# What Contributions Might be Made by Western Advocates, Activists, Researchers and Members of NGOs to Stop the Sexual Exploitation, Slavery, and Trafficking of Male Children in Cambodia?

Wayne Hancock

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# DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a University or other institution of higher learning except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements.


Wayne Hancock

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pedestrian Christian faith has sustained me and pushed me beyond my own limitations. Through adversity this has made me a better person. I am humbled, thankful that I finally listened and let go.

And to Eddie, my beloved Jack Russell/ Ponsonby-mongrel cross. Though you are no longer "here", you gave me 17 ½ years of love. Though I miss you immeasurably, you're still with me. I'm still sweeping up your fur! This is for you.

# ABSTRACT

The sexual abuse, exploitation, and trafficking of boys and young men is not a new phenomenon. It is a plague that continues to burgeon in our globalized, pandemic- affected world. However, despite the issue being an illicit growth industry there has been little research conducted. This research investigates how Western academics, activists, and NGOs might assist these boys in Cambodia, to stop their sexual exploitation, slavery, and trafficking.

I hope that with research on this gendered issue, further efforts and understanding may be implemented to combat the insidious culture of coercion and exploitation. Like many women and girls, boys and young men continue to be marginalized, stigmatized, and victimized due to this abuse. Their circumstances are not chosen, they are lived in a state of corruption, intimidation, poverty, and exploitation.

The methodology for this research is qualitative description. I use semi- structured interviews with purposively selected participants and extensive secondary data. Key themes of trafficking and sexual abuse, poverty, corruption, the circumstances of children, NGOs, and what we might do to assist the situation, emerged.

My research opens the issue of sexual exploitation, slavery, and trafficking of boys in Cambodia for further research. It challenges occidental influences and Western assumptions about research in Cambodia. It proposes ways that western activists might use to help the prevention, or rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration, for both the victims and survivors of sexual trafficking of boys in Cambodia.

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

**ACTIP:** ASEAN Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2015).

**ACTV:** ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Trafficking Victims.

**ACWC:** ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children.

**ADTV:** ASEAN Declaration on the Promotion and Protection of Rights of Trafficking Victims (2017).

**AEC:** ASEAN Economic Community.

**AMS:** ASEAN Member States.

**APS:** ASEAN Political-Security Committee.

**ASEAN +3:** ASEAN plus the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Republic of Korea (Korea), and Japan.

**ASEAN Declaration:** ASEAN Declaration Against Trafficking in Persons, Particularly Women and Children (2004).

**ASEAN:** The Association of South-East Asian Nations. (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam).

**AUTEC:** Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee.

**Bali Process:** the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and related Transnational Crime (2016).

**BFC:** Better Factories Cambodia.

**CCC:** Cooperation Committee Cambodia.

**Chbab srey/ Chbab proh:** Social codes of behaviour.

**CHRC:** Cambodian Human Rights Committee

**CSO**: Civil Society Organization(s)

**CSCE:** Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

**CCHR:** Cambodian Centre for Human Rights.

**COSP (Conference of the States Parties):** Conference of the State Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

**CSCE:** Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children.

**CSO**: Civil Society Organization(s).

**DoL:** Department of Labour.

**DWCP:** ILO Decent Work Country Programme.

**ECPAT International:** (End Child Prostitution and Trafficking). Of note is that in the late 2000's, people involved in child-protection were concerned of the misuse of the acronym, particularly "child prostitution", as it implies consent. On official documents the full name :End Child Trafficking and Prostitution" is no longer used, but the acronym has officially been kept.

**FBO:** Faith-based Organization.

**GDP:** Gross Domestic Product.

**GMS:** Greater Mekong Subregion.

**GNI**: Gross National Income.

**ICCPR:** International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976).

**IGO:** Inter-governmental organization.

**ILO:** International Labour Organization.

**INGO:** International Non-governmental organization.

**IOM:** International Organization for Migration.

**Istanbul Protocol (1999):** The Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

**LANGO:** Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organizations.

**LoN:** League of Nations (1920).

**MDI:** Multidimensional Poverty Index.

**MoI:** Ministry of Interior.

**MoU:** Memorandum of Understanding.

**NGO:** Non-governmental Organization.

**NGO Law:** Law on Association and Non-governmental Organizations (2015).

**OHCHR:** Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

**Palermo Protocol (2000):** United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women, and Children.

**PCCT:** Provincial Committee to Counter Trafficking.

**ProCoCom:** Provincial Cooperation Committee.

**Proh:** Men.

**PTSD:** Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

**QDM:** Qualitative Descriptive Methodology.

**RGC:** The Royal Government of Cambodia.

**Rome Declaration:** Rome Declaration on World Food Security (1996).

**SoG:** School of Governance.

**SDA:** Secondary Data Analysis.

**SDG:** Sustainable Development Goals.

**SECTT:** Stop Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism.

**Smuggling Protocol :** UN Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land Sea and Air, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (2000).

**Srey:** Women.

**TI:** Transparency International.

**TI Cambodia:** Transparency International Cambodia

**TIP Office:** Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.

**TIP:** Trafficking in Persons.

**TSCO:** Travelling Child Sex Offenders.

**TVPA:** Trafficking Victims Protection Act (2000).

**TVPRA:** Trafficking Victims Reauthorization Act (2003).

**UDHR:** UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).

**Smuggling Protocol:** UN Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land Sea and Air, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (2000).

**UN:** United Nations (General Assembly).

**UNCRC:** United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

**UNCTOC :** United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (2000).

**UNDP:** United Nations Development Programme.

**UNESCO:** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

**UNFPA:** United Nations Population Fund.

**UNHCHR:** UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

**UNHCR:** UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

**UNIAEG-SDGs:** UN Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators.

**UNICEF:** United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.

**UNODC:** United Nations Office of Crime and Drugs.

**UPR:** Universal Periodic Review.

**USAID:** United States Agency for International Development.

**USDoS:** United States Department of State.

**UNTAC:** UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia.

# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1   Introduction

Personally, and academically, I have been investigating the "sex trafficking and sexual exploitation of young men and boys" since 2017. I have travelled twice to Cambodia in that time. I observed first-hand situations of coercion and/ or sexual exploitation while there. I wanted to begin to research this illicit, multi-billion-dollar industry, to be involved in assisting work to combat and deal with the outcomes of these crimes in whatever manner I am able, but highly conscious that the western 'do-gooder' can very often 'do bad'.

Academically, my tertiary qualifications are criminological. This academic foundation gives me a legalistic, sociological understanding of the global, lucrative issue that human trafficking is in modern contemporary society. This background affects how I research and look at things.

While I was conducting research, news and social media kept me abridge of what was happening in real time locally, regionally, and globally on trafficking and abuse cases. In New Zealand, a man whose dark-web username was 'Kiwipedo' was incarcerated for trying "to buy a child on the dak web to sexually abuse" (Boyle, 2021, January 22); while Radio New Zealand reported that New Zealand businessman Sir Ron Brierly pleaded guilty to possession of child abuse material (2021, April 2). In the US, Maese and Hobson (2021, February 26) reported on the suicide of gymnastics coach John Geddert after being charged with "sexual assault and human trafficking". In France, CNN Paris reported that French clergy could have 'abused at least 10 000 minors and other vulnerable people since 1950".

Cases of diplomatic immunity from child abuse cases continue to challenge the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961), as a diplomat's "inviolability is the cornerstone of diplomatic law" (Raphael, 2020, p. 1425). The inviolability is "challenging for authorities not only to prove criminal misconduct, but also to detect it at the outset" (Raphael, 2020, p. 1435). I have been made

aware of such cases in Cambodia from participants who experienced this diplomatic privilege.

Al Jazeera investigated Cambodia's orphan business, "the dark side of voluntourism" (2019, September 15). On February 11, 2021, CNN asked young people, in thousands of schools in more than 100 countries, to participate in CNN's #MyFreedom Day, to pledge "what actions they're implementing to … spread awareness of slavery" (CNN International, 2021), with 2021's theme being sexual slavery. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) have warned that the COVID-19 pandemic may drive "human trafficking further underground" (Nortjuddin, 2020, June 29), with traffickers continuing to "find ways to innovate, and even capitalize, on the chaos" (TIP Report, 2020, n.p.).

The pandemics domino effect making people more vulnerable to trafficking, "because they have lost their source of income due to measures to control the virus" (Nortjuddin, 2020, June 29), the traffickers 'actively pursuing a victim … on social media, [posting] job advertisements, [waiting] for potential victims to respond" (Rezahi, 2021, February 2). Traffickers did not shut down. They continue to harm people, finding innovative ways to capitalize on the chaos.

After several revisions I settled on my research question: What contributions might be made by Western advocates, activists, researchers', and members of Non-government Organizations (NGOs) to stop the sexual exploitation, slavery, and trafficking of male children in Cambodia? I recognised that I would be able to invite a small group of New Zealanders with a generic human right focus in their work, who had extensive experience in Cambodia, either as researchers, or with significant NGOs, or International NGOS (INGOs) or with multilateral agencies, to participate in this research.

## 1.2  A Brief Note on Cambodia

There are multiple lenses for considering Cambodia. Historically, Cambodia's twelfth century UNESCO heritage site sprawl of Angkor Wat is the world's largest religious edifice. The temples reflect a Khmer society very different from the twentieth century.  Genocidal conflict and violence, fleeing 'boat-people' and haunting 'killing fields', were the features of most recent history.

Between 1975-1979 the Khmer Rouge (Communist Party) controlled traditional Cambodian society through notorious brutality and unbridled violence. Cities and urban centres were emptied. The population was relocated to the countryside to form a socialist agrarian republic. Phnom Penh, "as it existed during the Cambodian genocide (1975-1979), has been held as a textbook example of urbicide" (Tyner, Henkin, Sirik, and Kimsroy, 2014, p. 1873), "the most infamous deurbanization of modern times" (2014, p. 1873). The urbicide was a method by which the Khmer Rouge set to re-educate the Cambodian population.

To achieve this, the government closed formal educational institutions, abolished religion, and claimed they were ending class distinction. They attempted to accomplish this through industrial-scale systems of re-education, using denunciation, execution, and torture (Miles and Thomas, 2007), separating families, creating a culture of fear and intimidation.

Cambodia is amidst a "so-called triple transition" (Peou, 2010, p. xxi): from armed conflict and rebellion to peace, political authoritarianism to a hypothetical liberal democracy with a constitutional monarchy, from socialist, agrarian economics to a market-driven capitalist economy. However, this metamorphosis is challenging, with governance that has a "highly centralized administrative structure, corruption, nepotism, cronyism, lack of transparency, and incompetent officials" (Keo, Bouhours, Broadhurst, and Bouhours, 2014, p. 205). It is becoming "increasingly evident to the world that the Cambodian government's restrictions on civil society, suppression of the press, and banning of more than 100 political leaders from political activities have significantly set back Cambodia's democratic development" (UN, 2018, p. 101). This has highlighted tensions in development between local actors (such as the Cambodian government and local NGPs) and international actors (such as INGOs and donors. Development work, including child protection, in Cambodia is donor-driven by, and donor-dependent on financial, practical, and technical support. Even with this assistance, Cambodia continues to be one of the least developed and impoverished nations in the developing world.

When I visited Cambodia, I could not miss the stark contrast of architectural grandeur, with significant poverty and human suffering. There have been programmes of urban development, poverty reduction, health and education development, and ongoing investment in infrastructure (NFPA, 2019). This development has propelled Cambodia's economic growth rate by seven. five percent (Cambodia GP, 2019). This growth attracts more foreign investment.

Cambodia has the highest population rate of citizens aged between 15 and 29 in the region, with 59 percent of the population under 29 (UNFPA, 2014). The Population Census announced on January 26, 2021 that the "Cambodian population has risen to 15.5 million, an increase of 16 percent from the 2008 census" (Dara, January 26, 2021).

In 2020, the World Bank reported that Cambodia had undergone a significant economic transition in the past two decades, reaching lower-middle income status in 2015 (2020, October 14). The kingdom's economy has sustained an average growth of 8 percent between 1998-2018. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted Cambodia's economy with the World Bank forecasting a negative growth rate of - two percent, as more than 70 percent of Cambodia's economy is reliant on tourism, the garment industry, manufacturing, and construction (World Bank, 2020). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2020) report adds that the Gross National Income (GNI), per capita, is $USD4296 per annum, dropping down from $USD4389 per annum in 2017. The UNDP (2020) report states that 37.2 percent of the population live in multidimensional poverty. Multidimensional poverty is gauged by the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). MPI is an international index that is adjusted by deprivations that include education, health, and the standard of living. The average life expectancy in Cambodia is 69.8 years. UNDP report that females receive on average two-four years of schooling while males receive five-eight years.

## 1.3   Defining Trafficking and Smuggling

The descriptions and terminology used in human trafficking have metamorphosised throughout recorded history, from the Cyrus Cylinder of Babylonian times to the 19th century and the use of the word "abolition" by anti-

slave trade advocate William Wilberforce. The key words used since then have denoted the impact and social commentary in the movements against human trafficking, whether they have been "emancipation", "trafficking", and/ or "white slavery". The changes in languages and syntax ultimately led to a benchmark definition in 2000 with the United Nations (UN) Palermo Protocol, known as the United Nations Protocol, to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000). Human trafficking is defined as being:

> the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat, or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation (UNDOC, 2000, Article 3(a)).

People smuggling and human trafficking are now two, distinct, internationally agreed criminal offences. UN Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air. (2000). The smuggling of people is defined as:

> the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a state party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident (Smuggling Protocol, 2000, Article 3 (a)).

Under Cambodian Criminal Law, a child sex offence is perpetrated:

- When a person commits sexual acts with a child; the most obvious sexual act is penetration, however, acts such as caressing, touching, or kissing are included (Paillard, 2006, p. 6).
- When a person participates in the child abuse without directly committing sexual acts, for example, trafficking children for the purpose of sexual exploitation, or pimping children (Paillard, 2006, p. 6).

An alleged child sex offender in Cambodia can be charged with:

- Trafficking, rape or attempted rape, indecent assault, pimping or prostitution, debauchery (Paillard, 2006, p. 6).

## 1.4 Structure of Thesis

I began this research with an exhaustive literature review on the history of slavery and human rights responses through history. I carefully sequenced the development of national and international instruments and laws to combat trafficking. I thought this was where effective efforts to change outcomes might lie, and where the responses from my interviews might take me. Since then, many of my preconceptions have morphed into becoming misconceptions. Reviewing available literature has broadened, enlightened and enriched my understanding of the topic. Thousands of words on human rights have been cut from Chapter Two, which contains the literature review.

Literature regarding the issue of human trafficking in the past few decades, the commodification of human exploitation, sexual slavery, and sex trafficking has increased exponentially. However, globally, regionally, and nationally, most focus is on women and girls. In 2008 Dennis (2008, p. 11) observed that "the invisibility of men and boys in scholarly discussions of the global sex trade … failed to acknowledge the existence of male sex workers at all", but this may be changing, with scholars observing that an "increase in the number of studies and publications on the topic have escalated" (Weitzer, 2015). In Cambodia, most research conducted regarding boys has focussed on the coercion, exploitation, enslavement, and trafficking of boys within the lucrative, multi-billion-dollar fishing industry (Doezema, 2002; Kara, 2017), based in Thailand.

In the Literature Review I focus on the following key themes: trafficking, poverty, culture and tradition, sexual abuse of boys, stigma and discrimination, migration for work, orphanages and voluntourism, the sex tourist, donors and development and proselytizing.

A key feature of the literature review is to outline the laws and relationships between NGOs, multilateral organisations and the Cambodian Government. There are a range of organisations which are active in Cambodia on the issue of slavery. I have deliberately chosen to outline partnerships with the government of Cambodia, in addressing international human rights issues on trafficking. Of key importance has been the role of the UN Special Rapporteur on Cambodia. I describe the challenges faced by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the International Organisation on Migration (IOM), and

UNODC.; by an International Non-Government Organisation (INGO) Transparency International (TI); by the United States Department of State (US DoS) with their Trafficking in Persons (TIP) annual report; and the regional ASEAN responses to issues of trafficking in Cambodia.

In Chapter Three I outline my research design. I introduce qualitative description which I chose as my methodology. My research question would be best pursued through interviews. I discuss this and the ethics application. I cannot remember ever conducting a formal interview in my life and I am a novice researcher. I had a great deal to learn, as will be seen in my description of my pilot interview. The interviews which followed were carefully conducted. The research design involved data analysis and coding using NVivo.

Chapter Four contains the findings from my interviews. As I coded, I could see recurring adjectives in the transcripts: corruption; collaboration; conversion (proselytizing); cultural issues, poverty, and to a lesser extent, *genocide* coursed through each narrative. My participants told deeply textured stories. They were highly informed and deeply reflective, generous and constructive. I was in awe of their individual knowledge. Every interviewee was passionate and authentic. I could never have imagined the synthesis possible from my participant's interviews, how each continued to add to their descriptions to the themes. Chapter Four reports on participant's connection with Cambodia, observations and perceptions, descriptions of children, activities of NGOs and a final section on 'What can we do?', addressing the core thesis question.

Chapter Five contains the discussion from my interviews. It uses the primary data retrieved through the interview process, the respective findings, and the support or rebuttal that the findings have compared against references from the Literature Review. The chapter covers key themes that emerged from the interviews. It discusses these more in-depth, affirming findings as well as considering issues beyond their face value. The themes that emerged were disparate. They included themes such as 'knowledge and awareness', 'corruption', 'politics', 'gender bias and gender specifics', 'poverty', 'trafficking', 'orphanages and voluntourism', 'proselytization', 'altruism and colonialism', and the role that 'NGOs' play in the findings. The findings from this lead into Chapter Six.

Chapter Six concludes this investigative research. It proffers findings from the participants, who each successfully engaged with the thesis question. The findings from my research are bullet-pointed. They lead into the thesis question: "What contributions might be made by Western advocates, activists, researchers, and members of NGOs to stop the sexual exploitation, slavery, and trafficking of male children in Cambodia?"

Chapter Six discusses the question and considers further findings and recommendations that arose parallel yet independently to the literature supported discussion. The chapter also contemplates opportunities for further research, in and of the thesis question. The chapter concludes with issues that arose throughout the research process. Although I feel that this investigative research ends with more questions than answers, it does proffer practical, barefoot promptings and recommendations to continue to address, assist, and research the gender biased issue so that boys and young men are able to live a lived life free of coercion, stigmatization, victimization, and vulnerability.

# CHAPTER 2

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1   Part One

A literature review is an integral part of the research process. The literature review "helps researchers glean the ideas of others interested in a particular research question" Fraenkel and Wallen (2006, p. 67). This enables the review to create "larger, ongoing dialogue in the literature about a topic, filling in the gaps, and extending prior studies" (Creswell,1994, p. 20, 21).

The "trafficking of persons around the world is a serious violation of human rights and a manifestation of social injustice" (Okech, Choi, Elkins, and Burns, 2018, p. 103). Researching human trafficking is often plagued with misinformation. "Valid, reliable data [is] hard to find", exacerbated with estimations, and intensified by "socio-economic problems, conflicts, or natural disasters" (Okech *et al.*, 2018, p. 103). The literature review retrieves material from many sources: books, dictionaries, dissertations and scholarly empirical and non-empirical articles, encyclopaedias, peer-reviewed journal articles, textbooks, videos, and databases. These finds have invariably led, through the index, to other authors and publications. I have used Internet searches with Google Scholar.

The campus library offers access to multi-disciplinary databases, such as JSTOR, Project Muse, ProQuest (Social Sciences), SPRINGER Link, and Taylor and Francis Online. These are just a few options available to me that have proved overwhelmingly effective. The research repository located at https://tuwhera.aut.ac.nz/ holds theses and dissertations completed at AUT.

In this chapter, I review literature and research on trafficking, poverty, culture and tradition, stigma and discrimination, migration for work, orphanages and voluntourism, the sex tourist, donors and development and proselytizing.

### 2.1.1 Trafficking

The first universal, agreed-upon definition of human trafficking in the international community came in 2000, in the Palermo Declaration. Over the past century there have been more than five international documents that addressed human trafficking, and a purported 22 definitions and versions of human trafficking (de Heredia, 2008). As such, the language used in the definitions and descriptions reflect ever-evolving societal changes. For instance, historically as sensationalized in the press, human trafficking was 'the white slave trade', or (en)forced prostitution. (Wylie, 2016, p. 2). More recently human trafficking has become a 'battleground in the push for political agendas" being spun into "different themes when defining trafficking" (de Heredia, 2008, p. 302). Terminologies of 'human trafficking', 'human smuggling', and '(sexual) exploitation' can be exclusive or broad.

Trafficking and smuggling are criminal activities. These violate a "state's right and obligation to control its borders and determine who is admitted to its territory" (O'Connell-Davidson, 2013, p. 3). Trafficking is not a singular, one-off event. The processes of recruitment, transportation, and control take time. Bates (2009, p.40) makes the distinction clear, stating that "in cases of trafficking, the act of smuggling is just a prelude to, and a conduit into, enslavement".

Academics, NGOs, and policymakers emphasize two specific differences between 'trafficking' with 'smuggling'. Trafficking is held to involve a "relationship that continues subsequent to movement" (O'Connell-Davidson, 2013, p. 3), while those smuggled are "generally left to make their own way after crossing the [a] border" (O'Connell-Davidson, 2013, p. 3).

Kyle and Koslowski (2011, p. 4) wrote that human smuggling is when "an individual's crossing of a state's international border, without that state's authorization and with the assistance of paid smugglers", whereas human trafficking is often a "subset of human smuggling, which is itself a part of the broader phenomenon of what is variously termed 'irregular', 'unauthorized', 'undocumented' or 'illegal' migration'" (2011, p. 4). The fundamental difference between human smuggling and human trafficking is coercion, "whether through direct application of physical force or the threat of the use of force" (Kyle and Koslowski, 2011, p. 5). However, it is problematic to fully disentangle the

processes of human smuggling with that of human trafficking as these processes are "generally headed by networks of intermediaries rather than end-to-end by the same individual or organization" (Kyle and Koslowski, 2011, p. 5), whereas "smuggling is a 'voluntary act' on the part of those smuggled" (Jeffreys, 2002, p.1; O'Connell-Davidson, 2011, p. 3). Trafficking, however, is an act enforced through coercion, deception, and violence.

The difference between the two issues is important due to the obligations that states have in relation to the categorization of the 'smuggled' or trafficked' migrant. Though still restricted, the obligations that states have to those trafficked are more extensive than to those who are smuggled. This "hierarchizing of the rights of 'trafficked persons' over those of other categories of irregular migrants is often endorsed by anti-trafficking campaigners from NGOs and human rights lobby groups" (O'Connell-Davidson, 2013, p. 3). Trafficking is a more personal afront to human rights. Victims are indebted to the traffickers and enslaved to them, while the smuggled are usually left to fend for themselves in their destination nations as they have prepaid their smugglers and are physically free. Those smuggled must only avoid detection and detention at their destination.

In addition to the various definitions of [human] trafficking and smuggling, there is also debate over what terminology should be used to describe the phenomenon. Most notably is the term 'modern slavery'. There are some that argue that 'human trafficking' and 'modern slavery' are interchangeable, being an extension of the 'old' transatlantic slave trade, and that both terms refer to clear violation of the dignity and human rights of victims (Musto, 2009).

However, some academics argue that although slavery and trafficking sometimes intersect, they do not necessarily refer to the 'same' phenomenon. A key difference is that slavery suggests the victim is compelled by violence or the threat of violence. Whereas human trafficking refers to a complex process, that may or may not include violence, it often involves an exploitation of vulnerabilities. These subtle terminological differences are important to note because they illustrate the complexities of these experiences (Musto, 2009).

To assist in this matter, in 2000, the United Nations General Assembly introduced the United Nations (UN) Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish

Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, (to be referenced from here as the "Palermo Protocol (2000)"), was adopted by the UN General Assembly, in tandem with the Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air, as a part of the Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime in 2000 (see p.12). In the Palermo Protocol (2000):

> Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery, or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the removal of organs. (UNDOC, 2000, Article 3(a)).

Since the introduction and implementation of the Palermo Protocol, some national responses to trafficking have improved dramatically. For example, UNDOC annually produces a *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons.* By 2016, 158 countries, (88 percent of the UN General Assembly), had a statute that criminalizes most forms of trafficking, compared to only 33 member states in 2003 (18 percent). The countries with the highest number of convictions were in Western and Central Europe, as well as the Americas (UNODC, 2016). Despite new legislation, demonstrated responses to trafficking have remained largely unchanged. Evidence suggests that human trafficking is a growing issue with the number of reported victims increasing. The global Covid pandemic is expected to exacerbate this situation.

Human trafficking encompasses a broad spectrum of human rights abuses. The trafficking issue that gets the most attention is sex trafficking. The US DoS (2015, p. 7) defines sex trafficking as an instance in which an individual "engages in a commercial sex act, such as prostitution, as the result of force, threats of force, fraud, coercion, or any other combination of such means". Other types of trafficking are reported, including debt bondage, domestic servitude, forced labour, organ trafficking, and the recruitment and use of child soldiers (Bales, 2012; US DoS, 2015).

While sex trafficking has been a significant focus of initial human trafficking research and policy developments, trafficking does include many less acknowledged or recognized exploitative activities.

### 2.1.2 Poverty

Endemic poverty is a daily, lived experience for many Cambodians. Their average life expectancy is 69.8 (UNDP, 2020). The UNDP (2020) estimate that 37.2% of the population live in MDP. Cambodia's GNI is $USD 4246/annum. UNDP (2020) report that 14.3% of the labour force is skilled, meaning that 14.3% have either intermediate or advanced education beyond the age of fifteen. This is even though the same report (2020) indicates that across the general population, Cambodians have each received 11.5 years of education. Employment figures (UNDP, 2020) show that 81.8% of the population over fifteen are employed, with 12.6% of children aged between five and seventeen in full-time employment This disparity is one of the many determinants that make accurate data collection, particularly of human trafficking difficult. This has a domino effect throughout Cambodia, impacting many other aspects of daily life in the kingdom.

Davis, Miles, Eno, and Rowland (2021, p. 14) concur, commenting that "the rapidly expanding gap between the country's rich and poor has led to increasing forms of structural violence and exploitation". This exacerbates "vulnerabilities to physical, sexual, psychological, and emotional violence" (Davis *et al.*, 2021, p. 14). Neak Samsen, Poverty Analyst at the World Bank elucidates that that hard one gains of Cambodia's GDP "are fragile. Many people who have escaped poverty are still at high risk of falling back into poverty" (c.f. Ardiyanti, 2017, p. 51). This precarious situation is ripe for criminals, assisted by the ignorance of citizens about trafficking as a criminal action (Ardiyanti, 2017, p. 52). Men, women, and children are trapped in this criminal vortex. Many women and children are coerced, indentured, kidnapped, sold, tricked, and trafficked into sexual abuse and exploitation, having fewer employment, and even less opportunity for legal protection.

The combination of these determinants conducted under a long history of civil unrest, poverty, violence, and civil war contribute to the issue of human trafficking.

Davy (2014, p. 799, 780) comments that the "history of civil conflict, the growth of the sex sector as a result of UN intervention and presence in the country, and Cambodia's lagging economic development" has heavily

influenced human trafficking in Cambodia. Poverty, particularly rurally, has seen many youths increasingly search larger metropolitan areas for better education and employment opportunities. This rural-urban migration, ostensibly to escape endemic poverty increasing vulnerability to coercion, exploitation, and trafficking.

Vulnerability to trafficking exacerbated through "individual, family, and community- based factors" (Davy, 2018, p. 51), impacted by individual circumstances, such as "abuse (domestic and sexual), citizenship, documentation (or lack of it), violence, and the pressure to travel to work to support [their] family" (Davy, 2018, p. 51). Children often have no say in the decision-making process of their parents or elders concerning "migration", whether domestically or transnationally. This is because the intent of the migration is to support their families.

The children and youths that are migrated, often to overwhelming and unfamiliar environments, are extremely vulnerable to abuse, coercion, deceit, and victimization. This firstly happens by a manipulation of their 'trust', by either a family member, friend, or neighbour. Secondly, 'an exploitation of power' transpires, conducted by those that have 'control' over the "migrant" and/ or their families. Exploitation, extortion, and violence create fear and vulnerability. Emotional and physical threats enabling traffickers to abuse and control their 'chattels'. These are scenarios of the domino that poverty has upon the citizens of Cambodia.

### 2.1.3 Culture and Tradition

In Cambodia, the traditional belief system is "highly gendered, and the impact is very different for boys and girls" (Miles and Thomas, 2007, p. 390). Within Cambodian culture, Buddhist practices and traditions ensure that boys are given greater freedom than girls. In Khmer, this is known as *chbab srey/ chbab proh,* the social codes of behaviour that women (*srey)* and men (*proh*) are taught from a young age. To emphasis this, a Cambodian proverb narrates that "women are like cloth and males are like gold. When a cloth is soiled, it is no longer (valuable)

however, if gold is soiled it only needs to be polished again" (Brickell, 2007, p. 115).

This proverb is often used as a metaphor to repeat the idea of male importance and supremacy in Khmer society. Women and girls are tainted and unclean, therefore they are carefully protected, whereas men and boys have less scrutiny and more freedom. Some research "suggests that girls do face greater threats of sexual abuse privately" (UNICEF, 2010), and because of this, some authors and organizations believe that more attention is required for girls and women than that for males. However, with independence, "boys often face more risk of exploitation publicly, at parks, markets, theatres, and at the perpetrators home" (UNICEF, 2010).

This characterisation of gender fosters an environment where "the existence of sexual abuse and the vulnerability of boys is often denied" (Frederick, 2010, p. 6). Davis and Miles (2012, p. 5) noted that the "sexual violence against men and boys is often little understood or acknowledged". This is often exacerbated by them being ignored by "social services, administrative bodies, mass media, and social research" (Dennis, 2008, p.11-12). This can be attributed to the "feminization of victimization, creating the impression that boys are invulnerable, rarely abused, less seriously affected when they are, and/ or more likely to be abusers of others as victims" (Hilton, Sokhem, Socheat, Syphat, Channy, Sothearwat, Ponarry, Vibol, and Dalin, 2008, p. 8). Male vulnerability is often obscured by contemporary "media expressions of male dominance and invulnerability perpetuated under the guise of masculinity". To some extent, men, and boys … become the victims of this media-driven, socially constructed conception of maleness" (Jones, 2010, p. 1145).

There is a 'traditional' Khmer practice of the massaging of, and the kissing of the genitals of boys under two. Up to a 'certain' age, this practice is an accepted societal norm. It is an intimate form of 'comfort', innocent in practice, and not thought of as abuse or exploitation within Khmer culture. However, Davis and Miles (2012) note that in their research they discovered that sometimes the practice continued beyond the age of two, which subsequently could be inferred and interpreted as abuse. This cultural practice involves touching a male child's genitals to sooth them or show affection. This is usually administered by family

members or occasionally by neighbours. The practice is conducted by both males and females.

"Cambodia is a country that has a well-known problem with child abuse, especially with paedophilia" reported Al Jazeera in 2019. However, Cambodian society generally ignores these comments and observations of child abuse and sexual exploitation, particularly when it concerns boys. This denial can be "attributed to a variety of factors, including social stigmas regarding homosexual behaviour, fears of punishment, and threats to masculinity" (Miles and Blanche, 2011, p. 8). These refutations of sexuality continue to obstruct research on this subject, immaterial of socio-cultural paradigms, economics, geography, and politics.

### 2.1.4  Sexual Abuse of Boys

Between April and June 2007, Hilton *et al.* (2008) conducted the first specific research in Cambodia on the sexual abuse of boys. It was undertaken in three main centres: Phnom Penh, Sihanoukville, and Battambang, using semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Forty young boys were given the opportunity to be involved, as well as one hundred staff from a range of NGOs and service providers, who met with the research team. All provided consent and were thanked for their honesty and vulnerability.

When it has been discovered that they have been abused, victims have been further discriminated against, mocked, and maligned, "which [furthers] their marginalization and isolation" (Hilton *et al.*, p. 20, 2008).

The male vulnerability to sexual exploitation and to human trafficking has been greatly neglected. The "traditional narrative posits that women and girls are more vulnerable …and thus are in greater need of legal protection, whereas males, conversely, are resistant to human trafficking and thus less in need of legal protection" (Jones, 2010, p. 1146). This societal conditioning results in the adverse harm to males being trafficked being downplayed or ignored. In 1998 Holmes and Slap (1998, p.1860) commented that "the sexual abuse of boys is common, underreported, unrecognized, and undertreated". This was echoed

almost twenty years later by Herbert: the "gender … made visible in … trafficking literature [is] almost exclusively … female" (Herbert, 2016, p. 281).

Usually, the 'victims' are poor, socially isolated, and subjected to physical or psychological torture" (Jones, 2010, p. 1148). "Anxiety and fear saturate [their] daily lives… and destroy their mental health … leading to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, and disorientation" (Jones, 2010, 1148). The boys are trafficked for forced labour or the drug trade, gang activity, or sex (Jones, 2010, 1149). The market for forced labour "provides a greater incentive for human traffickers, [and] social conditions indicate that males are most vulnerable to this form of human trafficking" (Jones, 2010, p. 1152).

However, the "prevalence and magnitude of boy sexual abuse, the full extent of human traffickers' profit from the sexual exploitation of boys, and the medical impact of sexual exploitation on boy health are comparatively neglected and grossly underdeveloped" (Jones, 2010, p. 1151).

Discussion within Cambodian society on sexuality and sexual identity is rare. Sexual identity is more of a Western construct and fixation. Traditionally, Cambodians "do not consciously reflect on their sexual identity, but rather on themselves as females and males living in Cambodian society" (Tarr, 1996, p. 3). However, Sovannara and Ward (2004) observed that within Cambodian society there was a significant denial that sex between men happens.

### 2.1.5 Stigma and Discrimination

The discrimination and stigma incurred by those having homosexual relations, whether coerced or desired, causes most Cambodian men to "hide their face" (USAID, 2004). This public refutation of same-sex behaviour, sexual abuse, or exploitation indicates why there is more reporting and literature available on these issues for girls rather than boys. Additionally, the "lower frequency or [even] greater denial of the problem … [statistically] may not give an accurate picture of the problem" (UNICEF, 2010, p. 14). This matter is affirmed by academics, where conducting any research on sexual exploitation or trafficking is difficult (Davy, 2018; Thomas and Matthews, 2006). There is more reporting of sexual exploitation and trafficking of girls than on boys (Pocock, Kiss, Oram,

and Zimmerman 2016; Kumar, 2015; de Heredia, 2008). When this matter is discussed, the discourse focuses on estimations at best (Piotrowitcz, Rijken, and Uhl 2018; Spencer and Broad, 2012; Kyle and Koslowski, 2001).

### 2.1.6  Migration for Work

Commentary and opinion can picture men who migrate as "active, adventurous, brave, and deserving of admiration" (Surtees, 2008, p. 17). But the male victim is often controlled through physical, psychological, and sexual abuse. Men and boys trafficked in Cambodia have been "deceived onto long-haul fishing boats …out to sea for up to two years or more [in] virtual prisons on which the trafficking victims endure inhuman working conditions and physical abuse" (Tien, 2013, p. 209). They have been defrauded, duped by "recruiters, forced to pay high recruitment fees subject to hard and abusive work" (Surtees, 2008, p. 19). Those trafficked believed they were going to work, which was a necessity to survive, providing for their respective families. The demand for cheap, dispensable, disposable, invisible labour in South-East Asia is pervasive domestically, regionally, and internationally. Labour is but one of the nefarious trades, including young brides, adoption (Davy, 2018), orphanages, organ trafficking, pornography, sex-tourism, and voluntourism, where recruiters coerce the vulnerable.

### 2.1.7  Orphanages and Voluntourism

Orphanages and voluntourism are characteristics of a mounting trend where children live in "non-family group settings, including 'orphanages', 'institutional care', 'residential care', and 'children's homes'" (Lyneham and Facchini, 2019, p. 2). However, whatever definition is used, they are metaphors for the many situations in Cambodia: 'child sexual exploitation', 'child prostitution' 'child sex trafficking', 'commercial sexual exploitation of children', and 'child sex tourism'.

The sexual exploitation of children in the travel and tourism sector (SECTT) refers to the sexual abuse of persons under the age of eighteen, with or without the exchange of money, gifts, or favours, with or without the consent of the child,

either within their own country, or internationally. There are two kinds of 'travelling child sex offenders' (TSCOs); firstly, there are "preferential offenders who deliberately travel to seek out children for sex", (ECPAT International, 2016, p. 10), while secondly, there are "situational offenders who aren't travelling to sexually exploit a child, but if an opportunity presents itself while they're travelling, they'll take it" (2016, p. 10). TSCOs are often looking for a transformative experience for their soul, which can be amplified when the volunteering involves orphans. Carpenter adds that although orphans are "typically characterized as materially and socially vulnerable, [orphans] are paradoxically powerful, because by helping orphans, adults become better people, morally and emotionally" (Carpenter, 2015, p. 19).

Guiney and Mostafanez (2015, p. 132) suggest that "voluntourism could be fuelling the exploitation of children in Cambodia". The growth of orphanages and voluntourism have created ingenious new opportunities with which perpetrators are able to [sexually] exploit vulnerable children with virtual anonymity and impunity. This organized, institution-based child-sexual exploitation allows contact between "vulnerable children and child sex offenders, stimulating demand for orphanages and orphaned children through child trafficking and paper orphaning, … providing necessary conditions for orphanage scams" (Lyneham and Facchini, 2019, p. 1).

Children are placed in these institutions for various reasons: armed conflict, discrimination, disability, family conflict and neglect, homelessness, illness, natural disasters, poverty, and recruitment (Al Jazeera, 2019; Lyneham and Facchini, 2019). Just as in labour and sexual exploitation, parents are often coerced into giving up their child. Recruiters say to the parents that "the children are going to get a great education and that they'll be in touch with a lot of Westerners. Subsequently, parents allow these recruiters to take the children. They get put into these orphanages where some of these orphanages are a money-making machine" (Al Jazeera, 2019). These institutions are either poorly regulated or are simultaneously part of an endemic system rife with corruption.

As money-making enterprises, orphanages have developed as an entrepreneurial niche (Carpenter, 2019, p. 21). From 2005 to 2015, the number of orphanages in Cambodia increased by 60 percent (Knaus, 2017, August 18).

Coincidentally, this growth occurred when there was a "period of real growth in tourism, ... in voluntourism – combining holidays with humanitarian work" (Knaus, 2017, August 18). Many INGOs have increased their resistance to orphanage tourism. There has been much international backlash to prevent unqualified volunteers volunteering to work in orphanages. Al Jazeera (2012) noted that "if even a small fraction of the funds that support orphanages would be redirected towards basic family preservation, these children would have a much brighter future". Farrington (2016, p. 41) advocated that the regulated implementation of rigorous child protection policies and practices and monitoring of these policies and practices in all child-related professions should be a priority for governments.

### 2.1.8  The Sex Tourist

Child sexual exploitation is "common in areas frequented by tourists, such as rivers, beaches, cultural areas, and major tourist attractions" (Thomas and Matthews, 2006, p. 18). Child sex tourism manifests itself through organized crime, as well as through opportunistic exploitation by tourists. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is an increase in the industry. However due to its illicit, underground nature, estimations are used. Additionally, there is a dislocation between the sex tourist and their countries of birth which makes it more difficult to monitor them.

Profiling the "child sex tourist" is difficult. However, there are some general characteristics relating to age, residential status, occupation, and ethnicity. Contrary to widely held opinions that most child sex tourists are Western males, research shows that Asians are the largest group of child sex tourists visiting Cambodia (Thomas and Matthews, 2006, p. 8). Within this group, it was discovered that most Asian offenders were Chinese [males], ostensibly seeking out virgin girls for sexual exploitation. Thomas and Matthews (2006, p. 8) identified three general categories of the 'child sex tourist': "the paedophile, the virginity seeker, and the situational offender". Although two of these classifications have been previously explained, the 'virginity seeker' has not.

Within trafficking literature "paedophilia and virginity sale are considered particularly appalling examples of sex trafficking" (Molland, 2011, p. 129). Molland adds that the "sale of virgins as elite commodities within sex trafficking results in considerable profits for traffickers and exploiters" (2011, p. 129). Virginity sale is a niche market that is "separate from the 'mainstream' sex industry" (Molland, 2011, p. 133). As such, higher prices are paid to exploit the victim, given their assumed availability, physical acquiescence, and sexual malleability. Bauer, Chon, and McKercher (2003, p. 189) noted that many sex tourists prefer to engage with "virgins for safety reasons", particularly in a generation racked by the HIV/ AIDS pandemic.

Men are paying more to have sex with virgins, linked to health related and traditional cultural beliefs. These include the perceived belief that sex with virgins is a vaccine against HIV/ AIDS, limiting the risk of other STD infections, the notion of purity as a restorative and protective force, or just a basic interest in having sexual relations with a child (Thomas and Matthews, 2006; Schwartz, 2004). However, "once a girl's virginity is gone, [s]he is often forced to continue working as a prostitute either to pay off her debts or because she has nowhere else to go, or both" (Schwartz, 2004, p. 385).

Thomas and Matthews (2006) discuss that the prostitution process is different for boys than girls. They noted that whereas girls are more likely to have been coerced or introduced to prostitution through a family member or a middleman, boys "are more likely to have been approached and sometimes groomed by the offender, with 73 percent directly approached by their first client" (2006, p. 32). Like other forms of exploitation and trafficking within Cambodia, it is a market-driven industry that can only be addressed through suppressing demand and implementing preventative measures.

Thomas and Matthews (2006, p. 15) add that "some of these charges target sexual acts (debauchery, rape/ attempted rape, indecent assault), whilst others target the fact that persons earn money from the sex trade (debauchery, trafficking, pimping/prostitution)". Measures continue to be taken to address this issue, although this is a work in progress.

### 2.1.9  Donors and Development

From the 1990s, it has been suggested that Cambodia has become a 'donors' playground'. Almost 50 percent of Cambodia's budget is "still funded through developmental assistance, placing [the kingdom] among the most internationally intervened countries in the world" (Fforde and Siedel, 2010, p. 4). However, donors seem to have little influence or impact with the government, or political development within the kingdom, where political accountability does not exist. In 1992, the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) established developmental intervention in the kingdom. The UN Peacekeeping Mission deployment had a profound impact on the country, unwittingly setting the stage of many of contemporary Cambodia's current confusions and struggles. Cambodia became a guinea pig for a liberal peacebuilding effort after decades of civil war, genocide, and invasion. The kingdom was "riding on the wave of democratization efforts that had often replaced the Cold War model of war aid policies" (Fforde and Siedel, 2010, p. 7). It was assumed that Cambodia would be a blank page with which to (re)construct democracy and democratic institutions, starting with UN-sponsored elections.

However, since then, Cambodia's "political landscape has been shaped by and through the ongoing interactions between interveners, donors, representatives of foreign governments, the Cambodian elite, and the Cambodian population" (Travouillion and Bernath, 2020, p. 2). These international interventions have contributed to some economic and political changes. This assistance does have conditions, but they are rarely effectively implemented. Prominent opposition politicians in exile, muzzled, in exile, or under arrest, "boast of their special relationship with the international community" (Travouillion and Bernath, 2020, p. 2). This complicates relationships with the government of Hun Sen.

International NGOs provide insight into the complexity of Cambodia's (re)development, restoration, and restructuring, not only with infrastructure and the economy, but with aid and assistance in education, employment, the judiciary, the social services, and developmental intervention. Human rights activists may point out glaring examples of abuse, such as trafficking and land reform, others indicate that poverty has been reduced.

The Cambodian government has increased the use of legislation as a weapon to target civil society, opposition politicians, and social movements. To shut down community participation and to increase their power. In 2015, Cambodia passed the Law on Associations and Non-governmental Organizations (hereafter the NGO Law), to "regulate and control the activities of a wide range of civil society organisations". (Curley, 2018, p. 247). The NGO Law was implemented "requiring that all NGOs register with the government and maintain political neutrality" (Davies, 2019, p. 597). The NGO Law was initiated to close the activities of the US-funded National Democratic Institute. Government officials have used "neutrality provisions to issue warnings to other human rights-based organisations, such as the Cambodian Centre for Human Rights (CCHR)" (Curley, 2018, p. 258). This resulted in with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) spokesperson, Ravina Shamdasani, urging that the Cambodian Ruling Council reject the bill, because it breached the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Cambodia had ratified, and which was recognized in the country's constitution (c.f. Curley, 2018, p. 253).

Of note in the legislation is the distinction that is drawn between domestic and foreign NGOs, and distinctions made within domestic classification. The 'domestic association' refers to "a membership organization established under the laws of Cambodia by natural persons or legal entities aiming at representing and protecting the interests of their members without generating or sharing profit" (Curley, 2018, p. 253). However, a 'domestic non-governmental organization', is defined as:

> A non-membership organization, including foundations, established under the laws of Cambodia by natural persons and/or legal entities aiming at providing funds and services in one or several sectors for the public interest without generating or sharing profit. (Curley, 2018, p. 253).

Local grassroots groups, such as those often found in rural areas, were exempted by the government, although in practice this is a grey area. A foreign NGO is described as a "foreign association or non-governmental organization … a legal organization established outside the country aiming at conducting activities to serve the public interest without generating profit" (Curley, 2018, p. 253).

The NGO Law has eight regulatory requirements: "founding members, registration, statute and MoU, financial disclosure, neutrality, reporting, removal criteria, and terrorism (NGO Law, 2015)" (Curley, 2018, p. 254).

INGO, NGO, and Faith-based Organizations (FBOs) programmes and projects often require technical experts. These are frequently foreign development consultants. Some critics accuse the INGOs of organising "in ways that reflect development doctrines that are strongly universalistic – generic - in nature, implying that expertise applies across different contexts" (Fforde and Seidel, 2015, p. 92), with catchphrases such as 'what works there, will work here', without the negative 'it will not work'. The NGO Law did not directly affect development and investment of time, money, or staff, but it has created a need for constant vigilance by these organisations.

### 2.1.10 Proselytizing

Theravada Buddhism, Cambodia's official religion, has had an active presence within the kingdom for over 1500 years. It has a "central role in Cambodian social and political life" (Frame, 2016, p. 278). The faith is integrated into Khmer daily life. Although this integral core of faith and tradition was abolished and decimated through civil war and genocide, the Khmer continue to hold onto their ancestral tenets, including deities and animistic guardian spirits, in contemporary Cambodia.

This Buddhist tradition was also challenged with colonialization, with its ubiquitous proselytization. Religion was one of the "key units of colonisation, winning hearts and minds through their good works even as colonial governments exploited natural resources and people" (Loewenberg, 2009, p.795). In 2021, FBOs in Cambodia have a dual role as religious and development actors. However, this line is often blurred and conditional. The role of FBOs within the NGO fraternity has become of more interest within the academic community, as "evangelicals [continue to] challenge the traditional schema of 'development actor' by operating fairly independently, sometimes as family units, often with funding from their home churches, and generally without

any real oversight of their engagement or any attention to their effectiveness" (Schroeder, 2012, p. 5). Whether the FBO is:

> Catholic, Lutheran, Evangelical, or Pentecostal, all vie for territory and converts. They are joined by a wide range of Islamic groups …with many seek[ing] to spread their faith through medical services, emergency food aid, and development programmes. (Loewenberg, 2009, p. 795).

Within the emerging nation, most FBOs "intentionally separate their development initiatives from their religious outreach, recognizing the tensions that arise from juxtaposition of the two" (Schroeder, 2012, p. 8). FBOs have an underlying mission, or vision, that is "informed by their religious beliefs" (Thaut, 2009, p. 327), combining religious values with secular goals.

Many Christian-based FBOs have links to the local colonial past organizations and tend to immerse and ingratiate themselves into the local infrastructure, when compared with their secular counterparts. However, many FBOs are difficult to differentiate from their secular NGO contemporaries with their primary focus on aid assistance, development and relief work. Within the FBO 'brotherhood', Thaut (2009) found that most "evangelical agencies were found to be church-planting organizations who were involved with relief and development as a secondary, ad-hoc activity" (p. 327).

This issue highlights the contentious nature of evangelism and proselytization in Cambodia. It is an "issue that surfaced often, with wide differences in approach and practice" (Schroeder, 2012, p. 9). Many FBOs gauge their success in how well they have proselytized through their evangelism and humanitarian assistance. This measure of success is totally contradictory to that of their secular colleagues. Frame demonstrated that this theoretical difference is "not from their ability to actually measure effectiveness" (Frame, 2016, p. 274), but from the way that their effectiveness is defined, measured, and negotiated. Success has been "conceptualized and constructed multi-dimensionally by … referencing success in terms of high numbers of clients served, perceived improvement in client behaviour and attitude, and low recidivism" whether they "re-enter the sex-trade or [are being] re-victimized" (2016, p. 277). Frame comments further that "the notion of success, at least in part, [can be] attributed to God" (2016, p. 279).

Sexual exploitation and trafficking are also a sensitive matter for secular NGOs. This occurs in an environment where the dominant focus "in the anti-trafficking framework mostly overlooks the experiences and concerns of many of the most marginalized communities, including immigrants, and gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer (LGBTQI+) people" (Campbell and Zimmerman, 2013, p. 146). Reflection on the victims of sexual exploitation and human trafficking often brings moral discomfort and righteous indignation when FBO staff speak to churches and donors about their work and experiences combatting this matter. There is an "implicit expectation that adding the 'Christian' aspect of our professional identities means that we will condemn commercial sex work" (Campbell and Zimmerman, 2013, p. 146)

In such a context, donors and researchers are also realizing that "FBOs can play a legitimate role in civil society, as well as having greater access …to local communities" (Clarke, 2015, p. 38).

## 2.2   Part Two

This section of the literature review focuses on multilateral, bilateral and INGO engagement with, and in, Cambodia, with specific relevance to trafficking in general, specifically sex trafficking. Having ratified ICCPR, Cambodia is the subject of a Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of these obligations, including Article 8 on slavery and servitude. The human rights situation in Cambodia means that a UN Rapporteur has been appointed to monitor human rights.

Three multilateral bodies – ILO, IOM, and UNODC- are engaged in programmes with the Cambodian government. The bilateral relationship with the US DoS subject Cambodia to an annual report on Trafficking in People (TIP). Transparency International (TI) provides an example of an INGO walking a tightrope between being critical and being a development partner. Finally, I examine the activities of the ASEAN bloc with respect to trafficking and sexual slavery.

### 2.2.1 The UN Rapporteur

Since the 1960s, the role of the UN Special Rapporteur has been "an integral part of the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council" (Giammarinaro, 2019, p. 431). The UN Special Rapporteur works on a "wide range of human rights issues, including arbitrary detention, torture, slavery, and violence against women and children" (Subedi, 2011, p. 203). Although the UN Charter (1945) embodied in Article 2(7), emphasis the "principle of non-interference", by creating the position of the UN Special Rapporteur, "recommendations that are not legally binding on states" (Subedi, 2011, p. 203) can be, and have been made.

Special Rapporteurs advise, examine, monitor, and report publicly their respective findings (Subedi 2011). They can conduct fact-finding missions investigating allegations of human rights abuses, but only at the invitation of the country. Subedi (2016, p.1, 2) commented that: "Special Rapporteurs are rarely welcomed with any degree of enthusiasm in any country, but they have to work with the government … to have their recommendations implemented – a difficult balancing act in itself". The Rapporteur can personally intervene on the behalf of groups or individuals on their own accord. In this they enjoy "full independence and carry out their mandate according to the fundamental principles of ethics and integrity" (Giammarinaro, 2019, p. 431).

In Cambodia, the UN Human Rights mandate is one of the oldest and strongest. The mandate of the Special Rapporteur on human rights in Cambodia is derived from two sources:

1. The Paris Peace Accords of 1991 (Article 17 of the *Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodian Conflict* and Article 3 of the *Agreement Concerning the Sovereignty, Independence, Territorial Integrity and Inviolability, Neutrality and National Unity of Cambodia)* and;
2. The annual decisions of the UN Human Rights Council (formerly the Human Rights Commission). (Subedi, 2011, p. 250).

The role of the Special Rapporteur is a difficult position to have, particularly in a nation such as Cambodia. Media interest and political scrutiny of the

position, nationally and internationally, is critically and obsessively followed. Subedi (2011, p. 256) reminisced that "the degree of media interest in [my work on Cambodia] made me realize that I had to adapt quickly and to adjust as quickly. Any comments [made] to the media needed careful consideration, given the government's sensitivity to any negative media report". This is even if the work of the Special Rapporteur has no "visible or direct or tangible impact" (Subedi, 2016, p. 3). When the reports are "cited by national and international courts and tribunals, civil society organizations, development partners or donor agencies, academics, researchers, human rights defenders, and governments" (2016, p. 3) much diplomacy and discretion is required, as the "reports can be and have been used by prosecutors in international criminal courts" (2016, p. 3).

In 2020, the Special Rapporteur for Cambodia, Mary Lawlor, has been publicly criticized by the Cambodian Government. In 2020, the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Cambodia to the UN Office in Geneva rejected claims that "the government had used hard-handed measures against human rights defenders in the country" (Chheng, November 17, 2020). Mary Lawlor had called for "an immediate end to the systemic detention and criminalization of human rights defenders as well as the excessive use of force against them" (Chheng, November 17, 2020). The government stated that it "encourages citizens to participate in protecting, respecting, and promoting human rights in all areas within the legal framework for the benefit of the nation as a whole" (Chheng, November 17, 2020).

To support the Special Rapporteurs claims, a public opinion poll conducted by three NGOs had found an abject decrease in how citizens actually understood their fundamental rights and freedoms, commenting that "there is an acute need to improve public understanding of rights and fundamental freedoms as enshrined in domestic and international law, to enable citizens to actively engage in society, and to empower them to hold the government accountable for its failure to uphold freedom" (Chheng, October 20, 2020).The Cambodian government continued to argue: "The assertation that those cooperating with the UN human rights mechanisms are intimidated or retaliated against is an exaggeration", adding that "like other countries, the presence of police officers in the vicinity of various events should not be construed as a threat, intimidation,

or disruption. They simply fulfil their duty to prevent any chaos or insecurity" (Kunthear, October 1, 2020).

In February 2021, the Cambodian Human Rights Committee (CHRC) – appointed by the Government - announced that reports from several Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and international organizations were baseless and biased. "When the authorities enforce the laws against a targeted group who possess a clear agenda- such as former opposition party activists, and opposition CSOs-it is customary for members of these groups to always draw inferences and make allegations of human rights violations" (Samean, February 7, 2021).

On February 8, 2021, UNHRC president Nazhat Shameem Khan, announced that Thai national Vitit Muntarbhorn would be the replacement UN Special Rapporteur to Cambodia. The Cambodian government is ever more defensive as Hun Sen's grip on power tightens after almost four decades. The elected Special rapporteur noted in his application that "Cambodia has made much progress in socio-cultural and economic terms with an average of seven percent GDP growth year after year until the Covid-19 pandemic" (Chheng, February 9, 2021). He added that "positive gains in children's access to education and an overall education in poverty in Cambodia should especially be lauded" (Chheng, February 9, 2021). The Cambodian government has replied with diplomatic deference stating that "no matter who [the Special rapporteur] is, we are prepared to happily work with them based on international principles and laws and mutual respect for sovereignty, equality, and non-interference into the internal affairs of other states" (Chheng, February 9, 2021).

### 2.2.2  Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) was established by the OHCHR in 2006 to assess the "fulfilment by each State of its human rights obligations and commitments" (OHCHR, 2020). Annually, 48 states are reviewed, to "enhance their capacity to deal effectively with human rights challenges and to share best practices in the field of human rights among States and other stakeholders" (OHCHR, 2020).

In 2009, 2014 and 2019, Cambodia's human rights record was investigated by the UPR, the three representatives, serving as the Rapporteurs 'troika'. Reviewing Cambodia were Pakistan, Senegal, and the United Kingdom. The Review team receive:

1. A national report - provided by the State under review.
2. Information contained in the reports of independent human rights experts and groups, human rights treaty bodies, and other UN entities.
3. Information provided by other stakeholders including national human rights institutions, regional organizations, and civil society groups. (OHCHR, 2020, A/HRC/WG.6/32/KHM/3).

The UPR Working Group recommended that Cambodia amend its law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation (2008) "to define and prohibit child trafficking and child pornography" and that the country "expressly criminalize the sexual exploitation of children, in travel and tourism". The UPR reported an increase of child sex tourism, and in out-of-court settlements made between perpetrators and their child victims. They noted the prostitution of boys, child pornography, and the sexual exploitation of children through the usage of information and communication technologies had not been targeted in legislation. Other recommendations included collaboration with child rights organizations, international organizations, and the private sector.

Additionally, despite efforts being made to address the prevention of commercial sexual exploitation in travel and tourism, several incantations of the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSCE) have not been specifically targeted, such. It has been recommended that the design and implementation of prevention strategies be investigated and actioned upon.

### 2.2.3  United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) was established in 1997. It is the UN body accountable for the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air. UNODC promotes these

instruments and is engaged in working with states on crime prevention and criminal justice, international terrorism, political corruption, and the illicit trafficking and abuse of drugs with financial and technical assistance.

In 2016, the UN adopted the Elimination of Human Trafficking/ Forced Labour as target 16.2 of its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this setting, the UN Statistical Commission's Interagency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) recommended the monitoring of the number of victims trafficked per 100.000 population: by age, gender, and method of exploitation (Cruyff, Overstall, Papathomas, and McCrea, 2020). UNODC has responsibility for collecting and collating this data. The indicator is comprised of two components: detected and undetected victims. Whereas the detected victim can be nationally identified through the criminal justice system, NGOs, and other service providing institutions, the number of undetected victims need to be estimated (Cruyff *et al.* 2020).

In May 2017, UNODC advised that it would "partner with civil society (to) "effectively fight against organized crime and drug trafficking" (UNODC, 2017). It commented that "criminals rely on corruption to serve the successful outcomes of their illicit activities".

UNODC (2017) recorded that the "trafficking in persons, both domestically and across Cambodia's borders, became an important issue" in the early 1990s (p. 7). UNODC today works in conjunction with organizations such as World Vision and Interpol, in concerted efforts to protect children in the ASEAN Region particularly to combat child-sex tourism and to provide appropriate assistance and protection to the victims.

### 2.2.4  International Labour Organization (ILO)

The International Labour Organization (ILO) was established as a tripartite organization under the League of Nations (LoN). The ILO survived to become a UN agency. The ILO connects governments, employers, and workers from 187 member states to develop policies, devise programmes promoting 'decent work' for all men and women, and to set labour standards.

Cambodia has been an ILO member state since 1969. From the early 1990s, in recovery from years of civil war and unrest, the ILO has had programmes helping to generate sustainable employment, restore livelihoods, reconstruct infrastructure and to strengthen the nation's democratic institutions.

Poverty continues to be an issue within Cambodia, particularly in the rural sector. 85 percent of the population continues to be in an "informal economy, mostly in agriculture, forestry, and fishing, and in small and micro-enterprises" (ILO, 2020). The main areas of economic growth have been in the garment and tourism industries, accounting for 80 percent of Cambodia's exports (ILO, 2020). Better Factories Cambodia (2001) (BFC), which works in the garment industry, is but one example of a unique programme managed by the ILO that has governmental, industry employer's association, and trade union support.

These programmes give the ILO a base with which to contribute to the Cambodian government's Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency and the National Strategic Development Framework. Programmes such as these address issues from human resources and development to social protection and labour market governance. They cover laws, regulations and institutions that influence the demand and supply of labour.

In 1996, the ILO passed the Convention on the Suppression of Kidnapping, Trafficking and Exploitation of Human Persons. A later addition, the Agreement on Guidelines for Practices and Cooperation between the Relevant Government Institutions and Victim Support Agencies in Cases of Human Trafficking, agreed with Cambodia. The ILO assists the government to create enforceable legislation to counterattack Child Labour and Trafficking. A permanent Governmental committee constructed out of twenty different ministries and social partners to assist the ILO and the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC). They are mandated to develop national policy which respond directly to questions raised by the ILO.

The ILO does note that, immaterial of these mandates, and the proposed legislation, that, as a nation, Cambodia is inherently corrupt. Their own participation and involvement in encouraging and legislating change and reform, as well as that of other participating agencies, NGO's, and grassroots

organizations, are continuously hampered by the reported corruption and Cambodia's compliant, weak judicial system. The goal of the ILO is to improve the rule of law, whilst undermining any opportunity for corruption to occur and continue to.

To strengthen the ILOs commitment to this opportunity, several their projects are additionally funded by international donors in partnership with local actors. This augments the links that the ILO has between setting standards, services, and programmes to the Cambodian people.

### 2.2.5 International Organization for Migration (IOM)

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) was established in 1951. It was only in September 2016 that the IOM became an organization associated with the UN. It is the leading inter-governmental organization in the field of migration. The IOM's goal is for the humane and orderly migration to benefit all. It provides advice and services to governments and migrants on migration, involving refugees, migrant workers, and those who have been internally displaced.

The IOM works in four broad areas of migration: migration and development; facilitating migration; regulating migration; and forced migration (IOM 2020). Activities that the IOM implement to address these points include the promotion of international migration law, policy, debate and guidance, protection of migrants' rights, migration health, and the gender dimension of migration.

Migration is a contentious global issue exacerbated by civil war and unrest, poverty, and famine. Migration is of special concern in the 'businesses of human trafficking. As such, the IOM has conducted and/ or supported conferences, research, and reports on the burgeoning growth of the matter of TIP.

Research and data collection regarding migration, particularly when it involves TIP, is difficult due to its clandestine nature (Tsai, 2018; UNODC, 2018;Yusran, 2018). The IOM, supported with international community partnerships, has built a comprehensive legal and institutional framework to combat human trafficking in Cambodia. The IOM works in cooperation with the Cambodian government to strengthen the capacity of embassy and consular

staff in destination countries for the rapid identification of Cambodia TIP victims. This process is ongoing and involves cooperation with the bordering countries of Thailand, Lao PDR, and Vietnam.

Inside Cambodia, the IOM supports a variety of projects. An example of this was done on December 12, 2015, National Trafficking Day. The Provincial Committee to Counter Trafficking (Svay Rieng Province), held their ninth annual "Stop Human Trafficking and Exploitation "awareness raising event, which was supported by the IOM. IOM Cambodia Programme Officer Brett Dickson commented that "the purpose of the event was not only to raise awareness, but also encourage community leaders to take action if they see someone being abused or exploited, and port it immediately [by calling the national hotline number 12 88]" (Dickson, 2015).

To address TIP and migration, officials throughout the regions target youth, broadcasting that: "If you are thinking of migrating away from home, be informed. Ask questions and take your time before accepting a job offer. Anyone can be a trafficker" (IOM, 2015) or "Take your time before making a decision to migrate in Cambodia or overseas. And visit the local job resource centre and check with the Department of Labour to make sure the recruiters' company is licensed with the Ministry of Labour" (IOM, 2015). This is simple, wise advice. However, due to the abject poverty embellished with the promise of paying work to many, whether through forced migration, or trafficking, there continues to be an extraordinary vulnerability to be trafficked.

### 2.2.6  Transparency International (TI)

The 2020 Transparency International Report (2020) placed Cambodia near the bottom of the listed 180 countries, dropping them to number 162, just above Afghanistan and North Korea. TI reported that "although Cambodia has made some progress in certain areas such as resource mobilization and [the] improvement of local public services, the progress has not changed the overall perception of experts and business executives especially with grand and political corruptions", adding that "key structural and systemic reforms- in particular with

regard to strengthening the rule of law and justice - have made little to no progress" (Dara, 2021).

This report reflects most other NGO chronicles on corruption and exploitative practices being blatantly and pervasively conducted throughout contemporary Cambodia. Ismael and Abdulamir (2019, p. 87) comment that "corruption is a major threat that humanity faces as it destroys [the] societies, undermines [the] foundations of institutions and security of countries, demolishes [the] infrastructure and services, and generate[s] public anger that threatens to destabilize and exacerbate conflicts within societies". TI's focus is that of "corruption in politics, corruption in the private sector, corruption in public contracting, poverty and development, and international anti-corruption conventions" (TI, 2021).

TI partners in programmes with the Cambodian Government. On January 21, 2021, an extension of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and Transparency International Cambodia (TI Cambodia) was signed by all parties. The extension provides a framework for the MoI and TI Cambodia to implement a joint project on School of Governance (SoG) – Phase II (2021-2025). This was because of the successful implementation of the SoG Phase I (2016-2020), which aimed at "supporting the government in its efforts to strengthen the capacity of its institutions and agencies at both national and sub-national levels on good governance, accountability, integrity, and anti-corruption", that in turn led to "more transparent and accountable public service deliveries" (TI Cambodia, 2021, January 21).

### 2.2.7  US Department of State (US DoS)

The 106th Congress of the United States passed the "first comprehensive federal law designed to protect victims of sex and labor trafficking, prosecute traffickers, and prevent human trafficking in the United States and abroad" (USDoS TIP Report, 2020, p. 3). This strategy signalled a move away from conservative, political, righteous indignation to a positive, proactive action addressing the issue through accountability.

The result is an annual Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP Report) focused on implementing the "3-P's": the prosecution of traffickers, the protection of victims, and the prevention of human trafficking. Since the first report in 2001, the TIP Report "has continued to evolve in both substance and design" (TIP, 2020, p. 4).

The TIP achieves this by:

> objectively analyzing government efforts and identifying global trends, engaging in and supporting strategic bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, targeting foreign assistance to build sustainable capacity of governments and civil society, advancing the coordination of federal anti-trafficking policies across agencies, managing and leveraging operational resources to achieve strategic priorities, and engaging and partnering with civil society, the private sector, and the public to advance the fight against human trafficking (TIP Report, 2020).

To assist the TIP Report further the USDoS has created a Tier Programme to work with, encourage, and 'shame' countries into doing better, in basic human rights combatting TIP. Cambodia has consistently over the past twenty years, failed to achieve higher than Tier 2.

On Cambodia, the TIP reports have recorded that corruption continued to impede law enforcement operations, criminal proceedings, and victim service protection. Insufficient governmental oversight and accountability measures continued to subject people in sexual exploitation and labour trafficking. Government misused resources and targeted non-traffickers, repressing those who attempted to document the nations trafficking issues. No formal guidelines were set out to allow undercover operations addressing trafficking, thereby allowing the perpetrators to remain free.

The recommendations in the 2020 Report called for the government to: "respect due process, vigorously investigate and prosecute trafficking offences, and convict and adequately penalize sex and labour traffickers, including complicit officials, with significant prison sentences" (TIP Report, 2020). However, it continues to be "the endemic corruption at many levels of government that severely limits the ability of individual officials to make progress in holding traffickers accountable" (TIP Report, 2020). Addressing this is one way to prove success.

### 2.2.8 Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN)

The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a regional and intergovernmental organization formed in 1967 to "promote economic, social, and socio-cultural development and stability among its Member States (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia, Brunei, Lao People's Democratic Republic [Lao PDR], Myanmar, and Vietnam) (Rafferty, 2019, p. 1). The intention is to "create a stable, prosperous, and highly competitive ASEAN economic region in which there is a free flow of goods, services, and investments, a freer flow of capital, equitable economic development and reduced poverty and socio-economic disparities" (Soesastro, 2003, p. 1).

Human trafficking has been a part of their transnational agenda since the 1990's. The issue has been caused by the "movement of people and the operation of organized crime" (Smerchuar and Madhyamapurush, 2020, p. 41). This has resulted in regional South East Asia as having one of the highest international rates of TIP, a targeted area where those who are trafficked "originate, transit and settle" (Rafferty, 2019, p. 146).

UNODC have 'estimated that the number of South-East Asians falling victim to TIP in 1990-2000 had exceeded the number of slaves in the entire history of the transatlantic slave trade" (Yusran, 2016, p. 259). Moreover, the ILO (2017) estimate that two-thirds of the 40 million victims of human trafficking globally are in South East Asia of the Pacific. UNODC report that 48 percent of those trafficked in the region are women and children and within this percentage 23 percent are children, with 19 percent being girls and four percent being boys (UNODEC, 2018). However, these figures are estimates, as most trafficking crimes are unreported, making accurate data difficult to obtain (Mely Caballero, 2018).

Within the ASEAN Bloc, TIP became a regional concern "given the booming tourism industries" (Yusran, 2016, p. 258), and as ever-larger numbers of people are trafficking from, across, and to regional states and beyond for labour and/ or sexual exploitation" (Emmers, Greener-Barcham, and Thomas, 2006, p. 491). The South-East Asian tourism boom created a demand for the "sex" tourism industry" (Le Thu, 2019), which prolifically "resulted in sex tourism in Thailand,

the Philippines, and Cambodia" (Yusran, 2016, p. 263), as well as the "increase of women's and children's participation in labour migration within and from South-East Asia" (Yusran, 2016, p. 263). UNODC (2018) estimate that 60 percent of those 'migrating' are for commercial sexual exploitation. The sex tourism industry has created many issues in the region, as authorities attempt to increase legitimized tourism and development, to bolster their beleaguered economies. This has been hampered from the early 1980's by the impact and role of transnational organized crime syndicates in the region, and their prevalent involvement and participation with TIP.

Augmenting the "sex tourism" industry has been the proliferation of "orphanage tourism" and "voluntourism". This "institution-based sexual exploitation … is on the rise in South-East Asia" (Lyneham and Facchini, 2019, p. 1). Voluntourism has been lauded as a new form of tourism, a "logical conclusion of applying ethical concerns to the interest of travelling" (Butcher and Smith, 2010, p. 30). Orphanage and voluntourism commodifies vulnerable children, failing to "address the fundamental inequalities between the needy and benevolent" while stressing the "inadequate child protection policies and practices of many organizations that rely on volunteers" (Carpenter, 2015, p. 17). The children in these situations have vulnerabilities, that can be, (and often are), "exacerbated by residential care, causing potential for child abuse and exploitation" (Carpenter, 2015, p. 17). This occurs as most volunteers are unfamiliar with how to interact with the children concerned, many who have been, and are, traumatized by their experiences.

ASEAN states have realized that unilateral proceedings are insufficient to address the burgeoning growth of human trafficking. But despite human trafficking being a critical concern, little attention has been made to the "identification and recovery of [the] victims of child trafficking outside of the Mekong region" (Rafferty, 2019, p. 2). Within the ASEAN commonwealth "child trafficking has been identified as a serious crime" as well as a critical public health and human rights issue" (Rafferty, 2019, p. 1). Endeavours to ensure the "timely identification, successful recovery, and safe and sustainable reintegration of children within the ASEAN have been codified in several legal obligations at both the international and regional levels, as well as within non-binding guidelines" (Rafferty, 2019, p.1).

The ASEAN Declaration Against Trafficking in Persons, Particularly Women and Children was adopted in 2004 (ASEAN Declaration) (ASEAN, 2004). In 2015, ASEAN recognized the need for a legal framework, adopting the ASEAN Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (ACTIP). The framework requires member states to develop their own domestic legislation which is consistent to that of ACTIP. Although all ASEAN leaders signed and adopted this regional legal instrument, it was not ratified until 2017. ACTIP acknowledges human trafficking as being a human rights violation and avows a human rights-based agenda, integral to addressing the issue. Article 1, for example, outlines three core objectives:

(a) prevent and combat trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and to ensure just and effective punishment of traffickers;

(b) protect and assist victims of trafficking with full respect of their human rights, and

(c) promote co-operation among the parties, in order to meet these objectives.

ACTIP additionally outlines several actions for member countries to achieve. For example, Article 11 states that "the parties shall establish comprehensive policies, programmes, and other measures to:

(a) Prevent and combat trafficking in persons; and

(b) To protect victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, from revictimization" (Rafferty, 2019, p. 1).

Further Articles relate to the "identification and protection" (Article 14), and to the "repatriation and return" (Article 15) of victims (Rafferty, 2019). Following the ratification of ACTIP in 2017, the Bohol Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Work Plan 2017-2020 was developed by ASEAN, designed to implement ACTIP and facilitate regional activities and coordination (Rafferty, 2019).

There are two specific articles within ACTIP, consistent with the Palermo Protocol (2000) that address child protection, and the needs of the children involved. Article 15 has a primary focus on the repatriation and return of victims.

The United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (UN, 1989) also recognizes the need to protect child victims of TIP, "although the

range of services to be provided to children who are in need of psychosocial recovery is not specifically described" (Rafferty, 2019, p. 5). This victim-centred approach is emphasized with the ASEAN Declaration on the Promotion and Protection of Rights of Trafficking Victims (ADTV), "stipulating sufficient measures of prevention, protection, and prosecution" and creating a "monitoring human rights body or ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Trafficking Victims", specializing in "preventing human trafficking, protecting all groups of trafficking victims, and prosecuting perpetrators of human trafficking" (Kranrattanasuit, 2014, p. 3, 4).

In 2016, at the Sixth Ministerial Conference of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime, noted with growing concern the increasing complexity and scale of irregular 'migration' changes in the Asia-Pacific region. Of particular concern was/is the "abuse and exploitation of migrants and refugees at the hands of people smugglers ad human traffickers" (IOM, 2016). Regional partners are the ILO; the IOM; the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); and the UNODC.

This Process includes not only full ASEAN members, but also nation states of procurement, destination, and transit. It reveals how insidious trafficking is and the intricate multi-national web that it constructs with the assistance of government and transnational organized crime. (IOM, 2018).

However, counter-trafficking strategies at the national and regional level in ASEAN have deficiencies and limitations. Kranrattanasuit (2014) comments that the two human rights bodies, the ASEAN Inter-Governmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), as well as the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC), inadequately counter human trafficking, and do not provide the human rights bodies with enough enforcement powers. Furthermore, "efforts to solve problems in each ASEAN country seem to have met with only limited success" (Smerchuar and Madhyamapurush, 2020, p. 45).

In the next chapter I outline the research design for the fieldwork.

# CHAPTER 3
## | RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter will outline the process of choosing the methodology and methods for this research. I will discuss both the qualitative descriptive methodology and the methods of interviews and secondary data analysis. The ethical issues are considered for the research. The semi structured interview conducted and transcribed, I will outline the ethical issues considered for the research, which results in the direction of the data analysis.

I did consider alternative research approaches that had been used successfully by my contemporaries at AUT. Bradford (2014) is a sophisticated example of contemplating a variety of methodological possibilities before she chose Political Activist Ethnography. This led me to Institutional Ethnography, which has been developed as a way to consider grassroots organising to gather useful insights from the perspective of "activist organizations outside mainstream institutions rather than by focussing on government policies and activities" (Bradford, 2014, p. 50). However, given my fledgling skills as a researcher, the narrative descriptive methodology was chosen.

### 3.1   Methodology

Methodology and methodological approaches can be considered the practical tools that guide the research process. McGregor and Murname (2010, p.2) defined methodology as being the "rationale and philosophical assumptions that underlie any natural, social or human science study, whether articulated or not".

The primary objective of this investigative research is to identify how western academics, citizens, and NGO's might assist Cambodian boys and young men who are, or have been sexually exploited, and/or trafficked.

In deciding which methodological approach to use in this investigative research, I reflected on how other Masters' and Doctoral candidates at the Auckland University of Technology (AUT) have approached their respective theses. I used this process as a guideline for my own investigative research. I

additionally reflected on suggestions made by Grant and Giddings (2002) about the 'how' and 'why' they used specific methodological methods. These critical decisions impact the research. Ryan (2006, p. 17) commented that within qualitative research the *who* becomes "political, that the subjective is a valid form of knowledge, and that all people are capable of naming their own world and constructing knowledge".

Early twentieth century sociological research was predominantly and theoretically positivist. Sarantakos (1998) recalled that most sociological research texts had guided the researcher to use quantification. In 21st century academia, qualitative research is rigorously used within the social sciences. "Moments of qualitative inquiry" have seen the expansion of "numerous methods and approaches spanning the humanities" (Singh, 2019, p. 2). The clandestine, illegal nature of human trafficking in any form makes it almost impossible to either collate data, estimate, or establish any sense of reliable information (Yusran, 2018, Choo *et al.* 2010). However, I would be conducting fieldwork in New Zealand with New Zealanders knowledgeable about human trafficking but removed from the front line. Those approached to participate were all over the age of 20, were in New Zealand, had studied, worked, researched, and/ or lived in Cambodia, and through this they were aware of sexual slavery within the wider Khmer community. There was not a large sample of people to choose from who met these criteria, and the methodology and methods would need to be appropriate for these participants. The crux of the interviews was to collect observations and experiences from people whose experiences might assist my inquiry. Through my own networks, from searches on university websites and with assistance from my supervisors, I purposively approached eight (8) potential candidates, each with their own connection to Cambodia.

## 3.2  Qualitative Descriptive Methodology (QDM)

Qualitative Descriptive methodology (QDM) facilitates a clear descriptive understanding of a specific phenomenon (Maglivy and Thomas, 2009). It stays close to the surface of words, seeing language as being a "vehicle for communication" (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 336).

QDM presents the collated data in colloquial language, aiming to identify the *who, what* and *where* of occurred events (Sandelowski, 2000).This methodology does not anticipate interpreting each layered nuance of data, rather it is designed to effectively focus on the surface meaning of the data (Sandelowski, 2000). The resultant data is interconnected with the experience and knowledge of the participant, and what they bring to the research. This is because, to understand the social reality, "the perspective of those who are experiencing the phenomenon is critically important" (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011).

Sandelowski observed that this methodology is a unique and (in) valuable tool in which to explore and unpack human existence in real time, in every-day situations, in 'normal existence' where the methodology is more descriptive than interpretive. However, Sandelowski (2000, p. 335) does accept that inquiry entails description, and all description entails interpretation. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) advocate that qualitative descriptive methodology is an "interpretive research", where fundamental theoretical and substantive issues are addressed.

Researchers have used QDM in a variety of research fields due to the "methodology's flexibility" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008, p. 5). This approach to research suggests that qualitative data can be "systematically gathered, organized, interpreted, analysed and communicated so as to address real world concerns" (Tracy, 2013, p. 4). This methodology's focus on humanness is one well suited to challenge and explore concerns relating to human trafficking. QDM is also concerned with 'life' and 'culture', aimed at "understanding everyday life by unravelling taken for granted assumptions" (Sarantakos, 1998, p. 56). The methodology is characterised by "addressing questions related to the singularities that are unique to the field and the individuals researched" (Shaw, 2011, p. 188). The description in qualitative descriptive studies involves presenting the facts of the research in layman's terms.

QDM not only provides "knowledge that targets societal issues, questions, or problems" (Tracy, 2013, p. 5), but is additionally "appropriate and helpful", allowing in-depth research goals to be achieved.

To ensure that I was using the best suited method for me, I went to the AUT repository for theses and dissertations. I was anxious about the rigour of this

methodology. I typed in 'Qualitative Description'. I noticed that between 2010-2019 1139 post-graduate students had used this method. I looked at the research topics that used qualitative description. They ranged from investigating Pasifika mental health to leading the church through crisis, inter-firm knowledge transfer in multinational organizations to collaborative networking in manufacturing. The scope of subjects covered assured me that using qualitative description was rigorous and the best way forward for me in this investigative research.

## 3.3   Methods

Methods used assist in the "needs of the research, the sample(s) to be studies, and the question(s) to be explored" (Wheelon and Ahlberg, 2012, p. 2, 3). The "choice of research practices depends upon the questions that were asked, and the questions depend upon their context" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008, p.5). After consideration of different methods, including surveys or written questionnaires, I determined that interviews and secondary data analysis, would form this part of my research design.

However, reflecting on this chosen process, I went back and reconsidered alternative research approaches that have been successfully used by my contempories at AUT. Bradford (2014) is an example of working through a variety of methodological processes. She discusses Political Activist Ethnography. This is a methodological subset of Institutional Ethnography (IE).

IE has been developed as a way to consider grassroots organising. It is an investigative process my research. This is because the IE process is able to gather useful insights from the perspective of "activist organizations outside mainstream institutions rather than by focussing on government policies and activities" (Bradford, 2014, p. 50). Bradford comments further that these activist strategies could then be "developed more effectively on the basis of that [new] knowledge" (2014, p. 50). However, due to limitations, my choice of interviews and Secondary Data Analysis (SDA) remained the foundation of my research design, although the IE alternative would have the potential to uncover other data. Therefore, the chosen, simpler methods will be discussed further in this chapter.

### 3.3.1 Qualitative Interviews

Qualitative interviewing is an essential tool to report on the idiosyncratic experiences and observations that happen within the interview process. This method was not academically acknowledged until the mid-1990's, as positivist scholars viewed qualitative research with suspicion. This method "can be adapted to many different research situations and used in partnership with other forms of data gathering" (Prentice, 2017, p. 1), and is widely used today.

For this research, I chose to use semi-structured interviews as a format. This is because I perceived the method to be more conversational between myself and each participant. As O' Leary (2005) comments, the format allows flexibility, "shifting in order to follow the natural flow of conversation" (p. 116). Additionally, the structure of semi-structured interviews enables the interviewer to diverge away from the questionnaire when "interesting tangents" (O' Leary, 2005, p. 116) materialize.

This interview design does have its pitfalls. Some academics suggest that the responses are based on the "observations and experiences of both the researchers and the participants" (Prentice, 2017, p.1), and that the questions are not carefully controlled or tested. However, I felt that this method, with its' conversational composition would collect unanticipated data for me to work with. The semi-structured framework would allow the participant to proffer deeper, personalized insights that I had not specifically solicited.

The major attraction of this interview method was highlighted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. My interviews had been lined up before the second lockdown New Zealand enforced. As such, by using the ""Zoom"" App, I did not have to suspend interviews, I just had to rearrange them. I had to consider the "health and well-being of myself as well as the participants" (Jowell, 2020, April 4) during this process. I had to rethink my priorities academically and use lockdown effectively. If the interview process was to be interrupted, then I needed to be able to have an alternative plan, such as bibliography update, focussing on the literature review, just writing, honing the craft.

Due to a technical glitch, the first three interviews conducted were audio only. The remaining three were audio-visual. This difference was notably nuanced.

Without visual distractions I was more relaxed and focussed. The visual anonymity may have encouraged the third participant, Buon, to be more open with me. They identified as being gay within the first minute. This shared, lived reality gave me a feeling of safety and inclusion that only members of the LGBTQI+ community can relate to and fully understand. This is because of "subjective representation, legitimation, and reflexivity, the connectedness between the (gay?) interviewee, and (gay? bisexual? lesbian? queer?) interviewees" (Kong, Mahoney, and Plummer, 2011, p. 8). This revelation from the participant boosted my confidence, my self-assurance, not only with our interview but the ensuing ones.

By the last three interviews, I was more confident in myself. Visual awareness allows you to pick up on physical cues, body language, as well as physical appearance. The fifth participant, Pram, wore bracelets, just as I do. Their jewellery reminded me of a particular tree in the Killing Fields, Choeung Ek, where babies were smashed against the branches. I mentioned this recognition of the bracelets. This visual recognition and familiarity deviated away from the scripted questions. This only happened due to the visual context of the interview, where a relevant and interesting tangent in conversation led to a more personal, identifiable connection within the overall interview process. Such interactions affirmed my decision to use the qualitative, semi-structured interview process.

### 3.3.2 Questionnaire

My questions were as follows:

1. Can you outline your initial interest in Cambodia? What was your initial focus? Your relationship/ connection to Cambodia?
2. Were you aware of, or did you observe Cambodians trafficking of children, particularly for sex while you were involved up there? What was your first observation of trafficking? Of sexual trafficking and exploitation?
3. Was there a difference between whether things were different for boys or girls in trafficking?
4. Did you notice the work of Western NGOs in Cambodia? What appeared to be their priorities?

5. What about Cambodian NGOs, like NGOs run by Cambodians for Cambodian's. Did you see a parallel with what they set out to do with Western NGOs, IGOs, FBOs as well?

6. Have you conducted your own research in Cambodia?

7. What were the ethical considerations and the practical situations?

8. What do you think is a constructive or appropriate role for Western activist and/ or advocates? What position do you think they should take to combat the sex-trafficking of boys in Cambodia?

### 3.3.3 Secondary Data Analysis (SDA)

Secondary Data Analysis (SDA) appears to seamlessly supplement the qualitative description process. Sarantakos (1998, p. 274) comments that "documents have always been used as a source of information in social research, either as the only method or in conjunction with other methods".

SDA allows me to further consider "novel, theoretical juxtapositions, and borrow from other fields, models, and assumptions" (c.f. Tracy, 2013, p. 194). It allows me to co-ordinate prior findings across more than one field of study that can account for the 'now' and 'why' of the human trafficking phenomenon.

Most research begins with an investigation to learn what is already known and what remains to be learned about a topic (Creswell, 2009), including related and supported literature. This support should consider including previously collected data on the subject. SDA compliments, but does not replace, primary data collection. It may posit an alternative perspective on my original question.

SDA is an exercise that utilizes the same straightforward research principles that are applied to primary data collection. It uses existing information, and provides a practical option for researchers, such as me, who have limited time and/ or resources (Johnston, 2014). It requires less time to obtain and retrieve data and can give a deeper insight into the subject being considered.

- Books, a traditional way of collating data. Used in my literature review.
- Secondary data analysis picks up current trends by discussing current, real-time events. It additionally covers long periods of time, dependent on the documentation discovered. This allows me to co-ordinate prior

findings across more than one field of study that are able to account for the 'how' and 'why' of the human trafficking phenomenon.

- Official Statistics, usually collated by government, with their respective departments and/or bureaus, or international agencies. Nothing reliable was available for my research question.

- Government Records include data from census, health, education, and economics, etcetera. They are used to aid in government spending, the allocation of funds and of the planning and prioritization of projects. Nothing reliable was available in Cambodia for my research.

- Published Sources, whose authenticity depends on the data generated from its source. They are primarily paid or have free access, depending on the writer, and/or the publishing company. These are accessed through Google searches. On starting this research, I joined an App called academia.edu, which is both an App as well as an organization who send e-mails and updates on a regular basis. Within the App's search-engine, the parameters I have implemented are keywords such as "sex trafficking", "boys", "Cambodia", and "South-East Asia". My investigation has revealed that the journal articles that I have read and that have been made available to me, comment on the "lack of reliable data", the "difficulty of collecting data", the "gender bias", and "fake news".

- Scholarly Journals generally contain reports on original research (primary data collection), authored by experts in specific disciplines. They are usually peer-reviewed for accuracy, originality, and relevance.

- Newspapers: I subscribed to the *Phnom Penh Post, The Khmer Times* and the *ASEAN Post* to get a better, current overview of daily life and politics in Cambodia.

- Websites are not usually regulated, particularly sites such as Wikipedia. However, government websites, as well as those used by the United Nations, UNODC, and other NGO's and private organizations can give out accurate statistics and information.

However, regardless of the medium used, secondary data analysis does have its critics and criticisms. Many critics comment on the potential ethical and methodological issues that could occur when qualitative data is collated with

secondary data analysis conducted by researchers not involved with the initial data collection.

## 3.4  Ethics

Ethical issues have become a critical component for research within the social sciences when researching human subjects (Duong 2015). However, the collated data needs to be as truthful and reliable as possible, concurrently identifying and minimizing any inherent risks involved in the research process (Duong 2015).

My research question: "What contributions might be made by Western advocates, activists, researchers' and members of NGO's do to stop the sexual exploitation, slavery, and trafficking of male children in Cambodia?" required ethical approval as I would interview human participants'.

I needed to apply for ethical approval through the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC). The key ethical principles to be practised in my fieldwork were as follows:

- Respect for rights of privacy and confidentiality.
- Informed and voluntary consent.
- Truthfulness, including limitation of deception.
- Minimisation of risk.
- Social and cultural sensitivity, with an acknowledged awareness of te reo Māori as well as an understanding of tikanga Māori,
- A commitment to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.
- Research adequacy, and
- An avoidance of a conflict of interest.

Before obtaining full ethical approval from AUTEC, I was required to amend certain portions of my application, specifically to make it clear I was not interviewing 'representatives' of NGOs, but people who knew of NGO activities in Cambodia. This achieved the required approval was granted on 11 December 2019, the reference number being 19/389. The approval letter can be found in Appendix One.

The application approved a Consent Form to be sent to participants. This form outlined what I was requesting of participants to be involved in the research. The form covered informed consent within the interview process as well as stating that the interview would be recorded and transcribed. The transcriber would sign a Confidentiality Form, also part of the Ethics Application. The Consent Form advised participants could withdraw consent from their participation in this research, at any time, with no repercussions. The Consent Forms would be completed and signed by the participants before the interview began.

After accepting my invitation participants were emailed my Information Sheet, explaining the full objectives of the research and outlining the research process.

In the interview I used the person's actual name, but from transcription onwards I created an identity for them that would guarantee their anonymity. The participant's anonymity and confidentiality included removing identifying features that might be deduced due to their respective activism, advocacy, age, years in Cambodia, geography, gender, research, or work.

All participants would be provided a copy of their interview transcript. This would allow them the opportunity to make their own amendments and/ or recommendations of the data before I began coding and analysis.

## 3.5 Pilot Interview

In preparation for the interviews, I conducted a "pilot interview" with my primary supervisor. This was to hone the craft of effective interviewing before the real thing. Before commencing the pilot interview, I needed master the app ""Zoom"." Due to the Covid-19 virus, the ""Zoom"" app became the latest technological tool to use in telecommunications. My IT literacy is not a strength, therefore this pilot enabled me to understand more fully the app's capabilities. I discovered that it is not essential to have video, although visually one is able to detect facial nuances within the interview process that assist with the transcription. I needed to record and save the interview not only on a USB, but also into OneCloud. In doing this simple task I would be able to listen to the

interview from wherever I might be, on any device. This was the first of many skills acquired before conducting the pilot interview.

In the actual pilot I was nervous. Public speaking is not my forte nor is asking questions of academics. My supervisor role-played, taking on the persona of each interviewee, their research, and specialities. After introductions, I hurtled into the interview. I failed to guarantee anonymity and confidentiality. I was uncomfortable. I was racing through the interview questions as quickly as possible. The proposed 45-60 minutes needed to go quickly to allay my fears and nervousness.

I ignored all the basics. I needed to give an overview of the interview, what it entailed, and its duration. I needed to confirm that the participant had signed and read the information sheet and consent form. I also needed to let them know why I had purposively chosen them for the interview. This basic introductory process was something that I would have to focus on.

After listening to the pilot interview and sitting on my thoughts for a couple of days, I was mortified. I felt that I came across either bored, indifferent, or frustrated. I had deep sighs, whether due to fear and nervousness, or arrogance and indifference, I do not know. Some of the language I used was too familiar, too colloquial. As the interview progressed, I needed to listen more. I needed to allow the answers to come out organically, their natural observations complimenting their own research. To be able to converse, or to confidently ask questions, I needed to breathe and calm down.  It was integral for my survival to have noted pertinent data about interviewee beside me. This was to keep me informed, as well as to attempt to keep the answers pertinent to the research question. This helped immensely, although I got confused when to interject, or to ask another question. I was a novice interviewer, and a bit overwhelmed.

As the interview "dragged on", with me clock watching, I also became aware of my overuse of adjectives, inadvertently leading the questions, my tone unintentionally patronising.

The content of my pilot interviewee's answers made me realise that there was a need for geographical comparison, as human exploitation and trafficking is not a new phenomenon. As in my literature review, thinking globally, regionally, and locally, I needed to allow the answers to have broad,

complimentary responses to give a bigger picture to the questions. This revelation made me realise that even if it appeared to me, the novice that the answers were going off topic, the overall responses could add to the texture of my investigation. Some of the pilot interview answers focussed on control issues by governments as well as the traffickers. This discovery made me more aware of how little I knew so I would need to listen, carefully and assiduously to gather and glean morsels of information, pertinent, relevant to my research. I needed to continue to be quiet and listen, absorb the observations, and listen again. I needed to be more sensitive to some of the answers and not dismiss them because they were not my own experiences and observations. My prompt questions were too directive and suggestive. The end of the interview could not occur quickly enough! I had to develop an innate professionalism for the field. I needed to close the interview politely, to be gracious and thankful.

### 3.6   Interviews

Following the pilot interview, I simplified my approach. I set up interview appointments via email to connect to the "Zoom" app. The interviews were subsequently staggered over a two-week period. This allowed transcription to be a constant progression cohesively overlapping with the interview process.

Each participant is a Westerner. They have each held roles within Cambodia, representing INGOs, FBOs, NGOs, and academia. Due to time restraints and subsequent limitations, I was limited in recruiting only six participants. This was an issue that restricted deeper investigation.

Before starting each interview, I updated the participants about my research. I asked them if they had any further questions about the participant information sheet. I had already asked them to sign the Consent Form. I asked them to give their permission to record the interview through both "Zoom" and my iPhone. I used both devices so that if anything had happened to one, then I would still have a backup recording. I reiterated to the participants that at any time they were free to withdraw from the interview. I advised their anonymity, and their confidentiality would be protected.

Each interview was arranged similarly. The semi-structured design allowed the participants opportunities to articulate unreservedly their experiences and observations, their responses and sensitivities to the questions gave the interview personality as they responded to each explorative query. At times, a participant did veer off on a tangent, so I asked politely that they stay on the question. Most interviews lasted between 45 minutes to an hour. I noticed in myself that after each interview I had gained a little more self-confidence. All the fumbling and mumbling that I had in my pilot interview had been transformed into a well-rehearsed invitation to participate, observing all ethical practices.

I would double-check that "Zoom" would work properly, then the semi-structured interview was able to get started. My questions were structured around "what contributions *might be* made", by Western academics, advocates, and researchers. This gave a lot of levity to the resultant narratives. Although participants had commented when approached that they were unsure of what they could offer me in response to my invitation, slowly but surely each participant responded with anecdotes and information from their experiences.

Observational comments gave great depth to their descriptions. Each participant, whether with an IGO, NGO, or academic background revealed a nuanced, textured tapestry of information that interwove with the reflections of other participants. Each narrative gave me more confidence, each question answered silenced my susceptibility to interject, instead allowing me to listen and take note.

Beside me, whilst interviewing, I had both a notepad and notes, from my own research from public sources, on interests or experiences of participants All this collated data, as well as the purposive selection of each participant enriched the foundation of my investigative research, interlocking each participant with their respective commentary.

## 3.7 Data Analysis and Coding

This section gives detailed descriptions of the courses of action that I undertook following my interviews. The transcription introduces the procedure of coding datasets.

### 3.7.1 Transcription

In 1979, Och observed that inadequate attention has "been given to transcription in qualitative research" (Davidson, 2009, p. 36). In 2021 transcription throughout the social sciences is advocated as an essential academic tool. Incorporating verbatim transcription offers the researcher "something to begin with" (Silverman, 2017, p. 343), while demonstrating academic rigour that ensures that nothing of note is discarded.

I did not transcribe my interviews. I employed someone to assist me in transcription as it enabled me to continue with the interview process as soon as I finished the first interview. I wanted the transcripts back while the interviews were still fresh in my mind. I needed to be familiar with the transcribed texts, editing spelling and verbal nuances, while innately, intimately reliving each interview. I immersed myself not only in the transcribed texts, but also in the memories constructed by them. I highlighted key words, to be applied through coding and the initial data analysis.

This exhaustive procedure leads into the coding and analytical analysis of the thesis, before realising any discussion or coming to any conclusion.

I listened many times to each interview, noting changes in tone, sighs, laughter, and where video existed, noting behaviour I could see on the ""Zoom"" call, such as facial expressions. Listening and watching allowed me to note humour, cynicism and irony, and to detect emotion, enabling the participant's character to come out. The coding process allowed me to introduce these characteristics. This process is necessary for each interview. This procedure means that the data became idiosyncratic to me, peculiar to my personal history, my interpretations, my responses, and my understanding of the content and context of each interview. Davidson wrote that: transcription encompasses "what is represented in the transcript (e.g., talk, time, nonverbal actions,

speaker/hearer relationships, physical orientation, multiple languages, translations); who is representing whom, in what ways, for what purpose, and with what outcome; and how analysts position themselves and their participants in their representations of form, content, and action". (Davidson, 2009, p. 37-38). Consequently, transcription is an integral process of the qualitative analysis of language and record. The record itself *represents* an interactive event" (Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999, p. 64). The transcriber signed a confidentiality agreement.

### 3.7.2  NVivo

In preparation for the data analysis phase of this work, I attended webinars and workshop courses on NVivo, research, structure, writing, and revision. To parallel the workshops that I attended, NVivo also provided supplementary help and guidance for using the software, through YouTube videos, webinars, and extensive online assistance. All these processes have been invaluable.

Within social research, any technological advancement should be considered as a bonus, a "way of improving data management … rather than a way of replacing older methods with newer methods" (Tessier, 2012, p. 457), adding that "rather than debating which method is best, the focus should be on developing more complete methods of data management through a combination of methods" (Tessier, 2012, p. 457). The ongoing "technological developments bridge the gap between … transcripts, and tape recordings… impressions, emotions, and contextual details" (Tessier, 2012, p. 457). This advancement of NVivo software is foundational to the successful analysis and interpretation now happening using transcription and peer-reviewed text. Moreover, the interviews, the transcription, the coding, and the discussion are core to any investigative research. Bazely and Jackson (2013, p. 68) identify that NVivo is a tool that supports the "analyst in making use of multiple strategies concurrently – reading, reflecting, coding, annotating, memoing".

### 3.7.3  Coding

A code in qualitative research inquiry is a word, phrase, or sentence that represents aspects of data or captures the essence or features of data. The code connection "is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Parameswaran *et al.,* 2020, p. 633). Subtleties, such as "emotion, nonverbal communication, and context can be missed throughout the coding process within qualitative exploration" ((Parameswaran *et al.,* 2020, p. 633). This is where coding, within qualitative research, connects themes back to the researcher, and to the research question, further assisting with data analysis.

As qualitative data is presented as a narration of words from investigation, interview, interpretation, and observation, coding is the transitional process that links data collection and data analysis, through "any method of data collection frames what you can code" (Charmaz, 2016, p. 136). Identifying potential patterns within the data set is dependent upon the theoretical framework of the transcription process.  The development of themes ensures that coding works towards the implementation and understanding of any material.

Clark and Veale (2018, p. 484) state that "patterns are used to identify categories that are repetitive in the transcription from the coded data; those categories are reviewed to generate common themes in the data. Themes are defined as the outcomes of coding and sorting processes".

I was excited at my initial realisation of repetitive adjectives and thematic keywords. Some of these adjectives developed through each interview. The words were not coincidental, instead they cultivated a common thread imperceptibly woven through each interview. Each interview and interviewee were independent. None of them knew each other or another participant's identity. Therefore, any words that had commonality and repetition were significant.

Liberally peppered throughout the literature, peer-reviewed articles, and interview transcriptions, I discovered key adjectives pertinent to this project. At this juncture I thought that my research investigation had realised a running

narrative, a theme based on corruption, collaboration, conversion, cultural issues, and poverty. However, this lightbulb moment did not negate this procedure. It emphasised the need to continue with my analysis, collation, coding, and discussion without pre-determining outcomes. I could not assume that any of these singular adjectives were in themselves a theme. I needed to take note them, not become distracted or persuaded by them.

Bazely *et al.* (2013. P 69-70) observed that implementing the NVivo process is "likely to generate the majority of [your] categories … [as] it is useful to maximise the potential for variety in concepts". This is because codes can be descriptive, they can be labels, or they can be interpretive analytical concepts or tools. Furthermore, as Charmaz (2014, p. 136) stated, "coding full interview transcriptions gives you ideas and understandings that you otherwise miss". In contrast, coding from and across notes may give you a wider view". Initially, however, "coding routes your work in an analytic direction while you are in the early stages of research" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 136). It helps to shape responses, asks its own question(s) and creates debate and discussion.

Coding will shape the narrative for the data analysis, the discussion, and the conclusion. The keywords, patterns, and themes discovered by and through coding are foundational to achieving an accurate representation of the interviews conducted. The process of coding methodology leads to data analysis, collating the data from codes and nodes, and placing in text.

# CHAPTER 4

# | FINDINGS

## 4.1 The Participants

This chapter contains the findings from the interviews conducted with six participants. It may be helpful to advise their short descriptions again.

Participant profiles and pseudonyms used in the research are:

| | |
|---|---|
| Participant 1: Muoy | FBO |
| Participant 2: Pii | FBO/ RURAL |
| Participant 3: Bei | ACADEMIC/ INGO |
| Participant 4: Buon | ACADEMIC/ RESEARCHER/ NGO |
| Participant 5: Pram | ACADEMIC/ RESEARCHER |
| Participant 6: Pram Muoy | IGO |

At the commencement of the interview process, each participant was asked to outline their initial interest in Cambodia; their connection or relationship to Cambodia, and what their initial focus was. If you were to unpack this opening question, you would discover that it had many different elements to it. Each element, whether their connection, observation, or perspective, affirmed that they had a tangible relationship with the question. Some participants were initially sparing in their replies, others more forthcoming. Those that were more eloquent in their respective answers often blurred their reply into the next prepared question. Everyone had a deliberate, idiosyncratic approach, with each of them expanding on the opening question with varying degrees of aloofness and familiarity.

Each participant had a defined connection to the research question. The first question allowed each participant an open opportunity to respond. The initial opening remarks from participants were varied and led to the interviews going in totally disparate directions, between a personal affinity or connection with the people, to academic or UN activities, to INGOs, NGOs, FBOs, and grass roots communities, and their respective participation within Cambodian societal

structure. Two participants were involved with the rural sector with relative FBOs and local NGOs.

## 4.2   Connection with Cambodia

From the initial question, there appeared to be interconnected, unplanned threads with each participant having activist intent immaterial of their disparity.

Pram Muoy commented that their initial connection to Cambodia was engagement from "a long association with the UN". Bei's connection with Cambodia was through being an executive director of an INGO within the health sector, which had a role in international women's development. "So, I visited Cambodia as part of my involvement with South-East Asian organizations". But Bei also said: "I don't think I know anything about your research question". All participants were to echo this belief at the beginning of their interview.

Pram's connection to Cambodia is an ongoing academic, anthropological researching role, with "research [on] the Cambodian genocide … specifically looking at relationships with the dead and mass graves from [the] genocide". Buon was a sociologist, an academic researcher, who first worked as a volunteer in Cambodia, "then working with NGOs, primarily in agriculture and rural development".

Pii commented that their 'focus' in Cambodia was two-fold. "I went to Cambodia to do a number of things. One was to raise money to install wells, the other, to bring medical aid to people in the villages. The first time I went there was because my friend went. We were in the same church together. He said, "Let's go there". He was my closest friend, so I thought I would go there with him. Somehow the place grew on me".

On Muoy's first visit to Cambodia she visited "a girl who had been trafficked when she was eleven years old and was dying of AIDS. It broke me, pretty much. So, I ended up going back to see where I fit, what can I do in this space". Muoy's emotional connection to the teenager racked with AIDS, continued to profoundly affect them years later, with a recurring question of "what can I do?" The initial 'connection' led to a significant commitment. "When I went back to Cambodia, to work there, I went to start a recovery shelter for girls aged four to fourteen

who had been trafficked or sexually exploited". Muoy's practical response to their emotional connection, their initial observation of trafficking and sexual exploitation, was the first acknowledgement of 'what might be done', the tantamount theme of this investigation.

## 4.3   Early Interview Observations

I asked the participants about their personal and professional observations, specifically framed so that the participant had to reflect and think whether an observation involved the 'trafficking of children'.

Bei observed that "the area of trafficking and sexual abuse was probably, generally thought of primarily in terms of women and girls". Some of the participants would have instinctively noticed scenes with young girls. Pram Muoy's initial memory was of an older European man leading young girls by the hand in the city. "I did live in the society and one of the features in driving to and from work every day was that we would pass the beer halls, which were not beer halls in the English sense, but they were cafes where men went to drink. Outside each of these buildings were two lines of young women dressed beautifully. They sat there waiting for customers. This was quite surprizing for me because it looked like prostitution to me, but I wasn't really sure".

To fully understand the situation, Pram Muoy got talking to their driver about this and "my instincts were correct. They were girls who were not necessarily trafficked, but I did not know where they came from and they wouldn't necessarily have come from Thailand or Laos, but they were definitely poverty stricken, and this was their way of earning a living. That was the most obvious sign for me".

Pram Muoy offered descriptions of another scene. "Beyond the airport there are a lot of factories, the ones that make apparel for international labels. It was well known that the vast number of workers in these factories were incredibly young women. Every day, as I was coming back into the city, you could see truckload after truckload of young women. There would be 30, 40, or 50 young women, occasionally with young men as well. There were poverty-stricken young women, often from rural areas, who came to work in the factories, and

they got very little pay. The thing that shocked me the most was when my driver told me that if they [the young women] didn't have enough money to pay for transport to and from their jobs, the driver might have sex with them as payment." Sex is a currency outside of prostitution and trafficking and transactional sex is a common feature of women's transportation in many extreme situations.

Bei's initial response was "I don't know of the trafficking of children, not specifically in Cambodia. I was aware of trafficking throughout Asia including men and boys, and children". Yet Bei had significant knowledge of and reflections on trafficking, that included INGO, NGO, legislative and political reactions to 'trafficking'. Bei noted that "my NGO passed a Declaration of Sexual Rights through our governing council. Every member of the association was expected to commit to this Sexual Rights Declaration. We took a whole raft of various forms of denial of human rights, including trafficking, at the worst end of the spectrum, and right across the continuum, and linked every one of these to the UN Convention on Torture, one of the Conventions committed to human rights and understood by all countries.

Bei added that she had visited Cambodia. "I can remember having a group of about ten of our member associations' representatives at a workshop and talking to them about same sex relationships and explaining this to them. The fact that I am a grandparent with several grandchildren. That I am gay and have a same-sex partner. It took a little swallowing for them in the first place. I was talking to them about sexual orientation and gender, and the gender continuum, and the people's movement along with it. This was new to them and their line of work. The Association went on to look at particularly marginalized groups, including those in the 'entertainment industry', which I think is broadly defined and LGBTQI+. This was not specifically raised other than in discussions we had had in relation to their Sexual Rights Declaration. I think that we 'assumed' that discussion would happen with every association. When I say 'assumed', I mean that obviously there were policies in place related to this, working in relation to issues such as trafficking. That was the expectation which was very clearly defined. However, it was not something that they would report on in workshops, which they reported on in great detail at that time".

Like Pram Muoy, and Bei, Pii told a story. "Several years ago, we were walking in Phnom Penh [and] this little girl comes up to guys. She is offering herself for sexual gratification. I think that she was approximately eight, nine, ten years old. It was heart-breaking because you can't take them away from that situation and yet you don't want to leave them in that kind of situation. It's very tangible. You can see it; you can feel it. Corruption!" This led Pii to a 'lightbulb' moment for any participant throughout the interviews. "If they trafficked girls, they would traffic boys as well. I'm sure if they traffic girls, they will traffic boys as well".

Buon told me that she certainly has been aware of the trafficking of boys "where I was first working with an NGO". Then Buon introduced a specific form of child trafficking. As participants expanded on their knowledge and experiences, they were demonstrating they knew a great deal more than I did. Through NGO work, Buon had spent time getting to know orphanages and the problems with orphanages in Cambodia. "Orphanages represent trafficking of a different kind that includes coercion, labour, and traditional debt bondage, which is a tradition that has been practiced for generations in Cambodia. The orphanages in Cambodia today have created a new form of tourism; 'voluntourism'. Children are often weaponized by this industry. They are taken there by their parents or guardians or sold via a broker. Alternatively, the 'orphaned' children are supporting their dependent, impoverished families". Buon explained that the children do this "so that families would have the basics, enough money to survive".

Pram recalled "a baby being sold to a family who could not have children". Pram commented that this practice "connects Cambodia, a concept that is difficult to filter with Western eyes". However, to be able to understand the culture and history of Cambodia, the 'connection and rationale' that Cambodian's have about 'selling a baby', Pram warns about Western constructs of culture, history, and tradition, saying that "you've got to be very conscious and reflective and figure out, what do Cambodian's want?" Pram commented on this occidental attitude by adding: "Don't go there going 'we're going to help you in this way, we're going to do this'".

## 4.4   Perceptions of Cambodia

All participants had strong, frank descriptions of how they saw the political environment at macro and micro levels in the country, and how this supported trafficking. Pram was frank that within contemporary Cambodia, "it is hard for Cambodian's to be up front about how politically violent the current regime is". Pram Muoy described Cambodia as being "a terribly sad country. Its' government doesn't really care about its people. It's not there to protect and support them. The education, the hospitals, everything is very substandard. It is a very sad situation in Cambodia".

Pram explained that "the reason you have illegal logging that is destroying people's homelands, land grabs that are robbing people of ancestral land, but also child trafficking and drugs, is because of the massively corrupt government systems, with political impunity for the elite, who are basically all tightly involved in these issues, and are getting a lot of money.

"Cambodia as a state is immature. It is inescapable, because of the current regime, which is a violent and corrupt authoritarian political regime. After genocide, after conflict, after civil war, and international conflict for so many years, and being a developing country, has created a situation where internationally, Cambodia is positioned, not as a failed state, but as a state in need of external assistance".

Pram Muoy identified that corruption was rampant and rife. The corruption was so blatant, and the greed endemic with the entitled, predominant leaders. To the atmosphere of corruption, Buon added surveillance: "There is so much surveillance happening now because of the Ministry of the Interior.

Pii expanded on the challenges. "The government are facing problems on all fronts. There is the problem of infrastructure. The infrastructure that they build is quite often destroyed with a year by floods. The floods come and then the roads need to be rebuilt again. And what happens is that the 'rule of law' isn't exactly followed very closely over there. There's rampant corruption!"

Pii asserts that corruption "starts the moment you set foot in Cambodia. There have been times that I've been overcharged for my visas. Then of course you get stopped on the road by police for no real reason, except that they want

money, a bribe, that's all". Pii reflected on the levels of corruption. "Even though we get the relevant authorities to go to any particular village with a group of doctors or pharmacists, the police, or someone else, or some other group, will come out and harass us, and tell us we have no right to be there". "They always demand to see our passports. Because, once they take your passport you get another set of problems. Corruption is palpable".

Like Pram, Buon recounted that communities were being relocated due to land-grabs, although often those concerned would not talk about it. This issue of overcrowding and poverty exacerbates out-migration, for those that are hoping for a better life. Buon explained the precarious lives that are lived and experienced by those living in rural Cambodia. Desperation and displacement force migration and slavery, due to ongoing land conflicts and over-population.

Participants continually differentiated between actions of the government and agents of the state, and the Cambodian people. Pram Muoy explained: "These people have suffered. In three years, they lost a quarter of their population. The children of that era are not educated. Their land has been taken away from them. Their assets, taken away from them. They have the cruellest of governments. Now, and always, throughout history. They have always had this".

Pram expanded on the disturbing outcomes of this history. "Community, at every level, from family right up through to the state, has been fractured by genocide. How do you relate to that past, what your country is now, who you are, what religion means, what sociality is, at every level?"


## 4.5   Descriptions of Children

The participants fell into two groups with respect to Cambodian children. Some worked directly with children, some observed them in different circumstances. They were all aware that human rights instruments had no place here. Pram noted that while in western laws we understand children are under the age of sixteen, it is radically different in Cambodia. "In Cambodia, at twelve, eleven, you can see children raising children, children working and things like that, which do not fit in with these international norms".

Survival is a key issue. Buon explained that desperation and deceit factor into the trafficking question. Buon identified an issue in the rural area that concerned a "large community of people who are waste-pickers". The community scavenged through the rubbish-dumps to survive. This survival was hampered. Buon observed that "one of the things that was happening was that police and people in uniforms were coming along and saying that 'you're not allowed to live here, you must leave, your kids must be taken away'. People were coming and saying, 'we will give you money, and we will give your kids a good education', so there were children disappearing from that community. Some of those children were going to orphanages, which is quite a lucrative business in part because you've got all these Western people who want to volunteer in orphanages and give money to them". Buon acknowledged that this was happening to girls and boys. This unnecessary abuse of power, the bullying by uniformed people in authority, the subsequent bribery and coercion, are issues that often lead to the increasing trend of orphanages in Cambodia and their role in trafficking and voluntourism.

Pram Muoy was aware of the orphanages. "Children and infants are sent there because their parents are so poor. They can no longer support, and certainly cannot, educate them. Some of these orphanages have good intent, but it's very uncomfortable for someone who comes from a liberal democracy like ours". Pram Muoy described the discomfort of a personal experience, the entertainment factor of the industrial orphanage system. "We were at Sihanoukville. We were there over Christmas. They bought in some 'orphans', and they had to sing under the Christmas tree, and these rich Westerners sat there to listen to these young children. It was a very uncomfortable situation. When I became aware that Sihanoukville was known as the capital of paedophilia in Cambodia, I hated going there".

Families think that they are doing the right thing for their children by sending them away for financial gain. The NGO Buon was involved with "was to make people aware of what was happening, but to also make sure they had enough, and were not economically forced to do anything untoward, illegal, or underhand, to do that to their children because they had no other choice".

Buon explained that "places basically got pretty crowded, so they didn't have any land, didn't have any money, so they move. They try to make a go of it. So, there are some really poor families and a high rate of migration to Thailand".

Although this migration is predominantly made up of manual labourers, sexual exploitation also has out-migration paths. The coercion is the same. Trafficking occurs as a fight for survival. Buon confirmed that, particularly within the rural communities "people, they get a loan. They get some money from their families. They get enough for a broker to migrate with the promise of usually getting an agriculture job. They are going over to work on plantations. Some of them ended up getting into things like the fishing industry, but also in agriculture jobs. They are not getting the wages they were promised. They can't get home. They don't have any money. They are not allowed to leave to go to the cities. This happened to those young guys, anything from sixteen to seventeen up, so like economic exploitation rather than sexual. However, the economic exploitation means that they end up being stuck there". And the families in rural Cambodia are left with the debt from the loan.

There was a different narrative for the girls. From a rural perspective, Buon explained that "there are young girls, young women, leaving Cambodia. More of the young women are going to Phnom Penh, [or more specifically Sangkat Boeng Keng Kang Ti Muoy, a suburb in Phnom Penh], to work in the garment factories. Some of them also had stories of being promised kinds of jobs. It doesn't work out. They end up being sex workers. I have one young woman who be a teenager, eighteen or so. She ended up in a horrific situation in Malaysia". This statement by Buon was the second time one of the participants commented on transnational trafficking. Buon added that, "if you were doing work in trafficking and it became apparent that there are high level officials who are involved in trafficking, then some of the NGOs don't want to know, they won't go there".

Pii remarked on the crippling effects of endemic poverty. "One of the things, especially from the villages, is that we have seen parents sell off their children to pay off debts. The reason they sell off these children is because of poverty. We have seen and heard of parents, who, in the dead of the night, just leave

their children because of their extreme poverty. They were unable to look after their children".

Pii narrated a story from a 'reliable source' where "five children woke up in the morning and their parents had gone. They, [the parents], had packed their meagre belongings and taken off because they just couldn't look after their kids anymore". Pii added a more disheartening story where "a particular couple had given birth to this perfectly normal child, but because they were unable to look after her, they slashed her neck and her feet, and left her to die. There was this orphanage who heard about her, and they took her in. So, things like this do happen. A lot of the so-called orphans are not technically orphans, they are more like abandoned children".

Prams' descriptions of children in communities began with an attempt to use participatory video in her research. Pram discovered that visual methods worked well with children. "I hadn't initially planned to work with children apart from their being in the community where I was living and working. I had not really thought about what the place of children would be. Children do have a voice, even though they are usually subdued and silenced by society. This research realization regarding children as being good research assistants, happened in conjunction with realizing how the genocidal past is understood in contemporary Cambodia. To move around villages, you sit outside talking, and suddenly there's a pile of people coming in and getting involved in the conversation. Often the kids would be there. I found the kids were amazing at prompting the adults about talking about things. It was really interesting. Having children involved in the dialogue created a special dynamic. It involved the children encouraging their elders, with the children going "you should tell [me] about this". The adults, instead of [shooing the children away, which would happen within Western culture], they, the parents, would be like, "oh", and they would talk. There were interesting dynamics. It was a different dynamic".

Another research development came through Pram being interested in reincarnation, and that 'the children were integral to that". "I did a couple of little projects with kids who made some interesting little films. What it showed was, and the one that sticks in my mind, was this one group of children from, the smallest was six, the eldest about fourteen. They created the whole story, and

the story was very much in the genre of Cambodian storytelling and mythmaking. The story ultimately ended in reincarnation". With the children participating, Pram started to use photography as a basic tool of interaction, using it as a form of 'social lubrication'.

When asked about exploitation and trafficking in general, Pram told me: "I am very aware of it. I have seen people who have been offered young children. There was a baby in one of the research sites I was in where the parents sold one. One of the fears was that the baby was sold into a trafficking ring, other than the hopeful narrative being that the baby had been sold to a family who couldn't have their own children". In a matter-of-fact manner, Pram added that "these things happen in Cambodia. I saw what I would classify as children, but not necessarily what Cambodians would classify as children, who were sex workers, so [boys] and girls of the age twelve, thirteen, going for that. Seeing young people who were sex workers and knowing all the rumours and knowing that in Sihanoukville in particular, and up in Siem Rep, in these networks across [the country], these things happen. My assumption is that there would be more girls [trafficked], but that's a purely personal assumption. I don't know the research data."

Muoy expanded on creating the first 'recovery shelter for girls' who had been trafficked. "With a recovery shelter for girls aged four to fourteen who had been trafficked or sexually exploited, two to three years into that process, we started to get asked, 'Do you have somewhere for a boy?'. They would say 'we know you have girls, but we have boys, right now, at the police station and nowhere to put them!' So, because of the repeated requests for somewhere to put a boy from sexually exploited situations for his safety and recovery, we then started a recovery shelter for boys. We were the only one in Cambodia at that time".

From this perspective, Muoy furthered their narrative on sexually exploited and trafficked boys. They noted that within Khmer culture, "there is a general belief and understanding in the communities in Cambodia that a boy cannot be sexually abused, but a girl can be. They, Cambodians, believe that a boy couldn't be. They felt that the 'abuse' was seen to be as only playing, and if a foreigner was involved, then you were paid for it, so this was not abuse. Because

of that belief, there were other organizations doing awareness raising. That yes, boys do get abused. It is possible for a boy to be sexually abused".

Pram Muoy reflected on a deeply personal incident that had created much discomfort for them. "An acquaintance got in touch and said he'd be in Phnom Penh. "Can I see you?" Of course, come and stay. He had just had the preceding couple of weeks in Sihanoukville, and never told me why he was there. But I found out through general gossip that he went to Cambodia every summer, and the general feeling was that he went there for prostitution purposes. It was personally devastating. I have not been able to do anything to change this. I'm curious on why he had been in Sihanoukville for two weeks. What did he do there? Was he on his own? It gradually dawned on me, after he had stayed with me for a couple of weeks, and he had returned home, that the real reason he was probably there.

Pram Muoy advised me that they "never saw children being [trafficked], but I was aware of an NGO that worked with trafficked children. Using this NGO for catering was a personal connection, a way to help. I did not know the background of those children, naturally because privacy issues would intervene. I just 'knew' that there was a terrible problem for the young boys".

Muoy made a comment regarding European/ foreigners, concerning an issue that they had taken the time to reflect upon. "There was one community on the outskirts of Phnom Penh where a foreigner had been in there abusing the children. There were numerous cases of boys that had been abused by him. So, for a foreigner to go back into these communities, it just raised levels of distrust that were too high. A foreigner was here causing the problem and now a foreigner was here to fix it up. Who do we trust? Because the one that caused the problem, he said he was coming to help the community too. You find out that you end up using the same words in recovery that were used during the abuse. Therefore, it is just too messy".

'It is messy' in many ways to work in Cambodia, and participants had explicit descriptions of the positive and negative effects of the work of NGOs in the country.

## 4.6 NGOs

All participants had worked in and with NGOs, and they held both positive and negative opinions on NGO behaviour, both nationally and internationally. Bei strongly endorsed collaborations between local and western NGOs. "I think that it is about partnership. I think that it is about understanding what we can do together. So often, what I have seen work best, was to bring together Western NGOs and involve local NGOs with local leadership where possible. Support the local NGOs to work at government level. At the UN we would work together".

"When local NGOs are shut out, the Western NGO can afford to go to meetings and afford the resources to do things. It becomes nigh on impossible for the local NGOs to be treated as equal partners. That must be addressed right upfront if you are going to work in a kind of alliance together. The challenges are inherent, simply because of cultural morays and differences, even amongst the local NGOs themselves".

Pram Muoy commented, that generally, NGOs are "highly professional, and do indeed do wonderful development work which benefits the whole community, as well as particular people they're working with. Most [NGOs] want to do good. The only decent schools and hospitals in Cambodia are the ones funded by foreigners".

Pram Muoy described one of the NGOs that they learnt about. The NGO worked with impoverished families that 'rescued children' from rubbish dumps, where they earn a living by picking rubbish, and then selling it. The NGO "take the kids to school every day. They have got freshly laundered school uniforms for them. They spend the day at school, they go back to their parents at night-time [which is the right thing to do], they leave their uniform behind, and have the evening with their parents and siblings. They do get an education, and they usually get a job from that. These are very well-run NGOs". This is a very different outcome for the children, from the rubbish tip stories Buon and Pii told earlier.

Bei emphasised that a continuing strategy for NGOs is building capacity, where the local NGO can do the work with other local NGOs and doesn't need Western NGOs any longer. That would be the proof of success. Buon endorsed having long-term relationships with Cambodian organizations and groups "that

are working on these issues on the ground. You can support and ask them in what ways can you support them, rather than going, trying to do something you decided was important".

Pram noted that at times Cambodian NGOs are working brilliantly on the ground, with Cambodian understandings of the world, with Buddhist understandings of the way that education works.

Buon has had positive experiences in collaborations with different organizations. "The people that I have worked most closely with tend to be Cambodian NGOs, but there's normally a chain, like most groups that I work with. I tend to work with community networks, not formalized NGOs. Basically, they are a loose community group that work on all kinds of different issues. They are groups of people who are what I would call activists. They might not call themselves activists, but they work to understand what the local officials are doing. Sometimes they get funding from other NGOs, both Cambodian and Western". Buon describes "some great relationships. They are amazing people, although they do have difficulties. One way they achieve this is through getting some awareness".

Buon describes some of the challenges for local NGOs. "To keep working in the country they must make compromises, while not talking about other [real] issues. Ethnicity is an issue as well. A group of ethnic Vietnamese groups living in an area had 'turf-wars' but became displaced. They became stateless. As a result, NGOs did not want to get involved as it is such a politically controversial issue. The government could shut them down, or the government could say something like 'you've not been paying your taxes properly', to informally stop an NGO's work in those areas".

These positive experiences were tempered by the myriad of examples of poor development practice. Pram commented that NGOs created "a commodification of suffering in Cambodia. NGOs play a massive part in that". Pram Muoy observed that there "were thousands of NGOs. There were several things you can say about them [NGOs]. First, it is to the shame of the government that when all the money comes into the country, the predominant leaders take all the cream off a lot of aid that pours into the country, leaving NGOs to support the people". Pram Muoy added that "the NGOs aren't regulated

in any way that improves the professionalism of these groups. There is no attempt by the government to make sure professionally that they're up to scratch. The only time that they are regulated is when they start human rights NGOs, and when they start to annoy the government. Thousands of volunteers and aid professionals visited Cambodia to assist Cambodians. There is no doubt that 50 percent of them are doing a great job. However, there is very little coordination between them. You have 200 NGOs working in parallel doing the same job. I can think of three big ones immediately in Phnom Penh which do exactly the same thing".

With assistance and aid via the UN, INGOs, NGOs, FBOs, and bilateral partners, Pram described patterns of behaviour. "You have a lot of Western, Euro-American NGOs coming in. Firstly, there is a cultural disconnect. It is a kind of colonialism through development". (Bei also referred to the 'colonial model' of development). "There is a particular way of being. Democracy must look a certain way. To be successful, you must have all these things. Human rights of course are important, but they have to look a certain way". Buon adds further that within this contentious environment there is "such a disconnect between the Cambodian research community and foreigners who come to research, with very little actual awareness of what is around, the politics of what they are doing".

Within the Cambodian academic research community, Buon says that if you want to be a lecturer in Cambodia: "You must teach seven courses a semester to earn enough money to live on, so you've got no time to conduct research. So, you struggle. Foreign researchers often come in, they will want an affiliation with somewhere and they might come and visit you once or twice. They do their research, and then they leave. You never see what they did. There is no sharing, there is not long-term relationship formed. The Cambodians weren't asking for much. They were just asking people to come in and perhaps teach a couple of classes about what they found, perhaps, leave their thesis with the university library. Even collaboration at that sort of level is not happening".

Muoy commented that there are some Western researchers who have unwittingly, negatively impacted their FBO. "There were numerous research papers and other academic projects conducted on the FBO that I was previously

involved with. People would come and do some research, and that FBO would be one of the organizations that they would interview because of our expertise in that area. The researcher would request that we organize a focus group with 'x' number of children. They would say that our counsellors and social workers could be present. How could you avoid retraumatising the children with these foreigners?

Pram was highly critical of the international donors who "come in with particular targets, which come with particular ideas of what is normal and what is right. It creates a universalization of what a country should look like. How people should act. What the culture should be. I think that this has the potential to be culturally inappropriate, to be patriarchal and patronizing, and to be derogatory and damaging.

Bei had significant experience to back her comments. "I think that some Western NGOs come at the issue from the point-of-view of their own governments. Often, within religious countries, the dominant religion is not the one shared by the NGO that has been set up by a specific church". Pram commented on the do-gooder aspect within the INGO, NGO, FBO, and grassroots community in Cambodia, spread across the spectrum of sympathetic assistance. "A couple of ministering, missionary-style charities do some brilliant things in education, however, there was an almost enforced conversion and things like that. The proselytization was constructed in such a way that 'yeah, you convert to Christianity and [then] we'll help you'".

But Pram smiled at the community response. "What was wonderful was that quite a lot of the community were what I would call 'pragmatic Christians'. I had a lot of admiration for them. They were like, 'It's fine, we go to church, and we do this, and it's great, and they help us to appreciate it'. Some FBOs encourage the Khmer to live and embrace their own belief system and culture, acknowledging the sensitive balance needed when assisting unobtrusively or being conditional and manipulative in their altruistic endeavours.

In contrast, Pram described "the ones that by reputation are damaging the people actively, or they are not that competent. In that category there are a lot of religious organizations that go there to proselytize and help a bit as they go along. They sometimes harm as well". Muoy commented that an ongoing issue

that they, and other FBOs, NGOs, and INGOs have is "where I see expats. They have a very important role. It is sad when I see expats coming to Cambodia, who you can see have their own needs and they are meeting their needs, instead of wanting to meet the needs of the people". Pram Muoy commented on how many Westerners "go, with the love of God, and wanting to proselytize, when really, the people need a more systemic way of support and assistance".

Pram had strong feelings about this characteristic observed by all participants. "You'll have the café in Phnom Penh or Siem Rep, a friends' restaurant, and things like that. A big part of their marketing is 'we've taken trafficked girls and we're setting them up in this. We've taken orphans and are doing this. We've taken these poor people', which is basically, effectively highlighting the plight of these poor people. 'We've saved them, and you too can do good'. This is marketed and targeted at the Western market. This idea of doing good. I think that is damaging. I think it's highly problematic. I am not saying that they shouldn't be doing work to support people with education, with women's rights and gender equality, and all of that. But this commodification of it, when you turn it into a product which makes Westerners feel good about themselves. That's really problematic. The neo-colonialist aspect of international development is also problematic".

Pram noted that a key concern for INGOs et al. was that "they're all fighting for the same dollar. It undermines what they're trying to do. Likewise, I understand why. They are looking for funding. Unfortunately, trafficking is not what the globalist (development) market supports".


### 4.7 What Can We Do?

Muoy weaved throughout the interview personal anecdotes that focussed on the recovery part of their FBO work in Phnom Penh. It is a source of great pride, as the recovery centres have grown, increasing in size and numbers, treating the sexually exploited and trafficked.

Pram Muoy warned: "Don't ever try imposing our/ your views, whether they be Christian or democratic, on that community. [The Khmer community], they've suffered enough without us coming to tell them what to do. Have a bit of

compassion for these people. Try to support them and not use them. Put yourself in their position. Would you want your daughter or your son to be treated the way you are treating these people? I think that is an essential part of the message". Pram Muoy would "like to see INGOs with an unquestionable and absolute commitment in helping. People need a more systemic way of support and assistance".

Pram notes that a solution to Westerners coming in, under the INGO, NGO, FBO, grassroots umbrella is to "conduct collaborative work. I think that this is where you must work as an 'outsider'. Great, come in and do some research, because there is leeway given to foreign researchers that isn't given to Cambodian researchers. Westerners get away with a hell of a lot more. I think that there can always be ways where sensitive subjects such as trafficking can be worked on together, but I think it needs to be something collaborative for research, or NGO work, or any other capacity building".

Pram thought a constructive approach that Westerners might use in Cambodia was that "any research is useful. However, I think that trying to impose a 'moral compass', the ideal of right and wrong, can be dangerous. But this can be collaborative work. Opportunities for research here are different for nationals and outsiders. People are going to get attached to you. You have got to be careful with your participants and how you are protecting them. There is a leeway there which Cambodian's do not have. One challenge affecting all Cambodian researchers is being able to actually talk about what happened in Cambodia. I think there is also an advantage where we can support Cambodians in being able to do that. This is hard for those living in Cambodia, even though there are critics. I think there can be collaborative aspects. I don't think that all the work that Western NGOs and international organizations do is bad".

Pram puts this more succinctly when they comment, "I think that you have to be very conscious of the assumptions that you're bringing along".

Bei was emphatic that in a country like Cambodia, where there are locally owned organizations, they must determine how trafficking of boys, like all the other issues in relation to sex work and prostitution, is addressed. "Western NGOs must bring what they have that is complementary to work together to achieve what they believe can be achieved. That is, as we know, not easy".

"Cambodia is such a complex country", Bei continued. "Choose what is to be for the benefit of those that need it the most. Not all Western forms of advocacy are appropriate in certain cultures. It is not about speaking for those who cannot speak. It is enabling, through whatever actions will do it, to make sure they can speak for themselves, and we can amplify the message".

Bei indicated that to achieve this INGOs, NGOs, FBOs, and grassroots organizations must "involve advocacy. It must have advocacy around policy, around the law, around human rights, around obligations, around country obligations and the commitments that those countries have made". Bei added that more might be done using the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process. "The UPR process reminds Cambodia what their obligations are, and what they have committed to. The process means trying to ensure that questions are asked by those bodies. Sometimes through this, NGOs can fulfil their capacity".

Buon gave a personal example by recalling how "we did an interesting study, looking at what was called research? Basically, we were looking at the research environment in Cambodia, trying to understand what challenges occur for researchers. In terms of what researchers do, I think at the very least, have a sense of not just being an activist, in our Western way of doing research, but sharing what we find. Try to say to the community networks 'what can I do that is useful? If they find academic research is not very useful for them, then what is?'"

Buon built on front line experience to give some examples of how to be useful. "What they do find is my ability to know the rights of people, to have this sort of computer software, and other basic skills, such as GPS mapping are significant resources. That is how I can be of practical use. I'll figure it out and then through that we can work together in a more defined way. It's not personal, it is about the experiences that we've had with others. My experiences have shown me that there needs to be much more collaboration. There needs to be more transparency. They don't want to share. I understand that. I logically understand that. But my rational side goes, they really need to collaborate if any issues are to be addressed. If you don't collaborate, and everything is interconnected? I see this big disconnect, and it really saddens me. Because, in my opinion, they'll miss the mark".

Pram thinks that "we can look at much more politically sensitive issues. We can ask some pretty direct questions. As a foreign researcher you can get down to some pretty deep levels and you can make political statements, which you know that you don't necessarily want to when you are in Cambodia. I think that this has an advantage. There must be a collaborative aspect. I think that is also 'working with Cambodians', to go, "ok now, what is useful, what is good, what can help people in Cambodia?' You hopefully should learn and reflect. I think that there is a real advantage to foreign researchers being able to come out of Cambodia and talk about what happens in Cambodia. I think there is also an advantage where we can support Cambodians in being able to do that. If we can also support the education of Cambodian students outside of Cambodia, freedom of movement, and things like that, or even capacity building within Cambodia - there are people who do just that already and are an example of what to do. This is the stuff that we can do that's genuinely important. We might not be able to go in and make a difference on the ground. But we can make a difference by going, "right, there's this shit going on and people need to be aware of it".

Pram Muoy suggests that there are practical ways to continue to support those in Cambodia that you may have a personal connection with, reiterating that this "is an individual and private thing". If anyone wants to assist, it would largely be financial assistance, or provision of expertise. There's a huge need. I certainly support people providing financial and expert assistance, but I think they should choose their NGO carefully. I'm not keen on people having their hearts touched on a visit to Cambodia and setting up their own small charity. Why not support the existing ones, and if that's what you want, go, and visit, and see how 'your charity' is doing? Do that. Do it under the umbrella of a highly professional NGO that has a long-standing record of professionalism, competence, and financial management".

Cambodia's complex, infamous, nefarious history weighs heavily on how the issue of trafficking is constructed, considered, and conducted in contemporary Cambodia.

However, Pram commented that in their research, trafficking "came in association with questions when talking about genocide "I was working

interviewing people who worked at the site. We got talking about what are the benefits of tourism, and what are the negative aspects of tourism. When we spoke about the negative aspects, trafficking was one of the first thing that came up, trafficking and drug abuse".

Pram concluded that "there's not enough research done with child prostitution, [boys] and trafficking, and things like that> I don't think it dismisses the experiences of women and girls. To say they are actually [boys] I think that it highlights the fact that there are these abuses against humans, and all of that needs researching".

Buon's examination of trafficking primarily comes from their involvement, observations, and understandings of how things seem in rural communities. These reflections uncover another theme, that of coercion and debt bondage. Buon explains the precarious lives lived and experienced of those living in rural Cambodia. How desperation and displacement force migration and slavery.

Buon mused that in a post-Covid-19 world, that "over the next couple of years, I can imagine, that there will be less money to go around, because those donors will pull back. That feeling that you can't share. That each person is going for the same contracts. It does not create a good environment for working together on these issues".

In this chapter I have focused unapologetically on the descriptions and observations of my participants. These were born from rich and mature experiences over decades. In the next chapter, I discuss these themes in the wider context of the available literature, to forge a path to further answers to my research question.

# CHAPTER 5

# DISCUSSION

## 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss the themes that were dominant throughout the interviews. I will support these prevalent themes with literature that has been discussed earlier in the thesis. Many issues intertwined with each other, while other issues were conditional on the context. For example, when I asked about the 'trafficking of children', some participants assumed that the issue was primarily thought of in terms of women and girls, while other participants discussed orphanages [as] being representative of trafficking. Because of this I have identified eleven key themes that I have considered to be the most representative of the thesis question, although reference is made to other concerns throughout this chapter.

## 5.2 Overview

In contemporary global affairs, the issue of "child sex-trafficking has become a topic of [international] discussion and concern" (Miller-Perrin and Wurtele, 2017, p. 123). Although there have been many prior investigations conducted concerning human trafficking (Curley, 2018; UNDOC, 2016; Davy, 2014), trafficking continues to be a burgeoning, illicit issue. Prior to this research, I had my own assumptions that were based on my personal experiences and my observations in Cambodia. The interviewees challenged them. For example, prior to the interview process, my research had guided me to literature that centred on human rights instruments, such as the Palermo Protocol (2000), specifically the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976), and the UNTOC (2000). However, no participant bought up any of these key international instruments.

Bei did, however, did refer to the UN Istanbul Protocol (1999). This protocol focusses on torture, with its accepted, non-binding international directives.

Although Bei's referral was almost an aside, it complements the UN Palermo Protocol (2000). Bei additionally mentioned the UPR process, a UN review of human rights records of all member states. Bei's adherence to international protocols and conventions was important, as it showed me that some participants within the NGO community do respect the "rule of law" *per se*. This is because many NGO policies conflict with their host country, susceptible to the demands and vagaries of their host government.

Academics Suarez and Marshall (2014, p. 181) support Bei, identifying that NGOs' interaction with their environment requires "collaborative capacity [that gives] NGOs the ability to manage complex, overlapping environments". Pram concurred, noting that "capacity building needs to consider the bigger picture". Davy (2014, p. 807, 808) adds the "bigger picture [is] described as [what are the] root causes of trafficking, including poverty exacerbated by contemporary globalization, gender inequality, and a [lack of] support systems for young people". This capacity and connectivity lead into the opening question.


## 5.3   From Knowing Nothing and Seeing Nothing to Being Aware

The opening question asked participants about their "awareness, connection, observation, or perspective" of the sexual exploitation, slavery, and trafficking of young boys in Cambodia. The question was specifically gendered because the "discussion of boys as victims or survivors of the commercial exploitation of children" (CSE) is frequently appended to discussion about commercially, sexually exploited girls" (Friedman, 2013, p. 1). Whereas Bei and Buon commented that "I don't know anything", or 'trafficking is not my focus", Pram identified that although they didn't have "direct experience, [they] knew 'it' existed". Pram Muoy stated that they were "aware of the issue", but until the interview they had overlooked the issue.

As the interview process progressed, each participant began to recall specific scenes that they had observed or connected with. Initially, Pii had assumed that "if they trafficked girls, then they would traffic boys as well", whereas Buon recanted their original comment, remembering that their "NGO awareness [and involvement] gave them awareness", even though their NGO was not focussed on anti-trafficking or sexual exploitation issues. Muoy specifically recalled their

"personal epiphany, with a girl who had been trafficked when she was eleven years old, dying of AIDS".

Most participants initially reflected on human rights or human rights abuses, rather than the specific question of the trafficking of boys.

When I realized this, I had a cognitive shift to reconsider my own assumptions. I began to ponder each participant's reference to human rights, as the human rights abuses that the participants identified ranged from genocide to the sale of children, adoption to paedophilia, child abuse, forced labour, and poverty. Davy (2016, p. 486) includes "other activities [that define] the phenomenon of trafficking in persons" as domestic servitude, drug, and organ trafficking, forced marriage, and pornography. This realization also led me to reconsider the idiosyncratic perceptions of Cambodia that each participant had. This consideration made me realize that "personal stories" had started to emerge from each interview. Every response was independent and inimitable. Some intimate and raw. Several were deeply personal and poignant. Each had a palpable edge. I recognized that my rigorous fieldwork and research had the ability to transform the most obtuse response into a distinctive dialogue.

## 5.4   Perceptions of Cambodia

When someone states, as Pram did, that "there's shit going on and people need to be aware of it!", your attention is immediate. Pram followed this by stressing that "Cambodia [became] positioned, not as a failed state, but as a state in need of external control". Robertson (2019, p. 75) echoed this sentiment, noting that since the late twentieth century "Cambodia has become the petri dish for the West's development regimes". In opening this discussion, each participant had personal, profound experiences in Cambodia. Each interviewee was affected by its corruption, people, politics, and poverty. The "elitist, legitimized, Machiavellian, political tool of corruption, exercised to broker peace while distributing its spoils" (Ear 2016, p. 159), was commented on by each participant. These academic observations support the participants' perceptions.

## 5.5  Poverty

Cambodia is amongst the poorest in the world with the UNDP (2020) reporting that 37.2 % of the population live in multidimensional poverty, adding that a further 17.7% live below the national poverty line. (World Bank, 2020). However, these figures cannot be taken at face value due to the governments' venality, and issues with data gathering. Additionally, poverty is not only educational, financial, or material, but also that of food, sustenance, just basic survival. Each of these identified issues are ongoing matters within the kingdom.

Poverty and corruption in Cambodia are readily identifiable, perceptibly tangible. They assault your senses upon arrival. Cambodia's traditional social structure can be attributed to the phenomenon of poverty and oppression, endemic and obvious within the kingdom. Kruy, Kim, and Kakinaka (2010) comment that it is deeply entrenched, the paucity having a flow-on effect throughout the kingdom. Cambodia's rural areas are fraught with land grabs and politically motivated divisions of finite resources. This exacerbates poverty.

However, it assures allegiance and fealty to the authoritarian government, from connected capitalists to corrupt officials. As an issue, poverty has intensified for the rural population. New legislation has forced rural-urban migration. Buon affirms this situation, stating "many from the rural population have moved, as they don't have any land or any money".

These embedded, prescribed issues have created a fiscal and societal vulnerability. This is keenly noticeable in rural areas. The country community is susceptible to coercion and manipulation and vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation. Brokers inveigle desperate people from their disadvantaged destitution. They promise employment, security away from their negative cycle of poverty. Davy (2015, p. 319) observed this stating, they're "frequently deceived through false promises of economic opportunities that await them in more affluent destination countries", or in Cambodia's metropolitan centres.

This situation is aggravated by the population's illiteracy and low educational achievements. This augments desperate choices and endemic poverty (UNDP, 2020). Key to the perpetual poverty, is the need for survival. How Cambodian's address their lived reality oftentimes results in desperate measures. Participants noted people "adopting their children out, legitimately or not, through agencies

or orphanages", "abandoning their children in the middle of the night", "migrating for better work opportunities", "purposely maiming their children so that they can pitifully beg", or "selling their children to brokers, traffickers, or as collateral for loans" to exist, to survive. Buon was the most outspoken participant on the way Khmers' poorest think that these options are the best solutions for their situations.

## 5.6   Gender Bias

Jones (2010, p. 1145) observes that "male vulnerability is consistently obscured by modern-day media expressions of male dominance and invulnerability perpetuated under the guise of masculinity". This "conception of maleness, especially juxtaposed against the backdrop of the human trafficking phenomenon is conceptually flawed" (Jones, 2010, p. 1145). In the Cambodian context, patriarchy and heteronormativity within Khmer culture has ensured that women are subordinate. Women's subordination is an accepted social construct.

Davy (2014) noted that Cambodia has "an ancient practice known as debt bondage. [Children], usually girls, are sent to work for creditors until they pay off a family debt" (p. 794). [This is an accepted, expected] role of being a "good daughter" (Freed 2004). To break with tradition, Cambodia's government has implemented some legislation, in conjunction with investment from NGOs, that have attempted to address such examples of gender imbalance.

However, some Western assumptions have contradicted the understood hierarchal social structures that continue to affect the lived reality, particularly women in Cambodia. Enormous financial and human resource investment has poured into Cambodia. Unfortunately, Cambodia's "gender inequality is [still] inextricably tied with [that of] international intervention" (Robertson, 2019, p. 75), despite international investment. Bei supports this premise, saying that challenges to gender bias "are inherent simply because of social morays and differences". Most participants echoed each other with their knowledge and experiences of, and with, Khmer culture and how they had managed to understand the kingdoms traditional, patriarchal, hierarchal character of social mores.

Bei had advised that when talking about sexual orientation and gender, and the gender continuum and marginalized groups in the 'entertainment industry', this explicitly raised other issues related to their INGOs' sexual rights declaration. Robertson (2019, p. 76) added "there has been development to prevent inequality between men and women, [that the ongoing] unequal gender relations both create and are reflective of society". The disparities made more obvious within disenfranchised, excluded groups.

Gender is but one societal indicator. However, it is one that is integral to Cambodia's societal framework. Specifically, for the thesis question, gender assumptions and bias have shaped the responses to the inquiry. This is because of the assumption embedded in traditional masculinity is that men are inherently strong and not vulnerable to sexual exploitation. This impedes the understanding of the victimization of boys and men, and the social and assumed cultural norms they inhabit (Barron and Frost 2018; Davis, Miles, and M'lop 2014). This is particularly prevalent within Asian culture.

For example, when Pii reflected on my question, "have you observed boys [in Cambodia being] trafficked primarily for sex", initially the response was "no". later, Pii recanted saying "most of the time [you] think of girls, [I [ didn't] think of boys [for that purpose], but I'm sure, if they trafficked girls, they would traffic boys". When each participant reconsidered their initial response to the question, their answers started to take on an atavistic authenticity, a recognition about what they had seen and what that might mean. Many participants noted seeing young people who were sex workers. Pram added that they "assumed that there would be more girls, but that this was purely a personal assumption. I know boys are also abused. In Phnom Penh there are certainly many sex workers who are male, transgender". Barron and Frost (2018, p. 74) state that "even with global statistics in countries that often spotlight the victimization of women and girls, boys are more likely to be trafficked than girls".

Pii reflected on "male social and cultural norms [that] often assume men and boys are inherently strong, invulnerable to sexual exploitation". Muoy added, that within Khmer culture "there is a general belief and understanding that a boy cannot be sexually abused but a girl can" Cambodians are emphatic on this notion. Muoy added that 'because of that belief, there were [NGOs] doing

awareness raising, that boys do get abused. It is possible for a boy to get abused". Muoy added, that Khmer people viewed the purported sexual abuse as "tomfoolery". Keo *et al.* (2016, p. 30) confirmed a need to be "shining a spotlight on boys questioning these common assumptions", as "boys and young men are vulnerable to sexual exploitation" (Miles and Blanch, 2011, p. 4).

Jones (2010) headlined his article: "The invisible man: the conscious neglect of men and boys in the war on trafficking". Barron and Frost (2018, p. 74) added that this invisibility was exacerbated by a "combination of a lack of laws, corrupt officials, and overall ignorance [that] leads to the ever-thriving commercial exploitation of boys and men". Because of this, while more focus is put onto women and girls being trafficked, men and boys continue to be "discounted as victims and prevented from seeking help due to overgeneralization and stereotyping" (Barron and Frost, 2018, p. 74). Bei, Buon, and Pii noted that they were more aware of men and boys being trafficked for labour and migration other than for sexual exploitation. This is because "the demand[s] that trigger trafficking into forced labour, however, differ from that of sex trafficking" (Jones, 2010, p. 1152-1153). Although those sexually exploited and trafficked still generate considerable profit for their perpetrator and pimps, there is a difference in approach and coercion by brokers as most trafficking of boys is prevalent for the child pornography industry (Barron and Frost, 2018; Jones, 2010). As most trafficking is clandestine and illicit, the stigma associated with sex trafficking in a patriarchal society such as Cambodia drives it further underground, although the demand continues to increase.


## 5.7   Really, Boys?

Muoy had commented that within Khmer culture there was a belief a boy could not be abused. Cambodians are emphatic with this belief. Keo *et al.* (2016, p. 3) noted that "shining a spotlight on boys questions these common assumptions". The sexual abuse of boys is not playing. It is abuse. It is sexual assault. Muoy noted that they had an issue where a 'volunteer' was a problem. He had come into the community to help. However, the reality and the results were distressing. He had been accused and identified as having abused boys and young men. He had created a sense of shame amongst them due to their

ignorance. The general community belief was, so what's the problem? Of great concern was that the offending incurred confusion. This continues to be of great concern and indignation to Muoy, as it unravels years of building trust within the community. Trust is understandably difficult to rebuild from this scenario.

This situation reminded me of Jones (2010, 1145), who observed that "male vulnerability is consistently obscured by modern-day media expressions of male dominance and invulnerability perpetuated under the guise of masculinity". I agreed with his observation that this "conception of maleness, especially juxtaposed against the backdrop of the human trafficking phenomenon, is conceptually flawed" (Jones, 2010, p. 1145).

I had assumed that more had been written and researched on young men and boys vulnerable to sexual exploitation. However, I discovered a "combination of a lack of laws, corrupt officials, and overall ignorance" (Barron and Frost, 2018, p. 74) in the commercial exploitation of boys and men left a chasm of silence. Jones (2010) reinforced this. The "legal scholarship [has] largely disregarded the systemic neglect of male victims in the war on human trafficking, [and] male vulnerability that has been neglected in academic discourse" (Jones, 2010, p.1145 -1146). Men and boys continue to be more likely than women and girls to become victims of all forms of trafficking. They are far less likely to receive legal protection (Barron and Frost, 2018; Jones, 2010).

## 5.8 Trafficked

When I posited the question, "Did you observe trafficking of children in Cambodia; what was your first observation of trafficking?", in the majority, the participants "observed" more girls than boys. Initially, Buon stated that "I can't speak specifically to that", whereas Pram said "I am very aware of it. I've seen people who have been offered young children". Bei added that "the trafficking and sexual abuse was primarily thought of in terms of being women, girls". Pram Muoy reflected on the "young girls" they saw daily. My participants affirmed Jones' (2010) comment: "Female trafficking is erroneously regarded as the principle undertaking of human traffickers" (Jones, 2010, p.1151).

Most initial responses identified both the trafficking issue, as well as the gender bias already mentioned. Generally, the participants had intimate knowledge that trafficking in Cambodia is an issue of grave concern. Each participant started to recall incidents or observations that they had experienced and/ or observed. They told similar stories, some deeply personal and filled with emotion at recalling the memory. Pram reflected on whether the prostitution, or sex work that they knew about in Sihanoukville, Siem Rep, and Phnom Penh was "related to trafficking". Discourse on trafficking led to other issues such as orphanages and voluntourism.

## 5.9 Voluntourism and Orphanages

The travel and tourism industries account for "more than three-quarters of Cambodia's services exports and about one-fifth of Cambodia's total goods and services exports" (World Bank 2020). However, COVID-19 has had a severe impact on Cambodia's tourism industry that has affected all forecasts and figures, denying reliability and accuracy.

While the thesis question addresses sexual exploitation and sex trafficking, many other abuses are acknowledged and analysed as being a part of the industrialized trafficking complex (Quirk 2009). Sex-tourism is one of the better known of the "myriad of issues and problems in the tourism industry tied to ethics, or the lack thereof" (Tepelus, 2018, p. 102). Cambodia is globally identified as being a destination nation for the sex-tourist. Many mistakenly assume that the "sex-tourist" is predominantly from a Western nation, however they are more likely to be Asian travellers (Thomas and Matthews 2006).

The sex- tourist can be categorized as being "the paedophile, the virginity-seeker, and the situational offender" (Thomas and Matthews, 2006, p. 8). This is because the *modus operandi* of many of the tourists fall into one of two distinct groupings: those who approach children directly, such as street children, and those who use networks to access children such as brothels (Thomas and Matthews, 2006, p. 8).

International and national tourists are drawn to Svay Pak, "a poor fishing village on the outside of Phnom Penh, known globally as a destination for child

sex" (Hume, 2013, December 12). In the past forty years sex- tourism has become a buzzword in the lexicon of tourism and travel, but now, orphanage-tourism and voluntourism have been added. Tourism is one of the many industries that promote the industrial-scaled development of orphanage tourism and voluntourism. The demand for volunteer and orphanage-based tourism, provides the "necessary conditions for illicit adoption, trafficking, and orphanage scams" (Lyneham and Facchini, 2019, p. 1).

Cambodia unwittingly promoted this growth industry in 2002. Actress Angelina Jolie adopted a Cambodian infant. This resulted in a new phenomenon, where many Westerners adopt from developing countries, changing the adoptive trend from the Romanian or Russian orphans in the 1990's-2000's, to that of southern hemisphere developing nations.

Angelina Jolie's further adoptions from Vietnam and Somalia, with entertainer Madonna, adopting four children from Malawi, only added to the increase in demand. Furthermore, many Westerners reported widespread corruption and mismanagement by orphanages and adoption agencies (Guiney and Mostafanezhad, 2015). Pram Muoy supported these statements, commenting that "thousands of volunteers and aid professionals visit Cambodia annually to assist. There is no doubt that 50% are doing a wonderful job. However, there is little coordination between them.

The misplaced good intentions of volunteering and donor donations potentially damage "a whole generation of Cambodian children" (Guiney and Mostafanezhad, 2015, p. 133). My participants had seen the western 'do gooders', well-meaning people who came to meet their own needs as opposed to those of Cambodian communities. This form of voluntourism looks good on your CV. This kind of benevolent harm is atypical of the cross-over between colonial discourse, politics, collaboration, NGOs, and the intent of the volunteers.

Importantly, Pii noted that "a lot of the so-called orphans are not technically orphans, they're more like abandoned children, but conveniently called orphans". This convenience feeds the cycle of coercion, debt, deceit, and manipulation, leading victims desperate to survive poverty convenient

opportunity to commodify their children, protected under the umbrella of agencies and charities.

The exploitation emerges as a "commodified humanitarian intervention [that]] illustrates tensions", a disconnect "between gestures and humanitarianism and corollary opportunities for corruption" (Guiney and Mostafanezhad, 2015, p. 133). All the while, anti-orphanage movements have emerged to combat the growth of this contentious growth industry blamed for widespread corruption, and the purposeful exploitation of children for profit and nefarious gain.

## 5.10 Proselytization and Pragmatic Christianity

"You convert to Christianity, and we'll help you!", Pram sardonically observed. Pram Muoy noted that this is a typical refrain from "ministering, missionary-style charities in Cambodia". Conversely, Pram's observation on conditional assistance through circumscribed conversion, is but one of the many tragedies of the socio-cultural-political schisms that divide and polarize contemporary Cambodia.

Chowdhury, Wahab, and Islam (2019, p. 1056) noted that "the rise of identity politics linked with Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism, [as well as] the impact of neoliberal policies, has led to the emergence of [FBOs meeting] people's unmet welfare needs". Cambodia's Theravada Buddhism, which strongly influences the motivation of some FBOs, and NGOs has assisted with "their humanitarian, egalitarian principles, or teachings irrespective of religious faith" (Chowdhury *et al.*, 2019, p. 1056).

Pram Muoy concurred with Pram's theory, observing that many Westerners go to Cambodia. The arrive with the love of God. They want to proselytize. They help a bit, although this help sometimes harms. This is as Cambodians need more than dogma. They need a systemic way of support. They need practical solutions. Anyone who wants to assist [Cambodian's] should do so either through financial assistance or the provision of expertise". Pram furthers Pram Muoy's observation, stating that "instead of focussing on the soul of the [collective] individual, people should consider the bigger picture".

Frame observed that "FBOs believe [that their] faith brings added value to the services that they provide, [more than that of just] dignity, humanity, and compassion. This emphasis is perceived to be lacking in developmental approaches made by secular NGOs" (Frame, 2017, p. 311-312). However, Frame (2016, p. 272) added that "practical solutions, whether with an FBO or not, makes substantial differences in the outcome they produce. This is of particular importance in policymaking discussions".

Proselytization does have major issues. For example, I am personally aware of an FBO that will only rescue victims, if they 'pray the gay away'. One reason for this is that "male sex workers in the commercial sex industry are often assumed to be gay" (Barron and Frost, 2018, p. 74). Pram, Pram Muoy, Barron and Frost, are supported by Davy who commented that, in interviews they had conducted, "intense criticism of small faith-based organizations, described as "weird", or "wacky", doing "strange secretive things" were revealed (Davy, 2014, p. 807).

These considerations not only reflect on conversion issues, and/ or conversion-therapy, but also on Western and Cambodian attitudes towards the LGBTQI+ community. Schroeder observed that with "wide differences in approach and practice, it is vital to appreciate the real complexity of the concerns and debates around the definition and impact of proselytizing, which is as important as it is controversial" (Schroeder, 2012, p. 9)

For example, Barron and Frost discussed that "as a result of their objections to same-sex behaviour, FBOs contribute to the victimization of the LGBTQI+ men and boys by turning a blind eye to their suffering" (Barron and Frost, 2018, p. 73). The LGBTQI+ community are subsequently put at unnecessary risk. They collectively confront the assumption that boys and men, should be able to defend themselves better than girls can. This is difficult to achieve within a patriarchal society.

The LGBTQI+ community face a "high level of stigma, discrimination, and exclusion [from] home, school, the workplace, health facilities, and public spaces" (OHCHR, 2020). This is of concern as "same-sex relations are not criminalized [in Cambodia, but equally] they are neither protected nor recognized by Cambodian law" (OHCHR, 2020). This vulnerability of the gay

community is "unintentionally" preyed upon by Pharisaic evangelism, by well-meaning FBOs.

As identified by Buon and supported by Barron and Frost many victims of trafficking are "lured with financial promises and then threatened. There is no way out for many victims. With financial hardship comes the will to do anything" (2018, p. 74). Many [of those] trafficked are just "trying to provide food and shelter for themselves, and their dependents" (Barron and Frost, 2018, p. 75).

These comments and reflections by Pram, Pram Muoy, and myself are not criticisms. Davy (2018, p. 806, 807) writes of "collaborative relationship(s) between World Vision International, a Christian FBO, and Save the Children International, a secular NGO". Davy furthers they "frequently join forces on campaigns and programmes" (2018, p. 806, 807). Frame noted that "while spiritual dimensions infuse the values of FBOs, FBOs shared a number of organizational motivations related to their faith, sharing many organizational values with non-faith-based NGOs" (Frame, 2020, p. 7). However, oftentimes there is a disconnect between function and purpose with a disregard for indigenous Khmer culture and tradition.

Pram noted "some Cambodian NGOs work brilliantly on the ground, with Cambodian understandings, Buddhist worldviews". Pram Muoy eloquently concludes this contentious and personal issue, calling for compassion for these people. "Try to support them and not use them. The more people can say that, understand it, the better. Put yourself in their position".


## 5.11 Boastful Altruism or Arrogant Colonialism

Pram keenly observed that sometimes the work conducted by NGOs is sullied by an arrogance, "look, we've taken these poor people. We have taken trafficked girls. We are setting them up. We have "saved" them. This is marketed and targeted primarily at the Western market. This idea of doing good. I think that it is damaging. I think that it is highly problematic.

Bei commented that Cambodia's ongoing reliance on external [Western] aid usually follows a colonial model. Pram defines this as "colonialism through development.

Frewer wrote that this colonization includes "expatriate consultants, volunteers, and the trappings needed to support expatriate lifestyles [showing that] there is nothing natural about this situation" (2013, p. 98). Pram warned that "this has the potential to be{become] culturally inappropriate, to be patriarchal and patronizing, to be derogatory and damaging". These ideas are supported by Khieng who noted that "many of the development policies and programmes are conceived, prepared, and proposed essentially by foreign donors", as Western aid "usually comes with conditions and expectations of good governance" Khieng (2014, p. 1445).

Buon observed many Westerners, with good intentions, trying to start initiatives all the time. Pram added that this creates a social disconnect "when you have a lot of Western, Eurocentric NGOs [and people] coming in, with particular ideas of what is normal and right". This has led Cambodia to accept more aid and assistance from its nearer, Asian neighbours such as China, South Korea, and Vietnam, as their assistance is unconditional. The only demands that China mandates is that they have exclusive "access for their [state-owned] corporations to Cambodia's rich resources and cheap labour" (Khieng, 2014, p. 1445).


## 5.12 Politics

Since the fall of the Khmer Rouge's genocidal, repressive regime in 1979, Cambodian politics has been dominated by Prime Minister Hun Sen, and his ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP). The transition from annihilation to political authoritarianism, within the parameters of a constitutional monarchy, and a conjectural democracy has led to a the CPP's socio-political domination of the country. This "hegemonic party system emerged in 1997, [which has] now given way to a one-party state, … prone to tension and instability" (Peou, 2020, p. 17). Hun Sen has created an authoritarian kingdom, surrounding himself with a tight-knit elite comprised of a complicit CPP government, legislators, police chiefs, military generals, and businessmen who dominate Cambodian society with power and consolidation.

Subsequently, Cambodia has become an authoritarian democracy, with "the incompetence and venality of most of Cambodia's political class an unfortunate

constant" (c.f. Hays, 2014). The interest in the "democratization of Cambodia can be reasonably assumed to emanate from abroad; the Cambodian actors had previously shown little interest for any representative system, which, it has been argued, is alien to Khmer traditions" (Peou, 2001, p. 300). Adding to Cambodia's political narrative, Bei comments that "Cambodia is a complex country. [Don't] confuse political persuasion with advocacy. Whenever the government is involved it becomes a politically controversial issue".

Buon had commented on the great care needed working in Cambodia. "How to operate within an increasingly restrictive environment, particularly if you're wanting to do anything that might implicate anyone in power". Bei noted that "the government creates policy and legislation in an increasingly restrictive environment". This occurs particularly when the government is confronted on its human rights issues.

These issues have only been apparent and prevalent since Cambodia's first democratic elections in 1993 and 1998. Bei adds that "the government creates policy and legislation in an increasingly restrictive environment".


## 5.13 Corruption

"Corruption remains a significant impediment to development in Cambodia" (Ear 2016, p. 159), with estimates that it is a high as ten % of the GDP (2016, p. 159). "Corruption is not just money; it is a corrosive mentality that debases national life in a country still not sure of itself" (Hays 2008). The World Bank defined corruption as being the "abuse of public office for private gain" (Ear, 2016, p. 159). It is not a new phenomenon in the kingdom. Corruption is entrenched within traditional Khmer hierarchy: culturally, economically, educationally, politically, and societally (Chheang 2008). Its venality affected each participant, personally and professionally, upon arrival into the country, through to dealing with bureaucrats, bureaucracy, and bargaining at the local markets.

Pii refers to corruption as being "rampant", adding that Cambodia's endemic corruption "starts the moment that you land in the country". Buon says that it is "rife", with "government officials using their positions to legitimize their blatant

dishonesty". Profiteering and the marketization from Cambodia's natural resources, cheap labour, and foreign investment are distributed throughout Cambodia's elite with impunity. Ear supported this, writing that corruption infiltrates "all facets of society, but, in practice, the top four areas of bribe payments involve the judiciary, police, registry, permit services, and land services, all of which are public agencies" (2016, p. 163).

Ear discussed how disheartened they felt, reading reports that revealed "bribe payments in the past twelve months [show that] 65% of respondents name [the] judiciary, the police, followed [by those involved with] registration and permits at 62%, with land services being at 57%" (2016, p. 162). Corruption has created a systemic operation that benefits the powerful and connected but is also a blatant and obvious game played by any connected, resourceful judge, official, or police-person able to use discretionary power and influence to grease their palms. TI reports on Cambodia are full of such examples.

Pram Muoy is more disdainful. The government is divorced from supporting its citizens and the state subsequently relies upon NGOs supporting the people. Keo *et al.* noted that the government has "adopted a repressive law that defines human trafficking ineptly; in the hands of a dysfunctional justice system, the law [becoming] an instrument of corruption against powerless individuals" This is how the Cambodian government's "war on trafficking" is conducted, ensuring the continuation of development aid to the country (Keo *et al.*, 2014. P. 202). Buon furthers that "whenever the government is involved it becomes a politically controversial issue", adding that "the government creates policy and legislation in an increasingly restrictive environment".

In summation, Hutt (2019, August 28) reported that "corruption in Cambodia and purported efforts to combat it are nothing new. It is tied to the way its politics are conducted". State-linked outlets have talked about anti-corruption being part of Hun Sen's agenda, tying anti-corruption matters to concerns such as tax collection. Hun Sen is aware of the optics of assumed corruption, domestically and abroad. Although corruption continues to be "deeply embedded in Cambodia's political dynamics, state-directed efforts to get rid of a "few bad apples"' does not address [the] systemic problems related to the personalized and party-centric networks of Hun Sen" (Hutt, 2019, August 28).

Hun Sen's family continue to wield enormous power throughout the kingdom. His sons run the military and youth wing of parliament. His wife runs one of the nation's largest charities. His daughters' control important businesses and the media. The ruling party's dominant, manipulative influence extends beyond the links with business tycoons and loyalists within bureaucratic institutions.

However, "Cambodia's future relies on the results of reforms, especially in fighting against corruption, and building a strong institution, and resilient inclusive society" (Hutt, 2019, August 28). Hun Sen and his government are aware of this, the importance of anti-corruption. Hun Sen "understands that corruption and weak institutions are the key threats to political stability" (Hutt, 2019, August 28).

## 5.14 INGOs, NGOs, FBOs, and the Grassroots Community

In contemporary Cambodia, NGOs play an integral role in the kingdom's stability and reform. The nation has gone from having "no NGOs operating within its territory a mere two decades ago, to having thousands operating there at the end of the twentieth century" (Frewer, 2013, p. 97, 98). Pram Muoy had noted there were thousands of NGOs and 50 percent of them were below par. All participants acknowledged a strong NGO presence, with many commenting on there being an overabundance of NGOs in Cambodia. Moreover, all participants have had experiences with NGOs, whether working for them or alongside them.

The influx of NGOs into Cambodia in recent history has been the result of Cambodia's call for aid, assistance, and development. Pram believed this has been in response to a call for international help, massively influenced by the UN. They have proliferated. Some of them are doing incredibly good work".

Some UN activity may be from guilt. There were negative impacts from the initial UN intervention. Reports of an increase of prostitution to satisfy the peacekeepers, foreign troops, and NGO staff gained traction. With this carnal industry came the HIV/ AIDS pandemic which quickly took hold of the impoverished nation.

As the 1990s unfolded "Cambodia [underwent] a series of rapid and profound social changes; from civil war to peace, from socialist-style authoritarianism to

multi-party democracy, and from geographic isolation to a free-market economy" (Winter, 2008, p. 524). This "external control" began between 1992-1993 with the UN, which created the UNTAC (February 1992-September 1993). This "authority" the outcome of the Paris Peace Accords (1991). The subsequent UN-organized elections of 1993 saw Cambodia injected with two billion dollars; five billion dollars deposited into Official Development Assistance (ODA) afterwards. Half of this figure funded Cambodia's budget (Ear 2007). The five billion dollars assisted Cambodia into a post-genocide, post-civil war rebuild. The monies continue to aid Cambodia's fractured, fragile democracy, helping the kingdom in areas as disparate as infrastructure to human trafficking prevention. The country is now one of the most aid-dependent in the world. Some academics suggest that there may be negative consequences in governance due to the over-assistance of financial aid. These benevolent contributions have distorted the Cambodian economy since its democratic emergence in the 1990s.

Frewer (2013, p. 98) supports Pram's observation, noting NGOs bring with them "expatriate consultants, volunteers, and the trappings needed to support expatriate lifestyles, showing that there is nothing natural about the situation". Pram adds that this is a "social [societal] disconnect, that has the potential to be culturally inappropriate, to be patriarchal and patronizing, derogatory and damaging".

With the influx of foreign aid. Fedorak (2014) echoed the warnings of the danger of imposing Western ideals on other nations without acknowledging, respecting, or understanding local culture. This is because, as Bei comments, "not all [Western] forms of advocacy are appropriate for certain cultures. It is not speaking for those who can't speak. It is somehow enabling, through whatever actions will do it, to make sure that they can speak for themselves. Buon said this gives the opportunity to amplify their message.

One of the strongest reactions to NGOs came from Pram Muoy. Their observations mirrored that of Caroline McCausland, Vice-Chair of the Cooperation Committee Cambodia (CCC) Executive Committee, and ActionAid Cambodia. She explained that 'it is the government's responsibility to coordinate the actions of development organizations at the sub-national level, through mechanisms such as the Provincial Cooperation Committee (ProCoCom)"

(Domashneva 2013). Pram Muoy considers this bureaucratic, political positioning as shameful, leaving the NGOs to support the people. Pram Muoy continued saying that they are "not greatly in favour of a country being run by NGOs without proper authority, realization, or protection for the local people". However, if they are highly professional, "they do indeed do wonderful development work that benefits the whole community, as well as specific people that they're working with".

Bei advised that "to go in unasked, unwarranted without a clear agreement on how to deal with local organizations, would be the wrong thing to do". Pram noted that this is because "NGOs come in with certain, particular targets, that come with certain ideals of morality, as it creates a universalization of what a country should look like". This can be an issue.

Muoy adds that expats 'have a very important role to play and it is sad when [I] see expats coming into Cambodia who you can see have their own agenda, their own needs, and what they are doing to meet and satisfy their own needs, instead of them wanting to meet the needs of the people through their own people". McGloin and Georgeou (2016, p. 403) depict this as an example of "public pedagogy that reinforces a hegemonic discourse of need".  Katrina and Nancy (2019, p. 50) concur, observing that "Cambodian NGOs frequently don't align with neighbourhood needs, instead they put their resources into communitarian basic leadership and organized 'neighbourhood targets".

Considering this practice, Buon adds "Cambodians are entitled to behave in this manner as if the [local] NGOs don't want to share, I understand that. I logically understand, but [my other self goes] they really need to share if any issues are to be addressed. If you don't collaborate and everything is interconnected, there is a big disconnect".

The government introduced the NGO Law (2015), Curley explained, "to regulate and control [activities] on a wide-range of civil society organizations" (2018, p. 247). However, the law created alarm within the NGO community due to the legislation increasing government influence, interference, and involvement of not only the NGO community but additionally civil society. Buon notes that, even now, 'there is minimal awareness of the politics of what they are doing. There is a lack of awareness amongst NGOs".

Surveillance and interference by the Ministry of Interior are commonplace. Buon commented that "there is so much surveillance from the Ministry [already, that] when the formalization of NGOs happened, both the Ministry [of Interior] as well as the government unwittingly exposed their own corruption".

Buon added "one of the interesting questions in terms of the NGO sector, for both Western and local, is how you operate in an environment that is increasingly restrictive, particularly if you're wanting to do anything that might implicate anyone in power. To address this, an Anti-Corruption Unit, based in Phnom Penh has noted that "bribe-seeking and offering undermines the professionalism and accountability of government institutions. It leads to situations where those that can afford to pay more receive preferential treatment, inequality exacerbated and impunity reigns (Biddulph 2014).

Another issue is that Buon raised was about some of their NGO partners and friends. "Some of my friends have been working for NGOs in Cambodia for years but have become cynical due to the daily grind of dealing with the corrupt government, and the changing face of inter-NGO relations".

Although at the base of an NGO their respective mandates ultimately desire to democratize and create a civil society, this is often contrary to cultural tradition. Ideally, "societal participation in the organization of a state, from many walks of like, to advance mutual interests" (Fedorak, 2014, p. 33) would be a collaborative model.

In this chapter I have linked my participants descriptions with secondary data, in a discussion which adds to the literature, reviews of development partners in Cambodia, to unveil recent academic literature focused on the sex trafficking of boys.

The descriptions of my participants in Chapter Four were extraordinarily clear, considered, and heart felt. The secondary data confirmed and enlarged upon their observations. UN multilaterals the ILO, the IOM, the INGO TI, and the UNODC confirmed the issues of endemic corruption and trafficking. ASEAN strategies, the US State Department TIP Report(s), and the UPR Report(s), confirmed sex trafficking, with the UPR report adding that further forms of the trafficking of boys included child pornography, and to 'expressly criminalize the sexual exploitation in travel and tourism" (OHCHR, 2020).

Academics confirmed that the sex trafficking of boys has been subject to little investigation, with the focus being on women and girls.

The positive impact that NGOs have on Cambodia is tangibly evident, but this is a very hard country to work in, and it requires particular approaches and skills. The thesis now returns in the final section, to the answers to the thesis question, and findings which are directly relevant.

## 5.15  Donor Dependency and Aid Relations

Since Cambodia's tentative return to democracy in 1993, monetary aid and assistance from the UN, INGOs, IGOs, NGOs, FBOs, and grassroots communities transferring into the kingdom has resulted in minimal positive outcomes. Instead, the aid and assistance has created a culture of donor dependency. This has been exacerbated by a corrupt government, that has limited accountability, internally and internationally. Ear (2013, p. 8) observes that contemporary Cambodia is a "kleptocracy *cum* thugocracy", and the UN and other multilateral and nation state donors are the enablers of this. The "donor cultureviews aid dependence as a fact of life" (Ear, 2013, p. 8). This enabling has not been the intention of these foreign aid organizations and stakeholders, but it is the outcome.

Cambodia has one of the highest presences, per capita, of NGOs in the world. The Cambodian Rehabilitation and Development Board notes that activities of INGOs working in the kingdom can be classified under 4 categories:

1. Large-scale service projects for reconstruction and infrastructure development purposes.
2. service delivery at the provincial, district, and commune level.
3. community development activities in villages; and
4. development, training and capacity building of local NGOs" (Kong, 2013, p. 9).

However, Cambodia's socio-economic and political dependency has made the kingdom vulnerable, further weakened by a complicit police force and judiciary. As such, some INGOs and NGOs have framed the "trafficking issue"

to their donors and stakeholders as a reflection of the government's ineptness and nepotism. Cambodia's continued presence on the TIP Report illustrates this.

Chow suggests that the best way that Western intervention and involvement can help is to leave the Cambodian government and people alone. A harsh prosecutorial crackdown on Cambodia's endemic corruption would not be helpful. The focus should be on the survivors and victims (Chow, 2020, p. 60).

Ongoing issues such as cultural insensitivity and competency are a low priority for the government and some NGOs operating within the country. There is scant evidence that there is an actual system in place to address these issues of aid assistance and donor dependency.

# CHAPTER 6
# FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

My participants engaged successfully with the posited thesis question. My findings on my research are as follows:

**Addressing the thesis question: "What contributions might be made by Western advocates, activists, researchers, and members of NGOs to stop the sexual exploitation, slavery, and trafficking of male children in Cambodia?"**

- Don't impose your views on to the Cambodian community.
- You must be sensitive, and not judge Cambodians (or anyone else) in terms of your own Western ideology.
- Conduct collaborative work with Cambodian communities, researchers, and NGOs.
- Work together.
- You will have lots of knowledge and technology to share.
- Share any and all research and findings with the Khmer community.
- Be patient to discover how you can be of most use.
- Cambodian partners are vulnerable to surveillance, bribery, and corruption. You must take great care to ensure that their safety is not compromised.
- Do not publish research findings that will negatively impact Cambodian's or Cambodian NGOs.
- The trafficking of boys IS a major problem.
- It is hidden and denied.
- Khmer culture parades abuse as "tomfoolery".
- Stigmatization and victimization of the boys.
- Women and girls have overwhelmingly been the focus in advocacy and research.

- Cultural disconnect between academic and advocacy commentary suggests that the trafficking of boys and men higher than that of girls. It is just not reported.

- Cambodia has ratified most human rights instruments subject to three UPR's. However, Cambodia constantly in breach of fundamental human rights.

- UN multilaterals are engaged in Cambodia on key trafficking issues: ILO, IOM, UNODC. These partner with the RCG but are engaging with INGOs in particular to try to make some progress against corruption and trafficking.

- Cambodia is awash with NGOs. Last count there are at least 3500. As such think on the following comments that participants made:

- Do not start another NGO or your own "little project". Work alongside established, reputable, Khmer NGOs and linkages, with connections to their community.

- Ask the question "what can I do that is of use?

- Stand aside from taking or being given leadership. You are not the expert here. Work with and for the people.

- Apply assistance accordingly. Individuals can provide financial assistance to existing, reputable charities and NGOs.

- Have mainstream discussions. Corruption, endemic poverty, and extraordinary human exploitation are true. They are real issues.

- It will be very difficult to work in Cambodia upon arrival.

- There is very little rigorous or authoritative literature available on boys.

- FBOs must not proselytize or have their developmental assistance conditional on religious denomination or through evangelization.

- Conditional assistance from bilateral partners- the shaming practices such as those committed by the US DoS TIP report, the TI annual report. These make no difference to governmental behaviour.

- There is a commercial demand for sex tourism. Crimes committed against children offshore can be prosecuted in the country of the passport holder. This is unlikely to be legislated in Asian countries who have the majority of sex tourists.

- There needs to be more detailed investigation into specific policy surrounding the trafficking of boys. This needs to consider the implications involved in doing so, beyond socio-economics, culture, tradition, and politics.

- Many Westerners throughout the INGO, NGO, and FBO fraternities play integral roles in anti-trafficking. However, their ongoing involvement needs to be impartially critiqued, so as to further assistance cohesively, professionally, and safely for all concerned, the rescuer and the rescued.

- The thesis reflects the experiences and observations of myself personally, and the participants. However, areas for further research into this should consider the considerable role that donors have in policy making and development. An issue in many developing nations such as Cambodia, is their donor dependency, and the relationships fostered through aid relations. This is particularly important when working in child protection.

- Many Westerners throughout the INGO, NGO, and FBO fraternities play integral roles in anti-trafficking. However, their ongoing involvement needs to be impartially critiqued, so as to further assistance cohesively, professionally, and safely for all concerned, the rescuer and the rescued.

- Further research could consider the roles donors have in policy making and development, particularly in the file of child protection.


## 6.1 Further Findings

- Qualitative Descriptive Methodology was a good choice for this research. This was complimented by the semi-structured interview framework. I found that my participants were extraordinarily generous with their time, they were authentic, passionate, and cognitively aware, even though they professed their ignorance on the subject.

- Most of the preconceptions I had entering this research have been cast aside. I thought human rights were just not being applied and spent months reviewing this literature. They weren't but now I know why. I thought FBOs were concerned with development and conversion. I thought no one noticed the trafficking of boys. The most recent UPR

certainly does this and there is a small but growing amount of literature and research being conducted on this issue.

- If I wanted to conduct research which might contribute to stopping the sex trafficking of boys in Cambodia; if I was to be 'safe' in all the contextual environments that might cover, I needed to develop skills and consciousness to master (sic) these in an applied study. I learned skills I have never had before: how to write a research question, prepare and carry through on a research design, and prepare an ethics application. I learned extraordinary people will give me their time to share their wisdom and experience. I learned how to use NVivo. I wrote a thesis.

## 6.2   Conclusion

There were some issues involved in conducting this research.

Firstly, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Lockdown restricted access to on-campus facilities. It affected lifestyle and created social isolation which impacted my mental health. However, the pandemic did create opportunity to read, research, and learn how to hone the craft of academic writing.

I was restricted with how many participants I was able to "enlist". I was fortunate with the six that I engaged with from the eight that I had originally approached. The six participants that I interviewed for this research project I am indebted to. Each participant had a multi-layered tableau of rich data. Using the semi-structured interview process gave me an invaluable wealth of information.

This primary data accentuated and complimented the literature that I was able to retrieve through various search engines as well as physical locations, such as the AUT library. This is even though there continues to be more academic literature available on sex trafficking for girl than boys. This lack of literature gives opportunity for more research to be done, globally, regionally, and nationally. As such, it is my sincere hope that this investigative research will lead to further research being conducted by me. It is an issue that I am passionate about.

# APPENDIX ONE

11 December 2019

Marilyn Waring
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Marilyn

Re Ethics Application: **19/389 What contributions might be made by Western advocates, activists, researchers and members of NGO's to stop the sexual exploitation, slavery and trafficking of male children in Cambodia**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 11 December 2022.

**Non-Standard Conditions of Approval**

1. In the Information Sheet state that the interviews will be taped and translated, and whether transcripts will be available for confirmation.

Non-standard conditions must be completed before commencing your study. Non-standard conditions do not need to be submitted to or reviewed by AUTEC before commencing your study.

**Standard Conditions of Approval**

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted. When the research is undertaken outside New Zealand, you need to meet al.l ethical, legal, and locality obligations or requirements for those jurisdictions.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz. The forms mentioned above are available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics

Yours sincerely,

Kate O'Connor
Executive Manager
**Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee**

Cc:        wayhan76@autuni.ac.nz; Cassandra Mudgway

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