

# IMPACT SPOTLIGHT

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OXFAM

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## A WORD FROM THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR

Greetings,

In this tenth issue of the Impact Spotlight, we celebrate the key role women play in protecting natural resources, embracing new skills, advancing leadership and harnessing technology.

The climate crisis is no longer a distant threat; it is intersecting with inequality, gender injustice, economic vulnerability, and shrinking civic space. Addressing this complexity demands innovative solutions, new forms of capital, and stronger collaboration among the public sector, private sector, and development partners. Through the Sustainable Business Alliance, the Blended Finance Forum, we have created space for rethinking traditional funding models and move toward blended finance solutions that deliver impact at scale, for Cambodia's future and for those too often left behind.

This quarter, we forged new partnerships, explored innovative technologies and tackled new funding models for sustainable development while continuing to extend humanitarian assistance to displaced families. Our partnership with NADR has strengthened access to justice for families trapped in over-indebtedness.

We also launched critical initiatives that reflect our feminist and rights-based approach to development. From tackling gender-based violence in climate action through community-led prevention, to convening a feminist retreat that strengthens support networks for women leaders in the agri-food sector, we are investing in leadership, voice, and safety where it matters most.

As Cambodia navigates its digital transition, we advanced dialogue on rights-based digital governance and the protection of civic space. Innovation continues to open new doors: drone technology is now enabling young women to patrol community forests more safely and effectively.

Fair Finance Cambodia's latest bank policy assessment has exposed critical ESG gaps in the financial sector—an important step toward accountability and reform. At the community level, inclusive water governance took center stage, alongside the launch of the World Water Development Report 2026 as well as International Women's Day and World Water Day—reminding us that access to water is inseparable from justice.

As we close this quarter, I extend my deepest gratitude to our partners, communities, and colleagues. Together, we are proving that systemic change is possible when courage, compassion, and collaboration guide our work. Let us continue to build a Cambodia where equality grows, resilience deepens, and no one is left behind.

**SOPHOAN PHEAN**  
National Director, Oxfam in Cambodia



As we embarked on 2026, we did so with both urgency and hope. Across Cambodia, development challenges continue to evolve, and none can be separated from the growing reality of climate change.



# UNLOCKING BLENDED FINANCE FOR CAMBODIA'S FUTURE

By San Sar

*In Phnom Penh, a new conversation is reshaping the way Cambodia thinks about development. At the Blended Finance Forum: Inclusive and Sustainable Growth, convened by the Sustainable Business Alliance (SBA), more than a hundred voices including donors, investors, NGOs, and small businesses come to discuss how to move beyond traditional funding models to achieve lasting impact.*

The discussion reflected a growing recognition that blended finance, which combines public, philanthropic, and private capital, is not just a concept but a pathway to scale. For Cambodia, where pressing social and environmental challenges demand innovative solutions, this approach offers a chance to unlock resources that have long remained out of reach.

Ms. Sophoan Phean, National Director of Oxfam, reminded participants that the way development is financed is changing, and that new forms of collaboration and partnership are essential to meet today's complex challenges.

Mr. Koen Everaert, First Secretary of the European Union Delegation to Cambodia, highlighted the Global Gateway Strategy, which uses public funding to de-risk investments and mobilize larger volumes of private capital. Each euro of grant funding is designed to unlock multiple times



Oxfam National Director, Ms. Sophoan Phean, at the Blended Finance Forum hosted in February 2026. Photo: SBA

more in total investment, a powerful signal of how development cooperation is evolving.

Throughout the forum, theory gave way to practice. Discussions explored risk-sharing mechanisms like first-loss capital, technical assistance to prepare SMEs for investment, and pay-for-results models that tie funding to measurable impact. Real-world examples showed that blended finance is not about choosing between impact and profit, but about aligning both through smart structuring.

One of the most striking insights was that Cambodia does not lack capital. It lacks enterprises ready to absorb it. Many SMEs fall into the **“missing middle”: too advanced for grants, yet too risky for commercial finance.** At the same time, NGOs and investors often speak different languages — impact vs. risk and return. Bridging this divide make blended finance transformative.

Oxfam’s role is pivotal. Not as a financier but a pipeline builder. It

provides technical assistance, coaching, and ecosystem development. To date, Oxfam has supported around 40 inclusive businesses to become more investment-ready and scalable. This behind-the-scenes work may be invisible, but it is essential to making blended finance possible.

The forum also created space for reflection. In breakout sessions, participants mapped their potential roles, identified what they need to engage whether guarantees, networks, or expertise and acknowledged barriers such as trust, capacity, and coordination. The outcome was not a single solution but something more valuable: a shared commitment to collaborate.

Blended finance is not a quick fix. It is a long-term, partnership-driven approach that requires patience, trust, and persistence. The Sustainable Business Alliance will continue to serve as a neutral platform to strengthen investment pipelines and facilitate collaboration.

# TACKLING GBV IN ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE ACTION THROUGH COMMUNITY-LED PREVENTION

By *Natacha Anne Kim*

*On the banks of the Mekong River and its tributaries in Stung Treng and Ratanakiri provinces, women, men, and children live to the rhythm of the water flows, fish reproduction cycles, and the rainy season. They not only rely on precious water resources, fish stocks, wildlife, and forests for their livelihood, but they also serve as stewards and protectors of these natural treasures for their communities, Cambodia, and beyond.*

Women have increasingly claimed roles and space in Community Fisheries and Community-protected Areas to actively participate in the responsible management and conservation of these resources. But within conservation efforts, gender discrimination and gender-based violence (GBV) against women and girls are still highly prevalent.

*“My husband argues with me when I engage in community activities,” said Sokheng, a 38-year-old mother of four. “He doesn’t see any benefit in my work for the community and often tries to guilt me into not doing this work. But I stay strong and overcome his opposition,” she said.*

To address these issues, Oxfam, Banteay Srei and Culture and Environment Preservation Association (CEPA) have launched in



March 2026 the project “*Tackling GBV in Natural Resources and Biodiversity Conservation in Stung Treng and Ratanakiri Provinces*”, one of three winning proposals of the Resilient, Inclusive, and Sustainable Environments (RISE) Challenge, that is implemented by IUCN and is funded by the Government of Norway.

The 8-month long project’s ambition is to support 20 communities in Stung Treng and Ratanakiri to build their capacity in preventing GBV in their environmental, natural resources, and conservation activities, and to promote women participation and leadership.

Banteay Srei, a leading women’s rights organization, will establish foundational knowledge about forms of GBV, its impact not only on women and girls, but also on men, boys, and communities as a whole, and why it is essential to eradicate all forms of violence. It will also work with communities to build strong peer network to offer trauma-informed, survivor-centered support to women, children, and men to prevent and respond to incidents of violence. CEPA, together with Oxfam,

will support communities in building GBV risk mapping skills to embed GBV risks mitigation in their development plans, and build institutional mechanisms to prevent and respond to all forms of violence in their natural resources and environmental work.

Together, these efforts recognize that safeguarding nature and safeguarding people are inseparable. By placing community voices particularly those of women and youth at the center of environmental governance, the project seeks to transform harmful norms, strengthen collective responsibility, and ensure that conservation spaces are safe, inclusive, and empowering for all.

As communities along the Mekong deepen their capacity to prevent and respond to GBV, they also lay the foundation for more resilient ecosystems and more just local leadership. Ultimately, addressing GBV within environmental action is not only a matter of rights and safety, but a prerequisite for lasting, community-led conservation that benefits present and future generations.

# BUILDING A SUPPORT NETWORK FOR WOMEN LEADERS IN THE AGRI-FOOD SECTOR

By Natacha Anne Kim

*In the agri-food sector, women make up the vast majority of workers, street vendors, and small business owners. They are often at the forefront of defending workers' rights, demanding dignity in the workplace, and advocating for equal access to social protection.*

Women leaders in this sector come from diverse walks of life, including street vendors, smallholder farmers, food processing factory workers, restaurant employees, and domestic workers. What unites them is their shared commitment to ensuring that the people they represent can access social security easing the burden of healthcare costs and providing greater peace of mind. Yet, in the process of supporting others, these women frequently set aside their own wellbeing. Long working hours, the emotional toll of responding to injustice, and the stress of advocacy often leave them exhausted and vulnerable to burnout.

Recognizing these challenges, Oxfam organized a *Feminist Leadership and Wellbeing Retreat* in March 2026 as part of the "Improved Social Protection and Labour Rights for Women Workers in ASEAN's Agri-Food Sector 2022 to 2026" program, supported by the Royal Government of Belgium. The retreat brought together partner organizations, women leaders, and activists working across the agri-food sector.



Ms. Natacha Kim, Oxfam's Gender and Social Inclusion Specialist, co-facilitated the Feminist Leadership and Wellbeing Retreat in March 2026. It was a safe space exclusively led by and for women across the agri-food sector. Photo: Oxfam

Designed as a safe and inclusive space, the retreat was organized exclusively by and for women, in all their diversity—from participants and facilitators to documenters. It intentionally centered women's lived experiences, vulnerability, care, and wellbeing, creating an environment that encouraged trust, reflection, and mutual learning.

Through storytelling, experience sharing, creative and sensory activities, meditation, roleplay, small-group discussions, and high-energy games, participants connected deeply with one another. These moments fostered compassion, moral support during emotional storytelling, and shared joy in collective achievements.

Grounded in feminist learning principles, the sessions encouraged participants to reflect on what distinguishes feminist leadership from conventional models of leadership. By the end of the retreat, both facilitators and participants

left feeling energized, motivated, and strengthened by a profound sense of solidarity and collective purpose.

In a sector where women are expected to give endlessly to others, we are making a powerful statement: **care for women leaders is not optional, it is political and transformative.** By prioritizing wellbeing alongside leadership development, feminist-led programming helps ensure that women leaders are not only champions for change, but are also supported, valued, and sustained in their work.



Scan here to hear the impression and feedback from participants



Here are some snapshot of the activities during the Feminist Retreat. Photo: Oxfam

# RECIPE: NAVIGATING CAMBODIA’S DIGITAL TRANSITION TOWARD RIGHTS-BASED DIGITAL GOVERNANCE & CIVIC SPACE

By Ritthy Ou

Cambodia is in the midst of a sweeping digital transformation under the Digital Economy and Society Policy Framework 2021 to 2035 and the Digital Government Policy 2022 to 2035. With almost 95 percent 4G coverage and 5G in 2026, connectivity is expanding at an unprecedented pace. Yet this progress risks leaving behind rural communities including Indigenous people, informal workers, women, and youth, groups that make up the majority of Cambodia’s 17.9 million people.

Oxfam’s *Recentering the Civic Internet through Partner Engagement (ReCIPE)* project is working to ensure that Cambodia’s digital future is not only connected, but also rights based, inclusive, and safe.

The challenges are significant. Nearly 40 percent of Cambodians remain offline, digital literacy is low at just 32 percent, and civic space is rated as “repressed.” At the same time, fake news, AI generated disinformation, online scams, hate speech, and gender based violence are increasingly shaping public discourse and threatening personal safety. As one youth participant in a consultation observed, “Under the name of combating fake news, it is in practice combating real news instead,” highlighting how measures intended to protect can instead silence journalists and active citizens.

In March 2026, ReCIPE convened twelve consultations across six provinces, bringing together 150

stakeholders including NGO leaders, government officials, youth, students, and community leaders. The discussions mapped risks and co-designed solution to strengthen Cambodia’s digital resilience. Participants emphasized the important of equipping youth, students and journalists with fact-checking skills, critical thinking, and AI-based verification tools. Civil society organizations were encourage to adopt stronger data protection and digital security practices, while communities called for technology to serve practical need such as education, health and livelihoods rather than being confined to entertainment.

The consultations also revealed opportunities for collaboration. Government efforts to combat online scams and cybercrime could be aligned with digital peacebuilding, while partnerships with ministries, universities, provincial networks, and journalists are opening new pathways for inclusive governance. At the regional and global levels, Oxfam in Cambodia’s engagement in the Asia

Civic Space Working Group and digital rights networks, alongside Ireland’s upcoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union, provides strategic platforms for advocacy and influence.

The impact of ReCIPE is already visible. Rural youth and women are being recognized as key agents of digital literacy and civic engagement. Partnerships between civil society and government actors are strengthening, and Cambodia is beginning to position itself as a voice for rights based digital governance in Southeast Asia.

Looking ahead, ReCIPE will expand community based digital literacy hubs, embed digital peacebuilding into national strategies, and continue to ensure that Cambodia’s digital transition protects civic space rather than restricts it. In essence, ReCIPE is transforming Cambodia’s digital journey into a people centered transition, where connectivity empowers communities, rights are safeguarded, and civic voices thrive online.



Discussion on Smart Internet Use: Promoting safe, secure, and practical choices with students at the National University of Battambang, March 2026. Photo: Seng Pheng/CCC

# FFC RELEASES BANK POLICY ASSESSMENT HIGHLIGHTING ESG GAPS IN CAMBODIAN BANKING SECTOR

By Asisah Man

*Fair Finance Cambodia (FFC) announced the findings of 2023 Bank Policy Assessment, which evaluated the environmental, social, and governance (ESG) commitments of eight leading banks in Cambodia including ABA, ACLEDA, CAMPU, CANADIA, CIMB, Bank of China, KB-Prassac, and Sathapana.*

Conducted in late 2024 using the Fair Finance Guide International (FFGI) methodology, the assessment reveals both progress and persistent gaps in sustainable finance practices across the sector.

The study examined eight key themes including climate change, corruption, human rights, labor rights, nature, taxation, transparency and accountability, and gender equality. The results show that taxation and corruption policies scored highest, while nature-related commitment scored lowest, highlighting weak environmental stewardship. CIMB stood out as the strongest performer with an average score of 2.4 out of 10, setting a benchmark for sustainability reporting. However, transparency and accountability showed modest improvement since 2020 but dipped slightly in 2023, reflecting incomplete progress.

Compared with previous assessment, climate change

awareness of the assessed banks has improved slightly, with scores rising from 0 in 2020 to 0.6 in 2023. Yet, human rights and gender equality remain critically under-addressed, with persistently low scores across all banks. Tax compliance stagnated, while labor rights saw initial improvements but declined in 2023, pointing to enforcement challenges.

Despite gradual progress, the assessment highlights systemic challenges including limited public disclosure, weak regulatory enforcement, and inconsistent implementation of ESG standards. While CIMB sets a benchmark, most banks must accelerate their adoption of sustainable finance practices to meet Cambodia's development goals.

FFC emphasizes that Cambodian banks should fully integrate ESG standards into their operations, enhance transparency through detailed and accessible reporting, develop climate risk management strategies and expand green financing products, transform traditional Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities into measurable ESG programs, align with international human rights and gender equality frameworks, strengthen compliance with labor laws and anti-money laundering regulations, and improve accountability through stakeholder engagement and regular impact assessments.

"Cambodia's banking sector is progressive, but at a crossroads. While awareness of sustainability is growing, meaningful impact requires

stronger accountability, transparency, and alignment with international ESG standards. Banks must act decisively to ensure inclusive and sustainable development for Cambodia," said Mr. Saroeun Soeung, NGO Forum's Executive Director and FFC Member.

"At CIMB Cambodia, we believe sustainability is fundamental to building a resilient financial system that advances customers and society. We welcome independent assessments such as this, which help raise standards across the banking sector. While we are encouraged to be recognized as a leading bank among those assessed, we recognize that there is more we can do to support Cambodia's ongoing national development priorities, including strengthening financial inclusion, enhancing social and environmental risk management, and supporting climate resilience," said CIMB representative.

Established in 2019, FFC is a coalition of civil society organizations including Oxfam in Cambodia, The NGO Forum on Cambodia, Cooperation Committee for Cambodia, Transparency International Cambodia, ActionAid Cambodia, SILAKA, Star Kampuchea, and Norwegian People's Aid. FFC works to advance sustainable finance, mitigate the adverse impacts of cross-border investments, and promote inclusive economic development. It is a member of Fair Finance Asia, a regional network dedicated to ensuring financial institutions uphold social and environmental well-being in their funding decisions.

## COMMUNITIES GATHER FOR INCLUSIVE WATER GOVERNANCE AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN THE MEKONG



Indigenous community perform a traditional ceremony before the discussions on climate change challenges and how youth and stakeholder can contribute to reducing these impact and promoting sustainable future. The performance honored cultural heritage and reminded participants of deep spiritual connection between the Mekong River, its people and their future. Photo: Oxfam.

By Soknak Por

*Oxfam, civil society organizations, riverine communities, youth groups and government institutions came together in Stung Treng province to mark International Women’s Day, International Day of Action for Rivers, and World Water Day.*

More than 90 participants including women, youth, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, government agencies, academia, and development partners gathered under the themes of water, river, resilience, and GEDSI (Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion). The event became a powerful demonstration of solidarity and inclusive governance across the Mekong Basin.

Community-led projects co-designed by women, Indigenous leaders, and marginalized groups were presented alongside keynotes and discussions on barriers to water access, inclusive governance, and strengthening women’s leadership in climate resilience. Participants camped along the Mekong River, sharing meals, cultural performances, and discussions with local communities.

A River Solidarity Walk and Clean-Up, led by the Ministry of Environment, symbolized shared responsibility for safeguarding ecosystems. A boat trip to the Mekong Flooded Forest highlighted the biodiversity of one of Cambodia’s most critical habitats and its role in sustaining fisheries, ecotourism, and climate resilience.

The trip highlighted the critical role of flooded forests in sustaining fisheries, ecotourism, protecting livelihoods, and buffering communities against climate impacts. The celebrations concluded and provided participants with experiences on how climate change and unsustainable development affect river ecosystems and local livelihoods.

H.E. Pich Hatda An, Secretary of State, Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology, said, "The Mekong River Basin supports the daily lives and livelihoods of millions of people. Strengthening water governance means listening to communities, civil society, and all stakeholders, so decisions lead to real resilience and sustainable development."

H.E. Lina Ngin, Secretary of State, Ministry of Environment, said, "Protecting the Mekong River ecosystem means safeguarding the lifeblood of our communities, promoting public health, enhancing resilience to climate change [...] any development project must ensure inclusive and transparent consultation with communities, civil society organizations, and relevant institutions to ensure social, economic, and environmental responsibility with youth serving as the driving force for change."

Ms. Sophoan Phean, National Director of Oxfam said, the participation and voice of the most vulnerable groups are essential. When diverse perspectives are

included in decision-making, rivers are managed sustainably and equitably for future generations. Women, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and marginalized communities bring lived experiences that show how climate change and resource use affect daily life. Their involvement ensures decisions are more inclusive, practical, and just."

Mr. Kung Men, Deputy Governor of Stung Treng, said, "The Mekong River and its tributaries are vital for sustaining biodiversity and supporting the livelihoods of communities in Stung Treng province and across the Mekong region. Community-based water resource management is essential to ensure inclusivity and long-term sustainability."



Left: Ms. Phearun Cheng, Youth leader from Siembok District. Right: Ms. Pheary An, another Youth Leader from Kampong Pang village, Kaing Cham commune. Both are from Stung Treng province.



A discussion with youth and stakeholders facilitated by H.E. Lina Ngin, Secretary of State, Ministry of Environment, Koh Samseab. Photo: Oxfam





Koh Samseb island in Stung Treng province where more than 90 participants camped. The riverside camps offered a unique opportunity to connect directly with the Mekong ecosystem, share meals and cultural performances, and reflect on the importance of protecting traditional livelihoods and biodiversity for future generations. Photo: Oxfam

Mr. Reto Gruening, Director of Cooperation Development Counselor of Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation, said, "What we want to support is a bottom-up approach so that the community and young people can contribute to the development. My message to all the people who have gathered here is to continue the dialogue, continue talking to each other, and continue listening to bring the Mekong River forward."

"Protecting the river is not only about survival, it is about resource justice, identity, and our future," said Ms. Phearun Cheng, Youth leader from Koh Kroch village, Stung Treng province.

"The river carries our traditions and our spirit. When we speak up in decision-making, we defend the Mekong for all who depend on it," said Ms. Pheary An, another Youth Leader from Kampong Pang village, Stung Treng province.

The celebration reflects the urgent challenges across the Mekong basin, where climate change, hydropower development and

unsustainable resource use threaten ecosystems and livelihoods. These local actions align with global commitment such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), Goal 13 (Climate Action) and Goal 15 (Life on Land) and reinforce the Paris Agreement's call for inclusive, community-driven climate resilience.

The event concluded with reflections that highlighted how women and marginalized groups, when actively engaged in decision-making, lay the foundation for a more progressive and inclusive society. Communities committed to reducing pollution, stopping illegal fishing, and preventing resource overuse, while youth pledged to serve as a driving force in river protection through research, advocacy, and awareness-raising.



Mr. Reto Gruening, Director of Cooperation Development Counselor of Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation, sharing his insight during the discussion with youth groups. Photo: Oxfam



Group photo of participants and stakeholders during the camping event at Koh Samseb, Stung Treng province. Photo: Oxfam

## DRONE TECHNOLOGY EMPOWERS YOUNG WOMEN TO PATROL FORESTS SAFELY AND EFFECTIVELY

By Botom Mune and Ratha Ra

*Patrolling the forest has always been a demanding task. Long distances, thick jungle paths, and the constant threat of wild mosquitos made every journey risky. For young women, the challenges were even greater, as forest patrols were often seen as roles reserved for men.*

With the support of Oxfam's Climate Resilience for All (CREFA) project funded by the Government of Ireland, 19 communities across Oddar Meanchey, Banteay Meanchey, Siem Reap and Preah Vihear have received seven drones, and training on how to use it provided by professional drone users. Young women like Pon Soknan are stepping forward to lead patrols in safer and more effective ways.

At 23 years old, Soknan, a member of Preypor Maek Boun Community Forests in Preah Vihear province is learning to pilot drones that can cover vast areas of forest in minutes. "I am concentrating on every step of the training because I want to be a pilot who flies these drones to protect our forest," she said.

The training has not been easy. At first, Soknan's hands trembled as she held the controller, worried she might make a mistake. But with each session, her confidence grew. Now, she sees drones as a tool that not only reduces risks but also opens doors for women to take leadership



Soknan beams with pride as she holds the drone after a successful test flight.

roles in protecting their communities.

"Now the long distances deep into the forest won't matter for us anymore," she said. "With drones, we can avoid risks from wild mosquitos, and we won't be afraid to work late evening. We can patrol more safely and more effectively."

For Soknan and her team, drones are more than machines. They are solutions. They save time and resources, provide evidence against illegal logging, and most importantly, empower young women to take part in safeguarding their forests.

"I used to think drones were only for professionals or men," Soknan

admitted. "But now I am proud to control it myself."

Looking through the drone's camera, Soknan saw her forest from above for the first time. Its green canopy stretching endlessly, its hidden wildlife paths winding beneath the trees. "Our forest is very beautiful from the sky," she said. "It gives me more energy and more commitment to protect it."

Drone technology is not just transforming patrols; it is transforming lives. For Soknan, every flight represents safety, effectiveness, and a new vision of leadership. For her community, it represents a future where young women stand at the forefront of protecting the forest.

## WHERE WATER FLOWS, EQUALITY GROWS



Indigenous women collected water from the Mekong River, Stung Treng province. Photo: Kimheang Tuon/Oxfam

*In Cambodia, water is both a lifeline and a challenge. Despite abundant rivers and lakes, many communities face seasonal water scarcity that threatens livelihoods, food security, and health. Women, who are often responsible for securing water for their families and other marginalized groups, remain underrepresented in decision-making bodies such as Farmer Water User Communities and River Basin Committees. This lack of representation means their voices and experiences are not fully reflected in policies that shape access to and benefit from water.*

On 30 March 2026, UNESCO and Oxfam launched the United Nations World Water Development Report 2026 in Phnom Penh, under the theme, *Water for All People: Equal*

*Rights and Opportunities.* The event brought together more than 70 participants from government, UN agencies, civil society, youth, media, local women groups and

Indigenous peoples. Together, they explored how inclusive water governance can transform water governance systems by making them more inclusive and equitable and strengthen Cambodia’s resilience to climate change.

According to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6, only 33% of Cambodia’s population had access to safely managed water services in 2024. While the country is rich in water resources, including the Mekong River and Tonle Sap Lake, many areas suffer severe shortages during dry seasons. These challenges disproportionately affect women and girls, who bear the brunt of water insecurity yet remain excluded from leadership roles, in water governance.

The launch discussions identified specific actions to close gender gaps in water governance and financing, aligning with Cambodia’s Climate Resilient Water Resource Governance Roadmap.

H.E. Lina Ngin, Secretary of State and Chair of the Gender Working Group of the Ministry of Environment, said, “Water security for all is a key policy priority of the government and it has been mobilizing cross-sectoral collaboration and partnerships for more inclusive water governance practices. More enabling environments are being supported that improve women’s leadership and engagement in water governance decisions, including those related to access to affordable finance for women’s entrepreneurship.”

Ms. Sophoan Phean, National Director of Oxfam in Cambodia, said, “Oxfam and partners have co-designed many innovative approaches that further strengthen gender inclusive natural resources governance practices and policies in Cambodia. Our approach has always been to bring about systemic changes by working on some of the underlying causes of inequality and marginalization and building capacity for long-term impact.”

Mr. Flavio Bonetti, UNESCO Representative to Cambodia, said, “UNESCO is committed to strengthening the links between water governance, gender equality, and sustainable development. In the Lower Mekong Basin, we are addressing data and capacity gaps in transboundary groundwater management while promoting women’s equal participation through Gender Focal Points and Groundwater Gender Action Plans.”

This launch was co-convened by Oxfam, as part of the Government of

Australia and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)-funded Mekong Inclusive Water Governance and Climate Resilience Project (IP3), together with the UNESCO Cambodia Office.

As part of the plan, Oxfam and UNESCO in Cambodia will follow up on some of the suggested actions for promoting inclusive water governance in Cambodia.



To create greater awareness on the WWDR 2026 findings and recommendations, Oxfam translated the report’s Executive Summary in to Khmer and shared among different stakeholders. Scan here to download the document.

**The report emphasizes that gender equality in water governance is not just about fairness, it is about building stronger, more resilient societies. When women are empowered to lead, communities benefit from diverse perspectives, more equitable resource distribution and innovative solutions to water challenges.**

# NADR AND OXFAM SIGN MOU TO PROMOTE ACCESS TO JUSTICE



NADR and Oxfam sign an MoU to launch the Enabled Access to Alternative Justice to Redress Indebtedness (A2JURI) project, expanding grassroots access to alternative justice and supporting communities in four provinces. Photo: Naratevy Kek/Oxfam

By Naratevy Kek

*The National Authority for Alternative Dispute Resolution (NADR) and Oxfam officially signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on 30 January 2026 to launch the project “Enabled Access to Alternative Justice to Redress Indebtedness (A2JURI).”*

This initiative aims to strengthen cooperation and advance Cambodia’s justice system at the grassroots level, with a special focus on the four northeastern provinces including Kratie, Stung

Treng, Mondulkiri, and Ratanakiri.

This partnership is unique, bringing together three key actors, the government, the private sector, and civil society organizations represented by Oxfam. Together, they are working to address debt-related disputes such as an issue that has grown due to the global economic downturn, the COVID-19 crisis, and other challenges, including border conflicts with Thailand that have disrupted livelihoods and impacted Cambodia’s financial sector.

Although NADR’s mission has been active for just over a year, it has already earned widespread recognition and delivered

meaningful results. Representative offices have been established across several provinces, including remote areas with large indigenous populations. This achievement reflects the strong leadership of H.E. Keut Rith, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Justice, and President of NADR, whose vision has brought access to justice closer to Cambodia’s grassroots communities.

Ms. Sophoan Phean, Oxfam’s National Director, said, “With support from Dutch Entrepreneurial Development Bank (FMO), Oxfam is deepening its cooperation with NADR to expand justice services further. The project seeks to resolve civil debt disputes more effectively and quickly, reduce referrals to the

courts, ease case backlogs, and alleviate the burden on Cambodia's justice system."

Ms. Franca Vossen, Chief Risk Officer at FMO, said during her remarks, "At the heart of every financial transaction, whether a microloan or a major investment, there is a human story. A family trying to build a business. A CEO looking to open a second processing plant. A farmer investing in better tools. When those stories are disrupted by conflict, misunderstanding, or over indebtedness, the consequences can be profound. And it is our shared responsibility to ensure that people have access to fair, accessible, and trusted mechanisms to resolve disputes before they become crises."

H.E. Malin Chin, Permanent Secretary of State of the Ministry of Justice and Permanent Vice Chairman of NADR, said, "Oxfam in Cambodia is a close partner organization of the Ministry of Justice as well as the National Authority for Alternative Dispute Resolution. Oxfam has supported the Ministry of Justice from the early stages of studying and developing the conceptual of Alternative Dispute Resolution in Cambodia, through to the development of the Royal Decree on the establishment, organized consultation workshops with stakeholders, and operation of the National Authority for Alternative Dispute Resolution."

H.E. Malin added that over the past two years, the NADR has achieved commendable results in resolving disputes for citizens, earning widespread appreciation for delivering win-win solutions. As of December 31, 2025, the NADR had processed 1,000 cases out of a total



Ms. Franca Vossen, Chief Risk Officer at the Dutch Entrepreneurial Development Bank (FMO) during an interview with the media during the launching day.  
Photo: Naratevy Kek/Oxfam

of 2,189 received. Of these, 573 cases were successfully mediated and resolved, resulting in the issuance of Dispute Settlement Agreements. Meanwhile, 114 cases were dismissed due to misconduct or non-compliance with complaint requirements, and 313 cases were closed because the parties did not accept mediation.

It is noteworthy that loan agreement disputes represented the largest category, with 986 cases, approximately 45% of the total. Out of these, 321 cases were resolved through agreements that brought the disputes to a close.

The NADR representative offices serve as the network of the National Authority for Alternative Dispute Resolution and carry out three main responsibilities: receiving complaints from citizens seeking dispute resolution, mediating and resolving disputes, and cooperating with sub-national administrations to disseminate information on NADR's mechanisms while also providing training on dispute resolution skills

to sub-national officials.

As of December 31, 2025, the four NADR representative offices had received a total of 251 cases, including 83 in Ratanakiri province, 55 in Kratie province, 48 in Stung Treng province, and 65 in Mondulakiri province. Of these, 45 cases were successfully resolved, one case was closed due to disagreement, and 206 cases remain under processing.

In addition, this MoU marks another step in strengthening Cambodia's financial sector under the leadership of the National Bank of Cambodia. It fosters collaboration with private and specialized banks, as well as financial institutions, to provide fair dispute resolution options, promote a just society, and contribute to the government's Pentagonal Strategy.

The project will also deliver a study on how out-of-court dispute resolution can serve as an effective option for civil disputes, with potential to evolve into a Court Annex Mediation system, similar to models already applied across the region and globally.

## ONE FULL BARREL AT A TIME

*For 72-year-old Mr. Sam Nang, surviving displacement meant keeping twenty-one grandchildren safe and it started with clean water.*

When fighting reached Prey Chan village, Banteay Meanchey province, on 19 January 2026, 72-year-old Sam Nang did what he had done his entire life in a crisis: he gathered his family and fled. All six of his grown children, their spouses, and twenty-one grandchildren clustered together, with first under tarpaulins at the Wat Chan Sii safety centre, then at Wat Pou Soriya. Their houses were destroyed in the clashes. Shelling and military blockades turned Prey Chan into a red zone. Returning is not yet possible.

What frightened Nang most was not the loss of a house. What comforted him was simple: everyone was alive, and everyone was together.

"We evacuated with nothing. We used the little money we had to buy what we needed to survive," said Sam Nang.

Hundreds of families settled onto temple grounds, sleeping on mats or on wooden platforms, the children hammered together to keep out of the mud when rains came. Nang's tent became the family hub, a place where grandchildren ran and played, where his daughter Nang Sokea and her husband Ra Vin tried to keep a household alive for their two young children, and where small acts of care repeated themselves all day: rationing soap, sharing a bowl of soup, boiling water when there was fuel.



72-year-old Sam Nang who fled fighting in Prey Chan to keep his twenty-one grandchildren safe beginning with access to clean water. Photo: Oxfam

Water was the most pressing problem. The pond beside the pagoda served as a washing place and hazard simultaneously. Families bathed and laundered there because there was no alternative. Safe drinking water meant a five-kilometre motorbike ride to the Wat Chan Sii station, a journey that cost fuel, time, and the constant worry of leaving family behind. For families without a motorbike, buying a 2,000-riel barrel, roughly fifty cents,

was the only option, and those riels added up fast.

For Nang, the calculation was personal. He watched his grandchildren run and play in the heat and knew they needed to stay hydrated. But keeping the barrel full enough was a daily struggle. "They are running and playing a lot, and it is hot," he said, watching the children draw water from a shared container. "They need to drink."

Sokea felt the weight differently. When Ra Vin left on multi-night fishing trips, one of the few ways men could earn income, she managed the household alone. That meant managing water alone too: rationing every sip, calculating how long a barrel would last, and knowing that without fuel or fifty cents, there was no way to get more. A day without water was not an inconvenience, it was a health risk for her children.

The latrines added another layer of hardship. Long queues formed at all hours, exposing the elderly, young children, and women to discomfort and safety risks particularly at night. Without reliable handwashing points or hygiene supplies, maintaining basic sanitation routines was nearly impossible. In cramped, hot tents, even a small illness could spread quickly. For caregivers like Nang and Sokea, the pressure of keeping twenty-one grandchildren healthy while grieving the life they had left behind was relentless.

From the very first days of the displacement, Oxfam worked alongside local partners, the Village Support Group (VSG), Coalition of Cambodian Farmer Community (CCFC), Live & Learn Cambodia, Development and Partnership in Action (DPA), Human Resource and Rural Economic Development (HURREDO), and local authorities, to assess what families needed most urgently. Getting concrete data on the ground was essential to shaping an effective and immediate response. What that data revealed, however, was not what anyone expected.

**"People assumed food would be the most urgent priority but what surprised us was what people told us themselves: they could**



Mr. Ra Vin collecting water from the water filtration system at Wat Chan Sii safety centre, a daily journey families made before clean water points were installed at the camp. Photo: Oxfam



Ra Vin and his family at the Wat Chan Sii safety center. Photo: Oxfam

**manage a few days without food but not without water. Safe drinking water became our priority and we worked closely with Oxfam to drill a well with a pumping system and install a water filtration system," said Ms. Chhorvivorn Ros, Executive Director of Village Support Group.**

That supports shaped everything that followed. The turning point came in mid-March, when safe water points came online, additional mobile latrines were deployed, and hygiene supplies were distributed together strengthening the camp's WASH facilities in ways that families felt immediately.

Clean water now flowed within walking distance. Filling barrels no longer meant a daily ride or carefully rationed sips. "As gas gets expensive, it was not ideal to drive back and forth," Nang explained. "Then we got plenty, within reach, now the barrels are always full." For Sokea, that meant no longer waiting anxiously for her husband's return before she could cook or give the children enough to drink.

New latrines shortened queues and reduced open defecation around the camp, lowering disease risk for the children and restoring privacy and dignity particularly for mothers and girls who had previously avoided the toilets after dark. Hygiene kits that included soap and water containers enabled families to keep clean, prepare food safely, and teach children healthy habits.

The benefits reached beyond the physical. Where time and energy had been consumed by fetching water, parents now had breathing room. Some men began fishing or taking day jobs in nearby villages. Women managed cooking and childcare with less fear that a preventable illness would drain their fragile finances. The 2,000 riels saved per barrel multiplied, quietly, into time, dignity, and safety.

"It will not be like our old home," Nang said, "but my children will sleep under a solid roof."

The path to full recovery remains long. Prey Chan is still a red zone. The fields cannot be ploughed. Rebuilding livelihoods will require demining, seeds, livestock, and continued access to services. But in the meantime, the everyday acts carry their own quiet significance. Nang's grandchildren attend the camp school and come home clean. Mothers prepare meals without fear of waterborne illness. Elders rest

knowing the children are hydrated and that the latrines nearby protect their dignity.

For a man who has spent seventy-two years rooted in one community, who watched his children grow up, build families, and make a life, and then watched it all be taken away in a single morning, that is not a small thing. It is, for now, everything.

"We lost everything," Nang said softly, looking at the children gathered and laughing around his tent. "At least my family is together. At least my grandchildren can stay healthy."

The story of Nang's family shows how essential WASH interventions are in a crisis: clean water, latrines, and hygiene supplies do not restore what was lost, but they prevent disease, protect dignity, ease the burdens of caregivers and create the breathing room families need to begin rebuilding. In a place where homes have been destroyed and the future remains uncertain, those basic services offer a lifeline, one full barrel at a time.

Since the first border dispute between Cambodia and Thailand in July 2025, Oxfam and partners with financial support from the Government of Ireland, Australia, Belgium and Oxfam's own emergency relief package have stepped in to provide emergency humanitarian support that has reached more than 23,100 families, approximately 80,221 people including 51% women across the four affected provinces including Banteay Meanchey, Oddar Meanchey, Siem Reap and Preah Vihear.

In addition to emergency humanitarian assistance, which is vital to safeguard the livelihood, safety, and dignity of those directly affected, the crisis continues to erode Cambodia's social and economic development achievements. Families are being pushed deeper into poverty, children's education is disrupted, and opportunities for them to grow into potential citizens are being seized. These impacts represent a serious violation of human rights.



Sam Nang and his grandchildren. Photo: Oxfam

As displaced families receive urgent help, it becomes clear that lasting peace and stable livelihoods are just as important. To achieve this, a permanent ceasefire and the repair of damaged infrastructure are needed so that communities can resume normal economic and social life. Oxfam remains committed to working closely with authorities and partners to mobilize resources, both to meet immediate needs and to support the long-term recovery of livelihoods.

Photo caption: Nang's grandchild enjoying a refreshing cup of clean water from the new filtration system. Below graphic is the emergency support provided by Oxfam and partners with financial support from the Government of Ireland, Australia, Belgium and Oxfam's own emergency relief package. Photo: Oxfam



## ជំនួយមនុស្សធម៌ដល់ជនភៀសស៊ីក ខេត្តឧត្តរមានជ័យ បន្ទាយមានជ័យ សៀមរាប ព្រះវិហារ

Emergency Support to Displaced Families in Oddar Meanchey, Banteay Meanchey, Siem Reap, Preah Vihear Province

■ គ្រួសារ / HOUSEHOLD: 23,100 ■ មនុស្ស / PEOPLE: 80,221 ■ ស្ត្រី / WOMEN: 51%





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We appreciate the long-standing support and relationship we have with our partners and donors. Thank you for being the primary change agents of Oxfam's endeavours to reduce poverty and empower communities. We have come a long way on the road to harnessing peace and ensuring social justice. We are extremely grateful for the continued support, cooperation and collaboration we have had over the years and we hope to continue this journey for years to come.



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Oxfam has supported Cambodia's development since 1979.

We continue with a strong commitment to Cambodians, especially women, youth and other marginalized groups facing inequality, discrimination, exploitation, abuse, and violence. Our goal is to empower the people of Cambodia enabling them to exercise their rights and actively contribute to building a resilient society that is free from poverty and injustice.

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