Sex, Abuse and Childhood

A study about knowledge, attitudes and practices relating to child sexual abuse, including in travel and tourism, in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam








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Sex, Abuse, and Childhood

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www.childsafetourism.org
childsafetourism@wvi.org

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BCC	Behaviour Change Communication
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CPN	Child Protection Network
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
FGI/D	Focus Group Interview/Discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMS	Greater Mekong Sub-region
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
II	Individual Interview
IO	International Organisation
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organisation
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (Vietnam)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
STD/I	Sexually Transmitted Disease/Infection
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation

Glossary and Working Definitions of Terms

Abuse » *Any action (or non-action) that is not accidental and hurts or puts a person in danger.*

Adolescent » *Adolescence starts at the beginning of puberty and finishes when the identity and behaviour of an adult have been acquired. This period of development generally corresponds to when a child is 10 years old until he or she reaches 19 years old.*

Age of consent » *The legal age at which a person may voluntarily consent to sexual activity with another person.*

Child » *A child is defined as every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.*

Child abuse » *Child abuse is any action (or non-action) that is not accidental and hurts a child or puts a child in danger. There are four major categories of child abuse: neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse and sexual abuse.*

Child labour » *Child labour includes all kinds of work that exploits a child; children directly or indirectly involved in heavy, hazardous and dangerous work, which is likely to be harmful to physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development of children; or having to work at below the minimum age for work (15 years), which deprives them of their childhood, opportunities and the time necessary for study, recreation and entertainment (International Labour Organisation).*

Child sexual abuse » *Child sexual abuse occurs when someone involves a child in a sexual activity by using their power over them or taking advantage of their trust. Child sexual abuse includes all forms of unwanted sexual behaviour. This can involving touching or even no contact at all.*

Child sexual exploitation » *Child sexual exploitation can be broadly described as 'child sexual abuse' where something is given in exchange for the sexual activity. This may not necessarily be commercial as the 'thing' given can be shelter, food, drugs etc. This form of exploitation can occur physically as well as through technology e.g. internet or phone.*

Child sexual abuse in travel and tourism » *Child sexual abuse by tourists, travellers or foreign residents who commit child sexual abuse in the country or countries in which they are visiting or living.*

Child trafficking » *The recruitment, transport, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation.*

Duty bearers » *People who hold positions of authority, leadership and influence, particularly in relation to children's issues.*

Ethnic groups » *A social group that has a common national or cultural tradition (whereas a minority group is defined as a small group of people within a community or country, differing from the main population in race, religion, language or political persuasion (Oxford Dictionary).*

Exploitation » *Making use of a situation to gain unfair advantage for oneself.*

Grooming » *A process of building a trusting relationship with a child and his or her carers in order to abuse. First, the abuser observes and targets the child. Then, the abuser builds the child's trust by sharing their interests, giving them a lot of attention, offering them gifts and being their friend. As the abuser builds their relationship, they begin setting up secrets with the child to make sure the child will not disclose the abuse. Timing can vary but the abuser eventually escalates the sexualisation of the relationship. This can include exposure to sexual materials so that the child becomes 'desensitised'. The abuser progresses to sexual touching and other sexually abusive behaviours.*

Peers » *A group of people, usually of similar age, background and social status, with whom a person associates and who are likely to influence the person's beliefs.*

Street and working children » *A street child is a child who a) is living on the streets (this can be with their family), b) is living in slum houses, and/or c) has been abandoned or has run away from home.[1] A working street child is either: a) a child who spends most of their time on the streets but returns home on a regular basis), or b) children on the street who are engaged in some kind of economic activity (but most go home at the end of the day, they might attend school and they belong to a family) (UNICEF). A working child is a child engaged in income earning activities, full-time or part-time, or as an apprentice.*

Travelling sex offender » *Tourists, travellers or foreign residents who commit child sexual abuse in the country or countries in which they are visiting or living.*

Vulnerable » *A person or group is considered vulnerable if they are exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally (Oxford Dictionary).*

Young people or youth » *These terms characterise the period of transition from childhood to adulthood and generally include people from 15 to 24 years of age.[2]*

[1] UNICEF Bangladesh (2009), Protection of Children Living on the Streets, p.1

[2] Based on the UN Secretariat's interchangeable usage of the terms for statistical purposes, with the recognition that the meaning of the term 'youth' varies according to economic, social and cultural contexts in difference societies around the world.

Executive Summary

Overview

This report presents an overview of the findings of four separate studies conducted in vulnerable communities in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam on knowledge, attitudes and practices related to child sexual abuse, including in travel and tourism. The studies were undertaken to contribute to the design and conceptual platform of Project Childhood Prevention Pillar. The research provides a general understanding of the awareness, understanding and behaviours in communities around the issue of child sexual abuse.

The introductory chapter provides background information on Project Childhood Prevention Pillar, the sexual abuse of children in travel and tourism, and known trends in the sexual exploitation of children in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) drawing on existing literature. It also outlines the rationale, objectives, methodology, ethical considerations, and limitations of the report. A snapshot is provided of each of the eight selected research sites.

The second chapter describes how children and adults understand concepts relating to childhood, child rights, sexuality, abuse, and related subjects. It also discusses children's knowledge of sex, as well as the sex education and communications children receive and access informing them about sexual abuse.

The third chapter of the report addresses how adults' and children's perceptions and understandings of child abuse, particularly child sexual abuse, translated into actual practices and behaviour, how this behaviour was related to forces in the environment of the children, and how individuals and society viewed and responded to these practices and incidents of abuse.

Chapter four reviews additional risks to children of sexual abuse, including by tourists and travellers, pertaining to their environmental, political and broader situation. It also examines what internal and external circumstances and conditions increase or reduce their vulnerability to such abuse. Obstacles hindering proper interventions as well as opportunities to reach children with information and support are also presented.

The fifth and final chapter sets out the overall conclusions of the research for the main components of the study, namely the knowledge, the attitudes and practices, and the vulnerabilities and options for interventions by the program. Strategic recommendations for effective interventions are also included. A bibliography and two appendices complete the report.

Background

Project Childhood was an AUD 7.5 million Australian Government initiative to combat the sexual abuse of children in tourism in the GMS, specifically in the countries of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam. The three and a half year program (2011-2014) brought together the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and World Vision to address the serious issue of sexual abuse of children in tourism. It took a dual prevention and protection approach.

In the Protection Pillar, UNODC worked with law enforcement agencies to protect children through strengthening law enforcement responses. In the Prevention Pillar, World Vision worked with governments, the private sector, and communities to prevent children from becoming victims of sexual abuse in tourism.

Research objectives

The principal strategy of Project Childhood Prevention Pillar in preventing the sexual abuse of children in the travel and tourism sector was to foster positive behaviour change and to create an enabling environment that increased the resilience of girls and boys to sexual predators and ensured that parents and families, duty bearers and community members could protect them. This was undertaken through communication interventions relevant to the cultural and social contexts of the target communities. In order to communicate messages effectively through relevant tools and interventions, the program required a strong conceptual platform including an overall understanding of the main views, attitudes and behaviours that made girls and boys vulnerable to sexual abuse. It also required a clear understanding of how vulnerable children, families and communities at large accessed and were influenced by the media in its various forms. Without this information, opportunities to deliver effective messages through relevant channels would be based on assumptions, creating the risk that messages may be lost or target groups may not be reached. This understanding was also integral to designing effective tools for intervention that were relevant to local communities and easily integrated, culturally and systemically, in a sustainable manner.

Methodology

This research aimed to inform Project Childhood Prevention Pillar on the knowledge, attitudes and practices of community members (including girls and boys, relatives of children and duty bearers) in regards to child sexual abuse, including by travellers and tourists. The following specific research questions guided the research. Including in the context of travel and tourism:

1. **What are the knowledge, attitudes and practices in the community in relation to child abuse and child protection?**
2. **What are the key views, attitudes, behaviours and practices that enable risk and vulnerability to child sexual abuse?**

3. **What are the key obstacles and opportunities to preventing child sexual abuse?**

4. **What are the existing resources, mechanisms and key channels of communicating, informing and educating children, families and communities on the sexual abuse of children?**

The Lao PDR research, which took place later than the other national research, also explored the following additional question:

5. **What part do financial motivations take in child exploitation and what obstacles and opportunities are there for Prevention Pillar to respond to this?**

The study utilised qualitative research methods, namely interviews, focus group discussions, observations and case reviews. The core research team developed the methodology during a five-day preparatory workshop. Field research took place over the course of two weeks including travelling time, with one week allocated to each main field site in each country.

Children were selected as the main source of information and efforts were made to contact children in diverse circumstances. Wherever possible, parents and duty bearers of the contacted children were interviewed to allow for triangulation. Other stakeholders like heads of police and government administrators at the local level were interviewed using semi-structured questionnaires or topic lists. Case studies were also collected, mainly from NGO staff, and were used to identify different scenarios for child sexual abuse. Ultimately, children made up a considerable proportion of respondents in the study. This appears to be a result of the researchers' methodological approach, whereby most children participated in the research by means of focus group interviews, whereas most adults were interviewed individually. This research was undertaken between 2011 and 2012.

The researchers took the standard precautions to protect the safety and confidentiality of respondents, including obtaining permission to meet and interview children. They also applied specific measures to avoid harming children who, in any way, could be detrimentally affected by the study. Limitations of the research included time constraints, which limited the research methodology that could be used and also prevented some issues from being explored in greater detail. Time constraints may also have led to opportunistic sampling, especially as working and street children were much more difficult to interview than school children. While the limited scope of the research prevents generalisations beyond each study site, the study has generated a wealth of information and identified a number of striking trends.

Key Findings

Understanding child sexual abuse

Most respondents had a basic, limited understanding of child abuse and child rights. Both adults and children understood child sexual abuse narrowly as the penetrative rape of girls. The majority of children and adults that were interviewed confused the legal age of consent with the legal age of marriage and perceived this mainly as a form of control over, rather than a protective mechanism of, children. Judgements of sexual abuse often depended on certain circumstances, including the age of the sexual partner, the person's relationship to the child, and whether or not the girl in question was a virgin. Vocational students, working and street children, and private school students appeared to have a deeper understanding of the issue than public school students. Girls were generally seen to be more vulnerable to abuse than boys. Indeed, sexual abuse was not widely perceived as something that could happen to boys, which has implications for the identification of and response to sexual abuse of boys.

In short, many adults and children appeared to lack a sufficient understanding of child sexual abuse and practical ways to identify, prevent or respond to it. Parents demonstrated the lowest levels of understanding on the issue of child sexual abuse, while few children identified anal sex, oral sex, participation in/exposure to pornography or masturbation as abusive sexual acts. The general understanding appeared to be that sexual abuse was something that originated from outside the family and community, especially where sexual abuse of boys was concerned. Yet, at the same time, grooming techniques, used by both by foreign and local sex offenders, were rarely mentioned as a modus operandi or form of abuse.

Researchers identified five main sources of education about sex and sex-related issues for children: media/digital technology, friends and peers, schools, public information campaigns, and personal experience/observation. Despite children identifying parents as being the most important influence in their lives, parents were not found to be a major source of information, and many children expressed fear of confiding with their parents about intimate issues, including sex. Furthermore, school children received information about anatomy and reproductive health at schools and from NGOs, but rarely received more detailed information focussing specifically on child sexual abuse prevention strategies.

A striking pattern found throughout the research was parents' and teachers' resistance to providing sex education to children for fear that this would encourage sexual experimentation and inappropriate behaviour. In spite of this, many children in the study locations in Thailand and Vietnam were already engaging in sexual relationships. Children acquired a great deal of information about sex, accurate or otherwise, from informal channels such as peers, television, media and the internet.

Attitudes and practices

A number of attitudes, beliefs and practices were found in each of the research locations that could contribute to children's vulnerability to sexual abuse. These included taboos against discussing sexual issues openly, which prevented the dissemination of information and education about sexual abuse and how

to prevent it, gender inequality and hierarchical parent-child relationships contributing to a lack of empowering educational opportunities and lack of recognition for rights of children, especially female children; and a strong emphasis on female virginity and family honour and community reputation, which led to the widespread propensity to blame girls for 'rape' or any kind of sexual impropriety and hamper appropriate responses to child sexual abuse by creating a culture of silence and denial.

The research confirmed the strong cultural importance placed on girls across the region to remain virgins before marriage, although in practice, many children reported having romantic or sexual relationships. Girls were often blamed, stigmatised and marginalised for pre-marital sexual behaviour, even when they were victims of abuse. Additionally, the emphasis on preservation of girls' honour meant it was important to pretend that any sexual activity that did occur was unintentional or occurred without consent, the latter of which may contribute to the risk of unsafe sexual practices and further abuse.

Poverty, the need to finance educations, and health issues were some of the major reasons that children engaged in commercial sex. Furthermore, in all research locations, children were expected to obey and respect their parents. Kinship obligations and the need to support their families were frequently cited as the reason girls entered the commercial sex sector.

Peer influence was also found to be a contributing factor, especially where children encouraged their friends to engage in commercial sexual exchanges. It was also found that for some young people, selling sex for money was also a way of keeping up with consumer culture. This could take the form of conventional commoditisation of sex, or it could take the form of more subtle "material exchanges" involving gifts of consumer goods. Cases of grooming, often involving financial support and material gifts, were also documented across the research locations.

Homosexuality was stigmatised and considered socially unacceptable in all study sites, with the exception of Lao PDR and Pattaya, Thailand, and sexual exploitation of boys was not considered to be a real threat or issue. This lack of awareness and recognition presents a major risk to boys who are in danger of, or suffering from, abuse.

In all locations, the influence of media and digital technology on the attitudes and sexual behaviour of children was evident. Supervision of children's use of digital technology was practically non-existent. Parents' and duty bearers' main concern was that children might become addicted to video games or exposed to pornographic material. Few parents or children indicated awareness about the use of grooming techniques on the internet by sex offenders and the risks that were posed by this practice. The concept of a ''helpline'' as a channel for children to access confidential information and to get advice to deal with their problems was mostly unknown.

Responses to abuse varied across the different research locations. Where great significance was placed on reputation, children often did not report abuse to adults as a result of guilt and shame, parents preferred not to report abuse to authorities, and authorities tended to deny the existence of child abuse within their

communities. Reported hindrances to appropriate responses on the part of duty bearers included lack of resources, lack of coordination between departments and units, lack of knowledge of laws and procedures, lack of cooperation from families, difficult logistical barriers, and the tendency to treat child abuse as a family or civil matter.

Obstacles and opportunities for interventions

A number of factors were identified as contributing to children's vulnerability to sexual abuse, including financial difficulties, migration, the living environment, parental absence, physically or emotionally abusive household situations, as well as substance-related addictions in the family. Although some street children had access to day care shelter and food, the shelters could also be places for children to be recruited into exploitative practices by other street children or adults.

Travel and tourism comprised another risk factor contributing to children's vulnerability. Especially where children worked in occupations such as street vending, as tour guides, or in the service industry, proximity to travellers could make them highly vulnerable to grooming and sexual exploitation. Yet, it was found that children and adults in the study did not in general perceive tourists and travellers as threats.

Although child protection issues appeared to be increasing in prominence on national political agendas, in many cases, the majority of funding sources for child protection and prevention efforts derived from foreign sponsors and local civil society organisations rather than the national government. Thus, while researchers found child protection systems in place across all the research locations, respondents expressed that the degree of effectiveness of the structures was hindered by a variety of issues, including: the inadequate training of NGO and social workers; denial of the existence of child abuse and child sexual exploitation by authorities; limited availability of services in more remote locations; the tendency towards extra-judicial settlements and treating child sexual abuse as a civil matter; alleged police and local level corruption; lack of police resources, coordination between departments and units, and knowledge of laws and procedures; logistical challenges to responding to abuse cases (e.g. distance, transportation, human resources); failure to take child sexual abuse seriously and; local customs and beliefs.

Nevertheless, the research revealed many promising opportunities for intervention. Although many teachers and parents were opposed to talking in detail about sexual issues, schools were identified as important vehicles to relay information on sexual abuse. Existing NGOs and community-based organisations could also be harnessed for conveying IEC messages about child protection to wider audiences. Campaigns directly targetting parents could prove highly successful in improving communication between parents and children, decreasing taboos about discussing sexual issues, and informing parents about the risks posed by media and digital technologies. Hotlines and helplines appeared to be under-utilised and could become powerful tools of communication and awareness raising. Similarly, children's widespread access to the internet could also be employed as a way of reaching them with effective messages and strategies of preventing child sexual abuse.

Recommendations

1. Prevention interventions should take an all-inclusive approach; providing children and their parents and communities with the information, skills and strategies to protect children from all kinds of sexual abuse – whether committed by a stranger, foreigner, local person, friend or family member.

2. Prevention interventions should not only focus on child sexual abuse by travellers/tourists in tourist hubs, but also by locals and foreigners in remote and indigenous areas where the community cannot be easily accessed by competent authorities and where child sex offenders are reportedly increasingly targetting children.

3. Risks and vulnerabilities of children to sexual abuse cannot be summarised to one specific situation, such as poverty, the presence of tourism etc. Numerous factors, including the living environment and economic context, strongly influence behaviour. This means attitudes and practices must be observed from a holistic and dynamic perspective. Regular situational analysis will be required to identify behaviour change. Preventative approaches and tools must be reviewed and reconsidered on a regular basis in relation to these dynamics rather than 'top-down' perceptions and impressions made.

4. More attention should be paid to the sexual abuse of boys which is less known and has been less researched, especially as boys are more vulnerable due to increased stigma surrounding homosexuality. More research also needs to be conducted on changing child sex offender tactics, such as use of intermediaries, and access to children through pseudo-care work.

5. Children should be targeted in prevention interventions and provided education to help them recognise signs of abuse (including grooming) and encourage them to disclose information to a trusted adult if they are being abused.

6. Prevention interventions should reach out to both school-going and disadvantaged children (street and working children, and children with disabilities) who may not be receiving formal education or have access to child rights messages and prevention services.

7. Media and technology play an increasingly important role in children's lives, both as a source of entertainment and information. Any prevention information and messaging should be conveyed to children via their favourite communications platforms. More traditional information techniques such as leaflets, pamphlets and posters may be more appropriate for street and working children, who have less access to internet and phones. Existing child helplines should be promoted, especially in remote areas.

8. Parents should be targetted in preventative interventions and provided with the information and skills to protect and communicate effectively with their girls and boys. Tools for caregivers should include understanding and recognising signs of sexual abuse.

9. Parents and duty bearers are not using new technologies as frequently and with as much ease as children, making them sometimes unaware of children's interests and practices. Parents and duty bearers must be updated on children's tools and communication channels, particularly as they can dramatically change children's behaviour or endanger their lives.

10. Campaigns are needed among visiting travellers and tourists to reduce activity that keeps children on the streets and especially vulnerable to sexual abuse, such as giving to begging children or buying from child vendors.

11. Interventions at community level should work in cooperation with, and in support of, existing local child protection mechanisms. These mechanisms are already integrated within communities and cooperation would also offer a form of local capacity building and contribute to the sustainability of the program.

12. Besides providing information and education, interventions should also include advocacy with relevant high-level jurisdictional entities to amend and enforce criminal justice responses to child sex offending, rather than allow civil settlements such as financial compensation or marriage proposals, as well as to ensure better allocation of resources and training to local authorities entrusted with responding to cases of child sexual abuse.

United Nations Convention on the

Rights of the Child

Article 34

States Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, States Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent:

a. The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;

b. The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices;

c. The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and material.

Chapter One

Introduction

One: Introduction

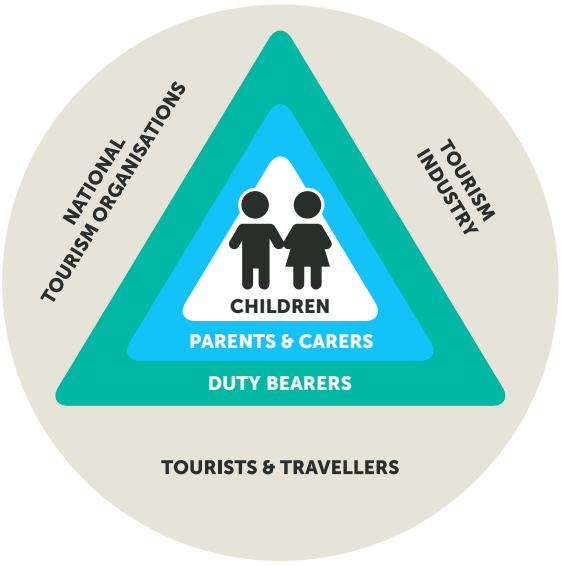
Background

This report presents an overview of the findings of four separate studies conducted in vulnerable communities in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam on knowledge, attitudes and practices related to child sexual abuse, including in travel and tourism. The studies were undertaken to contribute to the design and conceptual platform of Project Childhood Prevention Pillar.

Project Childhood

Project Childhood was an AUD 7.5 million Australian Government initiative to combat the sexual abuse of children in tourism in the Greater Mekong Sub-region, specifically in the countries of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam. The three and a half year program (2011-2014) brought together the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and World Vision to address the serious issue of sexual abuse of children in tourism. It took a dual prevention and protection approach.

In the Protection Pillar, UNODC worked with law enforcement agencies to protect children through strengthening law enforcement responses. In the Prevention Pillar, World Vision worked with governments, the private sector, and communities to prevent children from becoming victims of sexual abuse in tourism.



The Prevention Pillar targeted a range of key actors with central responsibility for keeping children safe from travelling child sex offenders. Integrally, this began with the children themselves, their parents and carers, and community members (or 'duty bearers') with responsibility for child protection (Component 1). At the next level of intervention, existing child helplines were strengthened in order to enhance national information and communication mechanisms

for vulnerable girls and boys (Component 2). The travelling public and the tourism industry were called upon through a Child Safe Tourism campaign and tailored tourism sector training to act in more responsible ways to help contribute to a child safe and protective environment (Component 3). Finally, the relevant government stakeholders were supported in improving their responses to preventing the sexual abuse of girls and boys in travel and tourism (Component 4). The different interventions at the varying levels were linked through upwards and downwards leveraging of results, learning, data and action (Component 5). The studies summarised in this report involving children, parents and carers, duty bearers and community members provided a strong conceptual platform for program interventions. The publication of these findings is an expression of the Prevention Pillar's core intention to sustainably and effectively improve ongoing efforts to protect children from sexual abuse in tourism. It is hoped that these findings will continue to inform further programming, research and continued efforts to curb this egregious abuse of children.

Sexual abuse of children in travel and tourism

For Project Childhood Prevention Pillar and this report, the phrase *'sexual abuse of children in travel and tourism'* is preferred over alternatives such as *'child sex tourism'* because:

- **The term *'child sex tourism'* gives insufficient reference to the criminal, exploitative and tragically harmful impact of this serious form of abuse and so does not accord with a child-rights based approach.**
- **There is a criminal offence of 'child sexual abuse' in most countries, applicable to all persons regardless of nationality. Child sexual abuse can occur in various settings, including in the travel and tourism sector.**
- **There is a distinction between tourists, most of whom are law-abiding persons, and travelling sex offenders who abuse children. A travelling sex offender or perpetrator may be a tourist, an expatriate or a foreign resident that uses the travel and tourism environment to abuse a child.**

It is important to note that such distinctions may seem subtle and irrelevant when viewed from a distance. However, such distinctions in language can make a significant difference when communicating and understanding the realities of child sexual abuse and offender behaviour, across languages and cultures, with those directly responsible for protecting children. For example, it is much clearer to refer to terms relating to existing laws and protective mechanisms that are applicable to all without arbitrary distinction. Therefore, Project Childhood Prevention Pillar is guided foremost by the impact such language and terminology has on real children.

Over the last two decades, as awareness of child abuse has increased in countries like Australia, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (US), laws and systemic procedures to prevent and respond have strengthened.[3] As a result, potential child sex abusers are looking to gain easier access to children in other countries. The knowledge and reporting of their nationals travelling to abuse

[3] Countries such as the UK, US and Australia have passed stricter laws covering various forms child sexual offences including the new offence of 'grooming', and also have strict regulations about the post-conviction management of offenders. Strict vetting processes for any person who will be working close to children or other vulnerable persons have been put into place. Communities and the public are becoming more aware and educated about the risks of child sexual abuse through improved professional and institutional capacity of child protection systems, as well as better community understanding through public dialogue.

children in other countries, coupled with awareness of the tragic impact of this problem on children and communities, means that countries such as Australia, UK and US have a responsibility and duty to act.

There is no known direct link between an offender's origin and his or her willingness to engage in sexual acts with young children.[4] Some research suggests that a significant proportion of travelling child sex offenders in the GMS are of Asian origin,[5] although this is not reflected in official statistics of arrests and convictions. A number of reasons are put forward to explain this inconsistency. It has been suggested that the higher number of arrests of Caucasian Western men, as opposed to Asian perpetrators, may be linked to the fact that Western offenders tend to seek out children on the street while Asian offenders do so through more discreet networks.[6] Also, Western men are more noticeable in Asian cities, in general, and therefore those that offend are more easily caught. This, in turn, has attracted media attention and lobbying efforts by organisations based in Western countries. Western perpetrators, from countries such as Australia, US and UK and many others, are also more likely to be arrested due to the proactive stance taken by their governments to prosecute their nationals for committing child sexual abuse overseas. Over time, many programs that actively combat the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism receive funding from these same governments, thereby leading to a focus on their own nationals.[7] Research also suggests that travelling child sex offenders are primarily male, with the estimated ratio of female to male sex offenders being 1:10.[8] Females are typically identified as accomplices, acting in the enabling role of procuring children for abuse by a contact offender. It has been suggested that this role is often undertaken by women due to their relative ease of gaining a child's trust in comparison to men.[9]

For the purposes of this study, the issues of domestic tourism and sex offenders who travel and commit offences within their own national jurisdictions are excluded. A national who commits child sexual abuse in his/her own country should be charged with an offence of 'child sexual abuse'. To bring such offending under the umbrella of 'travelling child sexual abuse' impedes prosecution efforts and unnecessarily deflects from the abusive element of the crime. It follows that collaborative work on prevention and hard reduction should also accurately reflect such legal frameworks in the best interests of children.

Notwithstanding, a tourism industry that caters for national tourists can be directly or indirectly complicit in *enabling* child sexual exploitation. Therefore, domestic tourism destinations were examined within the broader context of Project Childhood Prevention Pillar in creating child safe tourism *environments*.

Trends within the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS)

South East Asia welcomed more than 92.7 million international visitor arrivals in 2013; this was an increase of 10% from 2012, making it the fastest growing sub-region in the world.[10] The major source market for all countries was from within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' (ASEAN) region, with a share of 45% in 2012.[11] In South East Asia, interregional flows are expected to further increase as countries prepare for the ASEAN single market, or ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), which will be fully implemented by 2015.[12]

[4] Putman-Cramer (2005), *Child Sex Tourism: Study of The Scope of the Problem and Evaluation of Existing Anti-Child Sex Tourism Initiatives*, COSECAM.

[5] Niron et al (2001), *Children's Work, Adults' Play: Child Sex Tourism – the Problem in Cambodia;* World Vision and Save The Children (February 2009), *Sex Offenders without Borders: An investigation into the sexual abuse and exploitation of children in Thailand, Cambodia and Burma in relation to travel and tourism.*

[6] The Protection Project, The Johns Hopkins University (2007) *International Child Sex Tourism: Scope of the Problem and Comparative Case Studies.*

[7] Putman-Cramer, C., (2005), *Child Sex Tourism: Study of The Scope of the Problem and Evaluation of Existing Anti-Child Sex Tourism Initiatives,* COSECAM.

[8] One possible explanation is the social tendency to dismiss the negative impact of a sexual relationship between a young boy and adult woman. People who would report a sexual relationship between a male adult and a female or male child may not report such a relationship between a female adult and a male child. Action Pour Les Enfants (February 2014), *Investigating Travelling Child Sex Offenders: An analysis of the trends and challenges in the field of child sexual abuse and exploitation in Cambodia.*

[9] Action Pour Les Enfants (February 2014), *Investigating Travelling Child Sex Offenders: An analysis of the trends and challenges in the field of child sexual abuse and exploitation in Cambodia.*

[10] UNWTO, World Tourism Barometer: http://www.innovasjonnorge.no/Documents/old/Documents/UNWTO_Barom14_01_Jan.pdf, last accessed 10 April 2014.

[11] Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 31 January 2014: http://www.asean.org/images/resources/2014/Jan/StatisticUpdate28Jan/Tourism%20Update/Table%2030.pdf, last accessed 12 April 2014.

[12] UNWTO, World Tourism Barometer: http://www.innovasjonnorge.no/Documents/old/Documents/UNWTO_Barom14_01_Jan.pdf, last accessed 10 April 2014.

The three key forms of tourism in the GMS are border tourism, regional tourism and domestic tourism. Leisure is the biggest reason for travel to the region, followed by business and visiting family. Religious purposes, study and volunteering make up the remaining reasons for visits.

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) forecasts South East Asia to be one of the most visited regions – with 187 million tourists tipped for 2030.[13] As tourism continues to grow rapidly in the region, the number of travellers with easy access to vulnerable children increases. A growing number of international business travellers are visiting South East Asia and there are large increases in the number of expatriates working, living and retiring in the region. Often, those away from home will seek commercial sex more readily. This has specific consequences and risks for child sexual abuse in destination countries, particularly in developing countries.[14] More recent research suggests that an increasing number of travelling sex offenders in the GMS come from other Asian countries.[15] While child sexual abuse in tourism is commonly reported in large cities, it is also emerging in new locations, including in remote and isolated areas.[16]

Regional mobility of vulnerable migrants also draws children, whether alone or with their families, to tourism destinations in the hope of making money. All such circumstances, coupled with the relatively low socio-economic status and situation of local populations, brings about a disturbing trend of child exploitation. It has been suggested that tourism destinations in the region are increasingly working to attract regional, primarily male, visitors through such services as 'night entertainment venues' or commercial sex venues.[17] Research shows that such visitors often have a preference for 'young, pretty and attractive girls' and engage in practices such as 'virginity-seeking'.[18] Additionally, a recent meta-analysis of the available research demonstrates a worrying trend that children in the region are entering the sex industry or being trafficked at an increasingly younger age.[19]

Different offenders employ different *modus operandi* to commit abuse against children, and travelling child sex offenders are frequently categorised into two distinct categories: situational and preferential. Situational offenders do not have an exclusive sexual inclination for children, but abuse by way of experimentation or through the anonymity and perceived immunity of being a traveller or tourist.[20] Preferential offenders display an active sexual preference for children and will seek out children to abuse.[21]

A *paedophile* may be considered one example or subcategory of a preferential offender, with a specific sexual inclination for pre-pubescent children. Lanning proposes a revised typology that places all sex offenders along a motivational continuum (situational to preferential) rather than into one of two categories, albeit with one pattern typically more dominant than the other. He also explains that law enforcement has frequently accepted offender categories and characteristics developed by therapists and criminologists, which are often 'developed after data collection *from* offenders *after* arrest or conviction and often reflect unsubstantiated information about pre-arrest behaviour. It is the pre-arrest or pre-identification behaviour of child molesters that is of most value to law enforcement'.[22]

[13] UNWTO (2013), *Tourism Towards 2030*.

[14] O'Connell Davidson, J (2004), 'Child Sex Tourism: An Anomalous Form of Movement?', *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, Vol. 12(1), pp. 31-46, 37.

[15] Save The Children (February 2009), *Sex Offenders without Borders: An investigation into the sexual abuse and exploitation of children in Thailand, Cambodia and Burma in relation to travel and tourism*.

[16] UNICEF (2011), *An Analysis of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Selected Provinces and Cities of Vietnam*. See also Action Pour Les Enfants (February 2014), *Investigating Travelling Child Sex Offenders: An analysis of the trends and challenges in the field of child sexual abuse and exploitation in Cambodia*.

[17] Peters, H (2007), *Sex, Sun and Heritage: Tourism Threats and Opportunities in South East Asia*, UNIAP and World Vision.

[18] Peters, H (2007), *Sex, Sun and Heritage: Tourism Threats and Opportunities in South East Asia*, UNIAP and World Vision.

[19] UNICEF-EAPRO (2012), *Child Maltreatment: Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences in the East Asia and Pacific Region: A Systematic Review of Research*. See also UNICEF (2011), *An Analysis of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Selected Provinces and Cities of Vietnam*.

[20] In Cambodia, it has been observed that Western offenders primarily commit street-based or opportunistic exploitation, whereas Cambodian and other Asian offenders primarily commit establishment-based exploitation. While opportunistic offenders will approach victims directly, Asian offenders (including Chinese, Japanese and Taiwanese) tend to keep away from obvious public areas and require intermediaries and/or access children in predefined locations such as hotels and brothels. Grillot (2005); Putman-Cramer, C. (2005).

[21] ECPAT International (2008), *Combating Child Sex Tourism: Questions and Answers*, p 12.

[22] Lanning, KV (2010), *Child Molesters: A Behavioural Analysis: For Professionals Investigating the Sexual Exploitation of Children*, 5th ed. National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, Washington, United States, http://www.missingkids.com/en_US/publications/NC70.pdf, last accessed 26 July 2011. p. 31.

Another typology of travelling sex offenders presented in a study by CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre)[23] provides yet more differentiated *modus operandi,* namely: 'opportunity instigation' (taking advantage of holiday environments to abuse children), 'self-contained abuse' (travelling abroad in the company of intended child victims), 'speculative exploring' (travelling abroad to locations where children are reported to be available for sex), 'informed networking' (arranging in advance to abuse children at a specific location), 'resident foreigner abuse' (abuse by foreigner resident in developing countries), 'pseudo-care work' (professionals and volunteers abusing the children with whom they work), 'Internet-facilitated offending overseas' (using the Internet to abuse children in foreign countries).[24] However, it is important to bear in mind that with all typologies, individuals do not always fit clearly into one category or another, and that the exploitation taking place may have many different facets.

It has been suggested that sexual exploitation of children is less visible in Thailand and Cambodia than it once was. However, this could also be an indication that the success of awareness-raising campaigns have forced the sexual exploitation of children to 'go underground', leading to the involvement of more third-party exploiters who act as intermediaries between victims and offenders. It could also be a consequence of the increasing use of new technologies (mobile phones, internet, etc.) by offenders to facilitate contact with their victims and third-party exploiters.[25]

There are numerous reasons why child sex offenders are attracted to South East Asia, including opportunism, rationalisation of behaviour as 'helping' a child or family economically, and a perceived or real situation of impunity. Across the region, girls and boys are vulnerable to sexual exploitation for a variety of factors. Participatory research conducted with over 400 girls and boys during 2007 and 2008 identified social factors such as poverty and marginalisation, as well as lack of family support, education, opportunity, and protective factors. Individual factors included rape, domestic violence and/or drug abuse.[26]

Worldwide, child sexual abuse is experienced by nearly one in five females and one in eleven males.[27] There is also a growing body of evidence on sexual abuse in the East Asia Pacific region that shows that for many young people, their first sexual experience is forced sex, while the data collated across the region in general shows that both male and female children are vulnerable to child sexual abuse.[28]

In Cambodia, research has shown that as many as 51.2% of girls and 1.9% of boys reported ever having been forced to have sex.[29] Another study found that 16.1% of children reported direct experience of genital touching by an adult after the age of nine and 1.2% reported direct experience of child rape by an adult.[30]

In Thailand, 11.9% of children in one study reported having experienced child sexual abuse,[31] while in another, 5.8% of respondents (4.9% of young women and 6.5% of young men) reported experiencing sexual abuse before the age of 16.[32] In general, the lifetime prevalence of either contact or non-contact child sexual abuse from probability samples has been found to range from 5.0%–32.8%, while the lifetime prevalence of either contact or non-contact child sexual abuse from convenience samples has been found to range from 17.1% among adolescents to 47% among prostituted women and girls.[33]

[23] The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre is part of the UK Government's National Crime Agency.

[24] Maalla M'jid, N., *Report of The Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography,* Human Rights Council, Twenty-second Session, Agenda Item 3, A/HRC/22/54 (24 December 2012, reissued for technical reasons on 23 January 2013).

[25] Save The Children (February 2009), *Sex Offenders without Borders: An investigation into the sexual abuse and exploitation of children in Thailand, Cambodia and Burma in relation to travel and tourism.*

[26] World Vision International (undated), *Kids understand how other kids hurt: Children and adolescents speak out about sexual exploitation.*

[27] UNICEF-EAPRO (2012), *Child Maltreatment: Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences in the East Asia and Pacific Region: A Systematic Review of Research.*

[28] UNICEF-EAPRO (2012), *Child Maltreatment: Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences in the East Asia and Pacific Region: A Systematic Review of Research.*

[29] The Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports, UNICEF and UNESCO (2004), *Cambodia national youth risk behaviour survey.* Phnom Penh: Kingdom of Cambodia. Probability sample study cited in UNICEF-EAPRO (2012), *Child Maltreatment: Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences in the East Asia and Pacific Region: A Systematic Review of Research.*

[30] Miles, G. & Thomas, N. (2007), 'Don't grind an egg against a stone'—Children's rights and violence in Cambodian history and culture. *Child Abuse Review,* 16, 383-400, and Tearfund (undated), *Stop violence against us: summary report. A preliminary national research study into the prevalence and perceptions of Cambodian children to violence against children in Cambodia. Phnom Penh: Cambodia.* Miles, G. & Varin. S. Convenience sample studies cited in UNICEF-EAPRO (2012), *Child Maltreatment: Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences in the East Asia and Pacific Region: A Systematic Review of Research.*

[31] Chaopricha and Jirapramukpitak (2009), 'Child abuse and risky behaviours among youths', *Journal of the Medical Association of Thailand,* 93(S7): S160-165. Probability sample study cited in UNICEF-EAPRO (2012), *Child Maltreatment: Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences in the East Asia and Pacific Region: A Systematic Review of Research.*

[32] Jirapramukpitak, Prince and Harpham (2010), 'Family violence and its 'adversity package': a community of family violence and adverse mental outcomes among young people'. *Social Psychiatry and Pyschiatric Epidemiology.* Probability sample study cited in UNICEF-EAPRO (2012), *Child Maltreatment: Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences in the East Asia and Pacific Region: A Systematic Review of Research.*

[33] UNICEF-EAPRO (2012), *Child Maltreatment: Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences in the East Asia and Pacific Region: A Systematic Review of Research.*

Probability sample based research conducted among 2,394 youths in a suburb of Hanoi, Vietnam, demonstrated that 1.1% reported ever having been sexually abused.[34] This rose to a 19.7% lifetime prevalence of sexual abuse among 2,591 secondary school students surveyed in convenience sample based research in urban Hanoi and rural Hai Duong province in Vietnam.[35]

Although a few studies have investigated the issue of child labour migration and child trafficking,[36] there is a lack of basic, country-specific data on child sexual abuse (and child maltreatment in general) in Lao PDR.

Certain cultural perspectives and norms may contribute to vulnerabilities, for instance, the linked issues of local offenders and the failure to recognise children as having rights.[37] In environments where there is local demand for adult sex services and local tolerance of abuse of young girls and boys by their own nationals, using young people as sexual partners is not commonly seen by the general public as a crime against children or a violation of their rights.[38] As Montgomery observes:

> *'It is much easier to place blame firmly on a sexually perverse foreign man abusing innocent children than it is to look at a situation where the sexual abuse of children is endemic and has become normalised, and indeed, institutionalised'.*[39]

In other words, the sexual abuse of children occurs in societies where child protection mechanisms are poor or selective. A child protection system is part of an environment in which children have full access to and enjoy their rights to health, education, family life and other aspects of their development in order to reach their full potential. This is achieved through protecting children from harm by reducing vulnerabilities and risks, such as lack of supervision of children, and by vetting adults who work with children. It is also achieved by ensuring the protection system is robust enough to identify cases early where children are coming into harm and can effectively respond to the harm before it gets worse. It is where such systems are rudimentary or out-dated, and where the best interests of children are not the central focus, that there is more opportunity and vulnerability to child sexual abuse.

This research was undertaken based on the perspectives outlined above on known methods of offender behaviour. It also framed by a thorough understanding of good child protective mechanisms that identify cases of child abuse early and intervene before or soon after an abusive situation occurs. Initiatives for intervention were carefully designed through understanding the current landscape in the GMS of the gaps in awareness, understanding and protective behaviours around child sexual abuse.

[34] Le and Blum (2009), 'Premarital sex and condom use among never married youth in Vietnam'. *International Journal of Medical Health*, 21(3), 1-14. Probability sample study cited in UNICEF-EAPRO (2012), *Child Maltreatment: Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences in the East Asia and Pacific Region: A Systematic Review of Research.*

[35] Nguyen, Dunne & Le (2010), 'Multiple types of child maltreatment and adolescent mental health in Viet Nam'. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization,* 87, 22-30, cited in UNICEF-EAPRO (2012), *Child Maltreatment: Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences in the East Asia and Pacific Region: A Systematic Review of Research.*

[36] E.g. Phetsiriseng, I. (2003), *Preliminary assessment on trafficking of children and women for labour exploitation in Lao PDR. ILO-IPEC Lao PDR,* or, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare Lao People's Democratic Republic and UNICEF (2004), *Broken promises, shattered dreams: A profile of child trafficking in the Lao PDR.*

[37] O'Brian, M, Grillo, M and Barbosa, H (2008), *Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Tourism: A Contribution of ECPAT International to the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents,* ECPAT International, p. 10.

[38] O'Brian, Grillo and Barbosa (2008), *Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Tourism: A Contribution of ECPAT International to the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents,* ECPAT International, p. 10.

[39] Montgomery, H (2001), *Modern Babylon? Prostituting Children in Thailand,* Berghahn Books, New York, p. 32.

Research rationale

The principal strategy of Project Childhood Prevention Pillar in preventing the sexual abuse of children in the travel and tourism sector was to foster positive behaviour change and to create an enabling environment that increased the resilience of girls and boys to sexual predators and ensured that parents and families, duty bearers and community members could protect them. This was undertaken through communication interventions relevant to the cultural and social contexts of the target communities. In order to communicate messages effectively through relevant tools and interventions, the program required a strong conceptual platform including an understanding of the main views, attitudes and behaviours that make girls and boys vulnerable to sexual abuse. It also required a clear understanding of how vulnerable children, families and communities at large accessed and were influenced by the media in its various forms. Without this information, opportunities to deliver effective messages through relevant channels would be based on assumptions, creating the risk that messages may be lost or target groups may not be reached. This understanding was also integral to designing effective tools for intervention that were relevant to local communities and easily integrated, culturally and systemically, in a sustainable manner.

Research objectives

This research aimed to inform Project Childhood Prevention Pillar on the knowledge, attitudes and practices of community members (including girls and boys, relatives of children and duty bearers) in regards to child sexual abuse, including by travellers and tourists. The following specific research questions guided the research. Including in the context of travel and tourism:

1. **What are the knowledge, attitudes and practices in the community in relation to child abuse and child protection?**
2. **What are the key views, attitudes, behaviours and practices that enable risk and vulnerability to child sexual abuse?**
3. **What are the key obstacles and opportunities to preventing child sexual abuse?**
4. **What are the existing resources, mechanisms and key channels of communicating, informing and educating children, families and communities on the sexual abuse of children?**

The Lao PDR research, which took place later than the other national research, also explored the following additional question:

5. **What part do financial motivations take in child exploitation and what obstacles and opportunities are there for Prevention Pillar to respond to this?**

Respondents

In accordance with the research terms of reference, four main categories of respondents were selected:

1. Girls and boys: those who were studying, those who were working, those who were living on the street and those who were victims of child sexual abuse ranged between 8-18 years of age.[40]
2. Caregivers and neighbours: parents, relatives, friends and peers of particular children as well as street vendors, shopkeepers and others who had direct contact with or knew the interviewed children.
3. Duty bearers: teachers, police officers, healthcare providers, social workers and shelter staff who were in direct contact with children as part of their work.
4. Officials: staff from government agencies, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) or Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and International Organisations (IOs).

Children were selected as the main source of information and efforts were made to contact children from all four categories. Wherever possible, parents and duty bearers of the contacted children were interviewed to allow for triangulation. Other stakeholders like heads of police and government administrators at the local level were interviewed using semi-structured questionnaires or topic lists. Case studies were also collected, mainly from NGO staff, and were used to identify different scenarios for child sexual abuse. Ultimately, children made up a considerable proportion of respondents in the study. This appears to be a result of the researchers' methodological approach, whereby most children participated in the research by means of focus group interviews, whereas most adults were interviewed individually. This research was undertaken between 2011 and 2012.

Ethical considerations

The researchers took the standard precautions to protect the safety and confidentiality of respondents, including obtaining permission to meet and interview children. They also applied specific measures to avoid harming children who, in any way, could be detrimentally affected by the study. For example, all the researchers observed the child protection policies of World Vision and the Australian Government. Prior to engagement, Project Childhood Prevention Pillar obtained at least two references for each researcher, as well as police certificates of good behaviour to assure child protection. The study coordinator, who had lived outside his country of current residence for a long time, also provided references of good behaviour from his home country police, as well as from directors of NGOs he had worked for in the past. During the preparatory workshop, ample attention was given as to how to observe the policies during the course of fieldwork and what to do if an actual case of abuse was encountered. In such a situation, researchers were advised to contact the local World Vision office (who would then follow its child protection protocol) or any other child protection agency. Depending on (1) the seriousness of the case, (2) whether the

[40] Division of children into age groups and the questions asked varied between each of the study sites.

abuse was still ongoing, and (3) the views of the child, specific measures would be taken. This proved to be a suitable approach as, during the research, several suspected and actual abuse cases were found and referred to the responsible agencies.

Ethical conduct agreement with researchers

All researchers have signed and are committed to observing the child protection protocols of World Vision Australia and their affiliated agencies. It has been agreed at all times that for cases of children below 16 years of age, explicit permission to meet them will be obtained from their parents or caregivers (teachers, social workers and so on). Exceptions to this rule will only be allowed if no parents or caregivers can be contacted (for example in the case of street children). Children who are 16 years or older must express their written agreement to meet the researchers. Meetings with individual children will only take place in public places. Where they take place in rooms, the door will be left open. Wherever possible, caregivers or local authorities should not be present in the interviews but if they insist on doing so then the researcher should not enquire about personal or potentially confidential issues to protect the children in question.

Limitations

A period of one week to investigate sensitive issues in each research site was found to be too brief, especially in consideration of travelling times and the process of scheduling appointments with the relevant people. The time available to access target groups and the methods that could be used, particularly observation and participatory methods, were limited, as was the ability to follow up on and triangulate findings.

Time constraints led to 'opportunistic sampling'. Researchers could not be selective in their choice of who to interview within each target group. Furthermore, it was difficult to contact and interview working children during their working hours, which were mostly at night-time. Children living on the street were similarly difficult to find and interview. In contrast, interviewing students was much easier. For this reason, the study may have a bias towards knowledge, attitudes and practices of school children. School teachers were responsible for placing child participants in focus groups, which may also have affected data. For example, in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, only the 'best' students (and their parents) were selected for interview by the appointed homeroom teachers. Students were conscious of their role representing the school and were less forthcoming than vocational students and vendor/street children in providing information. Additionally, it was the low season for tourism in the region, meaning the ability to engage with and observe working children may have been affected.

Researchers did not have sufficient time to build trust with the respondents, meaning issues were not explored in as much depth than if a more solid rapport had been built. This was particularly the case in Cambodia and Thailand as the

researchers there were new to the research sites. An ameliorating factor may have been the fact that the country teams included experienced female researchers, which may have made building relationships with the children easier. Interviewing children who had been victims of sexual abuse was not possible in every location as these children were often still in the recovery process and it would have been against child protection standards.

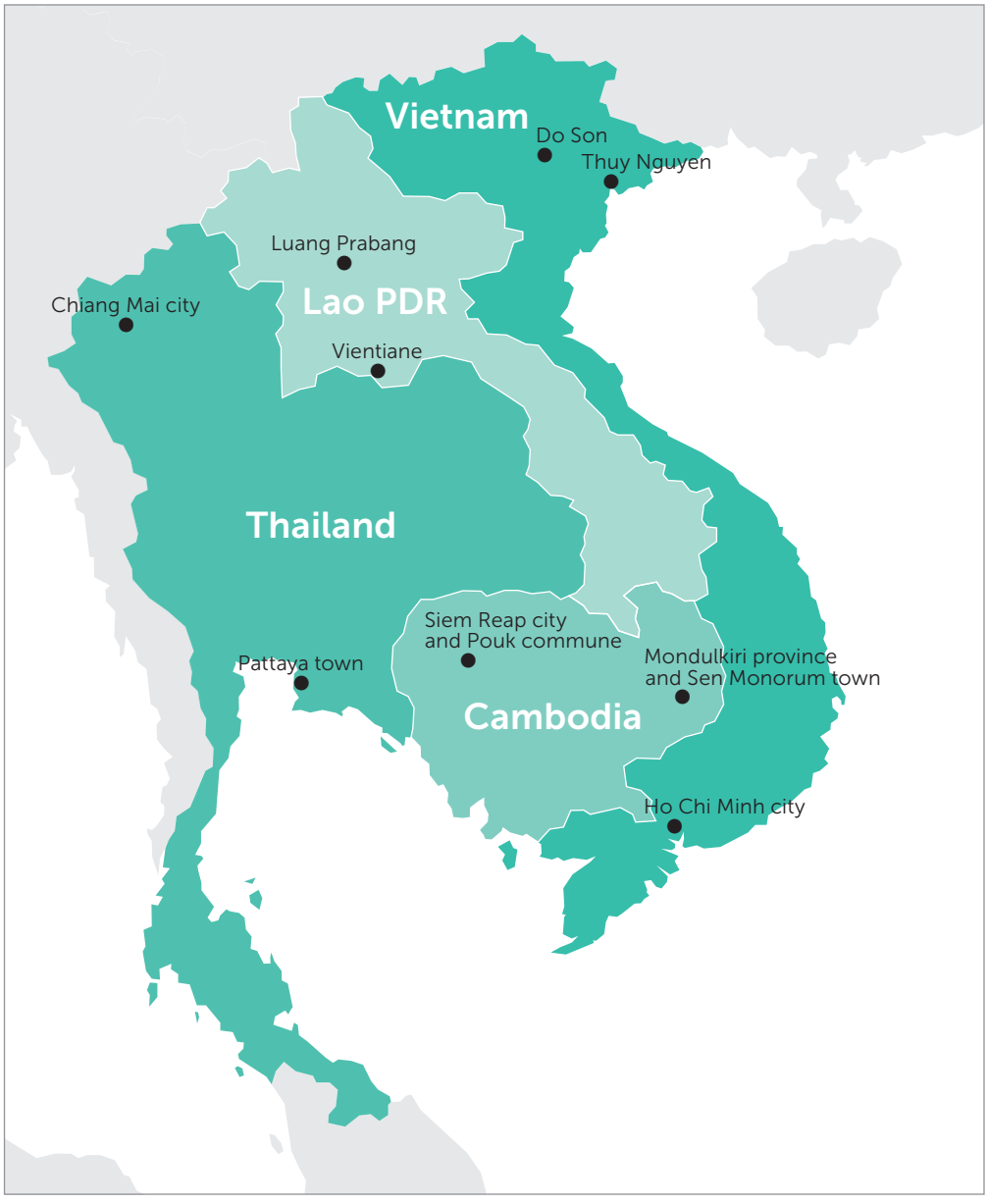
It was often more difficult to get detailed responses from adults than from children. For instance, at the Cambodian study sites, direct questions concerning duty bearers' knowledge of child sexual abuse were sometimes perceived as a challenge to their authority, which would be accompanied by a risk of 'losing face' if they did not know the 'correct' answer. Many parents were too busy with their livelihoods to attend interviews. Of those who did, many did not acknowledge awareness of local incidents of abuse. This was perhaps a result of not wishing to discuss private, intimate matters for fear of ridicule from neighbours. Researchers also encountered difficulty collecting information on abstract or hypothetical issues (such as opinions), particularly with indigenous groups. Information was more forthcoming regarding real events.

In Pattaya and Chiang Mai, Thailand, and Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, some officials and NGO staff were similarly uncomfortable sharing perceived sensitive information. Those in Hai Phong, Vietnam, were more frank in their responses. Additionally, in one village in Lao PDR, a senior member of the Lao Revolutionary Front was assigned by the District Officer to assist the research team.

While the limited scope of the research prevents generalisations beyond each study site, the study has generated a wealth of information and identified a number of striking trends.

Research Sites

The factors that were used to select the field sites included the following: (a) that it functioned as a tourist destination and (b) accessibility of the site. These were also sites that were tentatively selected as targets for Project Childhood Prevention Pillar to deliver community activities. Some sites were selected on request by government partners, for example Mondulkiri, Cambodia, was selected on request by the Cambodian Ministry of Tourism. World Vision offices in each country supported aspects of the research logistics and access to target audiences where it was possible. Three of the eight research sites were in close proximity to existing World Vision community-based projects. The research sites should not be considered in any way representative of all the tourist destinations in each country.



Cambodia

The Kingdom of Cambodia is located between Thailand, Vietnam and Lao PDR. In 2012, Cambodia's population was estimated at approximately 14.86 million.[41] Ninety per cent of Cambodia's population is ethnically Khmer. Other ethnic groups include Chinese, Vietnamese, hill tribes, Cham, and Lao.[42] While there has been gradual progress in reducing poverty, Cambodia remains one of the poorest countries in South East Asia with Gross National Income per capita at USD 880, and 20.5% of the population living below the national poverty line.[43] A large part of the Cambodian population lacks education and vocational skills, particularly in the countryside where more than 80% of the population lives.

Natural resources and historical sites make Cambodia an attractive place to visit for recreational tourists. In 2013 Cambodia received 4.2 million international arrivals, an 18% increase over 2012. The nationalities of the top six visitor arrivals were all from the Asia region. Vietnam made up 20% of travellers to Cambodia, followed by China, Korea and Lao PDR, which each made up roughly around 10%. Tourism receipts totalled approximately USD 2,547 million in 2013[44] and it is an important industry for Cambodia, making up 10% of its GDP.[45]

A number of historical and structural factors are said to have contributed to children's vulnerability to sexual abuse in Cambodia, including the rapid expansion of the sex industry,[46] uneven economic development, economic liberalisation, and a growing tourism industry.[47] Although the majority of child sex abusers are local (as is the case in any country),[48] the magnitude of Cambodia's cases of child sexual abuse by travelling offenders, relative to the population and the recent opening of its borders to international tourists in the mid-1990s, makes it a significant destination for offenders.[49]

It is frequently reported that an increasing number of visitors travel to Cambodia expecting 'low-cost prostitution, easy access to children, and impunity'.[50] According to the NGO *Action Pour Les Enfants* (APLE), the sexual exploitation of children in Cambodia usually occurs within one of three categories: 'establishment-based exploitation', facilitated through sex establishments and typically frequented by Cambodian and other Asian men who tend to be situational offenders preferring female victims; 'street-based exploitation', whereby a child is approached in a public place by the sex offender or an intermediary and typically found to be perpetrated by foreign tourists and expatriates who are preferential offenders who prefer male victims, and; 'institution-based exploitation' whereby an individual uses an institution that is intended to benefit the well-being of children to gain access to, groom, and/or sexually exploit children, and which appears to be favoured by foreign child sex offenders. Additionally, APLE's database shows that child sex offenders come from 26 different nationalities (including Cambodian at 41%, American at 12.5%, Vietnamese at 9%, French at 8.7%, and British at 6.3%). If excluding accomplices, male perpetrators accounted for 100% of all identified cases.[51]

• Siem Reap city and Pouk commune

Siem Reap province is known for its ancient temple complex Angkor Wat, which is recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Siem Reap city, the provincial capital, is a sprawling tourist destination offering various forms of entertainment to tourists who return from visits to the temples during the day. Massage parlours are

[41] The World Bank, 'Development Indicators Online: Cambodia', http://data.worldbank.org/country/cambodia, last accessed 23 April 2014.

[42] US Department of State (28 January 2011) 'Background Note: Cambodia', http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2732.htm, last accessed 26 July 2011.

[43] Estimates for 2012 and 2011 respectively from The World Bank, 'Development Indicators Online: Cambodia', http://data.worldbank.org/country/cambodia, last accessed 23 April 2014.

[44] Ministry of Tourism of Cambodia:. http://www.tourismcambodia.org/images/mot/statistic_reports/tourism_statistics_annual_report_2013.pdf, last accessed 10 April 2014.

[45] World Travel and Tourism Council, 2014 Cambodia Economic Impact Report: http://www.wttc.org/site_media/uploads/downloads/cambodia2014.pdf, last accessed 17 April 2014.

[46] It is reported that the presence of around 20,000 United Nations Transitional Authority on Cambodia (UNTAC) personnel from 1991 to 1993 created a demand for sex services in less politically restrictive environment. After UNTAC's 1993 withdrawal, the commercial sex industry continued to grow as a result of economic liberalisation. Human Rights Solidarity (1996), *CAMBODIA: Prostitution and Sex Trafficking: A Growing Threat to the Human Rights of Women and Children in Cambodia.* http://www.hrsolidarity.net/mainfile.php/1996vol06no04/219/, last accessed 18 April 2014.

[47] ECPAT Cambodia, NGOCRC, COSECAM, (2007-8) NGO *Joint Statistics Database Report on Trafficking and Rape in Cambodia 2007-2008.*

[48] Action Pour Les Enfants (February 2014), *Investigating Travelling Child Sex Offenders: An analysis of the trends and challenges in the field of child sexual abuse and exploitation in Cambodia.*

[49] The Protection Project, The Johns Hopkins University (2007), *International Child Sex Tourism: Scope of the Problem and Comparative Case Studies.*

[50] ECPAT International (2006a), *Global Monitoring Report on the Status of Action against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: Cambodia,* Bangkok, p. 12.

[51] Action Pour Les Enfants (February 2014), *Investigating Travelling Child Sex Offenders: An analysis of the trends and challenges in the field of child sexual abuse and exploitation in Cambodia.* The data is an underestimation due to the fact that they are limited to cases worked on by APLE.

abundant. Young children – some just seven years old – sell drinks and souvenirs to tourists, often until late into the night. Tourists are also offered tours to local 'orphanages' as a 'cultural experience', even though many of the children are not orphans.[52]

Pouk commune is the district town. It is easily reached within 30 minutes drive from Siem Reap city. The town is rural with most people practicing traditional ways of living. Despite the large numbers of tourists visiting Siem Reap city, the rural area surrounding it remains one of the poorest in Cambodia. Around 82% of the population in Siem Reap province are farmers.[53] There is little comprehensive data available about young migrant workers in urban Cambodia, although it has been reported that a considerable number of male migrants undertake construction-related work in cities such as Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, while a boom in hotels and tourism facilities and the accompanying services sector from the late 1990s through to the early 2000s created a demand for labour in the Siem Reap area.[54] At the same time, many of the vulnerable children living, working and in informal residential care come from such surrounding areas that are easily accessed by international visitors to Siem Reap.

- **Mondulkiri province and Sen Monorum town**

Mondulkiri province is situated in the northeastern part of Cambodia, around 400 km from Phnom Penh. Actively promoted as an eco-tourism destination by the Ministry of Tourism, with tourist attractions including the Bou Sra waterfall and forest-covered mountains and the wildlife, it is still one of the most remote provinces in Cambodia, despite recent improvements to its main access road. The total population in Mondulkiri province is 57,666, of which 29,626 or 51% are ethnic Phnong.[55] School enrolment rates are low while dropout rates are high.[56]

Although Sen Monorum is the provincial capital, it is largely rural with 40% of the population depending on agriculture to sustain their livelihoods. The total population consists of only 10,000 people, comprising 54% ethnic Khmers, 44% ethnic Phnong, and 2% of other ethnic groups. Despite its small size, the researchers observed the town had several entertainment venues and 23 hotels and guesthouses.[57] Although Sen Monorum does not attract large numbers of visitors, the town continues to grow due to the influx of Cambodian and foreign migrants working in the rubber, hydropower, and mining industries.

Lao PDR

The Lao People's Democratic Republic is a landlocked country bordering Vietnam, China, Myanmar, Cambodia and Thailand. In 2012 the population of Lao PDR was estimated at 6.65 million, with over 40% of the population (2.86 million) under 18 years of age.[58] About half the country's population is ethnic Lao; the country's politically and culturally dominant group. Mountain tribes of Hmong-Yao, Tibeto-Burman (Kor and Phounoy) and Tai ethno-linguistic heritage are found in Northern Laos. Austro Asiatic (Mon-Khmer and Viet-Mong) tribes live in Central and Southern mountains. Over the last decade and a half, Lao PDR has seen sustained poverty reduction and economic growth, largely due to its transition to a market economy and engagement with regional economies.[59] It is estimated that 27.6% of the population lives below the national poverty line.[60]

[52] UNICEF Fact Sheet (undated), *Residential Care in Cambodia* and UNICEF-EAPRO (2011), *With the Best Intentions: A Study of Attitudes Towards Residential Care in Cambodia.*

[53] http://db.ncdd.gov.kh/cdbonline/home/index.castle: accessed July 2011.

[54] CDRI and UNFPA (November 2007), *Youth Migration and Urbanisation in Cambodia.*

[55] http://db.ncdd.gov.kh/cdbonline/home/index.castle, accessed July 2011.

[56] Only 74% of six year old children are enrolled in primary school. Furthermore, according to a 2009 estimate, there is a high percentage (23%) of children aged 12-14 years old who have dropped out of school. http://db.ncdd.gov.kh/cdbonline/home/index.castle, accessed July 2011.

[57] Data obtained by researchers during visit July 2011.

[58] UNICEF, *Statistics: Lao PDR*, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/laopdr_statistics.html#78, last accessed 23 April 2014.

[59] Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'Laos: Why we give aid to Laos', http://aid.dfat.gov.au/countries/eastasia/laos/Pages/why-aid.aspx, last accessed 23 April 2014.

[60] The World Bank, 'Development Indicators Online: Lao PDR', http://data.worldbank.org/country/lao-pdr, last accessed 23 April 2014.

Major challenges remain for Lao PDR to achieve its 2015 MDG targets. Progress has been made in reducing income poverty, increasing primary net enrolment, reducing child mortality, action against tuberculosis and malaria, and access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation in urban areas. However, reducing child malnutrition, persistent and strong disparities in people's access to opportunities and social services according to sex, geography and mother tongue, women's limited participation in decision-making at the sub-national level, high maternal mortality, and the quick rate of loss of environmental resources remain critical challenges.[61]

Lao PDR opened its borders to international tourists in 1989. Since then, tourism revenue has increased dramatically, making tourism a major export industry.[62] The country's tourism policy focuses on natural, cultural and historical tourism, i.e. natural beauty and biological diversity, culture and traditions of ethnic minorities, and historic sites such as the World Heritage town of Luang Prabang.[63] Lao PDR welcomed 3.8 million tourists in 2013, an increase of 15% on 2012 arrivals.[64] ASEAN remained the largest source market, improving 12% with 3,041,233 visitors, which was dominated by overland travel from neighbouring Thailand (55% of arrivals) and Vietnam (24% of arrivals). Travel and tourism to Lao PDR made up 4.7% of the GDP in 2013 – a total of LAK 3,894 billion (approximately USD 487,650,000).[65] As law enforcement heightens in neighbouring Thailand and increasingly in Cambodia, some commentators suggest Lao PDR will emerge as a new destination for travelling child sex offenders, especially as the country reportedly offers high levels of anonymity and seclusion that travelling child sex offenders, and in particular, preferential offenders, seek.[66]

• Vientiane

Three villages were selected in the capital of Lao PDR, Vientiane: Ban Mixay in Cantabile District; Ban Phiawat in Sistine District; and Ban Hom in Hatxaifong District. Ban Mixay and Ban Phiawat were two urban villages located on the riverbank where there were rows of guesthouses, hotels, bars, and restaurants and shops. At Ban Phiawat, there were two Buddhist temples, three guesthouses and at least six restaurants or food gardens. In both Ban Mixay and Ban Phiawat, there were many big- and small-scale construction sites where a guesthouse and hotel were being built, and a temple was being renovated. Ban Hom is a rural village located on the bank of the Mekong River about twenty minutes' drive from central Vientiane. The majority of villagers are farmers growing rice, vegetables, and fruit. At the time of the research, there were a few guesthouses in and around the village. The village did not have as many visitors as the other two communities.

• Luang Prabang

Luang Prabang is a popular tourist destination in Lao PDR. The royal capital up until the communist takeover in 1975, Luang Prabang is a UNESCO World Heritage Site famous for its historic sites, natural attractions, and Buddhist temples and monasteries. Three villages were selected in Luang Prabang District: Ban Xieng Muan, Ban Aphay, and Ban Xieng Lek. However, due to time constraints the research team was not able to conduct data collection in Ban Xieng Lek. Ban Xieng Muan was located in the restricted zone of the World Heritage site on the bank of the Mekong River and featured two Buddhist temples, fifteen guesthouses, four

[61] UNDP Lao PDR, *The Millennium Development Goals in Lao PDR*, http://www.undplao.org/mdgs/, last accessed 26 July 2011.

[62] Yamauchi, S and Lee, D (June 1999), *Tourism development in the Lao People's Democratic Republic*, Discussion Paper of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, No 9, ST/ESA/1999/DP.9, http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/1999/esa99dp9.pdf, last accessed 19 August 2011.

[63] Lao People's Democratic Republic (2006), *Lao PDR Tourism Strategy 2006-2020*, Unofficial Translation, http://www.latalaos.org/doc/Strategy2006.pdf, last accessed 19 August 2011.

[64] UNWTO, *World Tourism Barometer:* http://www.innovasjonnorge.no/Documents/old/Documents/UNWTO_Barom14_01_Jan.pdf, last accessed 10 April 2014.

[65] World Travel and Tourism Council, *2014 Laos Economic Impact Report:* http://www.wttc.org/site_media/uploads/downloads/laos2014.pdf, last accessed 17 April 2014.

[66] The Protection Project, Johns Hopkins University (2007), *International Child Sex Tourism: Scope of the Problem and Comparative Case Studies*. p 35.

spa and massage shops, six restaurants, and a number of travel and souvenir shops. This village was part of a group of eleven villages in this zone where most upmarket guesthouses were located. Ban Aphay is located on a bend of the Khan River, southeast of Phousi Hill. At the time of the research, there were about ten guesthouses or villas and one hotel built around the road and riverbank, as well as one pub, two bars and five restaurants.

Thailand

Thailand is bordered by Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar. In 2012 the population of Thailand was estimated at approximately 66.79 million, with 15.12 million under 18 years of age.[67] More than 85% of the population speak a variant of Thai and share a common culture, although there is a strong regional identity in many areas of Thailand. A significant number of Thai people in the northeast have Lao and Khmer heritage, and ethnic Malay Muslims comprise a majority in the three southernmost provinces.[68]

Tourism is a key economic contributor in Thailand. In 2013, Thailand welcomed approximately 26.7 million visitors, an extraordinary 20% increase from 2012. Approximately 56% of visitors were from East Asia, with ASEAN specifically making up 28% of arrivals. Europe was the next biggest region for arrivals to Thailand, consisting of a 25% share. The Americas, South Asia and Oceania were all roughly around 5% each.[69] Tourism accounted for 9% of Thailand's GDP, with receipts totalling a staggering USD 33.3 billion in 2013.[70] This was a 27.5% increase from 2012; the biggest growth of any country globally.

The UNDP reports that Thailand has achieved many of the MDGs at a national level in advance of the 2015 target. However, some regions and groups are being left behind with stark disparities;[71] with gaps remaining in health and access to social services, and vulnerable groups including the elderly, young people, sex workers, migrant workers and the stateless.[72]

The growth of the sex industry in Thailand is said to have also enabled the growth of a market for child sexual abuse by foreigners. It was the situation in Thailand in the early 1990s that first raised public awareness of the commercial sexual exploitation of children and mobilised public opinion against so-called *'child sex tourists'*.[73] In 2006, the NGO ECPAT International[74] reported that entertainment businesses targeting tourists included sex shops and shows where not only adults, but also boys and girls, provided sex services.[75] However, more recently, it has been suggested that it has become much more difficult to access a child for sexual exploitation, at least in Bangkok, with the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism reportedly shifting away from establishment-based exploitation towards more street-based exploitation of the vulnerable poor.[76] Official crackdowns, universal mandatory education and increased economic development have reportedly contributed to a reduction in the prevalence of child sexual abuse in tourism,[77] although there is inadequate data to substantiate this.

• Pattaya town

Pattaya town is located 146 km from Bangkok. Its ethnically diverse population comprises over 104,318 registered inhabitants, although the population is estimated to be as high as approximately 300,000 including non-registered residents.[78]

[67] UNICEF, *Statistics: Thailand*, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Thailand_statistics.html#91, last accessed 23 April 2014.

[68] US Department of State (28 January 2011), *Background Note: Thailand*, http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2814.htm, last accessed 27 July 2011.

[69] Tourism Authority of Thailand, http://tourism.go.th/index.php?mod=WebTourism&file=details&dID=7&cID=276&dcID=621, last accessed 10 April 2014.

[70] World Travel and Tourism Council, *2014 Thailand Economic Impact Report:* http://www.wttc.org/site_media/uploads/downloads/thailand2014.pdf, last accessed 17 April 2014.

[71] UNDP: *Thailand, Millennium Development Goals*, http://www.undp.or.th/focusareas/mdgprogramme.html, last accessed 27 July 2011.

[72] Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (2009) *Thailand Millennium Development Goals Report 2009*, Bangkok, http://www.undp.or.th/resources/documents/Thailand_MDGReport_2009.pdf, last accessed 28 August 2011, pp 65-66.

[73] Ennew J, Gopal, K, Heeran, J and Montgomery, H (1996), *CHILDREN AND PROSTITUTION: How Can We Measure and Monitor The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children? Literature Review and Annotated Bibliography*, UNICEF Headquarters, New York, Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances Section, Centre for Family Research, University of Cambridge and Childwatch International, Second Edition, http://child-abuse.com/childhouse/childwatch/cwi/projects/indicators/prostitution/, last accessed 26 April 2011.

[74] End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography And Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes. http://www.ecpat.net.

[75] ECPAT International (2006b), *Global Monitoring Report on the Status of Action against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: Thailand, Bangkok.*

[76] The Protection Project, Johns Hopkins University (2007), *International Child Sex Tourism: Scope of the Problem and Comparative Case Studies*, pp. 158-159.

[77] Baker, S (2007), *Child Labour and Child Prostitution in Thailand: Changing Realities*, White Lotus.

[78] 'Pattaya population statistic according to residents registration 1997–2007 (Thai only)' Pattaya City Registrar Office, last accessed 29 November 2007.

Pattaya has acquired significance since a number of arrests of travelling child sex offenders have been made, raising concern that it is a destination hotspot for those seeking to abuse children. Pattaya beach is about 4km long with a road running parallel to the beach. The commercial sex sector is a key entertainment feature of Pattaya and is allegedly controlled by city gangs (something which may have constrained the research as sex workers were afraid to talk to researchers). The city attracts young migrants who want to earn a quick and easy income.

- **Chiang Mai city**

Chiang Mai city is located 706 km from Bangkok and has a registered population of 1,670,317. The city is the largest and most culturally significant city in northern Thailand. The former capital of the Kingdom of Lanna (1296 – 1768), the city is popular with both international and domestic visitors. International tourist arrivals declined from 5.3 million visitors in 2008 to 4.3 million visitors in 2009, although visitor numbers are again rising, possibly due to increased interest from the Japanese and Korean markets.[79] Chiang Mai is also attracting increasing numbers of Chinese tourists (with the number rising by at least 50% between 2012 and 2013), a trend believed to be catalysed by a highly popular Chinese film 'Lost in Thailand', which was mostly filmed in the province.[80] Attractions for tourists include diverse ethnic tribes, mountains, trekking, Buddhist temples, wild elephants, cooking and massage schools, the famous Night Bazaar and Sunday walking street markets, medical tourism, handicraft workshops and cultural performances. The city also has red-light districts. Displaced ethnic minorities live in slums at the edges of the city and earn incomes mostly from selling souvenirs to tourists, often by using their young children as vendors.

Vietnam

Vietnam is bordered by the Eastern Sea to the east, China to the north, and Lao PDR and Cambodia to the west. Vietnam has 54 ethnic groups, with ethnic Vietnamese (or Kinh) constituting approximately 85% of the population. The next largest ethnic groups are Tay and Thai (1.89% and 1.8% of the population respectively) and are concentrated in the country's northern highlands.[81] In 2012, the population of Vietnam was estimated at 90.80 million, with 25.34 million under 18 years of age.[82]

The tourism industry in Vietnam has grown impressively since the Doi Moi, largely due to the opening of Vietnam's tourism accommodation market to foreign direct investment and domestic private entrepreneurs.[83] The number of foreign arrivals visiting the country grew 11% from 2012 to 2013, with a total of 7.6 million international arrivals. Chinese travellers dominated with a 25% share, reaching close to 2 million visitors. The next biggest markets were Korea (10%), Japan (8%), USA (6%) and Taiwan (5%).[84] The direct contribution of travel and tourism to the GDP in 2013 was USD 7 billion, equivalent to 4.6% of GDP.[85]

In recent years, a number of cases and arrests of foreigners for child sex offenses have occurred in Vietnam. During an 18-month period between 2005 and 2006, seven foreign citizens were arrested for sex crimes against Vietnamese children.[86] There have been no arrests since 2005, but this should not be taken to indicate that sexual exploitation of children by foreigners has ceased, particularly as a

[79] *Chiang Mai Hosts Increasing Tourist Arrivals*, Thailand Government Public Relations Department, (27 February, 2011), http://thailand.prd.go.th/view_news.php?id=5542&a=2, last accessed 18 April 2014.

[80] Janjira Jarusupawat (12 January 2013), *'Film sparks Chinese tourist boom in Chiang Mai', The Nation*, http://www.nationmultimedia.com/business/Film-sparks-Chinese-tourist-boom-in-Chiang-Mai-30197745.html, last accessed 18 April 2014.

[81] US Department of State (3 June 2011), *Background Note: Vietnam*, http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/4130.htm, last accessed 27 July 2011.

[82] UNICEF, *Statistics: Vietnam*, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/vietnam_statistics.html#78, last accessed 23 April 2014.

[83] Suntikul, W, Butler, R and Airey, D (2008) 'A Periodisation of the Development of Vietnam's Tourism Accommodation since the Open Door Policy', *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, Vol 13 (1), pp. 67-80, http://epubs.surrey.ac.uk/1102/1/fulltext.pdf, last accessed 28 August 2011.

[84] Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, http://vietnamtourism.gov.vn/english/index.php/items/6709, last accessed 17 April 2014.

[85] World Travel and Tourism Council, *2014 Vietnam Economic Impact Report*, http://www.wttc.org/site_media/uploads/downloads/vietnam2014.pdf, last accessed 17 April 2014.

[86] UNICEF (2011), *An Analysis of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Selected Provinces and Cities of Vietnam.*

recent UNICEF study found that 76% of interviewed children in sexual exploitation reported that their 'customers' included foreigners.[87] Evidence suggests that increasing numbers of children are being sexually exploited through commercial transactions, which include prostitution, sex trafficking, sexual abuse in tourism and the production of child sexual abuse images. Another disturbing trend that has been noted is the finding that children are entering sexual exploitation at younger ages, with the youngest observed age of entry into prostitution in a recent study being only eight years old.[88]

• Ho Chi Minh City: Districts 4 and 8

Vietnam's largest city and its economic hub, Ho Chi Minh City was historically known as Saigon and is the former capital of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam). The city offers tourists many historic, architectural, and religious attractions. District 4 is the smallest district in Ho Chi Minh City with a population of approximately 180,000 people. It is the poorest urban district in the city, although a recent influx of wealthy residents into the area has made the gap between the rich and the poor more visible. District 8 is located in the southwest of the city with a population of approximately 405,000 people.

• Do Son and Thuy Nguyen

Do Son is one of the popular tourists beaches in the north of Vietnam, 20km southwest of Hai Phong City and 105 km east of Hanoi. The town has 35,000 inhabitants. Approximately six million tourists visit every year of which 25% are foreigners.[89] Do Son has a busy red-light district with many small-sized hotels that are concentrated on one short stretch of road. These hotels, functioning as brothels, draw in many local and regional travellers who come to seek sexual services from local young women.

Thuy Nguyen is a rural district, although the three communes in the district that were selected for the study are not rural in appearance. For recreational tourists, it offers festivals, a scenic canal, famous pagodas and other interesting architecture. Seventy per cent of the population earn sufficient enough income from commercial fishing activities. Many families also receive overseas remittances from relatives who left Vietnam after the war which ended in 1975, or from daughters who married foreigners (mostly from East Asia). The district faces many social issues created by wealth rather than poverty, such as extensive spending among the children, low motivation for education and associated high rate of school drop-outs, lack of parental supervision of the children, the presence of call-girls in front of schools, clandestine sexual activities within the school compound, and concentrations of bars, karaoke parlours and video game shops around schools.

[87] UNICEF (2011), *An Analysis of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Selected Provinces and Cities of Vietnam.*

[88] UNICEF (2011), *An Analysis of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Selected Provinces and Cities of Vietnam.*

[89] http://vietlandgroup.com/social%20significance.htm: accessed July 2011.

Chapter Two

Understanding Child Abuse

In order to build appropriate responses to child sexual abuse in travel and tourism, it is essential to understand the broader context of how child abuse occurs, namely, children's and adults' perceptions of childhood, child rights, sexuality, abuse, and related subjects. This chapter discusses how children and adults in the study understood these concepts. It also discusses children's knowledge of sex, and outlines the sex education and communications children received in each of the respective research locations, informing them about sexual abuse.

Concepts of child rights and child abuse

How children understand child abuse

Girls and boys are vulnerable to sexual abuse when they are not armed with knowledge, skills and confidence to protect themselves and when their parents and families are not aware of the impacts and consequences of child sexual abuse. A good understanding of abusive behaviours helps children identify potential perpetrators and makes them more resilient against sexual abuse.

Children across all research locations were familiar with the concept of child abuse, either in formal terms or otherwise. Abuse was seen to be physical, emotional, or sexual. Vocational students, working and street children, and private school students appeared to have a deeper understanding of the issue than public school students. Types of child abuse described included forcing a child to have sexual intercourse, take drugs, labour, or steal, as well as the selling, trafficking, punishment, or exploitation of a child. Neglect was rarely mentioned. Although preventing educational opportunity was considered abuse, child labour was not necessarily considered as such under all circumstances. In general, children had a reasonably good understanding of the consequences of child sexual abuse, including physical pain, pregnancy, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), mental illness, and reduced opportunities. Girls were generally seen to be more vulnerable to child abuse than boys.

The majority of children and adults equated child sexual abuse with rape of a female child and in some cases, inappropriate touching of a girl's body. Judgements of sexual abuse depended on certain circumstances, including the age of the sexual partner, the person's relationship to the child, and whether or not the girl in question was a virgin. For instance, amongst Vietnamese child respondents, consensual sexual intercourse between a minor and an adult was not always recognised as child abuse. School children in Pattaya, Thailand, felt that it was normal for a girl to be forced into sexual intercourse with her boyfriend at some point, with most respondents perceiving that such behaviour by a boyfriend should not be punished in the same way as a rape by a stranger. In other words, sexually abusive relationships amongst peers (e.g. by a boyfriend) were not always necessarily considered as such. This finding is confirmed in the literature, which shows that children in the region are becoming increasingly open to abuse by peers and 'friends'.[90]

[89] UNICEF-EAPRO (2012), *Child Maltreatment: Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences in the East Asia and Pacific Region: A Systematic Review of Research.*

Few children identified anal sex, oral sex, participation in/exposure to pornography or masturbation as abusive sexual acts.[91] Only a group of older girls who studied at a vocational school in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, were able to identify a broader variety of actions that could be considered child sexual abuse. Although the girls could not verbalise the formal definition of child sexual abuse, they had knowledge of a range of forms of sexual abuse including both non-penetrative and penetrative sexual acts, and considered child sexual abuse to include: *'Forcing a girl to have sex'; 'Showing your private parts to others'; 'Buying underwear for or watching a porn film with a girl'; 'Touching the private parts of someone'; 'Tricking someone into watching sex movies with you,' and 'Boys having anal sex with boys.'*

In Lao PDR, only three children suggested that touching and verbal harassment could be considered sexual abuse: *'Rape is sexual abuse... touching and saying sexually suggestive words or "kham wao leuan lame" are also considered as sexual abuse'* (17-year-old girl, Vientiane). Although some child respondents in Lao PDR reported having seen pictures of naked people, none described abuse as forcing a child to watch pornography or sexually abusing a child and recording the image.

The idea that a boy could be sexually abused was an alien concept to a majority of the children, except for child respondents in Pattaya and some vocational, street, and vendor children in Vietnam. The community as a whole was aware that that foreign men could be sex offenders against boys, something which was considered to be abuse. In the other research locations, respondents who did believe that boys could be the victims of rape felt that it was an offence that was typically committed by foreigners. In Vietnam, only a few students who had participated in HIV prevention or World Vision workshops believed that child sexual abuse could happen to both boys and girls. Many of the interviewed vocational, street and vendor children knew that boys were also sexually abused. This was something that they had learnt from hearing about or witnessing cases of sexually abuse of boys in their living and working environments.[92] In Lao PDR, no respondents mentioned sexual abuse against boys without prompting.

The general understanding appeared to be that sexual abuse was something that originated from outside the family and community, especially where sexual abuse of boys was concerned. Grooming techniques, used by both by local and foreign abusers, were rarely mentioned as a form of abuse.

Perhaps because of Pattaya's notorious status as a locale for child sexual abuse in tourism, respondents there were more wary of the potential for foreigners to sexually abuse children than in the other research locations. Children in Pattaya perceived strangers as representing harm and danger, as one 12-year-old school girl said: *'I am scared of the strangers, they can take me and sell me or they might rape me'.* However, the research showed that this kind of awareness tended to be more the exception rather than the rule. Where children were aware of the risk posed by tourists and foreigners, most lacked skills or strategies to protect themselves from possible abuse.

One exception involved three girls in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, who worked as seasonal vendors. Despite the fact that they lived away from their parents and had to work during summer to support their families, the three girls attended school and were high-achiever pupils. The girls learned practical knowledge about how to protect themselves against abuse and danger from their parents and applied

[91] A recent review of the research shows that boys are more frequently victimized by non-contact sexual abuse than girls. UNICEF-EAPRO (2012), *Child Maltreatment: Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences in the East Asia and Pacific Region: A Systematic Review of Research.*

[92] Research highlights that the majority of situational sex offenders prefer females, while the majority of preferential sex offenders prefer males. Additionally, APLE's statistics show that Asian men prefer female victims whereas Western men prefer male victims. Action Pour Les Enfants (February 2014), *Investigating Travelling Child Sex Offenders: An analysis of the trends and challenges in the field of child sexual abuse and exploitation in Cambodia.*

it effectively. The girls described the protective strategies that they were taught as follows: *'Always be sceptical of strangers'; 'Never follow tourists to their hotel rooms'; 'Don't sell things to drunken tourists'; 'Shout for help if some tourists try to kiss or embrace you'; 'Keep an eye out for fellow vendor girls'; and 'Never eat candies or take drinks given by tourists'.*

'The understanding of parents is very low... sometimes they are not aware of their child's problems. For instance, they do not realise that their child has been raped. And even if they knew this was the case, they are not able to do anything'. — **NGO worker, Siem Reap, Cambodia**

How adults understand child abuse

Like children, adult respondents in all research locations tended to equate child sexual abuse with rape of a female child. Adults similarly noted a broad range of child abuse including physical, verbal, neglect, and sexual abuse. Vietnamese parents who participated in the study were unable to clearly verbalise formal definitions or identify examples of child sexual abuse. This may highlight the extent to which formal concepts of 'child sexual abuse' differ from informal connotations that parents often use in communication with their children.[93] In contrast, duty bearers in Lao PDR had a more sophisticated understanding of the term 'child abuse'. Some duty bearers referred to legal articles such as the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, the *Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Children,* and the *Civil Law*.

Overall, duty bearers' responses across the research locations suggested that parents and children lacked a thorough understanding of child sexual abuse and practical ways to identify, prevent or respond to it, as the following statement from an NGO worker in Siem Reap, Cambodia demonstrates:

> *'The understanding of parents is very low... sometimes they are not aware of their child's problems. For instance, they do not realise that their child has been raped. And even if they knew this was the case, they are not able to do anything'.*

Of serious significance was the finding that the lack of awareness sometimes resulted in parents and duty bearers failing to identify abuse, even where it had happened. Parents tended to be more concerned about issues like multiple sexual partners and unplanned pregnancy than sexual abuse. Of concern, at times, authorities and teachers failed to respond to potential cases of abuse because they considered them to be a 'family affair'. As a duty bearer in Chiang Mai, Thailand stated:

> *'There was a boy who never attended our activities even when we tried to convince him. He was too busy selling stuff after school... I saw that he was pretty quiet and isolated. He also had bruises on his body most of the time... I just kept an eye on him but I did not have more reactions until the day he disappeared'.*

[93] There is an unclear legal definition of child sexual abuse in Vietnamese law: 'All cases where a person has sexual intercourse with children under 13 years old are considered to be child rape. However, there is no official legal definition of the term 'child sexual abuse' and it is used inconsistently in the legislation and regulations', MOLISA and UNICEF Vietnam (2009), *Creating a Protective Environment for Children in Vietnam: An Assessment of Child Protection Laws and Policies, Especially Children in Special Circumstances in Vietnam.*

> 'There was a boy who never attended our activities even when we tried to convince him. He was too busy selling stuff after school... I saw that he was pretty quiet and isolated. He also had bruises on his body most of the time... I just kept an eye on him but I did not have more reactions until the day he disappeared'.
>
> — Duty bearer, Chiang Mai, Thailand

Although parents often warned their children about the dangers posed by strangers, there did not exist a sound awareness amongst adults of tactics and grooming techniques used by some child sex offenders. A duty bearer in Mondulkiri, Cambodia, felt that sexual relationships between young children, often influenced by peer pressure, were more of a problem than child abuse by foreigners: *'Some children in lower secondary school are now involved in sexual relationships. That is what concerns me. I am not concerned as much about the foreigners'.* Such understanding of local concerns and priorities must be respected and worked with in any community intervention around sexual abuse issues.

Sex education and information

This section explores how children in the respective research locations obtained their information about sexual activities, behaviours and values, and how this might affect their lives and vulnerability to being abused. There were at least five main sources of information: media and the internet, friends and peers, school education, public information campaigns, and personal observations and experience.

School

Sex education received by school children covered topics such as anatomy, reproductive health, contraception, and STIs to varying degrees of detail. However, rarely was information on how to identify and prevent sexual abuse disseminated, with the exception of a school in Pattaya, Thailand, that taught students about such issues as having control over private parts of their bodies and identifying dangerous situations. Sometimes, advice or information that was offered appeared to be more in the interests of protecting the school's reputation, rather than in the interest of protecting the child. For example, one head teacher in Siem Reap, Cambodia, stated: *'We want all school children to be good school children because if any of them are bad, the school reputation would be spoiled'.* In Vietnam, teachers were more open than parents to well-designed sex education in schools but felt ill equipped to provide it, arguing that other professionals such as psychologists should do so. Overall, the opportunity for providing relevant sex education in schools, which covered relationships and abuse, was clearly identified.

Parents

The study showed that parents were not the main information source for children about issues relating to child rights and child sexual abuse, despite the fact that children often reported that parents were the strongest influence in their lives.

Parents were generally unaware about how their children obtained knowledge about sexual issues. Especially striking was the strong resistance shown by the majority of adults, especially parents, against sex education for children, for fear that this would provoke curiosity and lead to sexual experimentation and inappropriate behaviour.

'Parents seldom discuss sex-related topics with children and many parents simply don't know what to discuss'. — **Teacher, Vientiane, Lao PDR**

Parents gave children warnings and advice, but did not appear to provide them with relevant knowledge or skills to avoid abuse. For instance, parents warned their children, usually girls, against the danger of letting others touch or see their unclothed bodies but did not explain who a possible perpetrator could be or provide any other details about the danger. As a mother in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR, pointed out *'Parents don't talk about sex with children... but I try to because I want them to understand and prevent them to seek answer from sources which I have no control of'.* A teacher in Vientiane, Lao PDR, similarly expressed that: *'Parents seldom discuss sex-related topics with children and many parents simply don't know what to discuss.'* A duty bearer in Mondulkiri, Cambodia, felt that: *'Children have learnt more about sexuality from school or NGOs than from their parents'.* In general, parents were identified in sincerely employing protective behaviours towards their children to the extent that they were able. However, it seems that parents were not well enough informed of the realities of child sexual abuse.

The research showed that children were more likely to talk to their friends or classmates about personal concerns or problems, rather than with their parents, teachers, or other adults. As a school girl in Mondulkiri, Cambodia, pointed out: *'I usually visit my friends to share my sorrow'.* A 17 year old school girl in Vietnam said of talking to her parents about her boyfriend: *'I won't tell my parents... they would be disappointed and heartbroken'.* Reasons cited by children for not sharing personal issues with their parents included: *'I do not want to upset my parents', 'I am afraid they would blame me or that I would get beaten'* and *'I do not want to make them [my parents] suffer or to get hurt'.*

Although it is generally common for older children to be more open with their peers than their parents, not telling parents in situations where they have been abused could lead to increased vulnerability for them. In one case, a 17-year-old girl in Vietnam reported that she was transferred from her former school to a school that her parents thought had a better reputation and curriculum. However, she was bullied at the new school and could not make any friends. Also, she found the work more difficult than at her old school and had to repeat Grade 10, which made her parents very disappointed and upset. In defiance of her parents, she became sexually involved with a 24-year-old man who already had a girlfriend (with whom he continued his relationship). The girl knew that he had a girlfriend and that she was just being used for sexual intercourse but she continued her relations with this man and became emotionally dependent on him. Her parents were not aware of this relationship or her emotional distress.

Experience/observation

Street children, working children, and vocational school children demonstrated far greater knowledge of sex than school children, through information acquired through direct observations, discussions with peers, and personal experiences. For example, street children in Ho Chi Minh City and Hai Phong, Vietnam, often discussed sex-related topics among themselves and some had seen people having sex in toilets or other places. They did not receive formal sex education, having dropped out of school prior to 7th or 8th grade when such classes are offered. A caretaker in one Vietnamese secondary school mentioned that he often swept away condoms and underwear near the bathrooms. One vocational school student described being aware of her brother having sex with his live-in girlfriend behind a thin curtain in the attic where the whole family slept, while another said she saw a man approximately 30 years of age having sex with a girl of around 15 years old in a toilet. Two children recounted being approached by strangers who demanded they deliver small packages to various places, while one 12-year-old boy described how he had almost been kidnapped three years ago. A neighbour noticed the incident and shouted at the kidnapper who then ran off. Many of the girls working as street vendors had also been approached by strangers who offered to adopt and care for them.

Media, digital technology, and the internet

Use of social media, text messaging, and online games was found to be extremely widespread amongst the majority of children in all research locations. Children acquired a great deal of information about sex, accurate or otherwise, from informal channels such as peers, television, media and the internet. Images and information of a sexual nature were reported to be ubiquitous. Children in all research locations were easily able to access information of a sexual nature or chat with strangers through social media networks. Adult supervision of children's access to media, internet, and other forms of technology was non-existent.

Addiction to chatting, video game addiction, pornography, possible online lures, and stealing to pay for game addiction were among the problems related to digital technology and the internet that adults mentioned. Teachers and parents commonly complained that too many internet and game shops were concentrated around school areas and that many children skipped school to play and chat in these shops. Duty bearers and authorities assumed that children's curiosity and sexual desire was enhanced through free access to media, especially to the internet.

At the same time, the internet is reportedly increasingly being used by child sex offenders, both as a grooming tool to create a method of communication when abroad and to de-sensitise children to acts of abuse.[94] Offenders also regularly produce child abuse images, which can be circulated nationally and internationally via internet sex offender networks.[95] Overall, children did not seem to be aware of the danger that strangers posed online, despite the increase in reported incidents of emerging practices such as 'body show' and 'chat sex', wherein children agree to, or are forced to, upload sexual images or reveal their bodies via webcam.[96]

Basic information with regard to protection of identity, as well as awareness of threats such as online grooming, was limited. Some interviewed children reported

[94] Keane, K (2006), *Street-Based Child Sexual Exploitation in Phnom Penh and Sihanoukville: A Profile of Victims, Action Pour Les Enfants.*

[95] Keane, K (2006), *Street-Based Child Sexual Exploitation in Phnom Penh and Sihanoukville: A Profile of Victims, Action Pour Les Enfants.*

[96] UNICEF (2011), *An Analysis of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Selected Provinces and Cities of Vietnam.*

that they confided personal information they felt they could not share with friends or family members in online strangers. One Vietnamese 16-year-old female high school student reported that 20 out of her 200 *yahoo* IDs on her contact list belonged to strangers whom she now considered as her friends. She gave her mobile phone numbers to five of those strangers, of whom four were male. After the exchange of phone numbers, the online chatting progressed into phone texting and calling.

Public campaigns

Media campaigns aimed at raising awareness of child sexual abuse had the tendency to successfully target children and duty bearers. As a duty bearer stated:

> *'Kids need to know more on how to protect themselves from the sexual dangers. Since Pattaya is the main centre for sexual tourism they are learning and living in the middle of an adult entertainment setting, so they need to be guided and to understand this issue better at younger ages, like from nine or ten years old'.*

It was found that students in Hai Phong, Vietnam who had previously participated in World Vision Child Protection workshops possessed a greater understanding of child sexual abuse than other Vietnamese child respondents. Of note, however, training and awareness-raising generally did not reach parents. The exception was one NGO in Chiang Mai, Thailand, which provided community education on sexual issues and mediation between parents and children.

Knowledge of laws and rights

Childhood and child rights

Definitions of childhood were varied, even between respondents in each of the research locations. For instance, in Lao PDR, the research indicated that amongst adults and children, one's responsibilities were more important than one's actual chronological age in terms of defining the childhood and adulthood. Across all research locations, children were expected to respect and obey their parents. Nevertheless, child respondents in each research location were well aware that children should be protected from harm, cared for and allowed to go to school.

Children in Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam were generally familiar with the basic concept of child rights. Children in Cambodia and Vietnam demonstrated a better grasp of the formal definition of the concept. The majority of street and school children in Siem Reap, Cambodia, were familiar with the terms 'child rights' ('*sit koma*') and 'child protection' ('*kakaperkoma*'), respectively. In Pouk commune, school children were familiar with the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child and were able to tell the researcher what their rights were. In Vietnam, school children were aware of the term '*Quyen tre em*' ('rights of the child'), which was briefly taught in their social studies classes. Some of the children said that they had heard about the rights of the children from watching television or from reading newspapers. The issues of child rights and child protection were relatively new to families and communities in Lao PDR, though the government has, over the last decade, started to address the need to provide better care and protection to children.[97]

[97] MLSW and UNICEF (2009), *Social Welfare System in Lao PDR: An Analysis of Welfare Services for the Prevention and Response to Abuse, Violence, and Exploitation against Children.*

In all research locations, duty bearers and officials who were questioned during the study also had a basic understanding of child rights. Officials also knew that the state had the duty to protect children from harm. However, none of the questioned officials could describe what was actually being done to protect children in their area from sexual abusers. When the questions became more detailed about how the government should protect children, duty bearers and officials alike gave general statements such as they should *'uphold the law'* or *'make sure there is no risk to children'*. While government workers such as social workers, health providers, police and NGO staff generally had a good level of knowledge concerning children's rights and protection, the level of understanding varied between research locations. In general, a gap between the knowledge of, and the provision of, child rights was identified.

'When you are a child living in the street and selling sex, it is difficult as you are under age. You fear everything: the older street boys, and especially the police. You cannot really show up in the street and no bars want you to work there because the police will arrest [you]'. — **16-year-old boy living on the street**

Legal age of consent

The age of sexual consent outlines the age whereby a person is deemed to have legal capacity to properly consent to having sexual intercourse. The legal age of consent varies across the world, and for different forms of sex, from 14 to 21 years. It is commonly accepted that there are circumstances whereby a person does not have reasonable capacity to give full and informed consent, for example when someone is mentally incapable for reasons of disability, under the influence of drugs, or in the case of children under the age of legal capacity to consent. If an alleged victim is deemed incapable of giving consent, any accused person standing trial for rape would not be able to successfully defend themselves on the grounds that consent was given. The age of sexual consent therefore exists to protect children from sexual abuse and rape. It follows therefore, that a fundamental aspect of understanding child abuse is possessing knowledge of what the law states about the age of sexual consent.

Respondents throughout the region did not identify the legal age of sexual consent as a protective mechanism for child sexual abuse. Consent laws were seen as punitive, rather than protective. In one example, a 16-year-old boy living on the street said:

> *'When you are a child living in the street and selling sex, it is difficult as you are under age. You fear everything: the older street boys, and especially the police. You cannot really show up in the street and no bars want you to work there because the police will arrest [you]'.*

The same boy reported that the local police threatened him with a charge of illegal activities (prostitution) when he tried to report a case of abuse against him.

It was also perceived that legal age of consent was something that only applied to girls. A 14-year-old school boy said:

> *'I have no [sexual] experience yet… but it doesn't matter at what age. As boys, we can do whatever we want. We can have sex whenever we feel'.*

In some cases, parents and family members were more concerned with when sex was culturally appropriate (i.e. after marriage). They felt that school-aged children should not have sex, regardless of whether or not they had reached the legal age of consent.

In Cambodia, where school children had a thorough understanding about child rights, none of them knew of the minimum legal age of consent to having sexual relations or even about the concept of consent. Most children thought that only people older than 18 years should have sex, i.e. the same age that people can legally get married. In Vietnam, neither children nor parents knew what the age of consent was, or understood the meaning behind consent. Most adults who were interviewed in Cambodia, including law enforcement officers, were equally unaware about what the age of consent was.

In Lao PDR the majority of informants across all groups said that people had to be at least 18 years old for sex to be acceptable. A few older children said that it was socially acceptable to have sex at 15 years. The younger age group, 12 years and under, said sex was acceptable when individuals were 20 years or older.

In Pattaya, Thailand, most children had an understanding of the idea of 'consent' and knew that the legal age under which a child should not have sexual intercourse was 15. In contrast, in Chiang Mai, school children were confused about the age when girls had the legal capacity to agree to having sexual intercourse, and the majority thought that this would only occur after marriage or when girls would be able to live on their own. Duty bearers in both Chiang Mai and Pattaya knew the legal age of consent, while only parents in Pattaya were found to have this knowledge.

On the contrary, in Vietnam local officials were well aware of the concept of consent but were confused about the issue because the sexual abuse of children is not defined in the relevant laws and sexual abuse is officially defined as 'sexual intercourse'.[98]

[98] The Penal Code article 112 reads: 'All cases where a person has sexual intercourse with children under 13 years old are considered to be child rape'. (*Creating a Protective Environment for Children in Vietnam*, Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs and UNICEF Viet Nam 2009).

Chapter Three

Attitudes and Practices

In the previous chapter, children's and adults' understanding and perceptions of child abuse, and in particular child sexual abuse, were discussed. This chapter describes how these perceptions translated into actual practices and behaviour, how this behaviour related to forces in the environment of the children, and how individuals and society viewed and responded to these practices and incidents of abuse.

Values and customs

Virginity and sexual behaviour

The research confirmed the strong cultural importance placed on girls across the region to remain virgins before marriage. This was the case for both adults and children, although adults seemed to place more significance on it. Yet, while most children placed a value on female virginity, many of them did not report practicing sexual abstinence in practice.

In Chiang Mai, Thailand, both parents and children considered a girl who had lost her virginity to be a *'bad'* girl, labelling her *'jai-teak'* or spoiled. In Cambodia, a girl was believed to have lost her value when she lost her virginity. In Vietnam, all students, male and female, emphasised the importance of female virginity. In traditional Lao culture girls were labelled *'sai khon'*—literally, a 'damaged person'—if she had lost her virginity before marriage.

Parents often warned their children, particularly girls, not to go out alone at night to prevent them from possible abuse or rape. Some interviewees also said that it would bring shame on the family if their daughter was raped. Because of the enormous value placed on female virginity, many families preferred to resolve the matter amongst the families concerned without making it public. Additionally, parents did not usually worry about the safety of their boys in the same way as girls. For instance, in the case of Lao boys, parental fears were related more to drugs and alcohol addiction. In essence, the findings revealed that child sexual abuse and the rape of girls was more likely to be seen as an issue of 'face' and family reputation rather than about the well-being and protection of the child. As a result, when cases did occur families preferred to keep it quiet and settle on compensation. It also explains why there was not much attention directed towards protecting male children. The fact that a child's needs are not put first where s/he has been abused is a serious concern.

Attitudes in Pattaya, Thailand, were less conservative than those found in any other research location. Given the local entertainment industry for tourism, virginity was an abstract concept. Children in Pattaya did not consider virginity to be as important as the older generations in the family did. Parents seemed to be more concerned about possible pregnancies than about their daughter losing her virginity. In contrast to the other research sites, a girl's virginity was not as important for family reputation. This may possibly explain why there are more reported cases of abuse in Pattaya than in Chiang Mai, as families may feel more able to speak out without conservative social pressures around virginity and

reputation. Given that virginity also seemed to have an indirect financial value, as evidenced by compensatory agreements between families in the event of pre-marital sex (to cover the loss of the girl's virginity), some felt concerned that the loss of a girl or young woman's virginity may put more pressure on her to earn other financial compensation through commercial sex.

While stigmatisation of non-virgin girls in Pattaya, Thailand has declined significantly, it was still found to exist. Girls were viewed as seductresses who provoked sexual urges in men and boys. 'Bad girls' could be marginalised by the community, and some respondents even felt that they deserved to be raped. As a Pattaya teacher stated:

> *'In spite of knowing this is too short, too tight, why are they still wearing these clothes? In spite of knowing it is too late, too dark, why are they still going out to those places?'*

Despite the emphasis on virginity in Chiang Mai, Thailand, pre-marital sexual relationships were found to be common in both research sites in Thailand. Additionally, students, teachers and three NGO workers in both sites reported that 'many' children often changed sexual partners and that there was peer pressure to compete with each other. In Chiang Mai this practice was more concealed, while in Pattaya it was openly discussed. Furthermore, in Chiang Mai, respondents reported that girls living in university dormitories often took advantage of their sudden 'freedom', adopting a more sexually permissive attitude than previous generations. One duty bearer reported seeing girls from dormitories *'going out at night, getting drunk and dressing inappropriately'*.

While Lao children and youth recognised traditional values, they did not necessarily adhere to them. One rural 18-year-old female garment factory worker in Vientiane stated that she was well aware that as a Lao girl, she should remain a virgin until her wedding day. However, in her opinion, it was acceptable if a woman lost her virginity, particularly to her boyfriend, before she was married. Attitudes among young men about virginity also appeared to be changing.

Pre-marital sexual relationships were also found to be common in the Vietnamese research locations. The research team interviewed a group of men in Hai Phong who spent a great deal of money, time and effort pursuing sex with virgin school girls.[99] These so-called 'sex-chaser' men described the importance of conquest, in which 'protest' from the girl gave them a feeling (or illusion) that she was 'well-bred', something which made them feel more masculine. In contrast, according to the men it was easy to form sexual relationships with local school girls and young women who were waiting to marry East Asian men. Virginity was less of a concern for these girls, who found themselves outside the usual societal codes. The men said the girls wanted to enjoy multiple sexual partners before they 'gambled' their lives away with new husbands abroad. However, 'easy' sex was not as valued among these men as that obtained through conquest.

Since protection of virginity was culturally viewed as a responsibility of a 'good girl', protesting against or even mocking a boy's sexual advances was an expected criterion by which an image of 'good girl' was defined. Therefore, it was found to be important in Vietnamese courting culture to pretend that any sexual activity was unintentional. However, such a culture where true consent by girls is

[98] Of the seven men interviewed, six of them dropped out while they were studying in secondary or high schools. One held a university degree. While none held stable or formal jobs, the seven men were financially comfortable due to their families' wealth. In addition to the attraction of chase and conquest, the men in the 'sex-chasers' group also considered school girls and female university students as 'clean vegetables', whom they believed to be not yet sexually active and thus free from STDs.

considered 'improper' places young people at high risk of sexual abuse and also results in unprotected sex (e.g. as bringing condoms would indicate prior intention).

Selling sex and material exchanges

Commercial sexual exchanges were generally – but not in all cases – discouraged or considered inappropriate. Essentially, however, the most vulnerable children, such as street children, found themselves with little choice but to engage in sexual exploitation in order to financially survive.[100] Education, health, and supporting one's family were also reported as reasons for selling sex, as was supplementing low incomes from working in factories, bars, or the domestic sphere. However, despite the fact that many children can be sexually exploited as a result of their dire financial circumstances, it is often the case that children exploited in prostitution get cheated out of their earnings, receiving much less than promised or being trapped in debt bondage situations whereby owners of commercial sex establishments pay the child's parents in advance and force the child to work at the establishment until the 'advance fee' and any other expenses incurred by the child are paid off.[101]

[100] Not all child victims possess an awareness of the concept of money in exchange for sex before they are exploited. Keane (2006), for example, found that over one-third of the children she interviewed were not aware that their relationship with a foreign national would result in commercial sexual exploitation.

[101] UNICEF-EAPRO (2012), *Child Maltreatment: Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences in the East Asia and Pacific Region: A Systematic Review of Research.*

'Children from rural areas... some of them come to study in town but do not receive enough support from their families. This leads young people to seek work and sell sex'. — **Village chief, Luang Prabang, Lao PDR**

One former sex worker in Vientiane, Lao PDR, related how a mother turned up at her place of work and offered to sell her daughter's services to the sex worker to pay off a debt. The sex worker consequently arranged for the girl to sleep with a client. In another case, a senior police officer explained how he had met a 16-year-old school girl who worked at a karaoke bar in Vientiane where he went to dine with friends one night. He said he knew that she was underage and talked to her without disclosing his profession. She told him that before joining the bar she had sold her virginity for 40,000 Kip (approximately USD 5). The same girl also offered to become a customer's *'mia noi'* (second wife or mistress) if the customer agreed to pay her 25,000 Kip (approximately USD 3) per month.

In Luang Prabang, Lao PDR, children who sold sex to support their education were known as *'Kong Karn Suksa'*, which roughly translates as 'education project'. Selling sex to pay for education was reported to be particularly common among children from provincial towns to study in Vientiane. As a village chief in Luang Prabang explained:

> *'Children from rural areas... some of them come to study in town but do not receive enough support from their families. This leads young people to seek work and sell sex'.*

Existing research suggests that children in the region may be sold, trafficked, tricked, or may willingly sell their virginity to help support their families. In some cases, children are reportedly brought from rural areas, then kept in brothels and raised there until old enough to be sexually exploited. In other cases, girls

allegedly sold their virginity with agreement of the family, after which they would return to their homes. Sometimes, children sold for their virginity remained in commercial sexual exploitation for reasons including debt and shame.[102] In Vietnam and Cambodia, some cases were reported in the present study wherein which an offender entered into an agreement with the family to marry their (often under-aged) daughter.

[102] Thomas, F and Mathews, L (2006), *Who Are The Child Sex Tourists in Cambodia?*, Child Wise.

> 'I do not want to know what he did when he was with this (old) foreign man, as long as he provides me with money, I am satisfied and it is enough'. — **Grandmother of a street boy, Pattaya, Thailand**

It was also found that for some young people, selling sex for money was a way of keeping up with consumer culture. In other words, materialism, the need for a better standard of living or the desire to have the latest or best products, was reportedly a driving force pushing girls and boys into commercial sex. This could take the form of conventional commoditisation of sex or of more subtle 'material exchanges'. Two young males who were selling sex in Pattaya, Thailand just below 18 years of age, felt that selling sex was a good source of income. One grandmother of a street boy stated that the sexual abuse of her grandson was acceptable to her as long as she received money for it:

> *'I do not want to know what he did when he was with this (old) foreign man. As long as he provides me with money, I am satisfied and it is enough'.*

Some interviewees in Lao PDR commented that some boys encouraged their girlfriends to support them by selling sex. Similarly, in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, some respondents saw commercial or transactional sex as an attractive prospect.

In Pattaya, Thailand, children and adults interviewed suggested that children were susceptible to the trend of selling sex for money in the context of high social and media pressure to possess consumer items such as phones. One interaction with a foreigner could earn a child between 500 to 1000 Baht (USD 15 to 30).[103] Respondents voiced concerns that since children 'show off' consumer items such as modern phones to their friends, their behaviour could provide allurement or pressure to peers as an easy way to 'earn' money.

[103] Figure is based on responses from a street boy working as a prostitute, a government social worker, two parents and two teachers.

> 'The boys do online gaming and often become addicted to it... One of my child's friends used to go with an old man to "short farang" [a relatively short encounter of sexual fondling or touching] for him and reportedly said, "It's only for a few minutes, it doesn't hurt and it's okay; for which I get a large amount of money"'. — **Mother, Pattaya, Thailand**

Respondents also linked selling sexual services with other risky and concerning trends such as drug abuse and online gaming. A girl in Pattaya reported that a friend of hers had been selling sex to buy drugs and only stopped taking drugs once she was arrested. One mother described the risks of gaming addiction as follows:

> *'The boys do online gaming and often become addicted to it... One of my child's friends used to go with an old man to "short farang" [a relatively short encounter of sexual fondling or touching] for him and reportedly said, "It's only for a few minutes, it doesn't hurt and it's okay; for which I get a large amount of money"'.*

In Luang Prabang, Lao PDR, many young people dreamed of owning their own motorcycle, mobile phone, or other consumer items that their families could not afford. The job options for young and inexperienced children could be limited, as one father commented:

> *'Wanting to have available goods leads children to seek work. Their options could be limited because of limited education. Work available for them would be in services sector, most of which makes children vulnerable to being abused and exploited'.*

'When a girl told me she liked a certain shop, I would take her there shopping. Of course, I would not give anything for free. After shopping, I took her out to drink some beer and then pretended to be drunk and told her that I needed to look for a place to rest. Of course that place was a hotel. And you know what will happen'.

— **25-year-old man, Hai Phong, Vietnam**

NGO workers in Chiang Mai, Thailand, reported that girls in dormitories were vulnerable to sexual exploitation as a result of wanting to uphold a certain lifestyle:

> *'These girls come from remote areas with little nightlife. Suddenly they are living on their own with freedom to dress, go out and behave like their city-based friends. They might find boyfriends in nightclubs. To keep up with this lifestyle they become involved in selling sex'.*

The 'sex chaser' men in Hai Phong, Vietnam, also provided some insight into the various ways that sex could be exchanged for material gains without being labelled as 'commercial sex'. One 25-year-old man boasted:

> *'When a girl told me she liked a certain shop, I would take her there shopping. Of course, I would not give anything for free. After shopping, I took her out to drink some beer and then pretended to be drunk and told her that I needed to look for a place to rest. Of course that place was a hotel. And you know what will happen'.*

Grooming—or using financial benefits and gifts as a way to befriend children or their families—is known to be a common modus operandi of travelling sex offenders. Offenders have been known to become financial benefactors to the families of the children they abuse, sometimes even assuming the fatherly duties of monetary support, discipline, education (often in the form of English lessons), as well as food and shelter. In many cases, parents or family know of the ongoing sexual abuse but are reluctant to sever the relationship because of the monetary support being received.[104] A study in Vietnam documented the increasing trend of 'sponsorship' of young girls (the youngest was reportedly two years of age) by foreign men (usually Asian, sometimes Caucasian).[105] An NGO worker in Siem Reap, Cambodia, recalled four different cases in Siem Reap province where foreign offenders used grooming methods.[106] In one of the cases, a foreigner, with a Cambodian wife, raped girls who were working as domestic helpers in his house in Siem Reap. The wife acted as her husband's accomplice by actively building trust with the children's families, all of whom were very poor.

Homosexuality

Homosexuality was stigmatised and considered socially unacceptable in most of the research locations. In Chiang Mai, Thailand, respondents flatly denied the existence of homosexuality within their communities. This attitude was reflected in the statement of a 14-year old school boy: *'It is disgusting just to think of a man having sex with a man'.* Moreover, many children and adults in Chiang Mai considered the issue of sexual abuse of boys as a 'problem of others' (other provinces or countries) since they had never personally encountered it in their circles.

In general, Vietnamese media and society seemed to view homosexuality as a 'disease'. At the same time, recent research shows that there appears to be an increased proliferation of male children involved in commercial sexual exploitation in Vietnam.[107] These Vietnamese boys were embarrassed and fearful that their families would find out.[108] Almost all the respondents in Cambodia considered gay relations to be *'min sam roun'* or inappropriate. Given such prevalent attitudes, boys could be vulnerable to abuse or hesitate to report abuse if they had been raped by a man, as one duty bearer in Mondulkiri, Cambodia, pointed out. Although they had heard stories about boys being sexually abused, most children involved in the study did not believe that it was something that could really happen or that Cambodian men would commit such offences. Rather, they perceived abuse of boys as something committed by foreigners in tourist places.

Homosexuality appeared more socially acceptable in Lao PDR and in Pattaya, Thailand. In Pattaya, children identified certain advantages to being gay, such as being friends with both boys and girls, and being able to avoid being targeted for gang affiliation. The community was aware of foreign male tourists as potential offenders against boys.

The Lao PDR research team observed numerous men dressed as women (transgendered people or *'ka toey'*), young women dressed up like men (*'tomboy'* or *'tom'*), and young men accompanying male tourists. Local people reported that that there had been a recent increase in the number of homosexuals, and that some homosexual and transgendered people were working in the tourism

[104] Action Pour Les Enfants (July 2006), *Travelling Sex Offenders, Grooming Abroad: the Cambodian Context*. For example, APLE cites a case of a young girl in Battambang who was abused from the age of eight till twelve; her family knew of the on-going abuse but did nothing to stop it or report it; see also Putman-Cramer (2005).

[105] Reimer, JK (2006), At what price, honour? A qualitative study into domestic trafficking of Vietnamese (girl) children for sexual exploitation, Chab Dai, Phnom Penh.

[106] Ung Chansophal (2004), *The Sexual Trap*, Cambodian Women Crisis Centre, Phnom Penh.

[107] Further data is required to confirm whether or not this is an actual increase or just an increase in visibility. UNICEF (2011), *An Analysis of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Selected Provinces and Cities of Vietnam.*

[108] Yen et al, (2012), *Exploratory Research: Trafficking in Boys in Vietnam*, IOM.

industry. Some interviewees knew of popular gathering places for gay men in Vientiane. Most Lao children interviewed had seen gay men or '*ka toey*' and gay women on the street or on Thai television and did not feel prejudice towards them: *'I am not against gay people because it is not their fault - they born as one sex but their internal desire was the opposite sex'* (17-year-old girl, Vientiane).

Power relations - family

Power relations within families and communities highlight the variant status of families and community members and have a strong correlation with how a case of child sexual abuse is responded to. These power relations also illustrate why certain reactive practices and communications result when cases of abuse are suspected or identified.

In all research locations, children were expected to obey and respect their parents. For instance, adult respondents in both locations in Thailand shared the view that *'children are the property of their parents'* and in Chiang Mai, Thailand, children had little option to refuse adults' requests. This statement illustrates the lack of agency children have in relation to their parents. In Vietnam it was found that children had little or no voice over their lives and mainly acted according to their parents' wishes or demands. Respecting and obeying elders and parents was one of the values reflected in the interviews with Lao children and parents. The exception was again in Pattaya, Thailand, where children were more independent and often had to take care of themselves or live with extended family. Parents worked a lot and were less available to influence and control children. Although children in all locations had basic awareness of child rights, their position of deference meant that in practice they were not supposed to demand these rights. Clearly, this has implications in relation to issues of child protection.[109]

Kinship obligations and debt of gratitude to parents, especially on the part of girls, was a concept found recurrently in the literature on the subject across the region, as well as in the research findings.[110] This situation is exacerbated by gender inequality and the prioritisation of boys' education over that of girls, potentially leading girls with limited education and employment opportunities to enter the commercial sex industry in order to contribute to family income and fulfil their obligations to parents.

In Mondulkiri, Cambodia, there was a reported case of a woman who entered commercial sexual exploitation at the age of 15 years old after her mother told her she should support the family. According to some social workers, a few families in Pattaya, Thailand, encouraged children to sell sexual services as a means to improve the family's living situation. Reports from Vietnam also show that parents and relatives were becoming increasingly responsible for the sale of children.[111] Some commentators have suggested however, that researchers may be overstressing the importance of kinship obligations as an entry point into commercial sexual exploitation, arguing that it is rather a way for girls and their families to rationalise their predicaments, thereby obscuring the more likely reason of economic poverty.[112]

[109] Gourley (2009) suggests the strong cultural emphasis on family and parental reputation or 'honour', as well as the influence of hierarchy and patriarchy in parent-child relationships, hinder the realisation of children's rights in many areas of family life, including children's right to protection from sexual abuse. Gourley, S (2009), *The Middle Way: Bridging the Gap between Cambodian Culture and Children's Rights*, NGO Committee on the Rights of the Child, Phnom Penh.

[110] For example: Montgomery, H (2001), *Modern Babylon? Prostituting Children in Thailand*, Berghahn Books, New York.

[111] UNICEF (2011), *An Analysis of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Selected Provinces and Cities of Vietnam.*

[112] Baker, S (2004), 'Child prostitution and HIV/AIDS in Thailand: Changing realities for Thai and hill-tribe children', unpublished paper.

Fear of dishonour

Fear of dishonour was another recurring theme in discussions of girl's virginity and sexual behaviour across many of the research locations. Whereas boys were considered inviolate and even encouraged to experiment sexually, virginity of girls was seen as a criterion through which families gained or lost 'face' (honour or reputation). The value attached to virginity was so high that girls could be expelled from their families, marginalised, and/or stigmatised if found to have lost their virginity before marriage. This could often be a potential entry point into sexual exploitation, commercial or otherwise. Whether or not a girl lost her virginity of her own choice or through rape appeared to be inconsequential.[113] The shame and guilt often led to girls' failing to disclose their abuse. Others felt pressured into marrying their abusers in order to protect their own or their family's reputation. [114]

Over the last few years, many cases of child sexual abuse against school children were reported in the Vietnamese media.[115] After the cases were widely publicised, the girl victims reportedly had to drop out of school due to the social prejudice and ridicule they received from their fellow schoolmates and communities.[116] Additionally, a psychiatrist in Chiang Mai, Thailand, recounted the following disturbing case:

Case Study

A 10-year-old was abused by her adoptive father, a married man with his own children. The girl's mother found out and refused to compromise with the offender. Once the community found out, the offender felt ashamed and stressed; he committed suicide during the prosecution. The view of the villagers was that the girl had caused a family in the village to become broken or dysfunctional. The villagers' pity was more for the offender's wife and children who had lost their family leader and bread-winner, which they feared could bring further problems to the community if the children were unable to finish school and find jobs. Villagers eventually came to the view that the girl herself had seduced the offender and must be the cause of the events that had ensued. The case became the subject of gossip and disapproval, damaging the village's reputation: community members felt 'dishonoured' and ashamed to live in the same village. Interpreting the community's reaction as 'rejection', the girl's family sent her away from the village (on the outskirts of Chiang Mai) to a foster home in town. In the foster home, she usually isolated herself from others as she felt unsafe amongst people. She also felt guilty and nervous all the time. Several years later, the girl still needs constant care.

One father in a group discussion with the Vietnam research team held back tears as he explained that he had married off his 16-year-old daughter to an East Asian man to avoid bringing shame on the family after he had found out she had run away with her boyfriend for a few days. The thought that she had lost her virginity and could have become pregnant was too much for him to bear. Therefore, to protect his family honour he bribed a local official to increase her documented age to 18 and married her off to an East Asian man in his forties. The man's daughter called from the East Asian country to say that she missed home. This

[113] There is a growing evidence base on child sexual abuse in the region showing that for many young people, their first sexual experience is forced sex. UNICEF-EAPRO (2012), *Child Maltreatment: Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences in the East Asia and Pacific Region: A Systematic Review of Research*.

[114] Action Pour Les Enfants (February 2014), *Investigating Travelling Child Sex Offenders: An analysis of the trends and challenges in the field of child sexual abuse and exploitation in Cambodia*.

[115] http://www.baomoi.com/Khi-thay-giao-cuong-dam-voi-hoc-sinh-cua-minh/104/7974408.epi; http://www.baomoi.com/Tinh-tiet-moi-trong-vu-Sam-Duc-Xuong/104/4160329.epi

[116] Many of the media reports on child sexual abuse gave the initials of the names of the victims or the report clarified that the names of the victims were changed for confidentiality. However, to sensationalise the news, reporters provided the names of the schools at which the victims studied, names of the localities in which the victims lived and even pictures of the houses of the victims. These details often gave away the identities of the victims. (http://www.zing.vn/news/xa-hoi/hieu-truong-sam-duc-xuong-hoang-dam-nhu-the-nao/a102523.html; http://vnexpress.net/gl/phap-luat/2012/03/thay-giao-phu-nhan-dua-tro-vao-nha-nghi/)

case indicates how children are sometimes viewed not as autonomous individuals, but as the bearers of the family honour and the property of their parents.

Peer influence

Peer relationships are an integral part of child development, so much so that children with peers engaging in sexual exploitation may also be vulnerable to exploitation.[117] Children and parents alike noted that adolescents tended to follow what their peers were doing, including the way they styled their dress, hair, and in terms of having a mobile phone. In Pattaya, Thailand school children expressed the significance of peer pressure on their decisions concerning sex. Girls who had had sexual experiences reportedly liked to pressure other girls to try it by saying things like, *'Look at me, I have done that and nothing happened!'* Both girls and boys felt they needed to share their sexual experience with their friends, almost as a way of seeking acceptance. As one Lao male student (18 years old) said, *'Most of my classmates have boyfriends or girlfriends. I don't have and feel left out'*. Many children indicated that adolescents were at risk because they liked to go out to meet with their friends: *'Youth or 'sao nume' are at risk because this is the age when many people like 'going out and play' or 'pai linh' and make friends'* (18-year-old girl, Vientiane, Lao PDR). Some teachers and school students claimed that in Pattaya, Thailand, one could collect popularity points by changing sexual partners. Peer pressure could also influence youths to adopt other risky behaviours such as online gaming or going to dangerous areas such as sex entertainment venues.

Of even greater concern was the finding that competition and peer pressure played a role in the potential for students to exchange sexual favours for gifts. NGOs and duty bearers in Chiang Mai, Thailand, reported a worrying trend in which girls pressured each other to engage in casual transactional sex. So-called 'side-line girls' were gradually drawn into the casual commercial sex scene through their peers, who shared experiences and information, as well as acted as a go-between finding prospective clients.

The Vietnamese research team found that girls who had slept with men in exchange for gifts and money could sometimes use jealousy to influence their friends into selling sex. One parent in Hai Phong, Vietnam reported that his daughter (aged 16 years old) described a conversation overheard between two schoolmates, wherein one girl quizzed the other as to how she could afford the expensive bra she was wearing. The girl explained it was a gift from a man she had gone out with and that if she wanted the same, she could connect her with a few rich men she knew. Her friend reportedly agreed.

Media and digital technology

In all study locations, the influence of the internet and digital technology such as mobile smart phones, and media sources like the television, radio, magazines and pornographic movies, on the attitudes and sexual behaviour of children was evident. The impact of the information accessed through the internet seemed to be greater than all other platforms and channels.

In Cambodia, internet access was not yet available for the majority of school children living outside town centres but for most children in urban and town

[117] Keane, K (2006), *Street-Based Child Sexual Exploitation in Phnom Penh and Sihanoukville: A Profile of Victims,* Action Pour Les Enfants, http://aplecambodia.org/images/reportresearch/A%20profile%20of%20victims.pdf, last accessed 8 July 2011.

'Mobile phones have videos [that] allow users to share pornographic images. After [children] see the photographs, they would want to try.' — **Duty bearer, Mondulkiri, Cambodia**

areas, it was accessible in internet cafes or through mobile phones. Many school children (in the provincial capital of Sen Monorom, the main town) in the remote province of Mondulkiri had their own Facebook accounts and used a mobile phone internet connection to access them. Most school children in Vietnam had mobile phones and used text messages to communicate with their friends and peers. Many also had access to the internet via their own laptop computers or in internet cafes. Among 36 children interviewed in Lao PDR, only 5 said they had never used a mobile phone. All those aged 15-18 had used mobile phones. The research team also observed a number of primary school children carrying their mobile phones to school.

Parents and duty bearers were generally not aware of the effects that online games, chat rooms, social networking sites such as Facebook and similar social media websites had on the sexual beliefs, practices and networks of children. Researchers found that supervision of children's use of digital technology was practically non-existent. Parents' and duty bearers' main concern was that children might become addicted to video games or exposed to pornographic materials. A duty bearer in Mondulkiri, Cambodia, explained:

> *'Mobile phones have videos [that] allow users to share pornographic images. After [children] see the photographs, they would want to try.'*

Addiction to online gaming, related risk of debt and increased vulnerability to sexual exploitation enabled through digital technology are growing phenomena that were corroborated by the field data. Respondents linked selling sex with other risky and concerning trends such as drug abuse and online gaming. There have also been increases in reported cases of child abuse imagery and the availability of pornographic media.[118] As mentioned earlier in this chapter, one girl in Pattaya, Thailand, said a friend of hers had been selling sex to buy drugs and only stopped taking drugs once she was arrested. Another example provided by a mother in Pattaya relates the case of her child's friend, who allowed himself to be abused by old foreign man in order to earn money to support his online gaming activities.

Although some respondents spoke about the use of the internet by sex offenders to contact and befriend children, few indicated awareness of techniques such as creating a false online identity to gain sexual access to children. In Vietnam, one girl said that when her mother verbally abused her she went online to meet her 'friend': *'He was very understanding. He gave me advice and I felt better after that.'* Another school student, a 17-year-old boy, said: 'I can talk about my troubles... without the fear that this person will tell my classmates or teachers or parents'. It appeared that the anonymity of the medium encouraged children and young people to reveal secrets that were not shared with their parents or even

[118] Child Frontiers (2009), *Draft Report on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Lao PDR.*

their peers, such as the case of a girl in Mondulkiri who regularly spoke about her problems with an online friend. Most children who were interviewed said the use of digital technology could put people at risk of abuse, but very few could actually say how it put them at risk. A 10-year-old school girl in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR, asserted that:

> *'Bad people may use the mobile phone as a channel to send messages to trick the users. And parents don't have control over the use of mobile phone and internet'.*

'Bad people may use the mobile phone as a channel to send messages to trick the users. And parents don't have control over the use of mobile phone and internet'. — **School girl, Luang Prabang, Lao PDR**

The concept of a 'helpline' as a channel for children to access confidential information and advice about their problems was mostly unknown,[119] except amongst some children in Pattaya, Thailand and Lao PDR.

Responding to abuse

Family

Responses to cases of abuse varied across the different locations. In general, responses were dependent on the openness of the relationship between parents and children, as well as the degree of emphasis placed on family honour and reputation.

Lao child respondents stated that they would report incidents of abuse or violence to their parents. Lao parents saw themselves as the most important protective factor for keeping their children from harm, caring for their children, and giving advice about dangers. They also believed that the authorities should support them to fulfil their duties.

In Vietnam and Cambodia, children reported they would not share secrets or concerns, including regarding potential sexual abuse, with parents or adults.[120] Interestingly, vendor and street children in the Vietnam research locations reported that they would confide in their parents if they felt they were in some danger of sexual abuse, while the school children said they would not. This could be the result of working-class parents being less encumbered by the many layers of social pressure of face, shame and dishonour that the middle-class parents experienced.

In Chiang Mai, Thailand, the focus was very much on 'saving face' and family reputation. A family's response could also depend on their knowledge of sexual abuse, the level of importance of the family in the community and the location of the abuse. Resolving cases through compensatory compromise was common.

[119] There are national helplines for children in Vietnam and Thailand. Child Helpline Cambodia is also available nationally but at the time of the study had not yet been promoted beyond the capital city of Phnom Penh. In Vientiane, Lao PDR, there is also a Reproductive Health helpline for youth, run by the Vientiane Youth Centre for Health and Development under the Vientiane Governor's Office.

[120] Grillot (2005) observes that children in Cambodia are not encouraged to affirm themselves but to agree with adult perceptions, which may have implications for reporting instances of abuse. Grillot, C (2005), *Street Pedophilia in Cambodia – A Survey on Phnom Penh's Suspects and Victims, Action Pour Les Enfants.*

In Pattaya, cultural pressure from the local community appeared to be less important. Consequently, the families of abused children appeared to be more inclined to call the police in situations of abuse.

Duty bearers

In Chiang Mai, Thailand, formal responses to abuse were usually limited to civil society and government programs, generally in the form of foster shelters. Police interventions were rendered difficult by the fact that communities were concerned with the impact on their reputation. In more remote locations around Chiang Mai, NGOs accused local authorities of covering up child sexual abuse either because they were involved themselves or seeking to protect the interests of the perpetrators.

In Pattaya, Thailand, some interventions were supported by foreign police such as the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) under the UK's National Criminal Agency or the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Duty bearers suggested this international support and pressure was a critical factor in why cases involving foreigners were more successfully pursued than those involving locals.

As was the case in the other research locations, duty bearers and social workers in Pattaya reported corruption by authorities as a barrier to the response to child sexual abuse by foreigners. One social worker described how several attempts to arrest a child sex offender with the support of local authorities had failed. He also claimed that local authorities seemed to have links with bar owners who allowed illicit activity, such as hiring minors in order to attract clients and/or allowing minors to enter the bar to find commercial sex clients.

School children and duty bearers in both research sites in Cambodia felt that responsible neighbours and other villagers played a very important role in preventing child sexual abuse through educating children and sometimes through direct intervention. For instance, in one case, an educated villager who witnessed a group of men trying to persuade some local girls to get into a car immediately spoke to the girls and called the police. The local School Supporting Committee in the research location in Siem Reap, Cambodia, played an important role in educating children on how to keep safe, as well as intervening on behalf of children.

At the village level in Lao PDR there were several structures found to be dealing with child protection issues. The Village Mediation Unit (VMU), established in every village, was responsible for mediating between disputing parties and between family members. Village authorities were good at identifying and responding to cases such as drug use and misbehaving children, but none of the village chiefs interviewed had ever dealt with cases of child abuse. If there were reports of child abuse the case had to go through the normal process of mediation. A father in Lao PDR reported that there were cases of unreported and unrecorded child abuse in his village as authorities were afraid of 'losing face' due to the fact that the village was declared to be a crime-free village.[121]

In the Vietnamese study locations, the research pointed to an attitude of denial among the local authorities towards the existence of child sexual abuse in their

[121] The Lao PDR central government has a policy of rewarding villages that have lower crime rates, something which appeared to be a considerable factor in lack of reporting of child abuse.

own communities. Local authorities tended to treat cases of abuse as domestic affairs or as civil matters rather than criminal, and seldom intervened. For instance, two policemen contended that civil settlement of child sexual abuse cases was better than incarcerating the perpetrator because in such cases the perpetrators had 'at least' agreed to marry or financially compensate the victim. Additionally, a child victim could not file a complaint on his or her own and the police would only take appropriate actions on a formal complaint filed by a member of the victim's family or another adult witness.

Chapter Four

Vulnerabilities and Opportunities

Chapter 4: Vulnerabilities and Opportunities

This chapter reviews additional risks to children of sexual abuse, including by tourists and travellers, pertaining to their environmental and broader situation. It also examines what internal and external circumstances and conditions increase or reduce their vulnerability to such abuse. Obstacles hindering proper interventions, as well as opportunities to reach children with information and support are also presented.

Family and household situation

Various factors relating to family and household were identified as contributing to children's vulnerability to sexual abuse. These included: substance abuse within the family, domestic violence, broken or dysfunctional families, poverty, debt, and migration from rural to city areas. Almost all of the study participants identified family poverty and low socio-economic status as a major factor in children's vulnerability to abuse. This could lead to children being sent by their parents to work in high-risk, low-status employment such as street vending, domestic work, or factory labour, sometimes far from home. Where children were sent out to work on the streets in popular tourism areas, or worse, in red-light districts, or a family member was directly involved in the adult sex tourism industry, children's risk of being abused became exponentially higher.

Parental absence was also linked with a higher risk of being sexually abused. For instance, it was found that many parents in Pattaya, Thailand, were away at work in the entertainment industry from the afternoon until late at night. As a result, their children are often left unsupervised and exposed to an environment where sex, drugs and risky behaviours were common and avenues existed for children to enter sexual exploitation.

In the Cambodian field locations, many parents did not attend interviews because they were too busy earning income. Similarly, in Thuy Nguyen in Hai Phong municipality, Vietnam, many husbands and fathers went off to sea to fish for weeks or months at a time, while many young women migrated abroad to marry East Asian men. In Hai Phong, parents compensated for their absence by showering their children with generous gifts and money. One student said that his parents had given him pocket money of two million Dong (USD 100) on the day of the group interview. A 53-year-old mother in Vientiane, Lao PDR described the situation as follows:

> *'Children whose parents do not have sufficient time with them – because the parents are very busy working, or in broken families, or deprived families – will result in children being left to do things by themselves and becoming aggressive. Some parents raise their children with money and always give whatever the children want. These children tended to be spoiled'.*

Broken and dysfunctional families were also found to comprise a risk factor. The vocational school children in Ho Chi Minh City and vendor children in

both field sites in Vietnam had high levels of vulnerability to sexual abuse where they lived in cramped houses with their divorced or remarried mothers and stepfathers together with various extended family members. In terms of sleeping arrangements, there were no precautionary measures against child sexual abuse. Being an orphan or having conflict or separation in the family were the other main risk factors that made children vulnerable to sexual abuse.

Household situations in which parents or carers were physically or emotionally abusive, or where substance-related addictions existed in the family, could also lead to children becoming neglected and exploited. Eventually children could run away from home to places such as Pattaya, Thailand, where living arrangements often involved exploitative relationships.

The study showed that children living and working on the street were perhaps the most vulnerable to being sexually abused. Based on over a decade working with street children in Pattaya, Thailand, one NGO Manager (now in Chiang Mai) saw a direct link between street work and commercial sexual exploitation:

> *'Street working children are usually between 8 to 13 years of age, mostly not over 14 years. As they get older they often make less money, lose favour with their "caretaker" and become embarrassed engaging in what they perceive are immature activities. They may decide to start selling sex rather than flowers in order to answer their survival needs'.*

Although some street children have access to day care shelter and food, the shelters can also be places for children to be recruited into exploitative practices by other street children. Additionally, lax or non-existent child protection policies can lead to children being abused by staff within shelters.

Travel and tourism

The presence of the travel and tourism industry is another risk factor contributing to children's vulnerability. Yet children and adults in the study did not in general perceive tourists and travellers as threats. For example, in Lao PDR, children were happy to see many foreigners come to Lao PDR as tourism was a major source of income for families and the country:

> *'We see many tourists walking on the streets in town. Farang (French), Europeans and Asians are in shops and restaurants. We are not shy about responding if they ask for directions. We learn French at school. We are happy to speak in French and English to them'.* (Focus Group Discussion, 10-year-old school boys, Luang Prabang)

Children at a secondary school in Mondulkiri, Cambodia, felt that tourists could bring many benefits to their province, such as jobs and opportunities to practice English. In Chiang Mai, Thailand, a 13-year-old girl Hmong school girl who met foreigners at her after-school traditional dancing job, responded: *'When I see a white foreigner playing with children, I think that he must be a kind-hearted man'.* Additionally, ethnic groups in Chiang Mai seemed particularly positive about foreigners who adopted children or sponsored their education.

A few Lao child respondents voiced their concern that children could be influenced and copy some bad habits such as inappropriate dress, and kissing and

hugging in public. Several voiced concerns that tourists might be associated with child abuse and discouraged their children from interacting with them: *'Tourism could well be linked with child abuse because not all tourists are good persons, some are 'bad' and could be criminals, drug users, or even sex offenders'* (father, Vientiane). Parents also reported that they had seen news stories on Thai television about Lao girls being trafficked. Nonetheless, this did not stop these parents of children working as street vendors or in shops from encouraging their children to engage in conversations with tourists.

'Because of poverty, children from poor families are likely to be encouraged to look for work. They will take whatever work they can find'. — **17-year-old male, Vientiane, Lao PDR**

Furthermore, in many of the research locations, the proximity of sex entertainment venues offered many opportunities for children to earn money as waiters, waitresses, beer sellers, domestic workers, or even sex workers, putting them at grave risk of sexual abuse and with little hope of protection: *'Because of poverty, children from poor families are likely to be encouraged to look for work. They will take whatever work they can find'* (17-year-old male, Vientiane, Lao PDR). One 17-year-old Cambodian school girl recalled that her cousin, an entertainment worker, was badly abused by a group of men:

> *My 20-year-old cousin, who was working as a sex worker in a karaoke bar in Siem Reap town, was beaten by a group of East Asian clients after they had sex with her almost every day. Luckily, she was able to escape one day while the police raided [the bar]. She could barely walk. She had bruises all over her body. The tourists were then released by the police. If the karaoke girls are arrested by the police they will suffer more and will have to pay the police to be released.*

In regard to sexual abuse of entertainment workers, an NGO worker in Siem Reap, Cambodia, pointed out: *'No one cares about them and no one thinks it is abuse'.*

Particularly concerning is the reported demand for sex with virgins and children among visitors from two neighbouring countries of Lao PDR.[122] One father in Vientiane reported that girls aged 14-16 years old worked in beer and karaoke bars and offered to sell sex to customers. Clients could allegedly request specific types of girls such as students or virgins. In another example, agents or mamasans who supplied girls to clients often had lists of girls whom the agents categorised into several grades, depending on the type of clients.

Outside the sex industry, children were frequently found working as street vendors and guides, selling tours, flowers, books, souvenirs, food, and drinks to tourists. Studies show that opportunistic offenders almost always first access victims in a public place. The close interaction gives predatory (or preferential) sex offenders a way in which to manipulate and groom children directly, without having to go through adults such as parents or teachers. Therefore, the children's proximity to travellers made them highly vulnerable to exploitation.

[122] Child Frontiers (2011), *Draft Report on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Lao PDR.*

> ‘No one cares about them and no one thinks it is abuse’.
>
> — **NGO worker, Siem Reap, Cambodia**

Children selling souvenirs in Siem Reap, Cambodia, were observed by the research team to approach tourists and behave in a very friendly manner towards them, often encouraging the visitors to take photographs of them by speaking in a number of foreign languages. One souvenir-selling girl said:

> *‘Tourists are good. I like them because some of them are very kind and give me additional money after they have bought my products.’*

When asked whether they were concerned about being abused, most answered that they were not. An NGO worker who had worked on child protection issues in Siem Reap for more than ten years claimed that some tourists often exploited the friendly behaviour of working children. She recalled a case where a foreigner in Siem Reap city cultivated the trust of a 15-year-old souvenir-selling girl by buying all of her souvenirs and giving her tips. He asked her to bring some more souvenirs to his hotel room but once she was in the room, he raped her.[123]

[123] This story is one of four case studies in Ung, C (2004), *The Sexual Trap*, Cambodian Women Crisis Centre, Phnom Penh

> ‘I was informed that girls as young as 10 years old are being asked to accompany tourists/foreigners to the forest. These girls usually stay with the visitors for three to four nights. I’m very concerned about the safety of the children who escort foreigners/tourists. No one knows what happens in the middle of the jungle since it is quiet and far away from other people. Cases of child sexual abuse might have happened there but no one wants to report cases or make complaints. Money is the most important thing they need’.
>
> — **NGO worker, Mondulkiri, Cambodia**

In Mondulkiri, Cambodia, children as young as ten years old reportedly worked as tour guides, trekking with tourists deep into the forest for days, often without any adult supervision. Many local duty bearers expressed concerns about the possible risk for child abuse that this practice brought:

> *‘I was informed that girls as young as 10 years old are being asked to accompany tourists/foreigners to the forest. These girls usually stay with the visitors for three to four nights. I’m very concerned about the safety of the children who escort foreigners/tourists. No one knows what happens in the middle of the jungle since it is quiet and far away from other people. Cases of child sexual abuse might have happened there but no one wants to report cases or make complaints. Money is the most important thing they need’* (NGO worker, Mondulkiri).

Research and media reports show taxi and moto-taxi drivers acting as intermediaries between potential offenders and vulnerable children.[124] This has become more and more the case as awareness campaigns and child protection efforts make sex offenders more cautious and force them into new patterns of operation. Not only have taxi and moto-taxi drivers been known to take offenders to brothels or other venues where they can access children, but also children are often taken to hotels or guesthouses by moto and taxi drivers operating as procurers at the request of tourists.[125] Some drivers reportedly receive a commission for facilitating the contact. This data is confirmed by other research conducted on the commercial sex industry in Cambodia, in which informant taxi and moto-taxi drivers demonstrated strong familiarity with sex venues in the targeted research locations.[126] Additionally, hotel and guesthouse staff have been known to directly facilitate contact between a child and a tourist. They may also indirectly allow the exploitation to occur by turning a 'blind eye' to what is happening in front of them because they are afraid of losing customers.[127] Some duty bearers reported that some tour guides acted as intermediaries between offenders and victims.

Research and media reports confirm the enabling environment of the tourism sector. Where there is an existing adult sex industry for tourists, hotels and guesthouses commonly allow their customers to bring back women, sometimes at an additional fee. Further evidence is also emerging that third-party or intermediary exploiters themselves are become more cautious, as a result of awareness campaigns and higher risk of prosecution.[128]

[124] The Protection Project, Johns Hopkins University (2007), *International Child Sex Tourism: Scope of the Problem and Comparative Case Studies*. These findings are based on field research carried out in Phnom Penh, Sihanouk Ville and Siem Reap.

[125] Niron, N, Viriya, Y, Gray, L (2001), *Children's Work, Adults' Play: Child Sex Tourism – the Problem in Cambodia,* World Vision.

[126] Steinfatt, T, (2003), *Measuring the Number of Trafficked Women and Children in Cambodia: A Direct Observation Field Study*. USAID.

[127] The Protection Project, Johns Hopkins University (2007), *International Child Sex Tourism: Scope of the Problem and Comparative Case Studies*.

[128] Save The Children (February 2009), *Sex Offenders without Borders: An investigation into the sexual abuse and exploitation of children in Thailand, Cambodia and Burma in relation to travel and tourism.*

'Children or people from provincial areas or "khaeng" are most at risk of abuse... because they have never seen city life and do not have access to information.' — **Male hotline volunteer, Lao PDR**

Migration

Tourist industry hubs attract large numbers of domestic and international migrants because of the opportunities for earning income that can be found there. Displacement is another common cause of migration to tourist sites, one example being the ethnic minority groups that live in Chiang Mai's slums, in Northern Thailand, after having been displaced from their original homes. In Mondulkiri, Cambodia, Khmer families and ethnic minorities live side by side, while migrants from poorer provinces in Vietnam come to the Hai Phong area to find work. Children from these migrant families generally have fewer opportunities to complete their education and are often forced into street labour.[129]

Another vulnerability-increasing factor linked with migrant status is the loss of the social and community network that normally protects its members. Building social networks in a new place can take time, leaving families and children more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, particularly where the migrant family is living and working in sub-standard conditions and without legal status. Children in particular can be profoundly impacted by the lack of a supportive framework

[129] UNICEF-EAPRO (2012), *Child Maltreatment: Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences in the East Asia and Pacific Region: A Systematic Review of Research.*

> ‘During the long annual school vacation from April to May, girls of all ages come to Pattaya to sell sex… they come to work and save money for the next school semester. At the end of summer vacation, they return to school or university with a full pocket’.
>
> — **Duty bearer, Pattaya, Thailand**

of family, friends and relatives. Children in some cases lack access to school and networks conducive to their development. Additionally, in contrast to settled inhabitants, newcomers are not always aware of the dangers that exist in their new environment. For instance, many Lao informants stated that children who migrated to cities from provincial areas for work or study were particularly vulnerable to abuse: *‘Children or people from provincial areas or “khaeng” are most at risk of abuse… because they have never seen city life and do not have access to information’* (male hotline volunteer). The language barrier was also seen as an issue: *‘Rural kids are at risk because they do not know much what is going on outside their villages and also the language is different. Rural kids do not know how to speak and defend themselves*’ (18-year-old girl, Vientiane).

Illegal migrants’ lack of status also often pushes them to engage in informal, unskilled, risky income-earning activities where the risks of sexual exploitation are higher, as the following case study from Hai Phong, Vietnam, shows:

Case Study

One 17-year-old girl told of being raped by a young man in her neighbourhood (in a different province) when she was 15. At the age of 16 she went to the red-light tourist area in Hai Phong, Vietnam, and worked as a domestic helper in a hotel. However, when her hotel owner’s supply of girls ran short, she was called in to provide sexual services to clients.

A senior police officer in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR, reported that the owners of some places that provided rental accommodation to migrant workers acted as agents to supply *‘sao borikan’* (service woman or female sex worker) to clients. A similar story was related by a taxi driver in Vientiane, Lao PDR. Respondents also reported a trend of seasonal migration, whereby teenagers would go to sell sex during school vacations. A duty bearer in Pattaya, Thailand, stated:

> *‘During the long annual school vacation from April to May, girls of all ages come to Pattaya to sell sex… they come to work and save money for the next school semester. At the end of summer vacation they return to school or university with a full pocket’.*

The Vietnam research team interviewed a number of child migrants who came from adjacent provinces to Hai Phong to sell food and souvenirs to travellers and tourists. Compared with the seasonal vendors who came from Central Vietnam to the backpacker area in Ho Chi Minh City to sell souvenirs only for the summer,

the seven full-time vendor children in Hai Phong's tourism district appeared to have real risks of abuse from inside and outside the family. Some of them had parents who were drug addicts, former sex workers, or HIV carriers. Some of them reported that strangers had approached them to sell drugs or to work as waitresses.

As well as being potential victims of abuse, a significant level of suspicion and concern regarding migrants (adults) as offenders was noted in the course of the research. It was perceived that migrant workers had fewer links with the local community and therefore might not be as concerned about their social status or about 'losing face' when caught committing an offence. A duty bearer in Mondulkiri, Cambodia, said that there were a significant number of child rapes in the nearby village because of the many migrants in the area working in the farms and rubber plantations. A 17-year-old school boy in Mondulkiri expressed concern that migrants from other provinces were more likely to rape local children and then run away because they were unregistered with local authorities.

'Because no competent authorities are there and they are quiet places, there are more cases [of sexual abuse] in rural areas. However we do not know the extent of the problem because we do not have enough resources to collect the information'.

— NGO worker, Siem Reap, Cambodia

Local environment and vicinity

The local environment itself can present a risk to children. In Pattaya, Thailand, it was observed to be virtually impossible for children to avoid the sex entertainment sector. The sex industry coexisted alongside schools, pagodas, and communities. There were clear indications that children were vulnerable to being lured into sexual activity by foreigners through financial enticement. As a 13-year-old boy recounted:

> *'One foreigner sitting at a restaurant called me over by offering me 300 Baht. At first I hesitated to go to him but I wanted the money to be able to go out with my friends so I went. We talked for a bit and then I took the money from his hand and ran'.*

In Mondulkiri, Cambodia, school children, some only in seventh grade, visited karaoke bars in town because they are curious to see what happened there. The research also identified other settings with environment-related factors that may contribute to children's vulnerability, such as the need to travel along deserted roads to get home, or children having to spend time unsupervised in remote areas (e.g. bathing alone in the river, relieving themselves in the forest, or carrying buckets of water to their home).

The isolation of some locations can also prevent appropriate protective responses, thereby increasing children's risk of being targeted by sex offenders. For instance,

in cases of abuse reported in remote areas of Cambodia, police officers were said to be reluctant to visit or were significantly delayed due to road conditions and distance. A school child in Siem Reap suggested that prevention interventions should not only focus on larger towns but also in very rural areas: *'The police do not go to those places.'* An NGO worker in Siem Reap similarly stated:

> *'Because no competent authorities are there and they are quiet places, there are more cases [of sexual abuse] in rural areas. However we do not know the extent of the problem because we do not have enough resources to collect the information'.*

In Mondulkiri, another NGO worker similarly observed that isolated and remote areas inhabited by Indigenous people were often targeted by child sex offenders. He said: *'There is no accessible road to the village and parents have limited understanding about how to protect their children. These reasons mean that it is more likely that some children are raped'.* This is an especially significant concern in light of recent research confirming that travelling sex offenders are moving from cities to more remote areas, where awareness of sexual abuse and exploitation is low and NGOs and authorities are reluctant to or unable to reach.[130]

Disability

Available international research suggests children with disabilities are especially vulnerable to sexual abuse as a result of entrenched social and structural discrimination against them.[131] However, this was not the perception of some study participants. Respondents in Cambodia claimed to have observed and heard that children living with disabilities were being helped by NGOs and shelters. Consequently, they were seen as more fortunate than children who did not have a disability.

A medical doctor for the Centre for Disabled Children in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, explained that parents of children with disabilities were less discreet about having sex as they assumed their children lacked the capacity to understand. In order to protect children from the risks of abuse, the doctor recommended communication and information be delivered to the parents of this group on the negative effects of inappropriate exposure to the sexual activity. In essence, respondents did not seem to fully appreciate the struggles that children living with disabilities experienced.

Lack of trust in authorities and corruption

Respondents in many of the research locations expressed a widespread lack of trust in police ability to response to and handle a child sexual abuse situation. An NGO worker in Siem Reap, Cambodia, recounted the following story:

> *'A girl whose parents had passed away was taken in by her uncle. Her uncle was 77 years old and a respected Archar.*[132] *Four years ago, he raped her when she was just six years old. Currently she is living in an NGO shelter. Her uncle called her last year and told her that he wanted to sleep with her again. The director of the NGO recorded the conversation but decided not to file a complaint with the police because she has no trust in them to handle the case fairly'.*

[130] Action Pour Les Enfants (February 2014), *Investigating Travelling Child Sex Offenders: An analysis of the trends and challenges in the field of child sexual abuse and exploitation in Cambodia.* See also UNICEF 2011, *An Analysis of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Selected Provinces and Cities of Vietnam.*

[131] Handicap International/Save The Children (2011), *Out From The Shadows: Sexual Violence Against Children With Disabilities.*

[132] A layman who is usually invited to be a Master of Ceremony for any festivities in the village.

NGO workers highlighted many obstacles to proper police investigation: lack of resources, lack of coordination between departments and units, lack of knowledge of laws and procedures, lack of cooperation from families, and difficult logistical barriers. One NGO worker in Siem Reap said:

> *'Most of the cases arrive at my office too late and at that time a lot of the evidence has already been lost. The police themselves do not know the legal procedure clearly'.*

Although most respondents in the Cambodian research locations described shelters run by NGOs and Community-Based Organisations as safe places for orphans, abuse victims and street children, it was discovered through interviews with the directors of three shelters that none had a child protection policy. One shelter director in Siem Reap recalled her decision to reinstate a staff member after he had abused children at the shelter because he promised not to do it again and he used 'sweet words'. However, after some time he began a 'love relationship' with one of the resident girls. After he was seen by one of the other girls he was fired, but no criminal action was taken. An NGO worker in Mondulkiri recalled a similar case where an employee of another NGO sexually harassed and attempted sexual intercourse with a 13-year-old girl after building trust with her family. This raises the concern that institutions working with children may be attracting child sex offenders, and their staff groomed in order to enable offenders access to vulnerable children; highlighting the significant need for clear and enforced child protection policies and procedures.

'Most of the cases arrive at my office too late and at that time a lot of the evidence has already been lost. The police themselves do not know the legal procedure clearly'. — **NGO worker, Siem Reap, Cambodia**

Other cases of offenders seeking to gain access to children by working or volunteering at child related organisations have been reported in the literature.[133] The number of institution-based exploitation cases appears to be increasing in Cambodia as offenders are forced into new patterns of activity as a result of greater awareness and risk of prosecution.[134] Recent research shows that some travelling sex offenders work as English teachers or have even established their own organisations and children's homes (reportedly a fairly straightforward procedure in Cambodia).[135]

Some respondents in Thailand expressed a high level of concern regarding alleged local-level corruption, which they felt could impede the enforcement of laws against sexual exploitation. One NGO staff member in Pattaya stated:

> *'There are cases where international police have worked hard to crack down on the travelling offenders, following these offenders through various countries. Following police arrest in Thailand, many offenders are finally let off by the courts because of corruption'.*

An NGO worker in Siem Reap, Cambodia, felt that while anti-corruption laws did exist, the extremely low salaries of competent authorities prompted them to

[133] Olszewski, P (2011), 'Man about town', *Phnom Penh Post*, 25 March 2011, see also Action Pour Les Enfants (February 2014), *Investigating Travelling Child Sex Offenders: An analysis of the trends and challenges in the field of child sexual abuse and exploitation in Cambodia.*

[134] Action Pour Les Enfants (February 2014), *Investigating Travelling Child Sex Offenders: An analysis of the trends and challenges in the field of child sexual abuse and exploitation in Cambodia.*

[135] Save The Children (February 2009), *Sex Offenders without Borders: An investigation into the sexual abuse and exploitation of children in Thailand, Cambodia and Burma in relation to travel and tourism.*

> 'Sometimes, the abuser is a relative of someone in the authority. In this instance the case is likely to be covered up'.
>
> — **NGO worker, Siem Reap, Cambodia**

turn to corruption to earn a decent wage. He explained that sexual abuse cases are sometimes considered less lucrative and were therefore ignored. Other respondents in the research sites reported cases where authorities themselves were involved in abuse or where the offenders were wealthy or powerful. Another NGO worker in Siem Reap expressed this concern: *'Sometimes, the abuser is a relative of someone in the authority. In this instance the case is likely to be covered up'*.

In Hai Phong, Vietnam, a group of private school students seemed to accept that the misuse of power and money was part of the reality of their school and community. Many students were also aware of parents bribing local authorities to gain fake birth certificates in order to marry under-aged daughters to East Asian men for financial gain. Common to their stories was the view that offenders were not made accountable for their abusive behaviour: *'If the adults did not take cases of abuse seriously, then why should we bother?'*

In all research locations, it appeared to be a common practice to negotiate extra-judicial, out-of-court settlements between victims and offenders. For example, in Chiang Mai, Thailand, it was found that when underage sexual activity took place between children in a relationship – for instance if a boy raped his girlfriend – parents were more likely to seek compromise between families than take legal action. Students recounted incidents in which the parents of girls who had been victims of rape (as well as those who had had consensual sex with their boyfriend) used the threat of legal action to try to acquire compensation from the boy's parents. Police in Vietnam tended to treat sexual abuse cases as civil matters pertaining to family affairs rather than as criminal cases.

> 'If the adults did not take cases of abuse seriously, then why should we bother?' — **Group of students, Vietnam**

Local customs or beliefs were also found to play a part in hindering child protection efforts. An NGO worker in Mondulkiri, Cambodia, expressed strong concern about the traditional Phnong ethnic minority belief of accepting 'lourk', or compensation in the form of gifts, money or animals from wrong-doers which was still being practiced. He explained that if a person in the village was found to have committed rape of a child, the victim's family could demand a gift from the perpetrator, instead of going to the court or the police. The NGO worker claimed that the practice was followed by around 60% of people,[136]

[136] According to Gourley (2009), cultural values of protecting family honour, social harmony and respecting hierarchy contribute to parental acceptance of out-of-court settlements, marriage to perpetrators and abortion as acceptable solutions to sexual abuse. Gourley, S (2009), *The Middle Way: Bridging the Gap between Cambodian Culture and Children's Rights*, NGO Committee on the Rights of the Child, Phnom Penh.

'A seven-year-old boy was raped by a monk in a pagoda when the boy came for English class but there was no one there. The monk was arrested but his family bribed the police to release him from jail. He has now become a quiet boy and rarely talks with his neighbours or former friends'. — **School girl, Cambodia**

and commented that it did not adequately punish or deter offenders as it *'would encourage the abuser to commit the crime again and again'*. He gave the example of case of the rape of a three-year-old girl by a 43-year-old man, which was closed after the victim's family received compensation from the offender. In another example, a school girl mentioned the following case:

> *'A seven-year-old boy was raped by a monk in a pagoda when the boy came for English class but there was no one there. The monk was arrested but his family bribed the police to release him from jail. He has now become a quiet boy and rarely talks with his neighbours or former friends'.*

Chapter Five

Conclusions

Chapter 5: Conclusions

This section sets out the main conclusions of the research for the key components of the study, namely the knowledge, the attitudes and practices, and the vulnerabilities and options for interventions by Project Childhood Prevention Pillar. Strategic recommendations for effective interventions are also included.

Understanding child sexual abuse

Most respondents had a basic, limited understanding of child abuse and child rights. Child sexual abuse was understood by both adults and children in narrow terms as the penetrative rape of girls. The majority of children and adults perceived laws relating to age of sexual consent mainly as a form of control over, rather than a protective mechanism for, children. Judgements of what constitutes as sexual abuse often depended on certain circumstances, including the age of the sexual partner, the person's relationship to the child, and whether or not the girl in question was a virgin.

Vocational students, working and street children, and private school students appeared to have a better understanding of child sexual abuse than public school students. Additionally, most respondents felt that girls were generally seen to be more vulnerable to abuse than boys. Indeed, sexual abuse was not widely perceived as something that could happen to boys, which has serious implications for the identification of and response to sexual abuse of boys.

In short, many adults and children appeared to lack a sufficient understanding of child sexual abuse and practical ways to identify, prevent or respond to it. Of all the groups interviewed, parents demonstrated the lowest levels of understanding on the issue of child sexual abuse. Overall, this finding is perhaps the most important to consider in developing resilience and responses to all forms of child sexual abuse in communities. Lack of awareness of the basics of child sexual abuse means that parents and duty bearers are unlikely to identify risks and cases early within abusive relationships. This, in turn, hinders their opportunity to intervene, as well as their overall response to the needs of the child.

Few children identified anal sex, oral sex, participation in/exposure to pornography or masturbation as abusive sexual acts. The general understanding appeared to be that sexual abuse was something that originated from outside the family and community, especially where the sexual abuse of boys was concerned. Yet, at the same time, grooming techniques, used by both by foreign and local sex offenders, were rarely mentioned as a modus operandi or form of abuse. Where children were aware of the risk posed by abusers, most lacked the skills or strategies to protect themselves from possible abuse. This is identified as a significant risk factor as it is known that child sex offenders take advantage of unsuspecting families and parents to gain access to children.

Researchers identified five main sources of education about sex and sex-related issues for children: media and the internet, friends and peers, schools,

public information campaigns, and personal experiences and observations. Despite children identifying parents as being the most important influence in their lives, parents were not found to be a major source of information. In fact, many children expressed fear of confiding with their parents about intimate issues, including sex. School children received information about anatomy and reproductive health at schools and from NGOs but rarely received more detailed information focussing specifically on child sexual abuse prevention strategies. This is a major gap in opportunities to prevent and protect children from sexual abuse.

Additionally, a striking pattern found throughout the research was parents' and teachers' resistance to providing sex education to children for fear that this would encourage sexual experimentation and inappropriate behaviour. In spite of this, many children in the study locations in Thailand and Vietnam were already engaging in sexual relationships. The lack of awareness in adults' understanding of children's sexual relationships, as well as the lack of accurate and reliable information from trusted adults about sex, meant that children acquired a great deal of information on the topic, accurate or otherwise, from informal channels such as peers, television, media and the internet. This is concerning, as it puts children at a much higher inadvertent risk of engaging in risky sexual behaviour and being sexually exploited, which in turn makes them more vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies, mental illness, and other consequences of child sexual abuse. Additionally, lack of communication between trusted adults and children may lead to children being vulnerable to peer pressure or confiding in online 'friends', putting them at risk of grooming and sexual abuse. Yet, although parents and schools were not found to be the main sources of information about sex and child sexual abuse, they offer opportunities for response, intervention and preventable risks.

Attitudes and practices

A number of attitudes, beliefs and practices were found in each of the research locations that had the potential to contribute to children's vulnerability to sexual abuse. These included taboos against discussing sexual issues openly, which prevented the dissemination of information and education about sexual abuse and how to prevent it, gender inequality and hierarchical parent-child relationships, which contributed to a lack of empowering educational opportunities and lack of recognition for rights of children, especially female children; and a strong emphasis on female virginity and family honour and community reputation, which led to the widespread propensity to blame girls for 'rape' or any kind of sexual impropriety and hamper appropriate responses to child sexual abuse by creating a culture of silence and denial.

The research confirmed the strong cultural importance placed on girls across the region to remain virgins before marriage, although in practice, many children reported having romantic or sexual relationships. Girls were often blamed, stigmatised and marginalised for pre-marital sexual behaviour, even when they were victims of abuse, something which is a major obstacle terms of identifying and reporting child sexual abuse. Additionally, the emphasis on preservation of girls' honour meant it was important to pretend that any sexual activity that did occur was unintentional or occurred without consent, the latter of which

compounds the risk of unsafe sexual practices and further abuse. Program interventions which address this pervasive culture of victim-blaming and encourage young people who have suffered sexual abuse to speak out are crucial.

Homosexuality, particularly around males, was stigmatised and considered socially unacceptable in all study sites, with the exception of Lao PDR and Pattaya, Thailand. While some respondents had heard of cases or were aware of sexual abuse of boys by foreign and/or local offenders, sexual exploitation of boys was not considered to be a real threat or issue. This lack of awareness and recognition presents a major risk to boys who are in danger of, or suffering from, abuse. Such male victims may feel shame in reporting their abuse or, alternatively, their reports may simply be dismissed. In order to address this urgent issue, a great deal of effort needs to be invested in informing children, adults, duty bearers and authorities of the very real danger of male, as well as female, children being sexually abused.

Poverty, the need to finance education, and health issues were some of the major reasons that children engaged in commercial sex. This highlights the need for programming and policy to improve educational and vocational opportunities for disadvantaged children, especially those working or living on the streets and who are the most vulnerable to sexual exploitation as a result of their dire situations. Furthermore, in all research locations, children were expected to obey and respect their parents. Kinship obligations and the need to support their families were frequently cited as the reason girls entered the commercial sex sector. This finding highlights the importance of financial and social support for families and communities in order to better protect children from abuse.

Peer influence was also found to be a contributing factor to risk of sexual abuse, especially where children encouraged their friends to engage in commercial sexual exchanges. It was also found that for some young people, selling sex for money was also a way of keeping up with consumer culture. This could take the form of conventional commoditisation of sex, or it could take the form of more subtle 'material exchanges' involving gifts of consumer goods. Cases of grooming, often involving financial support and material gifts, were also documented across the research locations. Greater awareness needs to be raised among children and adults about the risks of material exchanges, gifts, and other grooming methods used by child sex offenders to gain access to victims or to prevent victims from speaking out.

In all locations, the influence of the internet, media and digital technology on the attitudes and sexual behaviour of children was highly evident. Parents and duty bearers were generally unaware of its effects, and supervision of children's use of digital technology was practically non-existent. Parents' and duty bearers' main concern was that children would become addicted to video games or exposed to pornographic materials. Few parents or children indicated awareness about the use of grooming techniques on the internet by sex offenders and the risks that were posed by this practice. In contrast, the concept of a 'helpline' as a channel for children to access confidential information and to get advice to deal with their problems was mostly unknown, indicating that websites, text messaging, social media, and other such channels may be more appropriate ways to reach children

with information about sexual abuse. Helplines could potentially be used in conjunction with such channels in order to deliver the most effective intervention.

Responses to abuse varied across the different research locations. In many cases, responses were dependent on the openness of the relationship between parents and children, as well as the degree of emphasis placed on family honour and reputation within the family and the community. This is of particular concern. In cases where great significance was placed on reputation, a cycle was established whereby children often did not report abuse to adults as a result of guilt and shame, parents in turn preferred not to report abuse to authorities, and authorities tended to deny the existence of child abuse within their communities. Reported hindrances to appropriate responses on the part of duty bearers included lack of resources, lack of coordination between departments and units, lack of knowledge of laws and procedures, lack of cooperation from families, difficult logistical barriers, and the tendency to treat child abuse as a family or civil matter.

Obstacles and opportunities for interventions

A number of crucial factors were identified as contributing to children's vulnerability to sexual abuse. Of these, family and household situation, including drug abuse within the family, dysfunctional family relationships, and domestic violence, figured the most prominently. This finding again reiterates the need for social and financial support to be targeted at families and communities as well as individual children.

The presence of travel and tourism industry in local vicinities comprised another risk factor contributing to children's vulnerability. Especially where children worked in occupations such as street vending, as tour guides, or in the service industry, proximity to travellers could make them highly vulnerable to grooming and sexual exploitation. However, children and adults in the study did not in general perceive tourists and travellers as threats, and governments did not, for the most part, see this as a high-priority issue, indicating that awareness-raising campaigns as well as advocacy are vitally important in this area. Such campaigns could help educate travellers and tourists on how to help create child safe tourism environments and not inadvertently support risky situations for local children.

In addition to children living near tourist areas, children living in remote and isolated locations were also vulnerable, especially as sex offenders appeared to be increasingly moving from cities towards targeting remote areas where awareness of sexual abuse was low and NGOs and authorities were reluctant, or unable, to reach. This shows that efforts to provide information about, and protective services responding to, child sexual abuse, should reach beyond urban, heavily populated, or touristic places and target more isolated locations. It also highlights how strategies used by child sex offenders are constantly transforming, and therefore that protection and prevention approaches should be similarly dynamic.

Child protection issues appeared to be increasing in prominence on national political agendas in all the research sites. However, although researchers found child protection systems in place across all the research locations, the degree of effectiveness of the structures was hindered by a variety of issues, including

inadequate training of relevant authorities, social workers and NGO staff; denial of the existence of child abuse and child sexual by authorities; limited availability of services in more remote locations; a tendency towards extra-judicial settlements and treating child sexual abuse as a civil matter; concerns about corruption; lack of resources and coordination between departments and units, and knowledge of laws and procedures, and; logistical challenges to responding to abuse cases (e.g. distance, transportation, and human resources). These challenges point to the need to use a multi-faceted and holistic approach in order to successfully prevent and respond to child sexual abuse and the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism.









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Annex I: Research Instruments

The instruments used in the Lao PDR research are representative of the research instruments used in each country report and are included in this section. [139]

[139] Please note that not all questions were utilised in the same form for each country.

1.Focus Group Discussion guidelines for children

Introduction session

1. Tell the participants the purposes of the focus group, who will lead the group, what role each participant does: express own views or experiences whether similar or different from the rest of the group.

2. Playing name game. Each participant introduces his/her name. The next person will introduce his/her name and then repeat the previous person name (s).

Topics for discussion

Themes of the discussion are central around the concept of safe environment for children. It begins with discussion about general views of safe environment. It will then explore their views about tourism. The following questions will be used as a guide for the discussion.

1. Do children feel safe at home and in their community?
   If yes, what make them feel safe?
   If not, why not, what they are afraid of?
2. What children themselves do to make their own environment to be more protective?
3. What their parents or communities do to make their own environment to be more protective?
   What more children wanted their parents or communities to do or tell them to make them feel safe?
4. What do children feel about tourism?
   What are good or bad about tourism?
5. What do children feel about men and women from other places and cultures?
6. How do children perceive childhood?
7. What is child abuse?
8. What do children know of relationship between child sexual abuse and tourism?

2. Interview guidelines for children

Personal background

1. How old are you (in complete years)? _____
2. Sex: Male ☐ Female ☐
3. To what ethnic group do you belong? _____
4. Where were you born? _____
5. Have you ever attended school? Yes ☐ No ☐
6. What is the highest year of schooling? _____
7. Do you currently live with your parents? Yes ☐ No ☐
8. If not currently live with parents, who do you live with?

_____

9. Are your parents alive? Yes ☐ No ☐
10. Parents live together? Yes ☐ No ☐
11. Personal health and disabilities? _____
12. Any appearances of physical and/or mental disabilities?

_____

Experiences in using ICT

	Mobile phone		Computer		Internet	
13. Ever used	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
14. Use Last week	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
15. Frequency used last						

Understanding child abuse and protection

16. What is childhood?
    When does an individual become an adult?
    What are child development and child protection?
17. How are children educated about sex?
    Who are children most likely to talk to about sex and sexuality?
    Do parents and carers discuss sex and sexuality with their children?
18. What are your views about boys' and girls' sexuality?
    At what age is having sex accepted?
    What do you think about homosexuality?
19. What is child abuse? Is it different for girls and boys?
    Do you know any children in person who are abused?
20. What is sexual abuse?

Risk and vulnerability factors

21. Who is more vulnerable to child abuse?
    Are certain types of children in households more vulnerable?
22. Are any particular risks involved using ICT (internet, mobile phone, computer)?
    How much families know about and have control over their children in using ICT?
23. What protective behaviours and messages do your parents communicate to you?
24. What do you feel about men and women from other places and cultures?
    What do you feel about tourism?
25. Do families encourage or discourage children speak to strangers?
    Who are strangers?

Obstacles and opportunities to preventing child sexual exploitation

26. What do your parents do to protect you and your sibling from possible harm?
27. Do children affected by abuse, violence or exploitation know whom to contact for help?
    Who do you think they go to?
    Do they feel safe and confident doing that?
28. How do you think you can influence your own environment to be more protective?
29. Resources, mechanisms and key channels of IEC for children, families and communities.
30. What do people usually do when a child is abused or exploited in this community?
31. What services (formal and informal) exist in the community to protect and provide support to children who are at risk or have experienced abuse, neglect, or exploitation?

3. Interview guidelines for parents or guardians

Personal background

1. How old are you (in complete years)? _____
2. Sex: Male ☐ Female ☐
3. To what ethnic group do you belong? _____
4. Where were you born? _____
5. Have you ever attended school? Yes ☐ No ☐
6. What is the highest year of schooling? _____
7. Are you married?
   Yes currently married ☐ Divorced ☐ Widowed ☐ Separate ☐
8. If you are married, do you live with your husband/wife? Yes ☐ No ☐
9. How many children do you have? Number of children _____
10. Do your children live with you? Yes ☐ No ☐
11. What is your occupation? _____

Understanding child abuse and protection

12. What is childhood? When does an individual become an adult?
    What are child development and child protection?
13. Do you discuss sex and sexuality with your children?
14. What are your views about boys' and girls' sexuality?
    What do you think about homosexuality?
15. At what age is having sex accepted?
16. What is child abuse? Is it different for girls and boys?
17. What is sexual abuse?
    What words and language is used to describe aspects of sex and abuse?
18. What are the costs and consequences of sexual abuse?
19. How are children who are abused or mistreated – e.g. rape victims – treated by friends, families and communities?

Risk and vulnerability factors

20. What are the roots causes of the child protection issues?
21. Are certain types of children in households more vulnerable and therefore more likely to be abused, neglected or exploited (such as girls, children with disabilities, migrant children etc)?
22. Do any of your children have or accessed ICT?
    Are any particular risks involved? How much you know about and having control over your children in using ICT?
23. What protective behaviours and messages do you communicate to your children?

24. Do families encourage or discourage children to speak to strangers? Who are strangers?
25. What do you think children feel about men and women from other places and cultures?
26. What do you feel about tourism?
    How has tourism impacted your lives and community?
    What are the potentials of tourism? What are the risks?
    Perspective on foreigners, tourism and tourism industry; level of desire to work in tourism/experience working in tourism; knowledge of relationship between child sexual abuse and tourism?

Obstacles and opportunities to preventing child sexual exploitation

27. What do you think are the most positive/protective parenting practices in this community?
28. Do you know that children affected by abuse, violence or exploitation know whom to contact for help, and do they feel safe and confident doing that?
29. Are children's voices being taken into account on child protection issues within households and the community?
30. How are children influencing their own environment to be more protective?
31. Resources, mechanisms and key channels of IEC for children, families and communities
32. What is being done to prevent child abuse, exploitation and/or neglect in the community?
33. What do people usually do when a child is abused or exploited in this community?
34. What services exist in the community (formal and informal) to protect and provide support to children who are at risk or have experienced abuse, neglect, or exploitation?
35. Do children and their families who are vulnerable or have been affected by abuse, violence and/or exploitation have access to these services?
36. What are the linkages (and gaps) between informal and formal parts/actors of the system?
    How do community members view the formal child protection mechanisms?
37. How do parents see the role of teachers and community duty bearers in protecting their children?
38. What should be done to improve prevention and protection against violence, abuse and exploitation in the community?

Financial motivations and aspects for child exploitation

39. Are there any financial motivations involving child exploitation?
40. What can be done and how, to prevent child exploitation?

4. Interview guidelines for duty bearers

Personal background

1. How old are you (in complete years)? _____
2. Sex: Male ☐ Female ☐
3. Organisation affiliation? _____
4. Position and/or responsibilities _____

Understanding child abuse and protection

5. What are the prevailing attitudes and beliefs in the community about children, child development and child protection?
   What is childhood and when does an individual become an adult?
6. What is child abuse? Is it different for girls and boys?
7. At what age is having sex acceptable?
8. What are your views about boys' and girls' sexuality?
   Knowledge and attitudes about homosexuality?
9. What is sexual abuse?
10. What and how do you recognise symptoms and signs of child abuse?
11. How are children who are abused or mistreated—e.g. rape victims—treated by friends, families and communities?
12. Risk and vulnerability factors?
13. What are the roots causes of the child protection issues?
14. Are certain types of children in households more vulnerable and therefore more likely to be abused, neglected or exploited (such as girls, children with disabilities, migrant children etc)?
15. How do children use internet and other information and communication technology (ICT)? Are any particular risks involved?

Obstacles and opportunities to preventing child sexual exploitation

16. Are there any harmful traditional practices in this community? What is their prevalence?
17. Are government and non-government organisations playing a positive, negative or neutral role in preventing abuse, neglect and exploitation?
    Please explain what they are and how?
18. Do children affected by abuse, violence or exploitation know whom to contact for help, and do they feel safe and confident doing that?
    If yes, please give an example?
19. Are children's voices being taken into account on child protection issues within households and the community?

Resources, mechanisms and key channels of IEC for children, families and communities

20. What is being done to prevent child abuse, exploitation and/or neglect in the community?
21. What services and mechanisms (formal and informal) exist in the community to protect and provide support to children who are at risk or have experienced abuse, neglect, or exploitation?
22. What do people usually do when a child is abused or exploited in this community? What are common responses taken to child protection and abuse?
23. Do children and their families who are vulnerable or have been affected by abuse, violence and/or exploitation have access to these services? How easy or difficulty to do so?
24. What are the linkages (and gaps) between informal and formal parts/actors of the system?
    How do community members view the formal child protection mechanisms?
25. How satisfied are community members with the common response to child protection issues and current child protection services?
26. Do you think parents and primary care givers have capacity to prevent the cases from happening?
    If not, why not?
27. What should be done to improve prevention and protection against violence, abuse and exploitation in the community?

Financial motivations and aspects for child exploitation

28. Are there any financial motivations involving child exploitation?
29. What can be done and how, to prevent child exploitation?

5. Interview guidelines for sex workers

Personal background

1. How old are you (in complete years)? _____
2. Sex: Male ☐ Female ☐
3. To what ethnic group do you belong? _____
4. Where were you born? _____
5. Have you ever attended school? Yes ☐ No ☐
6. What is the highest year of schooling? _____

Current work

7. Place of current work or establishment; working conditions and the nature of your current work?
8. Who are your main clients? (locals or foreigners; sex of clients)
9. History of sex work?
10. When and how did you enter sex work?
11. Was your first sex forced or coerced?
12. Movements or changes of place of work or locations since started sex work?
13. Knowledge and use of available services?
14. What types of health and social services have you heard of?
    Have you ever used those services?
    If so which services have you ever used?
    Why have you not used those services?
15. Have you ever used hotline or helpline?

Social network

16. Who do you normally ask for help or advice? Why?
17. How do you keep in contact with your family and friends?
18. How much freedom do you have to get out of the work place?
19. Perception on childhood and child protection?
20. What is childhood, child abuse?
    What are being done to prevent child abuse, exploitation and/or neglect in the community?
    Are people satisfied with such activities?
    Why or why not?
    If not, what else should be done?
21. Personal experiences in child abuse?
22. Personally, have you ever been sexually abused?
    If so, when did it occur and who was your abuser(s)?
23. What did you do when you get abused?
24. Did you ask for help or service from anyone or any organisation?
    If so, who?
    How did you know about it?
    How satisfied were you at that time with the services given?
    Will you recommend your friends or anyone you know to use that service?
    If not, why not?
25. Have you ever seen or heard of children being sexually abused by foreigners?
    If yes, who were they?
26. Do you think children are vulnerable to child abuse by tourists?
    If so, what make you think like that?
    Who are the most vulnerable to child abuse?
27. In your opinion, what should be done at individual, family and community to prevent child abuse?

Annex II: Breakdown of Participants

Cambodia

Target Group	Interviews	Respondents		
		Total	Male	Female
Siem Riep				
School children	2 IIs 7 FGIs	2 64	2 28	0 36
Working/street children	3 FGIs	24	10	14
Teachers	3 IIs	3	3	0
Local authority representatives	5 IIs	5	2	3
Parents	2 IIs	2	0	2
Street vendors (adults)	1 II	1	0	1
NGO staff	3 IIs 2 FGIs	3 8	1 4	2 4
Mondulkiri				
School children	1 II 4 FGIs	1 32	1 15	0 17
Children living in shelters	1 FGI	9	0	9
Teachers	3 IIs	3	3	0
Local authority representatives	4 IIs	4	2	2
Parents	2 IIs	2	1	1
Street vendors (adults)	3 IIs	3	1	2
NGO staff	3 IIs	3	3	0
TOTALS: **169 respondents**	**FGIs: 17** **IIs: 32**	**Children: 132 (56 male, 76 female)** **Adults: 37 (20 male, 17 female)**		

Lao PDR

Target Group	Interviews	Respondents		
		Total	Male	Female
Vientiane				
Primary school children	9 IIs	9	5	4
Secondary school children	10 IIs	10	5	5
School children (ages unspecified)	1 FGI	10	5	5
Youth (aged 15-20)	1 FGI	9	5	4
Out of school children (factory workers, restaurant workers, street kids)	8 IIs	8	2	6
Parents or guardians	15 IIs	15	5	10
Duty bearers	12 IIs	12	7	5
Sex workers	3 IIs	3	0	3
Luang Prabang				
Primary school children	3 IIs	3	1	2
Secondary school children	1 II	1	0	1
School children (ages unspecified)	1 FGI	12	6	6
Youth (aged 15-20)	0 IIs/0 FGIs	0	0	0
Out of school children (factory workers, restaurant workers, street kids)	5 IIs	5	3	2
Parents or guardians	5 IIs	5	3	2
Duty bearers	4 IIs	4	3	1
Sex workers	3 IIs	3	0	3
TOTALS: **109 respondents**	**FGIs: 3** **IIs: 78**	**Children: 67 (32 male, 35 female)** **Adults: 42 (18 male, 24 female)**		

Thailand

Target Group	Interviews	Respondents		
		Total	Male	Female
Pattaya				
School children aged 11–17 years	5 FGIs*	41	11	30
Working/street children aged 17 years	3 IIs*	3	3	0
Children in the shelters aged 14 years	2 IIs	2	0	2
Teachers, local authorities	6 IIs	6	2	4
Parents	2 IIs 1 FGIs	2 3	2 1	0 2
Community members	2 IIs 1 FGIs	2 3	1 0	1 3
NGO staff	6 IIs	6	1	5
Chiang Mai				
School children aged 11-17	3 FGIs	27	5	22
Working/street children aged 10–14 years	3 IIs	3	0	3
Teachers, local authorities	11 IIs	11	2	9
Parents	1 IIs	1	0	1
NGO staff	7 IIs	7	4	3
TOTALS: **117 respondents**	**10 FGIs** **43 IIs**	**Children: 76 (19 males, 57 females)** **Adults: 41 (13 males, 28 females)**		

Vietnam

Target Group	Interviews	Respondents		
		Total	Male	Female
Public school children aged 12-17 years	8 FGIs	92	33	59
Private school children aged 15-17 years	1 FGI	9	6	3
Vocational school students aged 12-16 years	1 FGI	7	0	7
Orphaned and abandoned children aged 9-16 years	1 FGI	8	8	0
Working children aged 9-18 years	3 FGIs	27	15	12
Seasonal vendor children aged 8-12 years	1 FGI	3	0	3
Children with disabilities aged 10-16 years	1 FGI	9	Unspecified	Unspecified
Children who are victims of child sex abuse aged 17 years	1 II	1	0	1
Caregivers & neighbours	39 IIs	39	Unspecified	Unspecified
Duty bearers	24 IIs	24	12	12
Officials	29 IIs	29	19	10
Hotel owners	2 IIs	2	0	2
Men pursuing girls for sex	7 IIIs	7	7	0
TOTALS: **257 respondents**	**16 FGIs** **102 IIs**	**Children: 156 (62 males, 85 females)*** **Adults: 101 (38 male, 24 female)****		

Regional Summary

Respondents	Children*	Girls	Boys	Adults**	Women	Men	FGIs	IIs
652	431	~253	~178	221	~93	~128	46	255

** 9 unspecified gender*
*** 39 unspecified gender*

Sex, Abuse and Childhood presents an overview of the findings of four separate studies conducted in vulnerable communities in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam on knowledge, attitudes and practices related to child sexual abuse, including in travel and tourism. The research provides a general understanding of the awareness, understanding and behaviours in communities around the issue of child sexual abuse.

This research is a contribution to the evidence base to better understand the vulnerabilities of children to sexual abuse and inform the strengthening of responses that aim to keep children safe from harm.

Child Safe Tourism
Take action against abuse

www.childsafetourism.org
childsafetourism@wvi.org




Australian Aid

World Vision