

Disrupting Harm

Evidence from 13 countries on the context, threats, and children's perspectives of online child sexual exploitation and abuse.

Detailed Analysis of Access to Justice and Legal Remedies in Cambodia
Interviews with Justice Actors

Last updated 8/3/21

Introduction..... 3

Access to the Justice System..... 5

 Services provided to help children involved in criminal cases against perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse5

 Description of how children mainly tend to come to the attention of the police.....6

Participation in the Justice Process..... 9

 Description of how children participate in the criminal justice process.....9

 Description of what criminal justice professionals see as the hardest part for children taking part in criminal cases against their abusers 10

 Description of what is done by different criminal justice professionals (police, judges, prosecutors, lawyers, or other relevant staff) to make the process easier for children..... 12

 Description of what is done by different criminal justice professionals (police, judges, prosecutors, lawyers, or other relevant staff) to make the process harder for children..... 13

Compensation.....15

 Description of if and how child victims tend to receive help/support to seek compensation 15

 Experiences of professionals supporting children to seek compensation (difficulties, strategies, successes...) 16

 Types of compensation sought and/or received 16

 Main barriers to seeking / obtaining compensation..... 17

Successes19

Challenges/Changes Needed.....20

 Main challenges described by the criminal justice professionals 20

 Main changes suggested to make it easier/better for children to participate in criminal cases against their abusers 22

This report is a summary of preliminary data collected for this research project. The perspectives contained herein represent the individuals interviewed and surveyed. Support from the Fund to End Violence Against Children does not constitute endorsement

Introduction

Disrupting Harm: evidence to understand online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA), is a unique and collaborative research partnership between ECPAT International, INTERPOL, and UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti. Leveraging their specific expertise, each partner sheds light on separate but interconnected areas: context, threats and children’s perspectives on online child sexual exploitation.

- Context by ECPAT International through portraying laws & policies in action;
- Threat by INTERPOL through the collection of crime and other data;
- Children’s voices by UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti through surveys with children and their caregivers.

The countries of focus in Southern and Eastern Africa region are: Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda. The countries of focus in the Southeast Asian region are: Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Research took place between 2019 and 2021. Up to nine separate research activities were undertaken in each country by the three project partners. Preliminary analysis for each activity was first conducted before the results across all the nine activities were consolidated into each national country report. These can be found here.

This report is the preliminary analysis conducted by ECPAT International on Access to Justice in Cambodia. Aim of the interviews is to provide a better understanding of how and to what extent children who have experienced online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA) can access formal justice systems and legal remedies in Cambodia. A convenience sample of ten interviews was conducted with a variety of criminal justice professionals in Cambodia. The said sample included state and non-state criminal justice professionals who have personal, recent experience working with OCSEA criminal cases, or at least cases involving child sexual exploitation and abuse, such as prosecutors, judges, child advocates, case managers, police or lawyers. The data was collected through a set of qualitative semi-structured interviews. While the intent was to do face-to-face interviews, eight of the ten respondents had to be interviewed via the online platform Zoom due to COVID19-related restrictions. Written consent forms were completed and signed by all respondents before all interviews.

ID Number	Organisation	Position
RA4-J-CA-01-A	APLE Cambodia	Child Protection Specialist
RA4-J -CA-02-A	LICADHO	
RA4-J -CA-02-B	LICADHO	
RA4-J -CA-03-A	APLE Cambodia	Court Support Team Leader
RA4-J -CA-04-A	Child Protection Unit Cambodia	
RA4-J -CA-04-B	Child Protection Unit Cambodia	CPU Manager Internet Crimes Against Children
RA4-J -CA-05-A	Terre des Hommes Netherlands	
RA4-J -CA-06-A	M'Lop Tapang	Team Leader

RA4-J-CA-06-B	M'Lop Tapang	Child Safe Team Leader
RA4-J-CA-07-A	M'Lop Tapang	Child Protection Programme Manager
RA4-J-CA-08-A	Hagar Cambodia	Case Intake Specialist
RA4-J-CA-08-B	Hagar Cambodia	Case Manager
RA4-J-CA-08-C	Hagar Cambodia	Case Manager
RA4-J-CA-09-A	Phnom Penh Municipal Court	Judge
RA4-J-CA-10-A	Phnom Penh Municipal Court	Vice Prosecutor

Access to the Justice System

Generally, information gathered during the interviews indicates that Cambodia's justice system has improved progressively in helping children involved in criminal cases against their perpetrators of sexual exploitation.

"The legal system in Cambodia is slowly moving towards more child-friendly ways compared to earlier days" (RA4-J-CA-06-A, Team Leader, M'Lop Tapang).

Services provided to help children involved in criminal cases against perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse

Child victims from poor families have access to legal aid through the Legal Aid Department of the Bar Association of Cambodia.¹ This was confirmed by two respondents. However, there is no comprehensive law that regulates legal aid in Cambodia. Due to an increasing number of demands, the services provided by the Bar Association have proved to be insufficient. Respondent RA4-CA-06-A&B, Justice Actor, Cambodia also confirmed the lack of lawyers for child victims for all forms of exploitation, including OCSEA, in Cambodia.

This lack of legal assistance was further confirmed by another respondent. *"The children cannot afford getting lawyers. Hence, it is challenging for the children to go through the entire legal process by themselves. We have hired our lawyer via our organisation to help the poor child victims. Currently, we have 4 to 5 child sexual exploitation cases that are going on in the court and all of them are from poor families"* (RA4-J-CA-07-A, Child Protection Program Manager, M'Lop Tapang).

In addition, one respondent stated that *"there is a lack of legal aid and the state-based legal aid system is under-resourced"* (RA4-CA-02-A&B, Justice Actor, Cambodia).

Respondent Child Protection Program Manager, M'Lop Tapang, RA4-J-CA-07-A, Cambodia stated that judges will not pay attention to child victims and that is the main reason why child victims should be accompanied by a lawyer, so that their rights will be safeguarded.

There are legal provisions in Cambodia to ensure that NGOs can assist or support victims, at their request, during the investigation and legal proceedings, and legal aid NGOs play a significant role in supporting children in these proceedings.² This was confirmed by one of the research respondents, RA4-J-CA-08-A, Case Intake Specialist from Hagar Cambodia, who stated that the legal aid assistance from the government of Cambodia for child victims, including victims of OCSEA, is limited and most of such legal aid assistance comes from NGOs such as Action Pour Les Enfants, Hagar Cambodia, Terre des Hommes Netherlands Cambodia, and the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights. Action Pour Les Enfants, among others, provides pro bono legal counselling and representation to child victims, vulnerable children, witnesses, and family members.

¹ Joamets, K., & Ngouv, M. (2019). [A Child's Right to be Heard and be Represented in the Criminal Procedure: A Comparative Analysis of Estonian and Cambodian Law To CRC. Baltic Journal of European Studies](#). 9(4), 140.

² Joamets, K., & Ngouv, M. (2019). [A Child's Right to be Heard and be Represented in the Criminal Procedure: A Comparative Analysis of Estonian and Cambodian Law To CRC. Baltic Journal of European Studies](#), 9(4), 141.

Action Pour Les Enfants social workers also provide a wide range of services such as medical care, shelter, social support, and trauma counselling for those affected by child sexual exploitation and abuse, including OCSEA.

In addition, one respondent confirmed that Action Pour Les Enfants has *“a hotline service to provide people an anonymous and confidential way to report child sexual abuse from anywhere”* (RA4-CA-01-A&B, Justice Actor, Cambodia).

The Internet Hotline Cambodia, run by Action Pour Les Enfants, was established in 2015 to collect, disseminate, and investigate reports from the public, law enforcement agencies, and non-governmental organisations regarding potential child sexual exploitation activities and material online. In 2019, Action Pour Les Enfants provided social services for 264 child beneficiaries and legal services for 145 child beneficiaries.³ One respondent also informed that Terre des Hommes Netherlands Cambodia helps child victims connect to the police by accompanying child victims to the police station to provide legal and emotional support, and they accompany them to Court (RA4-CA-05-A, Terre des Hommes Netherlands, Justice Actor). The Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights provides legal services about how to file complaints as well as required legal channels if OCSEA victims wish to pursue a complaint (RA4-CA-02-A&B, Justice Actor, Cambodia).

Overall, in Cambodia, it can be concluded that the number of lawyers is insufficient, especially lawyers who offer free legal aid services to child victims. It was observed that legal assistance for child victims from government agencies and NGOs is limited due to the lack of financial resources. Child victims are not entitled to proper legal protection within the criminal justice system of Cambodia as the government has not offered comprehensive support and safeguarding measures to these children.

Thus far, NGOs have played pivotal and active roles in helping child victims in Cambodia. *“Those NGOs also provide support to the children, especially psychological and legal. But if there is a report, police will cooperate with the relevant parties, particularly with their collaborators such as the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, etc”* (RA4-CA-10-A, Phnom Penh Municipal Court, Vice Prosecutor).

It is pertinent to note that one of the respondents stated that: *“sometimes we are aware that some NGOs and parents persuade the child to exaggerate the story”* (RA4-CA-09-A, Phnom Penh Municipal Court, Judge).

Description of how children mainly tend to come to the attention of the police

The national legislation does not establish a system for receiving and addressing reports, including protection mechanisms for those who report OCSEA-related offences. The Code of Criminal Procedure includes three articles on the initiation of criminal actions or complaints by prosecution and victims,⁴ but it does not include any provision on the presentation of an anonymous complaint as sufficient evidence to open an investigation.

³ APLE. (2019). [Impact Report 2019](#).

⁴ Government of Cambodia. (2007). [Code of Criminal Procedure of the Kingdom of Cambodia](#), Articles 4-6.

Based on information gathered via the interviews, various ways to enable children to come to the attention of the police are identified. Firstly, OCSEA victims or their family members can lodge a police report directly with the police. One respondent shared that:

“In Cambodia, the National Police in Phnom Penh have created a 24 hours hotline service specifically for child sexual exploitation and abuse cases and it has been proven that some of the children in Cambodia have the knowledge concerning this service provided by the National Police and they will provide information on the abuse via this hotline to them directly” (RA4-CA-07-A, Child Protection Program Manager, M’Lop Tapang).

Secondly, the Commune Committees for Women and Children can lodge a report to the police regarding child abuse in the community. Apart from that, the Commune Committees for Women and Children also act as a referral mechanism to NGO child protection services and deliver services themselves. According to a common study organised in 2016 by UNICEF, most of the the Commune Committees for Women and Children have successfully performed their duties in educating parents and guardians on child protection despite limited capacity and funds in child protection.⁵ Thirdly, NGOs can report cases to the authorities. NGOs receive complaints directly or via their hotline services, and they will analyse the complaints and refer the matter to the police as relevant. In most cases, NGO representatives will accompany the child victim to the police station together with the victim’s family members, if any is present.

One respondent from Action Pour Les Enfants informed that: *“A small amount of the child victims go directly to the police and the majority of them go through the NGO or anyone that they trust. Then, the NGO will assist and help them reach the police. So, this is the observation that we see in most of the cases”* (RA4-CA-01-A, APLE Cambodia, Child Protection Specialist).

Answering the same question, another respondent stated that: *“There are generally different sources, with child victims, they often report to the local authorities and when they arrive, they tell their story and what happened to them. They will also report to relevant NGOs working in the area. In Siem Reap for instance, most of the times the reports are done to NGOs and not to the police, because they act faster and have more resources to respond”* (RA4-CA-09-A, Phnom Penh Municipal Court, Judge).

Another respondent stated that: *“In general, victims always seek help from police when they encounter a problem. But in most of the child sexual abuse cases, victims have a Non-Governmental Organisation facilitating a complaint filing process with the police”* (RA4-CA-10-A, Phnom Penh Municipal Court, Vice Prosecutor).

This also shows that people in Cambodia often trust NGOs more than their own authorities. Child victims and their families hesitate to seek services directly from the authorities as the NGOs are faster and more equipped with resources in terms of sufficient expertise to respond. Based on the experience of respondent RA4-J-CA-01-A, Child Protection Specialist, Action Pour Les Enfants, Cambodia, the children seem to be frightened when dealing with law enforcement officers such as the police.

⁵ Jordanwood, M. (2016). [Protecting Cambodia’s Children? Phnom Penh: World Vision Cambodia.](#)

Another respondent also stated that: *“Sometimes the child can be fearful, so they seek the support of other service providers and see whether they can help the child regain confidence and become less scared first”* (RA4-CA-09-A, Phnom Penh Municipal Court, Judge).

OCSEA victims tend to feel more comfortable disclosing the information about their exploitation and abuse with NGOs rather than to the police, because the interviews conducted are often done in a public area with the presence of other people, including the child’s parents.

“If the child is accompanied by a service provider from a civil society organisation it is easier for the child. Especially for his or her experience during the trial which can be challenging, therefore they must ensure that the rights of the child victims are protected and that they have received proper justice” (RA4-CA-09-A, Phnom Penh Municipal Court, Judge). The same respondent also stated that the majority of complaints come from the parents and in rare cases, from strangers or individuals outside of the family circle.

It was highlighted that there is a major gap in Cambodia regarding the lack of understanding amongst Cambodians on the complaint/reporting mechanisms that are available to protect child victims’ rights. This was evidenced when a respondent shared that: *“In Cambodia, we have a low education level in the society. Hence, people do not understand well the legal process that is involved, including the complaint process”* (RA4-CA-08-A, Hagar Cambodia, Case Intake Specialist).

This shows the need for awareness raising amongst the general population as a measure to improve reporting and, as a result, access to justice for victims of OCSEA. Information gathered from the interviews also indicated that the involvement of local civil society groups, specifically parent and children’s groups, can lead to increased reporting of child abuse to authorities.

Apart from this, it should be noted that there is a different level of protection for a child being an offender than for a child being a victim of a crime, which would also include OCSEA. According to one respondent:

“If a child is an offender there is always a lawyer who accompanies the child, but if a child is the victim according to the law, a parent or guardian needs to be the one filing a lawsuit and seeking a lawyer to protect the interest of the child” (RA4-CA-09-A, Phnom Penh Municipal Court, Judge).

This shows that the criminal justice system is still mainly adversarial, with a tendency to focus on the accused while granting little attention to the victims of crime.

Participation in the Justice Process

Description of how children participate in the criminal justice process

Representation

According to the law, a child victim, including victims of OCSEA, is not required to have a lawyer representing them. This is only required for the defendant. This is reflected in the following statements:

“Normally, the child has an accompanying adult such as a social worker. In the case where the child is a defendant, it is required by law that the child shall have a lawyer, to protect his or her rights. If the child is a victim involved in the court proceedings, they always have their accompanying parent, guardian or counsellor. Furthermore, the prosecutor or prosecution representative is a critical actor to protect the rights of the child victim, in addition to the child’s legal representative, if they have a lawyer” (RA4-CA-10-A, Phnom Penh Municipal Court, Vice Prosecutor).

“Child victims, according to the legislation do not need a lawyer, they have a social worker, a parent/caregiver who can represent them” (RA4-CA-09-A, Phnom Penh Municipal Court, Judge).

This shows that there is no mandatory system in Cambodia to ensure that a legal representative represents child victims, including victims of OCSEA.

Safeguards for child victims

In 2008, the Ministry of Justice passed a *Prakas*⁶ on the Use of Court Screen and Courtrooms TV-Linked Testimony from Child/Vulnerable Victims or Witnesses,⁷ aiming to provide a safe and supportive environment in which child victims can share information regarding their experience, minimising trauma and threats to their safety and in accordance with the developmental level of the child.⁸ This *Prakas* sets court screens as a primary protective measure in all cases involving children, and TV-linked testimony in cases where special protection is needed.⁹ According to the regulation, the testimony of a child should be held on camera,¹⁰ children can be accompanied by a court-approved support person¹¹ and the Court must ensure that there is a comfortable environment for the child.¹² The Ministry of Justice also produced instructional videos for child victims and child witnesses about the role and functions of

⁶ A *Prakas* is a ministerial or inter-ministerial decision signed by the relevant Minister(s). A proclamation must conform to the Constitution and to the law or sub-decree to which it refers.

⁷ Government of Cambodia. (2008). [Prakas No. 62/08 on the Use of Court Screen and Courtrooms TV-Linked Testimony from Child/Vulnerable Victims or Witnesses](#).

⁸ Government of Cambodia. (2008). [Prakas No. 62/08 on the Use of Court Screen and Courtrooms TV-Linked Testimony from Child/Vulnerable Victims or Witnesses](#). Item 1.

⁹ Government of Cambodia. (2008). [Prakas No. 62/08 on the Use of Court Screen and Courtrooms TV-Linked Testimony from Child/Vulnerable Victims or Witnesses](#). Item 2.

¹⁰ Government of Cambodia. (2008). [Prakas No. 62/08 on the Use of Court Screen and Courtrooms TV-Linked Testimony from Child/Vulnerable Victims or Witnesses](#), Items 6 and 17.

¹¹ Government of Cambodia. (2008). [Prakas No. 62/08 on the Use of Court Screen and Courtrooms TV-Linked Testimony from Child/Vulnerable Victims or Witnesses](#), Items 7 and 12.

¹² Government of Cambodia. (2008). [Prakas No. 62/08 on the Use of Court Screen and Courtrooms TV-Linked Testimony from Child/Vulnerable Victims or Witnesses](#), Items 6, 12 and 14.

criminal justice actors.¹³ The legal measures provided under this Prakas will not be implemented automatically but are based on an application introduced on behalf of the child by the prosecutor or lawyer at the beginning of the trial. The interviews showed that many people are not aware of this protection measure:

“Whilst there are legal protections that children can request, such as protective screens or television testimony or separate waiting rooms, in reality, many of the survivors and their families are unaware of these protection methods and therefore often don't request them” (RA4-CA-02-A&B, Justice Actor, Cambodia).

In regards to the use of privacy screens, one respondent noted: *“Our lawyer always requests the court officials, especially during the trial hearing, to use a privacy screen or to use tailored television link interview to ensure children are not traumatised by joining the same trial and courtroom as the perpetrator. This has been implemented quite well in some courts that we have been dealing with. But that happened mostly in the cases in which we required it [via the prosecutor or lawyer who represents the child victims]. But to be honest, not every court has a privacy screen. Since 2015, Action Pour Les Enfants has been working with several courts and we provided the wooden privacy screen to roughly 12 different courts. So, they can use this privacy screen to ensure the privacy of the children”* (RA4-CA-01-A, Child Protection Specialist, Action Pour Les Enfants).

Another respondent added that: *“The court does not have a separate hearing courtroom for children yet, but so far, the court has utilised a curtain block to prevent the offender and victim from seeing each other. In particular, the interview at the judicial police stage should also be carried out with the presence of the child's guardian or carer who supports the child when providing testimony”* (RA4-CA-10-A, Phnom Penh Municipal Court, Vice Prosecutor).

In contrast to the above, a judge who participated as a respondent stated that: *“In the trial, they usually do not ask the child to be present in the courtroom, they have a separate room where questions are asked, sometimes it is equipped with toys as well”* (RA4-CA-09-A, Phnom Penh Municipal Court, Judge).

Description of what criminal justice professionals see as the hardest part for children taking part in criminal cases against their abusers

There are several obstacles that a child victim must face when he/she takes part in the process of criminally charging their abusers. A child victim is often re-traumatised in the judicial process at various stages. As described by one respondent:

“The child must repeat the same story many times with various criminal justice actors in the same chain, from NGO officers, police officers, medical officers, to prosecutors and court officials. So, traumatisation happens along the way. Three, four, five times. The case continued to the appeal in the Supreme Court and they continued to tell the same story to different people” (RA4-CA-01-A, Child Protection Specialist, Action Pour Les Enfants).

¹³ Committee on the Rights of the Child. (2014). [Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 12, paragraph 1, of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography](#), CRC/C/OPSC/KHM/1, paragraph 42.

Another respondent stated that: *“The police, judges and other adults involved in the criminal process always ask the child victims the same questions many times...this makes our children feel not comfortable”* (RA4-CA-06-A &B, Justice Actor).

In other words, child victims are required to narrate what happened multiple times to different parties in Cambodia’s legal system. According to one respondent, some female child victims reported that they must provide a statement of sexual abuse to a male police officer, causing the child to feel uncomfortable, and re-traumatizing the child (RA4-CA-01-A, Child Protection Specialist, Action Pour Les Enfants). This indicates that the legal system that protects children in Cambodia does not practice gender sensitivity when dealing with child victims of OCSEA. Hence, it is appropriate that improvements be made to prevent repeated interviews of child victims. At the same time, improvements should also be made to interview/investigations procedures, to avoid the children having to answer the same questions on many occasions.

As indicated by one respondent: *“Based on our experiences, the children do not want to go to the courtroom because they are scared. They are not comfortable during the court process”* (RA4-CA-08-A, Hagar Cambodia, Case Intake Specialist). The authorities in Cambodia are often in disbelief of the children’s statement. Sometimes law enforcement officers falsely accuse the child victims of wrongdoing, rather than the offenders. Police have also shown to act disrespectfully towards the children.

In addition, another respondent added that *“Another thing that is difficult for children in Cambodia is that the value of sexual modesty is highly regarded as sacred and praised, therefore many families would prefer to keep abuse private and quiet rather than go through a public court system. So, that often results in marriage to the perpetrator or out-of-court settlements which are facilitated by the police or judicial personnel rather than pursuing court processes”* (RA4-CA-02-A&B, Justice Actor, Cambodia).

The interviews showed that child victims are further traumatised if they see the perpetrator in the courtroom, especially if the perpetrator is a family member (RA4-CA-04-A&B, Justice Actor, Cambodia). The fact that child victims are exposed to the perpetrators throughout the criminal justice process requires attention and support from all parties, including the government of Cambodia, in order to reduce the trauma experienced by child victims.

Another difficulty that was raised during the interviews is that the court proceedings are complicated and consume a lot of time. One of the respondents stated that: *“The court process is generally very slow, so these processes can take years. And while we have seen some improvements in the speed at which trials are proceeding, it could still be drastically improved. The long duration puts additional pressure on children to be dealing with this for years”*(RA4-CA-02-A&B, Justice Actor, Cambodia).

In addition, the same respondent made the following statements:

“If it is a criminal case, the court can delay the case up until 12 months” (RA4-CA-02-A&B, Justice Actor, Cambodia).

“Most of our clients are from poor families, and most of them do not have transport support to the court and we will pick them up and drive them to the court” (RA4-CA-07-A, M’Lop Tapang, Child Protection Programme Manager).

Description of what is done by different criminal justice professionals (police, judges, prosecutors, lawyers, or other relevant staff) to make the process easier for children

Some initiatives have been taken by criminal justice professionals to make criminal justice systems work better for the best interest of the child. As stated by one respondent, the methods used by police officials to interview child victims have been improved in terms of child-friendliness:

“In my view, one of the things that I can see has improved is the police practice of the interview. They receive quite a lot of training in regard to child-friendly practices and investigation procedures. For example, during the investigation process, police try to engage with the people, especially social workers either from the government institution or from NGOs, to ensure to help and provide support to children in order for the investigation process to proceed smoothly” (RA4-CA-01-A, Child Protection Specialist, Action Pour Les Enfants).

Court practice in conducting the proceedings has also been improved, although at a minimum. One Child Protection Specialist informed that: *“They use the court screen in some courts. They conduct the trial hearing in a closed-door setting. But sometimes, because of the lack of space availability during the investigation, some interviews are not done in a separate room. They mostly interview children in their work area with little to no privacy. This is problematic for these children as they cannot guarantee their privacy. The process is usually better when the trial is ongoing as it is usually done in privacy, behind closed doors. They use the television link. Some courts have this kind of facility. They use the privacy screen” (RA4-CA-01-A, Child Protection Specialist, Action Pour Les Enfants).*

Although there is evidence in Cambodia on the improvements regarding practice in the judicial system on the treatment of child victims, it is also clear that there is still a great need to increase efforts for the mandatory use of the Prakas.¹⁴

A judge who participated in this research stated that the court official will *“check the room before the interview, look at the environment, and make sure it is suitable for the child” (RA4-CA-09-A, Phnom Penh Municipal Court, Judge).*

Answering the question how the child-friendly concept is implemented, one of the respondents stated that: *“Child-friendly practices are implemented in the way that they ask questions gently so that the children don’t get scared, no force or pressure is used on the child if they wish to not speak and therefore there is an amount of respect for the child’s will if they do not want to speak” (RA4-CA-09-A, Phnom Penh Municipal Court, Judge).*

In Cambodia, children can be accompanied to the police station by a social worker, parent, legal guardian, or close relative. This will reduce the re-traumatisation of children.

¹⁴ Government of Cambodia. (2008). [Prakas No. 62/08 on the Use of Court Screen and Courtrooms TV-Linked Testimony from Child/Vulnerable Victims or Witnesses.](#)

“In Siam Reap, when they interview in the police station, the interview session will be attended by the police, a social worker from the government institution, and if the children are girls, then an accompanying female officer attending to the children at all times. Mostly the interview session will also include their legal guardian as well as parents or close relative members” (RA4-CA-05-A, Terre des Hommes Netherlands, Justice Actor).

Commune Committees for Woman and Children have also been established across the country to ensure protection at the local level. However, members often lack capacity, have insufficient funds to fulfill their mandate, and are unclear about their responsibilities. Despite the recent increase in capacity building activities at the national and sub-national levels, the capacity for budget planning and mobilising resources remains low.¹⁵ Nevertheless, Commune Committees for Women and Children are very supportive and the necessary victim support services include providing emotional support:

“Local authority such as Commune Committees for Woman and Children, have always supported our clients in terms of emotional support especially during enduring times like in the court process” (RA4-CA-08-A, Case Intake Specialist, Hagar).

Description of what is done by different criminal justice professionals (police, judges, prosecutors, lawyers, or other relevant staff) to make the process harder for children

There were several responses from the respondents on the actions done by the criminal justice professionals which make the process harder than it already is for child victims. It was noted that inappropriate or aggressive questioning was utilised by the defence counsel during cross-examinations in the court. Most respondents were of the view that the defence counsels often ask inappropriate or aggressive questions with rude language to the children during the cross-examination:

“The lawyer who is representing the perpetrator asks inappropriate questions to the child victims” (RA4-CA-08-A, Case Intake Specialist, Hagar).

Additionally, defence counsels will also intentionally try to confuse the children with complicated questions during the examination process in the court:

“I see that the questioning technique is not appropriate for children. In terms of the question example, a leading question and suggested answer. And the questions have to be asked by different parties within the courtroom, by the prosecutor, by the judge, and especially by the defence lawyers. And as you might have known, the defence lawyer asks questions as hard as they can in order to have the charge dropped or to have their client receive less punishment. So, they use whatever technique to get the answer from children sometimes. Children are very much traumatised when answering those types of questions from the defence lawyers” (RA4-CA-01-A, Child Protection Specialist, Action Pour Les Enfants). This shows there is a serious issue concerning the behaviour of the defence lawyers in Cambodia, especially when they deal with victims of OCSEA.

¹⁵ APLE & ECPAT International (2019). Supplementary report on "Sexual Exploitation of Children in Cambodia" to the to the combined fourth, fifth, and sixth periodic reports of Cambodia on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including the implementation of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Furthermore, respondents shared experiences of judges screaming in the presence of children in court:

“I have personally experienced the environment in the courtroom, there was an incident where the judge screamed in court, consequently making the child feel very uncomfortable, even for myself too” (RA4-CA-08-A, Case Intake Specialist, Hagar). It is not clear if the judge was stern in general during said trial or if they screamed directly at the child.

As shown by these statements, it is undeniable that there are situations where the defence counsels try to mislead, deceive or intimidate child victims of sexual offences, including victims of OCSEA, and that judges also do not practice the concept of child-friendly justice during the trial. This shows that many legal professionals in Cambodia still lack sufficient specialised training in handling child victims during the trials.

Compensation

Description of if and how child victims tend to receive help/support to seek compensation

Child victims in Cambodia can seek compensation in civil or criminal proceedings, as enshrined in Title 3 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, regardless of whether the injury is physical or psychological.¹⁶ According to one respondent, however, *“child victims must file a separate civil suit to get compensation from the perpetrator”* (RA4-CA-01-A, Child Protection Specialist, Action Pour Les Enfants).

The respondents’ experiences with compensation claims by OCSEA victims all appeared to concern civil proceedings. A civil action can be filed on behalf of a child victim by their legal guardian, in accordance with Article 15 of the Criminal Code which states that *“a civil action can be filed on behalf of a victim by his or her legal guardian if the victim is a minor”*.¹⁷ This was confirmed by one respondent who stated that a compensation claim for a child victim can be filed by the legal guardian such as *“the father or mother or any family members where the child victims are placed”* (RA4-CA-07-A, Child Protection Program Manager, M’Lop Tapang).

Similarly, another respondent further informed that the *“court documents for compensation cannot be signed by a minor/child victim”* (RA4-CA-01-A, Child Protection Specialist, Action Pour Les Enfants).

According to the Code of Criminal Procedure, *“an injury can be compensated by paying damages, by giving back to the victim the property that has been lost or by restoring damaged or destroyed property to its original state”*. In any case, *“the damages shall be proportionate to the injury suffered”*.¹⁸ The Code of Criminal Procedure also includes the possibility of imprisonment in place of payment if requested by a civil party after proving that all means of enforcement had been used, such as seizing personal or real property.¹⁹ However, the offender remains a debtor of the amount due.²⁰

The compensation process can be costly, as the child victims must hire their lawyers to represent them in court for this civil suit:

“If the claim for compensation is higher, the legal cost for representation will also be higher” (RA4-CA-01-A, Child Protection Specialist, Action Pour Les Enfants).

The same respondent shared an example from a case in which the child victims had obtained a compensation order and had to pay a large amount to the lawyer:

“When the civil plaintiff calculates the amount of compensation that the convict has to pay, I think it’s around 20 million riel. It is roughly around 5000 or 6000 US Dollar. And then they’re required to pay lawyer almost 1000 Dollars” (RA4-CA-01-A, Child Protection Specialist, Action Pour Les Enfants).

¹⁶ Government of Cambodia. (2007). [Code of Criminal Procedure of the Kingdom of Cambodia](#), Article 13.

¹⁷ Government of Cambodia. (2007). [Code of Criminal Procedure of the Kingdom of Cambodia](#) Article 15.

¹⁸ Government of Cambodia. (2007). [Code of Criminal Procedure of the Kingdom of Cambodia](#) Article 14.

¹⁹ Government of Cambodia. (2007). [Code of Criminal Procedure of the Kingdom of Cambodia](#), Article 13.

²⁰ Government of Cambodia (2007). [Code of Criminal Procedure of the Kingdom of Cambodia](#), Articles 532 and 533.

It is difficult to get free legal aid assistance to file a compensation claim in Cambodia. This will be even more difficult if the perpetrator is a foreigner as the child victims need to get a foreign pro-bono lawyer to help to access the compensation under the respective domestic legislation. On this, one respondent informed that:

“We need to work closely with the pro bono law firms or pro bono lawyers to conduct research and study before we can proceed with this civil compensation process because the process of compensation of each country is not the same” (RA4-CA-01-A, Child Protection Specialist, Action Pour Les Enfants).

Child victims of sexual offences, including victims of OCSEA, in Cambodia are actively using the legal provisions on compensation to seek compensation with the support of NGO lawyers. However, even where a compensation order is made by the court, it is difficult to have the order executed and most offenders never pay. Where compensation is actually paid, the compensation amount awarded by the court is not being fully given to the child victims, as a lot of it will be spent on paying lawyer’s fees and any other costs involved in the process of seeking justice from the court. Although Cambodia has adequate legal provisions in enabling child victims to seek and obtain compensation, several constraints still exist, especially the lack of free legal aid to seek compensation from perpetrators, a complicated judicial process, no clear guidelines in determining the quantum of compensation, and out-of-court settlements.

Experiences of professionals supporting children to seek compensation (difficulties, strategies, successes...)

The interviews showed that the compensation process for child victims is a complex and long process that will consume a lot of time:

“The compensation process is not easy, and it is even more difficult when it involves foreigners” (RA4-CA-05-A, Terre des Hommes Netherlands, Justice Actor).

“In Cambodia, the compensation process in the courts is very slow and it takes a long time to further distribute the compensation to the child victims” (RA4-CA-07-A, Child Protection Program Manager, M’Lop Tapang). Most of the compensation cases in Cambodia are handled by the NGOs’ lawyers on a pro bono basis.

It is also important to note that there is no national compensation fund for child victims in Cambodia. One respondent mentioned that: *“Once an out-of-court settlement or adequate compensation is settled, then the police and judges will stop criminal cases proceeding”* (RA4-CA-02-A&B, Justice Actor, Cambodia). More details on the *“out-of-court settlements”* have been described under the section of this report covering challenges and changes needed.

Types of compensation sought and/or received

The respondents informed that child victims have requested compensation for the cost of transportation, medical costs (including hospitalisation), counselling costs, etc.

One respondent stated that: *“In general, they [the judge] look at the documentation of all their expenses, they need the evidence of what happened and the expense report, what type of future challenges they may encounter”* (RA4-CA-09-A, Phnom Penh Municipal Court, Judge).

Another respondent stated that the court *“will consider the impact the abuse had on the child, especially on their development if they are young, and at what level the abuse has affected them”* (RA4-CA-09-A, Phnom Penh Municipal Court, Judge).

Importantly, one respondent shared that: *“The effect on child victims is not only concerning physicality, but also takes a toll on the psychological state which can hardly be seen by the eyes. Therefore, the court needs to appraise the harm of the abuse. If there is a document or report from a specialist certifying the size of impact, it would be vital for the court. If it concerns a physical injury, a medical certificate or specialist’s report will assist the court. Whereas, if the harm is psychological, the certification by a psychologist is imperative. Moreover, the court will also determine the amount of compensation based on factors of the offender because some offenders cannot pay the compensation as demanded by the victim”* (RA4-CA-10-A, Phnom Penh Municipal Court, Vice Prosecutor).

It is interesting to note a response from a judge, who stated that: *“They will consider the impact the abuse had on the child, especially on their development if they are young, at what level it affected them. So, we will ask those involved and other NGOs, like Action Pour Les Enfants, to assess and evaluate the situation of the child. After they will send the child to a relevant stakeholder, especially the prosecutor who is the one that implements the decision of the court. In some cases, NGOs can do the evaluation, so they send the results to them as well and after they are the ones who apply for the permission to implement the execution of the compensation”* (RA4-CA-09-A, Phnom Penh Municipal Court, Judge).

Main barriers to seeking / obtaining compensation

It was noted by respondents that the compensation process is complex as it involves a lot of paperwork: *“In my opinion, the biggest barrier that the children face is a complex process of the compensation which takes a lot of time. Another challenge would be the socioeconomic background of the offender leading him or her the inability to pay the compensation ordered by the court. If the offender is rich, then the offender will pay the compensation by following the law”* (RA4-CA-06-A, Team Leader, M’Lop Tapang).

The Child Protection Specialist from Action Pour Les Enfants, Cambodia informed that there were parents and child victims who dropped the civil compensation suits once they realised how complex the compensation procedures were.

It is difficult to enforce a compensation order if the perpetrator is related to the victim, either as an immediate family member or a close relative: *“In some cases, the offender is a relative of the victim such as the stepfather, uncle, etc., hence it is difficult to enforce the compensation order”* (RA4-CA-06-A, Team Leader, M’Lop Tapang).

Article 523 of the Criminal Procedure Code provides that physical imprisonment will be imposed if the convicted offender fails to pay the compensation ordered.²¹ In certain cases, the compensation will only

²¹ Government of Cambodia. (2007). [Code of Criminal Procedure of the Kingdom of Cambodia](#), Article 523.

be paid to the child victim after the end of the imprisonment period, which can be up to six or seven years. This is not a practical solution according to one of the respondents. (RA4-CA-01-A, Child Protection Specialist, Action Pour Les Enfants).

Article 533 of the Criminal Procedure Code imposes tough requirements for child victims who are granted a compensation order, ensuring they must go through a subsequent layer of enforcement proceedings to get the convicted offender to pay the compensation.²² The law states that forced punishment shall be applied. However, the courts will also need to further examine whether the offender has assets that can be confiscated for auction or force the offender to pay. (RA4-CA-10-A, Phnom Penh Municipal Court, Vice Prosecutor).

In most cases, the convicted offenders do not have the financial capacity or any assets to pay the compensation to the child victims. This is reflected in the following responses:

“In terms of obtaining compensation in Cambodia, it’s quite challenging and complicated I would say because this is a civil case, and the civil law is practiced. So, the burden will be on the civil plaintiff who filed the case. So, the civil plaintiff must trace the asset of the offenders, whether the offender has the asset to pay for the compensation. Tracing the assets is not an easy job even for the lawyer. It is quite hard. When it comes to an individual perpetrator who abuses the child we need to prove that this individual has assets which can be forced for compensation. In the civil procedure, there is a requirement that requires a civil party to pay some tax” (RA4-CA-01-A, Child Protection Specialist, Action Pour Les Enfants).

“It’s very unlikely that you’ll receive compensation from a perpetrator. Often perpetrators also have limited financial means. And they will use that as a basis to appeal to the court, to not have to pay, even when compensation is awarded. Often, courts don’t issue enforcement orders and effectively nothing happens” (RA4-CA-02-A&B, Justice Actor, Cambodia).

²² Government of Cambodia. (2007). [Code of Criminal Procedure of the Kingdom of Cambodia](#), Article 533.

Successes

In 2019, six Cambodian girl victims received compensation of approximately USD 23,250 in total with Action Pour Les Enfants's support, through a pro-bono Swedish Law Firm (RA4-CA-01-A, Child Protection Specialist, Action Pour Les Enfants).

According to one respondent, one of the girls has planned to use the compensation money to start her own tailoring business (RA4-CA-01-A, Child Protection Specialist, Action Pour Les Enfants).

One respondent noted that: *"Compensation to victims of child sexual abuse and exploitation is extremely important as a first step for the victim to rebuild their lives. Feeling heard, understood, and receiving justice gives victims hope to carry on"* (RA4-CA-03-A-J, Court Support Team Leader, Action Pour Les Enfants).

Challenges/Changes Needed

Main challenges described by the criminal justice professionals

There are several challenges faced by criminal justice professionals in Cambodia. One of the main challenges is the underreporting of OCSEA crimes: *“Underreporting is certainly an issue, particularly amongst boys”* (RA4-CA-02-A&B, Justice Actor, Cambodia).

Another challenge is the lack of child-friendly facilities in court. Cheang Rithya, Child Protection Program Manager, M’Lop Tapang, Cambodia informed that not every court in Cambodia is equipped with child-friendly rooms. The *Prakas on the Use of Court Screen and Courtrooms TV linked Testimony from Child/Vulnerable Victims and Witnesses* is not fully implemented. In some cases, child victims will be placed together with the offender in the same courtroom. Due to this, child victims will be afraid, and some will even cry in the courtroom. One respondent (RA4-CA-06-A, Team Leader, M’Lop Tapang). stated that there is also a lack of child-friendly rooms for the victims in the police station.

One respondent stated the importance of evidence in securing a conviction against the perpetrator, especially in cases related to OCSEA where more sophisticated evidence will be required to be submitted to the court:

“The court only talks about evidence. If there is no evidence, the court will make a conviction according to judgment. If the court finds that evidence from the police is insufficient, the court will assume a significant role in finding additional evidence within the case” (RA4-CA-10-A, Phnom Penh Municipal Court, Vice Prosecutor).

Another respondent said that advancement of technology is a critical challenge: *“I know that the current technology is very advanced, and children are vulnerable. In Phnom Penh, almost every child owns a smartphone, and they spend a lot of time online and chat with other people. They tend to be more vulnerable”* (RA4-CA-09-A, Phnom Penh Municipal Court, Judge).

In line with technological advances, there must be skilled and trained officers including law enforcers to handle OCSEA matters in Cambodia. Within Cambodia, there are specialised law enforcement officers that deal with OCSEA specifically. Cambodia has mandated and specialised police officers for Child Exploitation and Abuse including OCSEA via Cambodia’s National Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Police. However, the capacity of such agencies, especially regarding OCSEA, is still limited:

“The other thing is particularly about OCSEA. The capacity of law enforcement and relevant stakeholders is very important to go after the offender, especially to suppress OCSEA” (RA4-CA-01-A, Child Protection Specialist, Action Pour Les Enfants).

In addition, there are no specialised judges to deal with child sexual exploitation cases specifically: *“Currently, there is no specialised judge to deal directly with cases involving children. The judge can be someone who has tried robbery cases. These judges can also be in charge of the children. So, this is something very hard for children who have to go through the legal justice system”* (RA4-CA-01-A, Child Protection Specialist, Action Pour Les Enfants).

Heavy reliance on the medical examinations carried out by authorities represents another evidence-related challenge mentioned by respondents: *“The problem within the system is that convictions often largely rely on medical examinations when there is no physical evidence. So, if there is no physical evidence, it is very hard to reach a conviction, especially in cases involving older children”* (RA4-CA-02-A&B, Justice Actor, Cambodia).

The overdependency on physical evidence by the criminal justice system can pose great challenges for child victims of OCSEA in getting the justice they deserve and result in OCSEA perpetrators not being convicted. The criminal justice system should differentiate other criminal cases from those involving OCSEA by taking into account the needs of different assessments and not merely relying on physical evidence for OCSEA cases. In regards to this subject, one respondent made the following statements:

“Some challenges faced so far concern the OPJ (Officier de Police Judiciaire) who supplied inadequate evidence. Moreover, holistic support for victims is substantially lacking. As mentioned above, the court does not have a courtroom for only children’s cases, so these gaps continue to have an effect on children. However, the court has paid greater attention to children’s cases and expedited the legal process” (RA4-CA-10-A, Phnom Penh Municipal Court, Vice Prosecutor).

“In finding evidence, there might be differences for offline and online cases, for online cases, the authorities will look for electronic devices” (RA4-CA-10-A, Phnom Penh Municipal Court, Vice Prosecutor).

“Court officials may have challenges working with children who are too young, or children who are severely victimised and do not want to speak. They do not want to disclose what happened to them and some children do not want to remind themselves of the story that has happened to them. On the other hand, some children seem to provide testimony based on the telling or coaching to speak. Because the psychological effect on children is abstract, it is hard and requires consideration on the working method and specialist involvement” (RA4-CA-10-A, Phnom Penh Municipal Court, Vice Prosecutor).

An important challenge to access to justice for OCSEA victims is that *“out-of-court settlements”* are a widespread practice in Cambodia, whereby an offender may negotiate extra-judicial agreements with the child victim’s family. These settlements often end up with the victim dropping the charges against the offender and receiving less financial compensation than the victims are entitled to by law.²³ This form of conciliation is facilitated by corrupted law enforcement officials, including some police officers.²⁴

One respondent stated that: *“It takes a long time to get the compensation. It usually takes a year or more to get the compensation after the conviction date. The compensation file will be suspended until the criminal case is settled”* (RA4-CA-06-A, Team Leader, M’Lop Tapang).

The interviews confirmed the findings of the desk research that the culture of out-of-court settlements strongly exists in Cambodia. One respondent informed that: *“I think moving away from the culture of*

²³ APLE. (2014). [Investigating Travelling Child Sex Offenders](#). 21.

²⁴ Committee on the Rights of the Child. (2015). [Concluding Observations on the Report Submitted by Cambodia Under Article 12, Paragraph 1, of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography](#). CRC/C/OPSC/KHM/CO/1, paragraph 22.

out-of-court settlement is one of the biggest challenges as it is pervasive. Some police officers and judicial personnel profit from these deals. They take a personal cut with the idea of doing justice which is reinforced by the cultural perception towards these cases” (RA4-CA-02-A&B, Justice Actor, Cambodia).

Another respondent further stated that: *“In Cambodia, poorly educated families do not want to go to court. So, when the abuses happened, the abuser and the family will try to solve and avoid going to court. Sometimes, when the police report has been lodged by the father, there will be a negotiation between the abuser’s family and the victim’s family to settle the matter outside of the court” (RA4-CA-08-A, Case Intake Specialist, Hagar).*

It is also the case that child victims often come to the NGOs, after the settlement sum is paid by the perpetrator, to request help in withdrawing the case as they are afraid to go to the police station after receiving the informal settlement (RA4-CA-02-A&B, Justice Actor, Cambodia).

Main changes suggested to make it easier/better for children to participate in criminal cases against their abusers

There were several recommendations to make it easier/better for these children to participate in criminal cases against their abusers:

“The first step would be simply implementing what exists such as the processes. We would have made a huge amount of progress” (RA4-CA-02-A&B, Justice Actor, Cambodia).

It was also suggested that cross-border collaboration must be enhanced, especially when dealing with OCSEA cases as these are serious cross-border offences:

“Third one is cross-border collaboration. This is very important because OCSEA is not committed only in a particular country, but it is a global network. So, suppressing the offender or dealing with OCSEA needs collaborative efforts not only from Cambodia, but from everyone across the globe” (RA4-CA-01-A, Child Protection Specialist, Action Pour Les Enfants).

Two respondents emphasised that the government must promptly adopt a cybercrime law including a provision that is related to OCSEA:

“I would say first to have a mandated cybercrime law” (RA4-CA-01-A, Child Protection Specialist, Action Pour Les Enfants).

“Establish the need for legislation regarding online crimes” (RA4-CA-09-A, Phnom Penh Municipal Court, Judge).

Moreover, it was suggested to establish a multiagency response team or working group to reduce the re-traumatisation of children in the various legal processes (RA4-CA-01-A, Child Protection Specialist, Action Pour Les Enfants). The same respondent was of the view that having a response team as One Stop Centre across the country would help the authorities to extract information from children only one time instead of asking many times.

One respondent stated that: *“We can build a separate room for the children that is well equipped with all the facilities for the children during the court proceedings” (RA4-CA-08-A, Case Intake Specialist, Hagar).*

Another noted that it is best to have a counsellor present with the child victims in court and this should be a practice across the country. The respondent was of the view that this would make the children

more comfortable, open, and less traumatised when speaking to the court, while the lawyer who represents the child advises on the legal aspects:

“We have to advocate for this because sometimes children are more comfortable, open, and less traumatised when speaking to the court while having their counsellor by their side. It does not mean the counsellor needs to tell them what to say. But as long as there is a counsellor, there is a support person by their side. Children are more comfortable, and this should be practised also across the country in every case involving children. Not only the lawyer who accompanies the child will represent the child in terms of legal parts, but also psychology parts as well. Like that, children can receive both legal justice and social justice when they participate in legal justice procedures” (RA4-CA-01-A, Child Protection Specialist, Action Pour Les Enfants). It is important to note that when children receive both legal and social support, the best interest of the child will be protected.

One respondent stated that *“we have to increase the number of pro-bono legal services to the poor people”* (RA4-CA-07-A, Justice Actor, Cambodia). The same respondent was also of the view that the government must increase funding for legal aid in Cambodia to ensure that all child victims have free access to legal assistance to safeguard their rights. Another respondent added that: *“The government needs to promote and create awareness on the existing laws that protect these children in all rural areas in Cambodia to ensure the people in Cambodia understand how they are legally protected”* (RA4-CA-06-A, Team Leader, M’Lop Tapang).

There is also a crucial need to enhance training capacities to improve the skills of those involved subsequently to work more effectively, especially with OCSEA issues: *“We want the government to train the authorities that deal with children, especially those officers who will interview the children in the legal process”* (RA4-CA-06-A, Team Leader, M’Lop Tapang).

One respondent shared that they *“do not have training on this or at least I am not aware of any. Maybe the ministry has plans on this. However, there is still a need to improve the investigation side, by increasing workshops and learning from other countries on best practices. This allows us to always keep up with new trends”* (RA4-CA-09-A, Phnom Penh Municipal Court, Judge).

With regards to compensation for OCSEA victims, it was also highlighted that capacity-building efforts amongst the authorities and the judges are needed to equip them with a better understanding of asset seizure and tracing so that perpetrators’ assets can be located to fulfill compensation orders by the courts. On the same subject, one respondent shared that: *“Some court officials have received training. Some training was conducted at the regional level and participation was not possible for everyone. Only a small number of officials have attended. If there is more training, it would get better because, in Cambodia’s context, we are already evolving to a more digitalised era”* (RA4-CA-10-A, Phnom Penh Municipal Court, Vice Prosecutor).

There must be special training courses that are related to handling these child victims during the court proceedings, including ethical methods of questioning child victims by the police, prosecutors, judges and especially the defense counsels. In this regard, one respondent stated that: *“I think the lawyer or judge needs to improve the ethics of questioning the child victims in the court and maintain the professionalism of a lawyer”* (RA4-CA-08-A, Case Intake Specialist, Hagar).

Lastly, corruption among the authorities needs to be tackled aggressively by the government:

“First, to strengthen the corruption laws, although most of the sexual exploitation and abuse cases are from poor families, some cases involve rich people, hence they will give money to the judge, prosecutor and police and settle the matter discreetly” (RA4-CA-08-A, Case Intake Specialist, Hagar).

“The courts are widely distrusted by many people, they are perceived as corrupt and expensive. And I think many people already feel that they are up against a system that is probably not going to work in their favor” (RA4-CA-02-A&B, Justice Actor, Cambodia).