

Reported Cases of Sexual Abuse in Cambodia in the First Half of 2010

According to Cambodian law, sexual abuse is a serious crime where perpetrators can be imprisoned for up to 20 years as well as being fined or given a labor penalty. This report is interested in how effectively this law is being enforced in Cambodia.

A media extraction carried out by ECPAT-Cambodia from five local newspapers: Koh Santepheap, Rasmei Kampuchea, Kampuchea Thmey, The Cambodia Daily and the Phnom Penh Post. This analysis shows that there were a total of 139 rape cases reported in the first two quarters of 2010. This figure reveals a decrease of 13 cases from the same period in 2009 (an 8.6% decrease). The most common locations were Battambang, Phnom Penh, Kandal and Kampong Cham. The 139 cases targeted a total of 145 victims, 144 of whom were female and 1 male, of which all reported nationalities were either Cambodian, Vietnamese or Khmer Muslim. 86 (58.6%) of the 145 victims were underage, the youngest being 3 years old. Of the 86 victims, 58 (67.4%) were under 15 of age. Both the total number of victims and the number of underage victims appear to be slightly lower compared to the same period in 2009 (from 158 to 145 and from 96 to 85). In 18 cases both the victims and the perpetrators were minors.

There were a total of 184 suspects implicated in the rape cases, 183 of which were male, and one female. Again, the nationalities of the suspects were either Cambodian, Vietnamese or Khmer Muslim. The majority of both victims and suspects were Cambodian (97.2% and 96.7% respectively). Looking at the relationship between suspects and underage victims, we found that 13 relationships involved a father or step father; 8 involved other relatives either by blood or by law; 20 were acquaintances and 45 were neighbors or members of the local community. The majority of the cases took place while the victim was either alone, sleeping, out at night or alone with the suspect. Results suggest that at least 31% of cases were pre-meditated, 17% involved alcohol and 3% involved pornographic videos. Incidences of gang rape have increased in terms of both the number of cases (21 cases compared to 16 cases in 2009) and the number of suspects in each case (the maximum number was nine in 2010 compared to seven in 2009). A total of 13 victims were killed after the attack.

137 suspects were arrested, 43 escaped and three were not arrested. 92 cases are pending for trial and 28 were under investigation by police at the time of writing. Two cases were reportedly settled out of court, two were released on bail and two were subjected to civil action due to the fact they were under 15 years old. So far only one has been tried and subsequently convicted of having sex with a minor. In this incidence the sentence was five years imprisonment and the compensation was ordered to pay to the victim of \$1,250. The lack of law enforcement remains a problem in bringing the perpetrators to justice and may therefore contribute to a higher number of attacks.

During this period there were seven reported cases of trafficking, targeting a total of 15 female victims. This is a significant increase compared to last year where only three cases were reported. Seven out of the 15 girls were confirmed as being either Cambodian or Vietnamese, one was known to have been trafficked from Vietnam, and the victims were minors in all known cases. One of the victims was from Phnom Penh, one from Kandal, one from Takeo and one from Siem Reap. All victims were trafficked within Cambodia, with the destination province being Phnom Penh in all cases except two, where they remained in either Kandal or Siem Reap. The cases involved a total of 18 suspected traffickers, 10 of which were male and eight female. The suspected traffickers were also either Cambodians or

Vietnamese, . The suspected trafficker was confirmed as being a mother in two cases, but the relationship between the suspected trafficker and the victim is unconfirmed in the other five cases. Of the 18 suspects, 17 were arrested and one escaped. Six of the cases are pending for trial and one is currently under investigation by police.

In the first half of 2010, there were 8 cases of sexual indecency with children. One case involved multiple abusers where they abused a 6 year old Cambodian girl and 3 cases included multiple victims. Three cases occurred in SHV, one in SRP, one in Takeo, one in Kandal and two in Phnom Penh. There were 10 suspected abusers in total, nine of whom were male and one female, who reportedly played role as an accomplice to a case. Two were confirmed as Americans, one Norwegian, one Dutch, one Vietnamese and three Cambodians. The cases involved one motor taxi driver, one tourist, one school principle, one pimp, and one was unemployed. Their ages ranged from 25 to 65 years old. Their victims were mostly male, almost all of whom were street boys, and one confirmed pagoda boy. There were a total of 16 victims involved in these cases, 12 male and 4 female. All were minors and the minimum age was six. Eight of the suspected abusers were arrested, and two escaped. All eight cases were pending trial at the time of writing.

ECPAT Cambodia concludes that rape and trafficking cases in Cambodia remain alarmingly high. The majority of victims are underage and often the suspects involved in the cases are known to the children, particularly in the case of rape. The number of convictions remains disappointingly low, exacerbating the problem. ECPAT-Cambodia would like to appeal to the government and law enforcement institutions to strengthen the judiciary process to ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice and their victims are compensated. This problem requires a multi-faceted approach where education institutions and parents also have a role to play, but offenders must know that they will be punished in order to reduce the number of attacks and make Cambodia a safer country for children.