

**CZECH UNIVERSITY OF LIFE SCIENCES PRAGUE**

**Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences**



## **Child Labour in Cambodia**

BACHELOR'S THESIS

Prague 2023

**Author:** Simona Tomanová

**Supervisor:** Ing. Tereza Pilařová, Ph.D.



# Declaration

I hereby declare that I have done this thesis entitled “Child Labour in Cambodia” independently, all texts in this thesis are original, and all the sources have been quoted and acknowledged by means of complete references and according to Citation rules of the FTA.

In Prague April 2023

.....

Simona Tomanová

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to deeply thank my supervisor Ing. Tereza Pilařová, Ph.D. for her consultations, advice on the thesis' structure and content, for her patience, guidance, and kind approach. Also, to the academic community from the Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences for the knowledge acquired during my bachelor's studies.

Many thanks to my family, friends, and classmates, who have been great support to me with always kind words and spirit.

The greatest thank belong to my great friend Zuzana Procházková, who has been the biggest supporter and motivated me throughout the whole study. Without her, I would not make it this far.

Last but not the least, I would like to thank myself for holding on and putting my best into this study and thesis.

## **Abstract**

Child labour is a pervasive issue in Cambodia, impacting the lives of numerous of children who are compelled to work in hazardous conditions for little or no compensation. Progress has been slow, and the problem persists despite the efforts of the Cambodian government and international organizations to combat child labour. The thesis is based on secondary data obtained by analysing previously conducted research corresponding with topic of child labour, and child labour in Cambodia. This method allows to summarize information from wide range of sources such as reports, scholarly journals and policy papers. This thesis examines the causes and effects of child labour in Cambodia, as well as the numerous efforts to combat this problem, the historical, cultural, and economic factors that contribute to the prevalence of child labour in Cambodia. Poverty, insufficient education, and cultural attitudes toward child labour are identified as the leading causes of the issue. In addition, the thesis emphasizes the significant effects of child labour on the physical, psychological, and social well-being of children, including long-term health issues, limited educational opportunities, and social isolation. Additionally offers an overview of the various initiatives and interventions intended to reduce child labour in Cambodia. Among these are government policies and laws and international development programs. While there have been some positive developments, such as the introduction of laws and policies to protect children and the efforts of non-governmental organizations to provide education and support to vulnerable communities, much more must be done to address the underlying causes of the problem and provide lasting solutions. Overall, this literature review emphasizes the pressing need to combat child labour in Cambodia and prioritize the well-being and rights of children. We can help to break the cycle of exploitation and ensure that all children have access to a safe and healthy childhood by addressing poverty, enhancing education, and altering cultural attitudes toward child labour.

**Key words:** child labour reduction, education, poverty, Cambodia, children's economic activity

# Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>- 1 -</b>
<b>2. Aims of the Thesis.....</b>	<b>- 2 -</b>
<b>3. Methodology .....</b>	<b>- 3 -</b>
<b>4. Cambodia .....</b>	<b>- 4 -</b>
4.1. Social economic context.....	- 4 -
4.2. Poverty.....	- 5 -
4.3. Child labour index .....	- 7 -
4.4. School and education.....	- 8 -
4.5. Recent history .....	- 9 -
<b>5. Economically active children.....</b>	<b>- 10 -</b>
<b>6. World's issue with child labour.....</b>	<b>- 12 -</b>
6.1. Countries with highest child labour involvement.....	- 13 -
6.2. Child labour in South Asia .....	- 14 -
6.3. Supply and demand of child labour.....	- 15 -
<b>7. Registration of children at birth in Cambodia .....</b>	<b>- 16 -</b>
<b>8. Child labour in Cambodia .....</b>	<b>- 17 -</b>
8.1. Agriculture sector .....	- 21 -
8.2. Garment sector.....	- 22 -
8.3. Factories.....	- 23 -
8.3.1. Brick factories.....	- 24 -
8.4. Waste industry.....	- 24 -
8.5. Sex industry .....	- 25 -
<b>9. Impact on child's well-being.....</b>	<b>- 27 -</b>
<b>10. Government regulations.....</b>	<b>- 28 -</b>
<b>11. Organizations helping with the issue .....</b>	<b>- 29 -</b>
11.1. Sustainable Development Goals.....	- 30 -

<b>12.</b>	<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>- 31 -</b>
<b>13.</b>	<b>References.....</b>	<b>- 32 -</b>

## List of Graphs

Graph 1: Cambodia's GDP per capita (US\$) in years 2000-2021. ....	- 5 -
Graph 2: Cambodia's HDI in years 2000-2021.....	- 6 -
Graph 3: Cambodia's ranking in CL index through years.....	- 7 -
Graph 4: Literacy rate of population aged 7+ years by sex in Cambodia, 2008-2019. ....	- 8 -
Graph 5: Children (5-14) involved in CL through years in Cambodia. ....	- 18 -
Graph 6: Children (5-14) involved in CL through years in different sectors in Cambodia.....	- 20 -

## List of Tables

Table 1: Employment in hazardous labour, youth 15-17 years old.....	- 15 -
Table 2: CL estimates in South Asia, highest ranking countries compare to Cambodia in 2014. ....	- 15 -



## **List of the abbreviations used in the thesis**

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CL	Child Labour
COVID-19	Coronavirus pandemic
EAC	Economically active children
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GDP	Gross domestic product
HDI	Human Development Index
ID	Identification document
ILO	International Labour Organization
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Fund
US\$	United States dollar
WB	The World Bank
WTO	World Trade Organization

# **1. Introduction**

Child labour (CL) is a serious issue in Cambodia as in the rest of the world, presenting series of problems that negatively impact the well-being of millions of youths. CL deprives children of their childhood, education, and possibilities for better future (Human Rights Watch 2016). Many youngsters are coerced into working long hours in dangerous environments, frequently for little or no compensation and are denied the opportunity to receive an education along with other fundamental rights. CL can be traced back to a variety of factors, some of which include economic deprivation, poor educational opportunities, and traditional social norms (ILO 2023). Children who come from low-income homes are particularly susceptible to being exploited since they frequently have limited options available to them for making money and may be required to labour in order to provide for their families, which leads to vicious cycle of poverty.

Cambodia is one of the countries that is experiencing one of the worst cases of CL conditions and the consequences that are related with it (UNICEF 2018). Even while the government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are working to improve the situation by instituting new regulations and standards, the issue needs to be addressed deeper to get more precise estimates.

The goal of this thesis is to investigate the root causes and repercussions of CL in Cambodia, with a focus on understanding the socioeconomic and cultural factors that contribute to this practice. Analysis of previously written reviews and reports provides a summary of aspects such as: impact on child well-being, the scale of CL and its seriousness, closer understanding of sector in which CL is present, work conditions in each and actions taken by the government and NGOs to address this issue, and its development.

## **2. Aims of the Thesis**

The main objective of this study is to analyse the current issue of CL, namely in Cambodia, and the progress made in CL reduction during the last two decades.

The specific objectives are:

- To evaluate the prevalence of CL in Cambodia.
- To determine the factors influencing prevalence of CL in Cambodia.
- To provide an overview of governmental and non-governmental organizations addressing the issue of CL in Cambodia.

### **3. Methodology**

The bachelor thesis is based on secondary data. The relevant available data on the subject matter, focusing on Cambodia was reviewed. Secondary data collection was done through available scientific sources, mainly from a scientific database of The Web of Science, ResearchGate, Google Scholar, EBSCO, and institutional websites.

Journals such as the World Development, Oxford Development Studies, Energy Research & Social Science or International Journal of Education highlighted the topics of education, child labour and how do they affect each other (in terms of Cambodia and of the world). Online reports from Bureau of International Labour Affairs, FAO, UNICEF, ILO, and WB were also cited to support the literature review. Keywords used to find the articles include child labour, child labour reduction, education, poverty, Cambodia, children's economic activity, agriculture, gender partition, school attendance, inequality.

As the literature review tried to overview the last two decades, article for collecting data since year 2000 were used. The use of the recent articles was to capture the current estimates and world's issue with Covid-19 and how it affected Cambodia and the world. Data from reports and online sources were used mainly for the graphs and tables used. It is important to mention that I worked mainly with data focusing on CL in Cambodia, while data for other countries or world's estimates are available, it is not relevant for the main research of this literature review.

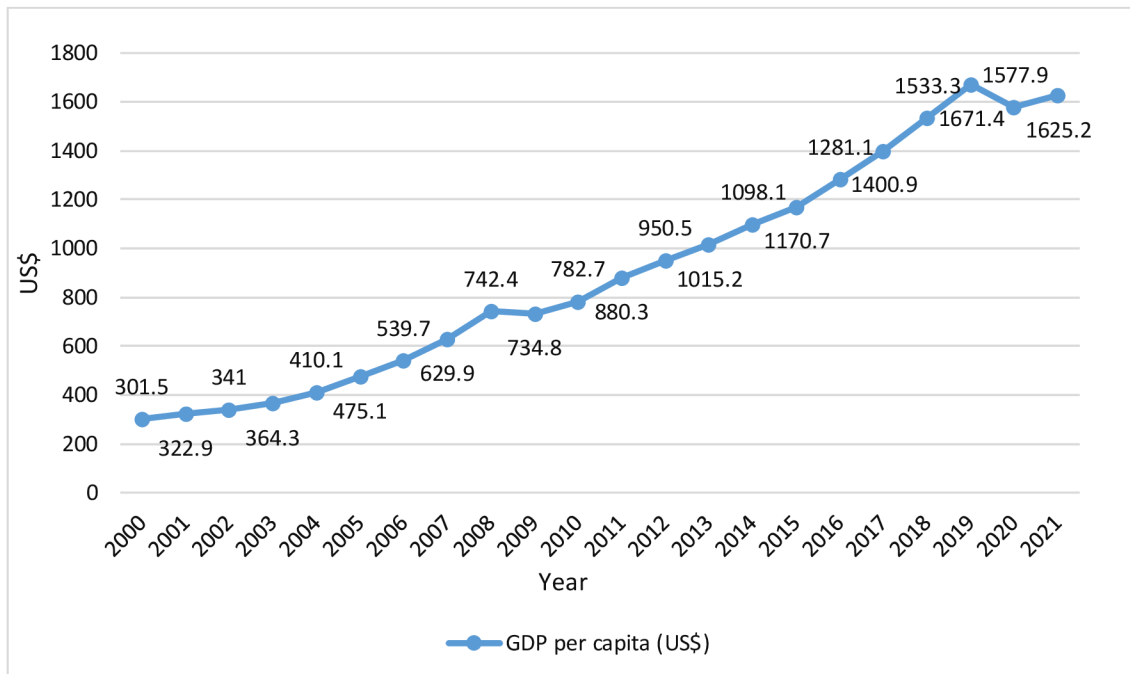
## **4. Cambodia**

The Kingdom of Cambodia, located on the Indochinese peninsula in Southeast Asia is a country with over 17 million inhabitants (The World Bank/WB 2022). With spanning of area 181 035 m<sup>2</sup> the borders are shared with Thailand, Laos and Vietnam. On the southern part it is surrounded by Guld of Thailand. It is constitutional monarchy, with king Norodom Sihanouk reigning since 2004. Offical language spoken is Khmer and more than 97 % of population are Buddhists. The capital city, Phnom Penh, is experiencing great urbanization with more than two million citizens (Chandler & Overton 2022). Yet, 80 % of the population still live in rural areas (Akenji & Bengtsson 2019).

### **4.1. Social economic context**

Cambodia's economy in the past two decades improved rapidly. Starting the 21<sup>st</sup> century with gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (in United States dollars/US\$), indicating the amount of economic value that can be ascribed to each individual citizen, at 301.5 US\$ in 2000, and ending in 2010 with 782.7 US\$ (WB 2023). Due to Great Recesion (2007-2009), where global economies decreased, Cambodian economy slightly suffered (History 2023). In 2009 there was decent decline to 734.8 US\$ compared to 742.4 US\$ in 2008. Till 2019 local economy was rapidly growing, being one of the fastest growing economies in the world (WB 2022). GDP per capita was at 1,671.4 US\$ (WB 2023). That is more than five times more than at the beginning of the century. In 2015 the country moved into category of Middle-Income Countries (WB 2022). Other fluctuation happend in 2020 as cornavirus pandemic (Covid-19) stopped the world's economy (WB 2022), and GDP per capita declined to 1,577.9 US\$ (WB 2023). The economic recovery in Cambodia has accelerated since the outbreak, although it is still unequal. Exports of agricultural commodities and manufacturing, two traditional growth drivers, have fully recovered. Even though the travel and tourist industry has rebounded, it is still far below its pre-Covid-19 levels (WB 2022). Overview of GDP per capita is shown in Graph 1. World's GDP per capita was 12,234.8 US\$ in 2021, that is more than seven times higher than in Cambodia in the

same year. There are predictions that Cambodia will join Upper-Middle Income Countries in 2030 (KHMER Times 2023).



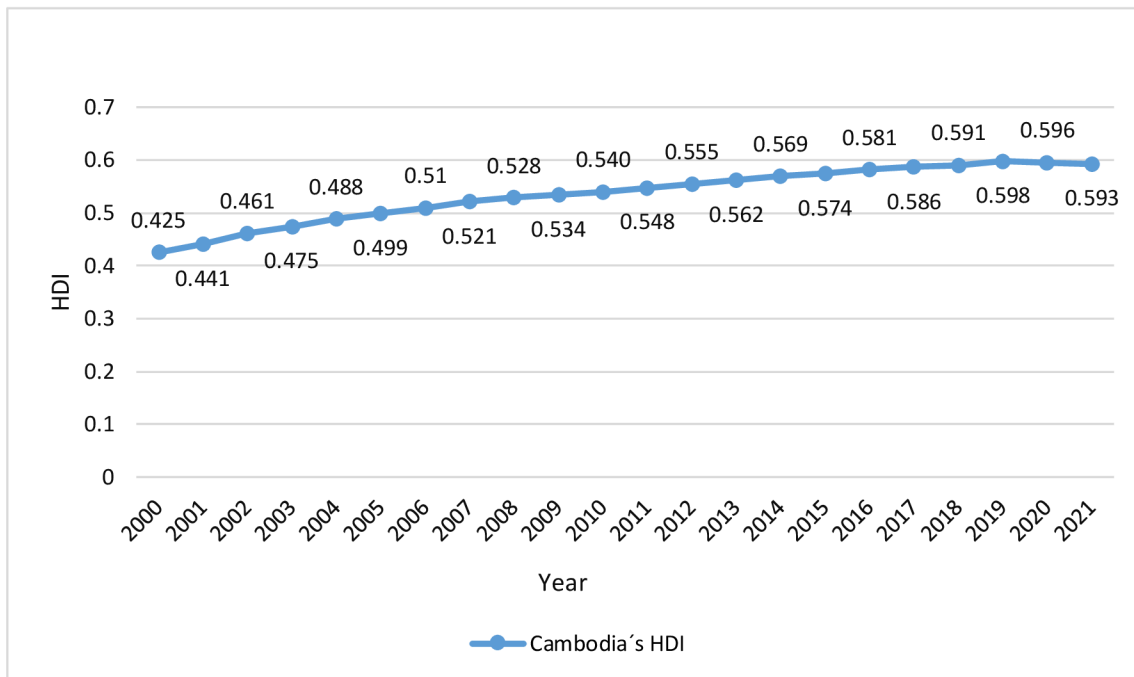
**Graph 1: Cambodia’s GDP per capita (US\$) in years 2000-2021.**

Source: data elaborated from WB 2023

## 4.2. Poverty

Poverty rate is rapidly declining. In 2009 33.8 % of the population was living under poverty line, known as absolute poverty (WB 2022a) (International poverty line in 2009 was 1.25 US\$ per day) (WB 2022b). By 2019 the number declined to 17.8 % (WB 2022a) (International poverty line in 2019 was 2.15 US\$ per day) (WB 2022b). Almost 2 million inhabitants escaped poverty during this period. The rate has risen by 2.8 %, meaning that almost 460,000 more individuals now fall below the poverty line since 2020 (WB 2022a).

Human Development Index (HDI), evaluating a nation's overall development as opposed to just its economic growth, enhance too. HDI was at 0.425 in 2000, and by the end of the decade in 2010 at 0.540. It raised up to 0.598 in 2019, but slightly decreased to 0.593 in 2021, due to Covid-19 (Countryeconomy.com 2023). The last two decades of Cambodia's HDI progress is shown in Graph 2.



**Graph 2: Cambodia's HDI in years 2000-2021.**

Source: data elaborated from Countryeconomy.com 2023

Gini coefficient, measuring division of wealth in the society, does not have sufficient data in Cambodia. In 2004 the coefficient was at 35.46. At the latest data from 2012, it was at 30.76. That shows that that country's equality has improved (FRED 2023).

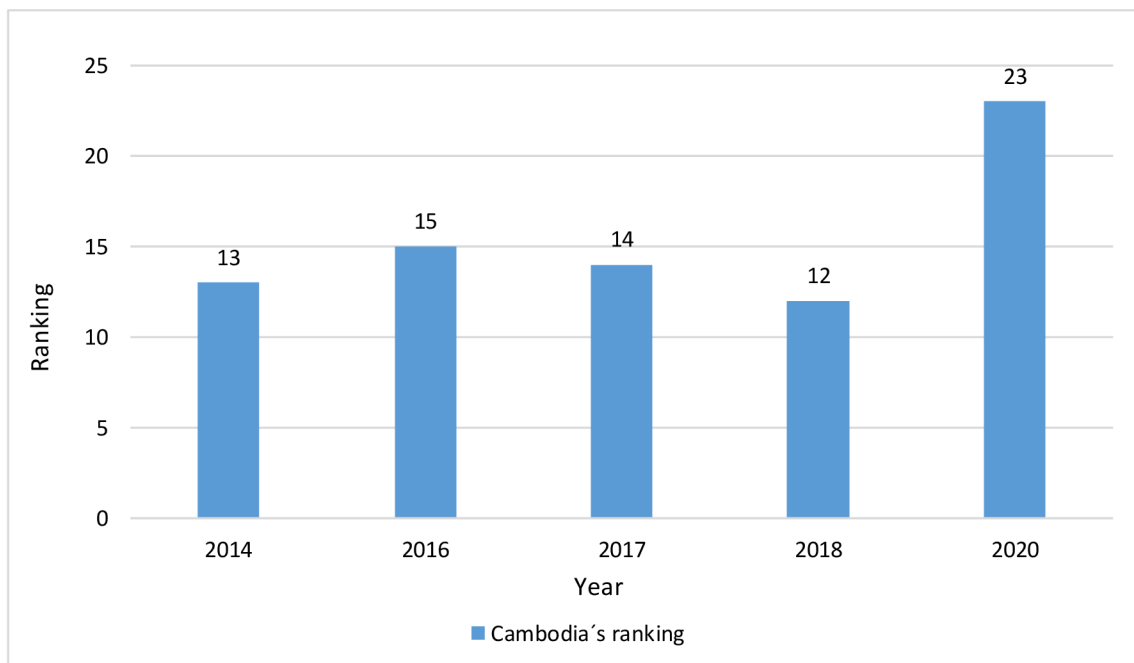
Minimum wage, the minimum amount of money needed by a working individual and their relatives to cover their basic expenses, was settled at 45 US\$ per month in 2000. In 2008 minimum wage reached 56 US\$ (The Arbitration Council 2001). In 2014 the wage went up to 100 US\$. The end of the decade ended at 182 US\$ in 2019. At the beginning of 2023 the minimum wage was settled at 200 US\$ per month. The increase of minimum wages and the wellbeing of employees at the bottom of the pay scale is

important for simultaneously lowering inequality and encouraging social inclusion (Trading Economics 2023).

### 4.3. Child labour index

The Global CL index is a framework that involves a thorough evaluation of a nation's commitment to stopping CL, the standard of its domestic legal system, its capacity for enforcement, and the number of recorded crimes (Southeast Asia Globe 2020).

Each year, since 2014, ILO releases the Global CL Index to give data on the prevalence and types of CL across the world as well as to suggest strategies for its abolition. Cambodia's ranking through years is visible in Graph 3. In 2020 Cambodia was also ranked first as the highest risk of CL in Southeast Asia (Southeast Asia Globe 2020).



**Graph 3: Cambodia's ranking in CL index through years.**

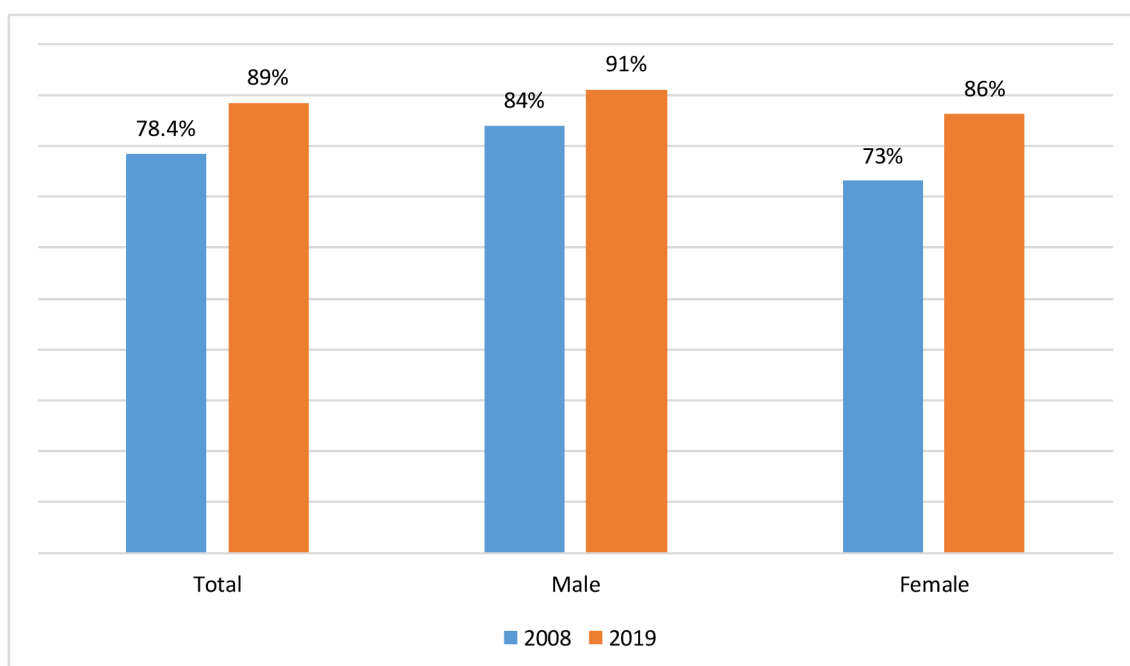
Source: data elaborated from ILO 2016-2021



#### 4.4. School and education

One of the primary causes of CL in Cambodia is poverty. Many families rely on their children to work and contributing to the family's income since they cannot afford to send them to school. Rural places are where this is most true (Kim 2011).

Between 2008 and 2019, Cambodia's literacy rate improved overall by 10.1 %, from 78.4 % to 88.5 %. The adult literacy rate (population aged 15+ years) increased significantly from 83.8 % in rural regions to 93.3 % in urban areas. Primary education did not have finished (population aged 15+ years) 35.1 %. This rate is higher for female 38.9 % than for men 31.3 %. In both years (2008, 2019) we can see great gender inequality (see Graph 4). Rural regions have a relatively greater disparity than urban areas. In Cambodia, the gender gap in basic education is a significant problem (Ministry of Planning 2020).



**Graph 4: Literacy rate of population aged 7+ years by sex in Cambodia, 2008-2019.**

Source: data elaborated from Ministry of Planning 2020

The primary school dropout rate decreased from 16.4 % in 2000 to 4.4 % in 2019. In 2019, the lower secondary dropout rate was 6.1 %, which is a decrease from 20.6 % in 2000 (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport 2019). While the general dropout rate has reduced, it is crucial to remember that there are still substantial differences in dropout rates across other demographic categories, with girls, children of ethnic minorities, and those from lower-income homes all having higher dropout rates (Kluttz 2015). In 2019, girls dropped out of primary school at a rate of 5.2 % compared to boys' 3.6 %. In the same way, girls had a lower secondary school dropout rate in 2019 6.7 % as opposed to 5.6 % for boys (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport 2019). The high percentage of school dropouts in Cambodia is a result of the pervasiveness of CL. Children who work are frequently unable to attend school on a regular basis, which causes them to miss out on crucial lessons and fall behind in their academics. In turn, this could result in subpar academic performance and a lack of enthusiasm in learning (United Nations Children's Fund/UNICEF 2018).

The likelihood that youngsters would be compelled to work to support their families has grown as a result of the Covid-19 related school closures and loss of income. Children who were already employed before to the Covid-19 may have been compelled to labour harder or under riskier circumstances in order to make up for lost wages (Cambodian Children's Trust 2021). Additionally, because of the pandemic's disruption of supply chains, there is now a greater need for CL and other forms of less expensive labour. Due to school closures and supply chain disruptions, exploiting vulnerable youngsters has become simpler for unscrupulous businesses (International Labour Organization/ILO & UNICEF 2020).

#### **4.5. Recent history**

On 9<sup>th</sup> November 1953, Cambodia declared its independence from France. In 1954 due to Preah Vihear (a temple constructed during the Khmer Empire era) conflict, the diplomatic relations with Thailand were severed, and war was a real possibility. However, Cambodia was inescapably dragged into the Vietnam War by the late 1960s. Communist troops, also referred to as the Khmer Rouge or Red Khmers by the outside world, seized control in 1975 (Chandler 2022). Approximately 1-3 million Cambodians perished during the Khmer Rouge era that followed as the Maoist-inspired government

strove to overnight establish comprehensive communism through starvation, excessive labour, executions, and the mistreatment of illnesses. In response to incursions by Cambodia, Vietnam invaded the country in 1979 and imposed a protectorate that lasted for ten years. In accordance with peace agreements signed in Paris in 1991, Cambodia was temporarily placed under United Nations (UN) protection prior to the 1993 national elections. Since that, a coalition government that has accepted significant amounts of foreign funding has been in charge of Cambodia, a constitutional monarchy (Wenk 2002). After millennia isolation, from Southeast Asia, Cambodia became a member of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1999 (Chandler 2022).

In 2004, Norodom Sihamoni replaced his father Sihanouk as the monarch of Cambodia. A indicator of growing international integration was Cambodia's 2004 entrance to the World Trade Organization (WTO). Strong industries for tourism and clothing manufacture have started to pay off for Cambodia. By doing this, it was able to win back the trust of international funding organizations (Chandler & Overton 2022).

In 2008, a diplomatic standoff erupted between Cambodia and Thailand over the Temple of Preah Vihear, which is located on their shared border. Tensions increased, and conflicts erupted nearby in 2011, Cambodia petitioned the International Court of Justice in The Hague to uphold a 1962 decision that body had issued in favor of Cambodia. In 2013 Cambodia become in charge of the temple's location (Thompson & Chong 2020).

Norodom Sihanouk, the former king of Cambodia, remained a significant national figure until his passing in 2012 (Chandler & Overton 2022). Cambodia has significantly reduced in the past decade poverty, increased the number of students attending school, and reduced the incidence of HIV which was spreaing rapidly due to poverty, political instability and limited access to healthcare services. Regardless of the improvements, progress was hindered by the economic crisis or Covid-19 pandemic, which continues slowing the process (ILO 2023).

## **5. Economically active children**

Children involved in economic activity (EAC), no matter the circumstances are part of EAC, so called working children. The economic activity is divided into two

forms: child work and CL. However, despite the fact that the concepts of child work, CL, simplified as EAC, are well known, and accepted, these and other terminology connected to child work lack exact, widely accepted meanings (Agarwal & Kelly 2004). EAC work within or outside the home, employed in formal or informal economy, and employed for pay or no pay. Often happens that families that force their children to work, get instead of pay check food and roof over their head (WB 2004). As a result, it is challenging to compare data collecting and analytical procedures, share data, and engage in collaborative activities since academics and other experts in the field are continually required to redefine terminology and explain its usage. Most essentially, there is a need for widespread acceptance and clear definition for child work, most likely based on the description used by ILO or UNICEF. Many experts have voiced their feeling of urgency over the necessity for adoption of a set of standard definitions for basic CL terms (Agarwal & Kelly 2004).

Child work refers to a minor's salutary responsibility within the family. Children are therefore expected to contribute to the family's unity and to help when necessary. As long as it doesn't obstruct their education or right to enjoy their rights, children may perform light job. The concept is that having children work within the home may be a great experience that helps them develop their capacity for both social and occupational adaption (RNCYPT 2020).

According to the ILO, CL refers to *work that deprives children (any person under 18) of their childhood, their potential, and their dignity, and that is harmful to their physical and/or mental development*. It refers to work that is physically, emotionally, or ethically hazardous to children and/or interferes with their educational by: denying them the chance to attend a school, pushing them to quit school prematurely, requiring them to make an effort to balance working long hours and going to school (ILO 2023). The term CL can be further divided into children under the age of 12, children aged 12 to 14 doing more than light work, and youth aged 15 to 17 (Agarwal & Kelly, 2004).

Children often engage in both paid and unpaid work activities all around the world. However, when children are either too young to work or active in hazardous sectors of labour that might jeopardize their physical, mental, social, or educational development, they are categorized as child labourers (UNICEF & ILO 2022).

Not all work performed by children should be considered CL that needs to be eradicated. It is typically viewed as favourable when children who have reached the legal working age participate in activities that don't harm their health, personal development, or interfere with their education. This practice, as mentioned before, is known as child work. That covers tasks like helping out within family or earning money during the summer or after school. These sorts of activities benefit children's growth and the wellbeing of their families; they provide them knowledge and experience and serve to get them ready to be contributing adults in society (RNCYPT 2020).

## **6. World's issue with child labour**

According to the most recent estimates by ILO in 2020, there are 160 million children working in CL worldwide, a surge of 8.4 million children in the past four years. In most regions the progress against CL is positive and the numbers are getting smaller. But the rise is significant in Sub-Saharan Africa where there are now more children in CL than Asia, the Pacific, the Latin America, the Caribbean, and the rest of the world combined (ILO & UNICEF 2021). These numbers are alarming as they are stagnating and/or rising since 2016 for the first time when ILO started CL estimates in 2000 (ILO 2017). Around 79 million of these children have to work in hazardous conditions. Over 72 % of them are working for their families. More than 17 % are employed and almost 11 % are self-employed. Due to Covid-19 pandemic there are estimates that CL will progressively rise in the next years (UNICEF 2020).

Compared to 37.3 million urban children, 122.7 million children are working in rural areas. By gender, boys' participation in CL is slightly higher with 97 million. Girls are at count of 63 million. 112 million children (70 %) are working in agriculture sector (ILO & UNICEF 2021).

Given that, many of them are younger children, agriculture serves often as a gateway industry for CL (Food and Agriculture Organization/FAO & UNICEF 2019). More than 75 % of 12 years old and younger engaged in CL are employed in agriculture. The other shares of economic activity are held in services 19.7 % and industry 10.3 % (ILO & UNICEF 2021).

CL appears for 72 % children within family and family-owned farms. They have to work on family farms or family microenterprises. Despite widespread misconceptions that the family provides a safer work environment, family-based CL is usually dangerous and leads to hazardous labour. Despite being inside the age limit for obligatory education, a significant portion of younger children engaged in CL are not allowed to attend school. More than a quarter of children under 12 and more than a third of kids between the ages of 12 and 14 are not in school (ILO & UNICEF 2021). Many of them struggle to manage the responsibilities of both school and work, which jeopardizes their entitlement to an education and leisure.

Boys are more likely than girls to be involved in CL at any age among nations. 11.2 % of all boys are involved in CL, compared to 7.8 % of all girls. Boys outnumber girls in CL by 34 million in total. The gender disparity in frequency among boys and girls, in age category of 5 to 14, is decreased by almost half when the definition of CL is expanded to include home activities that take up 21 hours or more per week as that is not seen as CL, which is mostly done by girls (UNICEF & ILO 2022).

## **6.1. Countries with highest child labour involvement**

More than one in five children are part of CL in the world's poorest nations, many even in the worst form of CL. Example of the most affected countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are Somalia and Nigeria. In Somalia, CL comprises over 40 % of the 1 million or more children between the ages of 5 and 14 as of 2018. Only half of the children in this age group attend school. Somali children are used in a variety of agricultural tasks, including fishing, threshing grain, and rearing cattle. Children are employed in the country's mining and construction sectors. Youngsters can also be seen peddling goods, operating minibuses, and beg on the streets (Nag 2019). In Nigeria, CL is mostly caused by poverty. CL is a significant source of revenue for low-income families. Around 70 % of the population lives under the poverty line. In 2020, 47.5 % of children aged 5 to 14 were part of CL (recalculated to over 15 million) (Bureau of International Labour Affairs 2020). As mentioned before, situation in Sub-Saharan Africa is getting worse in terms of CL. In Nigeria concretely, it is 11.2 % increase from 2010 when in the same age category was 36.3 % of children involved in CL (Bureau of International Labour Affairs 2010).

In Pakistan, 11 million youngsters work in agricultural and household chores. Some kids perform bonded labour in the brick business with their relatives. The coal, carpet, and brick industries all employ this sort of forced CL. Bonded labour continues to be used in Pakistan despite the country's implementation of an Act against CL in 1992 because it lacks the resources necessary to police CL regulations. Over 13 % of children are engaged in CL and almost half in hazardous work (Nuzzo 2019). Although North Korea is the most isolated country in the world, CL has not avoided it. Children are harmed by the many forms of CL used in North Korean culture as well as additional labour required in the camp. Despite being on the verge of famine, children are made to labour the majority of the time they are awake in order to satisfy quotas. Due to North Korea's extreme secrecy, no one is aware of the actual number of children involved (Lim et al. 2018).

In Latin America, in terms of CL the worst country is Brazil. There are more than 7 million child labourers. Almost 560,000 of these are young domestic workers. The worst forms are shown in commercial sexual exploitation, occasionally committed on children as a result of human trafficking. To augment family finances, children are compelled to labour, which interferes with their education and social activities (Bureau of International Affairs 2020).

## **6.2. Child labour in South Asia**

According to conservative estimates from 2014, 16.7 million children in South Asia (ages 5 to 17) are employed as child labourers. One-fifth of the child labourers in South Asia are children aged 5 to 11 years old. As age, involvement in employment rises, from under 4 % for 7 years old to ranges of over 20 % by the time they are 17 years old. A significant portion of 15–17 year old work is risky in nature. The percentage varies a lot within the countries (see Table 1) (ILO 2023). CL estimates in terms of total amount of children involved (see Table 2), which shows three countries with the highest amount compared to Cambodia (Khan & ILO 2014).

**Table 1: Employment in hazardous labour, youth 15-17 years old.**

Employment in hazardous labour, youth 15-17 years old	
Country	Percentage (%)
Bangladesh	75
Sri Lanka	72
Pakistan	41
Nepal	30
India	20
Cambodia	19.7

Source: data elaborated from ILO 2023

**Table 2: CL estimates in South Asia, highest ranking countries compare to Cambodia in 2014.**

CL estimates in South Asia, highest ranking countries compare to Cambodia in 2014	
Country	Number of children (in million)
India	5.8
Bangladesh	5
Pakistan	3.4
Cambodia	0.3

Source: data elaborated from Khan & ILO 2014

### **6.3. Supply and demand of child labour**

Families, who are in need of an extra income very often find CL as a solution. Not taking children's health and well-being in account, parents and other family members are accountable for their fate. Desire of household to improve their standards of living is driving the supply side. Meanwhile children are viewed as cheap to employ, easy to



control and more docile. For those reasons, they can be demanded and in the same time drive adults' wages down (UNICEF & ILO 2022).

Reduced costs are a natural goal for producers. One approach to reduce it is to make reduce labour spending. Male and female, skilled and unskilled, adult labour and CL are all categories of the available work force. A growing body of research on trade and CL demonstrates the connection between the demand for trade commodities and the demand for CL. Compared to adult labour, CL is more affordable and may be used in any sector of employment at a lower cost (Ab-Rahim & Tariq 2017). Demand for unskilled labour is high, particularly in the traditional agricultural industry (FAO & UNICEF 2019).

## **7. Registration of children at birth in Cambodia**

Cambodia has a serious problem with birth registration. A fourth of Cambodian children, under 5, according to UNICEF (2022), are not registered at birth, leaving them open to a variety of abuses, rights violations or issues with finding legal works in the future. Even though, there is mayor progress since 2000, when only 22 % children under 5 were registered (Get everyone in the picture 2017). The causes of Cambodia's low birth registration rates are numerous and intricate. Due to obstacles including poverty, location, or lack of transportation, some families might not understand the significance of birth registration, while others could not have access to registration services (UNICEF 2022).

In addition, families may find it challenging to register their children due to administrative obstacles including convoluted registration processes or the requirement for several paperwork. Required documents are letter of certifying birth, family books or residence books and copies of marriage certificate (OpenDevelopment Cambodia 2020). Low birth registration rates in Cambodia have major impacts. Unregistered children may be denied access to essential services like healthcare and education, and they may later have trouble obtaining identification documents or employment. Also, because it is more challenging to protect them due to their lack of a legal status, they may be more susceptible to exploitation and abuse (UNICEF 2022).

The Cambodian government has implemented a number of efforts, such as mobile registration teams, awareness campaigns, and legislation revisions, to raise birth registration rates and boost access to services for unregistered children (OpenDevelopment Cambodia 2020). Birth registration is also part of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), namely target 16.9 which should *by 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration* (UN 2023).

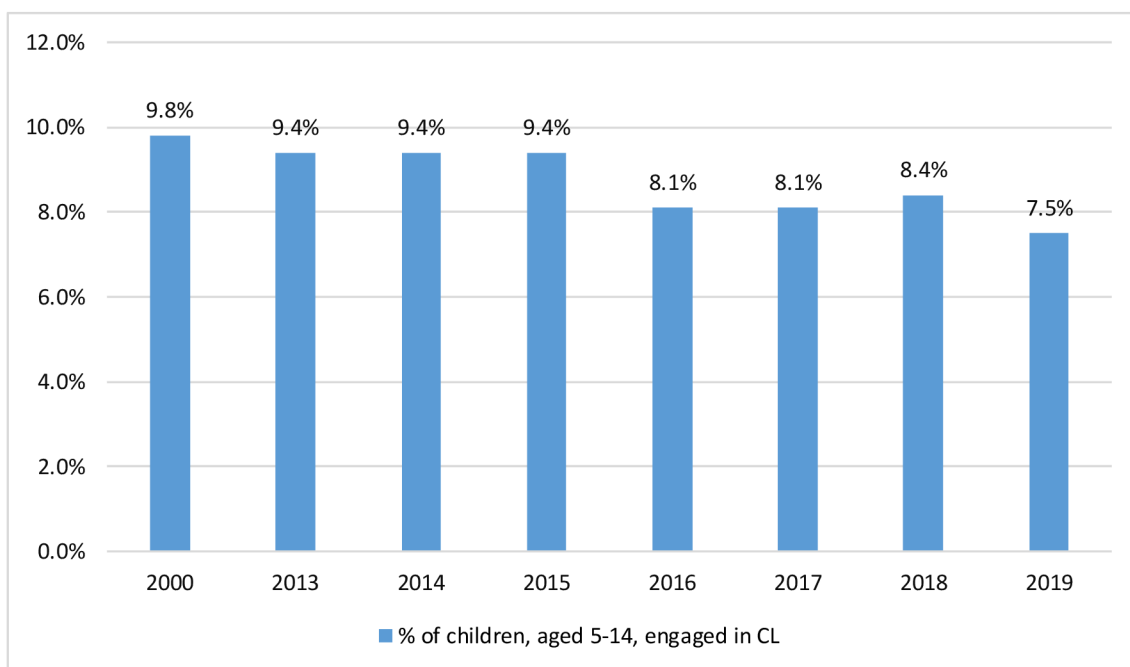
Unregistered children may face many challenges through life, especially in finding legal employment. Children without birth certificate are in much higher risk of CL and later in employment in illegal sectors. Overall, they are in much higher risk as they are “invisible” to the within the larger society (ILO 2022).

## **8. Child labour in Cambodia**

The minimum age for minors to work in Cambodia is 15 years. A minor (under the age of 18) cannot sign an employment contract without their parent's or guardian's approval. Night-time employment, hazardous work, and long hours are prohibited for minors. For hazardous work the limit is 18 years old. Yet, there are several cases of CL, starting at the age of 5 (WageIndicator 2021). Around 50 % of children involved in CL are working in hazardous sector. The majority of working children have family support, that means that families are aware of it. For many families, income from their children is highly needed for covering basic needs (ILO 2023).

Many children in Cambodia work in both formal and informal businesses, including street begging and peddling, prostitution, and others. The majority of child labourers in Cambodia work without a legal contract, which leaves them open to exploitation, physical and sexual abuse, and unfavourable conditions at work (RNCYPT 2020). As mentioned in chapter above, birth registration (see chapter 7.), is a great issue in Cambodia. Due to that, children tend to fall into CL. For non-registered children, there are much higher chances to get into hazardous works. Cambodia suffers with one of the worst forms of CL (UNICEF 2018). Children in rural regions are more prone than children in cities to fall into the CL trap. Also, as a large portion of CL takes place in unregulated or informal sectors, it can be challenging to estimate the precise number of children that are engaged in it.

Exact number of children involved in CL are hard to measure. By Bureau of International Affairs (2001-2020) the percentage of children (aged 5-14) engaged in CL are shown in Graph 5. Till 2012, there were no deeper rooting problem surveys made connected to estimates of CL in Cambodia. In report by ILO & National Institute of Statistics (2013), percentage of children (aged 5-17) engaged in CL was estimated to 10.9 %. Due to Covid-19 pandemic, a result of extensive school closures, the loss of jobs in the informal sector, increased poverty, and a lack of social protection, some families may be forced to use CL to make ends meet. Already employed children may experience worse conditions, with lower income and longer hours (ILO 2020).



**Graph 5: Children (5-14) involved in CL through years in Cambodia.**

Source: data elaborated from Bureau of International Affairs 2001-2020

As majority of the population lives in rural areas, the work also develops there. In report from 2001 by Bureau of International Labor Affairs (2002), there are indications that CL is much more visible in rural areas compare to urban, but exact partition is unknown. In 2012 work in urban was at 13.3 % and 86.7 % in rural areas (ILO & National Institute of Statistics 2013). The agriculture industry employs children mostly in rural regions (see Graph 6). This is because many rural households depend on agriculture as their primary source of income and sometimes are unable to afford to

recruit adult labour. Contrarily, Cambodia's urban areas often provide greater employment options and higher educational prospects, which lowers the need for children to labour to support their families (UNICEF 2018).

Both boys and girls have the opportunity to labour, albeit the jobs they hold and the sectors in which they work might vary. In Cambodia, girls are more likely to work in domestic activities like cooking, cleaning, and watching over small children. Whereas guys are more likely to engage in physical labour jobs like agriculture and construction or work with heavy machinery (ILO 2023). Involvement by gender in CL in 2001 was: male 51.2 %, female 48.8 % (ILO & National Institute of Statistic 2002). In 2012 involvement was: male 49.3 %, female 50.7 % (ILO & National Institute of Statistics 2013). Girls very often have to work on family tasks, creating gender gap, as boys do not have to participate in it. That leads to less free time for them or less time for education as work is a priority. Household tasks come in front of education, which leads to higher dropout or not attending schools at all. The labour is also unpaid (Asian Development Bank & ILO 2013).

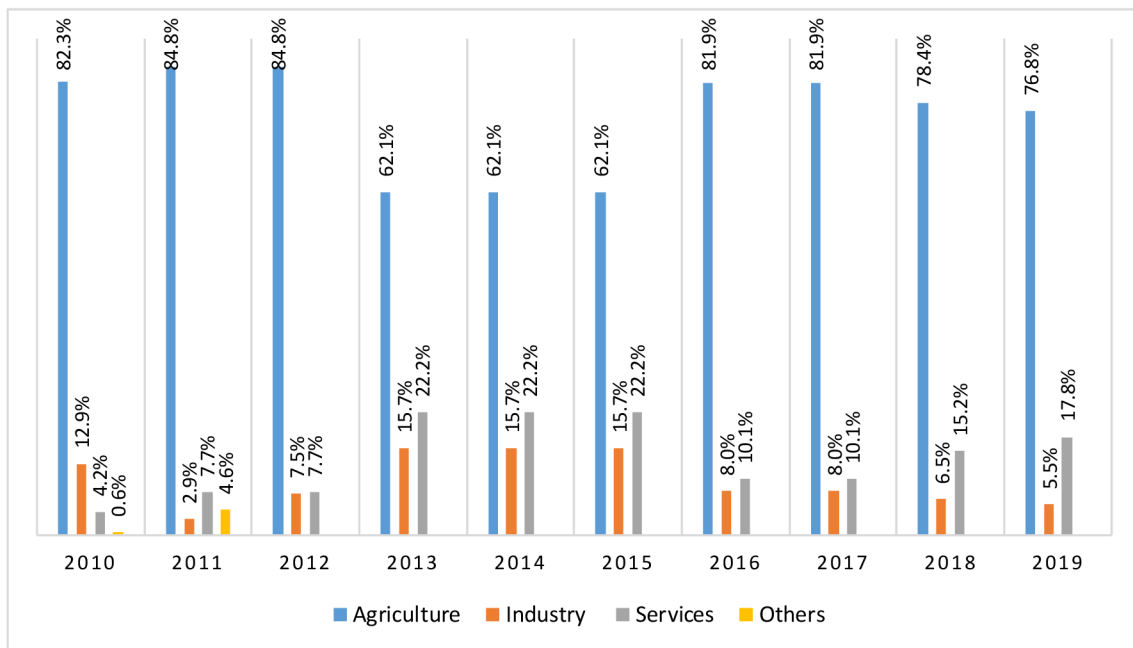
The most common age to start working for children is between 10 to 14 years. Unfortunately, children under 5 are seen to work too. Small children work usually as waste pickers and street baggers. With age, the number of working children is increasing (ILO 2020). The proportion of children in age group categories did not change through decades.

Particulars of the industry and working circumstances affect how many hours children are required to work. In certain instances, children may labour for 10 to 12 hours a day or longer up to 16, frequently without enough breaks or downtime. Some children could put in even more time at the worst form of labour, especially in sectors like agriculture, fishing, and construction (WB 2022). It is difficult to determine exactly how many hours children are working because CL tends to be covert and hard to detect (ILO 2017).

Children who are forced into CL frequently get extremely little pay that is much below the minimum wage and does not include any benefits or employment security. Depending on the sort of job they undertake and their age, they make anywhere from 0.50 US\$ to 2 US\$ per day on average. Their pay is frequently withheld or diminished for a variety of causes, such as deductions for shelter, food, and other costs. Minimum

wages are set in Cambodia, but they are not enforced on children (ILO & National Institute of Statistics 2013).

In general CL occurs the most in agricultural sector. Agriculture with fishing and forestry have the highest legal and illegal employment (FAO & UNICEF 2019). The proportion of CL involvement in different sectors is shown in Graph 6.



**Graph 6: Children (5-14) involved in CL through years in different sectors in Cambodia.**

Source: data elaborated from Bureau of International Affairs 2011-2020

Children involved in CL may sustain physical injuries including cuts, bruises, burns, and broken bones in addition to long-term health difficulties like respiratory conditions and back pain. They could suffer from psychological problems including anxiety, stress, and depression as a result of their long hours and distance from their families (Human Rights Watch 2015). The injuries may differ depending on the sector they are working in. Overall, these children are exposed to chemicals, large machinery, and hazardous working conditions while they are at work in majority of the different jobs. In the worst cases, children with work-related injuries had to have limbs amputated. Due to the usage of powerful gear and cutting-edge equipment, children who

work in sectors like agriculture, brickmaking, and fishing are especially susceptible to accidents that might end in amputations. Especially in the southern part of the country, where it is highly land mined, with unexploded munitions. Rural parts are containing high number of mines. Nowadays these areas are used mainly for agriculture where children are working (UNICEF 2018).

In 2001, there were reported 8,172 amputees of child labourers at workplaces (ILO & National Institute of Statistic 2002). This data is from legal employment, the number could increase with informal employment. Statistics in later years related to this topic are unknown. But by publicated reports by ILO, CL and its worst forms are improving, thus the number should be staying equal or decreasing (ILO 2023). In other report concentrating on unexploded ordnance and mines by UNICEF (2018), there were 15 deaths of children, compared to 11 in 2015. Amputations/ injuries were reported in 46 cases in 2012, compared to 9 cases in 2015.

## **8.1. Agriculture sector**

Agriculture industry is driving Cambodia's economy. Many families in rural areas depend mostly on agriculture for their source of income. Due to higher illiteracy of parents in rural areas, children are more likely to follow their path and drop out of school earlier (FAO & ILO 2013). Thus, children find employment in agriculture sector too (see Graph 6). The works diverse from working in fisheries, crop fields, logging wood to breeding cattle. Main crops harvested in Cambodia are rice, cassava, coconut, and sugarcane (ILO 2015). Especially in agriculture, gender division is visible on work assigned. Boys do hard lifting, working with machinery, harvesting and girls do cleaning, manual work, post-harvest activities and work in the field (FAO & ILO 2013).

Most children work on family or family-owned farms and fields. In sugarcane sector, 83 % of children work on family-owned fields compare to 17 % who worked on cash crop plantations (ILO 2015). Commonly, children do not get paid for this kind of work as they are seen as helpers. Cash crop plantations and other large-scale exporters do offer jobs too (ILO 2020). Cambodian legislation does not address child work in family-based agriculture but limits the permitted working hours, unfortunately many parents go over the limit as they do not see any harm on the children with it (Feldt

2015). In agriculture there are horrible working conditions for children. Children are working in the sun and are exposed to high humidity and excessive temperatures often complain of headaches, dizziness, and breathing problems. They operate with chemicals and large cutting tools, getting wounds, bee stings, and skin infections. At plantations they can make up to 3.75 US\$ a day. Unfortunately, the real amount is much lower (ILO 2015).

The age of children starting to work differs. In private sector (family farms) children under 10 are visible to work. In cash crop plantations, it is usually for older children (15+) (FAO & UNICEF 2019). The majority of parents and community leaders believe this is too early for a child to begin working (in private sector), but they also claim that because the household is struggling and more help is required on the farm, there are no other options (ILO 2022). Their workload may be lower during the off-season, children may work lengthy hours during the busiest agricultural seasons (ILO 2015).

In rural areas especially, CL in agriculture may also be considered as the norm, with young children acquiring farming skills from their parents and grandparents (Kana et al. 2010). As a result, it may be challenging to address the problem of CL in agriculture since it may be intricately woven into regional traditions and practices (FAO & ILO 2013).

Even though this sector has the highest CL prevalence, there are not sufficient data for Cambodia.

## **8.2. Garment sector**

CL in the Cambodian textile sector is contains doing a range of tasks, including sewing, cutting, and ironing. The use of CL in factories was frequently related to subcontracting, which occurs when bigger manufacturers assign work to smaller factories or workers at home (Fair Labor 2019). Some of the international brands that have been linked to CL in Cambodian garment factories include Adidas, Nike, H&M, and Gap (Thul 2021). Cambodia was ranked 8th at worldwide poll to have low manufacturing costs in global survey (U.S. News & World Report L.P. 2023). This is attracting brands to manufacture their goods there.

Child labourers in the garment sector are often subjected to long working hours, low wages, and hazardous working conditions. Outside vendors put the orders in the factories and dictate the amount of good in price they need to achieve. Then it is up to the chiefs to ensure the good working environment for the workers. Most of the time, they do not care about the conditions the workers need to work in (Bureau of International Labor Affairs 2022). Other issue is that due to the lack of human rights and bad working environment, the garment sector brings attention of NGOs and other organizations trying to secure better terms for the workers. The result of it, many factories decided to only employ people over 18 years of age (Human Rights Watch 2015). As already mentioned in chapters above, main driver for CL is poverty. Children are still in need for these jobs. As a result, an identification document (ID) falsification is very common. A significant price of 50 US\$ and the "help" of the commune/village leader and police were used in the forgery of documents. Due to their legal registration as adult employees, children are required to work the same hours as adults, including extended overtime shifts during the night (Prota 2014).

Regrettably, it is challenging to estimate the precise number of children employed in Cambodia's textile industry. There are no trustworthy government statistics on the number of child employees in the Cambodian garment industry since CL is frequently unofficial and covert. The prevalence of CL in Cambodian garment factories has been reported in a number of unofficial papers, as well as the difficulties in observing and resolving this problem (The Borgen Project 2020).

By purchasing items with knowledge and supporting businesses with high labour standards and ethical sourcing procedures, consumers can play a significant part in the battle against CL (Bureau of International Labor Affairs 2022).

### **8.3. Factories**

Diverse factories lack safety precautions and laws. It is forbidden for children to refuse any form of work. As a result, young children end up handling hazardous equipment and cutting-edge materials. There are several roles available in manufacturing. Brick production, loading, and unloading using machinery. Numerous



illnesses and injuries, such as cuts, bruises, burns, or the loss of body parts, are connected to this employment (Bunnak 2007).

### **8.3.1. Brick factories**

CL occurs often in brick factories in Cambodia, especially in rural regions where poverty rates are high. 486 brick kilns are known in Cambodia. Many families in these places suffer financially, thus parents could feel pressured to take their children to work to help the family's revenue (Thomson Reuters Foundation 2020a). Children employed in brick kilns usually perform risky and exhausting tasks such lifting large brick loads, mixing and molding clay, and working in intense heat without the required safety equipment (Bunnak 2007).

Brick kilns produce huge amount of ecological toxins, harmful to the environment and organisms. Children are often not provided any safety equipment nor given explanation how to safely perform their job (Bales & Sovacool 2021).

In the brick industry, where kiln owners provide loans to struggling workers and use the debts to trap them, it is claimed that thousands of Cambodian families are the victims of bonded labour. This help children to get trapped in the vicious circle of CL and poverty (Brickell et al. 2018).

The number of children working in brick factories is unknown. But there are estimates that it is in hundreds. Thanks to blooming brick industry, the number could be increasing (Thomson Reuters Foundation 2020b). Also, brick industry faces denial from country's government as they openly deny that there is a problem. Due to its history of violating human rights, notably through CL, Cambodia was attempting to escape economic penalties from the European Union and the US (The Thomson Reuters Foundation 2020a). The government is now claiming that all 486 kilns are free from CL and no one under 15 years is working there (Thomson Reuters Foundation 2020b).

## **8.4. Waste industry**

Waste management is a thriving sector in Cambodia, supported by an unofficial network of waste collectors, buyers, and pickers (Chhun 2012). At recycling, rubbish collection, and disposal sites, children are frequently hired to labour in dangerous

conditions. Waste picking, which involves removing trash from dumps in order to sell it, is common in less developed countries and is seen to be one of the most dangerous types of CL (Bales & Sovacool 2021). Due to smoke inhalation from burning debris and injuries from vehicles or bulldozers, waste pickers are at risk for infections, parasites, lung cancer, and other respiratory disorders (Hoeur 2018; Kabir et al. 2019)

Waste pickers might profit by selling their rubbish to smaller businesses that will reuse it. One can sell jewelry, electronics, and other items at flea markets or pawn shops. Since this kind of job is not time-bound, many kids are compelled to spend hours scouring the streets for items in order to make at least a modest living (Hoeur 2018). Child waste pickers frequently receive payment depending on the weight of the items they gather, which encourages them to put in as many hours as they can to earn as much money as they can. Waste pickers often get 1 US\$ per day if they do not discover any treasures (Akenji & Bengtsson 2019).

Given that a significant amount of this job is unorganized and uncontrolled, it is challenging to estimate the precise number of children that work as rubbish pickers in Cambodia. However, it is believed that thousands of kids in Cambodia participate in rubbish picking, particularly in urban areas where a lot of waste is produced. As this job does not require any management, young children as early as five or six years old might start working as rubbish pickers (Chhun 2012).

Cambodian government should be working on elimination of the worst forms of CL, which should lead to lower child labourers in this industry. Unfortunately, there are predictions that due to Covid-19 the number has increased (United Nations Development Programme/UNDP 2020).

## **8.5. Sex industry**

The problem of child sexual exploitation is highly complex, and in Cambodia, it is strongly related to the rapidly expanding domestic and international tourist sectors. The sex industry is supported by demand side of outside world. Girls in particular are frequently trafficked or persuaded into the sex business where they are exploited and exposed to sexual assault (UNICEF 2017). This industry is a major source of exploitation and abuse of children (U.S. Department of State 2022).

Children who are compelled to work in the sex business frequently come from poor and uneducated families, among other disadvantages (ILO 2020). Promises of a better life or career prospects may entice them, but they may end up becoming stuck in the sex industry. Some children are kidnapped or sold into the industry by their own families (UNICEF 2017).

Cambodia has regulations in place that make child trafficking and prostitution illegal. However, because to corruption and a lack of resources, enforcement might be challenging especially recent situation of Covid-19 with loss of jobs, families are in need of additional income (U.S. Department of State 2022). By UNICEF (2018), child trafficking is defined as *the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation*. Trafficking mostly affected young girls and women, aged 13–25. Forcible CL and child sex trafficking have Cambodia as a source, transit, and destination country. Trafficking originates in every region of Cambodia, and it predominantly goes to cities inside Cambodia and to neighbouring nations (mostly to Thailand, China, Hong Kong) (UNODC 2022).

Unfortunately, sex trafficking is a well-organized, cunning business that is all too widespread in local areas. The majority of sex traffickers are foreigners who look for girls together with the person running the prostitution ring in the neighbourhood and pay the family for giving up their daughter, usually in the form of money (UNICEF 2017).

Human trafficking for sex was on the rise in the first decade of 21<sup>st</sup> century in Cambodia, and it's linked to socioeconomic problems including pressure to support their families financially, illiteracy, and poverty. In addition, gender dynamics in Cambodian culture and patterns of economic development (such as the growth of the tourism sector, privatization, and corruption) have combined to foster a thriving sex industry (Sari 2010). Over the span of decade, sexual trafficking in Cambodia has greatly decreased. From 8 % in 2012, to 2 % in 2015. More than 15 % of commercial sex workers were between the ages of 9 and 15 (UNICEF 2018).

Trade-in virginity is a significant type of sexual exploitation in Cambodia. Members of Asia's elite who have been shielded from punishment for countless years are among the clientele (The Guardian 2014). The demand also comes from abroad.

The government is trying to make steps towards ending CL in sex industry. In report from the U.S. Department of State (2022), *Law on the Suppression of Human Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation criminalized sex trafficking and labour trafficking* was implemented in 2008 in Cambodia. Even though, there should be prescribed penalties, according to NGOs, in practice, the government did not punish labour traffickers criminally under the anti-trafficking statute.

## **9. Impact on child's well-being**

There is general agreement that children should be in school instead of working, and that many children work in awful conditions that are harmful to their health (WB 2004). Children are frequently denied the chance to attend school due to CL, which can have an influence on their overall education and future chances. It may be challenging to break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy as a result of it (Human Rights Watch 2016).

CL is linked to a number of detrimental health effects, including stunted development, malnutrition, an increased risk of infectious infections, and behavioural and emotional issues. This also covers limitations imposed on by injuries or illnesses (UNICEF 2022). They suffer high stress and worry about the future as a result of the quality of their well-being, low self-satisfaction, and lack of basic needs for the whole family (ILO 2018).

As a result of family situations, numerous children are forced to work. The need of financial support leads to earlier drop out from school. Children frequently decide to leave home due to the difficult circumstances at home and at work, where they may experience physical or sexual abuse and violence. All of it harms them both physically and emotionally. The majority of them eventually end on the streets, where they seek for freedom (Shahraki et al. 2020).

A children's physical, emotional, and social development can be hampered by CL. Children may be denied the chance to play, interact with others, grow in a supportive and safe environment (ILO 2023).

Overall, it is a violation of the basic human rights of children. It deprives children of their rights to education, protection, and growth (UNICEF 2018).

## 10. Government regulations

By establishing laws and policies aimed at defending children's rights and eliminating CL, the Cambodian government has taken action to address the issue of CL. Yet, these rules continue to be poorly enforced, and several kids continue to labour under abusive circumstances (Thomson Reuters Foundation 2020a). To help fight against the CL issue, government is implementing international laws about CL (ILO & UNICEF 2021).

The government prepares a National Action Plans on the Elimination of Child Labour since 2011 (Bureau of International Labor Affairs 2016). Newer Action Plan from 2017 aims to eliminate all forms of CL by 2025 (Bureau of International Labor Affairs 2017).

Some of the positive progresses towards the targets from National Action Plans are listed below:

Laws such as the Labour Law and the Law on the Protection of the Rights of the Child have been passed by the government to safeguard children from exploitation and abuse. These regulations stipulate stringent requirements for the employment of youngsters between the ages of 15 and 18 and forbid the employment of children under the age of 15 (WageIndicator 2021). The government has worked to increase all children's access to school, especially those from underserved neighbourhoods. This entails expanding the number of schools and offering financial aid to families whose children cannot afford to attend school (Kluttz 2015; Bureau of International Labor Affairs 2017). To inform parents, businesses, and the general public about the detrimental effects of CL, the government has started awareness programs. The value of education is emphasized in these efforts, which also promote reporting of CL crimes (CAMFEBA & PAECL 2012).

Challenges that still need to be addressed:

Numerous children still don't go to school despite attempts to widen access to education, especially in rural regions. A few of the causes of this are infrastructure deficiencies, prejudice, and poverty. Enforcement of CL regulations is still difficult, especially in the unregulated sector, where many minors work (Bureau of International Labor Affairs 2020).

The Cambodian government in partnership with international organizations including the ILO, UNICEF, FAO and NGOs are collaborating to fight CL through awareness-raising campaigns, educational initiatives, and law enforcement capacity development (ILO 2018).

Regardless, Cambodia faces corruption, bribery and exploitation of vulnerable families (Thomson Reuters Foundation 2020a). Therefore, tough steps must come from the government to help eliminate CL within the country.

## **11. Organizations helping with the issue**

The greatest organizations addressing CL in Cambodia and entire world are ILO and UNICEF.

ILO is setting international labour standards. Convention No. 138 on Minimum Age and Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of CL are the two ILO conventions on CL (ILO 2023). These Conventions are "fundamental" agreements. These treaties provide as a framework for the idea of CL and serve as the foundation for CL laws adopted by signatory nations (UNICEF 2022). As a result of the adoption of the CL Conventions, the majority of nations today have laws that forbid or severely restrict the employment and work of minors (ILO 2023).

The mission of UNICEF, a branch of the UN, is to advance the rights and welfare of children everywhere. The group promotes initiatives to end CL via education, awareness-raising, and advocacy while addressing the underlying causes of CL, such as poverty and lack of access to school (UNICEF 2018).

ChildFund International is a global NGO for child development that seeks to assist families and children in overcoming poverty and realizing their full potential. By giving children and their families access to healthcare, education, and other support services, the group strives to end CL. They are working in more than 30 countries, including Cambodia (ChildFund 2023).

Save the Children is world's largest child rights NGO working in more than 120 countries and working in Cambodia since 1970. Organization seeks to deal with the

fundamental problems that lead to CL, offer assistance and resources to children who are vulnerable, and promote laws that uphold children's rights (Save the Children 2023).

These organizations, along with others, are working to address the issue of CL in Cambodia and promote the rights and well-being of children in the country.

### **11.1. Sustainable Development Goals**

The world community has pledged to eradicate CL by adopting the SDGs. Goal 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth, and goal 16, Peace and Justice are taking CL into account.

Target 8.7 *takes immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms* (ILO 2023). CL has been found to impede a child's development and to be a violation of fundamental human rights. CL, which prevents upward social mobility based on good education and schooling and also helps to sustaining poverty over generations, is strongly correlated with household poverty. Target 16.2 concentrate on *ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children* (ILO 2023). These targets (goals) by UN should help end the issue connected CL. The goals should be fulfilled by 2030. Due to Covid-19, the estimates for finishing are prolonging.

## **12. Conclusion**

Cambodia is home to one of the worst forms of CL found anywhere in the world. It has been determined that the agricultural sector engages the greatest number of children labourers, despite that children are working in every sector. Due to the fact that most agricultural work is done on family farms, there is a widespread misunderstanding that working in the agricultural industry takes place in a safe environment. There is no denying the reality that the working conditions are unsafe and do not promote safety. Agriculture, fisheries, and brickmaking are the industries in which children are most likely to sustain injuries. This is because working in these industries requires children to operate heavy machinery and/or chemicals, both of which can result in injuries that are so severe that they require amputation.

Despite that the Cambodian government and other international organizations have taken steps to address the problem, the newly implemented regulations are not being enforced properly, and as a result, children continue to suffer.

The fact that there is a research gap in Cambodia that is both evident and rather significant is the aspect that presents the biggest challenge in terms of documenting changes in the country.

The fact that SDGs Goal 8 and 16 as well as ILO standards Convention No. 138 and No. 182 exist demonstrates how serious CL is not only globally but also in Cambodia. There is a critical requirement for development monitoring of CL since, according to estimations, it is getting better; nevertheless, there is a lack of evidence to support the hypothesis that it is steadily improving. In addition, Covid-19 poses a risk that CL will become even more severe as a result of the influence it has on the economy of Cambodia; as a result, it constitutes yet another justification for the requirement that CL's current state be carefully monitored.

It is necessary for all parties involved, including the government, NGOs, the commercial sector, and civil society, to collaborate in a way that is both coordinated and maintained if they wish to see a change that is long-lasting. We can contribute to breaking the cycle of poverty and exploitation that keeps CL alive in Cambodia and around the world if we make the protection of children's well-being and rights a top priority and invest in their education and future.



### **13. References**

- Ab-Rahim R, Tariq B. 2017. THE IMPACT OF TRADE ON CHILD LABOR: EVIDENCE FROM SELECTED SAARC AND ASEAN COUNTRIES. *Journal of Indonesian Economy and Business* **32**. DOI: 10.22146/jieb.22884.
- Agarwal M, Kelly L. 2004. Understanding Children's Work (UCW) Program. Addressing Challenges of Globalization: An Independent Evaluation of the World Bank's Approach to Global Programs. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group.
- Akenji L, Bengtsson M. 2019. ASEAN MEMBER STATES COUNTRY BRIEF. Circular Economy and Plastics: A Gap-Analysis in ASEAN Member States: 46-54.
- Asian Development Bank, ILO. 2013. Gender Equality on the Labour Market in Cambodia. Mandaluyong City: Asian Development Bank.
- Bales K, Sovacool BK. 2021. From forests to factories: How modern slavery deepens the crisis of climate change. *Energy Research & Social Science* **77**. DOI: 10.1016/j.erss.2021.102096.
- Brickell K, Parson L, Natarajan N, Chann S. 2018. BLOOD BRICKS. London: University of London.
- Bunnak P. 2007. Child Labour in Brick Factories: Causes and Consequences.. A Research Study for Campaign of Combating the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Cambodia: 1-68.
- Bureau of International Labor Affairs. 2001. Child Labor and Forced Labor Reports: Cambodia. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor.
- Bureau of International Labor Affairs. 2010. Child Labor and Forced Labor Reports: Cambodia. Washington, D.C.: U.S: Department of Labor.

- Bureau of International Labor Affairs. 2014. Child Labor and Forced Labor Reports: Cambodia. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor.
- Bureau of International Labor Affairs. 2015. Child Labor and Force Labor Reports: Cambodia. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor.
- Bureau of International Labor Affairs. 2016. Child Labor and Forced Labor Reports: Cambodia. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor.
- Bureau of International Labor Affairs. 2017. Child Labor and Froced Labor Reports: Cambodia. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor.
- Bureau of International Labor Affairs. 2018. Child Labor and Forced Labor Reports: Cambodia. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor.
- Bureau of International Labor Affairs. 2019. Child Labor and Forced Labor Reports: Cambodia. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor.
- Bureau of International Labor Affairs. 2019. Child Labor and Forced Labor Reports: Cambodia. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor.
- Bureau of International Labor Affairs. 2020. Child Labor and Forced Labor Reports: Cambodia. Washington, D.C.: U.S: Department of Labor.
- Bureau of International Labor Affairs. 2022. 2022 LIST OF GOODS PRODUCED BY CHILD LABOR OR FORCED LABOR. Washington, D.C.: The U.S. Department of Labor & Bureau of International Labor Affairs.
- Cambodian Children's Trust. 2021. 2020 Annual Impact Report. Battambang: Cambodian Children's Trust.
- CAMFEBA, PAECL. 2012. CAMFEBA PLAN OF ACTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF CHILD LABOUR (WF) IN CAMBODIA. Cambodia: ILO.
- Chandler DP, Overton LC. 2022. Cambodia. Britannica. Available from <https://www.britannica.com/place/Cambodia> (accessed November 2022).

- Chandler DP. 2022. Cambodia: A Historical Overview. Asia Society. Available from <https://asiasociety.org/education/cambodia-historical-overview> (accessed November 2022).
- Chhun G. 2012. Handling Solid and Hazardous Waste by Waste Pickers: A Case Study of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Arizona: Arizona State University.
- ChildFund. 2023. Our Work. ChildFund. Available from <https://www.childfund.org/> (accessed April 2023).
- Countryeconomy.com. 2023. Cambodia - Human Development Index - HDI. Countryeconomy.com. Available from <https://countryeconomy.com/hdi/cambodia> (accessed February 2023).
- Fair Labor. 2019. 21 companies sourcing from Cambodia express concerns about labor and human rights. Fair Labor Association. Available from <https://www.fairlabor.org/21-companies-sourcing-from-cambodia-express-concerns-about-labor-and-human-rights/> (accessed April 2023).
- FAO, ILO. 2013. Guidance on addressing child labour in fisheries and aquaculture. Turin: FAO & ILO.
- FAO, UNICEF. 2019. Child Labour in Agriculture: The Demand Side. Lebanon: FAO & UNICEF.
- Feldt H. 2015. Reducing child labour in agriculture through agricultural projects. Rural 21. Available from <https://www.rural21.com/english/a-closer-look-at/detail/article/reducing-child-labour-in-agriculture-through-agricultural-projects.html> (accessed April 2023).
- FRED ED. 2023. GINI Index for Cambodia. Economic Research. Available from <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/SIPOVGINIKHM#> (accessed February 2023).
- Get everyone in the picture. 2017. Cambodia: Cambodia's targets under the Regional Action Framework. Bangkok: United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

- History. 2023. Great Recession. AETN UK. Available from <https://www.history.com/topics/21st-century/recession> (accessed February 2023).
- Hoeur S. 2018. Happiness in the Poorest Communities: Subjective Well-Being. *Psychology Research* **8**: 133-144.
- Human Rights Watch. 2015. Cambodia: Enforce Labor Rights Law in Garment Industry. Human Rights Watch. Available from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/03/18/cambodia-enforce-labor-rights-law-garment-industry> (accessed April 2023).
- Human Rights Watch. 2016. The Education Deficit: Failures to Protect and Fulfill the Right to Education in Global Development Agendas. New York: Human Rights Watch.
- ILO, National Institute of Statistic. 2002. Cambodia child labour survey 2001. Phnom Penh: National Institute of Statistics.
- ILO, UNICEF. 2020. COVID-19 AND CHILD LABOUR: A TIME OF CRISIS, A TIME TO ACT. New York: UNICEF.
- ILO, UNICEF. 2021. Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward. New York: ILO & UNICEF.
- ILO. 2015. Rapid assessment on child labour in the sugarcane sector in selected areas in Cambodia: A comparative analysis. Bangkok: International Labour Office.
- ILO. 2017. Global estimates of child labour: Results and trends, 2012-2016. Geneva: International Labour Office.
- ILO. 2018. Ending child labour by 2025: A review of policies and programmes Geneva: International Labour Office.
- ILO. 2020. COVID-19 impact on child labour and forced labour: The response of the IPEC+ Flagship Programme. Route des Morillons: International Labour Office.

ILO. 2022. ILO: Vulnerabilities to child labour. Geneva: ILO.

ILO. 2023. Cambodia has significantly reduced in the past decade poverty, increased the number of students attending school, and reduced the incidence of HIV.. ILO. Available from [https://www.ilo.org/integration/themes/mdw/map/countries/WCMS\\_170047/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/integration/themes/mdw/map/countries/WCMS_170047/lang--en/index.htm) (accessed April 2023).

ILO. 2023. Child labour in South Asia. ILO. Available from [https://www.ilo.org/newdelhi/areasofwork/child-labour/WCMS\\_300805/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/newdelhi/areasofwork/child-labour/WCMS_300805/lang--en/index.htm) (accessed April 2023).

ILO. 2023. Definition: What is mean by child labour? ILO. Available from [https://www.ilo.org/moscow/areas-of-work/child-labour/WCMS\\_249004/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/moscow/areas-of-work/child-labour/WCMS_249004/lang--en/index.htm) (accessed January 2023).

ILO. 2023. ILO Conventions on child labour. ILO. Available from <https://www.ilo.org/ipecc/facts/ILOconventionsonchildlabour/lang--en/index.htm> (accessed April 2023).

ILO. 2023. Relevant SDG Targets related to Child Labour. ILO. Available [https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/dw4sd/themes/child-labour/WCMS\\_559713/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/dw4sd/themes/child-labour/WCMS_559713/lang--en/index.htm) (accessed January 2023).

Kabir S, Das SR, Hasan S, Begum N, Begum S, Afrin M. 2019. Study on factors determining health status of waste pickers at Dhaka city-corporation. *Journal of ZHSWMC* **1**: 1-3.

Kana M, Phoumin H, Seiichi Fukui. 2010. Does Child Labour Have a Negative Impact on Child Education and Health? A Case Study in Rural Cambodia. *Oxford Development Studies* **38**: 357-382.

Khan SR, ILO. 2014. SOUTH ASIA – Fact Sheet Children in labour and employment. New Delhi: ILO for South Asia and Country Office for India.

- KHMER Times. 2023. BRI projects will help Cambodia become an upper-middle income country: Cambodian expert. Khmer Times. Available from <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501213631/bri-projects-will-help-cambodia-become-an-upper-middle-income-country-cambodian-expert/> (accessed February 2023).
- Kim CY. 2011. Child labour, education policy and governance in Cambodia. *International Journal of Educational Development* **31**: 496-504.
- Kluttz J. 2015. Reevaluating the relationship between education and child labour using capabilities approach: Policy and implementations on inequality in Cambodia. *Theory and Research in Education* **13**: 165-179.
- Lim HK, Chang HHK & Nam B. 2018. *Unending Toil: Child Labor within North Korea*. Seoul: People for Successful Corean Reunification.
- Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. 2019. *Public Education Statistics & Indicators 2018-2019*. Phnom Penh: Department of Education Management Information System.
- Ministry of Planning. 2020. *General Population Census of the Kingdom of Cambodia 2019. National report on FINAL CENSUS RESULTS*. Phnom Penh: Ministry of Planning.
- Nag OS. 2019. *WorldAtlas, Worst Countries For Child Labor*. WorldAtlas. Available from <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/worst-countries-for-child-labor.html> (accessed March 2023).
- National Institute of Statistics & ILO. 2013. *Cambodia Labour Force and Child Labour Survey 2012: Child Labour Report*. Phnom Penh: ILO.
- Nuzzo LD. 2019. *10 Facts About Child Labor in Pakistan*. The Borgen Project. Available from <https://borgenproject.org/child-labor-in-pakistan-2/> (accessed March 2023).

OpenDevelopment Cambodia. 2020. Commune/Sangkat administration. OpenDevelopment Cambodia. Available from <https://opendevdevelopmentcambodia.net/social-accountability/civil-status/> (accessed March 2023).

Prota L. 2014. Cambodia's garment industry labour standards: the view from below. Rome: The American University of Rome.

RNCYPT. 2020. DISTINGUISHING CHILD WORK AND CHILD LABOUR. RNCYPT. Available from <https://www.rncypt.org/distinguishing-child-work-and-child-labour/> (accessed January 2023).

Sari BR. 2010. The Human Trafficking of Cambodian Women and Children. *Jurnal Kajian Wilayah* **1**: 221-236.

Save the Children. 2023. Cambodia. Save the Children. Available from <https://cambodia.savethechildren.net/> (accessed April 2023).

Shahraki SZ, Fouladiya M, Toosifar J. 2020. Child labour processes in the city of Mashhad: A narrative study. *Children and Youth Services Review* **119**. DOI: 10.1016/j.chilyouth.2020.105474.

Southeast Asia Globe. 2020. Child Labour Index: Cambodia highest risk in region for underage workers. *Globe Media Asia*. Available from <https://southeastasiaglobe.com/child-labour-index-southeast-asia/> (accessed April 2023).

The Arbitration Council. 2001. Minimum Wage Determination in Cambodia. The Arbitration Council. Available from <https://www.arbitrationcouncil.org/minimum-wage-determination-in-cambodia/> (accessed February 2023).

The Borgen Project. 2020. Labor Rights Violations in the Cambodian Garment Industry. The Borgen Project. Available from <https://borgenproject.org/labor-rights-violations-cambodian-garment-industry/> (accessed April 2023).

- The Guardian. 2014. VirginitY for sale: inside Cambodia's shocking trade. The Guardian. Available from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/jul/06/virginitY-for-sale-cambodia-sex-trade> (accessed April 2023).
- Thompson D & Chong B. 2020. Built for Trust, Not for Conflict: ASEAN Faces the Future. Washington, D.C.: US Institute of Peace .
- Thomson Reuters Foundation. 2020a. The Thomson Reuters Foundation investigated child labour at Cambodia's brick kilns after the government said all furnaces were free of underage workers. Thomson Reuters Foundation. Available from <https://news.trust.org/item/20200226093233-1umkb> (accessed April 2023).
- Thomson Reuters Foundation. 2020b. Expose reveals child labour in Cambodian brick kilns despite crackdown. Thomson Reuters Foundation. Available from <https://news.trust.org/item/20200213002549-zj1wl> (accessed April 2023).
- Thul PC. 2021. Cambodia raises minimum textiles wage by \$2. Thomson Reuters Foundation. Available from <https://news.trust.org/item/20210928075936-6k8xg> (accessed April 2023).
- Trading Economics. 2023. Cambodia Minimum Wages. Trading Economics. Available from <https://tradingeconomics.com/cambodia/minimum-wages> (accessed March 2023).
- U.S. Department of State. 2022. 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Cambodia. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State.
- U.S. News & World Report LP. 2023. These Countries Have the Cheapest Manufacturing Costs. U.S. News & World Report L.P. Available from <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/rankings/cheap-manufacturing-costs> (accessed April 2023).
- UN. 2023. Goals: 16 Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable



and inclusive institutions at all levels. UN. Available from <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16> (accessed March 2023).

Understanding Children's Work. 2009. Towards eliminating the worst forms of child labour in Cambodia by 2016: an assessment of resource requirements. Rome: UCW.

UNDP. 2020. Living on the Margins: A Community Battles COVID-19 Impact. UNDP. Available from <https://www.undp.org/cambodia/news/living-margins-community-battles-covid-19-impact> (accessed April 2023).

UNICEF, ILO. 2022. Methodology of the 2020 ILO-UNICEF Global Estimates of Child. New York: ILO & UNICEF.

UNICEF. 2017. A Familiar Face: Violence in the lives of children and adolescents. New York: UNICEF.

UNICEF. 2018. A Statistical Profile of Child Protection in CAMBODIA. Phnom Penh: UNICEF Cambodia.

UNICEF. 2019. UNICEF in Cambodia Country Programme 2019-2023. Phnom Penh: UNICEF Cambodia.

UNICEF. 2020. COVID-19 may push millions more children into child labour – ILO and UNICEF. UNICEF. Available from <https://www.unicef.org/eap/press-releases/covid-19-may-push-millions-more-children-child-labour-ilo-and-unicef> (accessed January 2023).

UNICEF. 2021. Official Launch of the National Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Online Child Sexual Exploitation in Cambodia 2021-2025. UNICEF. Available from <https://www.unicef.org/cambodia/press-releases/official-launch-national-action-plan-prevent-and-respond-online-child-sexual> (accessed April 2023).

UNICEF. 2022. Birth registration. UNICEF. Available from <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/birth-registration/> (accessed March 2023).

UNICEF. 2022. Child Labour and Disability: A Sector Review. Kathmandu: UNICEF ROSA.

UNICEF. 2022. Child labour: In the world's poorest countries, slightly more than 1 in 5 children are engaged in child labour. UNICEF. Available from <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-labour/> (accessed March 2023).

UNICEF. 2023. Convention on the Rights of the Child text. UNICEF. Available from <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text> (accessed April 2023).

UNODC. 2022. Global Report on Trafficking in Persons. Vienna: United Nations.

WageIndicator. 2021. Minors and Youth. Prake.org. Available from <https://prake.org/labour-law/fair-treatment-at-my-work/minors-and-youth> (accessed April 2023).

WB. 2004. Understanding Children's Work (UCW) Program. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group.

WB. 2021. Population, total - Cambodia. World Bank Group. Available from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=KH> (accessed November 2022).

WB. 2022. CAMBODIA POVERTY ASSESSMENT: Toward A More Inclusive and Resilient Cambodia. Phnom Penh: World Bank Group.

WB. 2022. Fact Sheet: An Adjustment to Global Poverty Lines. World Bank Group. Available from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/factsheet/2022/05/02/factsheet-an-adjustment-to-global-poverty-lines#3> (accessed February 2023).

WB. 2022. The World Bank in Cambodia. World Bank Group. Available from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cambodia/overview> (accessed February 2023).

WB. 2022. The World Bank in Middle Income Countries. World Bank Group. Available from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/mic/overview> (accessed February 2023).

WB. 2023. GDP per capita (current US\$) - Cambodia. World Bank Group. Available from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?end=2021&locations=KH&start=2000> (accessed February 2023).

Wenk B. 2002. THE WORK OF GIANTS: Rebuilding Cambodia. Bangkok: ILO.