

**“Out of Sight, Out of Mind?
Child Domestic Workers and
Patterns of Trafficking in Cambodia”**



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A Note on Language

Throughout this report, child domestic workers are often referred to as ‘children’ or as ‘CDW’s. Those employing CDWs are frequently referred to as ‘house owners’.

Findings on the commercial sexual exploitation of women and children are also presented in this report. They are referred to as ‘CSEWGs’ – Commercially Sexually Exploited Women and/or Girls. The use of this terminology does not reflect IOM’s position on the legalization of commercial sexual exploitation.

Acronyms

CDW – Child domestic worker

CSEWG – Commercially Sexually Exploited Women and/or Girls

ILO – International Labour Organisation

IOM – International Organisation for Migration

NIS – National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, Royal Government of Cambodia

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1 Executive Summary

This study was conducted in three provinces on Cambodia – Koh Kong, Kampong Som, and Siem Reap. The research aim for the project was to map the process and mechanisms of trafficking within Cambodia for two target groups, Commercially Sexually Exploited Women and Girls (CSEWGs) and child domestic workers (CDWs). Specifically, the research objectives sought to understand how the 'pull' factors in different provinces lead to migration and trafficking. It also sought to understand how process of migration could constitute trafficking.

Trafficking was defined using the UN's Palermo Protocol. The research looked at specific indicators of trafficking, including; recruitment, levels of deception involved in recruitment, the use of recruiters and paths of migration, levels of payment and debt, freedom of movement, age of entry into domestic work, work hours and patterns of abuse in the work location. Household owners who employed domestic workers were also interviewed on their methods of recruitment, but the research also sought to assess levels of demand for underage workers, as well as attitudes that could support trafficking related practices, including those towards punishment and forced labour.

In terms of socio-demographic profile, it was found that the vast majority of CDWs are female (89%). Strong gender norms mean that girls were overwhelmingly chosen for household based tasks. The majority of these workers (76%) were found to be currently above the minimum working age of 15 years, with the average being 15.5 years. However, 24% of CDWs were underage at the time of interview, and the average age of starting work is 14.5 years. When looking at age of entry, the proportion of those underage rises to 38%. The level of education of CDWs was low, and they often came from a dysfunctional family background, with problems such as divorce and domestic violence. 58% of CDWs reported that their families are in debt. CDWs predominantly come from rural areas.

CDWs are thus most often rural to urban migrants. The key decision makers in this pattern of migration are often the child's parents, with little evidence that the children are consulted prior to their entry into domestic work. The paths of migration are highly influenced by fears of trafficking, and often occur through the house owners' links to specific rural communities where they are known and trusted. Both house owners and CDWs and their families appeared to prefer the use of kinship networks to find work, and a sizeable proportion (42%) were related to the house owner.

Relationship to the house owner was found to be pivotal in explaining certain variances. For instance, in recruitment, relatives were less likely to be told that they would be working as domestic workers, and were less likely to be promised a salary. This could be due to the perceived low social status of domestic workers. Relatives were reluctant to refer to each other in this demeaning way, though they may have been actively recruited to fulfill this social role.

CDWs were found to be highly mobile, with 39% having previously worked as a domestic worker, and the average length of time in their previous domestic work posting being only 10.2 months. This was explained by homesickness, seasonal demands on their labour in the agricultural economy, as well as experiences of abuse by previous employers. The working conditions of CDWs were also found to be very harsh, as they worked for an average of 13.5 hours per day. Again, this varied by relationship with the

house owner, as non-relatives worked harder, at an average of 15.7 hours per day. Despite this, house owners often expressed the opinion that the work performed was 'easy', and the definition of domestic work as not being 'work' was found to be important to facilitating this labour exploitation.

In terms of payments and benefits, only 64% of CDWs are paid for the work that they do every day. This was partly explained by patterns of recruitment into the household and by relationship to the house owner - relatives were much less likely to be paid. However, it can be seen from the table below that 18% of the CDWs were not paid and were not related to the house owner, and this group is arguably exploited on the basis that they are perceived to have very few options and little social support, and are therefore willing to work for few benefits, such as food and shelter.

Payment Stratified by Relationship to the House Owner

Of those who are unpaid	
Relatives	71
Non-relative	18
Other	12
Of those who are paid	
Relatives	27
Non-relative	69
Other	4

Overall, there was also found to be a high rate of debt bondage at 10%. A substantial number (31%) of CDWs also reported that they never receive their salaries, as they are directly paid to their relatives, most frequently their mother. These patterns of exploitation and debt bondage are clearly of concern, given that they appear to increase risk of abuse, and lead to lack of freedom of movement.

In terms of harbouring, 90% of CDWs reported that they were allowed to have contact with people outside of the house. Lack of freedom of movement was often due to gender norms regarding protecting the sexual status of female CDWs, as well as being due to patterns of debt bondage. 39% of CDWs said that they wanted to leave their place of work. A further 39% reported that it would be difficult for them to leave their current work situation, but this seemed to be mainly due to lack of employment options due to their low educational status.

16% of CDWs reported that they had been 'punished' by their employers, however, relatives of the house owner as well as those in debt bondage appeared to be more likely to suffer punishment. Lastly, evidence concerning sexual abuse was explored by interviewing CSEWGs who were former domestic workers, 10% of whom had been raped during their employment, and 18% had suffered attempted rape. Strong feelings of shame and a culture of impunity were found to facilitate this sexual violence.

The overwhelming majority of CDWs had no formal contract, nor had they been monitored by the local authorities, though the Labour Office is supposed to monitor all child workers. However, the use of contracts was found to be directly related to trafficking, and are mostly used as a means of enforcing labour exploitation. Most employers and CDWs thus chose not to use contracts. CDWs also said that they would be unlikely to contact local authorities in cases of difficulties - only 19% said that they

would do so. Given the general pattern of lack of social support of CDWs, this is a worrying finding. Despite this, there was strong support for the government to increase monitoring of CDWs, among both house owners and the child workers themselves.

A strong link between migration into domestic work and into commercial sexual exploitation was identified, based on the findings of the research with both target groups in the research project. 51% of CSEWGs interviewed had previously worked as domestic workers. While these groups are not directly comparable, it is hypothesized that former domestic workers who later become CSEWGs often represent a group that has suffered extreme patterns of exploitation, such as working excessive hours, suffering physical and sexual abuse, and low social status within the employer's household. The path of migration that they follow shows a repeated pattern of social vulnerability in their own families and later in their lives as domestic workers. This social vulnerability later makes them easily recruitable into commercial sexual exploitation, either through 'voluntary' or trafficking-related practices.

Several social groups within the broad category of 'child domestic workers' were identified as being of strong relevance to not only trafficking, but also child labour exploitation and abuse. Arguably, the child's path of migration into an employer's household, being either through family networks or not, appeared to qualitatively differentiate their experiences of exploitation. The social groups identified included; children put into debt bondage (often by their own parents, and in a repeated pattern of exploitation); children from disintegrated family networks who could no longer rely on their social support networks; children who had become 'nomadic' - working in various low skilled labour sectors and disconnected from their family networks, and lastly, children who were found to be underage. In terms of use of force, it was found that there was relatively little exerted, and that exploiters and employers often relied on the children's perceived lack of social options to justify patterns of exploitation.

2 Background

This study was conducted as part of the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) research into the patterns of trafficking within Cambodia. Two target groups were selected; child domestic workers and Commercially Sexually Exploited Women and Girls (CSEWGs), in three key provinces – Siem Reap, Koh Kong and Kompong Som. The selection of these provinces was done on the basis of IOM's previous experience in counter-trafficking activities that had pinpointed these provinces as those with a high prevalence of trafficking. The findings from the CSEWG research is available in a separate report (Brown, 2007).

The rationale for the study was principally the lack of information that currently exists on trafficking within Cambodia, particularly amongst groups who may be trafficked for their labour, such as Child Domestic Workers (CDWs). A recent review of research conducted so far (Derks, Henke and Ly, 2006) demonstrated that one third concentrated on cross-border migration, and two thirds concentrated on trafficking for sexual exploitation. There is a current lack of research focus on different labour sectors within Cambodia.

The phenomenon of trafficking of CDWs has been noted in both Africa and Asia (UNICEF, 2002, Boonpala and Kane, 2001, Visayan, 2004), often taking the form of bonded labour and involving high rates of physical and emotional abuse. However, the prevalence of trafficking among CDWs is unknown, and so far there is only anecdotal evidence available from local Human Rights NGOs to rely on.

A study conducted by the National Institute for Statistics (NIS, 2003) and supported by ILO reported some disturbing trends. CDWs included in the sample ranged in age from 7 – 17 years old. 73.8% of CDWs received no monthly salary, while this proportion significantly increased for female CDWs – to 94.8%. This raised the possibility that CDWs in Cambodia were being held in bonded labour, and that the practice of low or no payments could have been a reflection of slavery like practices¹.

With this in mind, this study explores whether CDWs are trafficked, and if so, what are the practices, mechanisms and social patterns that lead to its practice.

2.1 Legal Status of CDWs

The legal status of CDWs is a crucial question in relation to trafficking practices, as it has repercussions on legal entitlements for redress, monitoring by the local authorities and aspects such as minimum age of work. The legal instruments available are constituted of the Cambodian laws and the International Conventions to which Cambodia is a signatory (and in some cases has ratified).

In terms of applicability of the law, the Cambodian Labour Code clearly states that it does not apply to domestic workers, except in cases of forced labour, which Article 15 states is forbidden.

¹ The ILO Convention on Forced and Compulsory Labour (No. 29) defines slavery as, "all work or service which is extracted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily". Other definitions emphasize forced labour for the purposes of exploitation.

In terms of age, the Cambodian law states that the minimum age of employment (for full time work in non-hazardous sectors) is 15 years old. This is the same as that stated in the ILO Convention No. 138 (concerning minimum wage for admission to employment). Below this age, children from 12-15 years of age are allowed to perform 'light work' that will not affect their attendance at school. However, all forms of work that are considered 'hazardous' cannot be performed by children under 18 years of age. There is currently no agreement on whether domestic work is considered hazardous or otherwise in Cambodia, and thus discussions of CDWs who are 'underage' refers to those who are below 15 years of age. However, the sample included all identified CDWs under 18 years of age.

Of final note is Article 179 of the Labour Code, which clearly states that local authorities from the Labour Office have the responsibility to register and observe all working children under the age of 18 years.

2.2 Ethical Considerations

There are strong ethical considerations that must be incorporated into any research design involving children or those who could be in a trafficked situation. In Cambodia, several factors aggravate this situation, including the lack of adequate child protection mechanisms, as well as the lack of adequate facilities to refer children to.

Conventional approaches to ethics in research with children place a strong emphasis on the importance of their participation, right to have control over the research situation and to have 'voice' – emotional expression without fear of ridicule or dismissal (Black, 1996). While this may be the ideal situation, in practice access to and the consequent involvement of children in research is usually mediated through care-givers who can undermine this aim.

The principle ethical consideration when working with children is that the research must not put them at further risk of abuse or have a negative impact on them. Children included in this study could be in a precarious situation within their place of work, and accessing them without permission from the care-giver could further their vulnerability. While the presence of the house owner undoubtedly compromised the research process, this study accepted that the participation of the child would be first and foremost at the discretion of the house owner. Nonetheless, steps were taken to mitigate their impact on the research.

During the interviews themselves, the data collectors followed the principles of confidentiality and participation. Children interviewed were given the right to refuse to participate, to refuse to answer any questions if they did not want to, and were not personally identified in the research.

A key part of the research looked at abuse, whether it be sexual, emotional or physical. The presence of trafficking could include the use of coercion to enforce exploitation. However, children may feel unable to trust researchers who are essentially strangers to them, and be unwilling to talk about abuse if they are still in a situation where they do not feel safe. Researchers thus asked a question that was sufficiently open to give the child the option of responding as much as they felt safe to do so. Specifically, they were asked if they had ever been 'punished'. In some cases, researchers conducted further

in-depth interviews with some children if either the house owner gave permission to be able to interview them at a further location or if they were felt to be safe in their current environment.

In some cases, it was felt by the research team that children were either in a socially vulnerable situation, had been trafficked or needed some social support for accessing education. These issues were discussed with the children in question in a confidential environment. With their agreement certain cases were referred to local NGOs or local authorities.

3 Research Methods

3.1 Definition of Trafficking

The commonly accepted definition of trafficking was developed by the UN (2000). Known as the Palermo protocol, it states that trafficking is;

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

In this report, certain key aspects of trafficking were operationalised, using the Palermo protocol. This breaks the process of trafficking into 3 distinct points; recruitment, transportation and harbouring. Trafficking may occur at one or all points of this process.

3.2 Operationalisation of the Definition of Trafficking

While this definition is the most comprehensive one to date, it is not unproblematic. The definition of 'exploitation' itself is unclear, and when it comes to trafficking in children (CDWS or otherwise) how are we to understand the concepts of 'consent' or 'choice'?

The research looked at the paths of migration (from CDWs and house owner's perspectives), specifically how they were recruited, who told them of their move into domestic work, who they travelled with and to what extent they knew the people involved. It also looked at what CDWs had been told about their work before they left their homes.

Once in their employment situation, it looked at work patterns, payment and debt, access to social and support networks (including for education and health), freedom of movement, desire to remain or leave their domestic work situation, and contact with local authorities.

For the house owner interviews, the research explored whether there was a demand for child domestic workers that could lead to the prevalence of trafficking in CDWs. Demand for certain qualities, such as youth, white skin, and sexual compliance, have been hypothesized to increase supplies of CSEWs, for instance². Research into the demand

² For instance, for a link between sex tourism and the increase in commercially sexually exploited children, see the report by Thomas and Pasnik (2002).

side of sexual exploitation (Anderson, O'Connell Davidson, 2004) has demonstrated that clients of CSEWGs who accepted and/or used women who had been trafficked often had particular attitudes towards them. Namely, they believed that CSEWGs could be bought, and that they could acquire temporary possession over them. Furthermore, they had concomitantly accepting attitudes towards forced labour.

The research with house owners sought to look at the perceived 'desirable qualities' of domestic workers in general, for instance, to see whether there was a desire for younger workers over older ones. It also looked at social hierarchies within the household and the CDWs' place within them, and attitudes towards physical punishment of children in general and CDWs. Lastly, it looked at attitudes towards forced child labour.

In this report, statistics given regarding trafficking will be broken down into clear categories to allow the reader to understand the different aspects of the trafficking phenomenon as it applies to CDWs.

3.3 Operationalisation of the Definition of a CDW

A study that looks at trafficking and child domestic workers demands a rigorous operationalisation of the definition of a child domestic worker. Any definition of trafficking (see Section 3.2) involves the element of exploitation, and it is assumed that CDWs are being exploited for their labour. Several factors make defining CDWs in the Cambodian context particularly problematic; 1) the limited use of the legal definitions of domestic workers currently available, 2) the practice of children staying with extended family relatives, either for the purpose of work or for studying/learning a trade, and 3) the cultural and social definition of CDWs that may actually underestimate the presence of other, non-culturally defined CDWs. Each of these points will be explored in turn.

Article 4 of the 1997 Cambodian Labour Code defines domestic workers as, "those workers that are engaged to take care of the home owner or of the owner's property in return for remuneration". While this does not specify that domestic workers need a contract (as in the definition of a "worker"), it excludes those who are not remunerated. Both this study and the one conducted by NIS demonstrated that this would then exclude a significant majority of domestic workers, as many are not paid, or may work in return for food and lodging. Furthermore, many small-scale enterprises in Cambodia are home-based, and part of the informal economy. How are we to define workers who work within a domestic household in such a small-scale enterprise, especially if they are not remunerated? This becomes especially complicated when it is recognized that workers (especially female workers) may be performing domestic chores alongside other economic chores within one household.

The ILO's definition is more useful as it addresses workers who are unpaid, in defining domestic work as, "Household tasks performed as an economic activity in the household of a third person ... usually exclude domestic chores carried out by members of the family." This definition recognizes the practice of working not only for cash but also for other benefits such as free meals, board and lodging, or support to education. However, it gives us little guidance on how to deal with child workers working in home-based economic activities.

The ILO also provides us with a guide on what forms of child domestic work are unacceptable, and this in broad agreement with the definition of trafficking as it would be applied to CDWs;

- If it is done by children under the minimum working age (under Cambodian laws, below 15 years old)
- If it is done by children 15–18 years old under slavery-like, hazardous, or other exploitative conditions
- If it is extremely hazardous because of the tasks given, conditions of work or physical, emotional and sexual abuse; practices similar to slavery such as debt bondage or forced labor, and child domestic labor into which a child has been trafficked

This research also looked at harbouring and the lack of freedom of movement.

These definitions may be at odds with the social reality in which CDWs themselves exist. In the Cambodian case, domestic workers are referred to as “neak bomraa” (translated as “the people/person who serves”), or as “chnoul” (a derogatory term for “servant”), denoting their servile position in the household. However, this word is perceived to be rude, and CDWs themselves colloquially refer to themselves as, “going to live with them” (“neu chea muy kee”). It is interesting to note that the CDW refers to ‘living with’ and not ‘working for’, denoting the workers’ entry into a domestic sphere and set of relations, and implying that domestic work may not be defined as ‘work’. “Them” in the colloquial term also clearly refers to people who have a non-familial relationship, and this study found that it is in these cases that ‘domestic workers’ are most clearly culturally defined.

However, many CDWs are related to the house owner, albeit distantly in many cases. As this study shows, employers often prefer to recruit from within their extended family networks, and consequently they will not always define the relationship as being work-based, and the children themselves may not self-identify as being domestic workers. However, we cannot assume that those who have a blood relationship with the house owner will be exempt from exploitation and abuse. Neither can we simply include children who live in a household without their parents (as was done in the NIS study), as it risks seriously over inflating the numbers of CDWs. Cambodian children commonly contribute to the domestic chores within a household. Close family members will often take in children, either for the purpose of education or to give them more opportunities. It is important to develop methodologies that clearly articulate and distinguish between a child who may be living with an aunt and attending school and occasionally helping with the washing up (and thus is existing in a semi-parental relationship with the house owner), from a child who was brought into the household for the purpose of work, in preference to other non-relative workers.

The final selection criteria are discussed in Section 3.4.

3.4 Research Aims and Objectives

The current report concentrates on the findings for domestic workers, but the research project also encompassed a review of trafficking among CSEWGs. While the two target groups were kept separate, there were interesting interrelated findings from both groups that give an additional insight into trafficking mechanisms. These will be reported in Section 7.6.1 and 7.8.

The research aim for the project was;

To map the process and mechanisms of trafficking among Child Domestic Workers and Commercially Sexually Exploited Women and Girls within Cambodia

The research objectives were as follows;

- 1) To map the perceptions of different locations and other factors that are leading to migration and trafficking to key provinces (Koh Kong, Kompong Som and Siem Reap), for CSEWGs and child domestic workers.
- 2) To understand the interaction and mechanisms between internal trafficking within Cambodia, and its relationship to cross-border trafficking.
- 3) To understand the process and mechanisms of migration within Cambodia, and whether this constitutes trafficking.

The research questions for CDWs are as follows;

- 1) Demographic background (age, origins, ethnicity)
- 2) What are the patterns of migration for CDWs in the target area?
- 3) What are the mechanisms that facilitate children moving into domestic work?
- 4) Can CDWs be viewed as trafficked? If so, at what point do they become trafficking victims?
- 5) What are the living and working situations of CDWs? What are the impacts of CDWs living and working situation on their well-being?
- 6) Have CDWs experienced physical/sexual abuse?

3.5 Methods and Sampling

The methodological approach was principally qualitative. Semi-structured questionnaires (fielding, CDW and house owner questionnaire) were developed. These were translated from English into Khmer and reviewed by bilingual researchers. They were then piloted in the first province (Kompong Som) and amended for use in the last two provinces. Given the low sample size, it was decided that this approach would be more effective than pre-testing. In some cases, the team conducted further in-depth interviews with CDWs, focusing on key areas.

The sampling method used was purposive. Urban areas under study were mapped using local authorities and personal observation of the research team. They were divided into market, slum and non-slum areas. These categories were chosen as results from the NIS study (2004)³ had shown that CDWs were disproportionately prevalent in market areas. Demarcating these areas should enable to clearly identify where CDWs are more likely to be found. Market areas were operationalised as being the households immediately adjoining the market and one street back from this. Slum areas were assumed to have a population that did not have land titles or were renting/squatting on land, and where there was a lack of access to services such as water and sewage systems. This distinguished it from areas that were poor but where people had a right to their land and were thus less of a mobile population.

³ The NIS study divided their sampling units into slum and non-slum areas, though they did not specify how they operationalised this concept.

Once these areas had been mapped, the research team went to the middle of the prescribed areas and entered every third household. Given that the populations of non-slum areas were always larger than those in market/non-slum locations, these often had to be further broken down into units of villages and randomly selected. In some areas, such as Koh Kong, there were very few slum and market areas, and thus all of these areas were sampled.

The breakdown of numbers of interviews completed by interviewee and location type can be seen in Table 1. The total number of households contacted was 1360, which yielded 123 CDWs and 87 house owners.

Table 1 – Interviews Conducted per Province

Province	Households Fielded	No. of CDWS	No. of House Owners
Koh Kong	230	30	18
Kampong Som	240	26	21
Siem Reap	890	67	48
Total	1360	123	87

Permission was gained from local authorities to conduct the survey, and representatives (either the village chief, or the group chief) accompanied the research team for most of the day. They were given a small amount of compensation for their time and expenses. Usually they facilitated initial introductions to house owners but did not participate in any of the interviews, either with the house owner or CDW.

Households were selected based on a two tiered process. The research team administered a selection questionnaire, for the purpose of identifying CDWs. If children were found with the following characteristics, the household was selected;

- Under 18 years of age
 - Living in the household without their parents
 - Participating in household domestic chores or other household economic activities
- OR
- Being employed and referred to as a domestic worker

From the above criteria, it can be seen that only those who are currently engaged in domestic work were interviewed⁴. Furthermore, living in the household without parents was not in itself a sufficient criterion for inclusion. The work within the household was listed and researchers ask house owners to list who performed each task. It is assumed that CDWs will be either exclusively given certain tasks (often menial ones, such as cleaning), or that their workloads will be higher than other children within the household. Lastly, if it was still not clear, researchers would have a discussion with the house owner to briefly ascertain for what purpose the child had been brought into the household. Only children who had been brought to work (even if they also studied) in some way were selected.

Once the household had been selected, house owners were asked for their permission to conduct interviews with both the house owner and the CDW. If this was granted,

⁴ 5 additional interviews were conducted with returned domestic worker migrants from Thailand.

researchers would find locations to conduct confidential interviews with the CDWs. They also asked CDWs for permission again (both for interviewing and for recording), before the interview had begun. CDWs were clearly given the right to refuse to answer any questions, or to participate in the research, without fear of repercussions from the interviewees. The interviews began with a PLA exercise to list daily activities, to enable the researchers to develop rapport and a trusting relationship with the CDW. In Kompong Som and Koh Kong, interviews with CDWs were conducted with an interviewer and a note-taker (who sat at a discrete distance), in keeping with WHO's guidelines for interviewing victims of trafficking (Zimmerman, Watts (2003)). The refusal rate was very low (1.14% for house owners and 1.62% for CDWs).

Secondly, completed questionnaires were further reviewed by the expatriate team leader to make sure that interviews conformed to the selection criteria. Those that did not were discarded. In practice, this occurred more towards the beginning of the research, as in the later phases, the team was better at selecting respondents according to the selection criteria.

In addition, it emerged from qualitative research with CSEWGs that these women and girls had often had experience as domestic workers. A total of 103 interviewees (n=203) were found to have had done so. They were further interviewed on their difficulties. This retrospective research with CSEWGs yielded important data related to patterns of physical and sexual abuse.

The quantitative data was then entered into excel and checked for inaccuracies. The qualitative data was translated from Khmer into English, then read for themes and patterns, re-coded and segmented.

3.6 Limitations

There were several limitations that could have affected the data and findings of this research. Limitations due to the data collectors' experience was minimized, as where possible, professional staff who had previously worked in research were recruited. Staff were re-trained in key areas (such as leading questions, ethics of interviews and avoiding bias) to minimize interview bias.

Nonetheless, while researchers did not directly broach the issue of trafficking, the topic was still a sensitive one. From respondents' answers, it can be seen that myths about regarding CDWs and their treatment within other people's households. Female CDWs are interestingly believed to be at risk of sexual assault or rape, and house owners talked of employers making them work 'above their strength' (see, for instance, Section 5.2 on 'CDW Myths – Rumours or Social Reality?'). Employers generally wanted to present themselves in the best possible light, and while questions regarding issues such as punishment revealed interesting findings, they could represent an underestimation of aspects such as the belief in the right of the house owner to use force within their household.

The second issue regards access to CDWs and their employers. In most cases, the data collectors worked with local authorities to facilitate introductions to house owners. While this may have decreased suspicion of researchers, it may also have increased the positive response bias. The reliance on local authorities also meant that researchers were strongly dependent on these individual's work ethic. In most cases, cooperation

was high, however, in some cases, there were difficulties making contact or establishing work hours.

All of the interviews took place in the employer's household. Interviews were conducted concurrently so that house owners would be separated from CDWs. However, in some households, especially in slum areas, it was impossible to find somewhere confidential to conduct interviews and other people, such as the house owners' children, would be within hearing distance.

This could have affected the data on sensitive aspects, such as either punishment or abuse. Particularly in the cases of female children, strong social norms regarding 'proper' female behaviour mean that they are often blamed for sexual abuse. It is unlikely that severe abuse within the employers' household would be revealed to the research team. Abuse within the CDWs' own family home, such as violence, alcoholism and exploitation, often was revealed. However, these counts of family dysfunction must also be seen as an under-count, given that some children may have felt reluctant to talk about their family problems.

Finally, the research used qualitative methods to look in-depth at how CDWs were recruited and migrated into domestic work. In some cases children were too young to have been made fully aware of the different steps of this process, as their adult care-takers were often the decision-makers and had made little effort to inform the CDW themselves of their placement within a household. While interviews with the house owners filled in some of the gaps, migration often happened through a succession of mediators. At times the research could only fill an incomplete picture of the children's journey into servitude.

3.7 Background to the Provinces Selected

The project locations were set in the TOR, and were chosen based on IOM's previous counter-trafficking experience, which had identified the three provinces under study as being locations of a high amount of trafficking. The study concentrated in the urban areas.

Each province visited had certain urban characteristics and migration patterns that entailed different social compositions and possibly trafficking dynamics.

- 1) Kompong Som is one of the foremost tourist destinations in Cambodia, with thriving tourist industries catering to both local and international visitors that has also led to a thriving sex industry. It is a source of in-migration, from outlying rural communities and other provinces, principally into the fishing and tourist industries. It also has a large itinerant population, as landless families migrate to Kompong Som to find work. This had led to a significant population of street children, which several local NGOs seek to support. Recent research and NGO work has identified Kompong Som as a center for paedophile activities⁵, though the extent to which this is part of an organized supply system is unclear.

⁵ APLES unpublished research report (2005) and personal communication, Zelda Hunter, 8/12/05. APLES report that several sex tourism web sites mention Kompong Som as being a place where children are available for sexual exploitation.

Several slum areas were identified during the research, including areas by the port area, whose population at the time of research was threatened with eviction.

- 2) Koh Kong province borders Thailand and has an international border crossing point. Economically, it has seen boom times, principally from fishing industries, illegal logging and cross border smuggling. These are no longer as lucrative as they once were. Cross border trade is still thriving, however, and it principally seems to be controlled by Cambodian settlers living across the border in Thailand.

Koh Kong has become notorious for trafficking, both within its borders and as a route on the way to Thailand. It has been reported (LSCW 2006) that migrants are trafficked from Cambodia across the border into various labour sectors such as domestic work, the fishing and commercial sex industries.

Koh Kong's urban area is characterized by very few market and slum areas. The settled population appear to be relatively wealthy, and the town shelters a relatively small mobile landless population, especially in comparison to Kompong Som.

- 3) Siem Reap is the primary tourist destination within Cambodia, receiving over 1 million visitors a year (MoT, 2007). The province is a source of in and out migration (Harrison and Khou, 2004) as the urban and rural poor migrate to find work. It employs a significant work force in the tourism industry, though rural communities cite the high educational requirements as a barrier to them working in these industries.

Siem Reap's reputation for trafficking, specifically related to child sex tourism, has led to strong moves to curb these practices by the provincial police and Ministry of Interior. Despite this, the sexual industry is a thriving part of Siem Reap's economy. Many of the Cambodian/Vietnamese owners of commercial sex establishments were formerly working in Svay Pak (Thomas, 2005), and moved after the police closed it down (due to the large numbers of children working in commercial sex there).

Siem Reap is characterized by the widest disparities of wealth. Being the urban area with the largest population, there are many (more than four) slum areas, market areas and a substantial settled population.

4 Socio-Demographic Profiles

The firmer definition of a child domestic worker should give a clearer picture of their socio-demographic profiles. However, key aspects, such as familial or non-familial relationships, will be used to stratify the data throughout this report, to see how they affected health and social outcomes for CDWs. The qualitative aspects of the research were also helpful in distinguishing between different groups of CDWs, who often migrate and live in very different circumstances, though we may refer to them as being from the same group. A typology of CDWS will be explored in Section 8.

4.1 Socio-Demographic Profile of CDWs

Sex

The sample was predominantly female – 89% were female and only 11% were male. Those that were male often were living in households that had a mixed economy – while they performed certain household chores, they also partook in the small-scale economic activities in the house⁶. As will be discussed later, strong gender norms meant that girl children were overwhelmingly chosen for household tasks such as cooking, cleaning the house and looking after children.

Age

As was discussed in Section 3.3, this report considered CDWs under 15 years of age as being underage, in keeping with both the Cambodian labour law and the ILO Convention No. 138 on Minimum Age for Admission to Employment. However, all CDWs under the age of 18 were included in the sample.

The current average age of CDWs is 15.5 years. The largest age category for CDWs (36%) was slightly older, at 17 years. 76% were above the age of 15 years old. This is consistent with findings from the house owner survey that showed that children above a certain age would be preferred as they have more 'energy' to work.

However, 24% of current CDWs are underage, with the youngest being 10 years old. Moreover, the average age at the time that CDWs started working is 14.5 years. Some of the youngest CDWs have been working for the longest, as the youngest was only 6 years old when she started work. When we look at the age of entry into the work force, the proportion of those underage rises to 38%, as can be seen in Table 2 below.

However, stratification by relationship with the house owner also revealed that this correlated with age of entry into domestic work. Overall, 42% of CDWs are related to the house owner, but this proportion rises among those who are under 15 years, to 54%. As will be explored in Section 5.6, this does not necessarily mean that there is a great desire for younger CDWs among house owners. The paths the CDWs follow entering the household becomes especially relevant when looking at underage CDWs (see Section 5).

⁶ See Section 8 and 9.1 for a discussion of the selection and definition of CDWs.

Table 2 – Current Age of CDWs and Age at Entry into Work

Age	Current Age (%)	Age at Entry into Work (%)
6		2
7		1
8		2
9		2
10	1	1
11	1	4
12	5	3
13	9	11
14	8	12
15	14	21
16	27	22
17	36	19

Education

It is not surprising to find that, given the low skills required in the domestic work sector, the majority of CDWs have a low education level, with 82% having completed 6 years or less of education, 14% having had no education and 30% having enough years to have completed primary school. Only 18% have had more than 6 years of education.

As can be seen from Table 3 however, stratification by relationship with the house owner reveals some striking differences.

It can be seen from this table that family relationship to the house owner is a significant factor when looking at education level. Relatives of the house owners are much more educated, and this is despite the low levels of CDWs that are currently attending school in their work situation (only 14% attend some form of schooling).

Table 3- Level of Education for All CDWs, CDWs related and not related to the House Owner

Years of Education	All CDWs (%)	Relatives of HO (%)	Non-Relatives of HO(%)
None	14	10	16
Less than 1 year	2	2	3
1-2 years	18	18	19
3-4 years	18	12	22
5-6 years	30	24	34
More than 6 years	18	34	7
Total	100	100	100

There is also a significant truncation at the level of 6 years of education for both groups, which is possibly a reflection of education policies that at least aim to encourage children to complete primary school (especially for girl children). As can be seen however, few in this group can afford to carry on their education beyond that.

Family Background of CDWs

Issues to do with the family background of CDWs were looked at in a variety of ways,

using both qualitative and quantitative methods. In particular, a question concerning problems within the family was added when it emerged how many CDWs were facing significant family dysfunction.

When looking at household composition, CDWs were asked to list people who were responsible for the care and maintenance of their household. On average, CDWs listed 2.17 adults per household. They also had a large number of siblings, on average 4 per CDW. The total for members in the household (6.17) is thus marginally higher than the national average, which number 5.4 members per household (ORC Macro, 2000).

When looking at the position of CDWs within the household, 21% were the oldest child in the family, and during the interviews talked of the pressure to earn money to support their younger siblings, so that they could go to school. There was also quite a few – 16% - who were the youngest in the family. These children may also be put under pressure to enter the work force early, as they explained that if their older siblings are all married, responsibility to care for their often elderly parents would fall to them.

There are significant differences when looking at the family composition of CDWs, which strongly suggests that this may be a factor leading to entry into domestic work. Table 4 demonstrates that, compared to national averages, CDWs are less likely to come from a nuclear family and that factors such as divorce appear to precipitate their entry into domestic work. This is strongly supported by the qualitative data, which will be discussed below.

Table 4 – Household Composition cited by CDWs

Household Composition	% (CDWs)	% (National Average)
Nuclear Family (married parents)	43	61 ^a
Female-headed household	25	29 ^b
Male-headed household	4	
Household with a divorced parents	13	2 ^b
Other	15	8

^a NIS (1998)

^b NIS (2004)

CDWs were also asked to list the main income earners in their family's household, (maximum number of two). The most frequently cited is the mother (55%), which is not surprising given the number of female-headed households. This is followed by fathers (38%), which it should be noted, is lower than the number of people who cited their fathers as being present in the household (48%). This strongly suggests that even if the father is present, he is not acting as the main income earner, due to health or social problems. Again, this is strongly corroborated by the qualitative data, which will be explored in the next section. Of note in Table 5 is also the high number of children who cited an older brother (21%) or sister (20%) as a main income earner. Finally, 3% cited themselves as the main income earner in their family.

As can be seen below in Table 6, most (71%) of the CDWs' main income earners predominantly come from the agrarian sector, and this is not surprising seeing as the children often cited poverty as a key factor leading to their migration. Domestic workers

also are rural to urban migrants. A few of them even said that they enter domestic work seasonally, and would return to their homes during the harvest season. When worked dropped off, for instance, before the planting season, they sought extra income through domestic work to support their families.

Table 5 – Main Income Earners cited by CDWs in their families

Total (Income Earners)	Percentage
Mother	55
Father	38
Step Father	7
Step Mother	2
Elder Brother	21
Elder Sister	20
Grandmother	1
Grandfather	2
No one	2
Aunt	3
Uncle	1
Adopted Aunt	2
Adopted Uncle	1
Younger Brother	1
CDW themselves	3
Other	5
DK	2

(Note: Responses add up to more than 100%, as children were allowed more than one response)

Table 6 – Professions of the Main Income Earners cited by CDWs (Aggregated)

Total (All Income Earners)	Percentage
Rice Farmer	34
Agricultural Worker	19
Garment Factory	4
Market Seller	12
no job	2
Business	12
Teacher	1
Fishing	13
Motodriver	3
Construction Worker	12
Domestic Worker	12
Police	1
Soldier	1
Hotel Worker	1
Local Authority	1
Labourer	2
Wood Industry Labourer	5
Other	27
Don't Know	4

Debt

A key issue that emerged from the data analysis was the number of families that are in debt, and the exceedingly high amounts that families owed. The link between migration, children in vulnerable circumstances and trafficking has been clearly demonstrated in other contexts. IOM's (2003) analysis of trafficking of child beggars from Cambodia to Vietnam showed that 78% of families said that they were in debt, with the amount of debt ranging from US\$200 – US\$1000.

Similarly disturbing findings are reported for CDWs and their families. 54% of CDWs reported that their families are currently in debt. The range of debt was from approximately US\$2 to US\$1935. The most frequent amount of debt ranged from US\$200-300. This is a very high level of debt given that CDWs most often come from very poor and rural households, where the average income per year has been estimated at US\$385⁷ per year. From Table 7 below, it can be seen that the most frequent reason given for why the family is in debt were illness in the family (33%), to construct a house (20%) or for purchasing something (21%). From the responses, families were either buying rice during lean parts of the year, or buying equipment to start a business, rather than buying consumer goods.

⁷ Provisional figure provided by the National Bank of Cambodia.

From the qualitative responses, this level of debt can sometimes be directly related to the child's entry into domestic work, as they are placed with the house owner in order to help their parents to repay the loan. It is also related to the phenomenon of debt bondage, which will be explored later in Section 7.4.

Table 7 – Reasons for Debt in their Families, cited by CDWs

Reason for Debt	Percentage
Illness in the family	33
Bad harvest	12
to build a house	20
To buy something	21
to buy rice to eat	9
To pay back debt	2
Capital for a business	11
Other	8
Don't Know	3

(Note: Responses add up to more than 100%, as children were allowed more than one response)

Family Problems

Qualitative methods were used to explore what family problems CDWs had experienced before they entered into the work place. Some CDWs reported that they had experienced no problems, and that the desire to earn an income had been their prime motivation to start working. Others, however, experienced severe family problems, most often poverty, but also including alcoholism, domestic violence (often directed towards their mother), violence and physical abuse towards themselves. For these children, domestic work represented an escape route from an abusive situation.

“My mother hit me so much all of the time, each time that she hit me she tied me up and hit me, all of my brothers and sisters are afraid of her, she forced me to stop studying and find other work, I worked at the brick factory for 6 months and then she came to get all of the money, my mother has a new husband and she did not give me enough to eat, she cared for her new husband more than she cared for us, my step father forced me to find work and hit me, my mother loves her new husband until she forgets her children, she cares for his food but she does not care about us. My aunt brought me to live with her”

Child Domestic Worker, Siem Reap Province

The quote above from a CDW in Siem Reap is illustrative of the kinds of family problems that CDWs often experience. Abusive and violent descriptions of family life for them often include the presence of a step-parent. They describe situations where the parents become unwilling to fully provide for the child anymore, and in fact, put pressure on the child to contribute towards the family income. Whether children are entering the work force earlier because of this pressure is unknown⁸. From the CDW's descriptions, it is clear that traditional obligation of older children in Cambodia to contribute towards the household income can become exploitative either when there is a step-parent, or when there are other forms of family dysfunction present.

⁸ To be able to measure this, we would need better longitudinal data or, more effectively, to be able to compare CDWs with a comparable group.

“My mother has a step husband living with her and the step father is very difficult, because I help to find money to support the family but the step father does nothing and demands money to go gambling. When we can find money my step father blames me, hits me and hits my mother. I am sad and don't want to stay at home because I need to find money for my future too, then I decided to come and live with aunt (the house owner)”

Child Domestic Worker, Siem Reap Province

“My parents are divorced, my father has a new wife... At home, my mother drinks and my family is very poor, nobody studies, only I studied before, that's why I came out to find money to help raise my family. Before I worked to harvest rice and peanuts, mother does not care to help me, in the family we lack everything, dishes, pots, mats, blankets. Our family has been crushed”

Child Domestic Worker, Siem Reap Province

CDWs also described families who could not provide for themselves all year round in a rural economy, or who did not have enough to eat. This situation was often aggravated in families with a large number of dependents, or if a health crisis arose. This could push the families into debt, but many CDWs also described situations where families only had enough for a day to day existence, and had no savings.

“At home we lack for our livelihood, we can afford things for the morning but we lack in the evening and I have a lot of brothers and sisters and there is only my father who has a business, sometimes we have money to buy rice but sometimes we don't, we can just buy only 1 kilo and I didn't have money then I came to live with aunt (the house owner). Sometimes my father was drinking and got drunk because he is stressed that he cannot find money so I decided to live with aunt in order to get money for him.”

Child Domestic Worker, Siem Reap Province

“At home, the farming season is finished, so we find some work to do because we all have energy to work, and we go to live and work with them, eat with them and at the end of the month we have a salary. My mother at home does farming, we have nothing to eat. If we find enough for one day, we only have enough to eat for one day. After working on the farm, we are free and my mother told me to go and find some work.”

Child Domestic Worker, Siem Reap Province

As will be explored later, in Section 5 on Paths of Migration, people either from within the extended family, or within the community where the CDW lives may respond to these family difficulties and assist CDWs to relocate to another household to escape these hardships. What is clear from the qualitative data is that for some CDWs, living and working with someone who is often unknown to them can be preferable to the abuse that they suffer from at home.

4.2 Socio-Economic Profile of House Owners

A total of 87 households were interviewed for all three provinces. This is lower than the total number of CDWs (123), however, house owners were often difficult to contact or not present within the household. Interviewers were instructed to return 3 times to the household to try to complete interviews – if they still could not meet the house owner, the household was discounted from the research.

There were slightly more males (100% of households) than females (90% of households) said to be living in the households under study⁹. Not surprisingly, the house owners are older but still within age range for a working population, at an average of 38.3 years old.

Table 8 below shows that most of the house owners interviewed work in professions related to the market (20%) or to 'business' (38%). It must be noted that this latter category is quite large, as much of the urban economy will involve small-scale enterprises where CDWs find work. Finally, the next largest category is government staff, comprising 10% of respondents.

Table 8 – Professions of House Owners in 3 provinces (aggregated)

House Owner Professions	Percentage
Market Seller	20
Business	38
Teacher	1
Medical Profession	1
NGOs	1
Fisherman	3
Government Officer	10
Other	26

Table 9 – House Owner Ethnicities

House Owner Ethnicity	Percentage
Khmer	63
Vietnamese	4
Chinese	4
Khmer/Chinese	25
Khmer/Vietnamese	2
Khmer/Chinese/Vietnam	1
Khmer and Other	1

In terms of ethnicity, it can be seen from Table 9 above that, as expected, the largest ethnic grouping is Khmer, at 63%. However, for this group it is far below the national average¹⁰. The next largest group is Khmer-Chinese (25%). Chinese settlers and their descendants have been involved in trade and commerce within Cambodia for centuries (Chandler, 2000). Their presence is thus likely to be higher in urban areas, as has been found in this survey.

The last aspect relevant to house owner's background is income. As can be seen in Table 10, most households (86%) make above US\$100 per month, which puts them in a secure financial position to enable them to hire domestic workers.

⁹ This only refers to the 87 households where house owners were available for interview.

¹⁰ There are at present no statistics available on the breakdown of ethnic composition in Cambodia, beyond statements that 90-95% of the population is Khmer, with the rest comprised of a variety of ethnic groups, including Chinese-Khmer.

Table 10 – Monthly Income of House Owners

Household Income (US\$)	Percentage
0-50	5
51-100	9
101-250	30
251-500	29
501-750	9
751-1000	3
Above 1000	1
Don't Know	14

This data was disaggregated according to house owners who pay and who do not pay their CDWs. 72% of those who pay their CDWs make above this level, but so do 70% of house owners who do not pay their CDWs. While there are certainly significant differences in terms of the distribution of income, as can be seen from Tables 11 and 12, this also clearly shows that income, or ability to pay, does not in itself account for why some CDWs get paid and others do not. There are a variety of possible reasons for this, including the relationship between the house owner and the CDW, how they enter the household and the perceived future outcome of that relationship.

Table 11 – Monthly Income of those who pay CDWs

Household Income	%
0-50	4
51-100	6
101-250	19
251-500	36
501-750	13
751-1000	4
Above 1000	2
Don't Know	16

Table 12 – Monthly Income of those who don't pay CDWs

Household Income	Percentage
0-50	6
51-100	15
101-250	49
251-500	15
501-750	3
751-1000	3
Don't Know	9

However, it is also clear from the socio-demographic information that there is a demand for CDWs for house owners in certain professions, and we can see from the professions data that this is often coming from house owners who have market or other small scale businesses. Hypothetically, these businesses require house owners, especially the female members, to be out of the house for significant hours of the day, in which case they require more substitute labour for household chores, such as cooking and child care. In households below a certain income level, there would arguably still be this need. In areas where the price of domestic work has significantly increased (see Section 5.1)

this could stretch household resources and put a pressure on house owners to find cheaper, or even free, labour.

A more complete picture will emerge from considering the paths of migration that lead CDWs to their place of work, outlined in the next section.

5 Paths of Migration

5.1 Of Liberalization, Garment Factories and Migration

Many publications have talked of the effect of globalization and liberalization on migration (see, for instance, Marshall, 2001). In South-East Asia in particular this has resulted in the 'feminization' of labour migration. Clearly, this has exerted an influence on domestic work, as a largely female profession, but in the absence of longitudinal data, it is hard to surmise the precise direction of this influence.

It has been remarked upon that many of the work sectors that have opened up in Cambodia since the liberalization of the economy (in 1993) are overwhelmingly female, including, among others, garment factories, sexual entertainment and tourism related businesses. Cambodians have also found higher wages across the border in Thailand, and a sizable part of the population risks the consequences of being an illegal migrant to reap these rewards every year (Chan and So, 1999).

In the personal testimonies of employers, domestic workers are becoming harder to find. Domestic workers are most often rural to urban migrants, and this is the same population that is in demand, for instance, in garment factories.

All three of the provinces under study had factors that house owners said had pushed up the price of domestic work. In Kompong Som, for instance, a combination of local garment factories and the tourist industry meant that the price for domestic work was said to be set at approximately US\$20 per month. In Siem Reap, despite the booming tourist industry, the price for domestic work was said to be lower, mainly due to the availability of rural labour and the barriers (such as the requirement to speak English) to work in the tourist industry. Lastly, in Koh Kong, local labourers could often find work across the border in Thailand, and this had pushed the price of domestic work up to about US\$25 or more per month. In reality, most CDWs did not make this amount of money, for a variety of reasons.

What is harder to ascertain is the effect of these market forces on the age of CDWs when they enter the workforce. Given the demand for older teenagers or young adults in these sectors, it is possible that the age of CDWs is actually decreasing. However, this is impossible to assess without longitudinal data, and without a proper working definition of Child Domestic Workers, for exact measurement.

5.2 CDW Myths – Rumour or Social Reality?

During the course of the research, persistent beliefs concerning child domestic workers, or domestic workers in general, emerged from the conversations with employers. While it is unknown exactly how long (child) domestic workers have been working in Cambodian society, there are early references to slave labour within written history¹¹. Social stereotypes and rumours surround descriptions of domestic workers, given their often tenuous position and low social status within a household that is bound through marriage and familial ties. This could also be seen reflected in the relationship between employers and CDWs who had a kin relationship, who strongly emphasized that the

¹¹ Zhou Dagan (1993) – a Chinese chronicler, wrote about Cambodian society during the 13th century. However, his account should be taken with caution, as it often resonates with racist overtones and derogatory descriptions of Khmer people.

CDWs could not be considered as a domestic worker, or referred to as such, even if this was the purpose for which they had been brought into the household, and it was the social role that they performed every day.

While these beliefs emphasized that child domestic workers were at risk of abuse – either through overwork or some stated, through risk of physical and sexual abuse – it was equally emphasized that they could pose a risk to the house owner, most especially if they were not related.

This was often compounded by stereotypes and social dynamics that arguably has characterized Cambodian society since it entered into a post-conflict phase. Social aspects of CDWs, such as youth, for instance, were emphasized as characteristics that could pose a danger to house owners. This corresponds to other social research which shows that cultures of impunity and social dysfunction have led to the evolution of an often cruel and violent youth culture¹². Despite the small numbers of people who participate in the excesses of this emerging youth culture (as they are often people who come from high social status families), young people are prone to being seen as out of control and deviant.

When talking about CDWs in other households (the house owners' relationships with their own CDW often was portrayed in different terms), they were commonly presented as being either at risk of sexual assault, exploitation and rape by the (male) house owner, or conversely, as inherently untrustworthy and liable to steal from the property of the employer. To refer to these ideas as myths does not discount that CDWs may actually experience a greater risk of sexual rape or assault. However, in most people's experience, they may never have encountered actual cases of CDWs facing such a situation. Nonetheless, the social construction of sexual danger becomes a strong factor influencing the recruitment of and social place that CDWs occupy within the household, and as such, the myth becomes a social reality that people use and act upon.

It is useful to look at social myths regarding CDWs in the context of safe migration initiatives. This research found that these myths influence the patterns of migration, affecting how CDWs are chosen and recruited, their social place within the household, and how people viewed the government's role in regulating the often informal work of CDWs. Various aspects of this will be explored throughout this report.

5.3 Source Provinces

Where possible, the research looked at the source provinces of CDWs to assess the pattern of migration. As will be explored in a discussion of the qualitative data (see Section 5.4), it clearly shows that CDWs are recruited through familial and other social networks of the house owner. Consequently, family relationships have a strong influence on the pattern of migration.

The majority of CDWs are rural to urban migrants. As can be seen from Table 13 below, most CDWs come from the same (44%) or an adjoining province (23%). However, in some areas, such as in Koh Kong and Kompong Som, a significant amount of CDWs

¹² See, for instance, Bearup, L (2003), "Paupers and Princlings: Youth Attitudes towards Gangs, Violence, Rape and Theft" GAD Cambodia, USAID, TAF, Australian Embassy, World Vision

come from further away. This is also supported by other migration data (Harrison and Khou, 2004), that shows that Siem Reap is both a major sending and receiving population (with an underemployed rural population) and that Koh Kong and Kompong Som are major receiving provinces.

Table 13 – Source Provinces for CDWs (all and by province)

Source Province	Same Province	Adjoining Province	Further
All Provinces	44	23	31
Total for Siem Reap	50	32	18
Total for Koh Kong	42	16	42
Total for Kampong Som	36	12	52

However, when source provinces are cross-tabulated with relationships of the CDWs to the house owner (relatives or not relatives), some interesting differences emerge. As can be seen from Table 14, only 15% of relatives of the house owner come from the same province, compared to 29% of non-family members. On the whole, this strongly supports the qualitative research which shows that CDWs who are related to the house owner are more likely to be recruited from further away than CDWs who are not related to the house owner.

Table 14 – Source Provinces for CDWs (by Province/Relationship with House Owner)

All Provinces	Family (%)	Non-Family (%)
Family		
Same Province	15	29
Adjoining Province	12	11
Further	14	17

This can clearly be seen in Table 15 below. CDWs that are not related to the house owner have about an equal chance of being recruited from within the province as from an adjoining or further province. However, 63% of those who are related to the house owner come from an adjoining or further province.

This does have important consequences for identifying provinces where future initiatives to support CDW programs could focus, especially before the CDW enters into work. Certain provinces and even communes recur as being sending provinces for CDWs, such as Stoung in Kampong Thom, Puok and Chi Kraeng communes in Siem Reap and Smach Meanchey in Koh Kong. However, while these areas are certainly poor (MoP, 2006), their presence in the CDW data might refer to people within the same family network migrating into each other's households, rather than a general pattern of poor areas being targeted by recruiters.

Table 15 – Source Province by Relationship to House Owner

All Provinces	Percentage	Non-Family	Percentage
Family			
Same Province	37	Same Province	49
Adjoining Province	29	Adjoining Province	19
Further	33	Further	29

5.4 Paths of Migration – General Considerations

In analyzing the paths of migration for CDWs from both the demand (house owners) and supply side (CDWs), it becomes obvious that the children involved are rarely the decision-makers, and that their placement in various households is often the outcome of a series of decisions between different adults. While the parents are often the key decision-makers, in certain situations (such as debt bondage) this will be revoked and the house owners themselves become the main actors. In only a few cases did CDWs describe being asked for their opinions about whether they wanted to work or not. It thus becomes important to first of all look at the recruiting behaviour of the house owners and what factors influence this. This will be looked at in Section 5.7.

For children about to enter into domestic work, the picture that emerges is a complicated one, often dependent on whether the placement is planned or opportunistic. This also corresponds to the behaviour of the house owner, where there are strong differences between the patterns of migration and arguably socio-economic profiles when CDWs are actively recruited, as compared to when they are not actively sought. This results in a different typology, which will be explored in Section 8.

5.5 Avoiding Trafficking

It was clear from the narratives of both the child domestic workers and the house owners that fear of the possibility of trafficking was exerting a strong influence on the patterns of migration. This was specifically seen in the fear of ‘stranger danger’. Findings from the CSEWG research also corroborated the finding that, whereas in the recent past people may have come to villages allegedly seeking workers and subsequently trafficking them, this was no longer the case as communities were more suspicious of outsiders.

There was broad consensus that house owners, or their intermediaries, had to be known in the community to be trusted by the parents of potential CDWs, or they would not be allowed to go to the new household.

“We could go to look for a child in the home town or countryside but they will only come with us if they know us, then they would allow their child to live with us. They are afraid that we would take their child to sell.”

House Owner, Kampong Som

There are other factors, such as the importance of trust, that mean that CDWs are often recruited through personal or familial networks, often between rural and urban areas. What is clear from CDWs interviewed, *in cases where their parents are the main decision-makers*, is that in some cases families took steps to ensure that their child was not trafficked if the recruiter was unknown to them.

“An Om called Mom came to find servants to work in the house, I went to meet her, she asked, “do you want to go and work in Siem Reap or not?” I said, “ask my parents”, then she called me to come with her to go by motorbike with her to meet my parents, to ask my parents. Mom said to my parents, “let her go and don’t be afraid that I will take her to sell,” my neighbour near my house gave her word (that I would be safe). If I was lost, she (the neighbour) would be responsible for my loss, she would sell a cow to go and find me. My neighbour near my house knew Om Mom because the neighbour’s child used to live with Om Mom too. I did not know Om Mom, she saw me walking in the road

and she asked me (to work) because she used to come and go looking for young people to work in my district. Om Mom took me to her house for 15 days then she called to the house owner to come to take me from her house at Kampong Thom.”

Child Domestic Worker, Siem Reap

(Clarifications of the text have been added in brackets)

However, it is clear that in most cases trafficking was understood as being sold into sexual exploitation, and that, for instance, forced labour or debt bondage was unlikely to be seen as such. Nonetheless, people who had connections to rural areas were more likely to say that recruiting CDWs was easier than people who did not have those connections.

5.6 Perceived Desirable Qualities of CDWs

The perceived desirable qualities of CDWs were considered pivotally important to an exploration of the migration patterns of children domestic workers in the design of this research. Other studies have highlighted the importance of looking at demand side factors (Derks, 2006, Anderson and O’Connell Davidson, 2004). Looking at whether there is a demand for underage workers, and what kinds of qualities are in demand can clarify the patterns of migration that are seen among CDWs.

House owners were asked specifically about three qualities – being female, being a relative and having a young CDW (under 18 years old).

In terms of sex, the overwhelming majority (95%) of house owners said that it was more desirable to have a female CDW than a male one. This was principally because domestic chores are seen as being ‘women’s work’. Some house owners also stated that female workers were either better workers or easier to control, whereas they would be more afraid that young male workers would ‘get into trouble’. Lastly, it was clear that the household is often seen as a female environment, and if the house owner had female children they said that it was unlikely that they would hire male workers. Strong gender-based sanctions against mixed sex groups within the household thus influenced demand. In our sample, male workers were found in households that also had small scale businesses, and where their roles interrelated between the productive work in the business and the reproductive¹³ work within the house. Exclusive domestic work is almost entirely done by female workers.

In terms of social relationships, 71% of house owners said that it was desirable to have a worker who was a relative, even though only a minority of CDWs are actually related to the house owner (42%). The issue of trust is pivotally important in the responses given by the house owners, as they often stated that relatives would be known to them, would be less likely to steal and more likely to ‘respect’ the house owner. However, some respondents also mentioned that relatives are preferable in the event of a crisis, such as stealing or sickness. In a sense, employing relatives gives the house owners more recourse.

¹³ ‘Productive’ work refers to work that is done for a financial benefit, and ‘reproductive’ work is done for the care and maintenance of the household, including domestic work such as cooking and cleaning.

"I take them if I know them, they are more easy to advise, and if they steal I know where their house is. I have money at home and I can trust them because we know them. And we can give them some money to help their family".

House Owner, Siem Reap

"Our relatives, we have confidence in them and they are honest with us and if it is the others (non-relatives) we are dishonest because they are dishonest, they have a bad mind and mean to do bad things to us. When we are away, they could steal our stuff and do bad things to us."

House Owner, Koh Kong

(Clarifications added in brackets)

Interestingly, as explored in Section 7.5, the language used in the discussion of domestic work emphasizes this difference between relatives and non-relatives, showing that the social relationship between the employer and the domestic worker will be different in each of these cases.

Another quality that emerged from these conversations with house owners about desirable qualities was being 'easy to complain to' or 'easy to use' ("srool pra"). House owners disagreed with each other on this aspect, though marginally more people said that 'the others' (non-relatives) were easier to control and to complain to when these workers were perceived to be doing something wrong. Some house owners asserted that their position within the family would give them rights to order their family workers, while others said that relatives would often demand more support from the house owners, and complain among the family if they found life too hard. While relatives were more easily trusted, non-relatives were easier to 'use', as the house owner did not have to worry about offending the worker by ordering them,

"Non-relatives are easier to use than relatives, because we are not afraid of their opinions (klaich jet)"

House Owner, Siem Reap

"(Relatives) are difficult, because they do not work well for us, and when they make a mistake it is very difficult to curse them, not like with a servant"

House Owner, Siem Reap

This would seem to suggest that non-relative child domestic workers are more prone to abuse, as harsh behaviour which is not socially allowed among family members could be more accepted with non-relatives. However, as will be seen in Section 7.6 on punishment, in practice it did seem that relatives were *more* likely to be physically disciplined by the house owners, who would assume semi-parental responsibilities.

"She is also my niece. We just advise her and trust her. If they are the others (non-relatives), we dared not to scold them, it is so hard. (We employ relatives) in order to prevent from someone saying that we have taken a child to live with us and we ordered her around like a slave and badly cursed her, and to avoid being criticized by someone."

House Owner, Koh Kong

(Clarifications added in brackets)

Furthermore, as will be discussed in Section 5.7 on recruitment, relatives were seen as desirable for their cheapness. Domestic workers who are the house owners' relatives

are much less likely to be paid for their labour, and they are also more likely to start working at a younger age. Clearly, there are a variety of reasons that house owners call on their relatives to help with household labour, and not all of them for the purpose of exploitation. However, house owners who have related CDWs often earn less than those who don't, showing that saving money can be more of a concern for these employers,

“With our relatives, we know their minds and we can trust them, and they don't take advantage of us because we are their relatives. Another thing is that people that we want our relatives to live with us because we don't want to have to pay them a salary. But there are only a very few people who pay a salary to their relatives”.

House Owner, Koh Kong

Lastly, house owners were asked whether it was desirable or not to have a young CDW (under 18 years old). 44% replied that it was desirable, compared to 52% who said that it was not desirable. There is likely to be a strong respondent bias in the answers to this question, as house owners would probably know that use of children below a certain age is against the law. However, when we look at Table 16 below, it can be seen that when asked about the preferred age for children to start working in domestic work, the most frequent reply was 15 years old (20%). 24% of respondents cited an age that was under 15 years old, though this may be because they were responding according to the age of the child who was working for them at the time, rather than in the hypothetical sense in which the question was asked. The average preferred age was 16 years old, which is in fact marginally older than the average age of those CDWs interviewed (15.5 years old).

Table 16 – Stated Preferred Age for CDWs (given by House Owners)

Age of CDW	Percentage
9	1
10	5
12	5
13	3
14	10
15	20
16	11
17	14
18	16
20	12
25	1
Non-Response	2

A look at the qualitative responses reveals that there is a demand for young CDWs, especially given a concern for hierarchy within the household. The desirability of young CDWs essentially relates to the ease with which they can be ordered to work, while doing so with an older worker would be against the strong age-based hierarchies that permeate many social relations in Khmer culture. One house owner explained that older domestic workers in fact have better skills in certain tasks, such as child care, but that a worker cannot be close in age or older than the house owner. As he explained,

“It is possible to tell them to do things and they listen, if we tell the old people to do something it is a bad deed, because they we are using the old people, we cannot use the old people”

House Owner, Siem Reap

Interestingly, the issue of age again revolves around the ease with which workers can be ‘used’, or told to work. It can be concluded that younger workers are much more prone to labour exploitation. Furthermore, they may be in demand for certain tasks, such as child care, as one house owner explained,

“(If she is young) she cannot work, she is not so strong to work and she needs to go to school, we can take her just to look after the kids, if the house has young children, because if they take an adult worker to live with them, they are afraid that there will be problems between them and the husband.”

House Owner, Siem Reap

The perception that younger workers are better for looking after young children was born out by this research. Often very young CDWs can be found in charge of the house owner’s children, though they may not be given other tasks that require more ‘energy’, such as carrying goods. Child care may in fact not be defined as ‘hard work’, though in practice these children work long hours (see Section 7.3). Table 17 below shows how house owners responded to open questions regarding desirable qualities¹⁴.

Table 17 – Perceived Desirable Qualities of CDWs (by House Owners)

	1st Response (%)	Prompted Response (%)
Honest	62	93
Young	1	15
Cheap		8
Male		1
Female	1	55
Uneducated		2
Educated	14	40
Countryside	2	13
Easy	12	36
Relative	8	35
Don't Know	9	1
Other	66	33
Of other - Hard worker	37	20

(Respondents were allowed more than one response so replies add up to more than 100%)

Honesty, in both unprompted (62%) and prompted (93%) responses, is clearly the predominant characteristic that house owners say that they are looking for, and again, this relates to the myths, rumours and fears of domestic workers discussed earlier. Again, this leads to the high numbers of respondents (35%) who specify that they want

¹⁴ In the questionnaire, this free listing was done first, followed by a prompted (read out) response. Subsequent questions asked about the desirability of youth, female workers and workers who are relatives.

to hire relatives. The quality of being 'easy' – to use and to order – was high in both unprompted (12%) and prompted (36%) responses. 'Young' and 'cheap' at 15% and 8% respectively seem low overall, but considering the respondent bias in these questions (given that it may be socially unacceptable to voice these opinions) are relatively high. Lastly, many house owners specified that CDWs had to be able to 'work hard', (36.8% in the unprompted responses). Other qualities that they emphasized included those that entail respecting the social order, such as 'not answering back'.

The qualitative data shows us the concern for hierarchy within the household, and the concern that 'outsiders' should not disturb this when they come into the domestic sphere. Despite the language of family and kinship that is often used by the house owners when discussing their domestic workers, the specific and varied qualities that are in demand for CDWs entail them being at the bottom of the social hierarchy, so that they will be easy 'to use' for labour exploitation. As one house owner explained,

"The old people are harder to order because they do something a little bit wrong, we dare not blame them. If I was rich, I would have a child domestic worker to come and help me. Because she is poor, and she comes to live with us. I don't want a relative because when I order them to do something, I am afraid of her because she is my relative".

House Owner, Koh Kong

5.7 Recruitment

Despite the clear preference for the use of family-based networks for some of the respondents, only 52% of house owners said that they knew the child before they came to live in the household, meaning that recruitment of CDWs is often (though not always) done through a series of intermediaries who are known and trusted by them and the CDW's family. A similar picture emerges from the CDWs' interviews – only 44% of CDWs said that they knew the family concerned before they came to work, though the qualitative data shows that in fact the house owners are often known to the child's parents or to a close relative.

Only 61% of house owners said that they were actively looking for a domestic worker before the child came to live with them, which would suggest that a significant minority (39%) are using child labour opportunistically. However, the qualitative data shows that many more children are often actively recruited into the household, but that they are unlikely to be defined demeaningly as child domestic workers, especially if they are relatives of the house owner. This is the case even if the child has been asked to come to help with work in the household, and even though they are essentially fulfilling the same role as a CDW.

This can also be seen through stratifying some of the data according to the relationship with the house owner. For instance, it can be seen from Table 18 below that non-family members are much more likely to be told that they will be working as CDWs (79%) than CDWs who are related to the house owner, of whom only 45% were told this. This is despite the fact that the qualitative data clearly shows that there is practically no discrepancy between what the children are told their work will be before they leave their home and the work that they do when they arrive in the household. There is no evidence

of ‘cheating’¹⁵, in the sense of false promises of work, of CDWs that has been seen in trafficking patterns in other work places (especially for commercial sexual exploitation).

Table 18 – Who were informed about becoming a CDW, prior to commencement, by relationship to the house owner

Non-Family	Percentage
Told being CDW	79
Not told being CDW	21
Family	Percentage
Told being CDW	45
Not told being CDW	55

CDWs who are relatives of the house owner are also much less likely to be promised (or to receive – see Section 7.4) a salary during the recruitment process. While 76.7% of CDWs who are non-family are promised a salary, only 34% of those who are relatives are.

Table 19 – CDWs who were promised a salary, by relationship with the house owner

Non-Relatives	Percentage
Promised a salary	77
Not promised a salary	16
Don't Know	7
Relatives	Percentage
Promised a salary	34
Not promised a salary	66

The qualitative data supports the finding that on this basis we can start to develop a typology of CDWs, broadly based on this difference between family and non-family CDWs. It must be strongly emphasized that a family relationship with the house owner does not mean that there is less risk of exploitation of the CDW, in fact, the opposite was found to be true in this research. This was also supported by interviews with CSEWGs who were formerly child domestic workers, and who were much more able to talk about the abuse and exploitation that they suffered from. However, this will be explored further in Section 7.6.1.

What this does suggest is that CDWs who are not related to the house owner are more likely to be defined as CDWs, and that the processes of recruitment will follow different patterns than that for related CDWs. The arrangement for non-related CDWs is also more likely to be based on a straightforward financial agreement than other CDWs. However, there is a strong and very important exception to this rule when recruitment of non-family members is done opportunistically, and it is arguably this group that is socially vulnerable to labour exploitation.

Those who are related to the house owner, even if this is a distant relationship, will again, follow a different pattern of recruitment, entirely extending through family

¹⁵ The practice of recruiting someone for one kind of work and forcing them to work in another sector, such as commercial sexual exploitation, has been commonly seen patterns of trafficking in Cambodia. In Khmer, this is often colloquially referred to as “cheating”, or “chan bowk kee”.

networks, often from urban to rural areas.

These two different types of CDWs will be explored separately, though as will be discussed, there is a wide variety of social relationships and recruitment practices that can also be seen among CDWs who are not related to the house owner.

The importance of family networks

For both CDWs who were related and not related to the house owners, the connections with rural areas were perceived as being important for recruiting CDWs. When asked how they would recruit another domestic worker, most house owners replied that they would use their connections in rural areas, or that they would ask people who had those connections to find workers for them.

This is important as it denotes that domestic workers can be delineated from other workers who may be less required to be known to the employer. The importance of trust and fear of people from outside the household was seen in several ways and has clearly had a strong influence on the patterns of migration for CDWs.

For most house owners, this meant recruiting from their ancestral villages or through relatives who lived there. 71% of house owners said that it was desirable to have domestic workers who were relatives, even though only 42% of CDWs were related to the house owner. This suggests that the many of house owners will choose to recruit from within their family networks if they can.

There is a strong concern about trust of CDWs among house owners, denoting that the house owners often assume some semi-parental responsibilities, especially if the child is coming from within family networks. In some cases, this is due to gender norms regarding female CDWs, to ensure that the girl still stays within the protective sphere of the household. This is especially seen when the discussion is between the house owner and her parents.

“My husband went to visit his relatives at Banlay TuToung district during the harvesting season. We went to visit and we told them that we wanted to look for a child to live with us and we told his younger brother in law. Her parents were asked whether they agreed to let their daughter live with us. Later, her parents brought her to live with us and her mother told us not to allow her daughter to go out at night and help to take care of her. Her mother trusted us, so she came back with us.”

House Owner, Kompong Som

However, as will be explored later (see Section 7.4), not all CDWs who are related to the house owners are paid employees. In some cases, domestic workers are brought into the household as a form of self-help among relatives. Domestic workers in this case may be unpaid if it is assumed that there may be some future benefit that would accrue to them from within this system of self-help among relatives.

“Previously I brought her elder sister to stay with me, and when she grew up she worked at a factory and I persuaded her younger sister to stay with me at Svay Rieng province because I am the younger sister of her father. When her elder sister came to stay with me, at the time I was giving birth to my first child. I had a lot of difficulties so that's why I asked for her from her father to stay with me.”

House Owner, Kompong Som

However, from informal conversations with respondents during the research, this practice seems to be evolving. Other studies have commented on the effects of a liberalized economy on forms of reciprocal labour, and how it had entailed an increasingly commercial aspect to relationships that were previously based on mutual help (Krishnamurti, 2000).

“She is our relative, so we help feeding her and give her money. But her parents mostly do not want their child to come and stay with us. They let their child live at home, go to school and do the house work there, unless her family is so poor, that they allow their child to stay with us.”

House Owner, Kompong Som

The children who later become child domestic workers have often come from backgrounds that are abusive or dysfunctional. For some of them, they are taken into the household in a system of family foster care, though often this does not mean that their status within the house is the same as the house owners, or their children. They may still be disadvantaged in terms of access to education and resources, and are expected to work within the house.

However, there were also several cases of unrelated house owners taking in children who they could see were in difficult circumstances in their local area, in return for which the child was expected to work. These children, whether taken in by relatives or not, are very unlikely to be paid. It seems that in situations where the child’s own family is unable to provide for them, or where they are abusive, they themselves may be willing to accept no wages in return for being able to leave the household. In many cases the house owners are providing a valuable escape route for the children. In some cases, the situation can become exploitative if it is known that the child has few other options¹⁶.

“Her father used violence on her mother by beating her with a stick...Her mother only knew drinking wine and Mom picked scrap metal...Her family’s standard of living was so hard...Her father beat her mother until she was full of blood, and he beat the children. I saw that, so I asked her from her parents...Her father beat her mother. The money that he earned, he used to pay for his drinking. He did not give his children even 100 riels...Seeing her parents maltreat her so much I took pity on her and that is why I persuaded her to stay with me. I said that there was just a little work. Just take care of my children.”

House Owner, Kompong Som

Within and outside of family networks it is noticeable that these ‘rescues’ of children and placements into domestic work, so that they can escape their situations, is often done through female relatives or neighbours. Some children are placed with relatives when there is a family crisis, such as parents dying or being put in prison. In other cases, it is the extent of difficulties that the children are facing within their household, such as severe poverty, that prompt other relatives to either take them in or place them in another household, where they will be fed in return for their work. This does not mean that they are always entering into a more financially and emotionally stable situation. For children who are escaping abuse, life as a domestic worker does not always cannot provide the support that they need,

¹⁶ Specific case studies to illustrate this point will be discussed in Section 15.

“After her real father died, her mother had a new husband, then she hit her and she came to live with me, this time she has stayed longer, sometimes she goes to live with her aunt and sometimes she lives with the soup seller and if they complain about her a lot then she comes back to live with me.”

House Owner, Siem Reap

However, in other cases, it seems that the presence of step-parents or other male relatives is one crucial reason explaining the motives for allowing the child to leave the household. It seems commonly accepted that children living in step-families can suffer physical and other abuse. In some cases, the mother will let her daughter leave the family if she has re-married. The fear of sexual exploitation is often thinly veiled in house owner’s narratives, yet it is also striking how these female children are seen as vulnerable just through their presence in a household with a male relative¹⁷.

“I asked her to come and live with me because Chan lived in this village too. Because I saw that her life was very difficult, they even did not have food or clothes. Her house is very small, there is a brother in law and a sister with her, when they slept they tied one mosquito net for the three of them, and I thought that they would have a problem, her brother in law was drunk every day, and then I asked her to come and live with me”.

House Owner, Siem Reap

For both relatives and non-relatives of the house owner, family networks are of pivotal importance in the process of recruitment and migration into domestic work. As will be discussed, however, it was apparent that there is much more unsafe migration among this group, who often make their journey through a series of intermediaries.

Either the house owner’s or the child’s family networks were used in the majority of cases of migration. Often the house owner had relatives who lived in an ancestral village who was known to the child and their family, and could actively recruit them with the family’s consent. In these cases, the family’s agreement with the decision revolved on the trust of the house owner’s relatives. As explained in Section 5.5 on “Avoiding Trafficking”, some parents would only consent to their child going if the recruiter was directly known to them.

A variety of other networks can be seen to have been used for CDWs finding employment. The neighbours of house owners often provided connections to rural areas, either through business or family connections. The CDWs own networks were also often used, either through relatives or friends who already lived and worked in urban areas and were asked to find other workers.

“My half sister went to visit my home in the village and she saw that the family was in difficult circumstances, so she took to me to live in the house that I now live in...My half sister’s husband is friends with the house owner before...whenever the husband of the house owner had a party he would call my brother in law to help make the food.”

House Owner, Siem Reap

In other cases, CDWs had made connections themselves with the future house owner,

¹⁷ Research into sexuality, particularly for HIV/AIDS, has commented on how male sexuality is often constructed as being ‘uncontrollable’ – thus absolving the man of social responsibility or accountability for his acts of sexual violence. See Beaufils (2000).

through a variety of means. 39% of present CDWs had previously worked in domestic work, and often would make connections with people nearby who would employ them once they left the first household. Again, if they were known to the house owner and perceived to be of 'good character' they would often successfully find work with other households.

Where these personal connections could not be made, other networks became apparent. One of the most important of these was the market, which in Khmer culture is often a female controlled network. Given how many employers of CDWs work in market areas it should not be surprising that the market itself, and specifically the connections that market sellers make between themselves and their customers should also be used for recruiting workers. However, house owners can sometimes also approach market sellers to ask them to help find CDWs.

"I came here through the Aunt nearby to my house. Aunt is a vegetable seller at the market and she is my neighbour. She lives near my house. Aunt knew the house owner because she often goes to the market and she knew the vegetable sellers. The vegetable sellers told me that someone was looking for a child to live with them. I agreed and she brought me here. If I had stayed at home, I would have nothing to do."

House Owner, Kompong Som

Other networks, through other social institutions were also used for recruitment, but to a much lesser extent than the market, such as through the pagodas or through local authorities.

In specific cases, the child's recruitment seemed to be much more owner controlled. This was especially when a child was passed on from house owner to house owner (who were almost always related) or when the child and their family was in debt to the house owner. In these cases, it seemed as if the child and their parents rescinded their rights to make decisions about their place of work and migration, at least until their debt had been repaid. Whereas in other circumstances, the CDWs explained that the decision to return to their families was made by them or their parents, in cases of debt, the house owner could force them to stay. As one child of a house owner explained regarding one CDW,

"She was sacked but her mother had taken one year of her salary in advance from Elu (the former house owner)...When she left Elu's house, she still owed about 1 year of salary to Elu. So my mother paid 1 year of salary to Elu to pay him back. Now she still owes my mother two and a half years salary. My mother said that if she wants to stop working here she has to bring the money to pay her back and then she will let her leave."

House Owner, Koh Kong

The complex issue of debt bondage will be discussed further in Section 7.4. In terms of recruitment, it should be noted that in cases where money was borrowed from house owners, this was almost entirely done by the mothers of CDWs, and if not by another relative who had effectively adopted the child. This does mean that they will not always be aware of how contact was made or what connections exist between the house owners and their parent.

A more complicated and subtle issue concerns debts between family members. The link between the debt and the child's forced labour may not be as overt as in cases of debt bondage. However, there were a few cases where the obligation of one family to repay

another family member was clear, and that requests for the child's labour appeared to be unlikely to be refused.

"When her parents wanted to work in another place and I sold things here and there was no one to help me. That's why I told my younger sister that was next to my house to ask her to stay with me. Because they all depend on me, her mother is my younger sister. When her living was in need, I supported them all...Before she came to stay here, her mother owed me many things. She took my money to cure her liver disease and heart disease."

House Owner, Kompong Som

There is also evidence that some children may have been targeted, based on their overwhelming poverty, or their perceived precarious position within a household (most often due to a death of a main income earner, or the presence of a step-parent). Some of these children would fall into the category of what can be termed 'nomadic' – meaning specifically that they have left their family networks and are mobile, moving from job to job, or that their extended family networks can no longer absorb them into their households and that essentially the family is seeking to place them somewhere else. A domestic work situation often appears to be the perceived solution in these cases. These children are often recruited opportunistically into households, in ways that appear to be unsafe and without the background checks that are done by other family members. Moreover, they are very likely to be unpaid.

"I saw her Uncle taking her to Koh Rong and she stayed with next to my house for a second (waiting for a car). He said that if anyone asked for his child, he would give her, but then at that time my wife asked for that child from him. She asked her if she wanted to stay with us or not. That child said that she wanted to stay here and not go back to her home village because she had nothing to eat."

House Owner, Kompong Som

This last category of child domestic workers is important, as will be discussed later in this report, it appears that their lack of viable alternatives, or the poverty of their options, means that they are often willing to work for little or no money. Some house owners mentioned that people had offered to work for them for no money in return for food and lodging, however, the strong feelings of mistrust of people unknown to the household or people connected to it meant that this opportunistic way of recruiting was not favoured, especially in more affluent households. Nonetheless, the children who fall into this category are clearly very exploited in the workplace, and in addition, have little social support to rely on. They are one of the most vulnerable groups that have been reviewed in this research.

6 Making the Journey

The qualitative and quantitative data reveals quite a complex picture regarding the journey into domestic work and the various steps that are involved. The research looked at several different aspects, including who recruited the child to do domestic work, who they traveled with and whether there were any agreements reached between the house owner and the child's guardians/parents.

It can be seen from Table 20 below that the child's mother (29%) most frequently told the CDW about their placement with the house owner. This is surprising given the variety of networks and connections that emerged from the qualitative data – however, it also shows that CDW's migration patterns is mostly controlled by the adults in their household. Even if a recruiter approached a child directly, agreement to work would often firstly be given by the child's parents. Similarly, 29% were told by another relative, reflecting the dominance of rural to urban family networks for recruiting CDWs, as well as relatives trying to place children in domestic work to escape family difficulties. Altogether, 74% of CDWs were informed of their work by a close family relative.

The house owner and their network (including relatives who live in the same village as the CDW, neighbours of the house owner and so on) account for a further 18% of people who communicated with the CDW. This is quite low given the amount of CDWs who are directly related to the house owner (42%), though of course recruitment often occurs at the house owner's request but is communicated and assented to by the child's parents or if they are not available, another close relative (such as an aunt or grandmother).

Table 20 – Identity of those who Referred the CDW to Employer's Household

Person	Percentage
Mother	29
Father	8
Grandmother	6
Other relative	29
Friend	2
May Kjal	1
Myself (CDW)	2
House owner	5
Relative of HO (other)	6
Mother of HO	2
Neighbour of CDW	7
Neighbour of CDW and HO relative	3
HO and relative	2
Other	7
Don't Know	1

(This table is condensed for ease of reading – 'Other' category includes grandfather, step mother, friend of house owner, Friend of parents and other)

More than 1 response was allowed so Table adds up to more than 100%

Of note is the very low use of may kjals¹⁸, or labour recruiters. This should not be surprising, given the predominance of family-based and other networks, and the lack of trust that house owners have for allowing people who are not known to them or to their intermediaries. Several house owners (especially those who were known for employing many domestic workers) commented that people had come to ask if they required workers that they could find for them, but that they did not trust these sources. This shows that labour recruiters for CDWs do exist but that they are relatively rare. Another house owner said that some people came to ask to be able to live and work for their food only in their house, but again, they were unknown to them and thus they did not hire them.

Consequently, we know very little about labour recruiters from the qualitative data. However, it again seems that they will be individuals who have influential connections and are well known in particular rural communities, and through their connections to certain mobile trades (such as working as a short-term labourer) can make connections with certain house owners. Even in cases where may kjals are used, the fees appear to be very low, the highest amount mentioned being about US\$20. This mostly seemed to repay the cost of travel and other expenses, rather than an active recruitment fee as such.

77% of CDWs said that the person that they travelled with was known to them before they left the village. Again, this is a reflection of the use of family and village-based networks. However, this does leave a significant minority (23%) who do not know the person that they are traveling with, though this does not discount that that person would be known to other family members.

When looking at the CDW and house owner data, there are also some glaring discrepancies. For instance, in Table 21 below, 12% of CDWs said that they travelled with their mother. However, house owners asserted that 21% of CDWs came with their mothers.

Table 21 – Identity of those who Traveled with the CDW to Employer’s House

Who did you travel with?	Percentage
Mother	12
Father	7
Grandmother	3
Other Relative	30
Friend	3
May Kjal	2
Myself	9
House Owner	12
Friend of House Owner	1
Relative of HO (other)	7
Mother of HO	5
Friend of Parents	1
Neighbour of CDW	8

¹⁸ “May kjal” – literally translated as “leader of the wind”, more correctly translated as “guide” or “facilitator”, is often understood in other contexts (particularly sexual exploitation) to mean ‘trafficker’, but in fact they often are used to guide people to job opportunities for a fee.

Who did you travel with?	Percentage
Neighbour of CDW and HO relative	3
HO and relative	1
Motodup	2
Police	1
Other	7
Don't Know	1

More than 1 response was allowed so Table adds up to more than 100%

Table 22 – Identity of those who Traveled with the CDW to Employer’s House (House Owner Response)

Person who brought the child	Percentage
Mother of the child	21
Father	3
Grandfather	2
Relative of the child	15
Neighbour of HO	3
May Kjal	2
Came alone	14
House owner	14
Relative of HO	20
Mother of HO	2
Monk	1
Neighbour of HO	1
Don't Know	2

The discrepancy between the high numbers of relatives (30%) who, according to CDWs, accompanied them, and the low numbers of relatives (15%) who met the house owner may be accounted for by the confusing ways in which people may be referred to – someone who is another relative to a CDW may also have been the house owner, or the house owner’s neighbour.

Both Tables reveal the relatively high numbers of people who travelled alone. This may be because the house owner was already known to them (as a relative, or a neighbour) particularly if they were escaping difficult circumstances in the home. However, there are also those children who fit the ‘nomadic’ category, and who are often opportunistically employed (though often not paid by) those people who they happen to meet.

Lastly, house owners were asked whether they had made a financial agreement with the CDW or their guardians before they started to work. Only 52% of house owners said that they had, though this is also a reflection of the overall low numbers of house owners who pay the workers (62%). However, close to this number (60%) of CDWs were promised a salary for their work, meaning that this may be more a reflection of the difficulties of translating ‘agreement’ into Khmer¹⁹.

¹⁹ While ‘agreement’ in English may imply a verbal or written agreement, in Khmer it may be understood as a written agreement, equivalent to a contract.

7 Life Situation of CDWs

7.1 Length of Work in Current Employment and Previous Experience Before Arriving

For many of the children, this is not the first time that they have been engaged as a domestic worker, showing that they and their siblings have already become key income earners within their families, especially if the family is unable to meet their basic livelihood requirements. A significant minority, 39% of CDWs have previously worked as a domestic worker, and 33% of those interviewed had siblings who were also working as domestic workers.

Of those who had previously worked as CDWs, the picture emerges of them being relatively mobile. 60% had worked in the same province, but 38% had worked in another province. The length of time in their previous posts in domestic work was also very short – on average only 10.2 months. Most (70%) stayed under 12 months, with 50% staying less than 6 months. The children interviewed were not asked why they left previous households. However, the qualitative data on their life paths shows a variety of factors that resulted in CDWs choosing to leave, including home sickness and seasonal demands on their labour by their families. However, it also includes abuse – several children talked of physical and emotional abuse, and were able to leave their domestic work, though clearly circumstances in their families forced them into working in another household later. While this does mean that CDWs may again find themselves in a situation at risk, it also makes detection and prevention of abuse more difficult, as the children may be there for the short-term only.

A similar pattern emerges in looking at the current length of stay for the children in the households where they were living and working at the time of interview. As can be seen from Table 23 below, 77% of those interviewed had been there for less than 12 months. Of course, these children may subsequently stay in the household for longer, though looking at previous employment suggests that the vast majority will not.

Table 23 – Length of Time Working in Current Household

Length of Time	Percentage
0-6 months	58
7-12 months	19
13-24 months	8
25-36 months	3
3-4 years	9
5-6 years	1
7-8 years	1
8-9 years	1

7.2 Cheating on Arrival in the Household

Children who participated in the survey were asked in a variety of ways what they were promised and what they received once they went to their place of work. Whether the CDW was related to the house owner affected whether they were likely to be defined as CDWs, though not the kind of work that they would do in the household, or their lower status within in it. It also affected the likelihood that they would be paid. Nonetheless, as has been remarked earlier, there appears to be very little cheating of the kind that has

been in other sectors, where CDWs are recruited on the basis of false promises of higher salaries or other kinds of work.

For instance, CDWs were asked what salary they were promised per month (US\$14.66), compared to what they were actually paid when they arrived in the household (US\$16.09). It can be seen that on the whole they are paid slightly more than what they were promised. Similarly, only 10% of CDWs said that house owners had agreed to provide education to them before they left the village, whereas 14% of them attend some form of schooling (though only 2% said that they were in full-time education).

As will be explored in this Section, child domestic workers face a variety of other difficulties, which are more related to their position within the household, their relationships with the house owners and often, with their own families.

7.3 Work Conditions

Table 24 – Daily Work Tasks performed by CDWs, by relationship to the house owner

	Wash clothes	Clean house	Look after kids	Prepare food	Ironing	Cooking	Go to market	Help to sell	Prepare place to sell
All	80	57	47	49	7	63	12	39	28
Relatives	70	42	44	48	6	58	14	40	32
Non-relatives	87	67	49	50	7	50	10	39	26

More than 1 response was allowed so Table adds up to more than 100%

Despite the very young age of many of the children interviewed, it became clear that many of them are working long hours with little respite, and seem to be subject to extreme labour exploitation. It should be noted that the Cambodian Labour Code clearly states that work done by children under the age of 15 years should be 'light' and not affect their attendance at school. However, the majority have had no or little access to education prior to and during their work in domestic work.

The type and hours worked by the children interviewed varied by relationship with the house owners. For instance, Table 24 above shows that all domestic workers are engaged in a variety of basic household tasks. Some of them are exclusively confined to household-based tasks, but many are also involved in menial labour small-scale enterprises as well.

However, non-relatives are much more likely to do work such as washing clothes or cleaning the house than relatives are. Relative domestic workers are more likely to do work involved in market-selling, and this confirms the qualitative data findings that showed that household owners preferred to recruit relatives who they can trust for involvement in small-scale enterprises.

Overall, CDWs also work excessively long hours, at an average of 13.5 hours per day. This also varies strongly by relationship to the house owner – while relatives work only 10.4 hours per day, non-relatives worked 15.7 hours on average. For both groups, the proportions of children working 12 or more hours per day was staggeringly high – overall 47% of them do so (40% of relatives, and 49% of non-relatives do so).

Furthermore, relative CDWs get more rest time than non-relatives (3.7 hours per day, compared to 2.7 respectively) and are also better fed. Overall, 33% of children get fed less than two meals per day, but with non-relatives this rises to 35%.

O’Connell Davidson and Anderson (2004) have explored how labour exploitation in domestic work often rests on an assumption that household chores do not constitute ‘work’. Even in cases of extreme exploitation, fears of being perceived to be ‘lazy’ stopped domestic workers from complaining about their situations. Employers also emphasized that domestic work was predominantly a female occupation because the work is ‘light and easy’, despite the commonly expressed concern that some employers make children work ‘above their strength’.

The harshness of the working conditions for the young workers is of even more concern, given that they often lack access to social support networks, have left their households in precarious circumstances and many expressed that leaving their employment would be difficult (see Section 7.6).

7.4 Payments and Benefits (including Debt Bondage)

Exploring the issues related to payment of CDWs directly relates to the exploitation for labour of CDWs. Most especially it entails exploring the perception of CDWs’ role within the household and to the other options that are available to them, either work or family support. It should be clear by now, from the evidence assessed so far, that the broad term of ‘child domestic worker’ encompasses many different social groups that we can broadly distinguish between, for instance, those recruited actively or opportunistically, who come from within family groups or who do not. Arguably, these distinguishable groups face different risks of exploitation, and furthermore, of trafficking.

As has been previously explored, payment of CDWs is strongly related to a number of factors. Only 64% of CDWs are paid for the work that they do every day. Table 25 clearly shows that relationship with the owner is a key factor explaining non-payment. However, that still leaves 18% of non-relatives who are not paid by the house owner. As has been explored, these children often follow the ‘nomadic’ categorization, and are mostly unpaid in return for being able to escape abusive conditions in their family, or who have little family to return to.

Table 25 – Payment of CDWs by Relationship to the House Owner

Of those who are unpaid	
Relatives	71
Non-relative	18
Other	11
Of those who are paid	
Relatives	27
Non-relative	69
Other	4

However, there is some disagreement between child domestic workers and house owners about who this salary is paid to. Table 26 below shows that the majority (69%) of CDWs said that they are paid directly, but 23% said that their salary is paid to their

mothers. This latter finding contradicts the house owners, who say that 36% of the salaries are paid to the CDW's mother. However, it should also be noted that there are a substantial number of CDWs who just do not know about their salary arrangements, mostly because the financial agreements are often made between the house owner and their mother. In fact, of those who said that there was an agreement between them (the house owner) and the CDW's guardian before they came to live in the household, 56% of these was done with the mother, compared to 13% with the father. Mothers are once again clearly the strategic decision-makers with regards to CDWs, their placements and salaries.

Table 26 – Who CDW salaries are Paid to

Who is this salary paid to?	CDW Response (%)	HO Response (%)
CDW	69	60
Mother	23	36
Father	6	2
Other Relative (Male)	2	
Other Relative (Female)	3	
Just came, don't know	3	
Don't Know	9	
Other		2

More than 1 response was allowed so Table adds up to more than 100%

When looking at when CDWs receive their salaries, other patterns of exploitation emerge. Of those CDWs who are paid, most (44%) said that they are paid per month, and this is largely corroborated by the house owner data. Many CDWs also choose to not receive their salaries until they need them or until they go home, mostly for security reasons.

Table 27 – Payment of Salaries (for CDWs who are paid only)

CDWs response		House Owner's response	
Salary Payments	%	Salary Payments	%
In advance month	6	Month (advance)	8
In arrears month	44	Month (arrears)	43
In arrears year	1	By year (advance)	6
Keep with HO paid on request	10	By year (arrears)	6
When I go home, paid on request	7	Paid on request of CDW	11
In debt- still owe money	10	When go home paid on request	4
Just come, don't know	2	In debt -still owe money	6
When relative requests	6	Just come, don't know	2
When there is a celebration	1	when relative requests	4
Other	5	Other	6
Don't Know	8	Don't Know	4

However, a substantial number (10% according to CDWs, but only 6% according to the house owners) said that they were in debt to the owner. Overall, from both the quantitative and qualitative data, it is estimated that 9% of all CDWs were in some form of debt bondage to the house owner. There does not seem to be any evidence that the debt accrued by the CDW either acquires 'interest' (exorbitant or otherwise) or is inflated – in other words, used as a long-term means of control of CDWs, in the same way that

has been seen repeatedly in trafficking among other groups, such as CDWs. They are, however, paid much less than their counterparts. The average salary for a CDW is US\$15.93 per month – this drops to US\$14.77 for CDWs who are in debt bondage. This latter average is skewed by one child who was making far above the average salary – if this is excluded it can be seen that most CDWs in debt bondage make US\$10.3.

From the descriptions given by the CDWs, it seems that there are some cases where cash is needed quickly and an advance on a child's salary can alleviate the immediacy of the crisis. For many CDWs, whether they are in debt bondage or not, helping their families out of this crisis is a key motivation. Not all house owners will agree to this loan, however. It is noticeable that CDWs are overwhelmingly put into debt bondage by their mothers, and thus the process of how they found the house owners or the precise nature of those agreements are to some extent, invisible to us.

Those in debt bondage are nonetheless more vulnerable to exploitation, for a variety of reasons. Though the sample size is small, an analysis of the cases of CDWs who are in debt bondage reveals that they are often from severely dysfunctional family backgrounds, or even, in a small number of cases, were from families that have effectively disintegrated. The overlap with the cases of trafficking within the sample is clear (see Section 8 for a discussion of this).

Many of the children in this research clearly exist in a world of duty and reciprocal obligations that is ingrained into Khmer society, and that binds families together. Those that are paid are clearly expected to and often feel a strong duty to help their families. When does this obligation become exploitative, and who is doing the exploiting?

In some cases, children are put into domestic work *repeatedly*, and there is a distinct pattern of the mother coming to get the entire salary. In some cases, the families have complex histories of dysfunction – including alcoholism, gambling, violence and divorce. Some of the CSEWGs who had once worked as child domestic workers also talked of this kind of exploitation, and it is interesting how often it is accompanied by the presence of a step-parent. In these cases, the cultural obligation of children to contribute to the household income becomes exacerbated, often as the parents themselves are put under (sometimes abusive) pressure to earn an income. As one CDW explained,

“My mother maltreated me and took money from me. I was very embarrassed because she had many husbands, about 7 people. They lived with each other and could not get on well then they divorced. I was very embarrassed, I did not want such a mother. She sold some of my brothers and sisters to someone else. Some lived with someone else (as CDWs) like me and my younger sister. I was afraid of my mother because she used to beat and maltreat me...”

Child Domestic Worker in Debt Bondage, Koh Kong
(Clarifications added in brackets)

The house owner added,

“Her step father is a complete drunkard, Phalla's mother is afraid of him like he is a tiger. When he has drunk wine and has nothing to eat, he beats Phalla's mother”.

House Owner, Koh Kong

Not in all cases were the relationships between the CDW and the house owner abusive, but this seemed to be down to luck rather than planning on the part of the mother. There was no evidence that parents contacted children who were in debt bondage to monitor their treatment – in fact, the only contact often described was when they came to borrow more money from the house owner. Nonetheless, as will be discussed below, being in debt bondage clearly affected freedom of movement and appeared to affect levels of abuse suffered by the children interviewed.

7.5 Social Status within the House

Social status within the household was looked at from a variety of ways, including access to education and health care, perceived status, how CDWs are referred to, whether they eat with the employers or not, and who CDWs would contact if they faced a difficulty. Clearly, as has already been highlighted, whether children were referred to as domestic workers was in itself a reflection of their perceived social status in the house.

House owners were asked whether they considered that the child had the same, lower and higher status than the house owner. Close to half, 49%, said that they had lower status, while 47% said that they had the same status. Lower social status could also be a reflection of age hierarchies, however, we must also assume that this question has a respondent bias and it is very possible that the proportion of house owners who feel that the CDWs have lower status is a lot higher.

As has been remarked, the level of schooling of CDWs is often low, and by the time that they reach the household where they will work, they may have already have missed out on many years of schooling, even if they are of school going age. This is particularly true of CDWs who are not related to the house owner – only 7% of whom have finished primary school.

Lack of access to education could also be reflective of the family backgrounds that CDWs have come from, especially their family's attitude towards education. Some of the CDWs mentioned being unable to complete their education because of a lack of funds. For others, the parental pressure to start work was more important.

"I was sad and I phoned my mother, I wanted to go back home to study, but she did not allow me to go back. She said even if you go to school it is useless."

Child Domestic Worker, Koh Kong

Nonetheless, they are clearly in an inferior position with regards to access to education, compared to other children within the household. 63% of house owners say that their children are currently attending school. This compares with 14% of CDWs who attend some form of schooling, with only 8% attending formal schooling.

For those who do access education, it is reflective of the semi-parental responsibilities that the house owner has started to assume for them. In only a few cases is schooling directly offered as part of the payment for domestic work, and where it is, the CDW is often unpaid.

Given their low salaries and often minimal contact with their family networks, CDWs will often be entirely reliant on the house owner for the provision of medical care. Again, lack of access to medical care is symptomatic of their low status and temporary position in

the household. While the clear majority (65%) of CDWs were given both medicines and rest time by the house owner, 27% were only given medicines, and 2% were given no medicines and no rest time. The qualitative responses shows that some house owners have emphasized that CDWs must tell them if they are sick, mostly so that cheap effective treatment can be given. Yet, it also reveals that the children will may to hide small illnesses from the house owner and be fearful of their reactions. For some, their best recourse is to turn to people who work alongside them or their social network nearby. In cases of severe illnesses, it is unknown whether the house owner would take any responsibility, and some house owners mentioned that they prefer to recruit from within family networks so that they can easily return a domestic worker who is very ill.

“When I am sick I tell the owner, she coins me and gives me medicines, I told her and when she is free she can help me...Before I was sick and I did not tell anyone because I was afraid that she would blame me because I ate something bad.”

Child Domestic Worker, Siem Reap

CDWs were also asked whether they eat with their employers or not. This can be an indicator of social hierarchies within the household, but also of its ‘inclusiveness’. The majority (75%) of CDWs eat with the house owner or their family, while 12% eat with other household staff. 11% eat alone. This could be as much a reflection of the demands on the CDWs work, especially for instance, if they are involved in helping to sell things, they (or even the house owners themselves) will be unable to leave the work unattended. For some CDWs, it is a felt part of their inferior status within the household (though it is not clear if this is enforced by the house owner or felt by the CDW).

“because we are the servants and we cannot eat with them, only their children can eat with them, they eat at the table, and we are to eat in the kitchen.”

Child Domestic Worker, Siem Reap

The relative isolation and lack of social support that child domestic workers often face was clearly illustrated when they were asked who they would contact if they were facing a difficulty. While some said that they had never had any difficulties, many of them said that they had few people that they would be able to talk to, and most often, kept their feelings of isolation and home sickness to themselves. This was especially the case if the CDW was not related to the house owner, and who then often felt that they could not communicate with them.

“I don’t dare to tell anyone, I keep it to myself, because I am the servant, if I have a difficulty I don’t dare to tell the owner because I am afraid and I am not their relative, I have no one to tell”

Child Domestic Worker, Siem Reap

From the responses given, homesickness was a key concern. The children often described strong feelings of loneliness, isolation and feeling cut off from their families.

“I want to visit home, but my aunt does not allow me, so I am sad and sit alone and I don’t tell anybody because even if I tell no one can help me, because if I go then I will miss my mother more and more and I don’t know the road to go.”

Child Domestic Worker, Siem Reap

It was striking how often the children asserted that they could only trust and confide in family members. Given this, it is also important to look at how often they have contact with their families. This is of pivotal importance not just because of feelings of isolation, but also as it is often only the family who can remove a CDW from the household. As will be explored later, for many CDWs this is a decision that they wait for their parents to make. Furthermore, if they face serious difficulties within the household (such as fear of sexual assault) it is often doubtful whether they would contact anyone apart from their family. Swift communication with the family is thus the most effective means of preventing abuse.

House owners said that 81% of CDWs have contact with their family, while only 78% of CDWs said that they did. As can be seen from Table 28 below, contact is often done at major holidays in the Khmer yearly cycle, such as Khmer New Year and P'chum Ben (the festival of the dead).

Table 28 – Contact and Ever Contact for CDWs (House Owner's Response)

When have contact?	%	Ever Contact	%
Khmer New Year	34	Khmer NY	2
Pchum Ben	28	Pchum Ben	2
Every week	2	1 time	20
Once a year	2	2-5 times	37
When the family are busy	6	6-10 times	3
By phone	3	More than 10 times	26
Parents come to visit	6	Never	7
Go everyday	5	Don't Know	5
When they want to go	6		
Celebrations in village	2		
Other	8		

More than 1 response was allowed so Table adds up to more than 100%

As can be seen above, the contact for many CDWs can be very infrequent, with 20% only have had contact once, though a sizeable proportion (26%) have had contact more than ten times, often because they are also living close by to their relatives. The qualitative responses from the CDWs also reveal that they can often have contact with their relatives through the telephone, or with other relatives who are living nearby. In terms of ever contact, only 7% of house owners said that the CDWs had never had contact with their family, either because they were living in very remote areas or because there was little family to contact.

It is not clear to what extent parents and/or family are truly monitoring the situation of their children in the new household. For those who are often in an abusive relationship with the parents, contact can, for instance, seemingly be for the sole purpose of borrowing money from the house owner or collecting the CDW's salary.

Lastly, this research looked at how house owners refer to the CDWs, when describing them to someone else. Caution must be used when interpreting these results, as they are subject to a strong respondent bias – it is likely that employers use much more derogatory terms than they will readily admit to.

As can be seen in Table 29, very few respondents (3%) used overtly demeaning terms, such as "chnoul" (meaning 'servant' but understood to be derogatory). Interestingly, the

most frequently used term shows that most house owners choose to use family-based terms – “Kmoury” (meaning “niece or nephew”) even though the proportion of CDWs actually related to the house owner is only 42%. This is generally not surprising given how widespread family-based terms are in Cambodian society. However, 21% of respondents said that they could only refer to the domestic workers as “neak neu chea muoy” (meaning “the person who is living with us”) as they were not related and therefore could not use kinship terms, and a further 6% referred to “con jengjom” (meaning “raised child” but in effect translated as “adopted child”). This latter term is disturbing, given how this research has shown that CDWs are persistently disadvantaged within the household and often work long hours. More research is needed of the situation of children who are informally adopted within communities in comparison to their counterparts who may be the biological children of the house owner.

Table 29 – Terms Used by House Owners to Describe Child Domestic Workers

How is CDW described?	
Bong Pa'aun	9
Kmoury	52
Neak neu chea muoy	21
Con jengjom	6
Chnoul	3
Other	9

7.6 Patterns of Abuse and Links to Trafficking

Assessing the patterns and the risk of trafficking among child domestic workers was done in several ways, using certain key indicators. These included; contact with people outside of the household and ability to leave the house, whether the children wanted to leave or stay in the household and how easy or difficult it would be for them to do so, householder attitudes towards physical violence and forced labour and lastly, patterns of punishment towards CDWs.

As will be discussed, however, the means of control and exploitation of child domestic workers can often be very subtle, as well as including the overt violence and abuse that is seen accompanying trafficking in other sectors. Understanding the patterns of trafficking also entails a discussion of certain fundamental aspects of Khmer society, such as its basis on kinship networks, and its consequent patterns of trust, fear and retribution.

The children interviewed were firstly asked whether they were allowed to have contact with people outside of the household. This was taken as one of the key indicators of harbouring²⁰. 90% of the children replied that they were allowed to leave the house and had contact with people such as neighbours, market sellers and friends close by the house. For those who were not allowed to leave the house, it seems that cultural constructions of gender and gender-based sanctions were the key reason that they were not allowed out of the house. The house owners’ response to this is instructive – it speaks of their responsibilities and fears of retributions should something happen to the

²⁰Harbouring – the definition is of a person being held against their will and is included in the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking as one of the key factors that defines the presence of trafficking

CDW. While some spoke of fear of selling, in other cases it was clear that it was also fear of female domestic workers having uncontrolled sexual relations, for which their families could hold the house owners responsible.

"We are feeding someone's child, so we have to take responsibility for her as well. We are afraid that she is cheated to sell, then we would have a problem. I allowed her to stay at home and watch videos. If she wants to go to the market, my son-in-law would take her by motorbike and I do not allow her to go somewhere alone"

House Owner, Kompong Som

For some CDWs, the lack of freedom that they experienced, due to the house owner's fear that they would do something 'wrong', was a felt pressure. Some children had a lot more freedom when they lived at home and resent the long hours and restrictions on them.

"(I want to leave) because it is difficult to be a domestic worker and living with them is not easy. They make me work night and day, if they want me to work at night I have to work at night, until I go to sleep at 10 p.m. and I don't have so much free time. If we do something right or wrong they will curse me too."

Child Domestic Worker, Siem Reap

"I live here and it is so hard. I want to live in my house, then I would be happy. I live here, and I work from morning until night. If I lived in my house, my father did not stop me from doing anything. If I want to do something, I do it and if I don't want to do it, it's up to me."

Child Domestic Worker, Koh Kong

Another key indicator of harbouring is the child's own will or desire to leave the household. In effect, this was a difficult question to ask. Despite powerful feelings of isolation and homesickness, the CDWs are often coming from desperate family circumstances and their hopes to help their families are important to them. A clear majority (49%) wanted to stay, because of a variety of factors, such as wanting to earn an income, having a good relationship with the house owner, and finding urban life more attractive and 'easier' than life in the rural areas that they came from.

Nonetheless, 39% of those asked said that they wanted to leave their place of work. For many of the CDWs, as has been explained, homesickness, hard work, lack of freedom as domestic workers were their main reasons for wanting to leave. However, for some CDWs, an abusive (be it verbal or physical) relationship with the house owner was a strong motivation.

"Because this boss blames me too much, and it is very difficult to look after their kids, if their children cry she blames every one of the domestic workers. Once I have paid back the debt I will stop working here."

Child Domestic Worker, Siem Reap

It is not always easy for child domestic workers to leave their situation, even if they have a strongly articulated desire to do so. When asked if it would be easy or difficult to leave, 46% said easy but 39% said that it would be difficult. A further 16% did not know. When we explore why certain children would find it hard to leave their place of work, several key factors emerge that are crucial to understanding patterns of trafficking among CDWs

and other groups in Cambodia (see Case Study below). As has been explained, the mobility of CDWs is most often controlled by their parents or another guardian within their family network. The decision to leave the household and the ease with which they would do so is often at the control of the CDW's parents. If the child has become a key income earner in the household, a quick departure from the household is unlikely.

"She has cursed me. I am waiting for my father to look for another house and then I will stop living with her."

Child Domestic Worker, Koh Kong

One key area is the lack of alternative forms of employment or social support. This is often because the CDW's low level of education and lack of opportunities for employment elsewhere. This is especially the case in Cambodia, where access to work, as in the case of domestic work, relies on kinship or other informal networks. CDWs who "do not know anyone" assessed that their chances of employment were weak. In these cases, often their only option is to return to a rural economy where they will likely face unemployment.

"There is no money if I go back home, there is just doing farming and the people in this house and my aunt will tell me to come back to stay here, if we do farming we will have no money, if I live with someone I can have a good and easy life."

Child Domestic Worker, Siem Reap

"If I want to stop, it is possible because they do not forbid me, but I don't want to stop because there is no one that I can rely on, it is difficult to find money."

Child Domestic Worker, Siem Reap

One of the most important factors, however, is the lack of alternatives faced by children who come from dysfunctional or disintegrated backgrounds. In some cases, there is no longer a family unit that can be relied on – other dependents (such as siblings) within the original household have been placed within the extended family network to the extent that they are able to be supported. As has been explained (see Section 5), a child may be placed into work as a domestic worker as a substitute form of semi-adoption, or to escape an abusive family situation. If they then want to leave that household, they face considerable difficulties doing so.

"If I left work, I don't know where I would go to, and if I went to live with my grandfather, my sister lives there, and if I live with Aunt, I would be separated from my family. If I live at home, I would face difficulties in doing so."

Child Domestic Worker, Kompong Som

One case of trafficking uncovered in the research is particularly revealing (see Case Study 1 below). This child could clearly express that she wanted to leave the household that she had been sold to, but her family had disintegrated. In effect, it was her lack of alternatives that were most effective in keeping her in servitude. As she said,

"I want to live with them (her family), but I don't know where I can go to! I don't know anyone else. Here is good and they have never hit me...(but I cannot leave) because my aunt asked me if I could live with them, and there is a contract for 20 years."

Child Domestic Worker, Siem Reap

Case Study 1

Sopheap lived with her mother and her five siblings. When she was 5 years old, her father died and her mother started drinking. She was unable to support her children and eventually the family split up. The children either entered domestic work or other work or were placed with other families. Her mother agreed to give her to another family in her village who were childless, and who wanted to adopt her. However, when Sopheap was 6 years old her 'aunt' (adoptive mother) gave birth to her first biological child, and from that time on it seems that her feelings towards Sopheap changed. Her 'Aunt' no longer seemed to care for her in the same way, and Sopheap had to do a lot more work in the house. When she was 10 years old, her 'uncle' left her 'aunt' and ran away to Siem Reap with another woman. Sopheap's 'aunt' followed him to try and reconcile. While they were there she decided to leave her with another family, to work as a domestic worker. She was sold for 2 chis²¹ and a contract was signed between her 'aunt' and the family saying that she would work there for 20 years. The family promised her that she would be allowed to go to school, which she did for the first few years. However, this support then stopped. At the time that she was interviewed for this research, she was 13 years old and worked for two households in the same family, working for more than 12 hours a day. She had not contacted anyone with regards to her situation.

Those children who were most obviously unable to leave their work situation, albeit temporarily until their debt is paid back, were those who were in debt bondage. As has been discussed in Section 7.4, debt bondage is often an indicator of an extremely exploitative relationship between the parents (often the mother) and the child. It is not surprising to find that a few children would prefer to stay with the house owners than with their families. However, in looking at the cases of debt bondage, it is striking how often the house owner, or the person to whom the debt is owed, can make decisions about placing the child, apparently without parental consent. With other CDWs, this is clearly a parental or guardian's responsibility. It seems then that the right to make decisions about the exploitation of the child's labour is rescinded by the parents, and the debtor acquires almost temporary possession over the child (though the original decision to put the child into an exploitative position was the parent's).

"Aunt Touch brought me here because she was the house owner's friend...My mother owed Aunt Touch about 5000 Baht but now she has not paid Aunt Touch back yet...(I have never contacted with her (mother)...my mother has never known the house owner and even now my mother still does not know her."

Child Domestic Worker, Koh Kong

Despite the small sample of CDWs in debt bondage in this survey, this finding is reinforced by case studies from interviews with former child domestic workers (who were interviewed as CSEWGs). Children whose parents have effectively, through force or choice, given up their parental responsibilities are at risk, not because there is no one else to take parental responsibility for them but because someone else can use the dynamics of the culturally enforced duty and obligations of a child to their parents exploitatively.

It is also well recognized how power within a family will often rest with the key income earners, for instance, former CSEWGs who return to their families can to some extent

²¹ 'Chi' is a measurement of gold, which at the time of the research, was equivalent to approximately US\$60.

overcome the shame of their position if they significantly increase the wealth of that family. Conversely, people who are dependent within the family unit are given less rights. In effect, we can see that where the relationship between employer and child domestic worker is more transactional (and where there is more effective parental involvement) there is less risk of abuse than where the employer acquires semi-parental 'rights', namely as the key person who is supporting the child, because the parents are unable or unwilling to.

We can see this more clearly if we look at the data on punishment, though again, the sample size was small and thus we do so with caution. Overall, 16% of CDWs experienced some form of punishment, most often verbal reprimands but sometimes physical violence. However, from Table 30 below it can clearly be seen that CDWs who were related to the house owners experienced more 'punishment' than those who were not.

Table 30 – Punishment by Relationship with the House Owner

Relatives of the House Owner	%
Punished	28
Not Punished	72
Non-Relatives of the House Owner	%
Punished	8
Not Punished	92

As one (related) CDW explained,

“My uncle is nastier than my aunt and he used to beat me a little bit. He has hit me three or four times at his house since I came. Aunt has never hit me...He hit me when I took no notice of his child. When I live here, I am always very busy, I cook the rice, wash the dishes and clean the house. I want to go back home to study. I am so afraid of uncle.”
Child Domestic Worker, Koh Kong

Case Study 2

Sreimom lived with her parents until she was about 10 years old, when they got divorced. Her father was arrested for a crime and put into prison, and her mother was unable to support her and her four siblings. She went to live with a cousin on her father's side. Her father's family had always hated her mother and Sreimom was not allowed to have contact with her. But life with her cousin was very hard. Her cousin forced her to work all day, blamed her and one day, even took a knife and cut her on her arm so badly that she had to have stitches. When she was older her cousin took her to Poipet and forced her to work in a small sewing business. At the end of the month, her cousin would take all of her salary and not leave anything for her. During her stay in her cousin's house, she was raped by a neighbour. Her cousin's husband also had attempted to rape her. She worked there for several years until she could bear the abuse no longer and ran away. She found a job in a karaoke shop nearby to her workplace, serving beer and ice to customers. Several years later she had started working as a karaoke girl, selling sex to support herself and her boyfriend. She has not had contact with her family since she ran away from her cousin in Poipet.

We can also see a similar relationship emerging from looking at debt bondage, though again the sample size is small. Table 31 below shows that significantly more children who were in debt bondage experienced some form of punishment (27%) compared to those who were not (15%). However, the numbers for those punished who are not in debt are also significant.

Table 31 – Punishment by Debt

In Debt	%
Punished	27
Not Punished	73
Not in Debt	%
Punished	15
Not Punished	85

From the qualitative data, it is clear that in situations where CDWs have experienced abuse (physical or emotional/verbal), they will be unable to leave their place of employment until their debt has been repaid. The best that they can hope for is that another member of the employer’s family takes on the child and their debt, thus removing them from contact with the abuser.

“The mother of the house owner slapped me, blamed me and hit me a few times...I want to stop this work because the mother of this house owner is too nasty, hit me and blamed me...because I owe money to this house owner, if I finish I want to leave from this house too. The mother is too nasty and hits me.”

Child Domestic Worker, Siem Reap

“(My mother) told me to live with the Grandmother that I live with now, and my mother took 100 000 Riels from Grandmother to buy land, when I lived with Grandmother she was very nasty, she hit me and blamed me a lot, then my aunt pitied me and she took me to live with her. ..Grandmother and Aunt that I live with are mother and daughter, when I lived with Grandmother, she blamed, hit, kicked and pinched me.”

Child Domestic Worker, Siem Reap

The link between abuse, debt and family relationships is clearly a complex one. However, the cases that have illustrated these points are further reinforced when the attitudes of house owners towards physical force and forced labour are taken into account.

Table 32 – Proportion of House Owners who thought it was Acceptable for Parents or Employers of CDWs to Use Physical Force to Discipline a Child/CDW

	Parents	Employers
Break Something	16	7
Use Bad Language	31	10
Not Work	21	7
Run Away	18	8
None	59	82
Don't Know	2	2

More than 1 response was allowed so Table adds up to more than 100%

House owners were firstly asked whether it was acceptable to use force to discipline a child, to which 39% said that it was in one or several instances (see Table 32 above). They were then asked whether it was acceptable to use force against a child domestic worker, to which 15% said that it was in one or several circumstances. Again, this confirms that patterns that have emerged from looking at punishment and family relationships earlier in the research.

Table 33 below also highlights that there is considerable acceptance of forced child labour among employers, which it can be hypothesized to considerably support damaging practices such as debt bondage. It may be accepted that those who are from certain classes – poor, uneducated and from families with large numbers of dependents – can force their children to work.

Table 33 – Proportion of House Owners Who Thought it was Acceptable to Force a Child to Work

Acceptable to force a child to work if	%
Poor	39
No education	39
Many children	41
None	47
Don't Know	2

The research did not specify what ‘force’ would entail. Clearly, many of the child domestic workers in this research did not want to work in the households where they were interviewed but had been forced, through parental pressure, lack of options or sheer poverty to accept a position as a domestic worker.

These behaviours do not exist in a vacuum, separate from other aspects of Cambodian society. The right of the family to exist within itself, with its concomitant impermeability to state or community interference, has been a strong feature of Cambodian society (Luco, 2002), and behaviours may be more accepted if they are perceived to happen within the confines of a ‘family unit’, than if they are perpetrated against temporary workers in the household. As one house owner in Koh Kong explained,

“We never beat a child, we just blamed him or her because she is not our relative. We were afraid that someone said if he or she was not our relative and we beat her, that it was unjustified. If she was our child, we would beat her.”

House Owner, Koh Kong

The links with parental responsibility complex, but it is clear in many of the cases where parents have been involved in finding employment for their children that there is a concern, by both the parent and the employer, for the ‘safety’ of the child. As has been explained, this mostly concerns general good treatment (not working hard, not being abused) as well as sexual mores (especially for girl children). This concern exists within a common understanding that responsibility is being temporarily handed over to the house owner, who may be held accountable if things go wrong (though it is not clear what bargaining position parents would have if this were the case). As one house owner explained,

“Her mother allowed me to take care of her daughter. If her daughter was lost, I would have to pay her mother back for her daughter, but this I would disagree with because I

don't know about her daughter's mind. If she lives with me, and she was lost, how could I pay for her daughter back?"
House Owner, Koh Kong

7.6.1 *Sexual Abuse and Rape – Evidence from the Commercially Sexually Exploited Women and Girl Research*

Patterns of abuse were found to be very hard to research within the current working life of the child domestic workers. Beyond the difficulties of conducting interviews in an environment where the children may not feel safe, and may fear repercussions upon them, additional factors of fear and shame, particularly in connection to sexual abuse, would prohibit these discussions with the researchers.

Most of the evidence for abuse, both physical and sexual, comes from retrospective interviews with CSEWGs who were an additional target group of the research. Their previous experience as child domestic workers emerged from the qualitative interviews. While retrospective research is less valid than that with current domestic workers, it is arguably more valid when it comes to exploring patterns of sexual abuse and rape. CSEWGs are already socially stigmatized for not conforming to strict norms regarding sexual behaviour for women, such as virginity before marriage, and were much more able to openly discuss the abuse that had taken place in their lives as domestic workers. Furthermore, these discussions revealed that in cases of rape, they often quickly left the household. CDWs who experience some forms of abuse are thus highly mobile and unlikely to be significantly prevalent in sampling that targets them in their current work situation.

However, these two groups (current CDWs and former CDW CSEWGs) are not directly comparable, especially when it comes to discussions of prevalence of abuse. In fact, as will be discussed in Section 7.8, the paths of migration from domestic work to commercial sexual exploitation seems to have been travelled by those women and girls who have experienced the extremes of exploitation and abuse in domestic work.

A total of 203 of women and girls working in commercial sexual exploitation were interviewed, of whom 51% had worked as domestic workers prior to their entry into commercial sexual exploitation. Within this group, the patterns of abuse are very high. 22% had experienced physical abuse while working as a child domestic worker. In terms of sexual abuse, 18% had experienced attempted rape, and in 10% of cases, the rape was completed²².

Almost all of the perpetrators were either the house owner themselves, or their relatives (in one case a neighbour was the rapist, however, the landlord had previously attempted to rape her). In only one case was an action taken to re-dress the situation – in this case compensation was paid to the girl's family in lieu of a forced marriage. Sexual abuse was perpetrated by both relative and non-relative house owners, with no apparent differences.

²² It must be noted that both attempted rape and rape is punishable under Cambodian law (LICADHO, 2006).

From these qualitative interviews, several key factors emerge that seemingly make these female children vulnerable to rape. Interestingly, these factors also emerge as being pivotal in patterns of rape and trafficking in general among the CSEWGs. It must also be emphasized that in these narratives, girls had often left their households because of physical abuse and the threat of sexual abuse, often due to the presence of a step father, and had entered into domestic work as an escape from their precarious households. They are arguably thus socially demarcated as socially vulnerable, with few options and a lack of social support.

First and foremost among these factors of vulnerability is not only the poverty of their background and low social status within the household, but the belief held by the CDWs that no one would support them. This is mostly related to the culture of impunity in Cambodia, where access to legal re-dress often depends on levels of wealth (LICADHO, 2006).

The silence concerning this abuse clearly facilitates its occurrence. CDWs were easily threatened to keep silent, though it was also apparent that they could expect little support from their families or that of the house owners' even if the abuse were known about. In one case, the rape was witnessed by the rapist's mother in law, who voiced her opposition but conspicuously did not take matters further. Furthermore, few of the child domestic workers, or girls who later became CSEWGs, would tell anyone of their rapes. It was commonly felt by them that they would be blamed by their families for their loss of virginity.

It is striking in these accounts how often the rapist justifies sexual violence through promises of compensation, either by marriage and more commonly, through financial compensation.

"I had been working there for a year and a half and the landlady's youngest brother raped me...He raped me one day when I was home alone. He entered my room while I was there alone...While he raped me he ordered me not to shout and he promised to marry me but he did not set an eye on me afterwards so I realized that I had been deceived and I felt so depressed that I quit...When I was at home, my mother asked me why I had stopped working for them. I did not dare to tell her the truth that I had been raped by the landlady's brother but I told her that I felt too tired to continue to work there. I was afraid that my mother would hit me when I told her the truth that I had been raped."
CSEWG, Former CDW, Kampong Som

The belief that sexual violence such as rape can be compensated for, rather than being an act that causes irrevocable damage to a child, can be identified as a key factor that facilitates these patterns of abuse. While compensation is often promised, it is rarely provided in a culture of compensation and impunity.

Strong feelings of shame often prevented these women from revealing the abuse that they have suffered, or from seeking any kind of re-dress. Gender-based norms that stipulate that women and girls are to remain sexually 'intact' before marriage often silences them if they do lose their virginity, regardless of the circumstances or means of force that were used against them. Fear of social stigma and shame are often expressed in the narratives of these women in explaining why they did not seek help from local authorities or their social networks.

“I wanted to notify the local police of the rape, yet I was afraid of the landlord and I was ashamed of getting raped myself. I stopped working for them partly because I was so depressed then, partly because I was afraid of getting raped again...I home I didn't tell my parents anything about the rape. I was afraid that my parents would notify the police of the rape and would bring him to justice and many more people would know that I had been raped and then I would be ashamed of it. I just told my parents that I could not stand the hard work there so I stopped. I was also afraid that my parents would be upset with me.”

CSEWG, Former CDW, Siem Reap

7.7 Attitudes towards Government Monitoring

According to the labour code, workers who are underage (as CDWs often are) are supposed to be monitored and checked by the local Labour Office. Their vulnerability to exploitation is thus clearly recognized by the Cambodian law. However, in practice this does not happen, though there may some informal contact with the village chief. How government monitoring should happen and consequently how best to reach CDWs is a pertinent issue.

Attitudes and access to government monitoring was explored with both house owners and CDWs. Of course it is a characteristic of domestic work in many countries that it is an informal sector with little government regulation (O'Connell and Davidson, 2004). However, the answers in this section were revealing of the processes of trafficking within domestic work (and other labour sectors, such as commercial sexual exploitation). Issues that were looked at included the use and attitudes towards the use of contracts; attitudes towards government monitoring; experience of government monitoring and lastly, access to government or other resources in times of difficulties.

Out of all the CDWs interviewed, only one had a contract, and interestingly, this was a case of trafficking. The main role of the contract was to enforce the servitude of the child for a period of up to 20 years. The use of contracts to enforce servitude has been noted in other sectors, such as commercial sexual exploitation (Derks, 2005)²³, and in this context, often entails the involvement of the local authorities to witness and enforce them. However, it is unclear how widespread their involvement is in contracts with CDWs, given the lack of links between law enforcement authorities and households that employ domestic workers²⁴.

Despite the low prevalence of the use of contracts that was found in this research, what is striking in the research is how widespread the awareness of contracts used to force or to exploit labour is, among both child domestic workers and house owners. In fact, employers cited the right of the domestic worker to leave their employment as a key reason why they had no contract. Some domestic workers themselves also strongly believed that contracts could be used to enforce labour.

²³ This research also noted the use of contracts in interviews with CSEWGs in the three target provinces – see Brown (2007).

²⁴ This is not the case in commercial sexual exploitation, where the direct involvement or dependence for funds of local authorities and police on commercial sex establishments is well noted.

“Because if we have a contract it is difficult for us and if we can’t tolerate it and we want to stop, they will not let us stop because we have a contract.”

Child Domestic Worker, Siem Reap

“Making a contract is hard, if in the contract when the work is too hard, we have the right not to let them go home if the contract is not finished yet, it is not easy, here if they want to stop they can stop.”

House Owner, Siem Reap

Most house owners cited trust (between them and the child’s parents) and not wanting to force the child to work as the key reason that they had no contract. Where they did talk about contracts, it was clear that these would mostly be used in cases of debt bondage, or of ‘buying’ the child,

“When she wants to go she can go. I don’t keep her here to be my slave, but if she takes money first then I make a contract, I am afraid that they will run away and not work for us.”

House Owner, Siem Reap

One domestic worker also emphasized that contracts would not be to the advantage of the house owner, as it would reinforce cultural ideas of semi-parental responsibilities that the employer has to take on by employing young workers within their own domestic sphere, placing them within a web of duties and obligations and thus, accountability.

“The house owner does not want to make a contract with her (the domestic worker) because if she makes a contract with us then she has to take responsibility for us. She lives with us, if one day she (the domestic worker) had a boyfriend and they loved each other and they went away together. What would the house owner do? If we take responsibility for someone’s child, then they have sent them to live with us and they trust us. When that child goes away, and we don’t know, what would we do?”

Child Domestic Worker, Koh Kong

One house owner echoed this sentiment, explaining how she had taken steps to avoid repercussions on her if the child domestic worker was lost. Again, in her narrative there are strong implications for the house owner’s cultural sense of responsibility in this situation,

“With our relatives, we know each other. The child’s parents allowed me to ensure (the safety of) their child. If their child was lost, I would have to pay them back. Previously, there was a person who asked me to live with me for a few months. Later, she fled to work in Thailand, but I did not allow it. I had to send her back home in order to avoid her mother from making trouble.”

House Owner, Koh Kong

It is surprising then to find that overall support for contracts among child domestic workers is relatively high, with 55% thinking that there should be a contract between them and their employer, and only 19% thinking that there should not be. The qualitative responses reveal two main issues. The first is the fear of cheating and exploitation (being made to work ‘above their strength’) by domestic workers, which is strongly felt. The second is the belief that a contract would be able to prevent this cheating, and some children even explicitly stated, trafficking (being ‘sold’).

“If we have a contract it is possible (good), because the contract can limit the work time, then we can have time to take a rest and another thing is that if they do not give the salary then we can bring the contract to protest.”

Child Domestic Worker, Siem Reap

“I want to have a contract because it is easy for people to know (about us), and then it is easy to find the house where I live, and it is easy for the house owner to trust us and it is easy because they cannot take me to sell to other people.”

Child Domestic Worker, Siem Reap

For a few children who are in an exploitative relationship with their parents, a contract could protect them from their demands. As one child explained,

“Someone takes you to live with them to do such work. They give you good things and promised to offer you a proper salary. When our mother does not like us so much, she will just come and get our salary every month. So when we worked for someone, we got nothing.”

Child Domestic Worker, Koh Kong

For many house owners, the lack of a contract was a reflection of the fact that they acknowledged that their own authority did not exceed that of the child’s parents, especially when it came to the issue of deciding how long the child would be working for them.

“(There is no contract) because he is my relative and he lives with me as well. If his mother wants to take him back, it’s up to her.”

House Owner, Koh Kong

However, there was an additional concern, which relates to the fears and myths about domestic workers discussed in Section 5.2. In cases where the domestic worker, or more importantly, her parents were known to the employer, it was often felt that trust negated the need for a contract. However, in other cases, there clearly was a fear that house owners would effectively either be extorted by accusations of wrong doing, or that contracts could protect them in cases where the worker had stolen from them.

“It is better for us to make a contract because some people are bad and they could accuse us of doing bad things to the child.”

House Owner, Kompong Som

In terms of government monitoring, there were only 3 cases where house owners said that local authorities had checked on them, and it is unclear (and unlikely, in the absence of any other mentioned systematic government program) whether they were in fact systematically monitored.

More worryingly, when asked only 19% of children said that they would contact a government agency if they were in a difficulty, while 66% said that they would not contact them (and 15% did not know how to do so). This response does not necessarily reflect a widespread lack of faith in local authorities, however, as many of those who did not want to contact a government authority said that they had never had a reason to

contact them. Of those who would contact a government agency, local authorities, such as the village and commune chiefs, were the preferred choice for 57% and 9% of respondents respectively. There was also strong support for NGOs, with 17% saying that they would contact them.

However, it was also clear from the responses that the children would most often rely on their family networks to ‘resolve’ the situation – most often to remove them from the household, should there be a problem. The fear of causing conflict and having confrontation within Cambodian cultural beliefs has been detailed elsewhere (Luco, 2002), and is particularly apparent when it comes to issues that are perceived as implying a societal authority over the internal authority of a family unit.

This was clearly expressed, for instance, by one house owner who wanted to help her domestic worker, whose mother had continually kept her child in debt bondage for a period of over a year.

“I dare not to go (to the government) and on the other hand, I do not want to interfere in the other family’s affair. In fact, I do want to contact them so that her mother would not come to make trouble.”

House Owner, Koh Kong

There appear to be two issues that hinder child domestic workers from approaching local authorities. The first is that the children perceive themselves to be in an inferior position for making complaints, and a few stated that if they were to do so, their employers could easily contradict their claims. Secondly, some CDWs said that the local authorities were not ‘known’ to them, and thus they could not approach them for help.

“I do not dare (to contact them) because I don’t know the authorities, if we have a problem at least I can leave this house.”

Child Domestic Worker, Siem Reap

One of the main issues for obstacles for the involvement of local authorities in cases where CDWs are facing difficulties however, is the culturally based acceptance of certain practices, such as debt bondage, that might keep CDWs from a sense that they should seek support elsewhere.

Table 34 below however shows that there is strong support among house owners for the government to be more involved in monitoring the situation of child domestic workers. Again, this is reflective of a widespread belief that some children are mistreated as child domestic workers, using physical and sexual abuse.

Table 34 – Belief in the appropriateness of a government monitor (House Owners’ Response)

Government Monitoring?	
Yes	70
No	21
Don't Know	7
Non Response	2

“Some houses make a contract with the child domestic workers when they stay with them. Some other houses prevent the child from going somewhere, make the child work hard, and cause them to lose their strength because the child works and has a contract with the house owner.”

House Owner, Kompong Som

For those who did not support government monitoring, it was noticeable that they were often replying from their personal experience rather than from the general sense in which the question was asked. However, other reasons for not involving the local authorities interestingly included the feasibility (or lack of it) of the authorities being able to monitor domestic workers. Some respondents also felt that parents were already adequately monitoring the well-being of their children who were working as domestic workers.

7.8 CDWs at risk? Links with the Commercially Sexually Exploited Women and Girls (CSEWG) data

As has been explored in Section 5.4, there appear to be strong links between the domestic work and commercial sexual exploitation labour sectors in Cambodia. This clearly emerged from the qualitative research with CSEWGs, of whom 203 were interviewed in the three target provinces. Through this inductive research process, it emerged that many CSEWGs – 51% of the total sample - had worked as domestic workers, often immediately prior to their entry into commercial sexual exploitation.

This section will briefly explore the links between these two groups, which are more extensively covered in the report on CSEWGs (see Brown, 2007). The qualitative research with CSEWGs allowed the exploration of some of patterns of exploitation of domestic workers that arguably would not have been possible through interviews with current domestic workers alone, such as sexual abuse and rape. However, there are some strong indications that these two groups are not directly comparable, and that those who later migrate into commercial sexual exploitation have often suffered the extremes of exploitation in domestic work.

This can be seen, for instance, if we look at certain key factors, such as age. The age of entry into domestic work is strikingly similar in both surveys – at 14.8 years for former CDWs currently working as CSEWGs, and 14.5 years for current CDWs. However, it must be remembered that only domestic workers under the age of 18 years of age (range 10-17 years old) were selected for interview, whereas the age of CSEWGs when they were domestic workers was recorded regardless of whether they were above 18 years or not. This supports the finding that CSEWGs who worked as domestic workers entered domestic work at a much younger age than woman and girls as a whole do²⁵.

Similarly, in terms of family dysfunction and composition, CSEWGs have higher rates than that reported by CDWs. 21.7% of CSEWGs, for instance, were found to have come from families with divorced parents, whereas only 13.1% of CDWs cited the presence of a step-parent in the family.

The qualitative research with CSEWGs also seems to suggest that they often experienced extreme labour exploitation, working excessive hours, and suffering severe

²⁵ While the average age of women and girls entering domestic work overall was not ascertained in this research, it would be presumably be a lot higher, given that many domestic workers above 18 years were identified but not selected as part of the research.

physical and sexual abuse, and often having an exploitative relationship with their parents. This was most commonly seen through patterns of debt bondage, which also appeared to entail a higher risk of abuse.

What are the paths of migration between domestic work and commercial sex, and more specifically to trafficking? This is extensively explored in the findings of this research with CSEWGs (Brown, 2007), but should be briefly explored here.

Clearly, these two labour sectors are similar in that they are low skilled, often exist informally with little regulation and their workers are prone to severe forms of exploitation in both. In many cases, women and girls voluntarily migrated into both sectors at different stages of their lives, with poverty and low education levels acting as 'push' factors in both instances.

However, in many cases the links extend beyond this. Firstly, the patterns of social vulnerability that were apparent in some cases with current CDWs acted in specific ways to make women and girls vulnerable to migration into commercial sex and/or trafficking. Women who had entered into domestic work as children because of a need to escape patterns of family abuse, for instance, were later made persistently socially vulnerable to recruitment into commercial sexual exploitation due to this same family dysfunction. Specifically, women and girls fleeing or disconnected from their households appeared to be much more vulnerable to recruitment, either in a rural or urban setting. Their entry into domestic work thus represented an initial step towards severing their ties with their households before their work as CSEWGs made this break more permanent. Again, they often clearly lacked the social support that was needed to not only prevent their entry into exploitation in domestic work, and later commercial sexual exploitation.

As has been explored, this dysfunction could also manifest itself as an exploitative relationship between parents and child, which was apparent in cases where CDWs were put into debt bondage. While there are strong cultural norms, such as notions of 'duty' and obligation of a child to their parents that support this exploitation on the part of the parent, in many cases it seemed that these women's experiences as child domestic workers had served to further inculcate these values. Women who had often been repeatedly put into debt bondage as child domestic workers would sometimes later 'choose' to either sell their virginity or seek higher salaries in commercial sex establishments where they would later also sell their virginity. While other research has highlighted the dependence of families on CSEWG incomes (White, 2004), in their narratives it was clear that the women's role as family provider had often been assumed since their work as child domestic workers, often at a very young age.

There is often a direct relationship between patterns of abuse suffered as domestic workers and entry into commercial sexual exploitation. Most clearly, this can be seen in the paths taken by victims of rape. Overall, 20% of CSEWGs had been raped prior to their entry into commercial sex, but of this group half (10%) had been raped while they were working as domestic workers. The strong beliefs concerning the lack of social value of women and girls who are no longer virgins, and thus who are no longer eligible for marriage, appear to make the migration of rape victims into commercial sex axiomatic. In their narratives, these women and girls perceive themselves to have few options remaining once they are no longer virgins, regardless of the situation in which they have lost it.

The severe exploitation that occurs in the domestic work sector, entailing long hours of work, low and sometimes no salaries, low social status and risk of abuse greatly facilitates their entry into commercial sexual exploitation. The women and girls interviewed had often experienced no work other than domestic work or commercial sexual exploitation, and similarly to the current CDWs interviewed in this research, perceived themselves to have few employment options, or the social networks that might help them to move into other sectors. There is also active recruitment by the commercial sex establishment of young women and girls into 'non-sexual'²⁶ roles within a commercial sex establishment, which later often progresses to commercial sexual exploitation. This work is often represented as being comparatively highly paid, and 'easy', though it is highly stigmatised. Given the harsh realities of domestic work, it is thus hardly surprising that women and girls who have been severely exploited in domestic work choose to migrate into commercial sexual exploitation.

While the links between domestic work and voluntary migration into commercial sex are clear, there are fewer direct links to patterns of trafficking. While they certainly occur, cases of deception using promises of domestic work are relatively infrequent. It can be assumed that traffickers use the lure of higher paying jobs with higher social status to lure their victims, and has been explored in this report, there is a great fear of trafficking that influences the decisions that children's parents take regarding their migration. However, there appears to be greater congruence between the patterns of social vulnerability and trafficking.

²⁶ Interviews with women and girls who worked in the karaoke parlours revealed that while these roles, such as waitressing, were perceived to be 'non-sexual', principally because it did not involve penetrative sex, in fact workers were often forced to accept a high level of sexual harassment from clients.

8 Discussion

Above all else, “domestic worker” is an occupational category, and as this report has shown, one which encompasses a wide range of social relationships, paths of exploitation and consequent social vulnerability. Social analyses, especially development-focused ones, that look at certain social groups tend to extract them from their place within a culture. This report has aimed to locate them within it, and to the social practices and beliefs that perpetuate labour exploitation of children, and to some extent, trafficking.

Analysing the links between child domestic workers and trafficking becomes even more complex, especially in the Cambodian context. The relations of labour and exploitation may be obscured under a veil of kinship and of assumed semi-parental relationships, the workings of which employers themselves may not recognize. In Cambodia, relatives regularly move into and out of each other’s households, for various reasons, including working, gaining access to employment or education, and for repayment of family obligations. We clearly have to differentiate between those who enter the household to avail themselves of its benefits and those who are there for the purpose of labour exploitation, who will be vulnerable in different ways. Yet, the line between these different groups can sometimes become exceedingly blurred. Furthermore, it is not always clear how these various grades of exploitation can be reconciled with the definition of trafficking.

It has been remarked upon that the concept of exploitation is not clearly defined in the Palermo protocol, and consequently, various lists of the kinds of forms of domination and control exerted by one person on another can be seen. In this research, there may sometimes have been a key indicator, such as the presence of a contract, which clearly demonstrated that trafficking had taken place. In many of cases, however, it is the sheer poverty of the children, and more fundamentally, their lack of clear other options, that keep them in the bonds of exploitative labour. Moreover, do we adapt our definitions if we have found that a lack of options is a criteria that certain employers will seek out and actively exploit?

Research on domestic workers in other countries has shown how the relations of labour exploitation are often hidden under a guise of altruism that helps to perpetuate and justify them. As researchers Anderson and O’Connell (2004) state, in their research on domestic workers in a cross-cultural context, “by employing a worker who is isolated, vulnerable and without choices or opportunities, employers can easily dress up a relation of exploitation as one of paternalism/maternalism...By entering into such a relation, the employer demonstrates kindness and social status” (p.32). They go on to add, “just as the power of dominant social groups is typically cloaked or justified by discourses that humanize or deny it, so individuals are usually reluctant to view themselves as abusive, dominating, cruel or evil...the vast majority of people will only use force or coercive power against another human being to the extent that they believe it to be natural, right and justifiable to do so.”

These comments were borne out by this research, which found similar patterns of justification. It is overwhelmingly the language of family relations that is used to describe, at least publicly, the relationship between the house owner and the domestic worker. It was striking how often employers would assert that they ‘loved the child like their own child’, wanted to ‘adopt’ them and would use family based terms to refer to them in the

presence of the researchers. The model of social relations that was most clearly used then was the 'family-based model', drawing extensively on a system of duty and obligation, between different family units, and most especially, between the parents/guardian and the child. Cambodian society is overwhelmingly based on the unit of the family (Ovensen, Trankell and Ojendal, 1996), which often directs access to resources and benefits to its own members, and as has been seen in this research, discriminates against those who are not a part of it. However, other research has often demonstrated how certain members of the household may be exploited for the benefit of others, creating and maintaining paths of inequality. The lack of access to education of girl children who are forced to stay at home and look after their younger siblings is one example.

Within the 'family model', children who are recruited from extended family networks tend to be underage and are often unpaid. Their lack of payment does not necessarily signal that trafficking or exploitation is taking place – rather, their culturally defined place as relatives means that they will be sharply differentiated from non-relatives, where conversely relations are much more likely to be commoditized. The exploitation of these children's labour was often stated by the house owner to be for some future benefit, which was unspecified. As one house owner explained,

"If we were to give her a salary, she would spend it all, it is useless as well because she is still young. When she grows up, we would marry her off to someone and share her capital for making a business. That would be better...I have fed many children, but I did not have the money to pay for them in salary because they are my nieces and nephews and not child domestic workers. If I gave them money, they would spend it all and when they grow up, they would have nothing left. Their parents handed them over to us, so we have to be responsible for them. I do not give them money, but when they go back home, I give them some amount of money to send to their mother, or else they could live with us until they grow up and they could marry and build their future."

House Owner, Koh Kong

How does our understanding of the family-based model, and of the paths of exploitation within it, facilitate our understanding of the patterns of trafficking seen amongst CDWs? It is important to emphasize that this is a model, a set of understandings and meanings, that guides people's behaviour, which often plays an important role to the benefit of children at risk. There were many examples of children escaping abuse, conflict and hardship within their own family households, and being 'rescued' by other family members (interestingly, most often an aunt on the mother's side²⁷). In the absence of adequate social services in Cambodia that can be used for effective prevention (rather than for a late response once abuse has taken place), extended family networks could be the best solution, even if the child is disadvantaged within the household when compared to their related peers.

²⁷ Cambodian society is matrilineal, meaning that social units such as a village for instance, will often include members of a family who are descended along the maternal line (matrilineal). While the legislation of Cambodia, particularly the Family Law, gives rights to the father to keep his children in the event of family break-up (especially the first born child), in practice it may be that the mother's side and her relatives play a greater role in absorbing uncared for children into their households.

Nonetheless, some of the worst cases of exploitation and trafficking in this research have been seen to be perpetrated by family members on other family members, or, more importantly, by people who are not related but can and do assert the family model in relation to a child domestic worker. The reasons for this have been explored in this research – namely, a house owner asserting that their relations with the child is one based on family, rather than on anything else, is less likely to be questioned in terms of labour exploitation, and as we have seen in discussions about punishment, has more authority to use physical and other force on the child. The authority within the family is assumed not only through blood ties, but through the power of the main income earner within the household, “neak jengjom” (translated as the “person who raises”). The rights and power of this position are not to be underestimated, particularly in relation to the acceptance of patterns of trafficking within the community. Opposition to exploitation is quickly silenced when the rights of ‘neak jengjom’ are asserted, which has also been seen in the research with commercially exploited CSEWGs²⁸.

This can be most obviously seen in the patterns of debt bondage, which are overwhelmingly perpetrated by mothers, and to a much lesser extent, fathers towards their children. This pattern of exploitation clearly often relies of the widely accepted obligation of the child to support and earn income for their parents/family unit. However, in the cases reviewed, this obligation can be exploitatively used, often when there is an additional pressure within the family. Sometimes this can be the presence of a step-parent who may resent and refuse to ‘support’ or raise their non-biological children, thus forcing them into a work situation at an early age. Other patterns of dysfunction, such as alcoholism, gambling and domestic violence, are also often seen. A distinctly separate group from this are those who face a crisis of some sort, most often a health problem or death, that requires the aid of fast cash. However, this data strongly suggests that while parents will put their child to work to earn money to repay the debt, and that those children feel a strong pressure to do so, they will often choose not to put their child in debt bondage. The question also arises as to who is doing the exploitation, given the sometimes protective role that some house owners adopted towards the children in their care when they are being exploited by their family.

Some of the worst cases of exploitation and trafficking, however, among both the CDW sample and CSEWGs who had previously been domestic workers, were seen with children who had lost their place within the family network because of the disintegration of their original family unit, either through death or other means. In these cases, either another family member or an ‘adopted’ family unit could assert their rights to ‘raise and exploit’ the child. Case study No.1 showed how this was done through an adoptive family, and case study No. 2 was done by a cousin and entailed extensive abuse. For the purpose of trafficking, what is interesting to note is that, compared to trafficking in other sectors, such as commercial sexual exploitation, there were noticeably few forms of control and force used to prevent the child from leaving the place of exploitation. In Case study No.1, for instance, a contract was signed (between her adoptive family and the house owner’s family) to ensure that she would work for 20 years. Beyond this, however, there were few signs of the use of force to keep the child in a position of exploitation. The child was held in her position principally by her lack of options and any visible sign of social support from her family.

²⁸ Derks (2005) has extensively commented on the ‘matron-client’ relationships within the brothel between the brothel owner and CSEWGs, based on mutual dependency. The brothel owner ‘raises’ the CSEWGs, who in their turn, provide an income for her.

This pattern of lack of options, and the exploitation that accompanies it, can also be seen when we look at children who appear to have been deliberately targeted for being in need, or more especially, being from the 'nomadic' category, namely without the support of a family network from which they have become disconnected. It appears to be unlikely that these children will be paid for their labour, which is often acquired 'opportunistically' by a household, and who are often seemingly willing to work for free in return for basic food and lodging. While these children have a history of moving from place to place, and thus presumably, could easily leave the household again, it is also striking that those most in need of a salary are least likely to be paid. This is especially significant given that we find CSEWGs with the same social profile, unable to return to their social networks or effectively detached from them, or like CDWs, exploited for their labour by them. While there is often no direct link between domestic work and commercial sex, it can help us to understand the sheer poverty of employment and living options for these children and women.

This is instructive if we also remember that house owners were much more accepting of forced labour than they were of the use of physical force, especially if the child was poor, lacked education and came from a family with many dependents. This research corroborates the idea that trafficking, or forced child labour, will be more socially accepted among certain groups than among others, namely those who are known to have few other options.

Lastly, this report has extensively looked at the demand side of domestic work with children. The qualities that employers demand in their workers is clearly culturally constructed and specific, varying from place to place. This report has extensively discussed how these qualities set the domestic worker most often at the bottom of a social hierarchy (in terms of age, sex and social status) within the household.

There was a clear consensus that employers wanted female domestic workers, but most specified that they wanted someone who they can trust and who is hard working. This is significant given that many house owners equated 'trust' with 'relatives'. It could be due to the perception that people might act more for the benefit of the extended family group if they come from within it. However, trust was also strongly associated with knowing the parents of a child, and 'knowing their mind'. Within this context, it can be seen that a primary concern was in fact fear and lack of trust of people who entered the household. Other research studies have pointed to Cambodia's low levels of social cooperation and trust (see UNICEF, 2001), and have linked this to the societal effects of its extensive period of conflict and genocide.

Yet, this lack of trust also points to other factors that are relevant to our analysis, such as the cultural patterns of obligation and responsibility. For the vast majority of child domestic workers, their place of work was negotiated through immediate or extended family networks. Especially in the case of female domestic workers, strong gender norms stipulated that they had to be 'protected', mostly from unsanctioned sexual contact. This was a felt responsibility alluded to by many house owners in interviews. Moreover, unlike in cases of debt bondage or other kinds of family-based exploitation, house owners specifically stated that their possession, or as they said, 'use of' the child was temporary, and would end once the child's parents reclaimed them.

Based on these findings, a clear typology emerges that allows us to map the patterns of trafficking among child domestic workers, namely who is at risk and what are the cultural and social underpinnings that facilitate its practice?

- i. Children in **debt bondage** (10% of the CDWs interviewed) were found to be the most clear category of children at risk of or being trafficked²⁹. They are often forced to work to pay back the money owed to the house owner, have increased risk of suffering from physical violence and are unable to leave their place of employment. Moreover, they often exist in a highly exploitative relationship with their parents/guardians, and in some cases, have repeatedly been put into debt bondage.

Even in cases where the debt bondage was felt to be exploitative (by the house owner and/or the child), culturally there was felt to be little recourse to be able to protect the child. The parents' right to exploit the labour of the child and to make decisions in this regard was seen as paramount, and was still perceived to be an internal family affair that outsiders had little rights to interfere in.

- ii. Children with **disintegrated family networks** were also found to be at risk. Families may have disintegrated due to death, divorce or further social problems. In even rarer cases, children chose to leave their families without the support of extended family networks.

As has been discussed, there will be a pattern of obligation and responsibility when the path of migration into domestic work is negotiated between the child's immediate family and the house owner, abuse seems less likely to occur. However, the path for children from disintegrated family networks seems qualitatively different.

In these cases, the exploitation will be conducted by another member either of the extended family network or another person who may not be related but puts themselves in a position of semi-parental authority. In these cases, exploitation occurs to the extent that the child is seen as dependent on their adult caregivers, who assume authority as the 'neak jengjom' or "person who raises them". The exploitation is sanctioned by the assumption of a family relationship, and often by the lack of other apparent options.

Children in this category are often unpaid, and at higher risk of physical and other abuse within the household.

- iii. Children who are '**nomadic**', meaning that they also have disintegrated family networks and have been migrant labourers for various lengths of time before they enter domestic work. They are most often recruited opportunistically by house owners and do not exist in a family-based relationship with the house owner.

The children's poverty and lack of other options means that they are often willing to work for food and lodging alone and are unpaid. They are often

²⁹ Current changes to the Anti-Trafficking Law may include debt bondage as a facet of trafficking. At the time of writing, however, it was not included.

integrated into households that are unable or unwilling to pay a salary. It is unclear whether this group constitutes trafficking, as the exploitation that occurs is forced by the poverty of circumstances rather than other means of control.

- iv. Children who are **underage**, meaning those who are under the age of 15 years old, the minimum age for full-time work outlined in the Cambodian Labour code. Clearly, this is also a child labour issue, as well as a trafficking one.

While on the whole, the stated age demanded by house owners was found to be higher, in practice, it was apparent that children who are much younger can often be found in domestic work, doing specific roles such as child care. There is a clear link between underage workers and other forms of exploitation – for instance, children who are in an exploitative relationship with their parents appear to start work at an earlier age, as do those who come from disintegrated family networks.

While these are the main groups of children that this research found was at risk, this does not mean that there may not be other children at risk who are not listed in the groups above. This is particularly important to remember with cases of sexual exploitation and abuse. As has been explored, child domestic workers are in a lowly position within the household and are recruited on the basis of characteristics that will keep them there. However, patterns of sexual abuse are incredibly hard to research, given that they are often hidden from public scrutiny and the family may prefer to quietly remove the child from the situation rather than seek redress through the authorities. Nonetheless, it is doubtful whether these cases would legally constitute trafficking, rather than rape or sexual abuse.

In terms of child protection, the current laws of Cambodia do not support 'outside' agencies interfering, even in the interests of the child. The right of the parents over the child is recognized in the Family Law, and can only be revoked in cases of 'neglect' (LAC, 1995). Local authorities, such as the Provincial Department of Social Affairs, complained that they have little legal redress in cases such as these.

This is clearly an important issue to address, given how this research has clearly demonstrated that child domestic workers are sometimes trafficked and often severely exploited.

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