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LANDLESSNESS AND CHILD LABOUR IN CAMBODIA

Introduction

The widespread use of child labour in Cambodia persists: 755,250 (19 percent of total) children aged between 5 and 17 work, 30 percent of whom are engaged in risky occupations such as the sex and drugs trade, or have been trafficked (NIS and ILO 2013).

Child labour in Cambodia is a rural phenomenon. Most working children are engaged in tasks such as fishing, feeding livestock, growing crops and collecting wood, mostly as unpaid family helpers and occasionally as informal sector workers; less than 2 percent work in sweatshops (NIS 2004, 11). Child labour is a complement to family income and labour shortage, rather than a substitute (Siddiqui 2012). Landlessness or near landlessness is a major cause of rural poverty: to have no or insufficient access to land is to have insufficient household income. Consequently, children are sent out to work as a household livelihood strategy.

Knowledge is still limited on the links between landlessness and child labour. This article addresses these shortcomings in the literature by seeking answers to the following questions:

1. How is landlessness related to child labour?
2. How does child welfare and socioeconomic status differ in landless and landholding households?
3. What are boys' and girls' perceptions of their roles in the family livelihood?



Child labour in Cambodia is a rural phenomenon. Takeo, May 2015

Definitions of child labour and landlessness

Child labour: The Ministry of Planning (2012), in line with Cambodian Labour Law (adopted in 1997), defines child labour as any form of economic or non-economic activity for at least one hour a week that could be harmful to a child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. Labour Law sets the minimum working age at 15 but allows children aged 12-14 to do light work for up to 14 hours a week.

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Table 1: Working hours defining child labour

Age groups	Non-hazardous	Hazardous
5-11	≥ 1 hour per week	
12-14	≥ 14 hours per week	Even ≤ 14 hours per week

Note: Hazardous work is defined as (ILO 2002, 34):

- work which exposes children to physical, psychological or sexual abuse; to temperatures, noise levels or vibrations damaging to health
- work underground, underwater, at dangerous heights or in confined spaces
- work with dangerous machinery, equipment and tools or carrying heavy loads; or work for long hours at night.

Landlessness: Landless households do not have farmland, regardless of reason.

Methodology

The study employed a mixed quantitative-qualitative approach. Following previous studies (Bhalotra 2000; Emerson and Souza 2003; Khan 2007; Bhalotra and Heady 2003), to investigate and determine the effects of landlessness on child labour, we used a probit model with a set of control variables, especially a dummy variable for agricultural land.

Relationships between variables are expressed in the equation:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta L_d + \delta X + \gamma Z + e$$

where Y takes 1 for child labour and 0 otherwise, α is a constant term, β is the coefficient focused on the effect of the agricultural land dummy L_d (1 for landless, 0 otherwise) on the incidence of child labour, δ and γ are the coefficients of other controlled variables, and e is the error term for remainders of excluded variables. Child characteristics X refer to age, sex and school completion. Household characteristics Z include age, marital status, sex, education and occupation of household head, number of household members by age group, ethnic background, region, and wealth quintile dummy.

Qualitative methods involved the conduct of in-depth interviews to collect information on individual histories, perspectives and experiences, and focus group discussions to gather broader opinions on issues of interest. The information collected does

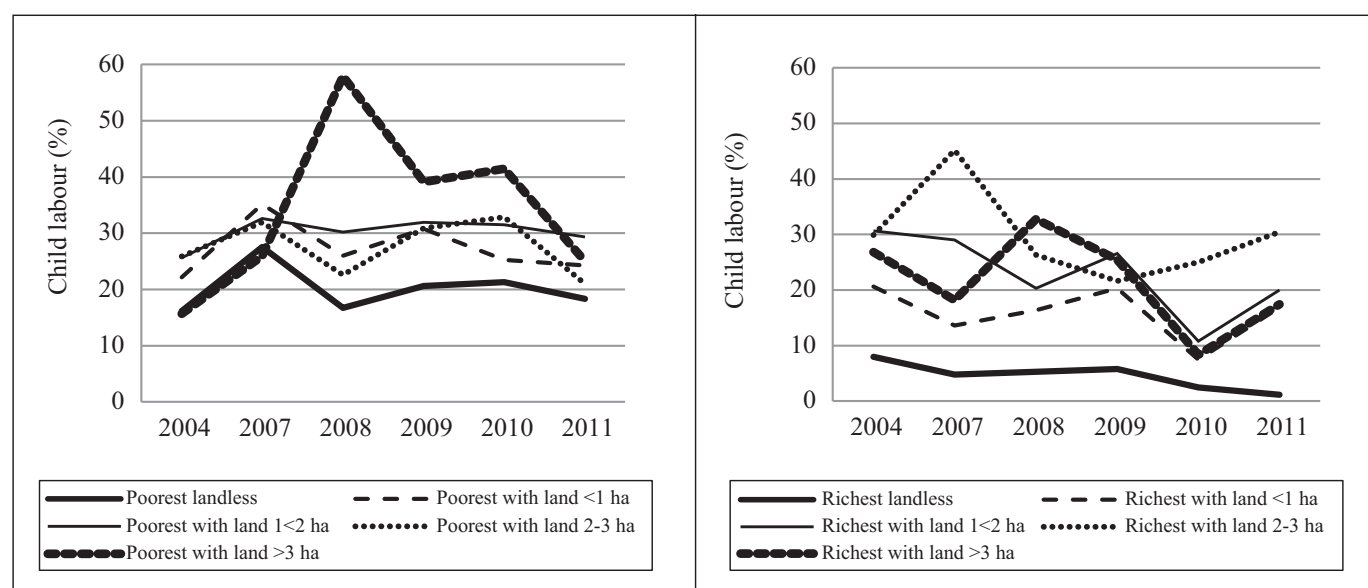
not represent the overall view of Cambodian adults and children but of the participants in selected villages.

Quantitative analysis relies on data from the nationally representative Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey (CSES) 2004, 2007, 2009, 2010 and 2011. Qualitative analysis is based mainly on the fieldwork conducted in the provinces of Pursat, Oddar Meanchey, Preah Vihear, Kratie and Koh Kong in 2014. We selected two villages in each province, and in each village organised two focus group discussions, three in-depth interviews and one key informant interview. In consultation with the village chief, sample households were selected from four household categories: IDPoor with agricultural land, IDPoor without agricultural land, non-IDPoor with agricultural land and non-IDPoor without agricultural land.

Landlessness

The study traced the causes of landlessness based on a 2014 survey conducted by CDRI on the poverty dynamics of 1183 households in 11 rural villages in nine provinces—Battambang, Kompong Thom, Kratie, Kampot, Kandal, Prey Veng, Kompong Speu, Preah Sihanouk and Preah Vihear. The survey results indicate that the largest number of landless households had never had land. Other causes were landsales, transfer to children, relocation and land grabs. Concentrated in urban areas, agricultural landless households accounted for 28 percent of total households between 2004 and 2011; they are typically engaged in service sectors, wealthier than landholding households and associated with higher levels of household head educational attainment.

Figure 1: Child labour by the first (left) and fifth (right) land wealth quintiles, 2004-11



Source: Compiled from CSES 2004-11

Child labour prevalence

Data from the CSES (Table 2) shows that the incidence of child labour was consistently higher in rural households in the period 2004-11. While the share of child labour in Phnom Penh and urban areas halved, that in rural areas rose by 2 percent.

Further, twice as many children (18 percent) were living in landless than in landholding (9 percent) households. Of working children, only 10 percent did not attend school at all, and 80 percent combined work and schooling (10 percent did not respond to the survey).

Table 2: Child labour by region, 2004-11

	2004	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Children aged 5-14	15,603	4024	3632	12,674	3348	3287
Phnom Penh	1107	634	583	884	533	513
Other urban	2178	743	652	1286	579	599
Rural	12,318	2647	2397	10,504	2236	2175

Percentage of child labour

	2004	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total child labour	21.8	23.3	21.1	25.1	18.6	18.7
Phnom Penh	6.1	5.2	4.6	3.2	3.0	1.6
Other urban	15.8	14.3	14.4	11.0	9.0	9.0
Rural	24.3	30.2	27.0	28.6	24.8	25.4

Source: CSES 2004-11

Table 3: Incidence of child labour by land size of agrarian households, 2004-11 (%)

	2004	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Landless (land=0)	18.9	20.0	17.1	19.1	18.3	20.7
<1 ha	25.9	29.7	26.4	29.0	24.7	23.9
1-2 ha	29.6	34.6	33.0	34.1	25.4	30.1
2-3 ha	30.3	39.4	26.8	29.6	31.0	28.4
>3 ha	28.9	33.3	35.7	32.5	25.1	28.2

Source: CSES 2004-11

The prevalence of child labour was found to be more frequent in landholding than landless households. The incidence of child labour is related to landholding size, fluctuating around the 19 percent mark in landless households and a mean of 30 percent (in a range of 24 to 39 percent) in landholding households (Table 3). When all household occupations are included, child labour is more prevalent in poor than rich families.

Empirical results

Probit model estimates indicate that children in landless households are less likely to be involved in the labour market than those in landholding households. This result is consistent with previous studies (Mead 1977; Bhalotra and Heady 2000).

Child labour prevalence is significantly related to the educational level of the household head: children in households where the head has completed at least primary education have less chance of being sent out to work. Boys are more likely to participate in economic activities than girls. Other contributing factors are household dependency on child labour for survival and living in a rural agricultural household.

On the other hand, model estimates for interactions between child labour and land wealth

show that landless households are less likely to involve their children in work than landholding households, regardless of how rich or poor they are (Figure 1). However, children in the poorest landless households have a larger probability of working than those in the richest landless households.

Qualitative findings

There are differences between children in landless and landholding households. Those in landless households work mainly on rice and cash crop fields to get money to fulfill basic needs, usually

food. They accept any type of work as long as they are paid daily. These children get less of their parents' time when they need their parents the most, and forfeit regular schooling because there is no food, proper school materials or transport. Some follow their parents to work everywhere.

Children in landholding households often work on the family farm or in the family business when they are not at school. They are closely supervised by their parents and are not left to work alone; their parents hire workers to do heavy jobs. These children have sufficient food and other necessities whether they work or not. Some complete grade 12 or university, while some quit school and dedicate themselves to the family business.

Parents, adults and elders in the family have the strongest influence on children's lives and economic activities. Boys know that they will have to follow their father, doing mostly heavy work such as cutting trees and bamboo, digging up cassava, ploughing, collecting fodder, and so on. Girls take on their mother's tasks which are considered light work, such as baby sitting, growing, cutting and drying cassava, transplanting, clearing grass, embroidering pillows and weaving mats, to name a few.

Conclusion

Landlessness and child labour in agrarian households are interrelated. Children in landless households are less likely to work than those in landholding households because of the limited opportunities for them to engage in rural seasonal work and a lack of resources to move elsewhere to find work.

Children of poor landless households are more likely to participate in work than those of rich landless households. Factors that reduce child labour are the education of the household head and the presence of more adults in the family. Living in a farm household, many children aged 0-4 years and rural residency are the key factors contributing to child labour.

The following recommendations can help free children from the necessity of working:

- Make labour saving technology more accessible to farm households
- Instill in families the importance of the long-term value of education
- Integrate practical skills into the education system
- Introduce flexible scheduling in schools
- Provide food security for poor children's families by improving access to farmland
- Build parenting skills
- Provide school materials, uniforms and transport.

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