

# **Review of a Decade of Research On Trafficking in Persons, Cambodia**

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## Table of contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	4
SUMMARY.....	5
1. INTRODUCTION.....	7
1.1 <i>Outline of the report</i> .....	8
2. METHODOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT.....	9
2.1 <i>Language, numbers, citations and references</i> .....	9
2.2 <i>Research design</i> .....	10
2.3 <i>Results</i> .....	14
3. PERSPECTIVES ON TRAFFICKING .....	15
3.1 <i>Trafficking for prostitution</i> .....	15
3.2 <i>Trafficking of children</i> .....	17
3.3 <i>Trafficking as a migration issue</i> .....	17
3.4 <i>Trafficking as a labor issue</i> .....	18
3.5 <i>Trafficking as a criminal problem</i> .....	19
3.6 <i>Trafficking and human rights</i> .....	19
4. ASSESSING WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT TRAFFICKING IN CAMBODIA .....	20
4.1 <i>Purposes of trafficking</i> .....	20
4.2 <i>Trafficking flows</i> .....	27
4.3 <i>Extent of the problem</i> .....	29
4.4 <i>Analyzing the dynamics of trafficking</i> .....	32
5. RESEARCH AND POLICY .....	38
5.1 <i>Interventions</i> .....	39
6. RESEARCH GAPS AND PROSPECTS .....	41
6.1 <i>Evidence-based policy and practice</i> .....	41
6.2 <i>Gaps and recommendations for future research</i> .....	43
REFERENCES .....	46
ANNEX I – MORE ABOUT NUMBERS .....	48
ANNEX II – DOING A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW .....	50
ANNEX III – LIST OF REVIEWED STUDIES .....	54

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## Summary

A growing body of research has addressed the issue of trafficking in persons in, from and to Cambodia during the past decade. Various studies have explored the different aspects of the phenomenon, including the extent of the problem, the exploitative and abusive situations that trafficked persons experience, sending and receiving patterns within Cambodia and across boundaries, and the needs of trafficked persons, including the special needs of trafficked children. These studies have been conducted with one main purpose: to inform the focus and direction of the programs and interventions to counter trafficking. For service providers involved in the counter-trafficking effort, relevant and reliable research information is of major importance to inform and guide their work.

This report looks back at a decade of trafficking-related research in Cambodia. It systematically reviews what the available information can—and cannot—tell us about the patterns, extent and consequences of trafficking in Cambodia (and in relation to its neighboring countries). This also involves a critical assessment of the major approaches, perspectives and debates that have guided the research; the ways in which the studies were conducted; and the extent to which specific research findings can be generalized to Cambodia as a whole, taking into account the limits of the targeted groups, sectors and locations.

This systematic review found that while there are undoubtedly many studies and papers focusing on trafficking and related issues, there is no real accumulation in knowledge about the patterns, practices and complexity of the phenomenon. As highlighted throughout this review, three interrelated points deter real accumulation of knowledge on trafficking in persons in Cambodia:

1. The information on trafficking is patchy. There is no consistency in the way the research on trafficking covers different groups, sectors and places. This has led to overlapping research among some groups in some areas, whereas other groups, places and issues are not covered at all. When information is based on a survey here and some case studies there, it becomes extremely difficult to reach meta-levels of analysis.
2. There is not enough substantiated information on trafficking. The research information on trafficking allows us to describe, be it incompletely, what trafficking looks like (in terms of age and gender of identified trafficked persons and purposes and routes of trafficking), but not *how* trafficking works. There is a clear lack of in-depth information on the workings, causes and broader context of trafficking. Taking a closer look at the data collected and the conclusions presented, we find that a lot of information is based on assumptions, not evidence.
3. The research on trafficking reflects the program interests of the organizations working in the field of counter-trafficking. While this is a logical consequence of the way organizations allocate their scarce resources for research, there is, as a result, hardly any independent research on the subject. The reflection of program interests in the research is not only related to the fact that donor organizations determine to a large extent the focus, approach, time and place of the research on the basis of their programs, but also to the reliance on non-governmental organization (NGO) and international organization (IO) representatives and practitioners for data collection.

The problems identified above point to more than the lack of accumulated knowledge on the extent, patterns, practices and causes of trafficking. They reflect the material conditions of knowledge production on trafficking in Cambodia. This implies that in order to address the “gaps” in research on trafficking in Cambodia, it will be necessary to improve both the organization of knowledge production and the current store of knowledge.

## **1. Introduction**

A growing body of research has addressed the issue of trafficking in persons in, from and to Cambodia during the past decade. Various studies have explored the different aspects of the phenomenon, including the extent of the problem, the exploitative and abusive situations that trafficked persons experience, sending and receiving patterns within Cambodia and across boundaries, and the needs of trafficked persons, including the special needs of trafficked children. These studies have been conducted with one main purpose: to inform the focus and direction of the programs and interventions to counter trafficking. For service providers involved in the counter-trafficking effort, relevant and reliable research information is of major importance to inform and guide their work.

Recently, however, some service providers, policy makers and donor organizations have questioned whether the problems related to trafficking are growing and whether the available information has helped to address the problem, for little success or impact has been documented. The Asia Foundation has observed a perception that the information derived from the various studies is not useful because it is biased, incomplete or unsubstantiated, and that programs are set up with insufficient or limited understanding of the local context, dynamics and complexity of the problems.

This participatory review on trafficking-related research, commissioned by The Asia Foundation and conducted by the Center for Advanced Study, addresses the above issues through a systematic collection and assessment of the various studies conducted in the area of trafficking in Cambodia. The project consisted of two main activities. First, it compiled all studies related to trafficking in Cambodia in order to review the quality of the empirical research and the state of our knowledge about trafficking in Cambodia, to identify gaps in information and to discuss appropriate ways to address those gaps. Second, the project sought to make practical use of the compiled studies by cataloguing the research information and setting up a database that makes existing studies on trafficking easily accessible through keywords developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

This report is the output of the first activity, i.e. a systematic review of all relevant studies on trafficking in Cambodia. The adjective “systematic” refers here to the approach used, namely one that is transparent and replicable, thus seeking to minimize bias. This means that every step in the process, including the limitations and constraints, are clearly formulated and that all the relevant material is reviewed in a consistent way, according to explicit criteria (see Annex II for a detailed description of the different steps in the process).

The review criteria were developed in consultation with the “stakeholders” in the field of counter-trafficking, i.e. the main users and producers of the research reports on trafficking. The review criteria were set up to answer the three overarching questions that we aim to answer in this review, namely:

- What do we know about trafficking in Cambodia?
- What is the basis of our knowledge about trafficking in Cambodia?
- What are the gaps in the information available?

By categorizing, appraising and synthesizing the compiled studies we aim to systematically explore what the available information can—and cannot—tell us about the patterns, extent

and consequences of trafficking in Cambodia (and in relation to its neighboring countries). This also includes critically assessing the major approaches, perspectives and debates that have guided the research on trafficking in Cambodia, the ways in which the studies were conducted, and the extent to which specific research findings can be generalized to Cambodia as a whole, taking into account the limits of the targeted groups, sectors and locations. This will then allow us to define gaps and suggest recommendations for future research.

### **1.1 Outline of the report**

This report, then, looks back at a decade of research on trafficking in Cambodia. The different elements of the review are described in separate chapters which, for those who want to prioritize their reading, can be read independently.

Chapters 2 and 3 provide systematic overviews of the methodological and conceptual approaches used in the reviewed studies. Chapter 2 assesses the methodologies, data collection techniques and informant types used in the research on trafficking, as well as the locations and findings of the research. Chapter 3 discusses the different approaches underlying the research on trafficking in Cambodia.

Chapters 4 and 5 look more in detail at the content of the studies on trafficking. Chapter 4 gives an assessment of what we know and do not know about the purposes, routes, extent and causes of trafficking in Cambodia. Chapter 5 concentrates on how policy and research on trafficking are connected to each other in Cambodia.

To conclude, Chapter 6 describes what the review sees as the lessons learned, in terms of the way research knowledge is produced and the issues in need of better, further or new research.

## **2. Methodological Assessment**

This review looks at a decade of research on trafficking in Cambodia. Considering the amount of studies produced over these past years, one would expect an extensive accumulation of knowledge about and insight into the phenomenon. Such insights, however, can only be based on systematic and transparent data collection. Before looking at what these studies can tell us about the situation of trafficking in, from and to Cambodia, we will first look at the ways in which the research was conducted and, in Chapter 3, at the approaches and debates that guide them.

### **2.1 Language, numbers, citations and references**

The subject of trafficking lends itself to “moralist” headlines. Certain media reports speak of “Children for Sale”<sup>1</sup> or argue that “Cambodia may be becoming the first sex slavery state”.<sup>2</sup> This occurs not only within mainstream media; certain research or advocacy papers also discuss the subject by means of moralist language and emotive stories. Such reporting does not really contribute to a deeper understanding of the patterns, context or extent of the phenomenon because the evidence is flimsy and the conclusions tend to be “grounded in the construction of a particular mythology of trafficking” (Sanghera 2005: 4).

The most obvious example that illustrates the lacking evidence base relates to the estimates of numbers of trafficked persons. Steinfatt (2003:5) rightfully criticized that most estimates on prostitution and trafficking printed in publications by NGOs and international organizations cannot be relied upon. They have no basis in fact and may have originated unintentionally, but, once printed, are uncritically cited in other reports. In the same vein, conclusions about the links between trafficking and poverty, vulnerability, migration or organized crime are often repeated without checking whether the collected data actually support the claims.

In an ideal situation, any new study builds upon former research, continuing where earlier work ended, filling gaps in information, trying to support or refute findings, using new methodologies, or developing new approaches to analyze a specific phenomenon. This requires a serious review and critical assessment of the available relevant information. However, only a few research reports start with such a literature review and build upon former research. The majority of the research reports and publications on trafficking in Cambodia only refer to some existing studies. The fact that research material on trafficking tends to be buried at various organizations and are hard to obtain may aggravate this, but it seems to be primarily caused by more general flaws in the systematic approach to research.

These flaws are also observable in the loose way in which many studies handle formal criteria for research reporting. In some reports, numbers or calculations do not add up correctly. Citations from other reports are often copied without, or with an incorrect, reference. Literature lists are not always complete or consistent. Although these may appear to be minor issues, they harm the credibility of the research work.

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<sup>1</sup> “Children for Sale”, NBC News, 9 January 2005, available at <[www.msnbc.msn.com/ID/4038249](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/ID/4038249)>.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas Kristof, “In Cambodia, Sex Traffickers are King”, New York Times, 16 January 2005, available at <[www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat-inter/IRC/newsdesk\\_articles.asp?SCID=1560](http://www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat-inter/IRC/newsdesk_articles.asp?SCID=1560)>

## 2.2 Research design

The credibility of research cannot be reduced to only formal criteria of research reporting. Much more important is the research design. In order to determine the base of our knowledge of trafficking, we systematically looked at the objectives, methodology, scope, informant types, locations and results of the available studies.

### 2.2.1 Objectives

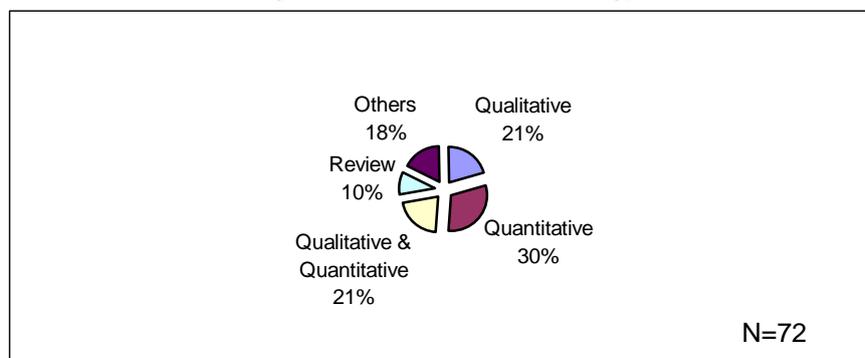
Research may be conducted with several objectives. Most commonly, trafficking research tends to explore or discover. This means that data are gathered with the aim to explore the topic and to provide some familiarity with, or understanding of, the topic. Such exploration may lead to the formulation of hypotheses, be the basis of more in-depth research, or provide input to project/policy interventions. The majority of the research on trafficking seeks to explore the topic with the latter objective in mind. Another common objective of research is to gather quantitative data to measure the extent of the problem or the number of people involved or affected. About one-third of surveys and database reports tried to measure the extent or specific aspects of prostitution, trafficking and related issues.

Other possible research objectives are to assess or evaluate, to demonstrate, or to refute or falsify. While we found no studies that evaluated the impact of specific interventions, several reports did make assessments of the kinds and the strengths and weaknesses of certain interventions, especially in relation to the protection and reintegration of trafficked persons. No studies have been conducted with the explicit objective to refute or falsify hypotheses or findings of other research, although there are a few discussion papers that criticize the assumptions and/or findings of other work. Interestingly, hardly any report had as the (formal) objective to demonstrate the need for certain pre-formulated project or policy interventions. Nevertheless, there is a clear link between research and policy. Research on trafficking in Cambodia tends to be commissioned and also conducted by organizations that have their own counter-trafficking projects for and from which data are collected. This means that the particular approaches and interests of these donor organizations are clearly reflected in and dominate the research on trafficking.

### 2.2.2 Data collection

Depending on the objectives of the research, different methods are used to collect data. In Figure 1, we give an overview of the research methodologies used in the reviewed material. Figure 2 gives a more detailed overview of how the data were collected.

Figure 1 – Research methodology

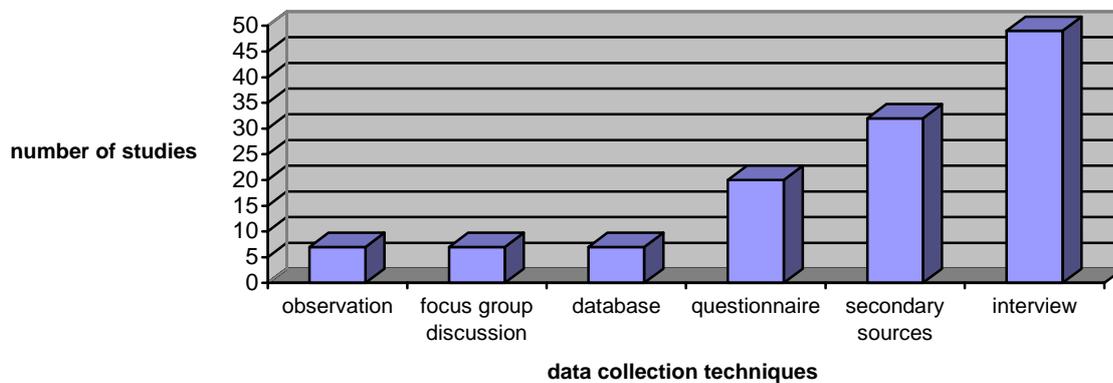


As with any categorization, one always finds cases that may fit more than one category, or that fit none of the categories. In general, social research either tries to collect a lot of in-depth information about a limited number of cases (referred to as “qualitative” research) or to collect a limited amount of information about a large number of cases (often referred to as “quantitative” research) (Ragin 1994: 26). Some studies, however, try to do both. The use of different methodologies may lead to an ideal combination of quantitative and qualitative data, but also requires a thorough knowledge of these distinct research approaches, including specific research skills. The reliability and validity of the collected qualitative and quantitative data is thus to a large extent dependent on the quality and professionalism of the researchers and the research design.

Not all studies included in this review were based on primary data collection. Some solely relied on and/or reviewed the existing information and were thus categorized as “review”. The “other” category includes material that either did not define the methods used, or that was predominantly conceptual discussion papers.

Several studies used more than one data collection technique in order to “permit triangulation for comparison and as assessment of the reliability of the responses” (MoWVA 2004: 3). Thus, the total number of entries in Figure 2 exceeds the number of reviewed studies (N=72). Even though database information is collected by means of questionnaire forms, we have created a separate category for this kind of data collection because of its specific setting within counter-trafficking projects. Figure 2 shows that most of the data were collected in interviews. Secondary sources<sup>3</sup> were also used, although, as pointed out in Section 2.1, not necessarily in a systematic way.

**Figure 2 – Data collection**

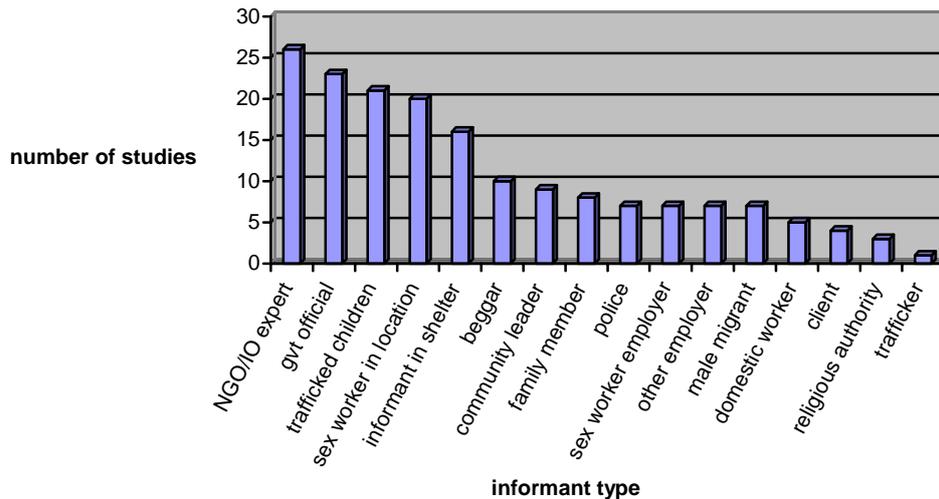


Besides looking at *how* data were collected, we also looked at from *how many* and from *what types of informants* data were collected. However, it proved difficult to get an overview of the overall “scope” of the research on trafficking, since few research reports give information about the number of informants that were used. This is particularly the case for the more descriptive research reports. Depending on research type, the “sample” size of the individual studies ranged from 12 to 2,880 informants (not including the reports that were based on census data).

<sup>3</sup> E.g. other studies, police reports, administrative data, etc.

Systematic information about the different *types* of informants was more readily available. Figure 3 gives an overview of the various informant types used to collect data on trafficking. Most studies use several informant types, and therefore the total number exceeds the total number of reviewed studies. The figure shows that representatives from NGOs and IOs and government officials are used relatively often as informants, whereas traffickers/recruiters were hardly ever interviewed. While we are unable to conclude anything about their numerical weight within the overall research design,<sup>4</sup> it is apparent that relatively many studies rely on “stakeholders” in the field of counter-trafficking as sources of information.

**Figure 3 – Informant types**



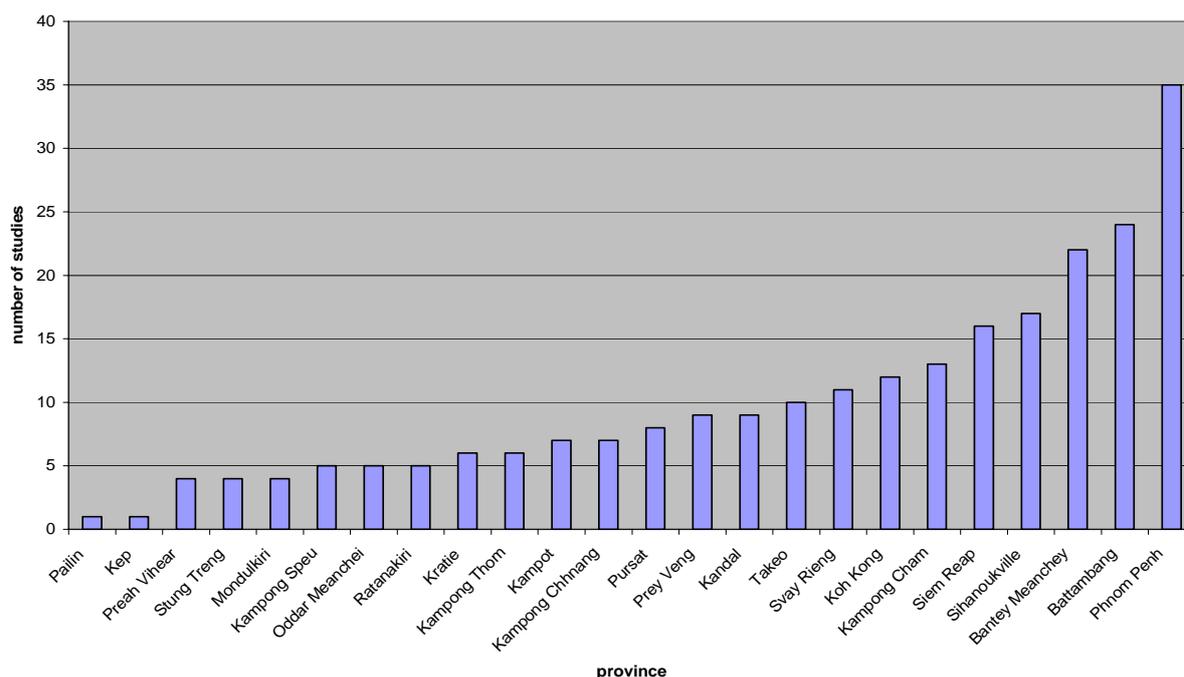
As in the case of number of informants, it was difficult to get a systematic overview of the timeframe of the data collection, as not all reports specified the duration of the research. It is clear, however, that research was commonly short-term, from one week to several months.

Another important issue relating to data collection is the question as to *where* the data were collected. Figure 4 gives an overview of the research locations of the various studies as mentioned in the reports (in some reports, the research location was not mentioned). Since several studies were based on research in more than one location, the total number exceeds the number of reviewed studies. As demonstrated by Figure 4, Phnom Penh was the major location of research, followed by border and tourist areas like Battambang, Banteay Meanchey, Siem Reap and Sihanoukville.

Although almost one-third of the studies explored cross-border migration and trafficking, no research took place in the destination countries, with the exception of some very short-term visits. Studies about trafficking in, from and to Cambodia all tend to be conducted within Cambodia. This means that the information about trafficking from Cambodia comes predominantly from return migrants, whereas information about trafficking to Cambodia comes predominantly from trafficked persons—particularly Vietnamese sex workers—in Cambodia. In both cases we can conclude that only part of the picture is available.

<sup>4</sup> It is possible, for example, that one survey asks 200 sex workers and only a handful of IO/NGO or government representatives. In Figure 3, no distinction is made among the relative weight of the informant types.

Figure 4 – Location of research



When assessing the design and quality of the research, it is also important to look at what kinds of problems the researchers encountered. Trafficking is, as most reports point out, a sensitive issue. Researchers of the phenomenon thus require competence, skills and creativity. While lack of research (often reduced to interview) skills of the researchers was mentioned in some reports, the most often described problems were “external”<sup>5</sup>, such as time constraints, access to informants, confidentiality, lack of cooperation and translation.

We also identified problems regarding the focus of research. A quick look at when, where and among whom research was conducted shows that there are certain high-concentration areas for research. For example, over the past two to three years, at least six different studies have been, and are being, conducted among sex workers in Sihanoukville.<sup>6</sup> This concentration of studies among particular groups in particular places raises questions regarding reliability of the data collected and may explain why accessibility to certain informants is becoming more and more difficult.

Another issue that must be raised concerns the ethics of research. The WHO Ethical and Safety Guidelines for Interviewing Trafficked Women (Zimmerman and Watts 2003) present a list of guiding principles for interviewing trafficked women. One of these is the importance of “getting informed consent” before conducting an interview.<sup>7</sup> Such “informed consent” is, however, absent from studies in which the researcher posed as a client or pimp or used concealed tape recorders to obtain information.

<sup>5</sup> In this context, “external” is used to refer to constraints that are not related to the quality and competence of the researchers.

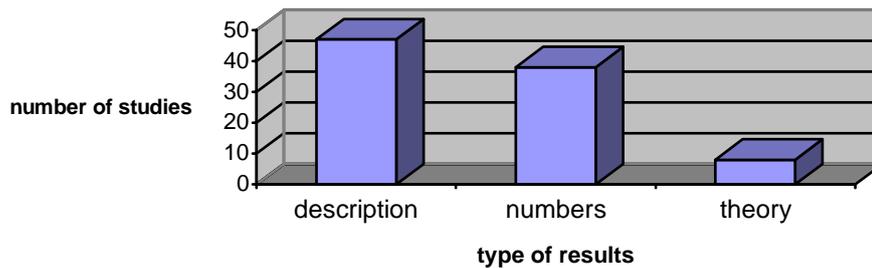
<sup>6</sup> Among these are: Arensen (2004), White (2004), Catalla (2004b), Henke (2005), CAS (upcoming), Brown (upcoming).

<sup>7</sup> This means making “certain that each respondent clearly understands the content and purpose of the interview, the intended use of the information, her right not to answer questions, her right to terminate the interview at any time, and her right to put restrictions on how the information is used” (Zimmerman and Watts 2003: 19).

## 2.3 Results

After describing these varying methodologies, data collection techniques, types of informants, and locations and problems, the question is what kinds of results have come out of these studies on trafficking and related issues? Without looking at content, we have identified three types of results—description, numbers and theory. As Figure 5 shows, the majority of the results are descriptive. It furthermore shows that trafficking studies tend to be disconnected from theory<sup>8</sup>, meaning that there is neither reference to existing theories nor a development of original theoretical frameworks in which to analyze the problem of trafficking.

Figure 5 – Results



The last area worth reflecting upon is data analysis—more specifically, the relationship among the kind of data collected, their analysis, and the conclusions of the studies. Some descriptive studies generalize from individual case stories. These stories are used to describe a whole pattern, and are presented as *the* reality of trafficking, without paying attention to different patterns, experiences and outcomes of trafficking. However important and real, an individual case story represents just one reality and can only be understood when considered in relation to the broader context.

This brings us to the next problem found in data analysis, namely the lack of depth. Describing the cultural context goes further than referring to an age-old text (such as the *Chbab Srey*), which most of the trafficked persons would not even know how to read. Referring to the political context goes further than stating that there is corruption. Different levels of analysis (individual, socio-cultural, structural) tend to be easily mixed up, without considering how these different levels interact with one another and what this means for social reality.

Related to this are logical mistakes. Sometimes this means that the data presented do not match with the conclusions that are drawn—for example, conclusions about the need to involve key authorities who are in the same report depicted as inhibiting. A more common example is individual stories about recruitment practices that do not provide a basis for subsequent conclusions on the involvement of organized criminal networks. Such conclusions seem to be based on pre-existing perceptions of the problem rather than on the findings of the studies.

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<sup>8</sup> Theory may be referred to as a systematic effort to specify a set of ideas or interconnected statements concerning a particular phenomenon or set of phenomena.

### **3. Perspectives on Trafficking**

There is a broad consensus that trafficking is an issue that needs to be tackled. Most research reports start from the premise that trafficking is a “sinister”, “serious”, “major” or “thriving” problem. The underlying question in the studies is therefore not *whether* there is trafficking, but how, why, where and among whom trafficking takes place. But, what do we actually mean by the term trafficking? Are we all talking about the same thing when we use the term? This is not necessarily easy to determine, as not all research reports specify their definition of the phenomenon. Still, the debate and lack of consensus on a definition of trafficking reported early on (Derks 1997; Caoutte 1998) seems to have ended with the finalization of the internationally recognized definition of the UN Trafficking Protocol (2000)<sup>9</sup>:

...the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

This definition is used in most of the research reports that appeared after 2001. Using a common definition, however, does not mean that all stakeholders or researchers perceive trafficking in the same way. Trafficking is not a single phenomenon, but consists of many different forms, in different locations, affecting different kinds of people, making it virtually impossible to cover in a comprehensive way.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, by necessity, analyses of and initiatives to counter trafficking focus on a particular group affected or a particular facet of the phenomenon. This produces a dilemma: on one hand, there is a clear need for more precise and better focused analysis of specific manifestations of the phenomenon. On the other hand, such efforts may be criticized for failing to cover the whole phenomenon.

As discussed in a former publication (Derks 2000), one can identify several approaches as to how trafficking is represented in advocacy, policy and research reporting. Although not always explicitly defined, trafficking may—depending on the area of specialization or interest—be described as a problem relating to prostitution, to children, to the rising levels of migration, to labor supply and demand, to criminality, and/or to human rights. These distinctive approaches, although interrelated and thus not clear-cut categories, have been instrumental in the ways in which various stakeholders have designed initiatives to counter trafficking and in the ways in which they have set priority areas for research. This is also clearly reflected in the research on trafficking in, to and from Cambodia.

#### **3.1 Trafficking for prostitution**

Trafficking in Cambodia, as well as elsewhere, is presented predominantly as a problem intimately linked to the sex business. About two-thirds of the studies included in this review focus, solely or partly, on trafficking for the purpose of prostitution. In addition to these trafficking studies, there are numerous studies focusing on prostitution in relation to health issues, condom use and sex work practices, making Cambodia’s sex industry a relatively well-researched subject.

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<sup>9</sup> Supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

<sup>10</sup> Anne Horsely (Oct. 2005), personal communication.

It is not surprising that prostitution receives the most attention. Trafficking has been associated with prostitution since the beginnings of the trafficking debate at end of the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> Thus, in general, the debate about trafficking is closely related to the debate about sex work. A main topic of disagreement has been whether the definition of trafficking should refer to prostitution *as such*, to the *procurement* of prostitutes (even with her consent), or only to *abusive* procurement practices (coercion) for prostitution (Derks 2000).

This disagreement can also be found within various studies, advocacy materials and media reports on trafficking within the Cambodian context. In some reports all prostitutes are referred to as “sex slaves”, whereas other reports seek to distinguish between those who have “voluntarily” entered sex work and those who were “forced” into the business.<sup>12</sup> While most studies make such a distinction between trafficked and non-trafficked sex workers, the basis for this distinction varies considerably. Trafficked sex workers are variably defined as women who were “sold” or “tricked” (CWDA 1994; Catalla 2004b), “forced” or “deceived” (Arensen 2004), “indentured” (Steinfatt 2003) and/or minors (see Section 4.3).

While notions of deception, debt bondage and sale are commonly used to label various ways in which women are trafficked into prostitution, there exist hardly any detailed studies exploring the actual meanings and limits of these concepts. Statements about “debt-bonded” or “indentured” women, or women who are “sold,” may appear straightforward at first, but in fact leave unanswered many questions regarding the practices, contracts, people and implications involved. Some of the more descriptive studies point out that, in the case of sex work, local perceptions of “buying” and “selling” do not necessarily concur with perceptions of outside observers (e.g. CARAM 1999; Derks 1997). CARAM (1999: 17) writes that the “lines of differentiation between ‘buying’ a sex worker and giving ‘a loan’ are... blurred for both the sex workers and the brothel owners.” Moreover, the status of a woman in sex work may change over time, as in the case of women who, after working off their debt, do not quit the business as soon as they are declared free to go (Derks 1998a; CARAM 1999; Steinfatt 2003). The ambiguity of real life situations calls into question the dichotomies between “voluntary” and “forced”, and between “choice” and “coercion”. These dichotomies are not necessarily consistent with the diversity of views and experiences of the sex workers themselves (Derks 2005: 133).

This makes it all the more important to be explicit in determining how to identify trafficking for prostitution. Is a woman who was deceived into sex work but chooses to stay (still) a “victim of trafficking”? Is a woman who indentures herself “trafficked”? While such distinctions may appear irrelevant, they are crucial if the research is to be rigorous in estimating the magnitude of the problem and helpful in considering program and policy responses.

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<sup>11</sup> The debate about trafficking started at the end of the nineteenth century with campaigns against the so-called “white slave trade”, a term referring mainly to the trafficking of European and American women into prostitution in Europe, the US or the colonies (see Derks 2000).

<sup>12</sup> It may be added here that for those reports referring to the definition within the UN Protocol, there is commonly no distinction made between “choice” and “coercion” in the case of child prostitution, as the issue of consent is considered irrelevant for those below 18 years of age.

### 3.2 Trafficking of children

The image of Cambodia as “a destination for child trafficking and sex tourism” (CRF 2001: 17) has resulted in increasing attention to the specifics of the trafficking of children.

Trafficking of children, addressed in more or less detail in about two-thirds of all reviewed studies, covers a broad spectrum of issues, including sexual exploitation, child labor, migration patterns, child-specific care and legal arrangements. According to the definition of the UN Trafficking Protocol, trafficking of children, unlike that of adults, does not need to involve force, abduction, fraud, deception or abuse of power or vulnerability; any recruitment and movement of a child into exploitation is considered “trafficking in persons”—a child being a person under 18 years of age. This distinction is based on the principle that children cannot be equated with adults as long as they are within the maturation process (Lim 1998).

Yet, despite this distinction, many studies group children together with some adults, namely women, making it difficult to discern the particularities and extent of the problem of child trafficking. As seen from the titles of the reports, studies on trafficking often focus on children and women as “victims of trafficking” (e.g. Derks 1997, 1998a). Both children and women are commonly considered to be particularly vulnerable to trafficking, even though it remains unclear whether this reflects actual trafficking practices or specific views on issues of self-determination, autonomy and agency of women and children as opposed to men. Such an approach may therefore be criticized for disregarding the special situation, needs and developments of minors, and for being diminutive towards women when they are treated like children (Derks 2000; Sanghera 2005).

This does, of course, *not* mean that children can be seen as a homogenous group. The experiences of a 17-year-old “girl” and a 20-year-old “woman” who are deceived into sex work are arguably much more similar to each other than to the experiences of a 10-year-old boy who is brought to Thailand to beg. It is therefore necessary, but not always practiced, to distinguish among the different categories, age groups and destinations of trafficked persons.

### 3.3 Trafficking as a migration issue

Trafficking has also been presented as a migration issue, or even “a fall-out from irregular migration” (Marshall 2001). Attention to the rising levels of migration, in general and of women in particular, to an increasing number of destination regions and countries has also shed light on the kinds of abusive, exploitative and irregular forms of migration that are associated with trafficking (Derks 2000; Piper 2005). So-called “blind migration” (uninformed or ill-informed migration), is especially considered to put migrants at risk of trafficking. The connection between trafficking and migration therefore tends to be linked to the vulnerability of people once they are “isolated from their homes and family” (Arensen 2004: 43).

Half of the reviewed reports make this connection between trafficking and migration. Yet, as Skeldon (2000) argues in his overview of trafficking in Southeast Asia, the boundaries between trafficking and smuggling or other forms of population movement are not always easy to delineate. This is confirmed in the case of Cambodia. Many reports indicate that it is difficult to differentiate “between people who voluntarily cross borders or move from one province to another searching for work and those who are trafficked” (Kavoukis and Horsley 2004: 3). Studies and database reports on return migrants trying to make this distinction often employ criteria that focus on the reported elements of deception, threat, coercion and abuse in the movement (recruitment, transport and harboring) of people (see, for example, Margallo and Lath 2002; IOM 2004).

Countries are divided into sending, receiving and transit countries according to directions of population movement. Cambodia is commonly considered to be all three types and to have, on top of that, a huge internal trafficking problem. Those trafficked within, from, to and through Cambodia are thought to be mostly women and children, whereas migrating men are more commonly considered to be illegal, undocumented or irregular migrants. Since there is no specific research on the trafficking of men (see Section 4.1.3), it is unclear whether this is related to a research bias or real patterns of trafficking.

### 3.4 Trafficking as a labor issue

Another approach to trafficking looks into the purpose or destination factors, i.e. the “purpose of exploitation”. This is, for example, apparent in an ILO-IPEC study conducted by Heng et al (2004), which looked particularly at labor exploitation issues when identifying trafficking among migrants. In this study, interviewed return migrants were considered to have been trafficked when they were forced to work long hours, were underpaid or not paid, were not allowed to leave the working place, were forced to work in dangerous conditions, or had experienced swearing and shouting, hitting, sexual abuse, or police arrest (Heng et al 2004: vi). However, it remains vague whether these migrant laborers were recruited by deceptive or coercive means for the purpose of exploitation (as the UN definition of trafficking sets out), or whether they ended up working under difficult conditions.

There are hardly any studies that explicitly analyze “trafficked labor”. About one-fourth of the reviewed studies pay attention to trafficking in relation to labor exploitation, but most of these examine labor exploitation from the supply side, most notably the general employment situation and specific labor conditions of the workers. There is now, however, an increasing awareness that in order to comprehend trafficking it is necessary to also focus on the demand side. This means that attention is paid to the different people and motivations involved in the demand for trafficked or exploitative labor. Demand is referred to the “desire or preference by people for a particular kind of person or service” and involves three levels (Pearson 2005: 4; Catalla 2004d: 6):

1. *Employer demand*: employers, brothel owners, pimps, controllers in tourism and entertainment, employers of domestic workers, farm or factory owners/employers and managers or sub-contractors of agriculture and manufacturing.
2. *Demand from third parties involved in the process*: recruiters, recruitment agencies, transporters and those who participate knowingly in human trafficking at any stage of the process.
3. *Consumer demand*: clients in the tourism and entertainment sectors and corporate buyers of products or retail store owners buying from factories/farms in agriculture and manufacturing.

Demand-side studies are still relatively rare in Cambodia. There are a few exploring client behavior in the sex industry and sex tourism (Thomas and Plasnik 2002; Gray 2001). ILO-IPEC conducted demand-side studies in three service sectors dominated by women, namely the sex industry, hotel and guesthouses and beer promotion. However, evidence of trafficking was only found in one of them, namely the sex industry (Catalla 2004b; Pearson 2005). This can, according to Catalla (2004d: 49), be explained by the unregulated nature of the business, which allows employers to reap good earnings from the use of trafficked labor. The more formal, licensed and regulated businesses of beer promotion and hotels and guesthouses make employers more cautious in taking the risk of trafficked labor (ibid.). Yet, in order to produce more substantiated conclusions about the relation between trafficking and labor regulation, it

will be necessary to explore issues of supply and demand among other groups and in other labor segments.

### **3.5 Trafficking as a criminal problem**

The fact that the UN Trafficking Protocol is a supplementary protocol to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime indicates that trafficking is now commonly considered to be a criminal problem. The association between trafficking and transnational organized crime points to the global scope as well as the organized nature of the phenomenon. Yet, while there may be evidence indicating the involvement of organized crime in some parts of the world, this cannot be generalized to trafficking globally (Sanghera 2005: 15). For example, in the Mekong region trafficking resembles more a cottage industry rather than organized crime (Marshall 2001).

There are no specific studies on the involvement of criminal networks in trafficking in, from and to Cambodia. From the available information in the reviewed reports one can only conclude that views on this connection are inconsistent. While some studies reflect a strong (but largely unsubstantiated) conviction that trafficking involves “organized trafficking networks” who “conspire to profit from the wholly unlawful covert transport of persons across borders with the intent to enslave them” (Perrin 2001: 57), not all research seems to support this view. Research reports point to the involvement of family members, husbands, parents, neighbors or friends (e.g. GAATW/IOM/CWDA 1997; Ly and Menh: 2005), or the kind of “personal, sometimes familial sets of relationships” that are not necessarily part of well-organized criminal networks (Derks 1997: 14).

What most studies seem to agree upon, however, is the lack of or flaws in law enforcement in the combat against trafficking. The few studies that look into the relation between trafficking and the criminal justice system point to problems relating to the involvement of law enforcement officials, the lack of understanding of the laws concerning trafficking, the lack of means to investigate and prosecute cases of trafficking, and flaws in the laws themselves. While there are several studies that offer overviews of the relevant laws, regional and international forms of cooperation, memoranda of understanding, and conventions, there is hardly any research on the actual performance and involvement of the criminal justice system.

### **3.6 Trafficking and human rights**

Human rights is an important principle in practically all trafficking approaches and therefore not a specific subject of study within the reviewed material. A human rights approach to trafficking assumes the perspective of those who have had their human rights violated, be they children, women, migrants or laborers. Violations of human rights are considered to be both a cause and a consequence of trafficking. Accordingly, trafficking is analyzed along with other forms of “violence against women” or “sexual exploitation of children”. While this approach has merits for taking into account a broader perspective on violations of women’s or children’s rights, it contains the risk of conceptually linking issues like rape, incest and trafficking that are not *necessarily* related in empirical reality.

## 4. Assessing What We Know About Trafficking in Cambodia

The amount of studies conducted on trafficking in Cambodia over the past decade reflects an increasing attention to the issue. Such an increase in attention can be easily confused with an increase in the forms or extent of the problem and, concomitantly, an increased need to counter it. But can we really make such conclusions on the basis of the available studies? In this chapter, we assess what we know about the purposes, routes, extent and causes of trafficking, on the basis of the available material.

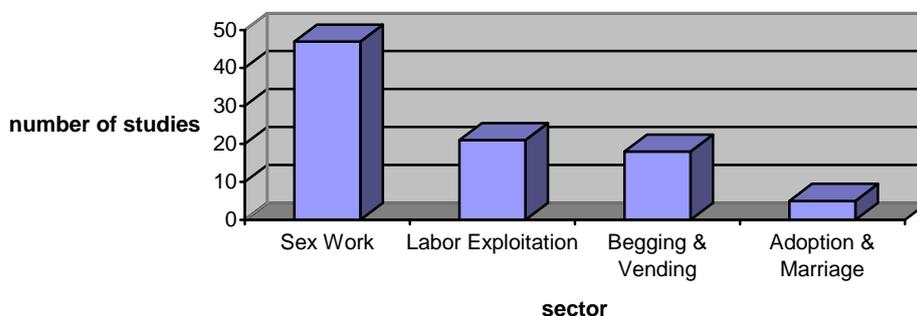
### 4.1 Purposes of trafficking

The available literature provides information on trafficking for the following purposes:

- 1) Sex work
- 2) Begging and vending
- 3) Labor exploitation
- 4) Adoption and marriage

Figure 6 gives an overview of the number of studies providing information about trafficking for each of these four purposes. Since several studies focus on more than one purpose or sector, the total number exceeds the number of reviewed studies. As the figure shows, not all sectors are equally well studied. Considering the common association between trafficking and prostitution, it is not surprising that this sector has received the most attention.

Figure 6 – Sector information



#### 4.1.1 Sex work

Sex work takes place in different forms and establishments. Some forms have developed in response to government and municipal policies aimed at suppressing the “vices and crimes” associated with sex work, such as trafficking, which has influenced the practices, if not necessarily the number, of women in sex work (Derks 2005). So Sokbunthet (2005: 1) states that prostitution practices have changed from operating openly in brothels to more hidden locations, such as beer gardens, nightclubs, massage salons, karaoke parlors, barbershops, hidden brothels and street corners. Similarly, in his study on the impact of closing Svay Pak,<sup>13</sup> Thomas (2005: 34) concludes that the “stricture on commercial sexual activities in Svay Pak has merely resulted in a proliferation of such activities elsewhere.” While he found that this led to improvements in working conditions for some of the “older prostituted women”, the conditions of “trafficked and sexually exploited children” deteriorated, as their

<sup>13</sup> The village Svay Pak, a renowned brothel area, is located 11 km north of Phnom Penh.

exploitation “became completely underground” (ibid.). This concern regarding an increase in the sexual exploitation of children has also been expressed in advocacy papers and research reports that focus on the relations among child prostitution and sex tourism, pedophilia and “virginity seekers” (Niron et al 2001; Thomas and Pasnik 2002; Von Geyer 2005). Obviously, these varied and changing forms of demand (and supply) have an influence on the composition of the sex worker population in Cambodia.

What do we actually know about those working in the sex industry? Demographic data on the sex worker population in Cambodia are often based on surveys conducted in selected areas; only two studies—conducted by the Commission on Human Rights and Reception of Complaints (CHRRC) of the National Assembly (1997) and by Steinfatt et al. (2002; 2003)—involved a nationwide count of sex workers and sex work venues in Cambodia. Comparing numbers is difficult because of the differences in the kind of sex workers counted (brothel-based as opposed to sex workers in both “direct” and “indirect” venues). It is evident, however, that the two nationwide counts found far lower numbers of sex workers than estimates based not on research but on secondary sources and “expert” interviews (see Table 1).<sup>14</sup>

**Table 1 – Estimates of total number of sex workers according to various reports**

Author	Year	Nationwide	Phnom Penh	Selected Provinces	Location
Vigilance	1995	-	2,644	6,110	13 provinces <sup>15</sup>
CCPCR	1995		5,783	8,454 <sup>16</sup>	7 provinces <sup>17</sup>
UNICEF	1995		10,000-15,000 <sup>18</sup>		
CHRRC (Nat.Ass.)	1997	14,492 <sup>19</sup>	8,022		22 provinces <sup>20</sup>
Chommie <sup>21</sup>	1998		1,489 <sup>22</sup>	7,346 <sup>23</sup>	3 provinces <sup>24</sup>
MoPlanning	2000	80,000-100,000 <sup>25</sup>			
Perrin	2001	80,000 <sup>26</sup>			
Steinfatt	2002	20,829 <sup>27</sup>	5,250	9,874	10 cities <sup>28</sup>

<sup>14</sup> See Annex I for a discussion on the reliability of certain estimates of the total number of sex workers.

<sup>15</sup> Phnom Penh, Battambang, Kampong Cham, Banteay Meanchey, Svay Rieng, Kandal, Pursat, Kratie, Kampot, Takeo, Kampong Speu, Kampong Chhnang, Prey Veng.

<sup>16</sup> Number based on statistics provided by police.

<sup>17</sup> Kampong Som, Koh Kong, Battambang, Banteay Meanchey, Siem Riep, Kampong Thom, Phnom Penh.

<sup>18</sup> Referred to as NGO estimates (UNICEF 1995: 4).

<sup>19</sup> Prostitutes working in brothels.

<sup>20</sup> All provinces and municipalities of Cambodia (except for Kep and Pailin).

<sup>21</sup> The study of Chommie (1998) was not included in the list of reviewed studies, as it only provides numbers about sex workers and condom use, not on trafficking.

<sup>22</sup> Number refers to sex workers based in brothels in Phnom Penh after the crack-down on sex establishments in November 1997 (the estimated number of sex workers before the crack-down was 2,030).

<sup>23</sup> Number refers to sex workers in brothels as well as indirect sex establishments.

<sup>24</sup> Kandal, Kampong Cham, Phnom Penh.

<sup>25</sup> Numbers cited in the Cambodia Human Development Report 2000 “Children and Employment”, quoting Sophea (1998) and Human Rights Vigilance of Cambodia (1995).

<sup>26</sup> Perrin (2001: 13) notes that the lowest statistics for “the number of prostitutes and sex slaves in Cambodia” is between 40,000 and 50,000, the highest 100,000, while the figure 80,000 is mentioned to be “moderate”.

<sup>27</sup> Number refers to sex workers in various sex work venues, incl. brothels, massage parlors, street pick-up areas and night clubs.

<sup>28</sup> Phnom Penh, Battambang, Siem Reap, Sihanoukville, Prey Veng, Kampong Cham, Takhmau, Pursat, Poipet, Takeo.

While it has proven difficult to come up with consistent numbers regarding the total sex worker population in Cambodia, it has proven even more difficult to determine the composition of the sex worker population. Table 2 gives an overview of various surveys that presented percentages of sex workers according to ethnicity and age. Since most surveys were conducted in areas and among sex workers that were not randomly selected, the percentages presented in Table 2 cannot necessarily be regarded as representative. Arensen (2004), for example, admits that the survey team largely surveyed brothels that had established relationships with NGOs, which arguably may not be the brothels with resident minors or, for language reasons, Vietnamese sex workers. Furthermore, some studies measured ethnicity on the basis of “physiological characteristics and biological origin” (Steinfatt 2003: 10), while others distinguished between Cambodian and Vietnamese on the basis of the “place of origin” (Catalla 2004b). Measuring age is also more complex than it may first seem, as Steinfatt (2003) discusses in greater detail. These different approaches and selection criteria may explain the great discrepancy among the various figures. Even the two studies with a nationwide focus produced percentages as diverse as 18 and 33 for the percentage of ethnic Vietnamese sex workers, and 15.5 and 3.7 for the percentage of sex workers younger than 18 years.

**Table 2 – Reported percentage of sex workers according to ethnicity and age**

Author	Year	N	Khmer (%)	Vietnamese (%)	< 18 (%)	< 18 (%)	< 18 (%)
						KH	VN
CWDA	1994	399 <sup>29</sup>			35		
Vigilance	1995	310 <sup>30</sup> 91 <sup>31</sup>			30.74		
CCPCR	1995				18.7 <sup>32</sup> 29 <sup>33</sup>		
CHRRRC (Nat.Ass.)	1997		81	18	15.5	22 <sup>34</sup> 65 <sup>35</sup>	78 35
ADHOC	1999	793 <sup>36</sup>	84.1	15.3	14		
Chommie	1999		77.3	22.4			
CHDR/MoP	2000				30 <sup>37</sup>		
Perrin	2001				30-35		78
Thomas/Pasnik (S2)	2002	256			44.9 <sup>38</sup>		
Steinfatt	2003	5,317 <sup>39</sup>	65.5	32.8	3.7 <sup>40</sup>	39	61
Arensen	2004	420 <sup>41</sup>			7 <sup>42</sup>		
Catalla	2004b	210 <sup>43</sup>		16.6	0		

<sup>29</sup> Survey in Tuol Kork.

<sup>30</sup> Total number of respondents.

<sup>31</sup> Number of sex worker respondents.

<sup>32</sup> Survey average of sex workers under 18 years old.

<sup>33</sup> Number of sex workers in Phnom Penh under 18 years old.

<sup>34</sup> 9-15 years old.

<sup>35</sup> 16-17 years old.

<sup>36</sup> Sex workers in Phnom Penh, Sihanoukville, Kep, Kandal, Kampong Cham, Kompong Thom, Siem Reap, Battambang, Pursat, Kampong Cham, Takeo, Svay Rieng, Prey Veng.

<sup>37</sup> Number of child sex workers in Phnom Penh.

<sup>38</sup> This number concerns the percentage of sex workers who lost their virginity “during commercial intercourse” when they were under 18 years old.

<sup>39</sup> Directly observed workers available for selling sex across 24 provinces.

<sup>40</sup> Steinfatt (2003: 15) observed 198 minors among a total of 5,317 observed sex workers.

<sup>41</sup> Direct sex workers in Kampong Som, Sisophon, Poipet and Phnom Penh.

<sup>42</sup> 30 of the 420 interviewed women were under 18 years; 50% of the trafficked women were minors.

<sup>43</sup> Survey among direct sex workers in Sihanoukville.

On the basis of the various quantitative and descriptive studies on those working in Cambodia's sex industry, we may conclude that:

- Although men and boys are involved, sex work is predominantly performed by women.
- The reported ages of sex workers vary between 13 and 44 years old. The majority of sex workers are above age 18; few of them are above age 27. Reported percentages of child prostitutes below 16 years old vary from 1% (ADHOC 1999), 3% (Arensen 2004) and 8% (CHRR 1997) to almost 26% (Thomas/Pasnik S2).
- The majority of sex workers are Khmer; the second major group is Vietnamese, who tend to be concentrated in certain areas. So far, only anecdotal information exists on women from other ethnicities and nationalities (Eastern European, Chinese, Thai) working in Cambodia's sex business. We know, for example, that IOM assisted five Romanian and two Moldovan women who were allegedly trafficked to Cambodia.<sup>44</sup>
- Cambodian sex workers come from all over the country; provinces with high populations and those located closer to urban/tourist areas (Kampong Cham, Battambang, Kandal, Phnom Penh, Prey Veng) tend to place higher on the reported list of provinces of origin.
- Sex workers are very mobile, changing often among brothels; this high turnover rate is related to the temporary nature of the work, as demonstrated by the average length of time women stay in sex work (White et al 2004; Catalla 2004b; Arensen 2004; ADHOC 1999; de Lind van Wijngaarden n.d.). Yet, Arensen (2004: 28) found that “[c]omparatively speaking, trafficked respondents had worked in a greater number of provinces and a greater number of brothels, and had remained in sex work longer than their non-trafficked counterparts.”

The data presented above are helpful in describing the sex business and those working as sex workers. They do not, however, necessarily help us understand the practice of trafficking for prostitution, or how women are trafficked into prostitution. This latter issue has been explored in studies focusing on the recruitment of and the control over sex workers.

As discussed, most of the reviewed studies distinguish between so-called “voluntary” entry and “involuntary” or “forced” entry into sex work. Studies that try to quantify the means of entrance into prostitution indicate that a clear majority of the women enter sex work “voluntarily” or “by themselves”: these percentages vary from 72.9% (Arensen 2004) to 77.5% (ADHOC 1999) to 81% (Catalla 2004b). Trafficked sex workers are accordingly defined as those who were “forced” to enter or “involuntarily” entered sex work. Although the concept of “force” tends to evoke images of girls and young women abducted, drugged or otherwise brought by means of violence into prostitution, research findings point to more subtle means of deception and debt bondage.

Central in these forms of trafficking is the mediation of various kinds of persons. As Table 3 shows, survey results about the involvement of these various mediators differ considerably. Whereas the Vigilance study (1995) found that 55% of sex workers had entered sex work by the mediation of someone they trusted, this was the case in only about 11%<sup>45</sup> of sex workers surveyed by Arensen (2004). Such figures should be considered with caution. It is unclear

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<sup>44</sup> Source: IOM's quarterly bulleting Trafficking in Migrants (No. 23, April 2001).

<sup>45</sup> This number may in fact be higher, since it is unclear whether the “other” category involves neighbors, friends, or other people they may trust.

what it means when women report to have entered prostitution “by themselves”; it may refer to women who independently searched for employment in the sex business as well as women who followed friends or acquaintances with connections or previous experience with particular employers or establishments. Other studies have pointed to the importance of social networks in facilitating entry into sex work, by whatever means (Derks 2005; CARAM 1999). This suggests that trafficking into sex work is not so much the result of “stranger danger” (MoWVA 2004: 16), but that existing and extending social relationships play a central role in the practice.

**Table 3 – Mediation in sex work according to percentage**

<b>Mediation Type</b>	<b>CWDA (1994)</b>	<b>Vigilance (1995)</b>	<b>ADHOC (1999)</b>	<b>Arensen (2004)</b>	<b>Catalla (2004b)</b>
employer	6				
broker	8	45			2.4
friend/neighbor	65	5	8.3		7.1
boyfriend/husband	4	10		4.5	2.9
parents/close relatives	7	40	8.3 <sup>46</sup>	2.6	5.1
other relatives	10			4.0	
others			83.5 <sup>47</sup>	16.0 <sup>48</sup>	1
no mediation				72.9	81

Other studies (particularly Steinfatt 2002, 2003) do not focus on the means of entry, but on the means of control over women in sex work, especially through debt bondage or indentured contracts. Steinfatt argues that “coercion, deception and trickery normally appear in the form of an indentured contract, a debt owed by the worker that must be paid before she can leave the employ of the brothel” (2003: 14), and that, thus, “involuntary servitude” is often identical to “indentured servitude” (2002: 13). This kind of indentured servitude can be found particularly among Vietnamese sex workers.<sup>49</sup>

The practice of debt bondage in prostitution is often related to older practices in which a daughter was sent to work and live with the creditor to pay off the family’s debt. Yet, debt bondage in prostitution does not necessarily involve parents or guardians; it may also be a way in which sex workers engage themselves with brothel owners (Derks 2005). In whatever form, debt, or the advance payment for the work of a woman in a brothel, often referred to as “sale”, seems to be a crucial element in binding sex workers to their employers (see, e.g. CARAM 1999; Catalla 2004b; White et al 2004; Preece 2005; Derks 2005). There is, however, little in-depth information about the different parties, contracts, obligations and implications involved, and how these do—or do not—differ between Vietnamese and Cambodian sex workers, or from other forms of labor exploitation.

#### 4.1.2 Begging and vending

After prostitution, research and database information tend to focus on trafficking for the purpose of begging and—to a lesser extent—vending. Eighteen of the reviewed studies give information about trafficking—or migration in general—for the purpose of begging and vending. From the available information we may discern that trafficking for begging is a cross-border issue—taking place from Cambodia to Thailand and Vietnam—and involves

<sup>46</sup> Includes parents and “second parents”.

<sup>47</sup> Includes “deception” and “abduction”, unclear by whom.

<sup>48</sup> Unclear whether these are agents, neighbors, strangers or friends.

<sup>49</sup> Steinfatt (2003: 17) found that 80.4% of the total number of indentured workers and 61.9% of the total Vietnamese sex workers were trafficked.

especially young or handicapped children, women with babies and elderly people. Children are also recruited to sell flowers, candy or lottery tickets.

The available information on those who were trafficked for begging or vending comes to a large extent from surveys or databases of women and children who returned from Thailand or Vietnam. As Table 4 shows, this concerns predominantly children; interestingly, only the oldest GAATW/IOM/CWDA study included elderly people.

**Table 4 – Percentage of beggars and vendors among return migrants**

Author	Year	N	% children	% begging	% vending	to
GAATW/IOM/CWDA	1997b	107	<11 <sup>50</sup>	61	12	Thailand
Margallo/Lath	2002	127	100	54	32	Thailand
MoSALVY/IOM	2003	641	96	47	32	Thailand
MoSVY/IOM	2004	61	93	34	23	Thailand
IOM	2004	220	73	90	13	Vietnam
MoSVY/IOM	2005	137	>91 <sup>51</sup>	41	<15 <sup>52</sup>	Thailand

As already discussed regarding prostitution, it is not easy to distinguish between beggars who were trafficked and those who went on their own, attracted by the amount of money that can be earned, or who came along with their family and whose involvement in begging may be considered “child labor” that is part of “a joint family effort to earn” (Margallo and Lath 2002: 47; IOM 2004: 26). There is no agreement on the way these different forms are to be distinguished. Some studies make the distinction based on the involvement of a “facilitator”, considered to be a “trafficker”, (GAATW/IOM/CWDA 1997b), while other studies differentiate among various methods/experiences/ circumstances in relation to the recruitment process (Margallo and Lath 2002; IOM 2004; MoSVY/IOM 2005). In the latter case, a differentiation is made among those who are sold, rented, deceived, abducted, threatened, coerced, sexually or emotionally abused or taken by family. It is, however, unclear how these different categories in the methods/experiences/circumstances of trafficking are defined and what marks the distinction between, for example, those “sold” and those “rented”, or those “threatened” and those “coerced”.

The same difficulty can be observed regarding efforts to identify the role of and the relationship to the facilitators. For example, IOM’s study, “Migration and Trafficking from Svay Rieng Province, Cambodia to Vietnam for Begging” (2004), states that whereas 74% of the respondents cited either parents or a relative as being their companion, actual percentages of the involvement of “relatives” may be much lower. This is due to the common use of titles like aunt, uncle, brother, sister, cousin and grandmother for those who are not “really linked by blood or marriage.” Still, the various studies indicate that, as in the area of sex work, in only a clear minority of begging cases a “stranger”, “trafficker” or “*meekol*” recruited and facilitated the movement of children to Thailand or Vietnam. This may, however, also reflect a change with time. The above mentioned IOM study (2004: 18) observes a “decrease in the

<sup>50</sup> Exact number of those below age 18 is not given, only that 12 out of 107 informants were aged from 10 to 20 years old.

<sup>51</sup> Exact number of those below age 18 is not given, only that 9% of females was over 18 (while fewer men were over 18).

<sup>52</sup> Exact number for total percentage of street sellers is not given, only that 15% of the females worked as street sellers (while fewer males did so).

use of facilitators” due to fears of abuse by facilitators<sup>53</sup> as well as the increased knowledge or experience regarding the routes and means of going to Vietnam.

#### 4.1.3 Labor exploitation

Besides prostitution and begging, trafficking is also said to take place for construction, fishing, logging, factory work and agriculture. About 21 studies refer to these various forms of labor exploitation.<sup>54</sup> Available information on trafficking for these various forms of labor exploitation is, however, scarce and exclusively related to cross-border trafficking. It is thereby difficult to discern whether this labor exploitation is related to trafficking or to the migrant situation. The often illegal status of migrants makes it hard to file complaints against employers who fail to pay the promised salary; force their workers to work under dangerous, dirty or difficult conditions; make their workers work long hours, sometimes through the use of drugs; and/or confine their workers. It may be apparent from various reports that migrants are being exploited (Preece 2005; Chan and So 1999; Derks 1997), but are they specifically recruited by means of force, deception, or coercion for the purpose of exploitation? Preece (2005: 67), who describes the working conditions of Cambodian migrants working in Thailand as fishermen, in construction, on plantations, in saw mills and ice factories, states that “the researchers were unable to meet Cambodian men who had been directly sold by a trafficker.” She does, however, refer to stories told by informants about the trafficking of young Cambodian men to boat owners in Rayon and Pattani on the Thai coast. Similar stories were told by the informants of Chan and So (1999). The problem is that it is difficult to assess the validity of such stories. As Vijghen (2005: 15) states, “many stories go around but no one knows [what] is fact and what is myth.”

The same lack of data is evident regarding trafficking for domestic work. Although often mentioned as one of the purposes of trafficking, there is little empirical information about the extent or practices of trafficking for domestic work. Database reports indicate that only very small percentages of trafficked persons end up in this kind of work in Thailand. The most extensive study on domestic work is the Child Domestic Survey conducted in 2003 in Phnom Penh (Ministry of Planning/ILO-IPEC 2004). The report (2004: 79-80) describes child domestic work as a “familiar practice” in Cambodia, often involving family members (60% of child domestic workers were reported to be related to their employers). Although the report does not provide information on trafficking practices, it does point out that “actual exploitation or child servitude can easily escape from public scrutiny” due to the general acceptance of child domestic work among parents and employers.

This shows that the information base regarding various forms of “trafficked labor” is extremely thin. What seems prevalent, but is thus far little researched, is indentured labor of Cambodian migrants in Thailand and Malaysia, wherein a person agrees to work for a pre-defined period for an employer in exchange for the costs of transport and other expenses. While this kind of arrangement may lead to situations of exploitation and bondage, it is often distinguished from trafficking because of the voluntary and contractual nature of the recruitment process.

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<sup>53</sup> It is unclear whether these fears are based upon personal experiences or on the messages of prevention campaigns.

<sup>54</sup> Depending on what approach one takes, sex work could also be considered a form of labor exploitation. Yet, considering the specific position of sex work within the trafficking literature, we deemed it more appropriate to treat it as a separate category.

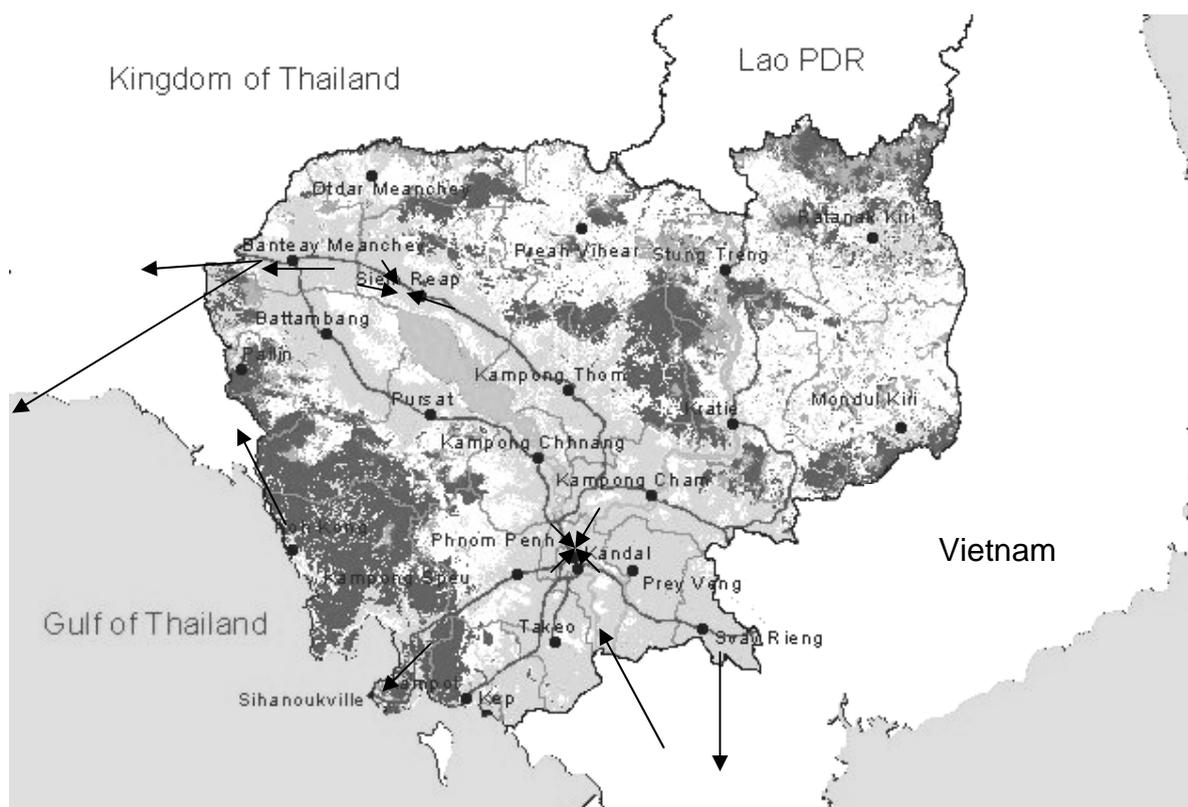
#### 4.1.4 Adoption and marriage

The practices of “baby-buying” and child trafficking for adoption—and the measures taken to prevent them<sup>55</sup>—have received widespread publicity after the first cases were reported in 2001. A Briefing Paper by Licadho (2002) reports that recruiters target young women, often divorced or widowed. These recruiters offer these young women the possibility to place their babies (temporarily) in a childcare center with the promise that they can visit their children and will receive a financial donation of between \$30 and \$100. Instead, the children are taken to orphanages that serve adoption agencies in the US and Europe. So-called adoption facilitators then arrange the necessary paperwork by falsifying documents and bribing officials. Licadho (2002) speaks of “clear patterns and networks in the process of buying babies or young children for adoption.” Yet solid research on the extent, context and persistence of this practice is so far lacking.

A few documents mention trafficking for marriage, although no detailed information is provided. The little information that is provided indicates that under the guise of marriage, women have been brought on to work in prostitution. This may thus be considered as another form or recruitment for sex work.

## 4.2 Trafficking flows

Map of Trafficking Flows in Cambodia



<sup>55</sup> Most notably, the suspension of the processing of orphan petitions from Cambodia, thereby preventing immigration of Cambodian children for adoption in the US (as of December 2001) and in France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Belgium and Britain (as of June 2004) (Blair 2005).

#### 4.2.1 Internal trafficking

As has become apparent from the information presented above, research on internal trafficking focuses solely on sex work. The most often mentioned destinations for trafficking are urban areas and tourist destinations like Phnom Penh, Sihanoukville, Siem Reap and Poipet. With sex workers coming from all over the country, the routes for internal trafficking appear to be diverse. Yet, considering the importance of social networks in the recruitment process, it would be interesting to do a mapping of the places from which sex workers originated in order to find the kind of patterns that have been observed in, for example, Thailand and Indonesia.

#### 4.2.2 Trafficking to Cambodia

As with internal trafficking, information on trafficking to Cambodia concerns particularly the sex industry. Most information relates to Vietnamese women originating from the southern part of the country (Kelly and Le 1999; Derks 1998a). They commonly cross the border overland, traveling by motorbikes, car or foot at border checkpoints in Takeo, Svay Rieng or Kampong Cham where border passes can be obtained. Another route is via the rivers connecting Vietnam and Cambodia, such as those in Kandal or Takeo. Rarely, “pretty virgins for whom a high profit is likely” may travel by air from Vietnam to Cambodia (Kelly and Le 1999: 47).

#### 4.2.3 Trafficking from Cambodia

The information on trafficking from Cambodia concerns especially trafficking to Thailand and, to a lesser extent, Malaysia. Poipet and Koh Kong are the major crossing points to Thailand; both are described as being—besides a destination—a source and transit place for trafficking to Thailand (and further to Malaysia) (Preece 2005; Vijghen 2005). At both places, 24-hour border passes can be obtained to cross the border legally; other methods to cross the border are by foot or boat (from Koh Kong). The most often mentioned trafficking route to Malaysia is also overland, through Thailand (CWCC 2005; Van der Meer et al 2005).

Most of the information on trafficking from Cambodia concerns Thailand. The available data about *trafficking to Thailand* reveal that:

- Cambodian women brought into sex work along the Thai border concentrate in specific areas, such as Klong Yai, Trad province or the islands Koh Kud and Koh Chang, where they mostly serve Cambodian migrants working in fisheries, construction or logging (GAATW/IOM/CWDA 1997; Preece 2005). There are no data about total numbers of Cambodian women involved in prostitution in Thailand. It can, however, not be assumed that sex work is the main purpose of trafficking to Thailand: only 5 of the 68 female returnees in the IOM/MoSVY Return and Reintegration Project (July 2004-May 2005) had worked as sex workers in Thailand (IOM/MoSVY 2005: 13), and 2% of 127 children interviewed by Margallo and Lach (2002: 50) had worked in prostitution.<sup>56</sup>
- The majority of the return migrants identified as trafficked were children who had been recruited for begging and vending; 24% of those were ethnically Vietnamese (Farrington 2002: 8).
- Migrants may go to Thailand more than once and are not necessarily discouraged by a first negative experience. For example, Margallo and Lath (2002: 47) describe the

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<sup>56</sup> Steinfatt (2003: 25) writes that during his 12-year period (1988-1999) studying sex workers in Thailand, obtaining data from over 4,000 sex workers, he found only one sex worker of Cambodian origin.

case of a boy who claimed to have gone to Thailand eight times: hired out, trafficked by parents and on his own.

- Trafficking patterns to Thailand appear to be localized: most of the assisted trafficked returnees from Thailand came from Banteay Meanchey province (80%), 90% of them from O'Chrov district, which includes Poipet. The next most common province was Battambang, followed by Siem Reap and Phnom Penh (MoSALVY/IOM 2003: 6). Other database reports confirm this pattern. Prey Veng was identified as a major source province for migration and trafficking to Koh Kong and Trad (Preece 2005).

There is much less information about *trafficking to Malaysia*. A fact-finding mission report and a database report reveal that Cambodian women have been recruited for sex work and factory work in Malaysia, but there are no data about total numbers of Cambodian women involved in prostitution or other work in Malaysia. From the available sources we know that, in 2002, 125 Cambodian women and, between November 2003 and March 2004, 52 Cambodian women were arrested due to involvement in prostitution in Malaysia (CWCC 2005: 14). Additionally, between June 2003 and July 2005, a total of 35 trafficked women returned from Malaysia with an IOM program. Vijghen (2005: 16) reports of a “new trend to transport the prettiest girls or those who are Cham... to Malaysia”, but does not detail any further information.

Research on *trafficking from Cambodia to Vietnam* indicates that it is related to migration patterns that are extremely localized, involving three districts (Svay Tiep, Kampong Ro and Chantrea) in Svay Rieng province. It involves mainly children who are trafficked for the purpose of begging, many of whom (89%) go to Vietnam more than once (IOM 2004: 22).

Other destinations for trafficked Cambodians mentioned in the available material are Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong and Japan. So far, however, we lack any systematically collected data on the specific practices, people and purposes of trafficking from Cambodia to these destination areas.

#### 4.2.4 Trafficking through Cambodia

Although Cambodia tends to be generally described as a transit country in terms of trafficking in persons (especially Vietnamese and Chinese), there is no research that can support this postulation.

### 4.3 Extent of the problem

Although conducted in different years, focusing on different sectors, taking different approaches and using different methodologies, the majority of the studies seem to agree that the problem of trafficking is—or appears to be—increasing. The question that remains unanswered, however, is on what basis are such statements made? There is no statistical evidence available to support any statements about an increase, decrease or stabilization of the number of trafficked persons in Cambodia or other parts of the region. Considering the definitional incongruity as to what constitutes trafficking and the often illegal nature of related practices, it has been difficult, if not impossible, to come up with consistent and reliable numbers. As has been observed more generally, estimates of the number of trafficked people are often based on estimates of total numbers of prostitutes or illegal and/or irregular migrants (Derks 2000: 9). This is no less the case for the available figures on trafficking in, to and from Cambodia.

Since the available information indicates that most of the trafficking in and to Cambodia occurs for the purpose of prostitution, figures about trafficking in Cambodia relate solely to the nation's sex business. Some of these figures are, as discussed in Section 4.1.1, highly disputed. Steinfatt (2003: 2) describes how, in the late 1990s, "the figures of 80,000 to 100,000 trafficked women and 5,000 to 15,000 children involved in commercial sex in Cambodia began to gain credence." Steinfatt's own estimate, obtained from direct observations in 2003, are substantially smaller; he calculated just under 2,000 trafficked women and children in sex work. This figure has been criticized for being far too low. There are, however, no other nationwide estimations of women and children trafficked into sex work based on systematic data collection.

This changes when we move from absolute numbers to estimated percentages of trafficked sex workers among surveyed populations. Table 5 gives an overview of the diverse surveys that over the past decade have tried to estimate the percentages of "trafficked" sex workers among the surveyed (direct) sex worker population. At first sight, the estimated percentages of "trafficked sex workers" appear to vary considerably, from 47% to 6%.<sup>57</sup> These differences are related to the different understandings of how to identify trafficking in prostitution and the different locations and compositions of the—not necessarily randomly selected—sample populations. With regard to the first point, we can observe that "trafficked sex workers" were identified on the basis of different criteria: CWDA (1994) and Catalla (2004b) calculated the percentage of women "sold" or "tricked" into prostitution; ADHOC (1999) counted the number of sex workers who "involuntarily" entered prostitution; Arensen (2004) looked at force and deceit, as well as minors who entered sex work; Steinfatt (2003) looked at indentured and minor sex workers to calculate the percentage of trafficked women in sex work.<sup>58</sup>

Notwithstanding these differences in how trafficked sex workers were identified, the percentages do not appear to be as diverse when we take into account the different locations of the surveys. Steinfatt's overall estimates may be relatively low, but when we look at percentage and location his estimates start approaching the higher-end estimates. Steinfatt (2003: 15) observed that trafficked sex workers were to be found in towns and cities, with the vast majority in Phnom Penh. In fact, he found that 795 of the 2,058 sex workers (almost 39%) in Phnom Penh were "trafficked". CWDA found, almost ten years earlier, that 47% of the surveyed sex workers in Tuol Kork had been trafficked. Other surveys conducted in several provinces do not specify differences in percentages of trafficked women per location, thus making it impossible to compare Steinfatt's findings with those survey findings.

So, what can we say about the extent of trafficking for prostitution in Cambodia? Unfortunately, not much. Available data indicate that the problem of trafficking for prostitution seems to be especially located in Phnom Penh, as that is where most of the sex workers are located (as well as where most of the research has been conducted). Yet, as long as we do not have an agreed upon, reliable estimate of the *total* sex worker population, it remains difficult to draw conclusions about the number of trafficked women in sex work. Furthermore, it has to be taken into account that surveys can only give snapshot calculations

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<sup>57</sup> As may be expected, among sex workers staying in shelters the estimated percentages of trafficked sex workers are even higher. CWCC, for example, calculated that in 2000-2001 57% of clients had been "forced into prostitution", while 24% were under 18 years old (Oung 2002: 4).

<sup>58</sup> Perrin does not provide an overview of the percentage of trafficked women in sex work, but seems to consider prostitutes and sex slaves as interchangeable categories. According to his calculations "more than 1 in 150 people in Cambodia are sex slaves or prostitutes" (Perrin 2001: 13).

of the number and percentage of trafficked women in sex work. In order to come up with more accurate numbers of trafficked persons on a yearly basis, for example, we will need to include data on the *turnover* of sex workers—how long women remain in sex work—and on the *frequency of re-trafficking*.

Having said this, and although we need to remain cautious in interpreting figures about trafficked sex workers, it seems safe to say these figures do not point to or validate the common assumption that trafficking within prostitution is increasing.

**Table 5 – Percentage of trafficked sex workers among surveyed populations**

Author	Year	N	%	Location
CWDA	1994	399	47 <sup>59</sup>	Phnom Penh
ADHOC	1999	793	22.5 <sup>60</sup>	Phnom Penh, Sihanoukville, Kep, 10 provinces
Steinfatt	2003	5,317	20.2 <sup>61</sup>	nationwide
White et al	2004	60	16.7	Phnom Penh, Sihanoukville, Pailin, Siem Reap
Arensen	2004	420	31.4 <sup>62</sup>	PHN, SHV, Sisophon, Poipet
Catalla	2004b	209	6.3 <sup>63</sup>	Sihanoukville

While it is difficult to produce reliable and consistent numbers on trafficking in prostitution, it is even more difficult to do so for figures on Cambodian migrants trafficked abroad. The only available figures are those collected in surveys and databases of return migrants—that is, those who were in the position to recount their situations. As in the case of trafficking for prostitution, different criteria are used to identify a return migrant who has been trafficked.

Within the survey conducted for ILO-IPEC by Heng (et al 2004: vi) the majority of the sample population consisted of return migrants who were above 18 when they left for work and who were identified as trafficked on the basis of their experiences with “bad working conditions”. The other surveys and databases listed in Table 6 came up with a rather different profile of trafficked (return) migrants. Most of the figures are related to IOM’s return and reintegration projects in which Cambodian trafficked migrants are assisted upon their return from Thailand, Vietnam and, more recently, Malaysia. Participants within such projects—above all children who were brought to Thailand or Vietnam for the purpose of begging—have been identified as trafficked, either through a screening in detention centers or upon arrival at the border after deportation. But without information on *how* persons are screened as potential victims of trafficking it remains unclear how to interpret the numbers.

**Table 6 – Return migrants by sex, age and trafficked status**

Author	Year	N	F (%)	M (%)	<18 (%)	Direction	# Trafficked	% Trafficked
Margallo	2002	127			100	Thai-Camb	127 <sup>64</sup>	
MoSALVY/IOM	2003	641 <sup>65</sup>	47	53	96	Thai-Camb	641	

<sup>59</sup> Compromises the responses of women who “were sold by boyfriend” (3%), “were tricked and sold” (32%), “came to the city to find a job and were sold” (4%) and “were sold by parents to pay debts” (8%).

<sup>60</sup> Term used here is “involuntary entry”, meaning entry in prostitution by force (deceived, kidnapped, lured or tricked) (ADHOC 1999: 6).

<sup>61</sup> Steinfatt (2003: 15) classifies sex workers as trafficked according to either their indentured status or their underage status.

<sup>62</sup> Women were classified as trafficked if they reported force or deceit as a reason for entry into sex work or if they were clearly identifiable as minors when they entered sex work (Arensen 2004: 21).

<sup>63</sup> Includes “tricked/deceived into working” and “sold by parents”.

<sup>64</sup> All respondents were trafficked at least once (Margallo and Lath 2002: 10).

IOM	2004	220	60	40	73	Vietn-Camb	127	57
MoSVY/IOM	2004	61 <sup>66</sup>	38	62	93	Thai-Camb	61	
Heng	2004	80	59	41	22	Thai-Camb	42	53
VanderMeer	2005	35 <sup>67</sup>			5	Malay-Camb	35	
MoSVY/IOM	2005	137 <sup>68</sup>	50	50	n.a. <sup>70</sup>	Thai-Camb	137	
		47 <sup>69</sup>	96	4	84	Camb-Vietn	47	

Compared to the total number of deportees, the numbers of returnees identified as trafficked and assisted by the return and reintegration project appear rather small. In 2003, for example, 117 women and children were identified as trafficking victims and assisted by the return and reintegration project, whereas a total of 23,547 Cambodians were deported from Thailand (Huguet and Punpuing 2005: 54). Does this mean that trafficking constitutes only a minor part of the total (irregular) migration movement to Thailand? Obviously, it would be too quick to jump to such a conclusion. The figures presented in Table 6 were not collected with the aim to provide a quantitative overview of the trafficking of Cambodians abroad. Therefore it would be wrong to draw conclusions about the extent of trafficking within migration movements from Cambodia to neighboring countries. Yet, we may conclude without much hesitation that statements about 400 to 800 children and women being trafficked abroad each month to work as sex workers (CWCC quoted in CRF 2001) are unsubstantiated.

#### 4.4 Analyzing the dynamics of trafficking

From the overview of the information on trafficking in, from and to Cambodia, one may conclude that those who are trafficked are predominantly women and children and that the major purposes of trafficking are sex work (within Cambodia) and begging (in neighboring countries). One may thus argue that, consistent with these findings, most of the projects on trafficking focus on women and children. Yet, the question is whether these findings are based on real patterns of trafficking or are related to biases within the counter-trafficking projects to which research tends to be commissioned. Would we come up with different findings if extensive research was conducted on the trafficking of men for the purpose of economic exploitation? Are, in other words, the findings a representation or a substantiation of two interrelated assumptions that have dominated the trafficking debate from its very beginnings, namely that trafficking takes place predominantly for prostitution and that women and children are most vulnerable to trafficking? We are unable to answer these questions here. What we can do is reflect on the ways issues of gender and vulnerability are presented in accounts and analyses of trafficking.

From the discussion about the extent, purposes and routes of trafficking, it has become clear that it is not easy to distinguish between trafficking and other forms of (labor) movements. For this reason, researchers like Angsuthanasombat et al (2003: 7) and Preece (2005: 45) refer to Archavanitkul's conception of trafficking as a continuum, with the use of force and coercion at one end and voluntary movement for economic opportunities at the other end. Archavanitkul (1998) presents the continuum in the following figure:

<sup>65</sup> Returnees and forced returns from Thailand between September 2000 and December 2003.

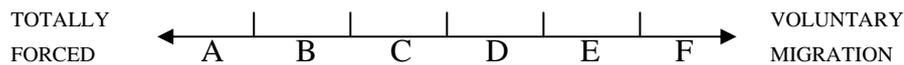
<sup>66</sup> Returnees from Thailand between January 2004 and June 2004.

<sup>67</sup> Returnees from Malaysia between June 2003 and July 2005.

<sup>68</sup> Returnees (repatriated and deported) from Thailand between July 2004 and March 2005.

<sup>69</sup> Repatriation from Cambodia to Vietnam between May 1999 and March 2005.

<sup>70</sup> The report does not give enough data to specify the percentage of people aged 18 and older (only for females, which is 9%). Yet, 51% of the returnees were aged between 9 and 15 when trafficked.



- A = Victims are forced and/or kidnapped
- B = Victims are given false information, and are trafficked into types of business other than promised
- C = Victims are aware of the kind of work, but not the work conditions
- D = Victims are aware of the kind of work and work conditions, but are not aware of and/or unable to foresee the difficult situations they may encounter
- E = Workers (who may have been trafficking victims before) are aware of the kind of work and work conditions, but are not given an alternative worksite (cannot choose where they want to work)
- F = Workers (who may have been trafficking victims before) are aware of the kind of work and the work conditions and are able to select their worksite

Many, especially migration-oriented, studies reveal that there are differences in the degrees of “force” and “voluntariness” in migration movements that are above all related to gender. Ly and Menh (2005: 1), for example, argue that the “gender dimensions of trafficking are profound”, affecting all aspects of the trafficking process, from the factors contributing to trafficking to the nature of the policies and laws developed to address the phenomenon. Similarly, Preece (2005: 85) emphasizes gender-related differences with regard to trafficking, arguing that “it is clear that all categories of migrant workers are regularly subject to abusive, exploitative and discriminatory treatment. However, for Cambodian women and girls, the dangers, vulnerabilities, violations and consequences of trafficking and exploitation are far greater than for men owing to unequal gender relations and unequal social and economic power at every stage of the migration process.” In other words, whereas female mobility is considered to be closer to the “forced” end of the continuum, male mobility is deemed to be closer to the “voluntary” end. This shows, as Surtees (cited in Ly and Menh 2005: 20) states, that while there is a growing recognition that women increasingly and independently opt for migration, there remains a perception of “female vulnerability”.

How can we conceptualize this “female vulnerability” in relation to trafficking? Although there is no agreed upon definition of vulnerability, in relation to trafficking the concept tends to be used to refer to the factors that put certain people at risk to be trafficked. In trying to assess whether there are, besides gender and age, certain factors that make some people more vulnerable to trafficking than others, studies have looked especially at variables regarding the socio-economic background of the “people at risk”. The most discussed factors are:

- *Economic conditions*: poverty and indebtedness
- *Lack of education/information*
- *Family situation*: number of dependents, illness, family breakdown, gambling, alcohol
- *Social context*: influence of friends, social networks, social exclusion
- *Individual characteristics and experiences*: personality, rape, domestic violence

Each of these factors does not individually provide sufficient explanation as to why people are trafficked; it is the interplay of various factors that make up the “vulnerability” of a person. For example, while poverty is generally cited as the most important reason for trafficking, obviously not all poor people are trafficked, and many may consciously make decisions that prevent them, or their children, from being trafficked (Margallo and Lath 2002: 46). Furthermore, as some studies indicate, trafficked persons do not necessarily come from the poorest strata of the population (IOM 2004: 16-17). One additional difficulty in assessing a causal relation between poverty and trafficking is that the available information tends to

relate to informants' own perceptions of their economic situation, which are not necessarily based on comparable standards.<sup>71</sup>

An issue that has become increasingly explored in relation to economic situation is debt. Research findings point to high levels of indebtedness among trafficked persons and migrants.<sup>72</sup> Although this tells us about the occurrence—less so about the levels—of indebtedness among the researched groups, how this relates to trafficking still needs to be explored in more detail. We should, for example, avoid reaching quick conclusions about the relationship between having a “bad debt” and the “phenomenon of debt bondage” (MoWVA 2004) as long as we do not know who is indebted to whom, the conditions of the contracts and the consequences of non-repayment.

As with economic situations, information on the role of educational backgrounds is inconclusive. While persons who are identified as trafficked have low levels of education, these are not necessarily much lower than national levels, and tend to be comparable to those of non-trafficked persons in the same sector (see, for example, Arensen 2004; ADHOC 1999).

In this context, it is interesting to refer to Taylor's (2005: 422) study on girls who are at risk to end up in child labor and prostitution in Thailand. Taylor found that “at-risk girls and women happen to be the most educated people in the rural village.” On the basis of a systematic analysis of various variables, Taylor concludes that neither poverty nor lack of education, but birth order and family expectations regarding human-capital investment (education) determine the odds of girls entering hazardous work such as prostitution.

Although some trafficking studies link perceptions of children's familial and reproductive roles to economic vulnerability (e.g. CCPRC 1998; Margallo and Lath 2002), a systematic analysis of how these affect trafficking patterns and practices is so far lacking. More attention has been paid to how certain factors increase vulnerability to trafficking, especially for women and girls. These factors relate to problematic or disrupted family situations, lack of social support, and experiences, such as sexual abuse, that influence the self-esteem of a person. As many studies seem to agree, vulnerability is exacerbated by the gendered structure of labor demand (most notably in the sex industry), cultural expectations regarding women's role in family support, and women's low bargaining power, all of which contribute to women being “more vulnerable to unsafe migration and trafficking” (Thomas 2005: 3).

Yet, while migration can lead women into situations of exploitation, it can also remove them from servile and abusive conditions at home (Skeldon 1999: 2). Considering the often described poor economic conditions, problematic family situations and abusive experiences in the home, it is no wonder that women may opt for migration to escape these restrictive conditions and to use new possibilities—however insecure—to improve their own and their family's situation (see, for example, CCPCR 1998: 67; Catalla 1994b). But by focusing on “female vulnerability” in migration, migrating women tend to become presented as passive victims, whereas migrating men are presented as actively taking risks. Seen from this

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<sup>71</sup> In such cases, a distinction is usually made between “absolute” and “relative”, or “objective” and “subjective” poverty.

<sup>72</sup> Some numbers: 58.3% of trafficked sex workers in the study of Arensen (2004) mentioned debt as a main problem in their families; 16.7% of the direct sex workers in Catalla's study (2004b: 16) named “paying off debt” as the reason why they entered sex work; 77.9% of the returnees from Vietnam said they had debt (IOM 2004: 13); and more than half of the returnees from Thailand had debts (MoSVY/IOM 2005: 7).

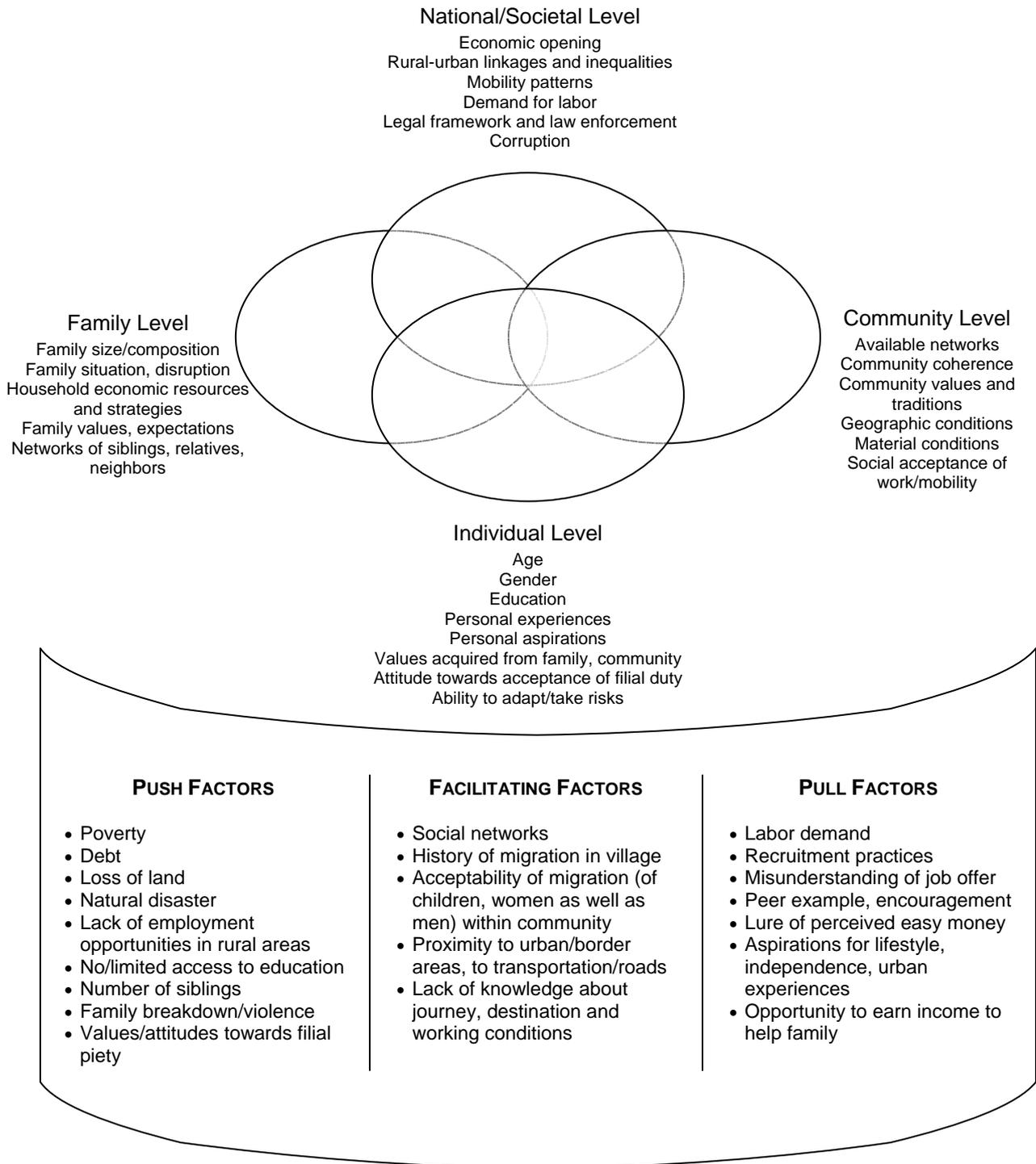
perspective, one may ask whether the concept of “vulnerability” helps or limits us in understanding why certain people are trafficked while others are not. Is not better to start from the question as to what extent women—like men—are willing to take risks?<sup>73</sup>

Within the following framework, adapted from Rushing (2004), we have tried to synthesize the various dimensions and levels within trafficking that have been described in the available material on trafficking. Within this framework, trafficking is seen as a dynamic phenomenon, in which different levels and different forces operate together and influence one another.

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<sup>73</sup> According to the data presented in certain reports, women have good reason to “take the risk”. A MoWVA study (2004), for example, showed that a majority of the interviewed female migrants (66%) had positive experiences with migration. An ILO study (Heng 2004) showed that despite the fact that 53% of the sample returnees experienced bad treatment, 74% were successful in sending remittances home.

## Dynamics of Trafficking in Persons: A Conceptual Framework



Source: Rushing (2004: 39)

So far, we have, in proportion to the available material, focused predominantly on the so-called “supply side” of trafficking by describing the profile and number of people trafficked, the kind of sectors in which they end up, and the conditions that put them “at risk” for trafficking. However, as mentioned in Section 3.4, there is now a growing consensus that trafficking should not only be studied from the perspective of the people who are “trafficked”, but also—and maybe even more so—by the kind of people, conditions and structures that create a demand for “trafficked” labor or services. Demand side, or destination factors, refers to, as Pearson (2005: 5) formulates, “both demand plus the environment that creates or influences demand: the economic, cultural, social, legal and policy factors affecting employers, consumers and third parties.”

Yet, as is lamented in various reports, little systematic research has been conducted on these demand-side factors. Interestingly, findings from three ILO studies on the demand dimensions of three service sectors showed that while employers were attracted by the “easy money” to be earned in their business, particularly brothels, the data were “not enough to point to any clear pattern about the deliberate use of unfree labor” (Catalla 2004d: viii). The demand for trafficking, the studies concluded, was mainly linked to “male clients’ unfettered sexual freedom” (ibid: ix), although no systematic data were collected on actual client demand.<sup>74</sup>

In this context, it is useful to look at demand-side studies conducted in other parts of the world. Anderson and O’Connell Davidson (2003) studied employer and consumer demand for domestic workers and sex workers in selected European and Asian countries and found that three related factors are the key to explaining exploitative conditions in these sectors: (a) the unregulated nature of the labor market segments; (b) the abundant supply of exploitable labor and; (c) the power and malleability of social norms regulating the behavior of employers and clients. This shows that the forces of supply and demand, similar to what in migration theory has been called push and pull factors, do not only interact, but also reinforce one another.<sup>75</sup> And they do so within a wider economic, political, socio-cultural and historical context. Yet, although it is commonly acknowledged that the phenomenon of trafficking must be understood within such a broader context, we actually know very little about the “economics of trafficking”, the involvement and inadequacy of political regimes, the relation between trafficking and social-cultural constructions of gender and gendered behavior, and the historical transmutations of patterns of dependency. Such knowledge would help put into perspective individual stories, localized patterns and dominant assumptions regarding trafficking, and thus push forward alternative ways of thinking about the phenomenon (Kempadoo 2005).

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<sup>74</sup> In fact, only one client was interviewed in this survey.

<sup>75</sup> This goes further than the often repeated statement “without demand, no supply”; business is all about creating demand through the availability, promotion and price of supply.

## **5. Research and Policy**

In the field of counter-trafficking, as in other fields, research and policy are connected to one another in several ways. Most importantly, research may inform as well as evaluate policy. Within the material on trafficking, we looked at the relation between research and policy in the form of:

1. Recommendations for interventions that were formulated on the basis of the research findings
2. Evaluation of specific interventions
3. Overview of the existing interventions

An important aim of almost all the reviewed research on trafficking is to come up with information, analyses and insights that can inform initiatives to counter trafficking. It is interesting to note that the kinds of recommendations seem to have changed little over time. From the early report to the latest ones, recommendations refer to the need for:

- More research
- Information campaigns or awareness raising regarding trafficking and options for “safe migration”
- Community-based activities to increase awareness and support
- Livelihood improvement options
- Special policies for women and children at risk
- Strengthening of the legal system, legal literacy and implementation of laws
- Cooperation or a referral system among various organizations in the field of counter-trafficking
- Regional cooperation

These general recommendations are elaborated upon within reports focusing on particular aspects of counter-trafficking, such as migration management or the functioning of the care or legal system.

How can we explain this consistency in recommendations among research reports written over the past decade? While it indicates that researchers are looking at the same kinds of issues when coming up with recommendations to counter trafficking, it also raises questions regarding the appropriateness and achievements of the existing interventions. Some recommendations, such as reducing economic necessity by improving livelihood options, are too broad and too dependent upon other factors to properly address within one project or program. Furthermore, the implementation of certain recommended interventions takes time, such as those relating to the legal and justice system. Thus, the repeated message that these issues need to be addressed serves as a reminder of the importance of the issues. In other cases, the recommendation remains viable, but its implementation needs to be adapted to new findings or situational changes—for example, issues relating to the appropriateness of certain forms of care or of information messages. There is, however, no systematic research on what kinds of recommendations have been implemented, what seems to have worked, and what has not. This brings us to the second point.

Among the body of research reviewed, there were no evaluations of specific interventions. This does not mean that such evaluations do not exist. Certain experts in the field pointed out that there are evaluations, but these are not always made public. Several reports or papers did

discuss the strengths and weaknesses of specific interventions, particularly in relation to the care system and the reintegration of trafficked persons (Derks 1998b; Vijghen 2004; Kavoukis and Horsley 2004; Arensen, Bunn and Night n.d.; Arensen 2005). Instead of exploring the phenomenon, as the majority of research on trafficking in Cambodia does, these reports explore what to do with persons who come out of trafficked situations.

Most reporting on interventions takes the form of an overview of available initiatives, services, laws and forms of cooperation. Such overviews, which are part of various reports and the focus of a few individual reports, give a brief description of the kinds of responses that have been developed and the different organizations and governmental departments that work in the field of counter-trafficking, but do not necessarily evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of individual responses or actors.

## 5.1 Interventions

The different kinds of interventions to counter trafficking are often divided into three broad categories: prevention, protection and prosecution. A mapping exercise during the consultation meeting resulted in an extensive list of keywords identifying the kinds of initiatives that fall within these three broad categories:

PREVENTION	PROTECTION RECOVERY REINTEGRATION	LEGAL SYSTEM LAW ENFORCEMENT PROSECUTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• poverty reduction</li> <li>• livelihood options/income generation</li> <li>• (micro) credit</li> <li>• awareness raising/advocacy</li> <li>• mass media campaigns</li> <li>• education (formal/non-formal, vocational training)</li> <li>• community support</li> <li>• vulnerability reduction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• shelter</li> <li>• community support networks</li> <li>• social services</li> <li>• long vs. short-term care</li> <li>• legal support</li> <li>• medical care</li> <li>• shelter (assurance of confidentiality, security)</li> <li>• counseling</li> <li>• therapy</li> <li>• mental health support (trauma, psycho-social, PTSD care)</li> <li>• medical care</li> <li>• alternative care</li> <li>• client, family assessment</li> <li>• education/vocational training</li> <li>• rehabilitation</li> <li>• return</li> <li>• repatriation</li> <li>• job placement</li> <li>• post-reintegration</li> <li>• family assessment/training</li> <li>• victim and family support</li> <li>• follow-up</li> <li>• prevention of stigmatization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• laws on trafficking, sexual exploitation, child protection</li> <li>• relevant conventions</li> <li>• MoU/bilateral agreements</li> <li>• extra-territorial laws</li> <li>• legal education</li> <li>• rescue/raid</li> <li>• investigation</li> <li>• arrest</li> <li>• deportation</li> <li>• (illegal) detention</li> <li>• referral system</li> <li>• training of police</li> <li>• police investigation</li> <li>• charge</li> <li>• legal services</li> <li>• court</li> <li>• trial</li> <li>• sentence</li> <li>• restitution/compensation</li> </ul>

The systematic review of the research material shows a clear lack of information on these topics. The only exception, in the category of protection and reintegration, is some work on

the kinds and limitations of interventions (Derks 1998b; Margallo and Lath 2002; Vijghen 2004; Kavoukis and Horsley 2004; Arensen, Bunn and Night n.d.; Arensen 2005). These reports are predominantly based on literature reviews; interviews with representatives of NGOs, IOs and relevant government ministries; and/or the author's own experiences with the care system. There is relatively little information based on the accounts and circumstances of individual "clients" or reintegrated persons. While it would be relevant in this context, there also is no longitudinal research on the impact of various forms of support and care provided, or on the reintegration process—two areas that would offer insight into the social changes and trajectories of individual trafficked persons.

## **6. Research Gaps and Prospects**

Within this review we aimed to collect and assess all available research on trafficking in Cambodia. Although we may have missed some reports and publications, we have been able to include most trafficking-related studies that were produced over the past decade.

Undoubtedly, a lot of information exists, but this does not mean there is an extensive accumulation in knowledge about the patterns, practices and complexity of the phenomenon. As highlighted throughout this review, three interrelated points deter a real accumulation of knowledge on trafficking in persons in Cambodia:

1. The information on trafficking is patchy. There is no consistency in the way the research on trafficking covers different groups, sectors and places. This has led to overlapping research on some groups in some areas, whereas other groups, places and issues are not covered at all. When information is based on a survey here and some case studies there, it becomes extremely difficult to reach meta-levels of analysis.
2. There is not enough substantiated information on trafficking. The research information on trafficking allows us to describe, be it incompletely, what trafficking looks like (in terms of age and gender of identified trafficked persons and the purposes and routes of trafficking), but not *how* trafficking works. There is a clear lack of in-depth information on the workings, causes and broader context of trafficking. Taking a closer look at the data collected and the conclusions presented, we find that a lot of information is based on assumptions, not evidence.
3. The research on trafficking reflects the program interests of the organizations working in the field of counter-trafficking. While this is a logical consequence of the way organizations allocate their scarce resources for research, there is, as a result, hardly any independent research on the subject. The reflection of program interests in the research is not only related to the fact that donor organizations determine to a large extent the focus, approach, time and place of the research on the basis of their programs, but also to the reliance on NGO and IO representatives and practitioners for data collection.

It thus makes sense to seriously consider what information is needed, which methodologies could be used to collect and analyze that information and how various stakeholders could cooperate in realizing such research.

The problems identified above point to more than the lack of accumulated knowledge on the extent, patterns, practices and causes of trafficking. They reflect the material conditions of knowledge production on trafficking in Cambodia.<sup>76</sup> This implies that “gaps” refers to both the organization of knowledge production and to the current store of knowledge. Section 6.1 addresses this organization and 6.2 the store of knowledge.

### **6.1 Evidence-based policy and practice**

How confident can we be that a review of trafficking research after another ten years will show less overlap and more consistency, substantiated facts and accumulation regarding

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<sup>76</sup> One should point out that these conditions are not particular to the field of trafficking; they are quite similar to research in Cambodia on nearly all other issues (e.g. Henke 2004). They are also not particular to Cambodia, as they are quite similar to other contexts where research is near exclusively practice-related.

patterns and causes? It is probably realistic to be pessimistic *unless* something changes in the organization of knowledge production on trafficking. As described above, the accumulated material is a near direct reflection of the immediate program objectives of the sponsors of the studies. The box below describes the implications of this.

**Research for development and the unintended consequences of accountability<sup>77</sup>**

Development agencies are under heavy pressure from governmental and other donors and from the public opinion to minimize overhead and maximize direct investments in core activities. Research is regarded as a necessary but non-core activity and budgetary allotments are closely scrutinized. Research expenditure is only considered permissible for a limited number of purposes. Development interventions being under such close public scrutiny makes everything related to evaluation permissible (baselines, monitoring, mid-terms, end-of-project assessments, etc.). Apart from these, only needs assessments and other directly intervention-related studies are considered unproblematic. Unproblematic in principle, that is, because more likely than not there will be restrictions in terms of the percentage of the total budget that can be allotted to research.

However laudable the stress on maximizing the share of the budget directly targeting beneficiaries, it does have some negative consequences. Knowledge needs for optimal project implementation cannot all be covered by research questions that are directly related to the interventions.

Stakeholder consultation showed that the policy and practice community of those working on trafficking issues are aware of this state of affairs and recognize their shared interest to counter the tragedy-of-the-commons aspects of individual project-related data gathering. All suffer from the lack of reliable basic data and understanding. The *idea* of more collective and coordinated knowledge production is thus easily accepted. The argument for pooling resources is straightforward. If one organization can afford a particular amount of money and a particular number of staff days, this allows for a study of a particular, limited scale. If six organizations pool their resources, the combination of resources and the benefits of economies of scale dramatically increase the possibilities. However, the material conditions described in the above box operate as major disincentives to turn such an idea into *practice*.

Of all the stakeholders, those funding research are most able to exert influence over this state of affairs. While funding agencies are not free from accountability restrictions, those higher in the funding “food chain” enjoy larger possibilities. Experiences with institutional efforts to change research practice<sup>78</sup> have shown that effectiveness requires good intentions *and* incentives—sticks as well as carrots. Good intentions seem not to be the problem in Cambodia, but the incentives to change research practice are unavailable.

This implies that, as long as Cambodia lacks a substantial independent research sector and as long as research money is donor money<sup>79</sup>, the ways in which donors are willing and able to facilitate research coordination will be our best bet for change. If a future review is to find

<sup>77</sup> Reproduced from Bou and Henke (2004: 39).

<sup>78</sup> E.g. Henke (2004).

<sup>79</sup> As a less developed country, a post-conflict society and a transitional economy, Cambodia is characterized by huge socio-economic differences; non-transparent and unaccountable governance structures; a lack of coordination within and among public, private and civil society institutions working in the same sector; and a questionable rule of law. The country is highly IDA dependent and can hardly be said to have a real “economy”. All of these conditions hamper the development of a substantial independent research sector.

counter-trafficking policy and practice more evidence-based, something will have to change in current donor practice.

## 6.2 Gaps and recommendations for future research

Given the above described preconditions regarding the organization of future research on trafficking, what are the issues that need further exploration? Based on the review, we can identify several gaps in information, as well as in the ways data are collected. The most obvious gaps relate to:

**Extent:** There is no substantiated information on the extent of the problem of trafficking in, from and to Cambodia. This makes it impossible to draw conclusions regarding an increase, decrease or stabilization of the problem of trafficking. Related to this is the lack of agreement on how to define and thus count trafficked persons.

**Sector:** Most information on trafficking concerns sex work, while other sectors are relatively little studied. This is particularly true for practices of trafficking for, and indentured labor in, various forms of labor exploitation, such as domestic work, fishing/seafaring labor, construction and agriculture. Related to these sectoral gaps are gaps of information on the trafficking of men.

**Geography:** Most of the research on trafficking and related issues is conducted in Phnom Penh and, to a lesser extent, in border or tourist areas like Banteay Meanchey, Battambang, Siem Reap and Sihanoukville. Little information on trafficking is based on research in other highly populated areas in Cambodia, such as Kampang Cham, Kandal and Prey Veng. Furthermore, no substantial research has been conducted in destination areas of Cambodians going abroad, most notably Thailand, Malaysia and Vietnam.

**Particular themes:** There is no substantiated information on the role of economic, political, criminal and socio-cultural factors in trafficking, although these are often mentioned as factors that facilitate the phenomenon. Of particular relevance are issues of debt and contract, and of social networks, which have hardly been studied in-depth. Other themes that warrant more detailed exploration are the role of ethnicity, the relation between trafficking and health, the reintegration of trafficked persons and the demand side of trafficking. Furthermore, due to the dominant perception of “female vulnerability”, there is a lack of attention for the issue of “agency” in relation to female mobility and the phenomenon of trafficking.

**Time:** The gaps in relation to time are twofold. First, all existing trafficking studies are short-term, making it difficult to collect in-depth information and to assess changes over time. This leads to a lack of a long-term perspective on the phenomenon and its consequences. Second, all existing studies on trafficking focus on contemporary practices, without examining the historical context and how current practices relate to patterns of dependency.

**Methodology:** Due to the predominant use of interviews and questionnaires for data collection, there is a strong reliance on people’s narratives. But, as we know from more general social research, what people say is not necessarily what people do. So far, there has been no effort to overcome this problem by including other methodologies—such as participant observation and social network analysis—that would allow us to produce a more comprehensive assessment of the phenomenon.

**Theory:** Research on trafficking is disconnected from theory. There are hardly any references to existing theories on trafficking, and no attempts to develop a theoretical framework in which to comprehensively analyze the phenomenon.

On the basis of these gaps in the body of research on trafficking in Cambodia, several ideas for future research present themselves. These ideas, however, require a move away from individual, short-term research projects to more cooperative efforts in order to generate an accumulation of knowledge on the phenomenon and enhance understanding of its complexity.

1. There are **gaps** in information about trafficking for purposes other than prostitution and about trafficking from and through Cambodia. Since they are often mentioned, but seldom researched, we suggest research on:

- *Domestic work:* While often described as a purpose for trafficking there is hardly any information on this topic, except in an ILO-IPEC survey focusing on Phnom Penh. One possible research project would explore the patterns and practices of children who are brought into domestic work in various parts of the country, including the countryside. Through a detailed study of dependency relations between employers and domestic servants and their families, it will be possible to explore various forms of dependency, child labor and local practices of debt bondage (as in the case of children working off their parents' debts in the households of the creditors—*kñom kee dak tlay*). Such a topic can only be explored in-depth by using qualitative research methods (e.g. participant observation). Another such research project could look at the more recent movements of Cambodian women into domestic work abroad, particularly to Thailand and Malaysia, and examine the different parties, kinds of contracts, conditions and consequences involved. A comprehensive study of these labor movements would require a multi-sited research approach.
- *Trafficking to neighboring countries:* The available information on trafficking from Cambodia was collected predominantly among return migrants; no research has been conducted to assess the forms and extent of trafficking of Cambodians in the destination countries. One possible study could focus on trafficking for fishing/seafaring labor in Thailand. Other possible research projects could assess the extent and practices of trafficking of Cambodians in construction work or agriculture. This kind of research will be extremely useful in exploring differences and similarities between “trafficked” and “indentured” labor. As in the case of domestic servants abroad, a comprehensive understanding of cross-border labor movements and trafficking can only be explored through a multi-sited research approach.

2. As pointed out above, the available information on trafficking points to a few issues that need **further exploration**. We suggest more in-depth research on the role of debt and social networks in trafficking:

- While notions of debt bondage, indentured labor and sale are commonly used to label various ways in which women are trafficked into prostitution, there is hardly any detailed research on the meanings and limits of these concepts. There are, however, strong indications that issues relating to debt and contract are of major importance in understanding recruitment for and control in sex work. This is not only the case for trafficking for prostitution, but also for other forms of labor exploitation. Future

research should therefore look at the relationship between trafficking and debt, and explore how indebtedness relates to the risks of being trafficked, how indebtedness plays a role in binding the individual to her/his employer and how patterns and practices of debt bondage are linked to ethnicity.

- The existing studies indicate that social networks play an important role in recruitment practices of migration movements and trafficking. There is, however, no research specifically focusing on the different actors in these social networks, on how (extending) social networks have changed recruitment practices over time and on how they determine trafficking flows. A study focusing on social networks will help to map “source” regions or districts of trafficking and to explore the involvement of organized crime. A possible way to systematically explore these issues is through a network analysis, systematically studying social relations among a set of actors. Depending on the objective and the feasibility of the study, network analysis may try to assess the quality of networks of individual trafficked persons (ego-centered network analysis), or to map all relationships among employers, recruiters and trafficked persons (complete network analysis).

3. In order to base the discussion on the extent of trafficking on more substantial information, we suggest a **re-study** of Steinfatt’s nationwide count of sex workers and trafficked women in sex work. Steinfatt’s efforts to come up with more reliable numbers of sex workers in Cambodia have raised a discussion about the appropriateness of his methodology and hence the reliability of his findings. If we want to be serious about examining the extent of the problem, it is necessary to conduct a re-study of Steinfatt’s field study, using a different methodology, or a combination of different methodologies.

4. A **follow-up** study on the existing studies on reintegration of trafficked persons will greatly enhance our knowledge of the consequences of trafficking, the processes of inclusion of trafficked persons and the risks of re-trafficking. The existing studies provide a broad overview of the various levels and factors involved in the reintegration process, the kinds of services provided by various organizations and the strengths and weaknesses of these services. However, most of this research is short-term and thus does not tell us much about the long-term impact of trafficking experiences, or of the provided services. A follow-up on the existing reintegration studies would ideally consist of a cooperative effort among multiple organizations to conduct a longitudinal study—based on data collected from the same panel of respondents at different points in time—on the relationship among reintegration, reintegration assistance to trafficked persons and their impact.

5. To build a comprehensive understanding of trafficking, it is insufficient to only address particular gaps and re-study or follow-up on former studies. A deeper understanding of the phenomenon requires an understanding of the similarities and differences of the practices in time and place. This thus points to the need for **comparative historical and regional research** on trafficking and issues related to trafficking. As such research is not linked directly to programs and interventions, expectations for such topics being addressed in the future are only realistic if current funding practices change.

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## **Annex I – More About Numbers**

Interestingly, the one study on the extent of prostitution and trafficking in Cambodia that most thoroughly describes its research methods—Steinfatt (2002; 2003)—has also become the most disputed. Criticisms question various methodological points—from the use of *motodup* drivers as informants, to the sample size, to the definition of a trafficked person—which altogether would contribute to an “undercounting of unknown magnitude” (Swingle and Kapoor 2004:2). Without debating the pros and cons of Steinfatt’s methodology, we may conclude that an assumed undercounting of the prostitute population evokes more criticism than an over-counting.

Considering the current attention on trafficking as a demand-driven problem, it may be helpful to reflect on the high-end estimations of sex workers in Cambodia in terms of the sexual practices of the “users” of these services. For example, if we accept Perrin’s “likely estimation” of 80,000 sex workers, receiving ten clients per day<sup>80</sup>, seven days per week (as quoted by Perrin 2001: 14), it would mean that there are 800,000 sexual encounters with sex workers in Cambodia per day, or 292 million sexual encounters per year.

When 30% of the clients are foreigners (as quoted by Perrin 2001: 15), it would mean that foreigners account for 87,600,000 sexual encounters with sex workers per year (at least in 2001). According to the statistics of the Ministry of Tourism,<sup>81</sup> the number of visitor arrivals in 2001 was 604,919, of which we will now assume around 65% were men (as in earlier years reported in Sok et al 2001: 66). This would mean that each of these male visitors had on average 222 sexual encounters with prostitutes during his stay in Cambodia. Even if one assumes that only the most potent men choose to visit Cambodia, it is obvious that this figure is a clear overstatement.<sup>82</sup>

According to the same logic, Cambodian clients would account for 70%, or 204.4 million, of the total sexual encounters with sex workers per year. When we connect this number to statistics on the “sexually active male population”<sup>83</sup>, it would mean that each Cambodian man from 15 to 69 years old has on average one sexual encounter a week with a sex worker. With an average payment of \$1.50 per customer (Perrin 2001: 27), it would mean that Cambodian men each spend \$78 per year, or about a quarter of the GNI per capita, on sex.<sup>84</sup> It is, however, highly unlikely that all these Cambodian men—of whom about 85% live in rural areas—are in the position, geographically or financially, to pay weekly visits to some kind of sex establishment. Should we assume, then, that primarily urban men account for the 204.4

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<sup>80</sup> This does not fit with observations made in other studies regarding the number of clients per day. Catalla (2004b: 24), for example, notes an average of 3.13 clients, ranging from one to seven, over a span of 24 hours.

<sup>81</sup> [www.mot.gov.kh/statistics/visitor\\_arrivals\\_98\\_04.htm](http://www.mot.gov.kh/statistics/visitor_arrivals_98_04.htm)

<sup>82</sup> It also does not fit with observations on the number of foreign customers who visited Svay Pak, seen as one of the major sex tourist areas, as presented in Thomas (2005: 13). According to these observations, 1,926 foreign customers visited Svay Pak in December 2001. That would mean there were about 23,112 customers in a year. Even if each of these customers had sex several times per visit, it by far would not contribute to the total 87.6 million sexual encounters expected on the basis of Perrin’s calculations.

<sup>83</sup> In 2004 Cambodia’s population was 13,091,000 of which 27.6% (or 3,613,116) were males between 15 and 69 years ([www.nis.gov.kh/SURVEYS/cips2004/p\\_pyramid.htm](http://www.nis.gov.kh/SURVEYS/cips2004/p_pyramid.htm)).

<sup>84</sup> According to the World Bank, the GNI per capita is \$320 (<http://devdata.worldbank.org/data-query/SMResult.asp>).

million sexual encounters per year? This would mean that they each buy sex once a day.<sup>85</sup> This also seems to be a highly unlikely assumption. Obviously, research on customer behavior would still be needed to verify such an assumption.

This exercise does, of course, not tell us anything about actual numbers of sex workers or the number of clients they receive on a daily (or yearly) basis. It does, however, show that it is easy to refute inflated estimations by relating them to demand-side figures. One low-cost “method” to produce more accurate numbers of sex workers in Cambodia would be to repeat this exercise in more depth, using existing supply-side and demand-side information from the most trustworthy and representative data sources available.

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<sup>85</sup> That is, when we calculate that 15% of “sexually active males” are urban, it means 541,967 males each have 377 sexual encounters with prostitutes per year.

## ***Annex II – Doing a Systematic Review***

Several reports and papers provide overviews of the main patterns and purposes of trafficking within the general region (e.g. Piper 2005) and in Cambodia in particular (e.g. Ly and Menh 2003). One may thus wonder why we should do another review. What distinguishes this review from other efforts to synthesize the existing information on the phenomenon? The most important distinction lies in the adjective “systematic”. This term implies that one follows transparent procedures and thereby creates accountable results (Bou and Henke 2004: 8). This means that every step in the process, including the limitations and constraints, are clearly formulated and that all the relevant material is reviewed in a consistent way, according to explicit criteria. Doing a systematic review therefore requires that one is clear about the different steps in the process.<sup>86</sup>

Along the way, we actively sought the input of the “stakeholders” in the field of counter-trafficking, i.e. the main users and producers of the research reports on trafficking. We regarded their input as crucial for developing relevant criteria for analysis and for formulating recommendations regarding priorities and modalities for future research.

The procedure followed in this review on trafficking in Cambodia can be divided into six steps:

### **1. Focus on answering specific questions**

Similar to any other research study, a systematic review should start by clearly defining its purpose and content in order to prevent a lack of focus. This means formulating specific questions.

The three overarching questions that we try to answer in this review are:

- What do we know about trafficking in Cambodia?
- What is the basis of our knowledge about trafficking in Cambodia?
- What are the gaps in the information available?

This leads to more specific questions:

- What should be regarded as relevant material? Which studies should be included?
- How was the research conducted? Are there important differences in the ways studies were done?
- Are there important differences in the ways trafficking is perceived and analyzed?
- What does the relevant material tell us about the extent, purposes and routes of trafficking in, from and to Cambodia?
- What does the relevant material tell us about situational changes over time regarding patterns and practices of trafficking?
- Does the relevant material lead to an accumulation of knowledge regarding the phenomenon of trafficking? How does it contribute to a comprehensive framework for understanding the phenomenon of trafficking?
- How relevant is the research information for interventions to counter trafficking?
- What kind of information has not been collected, and why?

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<sup>86</sup> See Bou and Henke (2004) and Boaz et al (2002) for a detailed description of the standards regarding what it means to systematically review data.

- What recommendations can be made for future data collection?

Thus, this review aims to explore what the available information can—and cannot—tell us about the patterns, extent and consequences of trafficking in Cambodia (and in relation to its neighboring countries). The review also aims to assess the major approaches, perspectives and debates in relation to research on trafficking in Cambodia. We critically assess how the studies were conducted and the extent to which specific research findings can be generalized to Cambodia as a whole, taking into account the limits of the targeted groups, sectors and locations.

## **2. Collect all relevant literature**

The review aims to cover all available research information (qualitative as well as quantitative), database information and selected regional or more general information on trafficking in Cambodia. In order to do so, we first had to determine which studies to include and, related to that, the scope of our review. Focusing solely on trafficking research could have meant missing relevant information in studies on related issues. We therefore decided to include selected studies about prostitution, migration, child labor and labor exploitation, as long as they provided information relevant to the phenomenon of trafficking. Much of the existing literature on trafficking focuses on prostitution and therefore, to get a proper overview of the sector, it is necessary to look at relevant general research on prostitution. For the same reason, general information about (illegal) migration, child labor and labor exploitation is needed to form a comprehensive understanding of the problem.

Because research and other forms of information about trafficking is scattered across many places, it takes quite an effort to collect all relevant material. We began collecting the material at the libraries of CAS, CDRI, GAP, CCC, UNICEF and other relevant organizations, as well as the internet. We also looked for additional titles in the bibliographies of various studies and contacted specific donor and/or research organizations to obtain copies of the reports that were unavailable at the consulted libraries. This resulted in a provisional list of trafficking information sources, which we shared with stakeholders during a preliminary consultation meeting. We asked participants to provide information about any titles that were missing in order to complete the list.

Although we managed to collect a long list of trafficking-related research titles, we may have missed some studies. In a few cases, we were unable to locate and obtain relevant studies because the organizations did not possess the studies they themselves had conducted or commissioned. Other studies or evaluations relating to trafficking are not publicly available. Thus, even though we have tried to be as exhaustive as possible, one can assume that at least some studies are not included in the review.

## **3. Classify information**

Our initial list of trafficking-related information sources consisted of over 120 titles. In order to work with these diverse sources of information, we needed a classification system. Based on the different kinds and purposes of information, we categorized the literature as follows:

1. Research information
2. Database information
3. Legal information
4. Practitioner/Advocacy information
5. Policy information
6. Regional information

## 7. General information

The first five categories relate to Cambodia in particular. Regional information refers to research, policy or advocacy information relating to the Southeast Asian region. General information refers to papers, analyses or protocols regarding trafficking in general. The focus of this review is on research and database information (see Annex III). The other sources of information have been included only as far as they are found to play a role in the discourse on trafficking in Cambodia or to provide additional insights into trafficking more generally (see references).

It is, however, not always easy to determine what should be identified as research information and what should fall under other categories. The main criteria for identifying research information relate to data collection and analysis. We included reports and publications that are based on systematically collected data, or that systematically analyze or discuss the existing information in order to contribute to the knowledge about certain aspects or the complexity of the phenomenon. This broad definition of research allows for the inclusion of a broad variety of papers and reports, even those that do not necessarily live up to academic standards of research. It did, however, allow us to filter out reports that may pretend to be based on research, but lack any systematic approach and are more appropriately categorized as advocacy or policy documents.

### 4. Develop criteria for assessing the material

As pointed out above, doing a systematic review means being transparent as well as consistent in the review process. This implies that all studies are reviewed according to an explicit set of shared criteria. During the first consultation meeting, we discussed and elaborated upon an initial set of criteria, developed from specific research questions and discussions with experts within various international and local organizations working in the field of counter-trafficking. This resulted in an elaborate criteria spreadsheet, according to which all studies included in this review were assessed.<sup>87</sup>

#### Review Criteria

**Background:** year, research organization, donor organization, objectives, definitions

**Design:** research type, methodology, data collection, timeframe, transparency

**Demographics:** age, ethnicity, gender

**Scope of the research:** total number of informants (N), N by gender, N by informant type

**Geography:** focus (national/international), research location by province and country

**Sector:** sex work, beer promotion, karaoke, massage, begging, domestic work, vending, adoption, marriage, fishing, logging, construction, agriculture, factory work

**Thematic information:** means (recruitment), migration movements, labor, sexual exploitation, risk factors, facilitating factors, health

**Interventions:** overview, prevention, protection, recovery, reintegration, legal framework, law enforcement, justice

**Results:** type (descriptive, numbers, theory), conclusions, recommendations

<sup>87</sup> Those who wish to obtain a copy of the criteria spreadsheet may contact The Asia Foundation.

## **5. Provide an overview of the trafficking situation**

This overview of the trafficking situation should not be read as a summary of all relevant material or as a kind of “final judgment” on which studies are “good” and “bad”. Instead, we aim to synthesize findings on the basis of an assessment of:

- The approaches, perspectives and debates in relation to research on trafficking in Cambodia
- The main facts, patterns and factors as reflected in the body of available research literature

Considering the diversity of the studies, and the different outcome measures used in them, it is not possible to do a proper meta-analysis of the findings of the included studies. However, it is possible to come up with a descriptive summary of the similarities and differences among the studies and their outcomes, taking into account the methodological quality of the studies. Where possible, we make use of tables to provide a systematic and consistent record of information (Boaz et al 2002: 5-6).

While the consultants’ experience with and knowledge base of research on trafficking greatly helped to speed up the review process, it proved difficult to systematically explore all possible elements that comprise the phenomenon of trafficking. Considering limitations of time and resources, it was not possible to systematically describe changes over time; to systematically analyze the relationship between trafficking and ethnicity, health or drug use; or to assess the legal framework and prosecution cases.

## **6. Define gaps and suggest recommendations for future research**

On the basis of a systematic overview of what we know about trafficking and the areas of interest among stakeholders, as identified during the first consultative phase, we identified gaps in information. Which questions remain unanswered? What information do we need to further our understanding of the problem and to properly address it? What can we learn from research conducted in other countries and regions? After identifying the gaps, we address the issue of how to fill these in terms of recommendations for future research.

At a second consultative meeting, we presented and discussed the major findings of the review, the gaps in information and the recommendations for future research. In this way, we obtained valuable input from stakeholders, which was included in this final report.

### ***Annex III – List of Reviewed Studies***

<b>ID</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Month</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Org1</b>	<b>Other Org.</b>	<b>Pages</b>	<b>Type</b>
001f	Prostitution Survey Results	1994	Feb.	CWDA	CWDA		4	1
001	The Trafficking and Prostitution of Children in Cambodia: A Situation Report 1995	1995	Dec.	Palan, Anugraha	UNICEF		32	1
001b	Child Prostitution and Trafficking in Cambodia: A New Problem	1995	Oct.	Krousar Thmey			8	1
001c	Notes on the March-April 1995 Rapid Appraisal of the Human Rights Vigilance of Cambodia on Child Prostitution and Trafficking	1995		Vigilance	Vigilance		6	1
001d	Combating Women and Children and Child Prostitution: A Rapid Appraisal	1995	April	Vigilance	Vigilance		5	1
001e	Report on the Child Prostitution and Child Trafficking in Cambodia	1995	Nov.	CCPCR	CCPCR		5	1
001a	List of Case Studies of Children Prostitution	1995	Nov.	SKIP	SKIP			2
004	Regaining Honour	1996		Gray, Laurence; Gourley, Steve; Paul, Delia	WV			1
015	Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Women and Children in Cambodia. Personal Narratives: A Psychological Perspective	1996	Jan.	Physicians for Human Rights	Physicians for Human Rights		31	1
005	Trafficking of Cambodian Women and Children to Thailand	1997	Oct.	Derks, Annuska	IOM		54	1
006a	Cambodian and Vietnamese Sex Workers along the Thai-Cambodian Border	1997	March	GAATW/IOM/CWD A	GAATW	IOM, CWDA	11	1
006b	Cambodian and Vietnamese Women and Children in Detention for Illegal Entry into Thailand	1997	March	GAATW/IOM/CWD A	GAATW	IOM, CWDA	13	1
007	Report on the Problem of Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking in Cambodia	1997	May	Commission on Human Rights & Reception of Complaints	National Assembly, RGC		28	1
068	The Case of Trafficking in Women for Sexual Exploitation, Paper presented at the Regional Conference on "Illegal Labor Movements: The Case of Trafficking in Women and Children", Mekong Region Law Center	1997	Nov.	Sin, Kim Sean; Barr, Ashley	Mekong Regional Law Center		38	1
008	Trafficking of Vietnamese Women and Children to Cambodia	1998a	March	Derks, Annuska	IOM	CAS	54	1
009	Reintegration of Victims of Trafficking in Cambodia	1998b	Oct.	Derks, Annuska	IOM	CAS	54	1

010	A Preliminary Report of a Research on Traffic in Women in Cambodia	1998		CWDA	CWDA		14	1
011	Cambodian Labour Migration to Thailand: A Preliminary Assessment. Working Paper 11	1999	June	Chan, Sophal & So, Sovannarith	CDRI		15	1
012	Trafficking of Women and Children in Phnom Penh	1999		Lorn, Trob	RUPP		54	1
013	Study on the Current Programmes, Existing Mechanisms of Coordination and Networking Among Relevant NGOs and Provincial Government Department Working on the Issue of Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children	1999		Guzman, Mary Ann D.; Yang, Daravuth	CNCC			1
014	Labour Force and Migration in Cambodia 1996	1999	Feb.	Chinta, L	National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning			1
017	Report on Sexually Exploited and Abused Children: A Qualitative Assessment of their Health Needs and Services Available to Them in Selected Provinces and Cities in Cambodia	1999		CCPCR	CCPCR	UNESCAP	73	1
019	Crossing Borders Crossing Realities: The Vulnerability of Vietnamese Sex Workers in Cambodia	1999		CARAM Cambodia	Tearfund	Vrije University	34	1
070	Report on Special Activities of Human Rights and Research on Causes of the Prostitution in Cambodia	1999	Jan.		ADHOC	DanChurch Aid	37	1
020	Cross-border Migration and HIV/AIDS Vulnerability at the Thai-Cambodia Border Aranyprathet and Khlong Yai	2000	March	Chantavanich, Supang; Beesey, Allan; Amornthip, Preweenja; Premjai, Shakti	Asian Research Center for Migration, Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University		246	1
050	When the Stars Are Up: Life and Work of Sex Workers in Koh Kong	2000	June	Greenwood, Zoe	Care	Bahap, FHI, USAID	45	1
022	Database on Sexual Abused, Trafficking and Exploitation of Children	2000		ECPAT	ECPAT	SCN Co	32	2
023	The Future of Southeast Asia: Challenges of Child Sex Slavery and Trafficking in Cambodia	2001		Perrin, Benjamin	The Future Group		174	1
024	Children's Work, Adult's Play: Child Sex Tourism - The Problem in Cambodia	2001	Sept.	Nuon, Rithy Niron; Yit, Viriya; Gray, Laurence	World Vision	Ministry of Tourism	94	1
025	Living in the Shadows: Children Trafficking in the Ethnic Vietnamese Community in Poipet, Cambodia	2002	Aug.	Farrington, Anneka	IOM		74	1

026	Review and Assessment of the Situation of the Returned Cambodian Children and Women Trafficked to Thailand and of the Assistance and Reintegration Mechanisms in Cambodia	2002	Jan.	Margallo, Sonia; Lath, Poch	IOM	AusAID	136	1
027	Abuses Related to the International Adoption Process in Cambodia: Briefing Paper	2002	Jan.	Licadho	Licadho		5	1
028	Government and NGO Response to Counter Trafficking of Women and Children in Cambodia: Review of Programmes, Funders and Programmatic Gaps	2002	March	Preece, Shelly	TAF		26	1
029	Measuring the Number of Trafficked Women in Cambodia: 2002, Part-I of a Series	2002	Nov.	Steinfatt, Thomas; Baker, Simon; Beesey, Allan	The Office to Combat and Monitor Trafficking, U.S. State Department		19	1
030	Report on Cambodia Child Labour Survey 2001	2002	Sept.	National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning	ILO-IPEC		137	1
031	Surveys on the Behaviors and Attitudes of Tourists and Foreign Clients with Sex-Abused Children and Young Women, Kingdom of Cambodia 2001-2002	2002		Thomas, Frédéric; Pasnik, Florence	AIDéTous		14	1
032	Rapid Assessment on Child Labour Employment in the Border Area between Thailand and Cambodia Sraskaew, Chantaburi and Trad Province	2003		Angsuthanasombat, Kannika; Petchote, Jiravool; Nop, Vanna; Vann, Sokunthea	UNICEF	Chulalongkorn University	57 excl. annex	1
033	Labour Migration to Thailand and the Thai-Cambodian Border	2003		ADI	CCC-ADI			1
035	Measuring the Number of Trafficked Women and Children in Cambodia: A Direct Observation Field Study, Part-III of a Series	2003	Oct.	Steinfatt, Thomas	University of Miami, RUPP	AusAid	30	1
036	Gender, Human Trafficking, and the Criminal Justice System in Cambodia	2003	Dec.	Ly Vuchita; Menh, Navy	ACIL	ARCPPT, AusAid	75	1
038	Sex Trafficking in Cambodia (Working Paper 122)	2003		Douglas, Leviseda	Monash Asia Institute, Monash University		21	1
034	Statistic of Deportation and Repatriation Through Poipet Border, 2001-2002	2003		CCHDO	CCHDO	UNICEF	5	2
037	Database Report on Children Trafficked from Cambodia to Thailand, 1 September 2000 - 31 March 2003	2003		MoSALVY/IOM	MoSALVY	IOM, AusAID	13	2
041	Needs Assessment and Situational Analysis of Migration and Trafficking From Svay Rieng Province, Cambodia to Vietnam for Begging	2004	Feb.	IOM	IOM	U.S. Dep. of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration	37	1

042	Alternative Care for Trafficked Women and Children	2004		Kavoukis, Sophie; Horsley, Anne	IOM	U.S.gvt, PRM	34	1
043	Preventing Trafficking of Women: A Study of Origin and Vulnerability Factors for Trafficking Victims and Direct Sex Workers in Four Cambodia Cities	2004	Dec.	Arensen, Lisa	PACT	U.S. Embassy	60	1
044	Child Recovery Center: Intentions Versus Realities	2004		Vijghen, John	COSCAM		26	1
045	The Ministry of Women's and Veterans Affairs (MoWVA) Counter Trafficking Information Campaign Stakeholder Analysis of Six Provinces: Preliminary Results and Recommendations	2004	March	MoWVA/IOM	MoWVA	IOM, USAID	39	1
046	Moving Forward: Secondary Data Review of Sending and Receiving Areas and Employment Sectors in Prevention of Trafficking Children and Women in Cambodia	2004	Feb.	Harrison, Shane; Khou, Somatheavy	ILO-IPEC		72	1
047	The Role of Victim Support Agencies in the Criminal Justice Response to Human Trafficking	2004		ARPPT	ARPPT	AusAID		1
048	Phantom Cities and Other Fictions: A Critique of AFESIP's Ivory Tower Approach to Research on Trafficking in Women and Children, Part-IV of a Series	2004	June	Steinfatt, Thomas	University of Miami, RUPP		39	1
049	Child Domestic Worker Survey Phnom Penh-2003	2004	March	National Institute of Statistics	Ministry of Planning	ILO-IPEC	87	1
051	Survey Report on Cross Border Labor Migration and Trafficking Banteay Mean Chey Province	2004	Sept.	Heng, Chamroen; Thida, Khus	ILO-IPEC	PDoSALVY, SILAKA	69	1
052	Research Report on Beer Promotion Girls in Phnom Penh, Cambodia	2004a	Sept.	Catalla, Rebecca F.	ILO-IPEC	Crossroads	97	1
053	Research Report on Direct Sex Workers in Sihanoukville Municipality, Cambodia	2004b	Sept.	Catalla, Rebecca F.	ILO-IPEC	Crossroads	95	1
054	Research Report on Hotel & Guesthouse Workers, Siem Reap, Cambodia	2004c	Sept.	Catalla, Rebecca F.	ILO-IPEC	Crossroads	98	1
055	Research Report: Demand-Side of Trafficking in Three Service Sectors in Cambodia	2004d	Sept.	Catalla, Rebecca F.	ILO-IPEC	Crossroads	58	1
056	A Response to Steinfatt's Estimates of the Prostitute Population in Cambodia (2002-2003)	2004		Swingle, Joseph; Kapoor, Aarti	Afesip		17 + 6	
069	Life Histories and Current Circumstances of Female Sex Workers in Cambodia	2004	May	White, Joanna, Lim Sidedine, Ke Kantha Meala	CAS		62	1
039	Database Report on Children Trafficked from Cambodia to Thailand, 1 September 2000 - 31 December 2003	2004		MoSALVY/IOM	MoSALVY	IOM, AusAID	14	2
040	Summary of Reports from the IOM/MoSVY on Returnees from Thailand, from 1st January to 30th June 2004	2004		MoSVY/IOM	MoSVY	IOM	13	2
057	Impact of Closing Svay Pak: Study of Police and International NGOs Assisted Interventions in Svay Pak, Kingdom of Cambodia	2005	Jan.	Thomas, Frédéric	COSECAM	AIDéTous	46	1

058	Gender Analysis of the Pattern of Human Trafficking into and through Koh Kong Province	2005	Jan.	Preece, Shelly & LSCW Researchers	LSCW	British Embassy, Oxfam GB, Novib	117	1
059	Trafficking of Cambodian Women and Children: Report of the Fact-Finding in Malaysia	2005	Aug.	CWCC	CWCC	Dan Church Aid	38	
061	The New Practices of Prostitution	2005	June	So, Sokbunthet	COSECAM		11	1
062	Situation Analysis of Paedophilia in Sihanoukville: Study of Perceived Demand for Sex in Sihanoukville	2005	June	Gyer, Judith von	COSECAM	Village Focus International	60	1
063	Report on the Return of Cambodian Trafficking Victims from Malaysia, June 2003 - July 2005	2005		Meer, Pieter van der; Chan, Kanha; Ung, KimKanika	IOM		14	1
064	Goods & Girls: Trade Across Borders, Border Research #3, Poipet 2004	2005		Vijghen, John; Khun, Sithon	ZOA Refugee Care, Norwegian People's Aid, Cambodian Hope Organization, IOM, ECR-Group, Care, Cosecam		26	1
065	Reintegration Assistance for Trafficked Women and Children in Cambodia - A Review	2005	Sept.	Arensen, Lisa	TAF		63	1
060a	The Return and Reintegration of Victims of Trafficking from Cambodia to Thailand 01 July 2004 - 30 March 2005	2005		MoSVY/IOM	MoSVY	IOM	30 (a+b)	2
060b	Repatriation from Cambodia to Vietnam of Vietnamese Victims of Trafficking from 15 May 1999 - 30 March 2005	2005		MoSVY/IOM	MoSVY	IOM		2
066	Police and the Courts: Attitudes and Knowledge About Sexual Trafficking and Prostitution in Cambodia: Survey Results and Discussion.	n.d.		Ramage, Ian; Miller, Erica	CWCC		34	1
067	Caring for Children from Commercially Sexually Exploitative Situations: Current Practices in Cambodia and Recommendations for a Model of Care	n.d.		Arensen, Lisa; Bunn, Mary; Knight, Karen	Hagar		80	1



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