

# THE EVOLUTION OF SECTT IN NORTHWEST CAMBODIA:

SITUATION ANALYSIS OF THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION  
OF CHILDREN IN TRAVEL AND TOURISM IN POIPET  
AND SIEM REAP



**terre des hommes**  
stops child exploitation



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past five years, Cambodia has seen a 250% growth in travel and tourism and similar rapid growth in foreign business investment between 2006 and 2016 – a figure which has only accelerated over the past four years. Asian nationals, including Chinese, Vietnamese, Laotian, Thai and Korean make up the largest portion of visitors, with a significant increase in Chinese visitors expected in years to come, due to increasing economic ties and airline services operating between the countries. Cambodia has welcomed large-scale foreign investment, including the growth of Special Economic and free-trade zones, where casinos, bars, and other entertainment venues proliferate. These developments have had a corresponding impact on the nature and scope of child sexual exploitation, making Cambodia one of the most popular destination in the region for traveling child sex offenders.

This situational analysis examines the context of sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism (SECTT) in Siem Reap and Poipet and identifies emerging risks, vulnerabilities, and threats posed to children, families, and communities. The analysis describes key challenges and opportunities for child protection on the ground. Data is informed by key informant interviews, in-depth interviews, and focus-group discussions with children in communities, practitioners from civil society, governments, and the private sectors in both cities.

Respondents in both locations describe a significant increase in foreign travelers and tourists from other Asian nations, most notably from China, and a decrease in western visitors. Considerable differences are observed in the ways that Government officials and community-level respondents regard the threat of, and vulnerabilities to, SECTT within their respective communities. Government officials in both areas tend to view SECTT as a former issue largely perpetrated by lone Westerners using traditional grooming practices in communities. They cite a decrease in SECTT case reports as evidence of their success in addressing the issue locally. Community-level respondents describe an entirely different range of threats, in comparison to Government officials, proceeding largely from Chinese travelers and tourists through various business ventures, as well as threats from domestic Cambodian travelers and tourists, especially in Siem Reap. In both areas, child-protection agents within the tourism sector (the Childsafe Network) cite concerns that new Chinese tourism and business practices have circumvented their traditional methods for monitoring and reporting child protection concerns within vulnerable communities due to the tendency of Chinese visitors patronizing exclusively Chinese-owned venues and service providers. Respondents in these areas express concern that this may create significant gaps in SECTT case monitoring. Respondents in both areas describe various new means used by perpetrators to access children including, online platforms, colluding food and entertainment venues, and, potentially, complex broker-recruiter systems operating in schools and communities.

In Poipet, much of the emerging risk seems to center within and around the Special Economic Zone (SEZ), which runs along the Thai-Cambodia border. Nearly all respondents note a recent, rapid, and significant increase in Chinese business investments and entertainment establishments. While this has increased the number of jobs available for some families, many cite Cambodians are no longer able to afford to live in Poipet due to rapid increases in living costs. Further, numerous community-level respondents observe an increase in Chinese businesses offering Khmer landowners large amounts of money to sell their land, forcing the eviction of poor working families, sometimes without any warning—furthering poverty and desperation to generate income and fueling vulnerability factors for SECTT. While government officials and law enforcement note a significant decrease in reporting of SECTT over the past few years, which they attribute to the implementation of new laws and collaboration agreements between local and national-level authorities. In contrast, community-level respondents commonly see new business developments as an active threat to children and families, both in terms of economic impacts, and an increasing involvement of children and young people in adult-oriented, foreign-owned businesses, including massage parlors, bars, KTV establishments, and restaurants.

In Siem Reap, respondents indicate a significant, rapid increase in visitors and investors from China, as well as Korea and other ASEAN nations. While government officers tend to see this investment in a positive light, village chiefs and members of the tourism sector describe pressing negative impacts on child neglect and labor, particularly on the streets and within local restaurants and entertainment venues. Poverty is seen as an aggravating factor that drives people from rural communities to migrate to Siem Reap in search of means for generating income. Increased migration often leaves children unsupervised and at an increased vulnerability to exploitation and other forms of violence in the community. When children join their parents to work on the streets or in establishments, they often become vulnerable to SECTT. Unseen forms of SECTT, including the growing role played by online platforms in facilitating SECTT, is expressed as a notable concern, citing the use of pornography for grooming, in addition to online platforms used to connect with children. Lack of police training, and lack of trust and meaningful collaboration among government entities remains a significant issue.

Despite the apparent reluctance among government officials to acknowledge potential gaps within present SECTT monitoring efforts and a reliance on an assumption that a lack of reporting indicates a lack of incidence, frontline service providers and members of the community seem acutely aware of significant and ongoing vulnerabilities to SECTT within entertainment districts, in schools, and within online environments. Considering the range of findings, there is considerable need for the development of more trusting intra-governmental communication and support, allowing for better monitoring and collaboration with community-level partners, including business owners, frontline service providers, and members of the tourism sector. Further advocacy is needed for a more contemporary understanding of SECTT to include a range of potential perpetrators from Asian nations, as well as domestic perpetrators traveling within Cambodia. Greater support is needed for law enforcement in undertaking more proactive monitoring in high risk areas and communities highly vulnerable to SECTT, especially within the FEZ in Poipet and in lesser known tourist areas on the outskirts of Siem Reap. Lastly, data demonstrates a critical need for the development of (or supplementary support for) programming to address key vulnerability factors for SECTT. This includes the development of transitional housing programs, substance abuse initiatives, alternative income strategies, support for working parents, and targeted awareness-raising and support among at-risk youth both in schools and on the streets.

In addition to these findings, it is crucial to underscore the effects of the current COVID-19 pandemic, which is expected to be most damaging for children in developing nations, especially among those who are already social or economically disadvantaged or in similarly vulnerable situations. As travel decreases and income becomes more scarce, many, if not most, of the social and economic factors already contributing to child sexual exploitation will be exacerbated, making children more vulnerable. Data from this study, as well as findings from recent national research by TdH-NL, suggests a growing prevalence of online or internet-based child sexual exploitation (OCSE). As COVID-19 lockdowns and travel-restrictions push both perpetrators and children online, the risk for OCSE increases. Such increases have already been observed in a recent study in the Philippines, which found “clear indicators of an unprecedented surge” in OCSE among vulnerable children. Further, as COVID-19 has made travel for potential perpetrators difficult, resident perpetrators (both long-term visitors and Cambodian nationals) may also have an increased advantage to exploit the elevated economic vulnerabilities to harm children.

## Introduction

Cambodia has seen significant growth in travel and tourism (and related business investment) over the past few years, with more than five million tourists arriving in 2016 – a 250% increase compared to the less than 2 million in 2006<sup>1</sup>. Asian nationals make up the largest portion of arriving tourists. According to the Ministry of Tourism, in 2017 the majority of travelers in Cambodia was Chinese (1.2 million), followed by Vietnamese, Laotian, Thai and Korean. Additionally, the trend of Asian visitors, particularly Chinese, is expected to rise due to economic ties and an increasing number of air companies operating between the countries<sup>2</sup>.

Pursuing economic development, Cambodia has welcomed large-scale foreign investment in tourism and other sectors, including the growth of Special Economic and free-trade zones, such as those seen in Poipet city and Sihanoukville. These developments often accompany casinos, bars, and other entertainment venues. The project of a new airport with a capacity of 10 million passengers has been granted to a Chinese company (Centre for aviation) and just as recently as June 2018, a Hong Kong-based casino company has shown interest in building a casino in the city<sup>3</sup>. As gambling is not yet permitted in Siem reap city, the project has yet to be approved. Despite this, the fluidity of decision-making of Cambodian authorities over investments and profits may change and, in the meantime, small, “out of sight”, casinos are known to operate in the city.

1 Cambodian Ministry of Tourism. (2017). Tourism Statistics Report. Ministry of Tourism, Statistics, and Tourism Information Department. Accessed: 22 July 2019. Available at: [https://www.tourismcambodia.com/img/resources/cambodia\\_tourism\\_statistics\\_2017.pdf](https://www.tourismcambodia.com/img/resources/cambodia_tourism_statistics_2017.pdf).

2 Ibid.

3 Kimsa, H. (2018, June 1). Official to casino firm: I wouldn't bet on it. Retrieved March 11, 2019, from Phnom Penh Post. 3Accessed: 22 July 2019. Available at: <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/business/official-casino-firm-i-wouldnt-bet-it>

## Overview of SECTT in Cambodia

Rapid growth in travel, tourism, and business investment has led to an increase in the country's economic development. This development has also had a corresponding impact on the nature and scope of child sexual exploitation, making Cambodia one of the most popular destinations in the region for traveling child sex offenders.<sup>4</sup> There is also some discussion that this increase is connected to various preventative efforts by traditional SECTT hotspots, such as Thailand, which has encouraged offenders to seek neighboring countries in which their activities are more likely to go undetected. Tourists and traveling domestic offenders are known to gain access to children through a number of channels, including direct or facilitated solicitation of children living and/or working in public places, through informal networks established within existing prostitution or entertainment establishments (spas, KTV, bars, and beer gardens) and through contact and grooming through employment or volunteer roles in schools, orphanages, and humanitarian aid organizations.<sup>6</sup>

4 ECPAT. (2017). Regional Overview: Sexual Exploitation of Children in Southeast Asia. ECPAT International. Accessed: 2 February, 2020. Accessed from: [https://www.ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Regional-Overview\\_Southeast-Asia.pdf](https://www.ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Regional-Overview_Southeast-Asia.pdf).

5 APLE Cambodia. (2014). Investigating Travelling Child Sex Offenders: An Analysis of the Trends and Challenges in the Field of Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation in Cambodia. (Phnom Penh: APLE Cambodia, 2014), 8-9. Accessed: 2 February 2020. <https://aplecambodia.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Analytical-Report-on-Investigating-Travelling-Child-Sex-Offenders-Web-Version.pdf>

6 ECPAT. (2016). Global Study on Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism 2016. ECPAT International. Accessed: 22 July, 2019. From: <https://protectingchildrenintourism.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Global-Report-Offenders-on-the-Move.pdf>



## OFFENDER PROFILES

The Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism (or SECTT) may be broken down into two broad sub-categories related to their behavior: **Preferential offenders** and Situational offenders. Preferential offenders are those who are predisposed to engage sexually with children, often strategically traveling or relocating to a particular area in order to more easily gain access to children.<sup>7</sup> These offenders are more likely to use various grooming strategies to earn the trust of the child, which often takes a significant investment of time and effort and includes building trust with the child’s family and social network. As such, preferential offenders tend to stay longer in the country, accessing children directly or through an occupation which gives them access, such as teaching, working in an NGO, or volunteering in a community.<sup>8</sup> While preferential offenders can be either gender or from any country, Cambodian law enforcement data on preferential offenders is largely composed of Western males (APLE, 2014). It should be noted that law enforcement data does not necessarily reflect the actual demographic makeup of offenders in the country, rather it only shows the demographics of those who have been identified and referred to law enforcement.

In contrast, **Situational offenders** may victimize children in a particular set of circumstances, but do not have a genuine sexual preference toward children. Situational offenders tend to access children through various enabling environments, such as massage parlors, casinos, beer gardens, and other similar establishments. These offenders commonly rely on a third party or intermediary to procure the child and facilitate sexual interaction. While situational offenders can be of any gender or nationality, reporting on the issue demonstrates this group of offenders to be largely Asian males. Although, third-party facilitators can be either gender.<sup>10</sup>

## ACKNOWLEDGED CONTEXTS FOR SECTT IN CAMBODIA

While SECTT could ostensibly occur through many means and within many contexts, there are a number of common contexts for SECTT offences that are commonly acknowledged within child-protection literature in Cambodia. These include community-based or ‘lone-wolf’ offending, voluntourism, visiting foreign teachers,

compensated dating, and more recently, through businesses operating within large-scale economic investments (such as Special Economic Zones)<sup>11</sup>. Within each context that SECTT occurs is often a unique combination of push/pull factors and considerations in the community or organization where the abuse takes place that may prevent offenders from being detected or provide them special protection.

**COMMUNITY-BASED OR ‘LONE-WOLF’** offending refers to travelers or tourists (often longer-term visitors) who spend time within a particular community, where they identify and groom particular children within a community, providing them with gifts or often money for their families. As familiarity and trust develops, children (and their families) often see the perpetrator as a friend or ‘uncle’. The perpetrator then eventually uses this trust to lure the child into sexual activity (**CITATION**). This form of SECTT is commonly reflected in historical case data in Cambodia and has been the common mode of exploitation targeted in anti-SECTT initiatives within communities and among law enforcement. However, as SECTT has been increasingly defined, this form of SECTT seems to be on the decline within more recent case data.

**VOLUNTOURISM** is the practice of travelers and tourists paying a fee to visit a particular country and undertake volunteer work with an NGO or charity while on a short-term holiday. The fee usually covers travel and accommodation expenses, as well as a monetary contribution to the charity where they work. This is a growing practice in the region, which is a part of a large global market, generating approximately \$2 billion (USD) a year<sup>12</sup>. While voluntourism may not always be damaging, some voluntourists choose to undertake work in organizations working with vulnerable children, such as orphanages or NGOs working with street-involved children, where they are often left alone with volunteers and at times permitted to bring children away from the organization for periods of time to eat meals or for other activities. A key issue here is that the organizations receiving volunteers rarely vet the individuals who are granted access to children and often lack adequate (if any) child protection policies or training for permanent staff. This allows potential child sex offenders to have easy, unsupervised access to children within these contexts.

**TEACHING** has also become a common pathway for SECTT in Communities<sup>13</sup>. As small private schools and English-language academies continue to proliferate in Cambodia, they create a demand for foreign, English-fluent teachers who are able to easily enter the country and remain for extended periods of time by exploiting the simplified visa conditions for immigration to Cambodia<sup>14</sup>. These schools often do not require background checks for their visiting teachers and have no child-protection policies (or inadequate policies) and do not provide sufficient child-protection training for their permanent staff (if any). This allows offenders to easily gain employment and have largely unsupervised access to children.

**COMPENSATED DATING** (also known as ‘enjo kosai,’ in Japan) is a practice in which older men typically pay younger girls to accompany them as ‘dates’, which commonly lead to sex. Recent reports from ECPAT international have identified this as an alarming trend throughout Southeast Asia, including Cambodia and Thailand<sup>15</sup>. Identification can be complicated in these contexts as many young dates may not see themselves as exploited, since they were only paid to accompany the perpetrator on a ‘date’ and then ‘voluntarily’ provided sex.

Lastly, as Cambodia has striven for economic growth and an improvement in bilateral investment and cooperation, large-scale economic investments in tourism within the newly developed Special Economic Zones, such as in Poipet city along the Thai border, have seen a unique proliferation of Casino and other entertainment venues catering to foreign tourists and investors. These developments draw (often wealthy) foreign visitors to the hotels and casinos located within these zones, which often enjoy lesser monitoring and regulation than venues located on the outside<sup>16</sup>. This may present a uniquely vulnerable context for children and other at-risk working within these areas.

## WESTERN VS. ASIAN OFFENDERS

Despite a widely held view that SECTT offenders are western men, previous research in the region has found that it has been primarily Asian men who are seeking sex with children in Cambodia.<sup>17</sup> Case data from the Cambodian NGO Action Pour les Enfants (APLE) suggests a broad range of nationalities that travel in Cambodia

seeking sex with children, including offenders from Australia, China, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, South Korea, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. However, the majority (62%) of foreign perpetrators of SECTT appearing in Cambodian law enforcement data are western males.<sup>18</sup> There is some consideration that should be given here regarding offender demographics within law enforcement data, noting that these data may be more reflective of common assumptions about what a perpetrator is assumed to look like (and thus who is more likely to be identified and reported), than the demographics of actual individuals involved in SECTT offences.

The sexual exploitation of children by western travelers, tourists, and expatriates has been well documented through research and prosecutorial precedence. A 2019 report by APLE Cambodia<sup>19</sup>, reviews existing case data through interviews and focus group discussions with law enforcement, social service providers and child protection advocates throughout Cambodia. The study details the well-established modus operandi of western offenders, which historically have employed classic grooming techniques in communities, targeting economically vulnerable children and families. However, despite the rapid increase of Asian travelers, tourists, and long-term visitors, case data is unclear on the nature, extent, or modus operandi of Asian offenders. While some anecdotal accounts among service providers do exist, there is a pressing need to understand the dynamics of SECTT perpetrated by this new and increasing demographic of travelers and tourists in the country.

In the context of these demographic changes, the goal of this project is to map critical dynamics of SECTT in two locations and to understand the current practices of offenders and the implications for children, communities, policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and civil society organizations. Thus, this project carries out a comprehensive situational analysis in Siem Reap and Poipet and identifies specific and emerging challenges, threats, needs - and existing resources, strengths, and responses on the ground concerning SECTT. The project identifies priorities for strategies related to interventions and advocacy, based on the findings, to support TdH in the development of innovative approaches, alongside other partners and government to strengthen responses to SECTT in Cambodia.

6 ECPAT. (2016). Global Study on Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism 2016. ECPAT International. Accessed: 22 July, 2019. From: <https://protectingchildrenintourism.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Global-Report-Offenders-on-the-Move.pdf>

7 Ibid, 2017.

8 Action Pour Les Enfants (APLE) Cambodia, 2019.

9 Ibid, 2017.

10 Ibid, 2014.

11 Ibid, 2017.

12 Ibid, 2016

12/13, 14 Ibid, 2016.

15 ECPAT International (2017). Sexual Exploitation of Children in Southeast Asia (Bangkok: ECPAT International).

Accessed: 2 February 2020. [https://www.ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Regional-Overview\\_Southeast-Asia.pdf](https://www.ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Regional-Overview_Southeast-Asia.pdf)

16 Ibid, 2016.

17 The Protection Project, International Child Sex Tourism: Scope of the Problem and Comparative Case Studies, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University, 2007), 107-108. Accessed: 2 February 2020. [https://childhub.org/en/system/tdf/library/attachments/the\\_07\\_tourism\\_0708.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=18274](https://childhub.org/en/system/tdf/library/attachments/the_07_tourism_0708.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=18274)

18 Ibid, 2017.

19 Bettini, Laura & Action Pour les Enfants. (2019). Assessment of Vulnerabilities to SECTT in Siem Reap. Technical Report. Phnom Penh: Action Pour Les Enfants.

# OBJECTIVES

Identify the emerging risks, vulnerabilities, and threats posed to children, families, and communities in Siem Reap and Poipet. Specifically addressing (but not limited to) these key questions:

1. Are perpetrators moving outside of urban centers and establishing themselves in rural areas to avoid detection and prosecution?
2. Are children being recruited from rural areas and brought to urban centers for the purpose of SECTT?
3. Are there illicit markets using established adult sex work networks in urban centers to facilitate SECTT?
4. To what extent do various online platforms, including apps, facilitate SECTT?

Further, the project intends to describe the needs, challenges, strengths, and opportunities on the ground, and understand what roles a range of actors can and should play in order to address the issues related to SECTT that are identified. The project also aims to identify specific and actionable recommendations and priorities for TdH, partners, and other actors identified above, including those which relate to the development of advocacy initiatives.

# METHODS

As a situational analysis, this is a qualitative study focusing on an analysis of themes extracted from a series of Key Informant Interviews (KII), In-depth Interviews (IDI), and Focus-Group Discussions (FDG) with critical practitioners from civil society, government, and the private sector. Before the gathering of primary field data, researchers will conduct a series of broad-themed KIIs with a series of crucial practitioners to establish additional critical individuals and entities that for inclusion into the primary data gathering. Before the collection of primary data, researchers will conduct a comprehensive review of related literature (published and gray) and as well as internal and external datasets related to SECTT, CSEA, Travel and tourism, and commercial development. By taking a broad approach to the literature review, the research can build a more comprehensive and nuanced backdrop for understanding primary data.

Prior to data gathering, a series of Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted with Cambodian frontline service providers from SECTT-related non-government organizations to build an understanding of the issue and to map out potential respondents from communities that could best describe the current dynamics of SECTT at a community level, and identify key gaps issues. In both Siem Reap and Poipet cities, all primary data was gathered between August 18 - 24, 2019. Data in Siem Reap city will be gathered prior to data in Poipet city on August 18-21 and data in Poipet city was gathered from August 22 through 24. Data was gathered using In-depth Interviews (IDI) and Focus-Group Discussions (FGD) in both areas. The research instruments for these activities are included as an appendix to this report.

## IN SIEM REAP

In-depth interviews were gathered from law enforcement, government anti-trafficking officials, government frontline service providers, and non-government frontline service providers<sup>20</sup>.

Focus-Group Discussions were conducted with local government officials, community child-protection advocates, members of the tourism sector, and youth from SECTT-vulnerable communities<sup>21</sup>.

## IN POIPET

In-depth interviews were gathered from local and district law enforcement, local government officials, and non-government frontline service providers from three SECTT-related organizations<sup>22</sup>.

Further, FGDs were conducted with government anti-trafficking officials at the local and regional levels, community child-protection advocates, members of the tourism sector, and youth from SECTT-vulnerable communities.<sup>23</sup>

## INCLUSION CRITERIA FOR FGDS

### STREET-INVOLVED YOUTH

This study requires six key criteria for inclusion in FGDS for street-involved youth. Each participant must be:

1. Street-working or street-living from a key tourist center catering to Asian tourists and travelers (especially in hotels/casinos)
2. Aged between 18 and 21 years old
3. Not living in a residential structure (NGO or government) nor benefiting from close case management from any social service provider
4. Freely consenting to participate
5. Not under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of the interview
6. Having no identified risk of harm by participation in the interview.

### TUKTUK DRIVERS/MOTODUPS

This study requires three key criteria for inclusion in FGDS for street-involved youth. Each participant will be:

1. Working regularly within a targeted tourist area or near tourist hotels/spas/casinos.
2. Having experience working within the area for a long period of time.
3. Knowledgeable about child protection and the changing demographics of travelers and tourists in the area.

<sup>20</sup> These include: DOSAVY (Child Welfare Unit); Anti-trafficking police; Members of the National Council for Counter Trafficking (NCCT); Angkor Hospital for Children (Social Work Manager)

<sup>21</sup> These include: Tuktuk Drivers from the ChildSafe Network working within targeted SECTT-Vulnerable communities; Older street-involved youth (18+) from targeted SECTT-Vulnerable communities, and village Chiefs from six targeted SECTT-Vulnerable communities.

<sup>22</sup> These include: the National Council for Counter Trafficking (NCCT); Damnok Toek; A21 Campaign; Friends International Thailand (Peuan-Peuan)

<sup>23</sup> These include: Members of the Anti-trafficking police force; Tuktuk Drivers and Motodups working within Special Economic Zone; Older street-involved youth (18+) within the Special Economic Zone.



# SECTT IN SIEM REAP



## BROAD CHANGES

Over the past 3-5 years, a significant increase in foreign investment in Siem Reap has changed the face of the city, bringing new jobs and creating an influx of local people from the surrounding provinces, migrating in search of livelihood (AHC). Local village chiefs from Siem Reap indicate notable improvements in local livelihoods as a result of families participating in various areas of the tourism sector, particularly operating through small businesses along the street.

Nearly all respondents note a significant change in the demographics of tourists and travelers coming through Siem Reap and describe a significant with rapid increase in visitors and investors from China, Korea, and other ASEAN nations. Similarly, they cite a significant decrease in visitors from Western nations. In particular, respondents highlight that Chinese visitors, as a group, have most notably increased over the past few years. While government officials describe Chinese visitors as businesspeople and investors who tend to keep to themselves, respondents from the tourism sector describe them in more negative terms, portraying them as potential threats to local Cambodian businesses. In particular, TukTuk drivers express concern about the increase in Chinese tourists because they use only Chinese-owned services and not use Khmer TukTuks, resulting in a decrease in business for local Cambodians. They also describe the tendency of Chinese tourists to only visit Chinese-operated restaurants and hotels and use Chinese tour companies, which has further harmed the profitability of Cambodian TukTuk drivers.

### Conflicting views on child vulnerability

In view of these changes, there are conflicting views between government officials and people who are working directly within communities. While government officers tend to see recent economic developments in a positive light, citing families with new abilities to start their own businesses, local social workers and those directly involved in the tourism industry seem to offer a darker and more nuanced understanding, expressing concerns that recent developments have exacerbated issues of neglect and child labor.

While village chiefs in Siem Reap acknowledge a recent increase in child labor, particularly on the streets and within local restaurants and beer gardens, they largely understand the new economic developments as a positive change, improving local livelihoods and preventing parents from migrating to work in Thailand. On the other hand, local social service providers (AHC) cite a notable increase in CSEA cases due to an increase in work involvement of parents who leave children alone or with extended family members while they spend extended amounts of time working in Siem Reap. Similarly, social workers describe an increase in cases of youth exhibiting sexually harmful behaviors, child abandonment, and cases of neglect, citing the same contributing factors.

With regard to child vulnerability and the changing demographics of foreign visitors, similar conflicting views appear between government officials and those working directly in communities. Government officials cite that Chinese people are largely uninvolved in child protection cases, indicating that Chinese people mostly come to run real estate, retail businesses, and online gaming shops. Officials cite that police have cracked down on a few illegal Chinese gaming shops but believe that child protection issues still largely center around foreigners from Western nations and involve mainly street-working children.



## CSEA BY FOREIGNERS

Government officials emphasize the success of previous anti-SECTT initiatives, citing that, despite a significant increase in tourism, the number of child-protection cases related to foreigners has decreased significantly. One official cites that their office has sent a clear message to abusers that they cannot harm children in Cambodia, and they need to leave. The official believes that good collaboration between all levels of government (local, district, and national) and NGOs, the implementation of government campaigns, and local police monitoring has contributed to the decrease in child protection cases.

While government officials cite two separate anecdotal cases of SECTT perpetrated by a Filipino teacher and a Korean pastor, they believe that SECTT is still largely perpetrated by Western foreigners. They further cite that they are not greatly concerned with potential child abuse among visitors from China, because Chinese people run their businesses quietly and provide services only to their own people. They cite that, since Cambodian law requires Chinese companies to use Cambodian laborers and tour guides, the Cambodians will report if they find cases of abuse because they have been trained to do so. Officials seem to be referring to the ChildSafe network.

TukTuk Drivers from the ChildSafe Network seem to present a conflicting view, indicating that they have been locked out of providing services to Chinese clients because Chinese hotels and tour agencies hire their own services to bring clients from place to place. They further indicate little knowledge of what happens within Chinese-owned establishments, but express concern that if sexual abuse takes place within these establishments, it would remain hidden.

## GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS



### GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

- Indicate that SECTT is no longer an issue in Siem Reap
- Report anecdotal cases of children being sexually abused through brokers
- Are aware of some online platforms that are used to connect with children for purposes of SECTT

High-level government officials broadly indicate that SECTT is no longer an issue in Siem Reap, citing the successes of existing child protection systems, such as the ChildSafe Network. While they indicate an awareness of some online platforms that are used to connect with children for the purposes of SECTT, they believe this does not happen in Siem Reap. Members of DoSAVY cite that there are no current SECTT cases and describe this as a former issue involving Western foreigners who employed traditional grooming tactics with children in communities. High-level officials broadly describe that Asians prefer sex with adults in entertainment establishments as a one-time transaction and do not seek sex with children, while Westerners tend to invest in traditional grooming tactics in communities. They cite that, because local officials monitor foreigners visiting local communities and report when they see suspicious activity, SECTT is no longer a pressing issue in Siem Reap.

Despite indicating that SECTT is no longer an issue in Siem Reap, they describe anecdotal cases in which people access sexual services with children through Khmer/Vietnamese brokers, which are believed to work in some hotels or guesthouses. They additionally cite hearing of some foreigners who access sex with children through tour guides, karaoke staff, and massage places, as well as some foreigners who access sex with children through tour guides, karaoke staff, and massage establishments.

Similar to DoSAVY and high-level government officials, local village chiefs suggest that only Westerners abuse children, usually employing traditional grooming tactics with children in communities. Village chiefs cite concern for Western visitors because they are more likely to come to local communities on their own. Conversely, they suggest that Asian visitors are not a concern because they visit Siem Reap in groups and rarely visit communities alone. They believe that this makes it difficult for them to abuse children. They also cite observing that Western perpetrated SECTT has significantly decreased due to the implementation of local interventions and increased advocacy initiatives. They report that they have not seen any new cases of SECTT within the past two years. With regard to Asian perpetrators, they similarly affirm that Asians tend to only seek sex with adults, however, they do express concern for Chinese men marrying Cambodian women and abusing them in marriage.

# COMMUNITY PRACTITIONERS



## COMMUNITY PRACTITIONERS

- Believe the means through which SECTT perpetrators access children may have evolved
- Raise concerns regarding both Western and Asian travellers
- Emphasize the indirect connection between tourism development and sexual exploitation by locals within communities especially when children are left unsupervised

Government officials do not describe SECTT as an ongoing issue and relay confidence in previous advocacy initiatives and existing child protection mechanisms (ChildSafe). In contrast to these notions, local tour guides, and TukTuk drivers from the ChildSafe Network believe the means through which SECTT perpetrators access children may have evolved to avoid child protection and monitoring efforts. Community social practitioners acknowledge the successes of previous SECTT initiatives and believe that previous investigation and prosecution of cases may have led to a decrease in incidence, but also express concern that many perpetrators may have changed their modus operandi because of these initiatives.

Describing Western perpetration, the lead social worker from Angkor Hospital for Children (AHC) indicates concern over an increase in volunteers in communities or private schools. He notes that uncritical acceptance of willing volunteers and English-fluent teachers, combined with relaxed child protection policies, gives potential perpetrators easy access to children. With regard to Asian perpetrators, the social worker expresses concern over the increased Chinese migrant presence in Siem Reap. While he has not directly witnessed SECTT, he describes seeing physical violence against children perpetrated by Chinese and expresses concern over Chinese migrant using the money to informally adopt Cambodian children, citing a recent case. Recalling cases of Asian-perpetrated SECTT, he describes two recent cases. One involving a Korean pastor (also described by government officials) and another case involving a Japanese woman who raped a street-working boy in a public restroom.

The lead social worker maintains that the majority of CSEA cases involve local perpetrators and emphasizes the importance of understanding the indirect connection between tourism development and sexual exploitation by locals within communities. He cites a key concern that, as parents migrate for work or become busier with business, they often leave children unsupervised or with grandparents/distant relatives who do not care for the children appropriately. He indicates that unsupervised children in communities or children with irregular caretakers have increased vulnerability to SECTT/CSEA.



# MEMBERS OF THE TOURISM SECTOR



## TOURISM SECTOR

- TukTuk drivers and tour guides emphasize concerns about the growth of SECTT in Siem Reap
- Indicate local Cambodians and Chinese people pose the biggest risk to children in Siem Reap with regard to SECTT
- Identify online and offline brokerage systems that need further investigation

Members of the tourism sector include TukTuk drivers from the Childsafe Network, as well as a group of independent tour guides who have extensive experience working with tourists from various countries. Both groups seem to provide a notably more nuanced understanding of SECTT-related child protection issues from a community perspective and emphasize concerns about the growth of SECTT in Siem Reap.

In Focus Group Discussions, local tour guides initially cite that Western travelers are the primary perpetrators of SECTT. However, they later admit that these beliefs are largely based on what they have seen in the media. Asked specifically about Asian offenders, they indicate Thai tourists commonly seek sex services, similar to Chinese (as well as local Cambodians), but they seem to be seeking services from young adults. A tour guide, in his previous work as a TukTuk driver, describes a specific instance in which he was requested by a Chinese traveler to locate young girls for sex, but he cites denying the request and bringing the tourist to a KTV/nightclub instead.

With regard to specific present vulnerabilities within Siem Reap, local tour guides express concern over the growth of Chinese businesses. They believe they may be committing crimes but cite it is difficult to know because these businesses always remain hidden. They observe that many Chinese people commit crimes and do not respect the local values and that they worry when they see many Chinese people coming for business and tourism.

Out of all respondents, TukTuk drivers present the most nuanced understanding of the current situation of potential unreported SECTT in Siem Reap. They indicate local Cambodians and Chinese people pose the biggest risk to children in Siem Reap with regard to SECTT. In a Focus Group Discussion, TukTuk drivers describe what they believe to be a system in which local Cambodians and wealthy Chinese/Khmer people collaborate to access children in high schools. They believe Chinese people may be using existing Khmer recruiter-broker networks within schools to exploit children. They note that recruiters are often youth who connect with students in schools and coordinate with brokers who remain outside of the schools, connecting students with perpetrators. Participants cite that the students involved in these networks will not talk to anyone about their encounters with perpetrators unless that person comes through their broker.

TukTuk drivers indicate an increase in the number of tourists (particularly Asian) accessing sex services through KTV and big massage/spa establishments. Drivers describe a number of 'young people' providing sexual services, however, they are often unable to determine if these young people are underage. They cite that tourists (or their intermediates) need to communicate directly with these establishments to access young people for sex. While a TukTuk will transport the client, they often do not see potential victims, as they usually go to the client on their own. One driver cites another case where two Chinese-Malay tourists asked to be brought to a place where he could have sex with young girls. The driver cites that he refused service to the client and informed them that sex with minors was a criminal offense.

Other SECTT cases seem to be pre-arranged, possibly through online platforms. Drivers describe instances in which they have picked up tourists from the airport and taken them to pick up young girls who are waiting for them and the two would then go to a hotel together. The driver cites that some young girls seem to use gyms or coffee shops as meeting points and then proceed to a hotel once they meet the perpetrator. The owners of the gyms and coffee shops seem to have no knowledge of what is happening as everything appears to be pre-arranged, presumably through social media.



# RISKY PLACES

Divergent views were noted between government officials and people working within communities with regard to high-risk areas for the occurrence of SECTT in Siem Reap. While government officials reinforce a traditional understanding of street based SECTT occurring primarily by Western males making direct contact with children in communities, people working in communities offer a more nuanced understanding, involving diverse people who utilize organized brokerage systems to meet with children and youth, among other methods.

In discussions, high-level government officials seemed to become defensive during discussions of potential gaps, reinforcing SECTT as a past issue, which involved largely street-working children and emphasized that the issue has seen a significant decrease in recent years. DoSAVY similarly cites critical high-risk areas to be among children working in the Temples, along Pub Street, and those collecting recyclables in the 'dumping area'. In discussing potential risks posed by the internet, government officials seemed to understand key vulnerability to be centered around issues of children seeing pornography and then being triggered to think about sex.

Village chiefs indicate a greater awareness of the various establishments that facilitate SECTT and online platforms through which perpetrators connect with children, in addition to traditional community based SECTT. Members of the tourism sector seem to be highly aware of the risks posed in local establishments, including bars, massage parlors, and KTV venues. In particular, TukTuk drivers recount a series of specific observations around high schools that seem to indicate a brokerage system that may facilitate SECTT/CSEA with both locals and visiting foreigners.

Community social workers emphasize hotels and guesthouses to be especially high-risk areas. The AHC lead social worker indicates that while children may be contacted in schools or in various places in the community, hotels and guesthouses are the most common venues for SECTT to take place, as there are few other 'safe' places for foreign visitors to be unsupervised with children.



## HIGH SCHOOLS

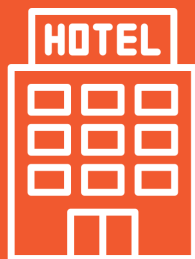
The existence of a brokerage system within high schools was a recurring theme presented by TukTuk drivers and members of the tourism sector in multiple interviews and Focus Group Discussion. The brokerage system is described to operate in a hierarchy, with brokers and clients outside of the school and recruiters and students inside of the school. Students are identified by recruiters and are said to use loans and gifts to lure students to work as recruiters themselves. New recruiters are introduced to the broker outside of the school and are able to earn money and gifts by identifying students who are willing to have a sexual encounter with a client in exchange for money. The broker functions as an intermediary between the client and the recruiter to connect the student with the client. Students will meet with clients at an arranged time and place, sometimes accompanied by a younger recruiter who may also be a student, thus avoiding suspicion being raised. Since the system works in multiple layers, it provides anonymity and protection for both the broker and the client. According to TukTuk drivers, the student only interacts with the recruiter and never sees the broker or has any knowledge of the functioning of the larger system.

TukTuk drivers cite a system like that has previously been used to arrange CSEA between high school students and wealthy Cambodians. However, one TukTuk driver, in a Focus Group Discussion, cites knowing that Chinese people have been using this system for sex with high school students for a number of years. The driver recounts talking with students who have personally experienced SECTT in high schools. In one instance, the driver recalls transporting students with someone who he believed was a recruiter to what seemed to be a meet up with a client. The driver recalls overhearing conversations between students and recruiters, which seemed to confirm that the teenagers were being brought to meet a client. Within the past month, at the time of the interview, the driver cites witnessing Chinese people picking up high school students on three different occasions at two particular high schools.

The researchers brought up the potential of a brokerage system within high schools with high-level government officials. However, they deny the issue exists and cite that some entertainment places use school uniforms for the ladies working within the establishments. They reinforce the efficacy of advocacy campaigns in schools and cite police monitor communities and guesthouses near schools. In contrast, DoSAVY cites hearing about this issue but notes they lack of clear information. One younger member of DoSAVY cites knowledge of a similarly functioning system within his former university. The system involved university students who received support from wealthy clients in exchange for sex— encounters which were facilitated by brokers and operated in secret. He cites feeling concern when he hears of the potential existence of these systems within Siem Reap.



## HOTEL/GUESTHOUSE



While hotels and guesthouses do not seem to be used as areas where young people are introduced to foreigners for exploitation, they are described as the locations in which most SECTT takes place after foreigners and children are introduced in other high-risk areas. Members of the tourism sector and civil society partners describe some cases, in which SECTT is pre-arranged online through a broker. Young people will arrive at a certain hotel at a specified time to meet the foreigner for sex. High-level government officials indicate continued police monitoring of hotels and guesthouses. However, agents in the tourism sector and civil society seem to indicate that these areas remain a common location where SECTT occurs and TukTuk drivers indicate knowledge that some receptionists and hotel staff are willing to ignore the ages of guests or not register guest IDs properly in exchange for bribes. More information is needed on this potential practice within communities. The lead social worker from AHC cites that these are the only locations in which foreigners can physically access children and remain undetected.

## MASSAGE PARLORS

Village chiefs and members of the tourism sector (TukTuk drivers and tour guides) express concern for a number of small massage parlors in Siem Reap as potential locations where children can be exploited. They note that sex or sexual services are commonly made available to tourists within many of these establishments. They indicate that the majority of people providing these services seem to be 18 years old or older, but they believe that some are younger. TukTuk drivers indicate that, in situations like this, the clients would communicate directly with the establishment to access younger masseurs. TukTuk drivers have little ability to monitor what happens as they only transport the client and do not see the children. They cite the children would need to come to the guesthouse by themselves.

## STREET-WORKING CHILDREN

Nearly all government officials (high-level and DoSAVY) indicate that this is the primary venue for SECTT, reinforcing the traditional understanding of street based SECTT through direct contact with children on the streets or in communities by using bribes and exploiting poverty to get access to children.

## KTV VENUES

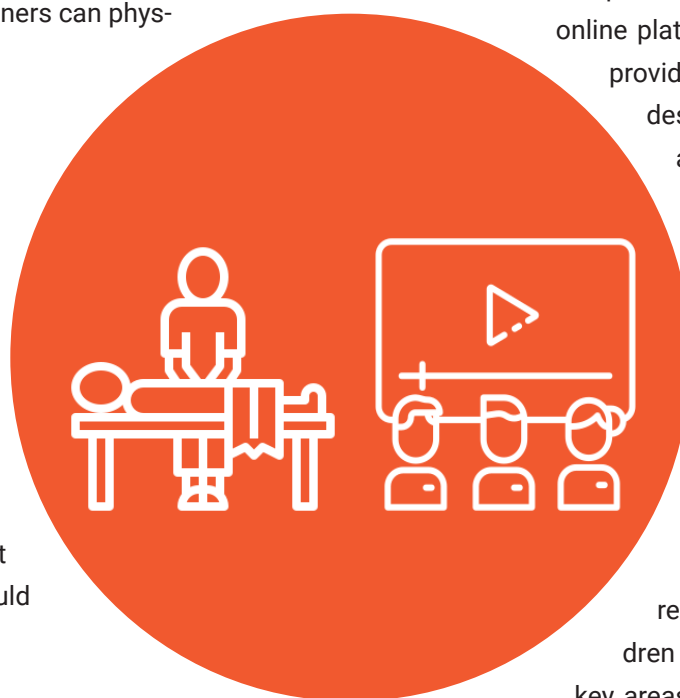
Members of the tourism sector also express concern with KTV venues being used as a potential location in which, particularly Asian tourists can meet with young people for sexual encounters. The means by which the encounter would be arranged is described to be similar to the way they would be arranged within massage parlors. TukTuk drivers and tour guide's clients would need to make arrangements directly with the establishment and the child would need to come to another location to meet the client— likely at hotel or guesthouse.

## TOUR AGENCIES

TukTuk drivers indicate awareness that some Korean tour agencies may participate in the facilitation of sex services with young people. However, respondents indicate they are unsure of the ages of the people providing sex with tourists. The drivers cite that if clients want sex, they are able to speak with particular agencies who can communicate with a broker to organize the encounter. The driver notes that there seems to be a clear organization to facilitate this process of connecting clients with sexual services, however, it's unclear if, or to what extent, children are involved.

## ONLINE PLATFORMS

Focus Group Discussions with youth from vulnerable communities especially emphasize the risks encountered in online platforms. Youth seem very aware of OCSE and demonstrate its potential connection to SECTT by providing a means for perpetrators to connect with youth even before arriving in the country. One boy describes receiving sexual messages and explicit pictures from an adult male who he describes as an Indian. He notes that later in the encounter the man sent a video of himself playing with his genitals. DoSAVY in Siem Reap and, broadly, most government officials, indicates little awareness of potential online vulnerabilities beyond citing the risks of children seeing pornography and thus being triggered to engage in, or think about, having sex.



## BARS, RESTAURANTS, AND NIGHT-CLUBS

Village chiefs and members of the tourism industry (TukTuk drivers and tour guides) indicate bars, restaurants, and nightclubs to be a particularly vulnerable location for children. They note that children as young as 14 commonly work within these locations and some locales specifically. One of the key areas, known locally as “Khmer Pub Street”, is located outside of the main tourist areas and geared toward local Cambodians. The area consists of a series of approximately 25 entertainment establishments, many of which offer food, Karaoke, and beer. Many young females work in the area, a number of whom seem to be under the age of 18. TukTuk drivers and tour guides note that customers can negotiate with some workers for sexual services. Respondents note that services would take place outside of the Pub Street area, likely in a hotel or other facility. While the area caters to Khmer clientele, respondents indicate it is commonly visited by a number of foreign visitors from various countries. A TukTuk driver notes that perpetration by local Cambodians is very common within these areas. He further expresses concern that child protection initiatives in Siem Reap largely focus only on foreign perpetrators, and neglect to recognize Cambodian perpetrators from within the country.

Many locations visited by foreigners are described to be outside of the tourist areas, which are monitored less frequently. Given the potential risks and the lack of monitoring, these areas may pose a significant risk to the children working within these areas. Participants in FGDs and IDs believe children are approached directly in these areas, usually employing traditional grooming tactics, offering money or gifts. Vulnerabilities within these venues are also acknowledged by youth in Focus Group Discussions, with some seeming personally aware of specific vulnerabilities, however, respondents remain reluctant to provide further details. More research is needed to understand the dynamics of risk within these areas.





# MODUS OPERANDI

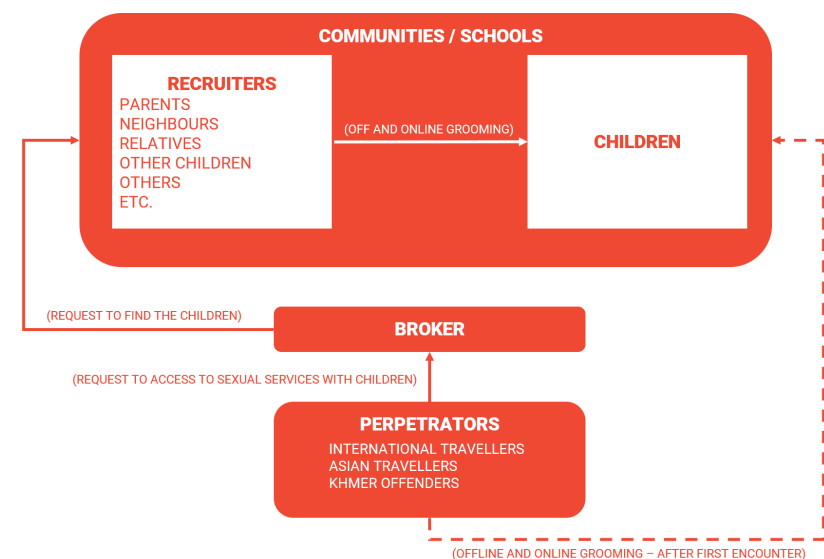
The majority of respondents indicate an apparent change in the modus operandi of perpetrators over the past few years, citing a notable decrease in perpetrators making direct contact with children on the streets and in communities, and an increase in the usage of brokers— both online and in communities. Previously, perpetrators were understood to directly target children from low-income families, typically using traditional grooming tactics, often targeting children living or working on the streets. Most community-based respondents believe perpetrators may be using a different approach to access children, which has gone undetected by child protection agents. Respondents indicate that law enforcement and other child protection agents may not be detecting it because it looks different from what they have been trained to detect as SECTT. Community-based respondents seem to support this notion, indicating that perpetrators are aware of the advocacy, training, and monitoring efforts commonly employed by law enforcement and child protection agents and that they would likely change their approach to accessing children to avoid detection.

Additionally, most respondents seem to indicate a change in the demographics of perpetrators, with Asians making up a growing majority of suspected offenders. AHC lead social worker indicates that Asians seem to be much more likely to connect with children online or through brokers and do not connect with children directly on the street or within communities, as western perpetrators have previously been known to do. Since most child protection monitoring training focuses on traditional grooming through direct contact with children (typically assuming perpetration by Western males), it is likely that Asian perpetrators accessing children through brokers could largely remain undetected under the current child protection framework.

## BROKERAGE SYSTEMS

All respondents, with the exception of high-level government officials, cite organized brokerage systems as a modus operandi of SECTT offenders in Siem Reap. Awareness of this modus operandi seems especially apparent and detailed among TukTuk drivers in Siem Reap. Some TukTuk drivers cite detailed accounts of what they believe to be community recruiters connecting children with clients who pre-arranged encounters with children and young people through brokers working outside of the local community.<sup>24</sup>

Most respondents indicate an awareness of high schools are being key locations where children are identified and recruited for SECTT/CSEA. Many described online platforms as highly involved in connecting brokers, recruiters, perpetrators, and the children they abuse. In addition, Siem Reap’s Village Chiefs demonstrate awareness of brokers who may be working within their communities and note that they could be neighbors, relatives, or parents, however, they offer little further information on specific individuals or cases of which they are aware.



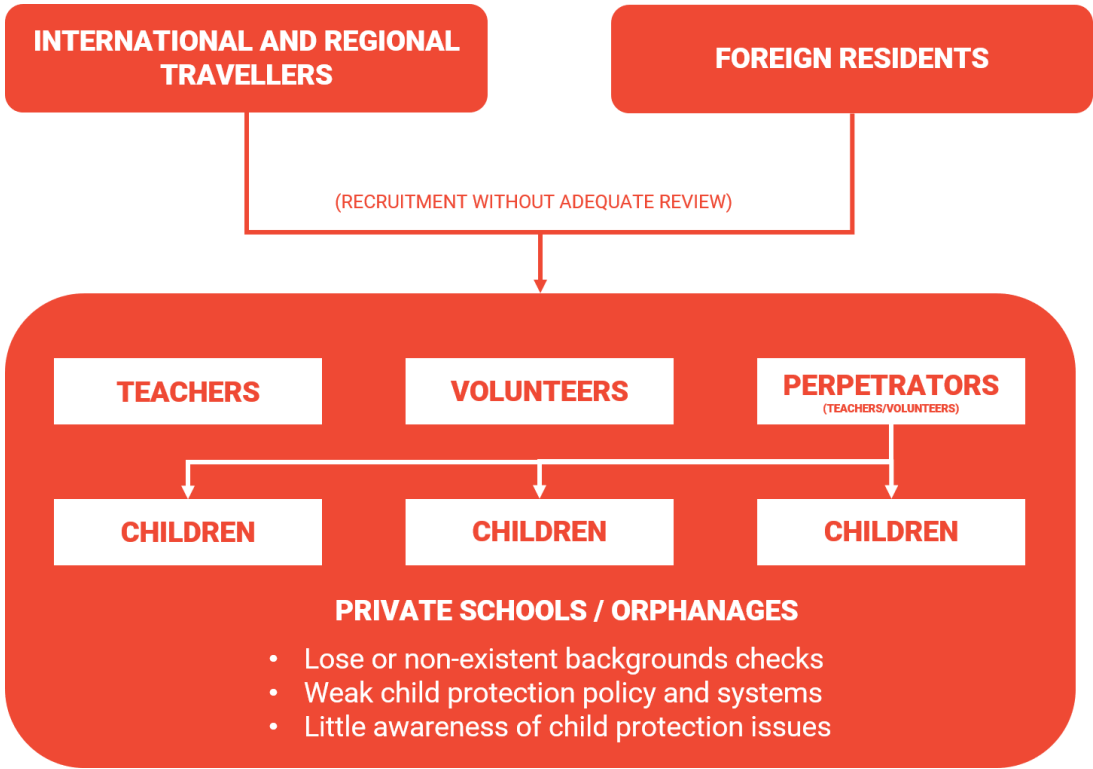
<sup>24</sup> For a more detailed explanation of how these systems seem to work within high schools, see the “risky places” section of this report.

# DIRECT CONTACT

All respondents indicated strong awareness of SECTT perpetrated by direct contact with children on the street or within communities— often employing traditional grooming tactics and exploiting poverty to gain access to the child. While all respondents were aware of SECTT offenders directly contacting children in the past, all respondents, excluding high-level government official s, seemed to indicate that this was no longer a common modus operandi for offenders. No respondents were able to identify a recent case of this particular modus operandi being used in Siem Reap. All case references had occurred at least one to two years prior to being interviewed for this study.

## VOLUNTEERING IN SCHOOLS

Private schools were also identified as a potential means through which foreign visitors gain easy access to children in Siem Reap. While this was not as widely identified as a modus operandi, community social practitioners from AHC and TdH raise this as a key concern for SECTT. They note that abusers may be increasingly likely to work as volunteers or teachers in private schools where child protection policies are either loose or nonexistent and child protection monitoring is scarce. The lead social worker from AHC notes that there have been recent improvements in the development and implementation of child protection policies in orphanages, however, significant gaps still remain in private schools, which are often very happy to welcome foreign teachers, often with little knowledge of their backgrounds. While village chiefs do not directly point this out as a key Modus Operandi, they note two recent SECTT cases that took place within similar settings— both of which were reported to the local police. may be working within their communities and note that they could be neighbors, relatives, or parents, however, they offer little further information on specific individuals or cases of which they are aware.



# VULNERABILITY FACTORS

Respondents defined a broad range of unique vulnerability factors for SECTT in Siem Reap. Local and regional government officials define poverty and migration as key issues which increase child vulnerability to SECTT in Siem Reap. While frontline service providers agree on these points, they also point to gaps in awareness among government officials, as well as a lack of trust or collaboration between local and regional governments, which seems to impede accurate reporting on child vulnerability in local communities. TukTuk drivers and youth underscore the issues of poverty and a lack of education and parenting skills as key factors contributing to child vulnerability to SECTT. All respondents agree that poverty is a key vulnerability factor.

## UNSEEN FORMS OF SECTT

Data indicates a divide in the way that SECTT is understood between government officials and those working within communities, such as children, frontline service providers, and members of the tourism industry. While government officials seem to understand SECTT as a largely Western-perpetrated issue involving individual men contacting children directly within communities, people in communities commonly see SECTT through a broad range of means, including organized brokerage systems and online platforms. Despite this, law enforcement has not officially documented any cases of SECTT beyond individual actors making direct contact with children in communities. Frontline service providers emphasize the need for greater public awareness of the broader range of ways that children are vulnerable to SECTT in Siem Reap.

While online platforms may pose a number of exploitative risks on their own, members of the tourism sector, TukTuks, and youth indicate these platforms may play an integral part in facilitating SECTT both through allowing direct contact by perpetrators, as well as facilitating communications between perpetrators, brokers, recruiters, and exploited children. Frontline service providers recognize the growing role played by online platforms in facilitating SECTT, citing the use of pornographic videos and pictures as a means of grooming, in addition to numerous online platforms that can be used to connect with children, such as Messenger, TikTok, and YouTube. Respondents describe this as a factor that makes children extremely vulnerable to various forms of sexual exploitation. However, most people lack of awareness that it is happening, and when they are aware, they commonly disregard or do not understand its significance. Frontline service providers and members of DoSAVY cite concern that the public is not aware of the risks posed by online platforms and believe that it's important to understand child's rights within an online context. These concerns are echoed by one male youth who describes being sexually approached by adults online and receiving explicit pictures and videos from foreign men online.

Youth and frontline service providers seem to be acutely aware of the risks online platforms pose to children and youth, however, these concerns do not seem to be echoed by government officials or members of the tourism industry. This indicates a need for further exploration of these issues and advocacy for children's rights within an online context.

## LACK OF TRUST/COLLABORATION AMONG GOVERNMENT ENTITIES

Frontline service providers note a lack of trust and collaboration between service providers and local authorities. Local authorities are often unwilling to report negative issues within their communities for fear that their community will be given a bad name, be blamed or stigmatized by government leadership. Due to this lack of trust and support between community leaders and regional government, he cites that it is difficult to accurately relay the much-needed information that is needed to develop a more effective response to SECTT.

## POVERTY

All respondents agree that poverty is a factor that makes children more vulnerable to SECTT in Siem Reap. In particular, poverty is seen as an aggravating factor that drives people from rural communities to migrate to Siem Reap in search of means for generating income. Members of the tourism sector cite young children are often pushed to work adult jobs in beer gardens and along the street, which puts them at greater risk of SECTT and CSEA. They further cite that in some instance families are pushed to allow their children to have sexual encounters with adults because of the money that they are promised in return. A TukTuk driver cites an instance of being asked by someone in a community to sell the virginity of their younger sister because their family needed money. Youth and respondents from the tourism sector also acknowledge that inadequate parenting skills or lack of education work alongside the reality of poverty to contribute to the vulnerability of children to sexual exploitation.

## INCREASED MIGRATION

Internal migration is seen as a key contributing factor in vulnerability to SECTT, according to frontline service providers, village chiefs, TukTuk drivers, and members of the tourism sector. As the tourism sector in Siem Reap has grown and economic investment into the area has increased, parents and entire families have relocated from rural areas to the city in search of means to generate income. In some cases, parents migrate alone to work in Siem Reap, leaving children with neighbors or extended family members in their hometown, many of whom may not be able to adequately care for the children. This leaves children unsupervised and at an increased vulnerability to exploitation and other forms of violence in the community. Similarly, when children migrate with their families for work, they often join their parents in income-generating activities or encouraged to work in bars or restaurants on their own to supplement their parent's income.

TukTuk drivers and members of the tourism sector indicate parents have been known to lie about their children's ages in order for them to work in restaurants and beer gardens, which may also put them at greater risk of harm, particularly among those located in areas where adult sex work is common. TukTuk drivers also cite cases of children migrating to Siem Reap from rural areas on their own, being drawn by the prospect of earning money in the growing tourism sector. Children in these situations are uniquely vulnerable in that they do not have the support of a family and are often more pressured to earn money to support themselves.

## LACK OF POLICE TRAINING

Frontline service providers note that current policies and police training are factors that prevent potential cases of sexual abuse and exploitation from being reported and adequately investigated. Angkor Hospital for Children (AHC) cites receiving numerous cases of very young children with gonorrhea. However, police are often unwilling to connect the presence of a sexually transmitted infection with sexual abuse and rather see it as a hygiene-related issue. Service providers cite the need to develop policies within law enforcement which are more proactive, allowing police to investigate cases such as these, noting that these are very likely cases of CSEA, but no one is able to investigate these cases further.



# SAFETY SOLUTIONS

Nearly all respondents, excluding high-level government officials, indicate the need to develop a better flow of information between communities and law enforcement. Respondents recognize that a more current and nuanced understanding of SECTT is needed in Siem Reap. While several groups of respondents recognized that current policies for investigating child protection concerns are insufficient, there is also a broad agreement on the need of successful implementation of existing laws and policies.

Frontline service providers advocate for improve legal frameworks for investigating SECTT and CSEA, which allow social workers and law enforcement to investigate when there is sufficient reason to believe that a child is being abused or exploited. They also note the need for improved relationships between local and regional governmental entities to allow for a better relay of child protection information to government officials and legislators.

## UPDATED ADVOCACY ON SECTT

Youth from vulnerable communities and members of DoSAVY and the tourism sector call for updated advocacy initiatives on SECTT and CSEA, which recognize the risks and role played by online platforms in facilitating child exploitation, as well as other hidden forms of SECTT/CSEA involving brokerage systems with schools. This advocacy should be targeted at all levels, including children, government officials, law enforcement, and child protection advocates within NGOs.

## PARENTING SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Youth, TukTuk drivers, and members of the tourism industry note the need for targeted advocacy and education for parents— particularly parents from vulnerable communities or economic migrants to Siem Reap. They cite that such initiatives should work to help parents to look after their children and allow parents and communities to join together to protect children.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF EXISTING LAWS AND POLICIES

Respondents from government and local communities note the need to implement existing laws and policies aimed at child protection. While respondents describe numerous good laws and policies, including those disallowing children to visit hotels/guesthouses without a guardian and those disallowing minors from entering KTV bars and nightclubs, they note that these policies are not enforced and are commonly circumvented.

## IMPROVED LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR INVESTIGATING SECTT/CSEA

Frontline service providers indicate frustration with current legal frameworks that disallow them from using child protection information to proactively investigate situations in which children may be in danger. They particularly note the recurring issue of young children being admitted to hospital with sexually transmitted infections, but not being allowed to follow up with parents/caregivers to assess the safety of the child and potential experiences and risks of sexual abuse or exploitation.

## IMPROVED RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES

Frontline service providers describe a need for the establishment of better relationships between communities and their local governments, to allow for better dissemination of community-level information to law enforcement and child protection advocates. Respondents note that local government officials are often reluctant to provide negative reports about their communities for fear that their communities will lose face or be stigmatized by the regional government.

## IMPROVED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ON CHILD PROTECTION ISSUES

Numerous community respondents express the need for greater community engagement in monitoring the involvement of children with recruiters and potential SECTT offenders. This engagement should not only include parents, teachers, and community leaders, but some social practitioners underscore the importance of sex workers and people working in nightclubs and beer gardens engaging in monitoring and reporting of children and young people who may be at risk of SECTT as they are often more closely involved in critical at-risk areas for SECTT. At present, the ChildSafe network has trained a number of hotels and restaurants. While this has been helpful, children, social practitioners, and members of the tourism sector indicate the need to build on the successes of this network and adapt it to the current and evolving needs of Siem Reap with regard to SECTT.

## VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN

Youth from vulnerable communities cite the need for the development of more targeted vocational training programs for children migrating to Siem Reap. Given the increase in economic migrants coming from rural areas, they cite that greater access to such programs would give youth better options for creating a livelihood so that they do not fall into exploitative forms of income generation. While some programs currently exist through Kalyan Mith and other NGOs, this may indicate a need to expand these initiatives to target children migrating from rural areas.

## DATA MANAGEMENT

DoSAVY and frontline service providers believe there is a need to develop better data management systems to harmonize case data from potential SECTT or CSEA cases, which have not been officially referred to law enforcement. At present, law enforcement data is perpetrator-focused, rather than victim-focused. As such, only cases with concrete information on a particular perpetrator committing a specific crime becomes a recorded case. In many SECTT cases or cases of online child sexual exploitation, a crime may take place, but victims might not be able to identify a perpetrator or prove that the crime took place. Harnessing child protection data from other government agencies, such as DoSAVY, Anti-trafficking Police, and Ministry of Women's affairs (along with NGO data) should be helpful in developing better data on the issue of SECTT and CSEA in Siem Reap.





# DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

Data from Focus-groups and In-depth discussions reveal a range of perspectives on emerging risks, vulnerabilities, and threats posed to children, families, and communities in Siem Reap. There is a notable split between government officers and community practitioners. High-level government officials seemed to maintain a traditional understanding of SECTT which lacks nuance and is based largely on historical crime data from law enforcement. While DoSAVY initially reflected these similar positions and perspectives, they express concern that the threats and vulnerabilities posed to children and families have evolved in recent years, acknowledging that improved community engagement and child protection data management systems were needed for a better understanding of the issue. Discussions with frontline service providers, community leaders, youth from vulnerable communities and members of the tourism sector provided a much more nuanced and in-depth understanding of the new evolution of the issue, which suggests a growth in the use of online platforms and organized broker-recruiter systems to facilitate SECTT in Siem Reap.

## WHAT ARE THE EMERGING RISKS, VULNERABILITIES, AND THREATS POSED TO CHILDREN IN SIEM REAP?

While all respondents, excluding high-level government officials, acknowledge the potential for sexual abuse perpetrated by Asian travelers and tourists, the majority of respondents were unaware of any specific instances in which this has happened. High-level government officials believe Asian-perpetrated SECTT is not a great concern because they have faith in existing child protection systems, such as the ChildSafe Network. However, members of the ChildSafe Network indicate that they have been closed out of much of the newly developing Asian (particularly Chinese) tourism sector.

SECTT monitoring in Siem Reap seems to be focused on the identification of lone perpetrators in communities directly contacting children, however, this contradicts what is being observed by frontline service providers and members of the tourism industry. Western foreigners are identified as risks because of their former presence in local communities, yet nearly all respondents report a noted decrease in Western perpetrators— the most recent case being more than two years prior to the time of interview. This seems to underscore a potential shift in the modus operandi of current perpetrators of SECTT. Local community leaders from five target child protection areas within the Siem Reap area indicate belief that only Western foreigners abuse children, citing the use of money and other gifts to attract children and curry the favor of their families. These prevailing assumptions may inhibit law enforcement and child protection advocates in communities from correctly identifying more contemporary forms of SECTT, which rely more on third-party brokers and recruiters and less on perpetrators making direct contact with children in communities.

Respondents working within communities commonly describe the usage of brokers and recruiters within schools and communities to facilitate connection between children and perpetrators and indicate that perpetrators no longer access children directly in communities due to the risk of detection. This is likely due to the increased monitoring and prevention efforts within the child protection community. Nevertheless, government officials charged with child-protection continue to hold the view that SECTT is largely perpetrated by Western males against street-involved children and seem to believe that the reduction in reported SECTT cases indicates that incidence of SECTT in communities has abated.

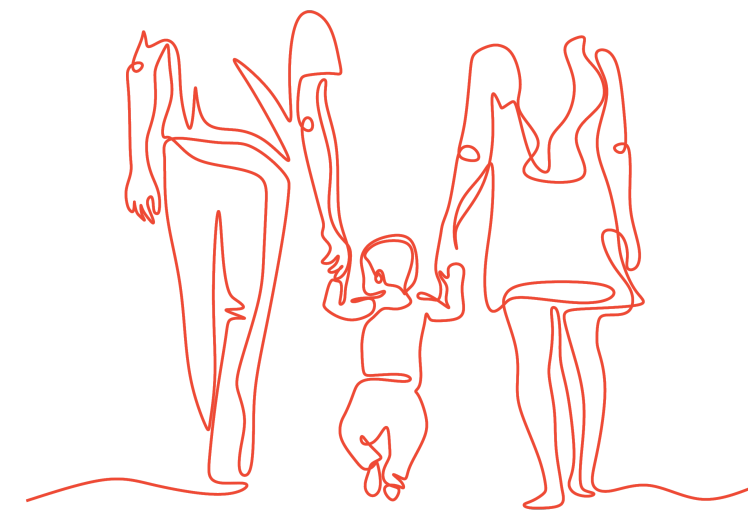


## ARE CHILDREN BEING RECRUITED FROM RURAL AREAS AND BROUGHT TO URBAN CENTERS FOR SECTT?

While there is no indication that children are being recruited from rural areas for the explicit purpose of SECTT, internal migration of parents to Siem Reap seems to be a contributing factor to child vulnerability to SECTT. Due to Siem Reap's economic growth and development, parents migrate to the area for work. When children migrate with their parents, frontline service providers indicate that the pressure to generate income often pushes parents to involve their children in income-generating activities as well. Respondents from the tourism industry note parents often state that their children are older than what they actually are so that they are able to work in various restaurants and beer gardens, which may place the children at increased risk of SECTT. Nearly all community-level respondents note that restaurants and beer gardens have become risky places, in which children are uniquely vulnerable to various forms of sexual harassment and exploitation.

Further, frontline service providers note that many parents migrate to Siem Reap alone, particularly if they have younger children. As parents migrate or become preoccupied with work, they often leave children unsupervised or with grandparents/distant relatives who do not care for the children appropriately, leaving children more vulnerable to a variety of threats within local communities. Frontline service providers emphasize the majority of SECTT cases involve local perpetrators and underscore the importance of understanding the indirect connection between tourism developments, its effect on internal migration, and increased vulnerability of children due to local perpetration.

Children are commonly described as migrating to Siem Reap from provincial areas independently in search of income. Children in these situations may be especially vulnerable as they may be more likely to be drawn into involvement with perpetrators, as many live independently, away from their parents and relatives. While little detailed information is provided by respondents, this seems to be an ongoing pattern and may represent a significant risk— particularly to children who are well connected in their online environments.





## ARE THERE ILLICIT MARKETS USING ADULT SEX WORK NETWORKS IN URBAN CENTERS TO FACILITATE SECTT?

TukTuks seem to indicate a potential overlap between Khmer and Chinese child exploitation networks, where perpetrators use brokers and lower-level recruiters (often other youth) to access children and youth within schools and communities. The procurement of children or youth is made in advance through the broker-recruiter network. Respondents cite that the brokers will identify a few key students within the school, often targeting vulnerable children, lending them money or providing them with luxury items for the purpose of recruiting them into the network to provide sexual services for perpetrators. In some cases, TukTuk drivers indicate observing perpetrators picking up students from their high school directly.

TukTuks and members of the tourism sector indicate that some young people (and potentially children) are present in nightclubs and KTV bars where adult sexual services are commonly available. While no direct observations of child involvement in adult sex work markets were made, respondents are aware of the presence of children within these environments and express concern of their involvement in sexual exploitation. Within this context, it's important to note that many children migrate to Siem Reap because they feel that Siem Reap offers economic opportunities that are not available to them in the province. Frontline service providers indicate that many children are under pressure to earn money— particularly among those who have migrated independently. At present, there is little effort in Siem Reap to control the entrance of underage persons into many of these nightclubs/establishments where sexual services are offered. Thus, this may be a significant area of focus for future anti-SECTT efforts.

Many respondents emphasize the need to provide better monitoring over local entertainment venues, noting that child sexual exploitation and violence by locals is much more common than perpetration by foreigners and should be of significant concern. Within the realm of SECTT, the focus has overwhelmingly been on perpetration by international travelers and tourists, however, it is important that child protection advocates recognize the potential threat posed by domestic travelers and tourists as well. This is a theme broadly discussed by the majority of community respondents.

## TO WHAT EXTENT DO VARIOUS ONLINE PLATFORMS, INCLUDING APPS, FACILITATE SECTT?

Most of the child protection and prevention mechanisms exist in local communities, however, if grooming and recruitment are happening online and through informal peer networks within schools, perpetrators who using these networks would remain anonymous and abuse victims outside the purview of child protection systems.

Within this context, it is important to note the variety of smartphone applications that are designed for adults, but readily accessible to children, apps like Tinder, Grindr, Jack'd and others are commonly used by adults to meet with other adults for dates and sexual meetups. While these apps require users to be over the age of 18, children can easily access these platforms by registering with a different birthdate and be given access to the full platform. These apps are well known and used throughout Cambodia and are seldom known or monitored by child protection advocates. This presents a pressing child protection issues, particularly for children coming to Siem Reap independently.

Previous research of OCSE in Cambodia conducted in 2018 by TdH-NL found Cambodian children to be highly vulnerable to various forms of OCSE including grooming for offline exploitation and the solicitation of child sexual abuse materials. In the study, nearly 25% of children in learning workshops describe personal experiences on the internet that were consistent with OCSE, including grooming, and solicitation of sexual images of the child (TdH, 2018). In particular, respondents in the 2018 study cite apps such as Facebook and Facebook Messenger are highly involved in OCSE related experiences, this is echoed in FGDs with children in Siem Reap in the present study. Findings from this study demonstrate that the Internet continues to play a crucial role in allowing perpetrators access to children in communities.



# SECTT IN POIPET



## BROAD CHANGES

### Increases in foreigners from Asian Nations

Nearly all respondents from the government, frontline service providers, the tourism sector, and vulnerable communities cite a significant increase in foreigners from other Asia nations. Most notably, they cite an increase in visitors from China, followed by Thailand and Indonesia, along with other ASEAN nations and a simultaneous decrease in Western visitors, apart from those passing through Poipet on their way to Thailand from Cambodia. Members of the tourism sector also note a particular increase in violence in communities, largely due to the increase in Chinese visitors who described as frequently becoming drunk and engaging in physical fights with one another in the streets.

### Increases in Chinese business investments

Nearly all respondents note a recent, rapid, and significant increase in Chinese business investments and entertainment establishments in the area, particularly centered around the Free-trade and Special Economic Zone (SEZ) on the border with Thailand. While this has increased the number of jobs available for some families, it is cited that many Cambodians are no longer able to afford to live in Poipet due to rapidly increasing living costs. Respondents cite concern that these developments have caused Poipet to become more crowded and in disarray, citing the actions Chinese visitors who frequently become drunk and violent. Members of the tourism sector and frontline service providers further highlight an increase in Chinese-owned nightclubs and massage parlors, at which they observe many young girls to be working, some of which they believe to be under the age of 18. They express concern that a number of these establishments may not be legally registered with the local government. Crimes committed by Chinese visitors who come to Poipet for business are broadly noted as a concern according to many respondents from government, the tourism sector and vulnerable communities in Poipet.

TukTuk drivers cite new difficulties in this environment for Cambodian-owned businesses. They note that as Chinese tourism has increased, Cambodian-owned businesses have suffered due to the tendency of Chinese visitors to only use Chinese-owned services and buy products from Chinese-owned businesses.

### Significant increase in living costs and migration

Government officials, frontline service providers, and members of the tourism industry cite a significant increase in

living costs in Poipet over the past few years, especially regarding to housing. Nearly all respondents, cite that this has negatively impacted low-income Cambodians who have disproportionately suffered as a result of these changes. Grassroots partners of the Childsafe network cite that the increased living costs have forced many children to quit their school in order to help their families earn money and support their basic needs. Further, foreign investment has caused a rapid increase in the cost of goods and services— especially with regard to accommodation costs. Government officials further cite that drug and alcohol use in the area has increased, potentially as a means of coping with the increased social and economic adversity and describe difficulties in providing adequate assistance to these groups. It is believed that this context has contributed to a potential increase in the vulnerability of children to both sexual and labor exploitation.

Frontline service providers also strongly emphasize the impacts that increasing Chinese investment has had on local communities. Poipet has traditionally been a site where many trafficking victims and deportees from Thailand have been repatriated, as Poipet is the primary land-border gateway into Thailand. When victims of trafficking or deported irregular migrants arrive in Poipet and do not have the money to return to their home provinces, many settle in the Poipet area and establish homes and have families. All grassroots partners note these groups are uniquely vulnerable to violence, street-involvement, and substance abuse. These groups rely on low-cost daily or monthly rentals to survive on the border, provided by local Cambodian landlords. However, in recent months Chinese developers have offered landlords high prices to sell their land, forcing many economically marginalized families to move— often with little or no notice. Representatives from one social service organization cite some of their clients have returned back to their communities from work to find that their houses are already gone. This has caused an increase in both street-living populations, which rely on street work and begging for money. They describe increases in violence and drug and alcohol use as a result of these changes. For families who have the means, some migrate to rural areas and commute back and forth to Poipet for work. Frontline service providers cite concern that there is a lack of ambition in the government to control abusive practices of foreign investors within local communities in order to prevent further economic marginalization of these vulnerable groups.



# CSEA BY FOREIGNERS

Government officials and law enforcement note a significant decrease in reporting of SECTT over the past few years, noting that the only CSEA-related cases they presently receive involve local Cambodian offenders. While government officials indicate an awareness of the changing demographics of foreigners, including the increase in Chinese businesses and entertainment venues and their potential risks to children, they do not indicate that they are currently a source of sexual exploitation of children in Poipet. Despite this, they describe numerous instances within and around Chinese-owned businesses that appear to be consistent with SECTT but stop short of identifying it as such.

In contrast to government officials, frontline service providers and members of the tourism sector (TukTuks and Moto-dups) see new business developments as an active threat to the safety of children and their families in Poipet, both in terms of their economic impacts, as well as their potential involvement in SECTT.

## Perspectives on Poipet’s Present Vulnerabilities to SECTT

# GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS



### GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

- Express concern for children working in casinos, KTV, bars, and restaurants
- Estimate that children working as domestic workers or in food delivery are very vulnerable to sexual and labor exploitation
- Note difficulties in monitoring SECTT/CSEA in Chinese-owned establishments

Government officials, both at commune and district levels cite that they have not received any official SECTT-related complaints or cases over the past two years but emphasize that cases committed by local Cambodians have continued, despite the demographic changes in travelers and tourists to the area. District-level government officials express concern that children working in casinos, karaoke, bars and restaurants may be exposed to sexual abuse and exploitation, as they have easy access to and interaction with potential abusers. They describe seeing many potentially underage Khmer girls with foreign partners, but they cite that they are unsure of the dynamics of their relationship if exploitation is taking place. Commune-level government officials similarly note a recent growth in foreign-owned massage services; however, they note that these are intended for adults, not children.

District-level government officials also note concern for local children working within Chinese houses as domestic servants. While they do not indicate knowledge of what happens in these contexts, they note that children working in houses are very vulnerable to sexual and labor exploitation from their Chinese employers.

Government officials also express concerns that some children are working for Chinese businesses delivering food to houses and hotel rooms. They believe children in these situations would be uniquely vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation, however, they cite that they do not have concrete knowledge that this is taking place. They note difficulties in monitoring SECTT/CSEA in these contexts as child protection officials are not party to what goes on in Chinese-owned establishments. Further, children may not be likely to share information or seek support when they need it for fear of losing their jobs.

# DOSAVY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT



### SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

- DoSAVY expresses concerns that local officials in the communities where SECTT takes place may fear that reporting such incidents would reflect poorly on the communities
- They acknowledge new and growing risks of SECTT from Chinese, Vietnamese, and Thai foreigners in the Poipet area, especially with the boom of massage parlors
- Law enforcement officials note that they are only aware of “real cases” which have been officially reported

DoSAVY similarly cites observing a notable decrease in SECTT reporting over the past few years, with the exception of one case in which a Thai man sexually abused a Khmer girl working for him in a local establishment. Outside of SECTT, the majority of CSEA cases involve Khmer perpetrators. Noting the recent dearth in SECTT case reporting, DoSAVY expresses concern over a disconnect between local authorities and government officials in monitoring and reporting potential cases of SECTT within communities. They believe the local officials in the communities where SECTT takes place may attempt to solve the issues themselves and not report them to relevant officials, fearing that reporting such incidents would reflect poorly on the communities of which they are in charge.

They acknowledge new and growing risks of SECTT from Chinese, Vietnamese, and Thai foreigners in the Poipet area. DoSAVY notes that many Chinese foreigners have opened massage establishments, which may be connected to SECTT. They believe these groups pose the greatest risk to children, aside from Khmer perpetrators of CSEA.

Law enforcement indicates that SECTT is no longer an issue in Poipet. They attribute this to their ability to implement laws that collaborate with local, sub-national, and national-level authorities. They further cite that they have faith in existing policies and initiatives and seem to largely disregard the possibility that SECTT could be an issue in Poipet. Despite their lack of acknowledgment of SECTT as an issue, they note that they are only aware of ‘real cases’ which have been officially reported through official channels from communities and are not aware of any potential cases within communities which have not been reported. Police believe that Chinese visitors pose the highest risk to children in Poipet, followed by visitors from Indonesia and Thailand. However, they also cite believing that Asian people may not like having sex with children as Western people do. Thus, they believe it is possible that Asian may not pose as great a threat. They further note that Asian visitors will commonly use brokers to find sex services and indicate that these services seem to be predominantly providing sex with adults.

## FRONTLINE SERVICE PROVIDERS



### FRONTLINE SERVICE PROVIDERS

- Grassroot organizations express concern with increasing numbers of children and young people involved in adult-oriented and foreign owned businesses
- Note that many children, often with the help of their families, forge birth certificates or ID cards and get jobs in potentially exploitative sectors of work
- Report that monitoring the vulnerability of children is more difficult as existing Child Protection networks have become less efficient

Grassroots organizations provide a much more nuanced understanding of potential vulnerability to SECTT and offer learnings from a community perspective, which seem to be overlooked in dialogues with government officials. Grassroots organizations express concern with increasing numbers of children and young people involved in adult-oriented and foreign-owned businesses, including massage parlors, bars, KTV establishments, and restaurants.

Similar to government officials, grassroots organizations indicate concern over the rapid increase of Chinese-owned massage parlors and express fears that some children may be working within these establishments as well. They note that many children, often with the help of their families, are able to change or forge birth certificates or ID cards in order to appear as 18 years old and get jobs in potentially exploitative sectors of work. While Chinese are identified as the primary concern, they also note that Thai nationals seem to have some involvement in these businesses.

Two representatives from grassroots organizations, both members of the ChildSafe network, note that nearly all SECTT and CSEA is Asian perpetrated, as most Western visitors only pass through Poipet on their way to Thailand. They express particular concern over street-working children and children experiencing substance abuse issues, as they are often the most vulnerable to sexual exploitation within these contexts.

They note that, previously, ChildSafe members were able to track SECTT offenders through a network of trained hotel staff and TukTuk drivers, however, this has now changed. Now monitoring the vulnerability of children is difficult as Chinese's hotels and casinos offer their own internal transit services that can transport clients from point to point, a concern which is similarly expressed among law enforcement officers in Poipet. Lacking access to these clients and establishments prevents the ChildSafe network from monitoring child protection issues within key areas where SECTT may take place.

## MEMBERS OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY



### TOURISM SECTOR

- Raise concerns that Chinese owned business owners and their customers tend to use exclusively Chinese owned service providers, preventing them from monitoring potential cases of SECTT
- Note that Asian travellers who want to find sex services resort to brokages system linked with casinos and other entertainment establishments
- Report cases of underage Cambodian girls involved in potentially exploitative relationship with Asian travellers

Similar to grassroots organizations, TukTuk and Motodup drivers express a more nuanced and practical understanding of SECTT, in comparison to government officials. They note that Chinese people have established their own nightclubs, KTV, bars and restaurants, many of which provide sexual services, and note that Cambodians are often not welcome as patrons in such establishments. TukTuk drivers cite many Chinese and Thai visitors ask to be brought to find sex services and many end up in the aforementioned Chinese establishments. TukTuk drivers complain that they now have little business since Chinese visitors have developed their own transit services that work exclusively with certain hotels and casinos where they stay. Many Chinese visitors exclusively use Chinese-owned businesses, which provide their own transportation services. This prevents TukTuks within the ChildSafe network from monitoring child protection issues, and harms local Cambodian businesses, according to TukTuk drivers.

Drivers believe that many Chinese visitors use brokers to access sex service, however, they are not certain to what extent these services provide access to children. In casinos, they note that there are organized referral networks to connect clients to sex services. According to drivers, the Chinese find sex services on their own and do not request the help of Khmer TukTuks. Many buy their own TukTuk and hire a driver to manage their travel for both work and entertainment. Drivers cite that most of these patrons only come out at night to drink and look for entertainment services. They cite that these patrons will usually contact the owners of massage parlor, karaoke bars, and nightclubs directly and rarely use public TukTuks and Motodups to find sex services, making it difficult to know their activities.

They also express concern over the involvement of Chinese foreigners with underage Cambodian girls and note commonly seeing Chinese people escorted by young Cambodian females and believe that many of them are younger than 18 years old. According to TukTuk drivers, these young females often describe themselves as the 'wives' of the older males, however, TukTuk drivers indicate that they do not believe that they are actually married couple.



# RISKY PLACES

DoSAVY similarly expresses concern with young people (some of whom are believed to be children) working within a variety of private entertainment establishments, including restaurants, bars, massage parlors, and casinos. They also express concern that many of these places provide sexual services on the side, however, they are unsure if the children working within their establishments are also involved in providing sexual services.

Frontline service providers from the ChildSafe network broadly express concern over children’s involvement in Chinese-owned private businesses and believe that various forms of SECTT may be taking place. They cite that they are unable to confirm details on what may be happening within these contexts due to a variety of reasons including young people who are unwilling to disclose their ages and lack of access to private Chinese establishments that do not welcome non-Chinese patrons. They further indicate knowledge of Chinese people who employ young Cambodians to work online. While they note that many of these people may be children, they have been unable to confirm their actual age. They note many young people have experienced sexual harassment online, including adults engaging in sexual conversations with children, sending pornographic images, and attempting to solicit images from the children.



# RESTAURANTS AND BARS

Children seem to be increasingly working in restaurants. While this may raise child labor concerns, DoSAVY also expresses concerns for SECTT as some restaurants are known to provide sexual services, based on knowledge from community informants. DoSAVY notes one case in which a Thai man raped a Cambodian child who was working with him in a local restaurant. A particular concern is raised with children delivering food alone to hotel rooms. Youth from vulnerable communities recall one instance of a young girl raped by an Indonesian man while delivering food to the man’s hotel room. One frontline service provider cites a similar case in which they responded to a street-involved child who was sexually assaulted by a Chinese tourist after being offered money to come to his room. It is of note that none of these cited cases are cited in discussions with law enforcement, indicating that many cases of SECTT may not be reported through the appropriate channels.

Law enforcement indicates seeing children working within bars and express concern citing that such things affect the city’s morality and culture. The police cite that they followed up with the workers, who verbally indicated that they were adults, but did not have any identification to support their claims. Law enforcement indicates business owners allow children to work motivated by sympathy because the children are in need of money. According to law enforcement, customers and bar staff (potentially including children) can negotiate with one another to meet for sex. Officers cite that since the sexual encounters are negotiated and the workers volunteer to go with the customers, they cite that it is difficult to take legal action. As for potential children working within these environments, police report that they follow up on these cases when they receive complaints, but the young workers and their families are often unwilling to collaborate because they are worried that they will lose their jobs.



# MASSAGE PARLORS

Frontline service providers express particular concern over the increasing number of Chinese-owned massage parlors that have opened recently, seemingly in connection with nearby hotels and casinos. While DoSAVY notes that they are not sure of the ages of people working within these establishments, they believe that some of the masseurs could be younger than 18 years old. Youth from vulnerable communities emphasize one particular area in which massage parlors have especially proliferated. They describe many young girls working within the area and note that girls working in these environments often feel trapped due to pressure from their families to earn money. The youth cite that they believe at least half of the young people working within this area are under the age of 18. They note that masseurs are commonly expected to provide sexual services to their customers.





## ENTERTAINMENT VENUES

DoSAVY expresses concern with regard to children working within the newly built entertainment district within the Free Trade and Special Economic Zone, noting the difficulties involved with monitoring and responding to child protection concerns. Chinese-owned massage parlors, KTV, bars, and casinos have uniquely proliferated within this area. DoSAVY notes the existence of “powerful men” behind these establishments, which seem to have a great deal of influence and protection in Poipet. They cite that Cambodian authorities can only enter Casinos when they receive complaints from a victim, or if someone files a report indicating that a crime may be occurring within the establishment.

Frontline service providers from the ChildSafe network note that children within their programs describe previously working in casinos. They note that staff working within casinos often face sexual exploitation and indicate field social workers who have reported the existence of brokers in the Casinos who coordinate sexual encounters with children. They cite that some children working within casinos adjust their birth certificates to appear over the age of 18. Frontline service providers from the ChildSafe network believe that sexual services are provided by young girls in these establishments, however, they are unsure how many of these individuals are under 18 as they are not willing to disclose such information to social workers. Youth from vulnerable communities seem to confirm these observations, reporting that Casinos in Poipet commonly employ children from the age of 15 and express concern that casino patrons will use violence against them.



## INFORMAL ESTABLISHMENTS

DoSAVY also notes a number of seemingly informal establishments near the construction sites for new casinos. They note that many young girls work in these establishments serving food and drinks. An initial investigation revealed girls who all claimed to be at least 18 years old, but none had any documentation to back up these claims. DoSAVY notes the difficulty in following up on this area as the people working in the area are often unwilling to cooperate with social workers.



## INTERNET CAFES AND ONLINE ENVIRONMENTS

Frontline service providers also indicate awareness of a variety of child pornography involving Cambodian children that is available on dark web forums. They note that some perpetrators may use these methods to access children or broker networks operating in Poipet. There is a growing awareness of the prevalence of online child sexual exploitation in Cambodia, and there is presently little training and few mechanisms in either government or non-government sectors to report, prevent, and adequately respond to potential cases. Much more information is needed in this area of child protection in Cambodia.





# MODUS OPERANDI

DoSAVY and government officials indicate that all official, recorded SECTT cases in Poipet are more than two years old and typically involve Western perpetrators (with a few exceptions) utilizing traditional grooming tactics with children in communities— a form of perpetration that nearly all respondents indicate is no longer common in communities. While these officials express particular concern that SECTT may be taking place in private businesses, including massage parlors and KTV bars, they have no official, recorded cases of this happening within these environments. Frontline service providers and members of the tourism industry seem to indicate a greater awareness of the vulnerabilities presented through private businesses, brokerage networks, and online platforms and provide a number of specific observations and experiences, which reveal consistent patterns of how perpetrators may be gaining access to children in Cambodia, while avoiding detection by local authorities.

TukTuk drivers and Motodups from the ChildSafe network have only been trained to identify traditional forms of SECTT involving individuals (typically Western males) who use traditional grooming tactics in communities to gain the trust of children and their families in order to abuse children. Drivers express increasing concern that many Chinese visitors are now able to find sex services and other illicit activities without the help of Khmer TukTuks and Motodups, indicating the possibility that many of the existing child protection infrastructure is being circumvented.

## BROKERAGE SYSTEMS

Based upon descriptions by frontline service providers and members of the tourism industry, brokers (and their recruiters) seem to work within a variety of different contexts. Some brokers are described as being community-based, building a small network of economically vulnerable children through traditional grooming tactics and facilitating encounters with perpetrators. Others are described as working in collaboration with private businesses, especially massage parlors and KTV bars, where underage staff members are believed to work. Perpetrators will often connect with brokers directly, by phone, describe what they are looking for and the broker will identify children and make arrangements for them to meet the client. TukTuk drivers similarly confirm that many brokers within communities will use unregistered sim cards to facilitate transactions and to communicate directly with clients so as to protect their identities from being exposed to government officials.

Service providers also describe brokers renting houses in communities nearby on the other side of border in Thailand, where clients can access the recruited young people (some who are believed to be children). These houses are usually unmarked and secret. Interested clients are connected with brokers (usually online or through a phone number) and are vetted before being given access to the young person. Service providers cite that many of the young persons involved here are those crossing the border into Thailand from Poipet on a daily basis in search of work.

**IN COMMUNITIES:** Respondents from government and community indicate that broker networks are being utilized to access children in communities. Brokers work with recruiters in the communities who identify and groom children. One service provider describes an anecdotal case in which a broker rented a room in a low-income community where many migrant workers live. This broker was locally known to provide various necessity items for families, in what seemed to be a kind of grooming relationship. In another case, a service provider describes providing assistance to a street-involved child who had been sexually assaulted by a Chinese tourist after being offered money to come to his room. Frontline service providers note rumors from the community, which describe Chinese business people using Khmer names to rent houses and then using those locations for selling drugs and other illicit activities. Service providers believe bribes to local law enforcement officers may be helping to protect the work of brokers without being detected.

### IN SCHOOLS:

DoSAVY also describes a situation similar to what is indicated in Siem Reap involving foreigners and wealthy Cambodians recruiting High School students through a broker-recruiter network operating within or around the schools that students attend. One DoSAVY official notes hearing that Chinese people access these networks through Khmer tour guides or business partners from Banteay Meanchey Province (a larger city about 40km from Poipet). They note the difficulty in identifying the brokers as they remain hidden and often operate through recruiters within the schools. This system allows them to keep their identities secret. They cite that only customers are able to know the identity of the broker and their services are only advertised on word-of-mouth and need-to-know basis, allowing the services to remain hidden from child protection agents and the purview of the public.

### COLLABORATION WITH PRIVATE BUSINESSES:

DoSAVY indicates knowledge of numerous entertainment venues in Poipet (Casinos, Massage Parlors, and KTV venues) that offer sexual services to customers and believe a similar broker system operates to facilitate connecting clients with young people. While they express concern for children within this context, they are unsure if children are directly involved in sexual exploitation within these establishments. TukTuk drivers and frontline service providers describe a similar system within private businesses and believe many of the young people involved are underage.

TukTuk drivers note that some local shops suspected of providing sexual services to clients, such as massage parlors and KTV establishments, are known to provide bribes to local authorities in order to continue operation without being detected by other government officials. Frontline service providers from the Childsafe network comment that many Chinese businesses in Poipet operate secretly and do not want the public to know about their business dealings. These businesses primarily, if not exclusively, cater to Chinese nationals and do not welcome Cambodians. District-level government officials describe difficulty in identifying children as they note some appear as though they could be 18 years old or older. They cite difficulty in understanding how broker-recruiter systems work without using the service as victims are unwilling to report.

## ONLINE PLATFORMS

District-level government officials express concern that perpetrators may be connecting with children through smartphone apps but cite that they do not have clear or concrete data on the issue. They further cite a desire to see greater initiatives taken to understand and respond to this issue.

Frontline service providers also indicate awareness of a variety of child pornography involving Cambodian children that is available on dark web forums. They note that some perpetrators may use these methods to access children or broker networks operating in Poipet.

## ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS WITH ADULTS

While TukTuk drivers and Motodups indicate they have seen no cases of SECTT in the past two years, they indicate an increasing awareness of young people in close or romantic relationships with Chinese men, as well as young people working within the entertainment sector (Massage Parlors, Restaurants, KTV, and bars). They estimate that about half of these young people may be under the age of 18.

## FRIEND NETWORKS

Frontline service providers indicate peer-recruitment children for SECTT. While it is unclear if child recruiters are working under a broker, it is possible that this could be similar to brokerage networks noted within high schools in Siem Reap. More research is needed to understand more about the dynamics of this issue in Poipet.

# VULNERABILITY FACTORS

Poipet presents a confluence of factors that seem to make children uniquely vulnerable to a variety of forms of exploitation and violence. These factors include poverty, substance abuse, and family violence, which pushes children into unstable living situations and makes them more likely to be lured into SECTT by brokers. Respondents commonly note that families are often placed in a position in which they are pushed to do whatever it takes to survive, and they see sexual exploitation as a lucrative means to that end.

Official government data show SECTT to be more of a historical issue, which was perpetrated by individual Western males in communities. However, government officials, frontline service providers, and members of the tourism sector indicate a notable awareness of a broader array of vulnerability to SECTT including online and broker mediated SECTT, which are not expressed in government data. At present, case reporting on SECTT seems to be lacking as it relies heavily on victims or family members of victims to come forward to report abuse. However, the current evolution of SECTT seems to be much more hidden, and potentially controlled by powerful individuals outside of local communities, which would make detection difficult, and reporting significantly riskier for victims.

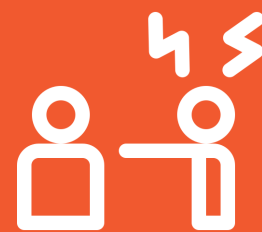
## POVERTY

Nearly all respondents in government and among grassroots partners see poverty as a key contributing factor that leads to child vulnerability to SECTT in Poipet. This reality is further complicated by rampant substance abuse, which is discussed below. Service providers from the ChildSafe Network note particular vulnerabilities among street-involved children who collect garbage along the streets. Many of these boys and girls travel to Thailand each day in the morning and return in the afternoon. While many face violence and various forms of exploitation throughout this work, they are also very susceptible to accepting offers from brokers to become involved with providing sexual services to the broker's clients. TukTuk drivers note that poverty drives children from vulnerable communities to become lured by brokers in the SECTT because it is lucrative. They also note that many children will recruit other children in similar situations.

## SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Substance abuse is broadly seen as a significant contributing factor to SECTT and a reality which greatly contributes to and complicates the reality of poverty within the area. The use of glue or other inhalants and methamphetamines is rampant among parents and children in Poipet. As parents are often impaired from working, children will often pick up the responsibility for earning income.

Substance use among children, in combination with the push to generate income often inhibits their ability to attend and graduate school, which has lasting impacts on the ability of children to find gainful employment. Service providers from the ChildSafe Network also cite substance abuse as being a critical factor in fueling poverty and lessening inhibitions for becoming involved in sexually exploitative situations.



## COMPLEX FAMILY ISSUES

Service providers from the ChildSafe Network cite the issue of filial piety as a contributing factor to children's involvement in SECTT. They cite that, due to family poverty, children believe that anything is justified in order to support the financial needs of their families. They note many children believe that suffering for their family in this life, will earn them merits for the next.

Further, because of family violence (often exacerbated by poverty and substance abuse), some children run away from their homes or will stay away for long periods of time during which they will live on the streets or in other risky environment. Service providers from the ChildSafe Network note that these groups are uniquely vulnerable to being lured by brokers and becoming involved in SECTT.

## MIGRATION

Similar to Siem Reap, migration is also cited as a factor that increased vulnerability to SECTT in Poipet. Because of its proximity to Thailand and increasing investment in the Special Economic Zone on the border, Poipet is believed to offer greater economic opportunities, especially among those living in the surrounding areas in Oddar Meanchey Province, which is one of the more economically depressed regions of Cambodia.

One frontline service provider note that migration and poverty are often intertwined. Since Poipet is the primary land entry point to Cambodia from Thailand, many trafficking victims and undocumented economic migrants arrive in Poipet after being deported from Thailand. When they arrive, they often are without money to return to their home provinces, so they may remain in Poipet and try to earn money from the lucrative trade industry across the Thai-Cambodian border. Frontline service providers indicate that many of these families will get married or have children, but often cannot earn enough to support their families. In other cases, families based in the Oddar Meanchey Province area will migrate to Thailand to work for extended periods of time, often leaving their children under-supervised with parents or extended relatives in Cambodia.



## CHINESE INVESTMENT

Frontline service providers see an influx of Chinese investors as a critical factor that makes children more vulnerable to SECTT for a number of reasons. As an indirect impact, they cite Chinese business people will offer Khmer landowners large amounts of money to sell their land. When they do this, the people renting houses on the land will be evicted, sometimes without any warning—furthering poverty/desperation to generate income. Many people lose homes and are placed in a more vulnerable situation. This is especially a problem for the many street-working people who rely on daily rental spaces. In some cases, renters will leave for work and return to realize that they no longer have homes, pushing them back onto the streets, where they are more likely to become involved in exploitative forms of income generation. As a more direct impact, investors have built hotels, casinos, bars, and clubs that provide a market for sexual exploitation, which draw in the economically vulnerable children and young people from the surrounding communities. TukTuks indicate that Chinese visitors and investors contribute to SECTT in Poipet and note that many of their businesses and practices remain hidden. Chinese visitors will hire their own staff to drive them from place to place which makes monitoring their actions and ensuring child protection difficult.

# SAFETY SOLUTIONS

## GREATER COLLABORATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND NGOS

Greater collaboration between government agencies and NGOs is needed to better understand the issue of SECTT and respond to it adequately, according to district-level government officials. Officials recognize that NGOs tend to have a stronger and more progressive understanding of these issues, however, they note that the government is needed to implement programming in order for it to be successful.

Frontline service providers from the ChildSafe network indicate the need to strengthen collaboration between the private sector, civil society, and government to ensure children are protected. This should involve an expansion of the ChildSafe network to include new hotels, casinos and nightclubs. At present, no hotels or casinos in Poipet participate in the ChildSafe network. Further, there is an indication that current child protection efforts are being circumvented by these newly established businesses, especially within Chinese-owned hotels, casinos, and nightclubs— some of which operate together as a single business entity. These establishments provide their own transit services and thus do not use the local Motodups and TukTuks, which are a part of the ChildSafe Network.

The ChildSafe network may need to reinvest in rebuilding a grassroots network among private businesses in the tourism sector, TukTuks, law enforcement officials, and government agencies. As the private sector has rapidly changed in Poipet, there are significantly more hotels and casinos, many with their own transit services, which excludes private TukTuks. Without large scale investment in comprehensive child protection mechanisms within the tourism sector, there will continue to be significant challenges in adequately monitoring child protection issues in the city.

## TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

DoSAVVY and law enforcement officials indicate that key vulnerabilities to SECTT and modus operandi of perpetrators may be evolving and express concern that frontline responders may not have adequate skills to address the new evolution of SECTT. They note the need for greater law enforcement training, including the strengthening of technical procedures as well as training in the use of ICT platforms to protect children online forms of sexual exploitation, including forms of SECTT which utilize online platforms to groom children and arrange sexual encounters.

TukTuk drivers and Motodups from the ChildSafe network have been trained to identify traditional forms of SECTT involving individuals (typically Western males) who use traditional grooming tactics in communities to gain the trust of children and their families in order to abuse children. While TukTuks drivers and Motodups indicate they have seen no cases of SECTT in the past couple of years, they indicate an increasing awareness of young people in close or romantic relationships with Chinese men, as well as young people working within the entertainment sector (massage parlors, restaurants, KTV and bars). They estimate that about half of these young people may be under the age of 18.

TukTuk drivers and Motodups from the ChildSafe network also express increasing concern that many Chinese visitors are now able to find sex services and other illicit activities without the help of Khmer TukTuks and Motodups, indicating the possibility that many of their child protection initiatives are being circumvented.

## A GREATER FOCUS ON ONLINE PLATFORMS

Frontline service providers express the need to protect children from online offenders, noting that both children and offenders widely have access to the internet and there are virtually no advocacies or interventions to mitigate their risks. Beyond the risks posed by perpetrators, they also note the wide and easy availability of pornography which can harm children— particularly as they are developing..

## PLACING A GREATER FOCUS ON INVESTIGATING BROKERAGE SYSTEMS

With regard to SECTT, NGOs should place greater focus on brokers and recruiters which sustain and fuel SECTT in Poipet. Targeting and stopping brokers and recruiters interrupts the system of exploitation which connects children to the buyers of sex. There is a related need to place a greater emphasis on identifying and undermining organized crime networks operating in Poipet and to provide police with adequate resources to accomplish this task. Frontline service providers indicate that some law enforcement officers are reluctant to investigate some casinos or implement the law due to fears of recourse from the wealthy and powerful individuals backing the establishments.

## MORE PROACTIVE CHILD PROTECTION MEASURES

Law enforcement officials note that they would immediately investigate if they knew of active cases of SECTT, but they indicate that they are unable to proactively investigate businesses when child protection concerns are raised in the community. They cite the need for victims to come forward to report SECTT crimes, so that police can investigate. However, given the vulnerabilities of victims, potential threats, and economic pressures placed on children to “do what they need to do” to generate income, it may be very unlikely and also dangerous for such victims to come forward. Within this context, it is crucial that more proactive monitoring and investigation procedures are developed for Cambodian law enforcement responding to crimes against children. There needs to be greater collaboration and ease in allowing law enforcement to monitor and uphold child protection laws and policies. At present, the process for police to investigate or monitor potential threats to children within these establishments is far too complicated. In order for police to enter these establishments, they are required to have an official complaint from victims and a warrant issued by a judge. A challenge here is that most victims do not report, due to fears for their safety. As data seems to indicate that SECTT may have significantly shifted from communities into closed systems, which aim to protect the perpetrator, it is difficult to monitor vulnerable children without better collaboration and access to private businesses.

## IMPROVEMENTS TO IMMIGRATION DATA COLLECTION SYSTEMS

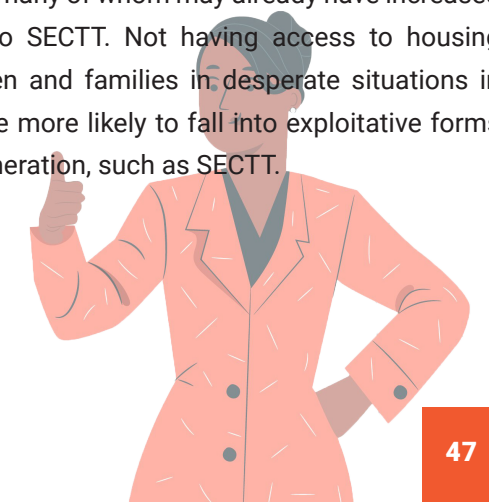
Improvements are needed to immigration data collection systems, which are meant to track potential threats and prevent potential abusers from entering the country. Some respondents express concern that the government does not adequately track the actions of foreigners in Cambodia once they pass through immigration. For example, many may enter on a tourist visa but then open a business under a Cambodian person or entity, while continually renewing their tourist visa. Because no business interests are officially tied to the immigration status of the individual, the government is unable to adequately track and monitor the activities of businesses which may be supporting the exploitation of children and tie those activities to the foreign entity profiting from those activities. This may be further complicated with businesses established in Poipet’s Special Economic Zone, which affords investors looser regulations and commonly avoids close scrutiny by monitoring from government or law enforcement.

## ENFORCEMENT OF EXISTING POLICIES

DoSAVVY further notes the importance for law enforcement to strictly enforce existing policies that forbid children to enter hotels without someone from their families accompanying them, indicating that these mechanisms have become relaxed in the face of recent developments within the tourism sector.

## DEVELOPING PROGRAMS FOR HOUSING SECURITY

There is a need for housing programs to care for the families that are being displaced by foreign developers. At present, foreign investment pressures Cambodian landlords to sell properties and evict economically vulnerable Cambodians, many of whom may already have increased vulnerability to SECTT. Not having access to housing places children and families in desperate situations in which they are more likely to fall into exploitative forms of income generation, such as SECTT.





# DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

## WHAT ARE THE EMERGING RISKS, VULNERABILITIES, AND THREATS POSED TO CHILDREN IN POIPET?

Most of the observed instances of SECTT in Poipet seem to be focused within and around the Special Economic and Free Trade Zone, largely involving Chinese travelers and tourists. Respondents particularly emphasize the entertainment establishments that have rapidly proliferated within this area, including hotels, casinos, massage parlors, KTV and bars. While government officials maintain that SECTT has largely abated, describing it as a former issue involving largely lone Western males in communities, frontline service providers and members of the tourism industry (TukTuks and Motodups) describe SECTT as an active and multifaceted issue involving organized networks of brokers in the community, schools, and private sector on both sides of the border. Most of the current knowledge on the issue comes from ongoing observations within the Special Economic Zone, as well as informal dialogue on the issue within communities.

Despite community awareness of the issue, no cases have been reported to law enforcement in recent years, according to government officials. This disconnect between government officials and community practitioners could indicate a significant gap in child protection monitoring and inadequate training to identify contemporary forms of SECTT in Poipet. Government officials and law enforcement seemed to largely understand SECTT as an issue involving (typically Western) foreigners who travel independently into communities, where they meet and groom children from low-income families. This understanding seems to overlook the more recent social and economic changes in Poipet, as well as the accompanying threats and unique vulnerabilities faced by children in a rapidly changing city.

Further, law enforcement officials express concern that they are not able to proactively monitor child protection concerns within Chinese owned, private businesses without an official victim complaint being filed. Victims of exploitation are typically reluctant to self-report due to concerns for safety and economic stability, shame, and social stigma. Given this context, it may be important to work with police and law enforcement-connected NGOs, such as APLE Cambodia, to review child protection monitoring protocol, and establish proactive methods of keeping children safe, and ensure that private businesses are in compliance with Cambodian law.

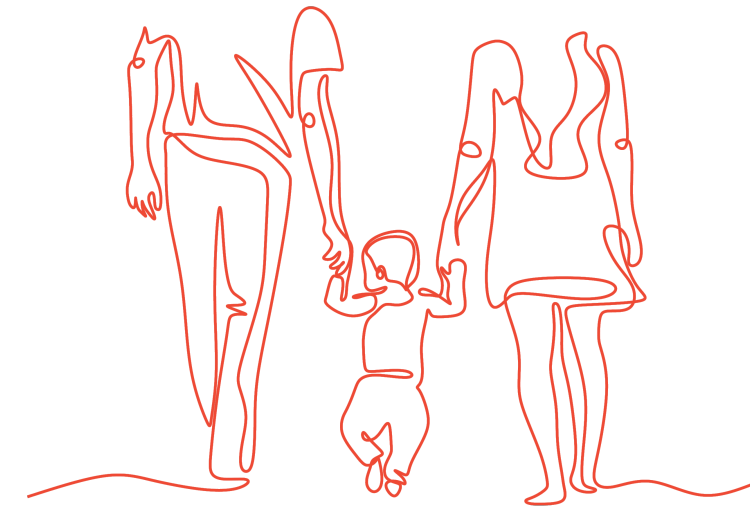
Nearly all discussions with frontline service providers and members of the tourism industry described what seemed to be a broker-recruiter system, which procures children for abuse which takes place in a 'safe' location, such as a hotel or other prearranged location, outside of the purview of child protection monitoring efforts. Data from government officials and law enforcement indicate that most SECTT monitoring efforts are oriented toward identifying foreigners who are physically present communities. Using a brokerage system, no foreigners would need to enter local communities, thus circumventing child protection monitors.

Within the Special Economic Zone, young females (potentially, but unconfirmed, as children) have been increasingly observed accompanying Chinese travelers to and from entertainment establishments. TukTuks and Motodups note that these young females refer to themselves as the 'wives' of the Chinese travelers, however, they cite that they do not believe that they are actually married. More clear data is needed to better understand the potential vulnerabilities of these young people



## ARE CHILDREN BEING RECRUITED FROM RURAL AREAS AND BROUGHT TO URBAN CENTERS FOR SECTT?

Most children seem coming from the Poipet area; however, some have migrated from surrounding low-income areas throughout the Oddar Meanchey area. There is an increasing concern for low-income groups who have lost their housing due to Chinese land-grabbing, which has forced families into desperate situations on the streets. Further, the building of hotels and casinos has increased the value of land, resulting in a sharp increase in rent and other living costs, making living in Poipet untenable for many people, especially low-income families. These factors have caused many families to move to nearby cities in Banteay Meanchey and commute back to Poipet during the day since most families' economic well-being is tied to working along the Thai-Cambodian border.





## ARE THERE ILLICIT MARKETS USING ADULT SEX WORK NETWORKS IN URBAN CENTERS TO FACILITATE SECTT?

There seem to be illicit networks established within and around various hotels, casinos, and restaurants, especially within the Special Economic Zone. Many of these establishments seem to be operated by Chinese investors. The existence of sexual services within massage parlors, bars, and KTV venues are not disputed, however the ages of the young people involved in these establishments are unclear. Frontline service providers and members of the tourism industry (TukTuks and Motdups) believe many working in these establishments are under the age of 18, however, this needs to be more intentionally monitored and verified. Members of the ChildSafe network express concern that they are no longer able to monitor child protection issues because many of these new businesses have established their own local transit services and tourism contacts, circumventing local TukTuks and Motodups who are the ‘eyes and ears’ of the child protection initiative. This is a concerning development that may require a re-envisioning and new investment into existing initiatives to meet the demands of the new and evolving landscape of Poipet.

There is a consistent indication by community respondents that numerous of young people in bars and restaurants in the Poipet area are engaging in sexual contact with restaurant patrons, however, it is unclear if these young people are under the age of 18 or not. Law enforcement officials report that they follow up on these cases complaints are received, however, the young workers and their families are often unwilling to cooperate with police in providing information due to worries that doing such will threaten their employment. Similar issues are described within casinos, massage parlors, and KTV establishments, with the majority of community respondents indicating the presence of young people (some potentially under the age of 18) engaged in sexually exploitive work. Despite this, police cite that they are unable to investigate without having an official complaint filed. Given the unlikelihood of victim reporting in this context, and that these businesses are hidden from the purview of child protection advocates, receiving official complaints to the police is exceedingly unlikely. This seems to underscore the need for more proactive monitoring and enforcement of child protection laws and policies within private businesses, allowing police or other child protection advocates to monitor or enforce existing child protection policies and legislation.

## TO WHAT EXTENT DO VARIOUS ONLINE PLATFORMS, INCLUDING APPS, FACILITATE SECTT?

District-level government officials and frontline service providers indicate an awareness that perpetrators may be connecting with children through smartphone apps but do not provide clear or concrete data on the issue. Despite the seeming lack of awareness of the extent that online platforms and apps are used for the facilitation of SECTT, this is likely an area of critical concern. Children in Siem Reap Province were well aware of modes of grooming and recruitment online and through informal peer networks within schools, which were commonly facilitated by a myriad of smartphone apps.

Previous research on OCSE in Cambodia conducted in 2018 by TdH-NL found Cambodian children to be highly vulnerable to various forms of OCSE including grooming for offline exploitation and the solicitation of child sexual abuse materials. In the study, nearly 25% of children in learning workshops describe personal experiences on the internet that were consistent with OCSE, including grooming, and solicitation of sexual images of the child (TdH, 2018). In particular, respondents cite apps such as Facebook and Messenger as highly involved in OCSE related experiences.

Further, frontline service providers indicate awareness of a variety of child pornography involving Cambodian children that is available on dark web forums. They note that some perpetrators may use these methods to access children or broker networks operating in Poipet. Related to this, service providers further express concern regarding internet cafes which operate on the edge of the Special Economic Zone. These establishments appear to be businesses, however, they feature no signage and are only open at night, when youth are commonly observed using the computers. During the day, some street-living youth are known to sleep inside the establishment. While the activities associated with these establishments are unclear, social service providers express concern as to the activities of the vulnerable youth connected to these establishments. Broadly, there is significant needs for further training, awareness raising, and capacity building among law enforcement and social service providers on how children are using online platforms and smartphone apps, and the connection that they may have to their various vulnerabilities to SECTT.




# BROAD RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1. SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORE TRUSTING INTRA-GOVERNMENTAL COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT.

Overall, there is indication of reluctance among government officials to acknowledge potential gaps within present SECTT monitoring efforts and a reliance on an assumption that a lack of reporting indicates a lack of incidence. This reluctance seems present from the community-level to the higher levels of government, with respondents emphasizing past successes and the present absence of police reporting on SECTT. Despite this, frontline service providers and members of the community seem acutely aware of continuing vulnerabilities to SECTT within entertainment districts, in schools, and within online environments. Efforts should be made to encourage more trusting, supportive relationships between local and district/national law enforcement and government leadership, ensuring that community leaders feel that they are able to communicate incidence of SECTT and other child protection risks without losing face or fearing that it will damage their community's reputation. In view of this, there may be scope for funders and NGOs to find ways to incentivize the identification of gaps in child protection monitoring and programming, emphasizing that uncovering shortcomings and programming gaps ultimately creates a more robust and comprehensive child-protection framework.

## 2. ADVOCATE FOR A MORE CONTEMPORARY UNDERSTANDING OF SECTT.

Contemporary advocacy and training materials should be developed for law enforcement, DoSAVY social workers, and related government officials to better understand the current scope and nature of SECTT in Cambodia. While further and more detailed research should inform these initiatives, in the short-term training and advocacy should work to expand the understanding of who can perpetrate SECTT, including domestic and international travelers and tourists of all races, genders, and ethnicities. This should include a greater awareness of the threat posed within online environments as well. Presently, law enforcement and high-level government officials maintain an outdated understanding of SECTT which lacks nuance and is based largely on past law enforcement reports. This understanding conflicts with what is perceived by frontline service providers and members of the community.



The assumed success of current child protection mechanisms should be critically examined. There should be broad understanding that, as the tactics of SECTT perpetrators continually evolve, so too should the mechanisms for child protection evolve to match. Government officials and law enforcement seem to take comfort that SECTT reporting has decreased, assuming that a decrease in reports indicates a decrease in incidence. This contradicts the understanding of the majority of key informants within communities, who indicate that SECTT is no longer occurring openly in communities and seldom by Western offenders. The prevailing assumptions held by government officials and law enforcement may place children at further risk by giving the impression that the issue has abated, while failing to identify contemporary forms of SECTT.

SECTT Advocacy should emphasize the risk of domestic SECTT offenders, who may pose an even greater risk than international offenders, due to their ability to operate without easily being detected. While the majority of child protection officials seem to be monitoring lone Western males in communities, children and member of the tourism industry express concern that local travelers and tourists—particularly in Siem Reap—are accessing children for sex, especially within restaurants and beer gardens. Training for law enforcement and child protection officials should include an understanding of SECTT that involves a broad demographic of potential offenders and recognizes that protection of children must be prioritized, regardless of the country from which the perpetrator comes.

Further, there should be significant investment in wide-scale advocacy campaigns to educate and engage members of the community in understanding the risks of CSEA (including SECTT) and monitoring risk, including parents, teachers, and other communities. Better advocacy for SECTT also includes training and awareness raising on the ways in which online platforms and smartphone apps provide tools for perpetrators to access children, both from within Cambodia, as well as from other nations.

## 3. SUPPORT LAW ENFORCEMENT IN UNDERTAKING MORE PROACTIVE MONITORING AND INVESTIGATIONS.

There is a need for more proactive monitoring and investigations of potential SECTT cases. Law enforcement officials note that they are unable to proactively investigate businesses when child protection concerns are raised in the community. The current process for police to investigate or monitor potential threats requires an official complaint from a victim and a warrant issued by a judge. However, since most victims do not proactively report to police, due to fears for their safety, formal monitoring or investigations seem to be rare. This method of opening an official SECTT case seems to place a heavy responsibility on victims to report and collaborate with justice officials.

Data in this analysis demonstrates that SECTT may have significantly shifted from communities into closed systems, which aim to protect the perpetrator, it is difficult to monitor vulnerable children without better collaboration and access to private businesses. In view of this, there is need for the development of more meaningful abilities to know better monitor and protect children within hotels, casinos, and other entertainment establishments where children may be at risk. While part of the responsibility for monitoring and protection within these environments could be undertaken by a renewed network of informants in an initiative like the ChildSafe network, there is also indication of a need for more proactive procedures in opening a formal law enforcement investigation. This could also be done through the increased support of para-law enforcement actors in the non-government sector, through expanded support and involvement of Action Pour les Enfants (APLE) or the development of investigative initiatives similar to the former work of International Justice Mission (IJM) within the Cambodian anti-human trafficking sector.

## 4. DEVELOP (OR SUPPORT) PROGRAMMING TO ADDRESS KEY VULNERABILITY FACTORS.

In both Siem Reap and Poipet, there are a variety of push/pull factors, including economic migration of family members, generation poverty, pressure to join parents in income-generation, substance abuse, unstable housing driven by foreign developments, lack of support systems in schools and communities, and a general lack awareness/monitoring of risks within online environments. These factors greatly increase the children's vulnerability to SECTT/CSEA.

### A. TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROGRAMS:

Many families in Poipet, who rely on daily rental housing, are increasingly being displaced from homes due to foreign investors who buy out land from Khmer landlords. This has forced families onto the streets, often with little-to-no warning. Children and families in these situations are placed in desperate financial situations, which can lead to falling into sexually exploitive forms of income-generation. In this context, there is scope for the development of transitional housing, which could greatly ease some of the vulnerability for the families that are being displaced by foreign developers.

### B. SUBSTANCE ABUSE INITIATIVES:

In Poipet, substance abuse is described as an endemic issue among SECTT-vulnerable populations, particularly among those living and working along the Thai border and within the Free-Trade Zone. While contributing factors to SECTT-vulnerability are complex and overlapping, the use of substances deepens this vulnerability further, by complicating an individual's ability to find and maintain gainful (and non-exploitive) forms of employment, lessening an individual's ability to decline involvement in exploitive activities, and contributing to related social and financial strains which often sustain one's vulnerability to sexual exploitation and violence.



**C.ALTERNATIVE INCOME STRATEGIES:**

As tourism and foreign investment in Siem Reap and Poipet continues to grow, families are under increased pressure to generate income to meet their basic needs. Within this context, many children are pressured to take jobs within industries and venues (such as KTV, bars, massage parlors, and beer gardens) where they may be at increased risk for SECTT. For older children, the development of alternative forms of paid apprenticeships or paid vocational training programs, could help support family income while contributing to the earning potential of children, once they have completed their studies.

**D.SUPPORT FOR WORKING PARENTS:**

In Siem Reap, many parents migrate to the city from provincial areas to work in a variety of fields. Children migrating with their parents are often left unsupervised or are pressured to join parents in income-generating activities (where they may be similarly unsupervised). While fewer parents indicate migrating in Poipet, respondents considerable pressure to work, especially among those living in daily rental housing, which leaves children similarly unsupervised. In view of this, there may be need for the development of support programs to care for children while parents work, as well as initiatives to increase the awareness of children and parents of the potential risks of SECTT within this context.

**E.AWARENESS RAISING IN SCHOOLS:**

There is indication that recruitment for SECTT is taking place within schools in both Siem Reap and Poipet, but especially within Siem Reap. Respondents indicate this may be happening through young peer-recruiters within the schools. Despite this, current advocacy/awareness-raising programs for SECTT do not recognize this, or adequately equip children and teachers to identify and respond to risk within schools. Thus, it is important that new, updated advocacy and training initiatives for SECTT be developed and implemented within schools and communities, which reflect a more nuanced understanding of the issue.

**F.SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH:**

Respondents within both locations demonstrate a much more nuanced understanding of SECTT than what it presently reflected within anti-SECTT programming. There is indication that children within schools may be vulnerable to SECTT-recruitment through peers, as well as on online platforms. Thus there may be a need to extend advocacy efforts beyond parents and community leaders, and target advocacy efforts to teachers and youth leaders within schools, who may have a greater ability to monitor vulnerability and provide support to children who may be vulnerable to SECTT.

**5. BROADEN SCOPE OF TARGET AREAS FOR SECTT MONITORING AND INTERVENTION.**

Anti-SECTT monitoring and intervention strategies should widen their scope to include areas outside of international tourist and entertainment areas. Data from TukTuks and frontline service providers indicates that SECTT may be taking place outside of entertainment districts and Free-Trade Zones. This includes some businesses that may operate as a front for SECTT/CSEA recruitment in communities. In view of this, it's important that the programming keep an open mind and focus on the community as a whole. To accomplish this, it is crucial to develop relationships with a network of informants and child-protection advocates throughout communities, including TukTuk drivers, Motodops, and small-business owners. People in communities continually have an 'ear to the ground' and have access to areas and contexts in which social workers and government officers may not.

**6. IMPROVE COMMUNITY-BASED SECTT MONITORING AND INTERVENTIONS.**

The ChildSafe Network, or another similarly focused initiative, should invest in building stronger relationships within areas where children are commonly at risk. This includes the recruitment of individuals working within critical entertainment districts to monitor risk and support the protection of children. Further, specialized training and advocacy should engage at those who may be uniquely positioned to monitor risk, such as sex workers and individuals working in night-clubs and beer gardens. These groups are often more closely involved in critical at-risk areas for SECTT and have the unique capacity to monitor and report in ways that law enforcement and social service providers cannot.

In Poipet, there is a particular need to build relationships with conscientious Chinese business owners who may have more knowledge of businesses that facilitate SECTT and a better capacity to inform child protection advocates. There is a further need for the recruitment of social workers fluent in Mandarin and Cantonese, that are able to maintain relationships with key community liaisons in the Chinese community and 'keep an ear to the ground', particularly among businesses within the Special Economic Zone.

In both cities, but particularly in Poipet, greater efforts should be made to ensure businesses are registered and in compliance with existing child-protection legislation. Penalties for child-protection violations exist and should be communicated within at-risk establishments, particularly within entertainment districts and the Free-Trade Zone in Poipet. This process could be greatly aided by an expanded ChildSafe network, or similar initiative, which proactively monitors, and reports child protection concerns within at-risk areas. As a part of this, the child protection sector should actively support law enforcement to monitor at-risk businesses and advocate for consistent implementation of existing government child-protection legislation, including the enforcement ID requirements and age restrictions for hotel guests and visitors.





RECOMMENDATIONS  
BASED ON  
CURRENT  
PROGRAMMING

1. REVISE AND UPDATE AWARENESS-RAISING INITIATIVES [TDH]

Current awareness raising initiatives involve students (aged 14 to 17) and focus on child rights, the definition of SECTT, how it happens (i.e. grooming), and include discussion of risks, protection, and reporting to the APLE internet helpline. Given the nuance and changing nature of SECTT, there may be need to rethink the content, structure, and methods used in these initiatives. In addition to presenting information to children, it could be helpful to use these initiatives as an opportunity to gather information from children on broader risks within schools and communities, including potential broker/recruiter involvement. Activities should include the potential for youth recruiters of any gender, which may work within online or offline environments. It may be helpful to explore how different facilitators (for instance, youth facilitators or same-gender facilitators) may affect youth participation and rapport between facilitators and children. Children should also be given the opportunity to privately, or anonymously share information with facilitators (through WhatsApp or a similar method) that they may not be comfortable sharing in a group setting.

IN SCHOOLS:

- Conduct learning activities with students to gather data on online threats (this can inform, or be a part of, future research on the issue).
- Broaden the scope of advocacy to include organized broker-recruiter networks
- Review existing awareness-raising curriculum/programming used in schools to identify potential messaging/targeting gaps based on data from the present study.

IN COMMUNITIES:

- Conduct learning activities with students to gather data on current online threats, modus operandi of perpetrators, and online platforms where perpetration occurs.
- Review existing awareness-raising, curriculum/programming used in communities to identify potential messaging/targeting gaps based on data from the present study.

Further, these programs should be adapted to the specific contexts in which they are intended to be used. Unique, child-centered, and contextualized programming should be offered for schools, communities, and uniquely vulnerable areas, such as within daily-rental housing areas (in Poipet), among street-involved groups, or among children and youth working in and around local and international tourism areas in both cities.

2. PRACTICAL ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITY [TDH + APLE]

**DEVELOPING A NETWORK OF COMMUNITY INFORMANTS:** In both Siem Reap and Poipet, members of the community demonstrated substantially greater, and more current information on the present situation of SECTT and are more able to identify risks faced children, in comparison with law enforcement and government officials. Thus, it could be helpful to invest significant effort in listening to, and learning from, key individuals at the community level, allowing the community to inform programming efforts that best suits its needs.

Outreach and advocacy efforts should focus on establishing trusting relationships with community informants to strengthen monitoring and case referral. Community ‘gatekeepers,’ such as shop owners, TukTuks, security guards, street vendors may have a unique ability to monitor child vulnerability, serving as the ‘eyes’ and ‘ears’ of project staff. As a part of these efforts, outreach activities should provide community informants orientation on the issue of SECTT and training in reporting suspected cases, as well as regular follow up with community informants to gather new information. This would also provide an opportunity for outreach staff to ask questions, provide additional training, and to continually gather suggestions for improving monitoring for SECTT. By doing this, project teams will be able to specifically utilize the practical knowledge and experience of these groups in communities, and adapt it to their programming needs. As a part of advocacy and outreach, the following points should be emphasized (and re-enforced in any existing or ongoing training):

1. The normalization of Asian SECTT offenders.
2. The normalization of local Khmer SECTT offenders
3. The recognition that either gender can be an abuser or facilitator of SECTT.
4. The recognition that SECTT offenders can be young or old, and many facilitators/recruiters may be children.
5. The recognition that online platforms are increasingly common locations for children to meet and be groomed by perpetrators for exploitation in either online or offline environments.
6. The recognition of online platforms as a location and recruitment tool for SECTT.
7. The awareness and recognition of organized SECTT networks, which may operate within schools or communities.

3. PRACTICAL ENGAGEMENT WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT [APLE]

Local level police are the first responders to potential cases of SECTT and have the ability to monitor vulnerability and perpetration in a way that national level police are able to do. However, data in this study indicates significant gaps monitoring, enforcement, and case reporting at the local level. While engagement with police at the national level is important, significant resources should go toward building the capacity of law enforcement officers within communities in addition to the continued efforts to lobby change at the national level.

ENGAGEMENT AT THE LOCAL LEVEL:

APLE, with the support of TdH should provide local level officers with updated training and support for SECTT monitoring and investigation— emphasizing the need to partner with children, business owners, and community members to actively monitor at-risk behaviors. Overall, data indicates a need for more proactive monitoring and investigation of potential SECTT cases. Contrary to what is indicated by local law enforcement, officers are able to conduct a preliminary inquiry WITHOUT an official complaint from a victim. This is supported by Article 111 of the Criminal Code of Procedure<sup>25</sup>. Thus, as a part of ongoing work with law enforcement should clearly emphasize and encourage undertaking preliminary inquiry on potential cases of SECTT, especially in regard to hotels, casinos, and entertainment establishments within the FTZ in Poipet, as well as massage establishments and risky businesses operating with people who may be under the age of 18, both in Siem Reap and Poipet. Law enforcement should understand that they are able, and responsible, to conduct preliminary inquiries when SECTT/CSEA is suspected.

<sup>25</sup> Criminal Code of Procedure, Article 111: “when judicial police officers have knowledge of acts which may be qualified as felony, misdemeanor or petty offense, they may conduct a preliminary inquiry at their discretion or upon the request of a prosecutor”.

These efforts can be integrated in to APLE's existing initiatives to monitor investigative responses towards child sexual abuse and exploitation in online and offline cases. However, current APLE initiatives focus on conducting technical review meetings with senior police leadership. While senior leadership often have greater power to implement change, it is important that training and support focus on the inclusion of lower level officers as they often have more direct and practical access and involvement with at-risk communities. Further, such initiatives should build awareness of article 530 of the Criminal Code <sup>26</sup> to encourage witnesses of crimes against children to take an active role in reporting these crimes to law enforcement.

#### ENGAGEMENT AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL:

In addition to the needed engagement with local law enforcement, APLE, with the support of TdH, should continue and augment existing work with law enforcement at the national level. At present, APLE works with the Police Academy of Cambodia (PAC) to review the training manuals on "Victim-Centered Response Strategy" and is lobbying for the inclusion of a related training course and curriculum for use with PAC. It is vital that this training and the related curriculum that is to be generated, reflect the learnings of this research, and places emphasis on new and evolving modes of SECTT and underlying vulnerability factors.

APLE presently conducts training for senior police trainers, including deputy provincial/municipal police commissioner in charge of anti-human trafficking and chiefs of AHTJP units. However, the current training program does not include frontline police officers and focuses mainly on administrative police officers. This focus should change, by placing a greater focus on the involvement of frontline officers, who have a direct, practical understanding of working at the local level within communities and ensure that the training reflects the learnings of this research.

Further, significant lobbying efforts should go toward the establishment of regular monitoring visits/meetings with officers at the local level. Training should further emphasize the need to build more trusting and supportive relationships between local and district/national law enforcement and government leadership. This ensures that local officers and community leaders feel confident and supported in relaying information on crimes against children that may take place within their communities.

#### KEY MESSAGES FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT:

As a part of education and advocacy for law enforcement, many of the same messages emphasized within communities should also be emphasized with law enforcement officers and offer application and contextualization for law enforcement officers. Some of these key messages should accomplish the following:

1. Normalize the existence of Asian SECTT offenders.
2. Normalize the existence of local Khmer SECTT offenders.
3. Recognize that either gender can be an abuser or facilitator of SECTT.
4. Recognize that SECTT offenders can be young or old, and many facilitators/recruiters may be children.
5. Normalize the reality that online platforms are increasingly common locations for children to meet and be groomed by perpetrators for exploitation in either online or offline environments.
6. Online platforms as a location and recruitment tool for SECTT.
7. Build awareness of the existence of organized SECTT networks, which may operate within schools or communities.
8. Strongly emphasize that SECTT case reporting DOES NOT indicate issue prevalence. Rather, a lack in reporting may simply indicate a gap in monitoring.

<sup>26</sup> Cambodian Criminal Code, Article 530: "Any person who, having knowledge of maltreatment or sexual assaults inflicted upon a minor under fifteen years of age, omits to inform the judicial authority or other competent authorities shall be punishable by imprisonment from one to three years and a fine from two million to six million Riel"

#### 4. PRACTICAL ENGAGEMENT WITH GOVERNMENT (NCCT) AT NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL LEVEL [APLE]

At present, APLE is participating in the implementation of five-year national strategic plan for counter trafficking in person both at national and sub-national level. The focus of these initiatives are on strengthening the cooperation in the development and implementation of laws, policies, and legal standards to prevent human trafficking and sexual exploitation on children. In view of these existing partnerships and initiatives APLE, with the support of TdH, should work with NCCT at the national and provincial level to advocate a more contemporary understanding of SECTT, including the following:

- the growing presence of Asian SECTT offenders
- local Cambodian offenders
- peer-recruitment in schools
- organized perpetration networks
- gaps in enforcement of current child protection legislation (e.g. hotels accepting money to not asking for ID/allowing minors to access guest rooms)
- Strongly reinforce that SECTT case reporting is not indicative of issue prevalence.

In addition to these messages, this platform could be used as a venue to lobby needed changes within law enforcement, addressing gaps in monitoring, enforcement, and proactive inquiry of suspected SECTT cases.

#### 5. ENGAGE IN OCSE-RELATED ACTIVITIES THAT ALSO CONTRIBUTE TO SECTT RISK MITIGATION

##### WORKING WITHIN EXISTING PARTNERSHIPS:

Building on TdH/APLE's existing OCSE partnerships with the Cambodian National Council for Children (CNCC) there is a need to provide knowledge and capacity building, emphasizing the potential overlaps between the issues of SECTT and OCSE, including the usage on online platforms for the grooming, recruitment, and facilitation of SECTT. <sup>27</sup>

##### CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT OF THE APLE ONLINE RESOURCE CENTER:

While the current version of this resource is in English and more geared for practitioners, there is need to develop these resources further for practical use by potential victims and witnesses of SECTT/OCSE. APLE, with the support of TdH, should invest in working with key stakeholder groups review resources and adapt them for use within communities, particularly for use by children and peers who may be aware of SECTT or OCSE risk. This should include resources that understand and emphasize the overlap between SECTT and OCSE. These resources should provide linkage to the APLE internet hotline to encourage reporting and to make referrals easier and more functional.

##### IMPROVEMENTS TO APLE INTERNET HOTLINE:

APLE, with the support of TdH, should improve accessibility of Internet Hotline — focusing on making reporting simpler and user friendly. This could involve the creation of a phone app or browser extension that could be used by children, providing children with a highly accessible tool to report child-protection issues.

<sup>27</sup> This should include an awareness of the abuse potential of platforms like Facebook, Messenger, WhatsApp, Line— as well as dating/hookup apps such as Tinder, Grinder, Jack'd, and Bumble, among others. While these apps are designed for adults, it is easy for children to download and use the app by indicating that they are over the age of 18.



6. FURTHER RESEARCH [TDH + APLE]

Conducting research on emerging forms of OCSE and SECTT. In particular, there is a need for research exploring risk within schools with a particular focus on online platforms and peer-recruitment. Ideally, this could be done through learning workshops with economically diverse groups of students (boys and girls). Research exploring what gaps exist between frontline service providers and law enforcement. Some of the key questions to be asked might include: “What cases are frontline service providers encountering and how/why are these different from the cases being referred to police?”; “What prevents these from being referred to law enforcement/DoSAVY?”; and “What gaps exist in the understanding and awareness of SECTT between frontline service providers and law enforcement/DoSAVY?”

Regardless of the questions asked, it is important that any study goes beyond data gathering solely from secondary or high-level officers. Helpful research on the issue of SECTT must place a careful focus on involving children, people in communities, outreach workers, low level officers, and other key individuals with practical, working understanding of the practical dynamics of the issue on the ground. Knowledge and responses must be built from the ground-up, with a careful understanding of the communities and related social and economic factors underpinning the issue.



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