

# “I want to be **BRAVE**”

A Baseline Study on the Vulnerabilities of  
Street-Working Boys in Sihanoukville, Cambodia



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Glenn Miles, PhD



**LOVE146**  
END CHILD TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION



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to Sexual Exploitation in Sihanoukville, Cambodia

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# Introduction

The global reality of sexual exploitation and abuse knows no gender. Internationally, it is said that 1 in 6 boys are sexually abused before reaching adulthood and in some nations the exploitation and abuse of boys far outweighs that of girls. While this remains a pressing issue, the sexual exploitation of men and boys is often little understood and commonly goes ignored. A key reason for this is that social and cultural norms often assume men and boys to be inherently strong and/or invulnerable to sexual exploitation. While these long-held assumptions on male invulnerability are strong and are often foundational to much of the literature available on gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, small but growing body of research in this area continues to show these assumptions to be false. Due to the general lack of awareness of the vulnerability of males to sexual abuse and exploitation, the efforts of organizations and individuals who desire to provide for the needs of male victims are often under-supported. Over the past three years, Love146 has made addressing the exploitation of boys and young men a key objective in its work, and often does this by partnering with key organizations that are pioneering such endeavors. The study that you hold in your hands is a part of this endeavor.

This is the first of a multi-part series of exploratory studies that look into the lives, experiences and vulnerabilities of street-living / street-working boys in SE Asia. This follows a similar series of five studies by Love146 that looked at the experiences of young males working in various sectors of the entertainment industry in southeast Asia, including massage, street-based sex work, and bar-based entertainment services. These projects have been a part of a small, collaborative movement among interested organizations, which have both recognized and acted upon the neglect of boys and men in discussions of sexual abuse and exploitation. The studies have utilized both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, merging careful fieldwork and one-on-one structured interviews to provide a better understanding of the lives of young men and boys within the sex trade industry and other sexually exploited careers as an information resource for service providers and future researchers in this area.

The title “I want to be brave” is not a title of our own making. It is a direct quote from a 10 year-old boy who sells fireworks and bracelets along Ochheuteal beach in Sihanoukville, Cambodia. This statement is the boy’s description of the one thing in his life that he would change, if he were able. He would choose to be brave. This statement is meaningful in that it recognizes that he is vulnerable and the fact that bravery and strength are not innate qualities of being male, but are key resiliencies that need to be developed.

# Executive Summary

Focusing on street-working boys in Sihanoukville, this study partnered with social workers and child protection officers from M'lop Tapang (a key social service provider in Sihanoukville) to identify locations where young boys were known to be working along the beaches and within the town center. In recent years, Sihanoukville has become known as a rapidly developing commercial beach area, which has received increasing attention from foreign tourists, backpackers, and ex-patriots. Within this context, it has become a destination for migrant workers from surrounding provinces who have hopes of generating income through selling, begging, and other various means.

The study conducted 56 in-depth interviews with street-working / street-living boys presently working along the streets and/or beaches in the Sihanoukville area, focusing on a number of key areas including: demographics, social and family relationships, financial security, sexual history, instances of violence and sexual abuse, health, emotional wellbeing, and future plans. This study aims to provide a baseline of information and broad analysis of the key needs, vulnerabilities, and potential resiliencies of street-working boys in the Sihanoukville area in order for NGOs and social service providers to better understand them and provide them with adequate services.

The research found a high percentage of street-working boys (38%) who disclosed instances of being touched sexually by an adult during their work on the streets. In addition to this, slightly more than one-fourth of boys (26%) disclosed instances of sexual abuse that went beyond just touching, many citing forced and coercive sex. In addition to sexual abuse, 26% of street-working boys disclosed various forms of 'sex work', or times when they had either solicited or been offered food, gifts, or money to provide sexual services to adults.

The research also explores the impact of sexual abuse on the emotional well being of this group, including issues of shame, guilt, and suicidal thoughts. Most notably, the research found that having suicidal feelings was four times more likely among those who had been sexually touched by an adult than among those who had not. A similar phenomenon was found among those reporting sexual abuse beyond sexual touching. Most notably those who had been abused were 2.1 times more likely to report guilt, 1.9 times more likely to report feelings of low self-esteem, 2.2 times more likely to report feelings, and 3.4 more likely to report that they feel numb. Additionally, the research noted some distinct differences between boys working on the beaches and those working on the streets. In particular, drug usage, sexual abuse, receiving compensation for sexual services, and instances of rape were found to be much more common among those boys working on the streets in the town center, as compared with the boys working on the beaches.

This research aids in defining the needs of such populations of street-working boys within various sectors of Sihanoukville and works to impact the development of such groups and to inform the foci of existing programs working with boys in the Sihanoukville area. The study provides recommendations for future research and continued vigilance against the sexual exploitation and abuse of vulnerable street working children

# Literature Review

Over the past several years, the issues of human trafficking and sexual exploitation have gained some meaningful notoriety. As a product of this, a wealth of new research and social programming has been generated to address a variety of related issues including strategies for aftercare, prevention, reintegration, as well as community development and education. However, an overwhelming majority of discussions surrounding this issue have predominantly--if not solely--focused on the vulnerabilities of women and girls, and have neglected the common reality of boys and young men who are also abused, exploited, and trafficked for sex and labor.

## The Neglect of Male Vulnerability

In a review of 166 scholarly articles on the global sex industry, 84% exclusively discussed female sex workers and made no mention of males. When males were mentioned, they were ascribed, or presumed to have, significantly more agency than females (Dennis, 2008). Research often views males in the sex industry as liabilities for sexual health, rather than vulnerable human beings that can be damaged (Graham, 2007). In addressing female sex workers, issues of gender-based violence, emotions/family support and a variety of other social vulnerabilities are commonly addressed. On the other hand, when studies address male sex workers, they predominantly address issues of HIV/AIDS and sexual orientation (Dennis, 2008).

Most discussions held within media circles often reinforce this gender exclusive understanding of vulnerability, highlighting only female victimization, while often obscuring the plight of male victims, especially male children (Jones, 2010). Traditionally, this narrative often explicitly describes instances in which men enslave and sexually abuse “women and girls” and typically dichotomizes males and females as “predator” and “prey” (2010), often blurring the concepts of sexual exploitation and misogyny. Such expressions of male dominance and invulnerability often hide the reality that males are also vulnerable to abuse and exploitation (2010). Samuel Jones, in an article in the Utah Law Review suggests, “to some extent, men and boys have become the victims of this media driven, socially constructed, conception of maleness” (2010). The focus of the discussion on vulnerability, exploitation, and violence then becomes solely on women as the victims of male violence. Thus, when research is conducted on males who are exploited and/or involved in the sex trade industry, this assumption of female vulnerability and male resilience is often laid as a foundation.

Asquith and Turner, in a 2008 report commissioned by the Oak Foundation, describe a “screaming silence” about the needs of male victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking. They cited that “where boys are referred to, this is usually in reference to reasons other than

sexual exploitation, such as child labor or begging...” However, among what research has been done on the issue, data continues to demonstrate that sexual exploitation and trafficking of males is a pervasive issue. In some countries, such as Sri Lanka and Afghanistan, instances of abuse and sexual exploitation committed against boys is cited to far outweigh that which is committed against girls--constituting up to 90% of sexual exploitation cases in Sri Lanka (Frederick, 2008).

## Sexual Abuse

In many, if not most, societies, the sexual abuse of males has been a difficult reality to acknowledge—much less understand. In part, this may be due to the fact that in many cultures, masculinity is constructed as being strong, powerful, and innately resilient to victimization, violence and abuse. Thus, the concept of vulnerability often stands in stark contrast to the very construction of masculinity itself (Kia-Keating, et al., 2005). Even males themselves are not often consciously aware of their vulnerabilities due to this strong cultural narrative, except in the case of unusual circumstances--such as rape within prisons (Graham, 2007). Over the past two decades, it has been common for a male’s experience of sexual abuse during childhood to be described as less dramatic than it would be for a female. Such instances have not always even been identified as abusive, especially if the perpetrator involved was female (Hilton, et al., 2008). Despite these cultural narratives, vulnerability studies on the effects of sexual abuse on males continue to echo the contrary. For instance, in a 2004 gender analysis on the effects of sexual abuse on 128 women and 69 men, male participants were found to have higher levels of an array of mental health symptoms compared to their female counterparts, including anxious arousal, depression, anger, dissociation, and sexuality concerns (Banyard, et al, 2004).

A retrospective cohort study conducted among 17,337 adult HMO members in San Diego, found 16% of males and 25% of females to have reported childhood sexual abuse (Dube, et al., 2005). Within this study, the histories and outcomes of those who had experienced childhood sexual abuse (CSA) were compared with those who had not experienced CSA, and demonstrated that the effects on the risks of multiple behavioral, mental, and social outcomes between males and females were nearly identical (2005). For example, both males and females who had a history of CSA were more than twice as likely to have a history of attempting suicide, compared with those who had not experienced CSA (2005). In an earlier study (1994), David Lisak conducts 26 autobiographical interviews with male survivors of childhood sexual abuse, of which 92.3% of cases involved multiple instances of abuse (Lisak, 1994). In his analysis, he identified 15 psychological themes, shared among his respondents, which include: Anger, Betrayal, Fear, Homosexuality Issues, Helplessness, Isolation and Alienation, Legitimacy, Loss, Masculinity Issues, Negative Childhood Peer Relations, Negative Schemas about People, Negative Schemas about the Self, Problems with Sexuality, Self-Blame/Guilt and Shame/Humiliation. Beyond these themes, the study also uncovered that nearly equal numbers of men cited abuse by male perpetrators as they did with female perpetrators (Lisak, 1994).

A key finding in numerous studies on CSA is that various forms of violence against children are interrelated. For instance, a child who is sexually abused has usually also experienced several other forms of violence as well (Save the Children, 2005). In a path analysis among 372 homeless and runaway youth in Seattle, young people were interviewed directly on the street and in shelters regarding family life, and histories of violence and sexual abuse. The study found a correlation between early sexual abuse in the home and the likelihood of later sexual victimization on the streets. The findings in the study suggested exposure to dysfunctional and disorganized homes can place at risk youth on trajectories for early independence, and increased likelihood of high-risk behaviors, which in turn increases their probability for sexual victimization (Tyler, et al., 2001).

## Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Boys<sup>1</sup> (CSEB)

Over the past 10 years, the commercial sexual exploitation of children has gained much needed attention in the United States and around the globe. However, as with the discussion of abuse and human trafficking in general, most of this discussion has centered on young women and adolescent girls. What little attention that has been afforded to boys often identifies them as exploiters, pimps and buyers of sex or as active and willing participants in sex work, not as victims or survivors of exploitation (ECPAT, 2010). As a result of this general lack of information and awareness about the reality of male vulnerability, social service providers are often ill equipped to meet the needs of male victims of violence, sexual abuse and exploitation. A recent report from the US Department of State notes, “around the world, the identification and provision of adequate social services for male victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking has remained a continuous challenge” (US Department of State).

A report released by ECPAT USA (2010) entitled, "...And Boys, Too" draws attention to this phenomenon in which discussions of boys as victims or survivors of CSEC is frequently appended to a discussion about commercially sexually exploited girls in the form of a footnote which usually reads, as their title suggests, "...and boys, too". This report includes a desk review among 40 key service providers and youth agencies in the United States. Most significantly, this review reveals that the scope of the commercial sexual exploitation of boys (CSEB) is vastly underestimated and cites a strong consensus among service providers that a majority CSEB cases commonly go unreported--a reality that poses a significant risk to health and lives of young males (ECPAT, 2010). In accordance with data on the male victims of sexual abuse, this paper cites that the overall mental, physical, and emotional health outcomes of boys who have been victims of CSE were dismal and provided increased chances of further sexual assault at the hands of a stranger. In addition, data from desk reviews and key

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<sup>1</sup> The term “boys” is used here to describe all male respondents. This is not meant to infantilize males over the age of 18, but because the majority of the respondents in this study are under 18 years, which is younger than in previous studies that we have conducted. We preferred not to use the term “minor” or “person” simply because we feel the gender is an important part of this study and the series of studies on male sexual abuse and exploitation.

informants indicate exceedingly high rates of alcohol and the usage of illicit drugs among boys who have been victims of CSE (ECPAT, 2010).

In South Asia, a very similar reality is true. UNICEF IRC indicates boys enjoy significantly less legal protection from sexual abuse and exploitation and less access to service for victims than girls. In some cases, legislation protects only girls and women and excludes boys and men (UNICEF, 2010). In Sri Lanka, as much as 90% of the estimated 20,000-30,000 child prostitutes in the country are boys, many of whom can be pre-ordered to be waiting for foreign pedophiles upon their arrival in country (Frederick, 2010; UNICEF, 2010). Many of these young boys are filmed for child pornography, which can be circulated the world over. In the United States, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) estimates that boys are depicted in over 50% of all the child pornography that it seizes (UNICEF, 2010).

Three ECPAT studies in South Asia show differences in the way boys are used:

- A small study of the exploitation of boys in prostitution in Hyderabad (India) reported few pimps and largely female customers (Akula, 2006).
- In Lahore and Peshawar (Pakistan) researchers described boys having sex with older men in long-term relationships that were not always based on money (Mohammed & Zafar, 2006).
- The exploitation of boys in prostitution in Bangladesh was found to be a traditional practice, based in hotels, in homes and on the street. Pimps controlled the boys through fear and violence (Ali & Sarkar, 2006).

## Male Sexual Abuse in Cambodia

In Cambodia, local literature on sexual exploitation and violence seldom recognizes males as victims of sexual violence, and more commonly focuses on males as perpetrators (Hilton, et al. 2008). Despite common under-representations (or misrepresentations) of boys and men in local literature, some developments have been seen over the past 10 years. Glenn Miles and Sun Varin, in a 2004 Tearfund study of more than 1300 Cambodian children, aged 12-15 (both males and females) report that 63.8 percent of the children in its sampling knew other children who had been raped by an adult. Further, 23.5% of boys and 21.4% of girls in this study said that they had witnessed the rape of a child in their community (Miles, 2005). While only 1.8 percent of boys and 0.6 percent of girls cited that they, themselves, had been raped, the authors speculate that the children who have themselves been raped may have been reluctant to disclose their experiences of rape and may instead prefer to say they have witnessed the rape of another child. In addition to rape, this study found that 18.9% boys aged 12-15 cited they had been sexually abused after the age of nine (2005).

In 2008, Alastair Hilton, et al. produced the first specific research focusing on the sexual abuse of boys in Cambodia. This study gathered primary data from 23 key informants, 100 service providers, and 40 male victims of sexual abuse and violence within key cities throughout Cambodia (2008: 78). The study highlighted a number of risk factors, which emerged from the

sampling. These factors included, low levels of education, exposure to poverty, separation and/or death of parents and/or key family members and the domestic violence. A number of the male victims in this study described leaving home to live on the streets at a young age in order to avoid violence within their home or communities and/or to earn money for their families (2008). The study also found an increased risk of additional violence and/or discrimination once it was known that the boys had been abused, resulting in further isolation and marginalization (2008). In addition to these experiences described by male victims, a number of misconceptions surrounding the causes and effects of male victimization were found among social service providers. A few of these misconceptions include: beliefs that sexual abuse of boys is rare and not harmful, that it is not abuse if money is exchanged, that it is not possible for two men to have sex, and that it is only abusive if the boy ejaculates (2008).

## Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Boys (CSEB) in Cambodia

Within Cambodia, the commercial sexual exploitation of children is understood to occur within one of two categories. The first of these is establishment-based sexual exploitation, which often occurs in brothels, beer gardens, KTV, and massage establishments (APLE, 2006). Secondly, there is street-based or opportunistic sexual exploitation, which is usually facilitated personally by a sex offender or an intermediary, who often approaches children directly on the streets, or in other public areas for the purpose of starting a relationship with the child which will ultimately lead to sexual abuse (2006).

In a 2006 study by *Action Pour Les Enfants* (APLE) interviews were conducted in Phnom Penh and Sihanoukville with 26 child victims of street-based sexual exploitation, as well as surveys among civil society personnel who were experienced in working with such groups of vulnerable children. The majority of the children interviewed in the sampling (19 of the 26) were male, reflecting existing APLE data that 80% of child victims of street based sexual exploitation are male. The study found similar themes among victims of street-based CSE as was found in the 2008 study by Alastair Hilton, et al. on child sexual abuse in Cambodia. These common themes included: stressors in the family environment, low-level family incomes, no education or low level education, a street-working or street-living lifestyle, and peers engaging in similar high-risk behavior (2006). The research uncovered a number of sophisticated grooming techniques employed by pedophiles to gain access to children on the streets. It was commonly found that the majority of children were unaware that the relationship with their abuser was ultimately leading to a sexual encounter (2006). The research found that a majority of sexually exploited children (two-thirds) had sex to earn money. Additionally, drug abuse was found to be common among victims, with 70% reporting to have already been using drugs before the time that they were first sexually exploited. Another notable finding was that respondents were found to show little regard for personal health issues (condom usage) despite some knowledge of the risks of sexually transmitted diseases (2006).

Over the past three years, Love146 has conducted a series of baseline studies, which explore the situation of young males in potentially sexually exploitive, establishment-based careers in

Cambodia, Thailand, and the Philippines. In Cambodia, two studies in particular have focused on the vulnerabilities of male masseurs in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap to sexual exploitation. In Siem Reap, males interviewed were found working in two types of massage establishments: male-only establishments, which offer male masseurs predominantly to male clients, and "mixed gender" establishments, which are spas that have male masseurs (along with females) and cater to clients of either gender. Overall, violence and sexual abuse were found to be a common theme for young males working in either type of establishment. Respondents from mixed gender massage establishments were found to report significantly lower occurrences of sexual intercourse with clients; however, were far more likely to have been forced to have sex against their wishes (Miles & Davis, 2012). This study, conducted in Phnom Penh (2011), uncovered a significant lack of employable skills and job training which seems to be a contributing factor to the vulnerability of young males to sexual exploitation (Miles & Blanch, 2011). Later studies in this series, conducted in the Metro Manila, Philippines and Chiang Mai, Thailand, established a significant connection between low wages and a significant reliance upon tips, which create a context in which the provision of sexual services is often obligatory in order to receive a fair wage (Davis & Miles, 2012; Davis, Glotfelty, & Miles, 2013).

## Accessibility of Pornography

The accessibility of pornography to young children has also been an increasing concern with regard to street-based sexual exploitation of children (APLE, 2005). Access to pornographic materials at young ages has been connected to numerous, serious developmental factors including: a premature sexualizing of children's lives and the teaching of "sexual scripts", which normalize violence and abuse as a part of the sexual experience (Graham, 2005). In addition to this, research in this area has shown a direct connection between the consumption of pornography by young people and sexual violence and rape—including rape within marriage and gang rape (Graham, 2005; APLE, 2005). A 2003 study conducted by Child Welfare Group in four major areas in Cambodia (Phnom Penh, Kampong Som, Siem Reap, and Kampong Cham) found that 61.7% of boys vs. 38.5% of girls indicating they have viewed some type of pornographic material (Child Welfare Group, 2003). This study found that, among those children who were viewing pornography, 36% depicted group sex, 35% depicted violence, 19% depicted bestiality, and another 15% was child pornography (2003). The most common place where minors reported viewing pornography was in public coffee shops and private homes and the prevalence of minors viewing porn was found to be almost twice as common in Phnom Penh, compared with provincial areas. A survey among 230 video street vendors in Phnom Penh found that nearly 70% of vendors surveyed sold pornography—49% of which was openly on display in their shop or stand (2003).

Dr. Graham Fordham, in a 2005 study on gender-based violence in Kandal Steung district in Cambodia found a significantly higher percentage of children who have been exposed to pornography at extremely young age. In this study, only 17.8% of boys and 15.5% girls had NOT encountered pornography. Further, the mean age at which children had encountered

pornography was 13.2 years of age with a significant percentage in countering pornography substantially younger than 12 years of age (Fordham, 2005). The research found that easy access to pornography was likely to be driving the development of masculine identities in which violent and abusive sexual scripts were normalized as appropriate ways of relating sexually to others (2005).

The easy accessibility of pornographic materials within the Cambodian context raises a number of key concerns, which include: the accessibility of Child pornography, having no specific legislation criminalizing child pornography, the general lack of legal restrictions on minors' access to pornography, and the widespread availability of violent pornography (Child Welfare Group, 2003). Research is beginning to demonstrate the connection between this ready availability of pornography and child sexual exploitation (CSE). Perpetrators of CSE often use adult pornography to groom their victims for sexual exploitation. Similarly, the purchasers of children often act out what they have viewed in pornographic films with child prostitutes and pimps will also use such films to instruct children on how to behave during sex with their clients (Peters, 2009; Fordham, 2005). Yet, as the availability and accessibility of adult hardcore pornography has continued to expand on the Internet and elsewhere, both government and private entities have commonly turned a blind eye to this phenomenon and its impact on their societies (Peters, 2009).

The exposure of children to sexual violence is an important consideration in this conversation. In a 2005 study, Glenn Miles explores the perception of and exposure to various forms of sexual and physical violence among 1,314 male and female school children throughout Cambodia. This study found it disturbingly high percentage of girls and an even higher percentage of boys who say they know children who have been raped. Beyond this, 21.4% of girls and 23.5% boys cited they had witnessed the rape of a child by an adult (Miles, 2005). This reality, coupled with the increasing availability of exposure to pornographic materials among school children is a significant concern for child development (Fordham, 2005). Given this context and the limited literature available on sexual exploitation and abuse of street-working children, more research is still needed. Children have the rights to a family, a home, health, an education and freedom from violence and discrimination. More research with these groups could help to better understand how government and non-government groups can better work to protect these children and ensure that their rights are protected.

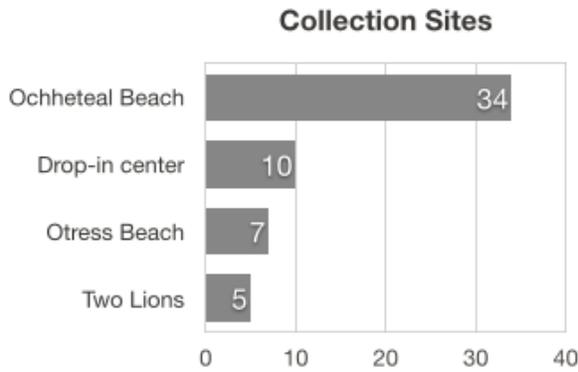
# Methodology

There are particular challenges and sensitivities surrounding research with children. On the one hand, there is a dilemma of asking questions that may be difficult or inappropriate for young children; yet, there is perhaps a greater ethical dilemma of *not* asking questions to groups of children that are known to be vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. We believe that to neglect research with children is, in itself, unethical as it prevents us from understanding this population and providing them with appropriate services. Nevertheless, we are aware that when doing research with vulnerable children, there needs to be careful construction of questions, so as to minimize discomfort and to allow opportunity for follow up. Doing research in partnership with an NGO such as M'lop Tapang enables questions to be asked in the context of a conversation with actual social workers and child protection staff that are already present in the child's community and allows the interviewers themselves to provide ongoing support after the survey has been conducted and beyond so that risk is minimized.

## Sampling

The study employed both purposive and "snowballing" data sampling methodologies. The lead researcher worked with key social workers from M'lop Tapang to identify locations where young boys were known to be working in the Sihanoukville area, along the beaches and within the town center. Additionally, after completing an interview boys were asked if they were aware of other boys who might also be willing to participate in the study, this method of gaining respondents (known as 'snowballing') allowed the research team to follow social networks of young boys working throughout the Sihanoukville area.

A total of 56 interviews were included in the final data set, 41 of these interviews were conducted on the beaches during times in which the boys were at work. An additional five interviews were conducted in a small, informal living area near where the boys worked. Lastly, an additional 10 interviews were conducted in a nonresidential drop-in facility operated by M'lop Tapang. All the boys interviewed at this facility were presently living or working on the streets in the town center of Sihanoukville.



Interview Times	Freq	%
Before 2pm	10	19%
2pm-5pm	18	33%
5pm-9pm	6	11%
After 9pm	20	37%
<b>N=</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100%</b>

The majority of interviews (61%) were conducted with boys working along Ochheuteal Beach, while only a small minority (12%) of interviews was conducted with boys working along Otress Beach. This is largely due to the fact that there was very few street-working children found to be working in the area during fieldwork. This is potentially due to the rapid development of the Ochheuteal Beach area in recent months, and its growing popularity with foreign tourists – especially backpackers. Fieldwork, coupled with findings from initial interviews revealed that what seemed to be distinctive and different groups of young boys working on the beaches at different times. Because of this, the lead researcher chose to vary the times of data collection so as to represent the distinctiveness of each of these groups. The times the interviews conducted were categorized into four key time periods throughout the day and night: Before 2 PM, from 2 PM until 5 PM, from 5 PM until 9 PM, and after 9 PM.

## Research Instrument

The questionnaire used for this study was comprised of 80 questions (excluding numerous sub questions) which were a combination of multiple-choice and open ended questions covering areas including: demographics, relationships, personal and family finances, social and emotional feelings, stigma and discrimination, sexual abuse, sex work, sexual health, violence, income generation, and future planning. The questions used for this study were adapted from previous research instruments used to gather a holistic baseline of information from young male entertainment workers in Cambodia, The Philippines, and Thailand. In adapting the questionnaire for children, the lead researcher work with specialists on child rights and holistic child development to ensure that questions were appropriate to be asked to young boys. Additionally, the final draft of the questionnaire was scrutinized by social workers from M'lop Tapang and other key partners in Sihanoukville. These initial reviewers were encouraged to critique the questionnaire and suggest additional questions based upon their specific knowledge of the street-working/street-living boys in the Sihanoukville area.

## Ethical Considerations

All interviews were conducted in the Khmer language by a team of six social workers who specialize in working with street-working children from M'lop Tapang. Prior to beginning

interviews, the team of interviewers were trained in the study's methodology, and given ethical training for research with vulnerable people groups using the 2009 "UNIAP Ethical Guidelines for Human Trafficking Research." Interviewers sought to establish rapport with boys prior to the survey and provide each respondent with information concerning: the research and its purpose; assurance of anonymity and confidentiality; information regarding the personal and sensitive nature of the interview questions; and their right to choose not to answer any question, stop the survey, and/or withdraw from the study at any time. In order to make provision for younger boys, surveys were designed to be age-contingent. After careful consideration of the needs of younger children, survey questions were structured in such a way for certain sections to be skipped for boys under the age of 12. However, interviewers were instructed that if a child under the age of 12 discloses sexual intercourse or sexual abuse, and seems comfortable talking about the subject, they were to continue through the full set of questions as they would with someone over the age of 12, at their discretion.

Prior to each interview, interviewers sought to build rapport with each boy and often spent several minutes playing or having simple conversation with them prior to discussing the research and its aims. After the study's purpose and objectives were explained, along with the nature and extent of the questions to be asked, boys could choose if they desired to complete the survey or not. Each boy was instructed that, during the interview, they would be able to skip any question that they did not want to answer or end the interview at any time. In addition, respondents were reminded that honest answers were greatly appreciated, and if at any time they felt uncomfortable – the interviewers would prefer no answer at all, rather than an answer that was untrue.

## Limitations

It is often considered that street children commonly lie as a form of survival. In this survey, we choose to believe that what our respondents have told us is true; however, some considerations have been made to counter these potential inaccuracies. During training, and throughout the data collection process, interviewers were carefully trained to be aware of the body language of respondents, in order to be aware of instances in which children were uncomfortable in answering questions, and provide annotations on each survey as to be perceived accuracy and reliability of the respondent's statements. Secondly, survey questions were constructed with internal redundancies to check for consistency throughout the whole of each interview. During the data cleaning and initial analysis, any variables that were held in significant question were removed from the data sampling. This resulted in a lower 'n'-value on some questions, but greater accuracy in the final data set.

Doing research on a confidential one-to-one level means that children can say things that they might otherwise be embarrassed to say in focus group discussions. Focus group discussions might also lead to street children speaking with bravado about their sexual behavior, which may be exaggerated and thus unhelpful, whereas in a one-to-one interview, there is no one to impress. However, it is also understood that doing one-on-one research with social workers

that are known to them might make children feel obliged to answer questions, even if they feel uncomfortable. Interviewers were trained to counter this by reminding boys that they are not required to answer any questions that they do not feel comfortable to answer,

While we felt that it was important for interviews to be conducted by local social workers and child protection officers, this may also pose a challenge to data accuracy. It is possible that some of the children who knew these social workers previously might have felt uncomfortable in disclosing some information, due to fears that it may have changed the way the social worker perceived the child, whether or not this was true. In many cases, however, it was found that prior knowledge of social workers aided in the comfort level of many of the boys and their ease of disclosure.

Another consideration is the normalization of sexual behavior and abuse. It is possible that such normalization may cause many boys to see some forms of sexual abuse as normal and thus be less likely to label such instances as “abuse” or something that needs to be reported. This became notable during data cleaning within a number of cases, particularly among boys working in the town center area.

The selection of children was done in certain geographical areas in which M’lop Tapang usually works, in addition to a few other areas that were identified during fieldwork. While we attempted to provide a representative sampling, we are aware that there are some areas of Sihanoukville that were missed. Because of this, we cannot say that this sampling is truly representative of the Sihanoukville area as a whole. Another factor to consider is the times at which the surveys were conducted. Initially, data collection was done during the daytime, when M’lop Tapang usually works, but this was extended to evening and late night on many occasions, which revealed other groups of children—some of whom M’Lop Tapang has not had much contact with. A more extensive survey would need to have a wider scope of interviews collected in terms of geography and time.

# Results

## Demographics

While the data collection attempted to gather a sampling of response that was representative of the street-working boys on the streets of Sihanoukville, interviewers were limited to interviewing boys who were eight years of age and older. This was a self-imposed age restriction due to the nature of questions to be asked, as well as the length and depth of the interviews, which may be too intense for boys under the age of eight. While there was a minimum age restriction for eligibility to be interviewed, the data collection team did not strictly enforce a maximum age limit for eligibility to be interviewed. Seeing as the majority of boys had been working on the streets for a number of years, looking at boys over the age of 18 allowed for a broader understanding of the trajectory of street-working children as they grow older. Additionally, it is understood that children under the age of 18 maybe less likely to disclose involvement in sex work due to increased vigilance and harsher legislation for child abuse and endangerment, which can drive younger sex workers underground or to lie about their ages.

**AGE:** The respondent's ages ranged from 8 to 22 years, with a mean age of 14.5 years and a range of 14 years. All of the boys interviewed fall within, or below the United Nations definition of youth (15-25 years of age). Greater than one third of boys reported being (36%) were under the age of 14, and nearly 60% of boys indicated that they were under the age of 15. The average number of years boys reported having worked on the streets/beaches was 5.5 years. Only 29% of boys indicated having worked on the street/beaches for less than three years—many indicated having spent the whole of their lives working there.

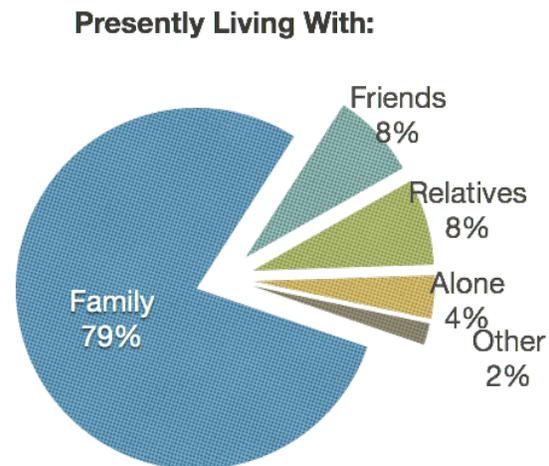
**MIGRATION:** A significant majority of street-working boys, or 25 boys (54.5%), were found to have migrated to the Sihanoukville area. Among those with migrated, the most common birthplaces were Phnom Penh (7), Kampot (4), Kampong Cham (3), Sihanouk Province (3), Takeo (3), Battambang (2), and Kandal Province (2). All but one person, or 98.2% of the sampling, indicated being Khmer-born nationals and one respondent indicated being born in Thailand, but was ethnically Khmer.

**EDUCATION:** Among boys reporting to be 18 years of age and below, 44% indicating that they are not presently attending any form of schooling. Among boys reporting to be 18 years of age and below (n=45), 25 boys (44%) indicated that they are not presently attending any form of schooling. Within this group, strong majority (41%) indicated that it has been greater than one year since they have stopped attending school, 19% cited that they stop attending

school last year, and 25% cited they stopped attending school sometime during the past year. Four boys, or 13%, reported that they have never attended school.

## Relationships

**LIVING ACCOMPANIMENT:** A strong majority of respondents, 41 boys (79%), indicated that they are presently living with immediate family members. In addition to this, four boys cited living with friends (8%), four cited living with distant relatives (8%) and two cited that they are currently living alone (4%). A significant number of respondents (20 boys, or 41%) indicated that they have at least one sibling working in their same line of work on the streets and/or beaches. Regarding the people with whom they are currently living, respondents were asked if they like living with these people. An overwhelming majority (93%) cites that they do, and only four boys (7%) cited that they do not. Each respondent was asked why he either does or does not like living with these particular people. This was an open-ended question to which respondents were invited to respond however they chose. Among those who cited that they did like their current living situation, 20% stated that this was specifically because the people they currently lived with did not abuse, or use violence against them. Similarly, among the four boys answering that they do not like their current living situation, two stated that this was due to violence used against them, and one states that it is because he is not allowed to go to school. While the majority of boys reported to be presently living with family members, it was strongly evident that the families of street-working boys tended to be large, reporting to have an average of four siblings in their family (aside from themselves), and 39% of boys indicating having greater than four siblings. In addition to this, a number of boys indicated living among a variety of different family members, including distant relatives (aunts, uncles, and grandparents).



**CARETAKERS:** Respondents were asked to identify the primary person who takes care of them. Well over one third (18 boys or 37%) stated that both their mother and father take care of them. Slightly more than one-fourth (13 boys or 27%) cites that only their mother is their primary caretaker. Other common answers include: grandparents (4 boys or 8%), a parent and an older sibling (4 boys or 8%), a father (3 boys or 6%), and no one (3 boys or 6%). A strong majority of boys indicated that their families were aware of their work on the streets. Among those for whom their families are unaware, this unawareness is largely due to neglect. In

response to this question, one respondent, a nine-year-old working as a beggar, cited: "my family does not look after me".

Regarding their present living situation, boys were asked, among those with whom they were currently living, whom they were closest to, and conversely, whom they were least close to. A majority of respondents, 11 boys or 28%, indicated that they are closest to their mother, followed by 9 boys (23%) who indicated that they are closest to a sibling. Apart from six boys (15%) who indicated they were closest to their father, five boys (13%) indicated being closest to a grandparent, and another five boys (13%) indicated being closest to both their mother and father equally. Respondents were asked why they were particularly close to the person that they named. This was an open-ended question and respondents were able to respond however they chose. While a variety of responses were given, most common responses were: "they love me" (11), "they care for me" (10), "they allow me to attend school" (7), and "they don't use violence against me" (7). Twenty boys or 69% indicated being least close to siblings among the people with whom they currently lived. Following this, three boys (10%) indicated being least close to a parent, two (7%) indicated being least close to a friend (with whom they were living), and two boys (7%) indicated an aunt. Thirteen boys gave reasons for why this person was not particularly close to them. Five respondents (38%) cited that this person hits them; three boys (23%) cited that this person disregards them; three boys (23%) cited substance abuse by this person; one cited that this person withholds education from him, and another indicated blame.

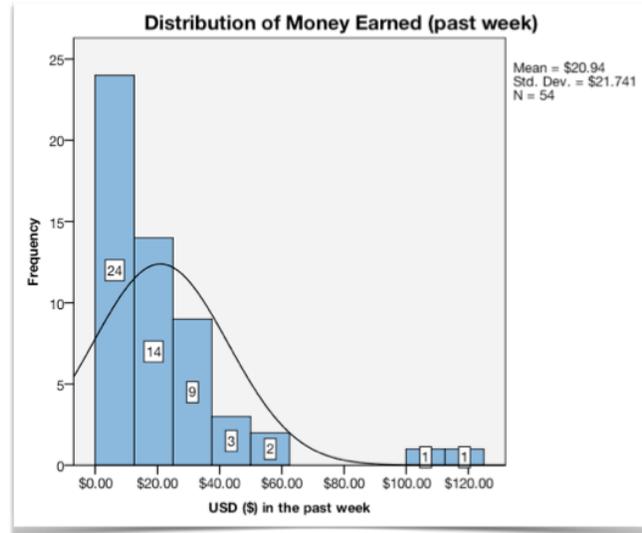
## Work / Earnings

**JOBS:** Respondents were found to be working in a wide variety of jobs along the streets and beaches. A strong majority of respondents, 50% or 26 boys made money by selling various souvenirs and trinkets –most commonly along the beaches. Items sold included: bracelets, fireworks, flowers, formula, newspapers, and other various souvenirs of interest to visiting tourists. Aside from this, 21% respondents or 11 boys made money by collecting recyclables along the streets and beaches. Eight boys, or 15% of the sampling were making money through begging. Lastly, five boys, or 10% of the sampling, made money by "parking cars", which entails standing on the street and guiding cars into parking spaces outside of businesses in hopes to receive a small tip from drivers.

**WORK HOURS:** Hours of work among respondents seemed to vary greatly. A majority of respondents, 40% or 16 boys cited working between 1 to 5 hours a day. Nearly a third of respondents cited working from between 6 to 10 hours in a day, and lastly, another third (12 boys or 31%) indicated working greater than 10 hours a day – five of which indicated that their work does not necessarily have an end, rather it is simply a part of what they do during the waking hours.

Type of Work	Freq	%
Selling Souvenirs*	26	50%
Collecting Cans	11	21%
Beggar	8	15%
Car Parking	5	10%
Other	1	2%
Information Withheld	1	2%

\*This category includes selling: fireworks, bracelets, flowers, sunglasses, and other various souvenir items.



**LENGTH OF TIME WORKING:** The majority of boys (36%) indicated that they have been working on the streets/beaches for one year or less. Among this group, 17% had been working for less than a year – a few for only a matter of weeks or months. More than a quarter of respondents, 28% or 13 boys, indicated working from two to three years on the street/beaches, and a lesser number of boys, 21% or 10 boys, indicated having worked on the beaches from four to five years. Lastly, seven boys (15%) indicated that they have worked on the streets/beaches for six or more years – for many in this group this has been a lifetime career.

**EARNINGS:** Earnings over the past week varied greatly throughout the sampling. Nearly 20% of boys indicated earning less than \$8 USD within the past week, and 50% of boys indicated earning less than \$15 USD over the same time period. The median income for all boys was \$20.94 within the past week. This amount is somewhat offset by two boys who indicated earning significantly greater amounts than others. One indicated earnings of \$110 within the past week, and the other indicated earnings of \$120. Both of these boys were found to be working on the beach selling trinkets and other souvenirs. Given that these two amounts diverge so greatly from other reported earnings, it is questionable that these reported amounts came entirely from bracelet sales alone.

A strong majority of respondents (26 boys or 62%) indicated that their families are in some form of debt. Given that the majority of the boys were quite young, many were unaware of the exact amount of their family’s debt; however, they were still a few who had knowledge of what their family was trying to pay back. Two boys indicated that their families have significantly high amounts of debt – one indicating \$1,000 and another indicating \$5,000 worth of debt. Between these two boys, they indicated that their personal incomes were \$8 and \$12.50 over the past week, respectively—the majority of which went to their mothers to help with these expenses.

Boys were asked if they were able to keep any of the money that they were working to earn. Half of the sampling (n=48), or 24 boys, indicated that they give all of their earnings to someone else. Nearly a third of respondents, 31% or 15 boys, indicated that they keep their earnings for themselves, and a minority of respondents, nine boys or 19% indicated that they keep some of the money, and give the rest to someone else. Among those who indicated that they give their earnings to someone else, (n=32) 91% indicated that they give their money to a family member. Predominately, the family member to whom the money was given was a mother (66%), and less commonly the money was given to a father (9%), both parents (6%), a sibling (6%), and a grandparent (3%). Lastly, three boys or 9% of the sampling indicated that they gave their earnings to a friend.

While 60% of all boys indicated giving all of their earnings to a family member, only 41% of boys (n=48) indicated that a family member introduced them to street work. Nearly one third (30%), or 14 boys, cited that they were introduced into street work through a friend, and 12 boys cited that they introduced themselves to street work.

## Stigma / Discrimination

Respondents were asked about what they believed to be the common perception of street-working boys among both Khmer people and foreigners. This allowed for interviewers to “set the stage” for a deeper discussion about not only how people think about boys working on the street, but also how people behave towards them. Questions about how the boys felt others perceived them were open-ended questions, in which respondents could answer however they chose. These responses on the perception of street boys by both Khmer people and foreigners were then analyzed qualitatively and broken down into categories.

Khmer Thoughts	Freq	%
Bad	14	37%
Pity	9	24%
We are thieves	7	18%
Good	3	8%
Don't care	2	5%
Normal	2	5%
Worry about us	1	3%

Foreigner Thoughts	Freq	%
They like us	11	33%
Understanding	8	24%
Not concerned	4	12%
Normal	3	9%
We are thieves	3	9%
Some good / some bad	2	6%
Bad	1	3%
Don't like us	1	3%

Overall, boys felt that Khmer people perceived them negatively. The majority of respondents, or 14 boys (37%), simply stated “bad”, and nine boys (24%) indicated that they are pitied. Seven boys (18%) cited that Khmer people think them of as thieves. To a lesser extent boys cited “good” (3), they don’t care about us (2), normal (2), and one person stated, “they worry about us”. Conversely, boys were much more likely to feel that foreigners perceive them positively. One third of respondents, or 11 boys, cited that “they like us”, while eight boys cited that foreigners “pity” them, four boys cited that for those were “not”. To a lesser extent, responses on how foreigners perceived street boys were: “normal” (3), “we are thieves”, (3) “good and bad” (2). Lastly, one person cited that he thought foreigners thought badly of street boys, and another cited, “they don’t like us”.

Boys were then asked if there was anyone on the streets or beaches who treated them badly. Nearly half, or 23 boys, indicated that there were and named a number of groups and individuals who did so. The majority of those who were cited as treating street boys badly were shop owners (mentioned by five boys or 23% of the group) and other sellers working on the streets (also mentioned by five boys). Those mentioning shop owners cited instances of being hit or yelled at as they were working on the beaches. This is due partly to the fact that street boys are often perceived to be thieves. Those who mention “other sellers” cited instances of jealousy, competition, and the stealing of merchandise. Three respondents mentioned gangs as treating them badly, and cited instances in which gang members would try to steal their money. Another three boys mentioned being treated badly by guests staying at hotels in guesthouses along the beaches, but did not give specific instances of how they were treated badly. To a lesser extent boys cited being treated badly by: NGO workers, “older boys”, police, and a sibling – mentioned by one respondent each.

## Sexual Abuse

**AWARENESS OF OTHERS WHO ARE ABUSED:** Questions regarding sex and sexual touching were approached delicately during interviews. Before asking the respondent about any personal experiences of sexual abuse, they were first asked about their awareness of other boys on the street beaches who are asked to do sexual things with adults, both foreign and Khmer. Nearly half of all boys, or 46%, indicated that they were aware of other boys who had been asked to do sexual things by foreigners. To a much lesser extent, 17% indicated that they were aware of boys who were asked to do sexual things by Khmer people.

Respondents were then asked to estimate how many boys working on the beaches, out of 10, would be asked to do sexual things by an adult. This question was asked in regard to both foreigners and Khmer people. Regarding foreigners, there was a wide variety of estimation, the maximum being 10 out of 10, and the minimum being one out of 10. On average, respondents estimated that 3.5 boys out of 10 boys working on the beaches (35%) would be asked by a foreigner to do sexual things. With regard to Khmer people, estimates seem to be much lower, with the lowest numbers being zero out of 10 in the highest being four out of 10. On

average, it was estimated that 1 boy working on the beaches out of 10 would be asked to do sexual things with an adult Khmer person.

**SEXUAL TOUCHING:** Without directly defining sexual abuse, boys were then asked if any adults have done things to them, or asked them to do things, that they did not like. One third of respondents (33%), or 17 boys, responded affirmatively. Of the boys who gave affirmative answers, several went further to define what it was that they were asked to do. Responses ranged from sexual touching, to masturbation, the removable clothing, oral sex, and substance abuse. This question was worded broadly so as to allow boys to disclose abuse or abusive situations on their own, or to allow them to ease into more direct questions on sexual abuse later in the survey.



**SEXUAL ENCOUNTERS WITH ADULTS:** Respondents were asked specifically about instances in which they had been touched on the genitals since they were eight years of age. This question specifically asked about sexual touching after the age of eight so as to differentiate instances of sexual touching from the common cultural practice in which adults will touch or kiss the genitalia of young males during infancy and very early childhood. Among 50 boys responding to this question, 20 boys (38%) cited that they had been sexually touched, and two boys declined to respond. Respondents indicated the ages at which they were first sexually touched. On average, boys cited that they had been first sexually touched at the age of 12, the youngest reporting that he was sexually touched at the age of four. It is notable that one respondent indicated being sexually touched at the age of four, which was four years younger than the minimum age defined in the question. This seems to be due to the fact that, although he was younger than the age of eight, he understood this experience to be from the sexual touching that is common within Khmer culture.

Among those who indicate instances of sexual touching, respondents were asked if the perpetrator had gone farther than just sexually touching them. Over one fourth of respondents, 13 boys (26%) indicated that their perpetrator had. It is notable that there was a significantly high number of boys – 11 or 22% of the group – who declined to respond to this question.

This could indicate that a number of boys from this group had experienced sexual violence that went beyond sexual touching, but were possibly reluctant such information to the interviewer.

Seven boys, or 14% of the sampling, indicated instances in which they had been physically forced to do something sexual – with three boys declining to respond. Beyond this, four boys or 9% of the sampling indicated that they have been physically hurt during such instances of sexual abuse. Specifically, when asked as to how they had been physically hurt, two boys indicated: “they hurt my penis”, one simply cites that he was “sexually abused”, and another cites, “they hit me”. Lastly those who had answered affirmatively for sexual abuse, were asked if there ever have been instances in which they were asked to have sex with another child. Four boys, or 9% indicated there had been such instances and five boys (11%) declined to respond.

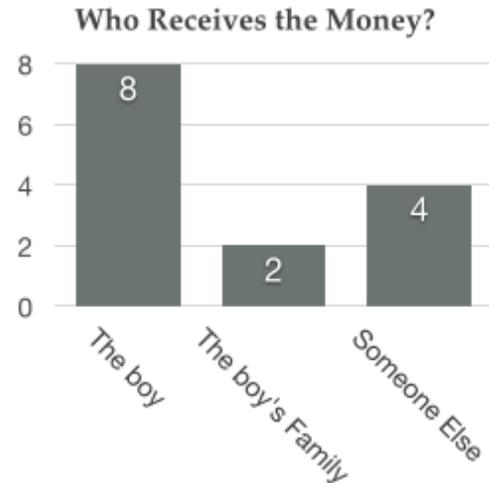
It is notable that nearly half of all respondents, 23 boys (46%), cited instances in which adults had shown them pornographic pictures or videos. This is particularly relevant in that showing children pornographic pictures videos is a common method of “grooming” children for sexual abuse. When asked about who had shown them the pornographic images, numerous responses cited tourists, foreigners, or guests who had shown them the images on their cell phones. Others cited being shown pornographic images by video shop owners. To a lesser extent, boys mentioned adults in the village and neighbors who have show them pornographic pictures or videos.

## Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)

Similar to the way in which sexual abuse was approached, questions on CSEC were structured in such a way so as to be descriptive of the process of receiving compensation for various sexual acts without using any particular labels such as “sex work”, “exploitation”, or “prostitution”, which may either not be understood as such, or may carry certain social stigmas that could make boys feel uncomfortable or deter them from answering questions honestly. In three separate questions, boys were asked if they, their family, or someone else had ever been given food, money, or a gift in exchange for the boy doing something sexual with an adult.

Sex Work	Freq	%
Yes	11	26%
No	24	56%
No Response	8	19%
<b>N=</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100%</b>

"Angry. Want to hit (someone)."	R47
"Hurt. Physical pain."	R2
"Sad. Nervous that the foreigner has a disease"	R35
"Not Happy"	R3; R13
"Happy" (that money has been earned)	R45
"Normal" (Tahmadah)	R33



Over one-fourth of respondents, 11 boys (26%) indicated that they had engaged in sexual activities with an adult in exchange for food, money, or a gift. Eight boys out of 43 boys (19%) indicated that *they* had received some form of payment in exchange for sexual services. Two out of 40 respond 5% indicated that *their family* had received some form of payment in exchange for the boy providing sexual services. Lastly, four boys out of 39 respondents indicated that *someone else* had received some form of payment in exchange for the boy providing sexual services to an adult. Among those who indicated sex work, three boys (27%) indicated that their families are aware of this work, and three boys declined to respond to this question. Five of the 11 respondents (45%) who indicated sex work reported that they were presently under the age of 18. The average age at which respondents first received compensation for providing central services was 12.8 years of age – the youngest being seven years old and the oldest being 17 years of age.

## First Sexual Experiences

Respondents over the age of 12 were asked if they would be willing to share about their first sexual experiences. The ages at which these respondents reported to have had their first sexual experiences ranged from 3 to 19 years of age. Over half of these first experiences (56%) were with another male, while a minority (44%) were with females. Locations at which these first experiences took place varied greatly and included: guesthouses, a school, gas stations, and on the beach.

#	Age	Partner	Sex	Relationship	Location	Stated Nature	Comments
R2	8	"Old"	M	Stranger	Guesthouse	Forced	"If my penis is not hard, I will not get money."
R3	13	"Old"	M	Stranger	Near my house	Forced	"He took off all my clothes and performed oral sex on me."
R12	3	18	F	"No Response"	Guesthouse	"Consensual"	"No Response"
R13	15	14	M	Stranger	Gas Station	Forced	"Anal sex while sleeping"
R45	12	23	M	Stranger	On the Beach	Forced	"He told me to take off all my clothes and had me lay on the beach."
R47	8	40	M	Stranger	Gas Station	Forced	"No Response"

Among the nine respondents who were willing to share, five of these cases qualify as adult to child sexual abuse, and six of the nine first sexual experiences (66% of those reported) were forced. Regarding the six cases of forced sex, five of these cases cited perpetration by a male, while one case cites perpetration by a female. In the one case in which the respondent's first sexual partner was said to have been a female, the respondent cited that he was three years old at the time of the experience, and the female perpetrator was cited to have been 18 years of age. Initially, the respondent had labeled this instance as "consensual" though this response was changed to "forced" during review of the dataset due to the extremely young age of the respondent at the time of perpetration (three years old). Throughout our previous studies dealing with male vulnerability to sexual abuse, it has not been uncommon for young males in this context to forced or coercive sex with female perpetrators as "consensual". This may be due to various cultural constructions masculinity, and the often-inherent cultural beliefs, which often neglect that males can be raped, or minimize the severity of cases of rape by assuming that men should enjoy sex with a female, regardless of the circumstances.

Among the six cases in which the respondent's first sexual experience was forced, only one of these cases does not qualify as adult-to-child sexual abuse (instances in which the perpetrator is an adult, and the one being perpetrated against a child). In this case, a 14-year-old male was cited to have raped the 15-year-old respondent as he was sleeping on the street. While this case may challenge the expected norms of perpetrators of sexual abuse, the reality of sexually harmful behaviors among children, particularly those living on the streets, is a reality that is readily acknowledged by social work professionals. Further research on sexually harmful behavior among children, particularly those living on the streets would be helpful in understanding the dynamics of instances such as these.

## Sexual Health

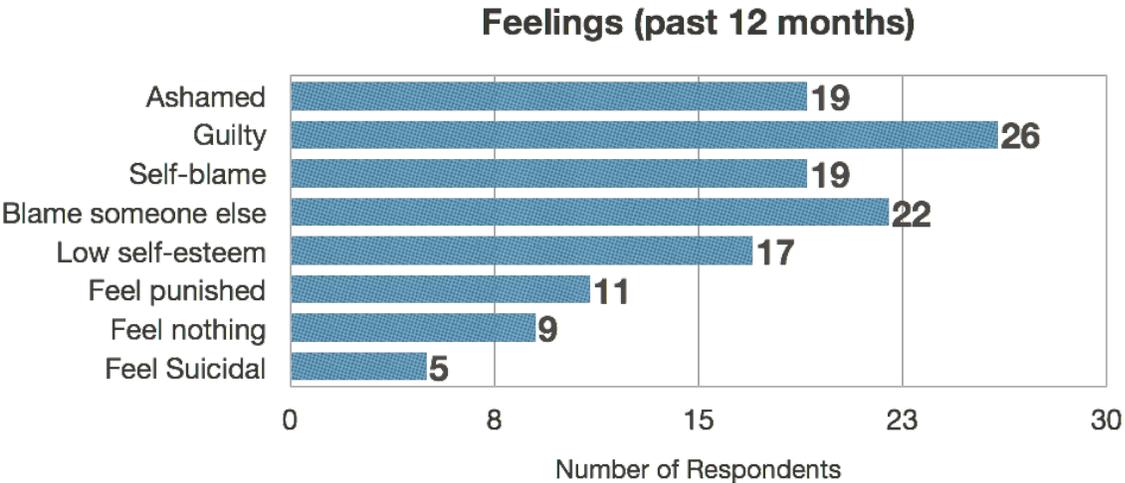
Among all respondents (n=52), only a minority indicated having had any form of sexual health education. Among those aged 12 years and older (n=40), 24 boys (60%) indicated having received some form of sexual health education. Among this group, the majority (48%) indicated having received their sexual health education from M'Lop Tapang, 17% indicated

having received sexual health education from a teacher, 13% indicated having received it from a friend, and another 13% indicated having received it from a doctor. Lastly, one person indicates that they received sexual health education from a parent, and another indicates having received it from an NGO located in Phnom Penh.

Respondents were asked a series of questions regarding the prevalence of symptoms that are indicative of major sexually transmitted infections (STI’s). Among the six boys who indicated presence of rashes, ulceration, or lumps in their genital area, half of this group (three boys) cited that they have never used a condom before in their lives. Similarly, among the three boys who indicated the presence of urethral discharge, having difficulty passing urine, or pain in their testicles, two cited never having used condoms before in their lives. In total, seven boys of the 49 responding to sexual health questions indicated one or more symptoms of common STIs within the past six months.

### Feelings

Respondents were also asked a series of questions on various emotions or feelings that they have experienced over the past 12 months. This series of feelings and emotions was adapted from indexes on stigma and discrimination so as to help build a better understanding of the emotional well-being of Street-working boys, as well as the social and emotional impact of their experiences related to living and working on the streets.



The most common reported feelings among respondents were feelings of guilt, and feelings of blame directed towards someone else, followed by shame and blame of one’s self. Notably, nine respondents indicated that they feel numb, or feel nothing and five respondents indicated suicidal feelings within the past 12 months. Feelings of shame, self-blame, and suicidal feelings varied greatly between those who reported being sexually touched, and those who did not report being sexually touched. More analysis on this, along with cross-tabulations of other related variables is included in the *discussion* section of this report.

## Substance Abuse

A series of questions was asked with regard to the respondent's usage of substances, including alcohol and illegal drugs. Fifty-four percent (54%) of respondents (28 boys) reported alcohol usage (n=52). Among this group, half cited that they drink due to peer pressure, and 19% psychically drink because of negative emotions (feeling sad or angry). Another 19% cited drinking alcohol because of force. Those who indicated "force" cited instances in which an uncle or another adult would purchase alcohol for them and oblige them to drink. In addition to this, one cites that he drinks because he "likes it" and another cites that he only drink once because he was "tricked" to drink something that he originally thought was not alcohol.

Nineteen respondents, or 37% cited usage of illegal drugs. A majority of this group (65%) indicated that they use illegal drugs due to peer pressure, 2 boys (12%) cited negative emotions, two cited being inclined to use illegal drugs because they were already high from huffing glue (a common inhalant among street-living children), one (6%) cites usage of illegal drugs due to addiction, and another cites usage of illegal drugs due to force, however declines to give further information as to the circumstances surrounding how he was forced. Further analysis indicated that 23% of those indicating sex work also cited being under the influence of alcohol when they meet their clients for sex. Additionally, 13% of all respondents indicated instances in which they have been asked (by adults) to take pills that they are not familiar with.

## Violence

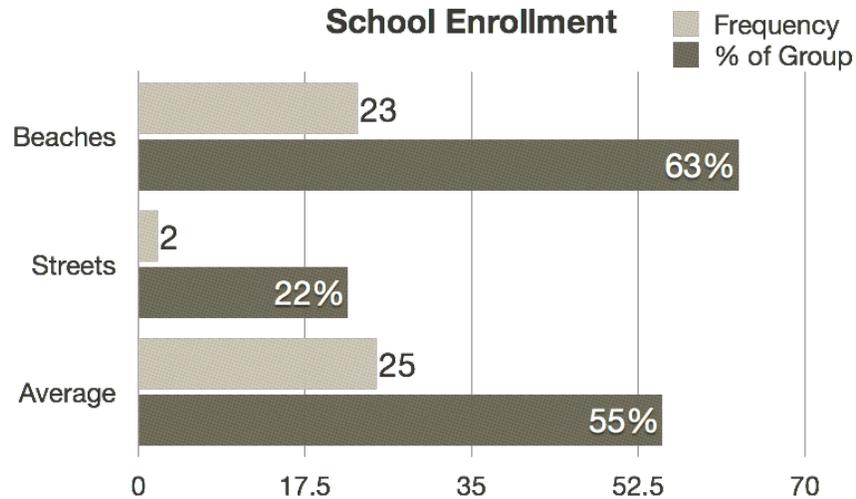
One in four respondents, (25%) indicated instances of physical assault that occurred to them within the past 12 months. For the majority of those experiencing assault, 67% indicated this happened "once" within the past 12 months, 25% indicated that this happened "often", and 8% indicated that this happened "a few times". Respondents were asked who perpetrated the assault(s) against them. Among the 12 boys who responded, two boys indicated assault by a police officer; two indicated assault by gangs in the area, another indicated assault by peers. Additionally, one person indicates being assaulted by his father, one indicates being assaulted by a drug user, and one indicates assault by a guest. The majority of those indicating assault (three boys or 25%) declined to respond. This includes one person who cited that he will be beat if he is not able to make enough money from collecting recyclables.

# Discussion

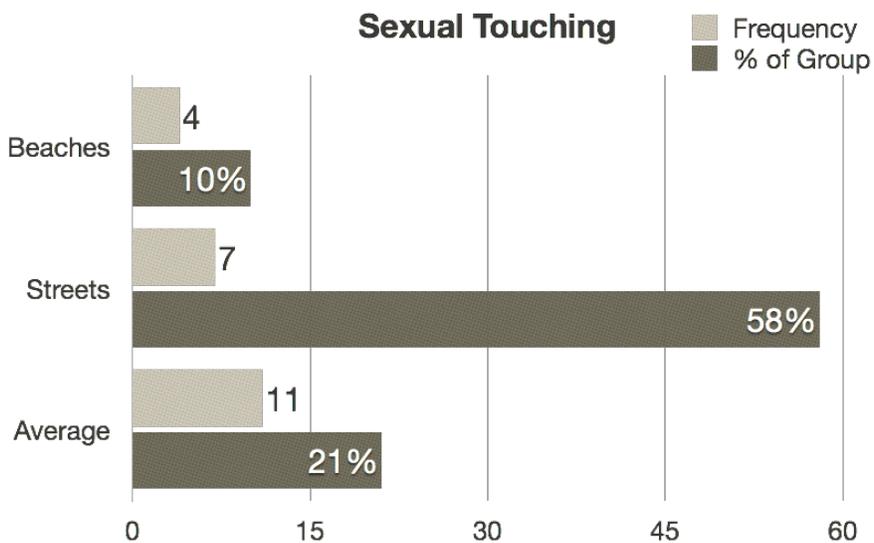
## Type and Location of Work:

Notable differences were observed between the groups of boys working directly on the beaches, versus those working on the streets and 'two lions' area within the town itself. While significant vulnerabilities were observed in boys from both groups, boys working on the streets within the town itself demonstrated numerous exceptional vulnerabilities. Overall, respondents working on the streets (in the town center and two lions area) reported higher instances of sexual abuse, physical assault and drug usage. In addition to this, street-working respondents were more likely to have immigrated from a rural area and less likely to be enrolled in school (among those who were under the age of 18), compared with boys found to be working along the beaches.

Begging and guiding cars into parking places were the most commonly cited types of work for boys working in the town center and 'two lions' area. Four of the six boys in the town center who disclosed their work (67%) cited that they were working as car-parking assistants. Less commonly, one boy disclosed that he was working as a beggar and one disclosed that he worked selling various trinket items. Among the six boys who disclosed their work in the 'two lions' area, the majority (5 people or 83%) cited working as beggars, while one worked as a can collector. On the beaches, the majority of boys were found to be selling trinkets and souvenir items, and secondly collecting recyclables, with a small minority working as beggars. Twenty-two out of the 32 boys working on Ochheuteal beach (69%) were found to be sellers, while 22% were found to be collecting cans and other recyclable materials left by tourists, and only three boys were found to be working as beggars. Only a small number of children (boys or girls) were found to be working on Otrass beach. Among the six boys interviewed, three were selling souvenir items and three were collecting recyclables.



Educational enrollment was found to be significantly higher among boys working on the beaches, compared with those working on the streets in the town center and ‘two lions’ area. While nearly 64% of school-aged boys working on the beaches (n=36) indicated school attendance, only 22% of those working on the streets (n=9) indicated the same. Similarly, among the 36% of boys on the beaches (n=19) who indicated that they were not presently attending school, only one indicates that he has “never attended school”. On the other hand, 23% of boys working on the streets (n=13), or three boys, cited that they have “never attended school”.



Sexual touching by adults appears to be a common phenomenon, to varying degrees, throughout all locations in which boys were found to be working. However, further sexual abuse such as forced/coerced masturbation and sexual intercourse seems to be predominantly disclosed among those groups working in the town center and around the ‘two lions’ area. In fact, only four out of the 36 boys (11%) interviewed who were working on the

beaches reported any sexual abuse that went beyond being sexually touched on the genitals. On the other hand, nine boys out of the 14 who were found to be working in the 'two lions' or town center areas (64% of boys working in these areas) disclosed sexual abuse that went beyond being sexually touched on the genitals. A similar phenomenon is notable regarding sex work in relation to the areas in which the boys are found to be working. Six of the eight boys interviewed in the town center area (75%) indicated instances in which they have received money in compensation for sex or sexual services, while one out of the four boys (25%) interviewed in the 'two lions' area indicated the same. While the number of boys interviewed in each of these areas is relatively low, the rates of abuse are nevertheless significant and may indicate the need for further research among young boys (and girls) working in these areas.

The perception of street-working boys among Khmer people and foreigners also seems to be much more harsh for those working on the streets (in the town center and 'two lions' area), compared to those working on the beaches. Most commonly, boys working on the beaches cited that Khmer people looked at them with "pity", whereas boys working on the streets most commonly cited various negative or antagonistic feelings among Khmer people towards them. A similar phenomenon is notable among the reported perceptions of foreigners towards boys working on the streets and beaches. It was most common that boys working on the beaches perceived that foreigners liked street boys, and secondly that foreigners pitied them. On the other hand, boys working on the streets most commonly felt that foreigners were not concerned at all with them, and secondly that they either didn't like them or had antagonistic feelings towards them. In discussions with respondents, most of these antagonistic feelings among both Khmer people and foreigners seem to be due to a common stigma that street-working boys, in general, are "thieves" and shouldn't be trusted. Because of this stigma, it was common for boys working on the beaches to have reported instances of abuse (hitting, yelling) by the owners of restaurants and shops along the beach, who assumed that the boys would steal their customers' belongings. While the sampling of respondents in this study is small, and may not be useful for any broad statistical generalizations, it does indicate some key themes and patterns among the various groups of street boys working in the area and signals the need for further research to better understand the more specific needs and vulnerabilities of such groups.

Even though the two areas are not geographically near one another, the vulnerabilities and experiences of the boys working in the town center and 'two lions' area are notably similar. While the town center is located more than 1.5 km from the beach area, the 'two lions' area is relatively near this area, lying within 300 m from the central tourist district of the beach area. Considering the physical proximity of the groups who cited working in the 'two lions' area and those groups who cited working in the main beach area, it would seem to logically follow that the vulnerabilities of these two groups would be similar; however, this does not seem to be the case. While there are still significant vulnerabilities cited by children working on the beach, vulnerabilities cited by those working in the town center and 'two lions' area are notably higher. One possible explanation for the differences between these two areas (the 'two lions' and main

beach area), which seems to exist regardless of the proximity to one another, could be due to the fact that there is much more vigilance afforded to children working on the beaches, in comparison with those who work in or around the residential areas near the beaches. In recent years, the creation of the ChildSafe network has trained tuk-tuk drivers, and the staffs of guesthouses and restaurants along the beach to be vigilant for child sexual exploitation and abuse. Additionally, such initiatives have produced numerous public service announcements and ad campaigns that draw attention to the reality of child sexual abuse and exploitation in the area. However, these campaigns typically target beaches and other areas commonly visited by tourists, but may not direct as much attention to the town center and other informal housing areas such as the 'two lions' area. The notable differences between the town center and 'two lions' area, which seems to be unaffected by their geographical proximity to one another, may indicate the need for increased vigilance and further expansion of the ChildSafe network into local residential communities.

## Receiving Money for Sexual Services

A variety of themes were noted among the 11 respondents who indicated receiving money for sexual services (sex work), including significantly lower levels of education (if any), coming from broken families or running away from home, and migration to Sihanoukville from a provincial area. Five of the 11 respondents who indicated sex work were under the age of 18. On average, their ages were older than those who did not cite sex work, but in view of this, it should be noted that the statistics represented here are "disclosure rates" of sex work, and may not necessarily represent all of the children on the streets who are being paid for sex. Furthermore, due to increased vigilance and child protection legislation it is possible that those under 18 would be less likely to disclose instances of being compensated for sexual services. Aside from differences in age, migration from a provincial area was found to be much more common among those who indicated sex work. Nearly three-fourths (73%) of those in sex work indicated migration from various provincial areas around Cambodia (and one from Thailand) while the majority of those who did not cite sex work (57%) also cited that they were born in the Sihanoukville area.

Being under the care of family members seems to have a significant impact on the rates of sex work among respondents. Respondents who do not cite at least one family member as a caretaker were found to be significantly more likely to cite instances in which they have received compensation (either food, money and/or gifts) in exchange for sexual services, compared with those who were presently living under the care of at least one family member. It was found that 19% of those cite at least one family member as their primary caretaker indicates receiving compensation for sexual services. On the other hand, a strong majority, or 83%, of those who do not cite at least one family member as a primary caretaker indicates receiving compensation for sexual services. This is consistent with the APLE and UNICEF data, which finds a significant connection between separation and/or estrangement from family and child sexual exploitation (UNICEF, 2001; APLE, 2006).

Among the 11 respondents who cited receiving compensation for sexual services, the majority indicated that they received compensation themselves—usually in the form of food or money. Apart from this majority, four boys indicated instances in which their family has received money for the boy’s sexual services, and two respondents indicated instances in which someone else has received compensation for the boy’s sexual services (three boys indicated more than one destination of the money from their sex work). The majority of boys who receive compensation for sex (seven of the 11) indicated that this happens regularly. The frequency with which respondents cited meeting customers for sex ranged from one person to five boys in a week, and one boy (age 15) declined to give a number, but stated that he is paid to provide sexual services “all the time”. Those indicating the highest frequencies of meeting clients for sex were found to be working in the town center and around the ‘two lions’ housing area and ranged from 15 to 19 years of age.

## Analysis of Work and Migration:

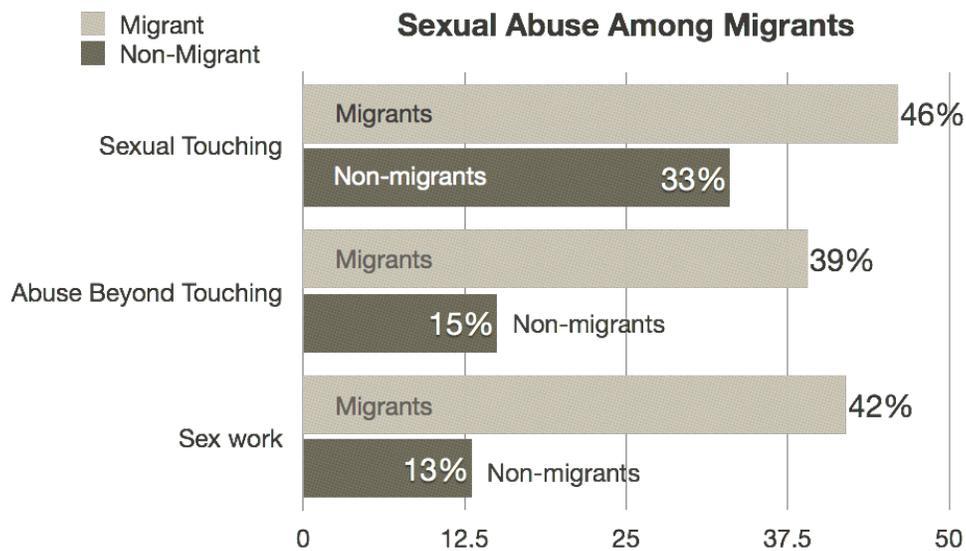
A significantly large portion of street-working boys, 49% of the sampling, indicated that they had migrated to the Sihanoukville area, predominantly from surrounding Cambodian provinces. Such migrant groups demonstrate vulnerability in a variety of areas including: lower levels of education, coming from troubled family backgrounds, and higher reported rates of sexual abuse. Although, seemingly contrary to these vulnerabilities, migrant groups indicated mean incomes that were, on average, about four dollars higher than those who had not migrated to the area. A large majority (43.5%) of those who had migrated also indicated they had done so for the purpose of earning money or looking for work. Beyond this, more than one third of migrants indicated that they had migrated along with other members of their family. To a lesser extent, two boys (8.7%) indicated moving due to the death of a parent, and two boys (8.7%) cited running away from home. Migrants to the Sihanoukville area were found to be more likely to be working in the town center and ‘two lions’ area, largely as beggars and helping to guide cars and two parking places, whereas children born in the Sihanouk Villa area were more likely to be working along the beaches selling souvenirs and, to a lesser extent, collecting recyclables. The fact that migrants were found to be working in the town center and ‘two lions’ area – two areas in which respondents were found to have markedly increased vulnerabilities to exploitation, violence, and extreme poverty—is consistent with global UNICEF data on child migrant workers which sites that access to urban centers for work has not historically been equitable. “The State of the World’s Children” (2012) sites that new arrivals to a particular urban area maybe pushed to the margins of the society, in some instances, as a deliberate response to deter future migration (UNICEF, 2012).

EARNINGS (1 MO)	MIN	MAX	AVE	N-Value	DEBT
Average	\$15.00	\$27.00	\$21.00	54	62%
Immigrant	\$2.50	\$100.00	\$21.00	27	62%
Non-Immigrant	\$1.25	\$50.00	\$17.00	28	62%
Beach-Working	\$14.00	\$30.00	\$21.00	41	67%
Street-Working	\$13.00	\$25.00	\$19.00	15	44%
Non-Sex work	\$13.00	\$28.00	\$21.00	24	60%
Sex Work	\$11.00	\$34.00	\$22.00	11	50%

Reported incomes over the past one-week seemed to vary greatly between immigrants and non-immigrants. While the average income for all respondents was \$20.94 over the past week, non-immigrants reported earnings of about \$17 on average in the past week, nearly four dollars below the average for all respondents, while immigrants reported a mean income of \$21 over the past week. While their mean incomes were higher, immigrants were significantly less likely to have reported being able to save any of their earnings (37% saving some earnings, compared to 52% among non-immigrants) and were more likely to be giving all of their earnings directly to a family member. In addition to this, migrants were far less likely to be enrolled in school compared with those who were born in the Sihanoukville area (35% in school compared to 54% in school among non-immigrants). This is consistent with global data on child migrant workers, which sites that migrant children may be denied or have limited access to various social services, including education and health services (UNICEF, 2012).

Comparing migrants with non-migrants, boys who had migrated to the area were found to be earning slightly more money and working longer hours, yet indicated lower access to education, higher instances of receiving compensation for sexual services (sex work), and higher rates of violence. For boys who had migrated to the area, street work seems to be more of a way of daily life, rather than a way to supplement income, as needed. A strong majority of migrants indicated that they had come to the Sihanoukville area (many with families) for the sole purpose of working and earning money and were more likely to indicate that they had been asked by parents or relatives to work on the streets. This is in contrast to non-migrating boys who were more likely to indicate that they came into street work on their own, because they needed the money.

This phenomenon could be a matter of perception on the part of the boys. It may be more likely that boys who have immigrated to the area carry the identity of a person who has migrated for particular purpose of work or earning money, whereas those boys who have grown up in the Sihanoukville area simply work on the streets, out of necessity – and have not migrated to the area for the explicit purpose of doing such work. Thus, the self-identification of non-migrating boys with street work may be more of “what they do” rather than “who they are”. Further qualitative research would be useful to explore and expand upon these ideas, in-depth.

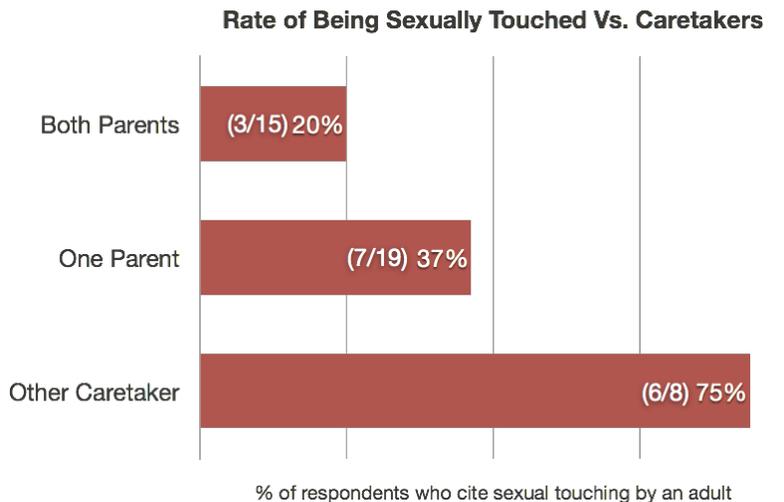


There are also some notable differences between immigrants and non-immigrants in terms of sexual abuse. While rates of being shown pornographic pictures or videos by an adult were not strongly differentiated between immigrants and non-immigrants, instances of sexual touching, further sexual abuse, and sex work were found to be notably higher among those who had migrated to the Sihanoukville area, compared with those who were native to the area. While only 33% of non-immigrants indicated instances in which an adult had touched them sexually on the genitals, 46% of immigrants indicated the same. Further, only 15.4% of non-immigrants cited instances of sexual abuse that goes beyond sexual touching while 39.1% of immigrants cited instances of the same. Lastly, some of the greatest differences between immigrants and non-immigrants are seen regarding sex work. While only 13% of non-immigrants indicated instances in which they or someone else had received compensation for the boy providing sexual services, 42.1% of immigrants cited the same. Once again, some of the differences between these groups may be due to the fact that immigrants have come to the area with the explicit purpose of generating income. Thus, it may follow that such groups would be more likely to resort to more drastic means of income generation (i.e. trading sexual services for income and/or parents allowing their children to be abused for the same). More research is needed to build a better understanding of the connections between migration and vulnerability to sexual abuse and exploitation among street-working children.

## Parents, Peers and Community

In analyzing the presence and roles of parents, peers, and other community members, this study's main objective is to understand what sorts of 'safe spaces' street-working boys have access to in their communities and living environment, if any. While it may seem ideal that a child has parents to take care of them, this assumes that a child's parents are not key factors in driving the child's work and/or exploitation on the streets.

For the most part, respondents were found to be living with family members (78.8%) and taken care of by at least one parent (74.5%). To a lesser extent, street-working boys cited living with friends, relatives, and alone. Among the majority of street-working boys (91%) who indicated that they liked living with the people with whom they presently lived, nearly one-fourth, or 11 out of the 47 boys responding to this question (23%), cited that they liked living with these boys because they did not use violence against them and/or abuse them. This is a significant pattern, which raises a key question: if respondents like living with these particular boys specifically because they do not use violence against them, who *does* use violence against them? A similar pattern was notable among the four people who cite that they do not like living with boys with whom they presently live. Of these four boys, two cited violence that is used against them, one cites that he is not allowed to go to school, any of the respondents chose not to give a reason why he does not like living with the people with whom he is presently living. This particular pattern may indicate the need for deeper qualitative research into the home lives and living situations of street-working children in Cambodia.



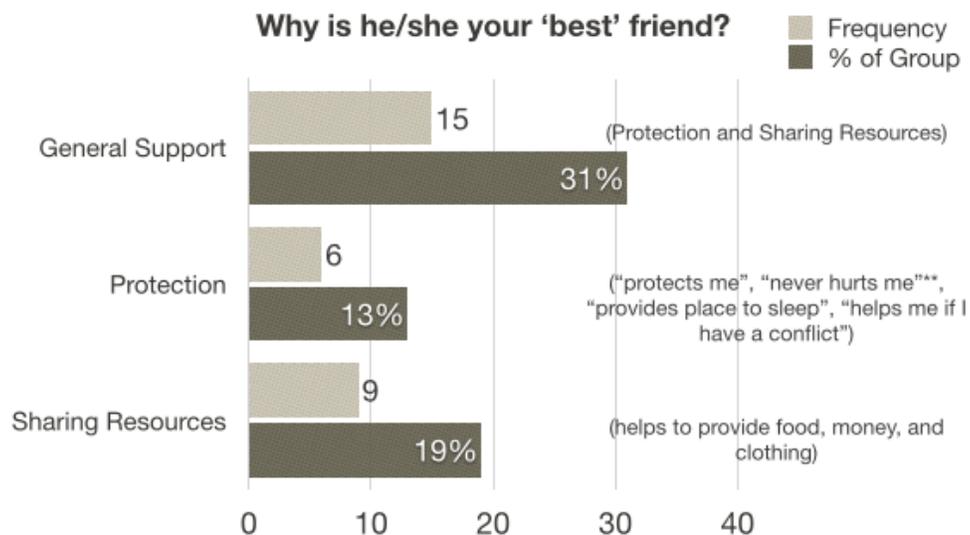
Consistent with existing data on child sexual abuse, the presence of parents as caretakers seem to have a direct, positive effect on the likelihood of children to experience sexual abuse (Gray, 2003; APLE, 2006). Looking at the rates of disclosure of sexual touching among respondents, only one in five (20%) of respondents who signed both parents as caretakers cite instances of sexual abuse. Among children who cite only one parent as a caretaker, the rate of disclosing sexual touching increases to 37%. Lastly, among children who do not cite having a parent as a caretaker, three in four, or 75%, of children from this cite being touched sexually by an adult.

Years on street:	Living with at least one parent		Living with others (Siblings, Friends, alone)	
	F	%	F	%
2 or fewer years	16	53%	2	22%
3-4 years	11	37%	3	33%
5 or more years	3	10%	4	44%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100%</b>

It was found that respondents aged 8 to 18 years of age, who were not living with at least one parent, had spent significantly longer amounts of time working on the streets,

compared with those who did live with at least one parent. Specifically looking at the 33 boys who indicated that they lived with at least one parent, 53% of this group (16 boys) had been working on the streets for two or fewer years – and six had been working on the streets for less than one year. A little over one-third, 37% of the group (11 boys) had been working for three to four years, and only 10% (three boys) had been working for five or more years.

While family members do seem to play a role in support and guidance for street-working boys—to varying degrees—there is also significant indication that for many street-working children, peers form a very central network of support, guidance, and basic protection. A strong majority, or 87% of the sampling, indicated that they have a best friend. Of this group, nearly one-third (31%) cited that this particular person is their “best friend” because they are able to provide some form of general support, including protection and sharing of basic resources (food, shelter, clothing, and money). In particular, 13% of those who said that they have a best friend specifically cited that this person provides them with protection; this includes being provided with aid during a fight, being provided with a place to sleep, and “protection” in general. Two boys, in particular, cited that their friend is their “best” friend because this person does not hurt them. This is another notable pattern, which bears strong resemblance to the reasons for which many boys “liked” living with the people with whom they were presently living; that is, because these particular people did not use violence against them. Once again, this seems to beg the question, “who does use violence against them and how common is it?” In future studies among street-working boys, it may be helpful to add additional questions, which explicitly inquire about this area of their lives. Lastly, apart from receiving protection from their best friends, 19% specifically cited the sharing of basic resources (food, money, and clothing) as the reason why their friend is their “best” friend.

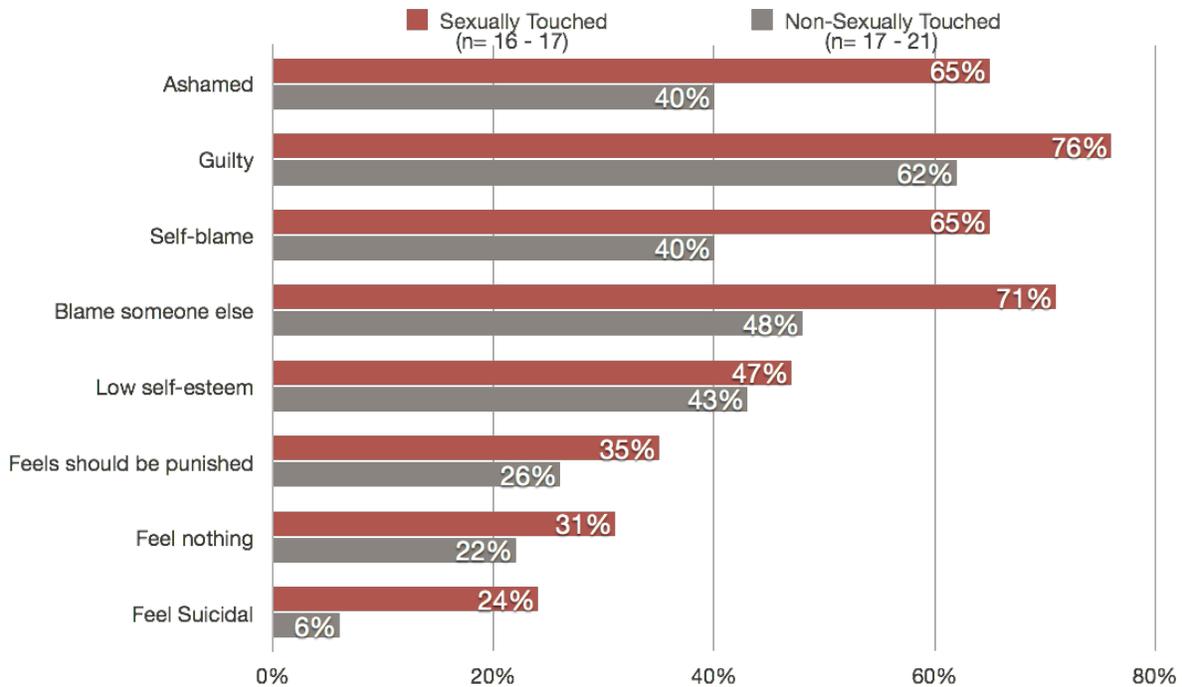


Notably, 13% of respondents, or seven boys, indicated that they do not have a best friend. Among this group, 66% (4 boys; n=6) indicated that an adult had sexually touched them. In addition to this, the group also reports significantly higher levels of shame, guilt, and low self-

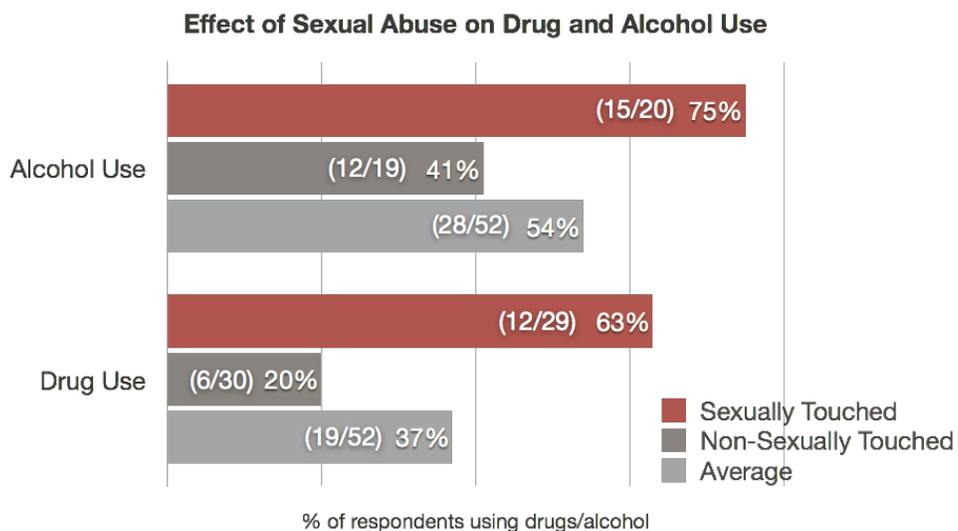
esteem in the past 12 months, compared to those who cited having a best friend. While these are relatively small numbers, and are not sufficient to generalize data, these high numbers of disclosures of sexual abuse among respondents that cited having no best friend, is significant. Once again, more in-depth research is needed on the socialization of street-working boys and their development of “safe spaces” in their communities and working environments. In such research, it would be useful to ask a number of questions which were not asked in this baseline study. For instance, many young boys are seen working in pairs or in groups of three as they’re working on the beaches. How do social networks function in this context? Additionally, it should be asked to what extent street-working boys are a part of gangs or other formal peer-networks, which may provide them with some form of protection? It would also be helpful, in future studies, to ask further open-ended questions to better understand what a “safe-space” might look like for children working on the streets. For instance, questions such as, “What makes you feel safe?” or “Whom do you go to when you feel upset or afraid?” may be helpful.

## Emotional Feelings and Sexual Abuse

Respondents who cited sexual touching and further sexual abuse reported experiencing notably different emotional feelings over the past 12 months. Most notable were differences in their feelings of shame, self blame, numbness, and suicidal thoughts. Respondents who indicated sexual touching by an adult were 62% more likely to have reported feelings of shame, 62% more likely to have reported feelings of self blame, 41% more likely to have reported feelings of emotional numbness, and 400% (or four times) more likely to have reported having had suicidal thoughts in the past 12 months. Perhaps the most striking finding among these numbers is the significant increase of suicidal thoughts within the past 12 months among those who have been sexually touched versus those who have not. In fact, of the five boys in the sampling who disclosed suicidal feelings, only one had not been sexually touched. These findings are consistent with previous research conducted with 17,322 male and female HMO members in San Diego, California. This study found that instances of attempted suicide were nearly twice as likely in cases in which respondents had reported being sexually abused (Dube et al., 2005). A key finding in this study was that comparisons between male and female victims of sexual abuse were nearly identical in terms of the emotional impact of the experience (2005).



A similar phenomenon is also notable among those who reported sexual abuse beyond sexual touching. The most notable differences between those who had experienced sexual abuse beyond mere touching and those who had not experienced such abuse were in the areas of feeling guilty (2.1 times more likely to have reported guilt than those who have not experienced abuse), feelings of low self-esteem (1.9 times more likely), feelings that they should be punished (2.2 times more likely) and feelings of numbness (3.4 times more likely). Additionally, all respondents who reported having suicidal feelings in this variable (n=3) also reported that they had experienced sexual abuse that went beyond sexual touching.



In addition to the increase in strong negative emotions among respondents who have experienced sexual touching, a similar correlation is notable between drug and alcohol usage among respondents who indicated that they had been sexually touched by an adult. Respondents who cited instances of sexual touching were significantly more likely to indicate alcohol use. Fifteen out of the 20 boys (75%) indicated alcohol use among those who had been sexually touched by an adult; this is in comparison to 41% who indicated alcohol use among those who had not been sexually touched. A similar reality is true in regards to drug usage. While 63% of those who say sexual touching indicated drug usage, only 20% of those who have not been sexually touched indicated the same. This is consistent with the findings in a 2006 APLE study child victims of sexual exploitation in Sihanoukville. This study finds that 38% of child victims of sexual exploitation were presently using or had used drugs—70% of which were street-working children (APLE, 2006: 14). This report cites drug usage to be a significant factor, which enhances the vulnerability of children to being sexually exploited by people on the streets (2006: 15).

## Drug Use

A significant difference is notable between respondents who cite living with family members versus those who cited living with nonfamily members in terms of illegal drug use. Overall, the majority of respondents indicated that they presently live with at least one family member and only eight respondents (18%) indicated living with other persons including: gang members (1), friends (1), alone (2), and other undisclosed living arrangements (3). Among the 39 respondents who cited that they presently lived with at least one family member, only 21% (eight boys) indicated using illegal drugs. On the other hand, 100% of the boys who indicated living with someone other than a family member, also indicated the usage of illegal drugs. Consistent with the sampling's reasons for drug use as a whole, five of the eight boys in this group indicated using drugs because of peer pressure and one indicated using drugs "to release stress". The ages of the boys in this group ranged from 14 to 20 years of age, with six of the eight being under the age of 18. All but two of the boys in this group also indicated at least one instance of physical assault the past six months. The persons responsible for the physical assault against the boys varied greatly and included: drug users, gang members, hotel guests, and friends. Notably, two of these boys indicated that being assaulted is a common occurrence and often happens to them within their communities.

Throughout the entire dataset, drug usage is perhaps the most starkly contrasted variable between beach working boys and street-working boys. Among all respondents interviewed, 36.5% or 19 boys, indicated using some form of illegal drugs. An overwhelming majority of the drug usage reported among respondents was concentrated among boys working on the streets. While only 13.5% of respondents working on the beaches (n=38) indicated illegal drug use, 100% of those working on the streets (n=14) indicated the same. Usage of illegal drugs also seems to be greatly dependent upon the location in which the boys are working and school enrollment. While only 12.9% of those working along Ochheuteal beach and 14.3% of those working along Otres beach reported using illegal drugs, 100% of street-working boys in

the town center and “Two Lions” area reported the same. Also, among street-working boys who are not presently enrolled in school, nearly 60% cite using illegal drugs, compared to 21% among those who are presently enrolled in school.

# Recommendations

We believe that this initial baseline of data is useful, but ultimately insufficient. More research is needed which builds on the observed themes and patterns presented in this study to uncover a deeper understanding of the sexual abuse and exploitation of street-working boys in Southeast Asia. Such an understanding is needed to aid in the development of more effective solutions that address the key needs and vulnerabilities of such groups to sexual abuse and exploitation specifically. The present gaps in sexual exploitation research among street-working children and young males are seemingly inverse. Previous research on the sexual exploitation of young men has tended to focus, almost exclusively, on a limited range of specific issues such as HIV transmission and other sexual health issues. In doing this, such research commonly neglects the full range of holistic needs and vulnerabilities to sexual exploitation that exist among young men – needs such as discrimination, physical and sexual violence, along with other social and economic challenges. On the other hand, sexual exploitation research among street-working children has tended to encounter an inverse problem in which the needs of children are looked at in such a broad, holistic way that their specific needs (such as their vulnerabilities to sexual exploitation and abuse) can become lost within a myriad of other issues that are simultaneously being addressed.

Sihanoukville has seen a large growth of tourism over the past 5 years and is expected to continue its rapid expansion in the years to come. NGOs working on the issues of sexual exploitation and trafficking have tended to focus their concerns on brothel-based work and in major cities; however, it is important to be aware that wherever there is a growth of tourism, there is also a growth of sex tourism. It is important for researchers and NGOs focusing on sexual exploitation and trafficking to focus on areas that are poised for growth and development, staying ahead of the developing sexual exploitation market. It is important for cafes, guesthouses, and other businesses to be made particularly sensitive to CSEC and know where they can report anything that appears to be suspicious (e.g. The ChildSafe network and other relevant police resources). In addition to this it is important that the RGC Ministry of the Interior ensure that the national police receive training in how to appropriately deal with children who have been exploited after cases are reported. It is vital that police are able to deal with such groups as victims, not as delinquents or troublemakers.

In recent years, ChildSafe has created a network of informants who are able to report instances of sexual exploitation and abuse of children and has produced numerous public service announcements and ad campaigns that draw attention to the reality of child sexual abuse and exploitation in the Sihanoukville area. Through these efforts, it has become commonly understood that the beaches and other key tourist areas are higher-risk areas for sexual abuse and CSEC. While this may be true, data from our study finds increased vulnerabilities town center and in residential areas near the ‘two lions’ area, in comparison with

groups working on the beaches. This could be attributed to the success of the ChildSafe network on the beaches, but simultaneously indicates the need for increased vigilance and further, continued expansion of the ChildSafe Network to local areas and residential communities throughout the Sihanoukville area.

For those who are vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation, it is important for schools and/or other organizations working with school-aged children to educate such groups about the risks of sexual abuse and exploitation and how to report it. Resources such as the Good-Touch-Bad-Touch flipchart ([www.good-touch-bad-touch-asia.org](http://www.good-touch-bad-touch-asia.org)) enable teachers and NGO workers to do this.

A significant factor that comes with development and economic growth is the reality of people groups migrating from rural areas in search of work. Data from this study finds nearly half of respondents to be members of such groups, and finds significant vulnerabilities among boys who have migrated from such areas in comparison with those who are native to the area. In response to this and existing data on migrant workers, there is significant need for better government and NGO support in mitigating the risks of migrating people groups within the country, providing access to key social services in addition to resources for education and livelihood training.

In recent years, the RGC Ministry of Women's Affairs has expressed an increasing concern in continuing to address the issues of gender-based violence. We welcome this concern, but encourage them to also explore the issues of gender-based violence against men and boys, as well as women and girls as a part of their portfolio. As a part of this, it is important that present child advocates work to incorporate boys and men into the language of vulnerability so as to normalize the understanding that exploitation of violence is a human issue – not merely an issue that affects females. It is hoped that such a focus will develop a clearer, more comprehensive understanding of gender-based violence – wherever it exists – to better address the needs and vulnerabilities that are implicit within all genders (including transgender identities), not only women.

Due to the expansive work of M'lop Tapang and similar organizations in the Sihanoukville area, there is presently a wealth of resources for street-working children and families in the Sihanoukville area. In spite of this, it is often true that simply living in proximity to good social programs does not necessarily mean that the most vulnerable people of a society are seeking their service (as was the case with many of the respondents in this study). More research should be dedicated to understand the various obstacles that may be preventing exploited persons from receiving services. With a development of a further understanding the complexity of social issues that may be preventing access, NGOs and government groups can potentially have great success and working to break the cycle of poverty and exploitation which greatly affects children working on the streets.

It is also recommended that more research be done on the demand side of this market as well, looking at males and females who purchase sex from young males. It is recommended that the RGC Ministry of Tourism continue to invest in promoting beautiful beaches and islands and cultural tourism, while discouraging sex tourism. At the same time, it should be understood that the sexual exploitation of children and boys does not only occur at the hands of foreigners. Thus, we also recommend that such research on the demand of Khmer men who seek sex from men is also needed.

This study found significant connections between strong negative emotions, (including suicidal thoughts), drug usage and sexual abuse. Further research that looks deeper and more specifically at the social and emotional development and well-being of street-working would be useful to better understand these connections. Additional qualitative research would be helpful to understand the deeper connections between these phenomena, the emotional impact of violence and sexual abuse against children, potential coping mechanisms for dealing with such violence, and potential resiliencies among survivors to aid in the development of potential intervention strategies for victims.

## Conclusion

This study has attempted to provide a brief look at some of the key needs and vulnerabilities that exist among boys living and working on the streets in Sihanoukville, Cambodia. It finds that street-working boys are significantly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse — many of them are dealing with it as a reality of daily life.

The Love146 team has been greatly thankful to be able to partner with an experienced organization such as M'lop Tapang. The partnership between Love146 and M'lop Tapang has provided a model for collaboration where both organizations were able to use their strengths, bringing together both the value of experience and research on the issues. As Love146 works to expand this research to other cities in Cambodia and Southeast Asia, it seeks similar collaborative partnerships with other experienced NGOs in order to achieve this.

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