

Suffering in Silence; the Real Story of Human Trafficking in Cambodia



Chyanne Ledbetter

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Introduction

Reduce, reuse, and recycle is not merely a motto for a greener America. This concept is practiced on humans: every minute, every hour, and every day. The millions of people enslaved and oppressed by human trafficking are constantly reduced by their persecutor¹. They are reused by johns², and recycled by society. Human trafficking is a global epidemic that directly affects more than 27 million people every year. In this time of freedom, more people are enslaved worldwide than any other time in history. While the number is far greater, the principal of slavery is the same: the individual toils in bondage, their work and body owned by another.ⁱ This issue of human trafficking includes sexual exploitation, referred to as sex-trafficking. Currently “43% of human trafficking victims are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation, of whom 98% are women or girls.”ⁱⁱ

Sexual exploitation is present worldwide, but is especially horrendous in Cambodia. Located in South-East Asia between Thailand, Vietnam and Laos, Cambodia is often overlooked. Slightly smaller than the size of Oklahoma, Cambodia possesses a turbulent and troubling history that still affects how the country functions today.ⁱⁱⁱ Although remote, Cambodia has had many interactions with the United States over the past few decades. These interactions include United Nations involvement (backed by U.S. dollars and personnel in the early 1990's) and multitudes of U.S. non-governmental organizations (NGO) and non-profits who have taken up residence in Cambodia. United States involvement has led to deep ties with this afflicted country. This interconnectedness in its current form unofficially serves as a source of support for the sex-trade in Cambodia. Questions arise as to why more is not being

¹ The person(s) responsible for tormenting, enslaving, and oppressing the victim(s)

² The purchaser of sex

done to prevent sexual exploitation, and protect the young girls and boys who are being harmed. This paper will focus on recommendations for reducing sex-trafficking in Cambodia, illustrating that more can be done to combat this issue in Cambodia through the relationship between non-profit NGO's and the United States government.

This discussion will reveal the reality of sex-trafficking in Cambodia, unveiling the multiple roots underneath this dark and deceptive surface. Reviewing the meaning of sexual exploitation will bring to life the flesh that creates the statistics on a global and regional level. Examining the history of Cambodia, from the country's independence to the Khmer Rouge leads into the discussion of how Cambodia's history exacerbates the current proliferation of sex-trafficking. The paper will continue by evaluating the response to the dilemma from the U.S. Government and what issues originate from U.S actions. By outlining how U.S. NGO's are responding to sexual exploitation in Cambodia, this paper will have the ability to compare the efficiency of non-profit NGO's to the efficiency of the Government structures of Cambodia and U.S. aid. Evaluating this issue and the many players involved allows for the creation of proactive legislation and policy proposals, and direct ways in which any individual can aid in reducing sex-trafficking in Cambodia. This dialogue will show that restoration and improvement can occur with a restructuring of thoughts and shifts in cultural paradigms.

What Does Sexual Exploitation Mean?

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime discusses human trafficking in Article 3, paragraph (a), defining:

Trafficking in Persons as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction,

of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, [and] servitude.^{iv}

During this discussion, sexual exploitation and slavery will be the specific focus in the larger context of human trafficking. The definition above will be the reference point for understanding the meaning of sex-trafficking.

I. The Global Issue

Worldwide there are over 27 million men women, and children enslaved in human trafficking of all forms.^v A recent report states that “trafficking in humans generates profits in excess of 32 billion dollars a year for those who, by force and deception, sell human lives into slavery and sexual bondage.”^{vi} Around 43% of those enslaved face oppression through sexual slavery, with nearly three million of that 27 million being children exploited in the commercial sex trade annually.^{vii} Sex-trafficking is a “market based economy that exists on principles of supply and demand. It thrives due to conditions which allow for high profits to be generated at low risk.”^{viii} In numerous countries worldwide, pedophiles are able to abuse young children with great freedom, and no consequence. Developing countries, such as Cambodia, contain a police presence whose priorities bow to the demands of the wealthy. This leaves a basis of doubt for the poor and little protection for these children.^{ix} This crime is invading nations everywhere, trading innocence and lives for profit along its corrupt path.

On a global and local scale, sex-trafficking often goes unreported due to the covert nature of the crime, the lack of awareness surrounding this issue, and misunderstanding of what defines the act.

II. The Issue in Cambodia

Understanding the context of the global epidemic is important as this paper begins to look at the statistics present in Cambodia.

Cambodia is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children who are subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. The United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking reported that 149 Cambodian victims of human trafficking were repatriated from Thailand in 2011, and the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans, and Youth Rehabilitation (MOSAVY) reported receiving 106 victims of trafficking from Thailand.^x

While only a few hundred acts were reported, there are still tens of thousands more victims who are not given justice. Inside the borders of Cambodia, ethnic Vietnamese and Cambodian women are trafficked from the rural villages they live in to more populous cities, such as Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, and Kampot. This commercialized sexual exploitation happens daily, particularly the sale of virgin girls, which is extremely popular in Cambodia.

Tragically, girls are often sold by a parent or family member for some quick cash to pay off loans or buy the latest technology. Another common way girls are lured into the sex trade in Cambodia is to trick them into believing they have employment in some other place, usually a city. Some girls know what might be coming, but they feel a sense of duty to their parents, and

their parent's decisions for them. This is a culturally imprinted trait found more regularly in Khmer³ daughters, than sons. A Khmer saying sums it up well:

“A son does not feel responsible to take care of his parents, whereas a daughter, even when she works as a prostitute, will still think of her mother. Troubled families are the breeding grounds for sex workers. And troubled families in poor, marginal, and crisis-ridden communities generate the most reliable supply of cheap girls.”^{xi}

Along with feeling an extra obligation to their parents, Khmer girls are less valued in Cambodian culture in comparison to their male counterparts. That cultural view is one of the reasons that just eight years ago, 100% of the girls in Svay Pak, Cambodia (11km outside the capitol of Phnom Penh) were trafficked, with girls starting at age 3. Svay Pak was the epicenter for virgin sales, and perverse fantasies. That number has decreased to 60% of all children being sold, but Cambodia still remains a destination for sex-trafficking.^{xii} Although it is nearly impossible to understand how the majority of children in a village could be sold, a glimpse at Cambodia's history will provide insight to this issue and provide a greater context of this discussion.

The History of the Kingdom of Cambodia

I. Communist Party of Kampuchea

Under French rule for ninety years, Cambodia gained independence on November 9, 1953. King Sihanouk became the ruler of the Kingdom of Cambodia.^{xiii} However, this long awaited, hard earned freedom and peace did not last long. In the early 1960's the beginnings of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK), most commonly known as the Khmer Rouge, began to form. The party formed out of a widening opposition to King Sihanouk's rule.^{xiv} After years

³ Synonymous with Cambodia[n]

of unrest and coups, the Khmer Rouge seized power on April 17, 1975. On that fateful day, the Khmer Rouge took over Phnom Penh, the nation's capital, and established their regime.

They drove city-dwellers into the countryside in an attempt to create an agrarian, communist utopia. Brutal persecution of intellectuals, religious figures and ethnic minorities began. The Khmer Rouge banned family relationships and began an aggressive campaign of brainwashing young children to worship the state and spy on their parents. If parents tried to disguise themselves as uneducated peasants, children were instructed to report them as enemies of the state.^{xv}

The movement's leader Pol Pot, a Cambodian himself, envisioned a place "absent of any social institutions like banks or religions or any modern technology."^{xvi} He desired to return to "Year Zero" and removed millions of people by extensive forced field labor, execution and torture. The Cambodian people were forced to kill their own families and turn on their neighbors.

This ruthless genocide continued until 1979, when Vietnamese troops invaded Cambodia and pushed the Khmer Rouge back into the jungles. "It's impossible to tally the total number dead with any precision, but it is generally assumed that the Khmer Rouge killed between one million and two million people during their reign. Thousands more died of malnutrition or disease, and the upper classes of Cambodian society were all but wiped out."^{xvii} They effectively wiped out an entire generation, around 21% of Cambodia's entire population. The Khmer Rouge only held power for four years, but the scars they left on the nation cannot be easily removed.

How Cambodia's History Has Exacerbated the Sex-Trade

I. Cultural Conflict

It has been 35 years since the Khmer Rouge was overthrown, but the mass genocide, and Cambodia's root practices affect the country to this day. The broken history of this country exacerbates the issue of sex-trafficking considerably. There are a few factors contributing to the continual practice of human trafficking in Cambodia. Firstly, is the cultural issue caused by the Khmer Rouge. They wiped out an entire generation of leaders; people with morals and values. After the smoke cleared, what was left were children who had been forced to kill their parents, had no moral compass, and suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These children are now parents of a new generation, a generation that is suffering because of the past. This cultural imprint has led to a society lacking a sense of ethics. There is less value placed on an individual's life, in comparison to the value of every individual's basic instincts of survival.

II. Lack of Economic Development

Survival for a Khmer person today may not include dodging bullets and avoiding Tuol Sleng⁴ prison. However, the struggle to survive includes the ability to feed oneself, which is made difficult by rampant poverty. The second issue caused from the past is the lack of economic development. The Khmer Rouge eliminated an entire generation of skilled workers. Today this means that there are not enough professionals in the workplace to guide and balance the number of growing intellectual's.^{xviii} Since the Khmer Rouge wiped out the would be managers of the rising intellectual class, many Cambodians find themselves resorting to garment factories, farming, or other menial means of labor. This makes it nearly impossible for them to escape the cycle of poverty because of a lack of upward mobility within their workplace. The Khmer Rouge also contributed to the weakening of the Khmer Riel, their form of currency.

⁴ Tuol Sleng was a high school in Phnom Penh that was overtaken by the Khmer Rouge. It was used as a notorious facility for torturing and killing Cambodians

During those four years, Pol Pot banned currency, and printed special banknotes.^{xix} When the Khmer Rouge fell and the Riel was reinstated, there was nothing to back it and inflation steadily rose. Thus, Cambodia lacks a strong currency and is unable to function successfully or competitively on a state, local, and national level.

Because of this lack of economic development, Cambodia is classified as a third world country. The average GDP per capita, which has risen recently, is around \$280. In comparison with other countries in the region, Cambodia ranks quite low on the poverty scale. The highest concentration of poverty is found in the rural regions, with 90% of all the poor practicing agrarian agriculture.^{xx} Because 21% of the population lies below the international poverty line of US\$1.25 per day, they find other ways to supplement their income.^{xxi} One such way of supplementing their incomes is selling their children.

Parents sell their children for endless amounts of reasons. When poverty is mixed with a lack of moral code and immense corruption, an environment that supports sex-trafficking is born. This intense, ever-present corruption is also a result of the destruction from the Khmer Rouge, serving as an ally to all those who perpetrate children in the commercial sex industry.

The Government Structure of Cambodia

As stated previously, corruption is ever-present, including in the government. Understanding Cambodia's government structure helps provide context to this issue, by having the knowledge of the infrastructure that legislation must pass through. Cambodia's government is a multiparty democracy under a constitutional monarchy. Similar to the United States, there is an executive, legislative, and judicial branch. Residing within the executive branch is the head of state: King Norodom Sihamoni, and head of the

government: Prime Minister Hun Sen, who has been in power for almost thirty years.

I. Corrupt Government and its Effect on the Sex-Trade

Cambodia has similar checks and balances to the United States, yet the system remains largely inefficient in comparison. The inefficiency and lack of accountability is partly due to one major thing: corruption. Not every Cambodian person or government entity is corrupt, but corruption does seep through every inch of Cambodia's pores. Corruption is present in such places as hospitals, courts, and schools. It is seen in law enforcement officers, debt collectors, and government officials, among many others.

Transparency International's latest corruption perceptions index...ranked Cambodia behind only North Korea in East Asia, at 160 of the 177 countries surveyed. The Asian Development Bank has similarly found that corruption continues to be the "main area of concern for improving the business environment and overall governance in Cambodia." This is nothing new. In 2005, James Wolfensohn, then the World Bank president, said that Cambodia was facing three major challenges: "corruption, corruption, corruption."^{xxii}

There are many instances of corruption within Cambodia. It can be seen in schools, where children can only attend if they pay their teachers extra money each day. That also means that most of Cambodia's youth are too impoverished to attend school because of the fees the students must pay the corrupt teachers. Lacking education and opportunity, many girls will find themselves in the sex trade. Corruption can also be seen in law enforcement, where police officers work hand in

hand with brothel owners. Officers warn brothel owners when raids are going to occur, in exchange for some extra cash in their pocket.

Corruption also infiltrates the government, which is slow moving, and fails to monitor itself. Recent Human Rights Reports by the U.S. Department of State show that, “some [Cambodian] law enforcement and government officials are believed to have accepted bribes to facilitate the trafficking and sex trade. There are reports of government officials who are complicit in the trafficking by accepting bribes.”^{xxiii}

Cambodia does have an anti-trafficking force that has arrested and successfully convicted people. However, even this unit is not far from corruption’s reach. In 2006, several police officers, and government officials were arrested and prosecuted on charges relating to trafficking. One of those arrested was an official in the Anti-Trafficking Department, who was charged with being complicit in trafficking actions. The top fine was a little over one thousand dollars, and five years suspension from work.^{xxiv} Convictions are rare, and for each individual apprehended there are thousands more who face no consequence for their corrupt acts.

Corruption occurs within the confines of the Kingdom of Cambodia as naturally as the sun rises and falls. While there are political, cultural, and financial reasons for the amount of corruption occurring, it is also an accepted practice deeply rooted in society. It cannot be quickly abolished or magically solved. The problem in corruption goes hand in hand with the problem of sex-trafficking, one

exacerbating the other. Cambodia's justice system, backed by U.S. dollars, aids the perpetrator.

U.S. Government Involvement in Cambodia

The United States is entwined with Cambodia, through past and current ties. The U.S. government's response to the issue of sex-trafficking can be understood in the context of their current relations with Cambodia.

I. U.S.-Cambodia Relations

During the previous decades of the 20th century, Cambodia and the United States began a relationship, ended a relationship, and rekindled it once again. This turbulent journey was strained by armed conflict, and changes within the government of Cambodia. After the Royal Government of Cambodia was established in 1993, full diplomatic relationships with the United States were solidified.^{xxv}

In recent years, bilateral relations between the U.S. and Cambodia have deepened and broadened. The two countries have worked together to increase trade and address challenges from promoting regional security and democracy to expanding global health and development. The U.S. supports efforts in Cambodia to build democratic institutions, promote human rights, foster economic development, eliminate corruption and trafficking in persons, and to bring to justice those most responsible for serious violations committed under the 1975-79 Khmer Rouge regime.^{xxvi}

II. U.S. Foreign Aid to Cambodia

Mentioned above is what the State Department lists as their relations to Cambodia. They also discuss the amount of foreign aid that is dispersed. The Cambodian government strongly relies on the United States government's financial support. Around half of the entire central government budget in Cambodia is funded from U.S. money. In 2012, the amount dispersed by the U.S. government totaled over seventy million dollars.^{xxvii} The United States is responsible for involvement in Cambodia's internal affairs because of the gaps they have left from past interaction, and their current ties through fiscal aid. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has programs that "counter trafficking in persons", "support rule of law and human rights", and "promote accountability and transparency". The objectives of USAID and the US State Department accurately respond to the question of what the US government is doing to address this issue of sex-trafficking in Cambodia. However, more questions can be raised related to the effectiveness of this allocation of funds.

Problems Stemming from the United States

I. Irresponsibility of Fiscal Aid

Certain problems Cambodia faces stem from Western countries, primarily the U.S. Over 70,000,000 dollars are given from the United States government to the government of the Kingdom of Cambodia every year. As discussed earlier the, US government has also published reports which clearly lay out the government of Cambodia's corruptive nature and inefficient use and allocation of funds. Even USAID states in their programs how although Cambodia is making progress, it is still considerably lacking. Unfortunately, some of the United States government's

aims in development have gone amiss, as USAID dollars find themselves in the wrong hands.

Current funding provided by the U.S. to the Cambodian government is not the only time that the U.S. government has been irresponsible with their fiscal aid. As stated before, America backed the UN's peace making effort in the early 1990's. The UN arrived with copious amounts of money in tow, billions of dollars. The nation was overflowing with new money, however not much actually made it into its intended place- the government treasury. All the new money bloated the economy, and made a multitude of corrupt people wealthy. There were a plethora of new projects spurred by the UN. However, with each new project an opportunity was present for theft to occur by corrupt officials. This huge amount of money left with the UN in 1993, when they decided to recede from Cambodia. The UN's departure, with their cash and expertise, left a "huge vacuum" in Cambodia.^{xxviii}

The UN invested a couple years, and three billion dollars, but left Cambodia with no truly sustainable systems. Cambodia lies in a geographic position that is just important enough to draw attention and aid from America, but not important enough to attract the political capital necessary to make the aid work. Because of this America has shelled out a pretty penny year after year, with little oversight. Even with the knowledge the U.S. has about the current state of Cambodia, little is being done to remedy the situation. The United States gives around \$80-million a year in aid to Cambodia that goes straight to the Cambodian government.^{xxix} The U.S. State Department states what the funds are intended for: economic development, health, education, and governance^{xxx}- however, the money rarely meets its intended use. Wiedemann, the previous U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia stated:

“Every single year, the donors get together. They decide among themselves in advance what they want to talk to the government about. They spend two days lambasting the government, the ministers, and you get all these promises of change. Then the donors turn in their pledges. Year after year after year. All the things the donors do, that’s money Hun Sen doesn’t have to spend.”^{xxxii}

This has become a continual pattern, which the United States has only exacerbated by participating in. Cambodia is one of the highest per capita recipients of foreign aid, and yet the aid through the government has accomplished little. “In 2007 the Cambodia Daily reported, ‘there had been brief discussion of postponing the next donor meeting until an anti-corruption law is enacted. That radical proposal, however, did not last very long before it was shot down.’”^{xxxiii} Even with the passing of the corruption law to appease pressure from foreign pledges, not much has changed. The United States government remains unaccountable and intentionally ignorant about the funds they send to the Cambodian government. This continued aid props up a despotic regime, and prolongs the social devastation. It is stated that one who sees injustice and has the ability to react to it, but does nothing, is just as guilty as the one committing the injustice. Therefore, the U.S. government is supporting sex-trafficking through their omission. They are aiding, rather than reducing sex-trafficking because of their inability to realize the negative impact of their money.

I. Demand Created by U.S. Men

Another way America serves as a part of the sex-trafficking problem in Cambodia is the demand created by American pedophiles and johns. While the greatest majority of the sex offenders are from Asia (coming from China, Japan, Korea, and Cambodia), the United States

plays a large role. It is estimated that 25 percent of child sex tourists in Cambodia are U.S. Citizens.^{xxxiii} Portions of that large number are known pedophiles, who upon release venture straight to the extremely destitute areas of Cambodia, such as Svay Pak. It is believed that these known pedophiles continue to prey on young girls and boys with impunity. Cloaking themselves in the safety provided by the lacking justice system of one of the poorest nations in Southeast Asia.^{xxxiv} Jeff Blom, who works with IJM in Cambodia, stated that “Cambodia in particular has been known for some time as a pedophile haven because there’s been a broken justice, no rule of law, and actually no laws on the books that would have been enforceable against these types of activities until recently.”^{xxxv} American child predators make up one fourth of all the demand in Cambodia’s sex industry, and therefore directly play a part in aiding and encouraging it.

Restrictions placed on pedophiles living within U.S. borders, such as Megan’s Law⁵, set a precedent on ways the U.S. government can respond to this dilemma on a global level. The United States government would not want international pedophiles coming to U.S. soil. Therefore, the U.S. government should be more proactive about monitoring their citizens from offending in other countries, by holding them accountable. Not monitoring these child predators is allowing them freedom without consequence. If the U.S. government has the ability to save children from being abused with impunity by their citizens, regardless of the location, they have the responsibility to take action.

The U.S. government also needs to re-evaluate their fiscal aid. By giving copious amounts of aid to a government they understand is corrupt to the core only contributes to the destruction within the borders of Cambodia. This irresponsible foreign aid gives Cambodian

⁵ Megan’s law is a law requiring authorities to notify communities of the whereabouts of convicted sex offenders, as well as placing restrictions on the freedoms and abilities of sexual predators

government official's money to line their pockets- leaving the rest of Cambodia as destitute and disillusioned as if there was no aid at all. This poverty continues the cycle of sex-slavery, as families remain trapped with no hope, and few options. Realizing the reality that their government; with the United States funds behind them, remains unchanged and oppressive. Potential solutions to stemming this oppression through restructured U.S. involvement in Cambodia will be addressed within the policy recommendations. The U.S. government is not the only entity who is involved with these issues.

The Importance of Non-Governmental Organizations

Another interactive force within the sex-industry in Cambodia is U.S. non-governmental organizations (NGO). An NGO is defined as any voluntary, or not for profit group that works on an international, national, or local level. NGO's perform a variety of different tasks and functions, providing expertise in a particular area.^{xxxvi} NGO's serve as a positive force in the fight against sex-trafficking because they fill in gaps and perform tasks that governments are unable to fulfill. There is a greater individual connection made with the community by NGO's, as compared to broad government organizations. "Associations and NGOs are growing rapidly in Cambodia. There are about 3,000 NGOs and associations registered with Cambodia's Ministry of Interior."^{xxxvii} Many of those 3,000 are American Non-Governmental Organizations, and not for profit humanitarian organizations. Figure III in the Appendix lays out where all the different NGO projects are located in Cambodia. In this discussion, it is important to understand the forces at work in this war. Highlighting a few key NGO's in Cambodia will help assess the impact of NGO's on the sex-trade.

I. Fighting Trafficking Holistically- AIM

The first NGO examined by this paper is Agape International Missions (AIM), a non-profit organization. AIM was created in 1989, the mission then focusing on church planting and humanitarian aid in Cambodia. In 2005 the mission was refocused specifically to fighting the sex-trade through the church. Don Brewster, the executive director, stated: “We learned that undercover operations that rescued girls and shut down brothels were no longer effective because there was nowhere for a rescued girl to go. She ended up in a cycle of hopelessness that put her right back in a brothel.”^{xxxviii}

To address this issue, AIM launched Agape Restoration Center (ARC) in September of 2006 to help counsel and aid girls who are recovering.^{xxxix} AIM realized there were other opportunities to fight trafficking, restore victims, and transform communities holistically by using their motto of prevent, rescue, restore, and reintegrate.

Observing that trafficking could be prevented by protection from within the community, AIM opened Rahab’s House, a Community Outreach Center in Svay Pak. One of the worst areas of trafficking in Cambodia, Svay Pak served as an epicenter for the issue. In 2006 100% of the girls in Svay Pak were being sold for sex; AIM’s involvement has since reduced that number to 60%.^{xl} Rahab’s House provides healthcare for the community, as well as free education, and a safe environment for children to play. Through the school, children are given many new opportunities, and can escape the possibility of trafficking. At this community outreach center, the AIM Cambodian staff is able to build healthy relationships with the community members, and teach them the intrinsic value of their children. AIM has expanded with several Rahab’s House centers; the AIM Employment Center (AEC) which provides survivors with a safe job;

and the Lord's Gym. The gym is a place that reaches out to pimps, traffickers, and johns.^{xli} Since the inception of the Lord's Gym, Svay Pak has seen around 10 men give up their trafficking lifestyle, including the top drug dealer in all of Svay Pak.

The men who changed their lives at the Lord's Gym are not the only example of redemptive works in Svay Pak. Another holistic part of AIM's transformation within the community is the Agape Employment Center (AEC) providing survivors in the process of reintegrating back into society a safe place to work and continued opportunities to heal. Survivors have the ability to make bracelets and t-shirts, while being paid twice the national average of fifty to sixty dollars a month. There is extreme success in this model of reintegration alongside vocation.

AIM's approach has been highly effective for all the reasons listed above, as well as a few more. AIM has been effective at spreading awareness, not only through Cambodia in church planting, but throughout the United States. Utilizing the documentary *The Pink Room*, which highlights AIM and the story of a survivor named Mien, AIM offers screenings all across the United States to effectively bring attention to the problem. Combined with US training of advocates in five different states, AIM is proactive about spreading awareness. Beyond spreading awareness stateside, they also send missionaries to serve in Cambodia, with a total of approximately 25 long term missionaries serving both in Svay Pak and Siem Reap⁶. AIM also welcomes short term mission's teams, which helps in spreading awareness, and exposes the realities of sex-trafficking firsthand.

Agape International Missions provides in-depth holistic care and treatment from a variety of approaches, balancing innovation and transformation. AIM is not the sole non-profit to work

⁶ A highly populated city in Southern Cambodia that is also a hotspot for sex-trafficking

within the confines of Svay Pak's dusty streets, and will not be the last. International Justice Mission has a long history of partnering with AIM, and serves as another example of a non-profit NGO originating from the United States who works in Cambodia.

II. Fighting Through the Justice System- IJM

International Justice Mission (IJM) is a human rights agency that brings rescue to victims of slavery, sexual exploitation and other forms of violent oppression, by seeking to make public justice systems work for victims of abuse and oppression who urgently need the protection of the law.^{xlii} They have 16 field offices all around the world, including in Phnom Penh Cambodia. Their office was established in 2004, with a particular emphasis on responding to sex trafficking. They shape all of their work around a collaborative casework model that partners with state and local authorities to push individual cases through the country's justice system. "By pushing individual cases of abuse...from the investigative stage to the prosecutorial stage, IJM determines the specific source of corruption, lack of resources, or lack of good will in the system denying victims the protection of their legal systems. In collaboration with local authorities, IJM addresses these specific points of brokenness to meet the urgent needs of victims of injustice."^{xliii} The collaborative case model focuses on four distinct outcomes for those whom they serve. Firstly is victim relief, which is IJM's main priority in casework. Second is holding the perpetrator accountable through the justice system. Third is aftercare for the survivor of oppression. Fourth and final is structural transformation within the community, and local judicial systems, in order to deter perpetrators from partaking in oppressive actions.^{xliv}

In Cambodia, IJM works on the frontlines to bring relief to victims of those trafficked and subjected to sexual violence. IJM was a part of bringing the former chief of the Phnom Penh

Municipal Anti Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Police to justice in 2011, as he was “found guilty as an accomplice to aggravated procurement of prostitution...These convictions will not only act as a deterrent to others, but also protect many girls and women from exploitation.”^{xlv}

The field office in Phnom Penh also spends a large portion of their time working with local law enforcement, at one point working with Cambodian police to “secure the release of 277 victims of sex trafficking and the conviction of 70 perpetrators of child sexual exploitation and trafficking.”^{xlvi} IJM also spends a great amount of time working in conjunction with other organizations. Oftentimes these partner organizations, such as AIM, will compile information through undercover sting work, and present it to IJM. The focus is on evidence that is substantial and compelling enough to result in the arrest of perpetrators, and the rescue of girls.

In IJM’s specific field they have proven to be successful as they contribute a form of oversight and balance that the justice system in Cambodia lacks. They are transforming the judicial standard case by case, and are setting examples to those who are engaging in damaging and illegal activities.

III. Other U.S. NGO’s in Cambodia

AIM and IJM are among many other U.S. organizations that are fighting sex-trafficking in Cambodia. One such organization is Hard Places, which provides a place of restoration for the boys who are being trafficked in Cambodia. Started in 2009, and based in Phnom Penh, the founders of the Hard Places Community stated: “We worked with children by day who were sold by night, we worked in residential after-care centers with girls who had been rescued, and we learned about the hundreds of boys who were being sold every day, but whose pain was ignored

by the community around them.”^{xlvii} Another organization goes by the name of Sak Saum, and also works in the depths of Phnom Penh. They focus on recovery for victims of human trafficking through restoration mixed with vocation. Sak Saum’s survivors make bags, wallets, and other clothing items that are sold all over the world. However, Sak Saum is more than just producing clothing items. “Sak Saum is about a changed life...seeing people set free and empowered for their future. From the beginning, our goal has been to create a nurturing, empowering, restorative program ...we believe in the union of powerful, life-changing outreach with effective, excellent business.”^{xlviii} The approaches from NGO’s in Cambodia are not limited to vocation training and providing aftercare for survivors. Figure IV in the appendix lays out the NGO projects in Cambodia by sector. There are organizations that focus solely on church-planting, education, sustainable farming techniques, clean water, food distribution, economic development, and providing low-cost medical care. While the methods and approaches vary, they all either help reduce human trafficking directly, or indirectly by combatting some root causes of trafficking, such as extreme poverty. By targeting these root causes with different approaches, NGO’s are becoming recognized for their fight against sex-trafficking.

NGO’s Impact on Sex-Slavery

There are a multitude of NGO’s in Cambodia fighting against sex-slavery in uniquely effective ways. Effectiveness of a specific NGO varies by the organization, what their goals are, and the methods they use. Not all statistics are quantifiable, but organizations such as AIM and IJM have seen good measures of success. As previously stated, in eight years AIM reduced trafficking in the village of Svay Pak from 100% of all girls being sold, to fewer than 60% being trafficked. That number is significant, considering the plethora of obstacles facing the organization, such as Cambodian culture and corruption. Organizations in Svay Pak before AIM,

had spent millions of dollars, and plenty of time, with no effective change occurring. Now, “rather than being peddled for rape, children are accessing educational opportunities, health services and community building activities.... [AIM’s] steadfast commitment to Svay Pak and its children has created a vibrant sense of hope, and brought life to a very dark place.” IJM too has helped refine the justice system little by little, bringing convictions to brothel owners and johns, who would have most likely walked free before. When you compare the NGO’s effectiveness to the Cambodian government’s effectiveness, the differences are vast and highlight the Cambodian government’s pitfalls. Figure II in the appendix breaks down NGO contributions to Cambodia. It not only shows that NGO contributions are on the rise, but also displays the limited amount of money NGO’s have to work off of, compared to a government system. The U.S. ambassador-at-large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Luis CdeBaca stated:

“Little was done by Cambodia’s government last year to help the country’s women, men, and children who were trafficked for sex or forced labor. While there were almost a thousand victims identified, almost all of the victim care was done by nongovernmental organizations, and often by nongovernmental organizations funded by foreign donors.”^{xlix}

U.S. Governmental Relationships with NGO’S

CdeBaca is not the only one calling for more accountability from the Cambodian government. However, the government of the Kingdom of Cambodia has continuously failed to be responsive. Due to their insufficiency, NGO’s have proved to be even more important to reduce sex-trafficking. The three types of NGO’s working in Cambodia are: advocacy NGOs, promoting before governments or in international venues for the interests of groups who lack voice or access to do so themselves; operational NGOs, providing goods and services to needy

clients; and hybrid NGOs, performing both of the previous functions.¹ The American government has had a good history of partnerships with these social NGO's. They recognize the lower cost, and added value of the volunteer sector versus the private sector. In Cambodia, the government provides support for NGO's, and works directly with them through their USAID office. However, greater work could be done in strengthening the relationship between the American government and their American NGO's who work in Cambodia. This strengthened relationship would allow them to mobilize greater combined resources, and would lead to greater awareness of the issues, as NGO's tend to be more aware of communities' essential needs. The U.S. government could also provide more funding, and initiate better programs that target the issues within Cambodia, to aid the NGO's who are already working there.

Ultimately, the issue of sex-trafficking in Cambodia is not as far away from the United States as it may seem. The United States is directly tied to Cambodia in a variety of ways, and so it is the duty of the United States to play a more active role in reducing sex-trafficking in Cambodia, particularly through refined relationships with NGO's. The U.S. government also has the responsibility of working with the NGO's in Cambodia who are performing undercover brothel raids. Such as AIM's newly created undercover SWAT team, who performs undercover raids with Cambodian law enforcement. Working with them allows the U.S. to hold their citizens responsible for their actions if caught, whether they are pedophiles or not. If the U.S. government was responsible about their aid to Cambodia, by reallocating some of the funds to NGO's who are making an impact- true change could occur.

The U.S. government is not responsible for turning the tide of the country's corruption, but they are responsible for the part they play in this issue. The U.S. government must take responsibility through restructuring their relationships with NGO's and the Cambodian

government. The Cambodian government needs to become responsive to the flourishing and illegal sex-industry, and take direct steps and policy measures to fight this issue.

Policy Proposals for the Cambodian Government

I. Anti-Corruption Oversight

There are many legislative and policy moves the Cambodian government could take to help reduce sex-trafficking. In 2010 the Cambodian National Assembly passed the law on anti-corruption, which stated its purpose in Article 1: “to promote effectiveness of all forms of service and strengthen good governance and rule of law in leadership and state governance as well as to maintain integrity and justice which is fundamental for social development and poverty reduction.”^{li} The officials in the justice system have generally failed to uphold this legislation since its passage, partly because the National Council Against Corruption, created to provide guidance/consultation and recommendations on anti-corruption work consists of government appointed people. As the government is riddled with corrupt officials, pawns are placed into these positions that can be controlled. The recommendation on this issue is to implement a new policy for Section 1, Article 6 of the Anti-Corruption law, where a new method of choosing an oversight board would be put in place. This board would be appointed by the United Nations, which Cambodia is a part of. All members would be Cambodian, but would need to be approved by the United Nations. Oversight and more oversight is not the answer to every dilemma, but could be effective and sustainable in this situation. By having an outside group monitor the anti-corruption law, and persecute those breaking it allows justice to occur. There are ample examples of corruption being tied to human trafficking. If the rule of law fails, people are not protected. If the rule of law is upheld, then it can be truly effective. This policy would help reduce sex-

trafficking by prosecuting those in the government who are contributing to the issue through their corrupt acts, such as police officer-brothel correspondence. It would also set a standard that those who are engaged in the corrupt acts have a consequence to fear. That serves as a preventative measure to those considering corrupt actions.

II. Greater Punishment for Sexual Predators

A second policy adjustment relates to greater punishment for johns and pimps. Under Cambodian law it is illegal to engage in underage sex with a minor, but the government does not comply with the minimum global standards for the elimination of trafficking. The government is making strides, convicting 62 trafficking offenders during the previous year.^{lii} However, that was with the assistance with NGO's and fails to adequately address the issue, leaving Cambodia on the tier 2 watch list (almost tier 3)⁷ for human trafficking. The policy recommendation is that the Cambodian government should continue to investigate and prosecute sexual offenders, and create a sustainable model for efficiency in this matter. The sustainable model would be created by initiating more rigorous monitoring of who is entering their country, and enforcing the laws that are already in place to protect victims. Even when someone is convicted, imprisonment time and monetary fees are far below what they should be. The Cambodian government should enforce harsher penalties on those convicted, including a greater monetary fine to compensate and provide funding for the victim's recovery. They should establish goals and quotas for eliminating and capturing traffickers. At this point people flee to Cambodia to partake in their most twisted desires; it is a safe haven for pedophiles. Those engaging in the exploitation of these young girls and boys should fear the punishment they could receive. This increased

⁷ U.S. State Department ranks countries on a human-trafficking watch list based on three tiers, 1 being the best. See Figure I in Appendix.

punishment would be effective in instilling fear, and deterring sex offenders from seeking Cambodia as a resort for their twisted desires.

III. Two-Pronged Community Education Program

The third policy recommendation would be the implementation of community education programs in Cambodia. Programs taught in rural villages to parents that focus on the dangers of loan sharks, and the horrors of selling their children. Elements of the program would focus on educating the children of the opportunities available to them, as well as the possibilities of safe housing, which is discussed in the following policy suggestion. This two prong approach aids in teaching fiscal responsibility to the adults, and providing them with resources on where to turn to for safe loans, provided by non-profits like AIM. As mentioned earlier, pressure to pay back loan debts are one key reason parents sell their daughters. This program also aims at educating the children that they are worthy enough to make choices, and have opportunities. As discussed earlier, a sense of duty to one's parents is deeply imbedded in Khmer culture. The education would help the children to see where that "duty" crosses the line. The funding for these programs would come from the portion of money the United States gives the Cambodian government for "education". This education program would be conducted by a coalition of human rights, and education focused NGO's in Cambodia, approved by the UN.

IV. Mandatory Recovery- Safe House Facility

The fourth and final suggestion for the Cambodian government is that they create a mandatory recovery program for victims of sex-trafficking. Due to Cambodia's current corruption, the program should be hosted by a UN approved recovery facility, like AIM or the Hard Places Community. Each victim and the approved recovery facility would receive a stipend

to cover the cost of recovery for the girl or boy. That stipend would be paid by the person convicted of abusing the child. The approved housing would also serve as a place for girls whose living situation is unsafe⁸. This policy suggestion is not as forcefully preventative as the others, but does contribute to reducing sex-trafficking. By establishing enough facilities for survivors to turn to, and thrive in, the number of women being trafficked will decrease. Providing a safe place for girls to come to when fleeing from being sold would also help reduce the number of girls entering the sex trade. When those being oppressed have a viable option, such as a recovery program, and a sustainable opportunity, they will not have to continue to sell themselves, or will avoid the sex industry entirely.

The implementation and success of these proposals would greatly help to reduce sex-trafficking in Cambodia. Due to the corruption that is manifested in Cambodian culture, the current policies are flawed and remain stagnant. The policies described above incorporate a type of oversight that is essential at this time to ensure the Cambodian government doesn't succumb to corrupt practices. The current Cambodian government system under Hun Sen is irreversibly corrupt, and change is not something that is realistic, regardless of policies. For change to happen there has to be a paradigm shift in the culture that starts off on an individual to individual basis. Small shifts made by each individual have the ability to transform the government itself over time. This process will be lengthy and arduous, but the younger generation in Cambodia is beginning the journey as they realize the capacity they have to make change happen. Over time, as the community heals within Cambodia, transformation can occur in the government structure and oversight may be reduced.

⁸ Unsafe meaning a parent or acquaintance is attempting to sell the child into the sex trade

Regardless of the policies, there is still much to be done at a far deeper level to combat, prevent, and reduce the issue of sex-trafficking. Sex-trafficking itself is rooted in many problems, including poverty and a lack of moral understanding within the country. Hun Sen's despotic leadership fails to serve as an example for a moral compass, and money given to the government never makes it to the hands of those who need it most. The Cambodian government structure is not irreparably damaged, but a lot of work must be done before reaching sustainable functionality.

Policy Proposals for the United States

As previously mentioned in the paper, the United States has many ties with Cambodia. The U.S. has the power to positively use those ties, and serve as an instrument to aid in reducing sex-trafficking. To be the most efficient possible resource, the United States government must reevaluate certain policies, and spending patterns.

I. Reallocation of Foreign Aid

The first step would be to reallocate funds from the Cambodian government to American NGO's who have proven to be effective. In January of 2014, President Barack Obama signed a spending bill, that:

Suspended some funding to Prime Minister Hun Sen's government until an independent investigation into last year's disputed national election is carried out, or until the opposition CNRP ends its boycott of parliament. The bill targets only a small portion of the U.S.' \$80-million a year in aid to Cambodia that goes straight to the Cambodian government. Excluded from the suspension, however, is anything that falls under humanitarian aid, and human rights training for the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces.^{liii}

While this is a step in the right direction, it is far from what could be done. A significant portion of the \$80 million given each year to the government should be transferred to NGO's who are adequately aiding the country. The United States should not cut off all aid to the Cambodian Government, but should re-evaluate where they place their funding. The U.S. government does provide a certain amount for NGO's. However, there is always more that could be given, because non-profit NGO's must rely solely on donors for funds. With the minimal funds NGO's do receive, they accomplish an impressive array of tasks.

NGOs offer a number of distinct advantages that can enhance the provision of social services or the promotion of social needs, whether on their own or in cooperation with business or government. They are well attuned to public concerns, and to the needs of specific groups that might not be represented by the market or defended by the government. Their dense, extensive networks are different from those of the typical government. Their members and representatives have technical expertise in the issue at hand, often due to having worked in difficult settings or with underserved populations. Lastly, they are often more cost-effective than their private or public partner.^{liv}

An independent board should assess the most positive, influential, and successful programs in Cambodia, in regards to sex-trafficking, and other programs dealing with education, health, etc. Based on the outcome of the assessment, a proper reallocation of 40% (approximately \$32,000,000) of the funds should take place. This would not only aid in reducing sex-trafficking, but would also send a message to the Cambodian government that the US does not support their corrupt acts. This reallocation of funds fosters a growing community of change within Cambodia that could ultimately help heal the broken nation.

II. Proactive Legislation

The second proposal is to not only establish effective laws in the United States to set an example [and fight the issue domestically], but also create laws with an international scope. One such bill that is working its way through Congress is S. 929: The Vietnam Human Rights Sanctions Act, which targets key international human rights issues. If passed the bill would

- (1) impose financial and immigration/entry sanctions on listed nationals of Vietnam who are complicit in human rights abuses committed against nationals of Vietnam or their family members, regardless of whether such abuses occurred in Vietnam; and (2) submit to Congress a publicly available list of individuals determined to be complicit in such human rights abuses.^{lv}

This bill would benefit Cambodia as many girls who are trafficked to Cambodia are from Vietnam. However, this bill fails to take into consideration the likelihood of those committing crimes to have a legitimate Vietnamese citizenship. Many in South East Asia live across borders, and neither the Vietnamese government, nor the Cambodian government recognizes them as true citizens. A recommendation would be for the U.S. Congress to introduce legislation that holds any human rights offender accountable who works within the Cambodian border. Points of the bill would focus on: submitting a publicly available list of all offenders (regardless of nationality), imposing immigration and fiscal sanctions on them, and working with the USAID office in Cambodia to bring perpetrators to justice. One task of the USAID office could be holding the Cambodian government accountable for proper action towards offenders, with the threat of a greater withdrawal of fiscal aid. Enabling governments to take action, and cooperate across international borders would place public pressure on the Cambodian Government's

response to the sex-industry. With the oversight of USAID, this pressure would also be placed on individual traffickers, who would face legitimate consequences.

III. Stemming U.S. Demand

The third and final recommendation is that the United States government should actively work at stemming demand in the U.S., and reducing the amount of pedophiles that travel to SE Asia. In 2009, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement identified and arrested three American sex tourists in Cambodia under “Operation Twisted Traveler.” While a stride in the right direction, it doesn’t do enough to actively combat the issue of sex-trafficking. American men make up 25% of the total demand in Cambodia. Congress should implement a policy that places pedophiles, particularly extreme ones, on a higher watch list. Particularly if they are known to take frequent trips to the South East Asia area. Working through USAID Cambodia’s office, undercover work should be performed to catch the pedophiles before they have the opportunity to abuse children. The three men that were prosecuted in 2009 were extreme pedophiles, who lived in Cambodia for a few years, raping tens, possibly hundreds of children. Undercover work should also be done in conjunction with USAID at brothels known to be frequented by Westerners, to catch men in the act. Not every man that travels there is a known sex offender, but placing limitations on known sex offenders is a start at providing a protectionist policy.

Conclusion

Ultimately the best way to reduce sex-trafficking in Cambodia is through partnerships with non-profits NGO’s. This issue is so deeply rooted that policies and legislation can only brush at the surface of the issue. This shouldn’t stop practical and efficient legislation from

occurring, but should encourage people to take a more direct approach to the issue. Reducing sex-trafficking in Cambodia is more than signing off on a bill, reallocating funds, or releasing lists, it is about being active within communities to fight this issue from the inside out, not the outside in. In this situation, the country of Cambodia can only be transformed on an individual to individual basis. When a group of individuals are transformed, that leads to a community being transformed. Then an entire city- and eventually all of Cambodia's cultural paradigms will shift. The Cambodian people have had a rough past that devalues human life and pushes aside morality. To combat that, it takes relationship building, and proper education to infuse the understanding of human life in to the Cambodian population. The governmental regime of Hun Sen cannot be easily changed, and therefore it may take their departure from office for consistent positive change to occur. The younger generations of Cambodian people are seeing a different world than that of their parents. With the aid of others, such as U.S. NGO's, they can forge a much brighter future. C.S. Lewis wrote:

So there are 4 kinds of 'love', all good in their proper place, but Agape is the best because it is the kind God has for us and is good in all circumstances...I can practice Agape to God, Angels, Man and Beast, to the good and the bad, the old and the young, the far and the near...You see Agape is all giving, not getting. Look at Matthew chap 25 v. 31-46: from which you see that Christ counts all that you do for this baby exactly as if you had done it for Him when He was a baby in the manger at Bethlehem.. Giving money is only one way of showing charity: to give time and toil is far better and (for most of us) harder. And notice, though it is all giving—you needn't expect any reward— how you do gets rewarded almost at once.^{lvi}

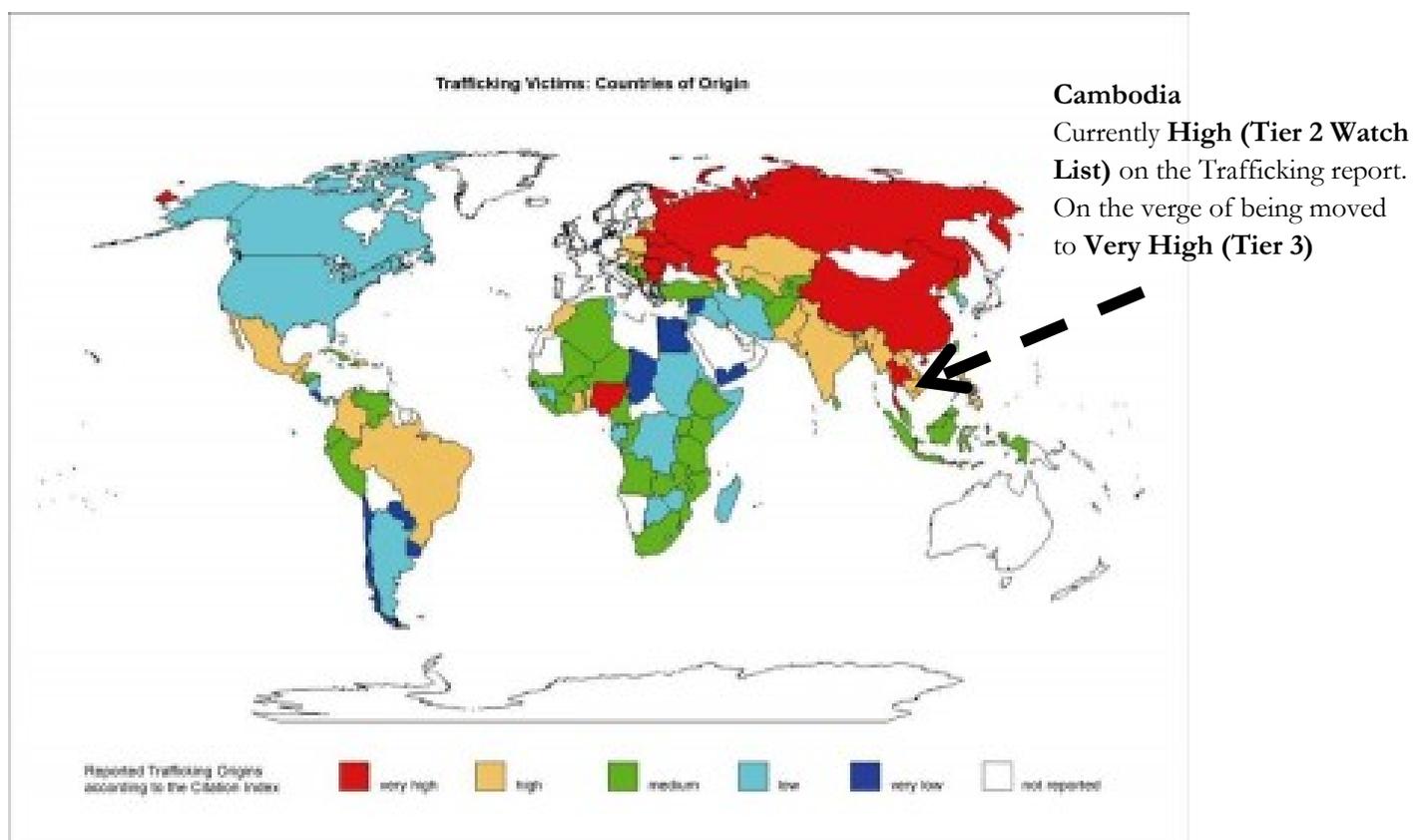
This is the approach one must take to reduce sex-trafficking in Cambodia; to give time and toil, performing as the literal hands and feet of Jesus. Change will happen when we not only give our dollars to this cause, but actively partner with organizations and give our time to

transform individual lives. To counter the issue of young girls and boys, being reduced, reused, and recycled, the United States government must be more responsible with their funding, more open to positive NGO collaboration, and more intentional about their actions. Most importantly, the individual citizens of the United States need to care about those who are losing their innocence this very minute; because as humans, our liberties are bound together.

Appendix

Graphs

Figure I: Trafficking Victims Report



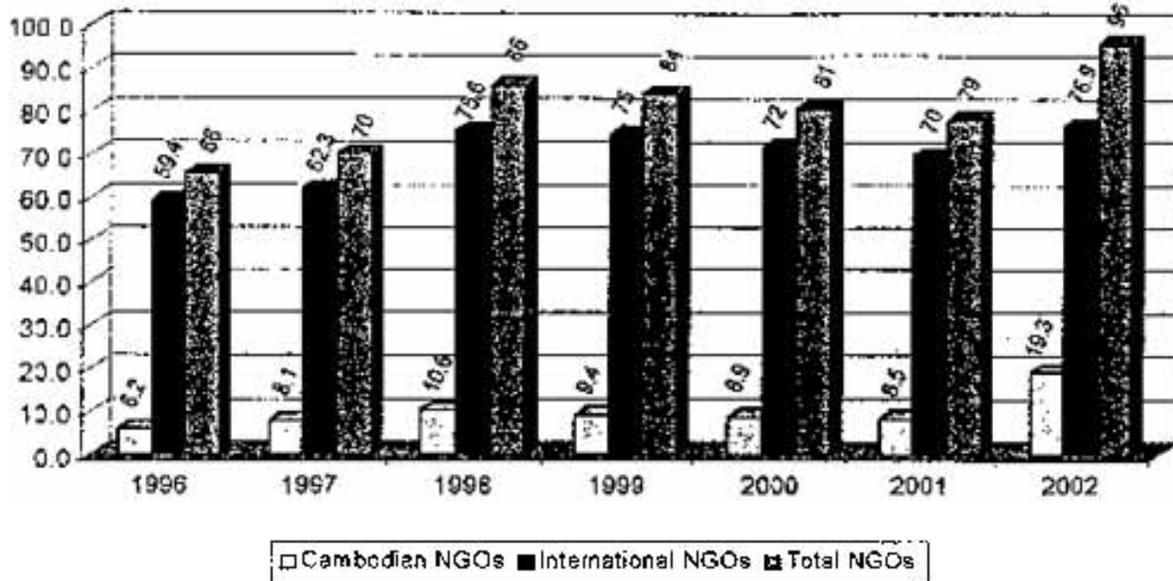
Tier 2 Watch List:

- Countries whose governments do not fully comply with the TVPA's minimum standards but are making efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards
- The absolute number of victims of severe forms of trafficking is very significant or is significantly increasing^{lvii}

Tier 3 Watch List:

- Countries whose governments do not fully comply with the minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so^{lviii}

Figure II: Summary of All NGOs Contributions to Cambodia* (US\$ millions)^{ix}



*Contributions have continued to increase considerably through the mid 2000's- present day

Figure III: NGO Projects in Cambodia^{ix}

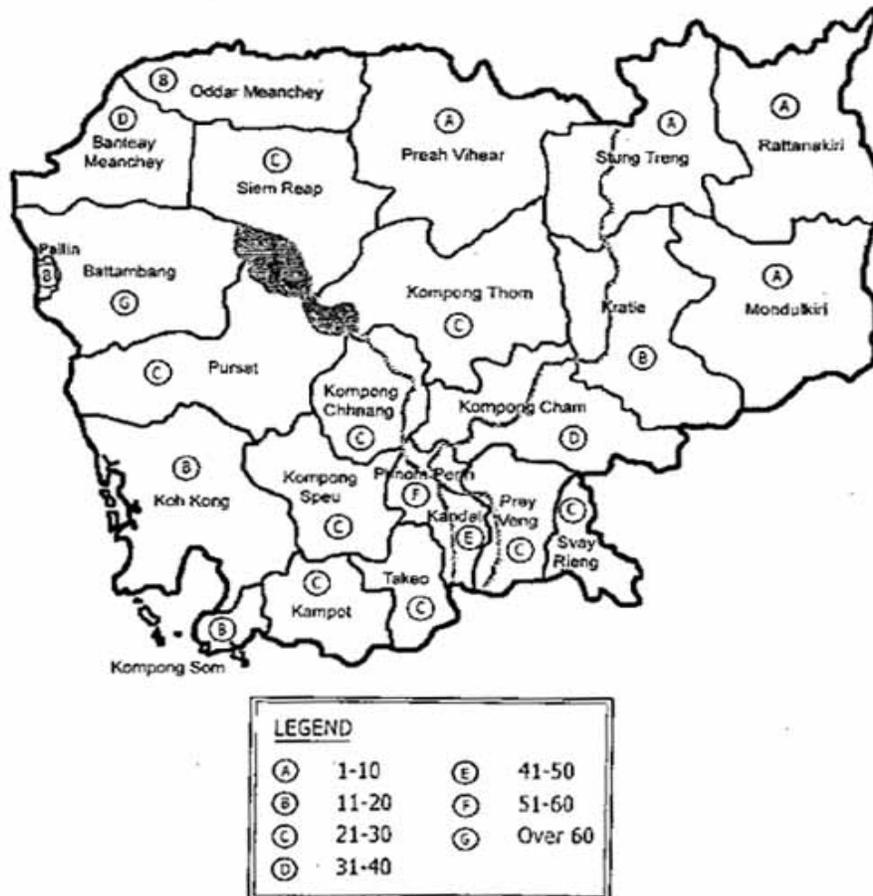
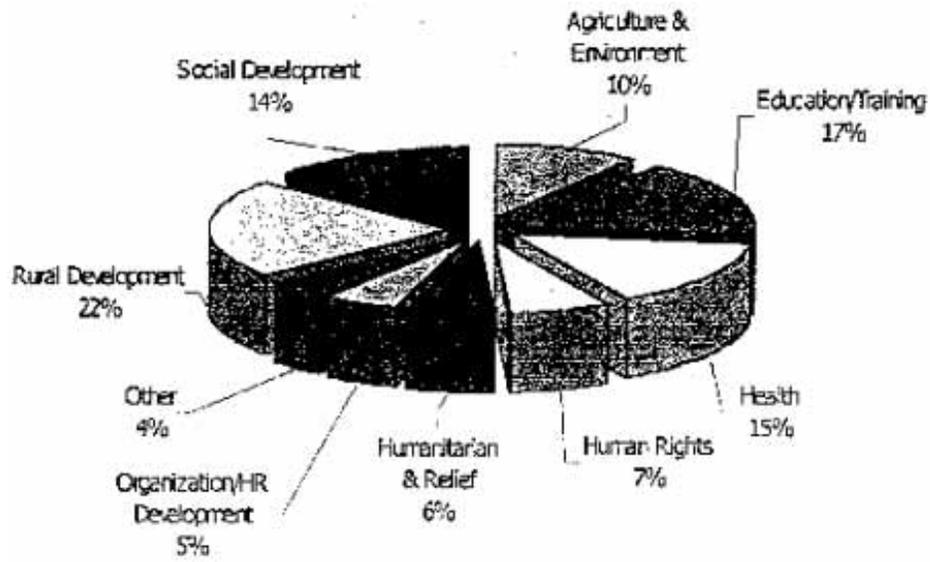


Figure IV: NGO Projects in Cambodia by Sector^{lxi}



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