



**CAMBODIA HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2000**  
**CHILDREN AND EMPLOYMENT**

**Cambodia  
Human  
Development  
Report 2000:**

**Children and  
Employment**

Ministry of Planning,  
Royal Government of Cambodia

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## FOREWORD

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the *Cambodia Human Development Report 2000*, which is the fourth Human Development Report that has been produced for Cambodia and the second one that has been nationally-executed by the Ministry of Planning. Cambodia is among more than 100 countries throughout the world that have published national human development reports. These reports have promoted the cause of human development and people-centered approach to national policy-making.

Each of the last three *Cambodia Human Development Reports* has been very well received by government agencies, NGOs, international donors and UN organizations, and civil-society groups. They have also attracted considerable attention in the media. More importantly, they have provided information that is useful for planning and programming purposes to many development organizations working in the field. In my opinion, the *Cambodia Human Development Reports* have achieved the purpose for which they were designed – they have generated a national dialogue on human development and poverty, which in the long run will define the issues and priorities for action.

*Cambodia Human Development Report 2000* focuses on the timely issue of child labor. It documents the magnitude of child labor in Cambodia, and attempts to understand the determinants of child labor within the context of the overall labor market in the country. It also explores the links between child labor, human development, and human rights.

Children are the wealth of our nation and its future. Labor that prevents children from realizing their full human potential – say, by keeping them away from school or by causing them injury or illness – is not only a violation of their human rights, but is harmful to our long-term national interest. We must try to combat this type of child labor.

The Royal Government of Cambodia has been at the forefront of attempts to combat child labor. We signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as early as 1992. We were the second nation in Asia, after Indonesia, to ratify all of the seven fundamental conventions of the ILO (including Convention No. 138 on Minimum Age of Employment). The government is also planning to ratify the new ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor in the near future. All of these steps show the strong commitment of the government to child welfare and child labor issues.

*Cambodia Human Development Report 2000* is the outcome of a nationally-executed project funded by UNDP and executed by the Ministry of Planning. The report is based on an extensive analysis of data from the Cambodia Socioeconomic Survey (CSES) 1999, which was undertaken last year by the National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, under the auspices of a Ministry of Planning/UNDP/SIDA/World Bank project on ‘Capacity Development for Socioeconomic Surveys and Planning.’

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of several agencies and individuals in bringing out the *Cambodia Human Development Report 2000*. First and foremost, the Ministry of Planning would like to thank UNDP for its many contributions, including providing technical assistance and funding to

produce the report. Ms. Dominique Ait Ouyahia-McAdams, Resident Representative of UNDP-Cambodia, has been very supportive and encouraging of this initiative.

Second, I would like to acknowledge the technical assistance of our consultant, Dr. Anil Deolalikar, who helped us in the preparation of the report and in the consultation process with other line ministries, U.N. agencies and NGOs. This is the fourth *Cambodia Human Development Report* on which Dr. Deolalikar has worked closely with us.

Third, I would like to thank the Technical Advisory Group established by the Ministry of Planning for the *Cambodia Human Development Report 2000*, comprising of H.E. Ou Orhat and Ms. Heang Siek Ly (Ministry of Planning), Mr. Jean-Claude Rogivue and Mr. Chamroeun Ouch (UNDP), Mr. Howard Jost (Church World Service), Ms. Hou Samith (Ministry of Women's and Veteran's Affairs), Mr Sok Kalian (Ministry of Justice), Ms Eva Mysliwicz (Cambodia Development Research Institute), Mr David Salter (ILO), Mr Chev Bunny (Royal University of Phnom Penh), Mr Chan Ratha (Royal University of Agriculture), Ms Mom Thany (Save the Children Fund-Norway), and Mr Keo Sokann, Mr Ouk Ravuth and Mr Hou Vuthy (Ministry of Social Affairs, Labor, Vocational Training and Youth Rehabilitation). The Technical Advisory Group provided very useful guidance to us in ensuring that the report reflects the various concerns and sectors of Cambodian society.

Fourth and finally, I would like to thank the National Institute of Statistics for successfully undertaking the CSES 1999 and making the data from this large and comprehensive survey available to us in a timely fashion.

I am confident that the *Cambodia Human Development Report 2000* will initiate a national debate and dialogue on child labor in Cambodia. We need such a debate to formulate our development strategies and to define the issues and priorities for action.

Phnom Penh  
October 2000

Chhay Than  
Minister of Planning  
Royal Government of Cambodia

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### A. Human Development in Cambodia

Human development is about improving ordinary people's lives by enlarging their choices and helping them realize their full human potential. While per capita income is an important aspect of improving people's lives, it is by no means the only one. Health and education are no less important in judging people's welfare. The global *Human Development Report 2000* additionally includes freedom and human rights in its definition of human development.

In recent years, over 100 countries around the world have issued national human development reports with UNDP support. These reports have played an important role in advocating the cause of human development and people-centered approach to national policy-making. This is the fourth human development report for Cambodia. While the first three *Cambodia Human Development Reports* were on poverty, gender, and the role of villages in Cambodia's development, respectively, this *Cambodia Human Development Report* focuses on the issue of child labor. It documents the magnitude of child labor in Cambodia, and attempts to understand the determinants of child labor within the context of the overall labor market in the country.

Child labor is intimately linked to the two concepts of human rights and human development. Human development is about enlarging the choices available to children, so that they can improve their lives and their future. Children have a right to realize and develop their full human potential, and any work that prevents them from attending school and realizing their full potential is a violation of their human rights. In addition, child workers, like all workers, have the right to decent work without exploitation.

The Human Development Index (HDI), proposed by UNDP, is one of several means of measuring the status of human development in a country. The HDI is a composite measure of longevity, educational attainment, and standard of living. The Gender-related Development Index (GDI) is similar to the HDI but additionally takes into account the gender inequality in life expectancy, educational attainment, and standard of living. A third indicator of human development proposed by UNDP is the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), which is a measure of the relative participation of women and men in political and economic spheres of activity. A final indicator of human development proposed by UNDP is the Human Poverty Index (HPI), which measures deprivation in three essential elements of human life -- longevity, knowledge and a decent standard of living.

Cambodia has among the lowest rankings in Asia on all the human development indicators. The HDI score for Cambodia is estimated at 0.517, with only Laos and Bangladesh in Asia having lower scores. Cambodia's GDI score (viz., 0.514) is very similar to its HDI score. The value of the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) for Cambodia is 0.283. UNDP (2000) reports GEM scores for only three countries in South and Southeast Asia. Cambodia's GEM score is lower than that for Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Philippines. Finally, Cambodia's score of 42.53 on the Human Poverty Index (HPI) reflects the high levels of mortality and child malnutrition and the poor availability of public services in the country.

There are large disparities within the country in these human development indicators. For instance, the HDI score for urban Cambodia is about 21 per cent greater than that for rural Cambodia. Likewise, there are large disparities in both HDI and GDI across economic groups. The richest 20 per cent of Cambodians have an HDI score that is 40% greater than that of the poorest 20 per cent of Cambodians. The human poverty index also differs significantly across socioeconomic groups, with the poorest consumption quintiles suffering to a much larger extent from human poverty than the richest quintiles. In addition, human poverty is greater among Cambodian women than among men across all economic groups.

### B. Labor Force Participation, Employment, and Wages in Cambodia<sup>1</sup>

Labor force participation. The Cambodian labor market is characterized by generally high rates of participation (80-90%) among both adult males and females. Labor force participation rates for women exceed those for men at ages 15-19 years, are approximately equal at ages 20-24 years, but are significantly lower at all older ages. Labor force participation rates begin to fall off steeply for women beyond age 54, while the rates do not begin to decline for males until after age 59.

Unemployment. As in most developing countries, rates of open unemployment are low in the rural areas of the country, reflecting the fact that most individuals in the rural areas have an option of working on their farms or working in self-employment activities if they do not find wage employment. Open unemployment rates are higher in the urban areas, and nearly twice as large for urban women as for urban men (12.2% versus 6.7%).

Underemployment and Labor Supply. Underemployment rates – defined as the proportion of employed persons who work fewer than 35 hours per week – are 9-15% among males and 15-18% among females. While open unemployment rates are higher in the urban areas than in the rural areas, the opposite is the case with underemployment rates, reflecting the fact that persons in the rural areas who would otherwise have been unemployed have the option of working, even if for a few hours each week, on their family farm. Despite the high rates of underemployment, average hours worked by the employed are high, with male workers in rural Cambodia working an average of 57.3 hours each week.

Structure of Employment. About 35% of Cambodian workers hold *multiple jobs* or engage in multiple income-earning activities, reflecting the low salaries in most jobs and the low levels of productivity in self-employment activities, including agriculture. Male workers are much more likely than female workers, and rural workers are more likely than urban workers, to engage in multiple income-earning activities.

The vast majority of workers in Cambodia (80% of males and 89% of females) are either own-account workers or unpaid family labor, reflecting the dominance of self-employment over wage employment activities in the country. There are also significant gender differences in the types of employers for whom Cambodian workers typically work. A larger proportion of female workers than

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<sup>1</sup>This section provides an overview of the Cambodian labor market, and focuses on persons aged 15 years and over. Section D looks at employment issues pertaining to children aged 5-17 years.



male workers (87% versus 79%) are self-employed. In contrast, it is much more common for male than female workers to work in government (public) employment. About 9-10% of both male and female workers work in the private sector.

Occupational distribution. Farming, fishing and forestry work are the most important occupations in Cambodia, with 71% of all male workers aged 15 years and over and 79% of female workers reporting these activities as their primary occupations. The next most common occupation, especially for female workers, is sales work, with 4% of male workers and 10% of female workers reporting their main occupation as being sales workers, including hawkers, vendors and peddlers. About 3-5% of male workers and a negligible proportion of female workers are technical workers, professional workers, and production workers (including plant operators). Interestingly, as many as 2% of all male workers in the country report being in the armed forces – a fact that probably reflects the history of civil strife in the country.

Sectors of Employment. Approximately three-quarters of all adult Cambodian workers cited their sector of employment as agriculture (farming, fishing or forestry work). For female workers, trade, manufacturing, and services are other important sectors, accounting for about 20% of all female workers in the country. The service sector employs about 12% of all male workers in the country, while the trade, transport, manufacturing, and construction sectors each account for 3-4% of total male employment. Interestingly, a much larger proportion of female workers than male workers are employed by the manufacturing sector, reflecting the heavily female labor-intensive nature of the nascent garment industry in Cambodia. Indeed, two-thirds to three-quarters of all employees in manufacturing and services are females.

Wages. There are relatively few wage earners in Cambodia, as only 15% of all workers in Cambodia aged 15 years and over are paid employees (the rest being self-employed). As in other countries, there is a large gender difference in wages, with male monthly wages being 27% greater on average than female wages. There are also large rural/urban variations in mean wages, with urban wages being 61% greater on average than rural wages. Average monthly wages are highest in Phnom Penh, followed by the coastal zone. The mountain/ plateau zone has the lowest wages in the country.

There appear to be large wage returns to education, with upper secondary-educated males earning 37% higher wages than individuals with lower secondary schooling and males with post-secondary schooling earning another 25% more in wages than males with upper secondary education. Among females, the wage increments from lower secondary school completion are significant (24%), as are those from completion of post-secondary education (also 24%).

Wages are also strongly related to age, but only among males, reflecting the importance of seniority and experience. For both males and females, wages fall sharply after age 54. Average wages are very different across economic sectors as well, with male wages being highest in the trade, utilities and manufacturing sectors and lowest in the services, agriculture, and construction sectors. In contrast, the service sector is one of the highest paying sectors for women. Indeed, the service sector is the only sector where female employees earn more than male employees (albeit by only 17%). In all other

sectors, women earn significantly less than men, with female wages being 67% lower than male wages in (retail and wholesale) trade. Even in manufacturing, women earn about 30% less than men.

### C. Child Labor and Human Development

Definition of Child Labor. In its broadest definition, child labor is any work performed for pay, profit or family gain by children under the age of 18 years. However, not all forms of child labor are detrimental. Work by children in family-based activities is generally not a problem, as long as it is not physically demanding, does not take up too much of the child's time, does not interfere with the child's schooling, and is not harmful to the child's health. There is also a consensus that paid or wage employment by children is less desirable than work in family-based activities.

However, there is no agreement on what constitutes an acceptable age for employment. The basic minimum age for admission to employment ranges from 14 years to 18 years across different countries in Asia. Some countries, such as Cambodia, allow children between the ages of 12 and 15 years of age to be engaged in "light work." Many countries exclude the agricultural sector from application of the minimum age law, while some allow waivers for certain categories of work, such as work in family-owned businesses and domestic service. Nearly all countries stipulate a higher minimum age for hazardous employment (ranging from 15 to 18 years), but there is no consistent definition of 'hazardous work' across countries.

Child Labor, Human Rights, and Human Development. There are several reasons why child labor, as defined in the previous section, is socially undesirable. Children, like adults, have basic human rights, one of which is to enjoy their childhood without having to worry about earning a livelihood. Child labor deprives children of this basic right. It forces them to become grown-ups before they even have had a chance to enjoy childhood. In addition, child labor inhibits the realization of children's human potential. It prevents them from going to school and investing in their education, thereby depriving them of a chance to improve their earnings in the future and to rise out of poverty. In this sense, child labor condemns children to a lifetime of want and poverty. Additionally, many types of child labor are hazardous to children's long-term health. Exposure to hazardous chemicals and toxins and certain types of physical and mental injuries can result in life-long disabilities and ill health, thereby impairing children's ability to lead normal, productive lives in adulthood.

Another reason why child labor is socially undesirable is that children enter a working relationship with an employer with a huge age and size disadvantage. It is much easier for unscrupulous employers to take advantage of child workers, often in gross violation of labor legislation.

Prevalence of Child Labor in Asia. It is estimated that there are at least 120 million children between 5 and 14 years of age worldwide who engage in work as a primary activity. If work as a secondary activity is included, the number of working children is nearly 250 million. Of these, more than 60% are in Asia. The countries of South Asia – Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan – have the largest proportion of children aged 10-14 years who are economically active. But, among Southeast and East Asian countries, Cambodia has the largest proportion of children aged 10-14 years who are economically active. However, the incidence of child labor in Cambodia is only 0.1

percentage points higher than that in Thailand – a country that has a per capita income that is nearly ten times as large as that of Cambodia. This suggests that child labor is not a function of per capita income alone, but that it depends upon many other factors, such as the structure of the economy, societal attitudes toward child labor, the commitment of the government in eliminating child labor, and the effectiveness of child labor enforcement mechanisms.

The Evolving Nature of Child Work. The vast majority of child workers in Asia work on family-owned farms in the rural areas, although child labor can be found in many other sectors of the economy as well. Indeed, children in Asia can be found in virtually every type of occupation – begging, scavenging for recyclables, baggage-carrying (porters), rickshaw driving, garment manufacture, carpet weaving, mining, commercial sex, fishing, brick-making, and construction work.

Since many countries have started collecting data on child labor relatively recently, not much is known about how the incidence of child labor has changed over time. But studies in Indonesia and Thailand suggest that the labor force participation rate of children has declined significantly in the last decade or two. However, child work in these countries appears to have shifted from the primary sector (agriculture) to the secondary sector (manufacturing and services), and the proportion of child workers who are wage earners has increased as the proportion that are unpaid family workers has declined. Wage labor in manufacturing and services is less flexible, more strenuous, and less compatible with schooling. Many children are increasingly employed in small enterprises which operate as subcontractors to larger firms. These firms, which operate in the informal sector and are often unregistered, are typically the least regulated of all establishments, and engage in flagrant violations of labor laws.

The case studies from Indonesia and Thailand are sobering for they suggest that decline in the overall incidence of child labor induced by economic growth is an incomplete indicator of child well-being. It is also important to look at changes in the type of activities that child workers are engaged in.

International Action Against Child Labor. The basic rights of children were given explicit recognition by all the countries in the world through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which was adopted unanimously by the United Nations General Assembly ten years ago. Since then, the issue of child labor has received a great deal of international attention. The International Labor Office (ILO) has done much to raise awareness of this issue among developing country governments and non-governmental organizations, primarily through a new program it launched in 1992 – the International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC). In many Asian countries, IPEC has been the largest single sponsor of local NGO action programs on child labor as well as government programs on measuring the prevalence of child labor.

The ILO has recently drafted a new Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor (No. 182) out of the realization that owing to poverty, lack of resources, and low administrative capacity in many countries, it would not be realistic to eliminate *all* forms of child labor immediately. In this case, it would be important to prioritize the worst forms of child labor and seek their elimination in the first stage.

The Convention defines children as all persons under the age of 18 years and defines the ‘worst’ forms of child labor as including (i) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labor, (ii) child prostitution and pornography, (iii) the use of children for illicit activities, such drug trafficking, and (iv) work that can jeopardize the health, safety or morals of children.

The ILO-IPEC has launched a number of survey initiatives in several countries to identify and quantify the most hazardous forms of child labor. These surveys have been helpful in identifying the extent of work-related injuries and illnesses sustained by child workers and the industries and occupations which are most harmful to child workers.

Legal and Institutional Framework of Child Labor in Cambodia. The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has been at the forefront of attempts to combat child labor. The government signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as early as 1992. The Royal Government of Cambodia has ratified seven ILO conventions (including Convention 138 on Minimum Age of Employment), thus becoming the second nation in Asia, after Indonesia, to ratify all of the seven fundamental conventions of the ILO. The government is also planning to ratify the new ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor in the near future. All of these steps show the strong commitment of the government to child welfare issues.

In 1997, the National Assembly adopted a new labor code, which set the minimum age of admission to employment at 15 (Article 177). All of the articles of the labor code are essentially in line with ILO conventions. The RGC has also set up an inter-ministerial body, the Cambodian National Council for Children (CNCC), to address issues concerning children, including child labor. The CNCC developed its first Five-Year Plan Against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children in July 1999.

The Ministry of Social Affairs, Labor, Vocational Training and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSALVY) is the lead government agency in charge of enforcing existing child labor-related national legislation through its network of labor inspectors. Despite good intentions, however, the legal system in Cambodia is weak and there are problems with the enforcement of child labor legislation. Few employers are brought to court for violations of child labor laws. The Department of Labor Inspections is severely understaffed and faces many logistical problems.

In addition to the government, U.N. agencies have been active in issues relating to child rights and child labor. A full-fledged International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) was launched by the ILO in Cambodia in May 1997. IPEC-Cambodia has taken the lead role in initiating and improving knowledge on the subject of child labor and other forms of commercial exploitation of children. IPEC-Cambodia additionally has been involved in undertaking situational analysis and action research on this issue.

The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) has identified children’s and youths’ rights as a key cross-cutting issue, and committed the U.N. system in Cambodia to work toward the goals of promoting the rights of the child, bettering the living conditions of impoverished

children, improving the health and nutrition of children, and abolishing the practice of employing children in industries.

#### D. Employment of Children

Incidence of Child Labor. Data from the Cambodia Socioeconomic Survey (CSES) 1999 indicate that the incidence of child labor is greatest among children aged 14-17 years. About 42% of the children in this age group worked or had a job in the survey reference week. The proportion of children aged 5-9 years who worked or had a job was negligible (about 3%), while 10% of children aged 10-13 years worked or had a job during the reference week.

Gender Differences in Child Labor Incidence. There is a striking gender difference in the incidence of child labor among children aged 14-17 years, with one-half of all girls, but only one-third of all boys, working. Not surprisingly, the rates of school enrollment are much lower for girls than for boys aged 14-17 years. Both the rates of school enrollment and of child labor are virtually identical for boys and girls at young ages, but the gender disparity starts manifesting itself after age 12 and continues to widen until age 17.

Several factors may be responsible for the higher prevalence of child labor among teenage girls relative to teenage boys. It is possible that employers, including the families themselves in their own businesses or farms, perceive girls to be more obedient, less likely to complain and shirk, and more willing to work longer hours. Another possibility is that parents consider it more important to educate their teenage boys than their teenage daughters. Teenage girls' access to secondary education could be impeded for a number of reasons, including (i) a perception among parents that the schooling of boys offers greater future rewards in terms of career opportunities and market wages, (ii) parental fear that their daughters might be abducted on the way to or from school (given the large distances between home and secondary schools, especially in the rural areas); and (iii) a perception among parents that 'over-educating' their daughters could be a handicap in the marriage market and would make it difficult for them to marry a suitably-qualified male. Whatever the reason, the fact that girls are less likely to continue their schooling after completion of primary school greatly increases the probability of their entry into the labor force.

Regional Variations in the Incidence of Child Labor. Child labor is much more common in the rural areas of the country than in the urban areas. However, the incidence of child labor in the urban areas is not insignificant – nearly 17% of boys and 29% of girls aged 14-17 years in the urban areas work. The greater incidence of child labor in rural areas is not surprising, as work on the family farm constitutes the single most common form of child labor in most developing countries.

There are other geographical variations in the magnitude of child labor. The incidence of child labor is greatest in the mountain-plateau zone (comprising provinces like Mondulkiri and Rattanakiri), where nearly two-thirds of girls and one-half of boys aged 14-17 years are economically active. In contrast, only 9% of boys aged 14-17 years and 21% of girls aged 14-17 years in Phnom Penh are engaged in labor. Despite the relatively high incidence of child labor in the mountainous zone, however, most of Cambodia's child workers are actually found in the Plains and Tonle Sap regions. These

regions, which are the two most populous zones in the country, together account for 81% of all child workers in the country. Thus, any meaningful efforts to combat child labor in Cambodia have to target these two regions.

How much Do Child Workers Work on Average? The CSES 1999 data indicate that, on average, child workers work nearly full-time – 44.2 hours a week. Indeed, at over 47 hours a week, the working hours of children aged 14-17 years are only slightly lower than those of adults. More than a third of child workers aged 10-13 years, and nearly two-thirds of child workers aged 14-17 years, report working more than 40 hours a week.

Child labor also does not appear to be a completely seasonal phenomenon in Cambodia. Working children work an average of 35-37 weeks – or more than 8 months – in a year in their primary job. More than 40% of all child workers aged 10-13 years and 45% of child workers aged 14-17 years work during 40-52 weeks of the year. With these kind of working hours and work weeks, it is difficult to see how schooling would be compatible with labor force participation for the large majority of child workers.

What Kind of Work Do Child Workers Perform? The vast majority of child workers in Cambodia are either unpaid family workers or own-account workers (viz., self-employed), reflecting the fact that the most common type of child labor is employment in the family business, including agriculture. About 9% of the older child workers (viz., those aged 14-17 years) do, however, work as paid (or wage) employees.

Data on the distribution of child workers by the industry of their primary occupation show that 86% of children aged 14-17 years and 92% of children aged 10-13 years work in agriculture, forestry and fishing. Trade (typically retail) and manufacturing account for another 7-11% of child workers. Other sectors, such as construction and services, account for a negligible number of child workers.

Data on the occupational distribution of child workers again indicate that well over 80% of child workers are farm, fishery or forestry workers, while another 4-6% are sales workers, including hawkers, vendors and peddlers. About 3-4% of child workers are crafts workers.

Thus, child work in Cambodia is largely (although, by no means, exclusively) a matter of children working in the agricultural sector, typically on their family farms. Children from non-farm families also work in their families' non-farm businesses, but relatively few children work as wage employees for non-relatives or non-family-owned businesses.

Unfortunately, the CSES data do not shed light on the type of tasks and activities child workers perform. However, field visits and anecdotal evidence suggest that children are involved in a wide range of tasks, including plowing, transplanting rice, pumping water into the rice field, fetching water to irrigate crops, weighing and harvesting rice, and carrying baskets of harvested rice from the farm. In addition, children are often responsible for taking farm animals, such as cows, to graze and for catching fish from ponds. Children are also known to work on rubber plantations.

Within the manufacturing sector, child labor is commonly found in industries such as brick-making, garment and apparel manufacture, and salt production.

Changes in the Incidence of Child Labor Since 1997. A comparison of the data from the CSES 1997 and CSES 1999 indicates that, while there was an appreciable decline in the prevalence of child labor between 1997 and 1999 among children aged 10-13 years, the proportion of children aged 14-17 who worked remained virtually constant. Within the younger age group, both boys and girls and rural and urban areas benefitted more-or-less equally from the decline in the prevalence of child labor.

What would account for the decline in labor force participation rates among children aged 10-13 years between 1997 and 1999? It is possible that this decline is part of a longer downward trend in labor force participation of younger children since the early 1990s. Improving access to primary schools over time has made it easier for parents to send their children to school and pull them out of work. Certainly, the primary school enrollment rate has been increasing steadily since the early 1990s. What is unfortunate, however, is that this trend does not appear to have extended to older children (viz., those aged 14-17 years), whose labor force participation rates have remained unchanged between 1997 and 1999.

Other Forms of Child Labor. Indeed, the worst forms of child labor may not be picked up at all by surveys such as the CSES. Because most nationally-representative surveys are household based, they are unlikely to enumerate persons not residing in a standard household, such as street children, child soldiers, and child commercial sex workers (CSWs). As a result, precise estimates of the size of these populations are not available. While it is widely recognized that most child soldiers in Cambodia have been demobilized by now and that this problem does not exist at this time, the problem of child sex workers, street children and child domestic workers is a very real one.

It is estimated that there are 80,000 - 100,000 CSWs in Cambodia, with 17,000 of these being in Phnom Penh alone. Of the CSWs in Phnom Penh, about 30% are estimated to be under 18 years of age. This would put the population of child sex workers at about 5,000 in Phnom Penh. Needless to say, these are very rough estimates. Young children, the majority of them girls, are often sold by desperately poor parents into sexual slavery to brokers or middle-men. In such cases, the child is 'pledged' for a certain period of time, and held responsible for repaying the initial loan (taken on by her parents) and the accumulated interest on the loan to the broker from her earnings as a CSW. In other cases, parents are tricked into believing that their children will be provided legitimate work in the city. The demand for child commercial sex workers is said to have increased with the spread of HIV/AIDS, as children are perceived to have had fewer or no sexual partners and therefore less likely to be infected. Child trafficking and prostitution are contemporary forms of slavery, and represent the worst possible forms of child labor.

Related to the issue of child prostitution is child trafficking. While most of the child trafficking for prostitution occurs within Cambodia itself, Cambodia is also at the sending and receiving end of international child trafficking. For example, it is estimated that at least 3,000 women from the southern part of Vietnam have been trafficked to Cambodia for prostitution, with more than 15% being younger

than 15 years of age. At the same time, Cambodian children are trafficked to Thailand for begging and soliciting, with the majority of victims being very young boys. In some cases, Cambodian infants have been purchased by middlemen and brokers for trafficking purposes through legal adoptions. The government has recently stopped adoptions of Cambodian children by foreigners to investigate this issue.

Estimates of the number of street children are even less reliable, as this group is highly mobile and frequently moves from town to town. Social workers and organizations that work with street children estimate that there are roughly one thousand street children living either on their own or with their families in Phnom Penh alone. Of these, the large majority are boys. The most common occupation of street boys is scavenging for recyclables in garbage dumps (46%), followed by begging (18%). In contrast, begging is more common among girls than scavenging. About 9% of the street girls and 5% of the street boys engage in commercial sex. It is very easy for the street children to be drawn into gangs, and resort to crimes such as pick-pocketing and petty theft for sustaining their livelihoods. They are also very vulnerable to using drugs and offering sexual favors in exchange for money or temporary shelter.

Another form of child work about which little is known is domestic work outside the child's own home. A large number of children in Cambodia work as domestic servants, responsible for everything from cooking, cleaning, child care and running errands. It is estimated that Phnom Penh alone has 6,500 child domestic workers aged 14-17 years. While most child domestic workers fall within the 14-17 age group, it is not uncommon to find child domestic workers as young as 8 or 9 years of age. One survey found that only 7% of the child domestic workers in Phnom Penh were male; the remaining 93% were females. Female domestic workers are often preferred over male domestic workers because they are perceived to be more hard-working and less likely to complain about long working hours and difficult jobs. Unfortunately, this makes the girl domestic workers also vulnerable to sexual exploitation by their employers.

Work in the Home. Household chores can be viewed as another form of child work. However, children's assistance with household chores is generally regarded as desirable as long as these chores are light, do not take up too much of the child's time, and do not interfere with the child's schooling. The CSES data indicate that assistance with household chores is very common, especially among older children aged 14-17 years. In this age group, 77% of boys and 82% of girls helped their parents out with household chores during the survey week. In contrast, only about a quarter of children aged 5-9 years actively perform household chores.

Children aged 14-17 years spent an average of 19 hours a week on household chores, with virtually no gender difference. While this may not seem like much, it is very large when added to the work hours spent outside the home. Since child workers aged 14-17 years spend an average of 47.4 hours weekly in outside work, the combined work and chore time of working children amounts to 66 hours per week or 9.5 hours a day (assuming a 7-day work week, which would be typical for children working in family enterprises). Not only would this level of work effort leave little time for school, it would be illegal according to the labor codes of most countries.



What kind of household chores do children typically perform? As would be expected, there is some age and sex segmentation of household tasks. Girls, especially those aged 14-17 years, are responsible for food preparation and cooking, while boys and younger girls tend to take on house-cleaning and clothes-washing duties. Fetching water from the river or well is also largely a task reserved for boys.

Children's Contribution to Household Income. Since the labor force participation rate of children aged 5-14 years is quite low and most of these child workers are unpaid family workers, the wage contribution of this group to overall household wage earnings is quite small – only 0.8%. The wage contribution of children aged 5-17 years is much larger – 3.9%. However, these averages hide the fact that the wage contribution of children is significantly greater among poor households. Among the poorest 20% of the population, children aged 5-17 years contribute 12.2% of household wage earnings. In contrast, the wage contribution of children in the same age group belonging to the richest quintile is only 2%.

Since, as noted earlier, the labor force participation rate of girls, especially at ages 14-17, exceeds that of boys, the contribution of girls to household wage earnings is greater than that of boys. This is especially true among the poorest 20% of households, where the contribution of girls aged 5-17 years to household wage earnings is 6.9% as compared to the boys' contribution of 5.3%.

#### E. The Determinants of Child Labor

Poverty, Land Ownership and Child Labor. Poverty is one of the main reasons for the high prevalence of child labor in Cambodia. Poverty is pervasive in the country, with recent estimates putting the proportion of the population living below the poverty line at 40%. In poor households, every able member – whether child or adult – has to work to enable the family to eke out a living. This is all the more true in families where the male head is disabled or absent. Child labor can thus be seen as a coping strategy for vulnerable and indigent families. Indeed, the most desperately poor families are often the ones to resort to the worst forms of child labor, such as selling or trafficking their children into prostitution.

Nearly 84% of the sample households in the CSES 1999 reported the need to augment household income and the need for the child to support his or her own expenses as the main reason why their children worked. In contrast, only 6% of households reported acquisition of work experience as the main reason for child labor.

In the urban areas, a strong inverse relationship is observed between child labor use and household economic status. While 56% of children aged 14-17 years are engaged in labor among the poorest 20% of the urban population, the corresponding proportion is merely 13% in the richest urban quintile. In contrast, the relationship between economic status and child labor in the rural areas, while still negative, is much weaker. This is because richer households in the rural areas have more land of better quality than poorer households, and consequently have a greater demand for labor to work on their farms. Thus, these households have a greater incentive to employ their children on the family farm, especially during the busy agricultural season when it is difficult to hire in farm workers.

This is observed in the significantly higher incidence of child labor (in the age group 14-17 years) among land-owning households relative to landless households (47% versus 26%).

Disabled and Female Household Heads and Child Labor. Households with certain characteristics are particularly prone to child labor use. These include households where the head is either disabled or absent (due to death, abandonment or migration). In such households, children, especially boys, may have to work to replace the lost income of the missing or disabled father.

The CSES data show that both boys and girls in female-headed households are more likely to work than their counterparts in male-headed households. However, there is an interesting gender difference in child labor when the household head is disabled. The data show that, among households having an able-bodied head, boys aged 14-17 years work to a much less extent than girls of the same age (35% versus 50%). But in households having a disabled head, boys no longer have the luxury of not working. Indeed, there is no gender difference at all in the incidence of child labor use among such households.

Education of the Household Head and Child Labor. The incidence of child labor among both male and female children aged 14-17 years is noticeably smaller when the household head has post-secondary education than when he or she has less-than-primary schooling. However, the incidence of male child labor falls more sharply than that of female child labor with the household head's education, indicating that boys benefit much more than girls from the household head's education.

Poor Access to Education. Although poverty is an important cause of both child labor and low schooling enrollments in Cambodia, poor physical and economic access to quality education is also an important reason for large numbers of children, especially girls, to be engaged in child labor. When quality secondary schools are simply not available or are unaffordable, secondary-school aged children have little else to do during the day, and it becomes easy for parents and households to put them to work.

Cambodia has among the lowest schooling enrollments in the Asia-Pacific region. An important reason for these low secondary enrollments is the paucity of secondary schools in the country. Only 5.4% of villages in Cambodia have a lower secondary school, and a mere 2% have an upper secondary school. This means that in the rural areas, the vast majority of children who wish to go on to secondary school have to commute outside their villages. In addition, average distances to the nearest secondary school are large: 4.1 kilometers in the case of the nearest lower secondary school and 8.3 kilometers in the case of the nearest upper secondary school. In the absence of affordable public transportation across villages, these distances are too far for a student to commute on a daily basis. The poor access to secondary schools is thus an important factor in explaining the unusually low secondary enrollment rates in the country.

The long distances to secondary schools put girls at a greater disadvantage relative to boys. Most Cambodian students walk to schools located outside their village, as public transport is not available in the rural areas and private transport is too expensive for most families. Most rural parents are worried about the safety of sending their daughters walking across remote roads to school.

In addition to lack of geographical proximity to schools, poor economic access to secondary schools and the generally low quality of education keep school enrollment rates low, thereby lowering the opportunity cost to parents of putting their children to work. Parents often find little use in sending their children to expensive but low-quality secondary schools when they could be home learning a skill (for example, agriculture) and supplementing the family income.

#### F. Education and Health Implications of Child Labor

Effects on Education. One of the most important reasons why child labor is considered harmful to children is that it diminishes their schooling opportunities. Is child labor really incompatible with schooling in Cambodia? The CSES 1999 data suggest that the compatibility of schooling and work depends largely on the age and sex of children. For both boys and girls aged 5-9 years, the difference in school attendance rates between working and non-working children is very small. But, at older ages, the school attendance rate of working children is significantly lower than that of non-working children. The difference in school attendance rates between working and non-working children is significantly greater for girls than for boys. For example, only 15% of working girls, but 87% of non-working girls, aged 14-17 years attend school. Thus, work of the type performed by most Cambodian children aged 10-17 years, especially girls, interferes with their schooling. It deprives them not merely of an education, which is a basic human right, but also of the means to improve the quality of their lives in the future.

Impact on Child Health. Working children are not only affected by physical injury, but they are also particularly vulnerable to workplace toxins and to chemical hazards on account of their relatively small size and their immature metabolic pathways which are often incapable of neutralizing dangerous chemicals. Additionally, many chemicals, such as solvents, can disrupt developmental processes in the brain. Children exposed to hazardous substances have potentially more years of life left to develop long-term sequelae, especially if exposure continues into adulthood and the cumulative dose is high.

The CSES 1999 data indicate that younger children (i.e., those aged 5-13 years) are more likely than older children (those aged 14-17 years) to be ill or injured. On average, 9-20% of children in the sample reported being ill or injured during the past 12 months, depending upon their age and sex. A very large proportion (more than one-half) of these illnesses or injuries were work-related. For example, 79% of illnesses or injuries suffered by boys aged 14-17 years were work-related. In contrast, girls in this age group are at significantly lower risk of illness or injury, perhaps due to the type of work activities they engage in.

HIV/AIDS is a deadly consequence of one of the worst forms of child labor – viz., commercial child sex. Street children as well as sexually-exploited child domestic workers are also at risk of HIV/AIDS. As is well known, Cambodia is one of the countries worst affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Asia. At the end of 1999, 217,764 Cambodians were estimated to be living with the disease, with 5,420 of them being children. The HIV sero-prevalence rate among commercial sex workers is estimated to range from 21.4% in Kandal province to as high as 64.1% in Pursat. The HIV prevalence rate among Phnom Penh CSWs is also very high (61.3%). Child commercial sex workers

are at even greater risk of HIV infection than adult sex workers, as they are often less informed about HIV-prevention measures and in a weaker position to insist on condom use by their adult customers.

Another adverse health impact of child labor comes from land mines. The long period of armed conflict and civil strife in Cambodia has resulted in extensive use of land mines in the country. While there has been an active program of demining, there continue to be many uncleared land mines that maim and kill Cambodians of all ages indiscriminately. Children who work in the rural areas, and have to travel along remote roads and in forests for their livelihood, are at risk of personal injury or death from these mines.

### G. Concluding Remarks

At first glance, the child labor problem in Cambodia appears to be overwhelming, with 42% of children aged 5-17 years engaged in some form of work. However, not all of the child labor observed in Cambodia is necessarily detrimental. Some types of child work, especially in family-based activities, such as farming, fetching water and firewood, and minding the family grocery store, can even be socially desirable, provided the work is not physically very demanding, does not take up too much of the child's time, and does not interfere with the child's schooling. Child work in many traditional societies is an important means of transmitting job and vocational skills, including many traditional crafts and arts, from parents to children.

What then is the magnitude of the socially-undesirable forms of child labor in Cambodia? Unfortunately, the type of household survey data used in this report can only provide a partial answer to this question. The reason is that most general-purpose household surveys have relatively limited sample sizes that do not permit a detailed exploration of the myriad of work activities that child workers are engaged in. Household surveys, like the Cambodia Socioeconomic Survey, can only provide an indication of the number of child workers, their average hours of work, and a broad classification of activities that they are engaged in. In addition, the worst forms of child labor, such as child prostitution and work done by street children, may not be picked up at all by household-based surveys such as the CSES. For these reasons, it is important to undertake a national survey specifically designed to investigate child labor. The National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, is currently preparing to undertake a comprehensive national household and establishment survey in two rounds in 2000-01. In conducting the data collection, the National Institute of Statistics will closely collaborate with the Ministry of Social Affairs, Labor, Vocational Training and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSALVY), as well as other relevant government bodies and other agencies, such as workers' and employers' organizations, NGOs, UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO and others. The data collection effort (which will include a comprehensive household survey as well as an establishment survey) will shed considerably more light on the child labor situation than is possible currently with the Cambodia Socioeconomic Surveys.

Nevertheless, the CSES 1999 can offer some idea of the magnitude of the socially-undesirable forms of child labor in Cambodia. There are approximately 5,000 children aged 5-13 years nationwide who work more than 25 hours a week *for wages* and who do not attend school (presumably as a result of this work). Since wage employment is generally more strenuous and less flexible than employment

as an unpaid family worker, this group of the youngest child workers needs the immediate attention of policy efforts to combat child labor. The CSES data indicate that there are another 42,000 child workers aged 14-17 years who also work more than 25 hours a week for wages and who do not attend school. These slightly-older child workers also constitute a vulnerable group. A third vulnerable group of child workers comprises the roughly 60,000 children aged 5-13 years who work more than 25 hours a week *as own-account or unpaid family workers* and who do not attend school (again presumably because of the demands of their work). Although family-based work is preferable to wage employment, it is inhumane for children as young as these to work such long hours and to be denied an education.

In addition, there are the children engaged in the worst forms of child labor, as defined by ILO Convention 182, who are unlikely to be enumerated by the CSES 1999. These include child prostitutes, street children, and child domestic workers. Unfortunately, there are few estimates of the number of children engaged in these most repugnant forms of child labor in the country. However, non-government agencies working with these children estimate that there are some 5,000 child commercial sex workers, 1,000 street children, and 6,500 child domestic workers in Phnom Penh alone. These are very rough approximations, and the number of children involved in these pursuits outside of Phnom Penh is simply not known. Hopefully, the special survey on child labor by the National Institute of Statistics planned for 2000-2001 will shed additional light on how many children nationwide are engaged in these harmful occupations. Once these worst forms of child labor are identified, government agencies, with the active support and assistance of NGOs and international agencies, can begin moving toward their abolition.

Eliminating the worst forms of child labor requires that a wide range of issues be addressed, such as improved legislation and enforcement of this legislation, rehabilitation of children engaged in the worst forms of child labor, provision of income-generation alternatives to the children and their families, and raising community awareness of the ill effects of child labor. Many of these avenues are already being pursued in Cambodia by government agencies and NGOs, with the active assistance of international agencies like the ILO-IPEC. Many NGOs have been trying to raise awareness and mobilize civil society on the issue of child labor, and have also been working directly with at-risk children and child victims of labor exploitation. Some of the NGOs cooperate directly with the government in enforcing the existing laws to ensure better protection of children from prostitution and trafficking.

The findings in this report also suggest that, given the limited resources available for combating child labor, it would be important for government and non-government agencies to geographically target their anti-child labor policies to regions having the largest concentration of child workers. In this regard, the CSES 1999 data reviewed in this report indicate that the large majority of Cambodia's child workers are found in the Plains and Tonle Sap regions. These two regions together account for 81% of all child workers in the country.

Since much of child labor stems from poverty, efforts to combat poverty will have powerful effects on reducing the magnitude of child labor. Already, the Royal Government of Cambodia has declared poverty alleviation as its most important goal. Likewise, many international agencies operating

in the country have declared poverty reduction as the main thrust of their programs in Cambodia. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) – a strategic planning and collaborative programming document that identifies common priorities and common challenges for all U.N. system organizations working in Cambodia – has explicitly identified promotion of the rights of the child, betterment of the living conditions of impoverished children, improving the health and nutrition of children, and abolition of the practice of employing children in industries as major cross-cutting goals to be pursued by the U.N. system in Cambodia. The government, in cooperation with several donor agencies, has currently embarked on preparation of a major poverty reduction strategy that will provide the overall policy framework and guidance for poverty-alleviation policies in all sectors.

As a final word, it is useful to stress the importance of coordination – across sectors, among government agencies, and among donors, NGOs and government – in fighting child labor. Child labor has many causes and many consequences – social, economic, health-related, educational, cultural and psychological. Likewise, the problem of child labor cuts across many sectors – agriculture, manufacturing and services. As such, the problem is best tackled by a multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral approach involving many different agencies in government and outside government, such as NGOs, donor agencies, and the private sector.

## I. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN CAMBODIA

### A. The Concept of Human Development

Human development is about improving ordinary people's lives by enlarging their choices and helping them realize their full human potential. As the first global *Human Development Report* (HDR) put it: "... The real wealth of a nation is its people. And the purpose of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives. This simple but powerful truth is too often forgotten in the pursuit of material and financial wealth" (UNDP, 1990).

While per capita income is an important aspect of improving people's lives, it is by no means the only one. Health and education are no less important in judging people's welfare. The global *Human Development Report 2000* additionally includes freedom and human rights in its definition of human development – freedom from discrimination; freedom from want; freedom for the realization of one's human potential; freedom from fear; freedom from injustice; freedom of participation, expression and association; and freedom for decent work without exploitation (UNDP, 2000). Human rights in this sense are intimately linked to the concept of human development.

It is sometimes thought that the concept of human development is about basic needs and therefore applies only to poor countries. This is a fallacy. The concept of human development applies to all countries at all levels of development. Naturally, the human development agenda will differ from country to country, depending upon the country's needs, its priorities, and its aspirations. But, "... the basic principle should be the same -- to put people at the center of development and to focus on their needs and their potential" (UNDP, 1992: 13).

The concept of human development differs from that of human *resource* development. The latter regards the development of people's capabilities as a human capital input into increased production and income. However, the former values the expansion of human capabilities in and of itself. Thus, human development regards the development of people's intellectual, nutritional and health potential as both an instrument as well as a goal of development.

In recent years, over 100 countries around the world have issued national human development reports with UNDP support. The national human development reports have played an important role in advocating the cause of human development and people-centered approach to national policy-making; in highlighting critical concerns, such as poverty or the rights of women and children, that may be of particular relevance in certain countries; and in focusing on intra-national equity in economic and

human development (say, across geographical regions, gender and income groups). In most countries, the national human development reports have triggered an extensive policy dialogue and debate on the interrelationships between economic, social and human development.

This is the fourth in a series of national human development reports prepared for Cambodia. The theme of *Cambodia Human Development Report 1997* was poverty -- the magnitude of poverty, distribution of poverty across regions, socioeconomic profile of the poor, and the causes, consequences and manifestations of poverty in Cambodia. The *Cambodia Human Development Report 1998* focused on gender -- the situation of women and gender equality in access to health, education and consumption. *Cambodia Human Development Report 1999* analyzed the role of villages in Cambodia's development. It examined the situation of Cambodia's villages in terms of economic and social infrastructure, analyzed disparities across poor and rich villages, and discussed recent attempts to promote participatory grassroots development in the country. This -- the fourth *Cambodia Human Development Report* -- approaches the issue of child labor. It documents the magnitude of child labor in Cambodia, and attempts to understand the determinants of child labor within the context of the overall labor market in the country.

Child labor is intimately linked to the twin concepts of human rights and human development. Children are the wealth of a nation and its future. Human development is very much about enlarging the choices available to children, so that they can improve their lives and their future. Children have a right to realize and develop their full human potential, and any work that prevents them from attending school and realizing their full potential is a violation of their human rights. In addition, child workers, like all workers, have the right to decent work without exploitation. Child labor that is exploitative, inhumane, and hazardous to health is an affront to human development and human rights.

## B. Measuring Human Development

The Human Development Index (HDI), proposed by UNDP, is one of several means of measuring the status of human development in a country. The HDI is a composite measure of longevity, as measured by average life expectancy at birth; educational attainment, as measured by a combination of adult literacy (two-thirds weight) and combined primary, secondary and tertiary enrollment ratios (one-third weight); and standard of living, as measured by real GDP per capita (expressed in purchasing power parity-adjusted exchange rates). Each component is scored on a scale of 0 to 1, and the HDI is a simple average of the individual component scores. Thus, the HDI can vary from a low of 0 (indicating an extremely low level of human development) to a high of 1 (indicating a very high level of



human development). However, in practice, the index ranges from 0.252 (for Sierra Leone) to 0.935 (for Canada) (UNDP, 2000).

The Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) is similar to the HDI but additionally takes into account gender inequalities in life expectancy, educational attainment, and standard of living. A country that has high average levels of life expectancy, educational attainment and living standards but also has large gender disparities in these indicators will have a GDI score that is smaller than its HDI score.

The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), also proposed by UNDP, is a measure of the relative participation of women and men in political and economic spheres of activity. It is a composite measure of the representation of women in legislative (parliament) bodies, in administration and management, and in the technical-professional field relative to their representation in the general population. In addition, the GEM includes a measure of income, but (like the GDI) discounts real per capita GDP on the basis of the relative disparity in the male and female shares of earned income.

A final indicator of human development proposed by UNDP is the Human Poverty Index (HPI), which measures deprivation in three essential elements of human life -- longevity, knowledge and a decent standard of living. It is a composite measure of the percentages of people who are not expected to survive to age 40, who are illiterate, and who have no access to safe water and health services, as well as the percentage of moderately and severely underweight children under 5 years of age.

### C. Human Development in Cambodia

The HDI score for Cambodia, using the most recent household survey data from the General Population Census of 1998 and the Cambodia Socioeconomic Survey (CSES) 1999,<sup>2</sup> is 0.517.<sup>3</sup> This is one of the lowest HDI scores in Asia (Figure 1). The HDI estimated by the first three *Cambodia*

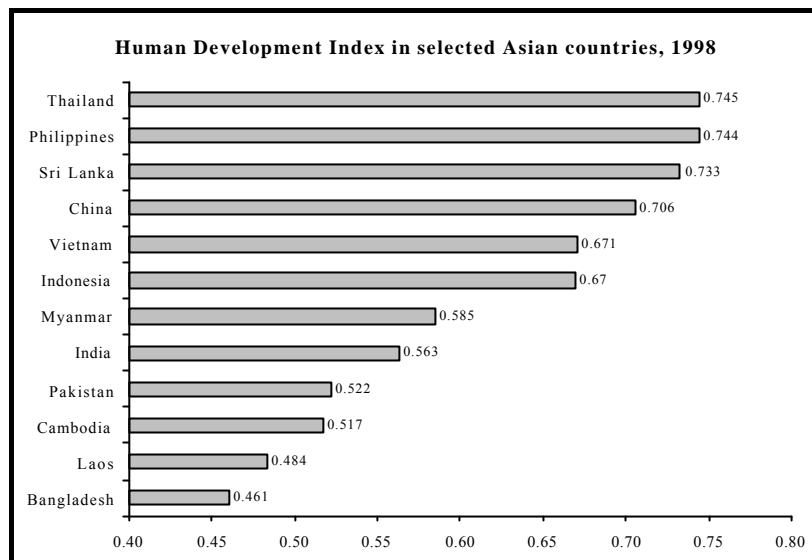
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<sup>2</sup>See the Annex for a description of the CSES 1999 data used throughout this report.

<sup>3</sup>There is a minor discrepancy between the HDI score reported for Cambodia by the global *Human Development Report 2000* (UNDP, 2000) and that calculated in this report (0.517 versus 0.512). The discrepancy is due to different sources of data used by the two reports. No GEM or HPI scores are reported for Cambodia by UNDP (2000).

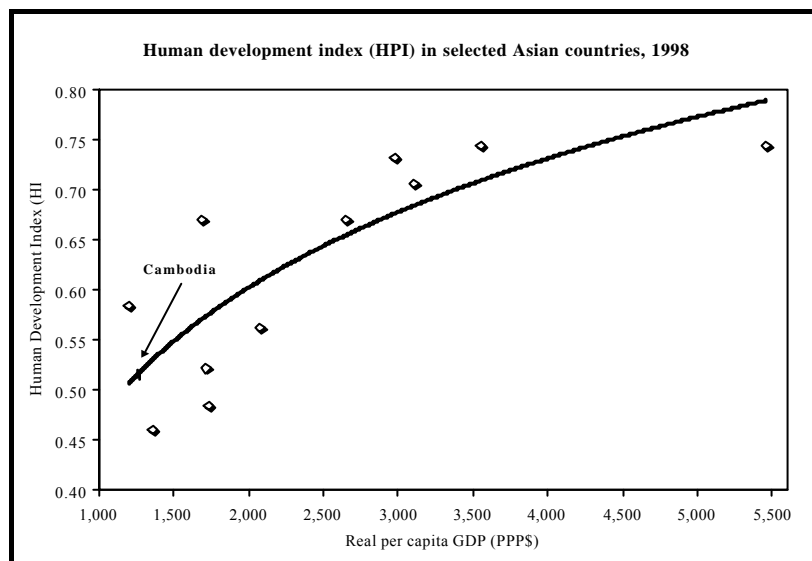
*Human Development Reports* were 0.427, 0.421, and 0.509, respectively. However, the difference between those HDI estimates and the one reported here does not necessarily imply that human development has improved significantly in Cambodia.<sup>4</sup> The difference is largely the result of a change in the HDI formula used by UNDP from 1999 onwards. The change affects the manner in which income is treated in the HDI calculation.

Because the earlier formula discounted income above the threshold level of \$6,311 (PPP\$) very heavily, thus penalizing those countries that had incomes above the threshold level, a new formula was devised which discounts all income – not just income above a certain level – by including the natural logarithm of income -- instead of actual income -- in the HDI formula (UNDP, 1999).



**Figure 1**

Source: UNDP (2000) and calculations from the CSES 1999 data.

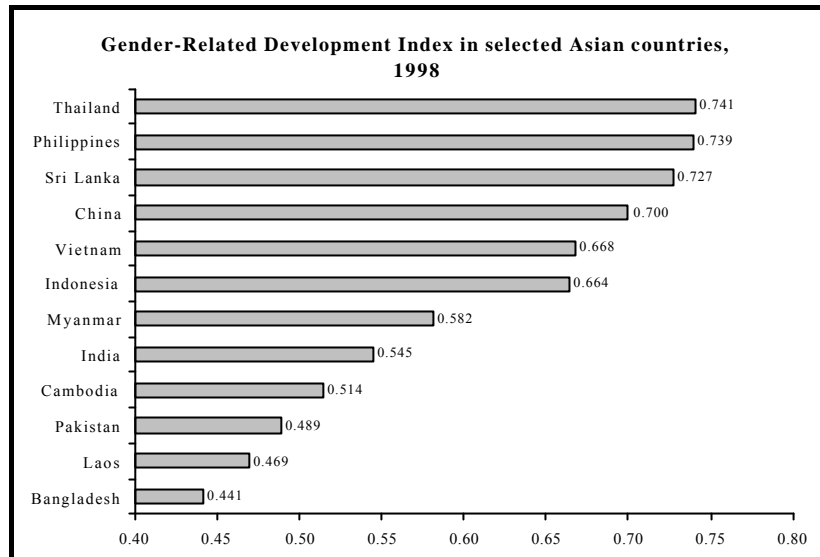


**Figure 2**

Source: UNDP (2000) and calculations from CSES 1999 data.

<sup>4</sup>Many components of the HDI, such as life expectancy and literacy, do not change much from year to year; as such, the HDI is a relatively stable indicator that changes rather slowly over time.

How does Cambodia's HDI score compare with its per capita GDP? As Figure 2 shows, Cambodia's level of human development is consistent with what would be expected given its level of per capita income and given the observed relationship between human development and per capita GDP across a cross-section of 12 Asian countries.



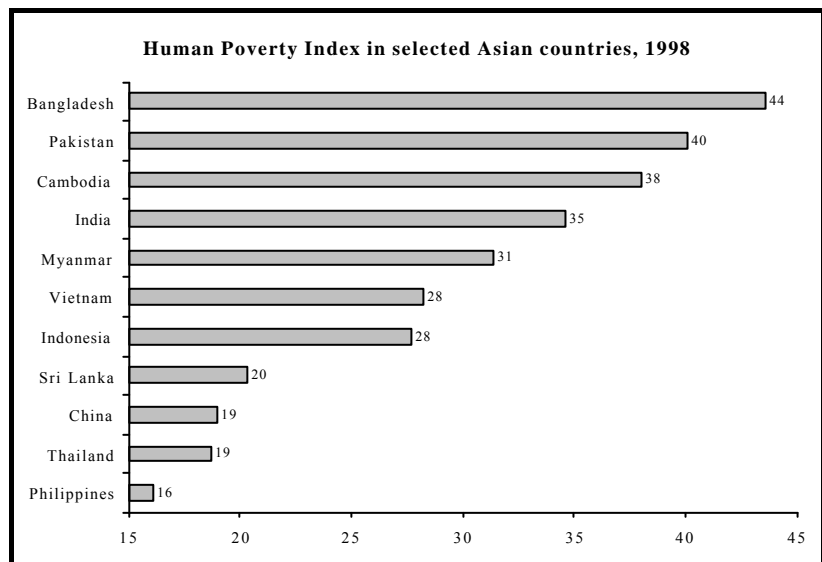
**Figure 3**

Source: UNDP (2000) and calculations from the CSES 1999 data.

Cambodia's gender-related development index (GDI) is also among the lowest in Asia (Figure 3). Indeed, the ranking of most countries in Asia is virtually identical whether they are ranked by HDI or GDI.

The value of the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) for Cambodia is 0.283. The global *Human Development Report 2000* reports the GEM for only three countries in South and Southeast Asia. Cambodia's GEM score is lower than that for Bangladesh (0.305), Sri Lanka (0.309) and the Philippines (0.479).

Finally, as would be expected given the high levels of mortality and child malnutrition and the poor availability of public services – indicators that are used in the construction of the HPI – Cambodia has a high Human Poverty Index (HPI) in relation to other Asian



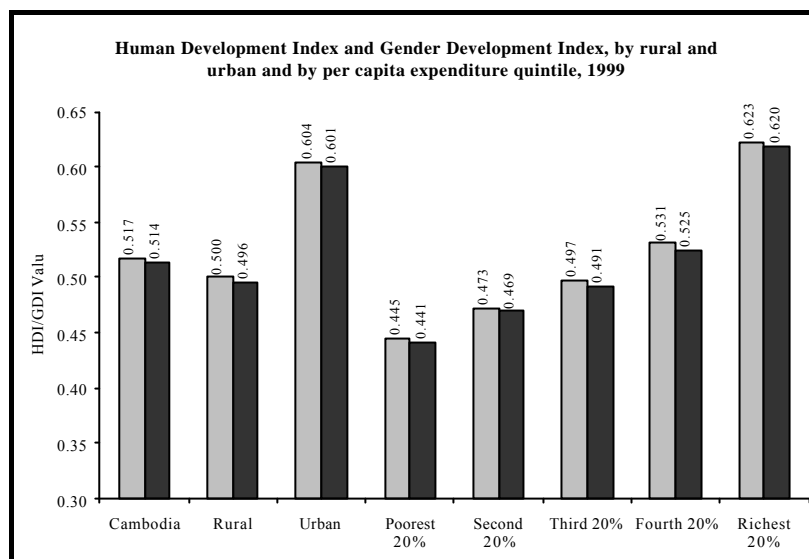
**Figure 4**

Source: UNDP (2000) and calculations from the CSES 1999 data.

countries (Figure 4). Only two countries – Bangladesh and Pakistan – have a higher human poverty index than Cambodia.

#### D. Disparities in Human Development within Cambodia

As in the case of per capita GDP, an average HDI or GDI score for a country can mask significant disparities in human and gender-related development among economic and social groups within the country. This appears to be the case for Cambodia, as Figure 5 shows.<sup>5</sup> The HDI score for urban Cambodia is about 21 per cent greater than that for rural Cambodia. Likewise, there are large disparities in



**Figure 5**

Source: UNDP (2000) and calculations from the CSES 1999 data.

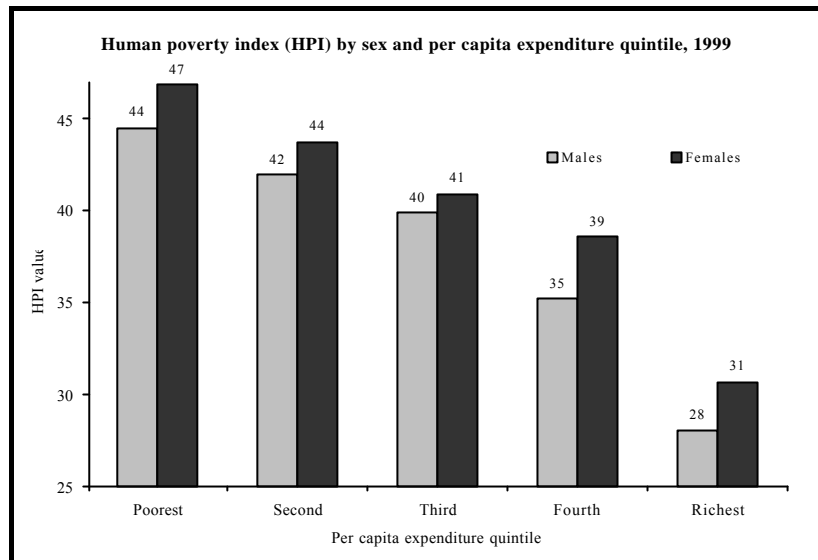
both HDI and GDI across economic groups. The richest 20 per cent of Cambodians have an HDI score that is 40% greater than that of the poorest 20 per cent of Cambodians (Annex Tables 1 and 2).

As with the HDI and GDI, the human poverty index (HPI) also differs significantly across socioeconomic groups (Figure 6). As would be expected, the HPI is significantly greater among the

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<sup>5</sup>Economic groups are defined in this report as per capita expenditure quintiles. The quintiles are obtained by ranking all individuals in the CSES 1999 sample on the basis of their (predicted) monthly consumption expenditure per capita, and then dividing the sample population into five equally-sized groups. The poorest quintile thus represents the poorest 20 per cent of the Cambodian population, while the richest quintile represents the richest 20 per cent of Cambodians. Household consumption expenditure per capita was predicted on the basis of a regression that included housing characteristics, attributes of the household head, household size and composition, household assets, and the time period (January-March or June-August) in which the household was surveyed.

poorest quintiles than among the richest.<sup>6</sup> In addition, human poverty is greater among Cambodian women than among men across all economic groups. The fact that the gender disparity in human poverty persists even among the richest 20% of all Cambodians suggests that gender disparities in human poverty in Cambodia will not automatically narrow with economic growth and rising consumption standards, and that specific policy interventions will be needed to narrow these disparities.



**Figure 6**

Source: UNDP (2000) and calculations from the CSES 1999 data.

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<sup>6</sup>The rich can also suffer from ‘human poverty’ as human poverty is defined not on the basis of income but on the basis of other indicators of living standards, such as mortality, illiteracy, child malnutrition and access to safe water and health services.

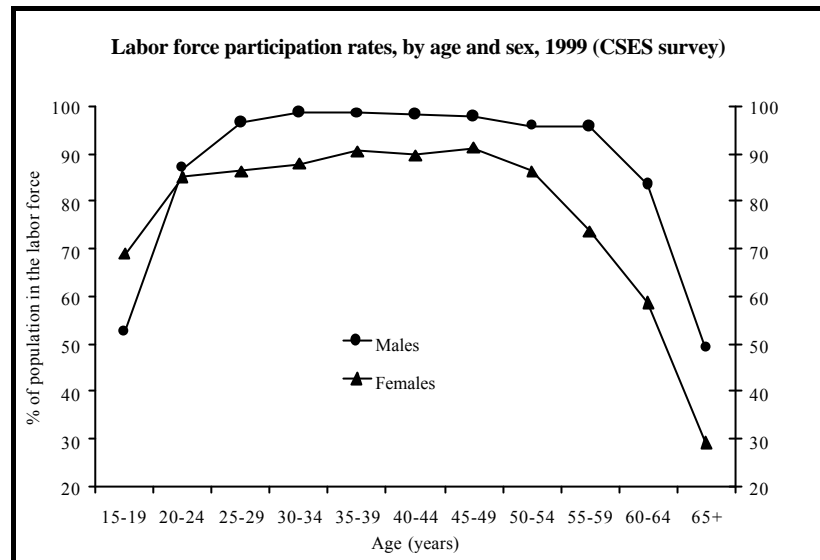
## II. LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND WAGES IN CAMBODIA

### A. Labor Force Participation

The Cambodian labor market is characterized by generally high rates of participation among both adult males and females. According to the Cambodia Socio-economic Survey (CSES) 1999, labor force participation rates exceed 90% for males and 80% for females between the ages of 25 and 54 years.

Interestingly, labor force participation rates for women exceed those for men at ages

15-19 years, are approximately equal at ages 20-24 years, but are significantly lower at all older ages. Labor force participation rates begin to fall off steeply for women beyond age 54, while the rates do not begin to decline for males until after age 59 (Figure 7).



**Figure 7**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

It should be noted, however, that the Census definition of an economically-active person differs from that adopted by labor force surveys in most countries. The Census classifies individuals as economically active or inactive based on their *main* economic activity during the year preceding the Census, with main activity being defined as the activity that was pursued for six months (183 days) or more of the year. In contrast, labor force surveys in most countries, including the Cambodia Socioeconomic Survey (CSES) 1999, consider individuals who looked for work or worked (for profit, pay or family gain) even for an hour during the past week as being in the labor force. The labor force survey definition has the advantage that it captures part-time work that individuals may perform even if their main economic activity during the past year was, say, being a student. The labor force participation rates estimated by the CSES are thus greater than those estimated by the Census.

## B. Unemployment

As in most developing countries, rates of open unemployment are low in the rural areas of the country (Figure 8),<sup>7</sup> reflecting the fact that most individuals in the rural areas have an option of working on their farms or working in self-employment activities if they do not find wage employment. Open unemployment rates are higher in the urban areas, and nearly twice as large for urban women as for urban men (12.2% versus 6.7%). It is not clear whether the higher rate of open unemployment among women reflects gender discrimination against them in the labor market, or whether it reflects voluntary unemployment among women.

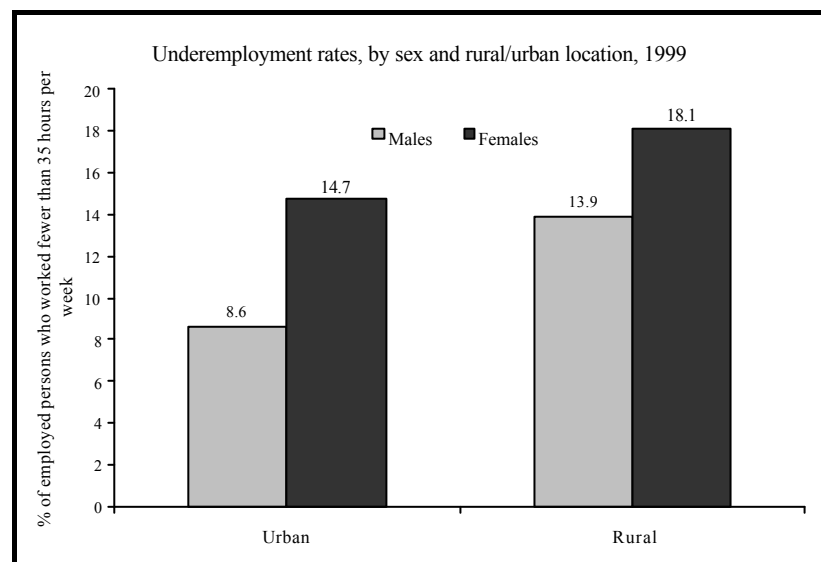


**Figure 8**

Source: NIS, 1999.

## C. Underemployment and Labor Supply

In most developing countries, open unemployment rates are typically low. However, unemployment is often disguised in the form of



**Figure 9**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

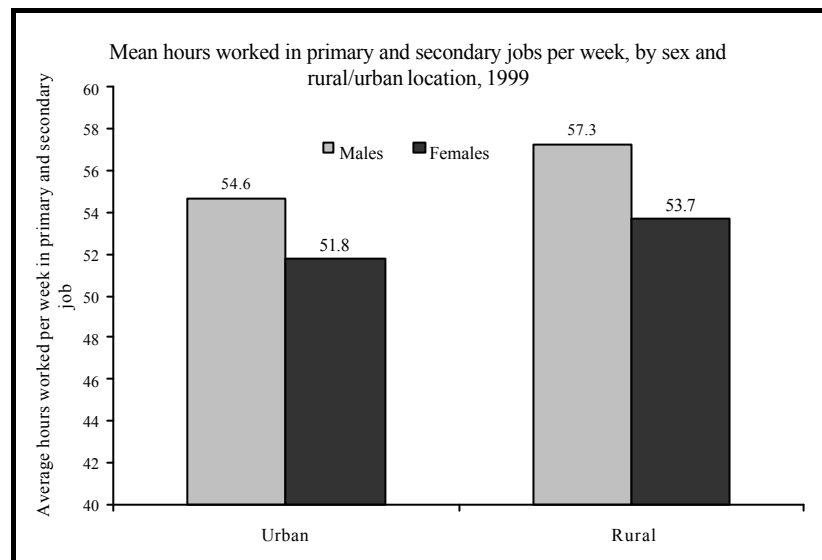
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<sup>7</sup>Note that the unemployment rates reported here have been obtained from the Census. Because of the type of questions asked of respondents in the survey, it is not possible to calculate unemployment rates from the CSES data.

employment with a relatively small number of working hours or underemployment. This does appear to be the case in Cambodia, where underemployment rates – defined as the proportion of employed persons who work fewer than 35 hours per week<sup>8</sup> – are 9-15% among males and 14-18% among females (Figure 9). Interestingly, while open unemployment rates are higher in the urban areas than in the rural areas, the opposite is the case with underemployment rates. This reflects the fact that persons in the rural areas who would otherwise have been unemployed have the option of working, even if for a few hours each week, on their family farm.

As in the case of unemployment, underemployment rates are also greater for women than for men in both urban and rural areas. This probably reflects the fact that women work fewer hours by choice, as they need to accommodate market work with household chores and child care duties.

Despite the high rates of underemployment, average hours worked by the employed are high, especially in comparison with more developed countries. For instance, male workers in rural Cambodia work an average of 57.3 hours each week, which works out to 8.2 hours per day for a 7-day work week or 9.6 hours per day for a 6-day work week (Figure 10).



**Figure 10**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

#### D. Structure of Employment

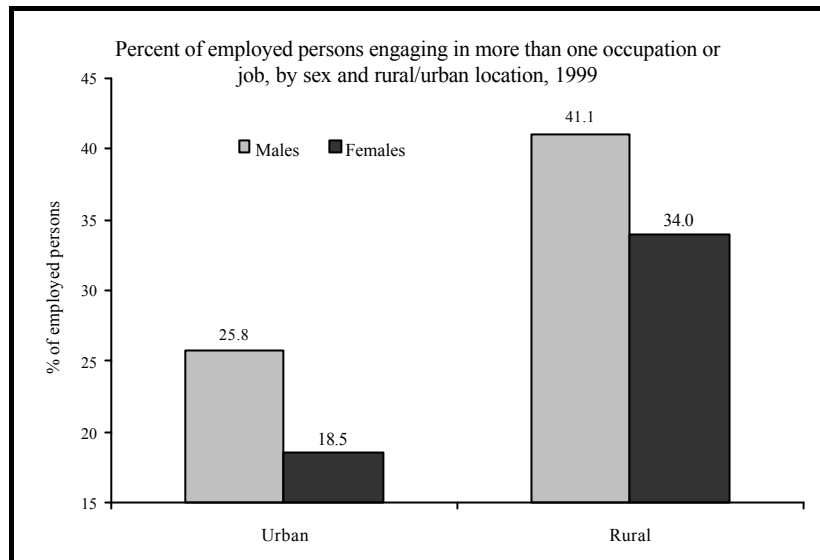
Multiple Jobs. One interesting feature of the Cambodian labor market is the ubiquity of holding multiple jobs or engaging in several income-earning activities. This is necessitated by the low salaries in most jobs and the low levels of productivity in self-employment activities, including agriculture, and the resulting inability to eke out a living from a single occupation. About 35% of all workers engage in more than one occupation, with large differences across men and women and across rural and urban

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<sup>8</sup>Underemployment can also be defined on the basis of work that is of low productivity or that pays very low wages.



areas. Male workers are much more likely than female workers, and rural workers are more likely than urban workers, to engage in multiple income-earning activities (Figure 11). In the rural areas, as many as 41% of male workers and 34% of female workers are engaged in multiple employment activities, reflecting the inability of farming to provide a sustainable source of livelihood.

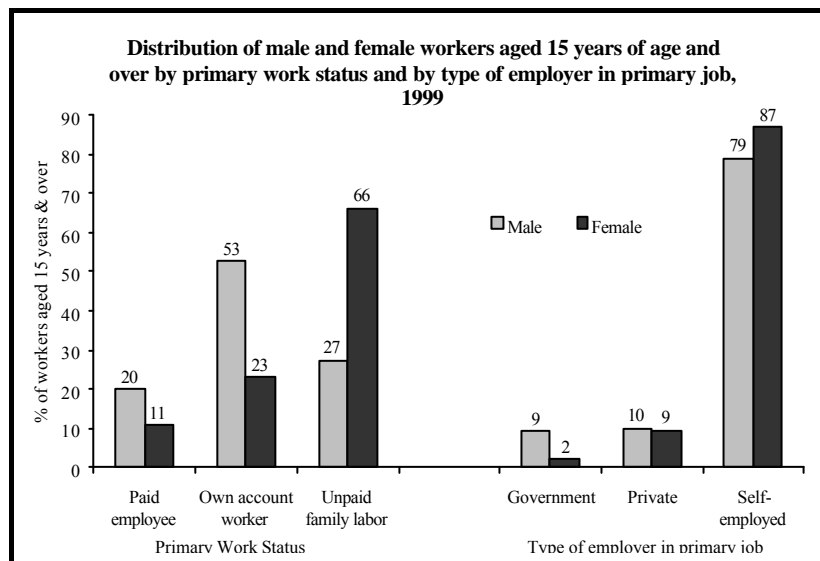


**Figure 11**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

**Work Status and Type of Employers.** The vast majority of workers in Cambodia are either own-account workers or unpaid family labor, reflecting the dominance of self-employment over wage employment activities in the country. Indeed, only 11% of female workers and 20% of male workers are paid (or wage) employees (Figure 12). While it is more common for male workers to be own-account workers, a much larger proportion of female workers are unpaid family workers, reflecting the propensity for the male in a family to be a business or farm owner and for the female to be a mere worker for the family business.

There are significant gender differences in the type of employers for whom Cambodian workers typically work. A larger proportion of female workers than male workers (87% versus 79%) are self-employed (Figure 12). On the other hand, it is much more common for male than female workers to work in

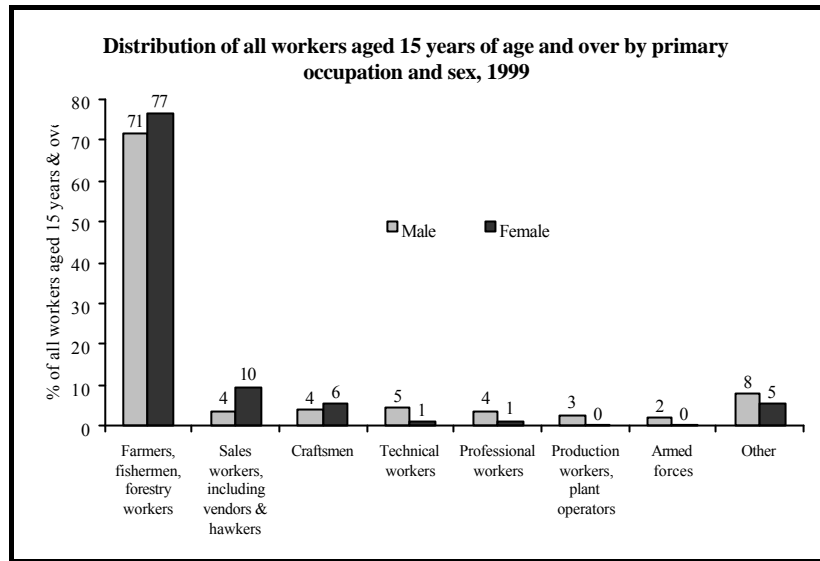


**Figure 12**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

government (public) employment About 9-10% of both male and female workers work in the private sector.

Occupational Distribution As would be expected in an overwhelmingly rural country, work on farms, fisheries and forests dominates the Cambodian labor market, with 71% of all male workers aged 15 years and over and 77% of female workers reporting their main occupation to be farming, fishing or forestry work (Figure 13). The next most

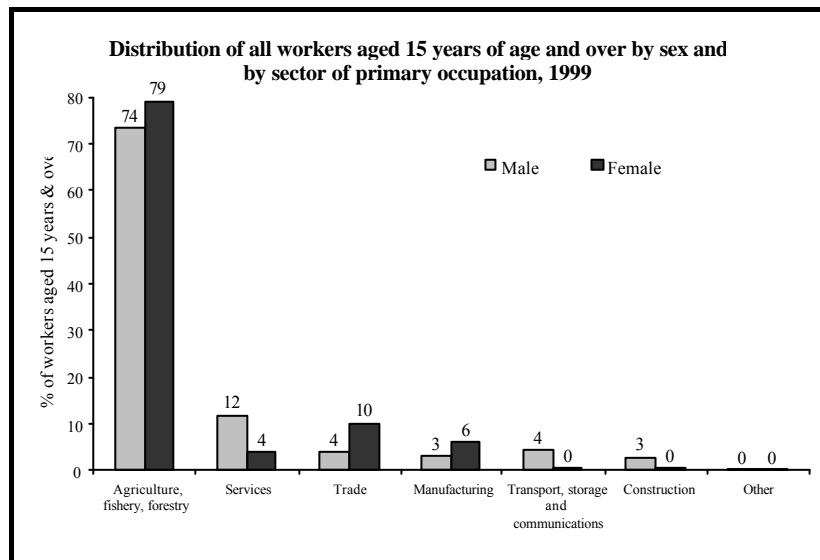


**Figure 13**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

common occupation, especially for female workers, is sales work, with 4% of male workers and 10% of female workers reporting their main occupation as being sales workers, including hawkers, vendors and peddlers. The three occupations – farming/fishing/forestry work, sales work, and crafts work – account for 93% of all female workers in the country.

About 3-5% of male workers are technical workers, professional workers, and production workers (including plant operators), while a negligible proportion of women are in these occupations. Interestingly, as many as 2% of all male workers in the country report being in the armed forces – a fact that undoubtedly reflects the history of civil strife in the country.

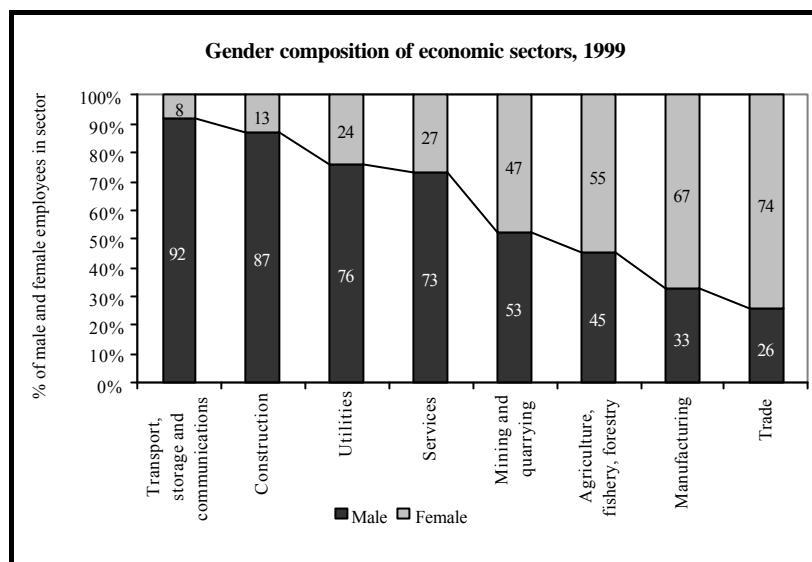


**Figure 14**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

S e c t o r   o f  
Employment.

The large majority of Cambodians work in the agricultural sector, with agriculture, fishing and forestry accounting for 74-79% of all workers aged 15 years and over (Figure 14). For female workers, trade, manufacturing, and services are other important sectors, together accounting for about 20% of all female workers in the country. The service sector



**Figure 15**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

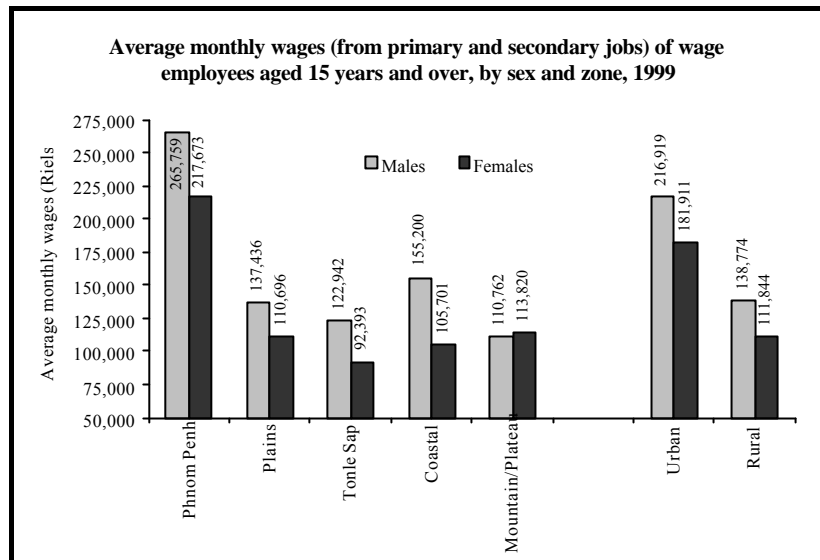
employs about 12% of all male workers in the country, while the trade, transport, manufacturing, and construction sectors each account for 3-4% of total male employment. Interestingly, a much larger proportion of female workers than male workers are employed by the manufacturing sector, reflecting the heavily female labor-intensive nature of the nascent garment industry in Cambodia.

Figure 15 shows the gender composition of the major economic sectors in Cambodia. The transport, storage and communications sector is the most heavily male labor-intensive industry in the country, with 92% of the employees in this industry being male. At the other extreme, both manufacturing and trade are female labor-intensive sectors, with two-thirds to three-quarters of the employees in these sectors being female.

E. Wages and Earnings

Only 15% of all workers aged 15 years and over in Cambodia are paid or wage employees. As such, monthly wages or salaries are observed only for this group of workers. The remaining 85% are either own-account or unpaid family workers who do not get paid a wage for their labor.

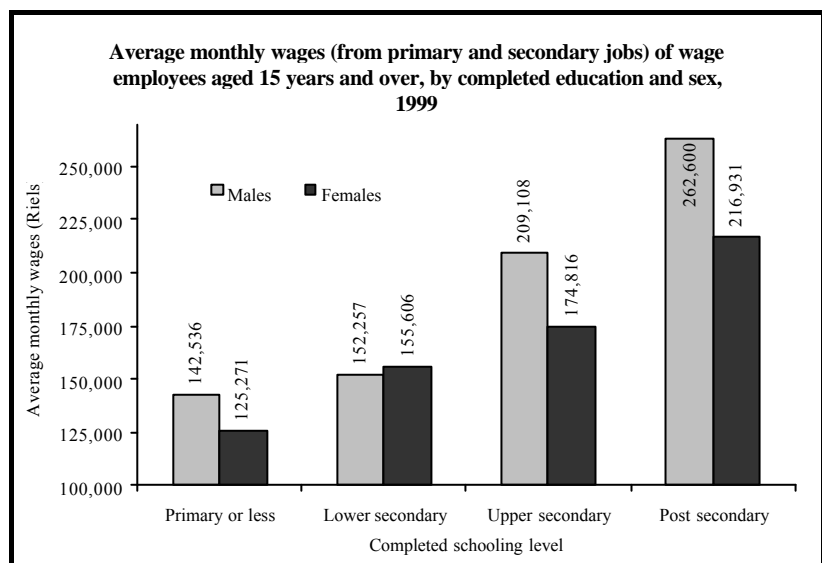
As in most countries, there is a large gender difference in wages. On average, male monthly wages are 27% greater than female wages. However, the gender gap varies significantly across regions, with male wages exceeding female wages by 47% in the coastal zone and female wages being virtually identical to male wages in the mountain/plateau zone (Figure 16).



**Figure 16**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

Figure 16 also shows large regional and rural/urban variations in mean wages. On average, urban wages are 61% greater than rural wages. Average wages are highest in Phnom Penh, followed by the coastal zone. The mountain/plateau zone has the lowest wages in the country. Average monthly wages in the mountain/plateau zone are less than one-half of those in Phnom Penh.



**Figure 17**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

There is a large literature on the pecuniary returns to schooling which argues that individual earnings

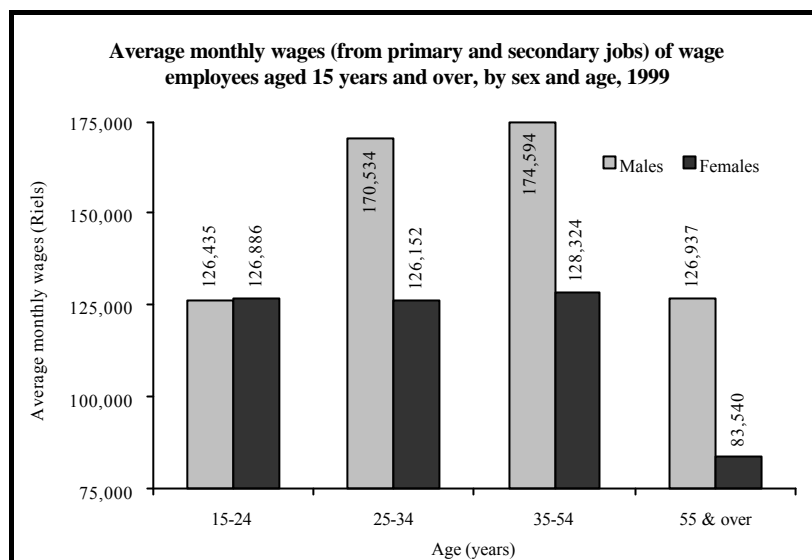
or wages are positively associated with schooling. This is observed to be the case in Cambodia as well, both among male and female wage employees (Figure 17). Among males, there appear to be large wage premia associated with upper secondary and post-secondary (college or university) education, with upper secondary-educated individuals earning 37% higher wages than individuals with lower secondary schooling and individuals with post-secondary schooling earning another 25% more in wages

than individuals with upper secondary education. Among females, the wage increments from lower secondary school completion are significant (24%), as are those from completion of post-secondary education (also 24%).

Wages also have a strong relationship with age (Figure 18), although the wage-age relationship differs significantly by gender.

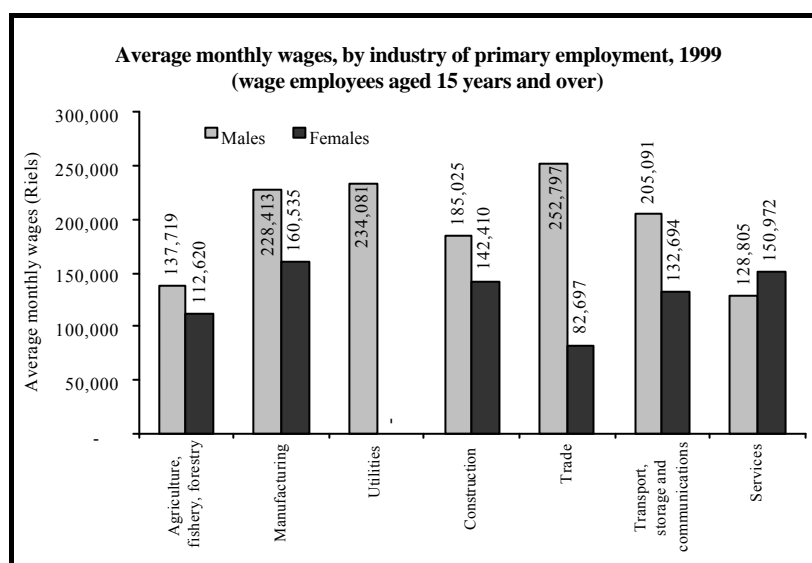
Among males, there is a sharp increase in monthly wages beyond age 24, reflecting the importance of seniority and experience. Wages are virtually flat between ages 25 and 54, but fall sharply beyond age 54. For female employees, there does not appear to be much of a wage premium to seniority, but wages fall very sharply (by 35%) after age 54.<sup>9</sup>

How do wages differ across economic sectors? Figure 19 shows that male wages are highest in the trade, utilities and manufacturing sectors and lowest in the services, agriculture, and construction sectors. In contrast, the service sector is one of the highest paying sectors for women. Indeed, the service sector is the only sector where female employees earn more than



**Figure 18**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.



**Figure 19**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

<sup>9</sup>It may be recalled that female labor force participation rates also fall sharply beyond age 54.

male employees (albeit by only 17%). In all other sectors, women earn significantly less than men, with female wages being 67% lower than male wages in (retail and wholesale) trade. Even in manufacturing, where female workers outnumber male workers, women earn about 30% less than men.

### III. CHILD LABOR AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

#### A. What is Child Labor?

In its broadest definition, child labor is any work performed for pay, profit or family gain by children under the age of 18 years. However, throughout human history, children have always worked beside their parents, assisting them on the family farm, in household chores, in fetching water and firewood, and in minding the family store. Work by children in such family undertakings is not only very natural, but is important in inculcating a work ethic among children and in ultimately making them responsible citizens. In traditional societies, such work is also an important means of transmitting job and vocational skills from parents to children.

But this is not what is meant typically by child labor. Thijs (1997) offers a narrower definition of the type of child labor that is worrisome and harmful:

“... What we should be concerned with are children who are denied their childhood and a future, who work long hours for low wages, often under conditions harmful to their health and to their physical and mental development... The process of modernization and market integration can be extremely disruptive, bringing rural poverty, migration, urbanization, regional inequalities, consumerism, diminishing family support and so on. In the short term, these factors may worsen the plight of child workers in the labor force. There are disturbing indications in emerging newly-industrialized economies of a structural shift to wage employment of children in industry and services. Many of these children work under conditions that seriously impair their dignity and physical or emotional development.”

Another useful definition of what constitutes “child labor” is provided by ILO (undated):

“Child labor includes both paid and unpaid work and activities done by children that are mentally, physically, socially, or morally dangerous or harmful to them. This includes work depriving them of opportunities to go to school or requiring them to assume the multiple burdens of schooling and work at home and in other workplaces, and work that enslaves them and separates them from their family. This work is undertaken to the detriment and endangerment of the child, in violation of international law and national legislation, and therefore is, properly speaking, ‘child labor.’ A strong consensus is emerging worldwide that such work is unacceptable and should be prevented,

and that the rescue and rehabilitation of children in these worst forms of child labor must be a priority.”

However, this definition of child labor is by no means universally accepted. For one, the age cutoff for child labor is itself a contentious issue. The basic minimum age for admission to employment ranges from 14 years to 18 years across different countries in Asia. Some countries, such as Cambodia, allow children between the ages of 12 and 15 years of age to be engaged in “light work.” Many countries exclude the agricultural sector from application of the minimum age law, while some allow waivers for certain categories of work, such as work in family-owned businesses and domestic service. Nearly all countries stipulate a higher minimum age for hazardous employment (ranging from 15 to 18 years), but there is no consistent definition of ‘hazardous work’ across countries. Thus, there is no single definition of child labor that is applied consistently across countries.

### **Box 1: The Scourge of Child Labor**

“Child labor is not jobs for kids. It is neither valuable work experience nor apprenticeship combined with schooling that enhances a child’s present and future prospects. Child labor – in its worst forms – is abuse of power. It is adults exploiting the young, naive, innocent, weak, vulnerable and insecure for personal profit; although so many valuable efforts are going on, we have not yet mustered enough courage and imagination to really go beyond chipping at the margins and actually stop it.”

Source: ILO, 1999a.

## **B. Child Labor, Human Rights, and Human Development**

There are several reasons why child labor, as defined in Section III.A above, is socially undesirable. Children, like adults, have basic human rights, one of which is to enjoy the innocence of childhood – not having to worry about earning a livelihood, playing with other children at school or in the neighborhood, and generally living a carefree life. Child labor deprives children of this basic right. It forces them to become grown-ups before they even have had a chance to enjoy childhood.

The basic rights of children were given explicit recognition by all the countries in the world through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which was adopted unanimously by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 November 1989 and which came into force in September 1990. This was followed by the World Summit for Children, held in 1990, where world leaders gathered to discuss issues of child survival, development and protection, undertake specific commitments to children, and adopt a plan of action.



In addition to depriving children of a chance to enjoy childhood, child labor has a profoundly negative effect on human development. An important – indeed, critical – component of human development is the “... freedom to develop and realize one’s full potential” (UNDP, 2000). There are at least two ways in which child labor inhibits the realization of children’s human potential. First, child labor prevents children from going to school and investing in their education, thereby depriving them of a chance to improve their earnings in the future and to rise out of poverty. In this sense, child labor condemns children to a lifetime of want and poverty. Second, many types of child labor are hazardous to children’s long-term health. Exposure to hazardous chemicals and toxins and certain types of physical and mental injuries can result in life-long disabilities and ill health, thereby impairing children’s ability to lead normal, productive lives in adulthood. It is not just children who suffer in these cases; the future losses to society from not having healthy, educated and productive citizens are probably greater.

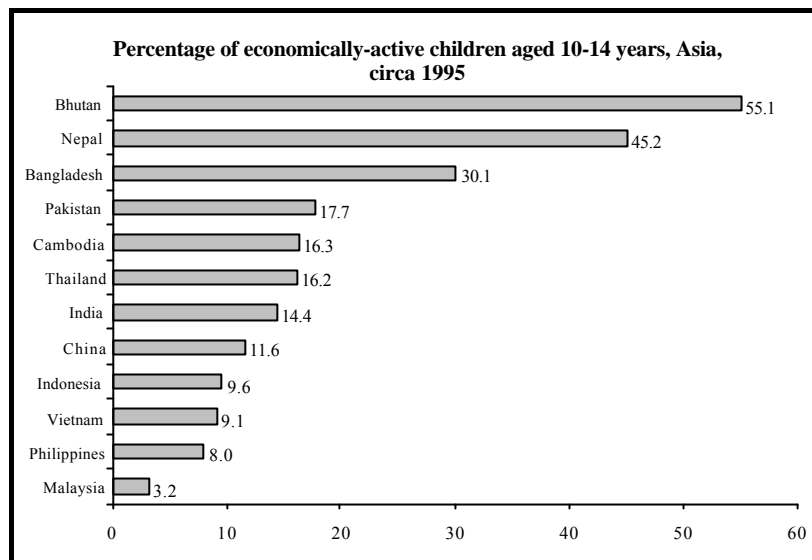
Yet another reason why child labor is socially undesirable is that children enter a working relationship with an employer with a huge age and size disadvantage. It is much easier for unscrupulous employers to take advantage of child workers, often in gross violation of labor legislation. Child workers are much less likely than adult workers to complain about pay and working conditions, since it is easier for employers to beat child workers into submission. Indeed, one reason why many employers in developing countries prefer female over male child workers is that girls are perceived to be “better” workers – i.e., more obedient, less likely to shirk, and more willing to work longer hours and receive lower pay – than boys.

### C. Prevalence of Child Labor in Asia

There are still many gaps in our knowledge about the prevalence of child labor around the world, but it is estimated that there are at least 120 million children between 5 and 14 years of age worldwide who engage in work as a primary activity. If work as a secondary activity is included, the number of working children is nearly 250 million (Thijs, 1997). Of these, more than 60% are in Asia.

Figure 20 shows the proportion of economically-active children aged 10-14 years in selected countries of Asia around 1995. The countries of South Asia – Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan – have the largest incidence of child labor in the region. But, among Southeast and East Asian countries, Cambodia has the largest proportion of children aged 10-14 years who are economically active. However, the incidence of child labor in Cambodia is only 0.1 percentage points higher than that in Thailand – a country that has a per capita income that is nearly ten times greater than that of

Cambodia. This suggests that child labor is not a function of per capita income alone, but that it depends upon many other factors, such as the structure of the economy (viz., the relative importance of agriculture in GDP), societal attitudes toward child labor, the commitment of the government in eliminating child labor, and the effectiveness of government enforcement mechanisms.



**Figure 20**

Source: ILO (1995) for all countries other than Cambodia, data for which are from the CSES 1997.

#### D. The Evolving Nature of Child Work

The vast majority of child workers in Asia work on family-owned farms in the rural areas, although child labor can be found in many other sectors of the economy as well. Indeed, children in Asia can be found in virtually every type of occupation – begging, scavenging for recyclables, baggage-carrying (porters), rickshaw driving, garment manufacture, carpet weaving, mining, commercial sex, fishing, brick-making, and construction work.

Since many countries have started collecting data on child labor relatively recently, not much is known about how the incidence of child labor has changed over time. But studies in Indonesia and Thailand suggest that the labor force participation rate of children has declined significantly in the last decade or two. An ILO-sponsored study in Indonesia showed that while the overall labor force participation of children aged 10-14 years had declined significantly in the last two decades, the nature of work performed by children had changed (Pardoen and Irwanto, 1986). Child work had shifted from the primary sector (agriculture) to the secondary sector (manufacturing and services), and the proportion of child workers who were wage earners had increased as the proportion that were unpaid family workers had declined. Wage labor in manufacturing and services is less flexible, more strenuous, and less compatible with schooling. The Indonesian study also showed that the proportion of child workers working fewer than 24 hours a week had declined, but those working more than 44 hours a week had increased from 6.7% in 1986 to 11.1% in 1993. Thus, while there had been progress in

reducing the overall amount of child labor over time, the children who were still working were working longer hours in sectors where flexibility is limited and the work is harsh and potentially hazardous.

Similarly, studies for Thailand also show that the incidence of child labor has declined significantly over time (Banpasirichot, 1996; Tzannatos, 1998). However, children are increasingly employed in small enterprises which operate as subcontractors to larger firms. These firms, which operate in the informal sector and are often unregistered, are typically the least regulated of all establishments, and engage in flagrant violations of labor laws. Child workers employed in such establishments are thus very vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.<sup>10</sup>

The case studies from Indonesia and Thailand are sobering for they suggest that declines in the overall incidence of child labor induced by economic growth is an incomplete indicator of child well-being. It is also important to look at changes in the type of activities that child workers are engaged in.

#### E. International Action Against Child Labor

As noted earlier, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was adopted ten years ago in 1990. Since then, the issue of child labor has received a great deal of international attention. The International Labor Office (ILO) has done much to raise awareness of this issue among developing country governments and non-governmental organizations, primarily through a new program it launched in 1992 – the International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC). In many Asian countries, IPEC has been the largest single sponsor of local NGO action programs on child labor as well as government programs on measuring the prevalence of child labor.

Initiated by its member states, the ILO drafted a new Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor (No. 182). The Convention was adopted in 1999 by the International Labor Conference. The spirit of this new Convention – along with that of the ILO Conventions concerning Forced or Compulsory Labor, 1930 (No. 29), and Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, 1973 (No. 138), and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) – guides the ILO-IPEC agenda.

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<sup>10</sup>It is likely that these trends have been occurring in Cambodia as well, although, given the lack of historical data on child labor, it is not possible to document these trends.

The 1999 ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor (No. 182) was developed out of the realization that owing to poverty, lack of resources, and low administrative capacity in many countries, it would not be realistic to eliminate *all* forms of child labor immediately. In this case, it would be important to prioritize the worst forms of child labor and seek their elimination in the first stage.

The new convention embodies two important principles, which differentiate it sharply from previous conventions, including ILO Convention No. 138. These are the need to (a) *differentiate* between more and less harmful forms of children's employment, and (b) establish *priorities*. The Convention defines children as all persons under the age of 18 years and defines the 'worst' forms of child labor as including:

- "All forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labor, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
- the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic purposes;
- The use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular the production of or trafficking of drugs as defined in the international treaties; and

**Box 2: The International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor -- IPEC**

"... The ILO's concern for child workers dates back to the earliest days of the Organization's founding. Since 1990, however, ILO action against child labor has developed in scope and intensity, and technical cooperation has become a more prominent element of it. In 1992, the ILO launched a major program, the International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC). Beginning in six countries in 1992, it expanded to 11 by 1994. By now, there are more than 40 countries on three continents that have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the ILO, thereby committing themselves to start a country program against child labor. Asia, as a region harboring the highest number of working children in the world, is a major beneficiary of this program...

... The aims of IPEC are to work towards the progressive elimination of child labor by strengthening the capacity of countries to deal with the problem. It stresses in-country ownership of the programs and makes a long-term commitment to countries in setting in motion a process geared at reform and change in social attitudes and in public and corporate policies that will lead to the sustainable prevention and abolition of child labor from within a country. Thus, IPEC strives to:

- support national efforts to combat child labor and to build up a permanent capacity to tackle the problem;
- give priority to the eradication of the most hazardous and exploitative types of child labor;
- emphasize preventive measures;
- build in sustainability from the start."

Source: Thijs, 1997.

- Work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to jeopardize the health, safety or morals of children” (Article 3, Convention 182).

While member states are obliged to define this last category themselves (Article 4.1), and to “ensure the effective implementation and enforcement of the provisions ... including the provision of penal and other sanctions, as appropriate” (Article 7.1), the Convention recommends that, in defining the ‘hazardous’ forms of child labor member states should give consideration, at a minimum, to work:

- which exposes children to physical, emotional or sexual abuse;
- which is done underground, under water, or at dangerous heights;
- with dangerous machinery, equipment and tools;
- in an unhealthy environment which may, for example, involve exposure to hazardous substances, agents and processes, or to temperatures, noise levels, and vibrations damaging to their health;
- under particularly difficult conditions such as work for long hours, during the night, or work which does not allow for the possibility of returning home each day.

In addition, the Convention recommends that programs of action should give special attention to “younger children ... hidden work situations, in which girls are at special risk [and]...other groups of children with special vulnerabilities or needs” [Article 2(c)].

The ILO-IPEC has launched a number of survey initiatives in several countries to identify and quantify the most hazardous forms of child labor. These surveys have been helpful in identifying the extent of work-related injuries and illnesses sustained by child workers and the industries and occupations which are most harmful to child workers. For example, the ILO surveys indicate that, although the large majority (more than two-thirds) of all working children are found in the agricultural sector, the worst incidences of injuries and illnesses occur in construction, mining and transport sectors – particularly for girls (ILO, 1999).

### **Box 3: The Rights of the Child – Turning Words Into Action**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted unanimously by the UN General Assembly in 1989, entered into force as international human rights law less than a year later. It has quickly become the most ratified human rights treaty in history, with 191 countries – all but Somalia and the United States – ratifying it in less than a decade. And in many countries around the world, it is already making an impact.

The convention built on earlier declarations:

- The first Declaration of the Rights of the Child, drafted in 1923 by Eglantyne Jebb, founder of Save the Children. One year later it was elaborated and adopted by the League of Nations, declaring that “mankind owes to the child the best it has to give”.
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, applying equally to all children as well as adults.
- The Declaration on the Rights of the Child, adopted unanimously in 1959 by the UN General Assembly, providing a fuller and more precise definition of the rights of the child.
- The International Year of the Child – 1979 – during which it was recommended that the United Nations draft a comprehensive treaty binding on states.

The 1989 convention provides a comprehensive approach by incorporating all human rights – civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural. The “soul” of the convention is four articles setting out its overarching principles:

- No discrimination against children.
- In all matters concerning children, the best interests of the child shall be primary.
- The right of the child to life, survival and development.
- The right of the child to express views freely in all matters affecting him or her.

The convention requires states to adopt all appropriate measures – legislative, administrative, social, economic, budgetary, educational or other – and to allocate the resources necessary to ensure effective implementation. The convention recognizes the obligations of other parties – parents and families, civil society and the international community. The fact that a child depends completely on others over the early years underlines the importance of obligations. The needs of very young children cannot wait – whether for care, food and warmth or for loving stimulus, basic education and health care.

#### **Norms**

The convention has encouraged children to speak out and defend their rights. In Colombia the Children’s Movement for Peace, nominated for the Nobel Peace prize, organized a national movement when 2.7 million children voted in a symbolic referendum on the human rights of minors. In Ecuador and Mexico, too, millions of children went to the polls and voted on their rights.

Children’s rights became a principal item in all the major UN conferences of the 1990s. The convention formed the basis for other international legal instruments, such as the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Inter-Country Adoption. The new ILO convention on the worst forms of child labor is another example. And several regional instruments are based on the convention, such as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

(Continued on next page)

### **Box 3 (continued)**

The convention has led to a process for formulating two optional protocols – to raise the minimum age of military recruitment and participation in armed conflicts, and to enhance the protection of children from sexual exploitation, including through greater international cooperation.

#### **Institutions**

Many states have appointed an ombudsman or commissioner for children, as a new independent institution or as part of an existing human rights mechanism. Norway was first to take such a step, followed by Costa Rica, Austria, Russia and Australia. Honduras has set up mechanisms to promote an integrated policy approach to children, to ensure coordination between relevant bodies and departments and to monitor progress in implementing the convention.

#### **Laws**

The convention paved the way for recognizing and safeguarding children's rights at the national level:

- Today at least 22 countries have incorporated children's rights in their constitutions – including Brazil, Ecuador, Ethiopia and South Africa.
- More than 50 countries have a process of law review to ensure compatibility with the convention's provisions.
- Bolivia, Brazil and Nicaragua have promoted the adoption of a code on the rights of children and adolescents.
- Other countries have given consideration to major areas requiring legislative changes, from child labor (India, Pakistan, Portugal) to protection from sexual exploitation (Australia, Belgium, German, Sweden, Thailand), juvenile justice (Brazil, Costa Rica, El Salvador) and inter-country adoption (Paraguay, Romania, the United Kingdom).
- In addition, countries have taken important legislative steps to promote changes in behavior and forbid practices incompatible with the convention's spirit and provisions – the ban on female genital mutilation (in several West African states, including Burkina Faso and Senegal), the prohibition of corporal punishment of children in schools and in the family (as in Austria, Cyprus and the Nordic countries).

#### **An Enabling Economic Environment**

- Parliaments in Brazil, South Africa and Sri Lanka have enacted legislation and national budgets to more clearly identify allocations for children.
- Norway now publishes a 'children's annex' to its annual budget, which is regularly submitted to the parliament.
- In Belgium the parliament produced an impact report on children, monitoring government policy for respect for the rights of the child.
- In Sweden the parliament adopted a bill to ensure visibility of the child's perspective in decision-making and called for an analysis of the impact of budgetary decisions and legislation on children.

Source: UNDP, 2000.

## F. Legal and Institutional Framework of Child Labor in Cambodia

The Royal Government of Cambodia has attempted to address the problem of child labor with strong legislation. The commitment of the government to child welfare issues was evident as early as 1992, when Cambodia signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Additionally, article 31 of the Constitution of Cambodia, adopted in 1993, explicitly states that "... the government shall recognize and respect human rights as stipulated in the United Nations charter, the universal declaration of human rights, and the covenants and conventions related to human rights, women's and children's rights."

In January 1996, the National Assembly adopted a new and first law on 'Suppression of the Kidnaping and Trafficking of Human Persons and Exploitation of Human Persons.' Subsequently, in January 1997, the National Assembly adopted a new labor code, which set the minimum age of admission to employment at 15 (Article 177). Another article (181) of the labor code prohibits minors under the age of 18 and under the responsibility of their parents or guardians from engaging in any type of work contract without the parents' or guardians' prior approval. However, Article 177 allows children aged 12-15 years to engage in light work, provided that the work is not hazardous to their health and psychological development and that the work will not affect their school attendance or their participation in vocational training programs. The labor code is essentially in line with ILO conventions.

In July 1999, the Royal Government of Cambodia ratified seven ILO conventions (including Convention 138 on Minimum Age of Employment), thus becoming the second nation in Asia, after Indonesia, to ratify all of the seven fundamental conventions of the ILO. The government is also planning to ratify the new ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor in the near future. All of these steps show the strong commitment of the government to eradicating the worst forms of child labor.

The government has set up an interministerial body, the Cambodian National Council for Children (CNCC), to address issues concerning children, including child labor. The CNCC developed its first Five-Year Plan Against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children in July 1999.

The Ministry of Social Affairs, Labor, Vocational Training and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSALVY) is the lead government agency in charge of enforcing existing child labor-related national legislation through its network of labor inspectors. Despite good intentions, however, the legal system in Cambodia is weak and there are problems with the enforcement of child labor legislation. Few



employers are brought to court for violations of child labor laws. The Department of Labor Inspections is severely understaffed and faces many logistical problems.

In addition to the MoSLVY, the Non-Formal Education Department of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports has been involved in developing technical methods and a manual for non-formal education to create and provide education opportunities for poor boys and girls aged 6-14 years old.

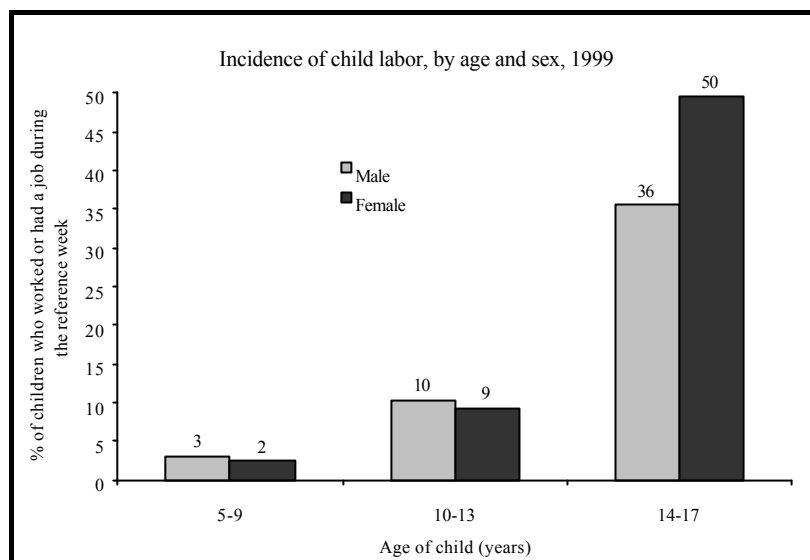
In addition to the government, U.N. agencies have been active in issues relating to child rights and child labor. A full-fledged International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) was launched by the ILO in Cambodia in May 1997. IPEC-Cambodia has taken the lead role in initiating and improving knowledge on the subject of child labor and other forms of commercial exploitation of children. IPEC-Cambodia additionally has been involved in undertaking situational analysis and action research on this issue.

In the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) – a strategic planning and collaborative programming document that identifies common priorities and common challenges for all U.N. system organizations working in Cambodia – children's and youths' rights have been identified as a key cross-cutting issue. The UNDAF explicitly identifies promotion of the rights of the child, betterment of the living conditions of impoverished children, improving the health and nutrition of children, and abolition of the practice of employing children in industries as major cross-cutting goals to be pursued by the U.N. system in Cambodia (U.N. System in Cambodia, 2000).

## IV. EMPLOYMENT OF CHILDREN

### A. Incidence of Child Labor

Reliable and nationally-representative data on the magnitude of the child labor problem in Cambodia can be gleaned from the Cambodia Socioeconomic Survey (CSES) 1999. The CSES 1999 data indicate that the incidence of child labor is greatest among children aged 14-17 years. About 42% of the children in this age group worked or had a job in the survey reference week.<sup>11</sup> The



**Figure 21**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

proportion of children aged 5-9 years who worked or had a job was negligible (about 2-3%), while 9-10% of children aged 10-13 years worked or had a job during the reference week (Figure 21).

It should be noted that the number of economically-active children estimated by the Population Census of 1998 differs substantially from the CSES 1999 estimate. The Census estimated that 0.4% of Cambodian children aged 7-9 years and 4.5% of children aged 10-14 years were economically active (NIS, 1999).<sup>12</sup> The Census estimates differ from the CSES estimates largely because of the different definitions employed. While the Census classifies individuals as economically active or inactive based on their *main* economic activity during the past year, the definition used in this report considers

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<sup>11</sup>These include children who worked for wages, profits, dividends or any other kind of payment or worked as unpaid family workers for at least one hour during the survey week, or did not work at all but had regular jobs, business enterprises or farms from which they were temporarily absent, whether or not they were paid by their employers during their period of absence. Household chores are not considered here as child work, although these are discussed later in this chapter.

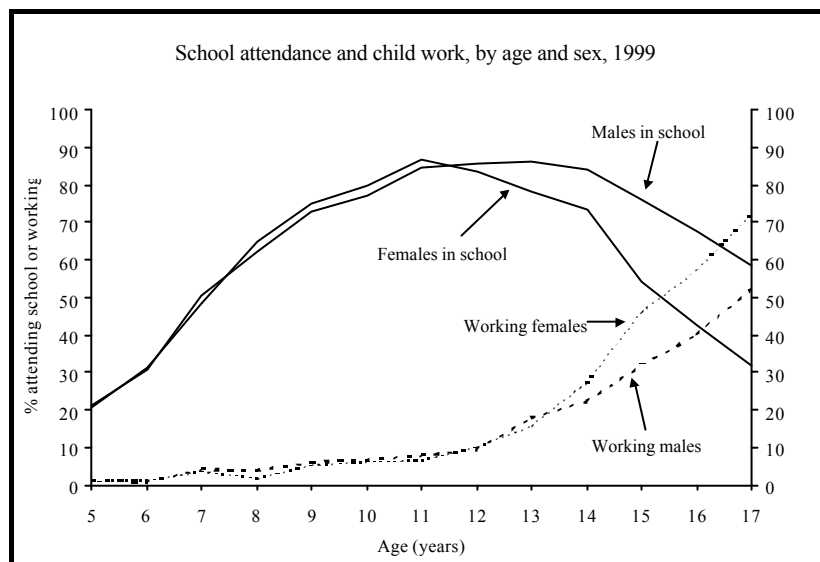
<sup>12</sup>Unfortunately, because the next age category employed by the Census (after the 10-13 years age category) is 15-24 years, it is not possible to obtain the number of economically-active 15-17 year olds from the Census.

individuals who worked even for an hour during the past week as economically active. This is especially important in the case of child labor, as children may list their main activity as being students if they work part-time. As such, the Census definition may grossly understate the number of child workers in the country.

**B. Gender Differences in Child Labor Incidence**

Figure 21 indicates a striking gender difference in the incidence of child labor among children aged 14-17 years. About one-half of all girls aged 14-17 years work, as compared to only about one-third of boys. This gender difference, especially during the teenage years, is consistent with earlier studies for Cambodia that have pointed out the divergence in school enrollment rates between boys and girls beginning at about age 12-13 years (Ministry of Planning 2000).

Data from the CSES 1999, shown in Figure 22, illustrate the gender divergence in school enrollment rates and in child labor rates between the ages of 5 and 17 years. While the rates of school enrollment and of child labor are virtually identical for boys and girls at young ages, the school enrollment rate for girls begins lagging behind that of boys beginning at age 11. The disparity in enrollment rates increases progressively through age 17, with only 32% of girls aged 17 enrolled in school as compared to 59% of boys.



**Figure 22**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

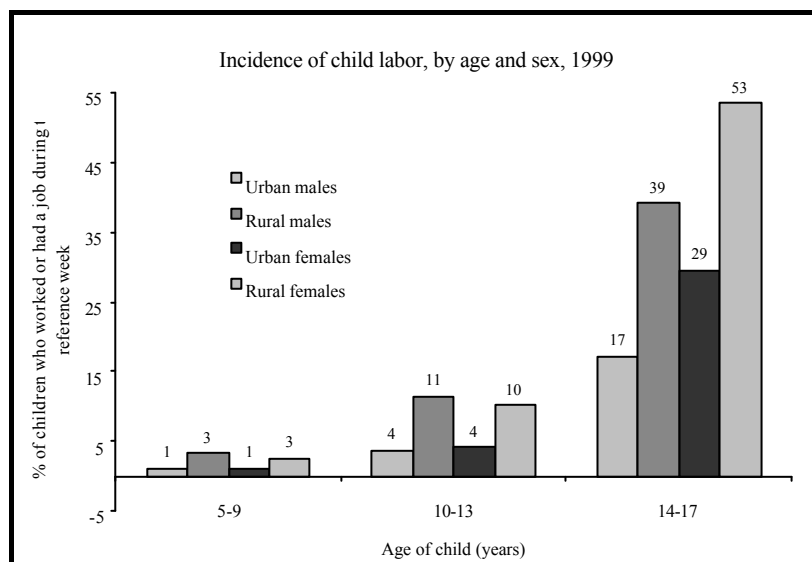
Interestingly, at the age of about 12-13 years, the labor force participation rate for girls begins moving ahead of that for boys, and the divergence in labor force participation rates continues through age 17. At age 17, about 72% of girls, but only 52% of boys, work in the labor market. Thus, higher labor force participation of older girls relative to older boys is associated with correspondingly lower school enrollments for them.

The higher incidence of child labor among girls relative to boys is not unique to Cambodia. It is observed in other countries as well. For example, a study for Nepal in 1993 found that the majority (59%) of working children aged 10-14 years in that country were girls (Sharma and Sherchan, 1998).

What would explain the higher prevalence of child labor among teenage girls relative to teenage boys? One possibility is that employers, including the families themselves in their own businesses or farms, perceive girls to be more obedient, less likely to complain and shirk, and more willing to work longer hours. Another possibility is that parents consider it more important to educate their teenage boys than their teenage daughters. Teenage girls' access to secondary education could be impeded for a number of reasons, including (i) a perception among parents that the schooling of boys offers greater future rewards in terms of career opportunities and market wages, (ii) parental fear that their daughters might be abducted on the way to or from school (given the large distances between home and secondary schools, especially in the rural areas); and (iii) a perception among parents that 'over-educating' their daughters could be a handicap in the marriage market and would make it difficult for them to marry a suitably-qualified male. Whatever the reason, the fact that girls are less likely to continue their schooling after completion of primary school greatly increases the probability of their entry into the labor force.

### C. Regional Variations in the Incidence of Child Labor

As would be expected, child labor is much more common in the rural areas of the country than in the urban areas. However, the incidence of child labor in the urban areas is not insignificant (Figure 23). For instance, 29% of girls aged 14-17 years in the urban areas, and 53% of those in the rural areas, are engaged in work. For boys, the corresponding ratios are 17% and 39%, respectively.

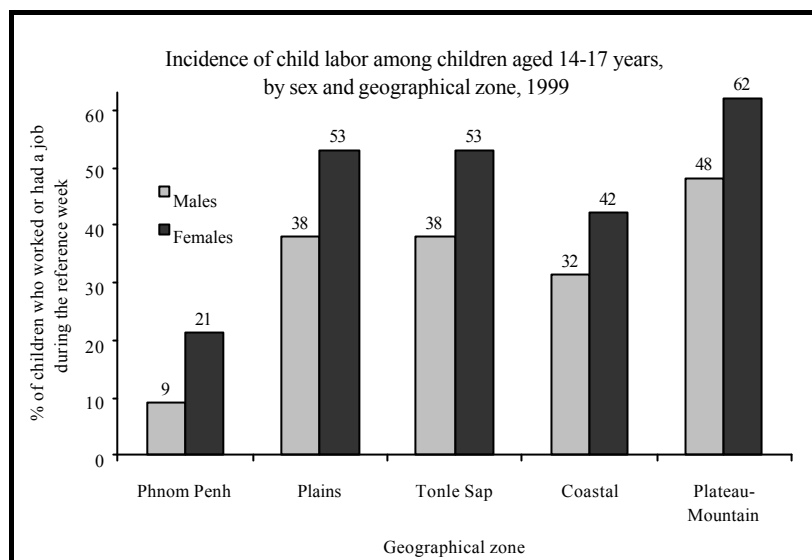


**Figure 23**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

The greater incidence of child labor in rural areas is not surprising, as work on the family farm constitutes the single most common form of child labor in most developing countries. In contrast, there are relatively fewer opportunities for children to work in the urban areas.

There are other geographical variations in the magnitude of child labor. The incidence of child labor is greatest in the mountain-plateau zone (comprising provinces like Mondulakiri and Rattanakiri), where nearly two-thirds of girls and one-half of boys aged 14-17 years are economically active (Figure 24). In contrast, only 9% of boys aged 14-17 and 21% of girls aged 14-17 in Phnom Penh are engaged in labor.



**Figure 24**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

A more relevant question for targeting purposes is: where are most of the child workers in Cambodia located? The CSES 1999 data indicate that, despite the relatively high incidence of child labor in the mountainous zone, most of Cambodia's child workers are actually found in the Plains and Tonle Sap regions. These regions, which are the two most populous zones in the country, together account for 81% of all child workers in the country.<sup>13</sup> Thus, any meaningful efforts to combat child labor in Cambodia have to target these two regions.

#### D. How much Do Child Workers Work on Average?

The magnitude of the child labor problem depends not only on the proportion of children who work in the labor market but also on how much they work on average. If children typically worked for 5-6 hours a week and a few weeks in a year, the problem would not as serious as if they were to

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<sup>13</sup>The two regions account for approximately 75% of the country's population. In contrast, the mountainous zone accounts for only 10% of the country's population, which is why the absolute number of child workers in that zone is significantly smaller than in the other regions.

work full time for more than half of the year. The CSES 1999 data indicate that, on average, child workers work nearly full-time – 44.2 hours a week (Table 1). Indeed, at over 47 hours a week, the working hours of child workers aged 14-17 years are only slightly lower than those of adults.<sup>14</sup> More than a third of child workers aged 10-13 years, and nearly two-thirds of child workers aged 14-17 years, report working more than 40 hours a week.

Table 1: Distribution of average weekly hours worked in primary and secondary jobs, by age, 1999

Age group (years)	Average number of hours worked per week by working children					Total	Average no. of weekly hours worked
	1-20	21-30	31-40	40 or more			
5-9	26.04	34.37	10.37	29.22	100.00	32.84	
10-13	19.59	30.12	14.48	35.81	100.00	36.58	
14-17	8.79	15.82	11.52	63.87	100.00	47.35	
All ages	12.09	19.90	12.03	55.98	100.00	44.24	

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

Child labor also does not appear to be a completely seasonal phenomenon in Cambodia. Child workers work an average of 35-37 weeks – or more than 8 months – in a year in their primary job (Table 2).<sup>15</sup> More than 40% of all child workers aged 10-13 years and 45% of child workers aged 14-17 years work during 40-52 weeks of the year. With these kind of working hours and work weeks, it is difficult to see how schooling would be compatible with labor force participation for the large majority of child workers.

Table 2: Distribution of average annual weeks worked in the primary job, by age, 1999

Age group (years)	Average number of weeks worked per year by working children					Total	Average no. of annual weeks worked
	1-13	14-26	27-39	40-52			
5-9	2.51	42.32	11.67	43.51	100.00	35.04	
10-13	5.56	34.60	19.72	40.13	100.00	34.70	
14-17	3.09	27.45	23.77	45.69	100.00	36.94	
All ages	3.54	29.75	22.24	44.47	100.00	36.38	

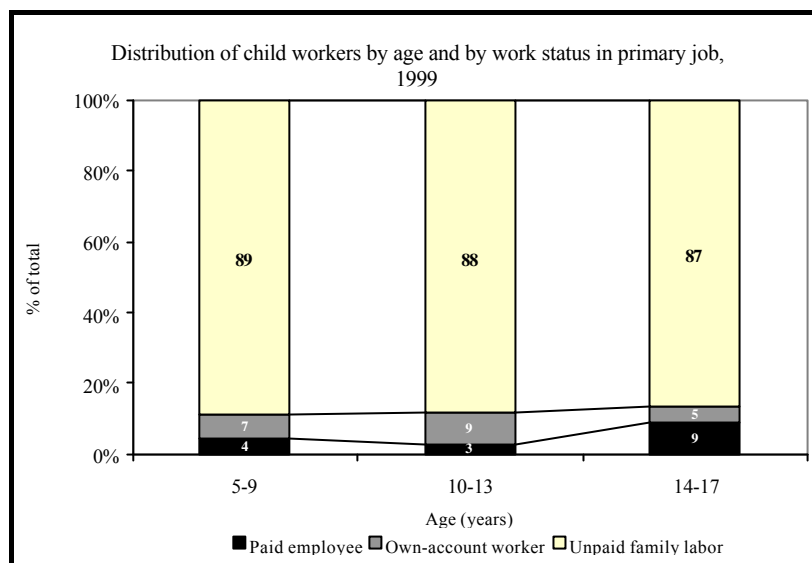
Source: Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

<sup>14</sup>Working adults aged 18 years and over work an average of 55.7 hours per week and 39.8 weeks per year.

<sup>15</sup>While data on weeks worked annually in the secondary job are available from the CSES 1999, weeks worked in the secondary job cannot simply be added to the weeks worked in the primary job, as some children may work on both jobs concurrently. The weekly hours worked variable, however, does include hours spent working on both the primary and the secondary job.

## E. What Kind of Work Do Child Workers Perform?

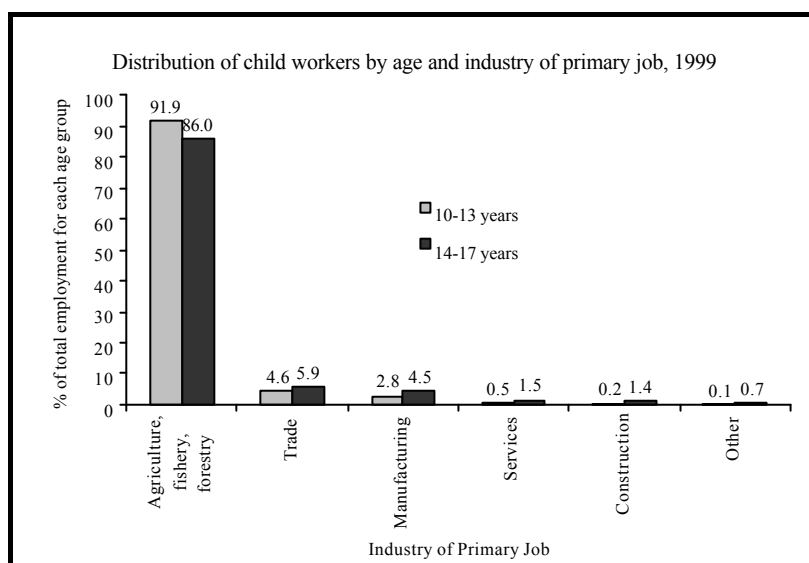
The vast majority of child workers in Cambodia are either unpaid family workers or own-account workers (viz., self-employed), reflecting the fact that the most common type of child labor is employment in the family business (such as farming). About 9% of the older child workers (viz., those aged 14-17 years) do, however, work as paid or wage employees (Figure 25).



**Figure 25**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

Data on the distribution of child workers by the industry of their primary occupation tell the same story. About 86% of children aged 14-17 years and 92% of children aged 10-13 years work in agriculture, forestry and fishing. Trade (typically retail) and manufacturing together account for another 7-11% of child workers (Figure 26).



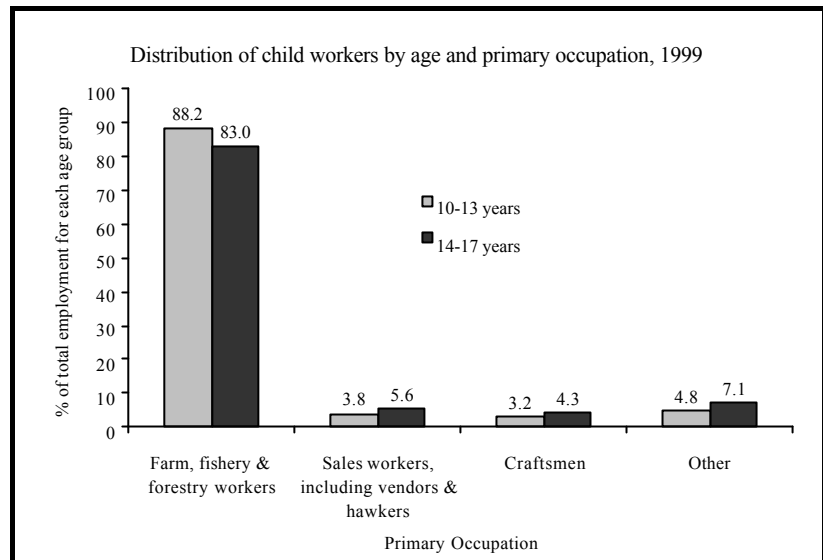
**Figure 26**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

Other sectors, such as construction and services, account for a negligible number of child workers.

Data on the occupational distribution of child workers again indicate that well over 80% of child workers are farm, fishery or forestry workers, while another 4-6% are sales workers, including hawkers, vendors and peddlers. About 3-4% of child workers are crafts workers (Figure 27).

Thus, child work in Cambodia is largely (although, by no means, exclusively) a matter of children working in the agricultural sector, typically on their family farms. Children from non-farm families also work in their families' non-farm businesses, but relatively few children work as wage employees for non-relatives or non-family-owned businesses.



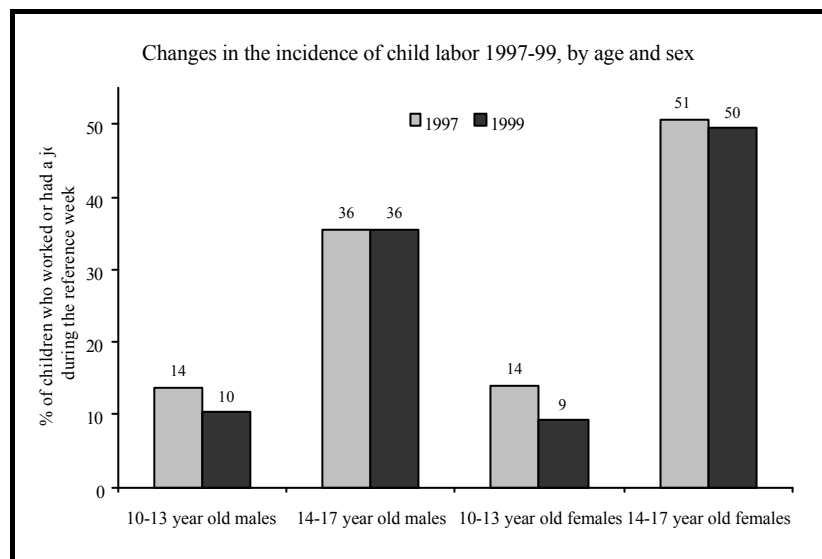
**Figure 27**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

What kind of tasks do children perform in agriculture and other sectors? Unfortunately, few data sets, including the CSES, collect detailed information on how children spend their time and what kind of tasks and activities they perform. However, field visits and anecdotal evidence suggest that children are involved in a wide range of tasks, including plowing, transplanting rice, pumping water into the rice field, fetching water to irrigate crops, weighing and harvesting rice, and carrying baskets of harvested rice from the farm.

In addition, children are often responsible for taking farm animals, such as cows, to graze and for catching fish from ponds. Children are also known to work on rubber plantations.

Within the manufacturing sector, child labor is commonly found in industries such as brick-making, garment and apparel manufacture, and salt production.



**Figure 28**

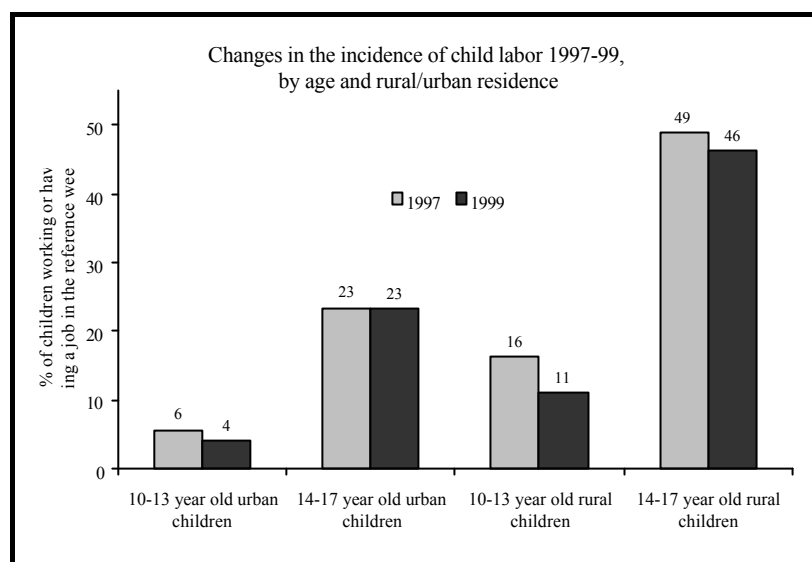
Source: Calculations from CSES 1997 and CSES 1999 data.



## F. Changes in the Incidence of Child Labor Since 1997

Since the Cambodia Socioeconomic Survey was also conducted in 1997, it is possible to obtain estimates of the prevalence of child labor in 1997 and compare them to the situation in 1999.<sup>16</sup> The results indicate that while there was an appreciable decline in the prevalence of labor between 1997 and 1999 among children aged 10-13 years, the proportion of children aged 14-17 who worked remained virtually constant (Figure 28).<sup>17</sup> Both boys and girls aged 10-13 years benefitted more-or-less equally from the decline in the prevalence of child labor.

Both rural and urban areas appear to have benefitted from the decline in the prevalence of young child labor. In the rural areas of the country, 11% of children aged 10-13 years worked in 1999 – down from 16% just two years earlier (Figure 29). These results are certainly encouraging.



**Figure 29**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1997 and CSES 1999 data.

What would account for the decline in labor force participation rates among children aged 10-13 years between 1997 and 1999? It is possible that this decline is part of a longer downward trend in labor force participation of younger children since the early 1990s. Improving access to primary

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<sup>16</sup>ILO-IPEC (1998) reports that the labor force participation rate for children aged 10-14 years was 16% in 1996, based on data from the 1996 Socioeconomic Survey of Cambodia (SESC). However, those estimates are based on only one round of data. In addition, unlike the CSES 1997 and CSES 1999, the SESC 1996 did not cover large parts of the country. For these reasons, the CSES 1997 and CSES 1999 data are used in this report.

<sup>17</sup>The estimates for the two time periods may not be *strictly* comparable owing to differences in sample coverage of the CSES 1997 and CSES 1999. However, the differences between the two surveys were relatively small, and a comparison should be *indicative* of the actual changes in child labor that occurred between 1997 and 1999.

schools over time (in large part the result of an expansion in the number of rural primary schools) has made it easier for parents to send their children to school and pull them out of work. Certainly, the primary school enrollment rate has been increasing steadily since the early 1990s (Ministry of Planning, 2000). What is unfortunate, however, is that this trend does not appear to have extended to older children (viz., those aged 14-17 years), whose labor force participation rates have remained unchanged between 1997 and 1999.

#### G. Other Forms of Child Labor

Indeed, the worst forms of child labor may not be picked up at all by surveys such as the CSES. Because most nationally-representative surveys are household based, they are unlikely to enumerate persons not residing in a standard household, such as street children, child soldiers, and child commercial sex workers (CSWs). As a result, precise estimates of the size of these populations are not available. While it is widely recognized that most child soldiers in Cambodia have been demobilized by now and that this problem does not exist at this time, the problem of child sex workers, street children and child domestic workers is a very real one.

Child Prostitution. Few reliable estimates of the number of child commercial sex workers (CSWs) are available for the country, although anecdotal evidence suggests that this number is large and growing. It is estimated that there are 80,000 - 100,000 commercial sex workers in Cambodia, with 17,000 of these being in Phnom Penh alone (Sopheha, 1998; Human Rights Vigilance of Cambodia, 1995). Of the CSWs in Phnom Penh, about 30% are estimated to be under 18 years of age. This would put the population of child CSWs at about 5,000 in Phnom Penh.

#### **Box 4: Deploying Children in Child Labor Situations**

“Sophal is the oldest son of the family. He was first sent to work for other people when he was 12 years old and has already lived and worked for three families. In the first two families, he looked after cows and cut grass for cows and had to do a few other tasks such as fetching water, looking after the house, and cooking rice. But with his present employer, he does many jobs such as plowing, transplanting rice, pumping water into the rice field, fetching water, and weighing and harvesting rice. His annual pay is 1,000 kilograms of rice, all of which is taken by his mother. He has lived with his present employer for three years. His 11-year old sister lives with a family in Battambang town, also as a household servant. Her work includes looking after the children, doing other household work, and looking after the house. Her pay is 300 Baht/month.”

Source: SCVCS, 2000.

Needless to say, these are very rough estimates. Currently, the Vulnerable Children's Assistance Organization (VCAO) is undertaking a survey in the four localities of Phnom Penh having the largest concentrations of CSWs. The objective of this survey is to enumerate the number of children in commercial sex. Until this survey is completed (by December 2000), the number of child sex workers in Phnom Penh will remain a rough guess.

Young children, the majority of them girls, are often sold by desperately poor parents into sexual slavery to brokers or middle-men. In such cases, the child is 'pledged' for a certain period of time, and held responsible for repaying the initial loan (taken on by her parents) and the accumulated interest on the loan to the broker from her earnings as a CSW. In other cases, parents are tricked into believing that their children will be provided legitimate work in the city. At any rate, the child soon finds herself in sexual bondage, forced to service countless customers against her wishes, and threatened with violent repercussions if she should try to escape. The demand for child commercial sex workers is said to have increased with the spread of HIV/AIDS, as children are perceived to have had fewer or no sexual partners and therefore less likely to be infected. Child trafficking and prostitution are contemporary forms of slavery, and represent the worst possible forms of child labor.

### **Box 5: Effects of Prostitution on Child Sex Workers**

"The personal trauma and loss of self esteem to a child prostitute brought about by constant degradation is difficult to imagine... It is hard to comprehend what goes on in the minds of 13, 14, 15 year old girls as they are forced to have sex with man after man, often by force, sometimes by rape. They suffer this knowing, in some cases, that people they have most trusted have allowed it to happen..."

Girls who have known no other life apart from prostitution from an early age could also find it difficult to comprehend a different kind of life and behavior... Some girls [who had been working in prostitution for a while] maintained casual sexual contacts with men on the street and with boys in the center itself... For young girls, working in a brothel from an early age threatens to set the course for life.

... For those children who have been raped by a parent, step-parent or relative, or been sold by their own families, it is difficult to contemplate a return. It is not unusual to hear of girls who repaid debts, went home and were sold again... For others, it is difficult to return because they cannot face the scorn of their families and communities arising from the fact that they have been prostitutes. This shame in fact keeps many sex workers in brothels even after they are technically 'free' of their debts."

Source: UNICEF, 1995.

A recent study of prostitutes has identified certain risk factors that increase the probability of a girl being lured into prostitution (IOM, 1997). These risk factors are:

- an older sister, relative or friend is already involved in commercial sex;
- the parents of the girl have divorced or separated;
- one or both of the parents are dead and the girl is living with relatives or friends;
- one or both of the parents are drug addicts, alcoholics or gamblers;
- the family is desperately poor; and
- the girl is of the appropriate age for the commercial sex industry.

Related to the issue of child prostitution is child trafficking. While most of the child trafficking for prostitution occurs within Cambodia itself, Cambodia is also at the sending and receiving end of international child trafficking. For example, it is estimated that at least 3,000 women from the southern part of Vietnam have been trafficked to Cambodia for prostitution, with more than 15% being younger than 15 years of age (ILO-IPEC, 1998a). At the same time, Cambodian children are trafficked to Thailand for begging and soliciting, with the majority of victims being very young boys. Many of

the 200,000 foreign child workers in Thailand are from Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar. In some cases,

#### **Box 6: A 16-year old Sex Worker from Battambang**

“One day, one of the workers told me about a lady who needed a person to take care of her child. She was willing to pay me 150,000 riel per month. I think this lady was his relative. I immediately agreed to come to Phnom Penh with this lady, because I was angry with my uncle and aunt who were always blaming me. I did not tell my mother that I was going with her, because the lady ordered me not to tell anybody else.

The lady brought me to Phnom Penh. When we arrived, she brought me to a place where I saw a lot of people going in and out, perhaps a hotel. Here I was sold by the lady to a *meebon*, who was interested in me because I was still a virgin. I do not know for how much she sold me. Then I was brought to a room and a bit later a man came in. I asked him to help me get away from this place, but he did not want to help me; he wanted me to sleep with him. After that, he wanted to buy me from the *meebon* to take me as his wife. The *meebon* did not agree, because he had paid a lot of money for me. I had to sleep with a lot of other men.

But soon I became very weak. They used make-up to make me look beautiful and gave me medicine to feel better. But it got worse. I was bleeding. First the *meebon* told me that it is just my menstruation and she hit me for complaining. Only later, five days after, they took me to the hospital. The *meebon* told me not to tell the doctor, but I decided to tell him about my situation and asked him to help me. He told the *meebon* that I had to stay in the hospital, because I was still unable to walk. Then he informed an organization who helped to arrest the *meebon*.”

Source: Derks, 1997.

Cambodian infants have been purchased by middlemen and brokers for trafficking purposes through legal adoptions. The government has recently stopped adoptions of Cambodian children by foreigners to investigate this issue.

Street Children. It is even more difficult to estimate the number of street children, as they are highly mobile and frequently move from town to town. Social workers and organizations that work with street children estimate that there are roughly one thousand street children living either on their own or with their

families in Phnom Penh alone. Many of these children engage in activities such as begging, scavenging for recyclables in garbage dumps, shoe polishing, and washing dishes in a street-side restaurant. It is very easy for the street children to be drawn into gangs, and resort to crimes such as pick-pocketing and petty theft for sustaining their livelihoods. They are also very vulnerable to using drugs and offering sexual favors in exchange for money or temporary shelter.

Mith Samlanh (Khmer for “friends”), an organization that works with street children in Phnom Penh, lists a total of 3,092 ‘contacts’ that its members had with street children in the city in June 2000 (Mith Samlanh, 2000). The organization estimates that there are roughly 976 street children in the city, of whom 840 (or 86%) are boys and the remaining 136 (or 14%) are girls.

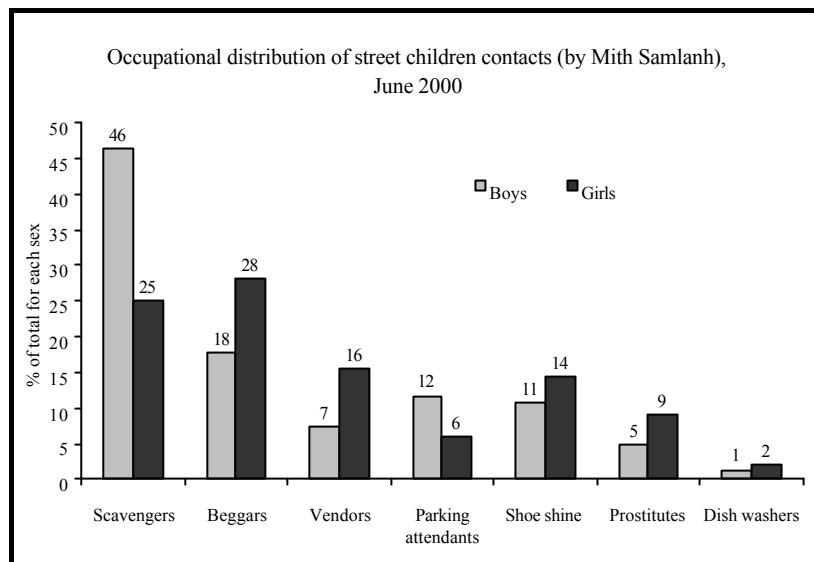
The occupational distribution of these contacts (which probably reflects the occupational distribution of the underlying street child population) is shown in Figure 30. By far, the most common occupation of street boys is scavenging (46%), followed by begging (18%). In contrast, begging is more common among girls than scavenging. About 9% of the street girls and 5% of the street boys engage in commercial sex.

#### **Box 7: The Life of a Street Girl**

“My name is Sochata. I am 18 years old. I left Kampong Cham and lived for three years on the streets of Phnom Penh. I had many friends. Most of my friends were working to help their families. I have two special friends with whom I slept in the streets when we were younger. Now we move together to the squatter area. We live in a small hut with our girlfriends. We work as construction workers and our girlfriends are “orange sellers” (many of these girls also sell sexual favors). Our future is very limited because we lack education and we have very few opportunities. We often go to the Naga Youth Center to receive STD treatment and counseling about our lives, because our girlfriends often do prostitution and they are forced by their clients to have sex without condoms. We are really excited to join because we can learn a lot about reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and STDs. We have received a lot of condoms to protect ourselves.”

Source: Written by a participant in Mith Samlanh’s Naga Youth Center, as reported in Mith Samlanh (2000).

A survey of 740 waste pickers by the Community Sanitation and Recycling Organization (CSARO) and the Center for Social Development in three districts of Phnom Penh – Chamcarmon, Toul Kork and Mean Chey, found that 1.8% of the waste pickers were aged 5-9 years, 33.2% aged 10-14 years, and 18.7% aged 15-19 years (O’Leary, 1998). Thus, more than half of the waste pickers were children. Boys outnumbered girls nearly three to one in this group. Most of the children frequented Phnom Penh’s landfill site at Stung Mean Chey, which is about 5 kms from the city, but a few picked along the streets. About 89% of waste pickers were unpaid family members working to contribute to their family incomes. Nearly two-thirds of the waste-picking children (under the age of 18 years) worked 7-9 hours a day, with 30% working 4-6 hours daily. About 22% of the children earned less than Riels 1,000 per day from waste-picking, while another 65% earned between R. 1,001 and R. 3,000 per day.



**Figure 30**  
Source: Mith Samlanh, 2000.

Domestic Work. Another form of child work about which not much is known is domestic work outside the child’s own home. A number of child workers in Cambodia work as domestic servants, responsible for everything from cooking, cleaning, child care and running errands. As in the case of street children and CSWs, no precise estimates of the number of children engaged in this type of work exist. According to UNICEF (1999a), child domestic work has a number of features that distinguish it from other forms of child labor:

- It is among the lowest status, least regulated, and poorest paid of all occupations.
- Most child domestic workers are live-in servants who can be summoned to work by their employers at any time of the day or night.
- The typical working hours for child domestic servants are 12-16 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Children as young as five or six years of age can be found in domestic work.
- The earnings of child domestic servants are often given to parents or other guardians, with the child seeing none of his or her earnings.

- Child domestic work is among the most socially-isolated jobs, as the live-in child servant is allowed virtually no contact with peers or friends or family.

Indeed, for these reasons, child domestic work outside the child's own family is often considered as one of the worst forms of child labor.

As in the case of child sex workers, it is difficult to know exactly how many child domestic workers there are in the country. The only available estimates are from the Vulnerable Children's Assistance Organization (VCAO), which undertook a survey of households in two communes of Phnom Penh to estimate the number of child domestic workers. Out of a total of 2,920 households that were surveyed between February 1999 and January 2000, representing a population of 17,907 individuals, a total of 109 child domestic workers aged 14-17 years were enumerated. If these numbers are extrapolated to the entire population of Phnom Penh, an estimate of 6,500 child domestic workers aged 14-17 years is obtained for Phnom Penh alone. While most child domestic workers fall within the 14-17 age group, it is not uncommon to find child domestic workers as young as 8 or 9 years of age. The estimated number of child domestic workers would need to be raised if children younger than 14 years were to be included.

### **Box 8: Uktha's Story**

Tha, 19 years old, originally came from a family of eight, half of whom (including his father) died during Pol Pot's time. In 1987, his mother fell ill and the other family members were too young to work. The family soon fell into debt and couldn't afford to buy enough food. They were forced to sell their house and land...

Now, Tha's household has seven members including himself – his mother, two sisters, and two orphaned nephews. Their house is made of old palm-leaf mat walls and a sheet metal roof. It contains one bed, two cupboards, and a table. They do not have access to a latrine or electricity, and have to buy water on a daily basis.

Tha used to scavenge out at the city dump in Stung Mean Chey between 1987 and 1994. He now only works at night between 8 pm and 2 am, and travels about 15 km. each night. He is often threatened and was recently beaten up and robbed by the Bang Thom gang. He works at night both because he doesn't want his friends to see him waste picking and because he is trying to stay in school during the day. His two sisters no longer attend school because they have to waste-pick.

The combined daily income for the household is about R. 6,600 (US\$2.12) per day. The family has to spend an average of R. 6,500 each day on food and necessities, and the remaining R. 100 is saved and often used for medicines when someone in the family is injured or ill from waste picking.

Source: O'Leary, 1998.

The VCAO survey found that only 7% of the child domestic workers enumerated were male; the remaining 93% were females. As noted earlier, girl domestic workers are preferred over boys because they are perceived to be more hard-working and less likely to complain about long working hours and difficult jobs. Unfortunately, this makes the girl domestic workers also vulnerable to sexual exploitation by their employers.

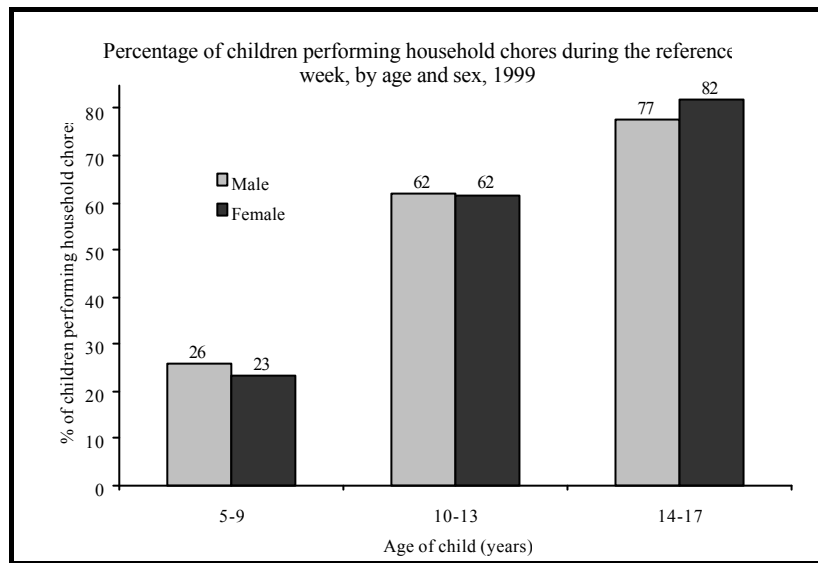
#### H. Work in the Home

Household chores can be viewed as another form of child work. However, children’s assistance with household chores is generally regarded as desirable as long as these chores are light, do not take up too much of the child’s time, and do not interfere with the child’s schooling.

The CSES data indicate that assistance with household chores is very common, especially among

older children aged 14-17 years. In this age group, 77% of boys and 82% of girls helped their parents out with household chores during the survey week (Figure 31). In contrast, only about a quarter of children aged 5-9 years actively perform household chores.

Children aged 14-17 years who perform household chores spend an average of 19 hours a week on these chores, with virtually no gender difference. While this may not seem like much, it is very large when added to the work hours spent outside the home. Since child workers aged 14-17 years spend an average of 47.4 hours weekly in outside work, the combined work and chore time of working children amounts to 66 hours per week or 9.5 hours a day (assuming a 7-day work week, which would be typical for children working in family enterprises). Not only would this level of work effort leave little time for school, it would be illegal according to the labor codes of most countries.

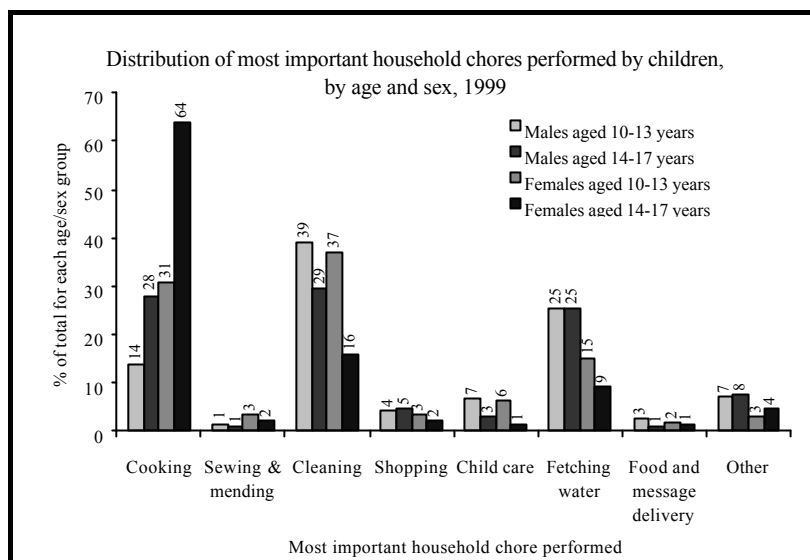


**Figure 31**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.



What kind of household chores do children typically perform? As would be expected, there is some age and sex segmentation of household tasks. Girls, especially those aged 14-17 years, are responsible for food preparation and cooking, while boys and younger girls tend to take on house-cleaning and clothes-washing duties (Figure 32). Fetching water from the river or well is largely a task



**Figure 32**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

reserved for boys. Surprisingly, taking care of younger siblings does not figure much among the most important household chores performed by children. This may, however, reflect the fact that child care is rarely regarded in the Cambodian context as a separate chore; it is more often seen as something that an older child does on the side as he or she cleans the house, washes the clothes, or prepares the evening meal for the family. Younger children may consider taking care of their infant or toddler siblings as play.

### I. Children's Contribution to Household Income

It is difficult to quantify children's contribution to household income since the large majority of children in Cambodia work as unpaid family workers, and as such do not earn a wage. However, one can calculate, for the overall CSES 1999 sample, the proportion of total household wage earnings contributed by children.<sup>18</sup> Since the labor force participation rate of children aged 5-14 years is quite low and most of these child workers are unpaid family workers, the wage contribution of this group to overall household wage earnings is quite small – only 0.8%. The wage contribution of children aged 5-17 years is much larger – 3.9%.

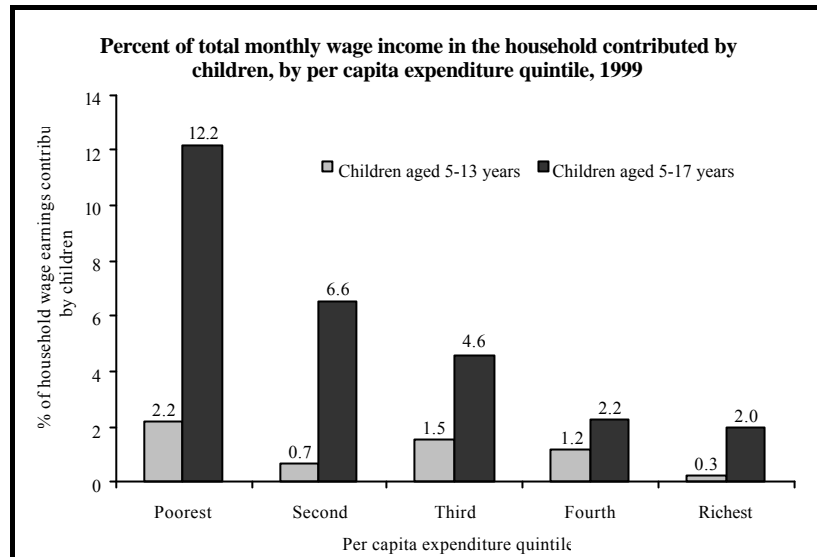
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<sup>18</sup>Note that wage earnings are only a small component of total income. In addition to wage earnings, total income includes profits from self-employment activities (such as farming), interest income, and remittances.

However, these averages hide the fact that the wage contribution of children is significantly greater among poor households. Figure 33 shows that, among the poorest 20% of the population, children aged 5-17 years contribute 12.2% of household wage earnings. In contrast, the wage contribution of children aged 5-17 years is only 2% among the richest 20% of the population. Thus, as would be expected, child labor makes a very significant contribution to the wage earnings of the poor.

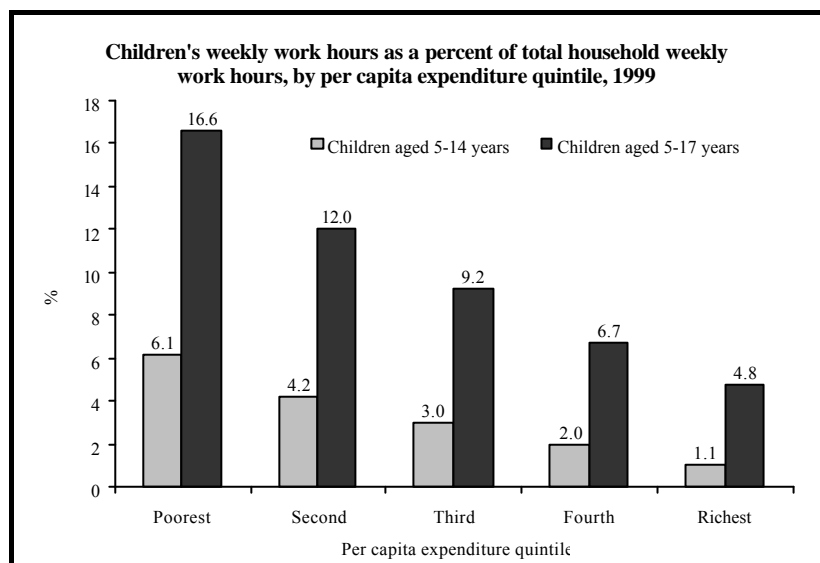
One may alternatively evaluate the contribution of children to the household's livelihood by looking at their work hours in relation to the total hours worked by all members in the household. This has the advantage that it includes hours spent by children and adults in non-

wage activities, such as self-employment, which are important in a country like Cambodia. The relative contribution of children to the household's livelihood is somewhat greater under this alternative definition, with children aged 5-14 years contributing 3.2% to the total hours worked within households and children aged 5-17 years contributing 9.7%. As in the earlier case, the relative contribution of



**Figure 33**

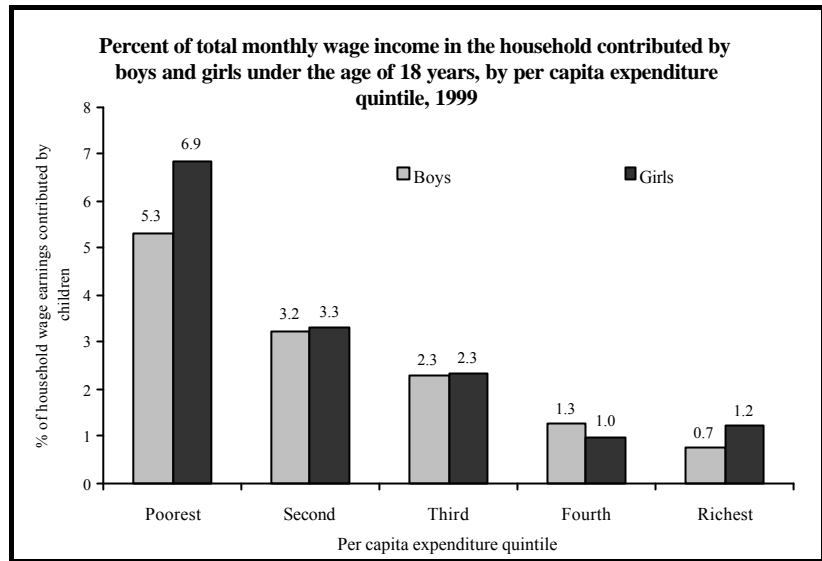
Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.



**Figure 34**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

children is significantly greater among the poor than among the nonpoor (Figure 34). For instance, among the poorest 20% of the population, the relative contribution of children aged 5-17 years to hours worked is 16.6%, while it is only 4.8% among the richest 20% of the population.



#### Gender Differences.

A final question concerns gender differences, if any, in

the wage or hours contribution of children to household livelihoods. Since, as noted earlier, the labor force participation rate of girls, especially at ages 14-17, exceeds that of boys, the contribution of girls to household livelihoods is likely to be greater than that of boys. This is borne out by data shown in Figure 35, which shows that particularly among the poorest households, the contribution of girls aged 5-17 years to household wage earnings is greater than that of boys (6.9% versus 5.3%).

**Figure 35**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

## V. THE DETERMINANTS OF CHILD LABOR

### A. Poverty, Land Ownership and Child Labor

Obviously, one of the most important reasons for the high prevalence of child labor in Cambodia is poverty. Poverty is pervasive in the country, with recent estimates putting the proportion of the population living below the poverty line at 36% (Ministry of Planning, 2000). In poor households, every able member – whether child or adult – has to work to enable the family to eke out a living. This is all the more true in families where the male head is disabled or absent. Child labor can thus be seen as a coping strategy for vulnerable and indigent families. Indeed, the most desperately poor families are often the ones to resort to the worst forms of child labor, such as selling or trafficking their children into prostitution. In many cases, the desperately poor make a conscious decision to sacrifice opportunities for one child so that the other children in the household may avail of opportunities such as schooling. That this happens often with the complicity of the ‘sacrificed’ child is all the more shocking.

Nearly 84% of the sample households in the CSES 1999 reported the need to augment household income and the need for the child to support his or her own expenses as the main reason why their children worked. In contrast, only 6% of households reported acquisition of work experience as the main reason for child labor.<sup>19</sup> Poverty is thus an important cause of child labor. Recognition of this simple fact is especially important in policy efforts to combat child labor. Unless poor households are compensated for the income they would lose from giving up child labor, efforts to combat child labor may not be successful.

While *a priori* one would expect an inverse relationship between socioeconomic status and prevalence of child labor, there is one mitigating factor that could affect the nature of this relationship. In Cambodia, as in other developing countries, most of the child labor consists of children working on their family farms. In general, the productivity of family labor (including children) is larger when the household has greater availability of other complementary farm inputs, such as land. Thus, if households with larger, well-irrigated plots of farm land find it difficult to hire in farm workers to work on the family farm, especially during the peak agricultural season, they will have an incentive to employ their children.

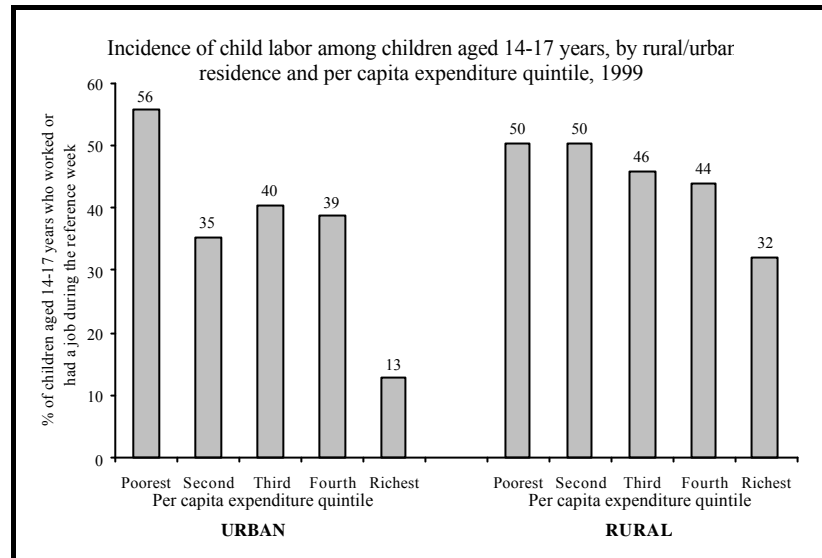
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<sup>19</sup>The remaining 10% reported other reasons.

This incentive or demand for using child labor among more prosperous land-owning households would thus offset the traditional ‘aversion’ to child labor that better-off households typically have. This would serve to weaken the inverse relationship between child labor use and economic status that is typically expected in the literature. It is no wonder then that many recent studies for other developing countries have found that child labor force participation rates are uncorrelated with household income (Nielsen, 1998; Canagarajah and Coulombe, 1999; Sasaki and Temesgen, 1999).

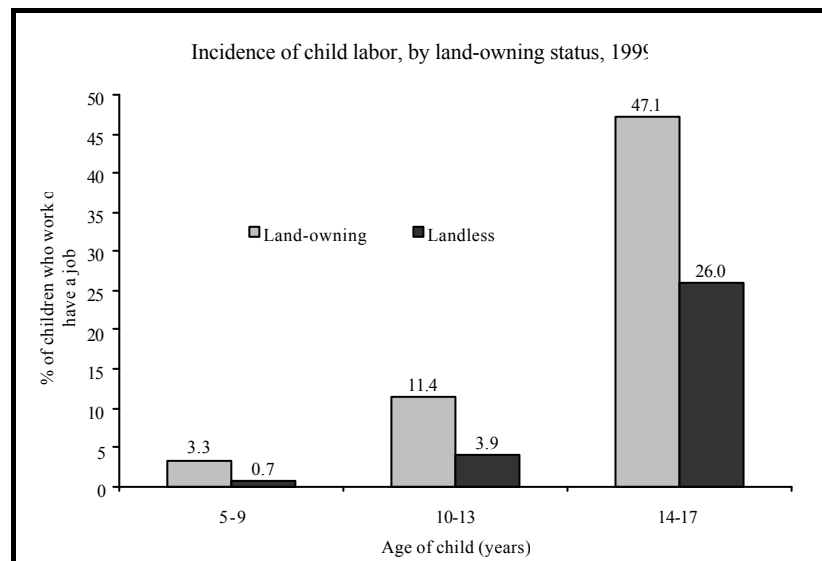
These observations are clearly germane to the Cambodian situation, since a large many child workers are found in the agricultural sector. Figure 36, which shows the incidence of child labor across per capita expenditure quintiles for both rural and urban areas in the country, provides an empirical context to the above discussion. In the urban areas, a strong inverse relationship is observed between child labor use and household economic status. While 56% of children aged 14-17 years are engaged in labor among the poorest urban quintile, the corresponding proportion is merely 13% in the richest urban quintile. In contrast, the relationship between economic status and child labor, while still negative, is much weaker in the rural areas.

These points are again highlighted in Figure 37, which shows the relationship between child labor and land-owning status. The incidence of child labor is significantly



**Figure 36**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.



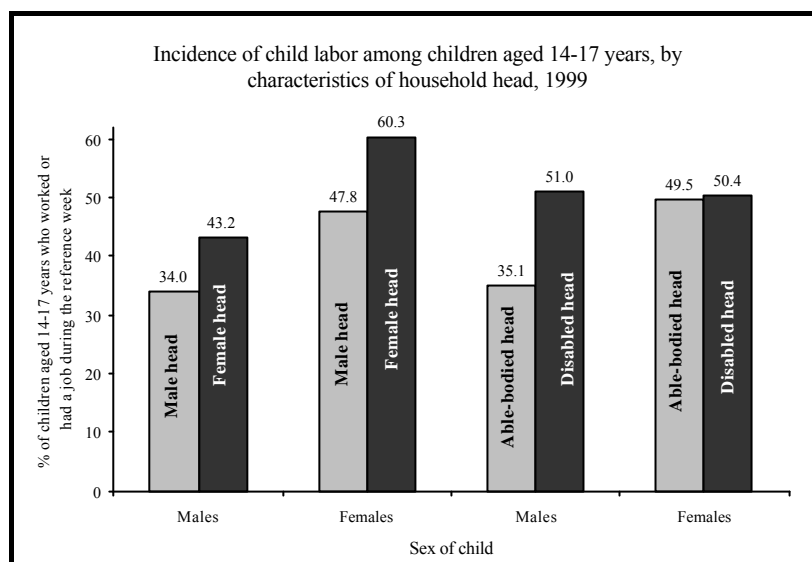
**Figure 37**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

greater among land-owning households relative to landless households (even though land-owning households tend to be better-off than landless households).

## B. Disabled and Female Household Heads and Child Labor

Households with certain characteristics are particularly prone to child labor use. These include households where the household head is either disabled<sup>20</sup> or absent (due to death, abandonment or migration). In such households, children, especially boys, may have to work to replace the lost income of the missing or disabled father.



**Figure 38**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

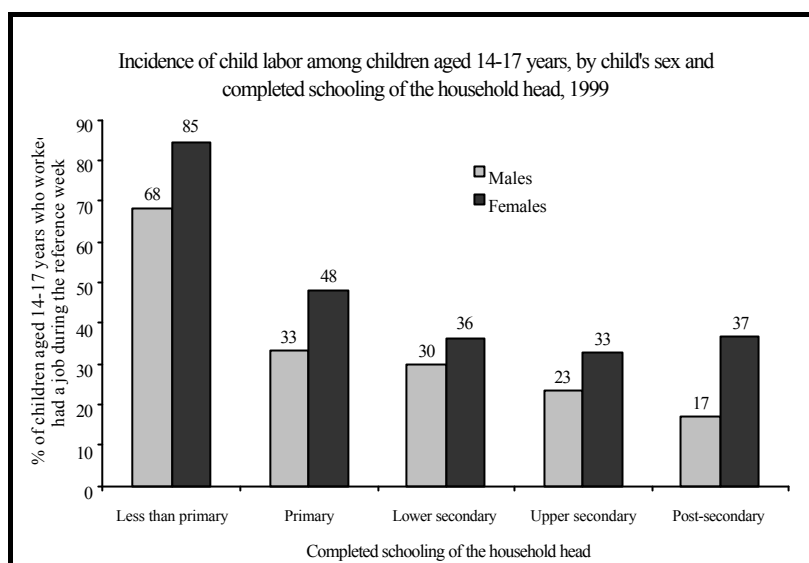
The data shown in Figure 38 confirm this observation. Both boys and girls in female-headed households are more likely to work than their counterparts in male-headed households. As many as 60% of girls, but only 48% of boys, aged 14-17 years in female-headed households work. However, there are interesting gender differences in child labor when the household head is disabled. The data show that, among households having an able-bodied head, boys aged 14-17 years work to a much less extent than girls of the same age (35% versus 50%). But in households having a disabled head, boys no longer have the luxury of not working. Indeed, there is no gender difference at all in the incidence of child labor use among such households.

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<sup>20</sup>Because of its long legacy of civil war and conflict, Cambodia has one of the highest proportions of disabled persons in the world.

### C. Education of the Household Head and Child Labor

The education of the household head may also play an important role in determining the incidence of child labor. Better-educated heads are more likely to send children in their households to school and less likely to engage them in labor. This does certainly appear to be the case in Cambodia, as observed in Figure 39. The incidence of child labor among both male and female children



**Figure 39**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

aged 14-17 years is noticeably lower when the household head has post-secondary education than when he or she has less than primary schooling. However, the incidence of male child labor falls more sharply than that of female child labor with the household head's education. For instance, the incidence of child labor among boys falls from 68% when the head has less-than-primary education to only 17% when the head has post-secondary education. However, the corresponding decline among girls is from 85% to 37%. Thus, boys appear to benefit much more than girls from the household head's education.

### D. Poor Access to Education

Although poverty is an important cause of both child labor and low schooling enrollments in Cambodia, poor physical and economic access to quality education is also an important reason for large numbers of children, especially girls, to be engaged in child labor. When quality secondary schools are simply not available or are unaffordable, secondary-school aged children have little else to do during the day, and it becomes easy for parents and households to put them to work.

Cambodia has among the lowest secondary schooling enrollments in the Asia-Pacific region – lower even than Laos, Nepal and Myanmar.<sup>21</sup> An important reason for these low secondary enrollments is the paucity of secondary schools in the country. Only 5.4% of villages in Cambodia have a lower secondary school, and a mere 2% have an upper secondary school. This means that in the rural areas, the vast majority of children who wish to go on to secondary school have to commute outside their villages. In addition, average distances to the nearest secondary school are large: 4.1 kilometers in the case of the nearest lower secondary school and 8.3 kilometers in the case of the nearest upper secondary school (UNDP, 1999). In the absence of affordable public transportation across villages, these distances are too far for a student to commute on a daily basis. The poor access to secondary schools is thus definitely an important factor in explaining the unusually low secondary enrollment rates in the country.

The long distances to secondary schools put girls at a greater disadvantage relative to boys. Most Cambodian students walk to schools located outside their village, as public transport is not available in the rural areas and private transport is too expensive for most families. Most rural parents are worried about the safety of sending their daughters walking across remote roads to school. There is often a fear that teenage girls might be abducted or trafficked and put into forced prostitution on the way to or from school.

Additionally, an institutional mechanism unique to Cambodia also effectively discriminates against girls' enrollment in secondary schools. Traditionally, many Cambodian boys who attend secondary schools away from their homes live in *wats* or pagodas (monasteries). There is no such traditional accommodation available for girls. Thus, the only option open to girls wishing to pursue secondary education is commuting long distances on a daily basis, and, as noted earlier, this is often perceived by parents as being dangerous and unsafe.

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<sup>21</sup>For instance, gross secondary enrollment rates in or around 1995 were 25%, 30% and 37% in Laos, Nepal and Myanmar, respectively, compared with a gross secondary enrollment rate of 21% in Cambodia (UNESCO, 1998). In contrast, primary school enrollments in Cambodia are not significantly worse than in other low-income Asian countries.



Likewise, the absence of toilets in most Cambodian schools also imposes a much greater burden on girls than on boys, especially in the years after puberty.<sup>22</sup> Parents are often reluctant to send an adolescent daughter to an all-day school that has no separate toilet facilities for girls.

In addition to lack of geographical proximity to schools, economic access to secondary schools is also very limited, especially for the poor, in Cambodia. Secondary schooling costs are simply unaffordable for the large majority of Cambodians, especially in the rural areas. The total cost of sending a single child to lower secondary school constitutes approximately 42% of total non-food consumption expenditure per person for an average household. The corresponding figure for upper secondary school is 82% (Ministry of Planning, 2000). This means that when a household sends a child to secondary school, there is little money left for any other discretionary (non-food) spending in the household. Little wonder then that secondary school enrollment rates, especially for the poor and in the rural areas, are so low in Cambodia.

Even when there is adequate access to schools, the low quality of schooling in Cambodia leads to a perception among parents that school attendance will be a waste of time for their children. Schools in Cambodia suffer from overcrowding, poor sanitation, inadequate numbers of teachers, and teachers who are poorly paid and who have low morale. Consequently, parents may find no use in sending their children to school when they could be home learning a skill (for example, agriculture) and supplementing the family income.

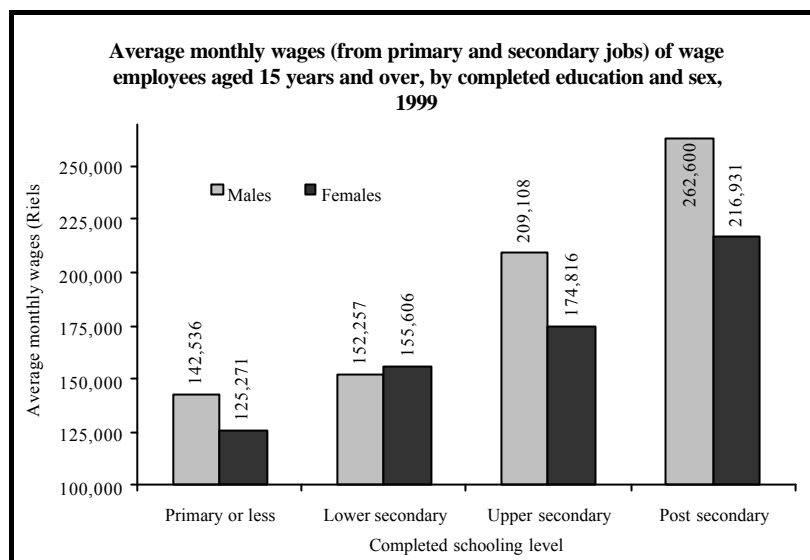
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<sup>22</sup>About 72.2 per cent of all schools in Cambodia reportedly have no latrine or toilet facilities (MoEYS, 1998). When households in a sample survey in five provinces were asked what aspect of their community school they were most dissatisfied with, the largest proportion -- 69 per cent -- indicated the absence of latrines as an area needing improvement.

## VI. EDUCATION AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS OF CHILD LABOR

### A. Effects on Education

One of the most important reasons why child labor is considered harmful to children is that it diminishes their schooling opportunities. As discussed in Chapter II, there are large pecuniary returns to schooling in Cambodia, as in other countries. For men, there is a large wage premium (of the order of 37%) from completing upper secondary school (as compared with



**Figure 40**

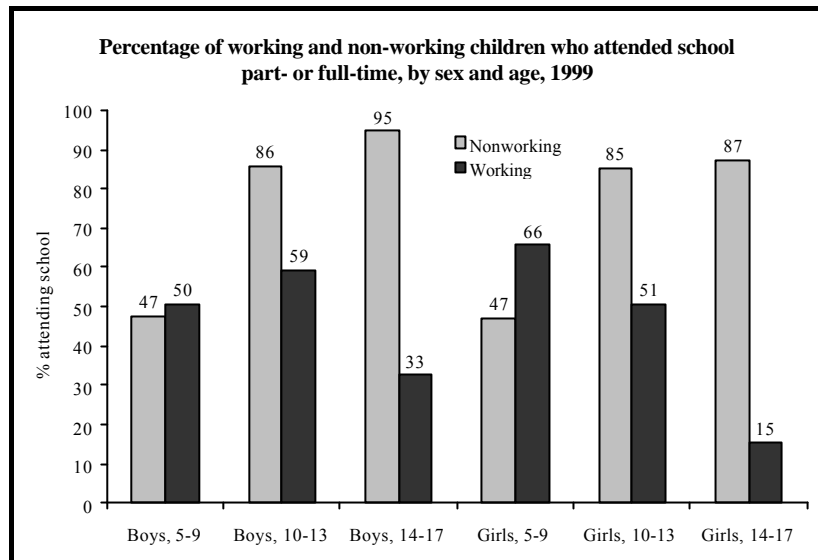
Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

lower secondary school completion) (Figure 40). Females realize a large increase in their wages from lower secondary school completion (of 24%). In addition, of course, there are large pecuniary returns from completing post-secondary education as well (24-26% for both males and females).

This means that education is one of the surest ways for children in Cambodia to improve their standard of living and escape poverty. To the extent that child labor prevents children from investing in their education, it destroys their chances of improving their lives in the future and condemns them to a life of hard labor and poverty.

But to what extent is child labor really incompatible with schooling in Cambodia? This question can be answered by analyzing school attendance rates among working and non-working children in the CSES 1999 sample. Figure 41 suggests that the compatibility of schooling and work depends largely on the age and sex of the child. For both boys and girls aged 5-9 years, the difference in school attendance rates between working and non-working children is very small. Indeed, the data show that school attendance rates are somewhat higher among working than among non-working children! (Not much meaning should be attached to this finding, as it may be a statistical aberration, given the relatively small numbers of children aged 5-9 years who work.)

However, at older ages, the school attendance rates of working children are significantly lower than those of non-working children. For each age group, the difference in school attendance rates between working and non-working children is significantly greater for girls than for boys. Thus, only 51% of working girls – but as many as 85% of non-working girls – aged 10-13 years



**Figure 41**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

attend school part- or full-time. For girls aged 14-17 years, the schooling disadvantage from working is even greater; only 15% of working girls in this age group attend school, while as many as 87% of non-working girls do.

It is thus clear that work of the type performed by most Cambodian children aged 10-17 years, especially girls, interferes with their schooling. It deprives them not merely of an education, which is a basic human right, but also of the means to improve the quality of their lives in the future.

## B. Impact on Child Health

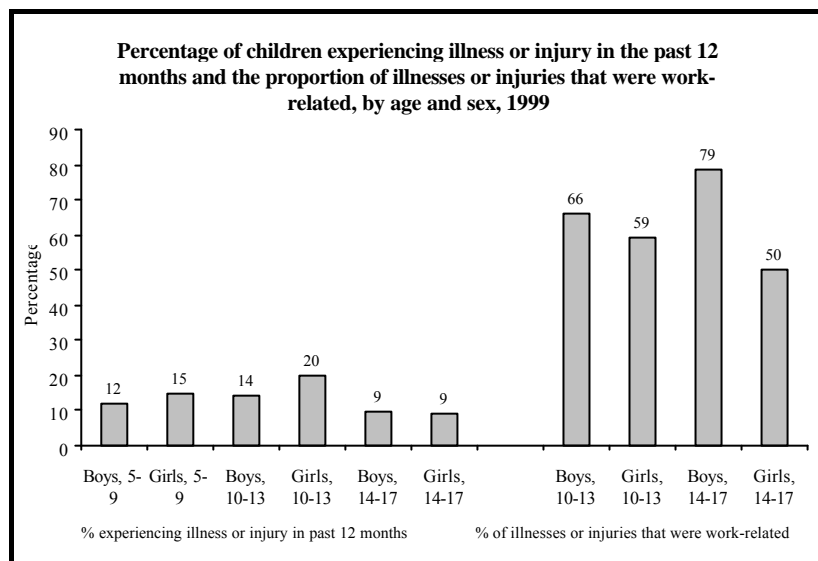
Working children are not only affected by physical injury, but they are also particularly vulnerable to workplace toxins and to chemical hazards on account of their relatively small size and their immature metabolic pathways which are often incapable of neutralizing dangerous chemicals. Additionally, many chemicals, such as solvents, can disrupt developmental processes in the brain. Children exposed to hazardous substances have potentially more years of life left to develop long-term sequelae, especially if exposure continues into adulthood and the cumulative dose is high (Landrigan et al. 1998). Table 3 provides an indication of the types of injuries commonly suffered by child workers and the workdays lost due to these injuries.

**Table 3: Types of Injuries and Workdays lost due to Injuries in the USA and in Developing Countries**

Country	Main Injury Categories
USA	Sprains: 18-31%, cuts and lacerations: 13-34%, burns: 8%, fractures: 3-5%
Developing Countries	Falls: 21%, overexertion: 17%, striking against objects: 7%, burns: 9%, struck by falling objects: 7%, cuts: 6%
<u>Work Days Lost due to Injury</u>	
USA	Median loss - 3 days (24% losing 1 day and 8% losing > 31 days)
Developing Countries	46% continue working despite a work-related injury or illness, 3% forced to stop working permanently.

Source: Graitcer and Lerer, 1998.

The CSES 1999 obtained information on the illnesses and injuries suffered by children during the 12 months preceding the survey and the proportion of these illnesses or injuries that were related to the child's work. Figure 42 shows that younger children (i.e., those aged 5-13 years) are more likely to be ill or injured than older children (those aged 14-17 years). There are relatively small gender differences in illness or injury incidence. On average, 9-20% of children reported being ill or injured during the past 12 months, depending upon their age and sex.



**Figure 42**

Source: Calculations from CSES 1999 data.

What is surprising, however, is that a very large proportion (more than one-half) of these illnesses or injuries are work-related. Figure 33 indicates that as many as 79% of illnesses or injuries suffered by boys aged 14-17 years are work-related. In contrast, girls in this age group are at significantly lower risk of illness or injury, perhaps due to the type of work activities they engage in.

HIV/AIDS is a deadly consequence of one of the worst forms of child labor – viz., commercial child sex. Street children as well as sexually-exploited child domestic workers are also at risk of HIV/AIDS. As is well known, Cambodia is one of the countries worst affected by the HIV/AIDS

epidemic in Asia. At the end of 1999, 217,764 Cambodians were estimated to be living with the disease, with 5,420 of them being children.<sup>23</sup> The HIV sero-prevalence rate among commercial sex workers is estimated to range from 21.4% in Kandal province to as high as 64.1% in Pursat. The HIV prevalence rate among Phnom Penh commercial sex workers is also very high (61.3%) (NCHADS, 1999). Child commercial sex workers are at even greater risk of HIV infection than adult sex workers, as they are often less informed about HIV-prevention measures and in a weaker position to insist on condom use by their adult customers.

Another adverse health impact of child labor comes from land mines. The long period of armed conflict and civil strife in Cambodia has resulted in extensive use of land mines in the country. Most mines were laid between 1979 and the signing of the peace treaty in 1991, but a number of land mines were also laid in the western part of the country (near the Thai border) during the fighting of July-August 1997. While there has been an active program of demining, there continue to be many uncleared land mines that maim and kill Cambodians of all ages indiscriminately.<sup>24</sup> Children who work in the rural areas, and have to travel along remote roads and in forests for their livelihood, are at risk of personal injury or death from these mines.

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<sup>23</sup>Unpublished estimates by the UNAIDS/WHO Working Group of Global HIV/AIDS and STI Surveillance, March 2000.

<sup>24</sup>It is estimated that one in 236 Cambodians has lost a limb, or part of a limb, giving the country one of the highest proportions of people with amputations (UNICEF, 1996).

## VII. CONCLUDING REMARKS

At first glance, the child labor problem in Cambodia appears to be overwhelming, with 42% of children aged 5-17 years engaged in some form of work. However, not all of the child labor observed in Cambodia is necessarily detrimental. As noted in chapter III, some types of child work, especially in family-based activities, such as farming, fetching water and firewood, and minding the family grocery store, can even be socially desirable, provided the work is not physically very demanding, does not take up too much of the child's time, and does not interfere with the child's schooling. Child work in many traditional societies is an important means of transmitting job and vocational skills, including many traditional crafts and arts, from parents to children (see Box 9).

What then is the magnitude of the socially-undesirable forms of child labor in Cambodia? Unfortunately, the type of household survey data used in this report can only provide a partial answer to this question.

The reason is that most general-purpose household surveys have relatively limited sample sizes that do not permit a detailed exploration of the myriad of work activities that child workers are engaged in. Household surveys, like the Cambodia Socioeconomic Survey, can only provide an indication of the number of child workers, their average hours of work, and a broad classification of activities that they are engaged in. In addition, the worst forms of child labor, such as child prostitution and work done by street children, may not be picked up at all by household-based surveys such as the CSES. For these reasons, it is important to undertake a national survey specifically designed to investigate the worst forms of child labor. The National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, is currently preparing to undertake a comprehensive national household and establishment survey in two rounds in 2000-01. In conducting the data collection, the National Institute of Statistics will closely collaborate with the

### **Box 9: Passing on the Ancient Cambodian Art of Silk-Weaving to Children**

The women of Trapeang Tea in Takeo province are traditional silk weavers, plying their ancient trade on looms set up in the cool shade beneath their wooden stilt houses... Tou Yot, 58, is weaving silk for a traditional skirt in the *ikat* technique that she learned from her mother, who learned it from her mother and so on back into time... She has four daughters, and all of them can weave... [The weaving] is enough to support the household, she says. "We have no need to ask the commune chief for help," she says with quiet pride. "We can support ourselves. We are not beggars." [Her sister, Tou Hang,] has four daughters and four looms, and one of her girls spent two years working in a Phnom Penh garment factory, sewing underwear. It wasn't awful, says the daughter, Chhin Sokhoeun, and she liked the friends she made. But the hours were inflexible and the money was no better. "Here is better than there, because nobody bosses me around. And it's better to stay with your family."

Source: *The Cambodia Daily*, September 2-3, 2000.

Ministry of Social Affairs, Labor, Vocational Training and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSALVY), as well as other relevant government bodies and other agencies, such as workers' and employers' organizations, NGOs, UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO and others. The data collection effort (which will include a comprehensive household survey as well as an establishment survey) will shed considerably more light on the child labor situation than is possible currently with the Cambodia Socioeconomic Surveys.

Nevertheless, the CSES 1999 can offer some idea of the magnitude of the socially-undesirable forms of child labor in Cambodia. There are approximately 5,000 children aged 5-13 years nationwide who work more than 25 hours a week *for wages* and who do not attend school (presumably as a result of this work). Since wage employment is generally more strenuous and less flexible than employment as an unpaid family worker, this group of the youngest child workers needs the immediate attention of policy efforts to combat child labor. The CSES data indicate that there are another 42,000 child workers aged 14-17 years who also work more than 25 hours a week for wages and who do not attend school. These slightly-older child workers also constitute a vulnerable group. A third vulnerable group of child workers comprises the roughly 60,000 children aged 5-13 years who work more than 25 hours a week *as own-account or unpaid family workers* and who do not attend school (again presumably because of the demands of their work). Although family-based work is preferable to wage employment, it is inhumane for children as young as these to work such long hours and to be denied an education.

In addition, there are the children engaged in the worst forms of child labor, as defined by ILO Convention 182, who are unlikely to be enumerated by the CSES 1999. These include child prostitutes, street children, and child domestic workers. Unfortunately, there are few estimates of the number of children engaged in these most repugnant forms of child labor in the country. However, non-government agencies working with these children estimate that there are some 5,000 child commercial sex workers, 1,000 street children, and 6,500 child domestic workers in Phnom Penh alone. These are very rough approximations, and the number of children involved in these pursuits outside of Phnom Penh is simply not known. Hopefully, the special survey on child labor by the National Institute of Statistics planned for 2000-2001 will shed additional light on how many children nationwide are engaged in these harmful occupations. Once these worst forms of child labor are identified, government agencies, with the active support and assistance of NGOs and international agencies, can begin moving toward their abolition.

Eliminating the worst forms of child labor requires that a wide range of issues be addressed, such as improved legislation and enforcement of this legislation, rehabilitation of children engaged in the

worst forms of child labor, provision of income-generation alternatives to the children and their families, and raising community awareness of the ill effects of child labor. Many of these avenues are already being pursued in Cambodia by government agencies and NGOs, with the active assistance of international agencies like the ILO-IPEC. Among the several national NGOs that are playing an important role in the child labor arena are Agir Pour les Femmes en Situation Precaire (AFESIP), Cambodian Women's Crisis Center (CWCC), Cambodian Center for the Protection of Children's Rights (CCPCR), and the Cambodian Children's and Handicapped Development Organization (CCHDO). NGOs like Mit Simlanh, Street Children and Development Program (SDP), Punleu Komar Kampuchea Organization (PKKO), and Khmer Kampuchea Krom Human Rights and Development Association (KKKHRDA) work with street children in Phnom Penh and in a few other provinces. Another NGO, ECLAT Cambodia, cooperates directly with the government in enforcing the existing laws to ensure better protection of children from prostitution and trafficking.<sup>25</sup> All of these NGOs try to raise awareness and mobilize civil society on the issue of child labor, and also work directly with at-risk children and child victims of labor exploitation.

The findings in this report also suggest that, given the limited resources available for combating child labor, it would be important for government and non-government agencies to geographically target their anti-child labor policies to regions having the largest concentration of child workers. In this regard, the CSES 1999 data reviewed in this report indicate that the large majority of Cambodia's child workers are found in the Plains and Tonle Sap regions. These two regions together account for 81% of all child workers in the country.

Since much of child labor stems from poverty, efforts to combat poverty will have powerful effects on reducing the magnitude of child labor. Already, the Royal Government of Cambodia has declared poverty alleviation as its most important goal. For example, the *First Socioeconomic Development Plan 1996-2000* stated that "... eradicating poverty is the single most important long-term objective of the Royal Government, and reducing it is the central thrust of the Plan for 1996-2000." Likewise, many international agencies operating in the country have declared poverty reduction as the main thrust of their programs in Cambodia. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) – a strategic planning and collaborative programming document that identifies common priorities and common challenges for all U.N. system organizations working in Cambodia – has explicitly identified promotion of the rights of the child, betterment of the living conditions of impoverished children, improving the health and nutrition of children, and abolition of the practice of

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<sup>25</sup>Note that this is not an exhaustive list of NGOs working in this area. There are many national and international NGOs not listed here whose projects and programs have a child labor dimension.



employing children in industries as major cross-cutting goals to be pursued by the U.N. system in Cambodia. The government, in cooperation with several donor agencies, has currently embarked on preparation of a major poverty reduction strategy that will provide the overall policy framework and guidance for poverty-alleviation policies in all sectors.

As a final word, it is useful to stress the importance of coordination – across sectors, among government agencies, and among donors, NGOs and government – in fighting child labor. Child labor has many causes and many consequences – social, economic, health-related, educational, cultural and psychological. Likewise, the problem of child labor cuts across many sectors – agriculture, manufacturing and services. As such, the problem is best tackled by a multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral approach involving many different agencies in government as well as outside government, such as NGOs, donor agencies, and the private sector.

## ANNEX TABLES

Annex Table 1: Human Development Index, by Population Subgroups, Cambodia, 1999

Group or subgroup	% children 0-5 years severely stunted	Avg. life expectancy at birth (years)	Life expectancy index	Adult literacy rate (%)	Combined 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> , & 3 <sup>rd</sup> level gross enrollment rate (%)	Educa-tional attain-ment index	Real per capita (in PPP\$)	Adjust- ed income index	HDI
Cambodia	33.1	54.42	0.490	71.20	49.43	0.639	1,257	0.422	0.517
Rural	33.8	53.84	0.481	69.91	47.24	0.624	1,074	0.396	0.500
Urban	27.8	58.70	0.562	78.06	62.07	0.727	2,286	0.522	0.604
Poorest 20%	36.1	51.95	0.449	60.56	42.98	0.547	767	0.340	0.445
Second 20%	36.2	51.86	0.448	66.46	47.47	0.601	914	0.369	0.473
Third 20%	33.6	54.00	0.483	69.51	47.00	0.620	1,023	0.388	0.497
Fourth 20%	29.5	57.31	0.538	72.51	47.61	0.642	1,185	0.413	0.531
Richest 20%	27.2	59.20	0.570	83.17	64.25	0.769	2,399	0.530	0.623

Notes: Average life expectancy at birth for different subgroups is derived by taking a single national figure of life expectancy (54.42 years), and scaling it for different subgroups in the same ratio as their severe child stunting figures (shown in column 1). Likewise, real per capita income for different subgroups is derived by taking a single national figure of real per capita income (in PPP\$), obtained from UNDP (2000), and scaling it for different subgroups in the same ratio as their real per capita consumption expenditures (in Riels).

Source: UNDP (2000) and calculations from CSES 1999 data.

Annex Table 2: Gender-Related Development Index, by Population Subgroups, Cambodia, 1999

Indicator	Cam-			Per capita expenditure quintile				
	bodia	Rural	Urban	Poorest	Second	Third	Fourth	Richest
% males 0-5 years severely stunted	0.354	0.364	0.280	0.400	0.388	0.377	0.308	0.252
% females 0-5 years severely stunted	0.308	0.312	0.276	0.322	0.336	0.297	0.282	0.290
Adjusted male life expectancy (years)	50.30	49.52	56.04	46.74	47.68	48.50	53.88	58.24
Adjusted female life expectancy (years)	58.62	58.26	61.31	57.39	56.21	59.57	60.79	60.11
Equally-distributed life expectancy index	0.491	0.481	0.561	0.448	0.449	0.480	0.540	0.567
Male adult literacy rate (%)	0.829	0.820	0.875	0.717	0.775	0.830	0.864	0.919
Female adult literacy rate (%)	0.611	0.595	0.699	0.509	0.570	0.582	0.609	0.753
Combined first, second and third level enrollment rate for males (%)	0.548	0.526	0.675	0.475	0.527	0.535	0.538	0.696
Combined first, second and third level enrollment rate for females (%)	0.440	0.417	0.567	0.378	0.422	0.403	0.414	0.593
Equally-distributed educational attainment index	0.629	0.612	0.720	0.537	0.592	0.606	0.627	0.762
Real per capita income (in PPP\$)	1,257							
		1,074	2,286	767	914	1,023	1,185	2,399
Male share of total population (%)	0.484	0.484	0.480	0.499	0.484	0.484	0.472	0.480
Female share of total population (%)	0.517	0.516	0.520	0.502	0.516	0.516	0.528	0.521
Ratio of female to male nonagricultural wage	0.817	0.805	0.957	0.793	0.806	0.823	0.701	0.934
Male share of economically-active population (%)	0.475	0.469	0.510	0.466	0.467	0.465	0.463	0.514
Female share of economically-active population (%)	0.525	0.531	0.490	0.534	0.533	0.535	0.537	0.486
Equally-distributed income index	0.421	0.395	0.521	0.340	0.368	0.388	0.409	0.529
GDI	0.514	0.496	0.601	0.441	0.469	0.491	0.525	0.620

Notes: See notes to Annex Table 1.

Source: UNDP (2000) and calculations from CSES 1999 data.

Annex Table 3: Human Poverty Index, by Population Subgroups, Cambodia, 1999

Population subgroup	% of children under 5 severely stunted	% of pop. not surviving to age 40 years	% of adult population illiterate	% of pop. with no access to safe water	% of pop. with no access to health services	% of children under 5 moderately or severely under-weight	HPI
Cambodia	33.07	31.90	28.80	63.34	30.51	49.33	38.03
Male	35.40	34.50	17.10	63.34	29.21	51.10	37.31
Female	30.78	29.61	38.87	63.34	31.57	47.60	39.99
Rural	33.79	32.57	30.09	71.87	32.85	50.25	40.52
Urban	27.81	28.99	21.94	30.47	20.37	42.51	27.88
Rural males	36.40	37.94	17.96	71.87	31.29	52.27	40.51
Rural females	31.21	27.92	40.49	71.87	34.15	48.26	42.12
Urban males	28.03	29.21	12.54	30.47	19.52	42.56	26.57
Urban females	27.60	24.69	30.15	30.47	20.99	42.47	29.00
<i>Per capita expenditure quintile:</i>							
Poorest	36.11	34.80	39.44	70.67	40.82	53.81	44.86
Second	36.22	34.91	33.54	71.04	34.38	51.67	42.10
Third	33.60	32.38	30.49	69.71	30.58	47.20	39.23
Fourth	29.53	28.46	27.49	61.67	28.35	47.43	36.00
Richest	27.19	26.21	16.83	43.62	23.57	43.91	29.05
<i>Per capita expenditure quintile and sex:</i>							
Poorest quintile males	39.97	41.66	28.30	70.67	37.46	57.69	44.47
Second quintile males	38.77	40.41	22.47	71.04	34.17	51.85	41.91
Third quintile males	37.72	39.31	17.00	69.71	30.66	49.47	39.88
Fourth quintile males	30.80	32.10	13.62	61.67	25.59	49.69	35.19
Richest quintile males	25.20	26.26	8.09	43.62	21.94	43.03	28.03
Poorest quintile females	32.22	28.83	49.14	70.67	43.91	49.90	46.80
Second quintile females	33.62	30.07	43.03	71.04	34.56	51.49	43.71
Third quintile females	29.65	26.53	41.78	69.71	30.52	45.03	40.89
Fourth quintile females	28.22	25.24	39.08	61.67	30.68	45.09	38.55
Richest quintile females	29.02	25.96	24.72	43.62	24.74	44.72	30.62

Notes: Figures on percentage of population not surviving to age 40 have been derived by taking a single national figure of percentage of population not surviving to age 40 (31.9), and scaling it for different subgroups in the same ratio as their severe child stunting figures (shown in column 1).

Source: Calculations from the CSES 1997 and CSES 1999 data.

## **Annex: Cambodia Socioeconomic Survey 1999**

This report has been made extensive use of data from the Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey (CSES) 1999, which is the second of two surveys carried out under the project “Capacity Development for Socio-Economic Surveys and Planning” sponsored by UNDP/SIDA and executed by the World Bank. The CSES survey utilized three separate questionnaires: (i) a core household questionnaire, (ii) an income and employment module, and (iii) a village questionnaire. The core household questionnaire collected data on the demographic characteristics of household members, school enrollment, utilization of health services, housing characteristics, household expenditures, and the ownership of durables. The income and employment module obtained more detailed information at the individual and household level on labor force participation, including the use of child labor, and sources of household income. The village questionnaire collected information on land use, access to community and social services (e.g., roads, electricity, markets, schools, health facilities), and retail prices for selected food and non-food items.

The CSES 1999 was administered to 6,000 randomly selected households from a stratified sample of 600 randomly selected villages in all 24 of Cambodia’s provinces. This is the first time in Cambodia that all provinces have been included in a sample survey, although security problems still prevented 4.4% of the villages in the country (containing 3.4% of households) from being included in the sampling frame. The field work was conducted in two rounds of interviewing, the first of which took place in January-March 1999 and the second in June-August 1999. In the first stage of sampling, 600 villages were selected using systematic random sampling (with probability proportionate to population size) from each of ten strata defined on the basis of urban and rural sectors within each of five zones (Phnom Penh, Plains, Tonle Sap, Coastal, and Plateau). In the second stage of sampling 10 households were selected using systematic random sampling from each village, yielding a total sample size of 6,000 households. The CSES is not a self-weighting sample, and all of the estimates presented in this report are weighted to reflect sampling probabilities calculated by the National Institute of Statistics (NIS, 2000b).

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