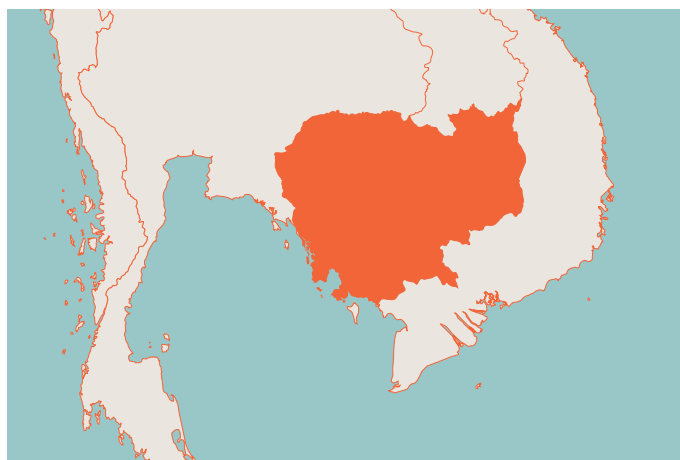


CAMBODIA

The Kingdom of Cambodia ('Cambodia') is situated within South-east Asia, bordering Thailand, Laos and Vietnam. Cambodia has a population of just over 16.5 million people,¹ almost doubling within the last 30 years. Although Cambodia is considered a lower-middle-income country² with almost 18% of the population living in poverty (less than US\$2.7/day), the nation continues to see positive economic growth heading towards upper middle-income by 2030.³ Cambodia's economic status and proximity to wealthier nations makes it a prime source and destination country for all forms of human trafficking, with all 25 of Cambodia's provinces to be known sources for trafficking.⁴ Cambodian nationals continue to be trafficked for forced labour, sexual exploitation, forced begging, forced marriage, and domestic servitude, both domestically and abroad.⁵ This mirrors the current trends within Southeast Asia showing that domestic trafficking is the main source of trafficking, followed by intra-regional trafficking.⁶ Traffickers often target children, persons with disabilities and undocumented migrant communities as well.⁷



FINANCIAL STRESS INCREASES RECRUITMENT FROM FALSE JOBS AND PROMISES OF MARRIAGE

The pandemic affected migration patterns and disrupted tourism, business and other sectors in 2020. However, post-COVID-19, Cambodia's borders have reopened and labour migration has resumed. This has placed some vulnerable groups at greater risk of trafficking than in previous years, due to financial stress caused during the COVID-19 pandemic. Vulnerable groups remain particularly at risk to labour trafficking.⁸ Most Cambodian migrant workers seek work outside of the country due to a lack of employment opportunities,

high indebtedness and significant wage differentials. Thailand is the primary destination country for Cambodian migrant workers, with workers commonly working in the fishing, agriculture, livestock, construction, manufacturing and service sectors, including domestic work.⁹ Undocumented border crossings to Thailand are prevalent, with continued reports of border guards arresting migrants who cross the border without the appropriate identification.¹⁰ Consistent with these reports, A21 Cambodia ('A21') observed an increase in forced labour cases in 2022, with 15% of cases resulting from false job opportunities. In fact, 16 survivors supported by A21 had been trafficked to neighbouring nations. Ultimately, A21 assisted 12 of those 16 survivors with repatriation back to Cambodia.

Cambodia has increased the 2023 minimum wage to \$200 USD per month for workers in the country's garment, footwear and travel goods sector. The Cambodian economy faces new challenges of higher inflation, and downturn in a global economy, which raises concerns on the drag on the economy if borrowers struggle to meet repayments.¹¹ Challenges faced with societal and personal economic status have the potential to contribute to people being vulnerable to trafficking and potentially lured by attractive, false job opportunities advertised online.¹² This vulnerability of poverty and economic insecurity are major contributing factors to the increasing trend of trafficking for forced marriage. This is where traffickers recruit women and sometimes girls from rural areas under the false pretence of travelling to neighbouring nations for marriage or to be illegal surrogates.¹³

Victims of trafficking for forced marriage are vulnerable to domestic servitude, forced labour in factories, sex trafficking, as well as debt bondage, where victims ultimately owe thousands of dollars to the brokers or families facilitating the transaction.¹⁴ Traffickers and brokers (essentially recruiters) will sometimes offer between \$1,500 and \$3,000 to families to send their daughters abroad for marriage.¹⁵ It is evident that post-COVID-19 economic issues in the region have resulted in an increase in labour trafficking and forced marriages, with victims being lured in with false jobs and false promises (or marriage). In 2022, A21 supported ten survivors who had been trafficked abroad for marriage, consistent with 2021.

A21'S RESPONSE

In 2022, the United States Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP Report) downgraded Cambodia from Tier 2 Watch List to Tier 3.¹⁶ This downgrade implies that the Cambodian Government is neither fully meeting minimum standards to combat human trafficking, nor making significant efforts to do so.¹⁷ Since

the release of the TIP Report, A21 has continued to take an active role in supporting the Cambodian Government's response to human trafficking issues. As a trusted nongovernmental organisation (NGO) partner, A21 has worked with the Cambodian government to respond to the increased reports of trafficking, ensure the safe extraction of potential victims from their trafficking situations and provide the necessary support for their recovery from the trauma. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior and Director of the National Committee for Counter Trafficking (NCCT) Samdech Krolahom Sar Kheng recognised A21 Cambodia's anti-trafficking efforts during a national Government event in April 2022 by presenting an award with the inscription, 'To A21 for your invaluable empathy, inspiration, and humanitarian [sic] toward our people, especially during the COVID-19 crisis'.

PREVENTION & AWARENESS

A21 Cambodia predominantly focuses its prevention and awareness efforts on vulnerable groups, including disadvantaged and rural communities, street children and schools, as well as equipping partner organisations. The National Committee for Counter Trafficking (NCCT) and its Secretariat coordinated anti-trafficking activities, continued to implement a 2019-2023 national anti-trafficking action plan and initiated a mid-year review of the action plan to evaluate its achievements and remaining challenges. A21 in partnership with the government maintained prevention efforts by disseminating information about trafficking laws, safe migration, child rights, and strategies to prevent and report trafficking to vulnerable communities and the general population.

In 2022, A21 reached more than 29,000 people directly through prevention resources (20,891 children; 8,179 adults). More than 21,500 awareness campaign and materials from A21 were distributed across the country, reaching 41,972 people (202 children; 41,770 adults). After the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, A21 facilitated 149 events and conducted facilitator training workshops with 187 professionals who work with children and youth. The overall potential impact of A21's reach exceeded 1.72 million people in 2022.

3,355 CHILDREN REACHED WITH A21'S PRIMARY PREVENTION PROGRAM (PPP)

Children under the age of 13 years old constitute the majority of survivors in A21's Aftercare Program. As part of A21's preventative response to minors being trafficked, over 72% of its efforts have been targeted at children and young people, with additional focus on children who are homeless, lack family and social support, live in low-income communities, on the street or in forced begging situations. A21 staff also work in remote areas where parents are migrants and must leave their children at home with grandparents or siblings, when they cross the border for work.

One of A21's core programs is the Primary Prevention Program (PPP) which is a three-session prevention program designed for children ages 6-12 that can be facilitated in community and school

settings. It aims to address identified risk factors to reduce vulnerability and protect children from human trafficking. In 2022, A21 reached 3,355 children with the PPP and trained 111 professionals with the accompanying facilitator 'Train the Trainer' program.

RAISING AWARENESS WITH A21'S TUK-TUK CAMPAIGN

'Child sex tourism' remains a concern in the Siem Reap region, with perpetrators predominantly Cambodian men travelling from other provinces within the nation to Siem Reap to sexually exploit children. However, people from all over parts of Asia, Australia, Europe, Africa and North America also travel to the region to sexually exploit children.¹⁸ This form of abuse was declining due to COVID-19 travel restrictions halting tourism, however, with the reopening of borders post-pandemic, it remains a concern for Cambodia, and in particular Siem Reap province as tourism regains momentum. To address this, A21 in partnership with the Provincial Committee for Counter Trafficking (PCCT) launched a human trafficking awareness Tuk-Tuk campaign in Siem Reap City, at the end of 2021. Tuk-tuks are the most common form of transportation for both locals and tourists in Siem Reap City. This campaign used advertisements on tuk-tuks aimed to educate the community about the reality of human trafficking, highlight the risks, and promote the national hotline. Throughout 2022, the tuk-tuks remained active throughout Siem Reap city reaching over 50,000 people. Furthermore, A21 conducted general trafficking awareness and identification training sessions for tuk-tuk drivers once a quarter throughout 2022.



PILOTING AN INNOVATIVE STRATEGY TO REACH STUDENTS - THE EVAC COMPUTER GAME

As technology advances and access to digital devices expands, so does the increase of online child sexual exploitation (OCSE) and the distribution of child sexual abuse material (CSAM). Further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, this is not only a global trend, but a trend that A21 is seeing locally in the region.¹⁹ In response to the growing need to address OCSE and online recruitment of children, A21, in partnership with The University of Kent, ECPAT International, PlayerThree Games and the University of Stirling developed a digital game, as part of the End Violence Against Children (EVAC) grant project. The EVAC Computer Game titled 'May and Bay: A serious game for a serious issue: combatting online child sexual exploitation and trafficking via a digital game' is designed for children aged 8-14, using age-appropriate tools to educate children about online safety, and is contextualised specifically for Cambodia and Thailand. In 2022, A21 piloted the game with 827 students, conducting 15 workshops across 6 primary schools and Community Learning Centres in Siem Reap and Banteay Meanchey. The game has been received extremely well by children and educators, resulting in the expansion of the program within existing and new partnerships. Participating children have expressed excitement and increased understanding of the content and a desire for continued learning.



WALK FOR FREEDOM

One of the most significant developments in A21's Cambodia's human trafficking awareness efforts during 2022, was the official launch of A21's first ever Walk for Freedom (WFF) in Cambodia, in partnership with the National and Provincial Committee for Counter Trafficking. Siem Reap City took the lead in launching the walk with 600 participants from government ministries, including the education and law enforcement sectors, NGO partners, and community members. The WFF reached thousands through online awareness, government media channels and local newspaper articles.²⁰



IDENTIFICATION & INTERVENTION

CHILD ADVOCACY CENTRE INCREASES VICTIM IDENTIFICATION

A21 partners with the Government of Cambodia and local authorities to secure freedom for victims of trafficking and the conviction of perpetrators through A21's Child Advocacy Centre (CAC), frontline professional training and legal assistance. In previous years, A21's identification, intervention and restoration programs focused only on Cambodian victims identified in Cambodia and abroad. However, in 2022, A21 provided support for victims of different nationalities, including Thai, Vietnamese, and Bangladeshi, due to changes in trafficking trends in the region, mostly related to the growing presence of entertainment establishments and other commercial enterprises during the pandemic.²¹

A21 launched Cambodia's first-ever (CAC) in 2019 to offer a victim-centred approach specifically tailored to children's unique characteristics and challenges. The CAC has since developed into a cornerstone for safeguarding children in the Siem Reap region, resulting in more victims being processed through the centre and referred to A21's Aftercare Program. Forensic interviewing conducted via the CAC model increased by 31.25% in 2022. In 2022, the total number of potential victims screened through the CAC program increased by 107.41% and the total number of victims identified through A21's support almost tripled. This increase is likely the result of A21's continued partnership with the Cambodian government, the coordinated efforts to identify individuals victimised by all forms of trafficking, and the increase in frontline professionals trained by A21 in 2022. Due to the increase of victims identified through A21's programs, the number of victims entering its Aftercare Program has increased by 66.67% in 2022 compared to 2021.



PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

A21 also works alongside law enforcement and government agencies to provide training. In 2022, A21's collaborative public sector partnerships resulted in 827 civil society, government agency, and other frontline professionals receiving professional, specialised training. The training focused on improving interviewing skills and interactions with child-survivors, including the need to consider the critical stages of a child's development during interactions. This specialised training also includes: employing a trauma-informed, child-centred approach; the importance of a child forensic interview; and creating a child-friendly environment. Training was conducted across multiple provinces, including Siem Reap, Beante Meachey and Battambang Province. This training is fundamental to ensure that frontline professionals understand and apply a victim-centred approach to safeguard the identification process and support identified survivors. Additionally, these sessions also train frontline workers to create effective prevention programs and assist in any ensuing criminal prosecution. In one training for frontline professionals, a pre-survey determined that only three out of 30 police officers had previous training on human trafficking and victim identification. Trained government officials have since been able to apply this training to their work throughout 2022, as evidenced by the increase in the number of identified victims of trafficking.

In addition to providing formal training, A21 staff, through their daily interactions, strived to demonstrate a working model of employing a victim-centred approach. In 2022, A21 staff observed law enforcement utilising child-friendly interview techniques while conducting operations. Law enforcement also displayed ease and comfort in using the CAC to conduct forensic interviews and multi-disciplinary team (MDT) meetings. The transformation was noticeable not only to A21 but also to survivors who interacted with Cambodian law enforcement working with A21. A male survivor provided feedback to A21 staff that he was surprised to have a positive experience with Cambodian law enforcement. His case involved an initial forensic interview conducted by A21 and follow-up interviews conducted by Cambodian law enforcement trained by A21 in 2022. The child-survivor reported that the police conducted his follow-up interviews in a very child-friendly and victim-centred manner. As a result of the

police's consideration and sensitivity, the child-survivor advised that he could lower his guard and trust the police. Moreover, due to the police's victim-centred approach, the child-survivor expressed comfort in engaging directly with the police rather than going through A21 as an intermediary.

AFTERCARE

A21's Aftercare Program empowers survivors through the provision of holistic aftercare, safe accommodations and relocation services. When survivors receive personalised, trauma-informed care, they can begin the restoration journey. Through the A21 Aftercare Program, survivors have access to services such as psychological consultations, medical services, housing, financial assistance and job training, which allows them to progress into new opportunities, decreasing the risk of re-victimisation. Throughout 2022, A21 supported survivors from various demographics, ages, gender, and nationalities. Survivors welcomed into the program included males, females, and transgender individuals, with 67.5% of survivors identifying as female. Ages ranged from newborn (0 years old) to 40 years old, with 37.5% of new survivors in 2022 in A21's Aftercare Program being 13 years old or younger.



LAUNCH OF THE FREEDOM CENTRE INCREASES THE RESTORATION OF SURVIVORS

In 2022, aftercare services saw a significant development with the official launch of the Freedom Centre. The Freedom Centre is a drop-in day centre that provides both child and adult survivors of human trafficking with a safe place of acceptance and belonging to empower them with skills and resources to restore wellness and help them reintegrate safely back into society. Over 50% of survivors in A21's Aftercare Program have fully engaged in the Freedom Centre, receiving services such as case management support and counselling, participating in group programs, and building

community with other survivors. A21 has observed survivors in Cambodia enthusiastically engage in Life Programs, a collection of strengths-based trauma-informed group and individual programs, that equip survivors with valuable life skills and emotional resilience tools. These programs include Life Skills (focusing on topics such as job readiness, safety, budgeting, goal setting and problem solving), Brave Hearts, Strong Minds (a program that empowers child and adolescent survivors with strategies to enhance their emotional resilience), and Freedom to Flourish (a peer-support program designed to assist female survivors to connect and support one another with intentional and meaningful conversations). Since the launch of the Freedom Centre, A21 has seen a 148% increase in survivors completing Life Programs, as well as an increase in survivors attaining financial independence and graduating from the Aftercare Program.



A21 utilises the Assessment of Survivor Outcomes (ASO)²² tool to measure a survivor's functioning in six domains considered critical to restoration, including: safety, legal protection, mental wellbeing, economic empowerment and education, social support, and physical wellbeing. The ASO identifies a survivor's strengths and vulnerabilities and enables caseworkers to develop an individually tailored case management plan. Caseworkers complete the ASO at survivor intake, case closure, and 12-month follow-up, providing a measure of the survivor's sustained restoration. In December 2022, ASO scores demonstrated that 100% of survivors who had graduated from the Cambodia Aftercare Program were considered 'restored' at the time of graduation, suggesting that these survivors had a high level of stability low vulnerability to revictimisation at case closure.

A NEW WAY FORWARD - A21'S COLLABORATION ON A FOSTER CARE PROGRAM

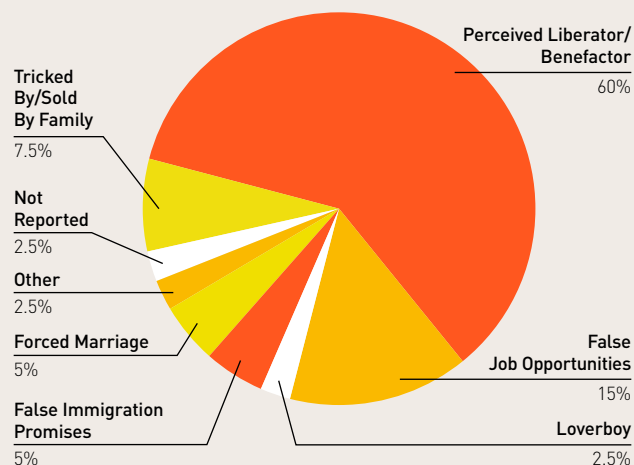
In 2022, A21 also launched a Foster Care Program for child survivors in Cambodia, in collaboration with NGO Hagar International—the leader in foster care across Cambodia for over 20 years. This partnership welcomes Hagar foster care specialists to operate collaboratively with A21's caseworkers at A21's new Freedom Centre in Siem Reap, which has areas dedicated solely for child-survivors.

At the centre, A21 and Hagar focus on first finding suitable foster care families for child-survivors, and then assessing, training and integrating the families into the foster care program. This partnership also allows A21 to place more young survivors in family-based care instead of institutionalised care.

The Foster Care Program is a much needed service as minor survivors constitute the majority of survivors in A21's Aftercare Program, with 50% having been trafficked by a family member.

As part of A21's Foster Care Program, A21 staff members work closely with each foster family and child-survivor to ensure minors receive the care they need to reach their full potential.

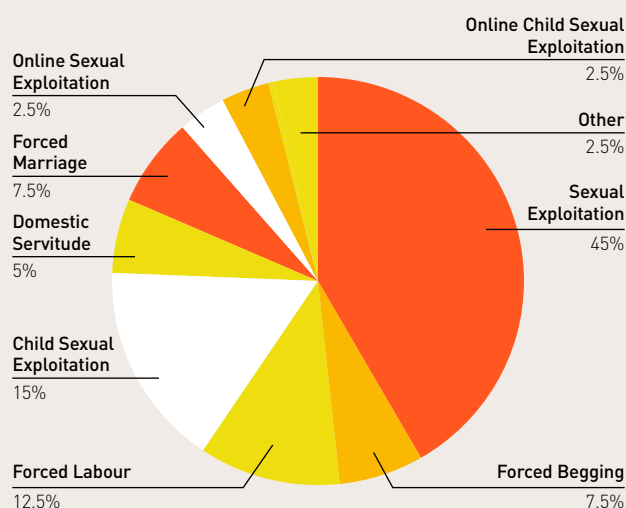
RECRUITMENT METHOD



In 2022, the three most common recruitment methods based on voluntary disclosures by survivors in A21's Aftercare Program included tricked or manipulated by a Perceived Liberator/Benefactor²³ (60%), false job opportunity (15%), and tricked by/sold by a family member (7.5%). Other forms of recruitment included loverboy situations, and false immigration promises.²⁴ Sexual exploitation remains the most common form of trafficking for survivors in the Aftercare Program in 2022 continuing the trend from 2021. Furthermore, 62.50% of new survivors entering A21's Aftercare Program in 2022 were either survivors of sex trafficking or survivors of online or offline child sexual exploitation. In 2021, survivors of forced begging constituted 24.5% of A21's total caseload, reflecting survivors who entered A21's Aftercare Program from previous years. In 2022, survivors of forced begging only comprised 16.85% of the total caseload, including

survivors who had entered A21's Aftercare Program from previous years. However, A21 continued to have a growing number of other forced labour cases (12.5%) referred for services in 2022. Moreover, A21 continues to observe that children remain significantly at risk for forced begging. These observations are primarily through A21's prevention efforts such as night outreach, where A21 proactively connects with vulnerable children often living or working on the city streets at night, with A21's prevention programs.

FORM OF TRAFFICKING



In 2021, 33.3% of survivors in A21's Aftercare Program escaped their trafficking situation while abroad, only to be arrested by authorities in the foreign country for an immigration violation. Only upon being interviewed by their embassy while in the immigration detention centre, are the individuals then identified as victims, repatriated back to Cambodia and assisted by A21.

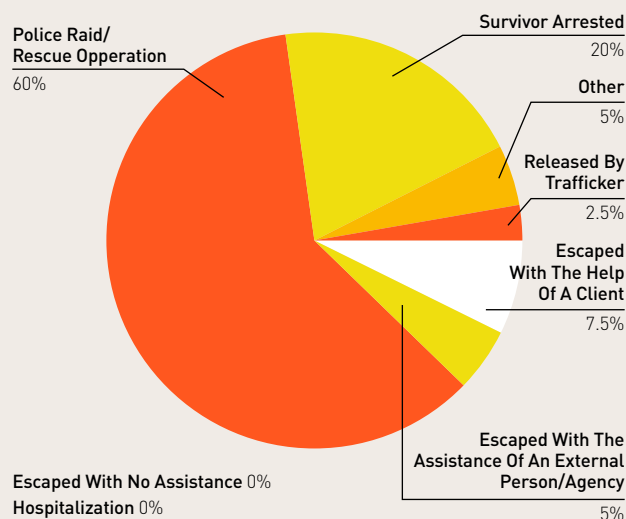
During 2020 and 2021, A21 worked closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Social Affairs Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSAVY), as well as the anti-human trafficking police to support the identification and repatriation of a large number of Cambodian survivors trafficked abroad for forced marriage, labour and sex during the COVID-19 pandemic. These trends continued in 2022, and due to the re-opening of the country, more local law enforcement were able to respond by conducting raids and other law enforcement operations. A21's CAC worked closely with the anti-human trafficking police to support operations and victim identification, especially for minors. This collaboration resulted in 60% of survivors in the Aftercare Program recovered via police intervention in 2022.

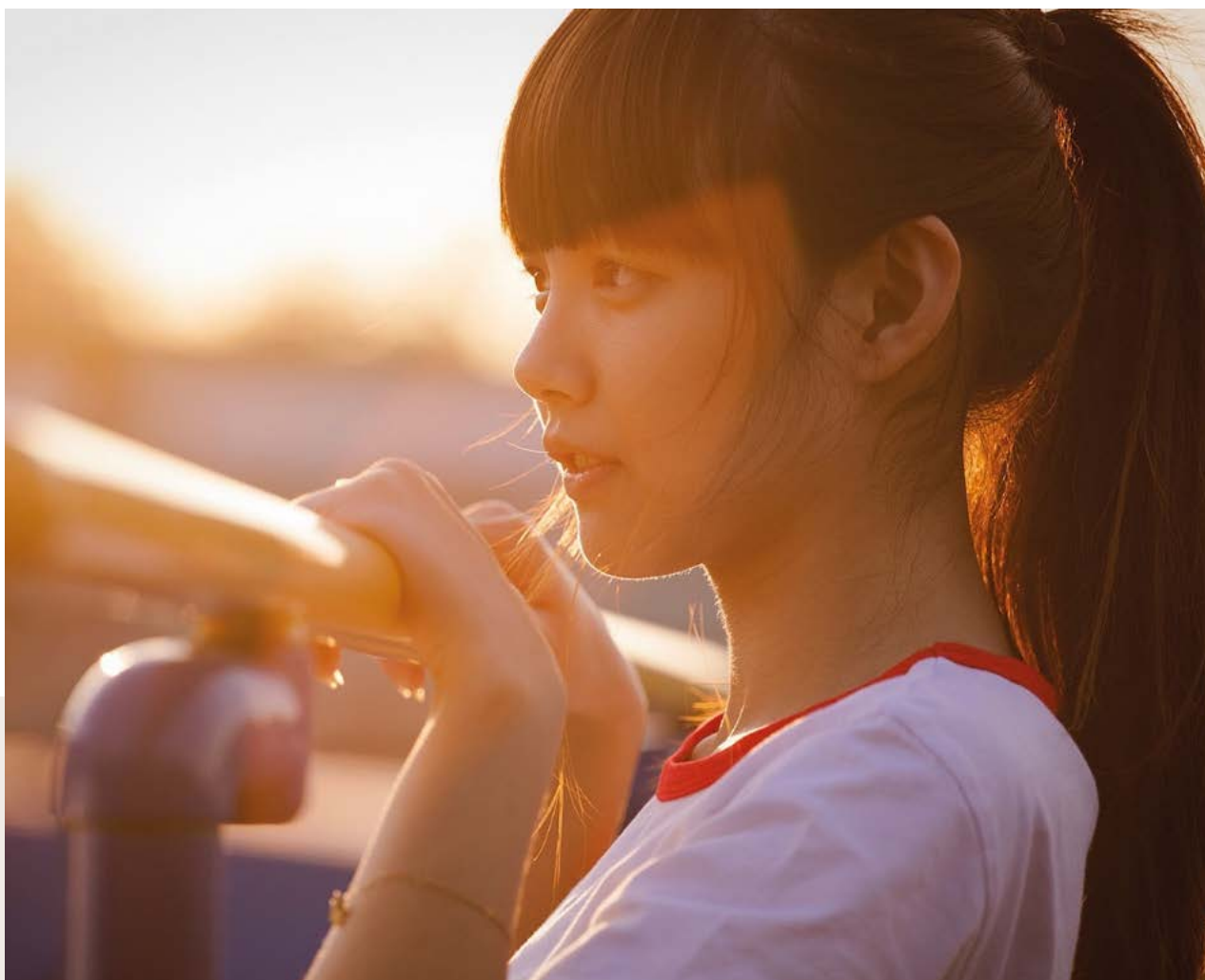
The government continued to provide basic care to assist in the repatriation of Cambodian victims exploited abroad. MoSAVY conducted preliminary interviews of the victims and all were referred to local NGOs for aftercare and reintegration assistance. Notably, the government does not require trafficking victims to participate in trafficking investigations or prosecutions to receive protective services. Twelve survivors in the Aftercare Program were repatriated back to their home country in 2022, a 20% increase from 2021.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Cambodia's Suppression of Human Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation 2008 legislation criminalises sex and labour trafficking and prescribes penalties of seven to 15 years imprisonment for offences involving an adult victim and 15 to 20 years imprisonment for those involving a child victim. This law, coupled with the services of the CAC and the Freedom Centre, has allowed A21 to assist 28 survivors of human trafficking and child sexual exploitation with legal representation or support, through A21's Legal Assistance Program in 2022; a 46% increase from 2021. A21 supported survivors testifying as key witnesses in four significant criminal prosecutions, resulting in trafficking convictions for all four defendants.

METHODS OF ESCAPE BY SURVIVORS





TRAFFICKER SENTENCED TO 12 YEARS FOR SEXUALLY EXPLOITING CHILDREN

A21 staff from the Child Advocacy Centre participated in an operation with the anti-human trafficking police, leading to a rescue of a group of child survivors of sexual exploitation in 2021. A21 coordinated the legal and aftercare services to the child victims, ensuring they received proper legal representation and emotional support throughout the court trial. The child survivors remained resilient, and with support from A21, they bravely testified against the trafficker in court. In 2022 the trafficker was convicted and sentenced to 12 years in jail and required to pay each survivor 10-12 million riels (\$2,500-3,000 USD). This was the largest court case that A21 supported in 2022, due to the large number of child survivors linked to the trafficker and the significance of the case in the criminal justice system.

ENDNOTES

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- ² World Bank Open Data." *World Bank Open Data: Cambodia Overview 2021* (last modified October 2023), <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cambodia/overview>.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ "2022 Trafficking in Persons Report - United States Department of State." *United States Department of State*, 20 Oct. 2022, 158 <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/>.
- ⁵ Ibid, 154.
- ⁶ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022*, 123 https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2022/GLOTiP_2022_web.pdf.
- ⁷ "2022 Trafficking in Persons Report - United States Department of State." *United States Department of State*, 20 Oct. 2022 <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/>.
- ⁸ U.S. Embassy in Cambodia, "2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Cambodia - U.S. Embassy in Cambodia." U.S. Embassy in Cambodia, 20 July 2022 <https://kh.usembassy.gov/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report-cambodia/>.
- ⁹ International Labour Organization (ILO) TRIANGLE in ASEAN Programme Quarterly Briefing Note: Cambodia (July – September 2022) https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/genericdocument/wcms_735105.pdf.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ International monetary fund (IMF) "IMF Staff Completes 2022 Article IV Mission to Cambodia" (September 20, 2022) <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2022/09/20/pr22312-cambodia-imf-staff-completes-2022-article-iv-mission-to-cambodia>.
- ¹² UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022*, 10 https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2022/GLOTiP_2022_web.pdf.
- ¹³ U.S. Embassy in Cambodia, "2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Cambodia - U.S. Embassy in Cambodia." U.S. Embassy in Cambodia, 20 July 2022 <https://kh.usembassy.gov/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report-cambodia/>.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ U.S Department of State (US DOS), *Trafficking in Persons Report*, 22nd Ed., 2022, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/>.
- ¹⁷ Ibid, 154.
- ¹⁸ U.S. Embassy in Cambodia, "2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Cambodia - U.S. Embassy in Cambodia." U.S. Embassy in Cambodia, 20 July 2022 <https://kh.usembassy.gov/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report-cambodia/>.
- ¹⁹ Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) "Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice: Child sexual abuse material and end-to-end encryption on social media platforms: An overview" [No. 653 July 2022] https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-07/ti653_csam_and_end-to-end_encryption_on_social_media_platforms.pdf.
- ²⁰ See articles like: "Siem Reap Joins Int'l March Against Trafficking." Phnom Penh Post, m.phnompenhpost.com/national/siem-reap-joins-intl-march-against-trafficking?fbclid=IwAR3c-xSY0zpHxtZg1b079f1J87wqWf4PiqD2W5bvz-N4CCHn_wAT_t0qX4.
- ²¹ U.S. Embassy in Cambodia, "2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Cambodia - U.S. Embassy in Cambodia." U.S. Embassy in Cambodia, 20 July 2022 <https://kh.usembassy.gov/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report-cambodia/>.
- ²² International Justice Mission. "Assessment of Survivor Outcomes Guidance Manual." 2018, pp. 1–33., www.ijm.org/documents/studies/ASO-Guidance-Manual.pdf.
- ²³ Recruitment by a 'perceived liberator/benefactor' occurs where a perpetrator promises to liberate someone from exploitation, harm, or hardship, only to then exploit them.
- ²⁴ False Immigration Promises is a recruitment tactic where brokers entice victims to travel abroad by promising victims a better life, often including employment, accommodation, or other opportunities, in a foreign country. Once in the foreign country, the victims are trafficked or otherwise exploited.