search of a better life, only to be exploited later. The lack of alternative jobs is a significant motivating factor. Recruiters lure women and girls with the offer of employment (as singers and waitresses) in Karaoke bars, which are fronts for sexual exploitation sites.

WHO IS AT RISK?
Women and children seeking employment opportunities in Cambodia’s bigger cities are vulnerable, as well as women and children from the ethnic Vietnamese community in Cambodia.

TREND #3: TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN INTO FORCED DOMESTIC WORK IN CAMBODIA

WHAT?
Child domestic work is viewed as a ‘familiar practice’ in Cambodia, often involving family members. Its widespread acceptance allows it to easily escape public scrutiny. Child domestic workers are expected to work long hours and face the potential for physical, emotional and sexual abuse. Not all work that children do is considered child labour. However, work that is harmful to a child’s physical and mental development and deprives a child of their childhood, potential and dignity is considered exploitative child labour. Therefore, any work that interferes with schooling or is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous is considered child labour.

WHERE?
Victims are trafficked from Siem Reap, Kampong Cham, Prey Veng, Kandal, Takeo, Battambang and Phnom Penh (urban slums) to Koh Kong, Kompong Som, Siem Reap and Phnom Penh.

HOW ARE VICTIMS RECRUITED?
Recruitment of child domestic workers takes place through family-based networks or through a series of intermediaries who are known and trusted by employers and the family of the child. Child domestic workers recruited through the family network are less likely to be promised a salary than those recruited through intermediaries.
TREND #4: TRAFFICKING OF WOMEN AND GIRLS FOR FORCED LABOUR INTO DOMESTIC WORK CROSS-BORDER

WHAT?
From 2011 to 2015, there was a moratorium on sending domestic workers from Cambodia to Malaysia after news of exploitation and abuse came to light. Prior to this, thousands of women and girls were sent to Malaysia every year to work as domestic workers, and a large proportion of them were suspected to be illegally recruited and trafficked. The moratorium was lifted in 2015.

Once women (who are being trafficked) have reached their destination, their passports and identification documents are often confiscated by the agent/employer. They can also find themselves in debt bondage situations, where their wages are withheld to pay for travel costs, meals and accommodation.

WHERE?
Victims are trafficked from Kampong Cham, Prey Veng, Kandal Takeo and Battambang to Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore.

HOW ARE VICTIMS RECRUITED?
Unauthorized labour agencies recruit girls as young as 13 to work in households as domestic workers. These young victims are often confined in overcrowded and unhygienic 'training centres,' and agencies regularly forge birth certificates to skirt age requirements.

According to anecdotal reports, recruiters facilitate the travel of Cambodian domestic workers to Malaysia on tourist visas. The workers then overstay in Malaysia, making them further vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

WHO IS AT RISK?
Cambodian women and girls seeking employment opportunities.

WHO IS AT RISK?
Mostly girls from families in rural communities who have dysfunctional family backgrounds.
HUMAN TRAFFICKING TRENDS

TREND #5: TRAFFICKING FOR FORCED BEGGING

WHAT?
There are reports of Cambodian children being trafficked for forced begging or street selling in Viet Nam and Thailand. For many, begging is the first step in a chain of exploitation where many go on to become sex workers and traffickers themselves. There is concern that some children may be purposely mutilated to increase their value as beggars.

WHERE?
Victims are trafficked from Kampong Cham, Prey Veng, Kandal, Takeo, Battambang, Svay Rieng and other rural areas in Cambodia to larger cities in Thailand (Bangkok) and Viet Nam.

HOW ARE VICTIMS RECRUITED?
Traffickers have been known to offer parents, particularly in border provinces, money to ‘rent’ their children for several months. However, once the parents agree, there is often no exchange of money, and the children are effectively trapped in exploitative circumstances. During school holidays some children are accompanied by their parents to travel to Viet Nam, where they are forced to beg.

WHO IS AT RISK?
Disabled children, women with babies, and elderly people are among those most at risk of being trafficked because they are viewed as the most successful beggars.

TREND #6: TRAFFICKING FOR FORCED MARRIAGE

WHAT?
Even though international marriage brokerage has been illegal in Cambodia since 2008, this legislation has done little to slow trafficking for marriage. Recently Cambodia requested Chinese consulates to restrict tourist Visas for single Cambodian women as most women trafficked for marriage enter on a tourist visa.

Initially, most women are open to the idea of travelling to China to get married but some are misinformed of the conditions and arrangements. Women are told they can choose who they marry and if they don’t want to marry they will be assisted to find a job in a factory instead. However, upon arrival in China, some women are managed by Chinese brokers and kept in the houses of brokers where men come to view and bid on a bride – it is reported they are being sold without any choice in the matter.
**COUNTER-TRAFFICKING ACTIONS**

The Government of Cambodia has taken significant steps to address the issue of human trafficking from a prevention, protection, prosecution and policy perspective. Some of the important steps include the following:

**National and local actions**

- Cambodia was one of the first countries to enact an anti-trafficking law in 1996, although the definition of human trafficking placed a disproportionate focus on sexual exploitation.

- Establishment of the Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Police Department in 2002 to promote greater cooperation between police officers and prosecutors to carry out investigations, apprehensions, arrests, prosecutions and convictions.

- Enactment of the Suppression of Human Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation in 2008, which prohibits all forms of trafficking and prescribes stringent penalties.

---

**HUMAN TRAFFICKING TRENDS**

The conditions after marriage can be harsh for some. Reports of sexual exploitation and abuse have been documented. Women are denied freedom, forced to work for the household and sometimes relatives, denied adequate food, subject to threats and abuse. Passports and identity documents are withheld as a control mechanism to keep them from escaping.

**WHERE?**

Victims are trafficked from rural Cambodia (such as Kampong Cham) to China, Taiwan Province of China and South Korea.

**RECRUITMENT:**

Initial recruitment is mostly through community networks. Generally female recruiters use persuasive tactics of focusing on the ideal life of being married to a Chinese man and being able to make and send money back to the family in Cambodia. In some cases recruiters are Cambodian women that are already married to a Chinese man or have connection with the Sino-Khmer community in Phnom Penh.

**WHO IS AT RISK?**

Cambodian women, primarily from rural areas.
Intensification of TIP awareness activities since 2009, when the first anti-trafficking awareness day in the country occurred.

Establishment of the National Committee to Lead the Suppression of Human Trafficking, Smuggling, Labour and Sexual Exploitation (December 2009), chaired by the Ministry of Interior but including representatives from all relevant ministries.


Development of a single uniform procedure on victim identification by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

The government continued to design and deliver donor-funded training on the implementation of the anti-trafficking law, reaching more than 2,500 law enforcement and judicial officials.31

Implementation of the new national action plan (launched in 2015) began, including allocating 72 staff members and a budget of USD 500,000.32

The anti-trafficking police developed and carried out training for members of the entertainment sector to help prevent and report trafficking for sexual exploitation.33

Regional actions

Ratified the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (ACTIP) in 2016.34

Despite the strong action being taken by the Royal Government of Cambodia to tackle internal and cross-border human trafficking, several challenges remain. These include the following:

- **Corruption:** Most local observers believe corruption to be the cause of impunity afforded to firms engaging in illegal recruitment practices that contribute to trafficking.\(^{35}\)

- **Lack of trust and fear:** Escaped victims are often too scared to go to the police in the destination country, as they might mistrust law enforcement and fear being deported.\(^{36}\) The lack of trust in the assistance offered can be borne out of past trafficking-related experiences and the fear of being cheated again.\(^{37}\)

- **Stigma:** Trafficking victims lack incentive to cooperate in the investigation and prosecution of traffickers, in large part due to the negative repercussions of being identified as a trafficking victim.\(^{38}\) Being identified as a trafficking victim could mean that the individual had failed at migration when others in his or her community had succeeded, leading to shame and embarrassment.\(^{39}\)

- **Victim identification and reintegration:** Victims of trafficking might receive some assistance but not the full package they require to move on from their trafficking experience and reintegrate into society.\(^{40}\) As a result, there is a high likelihood of the victims returning to the same (or similar) situation that made them vulnerable to trafficking in the first place.

- **Language and cultural limitations:** Undocumented Cambodian migrant workers in other countries who do not speak the local language and do not understand the local law are particularly vulnerable and many fear apprehension and/or deportation by the authorities if they approach authorities for help.

- **Limited awareness of trafficking of men and limited services:** Men are at particular risk of being trafficked, and there is still a lack of services for them. Many lower level law enforcement agents are not socialized about the high risk of men being trafficked. Most men do not seek psychological support, which makes following up with them and their own adjustment back into the community particularly difficult.

- **Criminal penalties are not enforced for labour recruitment companies:** Recruitment agencies and employers are rarely held accountable for illegal acts committed during the recruitment process, such as debt bondage, detention of workers during pre-departure training, and recruitment of workers younger than 18.
### Media Context

Cambodia’s media industry remains in a growing state given that an independent media was essentially non-existent prior to the 1991 Peace Accords. The media sector has grown tentatively since the signing of the peace accords and continues to grow steadily in parallel with the overall economic development of the country. The most important news sources for Cambodians are television (32%), Facebook/Internet (25%), radio (21%) and word of mouth (18%).

This shows the increasing role of the Internet in Cambodia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Penetration Rate</th>
<th>Rural vs. Urban</th>
<th>Relevent Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Television</strong></td>
<td>80%(^{42}) (Household)</td>
<td>74% vs. 92%(^{43})</td>
<td><strong>Popular TV formats:</strong> Dramas, soap operas, and entertainment shows.(^{44}) Also popular are Khmer, Korean, Chinese, Philippine, Indian and Thai series dubbed in Khmer.(^{45}) <strong>Top broadcasters:</strong> MYTV, CTN, Loy9, ONE TV Cambodia(^{46})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internet</strong></td>
<td>32%(^{48})</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td><strong>Social Media:</strong> Facebook is the top social media site with 4.2 million users. 56% of these users are under the age of 25.(^{49})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Radio</strong></td>
<td>59%(^{50})</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td><strong>Rural reach:</strong> There are 80 stations that reach the entire rural population.(^{51}) <strong>Demographics:</strong> The majority of listeners are between 15 and 24 years old.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mobile phones</strong></td>
<td>96%(^{52})</td>
<td>95% vs. 97%(^{52})</td>
<td><strong>Usage:</strong> About 48% of Cambodians (aged 15-65) own a smart phone. On average 37% of Cambodians (48% of urban and 31% of rural Cambodians) use their phones to access the Internet.(^{54}) Only 8% of the population gets its information from a newspaper and only 3% from a magazine.(^{56}) This is due to low literacy rates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Print</strong></td>
<td>23%(^{55})</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**ILO TRIANGLE II Project:** UN project in Thailand, Cambodia, Viet Nam, Myanmar, Malaysia and Lao People’s Democratic Republic focused on promoting fair migration and improving governance and rights of migrant workers.
Website: http://www.ilo.org.
Telephone: +662 288 2245

**UN-ACT:** The UN Action for Cooperation against Trafficking in Persons was established in 2014. By working with national and regional actors UN-ACT aims to build capacity within the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) and coordinate to combat human trafficking.
Website: http://un-act.org/.
Telephone: +662 304 9100

**Chab Dai:** NGO that aims to address human trafficking and exploitation through coalition building, advocacy, and research.
Website: http://www.chabdai.org.
Telephone: 855 12 481 597

**1280:** Free of charge and 24-hour Helpline that provides professional phone counselling, information service and effective referral and follow-up for children and young people up to age twenty-five. Text messages can be sent to 017 98 58 10.

**LICADHO:** The Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO) works to protect the civil, political, economic, and social rights of Cambodians through monitoring, protection, promotion, and advocacy programs throughout the country.
Website: https://www.licadho-cambodia.org/.
Telephone: (855) 23 727 102 or (855) 23 216 602
21 UNODC, *Victim Identification Procedures in Cambodia – A Brief Study of Human Trafficking Victim Identification in the Cambodian Context* (N/A).


27 IOM Cambodia, April 2016.


29 UN-ACT, A Study on Forced Marriage Between Cambodia and China (2016).

30 UN-ACT, A Study on Forced Marriage Between Cambodia and China (2016).


37 R. Surtees, After Trafficking: Experiences and Challenges in the (Re) integration of Trafficked Persons in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (Bangkok, 2013).


40 R. Surtees, After Trafficking: Experiences and Challenges in the (Re) integration of Trafficked Persons in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (Bangkok, 2013).


42 Media Partners Asia, Asia Pacific Pay-TV & Broadband Markets (2013).
45 Phibious, Media Assessment: Cambodia (2013).
47 Media Partners Asia, Asia Pacific Pay-TV & Broadband Markets (2013).
55 Phibious, Media Assessment: Cambodia (2013).